



1-1-2010

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Recommended Citation

Livingstone, John P.; Cox, Shirley E.; Duncan, William C.; Wells, M. Gawain; Reid, Kimberly W.; Dahle, Dennis V.; Byrd, A. Dean; and Dant, Doris R. (2010) "Understanding Same-Sex Attraction: Where to Turn and How to Help," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 49 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol49/iss1/15>

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Understanding Same-Sex Attraction: Where to Turn and How to Help

Authors

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“book of Moses, a revelatory expansion of the first chapters of Genesis” and “Joseph Smith’s translation of the early narratives of Genesis” (xxi, xxii).

The core of the book, around which all the other six sections are shaped, is a 476-page commentary by Bradshaw of Moses chapter 1 through chapter 6 verse 12. The intent here is to provide the reader with both the “plain sense” of the scriptural words as well as their context and relevance to modern audiences. The stories of the council in heaven, plan of salvation, Creation, Fall, Garden of Eden, and others found in the Book of Moses are not only explained by the author but also illustrated with extensive excerpts from ancient texts, scholarly research, and explanations by LDS prophets. This is accomplished in three parts: the author’s commentary; 4,599 footnotes and 320 longer “endnotes” at the end of each of the six chapters of commentary; and 274 pages of detailed discussion (“Excursus”) of 55 subjects related to matters raised in the commentary. Following upon and excerpting the work of Hugh Nibley and John M. Lundquist, as well as other scholars, historians, and LDS leaders, the book also illustrates how temple themes are woven into and expand our understanding of the story the Book of Moses tells.

This book also offers useful study aids: thirty-two pages of beautiful color plates of artwork related to the stories of the Book of Moses, an extensive bibliography, an appendix with various LDS documents on the origin of man, and a 103-page “Annotated Bibliography of Ancient Texts Related to the Book of Moses and JST Genesis.” This bibliography lists and briefly describes ancient Near Eastern, Old Testament, Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hammadi, Gnostic, Islamic and other texts—so often cited in scholarly research. But for those not constantly working with these texts, this bibliography will be helpful.

At 1,102 pages, this tome is not for the casual reader. It appears to be intended not only as a commentary but also a reference book, amalgamating in one place all the current scholarly and prophetic knowledge concerning the Book of Moses and the doctrinal subjects it treats. This is an ambitious project. Its value to each reader will be determined by careful reading.

—Michael David Olsen

Understanding Same-Sex Attraction: Where to Turn and How to Help, edited by Dennis V. Dahle, A. Dean Byrd, Shirley E. Cox, Doris R. Dant, William C. Duncan, John P. Livingstone, and M. Gawain Wells (Salt Lake City: Foundation for Attraction Research, 2009)

Readers looking for a book that supports the idea of homosexuality being an innate part of one’s identity will not be interested in *Understanding Same-Sex Attraction: Where to Turn and How to Help*. Instead, the authors of this book assert the unpopular opinion, backed by scientific research, that same-sex attraction *can* be lessened or eradicated in those who desire change and are willing to try. Readers who empathize with the Church’s position on homosexuality will likely find hope and useful ideas in this five-hundred-page compilation, authored by professional psychologists and scholars. The book presents three angles on the topic: the doctrinal stance of the Church, current scientific research, and experiences related anonymously by Latter-day Saints who have dealt with same-sex attraction.

Section 1, “Laying the Groundwork,” examines common misconceptions about homosexuality and invites readers to reevaluate what they know. The second section, “Gospel Perspectives,” provides a doctrinal and spiritual foundation for the rest of the book.

Readers familiar with LDS teachings may not find many new ideas in this section, but two full chapters dedicated to what General Authorities have taught on the topic may be an especially useful reference for Church leaders. Other chapters included in this section focus on the necessity of trials, faith, and the Atonement and how to show love and support to those who feel same-sex attraction.

Section 3, “Scientific, Clinical, and Social Perspectives,” offers a wide array of information for those who experience same-gender attraction and those who want to help them. Topics include how to choose a therapist, types of therapy used to treat same-gender attraction, how people can disclose their secret struggle to others, what parents and therapists can do to help children and adolescents who feel gender confusion, treating sexual addictions, and defending traditional marriage. The chapters that explain what science proves and what it cannot prove are particularly relevant for all Latter-day Saints, considering the public support gay rights activists have garnered in claiming that same-gender attraction is inherent and unchangeable.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of *Understanding Same-Sex Attraction* lies in its combination of scientific evidence in section 3 and personal testimonials in section 4. Here essayists recount how they emerged from homosexual lifestyles to find satisfaction in rejoining the Church mainstream, some even finding success in heterosexual marriages (although the authors of the book are quick to warn against marriage as a “cure” for homosexuality).

The book concludes with appendices giving contact information for resources like LDS Family Services; Evergreen International, a nonprofit group dedicated to helping those who want to reduce their same-sex attractions; and Foundation for Attraction Research, the nonprofit publisher of this book.

As some professional and state organizations frown on therapists who believe in reorientation therapy—seeking to ban their practice, in some cases—this book fills a void. It offers hope, and it voices a conversation that has largely been silenced in the larger media due to political pressures. Latter-day Saints who read this book will find a well-rounded and compassionate view of the complex and oft-misunderstood challenge of same-sex attraction.

—Kimberly Webb Reid

What’s the Harm? Does Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage Really Harm Individuals, Families or Society? edited by Lynn D. Wardle (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008)

Written by nineteen interdisciplinary authors and edited by BYU professor of family law Lynn D. Wardle, *What’s the Harm?* responds to several questions concerning same-sex marriage: does legalizing same-sex marriage harm traditional families? Does it discourage responsible sexual behavior and procreation? How does it affect the meaning of marriage? Does it impair basic freedoms to citizens and institutions?

In this potpourri of scholarly and legal papers, attorneys, educators, family counselors, and even linguists document through scientific studies and court cases the consequences already inflicted on men, women, and innocent children through practices such as abortion and no-fault divorce. Because such practices contribute to the breakdown of families and have longitudinal and intergenerational effects, they provide the social, moral, familial, relational, political, and conceptual architecture of the community. The harms are seldom seen immediately by the general public. Likewise, the preponderance of evidence from more than a dozen authors is unified in agreeing that history, natural law, common law, and common sense uphold