



*This is the world,
brutal and cruel, that Troy tried to withstand.
Cruelty wins in the end.
Our little clearings of civilization may seem real,
but mindless wilderness always lurks,
may take its time,
but in the end overwhelms all our pretensions to decency.
We revert to beastliness. (Seneca, Trojan Women, Lines 985-990)*

The four horsemen of the apocalypse

Part 1 of 5—general observations

Revelation 6.¹⁻⁸

¹*I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures invite, with a voice like thunder, "Come!"*

²*Then I saw—imagine this!—a white horse. Its rider held a military bow and was granted a crown. He went off triumphantly, intending to conquer.*

³*And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature invite, "Come!"*

⁴*And another horse, this one red, went off, its rider given power to take peace from the earth, to the extent that they kill each other. He was equipped with a vicious sword.^a*

⁵*And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature invite, "Come!"*

Then I saw—imagine this!—a black horse. Its rider held a set of scales in his hand. ⁶I heard something like a voice coming from the four creatures, announcing: "A quart of wheat^b or three quarts^c of barley^d costs a day's wage,^e while olive oil and wine you are not to impact."

⁷*And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature invite, "Come!"*

⁸*And I saw—imagine this!—a pallid horse. As for its rider, his name was Death, and hell accompanied him. And he was given dominion over a large swath^f of the planet to slay with the sword and with starvation and with death and with earth's wild beasts.*

When we turn our thoughts to the Book of Revelation, we, naturally enough, think mostly of John's apocalyptic vision, which begins with the Lamb's breaking of the first seal that shields from unworthy eyes the contents of the scroll that God holds in his right hand while he sits enthroned in his heavenly throne room. But, before that first seal is broken, five entire chapters have passed.

John begins his work with a brief introduction (1.¹⁻³). This is followed with a general letter written to seven churches in Asia, or modern-day Turkey (1.⁴⁻²⁰), and a follow up letter written to each of these churches individually (2.¹⁻³,²²). John then records his vision of God, who sat enthroned in his heavenly throne room into which the Revelator was graciously invited (4.¹⁻⁵,¹⁴). This vision includes his view of the scroll God held in hand, and the coming of Jesus, appearing as a sacrificial lamb, who, alone among humanity's billions and billions, was up to the challenge of opening, reading, and revealing the scroll's content.^g

This final Book of the Bible is, without doubt, a fascinating work. It has inspired varied and multiple feelings, from awe to contempt to confusion to fear and dread. The early Church father, Jerome, for example, once wrote of the Book of Revelation,

“The Apocalypse of John has as many secrets as words. I am saying less than the book deserves. It is beyond all praise; for multiple meanings lie hidden in each single word.”¹

Martin Luther, on the other hand, never one for pulling punches or mincing words, complained, “My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book.”² In my own LDS tradition, the first Mormon prophet, Joseph Smith, once stated, “The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written.” One suspects he was, here, acting the part of jester, as he was wont to do; for no one in their right mind would seriously present the Book of Revelation as a “plain” book, let alone “one of the plainest” books ever written. Indeed, as we will see, Joseph, himself, seemed unable to make up his mind concerning the Book's

¹ Ep. liii.9; found in Caird, 2

² Found in Caird, 2

meaning on several fronts.

As I have confessed elsewhere, I avoided the Book for the first 55 years of my life. My feelings toward the Book ran along the lines of Martin Luther's, and most certainly did not jive with those of Joseph Smith, playing stand-up comic or not. However, shamed by my cowardice, I finally decided to give the Book a whirl. After dozens of readings, consideration of others' perspectives, and much thought, my feelings toward the Book have gravitated to something more akin to those expressed by Jerome. The Book is still by no means easy. Certainly not "one of the plainest books God caused to be written." But I find myself returning to it over and over again for inspiration and guidance—and, perhaps, just a tad bit of titillation.

Revelation's dragons, demons, composite and fanciful creatures, and false prophets have long fascinated readers. The visual arts and imaginative literature of the western world are filled with their images and descriptions. But few of the Revelator's images have captivated readers' imagination more than that of the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Interpretation of these four horsemen has been varied and multitudinous.

Today's homily is the first of five dedicated to these famous four horsemen. I understand if the reader wonders at the need for or wisdom in my giving the four horsemen another look-see. My interpretation will not be unlike or independent of some before me. Yet, I may hit a few notes that strike a chord for the reader. To my knowledge, my interpretation is unrepresented in LDS tradition and interpretation. However, for me it does what I believe the Revelator meant it to do.

First, the Revelator wished to describe the nature of a world ruled and governed by fallen people and satanic principles—the world that we have inherited from our fathers, the world in which we live now, and the world we are, for better or worse, preparing to pass along to another generation (a generation that hopefully will be wiser than those that have passed before them). Second, the Revelator wished to help his readers imagine a world ruled and governed by God and his principles. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Revelator intended his book to be a call to action, action that would translate the world from one

governed by satanic principles to one governed by godly principles—indeed, by God Himself.

The priority of the Revelator’s didactic purposes is seen by the placement of his first of seven macarisms—or statements of blessedness—in his introductory remarks.

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, *and keep those things which are written therein*: for the time is at hand.”³

His book not only calls upon his readers to understand the tragic present and imagine a better future, but to actively work against the former and for the latter. It is a call to action. Failure to understand, to imagine, and to act would certainly permit the needless continuation of pain, destruction, death, and perdition he so well portrays.

Our first task, then, is to understand the nature of the world as the Revelator perceives it. He begins his description of “the world” in the first four seals with their respective horse and rider. In this homily, we will make some general observations about these four scenes. In the four homilies that follow, we will examine each of the horses—white, red, black, and pale—in turn.

g^eneral observations

It will, perhaps, come as no surprise that in seeking to understand the Book of Revelation I began inside my own tradition. Nor should it come as a surprise that since it is the four horsemen that begin the apocalypse, I began with them.

In March of 1832, Joseph Smith offered an interpretation of the scroll’s seven seals in response to questions members of the Church posed to him.

³ Revelation 1.³, emphasis added

Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

Q. “What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?”

A. “We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.”⁴

We learn, first, that the sealed book “contains... things” from “the seven thousand years of [earth’s] continuance, or its temporal existence.”

All righty, then. I had, already, run smack dab into my first difficulty. I had many, many years ago concluded that the earth’s “temporal existence” was far, far older than seven thousand years. There were indeed dinosaurs around millions of years ago—and, no, they weren’t lodged on Noah’s mythical ark. Furthermore, I had long ago accepted the fact that I had ancestors who lived much longer ago than seven thousand years. The world over, there were, to use a humble example, numerous well organized and permanent agriculture settlements 9, 10, 12 thousand years ago.

Many dozens of years ago, I read a series of books entitled, *The First Thousand Years*, *The Second Thousand Years*, etc. Even though they were obviously based upon what I consider to be a faulty Usher-type chronology, I learned a thing or two from them. So, I decided not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I would press on, believing that I could probably find a work-around this initial and disappointing difficulty.

But, for me, Joseph’s explanation contained a second stumbling block. When it came to the seals, Joseph asserted that they contained “things” related to 1,000 year periods: the first seal containing “things” related to the first 1,000 years of the earth’s “temporal existence,” the second seal “things,” related to the second 1,000 years, etc. This meant, for example, that the

⁴ DC 77.⁶⁻⁷

white horse and its rider represented some “thing” relating to the first thousand years, the red horse and its rider, to some “thing” relating to the second thousand years, etc. Of course, I wondered what those “things” could be.

As I dug around a little more—after all, are not two witnesses better than just one?—I found that a little more than a decade after Joseph had offered his interpretation in the Doctrine and Covenants he had another look at Revelation. Among other things, he stated,

“The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch, Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is *plainly represented by John, and clearly set forth by him.*”⁵

Hmmm. If the first seal with its horse and rider “contained” “things” relating to the first thousand years of the earth’s “temporal existence,” then it must, of necessity have some “allusion” to “scenes of the days of Adam” and/or “Enoch” for they lived during that first thousand years of traditional Biblical chronology—a traditional chronology Joseph clearly accepted. However, I had to ask myself, “How ‘plainly represented... and clearly set forth’ are Adam, Enoch, or some other figure from that ‘first thousand year’ period in Revelation’s white horse and rider?”

The answer is probably already obvious to you: “Not very.”

Correction.

Not at all! If you had been living in the time of John and had read about the white horse and its rider, what are the chances that you would have said, “Oh, yes, I see... Why, it’s as clear as day: this is a clear and unmistakable ‘allusion’ to Enoch.” Or, “Yes, clearly this is an ‘allusion’ to Adam”?

The chances are slim to none, I’m thinking.

⁵ HC Vol. 5, p. 341-342. Emphasis added.

Imagine, then, my surprise when, upon further investigation, I learned that the rider on the white horse was an allusion to Enoch, according to Bruce R. McConkie, one of the most dominate and doctrinaire theologians in LDS Church history.⁶ But, how “plainly represented” and how “clearly set forth” is Enoch in the imagery of the white horse?

I just have to say, John most certainly did not “plainly represent” or “clearly set forth” how the rider of the white horse was a representation of a scene from the first thousand years in general, or a scene from Enoch’s lifetime in particular. Not even a smidgin.^h

Things were not adding up for me. Not at all. The more I read, the more LDS interpretation of the four horsemen failed to meet the smell test. But, more significantly, if I applied the test of meaningfulness, usefulness, and applicability of John’s challenge that we act upon what we learn from his work, the interpretation failed even more miserably. I could go on. But, to make a long story short, as I worked my way through Revelation and examined interpretations from my own LDS culture, I continued to face what were for me insurmountable difficulties.

So, after many months, I turned to and began to dig my way through millennia of Christian interpretation. I could write pages and pages of commentary about what I learned here. Much of it was rational, clear and, useful.⁷ I found some of the interpretations as useless as that found in my tradition. One interpretation—here I am thinking of interpretations that begin with the assertion that Jesus is the rider on the first, white horse⁸—was more than useless, but almost blasphemous as they turned Jesus into an agent of the suffering, hunger, and death that follow with the remaining three horsemen. More on this later.

In the end, the best thing that both LDS and the various non-LDS interpretations provided was confidence; confidence to decide for myself by interacting faithfully, personally, and intimately with the text itself.

⁶ See *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 476-78

⁷ Not surprising since 1) Christianity has had 2000 years to explore and ponder, and 2) a Mormonism infantile in comparison has stubbornly refused to consider this 2000 year history, choosing, rather, to go it alone and attempt to reinvent the wheel all over again.

⁸ Driven more, perhaps, from a sort of obsessive-compulsive mindset than anything else, such interpreters justify this interpretation by pointing to the fact that Jesus rides a white horse later in Revelation. But the symbolism of the poet can be far more diversified than is often appreciated.

I do not claim to have the one and only true interpretation of the Book as a whole, or of the four horsemen in particular. Each reader must, of course, decide for him or herself. But following are a few things that I decided about the Book of Revelations as a whole, and the four horsemen of the apocalypse in particular. This is what works for me. These are the sorts of decisions that will guide us as we make our way through the four horsemen of the apocalypse in the four homilies that follow.

1. One of John's primary intentions was to describe the world as he knew and experienced it. This was a world governed by satanic impulses. The world that he knew and experienced is, with very few significant existential differences, the same world that has been passed to us.
2. Equal in importance with his first intention, John also imagined and sought to portray an alternate reality. In this alternate reality the world's inhabitants reject and are delivered from satanic governance. They are presented and accept the governance of God, thus adopting principles and behaviors consistent with the character of God.
3. In describing the world as it is and as it might be, John was not acting the part of educator, philosopher, theologian, doctrinaire, etc. His was not a simple descriptive task. Rather, John was acting as a pastor. In his role as pastor, he sought to make his instruction meaningful and useful in his readers' daily life, be they of any and every era. He intended those who read his Book to apply its principles to their lives. In his Book, John was issuing a call to repent and reform. His is a call to action.

In regard to the four horsemen specifically, these a few general principles upon which I decided.

1. After reading and rereading Rev 6.¹⁻⁸ dozens and dozens of times and thinking and pondering for many hours over many months, the notion that the four horsemen represented singular events or individuals restricted to single historical eras became,

for me, untenable. Such interpretations were hollow, meaningless, and without utility. They issued no call to action and so left the present evil age safely intact.⁹

2. Rather than understanding the horses and riders of the first four seals as one-off occurrences—“scenes” only from “the first thousand years,” “the second thousand years,” etc. of earth’s “temporal existence”—they should be understood as patterns or types. In each horse and rider, John was describing attitudes, desires, behaviors, and consequences that have played themselves out at the national level hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times in every age over the entire course of human history; the world as it has been and is.
3. Most interpretations assume that some type of unified “plot line” runs through the four horsemen. Joseph Smith’s “plot line” was one in which events moved from one age to the next, to the next, etc. Interpretations that propose Jesus is the rider on the white horse, assume that the following three riders are, in one way or another, consequences of his initial foray in the first seal.

I, too, will posit a unified plot line running through the four horsemen. The purpose of the following homilies is to demonstrate and examine that plot line. But, to be brief, following is the “plot line” I will propose and examine:

1st Seal

The rider of the white horse represents the personal and nationalist will-to-power, the desire to excel, conquer, and dominate.

2nd Seal

The rider of the red horse represents the conflict that inevitably breaks out when one individual or group seek to dominate another.

⁹⁹ One wonders, at times, if deliverance of this present evil age from the ravages of the Revelator’s critiques is, in fact, the point.

3rd Seal

The rider of the black horse represents the consequences of violent national conflict, specifically, the economic costs to societies.

4th Seal

The rider of the black horse represents the social and spiritual devastation of violence that spirals out of human control as a result of nations having yielded to the desire to dominate which leads to engagement in devastating military conflicts.

The reading that I will give to the four horsemen of the apocalypse is one that is, for me, most meaningful and, even more importantly, most useful and applicable to my life (Indeed, as I study scripture, this meaningfulness, relevance, usefulness, and present application is as important as the insights that come from the indispensable tools we utilize to critically examine the historical and textual context of scripture passages). Through the revelator's four horsemen, I better understand the nature of the world that surrounds me. I better understand the foundation upon which a better world, if it is to be, must be built. I better understand the responsibility I have to act.

I write this series of homilies on the four horsemen to answer, in part, John's call to action. In them, I do more than discuss and describe and interpret. In them, I describe, I challenge, I oppose, I resist this present evil age with its well-established satanic impulses. I do so with the hope that, with God's gracious assistance, we can establish a better world.

Hopefully, the reader will also find that the following homilies inform their understanding and perception of the world around them, and, having informed them, guide their response to that world as they seek to fulfil the Savior's commission that his disciples be a "light of the world."¹⁰

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."¹¹

¹⁰ Matthew 5.¹⁴

¹¹ Revelation 1.³

Even so, come, Lord, Jesus.

^a The *machaira* is a “short sword,” one that can be wielded with one arm. As a “large” sword would require two hands and thus no longer qualify as a *machaira*, it would seem best to understand the modifying, *meegas*, as indicative of something other than size. The word can also indicate quality. Hence, my “hardened.” However one translates it, the sword is an extraordinarily effective and brutal instrument of death.

^b Barely enough for one person.

^c Barely enough to feed a small family.

^d Less nutritious than wheat.

^e Several times more expensive than normal.

^f Literally, “a fourth.”

^g Following is my outline for the entire Book of Revelation

- 1.¹⁻³ Introduction
- 1.⁴⁻²⁰ Letter to the Seven Churches—Universal
- 2.¹⁻³.²² Letter to the Seven Churches—Individual
 - 2.¹⁻⁷ Ephesus
 - 2.⁸⁻¹¹ Smyrna
 - 2.¹²⁻¹⁷ Pergamus
 - 2.¹⁸⁻²⁹ Thyatira
 - 3.¹⁻⁶ Sardis
 - 3.⁷⁻¹³ Philadelphia
 - 3.¹⁴⁻²² Laodicia
- 4.¹⁻⁵.¹⁴ John Joins the Assembly in the Divine Throne Room
 - 4.¹⁻¹¹ Revelation of God’s Majesty
 - 5.¹⁻¹⁴ Revelation of Christ’s Worthiness
- 6.¹⁻¹¹.¹⁹ Revelation of the Seven Seals
 - 6.¹⁻² 1st Seal Opened
 - 6.³⁻⁴ 2nd Seal Opened
 - 6.⁵⁻⁶ 3rd Seal Opened
 - 6.⁷⁻⁸ 4th Seal Opened
 - 6.⁹⁻¹¹ 5th Seal Opened
 - 6.¹²⁻¹⁷ 6th Seal Opened
- 7.¹⁻¹⁷ Interlude: Who shall be able to stand?
- 8.¹⁻⁶ 7th Seal Opened
 - 8.⁷ 1st Trump Sounded
 - 8.⁸⁻⁹ 2nd Trump Sounded
 - 8.¹⁰⁻¹¹ 3rd Trump Sounded
 - 8.¹²⁻¹³ 4th Trump Sounded
 - 9.¹⁻¹¹ 5th Trump Sounded
 - 9.¹²⁻²¹ 6th Trump Sounded
- 10.¹⁻¹¹ Interlude: John’s Call to Prophecy
- 11.¹⁻¹⁴ Interlude: Two Additional Prophets Called to Prophecy
- 11.¹⁵⁻¹⁹ 7th Trump Sounded
- 12.¹⁻¹⁶.²¹ Revelation of the Seven Wonders
 - 12.¹⁻² 1st Wonder—Woman Clothed with the Sun

12. ³⁻⁶	2 nd Wonder—A Great Red Dragon
12. ⁷⁻¹²	3 rd Wonder—War in Heaven
12. ¹³⁻¹⁷	4 th Wonder—War on Earth
13. ¹⁻¹⁰	5 th Wonder—A Beast Rises up from the Sea
13. ¹¹⁻¹⁸	6 th Wonder—A Beast Rises up from the Earth
14. ¹⁻²⁰	Interlude: Seven Angels
14. ¹⁻⁵	Introduction
14. ⁶⁻⁷	1 st Angel
14. ⁸	2 nd Angel
14. ⁹⁻¹²	3 rd Angel
14. ¹³	4 th Angel
14. ¹⁴⁻¹⁶	5 th Angel
14. ¹⁷	6 th Angel
14. ¹⁸⁻²⁰	7 th Angel
15. ^{1-16.21}	7 th Wonder—Seven Angels Bear Seven Vial of Wrath
15. ^{1-16.1}	The Seven Vial Bearing Angels in Heaven
16. ²	1 st Angel Pours 1 st Vial out upon the Earth
16. ³	2 nd Angel Pours 2 nd Vial out upon the Sea
16. ⁴⁻⁷	3 rd Angel Pours 3 rd Vial out upon Fresh Waters
16. ⁸⁻⁹	4 th Angel Pours 4 th Vial out upon the Sun
16. ¹⁰⁻¹¹	5 th Angel Pours 5 th Vial out upon the Seat of the Beast
16. ¹²⁻¹⁶	6 th Angel Pours 6 th Vial out upon the Euphrates
16. ¹⁷⁻²¹	7 th Angel Pours 7 th Vial out into the Air
17. ^{1-19.10}	Revelation of Babylon's Fall
17. ¹⁻¹⁸	Description of Babylon's Character
18. ¹⁻³	1 st Lament/Taunt
18. ⁴⁻⁸	2 nd Lament/Taunt
18. ⁹⁻¹⁰	3 rd Lament/Taunt
18. ^{11-17a}	4 th Lament/Taunt
18. ^{17b-18}	5 th Lament/Taunt
18. ¹⁹⁻²⁰	6 th Lament/Taunt
18. ²¹⁻²⁴	7 th Lament/Taunt
19. ¹⁻²	1 st Affirmation
19. ³	2 nd Affirmation
19. ⁴	3 rd Affirmation
19. ⁵	4 th Affirmation
19. ⁶⁻⁸	5 th Affirmation
19. ^{9 a, b}	6 th Affirmation
19. ^{9 c-10}	7 th Affirmation
19. ^{11-22.5}	The Twelve Concluding Visions
19. ¹¹⁻¹⁶	1 st Vision—The Righteous Commander and his Hosts
19. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸	2 nd Vision—The Supper of the Great God
19. ¹⁹⁻²¹	3 rd Vision—The Rebellious are Vanquished
20. ¹⁻³	4 th Vision—The Rebellious go into the Bottomless Pit
20. ⁴⁻¹⁰	5 th Vision—A Thousand Years
20. ¹¹	6 th Vision—A Great White Throne
20. ¹²⁻¹⁵	7 th Vision—Judgment
21. ¹	8 th Vision—A New Heaven and a New Earth
21. ²⁻⁸	9 th Vision—The New Jerusalem
21. ⁹⁻²¹	10 th Vision—Description of Holy Jerusalem
21. ²²⁻²⁷	11 th Vision—The Presence of God in Holy Jerusalem
22. ¹⁻⁵	12 th Vision—The River and Tree of Life

^h Various apologetics have been marshaled to explain the discrepancy.

1. “Without granting a discrepancy, we must rely upon the explanation found in the Doctrine and Covenants because it has been ‘canonized.’”
2. “Granting a discrepancy, we must rely upon the explanation found in the Doctrine and Covenants because it has been ‘canonized.’”
3. “Though I cannot explain it, there is no discrepancy. I’m sure a truly inspired teacher/prophet could explain what is only an *apparent* contradiction.”
4. “There is no discrepancy. Period. No further discussion needed.”
5. “There is no discrepancy. Both statements are true. The first seal, for example, represents a ‘scene’ from the days of Enoch. For those with the Spirit, it is ‘plainly represented by John, and clearly set forth by him.’”

I find all of these unsatisfactory—some more so than others (4 being, for me, by far the least palatable). For example, one might be excused for finding it difficult to see in the white horse a representation or scene from the life of Enoch—a common interpretation. Such an interpretation is surely not “plainly represented” or “clearly set forth” by the Apostle. Additionally, Enoch fought with the “word of God,” not with weapons of human invention. Nowhere in the Enoch material do we have him riding a white horse or have any white horse imagery. There is, then, no reason to connect “white horse” and “Enoch” except as an article of faith without scripture support

Further, the degree to which such interpretations are not “plainly represented” or “clearly set forth” can be seen from the following. Bruce R. McConkie asked, “Who rode the red horse, the red horse of war and bloodshed and a sword, during the second seal?” His uncertain and tentative answer is instructive: “Perhaps it was the devil himself.... Or if it was not Lucifer, perhaps it was a man of blood, or *a person representing many murdering warriors*” (*DNTC*, Vol. 3, p. 478). What’s the point? And how plain and clear is all that? It’s a multiply choice test!

There are, it seems, other questions. Here are a few we might ask.

1. If each seal simply contains one salient event that took place during a single thousand year period, shouldn’t the fifth seal find as its most significant event the birth of the Savior or his atonement—something having to do with the Savior? How can such an event simply be ignored in a survey, which purports to record “the most transcendent happenings” of each dispensation? (See McConkie, p. 477)
3. What is the message? Is it just historical narrative? What was the church then, or the church now, to do with the historical narrative, especially when it is not even entirely clear what history is being referred to?

The questions could go on. I am satisfied that Joseph Smith was a bold explorer. Joseph Smith made both of the above statements attributed to him. The statements were made 10 years apart. A lot can happen in 10 years. One’s knowledge grows. In his growth, Joseph saw things in 1843 that he did not see in 1832. Joseph needn’t be exactly on point at each moment on every matter. No prophet does. No prophet has been. No prophet is.

All of this may convince some readers that it is a good thing that today’s prophets don’t seem interested in commenting on such obscure, “esoteric” passages—though, as we will see, there is nothing esoteric about the four horsemen of the apocalypse. I, too, find myself content with the fact that today’s Church leaders don’t give a hoot about such matters, though, if I am honest, I’d feel a lot better about it if they were not so completely obsessed with all things gay, especially their war against gay marriage.