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LDS News
24 Aug

Elder Holland Makes Veiled Threat To University Staff Over A Pro-Gay Speech Made Over 2 Years Ago

I am planning to write an article covering the church's view of homosexuality in more detail following the outrageous September Liahona Magazine, that tries to focus on diversity, despite comments as recently as May from LDS church leaders, that advocated against showing love and compassion for those with "same-sex attraction".

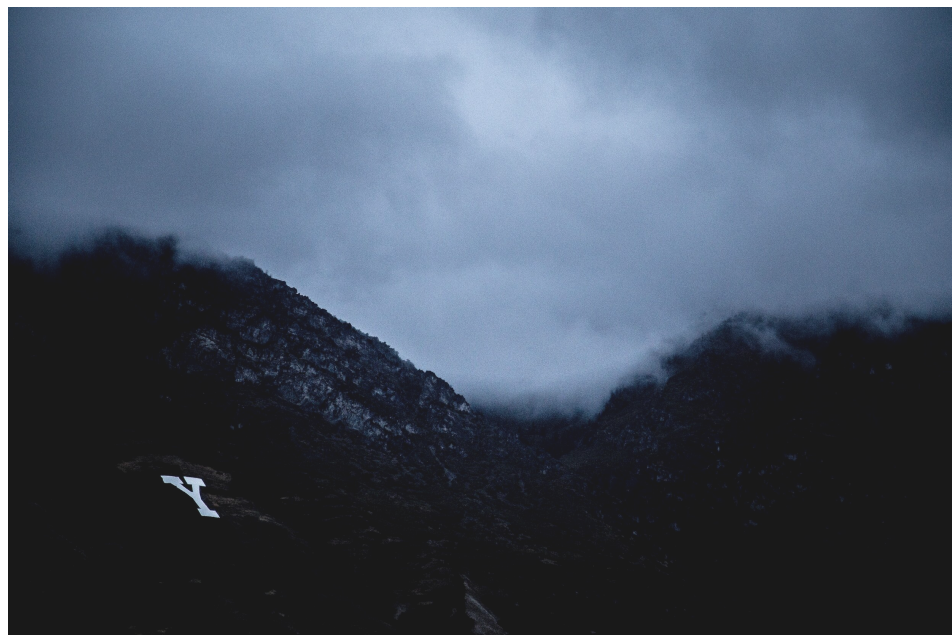
However, before I could even begin to take this latest issue apart, the hypocrisy continues in a talk given by Elder Holland just a few days after the September magazine, which is deserving of attention, as it reveals the churches true feelings towards those in the LGBTQ+ Community.

In his talk Elder Holland is addressing staff at Brigham Young University (BYU) during the first day of the institution's [2021 University Conference](#). He starts off in a teary and emotional manner as he reminisces about the time he has spent at the university (Holland was both a student of the university in the 1960s, and served as its President from 1980–1989). For the purpose of this article I have selected key parts of the talk, the full transcript can be read [here](#).

Holland briefly talks about some positive experiences others have had going through the university and how these are the types of experiences that BYU should hope to provide, he expresses the "pain" that comes with hearing a different type of experience from a concerned church member who writes:

"You should know that some people in the extended community are feeling abandoned and betrayed by BYU. It seems that some professors (at least the vocal ones in the media) are supporting ideas that many of us feel are contradictory to gospel principles, making it appear to be about like any other university our sons and daughters could have attended. Several parents have said they no longer want to send their children here or donate to the school. Please don't think I'm opposed to people thinking differently about policies and ideas, I'm not. But I would hope that BYU professors would be bridging those gaps between faith and intellect and would be sending out students that are ready to do the same in loving, intelligent and articulate ways. Yet, I fear that some faculty are not supportive of the Church's doctrines and policies and choose to criticize them publicly. There are consequences to this. After having

served a full-time mission and marrying her husband in the temple, a friend of mine recently left the church. In her graduation statement on a social media post, she credited [such and such a BYU program and its faculty] with the radicalizing of her attitudes and the destruction of her faith.”



Elder Holland explains that he started his speech by talking of his love for BYU, but that *“every so often we need a reminder of the challenge we constantly face here”*. The challenge he is speaking of is combatting behaviour that goes against gospel standards. Holland reiterates that as BYU is an extension of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints then integrity would demand that *“our lives be absolutely consistent with and characteristic of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ”* and that *“Staying in harmony with the Lord’s anointed”* would be the best achievement we can obtain until we *“have grown to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”*.

Here there is a strong focus on the idea that BYU needs to remain true and adherent to the standards of the Church, no matter the effect this may have on students or faculty members. This is a common narrative when it comes to [LDS teachings](#) as they discourage “labels” such as gay or lesbian as they think that they *“can affect how we think about ourselves and how others treat us and may expand or limit our ability to follow God’s plan for our happiness”*. While members of the church can choose whether they want to use a sexual identity label they do warn that doing so may have *“undesired consequences in the way one is treated”*. You will notice in many recent talks given by church leaders they will generally only use the term “same-sex attraction”, this in part works to take away the identity of someone who identifies as something other than straight.

It is important to recognise that Elder Holland’s talk when heard with the full history and context of the LDS beliefs on homosexuality is much more damaging than it may initially appear. For years the church has demonised members of the LGBTQ+ community. Often their sexuality gets compared to other transgressions such as dishonesty or pornography, and they get told that the feelings they experience are temptations from the

devil. In 2019 Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated that lesbian, gay, and transgender lifestyles and values were “*a culture of evil and personal wickedness in the world*”. In 2020 Elder and Sister Renlund wrote an article for the church magazine where they said “*Flawed reasoning and Satan’s deceptions have produced distracting philosophies that claim to eliminate the need for obeying God’s commandments, especially the law of chastity. Satan’s opposing voice is loud, and his philosophies are often enticing...Male and female spirits were created to complement each other. That is why gender is not fluid in the eternities—because it provides the basis for the ultimate gift Heavenly Father can give, His kind of life*”. There are many more quotes similar to this, and this history is important to understand because it gives a bigger picture of the LDS narrative on the subject which in turn better frames the context in which Elder Holland’s talk is being received.

Holland goes on to further elaborate on his call to action with a quote from Elder Neal A. Maxwell who said “*In a way, Latter-day Saint scholars at BYU and elsewhere are a little bit like the builders of the temple in Nauvoo, who worked with a trowel in one hand and a musket in the other. Today scholars building the temple of learning must also pause on occasion to defend the kingdom...I am grateful we have scholars today who can handle, as it were, both trowels and muskets....I would like to hear a little more musket fire from this temple of learning*”. Holland advises that the topic Maxwell was speaking of when he spoke of musket fire was specifically about defending marriage as the union of man and woman. Furthermore following this talk while many moved to assist, Holland claims there were others who “*fired their muskets all right, but unfortunately didn’t always aim at those hostile to the Church. A couple of stray rounds even went north of the point of the mountain*”. For those reading that didn’t grow up in Utah, he is implying that members fired back at the church itself. He then continues saying “*a house divided against itself cannot stand, and I will go to my grave pleading that this institution not only stands but stands unquestionably committed to its unique academic mission and to the Church that sponsors it...I and many of my Brethren have spent more time and shed more tears on this subject than we could ever adequately convey to you this morning, or any morning. We have spent hours discussing what the doctrine of the Church can and cannot provide the individuals and families struggling over this difficult issue. So, it is with scar tissue of our own that we are trying to avoid — and hope all will try to avoid — language, symbols, and situations that are more divisive than unifying at the very time we want to show love for all of God’s children*”.

As a former member of the Church and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I find it highly offensive that Elder Holland would advocate for “more musket fire” in an attempt to get LDS members to speak out more in support of their traditional family values because the community is already marginalised and discriminated against. Latter-day Saints who are LGBTQ+ are constantly fed that the love and attraction they feel can never be acted on, and that these feelings are messages from the adversary who is trying to lead them away from the church. He then pours salt into the wound by talking about just how upsetting the topic was for him and other brethren who had conferred on the subject, as though the pain he feels could in any way match the suffering of those who have lived through years of mental abuse from the church’s stance on sexuality.



To further his agenda Holland then inexplicably refers to a student who “*commandeers a graduation podium intended to represent everyone getting diplomas in order to announce his personal sexual orientation*” and implies that if this sort of behaviour is allowed then “*what might another speaker feel free to announce the next year until eventually anything goes?*”. This is actually a reference to a student who during his valedictorian speech brought up the fact that he was “proud to be a gay child of God”, but far from commandeering the podium this student had his speech approved by the University and only spoke of his sexuality in the context of his university experience. So while Elder Holland seems to imply that the student somehow took the stage by force, or spoke out of turn it is not true - but by framing the situation in this manner he can imply that there is some “gay agenda” being forced on campus and this further perpetuates the idea of a hidden agenda that must be fought against.

Elder Holland sums up this part of his talk by saying that it will assist everyone if things can be kept in some proportion and balance, *“we have to be careful that love and empathy do not get interpreted as condoning and advocacy, or that orthodoxy and loyalty to principle not be interpreted as unkindness or disloyalty to people... Christ never once withheld His love from anyone, but He also never once said to anyone, ‘Because I love you, you are exempt from keeping my commandments’”*. He continues saying *“Musket fire? Yes, we will always need defenders of the faith, but ‘friendly fire’ is a tragedy — and from time to time the Church, its leaders and some of our colleagues within the university community have taken such fire on this campus. And sometimes it isn’t friendly — wounding students and the parents of students who are confused about what so much recent flag-waving and parade-holding on this issue means. Beloved friends, this kind of confusion and conflict ought not to be... My Brethren have made the case for the metaphor of musket fire, which I have endorsed yet again today. There will continue to be those who oppose our teachings and with that will continue the need to define, document, and defend the faith. But we do all look forward to the day when we can ‘beat our swords into plowshares, and [our] spears into pruning hooks,’ and at least on this subject, ‘learn war [no] more’”*.

I feel that Elder Hollands speech is damaging and harmful because he wants the LGBTQ+ presence on campus to shrink back down and fade in. He claims that he doesn't want *“orthodoxy and loyalty to principle not be interpreted as unkindness or disloyalty to people”*, but the LDS Church is constantly being unkind and disloyal to the LGBTQ+ community. It is a Church that perpetuates harmful information on homosexuality. It is a church that once taught that homosexuality could be cured. That invested its money into aversion therapy. One that continues to preach that *“satan’s plan is in direct opposition to the family proclamation. It is an insidious attempt to destroy the nuclear family and God’s moral values. He disguises his plan of attack with alluring labels such as ‘pro-choice’ for abortion, ‘love and compassion’ for endorsement of same-sex marriage, and ‘environmental emergency’ for promotion of a zero-growth population agenda”*. This message is not one of love, acceptance, or understanding.

Resources:

You can read a more detailed history of the Churches stance LGBTQ+ issues [here](#).

For anyone effected but this speech or any of the topics discussed please reach out to someone you trust, or contact [recovering from religion](#) for further advice and support.

If you have any questions, comments, or want to suggest a topic to be covered you can contact me via email at bisexualexo@gmail.com or reach out to me on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

Elder Hollands full speech:

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland Urges BYU to Embrace Its Uniqueness, Stay True to the Savior



Matt Easton speaks about his experience on Latter Gay Stories:

Matt Easton | Responding to Jeffery R. Holland



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[Preview](#)[Post Comment...](#)**Paul** 2 years ago · 0 Likes

Yup, there's alot packed into this address. You don't have to read-between-the-lines much to see that he's saying that the church would prefer to run BYU as a non-accredited institution than accept gays into full-fellowship. But there's also a veiled threat against BYU faculty, that academic freedom and accreditation won't save you... if you agitate for gay rights, the church is willing to purge you, regardless of your credentials.

◀ [LDS Church Advocates For Diversity While Having Historic Teachings of Racism and Homophobia: Part I](#)

[I'm reading 'The Miracle of Forgiveness' so you don't have to: Introduction](#) ▶

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