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VARIETY AND COMPLEXITY IN THE WITNESSES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: This paper examines the testimonies of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon— not only the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses, but many others who experienced and testified of the reality of the Book of Mormon plates. Together, these testimonies offer impressive support for the claims of Joseph Smith regarding the Book of Mormon and, thus, the Restoration. The variety and complexity of their collective testimony makes finding a single, alternative, non-divine explanation for the witness experiences challenging, indeed.

[Editor’s Note: A very similar version of this essay was delivered as an address at the annual FairMormon Conference in August 2020.]

While listening to a recorded lecture a few months ago, I heard an Evangelical apologist make an observation along roughly the following lines: “Some Christians,” he said, “are too easily talked out of their faith because they had never been talked into it in the first place.” I wish that I could give credit to my source, but I no longer recall his name. However, I’ve been reflecting on that comment since then.

Now, I do not believe that we are very likely to remain in any deep life-altering commitment — whether religious, or romantic, or of any other kind — merely because we’ve been “talked into” doing so. Still, I think that there is something noteworthy in the comment, something pointing to an area in which we Latter-day Saints could do better. (That’s one of the reasons I believe so strongly in the importance of The Interpreter Foundation and why I see value in its sister-organizations, Book of Mormon Central and FAIR.)

We, as a people, tend to focus on experiential support for our beliefs. We seek and value “spiritual experiences,” and we try to help
others seek and receive them — in sacrament meetings, firesides, girls’ camps, handcart treks, and a host of other such ventures. This is all well and good, and I enthusiastically support such things. Indeed, our fundamental missionary approach is to lead people to test the promise of Moroni 10:4–5 in order to receive their own individual, personal testimonies as a result of the feelings they receive.

But I am absolutely convinced that we should not neglect a more cognitive support for our faith — one that is intellectually or rationally based.

Commitment to religion should not rely merely upon emotional satisfaction, as important and essential as such fulfillment may be; our moods fluctuate and our emotions are inconstant. We also should be able to articulate reasons in support of our faith. Doing so is in no way a detraction from the importance of spiritual conviction. It may, in fact, be a way of piquing the interest of outsiders who may then be led to develop their own Spirit-infused faith.

“Be ready always,” says 1 Peter 3:15, “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” “In your hearts,” says the English Standard Version1 of that same verse, “honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

The Greek word that the ESV renders as defense and that the King James Bible translates as answer is apologia, from which we derive our words apologist and apologetics. This suggests that apologetics, in at least some form, may well have an entirely necessary role within the lives of Latter-day Saints and especially in the lives of Latter-day Saints who seek to share the Gospel with others.

The Savior himself was willing to provide evidence for rational belief. We find support for this claim in a well-known account from the gospel of Matthew. It revolves around a man who was cured of palsy (likely paralysis) in the small Galilean fishing village of Capernaum. Jesus had been over on the eastern side of the lake in Galilee called Genesaret (often misnamed “the sea of Galilee”).

And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within

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themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. (Matthew 9:1-8)

In this story, Jesus declared that the sins of the man with palsy were forgiven, but there was clearly no empirical way of testing such a declaration — no medical examination or litmus test could prove it either true or false. So, to provide his audience reason to believe the non-empirical claim that he had the authority (and the requisite status with God) to forgive sins, Jesus performed a very empirical, quite tangible miracle: He healed the man with the palsy. The paralyzed man immediately arose and walked. Seeing this, his observers could rationally infer Jesus’s authority to forgive (and thus, God’s ratification of such forgiveness) from the curing of that paralytic.

When Latter-day Saints attempt to provide rational grounds for belief, however well or poorly we execute the task, it can rightly be said that we are attempting to follow the Savior, for he did that as well.

My work here represents just one partial approach to one of the many reasons that we give for the hope that is in us as believing Latter-day Saints. I emphasize that it is a partial approach — much, much more can and should be said. My comments in this essay cover only a small portion of my overall argument respecting the Book of Mormon witnesses.

I choose this particular subject of the witnesses for two specific reasons, one practical and one theological:

- I’ve been involved, over the past several years, in an Interpreter Foundation project on the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. The effort began shortly after we had interviewed the late Richard Lloyd Anderson, for decades the leading authority on the subject. Our project has produced a theatrical film that will, I expect, receive its premiere in just a few weeks from the time this essay 2. Anderson died in mid-August 2018, at the age of 92, and I’m deeply grateful that we captured that footage in time. I consider him a witness to the witnesses.
appears. It will be accompanied by a documentary or docudrama that features interviews with scholars and other experts, as well as by other online supporting materials, both video and textual.

- Since the Witnesses represent the only evidence for the Book of Mormon (beyond the existence and character of the book itself and the corroborating testimony of the Holy Ghost) that was scripturally promised by the Lord himself and that he has directly provided, it seems to me imperative that we pay careful attention to them.

One might surely ask why the Lord did not simply send an angel to show the plates of the Book of Mormon to a general meeting of everybody in the area of Manchester and Palmyra and then take them on an exhibition tour along the Erie Canal. Plenty of critics (and probably more than a few members of the Church) have asked that question.

The answer appears to be that he does not seem to have ever done things that way. The mortal ministry of Jesus took place in a remote backwater province of the Roman Empire. The miracle that I earlier mentioned occurred in the Galilee, an even more remote backwater area of that remote backwater province. And, when Jesus rose from the dead, although he appeared to a few people in Judea and the Galilee and, later, to people gathered at the temple in Bountiful, he never dropped by the Roman Senate, or made an appearance in the Colosseum or the Circus Maximus where he would receive greatest exposure and renown. The apostle Peter, speaking to the Roman centurion Cornelius and other Gentiles in Caesarea Maritima, explained of Jesus that “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts 10:40–41).

The Lord took the same approach in the early days of the Restoration: He chose witnesses.

Why does He do this? The honest answer is that we simply do not know. I suspect, though, that it is related to what Latter-day Saints call the “veil,” and which the late Anglo-American philosopher of religion, John Hick,

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4. The docudrama has its own website, see Witnesses (website), https://witnessesundaunted.com/. As an example of the written, textual, resources that we're creating, see Witnesses of the Book of Mormon (website), https://witnessesofthebookofmormon.org/.
called “epistemic distance.” The Lord will not compel us to believe. He could simply reveal Himself to us, but that would overwhelm our freedom to choose to believe. He wants us to choose Him out of love, out of a desire for goodness and truth, and not because our wills have been coerced.

Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, uses a parable about a king and a maiden to make this point — that, if God were to reveal himself fully and with unmistakable, irresistible clarity, that revelation would overwhelm and destroy our freedom.

In the story, a king falls deeply, passionately in love with a peasant girl. But how can the king reveal his love to a woman of humble parentage — given the huge disparity of rank, status, and wealth between them — without coercing and crushing her? If she were aware of his position, how could he (or she) be certain that her love for him was genuine, unaffected by his status, unintimidated by his power, unmotivated by greed or ambition?

“Not to reveal oneself,” Kierkegaard writes, “is the death of love, to reveal oneself is the death of the beloved.” The only real choice open to the king is to court his beloved indirectly, by descending to her station, by taking on the character of a servant. So he disguises himself.

God, Kierkegaard says, wants us to love Him freely because we come to know Him as lovable, not because He’s powerful, terrifying, incredibly “rich,” or overwhelming. We have abundant reason to do that. In a similar way, though he wants us to develop faith or trust in Him, He does not seek a compelled belief. He does not desire an assent that has been forced upon us because we had no rational alternative or escape.

Accordingly, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, there are hints and clues, but they are not coercive because they were designed not to be. Moreover, questions — even reasons for doubt — definitely exist, and they do so, I believe, by divine intent.

Now let us return from the airy realms of philosophical and theological speculation to the solid ground of history, where I believe the witnesses to the Book of Mormon are firmly rooted.

On 29 March 1830, a young Baptist minister named David Marks attended a meeting in Fayette, New York, “at the house of Mr. Whitmer,” specifically, Peter Whitmer, Sr. and his wife, Mary, where, just one week later, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would be formally


6. Ibid.
organized. Writing thereafter, Reverend Marks remembered that “two or three” of the Whitmer sons were among “eight, who said they were witnesses.” Actually, there were four: Christian Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and John Whitmer, along with a Whitmer son-in-law, Hiram Page. (The other three were Joseph Smith, Sr., his eldest surviving son, Hyrum Smith, and Samuel H. Smith, the Prophet Joseph’s immediately younger brother.) Reverend Marks reported that they had seen “certain plates of metal, having the appearance of gold. … These eight, we understand, were in company with Smith and three others.”

The “three others” were the Three Witnesses — Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer (yet another son of Peter and Mary), and Martin Harris. Altogether, with Joseph Smith, the Witnesses total twelve.

I doubt that number is mere coincidence. Although it was nowhere enshrined in the U.S. Constitution that juries must contain twelve members, and although some American states permit lower numbers of jurors in some cases, the tradition of twelve-member juries has been common, if not dominant, among English-speaking peoples, and particularly in the United States, for many generations. The origin of this customary practice goes back at least to the Welsh king Morgan of Gla-Morgan, who decided upon the number when he established trial by jury in AD 725, comparing the judge and jury to Jesus and his twelve apostles.

The notion that important legal judgments were to be rendered by “twelve good men and true” was well established by at least the first half of the seventeenth century. For example, Thomas Randolph famously had a spokesman in one of his poems declare of another “I had rather ... haue his twelve Godvathers, good men and true, contemne him to the Gallowes.” And the concept of a “jury of one’s peers” can be traced to the Magna Carta of 1215, which repeatedly stresses a requirement that judgment be rendered by a defendant’s “equals.”

I will try, in this essay, to illustrate how those phrases, too, shed light on the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

7. David Marks, The Life of David Marks: To the 26th Year of His Age, Including the Particulars of His Conversion, Call to the Ministry, and Labours in Itinerant Preaching for Nearly Eleven Years (Limerick, ME: The Morning Star, 1831), 340.
The Three Witnesses

As is usually done, let us consider the Three Witnesses first, and examine the variety and complexity of their accounts. Over the course of that two-day interview with us about a year before his death, Richard Anderson emphasized the differences between Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, viewing them as representative human types:

You’ve got Oliver Cowdery, who is trained in education equivalently to today. And he’s a white-collar man and he’s a thinker and analyzer. Now, if you wanted to get the best three representatives of the human race, you certainly include him. But he’s in the minority, even today. … David Whitmer is a tradesman; he’s a businessman. … He ran a business for fifty years and kept his profits in the black instead of in the red. And then there’s Martin Harris and he’s the religious fanatic — using the terminology of some people who knew him. They have a hard time with Martin Harris because he is a believer. And sometimes he believes in too much — maybe things that we wouldn’t now. … And Martin Harris gets criticized for being a true believer, but that’s part of the logic of having three witnesses who were representative of the human race.10

So you’ve got somebody who’s what you would call an intellectual, somebody who’s a pragmatic businessman, and somebody that is a true believer.11

So the very selection of these men as witnesses, to me, is faith promoting as a historian.12

[T]he Three Witnesses were in fact a cross section of their community.13

Thus, to follow the framework I have introduced, these witnesses were part of a “jury of peers.” The differences between them in education and life experience can be argued as ensuring that representation.

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 00:16:22.25.
According to David Whitmer, their encounter with the angel and the plates took place toward the end of June 1829, at about 11:00 am. What was the nature of that encounter? What did these three very different men claim to have seen and heard?

- They saw the plates.
- The audible voice of God declared to them that the plates had been translated by divine gift and power.
- They saw the engravings on the plates.
- They saw an angel who had descended from heaven.
- The voice of God commanded them to bear record of their experience.

The miraculous nature of the claimed experience of the Three Witnesses is clear. They did not simply go into the woods and see an unusual metal object, they saw an angel. Indeed, they heard the voice of God from heaven.

David Whitmer, who lived well past the other witnesses into 1888 (and whom Richard Anderson calls “the most interviewed witness”) described the atmosphere in which all this occurred:

[A]ll at once a light came down from above us and encircled us for quite a little distance around, and the angel stood before us. … [W]e were overshadowed by a light. It was not like the light of the sun, nor like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended away round us, I cannot tell how far … All of a sudden I beheld a dazzlingly brilliant light that surpassed in brightness even the sun at noonday, and which seemed to envelop the woods for a considerable distance around. Simultaneous with the light came a strange entrancing influence which permeated me so powerfully that I felt chained to the spot, while I also experienced a sensation of joy absolutely indescribable.\(^{15}\)

I beheld the glory of the Lord.\(^{16}\)

Simple, ordinary mundane forgery — the work, say, of a cunning and conniving blacksmith — could not account for such claims. It could not create an unearthly light, let alone produce an apparent angel or a divine voice from heaven.

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15. Ibid., 80-81.
16. Ibid., 90.
Moreover, as Richard L. Anderson points out, “Those who see the witnesses as victims of simple deception have overlooked the complexity of the experience promised to them, and their later spontaneous mention of seeing the other ancient objects with the plates.”17

Consider, for instance, the words spoken to the Three Witnesses in a June 1829 revelation given just prior to their experience with the angel and the plates:

> Behold, I say unto you, that you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the breastplate, the sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, which were given to the brother of Jared upon the mount, when he talked with the Lord face to face, and the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness, on the borders of the Red Sea. And it is by your faith that you shall obtain a view of them, even by that faith which was had by the prophets of old.

> And after that you have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, you shall testify of them, by the power of God.

> And this you shall do that my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., may not be destroyed, that I may bring about my righteous purposes unto the children of men in this work. (D&C 17:1-4)

In fact, even though the official statement doesn’t mention it, they did see all of those things. David Whitmer, for example, said in various interviews:

> [The angel] showed to us the plates, the sword of Laban, the Directors [that is, the Liahona], the Urim and Thummim, and other records. ... [T]here appeared, as it were, a table, with many records on it — besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the sword of Laban, the Directors, and the Interpreters. I saw them as plain as I see this bed [striking his hand upon the bed beside him]. ... I saw the Interpreters in the holy vision; they looked like whitish stones put in the rim of a bow — looked like spectacles, only much larger.18

In other words, they saw a collection of concrete and tangible objects, not just the plates. Not just the *angel* and the plates. Richard Anderson’s comment is appropriate here:

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17. Ibid., 10.
18. Ibid., 80-81. Oliver Cowdery also claimed to have seen the Interpreters (see ibid., 61).
Nothing short of biblical Christianity furnishes such a concrete statement of supernatural reality. One cannot dismiss the experience easily, for each man so testifying impressed his community with his capacity and unwavering honesty, and all three consistently reaffirmed the experience in hundreds of interviews throughout their lives.19

The claim of the Three Witnesses is more complex still, as they had these experiences in two distinct groups: First, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer saw the plates, the angel, the sword, the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim, and the Liahona, and heard the attesting voice of God. And then, separately, Joseph Smith and Martin Harris had the same experience. If it was a hallucination, it had to be generated and experienced not just once, but twice.

The Eight Witnesses

We now turn to the Eight Witnesses, whose statement reflects a very different experience. It is, among other things, far more restrained, matter of fact, cooler, even legalistic, than the statement of the Three — for instance, in their reference to Joseph Smith as “the said Smith.”20 Notice, too, their almost noncommittal language. They will not go beyond what they saw and what their eyes and their hands had been able to verify:

- They saw the plates, which, they said, “had the appearance of gold.”
- They saw the engravings on those plates, which, they said, had “the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship.”21

They do not claim to have seen the Liahona (the “Directors”), the sword of Laban, the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim (the “Interpreters”), or any collection of other metal plates. They do not claim to have heard an audible divine voice. They do not claim to have received a heavenly confirmation that the translation was correct, nor reported an unearthly light, entrancing influence, or sensation of transcendent joy. No angel appeared to them. They do not even testify to divine power in the translation process. They simply bear witness that they “know of a surety

19. Ibid., 53.
21. Ibid.
that the said Smith has got the plates.” They have “handled” those plates, leaf by leaf, “with [their] hands.” They have “seen and hefted” the plates.

The verb to heft is worth noting; it’s significant. It means “to lift” or “to carry,” with the clear connotation that what is being lifted or carried is something heavy. (We don’t “heft” goldfish or feathers or tufts of cotton.) It is, in fact, scarcely surprising that the verb contains such a suggestion, since we also use heft as a noun to indicate notable weight and since, very distantly, both ultimately derive from the same Proto-Indo-European root. At one point before he saw the plates and the angel, for example, Martin Harris had a chance to lift the box that purportedly contained the plates. His recollection of that test has always struck me as hilarious, whether the humor was intentional or not. But please note the word that he uses: “I knew from the heft that they were lead or gold, and I knew that Joseph had not credit enough to buy so much lead.”

Returning to the Eight Witnesses and their declaration that they had seen, hefted, and handled the plates: “With these simple claims,” Richard Anderson remarks,

eight farmers and artisans publicly reported that Joseph Smith had shown them ancient plates of the Book of Mormon. A practical group who worked with their hands, they were better able to evaluate the “appearance of gold” and the “curious workmanship” than eight picked at random from a modern city.

Moreover, there is at least one report that seems to suggest that the Eight Witnesses encountered the plates in two groups of four rather than all together. If that is true — and it may or may not be — the scam, if it were a scam, had to be run not once but twice.

These farmers and artisans were, again, members of a “jury of peers,” ordinary, common men. There were many like them on the American frontier in the early nineteenth century. Counting Joseph Smith himself and the Three Witnesses, there were “twelve good men and true.” However, the Eight Witnesses cannot simply be added to the Three for a total of eleven supplemental, confirming witnesses for Joseph. That would be true, but inadequate. They aren’t interchangeable; they’re not

22. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 123.
fungible or redundant. Their testimony is markedly different — and, I think, designedly so — from that of the Three.

**The Three and the Eight Taken Together**

B. H. Roberts set out some vitally important analysis of the two sets of witnesses in his classic *Comprehensive History of the Church.* I can really do no better, I think, than to quote it at considerable, even awkward, length. Members of the Church will profit, in my judgment, from familiarity with his thinking on this issue:

> It is to be observed that what may be called two kinds of testimony to the truth of the *Book of Mormon* is found in the statements of the three and eight witnesses respectively; *viz:* what men would call miraculous testimony, and ordinary testimony. Had there been but one kind of testimony the matter would have been much simplified for the objector. Had the testimony of the three witnesses been the only kind given; that is, if the plates had been exhibited to the eight witnesses in the same manner as they had been revealed to the three, then, perhaps, mental hallucination might have been urged with more show of reason. Or, if the three witnesses had seen the plates in the same manner as the eight did, in a plain, matter-of-fact way, without display of the divine power, then the theory of pure fabrication, with collusion on the part of all those who assisted in bringing forth the work, would have more standing. But with the two kinds of testimony to deal with it is extremely difficult for objectors to dispose of the matter.

> It is just at this point that the two kinds of testimony — the testimony of the three witnesses and the eight, respectively, act and react upon each other in a manner quite remarkable. The “mental mirage” theory might offer a possible solution for the vision of the three witnesses, but what of the testimony of the eight witnesses — all so plain, matter-of-fact, straightforward and real? How shall that be accounted for? Here all the miraculous is absent. It is a man to man transaction. Neither superstition, nor expectation of the supernatural can play any part in working up an illusion or “mental mirage” respecting

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27. Ibid., 1:149-50.
what the eight witnesses saw and handled. Their testimony must be accounted for on some other hypothesis than that of hallucination. And indeed it is. Some regard it as a mere fabrication of interested parties to the general scheme of deception. This, however, is an arbitrary proceeding, not warranted by a just treatment of the facts involved. Others, being impressed with the evident honesty of the witnesses, or not being able to account for the matter in any other way, admit that Joseph Smith must have had plates which he exhibited to the eight witnesses, but deceived them as to the manner in which he came in possession of them. ... The net result then of the anti-“Mormon” speculations in relation to the testimony of the three witnesses and the eight is the theory of hallucination to account for the testimony of the three witnesses, and pure fabrication, with the possibility of deception by Joseph Smith as to the existence of some kind of plates lurking in the background, to account for the testimony of the eight witnesses.28

But the testimony of the three and the eight witnesses, respectively, stands or falls together. If the pure fabrication theory is adopted to explain away the testimony of the eight witnesses, there is no reason why it should not be adopted to explain away the testimony of the three. But every circumstance connected with the testimony of all these witnesses ... cries out against the theory of “pure fabrication.” It is in recognition of the evident honesty of the three witnesses that the theory of mental hallucination is invented to account for their testimony; as it is also the evident honesty of the eight witnesses that leads to the admission by many anti-“Mormon” writers that Joseph Smith must have had some kind of plates which he exhibited to the eight witnesses, though he may not have obtained them through supernatural means.29

Perhaps I can rephrase Elder Roberts’s point: Let us assume for a moment that the experience of the Three Witnesses — “miraculous testimony,” as he calls it — could be explained as the product of hallucination. (To be clear, I do not believe it could be, but, for purposes of the argument, let us assume that it could.) The very distinct experience

29. Ibid., 1:153-54.
of the Eight Witnesses — “ordinary testimony,” in Elder Roberts’s terminology — cannot plausibly be accounted for by hallucination. It’s too mundane and matter-of-fact. So perhaps, a critic might urge, it was a matter of a cunningly designed stage prop. Fake plates, created to fool the yokels. But who manufactured those golden plates? What was the source of the considerable gold required to make them? And where did it go? Why were the Smiths still poor after the plates disappeared? And, anyway, mere stage-prop plates can’t explain the experience of the Three.

I assert that, with the testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses, we do not simply have an arithmetic sum of two collective testimonies. Rather, given the different nature of the reported experiences, the difficulty for those who want to dismiss the claims of the witnesses is increased geometrically, not merely arithmetically, by the existence of the two kinds of witness. Put simply, the critic’s difficulty isn’t just doubled, it’s quadrupled.

**The Informal or Unofficial Witnesses**

But the strength of witness testimony does not end there. I will start with perhaps the least interesting of them: Isaac Hale, Joseph Smith’s father-in-law, Emma’s father, a hunter, farmer, and innkeeper. He was anything but a fan of his son-in-law. He disapproved of Joseph’s money-digging past, and he strongly disapproved of the marriage with Emma. A year after their marriage, though, Joseph and Emma left Palmyra, New York, for a small cabin on the Hales’s property in Harmony Township — modern Oakland Township — on the bank of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania.

Mistrustful of Joseph and skeptical of his claims about the Book of Mormon, Hale confronted him on the subject, demanding to see the plates. Joseph responded that he had been commanded to show them to nobody except by divine command. Still, Joseph permitted Hale to lift the wooden box that, he said, contained the plates. Of this relatively little-known experience, Hale later recalled: “I was allowed to feel the weight of the box, and they gave me to understand, that the book of plates was then in the box — into which, however, I was not allowed to look.”

Holding the box failed to mollify Isaac Hale, who said that:

[He was] dissatisfied, and informed him [Joseph] that if there was any thing in my house of that description [the plates], which I could not be allowed to see, he must take it away; if he

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did not, I was determined to see it. After that, the Plates were said to be hid in the woods.31

Now, as Book of Mormon witness statements go, Isaac Hales’s is of only modest significance. Still, it’s not without value. Friendly skeptics and historians of religion who would prefer not to commit themselves on the truth or falsity of Joseph’s prophetic claims find it much easier, on the whole, to regard him as a sincere person who was telling the truth (as he perceived or imagined it to be) about his subjective mental and spiritual states. However, handing a heavy box over to Isaac Hales (a box in which, he claimed, the plates were hidden) gives a tangibility to the matter that makes it more difficult — not quite impossible, but definitely more difficult — to maintain that Joseph’s experiences were purely personal and subjective. This palpable object seems to point, instead, to either genuine authenticity or deliberate fraud. It begins to confront us with a very stark either/or choice.

In his very limited and adversarial way, Isaac Hale was a witness to the Book of Mormon.

Late in his life, William Smith, the Prophet’s younger brother, described what happened when Joseph entered the family home with the plates from which the Book of Mormon would soon be translated:

When the plates were brought in they were wrapped in a tow frock. My father then put them into a pillow case. … We handled them and could tell what they were. They were not quite as large as this Bible. Could tell whether they were round or square. Could raise the leaves this way (raising a few leaves of the Bible before him). One could easily tell that they were not a stone, hewn out to deceive, or even a block of wood. Being a mixture of gold and copper, they were much heavier than stone, and very much heavier than wood.32

Martin Harris estimated the weight of the plates at somewhere between forty pounds and sixty pounds.33 Based on his own encounter with the plates in his late teens, William Smith’s estimate was roughly similar, though on the high end of Martin’s range. (Note, again, the use of the verb heft.)

31. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 114.
I did not see them uncovered, but I handled them and hefted them while wrapped in a tow frock and judged them to have weighed about sixty pounds. I could tell they were plates of some kind and that they were fastened together by rings running through the back. 34

William Smith was a witness to the Book of Mormon.

Perhaps the first person outside the Smith family to feel and heft the plates — that is, even before the Eight Witnesses — was Josiah Stowell, for whom a very young Joseph sometimes worked as a hired hand. 35

During Joseph Smith’s 30 June 1830 trial for an alleged “breach of the peace” in Broome County, New York, Stowell actually testified under oath that he saw the plates the day Joseph first brought them home. As Joseph passed them through the window, Stowell caught a glimpse of the plates as a portion of the linen was pulled back. Stowell gave the court the dimensions of the plates and explained that they consisted of gold leaves with characters written on each sheet. 36

Josiah Stowell was a witness to the Book of Mormon.

Lucy Harris is typically remembered negatively among Latter-day Saints for her opposition to her husband Martin’s involvement with the Book of Mormon and, most dramatically, as the leading suspect in the case of the lost 116 pages.

The story is a bit more complex than that, however. Lucy Mack Smith recalled that early in the process of recovering the Book of Mormon, Lucy Harris offered to help Joseph publish it — but “[only] if I can get a witness that you do speak the truth.” Joseph reminded her that only God can bestow such a witness, and Mrs. Harris went away “highly displeased.” But Lucy Smith’s narrative goes on to recount that, on the very next day, Mrs. Harris returned with a very different attitude:

She said that a personage appeared to her, who told her, that as she had disputed the servant of the Lord, and said his word was not to be believed, and had also asked him many improper questions, she had done that which was not right in the sight

34. Ibid., 24. William Smith gave his estimate of the weight of the plates on several occasions. Examples occur on ibid., 23-24.
35. See Joseph Smith-History 1:56-58.
of God. After which he said to her, “Behold here are the plates, look upon them and believe.” After giving us an account of her dream, she described the Record very minutely.37

Lucy Harris gave Joseph $28 — worth more than $770 in 2021 — which appears to make her the very first donor toward the publication of the Book of Mormon.38 Unexpectedly, Lucy Harris was a witness.

Lucy Mack Smith herself, the Prophet’s mother, claimed to have “examined” the Urim and Thummim and “found that it consisted of two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glasses were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles.”39

She also encountered the breastplate:

It was wrapped in a thin muslin handkerchief, so thin that I could see the glistening metal, and ascertain its proportions without any difficulty. It was concave on one side and convex on the other, and extended from the neck downwards, as far as the centre of the stomach of a man of extraordinary size. It had four straps of the same material, for the purpose of fastening it to the breast, two of which ran back to go over the shoulders, and the other two were designed to fasten to the hips. They were just the width of two of my fingers, (for I measured them,) and they had holes in the ends of them, to be convenient in fastening.40

38. For a discussion of several of these women witnesses, see Chris Heimerdinger, “5 Women Who Are Witnesses of the Physical Golden Plates,” Book of Mormon Central (blog), March 2, 2018, https://bookofmormoncentral.org/blog/5-women-who-are-witnesses-of-the-physical-golden-plates.
40. Ibid., 390. She estimates that the breastplate “was worth at least five hundred dollars” — presumably in terms of either 1827 or 1828 currency (those being the candidate years for the event) or 1844-1845 currency (those being the years in which she dictated her account). So, in terms of today’s prices, she was guessing that the value of the breastplate was roughly $13,000.00 to $14,000.00. If, however, she was thinking of the dollar as it stood in 1844, a translation into today’s prices would put the value of the breastplate at approximately $17,500.00. Assuming that her estimate is at least roughly accurate, that her account not pure fabrication, and that the object wasn’t authentically ancient, this raises the question, very acutely, of how Joseph Smith was able to procure such an object and what happened to it afterwards.
On 26 August 1838, an Ohio woman named Sally Parker wrote a letter to one John Kempton. The letter has survived, and in it, she describes Lucy Mack Smith, the mother of the Prophet:

I lived by his mother, and [she] was one of the finest of women — always helping them that stood in need. She told me the whole story. ... I asked her if she saw the plates. She said no, it was not for her to see them, but she hefted and handled them, and I believed all she said, for I lived by her eight months, and she was one of the best of women.  

Lucy Mack Smith was a witness; note the indication that she *hefted* the plates.

Emma Smith, too, can be considered a corroborating witness to the plates. She said, “I moved them from place to place on the table, as it was necessary in doing my housework.”42 At times, she had to “lift and move [the covered plates] when she swept and dusted.”43 Here is a portion of an interview with her that was conducted by her son Joseph III not very long before her death on 30 April 1879:

Question. Are you sure that he had the plates at the time you were writing for him?

Answer. The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen tablecloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book.44

Emma Smith was a witness to the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith’s sister Katharine held and even carried the covered plates on several different occasions.45 She seems often to have emphasized

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42. Ibid., 29.
45. “The Prophet’s Sister Testifies She Lifted the B of M Plates,” *Messenger* (October 1954): 1, 6; see also Mary Salisbury Hancock, “The Three Sisters of the
what Chris Heimerdinger calls their “physicality.” Herbert S. Salisbury, grandson of the Prophet’s sister Katharine, recalled his grandmother telling him about Joseph’s first bringing the plates home:

She said he entered the house running and threw himself on a couch, panting from his extraordinary exertion. She told me Joseph allowed her to ‘heft’ the package but not to see the gold plates, as the angel had forbidden him to show them at that period. She said they were very heavy.

Note, yet again, that verb to heft.

Katharine remembered Joseph’s arrival home in 1827, when she was fourteen, and that the plates were “wrapped … up in his frock:”

When he got to the door he said: “Father, I have been followed; look and see if you can see any one.” He then threw himself on the bed and fainted, and when he came to he told us the circumstances; he had his thumb put out of place and his arm was very lame.

Her grandson, Herbert Salisbury, remembered his grandmother relating that “When [Joseph] came in the house … he was completely out of breath. She [Katharine] took the plates from him and laid them on the table temporarily, and helped revive him until he got breathing properly, and also examined his hand, and treated it for the bruises on his knuckles.” He had been chased by members of a mob, and:

In striking the last one he dislocated his thumb, which, however, he did not notice until he came within sight of the house, when he threw himself down in the corner of the fence in order to recover his breath. As soon as he was able, he arose and came to the house. He was still altogether speechless from fright and the fatigue of running.

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47. Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, 83-84.
50. Anderson, Lucy's Book, 386.
Mary Salisbury Hancock, Katharine’s granddaughter, remembered Katharine relating that same episode, or a similar one, when Joseph, with the plates in his possession, had been chased by a mob:

Hearing an unusual commotion outside Catherine flew to the door and threw it open just as Joseph came rushing up, panting for breath. He thrust a bundle into her arms, and in a gasping voice whispered hoarsely, “Take these quickly and hide them,” then he disappeared into the darkness. Closing the door Catherine ran hurriedly to the bedroom where she and Sophronia slept. Sophronia threw back the bedding and Catherine put the bundle on the bed, quickly replacing the bedding. Both of them lay down on the bed and pretended sleep. The mob, failing to find Joseph outside, returned to the house to search, but they did not disturb the girls since they appeared to be sleeping.51

Katharine Smith was a witness to the Book of Mormon.

David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses, related that his mother, Mary Musselman Whitmer, saw the plates quite independently of anybody else and under the most matter-of-fact circumstances. The entire family of Peter Whitmer Sr. had become acquainted with Joseph Smith in 1828 through David, the fourth of nine children. Eventually, a substantial part of the translation of the Book of Mormon occurred at the Peter Whitmer farm near Fayette, New York. During that period, the place was a hive of activity; Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma, and Oliver Cowdery were boarding with the Whitmers, and other people (including curiosity-seekers) were constantly coming and going. Much of the burden of coping with them fell upon Peter’s wife, Mary.

David later explained:

My father and mother had a large family of their own. The addition to it therefore of Joseph, his wife, Emma, and Oliver very greatly increased the toil and anxiety of my mother. And although she had never complained, she had sometimes felt that her labor was too much, or at least she was perhaps beginning to feel so.

A granddaughter’s account, published by Royal Skousen in Interpreter, adds specific detail to the story, relating that Mary Whitmer was irritated when Joseph and Oliver took breaks from translating and

“skated rocks on a pond.”52 “She thought they might just as well carry her a bucket of water or chop a bit of wood” and she “was about to order them from her home.”53

The most interesting aspect of this story is that Mary Whitmer’s difficulty with the household situation was more than just being tired from all the extra work. She was irritated by Joseph and Oliver’s indifference to all the work she was doing, with their not helping out and instead skipping rocks for relaxation, so “she was about to order them out of her home.” Thus Moroni’s intervention was perhaps more purposeful than we might have previously thought. Undoubtedly, many others exerted much effort on behalf of providing help to Joseph and Oliver (such as Emma Smith had just done in Harmony, Pennsylvania, for the previous three months). Here, however, Moroni needed to deal with a more difficult situation, one that could have forced Joseph to find another place – and a secure one – to do the translating. Moroni (and the Lord) weren’t in the habit of just showing the plates to people to encourage them to act as a support team for the work of the translation.54

One day, probably in June 1829, when she was going out to milk the cows in the family barn — where, David happened to know, the plates were concealed at the time — she met an “old man,” as she described him, who said to her, “You have been very faithful and diligent in your labors, but you are tired because of the increase of your toil; it is proper therefore that you should receive a witness that your faith may be strengthened.”55

“Thereupon,” David said, “he showed her the plates.” This unexpected encounter “completely removed” her feeling of being overwhelmed, said her son, “and nerved her up for her increased responsibilities.”56

Afterwards, Mary was able to describe the plates in detail. John C. Whitmer, her grandson, reported that he himself had independently heard his grandmother tell of this event several times. He summarized her experience in more detailed fashion, as follows:

53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 39-40.
55. Ibid., 36.
56. Ibid.
She met a stranger carrying something on his back that looked like a knapsack. At first she was a little afraid of him, but when he spoke to her in a kind, friendly tone and began to explain to her the nature of the work which was going on in her house (that is, the translation of the Book of Mormon), she was filled with unexpressible (sic) joy and satisfaction. He then untied his knapsack and showed her a bundle of plates, which in size and appearance corresponded with the description subsequently given by the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. This strange person turned the leaves of the book of plates over, leaf after leaf, and also showed her the engravings upon them; after which he told her to be patient and faithful in bearing her burden a little longer, promising that if she would do so, she should be blessed; and her reward would be sure, if she proved faithful to the end. The personage then suddenly vanished with the plates, and where he went, she could not tell. From that moment my grandmother was enabled to perform her household duties with comparative ease, and she felt no more inclination to murmur because her lot was hard. I knew my grandmother to be a good, noble and truthful woman, and I have not the least doubt of her statement in regard to seeing the plates being strictly true.  

Five of Mary Whitmer’s sons and a son-in-law became official witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page, one of the Eight Witnesses, had married Catherine Whitmer in 1825. Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses and the principal scribe during its dictation, baptized Mary Whitmer into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Seneca Lake on April 18, 1830, when the church was fewer than two weeks old, and he married her daughter, Elizabeth Ann, in December 1832. The Whitmers gathered to Missouri with the Latter-day Saints, and there Mary died at 78 years of age in 1856, still a faithful believer in the divine origin of the gold plates and the book that had been translated from them. Mary Whitmer was a witness.

So what special significance, if any, do the experiences of the “informal” or “unofficial” witnesses hold? First, as Richard Anderson points out, “These private encounters with the metal book preceded both

the Three Witnesses’ seeing the angel and the plates, and also the Eight Witnesses’ handling the plates in natural surroundings.”

Interestingly, these informal witnesses reported a mixture of the same kinds of experiences, more or less, that the Three and the Eight had. In B. H. Roberts’s language, they received both “ordinary testimony” and “miraculous testimony”:

- William Smith, Josiah Stowell, the early Martin Harris, Lucy Mack Smith, Emma Smith, and Katharine Smith had quite mundane encounters with tangible physical objects, much like the Eight Witnesses.
- Lucy Harris and Mary Musselman Whitmer saw the plates as well as an angel or messenger, rather like the Three Witnesses.

These accounts provide additional, corroborating testimony. But I think that they offer more than just that. Again, the informal or unofficial witnesses are not interchangeable — not with each other as individuals nor, collectively, with the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses.

Several arguments that have been deployed against the Three and the Eight, however ineffectually, just cannot be used against the informal witnesses.

Some skeptics have suggested, for instance, that some sort of social dynamic or collective group hysteria explains the experience of the Three and the Eight. But the informal witnesses had their experiences separately. So, collective emotional pressure cannot account for them.

Others have suggested that the Three and the Eight expected to have a “spiritual experience,” and so, being effectively “programmed” for something extraordinary to happen, they did have remarkable experiences — but experiences that were real only in a subjective sense. While this does not seem a plausible or persuasive objection to me, it certainly is not applicable to the unofficial witnesses. Mary Whitmer was in the barn doing the routine chores of a farmwife, and perhaps feeling a bit resentful. She was not expecting an encounter with the plates and the messenger, so religious fervor or spiritual expectation cannot explain her experience. Josiah Stowell and Katharine Smith had a heavy object suddenly thrust at them, under rather tense conditions. Lucy Mack Smith, Martin Harris, Emma Hale Smith, and William Smith handled and examined tangible objects under very mundane circumstances.

Additionally, while Joseph Smith, the Three, and the Eight constitute a kind of jury of “twelve good men and true,” in terms comprehensible to

58. Ibid.
their culture and in accord with its expectations for deciding important matters, women were not permitted to serve as jurors in the 1820s or 1830s, nor, indeed, for many years thereafter. But the Lord called Lucy Mack Smith, Emma Smith, Katharine Smith, Mary Whitmer, and even Lucy Harris to serve as witnesses beyond those twelve. The voices of these women and their testimonies deserve to be heard now, alongside those of the men. We owe it to them to make that happen.

Traveling on his way to a mission in England in 1853, David B. Dille stopped by the Martin Harris home in Kirtland, Ohio. The seventy-year-old Harris was in bed at the time, so sick that he hadn’t eaten in three days. But, when Elder Dille showed up, he bore spirited testimony of his experience with the angel and the plates. Moreover, reminiscent of several other accounts that tell how, even when he was ill or very old, he became energized when testifying, Harris got out of bed, dressed himself, asked for food, spoke with Elder Dille for hours, and went to hear him preach that evening. Afterwards, he said to Elder Dille, “Just let me go with you to England. … You do the preaching and I will bear testimony to the Book of Mormon, and we will convert all England.”

In the last year of Martin Harris’s life, John E. Godfrey visited him. “I am pleased to have you come,” said the now nearly-ninety-two-year-old witness, “and I wish I could bear my testimony to the whole world.” “I tell you of these things,” he told his bishop just a few days before his death, “that you may tell others that what I have said is true, and I dare not deny it; I heard the voice of God commanding me to testify to the same.”

In a way, through the distribution of the Book of Mormon in scores of languages around the globe, Martin Harris and the other official witnesses are bearing their testimonies to the whole world. Their statements have appeared in every edition of the Book of Mormon since 1830. But it’s still not enough — not nearly enough. The Interpreter Foundation’s Witnesses project is an attempt to widen the reach of these invaluable testimonies to the existence of God, the deity of the Savior, and the truthfulness of the Restoration. We hope that you, too, will join forces in sharing the news. “No testimony of direct revelation in the world’s history,” Richard Anderson quite correctly observed, “is better documented than the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses.”

59. Ibid., 113.
60. Ibid., 117.
61. Ibid., 118.
62. Ibid., 79.
It is because of that direct revelation, and because of further revelations that have flowed from it and in its wake, that The Interpreter Foundation exists. I am profoundly grateful to those who, by their gifts of time and effort and money, have made its existence and its flourishing possible. Particularly at this point, I wish to thank the authors, copy editors, source checkers, and others who have created this volume, and I especially want to thank Allen Wyatt and Jeff Lindsay, who have not only devotedly overseen and steered the effort but have themselves been deeply involved in it. They do so for no material compensation, but their dedication is essential to the success of Interpreter and at its very heart.

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That Which You Have Translated, Which You Have Retained

Clifford P. Jones

Abstract: I propose that our current Words of Mormon in the Book of Mormon was originally a second chapter of the book of Mosiah following an initial chapter that was part of the lost 116 pages. When Joseph Smith gave the first 116 pages to Martin Harris, he may have retained a segment of the original manuscript that contained our Words of Mormon, consistent with the Lord’s reference “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41). A comprehensive review of contextual information indicates that the chapter we call Words of Mormon may actually be the first part of this retained segment.

In Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord uses the term “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41) as he provides a solution to the problem caused by the loss of the 116-page manuscript. The Lord’s solution is to replace the lost text with the small-plate record, followed by the balance of the translation, beginning with “that which you have translated, which you have retained.” I propose that this term refers to a segment of text translated before the loss but retained by Joseph Smith and that Words of Mormon, the text that now follows the replacement small-plate record, is the first part of this retained text. In other words, Words of Mormon once followed immediately after the lost text. It is the earliest part, still in existence, of Joseph Smith’s translation of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record.

My paper begins by putting this proposal in the context of the scholarly landscape for the order of Book of Mormon translation. It then reviews historical information about the lost manuscript, the rest of the original manuscript, and the printer’s manuscript. After this review, it walks through six considerations which support a conclusion that the retained text — the segment of text that once followed immediately after
the lost text — begins with Words of Mormon. First, traces of evidence, including four edits made by Oliver Cowdery to the printer’s manuscript, support the premise that Joseph Smith held back previously translated pages that weren’t lost. Second, a structured comment (a resumptive structure) found in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 indicates that a large block of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record (the lost text) is missing right before the beginning of Words of Mormon. Third, a part of this resumptive structure indicates that the last event mentioned in the lost text once supplied foundational context for the aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8, including antecedents for the terms this king Benjamin, these plates, and this small account in Words of Mormon 1:3. Fourth, textual analysis of Words of Mormon 1:3–6 suggests that Mormon wrote Words of Mormon before he wrote the following part of his abridgment. Fifth, linguistic analysis indicates that the term about to in Words of Mormon 1:1 can be read to support this conclusion. Sixth, the simple directives in Section 10 support my view that the retained text begins with Words of Mormon.

The Scholarly Landscape for the Order of Book of Mormon Translation

Over the years, a variety of views have been expressed about the order in which the books of the Book of Mormon were translated. In recent decades, most scholars have adopted a Mosiah-first view, holding that when translation resumed after the loss of the 116 pages, it began at the beginning of the Book of Mosiah, then continued from there through the balance of the writings of Mormon and Moroni, including the title page. These scholars believe that the small-plate record was translated next, ending with Words of Mormon. In 2012, Jack M. Lyon and


Kent R. Minson published a modified Mosiah-first view which suggested that verses 12–18 of Words of Mormon were originally part of the book of Mosiah, so these verses were translated first. They agree that the balance of the translation took place in the order described above, ending with verses 1–11 of Words of Mormon.³

This paper suggests that the entire chapter we call Words of Mormon is the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah. This entire chapter and some of the next chapter (which is now subdivided into Mosiah chapters 1–3) were translated before the loss of the 116 pages and retained by Joseph Smith. When translation resumed, it began at the end of this retained segment, continuing through the balance of the writings of Mormon and Moroni and then through the small-plate record, ending with the book of Omni. In a nutshell, I propose an expanded Mosiah-first view. Words of Mormon, in its entirety, is the original second chapter of Mosiah.

Historical Background:
The Lost Manuscript, the Rest of the Original Manuscript, and the Printer’s Manuscript

Joseph Smith began to translate the ancient Nephite record by “the gift and power of God” in April 1828 in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph’s wife Emma served as his initial scribe.⁴ Soon, Martin Harris replaced Emma as the principal scribe. Book of Mormon manuscripts weren’t transcribed onto loose sheets of paper. Instead, several sheets of paper (usually about six of them) were folded together, once down the middle, to form a simple booklet called a gathering, so each gathering contained

⁴. Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days, (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 1:49.
about 24 pages. After a gathering was filled with writing, it was stitched together at the fold.5

After two months of translation, in mid-June 1828, it appears that the translation filled five gatherings, four with six sheets (24 pages each) and apparently one gathering with five sheets (20 pages), for a total of 116 pages, as Royal Skousen has proposed,6 as well as some additional pages in an incomplete sixth gathering not given to Martin Harris.7 If so, the term that which you have translated, which you have retained may refer to these pages in this incomplete gathering — a gathering in process that wasn’t yet ready to be stitched together.8 At this point, Joseph paused the work of translation to care for Emma, who was about to give birth.9

As the work of translation neared this stopping point, Martin planned to spend a few days at his home in Palmyra, New York. As that day approached, he repeatedly asked for permission to take along the completed manuscript to show it to certain family members. With each request, Joseph prayed for direction. Twice the answer was no. After a third petition, however, the Lord no longer denied the request.10 Although Joseph let Martin take 116 pages of manuscript (probably all completed gatherings), I assert that Joseph retained some translated

7. Skousen proposes that this incomplete gathering “probably included the following portions from the beginning of the original Mosiah: [part] of chapter I, all of chapter II, and perhaps the beginning of chapter III.” (Royal Skousen, “Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6, no. 1 (1994): 139; see also Skousen, Original Manuscript, 35.) I assert that the incomplete gathering included all the original second chapter of Mosiah and continued into some of the third.
8. Lyon and Minson were the first to suggest that the retained pages were the completed part of an incomplete gathering. See Lyon and Minson, “When Pages Collide,” 127.
10. Saints, 1:50–51. See also “History, 1838–1856,” 9–10 and Historical Introduction to “July 1828.”
text in an incomplete gathering (see Doctrine and Covenants 10:41), consistent with Lyon and Milton's proposal.

About a day after Martin left, Emma gave birth to a son who was either stillborn or died shortly after birth. Joseph cared for a very weak Emma beyond the date when Martin was to return with the manuscript. In early July, as Emma recovered, and with her encouragement, Joseph went to his parents’ home in Manchester, New York (near Palmyra), where he learned that the 116-page manuscript was lost. He then returned to Emma in Harmony, Pennsylvania.¹¹

Later that month (July 1828), Joseph received the revelation in Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In it, the Lord explains that because of Joseph’s error, he has lost the privilege of translation for a season, but if he will repent, he will be able to translate again.

After the loss, Joseph Smith wondered whether, when he eventually reached the end of the record, he should retranslate the lost portion. The Lord answered this question in the revelation published as Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is not clear, however, whether this revelation was received shortly after the loss in 1828, after translation had resumed in 1829, or a combination of both. The heading for Section 10 says that it was given “likely around April 1829, though portions may have been received as early as the summer of 1828.” The editors for the Joseph Smith Papers Project note that “assigning a date to this revelation is problematic” and suggest that “although [Joseph Smith] may have received the first portion of the revelation in the summer of 1828, it was not actually written down until April or May 1829, along with the rest of the text.”¹²

In this revelation, the Lord explains that the lost portion of the manuscript is not to be retranslated (see D&C 10:30). Rather, the Lord reminds Joseph that the lost manuscript mentioned a separate account, written on the small plates¹³ of Nephi. Rather than retranslating the lost


¹³ The phrase plates of Nephi in this revelation refers specifically to the plates we now call the small plates of Nephi. These small plates are the only plates of Nephi included among the plates that Joseph Smith received from Moroni. Therefore, they were the only plates of Nephi available for Joseph to translate. J. B. Haws’s reading
portion, the Lord directs Joseph to “translate the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41). Thus the small-plate account, which would be translated last, would become the “first part” (D&C 10:45) of the Book of Mormon.

The privilege to translate was eventually restored, and no later than March 1829, Joseph resumed the translation.15 The evidence, including textual analysis and historical sources, indicates that the translation of the term plates of Nephi in Section 10 appears to be correct. In this revelation, this term consistently refers to the small plates. Haws’s rationale, however, doesn’t recognize that Words of Mormon, whose three uses of the term plates of Nephi clearly refer to the large plates of Nephi, was translated before this revelation was received. (See Haws, “Lost 116 Pages Story.”)


15. See Welch, “Miraculous Translation,” 121.
resumed right where it had left off. If, as my paper asserts, Joseph had retained an incomplete gathering, with several translated pages and some blank pages, which retained text became the beginning of the original manuscript, the first post-loss entry was written on the very next line of that incomplete gathering. Little new translation occurred, however, until Oliver Cowdery took over as scribe on April 7, 1829.

To obey the revelation in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith continued translating the writings of Mormon and Moroni, and then translated the small-plate record. The Lord had explained that the small-plate record, which was translated last, would replace the lost text, which was translated first. Consequently, page numbering was restarted as the original manuscript continued with the small-plate record. The entire original manuscript was completed by June 30, 1829. Both the printer’s manuscript and the Book of Mormon are assembled in the order designated by the Lord, which differs from the order in which the original manuscript was received. Both the printer’s manuscript and the 1830 Book of Mormon begin with the title page and a preface, followed by the small-plate account. In all editions of the Book of Mormon, the small-plate account is followed by the retained text, which is, in turn, followed by the balance of Mormon’s writings and the writings of Moroni.

A portion of the original manuscript and virtually all of the printer’s manuscript still exist today:

Joseph Smith preserved both the original manuscript and the printer’s manuscript, or second copy, well past the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. He placed the original manuscript in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in 1841,


and it was removed in 1882. Though significantly damaged, about thirty percent of this manuscript is extant, most of which is held at the Church History Library. The printer’s manuscript was in Oliver Cowdery’s custody until his death in 1850, followed by David Whitmer’s custody until his death in 1888. It was eventually sold to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and is held at the Community of Christ Library-Archives.20

Page numbers are found on extant pages of both the original and printer’s manuscripts. Royal Skousen notes, “In the original manuscript, Oliver Cowdery seems to have always written the page number in the upper corner of each page and on the outer edge of the page. (He also followed this same placement of the page number in the printer’s manuscript.)”21 In the Joseph Smith Papers, the Source Note for the printer’s manuscript indicates that each page of the printer’s manuscript was paginated except for the two introductory pages and the first leaf. “[Oliver] Cowdery numbered his pages on the upper right corner of the recto pages and the upper left corner of the verso pages. Hyrum Smith and [another scribe] paginated in the upper left corners for both recto and verso pages.”22

Despite the loss of much of the original manuscript, Skousen believes the consistent numbering of extant pages makes it safe to assume that other pages were numbered as well:

Unfortunately, there are no extant page numbers in the original manuscript for the translation of the plates of Mormon and Moroni (from the lost book of Lehi through the book of Moroni). In each case where part of a page is extant, the upper outer corner is missing. The upper inner (or gutter) corner of the page is generally extant for fragments from Alma, but in each extant instance Oliver Cowdery did

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not write the page number near the gutter. It is nonetheless safe to assume that these pages were numbered since evidence elsewhere consistently supports this practice. For instance, Joseph Smith knew there were 116 pages of lost manuscript (the book of Lehi), which implies that his scribes had been numbering the pages as they wrote down his dictation. …

There are extant page numbers for the translation of the small plates of Nephi (1 Nephi through Omni). … These small plates were probably translated last — that is, after the plates of Mormon and Moroni were translated. For the small plates of Nephi, the page numbers were sometimes extant (or partially extant). When extant, these numbers are always located in the upper outer corner of the page.23

In the original manuscript, there are extant page numbers (written by three different scribes) for pages 5–7, 11–18, 20, 22, 44, and 111–14.24

1. Evidence for a Retained Segment of Translated Text That Wasn’t Lent to Martin Harris

It has been suggested that if the portion of Section 10 containing the word retained was received in 1829, then no evidence supports the view that translated text was held back at the time of the loss.25 It is true that most of the physical evidence that might support this view is no longer available. The lost manuscript was never recovered, and the original manuscript pages that contained the book of Omni, the words of Mormon,26 and the book of Mosiah were later lost to water damage. Nevertheless, traces of supporting evidence can still be gleaned from the extant manuscripts and revelations. While the extant evidence may not be conclusive, it supports a plausible case that Joseph Smith retained a segment of translated text at the time of the loss. I review three items of evidence.

The first is circumstantial but reasonable. The circumstances suggest that Joseph Smith was confident that exactly 116 pages were lost. A page number on the first retained manuscript page is a likely reason for this confidence. (Note, however, that it has recently been claimed that

24. Ibid.
26. In the printer’s manuscript, as here, the word words is not capitalized. “Printer’s Manuscript,” 115.
Joseph Smith’s published page count is inaccurate.²⁷ Appendix A provides evidence to counter this claim.) The second set of evidence relates to the word retained in Doctrine and Covenants 10:41. Whether Joseph Smith received this part of the revelation in the summer of 1828 or after translation resumed, the context suggests that the word retained refers to translated text held back at the time of the loss. The third set of evidence is more significant. Four edits that Oliver Cowdery made to the printer’s manuscript lend additional support to the premise that Joseph Smith had held back previously translated text, including Words of Mormon.

**Confidence in a Precise Number.** Common sense suggests that manuscript pages are easier to manage when they are numbered. The evidence of page numbering across the extant manuscripts, together with the practical purpose for page numbers, suggests that Emma Smith and other scribes were numbering manuscript pages even before Martin Harris arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Because virtually all extant manuscript pages are numbered, the assumption that the earliest manuscript pages were numbered may be less speculative than an assumption that they were not numbered.

Joseph Smith’s preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon was written to provide a true account of the lost manuscript. Before he wrote the preface, the Lord had warned him that “servants of Satan” (D&C 10:5) who had taken the lost manuscript sought to catch Joseph “in a lie, that they may destroy him” (D&C 10:25). The Lord warned that these “wicked men” (D&C 10:8) might use the lost manuscript (which the Lord suggests was still in their control) to discredit the published Book of Mormon. As Joseph drafted the preface, he would have expected those men to jump at the chance to prove that anything he published was a lie — perhaps including a bad guess about the length of the manuscript they now held. Therefore, Joseph arguably had good reason to avoid using an inaccurate page count that these wicked men might quickly prove to be false.

Because the Lord warned Joseph of their evil intentions, Joseph had several sensible options, but publishing an unverifiable, incorrect number wasn’t really one of them. If he had estimated his page count, he could have published it as such — using a round number or a range of numbers and a word like nearly or about, to avoid any appearance of lying. A clearly described estimate would have served his purposes

²⁷. See Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 103, which suggests that the lost manuscript may have had “far more than 116 pages” and may have been 200 or even 300 pages long.
as well as a specific number and would have avoided any claims that his published number was a lie. Nevertheless, the page count Joseph chose to publish to the world was very precise: “one hundred and sixteen pages.” The fact that Joseph published this precise page count under such circumstances suggests either that he was foolhardy or that he knew the page count was true. If Joseph had estimated his page count based on a whole number of gatherings each with six sheets of paper folded to have 24 pages, he would not have come up with 116 pages, since this number requires six gatherings, with one gathering having only five sheets. The number 116 seems unlikely to be the result of guesswork. Joseph Smith was not foolhardy. He was a responsible man of integrity who was confident that this page count was accurate. While there may be other explanations for such confidence, the simplest seems to be that Joseph still held several manuscript pages transcribed before the loss, and the first one had been numbered as page 117.

The Context for the Word Retained. In Doctrine and Covenants 10:41, the Lord uses the term “that which you have translated, which you have retained.” This term refers to a segment of manuscript that was never lost. Opinions differ as to whether it refers to a segment translated before the loss, but retained (held back) rather than lost; or whether it refers to text that was newly translated months after the loss, and was thus retained (still possessed) weeks later at the time the revelation was written down.

As explained earlier, it is not clear whether Doctrine and Covenants 10:41 was received in the summer of 1828 or in May or June of 1829. If it was received in 1828, nothing new had been translated since the loss, so the word retained must refer to text that was translated before the loss and held back. On the other hand, if it was received in 1829 after the translation had resumed, the context still suggests that the word retained refers to previously translated text that was held back at the time of the loss.

The word retained often refers to something kept in one’s own possession when something else is lost. It means “to keep in one’s own hands or under one’s own control; to keep back; to keep hold of

29. By publishing this precise number, Joseph sent a clear message to the thieves, who could easily verify this number and, realizing that Joseph knew the exact length, would also realize that any attempt to substitute a false manuscript with a different page count could be proven fraudulent.
possession of; to continue to have.” The following sentence tends to convey this meaning: *Tom lost a baseball last week, but he’s now playing with the baseball he retained.* To most readers, this sentence suggests that Tom initially had two baseballs. He lost one and is now playing with the other. The word *retained* carries this meaning when used in the context of a loss. If Tom had obtained the second baseball after losing the first, words like *acquired thereafter* or *obtained later* would convey this meaning better than the word *retained*.

The word *retained* appears to convey this same meaning in Section 10. In this revelation, the context clearly refers to something lost — the lost text — which the Lord repeatedly describes as translated words that have “gone out of your hands.” The terms include “the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands” (v. 10); “those words which have gone forth out of your hands” (v. 30); and “those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands” (v. 38). Then, in contrast, the Lord refers to a different segment of text: “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (v. 41). In the context of a loss, the word *retained* doesn’t readily identify text that wasn’t translated until the work resumed several months after the loss. In this specific context, this word connotes a segment of translated text that was kept back at the time of the loss.

**Four Items in the Printer’s Manuscript.** Oliver Cowdery added four items to the printer’s manuscript that provide the best extant evidence that Joseph Smith held back previously translated text rather than lending everything to Martin Harris. These additions by Oliver Cowdery to the printer’s manuscript suggest that the original manuscript once held even better evidence of this retained text. Unfortunately, as explained above, 72 percent of the original manuscript was destroyed by water damage. The damage was unkind to the manuscript’s extremities. Neither its initial pages nor its final pages exist today. If both ends of the original manuscript were still available, there could be no confusion about whether Words of Mormon begins a segment of text held back by Joseph Smith, whether it was the first text translated after the loss, or whether it constitutes an addendum to the small-plate record. If Words of Mormon begins a segment of retained text that was translated before the loss, then it was written by Martin Harris and became the beginning text of the original manuscript. If it was the first text translated after the loss, the text of the original manuscript would likely be incomplete.

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loss, it was not written by Martin Harris but became the beginning text of the original manuscript. On the other hand, if Words of Mormon were an addendum to the small-plate record, it would have been the final text at the very end of the original manuscript.

After the first 116 pages of original manuscript were lost, the truncated original manuscript began with “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (see D&C 10:41). If this retained text was translated and transcribed prior to the loss, it would have been the only (remaining) writing in the original manuscript in Martin Harris’s handwriting. If the pages containing this retained text were numbered by Martin Harris, then the original page number on the first of these pages was 117. In addition, this retained gathering may have been written on a different type of paper from that used in later parts of the manuscript. Paper was obtained “at fairly frequent intervals” during the translation process. “The original manuscript shows five different kinds of paper for extant pages,” so, in particular, the paper type used for this first gathering of the original manuscript (in June 1828) may have differed from that used more than a year later (in June 1829) for the final gathering of the original manuscript.33

The final gathering of the original manuscript — the gathering containing the final words of the small-plate record — would also have been unique. It appears that on earlier gatherings, every available line was used, and then the text flowed onto a subsequent gathering. However, it’s unlikely that the final words of the small-plate record — the last text translated from the gold plates — would have completely filled every line on every page of that final gathering. As a result, the last words on that unique gathering would likely have been followed by blank space, and perhaps by several blank pages (all remaining pages in that final gathering).

Thus, if Words of Mormon were written by Mormon at the end of the small-plate record, or on plates added to the small plates, it would have been the last text on that unique final gathering at the end of the original manuscript. It would also have been the last text translated by Joseph Smith. As such, in the original manuscript, it would likely have been followed by blank space, and perhaps by blank pages.34


34. But see Gardner, who suggests that Words of Mormon 1:1–8 was found at the beginning, and not the end, of the small-plate record, and that the verses in Words of Mormon 1:12–18 were not found on the golden plates at all but “were Joseph’s prophetic addition.” Brant Gardner, Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture (Provo, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2020), 124, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-3/#sub-6b.
the other hand, if Words of Mormon is the beginning of a segment of
text translated before the loss, but retained, it would also be the first
(retained) text translated by Joseph Smith and would have been found
at the beginning of the original manuscript. In addition, it would be
written in Martin Harris’s handwriting, perhaps on a different type of
paper than that used at the end of the original manuscript.

As Oliver Cowdery copied the text from the original manuscript
to the printer’s manuscript, he would have known whether he copied
Words of Mormon from the unique gathering at the very beginning
of the original manuscript or from the other unique gathering at the
very end. However, neither the first part nor the last part of the original
manuscript exists today, so the printer’s manuscript, onto which the
text of the original manuscript was copied, is our earliest source for the
text from these two ends of the original manuscript. It is there where we
must look for clues.

The most unique juncture in the printer’s manuscript may be the
point where the very last words from the end of the original manuscript
(the final words from the small-plate record) are followed by the very
first words from the beginning of the original manuscript (the first
words of the retained text). This point joins the first and last words from
the original manuscript. It is also the point where the lost text would
have ended had it not been lost.

Sadly, the decayed beginning and ending parts of the original
manuscript removed most of the evidence that could help us identify this
unique juncture. When Oliver Cowdery35 copied the words from these
two (last, and then first) gatherings of the original manuscript onto the
printer’s manuscript, their apparent meeting point fell in the middle of
a page. For this reason, we might expect no evidence at all in the printer’s
manuscript that designates the point where the original manuscript’s very
last words are followed by the original manuscript’s very first words.

 Providentially, however, Oliver Cowdery placed a unique mark (one
that occurs only once in the entire printer’s manuscript) at the likely
location of this pivotal point. In the printer’s manuscript, Amaleki’s
last words in the book of Omni, “plates are full and I make an end of
my speaking,” fill half a line. After these words, Oliver Cowdery drew
a wavy line from the word speaking to the right edge of the page. He then
drew a second wavy line all the way across the page before he resumed

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35. “Printer’s Manuscript,” [i].
with “The words of Mormon and now I Mormon being about to deliver up” on the first line of text after the two consecutive drawn lines. 36

Figure 1 shows an image of the applicable part of the printer’s manuscript, showing these two consecutive lines. Because these lines have dimmed with time, I’ve added a second, enhanced image in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Printer’s manuscript showing two lines.

Figure 2. Enhanced printer’s manuscript showing the same two lines.

Oliver Cowdery left no record to explain the purpose of this unique mark, consisting of two consecutive wavy lines, but it appears to identify a break that Oliver deemed both important and unique. It is a more prominent and conspicuous mark than anything Oliver or other scribes placed between successive books in the printer’s manuscript. The unique nature of this mark suggests that Oliver considered the break it designates to be significant. At the very least, we can infer that this mark at the end of the book of Omni indicates that Oliver knew the book of Omni didn’t extend beyond this point. Oliver’s mark appears immediately before the heading *The words of Mormon*. I assert that the intent of Oliver’s unique mark is to designate the precise point where the final, most recently translated words from the original manuscript (at the end of the replacement small-plate record) meet the first available, earliest translated words of the original manuscript (at the beginning of the retained gathering). 37

36. Ibid., 115.

37. Some may consider it serendipitous for the retained gathering to begin with a new chapter (and its heading). At least on the printer’s manuscript, it’s somewhat uncommon for a new chapter to begin on the first line of a manuscript
Two out-of-place chapter numbers were originally found in the printer’s manuscript right after this mark, and both of these original chapter numbers were later edited by Oliver Cowdery. The first was the ordinal Arabic number 2d (second).\textsuperscript{38} It identified the chapter labeled “The words of Mormon.” The second was the Roman numeral III (three).\textsuperscript{39} It identified the subsequent chapter, which, in later editions of the Book of Mormon, has been subdivided into three chapters (Mosiah 1–3). The formatting of these two original chapter numbers in the printer’s manuscript (an ordinal Arabic number followed by a Roman numeral) can seem odd in our day, when we are used to the uniformity of word processors and automatic paragraph numbering. Unusual chapter numbering like this, however, is common in the printer’s manuscript. In page (but see “Printer’s Manuscript,” pages 164, 190, 261, 252, 454, and 455, where this does happen). Royal Skousen has suggested that some text from the retained gathering could have been crossed out to avoid confusing repetition (see Skousen, “Critical Methodology,” 139). Perhaps this was done, but every word on every original-manuscript gathering was precious, having been received by the gift and power of God. In addition, it’s clear that God had a specific, long-term plan for dealing with the lost manuscript. It shouldn’t, therefore, be difficult to concede that it would have been a small matter for God to reveal an English text that placed the heading “The words of Mormon” on the first line of the retained gathering. This view aligns particularly well with D&C 10:41–42, which doesn’t mention that any retained text needs to be omitted from the Book of Mormon. As a practical matter, one might speculate that the chapter break before this heading came close enough to the end of the earlier gathering, which Martin Harris hoped to take with him to Palmyra; and he ended that gathering at that convenient break and therefore began the new gathering (the retained gathering) with the new chapter and its heading. (See “Printer’s Manuscript,” 453 and 454, where the scribe left an uncharacteristically large space at the bottom of page 453 and began page 454 with a book heading and new chapter.)

38. In the printer’s manuscript, there is a dot between the 2 and the d.

39. A review of Oliver Cowdery’s chapter numbers in the printer’s manuscript suggests that he tended to write his Roman numerals more solidly than his Arabic numbers, sometimes apparently retracing his Roman numerals so that they tend to stand out more than his Arabic numbers. This writing style may cause all of his Roman numerals to appear to have been inserted later, while his Arabic numbers appear very similar to the surrounding text. Some numbers in the printer’s manuscript may have been inserted after Oliver copied the surrounding text, but, because of this writing style, it may be difficult to determine whether he inserted a given Roman numeral earlier or later.
1 Nephi, we find 2d followed by III. In 2 Nephi, we find 1st followed by II. And in Alma, we find 10th followed by XI.

A likely reason for these two out-of-place chapter numbers in the printer’s manuscript becomes clear as we focus on their location (right after Oliver’s mark) and on the process by which chapter numbers were added to the original manuscript. Royal Skousen explains that the ancient record contained neither the word *chapter* nor chapter numbering:

Evidence from both the original and printer’s manuscripts shows that Joseph Smith apparently saw some visual indication at the end of a section that the section was ending. Although this may have been a symbol of some kind, a more likely possibility is that the last words of the section were followed by blankness. Recognizing that the section was ending, Joseph then told the scribe to write the word *chapter*, with the understanding that the appropriate number would be added later.

It should be noted that the evidence supporting this description is found in the extant record left by Oliver Cowdery (and later scribes). The extant manuscripts contain many original samples of Oliver Cowdery’s chapter numbering. Skousen bases his specifics on these samples, which indicate that Oliver often left a blank space and the word *chapter* at the beginning of new chapters and that he sometimes waited a long time before adding the chapter numbers.

On the other hand, the extant manuscripts provide almost no specifics on how Martin Harris may have added chapter numbers to the text he transcribed. One would surmise that the fundamental facts were the same. The ancient record didn’t contain chapter numbering, so Joseph would have indicated chapter breaks to Martin; and Martin would have at some point added chapter numbers into those breaks. However, all original chapter numbers supplied by Martin Harris are lost. Most were lost with the lost manuscript, and any chapter numbers that Martin added to the retained text have perished with the decayed original retained gathering. Therefore, we don’t have any original samples from which to infer the specific manner in which Martin added chapter numbers to the text he transcribed. There is no extant text from

40. “Printer’s Manuscript,” 9, 14.
41. Ibid., 46, 52.
42. Ibid., 201, 208.
44. Ibid., 28.
which to infer how quickly he added chapter numbers or even whether it was his practice to insert the word *chapter* with each chapter number. It appears that any differences in these specifics could apply to the two out-of-place chapter numbers because they appear to have been added to the original manuscript’s retained gathering by Martin Harris and later copied to the printer’s manuscript by Oliver Cowdery.

We can assume that while Martin Harris was the principal scribe for the earliest part of the manuscript, most of which became the lost manuscript, Martin had added text and chapter numbers to the original manuscript through the same basic editorial process that would later be used by Oliver Cowdery and others. Using this process, Martin transcribed most of the book of Lehi, all of which would soon be lost. As the translation continued, Joseph dictated the original title for the book of Mosiah and the text of its first chapter, which, it appears, were also soon lost. Royal Skousen suggests that the lost manuscript “included not only all of Lehi, but also part of Chapter 1 of the original Mosiah.” As explained in more detail below, this paper suggests that all of that original Chapter 1 was lost.

When Joseph indicated the end of that original first chapter of the book of Mosiah, it appears that Martin noted the chapter break either as the last item at the bottom of a page or as the first item at the top of the next page — the first page of a new gathering he would never complete — the retained gathering. The first page of this new original manuscript gathering was page 117. It began with the chapter heading “The words of Mormon” and continued with the text we know as Words of Mormon, which, based on the out-of-place chapter numbers and other evidence detailed below, appears to be the original second chapter of Mosiah. As the translation continued, Joseph indicated the end of this second chapter and translated some of the third chapter. Then, as Martin prepared to take the completed gatherings to Palmyra to show them to family members, he added any missing chapter numbers to the manuscript, including these last two chapter numbers, *2d* and *III*, per the editorial process described by Skousen.

Martin then borrowed all completed gatherings. Unfortunately, those completed gatherings were stolen, but Joseph Smith retained the incomplete gathering that began (on page 117) with the heading “The

46. Skousen, “Critical Methodology,” 139.
words of Mormon.” When the lost manuscript was stolen, Joseph lost the power to translate for a time. When this power was restored, the work continued right where it had left off. The retained manuscript was completed, and the translation eventually proceeded through the balance of Mormon’s writings, through Moroni’s writings, and then the writings on the small plates, ending with the book of Omni.

After the original manuscript was finished, work began on the printer’s manuscript. After the title page and a preface written by Joseph Smith, it begins with the small-plate record — copied from the last part of the original manuscript. After Oliver Cowdery copied the final words from the book of Omni to the printer’s manuscript, he marked the end of the replacement small-plate text with two wavy lines.47 He then began copying from the retained gathering at the beginning of the truncated original manuscript. He faithfully copied the text of this retained gathering as it existed on the original manuscript. However, the lost text no longer preceded this retained text, so the two chapter numbers for this text were now out of place.

Oliver Cowdery added the word *Chapter* and the first of these chapter numbers (2d) as interlinear insertions, just beneath his distinctive mark. It appears from the ink flow that this interlinear insertion, like the interlinear insertion of the word *as* later on the same page, was made fairly soon after Oliver copied the accompanying text. Perhaps both were initially overlooked, then noticed and inserted. The reason for initially overlooking the chapter number may be as inadvertent as the reason

47. Bradley suggests that Joseph’s published page count of 116 pages may have been an inaccurate guess based not on the length of the lost manuscript, but on the length of the printer’s manuscript copy of the replacement small-plate record (see Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 89). However, Joseph would have known that the replacement text doesn’t include Words of Mormon. It ends with Oliver Cowdery’s unique mark at the end of the book of Omni. Thus, the printer’s manuscript copy of the replacement text was only 114.5 pages long. If Joseph had based his page count on the length of the replacement text, he might have used the number 114 or 115, but not 116. The Historical Introduction to “Preface to the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829” mentions this theory, but also notes that “the process of preparing the printer’s manuscript and providing portions to the typesetter suggests that the printer’s manuscript may not have comprised 116 pages by the time JS wrote the preface.” If so, it would seem that Joseph must have had other reasons for giving the specific number of 116 pages, consistent with the proposals made in this paper. Preface to the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1#historical-intro.
for initially overlooking the word as, but there appear to be at least two other reasonable possibilities.

One might speculate that Martin Harris designated chapters slightly differently than Oliver Cowdery tended to do, so when Oliver encountered this first chapter number, he didn’t initially recognize it for what it was. Perhaps he wasn’t sure what to make of the (perhaps poorly formed) 2d at the top of the first retained manuscript page until he saw the III at the beginning of the next chapter. Perhaps at that point he realized that the earlier 2d was also a chapter number, so he went back and added the word Chapter and this number as interlinear insertions.

A second possibility is that the chapter number 2d wasn’t found at the top of the first page of the retained gathering. The first retained page may simply have begun with the heading “The words of Mormon.” The chapter number may have been the last item placed on the previous page (now lost), just as a chapter number is the last item found on page 163 of the printer’s manuscript.48 Perhaps Oliver realized (after having transcribed most of the original manuscript) that the chapter heading “The words of Mormon” necessarily started a new chapter. After he saw the III at the beginning of the next chapter, he knew which chapter number to insert, so he added Chapter 2d as an interlinear insertion after the heading “The words of Mormon.”

Sometime after Oliver Cowdery faithfully copied the text of the retained gathering, including these two chapter numbers, to the printer’s manuscript, he realized that edits were needed. Without the missing book title, all the text from Oliver’s mark to the start of the book of Alma was orphaned — it had no book title. In addition, these retained chapter numbers were out of place because they no longer followed a chapter 1. Probably after consulting with Joseph Smith, Oliver made three reconstructive edits. He chose to treat the original second chapter, with its heading “The words of Mormon,” as if it were an independent segment or book by changing its chapter number to 1.49 He also changed the chapter number for the original third chapter to I and added the book title “The Book of Mosiah” as an interlinear insertion at the head of this chapter.50

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49. Ibid., 115.
in a reconstructive edit, lacks the extended description of book contents that accompanies all other book titles in Mormon’s abridgment.

Other context corroborates the fact that the original first chapter of Mosiah is missing. Mosiah is the only book in Mormon’s abridgment that doesn’t begin with an account about the person for whom it is named. The book of Alma begins with an account about Alma. The book of Helaman begins with an account about Helaman, and so on. The retained portion of the book of Mosiah, however, doesn’t begin with an account about the first King Mosiah. After Mormon’s aside, he resumes his ongoing account, which is about King Benjamin, the son of the first King Mosiah. Mormon’s abridged account about King Benjamin’s father, the first King Mosiah, is missing. It seems safe to infer that the missing original first chapter of Mosiah began with the account of the first King Mosiah.

Oliver Cowdery made these reconstructive edits to his printer’s-manuscript copy of Martin Harris’s transcription from the retained gathering of the original manuscript. Oliver’s edits altered the original chapter numbers, but as we have seen, the numbers themselves were not part of the revealed text. His edits kept intact all known revealed text that had been retained, including the heading “The words of Mormon.” His reinserted book title “The Book of Mosiah” may have even restored a small sliver of revealed text that had been lost. Thus, Oliver’s edits provide some reconstructed structure for this remnant of text that is now bereft of the lost preceding text. As they do so, however, these edits also make it harder for readers to see that Mormon wrote the text we call Words of Mormon as the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah and not as an independent book.

Other explanations for the two out-of-place chapter numbers don’t accurately account for Oliver’s unique mark or for the way chapter numbers were originally added to the manuscript. The ancient record

51. The heading “The words of Mormon” was not inserted interlinearly, so we can assume it is included in its entirety, yet it has no extended description. This is another way in which it differs from all Mormon’s book titles.

52. Some of the ideas presented here are based on Lyon and Minson, “When Pages Collide,” 129.

53. Don Bradley has suggested that the book title “The Book of Mosiah” might be incorrect. His suggestion is discussed in Appendix A.

54. Don Bradley maintains that the lost manuscript may have included “the books of many other record keepers” between the book of Lehi and the book of Mosiah and that this book title may not have come from the ancient text. See Bradley, The 116 Lost Pages, 87, and related content in 85–92. Appendix A suggests that this view is incorrect.
itself is not the direct source for any chapter number in the manuscript. The numbering came through the editorial process described above. Accordingly, if there were no retained text, a new translation from the ancient record after the entire earlier manuscript was lost would not have produced a number 2 or 3 as its initial chapter number.\textsuperscript{55} Joseph would have seen a visual indication that a prior section had ended. He would have told the scribe to write the word \textit{chapter}, with the understanding that the appropriate number would be added later. With no prior number available due to the missing manuscript, the scribe would eventually have given the first new chapter the number 1, and there would have been less need for reconstructive edits. But the manuscript clearly contained two consecutive chapter numbers that seemed out of place. The best explanation for these two seemingly out-of-place chapter numbers right after Oliver Cowdery’s unusual mark is that they were added to the retained part of the original manuscript by Martin Harris and copied to the printer’s manuscript by Oliver Cowdery.

Another suggested explanation for these out-of-place chapter numbers is that one\textsuperscript{56} or both\textsuperscript{57} of them were mistakenly supplied by Oliver Cowdery, who may have wrongly believed that the corresponding text was a continuation of the book of Omni. In support of this suggestion, it has been proposed that “the seam between the small plates translation, Words of Mormon, and the beginning of Mosiah was no more clear for Oliver than it is for us.”\textsuperscript{58}

But the construction of the original manuscript suggests that Oliver could not have shared that confusion. He was well acquainted with the original manuscript. He knew it began with the retained segment and ended with the final text from the small plates. Oliver’s mark in the printer’s manuscript right after Amaleki’s final words, “these plates are full and I make an end of my speaking” (Omni 1:30), appears to indicate Oliver’s personal certainty about the ending of Omni’s book. It seems unlikely that the person who inserted this substantial mark could have believed that the book of Omni continued after this mark. Oliver added both the word \textit{Chapter} and the chapter number \textit{2d} as interlinear insertions just beneath his distinctive mark\textsuperscript{59} and just after the heading “The words of Mormon.” To insert the chapter number, Oliver had

\textsuperscript{55} But see Bradley, Ibid., pp. 87–88, 276–78.
\textsuperscript{56} See Lyon and Minson, “When Pages Collide,” 132.
\textsuperscript{57} See Gardner, “When Hypotheses Collide,” 114.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{59} “Printer’s Manuscript,” 115.
Jones, That Which You Have Translated • 23
to focus on both his mark and this heading, which clearly identifies Mormon as the author of the following text. He would have known that the chapter number he was inserting belonged to the words of Mormon and not to the book of Omni.

Nor is it likely that Oliver mistook the next chapter (now Mosiah 1–3) for part of the book of Omni. In the first place, it too followed Omni’s final words, Oliver’s own obvious mark, and Mormon’s heading, “The words of Mormon.” Moreover, it’s likely Oliver had a unique affinity for this particular chapter. It appears that Oliver helped transcribe at least part of this lengthy chapter as he joined Joseph in the work of translation. So the very first words of Joseph Smith’s dictation Oliver transcribed after arriving in Harmony, Pennsylvania on April 7, 1829, would have been within this lengthy chapter. Oliver clearly knew this chapter, probably the first he helped transcribe, could not belong to the book of Omni, which was translated almost three months later in Fayette, New York.

In summary, the idea that Oliver Cowdery inserted the original numbers for these two chapters under the mistaken belief that they continued the book of Omni strains credulity. Oliver’s own unique mark and his personal involvement with the transcription of the text both argue against that scenario. It seems more likely that everything that happened with these chapter numbers happened purposefully. First, Martin Harris, as Joseph Smith’s scribe, transcribed this portion of the original manuscript, assigning correct numbers to these chapters — the original second and third chapters of Mosiah. Then, all 116 pages of manuscript preceding this retained portion were lost. Eventually, after the translation was completed, Oliver Cowdery copied all the replacement small-plate record from the end of the original manuscript to the printer’s manuscript. He then marked the end of that record and copied this small retained segment of Martin Harris’s transcription, with its chapter number or numbers, from the beginning of the original manuscript to the printer’s manuscript. Sometime after that, Oliver Cowdery (most likely after consulting with Joseph Smith) found it necessary to edit these chapter numbers (and insert the book title for Mosiah) to mitigate problems caused by the absence of the lost text.

The heading “The words of Mormon,” which appears at the head of the original second chapter of Mosiah, is not a book title. It is one of the occasional chapter headings (brief descriptions) that sometimes

60. See Welch, “Miraculous Translation,” 121. (In the 1830 Book of Mormon, Mosiah chapter 1 comprises all of the three chapters now designated as Mosiah 1–3.)
61. Ibid., 125.
introduce content within the books of the Book of Mormon. Because current Book of Mormon chapter divisions vary from those in the original text, some readers may not be aware that every such heading begins an original Book of Mormon chapter. Most original chapters don’t have such headings, but each such heading (which may describe only part of a chapter or may describe multiple chapters) appears at the head of an original chapter.

A list of all such occasional chapter headings in the Book of Mormon with their capitalization from the printer’s manuscript is included in Appendix B. The heading “The words of Mormon” appears to belong to this group of headings. It begins with the term the words, the most common term at the beginning of these headings. With only four words, “The words of Mormon” is the shortest of these headings, but there are several with six to nine words. Two factors in particular distinguish all these headings from all book titles in the Book of Mormon. First, none of these headings contains the word book, found in all book titles in the Book of Mormon. Second, in the printer’s manuscript, all book titles are written with title capitalization, so the word Book is always capitalized. On the other hand, in the printer’s manuscript, these occasional headings are not written with title capitalization, although, as Appendix B shows, some of them have nonstandard capitalized words and a few approach title capitalization. As a general rule, however, the words prophecy, account, words, etc., tend not to be capitalized in these headings.

The heading “The words of Mormon” appears to cover only part of the chapter it heads. Although Mormon wrote all the words in this chapter, the heading appears to refer only to Mormon’s personal aside, which is found only in verses 1–8. After this aside, the chapter continues as Mormon resumes his abridgment, covering various events of King Benjamin’s reign. Some of the other occasional headings also cover only part of a chapter. For instance, the heading “The prophesy of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephites” refers only to the first part of the original chapter it heads. After relating Samuel’s prophesy, that chapter continues, covering four years of Nephite history that take place after Samuel leaves the land of the Nephites (see Helaman 13–16). Similarly, the heading “An account of the preaching of Aaron and Muloki and their brethren to the Lamanites” heads an original chapter that also covers some of the efforts of Ammon and King Lamoni and ends with an aside that describes Lamanite and Nephite lands (see Alma 21–22).

As explained earlier, Oliver Cowdery (probably in consultation with Joseph Smith) chose to leave the heading “The words of Mormon,”
which is part of the revealed text, alone — neither replacing it with the book title “The Book of Mosiah” nor awkwardly inserting the book title immediately before this retained heading. Because Oliver changed the chapter number to 1, this heading has, ever since, been given title capitalization and has been formatted as a book title — further obscuring the fact that the chapter it heads is the original second chapter of Mosiah. The revealed text itself, however, which was not edited, together with Oliver Cowdery’s mark and edits to the printer’s manuscript, suggest that this heading begins the retained text — the earliest extant chapter of Mormon’s abridgment of the book of Mosiah.

2. Evidence from a Resumptive Structure Indicating that Words of Mormon Follows Immediately after the Text of the Lost Manuscript

A resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 provides further evidence for the view that Words of Mormon was not found at the end of the small-plate record, but is the first part of the retained text — the original second chapter of Mosiah. A detailed explanation of resumptive structures (specialized, structured comments) was given in a recent paper that suggests the location of Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record.62 That paper explains how the consistent meaning inherent in resumptive structures weighs against one proffered location for the end of that abridgment. As explained in that paper, the resumptive structure is sometimes used by Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni to restart an ongoing narrative that has been paused for an aside (see, for example, 1 Nephi 10:1–2; Alma 22:35–23:1; and Ether 6:1–2, 9:1,63 and 13:1–2). Resumptive structures are used only a few times in the Book of Mormon, 62. See Clifford P. Jones, “The Record of My Father,” Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship 32 (2019):15–20, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-record-of-my-father/. Resumptive structures appear to be a uniformly structured version of “the ancient scribal technique of Weideraufnahme, also called a resumptive repetition or epanalepsis.” For a basic description of this scribal technique found in the Bible, see Dr. Rabbi Zev Farber, “The Resumptive Repetition (Wiederaufnahme),” TheTorah.com, https://thetorah.com/the-resumptive-repetition/. For some less-structured Book of Mormon examples of this scribal technique, consider Gardner, Labor Diligently, 74–79, https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-3/#sub-6b.

63. I identified the resumptive structure in Ether 9:1 (and the resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10) more recently, after I had written the earlier paper.
but when they are used, they always follow immediately after asides, and they are always composed of three elements:

1. The first element always identifies the specific ongoing narrative that began long before the aside and is being resumed after the aside. The verb to proceed, when used in this element of a resumptive structure, always means to resume or continue.

2. The second element always recaps the last event mentioned in that narrative before it was paused for the aside. This recap serves as the starting point for the resumed narrative.

3. The third element is the resumption of the narrative, which always follows right after the recap of that last event as if there had been no aside.

The following two representative resumptive structures exemplify the functions of these three elements. In each case, for clarity, the first element is bolded; the second is italicized; and the beginning of the third (which always continues in subsequent verses) is underlined.

Moroni placed a representative resumptive structure immediately after his aside about faith (see Ether 12:6–41). This structured comment resumes his account of the destruction of the Jaredites:64

> And now I Moroni proceed [continue] to finish my record concerning the destruction of the people of which I have been writing. For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether, for he truly told them of all things from the beginning of man.” (Ether 13:1–2)65

The first element of this resumptive structure explains that Moroni is resuming the ongoing narrative he had been writing about the destruction of the Jaredites (before he paused that narrative to write his aside). The second element recaps the last event mentioned in that narrative before the aside — that the Jaredites didn’t believe Ether’s words (see Ether 12:5). The third element resumes Moroni’s narrative as if there had been no aside.

64. From the beginning, Moroni makes clear that his account is about a people who were destroyed (see Ether 1:1).

65. All Book of Mormon quotations (except those specifically from the printer’s manuscript) are from Royal Skousen, ed., The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). This edition, while sometimes harder to read than the current Latter-day Saint edition, corresponds more closely with the actual text revealed to Joseph Smith.
As a second example, Nephi placed a representative resumptive structure immediately after his aside about his two sets of plates (see 1 Nephi 9:2–6). This structured comment resumes his account of his own reign and ministry:

And now I Nephi proceed [continue] to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings and my reign and ministry. Wherefore to proceed [continue] with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father and also of my brethren. For behold, it came to pass that after my father had made an end of speaking the words of his dream and also of exhorting them to all diligence, he spake unto them concerning the Jews. (1 Nephi 10:1–2)

In this resumptive structure, the first element explains that Nephi is resuming the ongoing narrative he had been writing about his ministry (before he paused that narrative to write his aside). The second element recaps the last event mentioned in that narrative before the aside — that Lehi finished speaking about his dream and other teachings (see 1 Nephi 8:36 to 9:1). The third element resumes Nephi’s narrative as if there had been no aside.66

Words of Mormon 1:9–10 is strikingly similar to the above two resumptive structures (and all others) in both context and content. Mormon placed this resumptive structure immediately after his aside about the record he is making and the small plates he has found (see Words of Mormon 1:1–8). This structured comment resumes the account he is taking from the large plates of Nephi:

And now I Mormon proceed [continue] to finish67 out my record which I take from the [large] plates of Nephi; and I make it according to the knowledge and the understanding which God hath given me. Wherefore it came to pass that after Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king

66. For more information on the meaning of this resumptive structure, see Jones, “The Record,” 15-20.
67. The Oxford English Dictionary defines one sense of finish thus:“To bring to completion; to make or perform completely; to complete.” The word finish needn’t imply that an effort is near completion. See, for example, D&C 5:4, 9:1, and 10:3, where the Lord uses forms of the word finish to refer to the eventual completion of the translation of the Book of Mormon, the bulk of which remained to be done. See also Luke 14:28-30 and Mosiah 13:3, 7, and 9. Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v.”finish, v.” https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/70447?rskey=YJ7NbB&result=2&isAdvanced=false.
Benjamin, he took them and put them with the other plates.  
(Words of Mormon 1:9–10, emphasis added)

This resumptive structure has the same three elements we find in all other resumptive structures. The first element explains that Mormon is resuming the ongoing narrative he had been abridging from the large plates of Nephi (before he paused that narrative to write his aside). In this case, however, all that narrative is missing from the Book of Mormon. The second element recaps the last event mentioned in the narrative before the aside — that Amaleki had delivered the small plates to King Benjamin (this does not occur in Omni, where Amaleki expresses only his intention in Omni 1:25 to later give the plates to King Benjamin, but the transfer of the plates is not recorded prior to Mormon’s mention of it as an accomplished fact). In this case, however, because the narrative is missing, the record of this event is no longer present before the aside. The third element should resume Mormon’s narrative as if there had been no aside, but all that narrative is missing, so this element begins the subsequent portion of Mormon’s abridged narrative — the only portion still present in the Book of Mormon.

Thus, this resumptive structure points quite precisely to a specific narrative, abridged by Mormon from the large-plate record, that is missing just before Words of Mormon. Mormon paused this narrative to write his aside. This missing narrative is the well-documented missing account that was transcribed, primarily by Martin Harris, onto the 116-page lost manuscript.

The resumptive structure places this missing account in a specific location that may surprise some students of the Book of Mormon (immediately before Words of Mormon). Without the information provided by this resumptive structure, few of us would have suggested that the heading “The words of Mormon” at the beginning of Mormon’s aside originally followed immediately after the text of the lost manuscript. Nevertheless, this location coincides with Oliver Cowdery’s mark, which was placed precisely at the point where this resumptive structure indicates the lost manuscript ended and the retained portion of Mormon’s abridgment begins. The correctness of this somewhat unexpected location is further corroborated by a solid set of relevant evidence detailed below.

Indeed, as we read Words of Mormon in light of the meaning inherent in the resumptive structure, its structural meaning gives new significance to several words and phrases in Words of Mormon. All words in Words of Mormon harmonize well with the meaning
inherent in the resumptive structure. For example, the second element of a resumptive structure always recaps the last event mentioned in a narrative paused for an aside. In this case, this second element says “Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:10), so the resumptive structure indicates that, in text now missing from the Book of Mormon, Mormon had discussed this delivery of the small plates just before he wrote the aside that begins with the heading “The words of Mormon.”

This now-missing discussion, written by Mormon, is reminiscent of a well-known passage in the small-plate record written by Amaleki. In that passage, Amaleki tells us he plans to deliver the small plates to King Benjamin: “knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore I shall deliver up these plates unto him” (Omni 1:25). After mentioning this plan, Amaleki then continues his small-plate account by detailing gifts of the Spirit, inviting his readers to come unto Christ, and describing one group’s failed attempt to return to the land of Nephi, followed by another group’s presumably successful attempt. After adding all this information to his small-plate record, Amaleki simply concludes the small-plate record, with no mention of the actual delivery of these plates to King Benjamin.

It’s not surprising that the small-plate record doesn’t describe the actual delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. In the first place, Amaleki had already filled the small plates, so there was no room for further explanation. In the second place, once these plates were delivered to King Benjamin, they were no longer in Amaleki’s possession, so we should expect any description of the delivery itself to be found in King Benjamin’s large-plate record. As mentioned earlier, the recap in the second element of the resumptive structure indicates that the large-plate record did, in fact, recount Amaleki’s actual delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. Mormon included this event in his abridged record just before the aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8. Unfortunately for us, Mormon’s original description of this event is now missing, but the recap in Words of Mormon 1:10 indicates that this was the final event described by Mormon in the lost text.

3. Foundational Context for Mormon’s Aside Provided by His Reference to a Passage That Was Lost

The aside preceding each resumptive structure in the Book of Mormon is itself prompted by the earlier discussion of the last event before the aside. The aside in 1 Nephi 9:2–6 follows an explanation that Lehi said many
things that can’t be written on “these plates” (1 Nephi 9:1). This leads into Nephi’s aside about his two sets of plates. The aside in Alma 22:27–34 follows an explanation that the king send a proclamation “throughout all the land amongst all his people” (Alma 22:27). This leads into an aside about the lands of the Lamanites and of the Nephites. The aside in Ether 4:1 to 5:6 follows an explanation that the brother of Jared left the mount where he had seen the Lord and then wrote the things he had seen (see Ether 4:1). This leads into an aside about the subsequent history of what he wrote. The aside in Ether 8:20–26 follows an explanation that Jared, his daughter, and Akish formed a secret combination (see Ether 8:17–19). This leads into an aside that warns latter-day Gentiles about such combinations. The aside in Ether 12:6–41 follows an explanation that the people didn’t believe the great things Ether taught, because “they saw them not” (Ether 12:5). This leads into an aside about faith in things not seen.

In the case of Mormon’s aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8, the resumptive structure (Words of Mormon 1:9–10) indicates that the last event discussed before the aside was Amaleki’s delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. Even though this event no longer precedes the aside, it provides introductory context for the aside. In the aside itself, Mormon mentions searching for the small plates after working on his earlier abridgment. He doesn’t, however, specify what induced him to initiate the search (see Words of Mormon 1:3). The event he had described just before his aside appears to supply this context. According to the resumptive structure, shortly before searching for the small plates, Mormon had abridged the large-plate description of Amaleki’s delivery of these small plates to King Benjamin. Having thus learned of their existence, he searched for them, found them, and studied their engravings. As he did so, the Spirit touched him, which led him to write his aside about this spiritual experience. He added the chapter heading “The words of Mormon,” identified himself, and then recounted how this exciting find and the workings of the Spirit affected him. They evoked a determination not only to include the small plates with his own record but also to base the balance of his abridgment on the small-plate prophecies (see Words of Mormon 1:4–7). Mormon’s resumptive structure (Words of Mormon 1:9–10) then transitions readers back to his continuing abridgment of the large plates (with this new emphasis on these prophecies).

Early in his aside, Mormon refers to something that Amaleki had previously said about King Benjamin. Specifically, he refers to “this king Benjamin of which Amaleki spake” (Words of Mormon 1:3).
Mormon’s words in this verse suggest this is not a reference to something written on the small plates. Just before this reference to King Benjamin and Amaleki, Mormon says, “And now I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written” (Words of Mormon 1:3). This suggests that Mormon is speaking about something he personally has already written. He then explains that he has been writing “an abridgment from the [large] plates of Nephi” (Words of Mormon 1:3). As we have seen, the resumptive structure tells us that this (now missing) abridged record had just mentioned that Amaleki “had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:10). Thus we shouldn’t assume the small plates were Mormon’s only source for things Amaleki spoke. Mormon had been abridging the voluminous large-plate record that covered the same period as the small-plate record. According to the resumptive structure, the last event Mormon covered in that (now missing) abridged record dealt with Amaleki. These words in Mormon’s aside appear to refer back to the same passage recapped in the resumptive structure. They tell us that in this missing passage, Mormon had mentioned something that Amaleki had spoken about King Benjamin.

Because we have never read this missing part of Mormon’s abridged record, we aren’t familiar with any of its specifics. On the other hand, we know quite well that in the small-plate record (which replaced the lost text and now, in our reordered Book of Mormon, immediately precedes Words of Mormon), Amaleki mentions King Benjamin (see Omni 1:23–25). Consequently, when Mormon refers to specific words spoken by Amaleki about King Benjamin, our mind tends to jump to the specific words we remember from reading the replacement small-plate record. But Mormon didn’t include the small-plate record with his own record until after he wrote his aside (see Words of Mormon 1:6). The aside discusses things Mormon himself has previously written. We would have recently read these same things ourselves, just a few verses earlier, if they weren’t missing from the Book of Mormon.

One reason readers of the Book of Mormon have assumed that Words of Mormon was written as an addendum to the small plate record is that the small-plate record appears to supply context and antecedents for the terms these plates and this king Benjamin in Words of Mormon 1:3. The content of the resumptive structure, however, suggests that the missing text that once immediately preceded the heading “The words of Mormon” is the more likely source of the required context and antecedents. In addition, Doctrine and Covenants 10:38–39 suggests that this same missing text
The term *these plates* doesn’t always require an antecedent. In many Book of Mormon passages, the term *these plates* is used with no antecedent reference to a specific set of plates. In these passages, the term *these plates* consistently refers to the plates being written upon. (See, for example, 1 Nephi 9:1–5, 10:1, 19:1–5; 2 Nephi 5:4, 31–32; Jacob 1:2–4, 3:13–14, and 7:27.) One such passage adds a brief identifying phrase after the term *these plates* to confirm this meaning. In this passage, Nephi identifies content being placed “upon *these plates which I am writing*” (1 Nephi 6:1). He then refers to the set of plates upon which he is writing (the small plates) simply as “*these plates*” (1 Nephi 6:3, 6). In all of these passages that don’t mention another set of plates, the term *these plates* refers to the plates being written upon.

Other passages, on the other hand, initially identify a set of plates other than the one being written upon. In these passages, this other set of plates becomes the antecedent for the subsequent term *these plates*. For instance, Mormon identifies “the plates of brass” (Mosiah 1:3) and then quotes King Benjamin, who refers to them as “*these plates which contain these records and these commandments*” (Mosiah 1:3), and later simply as “*these plates*” (Mosiah 1:4). In another passage, King Limhi identifies “twenty four plates which are filled with engravings; and they are of pure gold” (Mosiah 8:9), then refers to them simply as “*these plates*” (Mosiah 8:19).

I propose that Mormon wrote Words of Mormon as a continuation of his ongoing abridgment of the large-plate record, which he wrote on plates he made with his own hands (see 3 Nephi 5:11), commonly called the plates of Mormon. If Mormon is writing Words of Mormon on the plates of Mormon, then his term *these plates*, which clearly refers to the small plates, should have been introduced with an earlier direct reference to the small plates. However, in the text of Words of Mormon, Mormon’s initial reference to the small plates uses the term *these plates* with no antecedent.

This lack of an antecedent has convinced some that Mormon is writing Words of Mormon directly onto the small plates. Amaleki’s last sentence on the small-plates, however, appears to contradict this idea: “*these plates are full*” (Omni 1:30). Possibly believing that the text of the Book of Mormon offers no viable alternative, creative students of the Book of Mormon have offered some fairly plausible work-arounds. The small plates conceivably could have had margins or other white space into which Words of Mormon
could have been inserted, or maybe Mormon added a plate or two to the small plates to accommodate Words of Mormon.68

The resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 reveals a simpler, sounder solution to this problem. This structure shows that Words of Mormon is a continuation of the lost text. Mormon didn’t need to fit Words of Mormon onto the already ancient and already full small plates. He wrote Words of Mormon onto the plates of Mormon in the normal course of his abridgment of the large plates. And he wrote it right after he had written a description of Amaleki’s delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. However, the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript removed that description (and everything in Mormon’s abridgment before that description) from the Book of Mormon. The resumptive structure recaps that missing description, giving us a glimpse into the final passage of the lost manuscript. The recap in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 tells us that just before the aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8, Mormon himself had recently written that description, which mentioned both the small plates and King Benjamin. Therefore, that earlier description of the delivery of the plates had once provided the (now missing) antecedents for the terms these plates and this king Benjamin in the aside.

Other evidence from the Doctrine and Covenants suggests that the same missing passage just before the aside also supplied the antecedent for Mormon’s term this small account in the aside. Like the term this king Benjamin, the term this small account presupposes an antecedent — a recent direct reference to the same account. For instance, Mormon’s use of the term an account in Mosiah 28:17 provides the antecedent for his three uses of the term this account in Mosiah 28:18–19. In Words of Mormon, on the other hand, there is no antecedent for the term this small account. Neither is an antecedent for the term this small account found in the book of Omni or the resumptive structure. Fortunately, Doctrine and Covenants 10:38–39 reveals additional content from the lost manuscript. This revelation tells us that the lost text had mentioned

68. See, for example, Ricks, “Small Plates of Nephi,” 216n3.

69. In Words of Mormon 1:3, the words “this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi” refer to the account written by these men on the small plates. The word small in this passage is in comparison with the large account, mentioned earlier in the same verse, from which Mormon was abridging his own account. Mormon sees his own abridged record, like the small-plate account, as small (see 3 Nephi 5:15 and Mormon 5:9).
“a more particular 70 account” (the small-plate account) of things written for the people in our day. This revelation doesn’t tell us, however, just where in the lost text this “more particular account” was mentioned. Indirect evidence, however, suggests that it was mentioned in that same final passage at the end of the lost text.

As we’ve seen, that final lost passage mentioned the small plates. It appears that Mormon learned of the existence of these plates as he studied the large-plate record and wrote that passage, so he then searched for them and found them. Mormon’s search for these plates at that specific time indicates that he did not learn about them — or the small account written on them — before that time. If Mormon had learned about this “more particular account” earlier, he probably would have searched for the small plates sooner. The timing of his search circumstantially suggests that the lost text’s description of this small account, which the Lord mentions in this revelation, was found in the same final passage. It appears, then, that the final passage of the lost manuscript originally supplied antecedents for all three terms (this king Benjamin, these plates, and this small account) found in Words of Mormon 1:3.

As Mormon resumes his abridgment after writing this aside, his words indicate that he is simply moving the narrative forward from the point where it had left off — Amaleki’s delivery of the small-plate record to King Benjamin. The third element of the resumptive structure moves forward with the narrative from this point. First, it mentions that King Benjamin secured the newly acquired record with his other records, all of which later came into Mormon’s possession (see Words of Mormon 1:10–12). It then describes some major events of King Benjamin’s reign.71

70. The Lord refers to the small plate account five times in D&C 10:38–42, once in each verse. In verse 38, the term is “an account … engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi.” In verse 39, it is “a more particular account … given … upon the [small] plates of Nephi.” In verse 40, it is “the account which is engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi,” which is “more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this [translated Book of Mormon] account.” In verse 41, it is “the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi.” In verse 42, it is “the record of Nephi.” These parallel terms indicate that this small-plate account is “a more particular account” because it is “more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this [translated Book of Mormon] account.” As explained earlier, the term plates of Nephi in this revelation refers specifically to the plates we now call the small plates of Nephi, because they were the only plates of Nephi available for Joseph to translate.

71. It seems likely that the war mentioned by Mormon in Words of Mormon 1:13–14 is also mentioned by Amaleki in Omni 1:24. If so, this war took place before,
Some scholars have suggested that Mormon’s description of these events in Words of Mormon 12–18 reviews events previously described in the lost portion of Mormon’s abridgment. However, when Words of Mormon is read in light of the resumptive structure, Oliver Cowdery’s unique mark and reconstructive edits, and other evidence outlined herein, nothing in the text suggests that Mormon had covered these events previously. Indeed, Mormon’s term this king Benjamin, used three times in Words of Mormon, suggests that Mormon may still be introducing King Benjamin to readers of his abridgment. Thus the final event discussed by Mormon prior to his aside (the delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin) may be Mormon’s initial reference to King Benjamin. The brief manner in which Mormon covers these events isn’t all that unusual and needn’t suggest that he covered them earlier in greater detail. Mormon’s abridgment includes other similarly brief descriptions of similar events that are not reviews of events covered previously. For instance, even though Mormon sometimes describes battles in great detail, he also sometimes mentions major, important battles only briefly (see Alma 3:20–24, 28:2–3, and 63:14–15 and 3 Nephi 2:11–17). Similarly, in two provisions, he touches only lightly on efforts to overcome Nephite contention and dissensions. One was an unsuccessful effort to end “dissensions and disturbances” (Alma 45:20–24). The other was a successful effort to convince many people to repent (Alma 62:44–52).

4. Mormon’s Choice to Focus the Balance of His Abridgment on Small-plate Prophecies

As explained earlier, many scholars believe Mormon wrote Words of Mormon after all his other Book of Mormon writings. However, textual evidence within Mormon’s aside at the beginning of Words of Mormon indicates that an important purpose of this aside is to describe two decisions, one of which affected the balance of his abridgment. After reading the small plates, Mormon was touched by the revelations and and not after, King Benjamin’s receipt of the small plates. Mormon’s words, “and now concerning this king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:12), unlike “and then it came to pass that,” don’t require a chronological account. Rather, they introduce information about King Benjamin not previously shared by Mormon. If Words of Mormon were written as a bridge to fill in a supposed time gap between the small-plate record and the book of Mosiah, it would not describe a war that happened prior to the supposed gap.

prophecies they contained. It appears he wrote this aside primarily to share two related decisions with his readers. One decision was to keep the small-plate record with his own record. The other was to focus the balance of his abridgment on the small-plate prophecies and their fulfillment.

As he describes these choices, Mormon uses several terms that refer (directly or indirectly) to prophecies. In Words of Mormon 1:3–6, he uses the word prophecies only twice, but textual analysis can suggest that several other terms also refer to prophecies. The following highly annotated quotation emphasizes and explains these direct and indirect references:

I found this small account of the prophets [and their prophecies] from Jacob down to the reign of this King Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi [including his prophecies]. And the things [prophecies] which are upon these plates pleasing me because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ, and my fathers [who lived after these small-plate prophets, but before me] knowing [and having recorded their knowledge in the large-plate record] that many of them [these small-plate prophecies] have been fulfilled — yea, and I also know [and am adding my testimony here and in the remainder of my record] that as many things [prophecies] as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day has been fulfilled, and [I also know and add my testimony here and in the remainder of my record that] as many [of these prophecies] as go beyond this day [and so will be fulfilled in the future, including in the latter days] must surely come to pass — wherefore [for these specific reasons], I choose these things [these prophecies recorded on the small plates] to finish73 my record [the balance of my abridgment] upon them [making these prophecies the subject or theme of the rest of my record — it will be about them],74 which remainder of my record [the balance of my abridgment] I shall take from the plates of Nephi [the large-plate record]. And I cannot write a hundredth part of the things [doings] of my people [so this thematic focus will emphasize prophecies as I omit much of the history]. But behold [even though only a small record can be passed on], I shall take these plates [this refers to an act that has not already been done but will be done in the future]

73. See footnote 67.
which contain *these prophecies and revelations* [the small plates of Nephi] and put *them* [the small plates of Nephi] with the remainder of my record [the balance of my abridgment], for *they* [the small plates of Nephi] are choice unto me [because of the prophecies and revelations they contain] and I know that *they* [the small plates of Nephi] will be choice unto my brethren [for the same reason]. (Words of Mormon 1:3–6)

**Two Purposes Filled by the Small Plates.** Thus this passage describes the importance of the prophecies on the small plates and tells us that Mormon chose at this time to make these prophecies and their fulfillment the main topic for the balance of his abridgment. This decision, and the emphasis placed on it by Mormon, would make little sense if his abridgment were already virtually finished. On the other hand, if he is recording this choice in the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah, it is a choice that affects all the balance of his writing — everything that Mormon wrote that was not lost. (Both his statement about choosing the small plates as a source of influence in his future abridgement, and his statement about adding the small plates to his work, point to future events, whereas they would be completed acts under the traditional view of Words of Mormon being written at the end of Mormon’s work.) It would appear, then, that the Lord’s purpose in preserving these prophecies on the small plates was not only to use the small-plate record as the “first part” of the Book of Mormon, but also to inspire Mormon to focus all the remainder of the Book of Mormon on the fulfillment of these important prophecies.

**Logical Inconsistencies.** In this passage, Mormon discusses two concepts that can easily be confused. His term *these plates* refers to the small plates. His separate term *these things* refers to the prophecies on the small plates and not to the plates themselves. Some students of the Book of Mormon nevertheless maintain that when Mormon states “wherefore I choose *these things* to finish my record upon them” (Words of Mormon 1:5), the words *these things* refer to the small plates. Or perhaps, since the small plates were already full (see Omni 1:30), they suggest that these words refer not only to the small plates themselves, but also to an additional plate or two that Mormon may have appended to the small plates.  

75. See Ricks, “Small Plates of Nephi,” 216n3.
small plates and was among Mormon’s final writings. That suggestion, however, gives rise to two logical inconsistencies.

The first logical inconsistency arises because that suggestion is incompatible with Mormon’s use of the word *wherefore*. The role of this word is to introduce “a clause expressing a consequence or inference from what has just been stated.”\(^76\) So when Mormon says, “*wherefore* I choose these things to finish my record upon them” (Words of Mormon 1:5), he is telling us that he chooses “these things” for a reason he has just mentioned. He has just used the word *things* to explain that the prophecies written on the small-plate record (the *things* which are upon these plates) please him because they are true. It would appear that these same things, the prophecies on the small plates, are the intended antecedents for the term *these things*. Mormon has just stated two clear reasons for making these prophecies the main subject of the balance of his abridgment (they please Mormon and they are true). On the other hand, nothing just stated provides any plausible reason for choosing to write anything upon any specific set of plates.

The second logical inconsistency arises for a different reason. If the words *these things* refer to the small plates, then the term *the remainder of my record* has two opposing meanings in two consecutive sentences. Thus the term *the remainder of my record*, as used in verse 5, would refer to a record written *upon* the small plates, while the identical term, as used in verse 6 without distinguishing context, clearly refers to something separate from the small plates, to be kept *with* the small plates.

There is, however, no such inconsistency if the term *these things* refers to the prophecies found on the small plates. In that case, the term *the remainder of my record* consistently refers to the extensive portion of Mormon’s abridged record that is not yet written at the time he writes these words. Mormon’s aside tells us that he will focus on the small-plate prophecies as he abridges the remainder of his record from the large plates of Nephi. He will keep the small-plate record (which contains those prophecies) with the prophecy-focused remainder of the abridged record, thus sharing the original prophecies themselves with the abridgment that refers to them.

So the more likely intended meaning of this passage is that Mormon is choosing the prophecies on the small plates as the subject or theme for the rest of his abridgment of the large-plate record. Our study of the remainder of Mormon’s abridgment (all of his abridgment available to us today) can be

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greatly enhanced as we recognize this correlation between the small-plate prophecies and the carefully selected content of Mormon’s abridgment.

For instance, King Benjamin’s possession of the small-plate record and his recognition of the value of the prophecies it contained may be reflected in his teachings to his sons in Mosiah 1:2–9. The repeated use of the word also may indicate three distinct sets of plates. The first set, perhaps the small plates, is described as “the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which was delivered them by the hand of the Lord” (Mosiah 1:2). After mentioning this set of prophecies, Mormon says that “he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass” (Mosiah 1:3). After discussing this second record, King Benjamin introduces a third record, which appears to be the large-plate record, saying, “And behold also the plates of Nephi which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now” (Mosiah 1:6). The fact that the second and third records are each introduced with the word also suggests that the first description of prophecies may refer to a distinct record — the prophecies found on the small plates.

**Mormon’s Plan to Add the Small Plates in the Future.** Mormon’s aside was written after he “found” (past tense) the small-plate record (Words of Mormon 1:3) and before he resumes his abridgment (see Words of Mormon 1:5, where he says “which remainder of my record I shall take [future tense] from the [large] plates of Nephi”). In his aside, he says, “I shall take these plates which contain these prophecies and revelations and put them with the remainder of my record” (Words of Mormon 1:6). These statements seem to require that Mormon’s resumed abridgment of the large plates and his addition of the small-plate record to his own are to be completed after he wrote this aside, not before. The plan to do these things in the future makes little sense if Mormon had already added the small plates to his record and is now explaining, at the end of that attached record, why he did so. At the time Mormon wrote this aside, he had not yet made the remainder of his abridged record and had not yet put the small plates with his abridged record, but planned to do so in the future. These words about what he shall do fit better in an aside written as part of the original second chapter of Mosiah than in an aside written after the small plate record is already in place at the end of Mormon’s record.
5. An Appropriately Archaic Meaning for the Term About to in Words of Mormon 1:1

Mormon begins his aside by saying that he is “about to deliver up” the record he has been making to his son Moroni (see Words of Mormon 1:1). The modern meaning of the term about to would suggest that Mormon is on the verge of delivering a completed record to Moroni. However, as we have seen, multiple evidences in the greater context indicate that these words are found in the original second chapter of Mosiah — they were written when Mormon’s abridgment was far from complete. This context suggests the application of a different meaning for the term about to, one that doesn’t imply immediacy.

Royal Skousen’s in-depth study of the Book of Mormon manuscripts has found extensive archaic word usage that indicates “that the text of the Book of Mormon is uniquely archaic and generally dates from Early Modern English. The vocabulary of the Book of Mormon turns out to be one to three centuries older than Joseph Smith’s time.”77 And while many English words and phrases have retained their meanings from that period, some meanings have shifted. Because of these shifts, the intended meaning of some Book of Mormon passages differs from the meaning that our modern vocabulary first brings to our minds. Specifically, Skousen discusses “39 lexical items that each take a distinct archaic meaning in the Book of Mormon, one that no longer exists in English.”78 The term about to is one of these lexical items.

In Early Modern English, the term about to had two meanings, only one of which continues in common use today. The still-common definition is “at the very point when one is going to do something; intending or preparing immediately to do something.”79 The other meaning, on the other hand, conveys no sense of immediacy. Its definition is “engaged in or busied with plans or preparations to do something; planning, conspiring, or scheming to do something.”80 In other words, in the vocabulary of the Book of Mormon, the term about to can describe an ongoing effort aimed toward ultimately, but not immediately, reaching a specified goal. It can indicate that one is engaged in preparatory efforts intended, in due course, to reach a specified goal.

78. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
A remnant of this archaic meaning of *about to* lingers in North America, but only in negative constructions.\(^81\) I might say, “I’m not *about to* vote for that candidate,” meaning that I have no present intent or plan to eventually do such a thing. The less common meaning of *about to* is similar, but is applied in the affirmative sense. When one is *about to* do something (in the less common sense), one *does* intend to do such a thing and is actively working to that end (ultimately, rather than immediately).

The following dictionary samples from Early Modern English use this less common meaning. (Spelling has been modernized and emphasis added.)

1533: “The leech that ... sitteth by the sick man busy *about to* cure him.”
1541: “The devil hath been of long time *about to* bring in this snare for priests.”
1669: “It becomes every man, *about to* transcribe, or render the works of another in his own native tongue, neither to add anything of his own, nor to omit of the author’s.”\(^82\)

In each case, the term *about to* describes one who is actively moving toward accomplishing a goal or, in other words, *working to* accomplish that goal. So the substitution of the term *working to* for *about to* can suggest this meaning. For example, with these dictionary examples, this substitution results in:

“The leech that ... sitteth by the sick man busy [working to] cure him.”
“The devil hath been of long time [working to] bring in this snare for priests.”
“It becomes every man, [working to] transcribe, or render the works of another in his own native tongue, neither to add anything of his own, nor to omit of the author’s.”

Because this less common, now obsolete meaning of *about to* is foreign to modern readers, it is never the meaning that instantly comes to our mind when we first read the term *about to*. It takes mental effort to consider this archaic meaning, but it clearly applies in several Book of Mormon passages. For instance, after the treasonous Paanchi, the brother of Parhoran and Pacumeni, lost the election to be chief judge or governor over the land, he didn’t accept the voice of the people. Rather, he was busily engaged in preparatory efforts toward overthrowing the government. He wasn’t

\(^81\) Ibid.
\(^82\) Ibid.
only considering a future rebellion, but was already actively engaged in rebellious activity. He was working to incite others to rebel:

But behold, Paanchi and that part of the people that were desirous that he should be their governor was exceeding wroth. Therefore he was about to [working to] flatter away those people to rise up in rebellion against their brethren. And it came to pass as he was about to [working to] do this, behold, he was taken and was tried according to the voice of the people and condemned unto death; for he had raised up in rebellion and sought to destroy the liberty of the people. (Helaman 1:7–8)

The following passage, which Stanford Carmack brought to the attention of Royal Skousen, also contains language that works much better if the term about to means “working to.”

And now when Coriantumr saw that he was in possession of the city of Zarahemla and saw that the Nephites had fled before them and were slain and were taken and were cast into prison and that he had obtained the possession of the strongest hold in all the land his heart took courage insomuch that he was about to [working to] go forth against all the land and now he did not tarry in the land of Zarahemla but he did march forth with a large army even towards the city of Bountiful. (Helaman 1:22–23)

Skousen provides the following explanation of the manner in which this passage appears to reflect the archaic, earlier meaning of about to:

If we read this passage with our modern-day view of the expression “to be about to go forth,” we assume that Coriantumr is thinking of immediately going out to attack all the remaining Nephite lands (at the end of verse 22), yet then we are suddenly surprised by the statement (at the beginning of verse 23) that “he did not tarry in the land of Zarahemla.” Since the text just said that Coriantumr was on the verge of attacking, then why should it gratuitously add that he did not tarry? But if the expression “to be about to go forth” is interpreted with its earlier meaning, then this passage is telling us that Coriantumr was making preparations “to go forth against all the land,” which could have taken some time if he had wanted to, yet in the end he did not put off his attack
but decided to march forth promptly, without further delay, against the city of Bountiful.83

This meaning also appears to apply as Nephi made tools for building a ship. His brothers saw that he was engaged in preparatory efforts toward constructing a ship. “And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock. And when my brethren saw that I was about to [working to] build a ship, they began to murmur against me” (1 Nephi 17:16–17). A significant effort lay ahead, but by making tools, Nephi was already engaged in plans and preparations to build a ship.

This same meaning also appears to apply when Amulek quotes words that King Mosiah wrote at a time when he, King Mosiah, “was about to [working to] deliver up the kingdom” (Alma 10:19). At the time King Mosiah wrote these words, he was engaged in preparatory efforts toward “deliver[ing] up the kingdom” to the first chief judge. The detailed account of King Mosiah’s efforts at that time (all of Mosiah chapter 29) reveals that the quoted words (see Mosiah 29:27) were written near the beginning of a major persuasive effort.

As King Mosiah begins this persuasive effort and shares the quoted words, the people have recently voted in favor of an impossible monarchy (see Mosiah 29:2–3). In the wake of this vote, King Mosiah sends “a written word” (Mosiah 29:4) among the people to teach righteous principles and convince them to adopt a new form of government. He is working to make this change, but the process takes time. As he sends out this written word, the people need to be convinced that a change is needed. All elections that might lead to the new form of government are still in the future (see Mosiah 29:37–39). Nevertheless, when successfully completed, the effort will allow King Mosiah to deliver his kingdom to Alma, who will eventually be elected to serve as the first chief judge (see Mosiah 29:41–42). Thus the words about to deliver up indicate that King Mosiah was busily engaged in a plan to “deliver up the kingdom” to a future chief judge.

After Mormon had abridged about 455 years of Nephite history from the large plates of Nephi, including all the book of Lehi, and was finishing the first chapter of the book of Mosiah, he encountered an important passage. This passage described Amaleki’s delivery of the small-plate record to King Benjamin. Mormon added this event to his abridged record (at the end of the original first chapter of Mosiah). He then searched for, found, and read the small-plate account for the first

time. As he did so, he was moved by the Spirit to keep this small-plate record with his abridged record and to focus the rest of his abridged record on the fulfillment of the prophecies he had just read. He then added an aside to his record (at the beginning of the original second chapter of Mosiah) to explain these pivotal decisions (see Words of Mormon 1:1–8). After writing this aside, he used a resumptive structure to resume his abridgment (see Words of Mormon 1:9–10).

In the aside, Mormon, who still needed to abridge about five centuries of the history of his people, writes that he is “about to deliver up the record which [he has] been making into the hands of [his] son Moroni” (Words of Mormon 1:1). In this context, the modern meaning of the term about to is out of place, but the archaic meaning, used in several other Book of Mormon passages, fits well, telling us that Mormon is working to deliver into the hands of his son Moroni the record he has been making. This ultimate aim motivates him to press forward. His words express a faith that is similar to that of Nephi as he forged tools, being “about to [working to]” (1 Nephi 17:16–17) build a ship. Mormon’s faith also mirrors that of Mosiah, who, near the end of his own life, taught righteous principles, being “about to [working to]” (Alma 10:19) deliver up his kingdom to a chief judge. By working to achieve these worthy goals, each prophet was acting in faith — showing hope for something he could not yet see. As the dictionary definition reads, each was “engaged in or busied with plans or preparations” to ultimately bring about a righteous goal.84

6. The Lord’s Simple, Direct Instructions in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants

An understanding that Words of Mormon is the original second chapter of Mosiah, a continuation of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record, helps us realize that the Lord’s instructions in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants are simple and complete. They reveal all of the Lord’s straightforward plan for dealing with the lost manuscript:

84. After telling us he is about to [working to] deliver the record to Moroni, Mormon uses the present-tense term “I deliver these records” (Words of Mormon 1:2) to refer again to his future delivery of the record to Moroni. Mormon uses the present tense to refer to future events in other passages as well. See, for example, “I do this” (Words of Mormon 1:7) and “then do I make a record” (3 Nephi 5:17). Because Mormon’s present-tense words I deliver these records refer to a future event regardless of the meaning of about to, these words work equally well with either meaning of about to.
You shall translate the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words.

Behold, there are many things engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part [the first part of the Book of Mormon, to be translated from the replacement small-plate record] of [out of]\(^{85}\) the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work [the Book of Mormon]. And, behold, all the remainder of this work [the last part of the Book of Mormon, which Mormon focused on the fulfillment of the small-plate prophecies]\(^{86}\) does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. (D&C 10:41–42, 45–46)

The simple instructions in this revelation seem to challenge the more complex assumption that Words of Mormon was added by Mormon at the end of the small-plate record. These simple revealed instructions explain that the narrative on the small plates of Nephi ends at the time of the reign of King Benjamin. Accordingly, the last book in the small-plate account, the book of Omni, ends at that time. These instructions never suggest that after the small-plate record reaches this point, Joseph will then encounter an additional passage called Words of Mormon, written by Mormon centuries after the small-plate record, which must also be translated to patch up what would otherwise be a troublesome time gap between the book of Omni and the book of Mosiah. These instructions certainly don’t indicate that, as Brant Gardner suggests, Joseph himself will need to author a modern addition to the manuscript, not found on the plates at all, to be inserted as Words of Mormon 1:12–18 to mend such a troublesome gap.\(^{87}\)


\(^{86}\) See Words of Mormon 1:3‒6.

\(^{87}\) But see Gardner, “When Hypotheses Collide,” 107, 115, and 117-19; and Gardner, *Labor Diligently*, 122-24, which suggest that instead, Joseph Smith wrote a “prophetic addition,” which was deemed necessary to mend such a gap. Note that in Words of Mormon 1:9, Mormon again identifies himself as the author, though that does not necessarily specify the author of vv. 12–18.
The Lord’s instructions in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants don’t mention any troublesome time gap, because none exists. Joseph had translated Words of Mormon, the first part of the retained text, in June 1828 — about eight months before translation finally resumed. The retained text had originally followed immediately after “an abridgment from the plates of Nephi down to the reign of this king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:3), but that earlier part of the abridgment was lost. After that loss, Joseph Smith had faithfully resumed the translation where it had left off — after the retained text. Joseph and Oliver knew, of course, that the narrative in the retained text began in the middle of the story — with the reign of King Benjamin. The instructions in Section 10 reassure them that the lost narrative will be replaced by a different narrative taken from the small plates of Nephi. This replacement narrative will cover the same period as the lost narrative. It too will cover events “even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41).

After receiving this reassuring revelation, Joseph continued his ongoing translation through the balance of Mormon’s writings and the writings of Moroni, ending with the title page. He then translated the replacement narrative from “the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi” (D&C 10:41). When Oliver Cowdery created the printer’s manuscript, he used this replacement narrative (the last part of the original manuscript) as the “first part” (D&C 10:45) of the Book of Mormon. In all editions of the Book of Mormon, this small account, which continues “down even till you come to the reign of King Benjamin,” ends immediately before Words of Mormon. Words of Mormon is the original second chapter of Mosiah — the first part of the retained text. Because of the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript, it had become the beginning of the original manuscript and, as previously discussed, Oliver marked this transition point in the printer’s manuscript with two consecutive wavy lines. This retained text begins with Mormon’s aside about the small plates and their prophecies. Then the resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 resumes Mormon’s abridged account (with a focus on these prophecies) right where the replacement narrative ends — at the time of the reign of King Benjamin. This solution provided by the Lord and implemented by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery is simpler than some of us have assumed.
Conclusion

The Lord’s revealed solution to the problem caused by the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript (D&C 10:38–46) tells Joseph Smith to replace that lost text with a translation of the small-plate record. The Lord says the narrative of this replacement text ends (at the end of the book of Omni) at the time of the reign of King Benjamin. The Book of Mormon is then to continue with “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41). This retained text, which begins with the chapter we call Words of Mormon, is a continuation of the lost part of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record. After a brief aside, it resumes the abridged narrative right at the time when the replacement small-plate record ends — the time of the reign of King Benjamin. Oliver Cowdery left a unique mark in the printer’s manuscript at the end of the book of Omni. This mark appears to designate the point where the small-plate record ends and the retained text begins. Further evidence from the printer’s manuscript indicates that Words of Mormon, the first part of “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41) is the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah.

Appendix A: Consistent, Credible Evidence that Supports Joseph Smith’s Published Page Count of 116 Pages

On page 102 of his insightful book The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories, historian Don Bradley maintains that Joseph Smith’s statement in the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long is inaccurate. He invites those who rely on this number to account for three facts which he believes support his claim of inaccuracy: (1) the fact that Emer Harris, Martin Harris’s brother, is reported to have said Martin scribed for near two hundred pages of manuscript that was lost; (2) the fact that Joseph Smith translated an average of only about two pages per day before the loss, but averaged over seven pages per day after the loss; and (3) the fact that, on average, a page in the 116-page lost manuscript would have contained about four years of historical narrative, but, on average, a page in the published portion of Mormon’s abridgment contains more details so that it contains only about two years of historical narrative.

The body of this paper relies on the accuracy of Joseph Smith’s published page count of 116 pages. This appendix reviews these three facts and proposes that each, when properly accounted for, can be reconciled with the accuracy of this number. This appendix also sustains the plausibility of Joseph Smith’s statement in the preface to the 1830
Book of Mormon that there was only one complete book in the lost manuscript — the book of Lehi.

1. Reconciling secondhand statements that might suggest a longer lost manuscript

The best evidence for the number of pages in the lost manuscript would be that manuscript itself. Unfortunately, it has never resurfaced. The next best evidence would probably be the original page number on the first page after the lost manuscript — the first retained page (see D&C 10:41). As the body of this paper explains, it is reasonable to conclude that this page was numbered as page 117 and was the first of several pages of manuscript that were translated before the loss, but not lent to Martin Harris. If so, then Joseph had this page in his possession (as the first page of the remaining original manuscript) as he wrote the preface which tells us that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long. Unfortunately, over time, water damage destroyed most of the original manuscript, including this page, so it’s no longer available. Because this physical evidence no longer exists, published direct statements of firsthand witnesses are now the best available evidence of the page count. Three such statements survive, all given by Joseph Smith. The first, of course, is the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon, in which Joseph states that the lost manuscript was “one hundred and sixteen pages” long. Joseph confirmed this same number in both of his histories that mention the lost manuscript — his 1832 history and his official history.

It appears that Martin Harris also repeatedly confirmed that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long, but this information comes to us, perhaps with some loss of precision, through statements made by secondhand witnesses. Don Bradley alludes to such statements, saying that Martin Harris sometimes used the term “116 pages.” Bradley, however, attributes Martin Harris’s use of the number 116 to a tendency to “follow the lead of Joseph’s terminology.” While the two men did tend to use some similar terminology, Martin sometimes took strong stances contrary to those of Joseph Smith. There was a period during which Martin “lost confidence in Joseph Smith” and was even excommunicated

91. Ibid.
from the Church. Martin eventually rejoined the Church, but he clearly chose his own path. This unfortunate period of antagonism between Joseph and Martin is often mentioned to support the probative value of Martin’s life-long witness of the veracity of the Book of Mormon. Their differences of opinion and Martin’s firm stance in opposition to Joseph reveal that Martin was willing to assume responsibility for his own words. This indicates that Martin’s consistent use of the number 116, like his consistent witness of the veracity of the Book of Mormon, may owe to his own independent recognition of its accuracy.

Martin’s use of this number appears to have outlived Joseph Smith. The secondhand statement of William Pilkington may be one of those alluded to by Don Bradley. Pilkington immigrated to Utah in 1874 when he was 13 years old. Martin Harris Jr. soon hired the youth to work for him and live in his home. Martin Harris Sr. also lived there at the time. Pilkington lived in the Harris home during the final year of the senior Martin Harris’s life. Years later, in 1934, when Pilkington was 73, he gave a sworn statement before Joseph W. Peterson. Among other things, Pilkington testified in this sworn statement that Martin Harris Sr., near the end of his life, told Pilkington that “he was the cause of the 116 pages that he had written being lost and never found.” This secondhand statement by Pilkington indicates that Martin Harris Sr. referred to 116 pages of lost manuscript during the last year of his life — 30 years after the Prophet’s death.

The question to be considered is whether this sworn written statement made by a 73-year-old man who, 60 years earlier, had lived with Martin Harris for a year, accurately reflects a firsthand statement made by Martin Harris. The reliability and accuracy of this written, formally sworn statement depends not only on Martin’s own credibility but also on Pilkington’s credibility and on the reliability and accuracy of Pilkington’s memory at the age of 73 about something that took place much earlier. Similar consideration should be given to any secondhand statement offered to suggest Martin’s view of the length of the lost manuscript. In each case, the assessment is subjective. In this particular case, Pilkington’s sworn recollection doesn’t acknowledge the contributions of other scribes to the lost 116 pages. His statement

would have been more accurate had he recognized their roles. We can’t be certain whether this slight discrepancy originated with Pilkington or with Harris. Nevertheless, despite the passage of time, the written, sworn statement can be deemed sufficiently reliable and credible to indicate that Martin Harris Sr., shortly before he died, stated that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long.

Martin Harris’s brother, Emer Harris, spoke about the lost manuscript in his later years. It appears that Emer had no firsthand knowledge of the length of the lost manuscript, but he probably had spoken with Martin about it. Emer lived 200 miles away from Palmyra (in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania) at the time the lost manuscript was stolen. He was not one of the five family members to whom Martin was given permission to show the manuscript. The historical record doesn’t suggest that he traveled the 200 miles to Martin’s home in Palmyra to see the manuscript before it was lost.

One can assume, however, that Martin eventually explained to Emer the details of the sad story of the loss of the manuscript. Emer joined the Church in 1831, not long after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and soon moved with the Saints to Ohio. About a year later, he served a mission near his former home in Pennsylvania. During most of this mission, “Emer’s companion was his brother Martin.” Emer remained faithful to the Church his entire life. He moved with the Saints not only to Ohio but also to Missouri, to Illinois, and then to Utah.

On April 6, 1856, Emer Harris, then 74 and serving as a stake patriarch, spoke in a stake conference in Provo, Utah about the early history of the Church. Detailed minutes of the meeting written by the stake clerk provide us with the content of the talk. The reliability of these detailed minutes depends, in part, on the accuracy of the stake clerk’s transcription of the words he heard Emer speak. The stake clerk wrote that Emer Harris said his brother had scribed for “near 200 pages” of the lost manuscript. This term appears to be a simple transcription error. Rather than saying “near two hundred pages,” it’s more likely that Emer said “near to a hundred pages.” Audibly, the two terms can be almost

95. Bradley, The Lost 116 Pages, 58.
96. “Harris, Emer,” Joseph Smith Papers.
98. “Harris, Emer,” Joseph Smith Papers.
identical. The term *near to a hundred pages* is more grammatically correct. (The transcribed term should say *nearly* rather than *near.*) Emer’s use of the term *near to a hundred pages* fits well with both a lost manuscript length of 116 pages and with the fact that scribes other than Martin scribed for a portion of those pages.100

We can’t be certain which term Emer actually spoke, but the term *near to a hundred pages* harmonizes with everything Joseph Smith and Martin Harris are reported to have said about the lost manuscript. The audibly similar, but grammatically incorrect term *near two hundred pages*, on the other hand, paints a very different picture. If Emer actually used this transcribed term, the issue becomes whether it might accurately reflect something that Martin had said earlier to Emer. In Emer’s talk, he never suggests that his term came from Martin. Even if transcribed correctly, this term may have resulted from a slip of Emer’s tongue or his inability to recall the actual number at the spur of the moment. It might even represent Emer’s own personal uncertainty about the precise number given by the Prophet. If any of these is the case, this odd term doesn’t reflect any firsthand statement and therefore has little probative value for supplanting the Prophet’s published number. Of course, one might presume that Martin once used such a term despite Emer’s silence on the matter. Such a presumption would imply that this term originated with Martin, a firsthand witness. Unfortunately, such a presumption also necessarily discounts Martin’s own credibility as a consistent witness.

Despite Martin’s disagreements with Joseph Smith, Martin was considered an honest man and a reliable witness of the Book of Mormon because he was never willing to disavow, even in private, his published testimony of the Book of Mormon. Martin also consistently held to the 116-page length of the lost manuscript throughout his life — unless Emer actually said *near two hundred pages* and Emer was speaking for Martin as he did so. Because of Martin’s reputation for consistency, including in private conversations, it seems contrary to his character for him to have said one thing in a private conversation with Emer and something else in conversations with William Pilkington and others. Martin’s reputation for consistency and his multiple statements across the course of his life attesting to a 116-page lost manuscript suggest that he was not the source of the transcribed term *near two hundred pages*.

The more likely term that Emer used in stake conference that day is *near to a hundred pages*. This term is consistent with all of Martin’s and Joseph’s statements about the lost manuscript. If, on the other hand,

100. But see Bradley, ibid., 92-95.
Emer said near two hundred pages, Martin’s reputation for consistency suggests that this term originated independently with Emer, who had no firsthand knowledge of the length of the lost manuscript. Either way, the consistent statements of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris needn’t be diminished by the report of Emer’s conference talk.

Similarly, a letter written by Simon Smith in 1880 doesn’t carry significant weight in challenging the accuracy of Joseph’s published page count. In July 1875, just a day or so before Martin Harris Sr., passed away, his bishop, Simon Smith, paid a visit to the Harris household. Five years later, Simon Smith wrote a letter whose content has been used to suggest that Martin Harris opposed Joseph’s page count. This factually inaccurate letter, however, provides no credible insight into Martin Harris’s view of the length of the lost manuscript.

A little more than a year after Simon Smith visited the Harris home, Simon Smith’s life changed significantly. In October 1876, Simon’s first wife, Henrietta, whom he had left in England 12 years earlier when he emigrated to Utah, joined Simon’s household in Clarkston, Utah, together with her children. Simon’s two other plural wives and their children soon left the household. In November, Simon was released as bishop. He soon divorced his other two wives and joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. By 1880, he, Henrietta, and her children had moved back to England.

In December 1880, more than five years after the death of Martin Harris, Simon Smith wrote a letter to Joseph Smith III (the president of Simon’s new church), a letter in which he shared his personal opposition to the practice of polygamy. Among other things, the letter purports to recount Martin Harris’s answers to questions about polygamy posed to him by Simon Smith during the visit mentioned earlier. Several factors, however, weigh against the likelihood that such questions and answers took place at this time. A separate, more contemporaneous account of the visit written by Martin Harris, Jr. doesn’t mention any discussion of polygamy. Not only was Simon himself a practicing polygamist at the time, but also Martin Harris Jr. and his plural wives were all present. It seems unlikely that Simon, an invited guest, would have raised such a contentious topic at such a tender time.101 Separately, on the topic of the Book of Mormon, Simon Smith’s letter also claims that Martin said “that he had acted as scribe for [Joseph Smith] when

[Joseph] was translating from the plates by the Urim and Thummim nearly one third of what is published.”102

This statement about the Book of Mormon cannot be true as written. Bradley recognizes this but suggests that Simon Smith may have meant to report that Martin Harris used the fraction one-third to represent the ratio of the length of the portion of the unpublished lost text scribed by Martin Harris to the combined length of Martin’s unpublished text plus the published text. Bradley notes that this view of Simon Smith’s statement could be seen as fairly consistent with Emer Harris’s transcribed term near two hundred pages.103 However, adding unpublished and published text to get that ratio seems questionable. While it’s difficult to determine what Simon Smith intended to write, he may have intended to say that the lost manuscript had a length of about one-third the length of the published text (though one-fourth would be more accurate).

Simon Smith’s nonfactual statement gives little basis for even deciphering what Simon Smith may have intended to write. It certainly isn’t a reliable source for what Martin Harris may have actually said. Because the words in this letter can’t be true and because they don’t even mention a lost manuscript, there is little value in using them as a basis for deducing Martin Harris’s firsthand views about the length of that manuscript.

Multiple well-documented statements of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris credibly and reliably support the 116-page length of the lost manuscript. If Emer Harris, in his 1856 stake conference talk, said near to a hundred pages, his words also support a lost manuscript with 116 pages. But even if Emer used the unlikely, ungrammatical term near two hundred pages, Emer didn’t attribute this term to Martin. Neither should we. Doing so needlessly tarnishes Martin’s well-deserved reputation as a consistent witness. Simon Smith’s 1880 letter, which mischaracterizes Martin’s role in the translation of the Book of Mormon and never mentions the lost manuscript, deserves little, if any, consideration in this matter. Therefore, a reasonable view of all available evidence can support a lost manuscript length of 116 pages.

**Translated Pages per Day and the Sigmoid Learning Curve**

Data available today doesn’t allow us to map out an accurate learning curve for Joseph Smith’s progress as a translator of the Book of Mormon. We know little about the process, accomplished only through “the gift and power of God.” The Lord’s words in Doctrine and Covenants 9:8

103.  Ibid., 94–95.
appear to suggest a need for diligent, faithful, prayerful effort that was both mental and spiritual in nature. The process would have been a team effort that involved Joseph and his scribe. It appears that, over time, the team became more proficient. The limited data from the historical record appears to be consistent with a common S-shaped learning curve (see Figure 3).

Learning curves vary based the nature of the skills being learned. When a set of skills is easy to learn, skill acquisition is initially fast. Fast-skill acquisition is often shown in a diminishing-returns learning curve with a quick initial rise that slows over time. When a set of skills is more difficult, skill acquisition is initially slow. Slow-skill acquisition is often shown in an increasing-returns learning curve with a slow initial rise that speeds up over time.

A learning curve that is often used to describe the learning of a complex set of skills, however, is the increasing-decreasing returns learning curve, also known as the *sigmoid* or *S-curve*. This curve describes cases in which skill acquisition is initially slow, but this initial slow period is followed by a rapid learning period as skill acquisition becomes easier. Then, after this rapid acceleration or hypergrowth, the acceleration slows again as the skills are mastered.104 In a business setting, this learning curve is described like this:

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Whenever people start new jobs or take on new responsibilities, they launch their own S-curves. At the beginning, … progress is slow and they have limited impact. … Then they reach an inflection point, gaining competence and confidence in their new roles, quickly accelerating their abilities, and having a progressively greater impact. … After they’ve been in their roles for a certain amount of time, they reach the upper flat part of the S-curve.105

The limited data we have from the historical record about Joseph’s progress in receiving and dictating the sacred text to a scribe is by no means conclusive, but it can suggest an S-curve with the period of rapid acceleration or hypergrowth taking place as translation resumed after the loss of the 116 pages. Joseph’s estimated average translation rate before that time was roughly two pages per day.106 Afterwards, his estimated average translation rate quickly grew, so that, while working with Oliver Cowdery, he averaged seven or more pages per day.107 This rapid acceleration is in line with what one might expect as experience brought Joseph and his scribe through the various stages of the sigmoid learning curve.

Several additional factors may have enhanced the acceleration. First, before resuming the translation effort, Joseph went through a humbling repentance process. This may have increased his meekness and facilitated the flow of revelation. Second, Oliver Cowdery, an enthusiastic young school teacher, replaced Martin Harris, an older, prosperous farmer, as scribe. Third, it appears that at about the time Oliver began his service as scribe, Joseph changed his translation method from a more cumbersome process by using the interpreters to a possibly simpler process by use of


106. About 122 translated pages (including an estimated 4 pages with Emma, 2 pages with other scribes, and 116 pages with Martin Harris, 110 of the 116 pages and about 6 pages of the retained segment). Martin’s tenure was about 55 days (although some days and parts of days were likely spent on other necessary tasks), and we’ll assume a total of 10 complete days with the other scribes (probably in stints of a few hours per session), for a total of 65 days and an average of 1.9 pages per day. See also Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 97–98 and 101–102.

a seer stone. Fourth, during Oliver’s tenure as scribe, the two moved to Fayette, New York, where, as guests of the Whitmer family, they had fewer daily distractions. Together, a sigmoid learning curve and these other factors may fully account for the rapid growth in translated manuscript pages per day after the loss of the 116 pages.

Number of Years of Historical Narrative Covered on Each Manuscript Page

In the 116-page lost manuscript (primarily the Book of Lehi), an average page contained about four years of historical narrative. In contrast, an average page in the published portion of the manuscript contains about two years of historical narrative. Nevertheless, a strong argument can

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108. “Joseph Smith’s wife Emma, who also served as a scribe for the translation, described his use of two distinct instruments: ‘Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim, and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly, black, but was rather a dark color.’” “Joseph Smith Documents Dating through June 1831,” Introduction to Documents, Volume 1: July 1828 – June 1831, The Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/doc/introduction-to-documents-volume-1-july-1828-june-1831. The “more elaborate physical setup” required with the interpreters is described in Bradley, The Lost 116 Pages, 46–47.

109. These numbers and those that follow are based on the following information: The historical narrative of the lost manuscript began in about 600 BC and ended with Amaleki’s delivery of the small-plate record to King Benjamin in about 155 BC. Bradley estimates that Benjamin’s reign began in about 157 BC (Bradley, The Lost 116 Pages, 95). That seems to be a reasonable estimate. In Mormon’s aside in Words of Mormon, which follows immediately after the lost account of Amaleki’s delivery of the small plate record to King Benjamin (see Words of Mormon 1:9 10), Mormon mentions “this king Benjamin of which Amaleki spake” (Words of Mormon 1:3). Mormon’s use of the word this suggests that this is only Mormon’s second mention of King Benjamin (his first was lost with the lost manuscript). If so, we can assume that Amaleki delivered the small plates to King Benjamin quite early in his reign — near the beginning of Mormon’s abridged account of that reign. 155 BC is just two years after Bradley’s suggested date for the beginning of King Benjamin’s reign. Thus, the lost manuscript, like the small-plate record, covered about 455 years. So, on average, each lost manuscript page covered about four years. Mormon’s continuing abridgment of the large-plate record begins in that same year (about 155 BC) and continues through AD 335 with his abridgment of the record he made at age 24 (see Mormon 1:3–4 and 2:17–18). So the portion of Mormon’s abridgment included in the Book of Mormon covers about 495 years. In the printer’s manuscript, these 495 years take up about 300 pages. So, on average, each published manuscript page covers about two years. The published portion of Mosiah (including Words of Mormon) covers about 64 years in about 54 manuscript pages, so each manuscript page covers about one year. Alma covers about 31 years in about 161 manuscript
and should be made that this is a normal difference that one should expect in different books abridged by Mormon. One should not expect to find a consistent number of years of historical narrative per page across different historical books, even books written by the same author. This metric simply isn’t considered by historians. Histories, including religious histories, are a function of the available historical records and an author’s specific objectives. The number of years per page is an inadvertent and inconsistent product of this function.

Mormon’s abridgment is more than a history. It’s a testament of Jesus Christ. This purpose plays a large role in the content of Mormon’s abridgment. In fulfilling this purpose, Mormon had no interest in producing a consistent number of years of historical narrative on each manuscript page. The wide variation in this metric across his writings is obvious even within 3 Nephi. In the first part of 3 Nephi (before Christ’s death, chapters 1–7), an average manuscript page covers about 2.5 years of historical narrative. In the second part (including Christ’s visit to the Americas, chapters 8–30), the level of detail explodes so that an average manuscript page covers only about 0.03 years (about 11 days) of historical narrative. Similarly wide variation exists across all the published books. In 4 Nephi, an average manuscript page contains about 96 years of narrative. In Alma, an average manuscript page covers about 0.19 years (fewer than three months) of narrative. In Helaman, an average manuscript page contains about two years of narrative. In Mosiah, an average manuscript page covers about one year of narrative.

This overwhelming variation (96 years is more than 3,000 times as long as 11 days) should make it clear that Mormon made no attempt to normalize the number of years per manuscript page across his writings. Among such extremes, it’s completely insignificant that an average manuscript page in the lost manuscript covers about two times as many years as an average manuscript page in the published portion of the manuscript. A comparable difference is found between the fairly similar books of Helaman and Mosiah. Nevertheless, the relatively small difference between the lost manuscript and the published portion may...
be due to two identifiable changes that affect the abridgment beginning with the account of King Benjamin.

As mentioned earlier, histories are a function of the available historical records and the author’s specific objectives. At the time of King Benjamin, an important event changed the nature of subsequent historical records on the large plates. After Mormon abridged the account of that event, another event changed Mormon’s specific objectives for the balance of his abridgment.

Beginning with King Benjamin, the writers of the large-plate record had a broader purpose for their writing than did the earlier writers of that record. Before Amaleki’s delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin, the small plates were “for the more part of the ministry” and the large plates were “for the more part of the reigns of the kings and the wars and contentions” (1 Nephi 9:4). Afterwards, the large plates fully assumed both roles. The large-plate purpose expanded to include more of the ministry. In fact, beginning with King Benjamin, all custodians of the large plates were prophets. The first three, King Benjamin, King Mosiah, and Alma, were also political leaders. After that, several custodians of the large plates were prophets who were not political leaders. This change in purpose and authorship could have caused the latter portion of the large-plate record to contain more prophetic detail than the earlier part of that record.

More importantly, Mormon’s specific objectives changed after he obtained the small plates. As I have explained in the body of this paper, after Mormon read the small-plate account, he was moved by the Spirit to focus the balance of his abridgment on the prophecies it contains. This new emphasis changed the nature of Mormon’s abridgment from that point on. As he continued to record only a fraction of large-plate content, he chose to mention more details about prophecies. This change would have increased the average level of prophetic detail per page, thus lowering the average number of years of historical narrative found on each page. The relatively small difference between the average number of years covered per manuscript page in the 116 pages of lost manuscript and the published portion of the manuscript should be deemed trivial. However, the change in large-plate content and Mormon’s new focus on prophecies beginning in Words of Mormon probably account for most, if not all, of this small difference.

The foregoing analysis accounts for all three facts mentioned by Don Bradley. Each can reasonably be reconciled with the accuracy of Joseph Smith’s published page count.
Only One Complete Book — the Book of Lehi — Was Lost

Joseph’s preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon\footnote{110}{“Preface to Book of Mormon, circa August 1829,” The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1.} is only one paragraph long, but it is clearly and thoughtfully written. The historical evidence doesn’t support a claim that Joseph was pressed for time as he wrote this paragraph, which also serves as both Joseph Smith’s “first autobiographical account to appear in print” and “the first publication of any of his revelations.”\footnote{111}{Historical Introduction, “Preface to Book of Mormon, circa August 1829,” The Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1#historical-intro on July 31, 2020. But see Bradley, The Lost 116 Pages, 85–86, 91, which asserts that this paragraph was “quickly” written under “time constraints” to provide a “serviceable,” but “provisional,” explanation of the loss.} Within this paragraph, the description of the lost manuscript is simple and concise. It consists of fewer than 30 words, five of which, “one hundred and sixteen pages,” give the precise length of the lost manuscript, whose accuracy is discussed in both the body of this paper and above in this Appendix. The balance of this short description adds some detail: “the which I took from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon.” According to this description, the name of the only complete book in the lost manuscript is “the Book of Lehi.” It was abridged by Mormon from a set of plates referred to as “the plates of Lehi.” Both of these terms, the Book of Lehi and the plates of Lehi, apparently originated with the lost manuscript. They aren’t found within the remaining text of the Book of Mormon, but similar terms in the remaining text appear to convey similar meaning.\footnote{112}{David E. Sloan, “The Book of Lehi and the Plates of Lehi,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, 6, no. 2 (1997): 269.}

This preface doesn’t, however, mention the original first chapter of the book of Mosiah, which, as discussed in the body of this paper, was lost along with the book of Lehi. The failure to mention this chapter in the one-paragraph preface appears to reflect Joseph’s choice to write a less-granular description — one that is accurate at the book level, but that doesn’t mention individual chapters. The preface names the only complete book that was lost, so it is accurate at the level of detail it covers. Nevertheless, the failure to mention this lost chapter in this preface and the separate decision to edit chapter numbers in the retained text rather than bring attention to this lost chapter have had some unintended consequences.
One consequence is that the lack of detailed disclosure makes it harder for readers to realize that Mormon wrote the text we call Words of Mormon as the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah rather than as an independent book. A second consequence is that the less-detailed disclosure also invites speculation about further differences between the preface’s description of the lost manuscript and the lost manuscript’s actual content. The evidence about lost content is discussed in detail in the body of this paper. It is consistent with the loss of one complete book, the book of Lehi, and one complete chapter, the original first chapter of the book of Mosiah. Don Bradley, however, speculates that, in addition to the book of Lehi, the lost manuscript contained “the books of many other record keepers.”

It seems unlikely that Joseph Smith’s published description fails to mention multiple lost books. It’s more likely that the description is accurate at the book level.

If many books were actually lost, then Joseph’s description would appear to be inaccurate at the book level. It is difficult to attribute inaccuracy at this level to mere simplification. If many books were actually lost, then it would have been at least as simple to omit the reference to the book of Lehi or to mention many books without naming them. A description that mentions the loss of only one book, but fails to mention many other lost books, could be seen as misleading.

There is no need, however, to suggest that many other books were lost or that they would have filled more than 116 pages. A simple set of calculations shows that the lost 116 pages were easily long enough to describe the reigns of all Nephite leaders from Lehi through the first King Mosiah with the same level of detail that Mormon gives to all later kings. The reigns of all these later kings are described in the published portion of the original book of Mosiah (including Words of Mormon), which fills about 54 pages of printer’s manuscript. These kings include Benjamin, the second Mosiah, Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi. In these calculations, Limhi’s reign is counted as only half a reign because it ends early when his people join those of the second King Mosiah. So these

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113. Bradley, *The 116 Lost Pages*, 87. Perhaps Bradley’s reference to the books of many other record keepers is intended only to suggest that the book of Lehi, like the book of Mosiah, is composed of multiple records kept by multiple record keepers. If so, the proposed content for the book of Lehi suggested below may not differ substantially from what Bradley might suggest.

114. As explained in the body of this paper, it appears that the published portion of the book of Mosiah (including both Words of Mormon and Mosiah) contains virtually all of Mormon’s abridgment of King Benjamin’s reign.
4.5 reigns fill about 54 manuscript pages. This means that there is, on average, one reign for every 12 manuscript pages.

If the 116 lost pages likewise covered an average of one Nephite king (beginning with Lehi and Nephi, who didn’t call themselves kings) every 12 manuscript pages, these pages had room to describe the reigns of 9.7 (about 10) such kings. The replacement small-plate record doesn’t tell us how many generations of kings there were before King Benjamin, but we know there were seven generations of Lehi’s family along Jacob’s line before King Benjamin (Lehi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Chemish, and Abinadom). If we assume the same number of generations (seven) in the kingly line, then the lost manuscript had 12 manuscript pages for each of them, with more than 30 pages to spare. These extra pages might have held additional generations of kings, if any, or more detail per king than we find in Mosiah.

Thus it’s reasonable to assume that the lost 116 pages had room for Mormon’s abridgment of the records of Lehi, Nephi, and all Nephite kings through the first King Mosiah. The level of detail would at least have been comparable to the level Mormon gave to all later Nephite kings. The actual length of Mormon’s abridgment of each leader’s individual record would have varied, of course. Just the same, there is every reason to believe that the lost 116 pages of Mormon’s abridgment accommodated all the reigns of kings it is said to have described. It did so at a level of detail no less than that of the book of Mosiah.

Don Bradley makes a reasonable case that the first King Mosiah began a new dynasty. This may explain the logic behind Mormon’s aggregation of multiple reigns into only two books. Mormon’s longer book of Lehi covers the entire dynasty begun by Lehi, and Mormon’s shorter book of Mosiah covers the entire dynasty begun by Mosiah. Thus everything in Joseph Smith’s preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon is plausible. The best evidence supports a lost manuscript that was 116 pages long and contained one complete book — the book of Lehi.

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115. Because Nephi and Jacob were brothers (see 1 Nephi 18:7), they shared a generation. Amaron and Chemish were brothers (see Omni 1:8‒9), so they also shared a generation. Amaleki the son of Abinadom was born in the days of the first king Mosiah (see Omni 1:23), so he was in the same generation as Benjamin the son of Mosiah.


117. Based on these estimates, the book of Lehi would have been about 108 manuscript pages long — about two-thirds as long as the book of Alma.

118. Bradley’s suggestion (see Bradley, *The 116 Lost Pages*, 275‒84) that the book of Mosiah might actually have been called the book of Benjamin would do away with this symmetry.
Appendix B: Book of Mormon Occasional Chapter Headings with Capitalization from the Printer’s Manuscript

The following is a list of all occasional chapter headings in the Book of Mormon as capitalized in the printer’s manuscript. Some of these headings aren’t formatted as headings in the Book of Mormon, but most share a common structure. Only one uses complete sentences, and all are clearly designed to describe the following text. After each heading, I’ve added the current chapter designation followed, in italics, by the original chapter designation.¹¹⁹

The words of Jacob the Brother of Nephi which he spake unto the People of Nephi (2 Nephi 6, originally 2 Nephi 5)

The burden of Babylon which Isaiah the Son of Amoz did see (2 Nephi 23, originally 2 Nephi 10)

The words which Jacob the Brother of Nephi spake unto the People of Nephi after the death of Nephi (Jacob 2, originally Jacob 2)

The words of Mormon (Words of Mormon 1, originally Mosiah 2)

The record of Zeniff (an account of his people from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time that they were delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites) (Mosiah 9, originally Mosiah 6)

An account of Alma and the people of the Lord, which was driven into the wilderness by the people of king Noah (Mosiah 23, originally Mosiah 11)

The words which Alma, the high priest according to the holy order of God, delivered to the people in their Cities and villages throughout the land (Alma 5, originally Alma 3)

¹¹⁹. For further insights on these headers, see Stephen O. Smoot, “Notes on Book of Mormon Heads,” Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship 40 (2020): 263‒82, where they are called “markers of embedded content,” and Gardner, Labor Diligently, 23–37, where they are called “synoptic headers” for chapters.
The words of Alma which he delivered to the People in Gideon, according to his own Record (Alma 7, *originally* Alma 5)

The words of Alma and also the words of Amulek which was declared unto the people which was in the land of Ammonihah. And also they are cast into prison and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, according to the Record of Alma (Alma 9, *originally* Alma 7)

An account of the Sons of Mosiah, which rejected their rights to the Kingdom for the word of God and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites. Their sufferings and deliverance according to the record of Alma (Alma 17, *originally* Alma 12)

An account of the preaching of Aaron and Muloki and their brethren to the Lamanites (Alma 21, *originally* Alma 13)

The Commandment of Alma to his Son Helaman (Alma 36, *originally* Alma 17)

The Commandments of Alma to his Son Shiblon (Alma 38, *originally* Alma 18)

The Commandments of Alma to his Son Corianton (Alma 39, *originally* Alma 19)

The account of the people of Nephi and their wars and dissensions in the days of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman, which he kept in his days (Alma 45, *originally* Alma 21)

The prophecy of Nephi the Son of Helaman (God threatens the people of Nephi that he will visit them in his anger to their utter destruction except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites) (Helaman 7, *originally* Helaman 3)
The prophesy of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephites (Helaman 13, originally Helaman 5)

Jesus Christ showeth himself unto the people of Nephi as the multitude were gathered together in the land Bountiful and did minister unto them. And on this wise did he show himself unto them. (3 Nephi 11, originally 3 Nephi 5)

The words of Christ which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them (Moroni 2, originally Moroni 2)

The manner which the disciples, which were called the elders of the church, ordained priests and teachers (Moroni 3, originally Moroni 3)

The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church (Moroni 4, originally Moroni 4)

The manner of administering the wine (Moroni 5, originally Moroni 5)

An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me Moroni (and it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry) (Moroni 8, originally Moroni 8)

The second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni (Moroni 9, originally Moroni 9)

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THE LORD WILL NOT FORGET THEM!
MĀORI SEERS AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS
CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW ZEALAND

Robert Joseph

Abstract: This essay demonstrates that the key prophetic matakite dreams and visions of at least the nine nineteenth-century East Coast Māori seers appear to have been (and should continue to be) fulfilled surprisingly by the coming of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to New Zealand. There are lessons for current and future Latter-day Saint leaders and missionaries to reflect on this little-known history on the nineteenth-century Māori conversions to the restored Church.

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.


Blessed is the name of my God, who has been mindful of this people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body in a strange land; yes I say, blessed be the
name of my God who has been mindful of us, wanderers in a strange land.

Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth.

Alma 26:36–37

**Introduction**

Māori historically and culturally believe they are a branch of the ‘House of Israel’ but in a ‘new land’ as noted in the above Book of Mormon reference.\(^1\) By implication, Māori believe they have a right to, as well as all of the associated responsibilities of, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This includes its priesthood and attendant blessings by virtue of their direct House of Israel lineage (whakapapa), by entering into gospel covenants (ngā kawenata) and by keeping the commandments of God (ngā ture o te Atua). It was no surprise then that when the first Anglican Christian service was preached by Reverend Samuel Marsden to Māori in 1814, Māori eventually flocked to the Anglican Church, one of the precursors to the restored Church of Jesus Christ, in large numbers.

The Wesleyan Methodists followed the Anglicans in 1823 and the Catholics in 1838. Māori conversions to these and other Christian churches increased rapidly when parts of the Bible were translated into Māori in 1827 and 1834, with the first full Māori Bible (Te Paipera Tapu) completed in 1868. The New Testament was very popular among Māori; many chiefs traveled long distances to obtain copies from the sectarian missionaries. Consequently, Māori became very familiar with the Bible to a point where the sectarian missionaries complained that they found it difficult to find something new in the Bible to converse with them about.\(^2\)

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When the first missionaries (elders) of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints arrived in New Zealand in the 1880s to live and proselytize among Māori, they discovered that many of the religious beliefs of Māori and the Latter-day Saints appeared to parallel each other in surprising and initially inexplicable ways. These included a common heritage, spiritual beliefs, in some respects culture and customary traditions, and hope for the future.

What is less well-known in New Zealand history is why Māori subsequently flocked to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after 1880 in large numbers. For example, by August 1885, there were 16 Māori and 4 Pākehā (European) branches of the Church in New Zealand, which numbers continued to grow steadily for the next 15 years. At the close of 1887, there were 2,573 Church members with 2,055 Māori and 237 Pākehā. At the turn of the century, there were nearly 4,000 Māori in the restored Church, accounting for nearly a tenth of the total Māori population, while in 1901, there were 79 Māori branches in New Zealand.


3 The Mormon Church or LDS Church were both commonly used to refer to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the October 2019 188th Semi-annual General Conference, the current prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, called on all church members to refer to the church by the name the Savior gave it—hence my use of the full name of the church in this article. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Correct Name of the Church,” Ensign, (November 2018): 87.

4 Pākehā is the Māori term for non-Māori or white European. The term is used respectfully throughout this article.


7 Britsch, “Māori Traditions and the Mormon Church,” 38. This success has continued on into recent times. In 2010, for example, the number of restored Church members in New Zealand had increased to 103,802. More recently, Marjorie Newton noted that the restored Church claims more than 100,000 adherents of which 70% are Māori and Pacific Islanders and is the sixth largest church in New Zealand. See Marjorie Newton, Mormon and Māori (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), xxi and 181.
Why did The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints appeal to an indigenous non-European people on the other side of the world? How could a perceived white, conservative, American Church penetrate into the hearts, minds, and lives of this fiercely independent, intelligent, and proud race? How could Western American missionaries infiltrate so successfully into a foreign indigenous culture at such a turbulent time in New Zealand, Māori, Church, and even world history? Such questions of the restored Church of Jesus Christ have often intrigued Māori and non-Māori scholars alike.

It would be a combination of the natural similarities between these two groups, the dissatisfaction of Māori with the evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS) section of the Anglican Church and other Protestant churches in New Zealand, and other political, social, and economic factors that played a part but are beyond the scope of this article. While this discovery was unanticipated by missionaries from the restored Church of Jesus Christ, Māori seers (matakite) ironically predicted that a fullness of religious truth and salvation would also come to Māori from Pākehā. The rest of this article will focus on the prophetic

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utterances of East Coast Māori seers being a key motivation for certain Māori families converting to the restored Church of Jesus Christ in the late nineteenth century. Specific matakite predictions ultimately guided many Māori into, and could continue to keep them in, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The article will briefly discuss the prophetic utterances of nine Māori seers—Arama Toiroa, Arapata Taniwha, Horiana Tupeka, Toaroa Pakahia, Apiata Kuikaiinga, Paora Te Potangaroa, John Rangitakaiwaho, Piripi Te Maari, and Te Whatahoro Jury. The author will consider these insights in a respectful, balanced, and pensive way, analyzing the alleged prophesied arrival of the restored message and messengers to a number of Māori tribes where the restored Church of Jesus Christ flourished.

**Matakite Māori: Tribal Seers**

Kei muri i te awe kāpara, Behind the tattooed face,
he tāngata kē. a stranger stands.
Nōna te ao—he mā. He will inherit the world—he is white.9

—Titahi, Ngāti Whatua prophecy

The Māori appear to have been prepared in special ways for the coming of missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, at least in the restored Church and some Māori tribal narratives. The Māori seer also foresaw the bittersweet arrival of the Pākehā long before they came to Aotearoa, New Zealand. According to Ngāti Whatua sources, the above prophecy was well-known and was uttered by their tribal seer, Titahi, who foretold the coming of Europeans and, implicitly, the subsequent impact of European contact, which thrust the Māori world into a state of perilous imbalance. Land and natural resource loss through unjust wars, as well as land confiscations and other legal machinations, wreaked havoc on the relationship between people and the natural environment. Forcible individualization of land, property, worldviews, and leadership in the Native Land Court disturbed the balance between members of kin-groups. Introduced diseases decimated tribal populations and upset belief systems, and introduced addictive substances—alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, and sugar—undermined

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Māori health and well-being. Sectarian Christianity, moreover, damaged in many ways the connection between the people and the gods; and the individualistic and economic assumptions underlying European capitalism and Western liberalism destroyed traditional tribal reciprocity economies, the equilibrium between kin, the physical and metaphysical world, the environment, and the fundamental reciprocal obligations to past, present, and future generations.

In a Latter-day Saint Church-Māori historical narrative, a similar vision was recorded by another matakite who prophesied:

When I depart from here to join my people who are waiting for me at home, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves; for the time is come and now is when alien white feet shall desecrate my grave.10

Yet the Anglican Reverend Samuel Marsden acknowledged as early as 1808 that Māori were prepared for the gospel of Jesus Christ when he observed from Australia:

The natives of New Zealand are far advanced in Civilization, and apparently prepared for receiving the Knowledge of Christianity more than any Savage nations I have seen....The more I see of these People, the more I am pleased with, and astonished at their moral ideas, and Characters. They appear like a superior Race of men. Was Christianity once received amongst them, New Zealand would be one of the finest parts of the Globe.11

In a similar manner but in a specific Latter-day Saint context, William W. Phelps resided in the then Church center of Independence, Missouri, in 1832 and was editor of a newspaper The Evening and Morning Star. Phelps read a short sketch that described the physical beauty and superior intellect of Māori; this impressed him so much that he reprinted the passage in his newspaper. Phelps then added some comments about Māori and the broader missionary proselytizing endeavours of the recently established Church of Jesus Christ at the time:

It really affords consolation to think that such a people exists upon the Islands of the sea, for the Lord will not forget them.

The Isles are to wait for his law, and the gospel of the kingdom, is to be preached to every nation on the globe so that some may be gathered out of every kindred, tongue and people, and be brought to Zion.12

Elder John Murdock, a missionary, was assigned to preside over missionary work in the British colonies in Australia and New Zealand (the Australasian Mission) by Elder Parley P. Pratt in 1851. Elder Murdock was subsequently stationed in Sydney, Australia. Elder Murdock soon learned there was a potential missionary field in New Zealand, including among Māori who, he noted, were able to “read and write and all of them industrious and intelligent.”13

The first Latter-day Saint missionaries to visit New Zealand, however, were Elders Augustus Farnham and James Cooke in 1854. Elder Farnham further acknowledged that Māori were prepared for the gospel message when he wrote to the Prophet Brigham Young:

I am informed that the chiefs of the tribes say the [sectarian] missionaries do not preach them the right gospel, that they are keeping back the part they need. And they do not feel to receive their teaching. From what I can learn, the field is ready to harvest; and as soon as possible, we shall send some laborers there to weed the crop and try to gather the wheat.14

The above comments provide context into how Anglican leaders and leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ perceived Māori in the early and mid-nineteenth century and how some Māori were ready to receive the restored Church of Jesus Christ. Due to space constraints however, the rest of this article will briefly discuss the specific prophetic utterances of some well-known and not so well-known matakite that guided Māori families to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the first being Arama Te Toiroa.

Arama Te Toiroa: East Coast Seer

In 1830, the same year The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in Fayette, New York, by the young prophet Joseph Smith,
an aged Māori patriarch and seer named Arama Te Toiroa gathered his family (whānau) and subtribe (hapū) together in Te Mahia (Northern Hawkes Bay) to advise them about a new church. Toiroa was a famous East Coast seer who made other prophecies, such as predicting who would survive and how opposition foe would die in tribal battles, the birth of children, and counsel on religious matters.

To his people then, Toiroa was considered a great seer, so his family and subtribe listened very carefully to what he had to say regarding religious matters. Toiroa's key prophecy in a Latter-day Saint and Māori context was recorded by one of his grandsons, Hirini Whaanga, who subsequently converted to the restored Church on 30 November 1884 in Nuhaka. Hirini actually recorded Toiroa’s prophecy in 1902 while living in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he and his family migrated to in 1894.

The author interjects and acknowledges here that although Hirini was a baby in 1830 when Toiroa uttered the prophecy—he was born in 1828—Māori oral accounts such as this were meticulously recorded by experts (tohunga) set apart specifically to record and transmit important knowledge and events orally. Māori also had sufficient checks and balances such as other expert witnesses (tohunga) being present when accounts were recorded and recited to ensure the information was correct, accurate, and protected.

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Hence, the author has no doubt regarding the accuracy of the account recited by Toiroa in 1830 but written down by Hirini in the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1902, 72 years later, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The claim to accuracy is enhanced by Hirini’s status as the firstborn (tuakana) in the Whaanga family and chief (rangatira) of the tribe whose responsibility it was to preserve and transmit such knowledge to future generations. Now to Hirini’s written account of Toiroa’s prophecy. Hirini recorded:

I desire to tell you of a prophecy of one of my forefathers, Arama Toiroa. Amongst our people this chief was regarded as a seer....In the year 1830, this Arama Toiroa gathered his children, grandchildren and relatives together. At this time, most of his descendants had joined the Church of England, and the aged chief, addressing them, said: ‘My dear friends, you must leave that church, for it is not the true church of the God of heaven. The church you have joined is from the earth and not from heaven.’ Upon hearing this his people asked, ‘Where then can we find a church where we can worship the true God?’

Arama Toiroa answered, ‘There will come to you a true form of worship; it will be brought from the east, even from beyond the heavens. It will be brought across the great ocean and you will hear of it coming to Poneke [Wellington at the south end of the North Island] and afterwards its representatives will come to Te Mahia. They will then go northward to Waiapu [Poverty Bay, Gisborne area] but will return to Te Mahia.

When this ‘Karakia,’ form of worship, is introduced amongst you, you will know it, for one shall stand and raise both hands to heaven.

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19 The *Juvenile Instructor* was an official periodical of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that began in 1866. Its primary audience was the children of the Church with a purpose to help prepare them for future responsibilities. The magazine published editorials, poetry, essays, stories, biographical sketches, a monthly column, and discussions on moral issues and the history of other cultures. The magazine subsequently became the teachers’ magazine of the Church and was renamed *The Instructor* in 1929. See Doyle L. Green, “The Church and Its Magazines,” *Ensign*, January 1971, 12–15, and Ruel A. Allred, “Juvenile Instructor,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism: Twentieth-Century Mormon Publications*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 481.

When you see this sign, enter into that church. Many of you will join the church and afterwards one will go from amongst you the same way that the ministers came even unto the land from afar off.\(^{21}\)

**Korongata-Bridge Pā Conversions**

Fifty-four years passed before Toiroa’s utterances were fulfilled. In 1884, Elders Alma Greenwood and Ira Hinckley brought the restored message to the Poneke (Wellington) area and then made their way to Hawkes Bay. There they were joined by President William Thomas Stewart, and together they all traversed the path Toiroa had predicted. It was at Korongata (now Bridge Pa,\(^{22}\) Hastings), however, and not at Te Mahia, that Toiroa’s descendants first accepted the restored message. Hirini described the day when the gospel was first preached to some of Toiroa’s people:

In journeying northward they reached...Korongata, where many of us were assembled on the Sabbath day. Amongst the people who were there was a grandson of Arama Toiroa whose name was Te Teira Marutu.

The meeting was conducted by Elder Stewart and his friends. The services were opened with singing and prayer, and a Gospel address was delivered, after which they sang again, and Brother Stewart arose to dismiss with prayer. In doing so he raised both hands and invoked God’s blessing upon the people.\(^{23}\)

As soon as the grandson of Arama Toiroa saw this he arose and declared that this was the church of which his forefather prophesied which would surely be firmly established amongst the Māori people. He and his wife applied for baptism, and they and their children were thus initiated into the Church by Elder Stewart.\(^{24}\)


\(^{22}\) Korongata or Bridge Pā was settled by Māori from Nuhaka and Te Mahia in the nineteenth century; hence the people of Nuhaka and Te Mahia are Toiroa’s people as are many from Korongata.

\(^{23}\) Early in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ, both hands were often raised when a prayer was given publicly. The practice was later changed to only the right arm being uplifted when blessing the sacrament or dedicating a grave. Both practices were later discontinued except in sacred temple rituals.

Māori stalwart Stuart Meha added in his unpublished history of the restored Church:

The work of proselyting was prosecuted with vigor and begun in Hawkes Bay in 1884, and the first [Hawkes] Bay people who affiliated themselves with the Church were the people of Korongata, better known by Pākehā people [Europeans] as Bridge Pa.25

Nuhaka and Te Mahia Conversions

Subsequently, the Elders visited the old home of Toiroa at Te Mahia. In August and September 1884, the three missionaries—Elders William Thomas Stewart, Ira Hinckley, and Alma Greenwood—arrived in Nuhaka and were later joined by Elder John C. Stewart. Subsequently, some 210 adults, a high proportion of the Anglican community on Mahia Peninsula, were converted to the restored Church. Mel Tuati Whaanga augmented the narrative with these remarks:

[The people] received word that a new religion had arrived at Korongata in Hastings. Hirini and Ihaka [Whaanga were] to investigate it….At the end of the meeting, Elder Stewart stood to offer the closing prayer and raised both hands above his head. This was the sign Toiroa had foretold. The two sons returned to Mahia and [shared what] they had seen and heard.26

Mel Whaanga added that when the missionaries visited Te Mahia and held meetings with other descendants of Toiroa, after seeing the sign, these people said, “This is indeed the Church for us, for did not our revered forefather, Arama Toiroa, prophesy about it?”27

Largely because of Toiroa’s 1830 prophecy, every person in Korongata and a large number of Māori in Taonoke, Omahu, Te Hauke, Nuhaka, and Te Mahia were baptized into the restored Church. For the Whaanga family, the conversion process was initially due to this prophetic utterance of Toiroa.

Also recorded in Toiroa’s prophecy was what the missionaries would do next. Toiroa stated that the missionaries would travel from Te Mahia

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25  Meha, “Condensed History.”
and go north to Waiapu (East Coast area around Ruatoria) and would then return to Te Mahia. Stuart Meha noted in this respect:

Encouraged by the success of their labors, President [William Thomas] Stewart established another branch at Taonoke, and then pushed on to the Wairoa, Nuhaka, Te Mahia, Te Muriwai, Te Arai and on to Gisborne.28

**Arapata Taniwha and Horiana Tupeka: Gisborne Matakite and Conversions**

A number of Māori families were also baptized into the restored Church of Jesus Christ in the Tūranga (Gisborne) and Waiapu areas during this period. One of them was the Hamana (Hamon) family, who were converted through other prophetic experiences of their ancestor Arapata Taniwha and his daughter Horiana Tupeka.

Taniwha and his people were sympathetic to the Māori-Christian hybrid Church—Pai Mārire, whose emissaries visited Gisborne in the 1860s. Pai Mārire, meaning “goodness and peace”—was an organized expression of an independent Māori Christian Church movement led by Te Ua Haumene of Taranaki during the turbulent New Zealand Wars period. In 1862 Te Ua apparently had a vision in which the archangel Gabriel instructed him to lead his people in ‘casting off the yoke of the Pākehā.’ Te Ua called his Church Hauhau. Te Hau (the breath of God) carried the news of deliverance to the faithful. Te Ua preached that the children of Israel, or Māori, would be restored to their land of promise—Canaan, or New Zealand—following a day of deliverance where the unrighteous would perish. Pai Mārire emissaries subsequently travelled around the North Island seeking converts, but its founding principles of peace and goodness were subverted by violent elements such as the killing of Pākehā soldiers at Ahuahu and the Battle of Moutoa Gardens in Whanganui in 1864.29

As a result of the Pai Mārire emissaries visiting Tūranga, on 17 November 1865 the Crown and its Māori allies attacked Waerenga-a-Hika

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28 Meha, “Condensed History.”
pā, where Arapata Taniwha, Horiana Tupeka, and their family lived. After five days, the pā fell and many were taken prisoner and sent to prison, without trial, in the Chatham Islands in 1866.

Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki, another well-known matakite, was also imprisoned at the Chatham Islands a month after Arapata Taniwha. During his incarceration, Te Kooti studied the Bible very closely, then became ill with severe bouts of tubercular fever in 1867. During his illness, Te Kooti alleged that he had strange visions where the ‘Spirit of God’ (some say the angel Gabriel) raised him up and instructed him to teach the people. He miraculously recovered, then started his new church basing its tenets on the Old Testament and apparently converted most if not all of the other Māori inmates to his new faith.

Subsequently, on 4 July 1868, Te Kooti led a daring escape with 163 men and 135 women and children when they commandeered the Rifleman and sailed back to Whareongaonga just south of Gisborne. Te Kooti then told the people that they would no longer kneel at prayer. Their homage to God now would be the raising of the right hand at the end of prayer. From this gesture, the Ringatū Church of Te Kooti derives its name.

Te Kooti wanted to be left alone, but Pākehā and many Māori refused. A number of bloody battles ensued that included atrocities on both sides. A massive bounty was even placed on Te Kooti’s head of £5,000—yet miraculously, he was never apprehended.

Unfortunately many of his people and other tribes were ‘caught in the cross fire’ of the battles, including at the hilltop pā of Ngatapa on 5 December 1868, where approximately 130 of Te Kooti’s people were captured, stripped, and summarily executed at the command of Major Ropata Wahawaha of Ngāti Porou.

One of the people at Ngatapa pā was Horiana Tupeka—she was known for her healing skills (tohunga wairakau) through herbal medicine and prayer (karakia). Before the pā fell, however, Horiana had a dream that saved her life. She had seen a man with a spear (taiaha) standing in the doorway of the house. On hearing about her dream, Te Kooti ordered Horiana to leave the pā, which she did. She made it safely back to Gisborne. Horiana subsequently married a European, Joseph Hamon.

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30 Poverty Bay Herald, 11 August 1897.
When missionaries Elder Alma Greenwood and President William Thomas Stewart visited Tūranga (Poverty Bay) in 1884, they were moved by the spirit (wairua) to visit Horiana Tupeka and her family. The Hamon family oral narratives recorded how just outside of Gisborne, the elders prayed and had an impression to follow a certain track that led to Horiana and her father Arapata Taniwha.

Three nights before the elders’ visit, however, her son Henare was ill. Horiana, although an expert healer (tohunga wairakau), could not make out what was wrong. Horiana would usually experience visions and dreams to instruct her how to heal. At this time, the Hamon family narrative recorded:

[Horiana] would usually know what herb to give [Henare]. When she was stuck for information on what herb to give, she prayed and her mother appears to her and tells her what herb to get.32

Hixon Hamon continued:

Now this story she told me not once but time and time again. This time her mother appeared with her hands raised. Poua [Horiana] couldn’t make out what the sign was. So the next night she prayed again and the same thing happened, making the same sign. The same thing happened on the third night.

The following afternoon,…the two Mormon elders appeared. They had followed the track, and her little shack was the first one they had come to. They said we are missionaries. Poua called ‘Haere mai,’ come.…

The elders came in and Poua said in Māori, Kei te mate taku tamaiti, e manaaki ia — my boy’s sick, bless him. Of course the Elders said they would. But you see in the prayers at that time, whenever the Elders pray, they put their hands up. So as soon as that happened Poua understood then what her mother was telling her, these were the servants of the Lord.33

Horiana then took the missionaries to her father Arapata Taniwha, who apparently had received previously a vision of the true Church having three books. Hixon Hamon continued:

32 Hamon “Haere mai nga pononga o te Atua.”
33 Ibid.
It was early evening…old Taniwha had his back towards them. When he saw their shadow and heard them coming up he knew that they were ministers. He called out to them: Haere mai nga pononga o te Atua, ‘Come ye servants of the Lord,’ and Poua took them in.

But the old man, although he said that, he wasn’t satisfied. Every minister that came into the pa he asked them in Māori, where are the three books?

Well the Elders laid out the Book of Mormon first, then the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants. The old fella, all the years he has been telling the people, the Gospel, the right Gospel will come and the sure sign of the true Gospel will be the three books.

Of course he talked to them in Māori. The Catholic, the Church of England missionaries would come and he would tell the people: Kaua e hono…and he wouldn’t join. When he came to this he told them ‘This is the true church; these are the signs. They have their three books.’

As a result of this experience from the dreams of Horiana Tupeka and vision of Arapata Taniwha, the Hamana family and others in the Turanga area were baptized into the restored Church in 1884.

Te Arai Challenge: More Tūranga Conversions

Another relevant incident regarding missionary work in the Tūranga area was at Te Arai (Manutuke) in 1886. When President Stewart and his missionaries—Elders Ira Hinckley, John Ash and Edward Newby—visited Te Arai that year, the Anglican Church was holding a Diocesan Conference with over 2,000 Māori in attendance under the direction of Bishop William Williams.35 The arrival of the missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ naturally created quite a disturbance. According to the Church historical narrative, Bishop Williams welcomed the visitors in his formal welcome speech (whaikōrero) as follows:

Welcome thou honoured guest. Where were you when the flesh of man singed on the stones of the oven? You have waited until I have made peace between man and man; then you

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34 Hamon, “Haere mai nga pononga o te Atua.”
35 See also Stuart Meha, “A Prophetic Utterance of Paora Potangaroa,” Te Karere 43 (October 1948): 298–299.
have come trespassing on my preserves. As host I cannot but extend to you accommodation and food.36

Bishop Williams issued a very strong challenge (wero) to the missionaries. President Stewart however, according to Stuart Meha, formally responded in te reo Māori:

President Stewart in arising to respond thanked the assembly for their welcome and hospitality. He told them the Māoris were a remnant of the House of Israel and that he had with him their history which told of their origin [The Book of Mormon]…

To the venerable bishop President Stewart also expressed his thankfulness for his kindly and courteous welcome. He congratulated the bishop on the great preparatory work that had been done by his Church among the Māori people — even for the cessation of bloodshed and cannibalism among the various tribes, and for the translation of the Bible into Māori. Those were great achievements, he said. He pointed out that that was the mission of the Churches who had come to this land from 1814 to the present.

President Stewart pointed out that before our Lord and Saviour entered upon this ministry in the meridian of time, he had need of a forerunner who was required to prepare the way for the Lord. John the Baptist was that forerunner who came bounding into the wilderness crying, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his path straight.’

‘Bishop Williams,’ President Stewart is said to have said, ‘You are our forerunner. You have prepared the way for the true Church of God, and we are his ambassadors. You have in very deed prepared the way for us.

… All this great mission of yours is a preparatory work for the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has been restored in these latter days by an angel, just as John the Revelator said it would be through the instrumentality of an angel, and to a youth, just as the prophet Zechariah said it would be.’37

Hamon recorded slightly different details of this event:

After the formal welcome...President Stewart then arose and addressing the congregation in Māori said: ‘E te morehu o te whare o Iharaira ...’ (Oh ye children of the house of Israel.) The assembled group, many of them in native Māori dress, and about 1 in 10 of the men having tattooed faces, were astonished at hearing President Stewart speak to them in their native tongue....

Tumuaki Stewart continued, ‘John the Baptist came before Christ to prepare the way for Him. So likewise did you people come to prepare the way for the true church of Jesus Christ.’ By this time the big crowd was pressing in closer to hear the words of President Stewart. For several hours the speaking by various ones went on.38

Although these accounts differ slightly, the response was the same. Māori were very impressed with President Stewart’s response, and some asked to hear the message of these new ministers to which Bishop Williams acquiesced. Some Māori also invited the elders to visit them in their homes after the conference.

Willard Amaru provided another account in which he recorded that his ancestor, Karaitiana Amaru, attended the Te Arai hui; following his response to Bishop Williams, President Stewart then raised his hand to the square, greeted the people—Tēnā koutou te Whare o Iharaira – Greetings to you the House of Israel. Then he began to preach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The Amaru narrative added that when Karaitiana returned to Tolaga Bay (Uawa), he was aware of the prophecies about the true Church for his people (assuming it was Toiroa), was baptized, and then a large number of the tribe, Te Aitanga a Hauiti, entered the waters of baptism.39

Subsequently and as prophesied by Toiroa, many of the people from Tūranga to Waiapu were converted to the restored Church, including those from the various tribes of these areas.

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38 Hamon, “Haere mai nga pononga o te Atua,” 153.
39 Willard Amaru, “Karaitaina Tuteketenui Amaru” (unpublished manuscript in the author’s possession, no date), 1–2.
Back to Te Mahia

The missionaries then frequently returned to Te Mahia, as prophesied by Toiroa, which became a Church stronghold from that point on. An official Government Report in 1886 even confirmed:

The Natives at Nuhaka and Te Mahia have been visited by several American Mormon elders, who have succeeded in making a great number of converts to their faith; in fact, nearly all the Natives of Tahaenui have given up their former creeds and joined the Mormon faith.40

Another newspaper article in 1896 further confirmed:

Mormon proselytizing among the Māoris appears to be making considerable headway in this district. The Mahia district of this church extends from Waikare to Mahanga, including Mahia Peninsula...The number of members now totals 560. Good work has been and is still being done by the elders in charge, especially in temperance teaching.41

To complete our analysis of Toiroa’s vision, we will finish with the last section of his prophecy in which Toiroa predicted that one would travel back with the ministers. We will also briefly introduce a related prophecy by another Māori seer, Toaroa Pakahia, which aligned with this last section of Toiroa’s prophecy.

Toaroa Pakahia and the Whaanga Migration to Utah

The final stanza of Toiroa’s prophecy stated: “Afterwards one will go from amongst you the same way that the ministers came even unto the land from afar off.”42 Toiroa’s direction was the divine injunction for Hirini and Mere Whaanga and their family mandating their emigration with the returning Church missionaries to Utah, the ‘land afar off,’ in 1894.

Another related prophecy was that of the Māori seer Toaroa Pakahia, who stated in 1845 that salvation for Māori would come from the East

40 Captain R. M. Preece, “Wairoa District, Napier, to the Under-Secretary, Native Department,” in “Reports from Officers in Native Districts,” in Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, (Session 1, G-01, 1886), 16.
41 See also the newspaper article “Mormonism among the Māoris,” Bay of Plenty Times, 10 January 1896, 3.
and Māori would recognize the true messengers because they would raise their arm when in prayer.\(^{43}\)

Referring to this prophecy, Te Wiringa Naera recorded at a genealogy meeting in the 1960s in which he asserted that Toaroa Pakahia further prophesied: “After my death when weeds cover my grave, then that salvation of which I have spoken will come and one of you will cross the great sea of Kiwa [the Pacific Ocean].”\(^{44}\)

The late Ngāti Kahungunu chief Paora Whaanga noted that Hirini Whaanga was so impressed by this utterance of Pakahia, along with that of Toiroa, that he joined the restored Church when the elders came to Te Mahia. Paora added that Hirini and his family later crossed Te Moananui-a-Kiwa—the Pacific Ocean—and carried out temple work for his ancestors in Utah from 1894 until his death in 1905, again because of these utterances of Toiroa and Pakahia.\(^{45}\)

**Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki: East Coast Matakite and Te Hāhi Ringatū**

Before we leave Toiroa, two final points must be mentioned. As with all Māori prophecies (and non-Māori prophecies for that matter), a prophecy is capable of more than one interpretation. The true seer could not err. It was left to the interpreter to make mistakes.\(^{46}\) Some of Toiroa’s prophecies, including the narrative by Hirini Whaanga above, were interpreted by Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki to establish his Ringatū Church. Judith Binney asserted:

> Among the seminal narratives of Toiroa and Te Kooti, there is one concerning Te Kooti’s visit to Nukutaurua when still a young man. ... Toiroa then predicted to Te Kooti that he would see him coming from Tūranga [Gisborne], weeping, and disappearing on a raupo raft beyond Papahuakina (Table Cape). But soon he would return, bearing the prayers of the

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\(^{44}\) Te Wiringa Naera, “Māori Prophecies” (unpublished manuscript given to Lewis Mousely, Salt Lake City, Utah, no date) as cited in Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand*.


\(^{46}\) Buck, *The Coming of the Māori*. 
faith with his hand up-raised. Thus, in this narrative, Toiroa, it is alleged, foresaw the coming of the new faith, the Ringatū or Upraised Hand.47

The Ringatū Church then claims that Toiroa was prophesying of their Church and not The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As noted above, after escaping from the Chatham Islands, the people returned to Tūranga from the East, the Ringatū emissaries apparently traveled in pairs, and when they prayed, they raised their right arm to the square—hence the name Ringatū.

In the restored Church narrative however, Elder John Ferris, who labored in the Urewera area in 1881 among the Tūhoe tribes, recorded that these tribes who sheltered Te Kooti during the New Zealand Wars, acknowledged:

Tekota [Te Kooti] told them that I was the same man that he had told them about two years ago that would come from a far country and give them the good church, and that Tekota [Te Kooti] said there were two more coming, and then the Māoris would have no more war, but they would have peace, and many good things would come to them, and that they would know the good way.48

Furthermore, as noted by Hirini Whaanga in 1902, the matakite utterance of Toiroa specified the path the missionaries would travel from Poneke (Wellington) up to Tūranga and they would raise both hands, not one hand, when they prayed. There are, therefore, contested narratives on the interpretation of Toiroa’s prophecies regarding the new Church for Māori.

A further interesting satirical newspaper article, however, was published in 1870 regarding the Hau Hau (Pai Mārire), Ringatū, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that stated:

If these [restored church] missionaries could disseminate their doctrines among Hau Haus, and induce a large emigration


48 John S. Ferris to the editor, 11 September 1881, Deseret Evening News, 10 November 1881. See also “The Diary of John S. Ferris from Marys Vale [Marysvale] Utah, Mormon Elder” (12 June 1881, Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah).
of those undesirable individuals, they would be doing good service, and might reasonably expect a subsidy from the Government. [Te] Kooti, with his strangely perverted knowledge of the Old Testament, and his belief reduced to practice in the plurality of wives, would make an excellent Mormon.49

The last note here on Toiroa is on Hamiora Mangakahia who, with Te Kooti, was a student of Toiroa. Mangakahia considered that he too had been chosen to fulfil Toiroa’s quest for peace which Toiroa had called for in 1858.50 Hamiora even cited a prediction of Toiroa that it would be ‘the distant descendant—te Miha’—who would one day bring about this peace.51 Mangakahia was later the first Premier of the Kotahitanga Māori Parliament (Paremata Māori) in 1892 at Pāpāwai, Wairarapa. In this manner, the lines of authority descending from Toiroa’s authority (mana) were similarly alleged to have been woven into the Ringatū Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Kotahitanga Māori Parliament. Incidentally, Mangakahia was subsequently baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as were many rangatira in the Wairarapa area. It is to the Wairarapa where we will now discuss another well-known prophecy of the great Māori seer Paora Te Potangaroa.

**Paora Te Potangaroa:**

**Wairarapa Moana Mataki and Conversions**

Paora Te Potangaroa was a great Ngāti Kahungunu and Rangitāne chief and mataki of the Wairarapa region. In 1878 Potangaroa inspired the many tribes of the upper Wairarapa to construct a large carved meeting house at Te Ore Ore near Masterton. During the construction of the marae, animosity developed between Potangaroa and Te Kere, an expert carver (tohunga whakairo) and rival mataki from Whanganui. Te Kere apparently resented Potangaroa’s growing influence; he disagreed with the size of the proposed house and prophesied: “E kore e taea te

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49 *Evening Post*, 19 April 1870.


51 Hamiora Mangakahia, in *Te Puke ki Hikurangi* (7 June 1898). At this time, Mangakahia stated that he was the person to whom Toiroa had told his predictions for peace. See also Binney, *Redemption Songs*, 13.
whakamutu te whare i mua atu i ngā tau e waru – It is not possible to complete this [house] in less than eight years. 52

Te Kere then departed to build a rival meeting house at Tahoraiti, Dannevirke. Potangaroa however, completed construction between 1878 and 1879, but the house was not officially opened until 1881. In derision to Te Kere, Potangaroa named the new house ‘Nga Tau e Waru – The Eight Years.’

During this period, Potangaroa was preaching Christianity expressed in Māori concepts and when he appeared in public, people gathered around him at Nga Tau E Waru for instruction. One such famous meeting (hui) was held on 16 March 1881. The Te Ore Ore meeting was to celebrate 40 years of peace in the region from three covenants (kawenata) which had deep political implications, hence the 3,000 or so people in attendance that included many Pākehā. 53

It was during this meeting that Potangaroa uttered a number of visions including admonishing Māori to no longer alienate their land because they were dispossessing themselves. 54 Apparently, Potangaroa also dealt with some vexing questions of the people over religion. 55

Maunsell, the Native Agent for Wairarapa, adversely recorded his observations of the 1881 hui:

A number of Natives of the southern end of the district joined a new faith started by Paora Potangaroa of Wairarapa. Nearly 300 Natives from Hawkes Bay attended the late meeting…for the purpose of promulgating his views on religion….A large section of the Natives here profess to believe in prophets, or in men said to possess supernatural powers. Kere of the West and Paora Potangaroa of the East Coasts, both now at Te Oreore, have each taken the role of prophet; in such capacity they are, each for their separate districts, religious and secular guardians, though many do not believe in them, and the influence gained appears to be only temporary and at their assemblies. Large invitations were sent throughout this island to various tribes to assemble at Te Oreore near Masterton, to

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52 “Te Ore Ore Marae” (unpublished manuscript, in author’s possession, no date), 43.
54 Smith, “Between Two Worlds,” 73.
55 See E. S. Maunsell, “Wairarapa Report,” in Appendix to the House of Representatives (Native Agent, Wairarapa, to the Under-Secretary, Native Department, Greytown, 17 May 1881, G-8), 14–15.
hear some important revelations from Paora....Paora did not make a favourable impression as to his pretended prophecies. The greater part dispersed in disappointment, beyond having feasted well for about three weeks. The only conclusion come to was that Paora and Kere were to control their individual affairs.\textsuperscript{56}

Ballara and Cairns, however, recorded that Potangaroa made a number of prophecies at the same hui. One key prophecy of relevance to the restored Church was uttered here by Potangaroa, which Ballara and Cairns briefly recorded:

A new and great power was to come to the people from the direction of the rising sun. Various interpretations were made: it was believed to herald the arrival of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as interpreted by the Mormons; and it was believed that missionaries would come from the east and set in place a new church.\textsuperscript{57}

Bronwyn Elsmore added that Potangaroa prophesied that in two and a half years a prophet would appear after him, would speak of matters concerning a new house, and would make them known to the people.\textsuperscript{58} Elsmore noted that while the churches at that time were found lacking, there was no rejection of the Christian message or hopes. There was further instruction that the different churches ‘should be welcomed in the area because one would be influential in the future.’\textsuperscript{59} Rimene recorded his understanding of the prophecy:

There is a religious denomination coming for us; perhaps it will come from the sea, perhaps it will emerge from here. Secondly, let the churches into the house—there will be a time when a religion will emerge for you and I and the Māori people.\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{57} Angela Ballara and Keith Cairns, “Paora Potangaroa,” in The People of Many Peaks, 226–228.

\textsuperscript{58} Elsmore, Mana from Heaven, 248–249. Elsmore noted that the Te Ore Ore hui lasted for approximately three weeks.


\textsuperscript{60} Rimene, “Prophecies of Paora Potangaroa,” 4.
Part of the 1881 Te Ore Ore hui was actually covered in some detail in a local newspaper at the time. The reporter provided some interesting, although somewhat adverse, comments on the authority of Potangaroa and the issue, questions, and views of the people on religion. The reporter noted:

The great Te Ore Ore meeting came off yesterday, and was to a certain extent a disappointment to both Māoris and Europeans. Many of the former expected a revelation, some of them a miracle; but neither one nor the other transpired.... The meeting had its origin in a mysterious dream. Paora Potangaroa, a little old infirm native, the Moses of Te Ore Ore, saw a mystic flag in a dream, and assembled the tribes apparently to interpret it.... Apparently to the disappointment of one and all, no one, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Hauhau could throw the necessary light on the marvel.

...There were no great fruits of all this great meeting, and it is the same today....There were many more speeches made to the same effect, at the conclusion of which had their usual services, and then the meeting broke up....For several days past the natives have been discussing religious questions with very little result, as far as settling the merits of different religions go.61

The reporter then cynically concluded:

We presume that as soon as the food begins to run short the camp will disperse, and the great meeting end in nothing but a great feed and a great talk.62

The narrative provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, includes much more context. A detailed account by Elder Matthew Cowley referred to the 1881 convention at Te Ore Ore. The established Churches were well represented, but like the young Prophet, Joseph Smith, the chiefs shared a feeling of discontent about the lack of unity among them. Why were there so many different Churches within the bounds of Christianity? Which one should the Māori join so that unity could again be restored among them?63

62 “The Te Ore Ore Meeting.” Given this report was day 2 and the hui lasted for over three weeks, patience was indeed a virtue.
After considerable debate and discussion, the chiefs decided to place the questions—specifically ‘Which of the Churches is the Church for the Māori people? Which of them should we join?’—before the most respected rangatira among them. Potangaroa was asked the poignant questions to which he responded: ‘Taihoa’—‘Wait.’ He retired to his home and meditated, fasted, and prayed about the problem for three days. When he returned to the convention, he addressed his people, stating in part:

My friends, the church for the Māori people has not yet come among us. You will recognize it when it comes. Its missionaries will travel in pairs. They will come from the rising sun. They will visit with us in our homes. They will learn our language and teach us the gospel in our own tongue. When they pray they will raise their right hands.\(^{64}\)

Stuart Meha added:

Paora [Potangaroa] was widely known to possess supernatural powers, [and] was asked the question: ‘Tell us which of these Churches is the right one, for there can only be one Church of God?’ Paora replied—and it is the reply which must be regarded in the light of prophecy—‘The true Church is not here yet, but soon will be, for it is already on the ocean, and you will readily recognise it when you see its ministers raise their hands to the square.’\(^{65}\)

Elsmore alleged that Potangaroa then referred to a number of key points in time:

First, this day of fullness 1881, second, the year 1882 would be a year of the sealing; third, the year 1883 was a year of the honouring of great faith as it is written. Render therefore to all dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.\(^{66}\)

A lot more was uttered by Potangaroa. Apparently, Potangaroa then asked Ranginui Kingi to be his scribe and write his words as he continued to answer the questions which had been put to him. He called the transcription of his words: ‘A covenant (kawenata) for remembering

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the hidden words which were revealed by the Spirit of Jehovah to Paora Potangaroa.’ Cowley offered his interpretation:

First, this is the day of the fullness (1881). Brother Cowley points out that later that year the fullness of the gospel was taken to the Māori. Actually, President [William] Bromley and his colleagues first visited a Māori village, Orakei, on March 6, 1881, ten days before the “covenant” was given to the Māori at Te Ore Ore. “Second, the year 1882 would be the year of the ‘sealing’ (or the year they would learn the sealing ordinances). Third, the year 1883 will be the year of ‘the honoring’— of ‘great faith’— as it is written: ‘render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.’ (Romans 13:7). In that year, Māori began to honor the true God by rendering their dues to him and entering the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Members of Ngāti Kahungunu, especially, began to enter the Church in large numbers. The Te Ore Ore Branch was organized on December 16, 1883.67

Paora Potangaroa’s covenant (kawenata) concludes with these words:

This covenant is to be remembered by the generations which follow after us. And the fruits of that which is set forth above [in the covenants] are — we are the lost sheep of the House of Israel. [We will learn of] the scepter of Judah; of Shilo; of the king of peace; of the day of judgment; of the kingdom of heaven; of the sacred church with a large wall surrounding; of the increase of the race; of faith, love, peace, patience, judgment, unity. All this plan will be fulfilled by the people of the Ngati Kahungunu Tribe during the next forty years.

March 16, 1881  Ranginui Kingi68

Three months after the hui in June 1881, Potangaroa died.69 The covenant, however, was sealed in a cement monument inside Nga Tau E Waru Marae at Te Ore Ore that same year.

A photographer from Masterton obtained permission beforehand to photograph the covenant and a copy subsequently made its way into President Matthew Cowley’s hands at a Church District Conference in

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Masterton in 1944. President Cowley was visiting with the Māori High Priests—Hohepa Heperi, Stuart Meha, and Rahiri Harris. Another local Māori stalwart, Eriata Nopera, also spoke at the Masterton Conference and stated that he was present as a young man at Potangaroa’s Te Ore Ore hui in 1881 and he was aware of the prophecy of the coming of the true church to Māori. At the conclusion of the Masterton Conference, a local woman, Hinerangi Ranura, asked her husband to retrieve a document wrapped in brown paper at the bottom of a trunk in her home and then handed the package to Hohepa Heperi, Eriata Nopera, and then President Cowley in a private room, given the sacred nature of the document. At the conference, Eriata Nopera confirmed that the document was the photograph of Potangaroa’s 1881 Kawenata that he witnessed years before.

Elder Cowley further identified the ‘sacred church with a large wall surrounding it’ with the Salt Lake City Temple in Utah. He also pointed out that the only Māori to participate in all of the ordinances of the restored gospel, including the temple rites, during the next 40 years (1881 until 1921) were members of the Ngāti Kahungunu tribe. Later many members of other tribes participated in all blessings of the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana: Whangaehu Matakite and Te Hāhi Rātana

As noted above with Toiroa, a prophecy is capable of more than one interpretation. Accordingly, Ballara and Cairns were adamant that Potangaroa’s prophecy was not to herald The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but the Rātana Church when they opined:

In 1928, when the religious leader T. W. Rātana visited Te Ore Ore at the request of the people, he removed the stone set up by Paora inside Nga Tau e Waru, repositioning it outside. The move silenced the medium. The coming of the Rātana faith is now widely believed to be the fulfilment of Paora’s prophecy.

71 Cowley, “Māori Chief Predicts Coming,” 697; and Naera, “Māori Prophecies.”
73 Ballara and Cairns, “Paora Potangaroa,” 226–228. See also the newspaper coverage of the event in “Tohungas’ Twilight. Rātana goes on Tour. Not interested in politics,” Auckland Star, 5 May 1928, 10.
Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana alleged that he received his spiritual guidance from the prophetess Mere Rikiriki of the Te Kawau area in the late nineteenth century. Rikiriki prophesied that Rātana and his two sons Ārepa (Alpha) and Ōmeka (Omega) would one day play important roles in the future of New Zealand. One day while fishing at Whangaehu, two whales stranded, which Rātana perceived as a sign (tohu) that he was to be like Christ, a ‘fisher of men.’ Later, Ōmeka became critically ill after a needle pierced his leg so Rātana began to fast and pray. Rātana claimed that he received a divine visitation on 8 November 1918 where he had a series of visions urging him to unite Māori under ‘Ihoa o ngā Mano—Jehovah of the thousands,’ to heal the people, and turn them from old Māori superstitions and fear of Māori priests (tohunga) and the old Māori Gods (ngā Atua).74

After miraculously healing Ōmeka, Rātana became a world renowned healer. By the 1920s, Rātana Pā sprung up on the Rātana farm south of Whanganui, which attracted thousands eager to witness Rātana’s miraculous healing power that included many Māori and Pākehā. His teachings and healings provided ordinary people a renewed sense of hope, spiritual and even political direction.

In April 1924, Rātana and some of his supporters travelled to London to seek an audience with King George V to discuss Māori grievances concerning land alienation and alleged breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi 1840. Rātana planned to present a petition signed by 45,000 Māori calling for the British Crown to honor the Treaty of Waitangi covenant. But the New Zealand government intervened and prevented the meeting.

Rātana often spoke, however, of having the Bible in his right hand and the Treaty of Waitangi in his left hand. He also stated that if the spiritual side was attended to, the physical side would follow. Subsequently, on 31 May 1925, Rātana drew up his creed of faith and on 21 July 1925, he declared the existence of, and formally registered, a separate church, the Rātana Church (Te Hāhi Rātana), declaring himself as the mouthpiece of God (te māngai). Rātana also established the political side of the Rātana

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movement, often capturing the four Māori seats in Parliament even up to the present day.\textsuperscript{75}

\textbf{Rangitakaiwaho and Piripi Te Maari: Other Wairarapa Matakite}

Of course the historic narrative of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contests the above interpretations that Potangaroa’s great prophecy referred to the Rātana Church with respect to our Rātana relations. At the close of 1883, for example, President William Thomas Stewart reported to his presiding leader, John Taylor, in Utah:

Two or three years ago [the Māori] had a man here among them [Potangaroa] whom they regarded as a prophet, they say. He told them in 1883 that the true Gospel would be brought [to] them....Some of them firmly believe the Book of Mormon, being presented them in this year, to be the exact fulfillment of the predictions of their prophecy.\textsuperscript{76}

In addition, Elder Alma Greenwood recorded in his journal on 6 April 1883 about another prophetic dream reported to him that John Rangitakaiwaho had two days before in the Wairarapa area. John said he saw in his dream a rope, one end of which was not finished. Elders Greenwood and Farr were standing by a group of natives and the natives began trying to join the ends of the rope together. The Elders said that the ends were not joined right but that they would show them how to fix it. They properly placed a piece that had been left out and then rolled the rope together, finding the piece to be a perfect fit. To him, and many others who heard this account, this was reason enough to join the restored Church.\textsuperscript{77}

Greenwood added that while in the company of Brother and Sister Ihaia at Waihirere near Masterton, he met Samuel Potangaroa:

\textsuperscript{75} Interestingly, Rātana and his followers visited the Salt Lake City Temple in Utah during their tour of North America in 1925 specifically because of the prophecy of Paora Potangaroa, apparently regarding the “sacred church with a large wall surrounding it.” Information given to the author by Kereama Pene, Rātana Apotoro (apostle), during an official visit of Rātana Church leaders to Temple View, Hamilton, in 2018.

\textsuperscript{76} William Thomas Stewart to John Taylor, 31 January 1884, as reproduced in History of William Thomas Stewart, ed. Mary Stewart Lee and Marion Stewart Peterson (Provo, UT: Grant Stevenson, 1972), 25.

\textsuperscript{77} Alma Greenwood, “Mission Journal for 1883” (unpublished manuscript, 1883, original holograph in BYU Archives, L. Tom Perry Special Collections).
This chief asked my opinion regarding the ancestors of the Māoris, their origin and where they came from etc.… Sometime ago a Māori prophet said that all the Sectarian Denominations were wrong and ere long another prayer would come which would be the truth. Many of the natives believe that Mormonism is the religion which was to come.\footnote{Greenwood, “Mission Journal for 1883.”}

Furthermore, shortly after leaving New Zealand in 1884, Elder Greenwood recorded his thoughts on Potangaroa’s influence:

Many of the natives were led to investigate the new and somewhat strange religion, which had come in their midst. This, too, was in accordance with some predictions previously made by a Māori prophet: that in 1883, a new religion would come.…The prophecy and its literal fulfilment gave the gospel prestige and influence [mana] among that people.\footnote{Alma Greenwood, “My New Zealand Mission,” \textit{Juvenile Instructor} 20, 1885, 222.}

Consequently, the first permanent branch of the restored Church was established at Pāpāwai, Wairarapa in 1883.

One other brief but relevant prophetic utterance in the Wairarapa area was that of Piripi Te Maari who recalled a prophetic dream (moemoeā) he shared with Elder Alma Greenwood about the restored Church. Te Maari recorded:

I saw a big meeting and lots of people in it. I was in the meeting and preached how bad things come to New Zealand to destroy the land and people. Three times a man was standing close to me who was very mild and sorry. When I looked at him he came to me and shook hands with me.\footnote{Alma Greenwood, “Journal” (1 September 1883); cited in Peter Lineham, “The Mormon Message in the Context of Māori Culture,” \textit{Journal of Mormon History} 17 (1991): 86.}

Elder Alma Greenwood stated that Piripi Te Maari saw the timely visit to him by the two elders as the fulfilment of this dream.\footnote{Greenwood, “Journal.”}

Having discussed the influence of Potangaroa’s prophetic utterance in the Wairarapa region, we will now briefly explore the effect of his
utterance further north in the Tāmakinui-a-rua area known today as Dannevirke.

**Tahoraiti Conversions**

Another Māori stronghold for the restored Church was Tahoraiti, just south of Tāmakinui-a-rua, which was also influenced by Potangaroa’s prophecy. Polly Kingi Marsh wrote a short piece titled ‘Church History in the Tamaki Branch’ where she noted:

> In March 1881, a Māori chief, Paora Potangaroa, prophesied…. Later in the year, the fullness of the gospel did come to our people, and everything that Paora Potangaroa prophesied did happen.”

Marsh thus underscored the influence of Potangaroa beyond the Wairarapa into southern Hawkes Bay, although both groups share common genealogical links.

As noted earlier, when Potangaroa and his people were building his meeting house, Nga Tau e Waru, at Te Ore Ore in 1878–1879, the rival priest Te Kere disagreed with the size of the proposed house, became upset, and departed. Ngāti Mutuahi of Tahoraiti wanted their own meeting house so Te Kere took over that project. This rival meeting house with ‘Nga Tau E Waru’ at Te Ore Ore was ‘Aotea’ Marae at Tahoraiti, which was completed in 1883. Tahoraiti was also where many of these people were converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, interestingly, because of Potangaroa’s prophecy.

Returning back to Potangaroa’s prophecy, the final stanza stated:

> …the sacred church with a large wall surrounding it; of the increase of the race; of faith, love, peace, patience, judgment, unity. All this plan will be fulfilled by the people of the Ngati Kahungunu Tribe during the next forty years.

As noted above, Elder Matthew Cowley identified the “sacred church with a large wall surrounding it” with the Salt Lake Temple in

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82 Polly K. Marsh, “Church History in the Tamaki Branch” (Church College of New Zealand Manuscript Archives, Hamilton, no date), 1.

83 “Te Ore Ore Marae,” 43. The original meeting house burned down on 22 September 1939 and was replaced by a smaller one on 16 March 1941. As for Aotea, by the 1960s, it was apparent that the old meeting house was in a state of disrepair due to neglect by the local Māori community. Mr Lui Paewai organized the demolition of the meeting house and its re-erection at Mākirikiri. See “Aotea Tua-Toru Opened at Mākirikiri,” Te Ao Hou, 1 September 1967, 31.

Utah which has a large wall around it. Cowley also pointed out that the only Māori to participate in all of the ordinances of the restored gospel, including the sacred temple rites, during the next 40 years (until 1921), were members of this Ngāti Kahungunu tribe.⁸⁵

The first Māori converts to visit the Salt Lake Temple in Utah were Hirini and Mere Whaanga in 1894, as noted earlier. The second group were Tamihana Peeti Te Awe Awe of Tahoraiti, his wife, Waitokorau Tamihana, and two daughters, Adelaide and Nora, who also migrated up to Utah in June 1910.⁸⁶ The third group of Māori converts to visit the Salt Lake Temple were also from Tahoraiti and Waipawa. These people were all from Ngāti Kahungunu as prophesied by Potangaroa and another Māori seer, Apiata Kuikainga.

**Apiata Kuikainga: Waipawa Seer**

Stuart Meha added valuable context by providing a very personal sacred experience regarding Apiata Kuikainga. Meha stated that a Church of England clergyman married his parents, Arapata Meha and Mere Te Hau (from Nuhaka), in 1877. Months later when Mere was pregnant, she was called to appear before the Māori village council. Apiata Kuikainga, Stuart Meha’s paternal great-grandfather, patriarch, and seer, then said to Mere:

> E Mere,…you are with a male child and the day is coming when that child will cross the mighty waters of Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean) to do the work for the salvation of his people who had died.⁸⁷

Stuart Meha then noted that those present scoffed at what Kuikainga had said and alluded to his being crazy. But Mere, being a devout woman, simply said: ‘We will wait and see.’⁸⁸

Meha than analyzed the situation and stated:

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⁸⁶ In Salt Lake City, Tamihana and Waitokorau made their home in Forest Dale where the Whaanga family also lived. See W. Wallace Woolley, “A Letter from Zion,” *The Messenger* 7, no. 1 (1 January 1913): 2.
⁸⁸ Meha, “Request to Talk,” 1.
Here are two things which must be borne in mind in connection with this child. First, he must be born a male, otherwise the whole affair must collapse and fall to the ground and further notice of it must cease. On the other hand, if the predicted child were born a boy, then we must look forward to the second requirement, viz., his ability and willingness to go to a Temple of the Lord to do the work for the salvation of his people.89

Meha confirmed that the child was a boy, and then she rejoiced. In 1885, Elders George S. Taylor and Edward Newby visited the Meha home in Waipawa, Central Hawkes Bay, and they taught the Meha family the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Meha family at this time were devout Anglicans, and after a substantial meal, the living room was cleared and a round-table discussion of the principles of the gospel was held. Arapata and Mere knew their Bible well, so the missionaries needed to teach from the scriptures the doctrine they were preaching. The elders were prevailed upon to stay several days as the Mehas loved to hear the principles of the primitive church explained again and again. The missionaries stressed the fact that the gospel they preached was the same as that which the Lord Jesus had established on the earth in the meridian of time, with apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers and that the church they represented was similarly constituted and that they had the history of Māori, even the Book of Mormon. Meha added that after a while, the missionaries proved every tenet of the restored Church, and the family knew that the message they shared was the truth.90

Meha then noted an interesting experience the family had while the missionaries continued to teach the restored truths of the gospel:

One night towards the end of their stay the Elders brought up the work for the dead, emphasising its great importance and that it was a major work of their Church. The Elders said that this work had been done in the days of Paul as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:29, which reads, ‘Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?’ Why then are they baptised for the dead?’ Here Paul was referring to work...among the saints of his day to prove his point in his argument with those who did not believe in the resurrection.

89 Meha, “Request to Talk,” 1.
90 Ibid., 2.
The Elders were very painstaking in their treatment of this principle.91

Stuart Meha then shared what happened next, which was a very sacred experience of his family that the author respectfully acknowledges:

Then when the missionaries spoke on vicarious work for the dead, their interest in what was being said mounted high, for this was something definitely new—something they had never heard from their ministers. Then immediately the prediction made by the patriarch Apiata Kuikainga flashed across their minds. It was at this very moment, while Elder Taylor was speaking on work for the dead that a great disturbance came from Apiata’s room. Mother then arose and went to Apiata’s room, and told him to desist knocking on the floor with his stick and that there were missionaries there. The old man, now well over 100 years, refused to be silenced. Said he: ‘Where comes this great light, which is illuminating my room brighter than noonday?’ (This vision of illumination could only be to Apiata alone, for mother said she saw no light, testifying to the truthfulness of the prophecy he made in 1877, eight years before, regarding work for the salvation of the dead and that I would be instrumental in said work.) We do not speak of this manifestation but only to a select few. We hold it sacred.92

The Meha family were subsequently baptized in the Waipawa River on 15 July 1885. A few days later, Apiata died. Meha subsequently noted that in 1912, he ‘became animated with an urge to go to the Temple’ to have his recently deceased wife sealed to him and to work for his deceased ancestors so he visited with mission president Orson Romney for a temple recommend to go to the Salt Lake Temple in Utah. Meha recorded:

There were six of us who went to the Temple in 1913. We were given a great reception and we were there a little over three months. With the help of many returned missionaries and their wives, our party put through some 7,000 names [deceased ancestors’ sacred ordinances in the temple]. This was a new experience for us and a very satisfying one.93

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91 Meha, “Request to Talk,” 3.
92 Ibid., 3.
93 Ibid., 5.
Meha added that his family patriarch, Apiata Kuikainga, was one of the very first for whom he did this vicarious work in the Salt Lake Temple, and he concluded: “I feel that the very first missionaries who came to our home in 1885 were led there so that the prediction and prophecy uttered by my great-grandfather might be realized.”

Te Whatahoro Jury: Pāpāwai and Gisborne

One other fascinating conversion story during this period was that of the well-known Ngāti Kahungunu chief Te Whatahoro Jury who was living in Gisborne in the late nineteenth century. In 1919 Te Whatahoro sent a letter to the mission president Lewis G. Hoagland recalling his conversion into the restored Church through a number of dreams (moemoeā):

My first dream showed me a house, standing with the side walls only—no top, just the walls. People were entering it, and I joined the concourse and entered the house. I saw that the people were worshipping and praying. I also joined and prayed and just before I awoke [what] came to me: ‘perhaps I will join the Hauhau [Pai Mārire] church.

…Following this dream I met a Mormon elder. It was at Papawai, Wairarapa....I first heard the Gospel, of the Latter Day Saints, in Papawai, Wairarapa. Hyrum Groesbeck came and lodged at the home of Brother Manihera Rangi Taki-waho....He baptised the first Wairarapa Māoris, Ihaia Manihera being the first one with other natives of his tribe. This elder spent two nights teaching me the doctrines of the Church.

…Following this and after my return to Gisborne, there arrived in New Zealand another elder in the person of William Thomas Stewart. In the course of time Tuati (Wm Thomas Stewart) came to my home in Gisborne. He taught me and mine the Gospel, remaining with us for two days. During this visit of Elder Tuati I had my second dream; it was this:

I beheld the heaven and it was very clear, transparent; then myriads of stars; then another and more bright star in the East, appeared and wended its way thru the other stars until

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94 Ibid. See also the biography of Stuart Meha by his grandson: Meha, “Saviour on Mount Zion, 1878–1963,” 137–154.
it was right above me and then it paused. And then it took on it the shape of a person; the head, the body, the feet, all in perfect likeness of a human; then I beheld this personage held a saw in his hand, and that said to me, ‘why this must be the carpenter Joseph’s son.’

I then awoke, and my whole soul was thrilled, and I said to myself, now I know that the Mormon Church is the true one; this doctrine taught by Thomas Stewart to me is the right one. Then I gathered my native people to me at one place, that he might preach to them also. He taught us and at the conclusion of his speech we all were truly converted and were baptised in to the Church. This was in the year 1883.95

Te Whatahoro then affirmed to President Hoagland:

Dear friend, Ruihi (Louis) I here say that this dream converted me — or rather confirmed — that the preaching of Tuati was true and the Church of our Master, Jesus Christ, was with us; and this is my reason for entering the Church….I testify that I did have the dream; it is true.96

**Some Formative Conclusions**

The devastating impacts of European colonization disempowering Māori certainly left them struggling to maintain their culture, language, lands, livelihoods, even their very lives and well-being, yet these impacts were prophesied by Māori seers such as Titahi, Potangaroa, Te Maari, and others. It was, moreover, ironically prophesied that the salvation of Māori as a people would also come from Europeans in the form of a new faith or church—hence to some extent, the amazing mass conversions of Māori into the sectarian churches in the early and mid-nineteenth century, and to a lesser extent, the mass conversions into the millennial Christianized Māori churches during and following the turbulent New Zealand Wars period. Nevertheless, the early sectarian and the Māori millennial churches and missionaries did not appear to comply with all

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96 Letter by Te Whatahoro to Hoagland.
of the prophesied utterances of the Māori seers, so some Māori began to question the legitimacy and efficacy of these churches.

Nevertheless, Māori were still prepared in a number of special ways for the restoration of the true gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation as articulated by, inter alia, the Anglican Samuel Marsden in 1808, Latter-day Saint William W. Phelps in 1832, and two other Church missionaries—Augustus Farnham in 1854 and William Bromley in 1881. The true gospel was not there yet. By 1880, Māori society was in a state of perilous imbalance and the leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph F. Smith, was inspired to direct missionary work in New Zealand from that point on to focus on Māori.

Unexpectedly, the missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ commenced a concentrated proselytizing process among Māori, and surprisingly, the message and messengers appealed to certain Māori tribes for a number of key reasons, especially specific prophetic utterances.

The prophetic utterances of local Māori seers with specific and significant signs (tohu) and religious actions (karakia) were very important factors, in the author’s opinion, that contributed to these Māori conversions to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after 1880. Some of these key matakite signs included the missionaries proselytizing in pairs, and the missionaries would come from the East (America). This is significant given that most of the earlier sectarian missionaries were from the West—Great Britain and Europe. Other prophetic signs were that the missionaries would traverse a certain path such as from Poneke to Waiapu then returning to Te Mahia for Toiroa and visiting the Salt Lake Temple, for Potangaroa; or specific events would occur at certain times such as ‘when weeds cover my grave’ for Pakahia; 1881 being the year of fullness, 1882 the year of sealing, and 1883 the year of ‘honouring’ for Potangaroa; and, while in the midst of destruction of the land and people, a person would visit Piripi Te Maari three times and would shake his hand.

Further prophetic signs were evocative particularly as tangible signs of the true Church. For example, for Toiroa, Pakahia, and Tupeka raising of either both hands or the right hand to the square in certain religious rituals was critical. For Toiroa, Pakahia, and Kuikainga another significant sign was crossing Te Moananui-a-Kiwa—the Pacific Ocean—from whence the messengers originated. Other metaphorical signs included for Rangitakaiwaho fixing the ends of a rope not tied together and the Church elders placing the missing piece on the end, thus securing
the rope together; and for Kuikainga a light illuminating the room when discussing redemption for the dead. Additionally, while investigating the restored gospel with the elders, Te Whatahoro dreamed of praying in a house with no top and beholding the myriad of stars in heaven, then observing a bright star rising in the East wending its way through the other stars, then transforming into Jesus Christ directly above him. Carrying out specific work across the Pacific Ocean for the salvation of deceased ancestors was another important sign for Kuikainga, while for others, the signs of the true Church were new books such as Arapata Taniwha’s three books—the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Whatever one’s views then of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it appears that the key prophetic matakite dreams and visions of at least the nine East Coast Māori seers referred to in this article—Arama Te Toiroa, Arapata Taniwha, Horiana Tupeka, Toaroa Pakahia, Apiata Kuikainga, Paora Te Potangaroa, John Rangitakaiwaho, Piripi Te Maari and Te Whatahoro Jury—appear to have been (and should continue to be) fulfilled surprisingly by this conservative church originating in America. God appears then to have been mindful of Māori, who are a branch of the house of Israel in this strange land. Yet, as the earlier Book of Mormon scripture declared, he has been “mindful of them, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth”: and the Lord did not and will not forget them!

It is also important, and there may be lessons for current and future Latter-day Saint leaders and missionaries, to reflect on this little-known history on the nineteenth-century Māori conversions to the restored Church. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints missionaries fulfilled the prophecies of these Māori seers where the missionaries were prepared to be influenced by Māori to influence Māori, and both were transformed in the process.

Louis Midgley, Brigham Young University emeritus professor, was one such great Utah American missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who served in New Zealand after World War II. Professor Midgley was significantly influenced by serving among the Māori to influence them to live the restored gospel. His and our lives were and continue to be richly transformed from these and other experiences.

Nō reira, e te rangatira, a kaumātua Ruihi Mihiri, kanui te mihi atu ki a koe mo tōu mahi a te Hāhi a Ihu Karaiti o te Hunga Tapu o ngā rā, o muri nei, me tōu mahi aroha a te iwi Māori, tēnā koe, tēnā koe, tēnā koe e te rangatira!
Mehemea karekau ana he whakakitenga, kia mate te iwi.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

Proverbs 29:18

Robert Joseph is a direct descendant of some of the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Māori pioneers in New Zealand and was brought up in the Church in Hastings and Hamilton. He graduated from the Church College of New Zealand in 1986 and from Seminary and Institute. He served a mission in Adelaide, Australia, from 1989–1991, after which he studied Law at the University of Waikato. Dr Joseph is currently a Senior Lecturer at Te Piringa-Faculty of Law at the University of Waikato, he was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand in 1998, and he completed his PhD in Law and Māori and Indigenous governance at the University of Waikato in 2006. In 2007, Dr Joseph was awarded a Building Research Capability in Social Science (BRCSS) Post-Doctoral Fellowship, and the ‘Best PhD Thesis Internationally on Canadian Studies Award’ in 2009 by the International Council for Canadian Studies in Quebec, Canada.

Dr Joseph is a former Fulbright Scholar to Harvard University and the University of Arizona; he is an expert witness, licenced researcher, and legal historian in the Waitangi Tribunal; the New Zealand representative on a number of international organizations including the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand (ACSANZ), the International Indigenous Governance Consortium (IIGC), and the International Indigenous Trade and Investment Organisation (IITIO); and he is a member of the New Zealand Government Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)-Māori Taumata grappling with Māori and international free trade agreements.

Dr Joseph has served in numerous Church callings. Dr Joseph married his sweetheart Amelia Turangi in the New Zealand Temple in 1996, and they are the parents of 5 children.
### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aroha</td>
<td>to love, sympathize, true charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haka</td>
<td>fierce dance with chant, war dance performed before battle</td>
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<tr>
<td>hakari</td>
<td>great feast, ceremonial feast, gift, ceremonial gifting</td>
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<tr>
<td>hapū</td>
<td>descent group with local base on a marae, section of a tribe, sub-tribe</td>
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<tr>
<td>hui</td>
<td>formal meeting, ceremonial gathering.</td>
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<tr>
<td>iwi</td>
<td>tribe or people</td>
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<tr>
<td>kāinga</td>
<td>home, village</td>
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<tr>
<td>karakia</td>
<td>prayers, incantations, prayer-chant, service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaumātua</td>
<td>respected elder, old man, can be both sexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaupapa</td>
<td>rule, basic idea, topic, plan, foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kawa</td>
<td>protocol of the marae, varies among the tribes, ceremonial, dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koroua</td>
<td>male elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuia</td>
<td>elderly woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mana</td>
<td>ascribed and achieved power, authority and prestige, spiritually endowed and maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manaakitanga</td>
<td>hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marae</td>
<td>place of ceremonial greeting and gathering, meeting place, village courtyard, spiritual and symbolic centre of Māori community affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>ordinary person, native or Indigenous to Aotearoa New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māoritanga</td>
<td>Māori culture and identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pākehā</td>
<td>New Zealander of non-Māori descent, non-Māori</td>
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<tr>
<td>pepeha</td>
<td>tribal sayings, proverbs, tribal mottoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poroporoaki</td>
<td>farewell</td>
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<tr>
<td>powhiri</td>
<td>to wave, welcoming ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>rangatira</td>
<td>chief, both male and female leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>rangatiratanga</td>
<td>chieftainship, authority, kingdom, principality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rohe</td>
<td>tribal territory, boundary, district, area</td>
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<tr>
<td>tangata whenua</td>
<td>people of the land, Indigenous People of a given place</td>
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<tr>
<td>tangi</td>
<td>lament, to cry, weep, mourn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>taurahere</td>
<td>rope, cord that binds, urban kin recognised by home peoples</td>
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<tr>
<td>te reo Māori</td>
<td>Māori language</td>
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<tr>
<td>tika</td>
<td>correct, straight, right ways</td>
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<tr>
<td>tikanga</td>
<td>‘right ways’, custom, from tika (adj.) straight, right, correct, fair, just, rules, principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tino rangatiratanga</td>
<td>traditional authority, self-determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>tohunga</td>
<td>expert, specialist, priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tupuna</td>
<td>ancestor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tūrangawaewae</td>
<td>a place to stand, basis of rights of the tangata whenua</td>
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<tr>
<td>utu</td>
<td>reciprocity, compensation, involved the initiation and maintenance of relationships both hostile and friendly</td>
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<tr>
<td>waiata</td>
<td>song, to sing, psalm</td>
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<tr>
<td>wairua</td>
<td>spirit, metaphysical world</td>
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<tr>
<td>whānau</td>
<td>extended family</td>
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<tr>
<td>whaikorero</td>
<td>formal speech in powhiri ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whakapapa</td>
<td>genealogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>whakatauki</td>
<td>proverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wharenui</td>
<td>large ceremonial house, located on the marae complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>whenua</td>
<td>land</td>
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**Abstract:** *Tabernacles of Clay* examines the discourse of *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* through a “queer theory” lens. This review examines its first two chapters’ use of sources regarding Church teachings about eternal biological sex and homosexual behavior. These chapters claim that the Church treated homosexual sin leniently and said little about such acts until the more “homophobic” 1950s. There are, in fact, many examples of homosexual behavior being condemned by Church leaders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Tabernacles* further claims that in the 1950s–1970s, some in the Church saw biological sex as “created and contingent” — rather than eternal and unchanging — thus permitting a view of theological “gender fluidity.” The authors used to support these claims have been misrepresented and important information omitted. *Tabernacles* also fails to properly contextualize the sources and language of the 1950–1970s, and it thereby misrepresents Church discourse on homosexual sin. A thorough review of the Church’s official documents from this period reveals an almost exclusive focus on homosexual behavior, not homosexual temptation or identity. Aspects of present-day Church teaching or policy which are said to be novel are shown to be otherwise. The above errors lead to mischaracterization of Spencer W. Kimball’s book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. *Tabernacles* has not adequately or fairly characterized its sources, rendering its conclusions suspect.

Taylor Petrey wants to “think creatively and theologically within Mormonism” since he believes “LDS theology faces serious credibility
issues” at present. “Perhaps,” he writes, “LDS ritual and rhetoric may embrace … [sexual] variation, including homosexual relationships in … [temple] sealing.”¹ He assures the reader that

the possibility of creating theological space within Mormonism for homosexual relationships rests not on the abandonment of any central doctrine of the Church, but rather on the revival of past concepts, the recovery of embedded theological resources, and the rearticulation of existing ideas in more expansive terms in order to rethink the possibilities of celestial relationships.²

This argument asserts that opposition to homosexual acts is not central to the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ and that any reluctance stems from an abandonment of past concepts of things that Latter-day Saints should recover from their religious heritage by rethinking.

It helps to know this because Tabernacles of Clay serves as a brief for such hopes. Tabernacles understands current Church teaching opposes its project in the strongest terms.

[S]cholars have treated Mormon views about gender and sexuality as a theory of essentialism — the belief that there are universal traits that make men and women fundamentally different from one another. This book will significantly challenge this paradigm, but it is easy to see why it has been so persuasive. In 1995, the church issued the brief authoritative statement “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” According to this document of Mormon orthodoxy, “gender is an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.” (7)

Tabernacles bluntly states that “the supposed differences of sexes, genders, and races are historical and ideological, not natural and


fixed” (10). The conflation is unfortunate — race is quite a different matter than biological sex, for example. *Tabernacles*'s fundamental ideology is made clear, and throughout the book it will be assumed, though not demonstrated, that sex and gender are not fixed or natural. *Tabernacles* describes the primary interpretive tool used in its study thus:

Queer theory links the issue of gender and sexual difference to the issue of sexuality as related subjects of inquiry. Once a term of derision, scholars and activists have reclaimed “queer” as a mode of analysis and an identity that resists fixed categorization. While this approach traces its origins to feminist and gay and lesbian analysis — and holds its goals in affinity with those fields — queer theory takes as its subject something more fundamental, namely, the categories and distinctions between sexes, genders, sexualities, races, abilities, and so on. This paradigm challenges the idea of the natural and self-evident and instead seeks to historicize and question claims about essential and stable identities by looking at where those boundaries wear thin. *This method is the starting point for the present study.* The supposed differences of sexes, genders, and races are historical and ideological, not natural and fixed. Poststructuralist queer approaches are attuned to the failure of categories; the fluidity of bodies, sexualities, and identities; and the genealogies of what is often taken for granted. (10, emphasis added)

*Tabernacles*'s method thus virtually requires that such categories as sex and gender be fluid and socially constructed. The author tells of his surprise to discover this very tendency in Latter-day Saint thinking:

Over the course of my research I became interested in a genealogy of contemporary beliefs that gender is an essential feature of one’s identity. What I found surprised me at first. It turned out that while Latter-day Saints have often expressed the values of gender and sexual essentialism, I started to see that this was a rhetorical effort to cover over a different ontology of gender and sexuality. Rather than seeing these categories as essential and fixed, Latter-day Saint leaders often talked about them as malleable and fluid — and showed that heterosexual desire and heteronormative roles are especially vulnerable to change. I needed to tell that story. (ix)
The author may be surprised, but readers should not be. The material was viewed through the lens of queer theory, and it is predictable that one should thereby discover what queer theory assumes. This does not mean that *Tabernacles* is necessarily wrong, but it does mean that we would be well-served by skepticism if we think we have found so neatly what queer theory requires.

The subtext seems to be this: if The Church of Jesus Christ has only recently come to regard homosexual acts as sins on a par with adultery and fornication, it becomes much easier to see this stance as an aberration that ought to be corrected. If biological sex is only recently seen as reflecting something eternal, queer theory’s goals are that much closer. If the Church’s doctrines have ebbed and flowed, erred and backtracked, then what is one more course correction?

If, on the other hand, sexual essentialism and the sinfulness of homosexual acts have been consistently taught, then it is much harder to argue that the doctrine could or should change. ³ *Tabernacles* states that “[w]hat is remarkable about the Mormon tolerance for change (and its limits) is how resistant Latter-day Saints can be to acknowledging that there is really any change at all” (213). Readers should not conclude that this review claims that there has been no change, but I will show (in excruciating detail) that much of what *Tabernacles* claims to be a change is not, and that areas that have changed have much more continuity with the past than the reader will learn from *Tabernacles*.

This review spends little time on theoretical, theological, or interpretive issues — though these issues are important. Instead, I focus primarily on questions regarding the sources and use of sources in *Tabernacles*’s first two chapters. These chapters include questions regarding sexual fluidity, premortal sex, postmortal sex, and homosexual sin. While I can only sample *Tabernacles*’s use of sources, that sampling reveals serious problems.

So serious are these problems that, on one level, it is astonishing that this work would be published by a university press. Granted, the book’s ideological agenda and subject matter is popular in some quarters, and such works have their place — if they are honest with themselves and their readers about what they are. But what Tabernacles offers is not good history.

Tabernacles of Clay is a good argument for the necessity of review by experts in both the theology and history of the Church of Jesus Christ when academic presses do “Mormon” studies. Experts in queer and gender theory might find it compelling; anyone familiar with the religious sources ought to know better. This review, then, addresses a proper reading of the sources.

I propose to treat five themes in this review:

- Tabernacles’s claim (following D. Michael Quinn’s Same-Sex Dynamics) that The Church of Jesus Christ treated homosexual sin leniently until the 1950s;
- Tabernacles’s claim that there is a virtual silence regarding homosexual sin in Church discourse until the 1950s;

4. Such an agenda is unsurprising, given the crusading stance of much queer theory: “Queer Theory is a political project, and its aim is to disrupt any expectations that people should fit into a binary position with regard to sex or gender, and to undermine any assumptions that sex or gender are related to or dictate sexuality. … This agenda-driven view, which lies at the heart of Queer Theory, goes against both the rigor of scientific inquiry and the ethics of universal liberal activism” (Helen Pluckrose and James A. Lindsay, Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity — and Why This Harms Everybody [Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020], 94, 100).

5. Historian David Hackett Fischer would warn of the dangers of the pragmatic fallacy which “selects useful facts … in the service of a social cause. … Scholars who take a pragmatic view of their task and collect facts that are weapons for a cause are faced with the problem that some facts exist which are useful to their enemies” (David Hackett Fischer, Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought [New York: Harper and Row, 1970], 82, 85).

6. Given the subject matter, this review necessarily includes what some would call “explicit” language. Efforts have been made to avoid anything gratuitous and to treat the subject as inoffensively as possible. Nothing herein should be read as an attempt to defend or criticize any past or present preaching or policy. Nor does it advocate any future policy.

7. Tabernacles uses the first edition of Quinn’s volume: D. Michael Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), which means that any reviews at its publication apply without question to his cited source. I have used this edition, of which Tabernacles cites large portions (pp. 265–313, 366–400).
• *Tabernacles*’s claim that in the 1950s–1970s, some in the Church saw biological sex as “created and contingent,” thus permitting a view of theological “gender fluidity” which encompassed the premortal and postmortal states;

• *Tabernacles*’s failure to properly contextualize the sources and language of the 1950s–1970s and the resulting misrepresentation of Church discourse on homosexual sin;

• *Tabernacles*’s misrepresentation of Spencer W. Kimball’s book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness,* as enabled by the errors of the above themes.

**Leniency Toward Same-Sex Sins**

**Uncritical Use of D. Michael Quinn**

*Tabernacles* refers to “[p]ioneers in this research like D. Michael Quinn” who have “charted a gloomy history from ‘relative tolerance’ of same-sex intimacy in an earlier era to the rise of homophobia in contemporary LDS thought” (9), demonstrating that “the church moved from ‘relative tolerance’ to ‘homophobia’ and strident opposition” (63). *Tabernacles* evinces an insufficient dose of healthy skepticism when it relies on Quinn’s *Same-Sex Dynamics* volume (227n33, 235n7n9n14, 237n50).

At no point does *Tabernacles* give any indication that *Same-Sex Dynamics*’s treatment has been challenged on numerous grounds by Latter-day Saint and nonmember scholars. Particularly on the issue of

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the Church’s supposed “relative tolerance” of same-sex acts, *Same-Sex Dynamics* has been decisively rebutted by its more thorough reviewers.²⁰

Wrote one non-Latter-day Saint reviewer:

> Quinn’s interpretation is on thin ice. He imputes a homosexual substrate to much behavior that participants regarded as innocent. He pushes his readings, sometimes

A more favorable take which still expresses significant doubts about some aspects is Robert S. Fogerty, “Homoromance in Utah,” *The Times Literary Supplement* 4890 (20 December 1996): 30; (these works are all referenced in Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 146n9, 146n10, 175n82).


None of these favorable reviews engages at all with the substance of *Same-Sex Dynamics*’s claims — in some cases they seem to have been overwhelmed or impressed by the appearance of rigor and assumed that the bulky documentation proves what is claimed. Critical reviews have demonstrated such trust to be misplaced. Even a favorable review complains of “overdocumentation” (Stephen J. Stein, “Reviewed Work: Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example by D. Michael Quinn,” *Church History* 67, no. 2 [June 1998]: 420–22) and this tendency arguably allows *Same-Sex Dynamics* to bury the reader in references that few will check. The brief positive reviews are evidence that the tactic works.

Two years later, Quinn was “still stinging from the negative reaction his book received, not just from Mormons but from some liberal members of the press.” Quinn attributes such reactions to “homophobia,” saying he was “blindsided by people who … hated what my book had to say” (Robert L. Pela, “The Truth Will Out,” *The Advocate* 754 [3 March 1998]: 58).

through innuendo ... sometimes through an annoying use of rhetorical questions. ... He also presents controversial interpretations as undeniable or commonly accepted.11

Another reader who is not a Latter-day Saint wrote:

Quinn’s interpretation of certain material is on shaky ground. ... There are places where Quinn’s reading of nineteenth-century notions adopted by the Mormons is driven by his desire to make the theory fit the case.12

Tabernacles does not engage these concerns, nor give the reader any hint that they exist. A sample of Same-Sex Dynamics’s errors in the pages cited include:13

- Portraying Brigham Young as indifferent to homosexual sin;14
- Ignoring evidence (which it cites in another context) demonstrating that a provisional penal code for the state of Deseret explicitly forbade male-male sodomy;15
- Claims that there were “no early Mormon leader[s] to quote against homosexuality or homoerotic behaviors.”16

Other problems on pages not referenced by Tabernacles which speak to the unreliability of Same-Sex Dynamics’s claims, are found in Appendix I. In sum, as one reviewer put it:

The volume is a highly personal work of great merit, but from a disciplined historical perspective, the study has problems. ... On a number of ... occasions, Quinn elevates to fact material that can at best be categorized as supposition, offers

13. Other errors in Quinn’s material cited by Tabernacles is covered below. See the sections titled “Joseph F. Smith II,” “Nineteenth Century,” “Marriage as a Cure?,” “Homosexuality Worthy of Death?,” and Appendix II.
14. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 171–79; Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 270, see also 66, 85–86, 111, 122n19, 443. Compare Appendix II.
15. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 178–79; Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 271, 273, 296n41.
16. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 256; Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 375–76.
uncertain evidence, and draws conclusions that the evidence does not warrant. … As a disciplined and objective historical study of lesbians, gays, sexual issues, and Mormon culture, this volume has serious drawbacks.17

These problems speak precisely to the claims Same-Sex Dynamics is used to support in Tabernacles. It may be that Same-Sex Dynamics is right and its critics wrong — but Tabernacles must demonstrate it.

As Mitton and James noted, “While Latter-day Saints may resist Quinn’s sophistry, it seems that the academic and especially the homosexual worlds will be enthralled by his claims.”18 In Tabernacles’s case, they were right.

**Same-Sex Encounters Common among Leaders?**

Following in the footsteps of Same-Sex Dynamics,19 Tabernacles attempts to demonstrate the early twentieth-century Church’s leniency toward homosexual acts by writing:

> These [same-sex] encounters were common enough that even high-ranking church leaders engaged in them. In 1946, the church’s presiding patriarch, Joseph F. Smith (d. 1964; not to be confused with the earlier church president of the same name), took a young male lover who had just returned from service in the navy. The young man’s father outed Smith to church authorities when he discovered the relationship. As a consequence, Smith was released from his church duties and moved in exile to Hawaii on the pretense of his back injuries — but was not excommunicated. In contrast, when church leaders discovered a sexual affair of apostle Richard R. Lyman (d. 1963) with his elderly mistress in this same period, they publicly announced his excommunication for violating “the Christian law of chastity.” (62–63)

*Tabernacles* begins by committing what historian David Hackett Fischer called the fallacy of the lonely fact. This fallacy, says Hacker, “deserves to receive special condemnation. It may be defined as a statistical generalization from a single case.”20 A single case — that

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17. Boag, “‘Behind the Zion Curtain’ Homosexuals and Homosexuality in the Historic and Contemporary Mormon-Cultural Region,” 261, 265.
18. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 150.
of presiding patriarch Smith — proves nothing about how common anything was, nor does it prove that “high-ranking church leaders” (note the unsubstantiated plural) “engaged in them.”

Tabernacles’s language would make one think that such acts by leaders were known to be frequent and widespread. But it presents no evidence of this. Fischer warned specifically:

> As long as the majority of historians continue to conduct their “research” impressionistically and to cast their findings in a simple narrative, the fallacy of the lonely fact is likely to flourish. Whenever the reader sees a mighty generalization, followed by a minute example, and the telltale phrase “for instance,” or “for example,” he should be on his guard against this error.

> But often the fallacy of the lonely fact occurs without warning. The only defense is research in depth, of the sort which readers are rarely equipped to carry out.

Tabernacles asserts that the treatment of apostle Lyman and patriarch Smith provide a “contrast.” They do, but not as portrayed. The next couple of sections examine these cases with more attention to detail — the “research in depth” that Fischer recommends.

**Richard R. Lyman**

Thorough treatments of Lyman and Smith are available, and though Tabernacles cites the article on Lyman, it mentions none of the information that undercuts its thesis. Ordained an apostle in 1918, Lyman was assigned to help Anna Jacobsen, a convert to the Church

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who had been married in an unauthorized plural marriage. By the mid-1920s, the apostle and the sister he had been assigned to counsel had become emotionally close. At this point, Jacobsen was only fifty-three—a year younger than Lyman—even though Tabernacles characterized her as Lyman’s “elderly mistress” (63). By 1938, the relationship had become sexual.

When rumors of the relationship reached the Quorum of the Twelve, they took action. Lyman and Jacobsen were caught in flagrante by Harold B. Lee, Joseph Fielding Smith, and police. At his disciplinary hearing, Lyman confessed to the relationship, as both George Albert Smith and Joseph Fielding Smith reported in their journals. Elder George F. Richards’s diary noted that Lyman “confessed his guilt and stated that it had been carried on for ten years or more, and that he had similar associations with other women before he was made an Apostle.”

Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote that Lyman “minimized his act and seemed to feel that it should be overlooked but showed no repentance and expressed no sorrow for his sin. He tried to link his sin with polygamy but the evidence gave no corroboration to the story. … No tears from him but plenty from the rest of us.”

Lyman’s lack of contrition is obvious from his later behavior:

Lyman’s secretary worried that the ex-apostle was not fully “aware of the gravity of what he had done”. … In fact, Lyman returned to work in the LDS Church Office Building the next week, asking that he be allowed to keep his office. … A few weeks later, on December 8, 1943, Lyman requested rebaptism … and was denied. … Initially Richard Lyman tried to rationalize his relationship with Jacobsen as a kind of proto-marriage and could not understand his colleagues’

24. Ibid., 178

25. See Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans*, 372; which likewise emphasizes that the apostle and his mistress were “seventy-three” and “seventy-one,” when they were caught, though it is not clear why age matters. Perhaps the reader is to conclude that aged transgressors merit more leniency? As I show in Appendix II, Church leaders were more apt to be lenient with youth, not experienced adults. In any case, Lyman’s mistress was hardly “elderly” when they began their dalliance.


27. Ibid., 185–86.

28. Ibid., 190.

29. Ibid., 191.
harsh reaction ... The response of Lyman’s quorum was perhaps driven as much by his obfuscation as by his actual adultery. Over the next several years, as Lyman worked to salvage his life, his resentment festered. He was convinced that his punishment did not fit his offense.30

Six years later, Lyman was still attempting to excuse himself. In a letter to an apostle, he wrote: “For reasons that seemed to me to justify it I agreed to regard that woman as my wife and she agreed to regard me as her husband. While no written note was made of this agreement at the time the date I feel sure was Nov[ember] 9, 1925. This relationship had gone on for 18 years in a most quiet way.”31

In May 1952, Lyman met with the Twelve. Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

He … abused the members of the Council, especially those who were present at the time he was excommunicated, feeling that they had treated him harshly. His entire time was spent in abuse of the brethren and an attempt to justify himself in his wrong-doing. I informed him that he was not ready to return [to] the Church and was sustained by my brethren. He admitted continued adultery relations since his excommunication. It is a sad case.32

Spencer W. Kimball’s journal further demonstrates Lyman’s prevarication, the inconsistencies in his testimony, and his ongoing defiance.

He excused his trouble on the grounds of plural marriage claiming that he and the woman had an arrangement (this she denied) for their eventual sealing for eternity. He admitted the sexual experiences but seemed to feel they were “not so bad” in view of the circumstances. … There was little or no evidence of repentance, but much of self-justification. …

This was a sad day. Had he been repentant, how glad I would have been to have voted for his baptism!!!! I was convin[c]ed that

30. Ibid., 194–96.
31. Ibid., 198.
32. Ibid., 199.
he had permitted self-justification to almost wholly crowd out repentance.33

In October 1952, Kimball met Lyman again at Joseph Fielding Smith’s instruction. Kimball reported:

Our discussion brought out the fact that since his excommunication … he admits to having gone to the home of [his mistress] on at least three occasions, the last time being about nine months ago. … On each of these occasions he admits to having had illicit relations with her. … He has had these further associations … without any knowledge of Sister Lyman or other members of his family.

He vigorously resists the characterizing of these associations as adultery and continues to press the fact that he and she have considered themselves as “almost” husband and wife. His attention was called to the fact that at the time of his excommunication both he and she denied that their association had been under the guise of plural marriage or in anticipation of it.34

Finally, in “1954, Lyman decided to swallow what remained of his pride, to acknowledge his transgression, and to explicitly seek the forgiveness of his wife and colleagues.” He was ultimately rebaptized that year.35

It gives me no pleasure to linger over this episode, but I felt that Tabernacles’s argument made it necessary.

Joseph F. Smith II

Tabernacles relies heavily on the work of Gary Bergera36 in dealing with the case of Joseph F. Smith II, grandson of Church President Joseph F. Smith and nephew to President Joseph Fielding Smith. He was ordained presiding patriarch on 8 October 1942; for clarity I refer to him as Joseph II herein.37 Despite Same-Sex Dynamics’s efforts to attribute

33. Ibid., 200.
34. Ibid., 200–201.
35. Ibid., 202–203.
homosexual acts to Joseph II in 1926, Bergera notes, “I have not been able to independently substantiate that any high-ranking LDS Church authority knew of, or suspected, such reports and/or activities regarding Joseph F. Smith [II] prior to 1946.”

Byram Browning, a young sailor, told his father about some type of same-sex encounter with the married Joseph II in 1946. This led Browning’s father to report the matter to Church leaders.

George Albert Smith met with Joseph II for more than two hours, and “the questions and implied accusations apparently caught Joseph [II] completely off-guard.” George Albert’s July 1946 journal reported, “Bad situation. Am heartsick.” Joseph Fielding Smith was aghast:

Matters of a most serious nature were presented by the Presidency which brought a shock to me and my brethren [sic], this was of a nature which I do not feel at liberty or capable of discussion. It is enough for me to say that what was presented was a shock to me of the greatest magnitude, and I think likewise to my brethren, or some of them.

George Albert Smith would arrange a meeting with both Joseph II and his accused partner, describing it as “a pitiable case.” Some of Joseph II’s family later sought to discuss the matter with J. Reuben Clark Jr., a counselor in the First Presidency. Clark declined and referred them to George Albert Smith. When asked if this was because “You do not care to discuss it,” Clark replied, “It is not quite that, it is not my place to discuss it with you, that is placed with the President of the Church.”

George Albert Smith continued in “attempts to uncover additional, possibly exculpatory, information,” but these “proved futile and soon ceased. … In 1947 Joseph F. Smith [and his family] relocated to Honolulu, Hawaii, where local LDS Church leaders were quietly directed not to extend any callings nor to issue a temple recommend to the former General Authority.”

The lack of public excommunication “suggests that Joseph [II]’s behavior was probably not overtly sexual (meaning genital contact in some

39. Ibid., 107, 111.
40. Ibid., 111.
41. Ibid., 113.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., 114–15.
44. Ibid., 115.
45. Ibid., 117.
form),” argues Bergera. “However, if [there were] reported hugs, kisses, and possibly affectionate caresses, the presiding authorities may have felt that such behavior was inappropriate.” Bergera argues that other contemporary evidence demonstrates that homosexual fondling, for example, was not typically treated with the same severity as completed intercourse.

Leniency Toward Smith vs. Lyman

Tabernacles assures readers that there is a contrast between Lyman and Smith. This is right, but not because one was guilty of a heterosexual sin and the other a homosexual one. Instead:

- Lyman admitted to unrepentant adultery with other women prior to his call to the Twelve. Joseph II admitted to nothing similar;
- In his role as apostle, Lyman had been assigned to work with a member in distress and had ultimately committed adultery with her. Joseph II’s situation involved no similar boundary violation (as it might be called today);
- Lyman admitted to multiple episodes of adultery and continued even after his excommunication. With Joseph II, there is no evidence of repeat offenses after discipline;
- Lyman would change his story repeatedly, contradicting both his and his mistress’s contemporary testimony. Joseph II did nothing like this;
- Lyman persisted in self-justification both before and after his excommunication. There is no evidence that Joseph II did so;
- Lyman’s crimes clearly involved repeated episodes of heterosexual intercourse. The evidence for completed intercourse in the case of Joseph II’s homosexual behavior is limited, and his indiscretion may have stopped short of what was perceived to be a more severe transgression.

Given these differences, it is hardly surprising that Joseph II was treated with more “leniency” than Lyman. This proves nothing, however, about homosexual sin being regarded as less serious.

It is helpful to compare the reaction of Joseph Fielding Smith to both imbroglios. In the case of Lyman, Smith was shocked and sad; he called his assignment to investigate Lyman’s adultery “a very disagreeable

46. Ibid., 118.
47. Ibid., 118–20.
48. See discussion in Ibid.
task but one which seemed to be necessary.” The admission that such “charges . . . of a most serious nature” were true led to “sadness and heavy hearts.”

Smith likewise termed Joseph II’s charges as “most serious,” but in contrast to Lyman’s case, the accusations against the Church patriarch caused “shock” because “this was of a nature which I do not feel at liberty or capable of discussion.”

Clearly, Smith and his colleagues did not see homosexual activity as less serious than heterosexual sins. If anything, they were more shocked and appalled.

In my opinion, the “lighter” treatment given to Joseph II derives in part from the factors listed above. Church leaders also probably saw Joseph II’s behavior as more scandalous and shameful — for him, for his family, and for the Church. Joseph II’s contrition and his decision to avoid justifying himself to others inside and outside the Church made it possible to keep the matter private, whereas Lyman’s long-standing rebellion and persistent self-justification made his public excommunication necessary.

These papers were all available to Tabernacles. It even cites three words from one of them, but fails to evaluate their broader implications.

Evidence of Nineteenth-Century Attitudes

Connell O’Donovan describes the legal environment in nineteenth-century Utah as applied to the rape of a young boy by Frederick Jones in 1864:

The boy then told his father, who pressed charges against Jones. A week later Jones was in the Salt Lake City jail awaiting trial for sodomy. . . . [T]he justice determined that the “evidence was clear and conclusive against Jones,” went into recess to “examine the law on the subject,” but then discovered that Utah had no anti-sodomy law. When Jones appeared for sentencing, he was released. He set off on foot for Fort Douglas but reached only the corner of First South and State Street, where he was killed. Witnesses heard gunshots, saw the flash of pistol fire, and heard the sound of retreating footsteps, but no one reported to have actually witnessed the murder. . . .


50. Ibid., 186.

Although the Jones suit actually dealt with violent pedophilia (an adult raping a pre-pubescent child), I include it because the judicial response shows that many Utahns saw only that the perpetrator and victim were male and focused solely on the issue of sodomy. …

Many Mormons felt little sorrow at the murder of Frederick Jones. Albert Carrington, editor of the Deseret News and future LDS apostle, editorialized that Jones’s murder “should prove a warning to all workers of abominations, for there is always the chance that some one [sic] will be impatient of the law’s delay in cases so outrageous and abominable.” As D. Michael Quinn has documented, even Brigham Young responded to the outcome of the Jones trial, writing in November 1864 that Utah lacked an anti-sodomy law at that time because “our legislators, never having contemplated the possibility of such a crime being committed in our borders[,] had made no provision for its punishment.”

The same issue of the Deseret News regarded the act as “an outrage too gross for publication,” which undermines efforts to see contemporary attitudes as lenient.

**Early Proposed Legal Code**

There is an earlier legal example that O’Donovan does not mention. Same-Sex Dynamics used it in one context but failed to address it when attempting to prove that early Latter-day Saints were relatively tolerant of homosexual acts. A suggested penal code was read to Brigham Young on 23 January 1850:

> When the provisional State of Deseret enacted a penal code in early 1851, it had a clause to the effect that, “if any man or boy shall have, or attempt to have, any sexual intercourse with any of the male creation, on conviction thereof, they shall be deemed guilty of Sodomy, and be fined or imprisoned, or both, as the court may direct.”

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54. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 177–78 citing Dale L. Morgan, “The State of Deseret,” Utah Historical Quarterly 8, no. 2–4 (1940): 216. Of the apparent contradiction between the 1851 proposed code and Brigham’s remark in 1864,
No lenience is in evidence.

**Other Ecclesiastical Examples**

*Same-Sex Dynamics* describes a December 1856 case in which a woman “was trying to seduce a young girl.” The accused confessed to heterosexual adultery, but “denied having any hand in trying to seduce [the girl] though the testimony seems plain against her.”

This hardly seems congruent with leaders who view homosexuality leniently. If the evidence were compelling, why would the accused admit to adultery, but deny an *attempted* homosexual seduction if nineteenth-century Saints were lenient about same-sex acts?

In 1882, Joseph F. Smith wrote to a stake president regarding three men guilty of homosexual conduct: “‘Get the names of all of them & cut them off from the church’ for ‘obscene, filthy & horrible practices’” Their acts were a “monstrous iniquity, for which Sodom & Gomorrah were burned with fire sent down from heaven.” This is not lenience.

*Same-Sex Dynamics* likewise reports that in 1886, a bishop was punished because three young men from outside his ward “testified that while each was alone in bed with [him] … the bishop had used the young

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Mitton and James write: “Utah’s territorial legislature was made up of men who had limited experience in the development of legislation, and they had reason to be concerned about how their legislation would be construed by the courts. To some extent, it was a trial-and-error process. It is probable that the legislators felt that their more general language on ‘adultery, seduction, fornication, and lewd and lascivious cohabitation’ would have been adequate. When the penal code was reviewed and reenacted, the California Code was used as a convenient model from a larger jurisdiction that had had more experience with the development of legislation and with criminal matters” (179).

55. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 269; citing Richard Ballantyne, 1856–89 Diary, 21 December 1856.

56. *Same-Sex Dynamics*’s reading has not been uncontested. Wrote one queer theorist: “Quinn’s fixation on the occurrence of actual sex functions as a blinder to the more interesting implications of this diary entry. On reading the full paragraph from which Quinn takes this case, it becomes clear there may be more complicated issues at play. … While it is certainly possible that this woman was trying to sexually seduce this young girl, it is just as possible that this woman was trying to ‘seduce’ this young girl into opposing polygamy (what Ballantyne refers to as ‘the order of a plurality of wives’)” (K. Mohrman, “Queering the LDS Archive,” *Radical History Review* 122 [May 2015]: 149–50). Another potential reading is that the girl is a child or minor (Ibid, 150).

man’s hand to masturbate himself” and taught them to do the same. The bishop admitted to one charge, and the local paper described “disgusting things” that were “an unmentionable crime.”

_Same-Sex Dynamics_ writes of the “shocked references in diaries and newspapers,” but does not explain how shock helps the claim that nineteenth century Saints were lenient in their views of homosexual acts. The same bishop was later “excommunicated … for what the anti-Mormon _Tribune_ and some contemporary Mormons called ‘sodomy.’”

**Conclusion — Nineteenth-Century Evidence**

The pages of _Same-Sex Dynamics_ cited by _Tabernacles_ include several other examples. An analysis of the errors in these further claims is found in Appendix II. These do not support _Tabernacles_’s contention that there was a lenient attitude in nineteenth-century Utah any more than the above examples do.

The citizens’ and law’s reaction to legal cases makes it implausible to claim that nineteenth century Saints or their leaders were unaware of or indifferent to homosexual sin. One must also ask how likely it is that awareness of or concern about such acts failed to persist personally and institutionally into the early twentieth-century Church.

**An Early Twentieth-Century Gap?**

_Tabernacles_’s account focuses on the twentieth century, and so does not consider most nineteenth-century statements in any detail. Appealing to _Same-Sex Dynamics_, _Tabernacles_ claims, “The first half of the twentieth century provides mostly a profound silence of LDS discourse on the sins of sodomy, homosexuality, or other cognates” (55). Supposedly, “in the early twentieth century, there was virtually no public teaching on same-sex sexual relationships in the church” (55). “The birth of LDS attention to what was becoming known as ‘homosexuality’ belongs to the period after World War II,” i.e., after 1945 (55–56).

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58. Quinn, _Same-Sex Dynamics_, 277.
60. Quinn, _Same-Sex Dynamics_, 278.
61. _Tabernacles_, 235n9; citing Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 265–313, 366–400.
62. “Virtually” is a word with considerable wiggle room. In the pages cited by _Tabernacles_, _Same-Sex Dynamics_ cites no examples of public remarks about homosexual behavior. As will be seen below in the section entitled “Nineteenth Century,” there are many. See the section “Twentieth Century” for more examples of wiggle room.
It is worthwhile to examine the nineteenth-century sources prior to considering those of the first half of the twentieth century. Without considering what, if anything, was said about homosexual behavior in the nineteenth century, one would be hard placed to determine whether the first decades of the twentieth century were virtually or profoundly silent. (As already shown, legal and ecclesiastical attitudes were decidedly not lenient in several cases.)

As Tabernacles notes, the term homosexual was not in broad usage until the 1950s and was first used in Latter-day Saint discourse by J. Rueben Clark Jr. in 1952 (63). Further, “the lack of ecclesiastical attention in sermons does not mean the possibility and practice of same-sex intercourse was unknown among the Saints” (55).

Same-Sex Dynamics argues that Joseph Smith saw Sodom and Gomorrah as guilty only of “rejecting the prophets,” not homosexual sin. Quinn insists that those who preached against sodomy later either “revised” or “made a complete reversal of” Joseph’s “nonsexual interpretation of Sodom’s destruction.”63

It is certainly true that Joseph said that “the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah were destroyed for rejecting the Prophets.”64 But in a transparent example of special pleading, Same-Sex Dynamics acts as if the cases are mutually exclusive — as if there could not be both sexual and nonsexual charges against Sodom and her sister city.65 These infamous cities did reject the prophets. This does not rule out sexual sins. Even in Joseph’s lifetime, John Taylor would write in Times and Seasons and Millennial Star:

Another very eminent Evangelical church existed in great numbers, in Asia; there were several very notable cities that were eminently skilled in the doctrine of paying no attention to the messages that might be sent to them. I refer to the

63. Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 276.
65. This is a variety of the “fallacy of false dichotomous questions … which deserves to be singled out for special condemnation. … [These] suggest a false dichotomy between two terms [or options] that are neither mutually exclusive nor collectively exhaustive” (Fischer, Historians’ Fallacies, 9, 11).
famous cities of Admah, Zeboim, Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, &c. When the angels of God went they abused them.  

One could, it seems, both reject the messages and be guilty of attempted homosexual mistreatment of the messengers.

Joseph did not repudiate the sexual aspect of their sin. In his theology, no group would be punished for their sins without prophetic warning. A rejection of divine messengers was thus a necessary capstone upon their sinfulness, not the sole sign of it. They would have had no need of prophetic warning had they no other sins.


67. See Part 2, “1922 — George F. Richards,” for a later apostle charging Sodom with both rejecting prophets and participating in other gross wickedness. One might argue that Taylor claimed only that the angels were “abused” in the sense of being rejected as messengers, but this is not what the Old Testament text describes. The angels arrive at Sodom and are immediately invited home by Lot as they enter the city’s gates. When the men of Sodom learn that the guests are there, they surround the house and seek to sexually mistreat the angels before any message has been given. (Arguably, the actions of the mob confirm the city’s condemnation and seal its fate.) The angels then deliver their warning to Lot, who is later rejected as a messenger by his sons-in-law (12–16), but no verbal abuse ever falls on the angels as messengers, and there is no indication that they have said anything to anyone but Lot. Sodom’s inhabitants paid so little attention that they assaulted the messengers before even hearing the message.

As discussed below, in 1858 and 1882 Taylor would explicitly critique the sexual behavior of Sodom, including a reference to “sodomy.” In 1884 he compared Sodom to Pompeii and Herculaneum (both notorious to Taylor’s contemporaries, as we will see, for homosexual vice). His First Presidency likewise released a statement in 1886 condemning Sodom’s “abominations.” It thus seems likely that Taylor here, too, understood the charge against Sodom to include sexual sin, given that he was aware of this dimension and willing to mention it explicitly.

68. Doctrine and Covenants 1:14. Also from the same talk which *Same-Sex Dynamics* cites, “whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed his word & gave power & authority to administer in his name: And whare there is a Priest of God, a minister who has power & authority from God to administer in the ordinances of the gospel & officiate in the Priesthood of God, there is the kingdom of God & in consequence of rejecting the gospel of Jesus Christ & the Prophets whom God hath sent, the judgments of God hath rested upon people cities & nations in various ages of the world” [sic] (Smith, “Discourse, 22 January 1843,” 4).
The Joseph Smith Translation

Neither *Same-Sex Dynamics* nor *Tabernacles* cite the earliest evidence of Joseph’s view of homosexual acts — his revision of the King James Bible.\textsuperscript{69} If Joseph were inclined to soften the biblical stance on homosexual activity, his revision would have provided the ideal opportunity. Instead, the prohibition was strengthened, as reviewers critical of *Same-Sex Dynamics* have shown.\textsuperscript{70} The Joseph Smith Translation (JST) intensified the Sodom story in Genesis:

> [KJV v. 9a] stand back and *they* were angry with him and they said *again* among *themselves* this one fellow man came in to sojourn among us and he will needs *now* make himself to be a judge now we will deal worse with thee him than with them. *wherefore* they said unto the man we will have the men and thy daughters also and we will do with them as seemeth us good now this was after the wickedness of Sodom. [KJV v. 8] And Lot went out at the door unto them and ssaid [sic] behold now I have two daughters which have not known [p. 46] *man* let me *I pray you* plead with my breatheren that I may not *bring them out unto you* and do ye shall not do unto them as is seemeth good in your eyes for God will not justify his servent, <in this thing> wherefore let me plead with my breatheren this once *only* that unto these men ye do nothing that they may have peace in my house <for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof > [KJV v. 9b] *and* they pressed upon the man, even and they were angry with Lot *and* came near to break the door but the men Angels of God which were holy men put forth their hand and pulled <Lot> into the house unto them and shut to the door.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{69} The Old Testament JST material was published in the 1978 Latter-day Saint version of the Bible. The Romans JST material has been available at least since 1981 in a manual cited by *Tabernacles of Clay* (Homosexuality [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981], 2). *Tabernacles* cites this specific page on 243n206 and a different page on 243n207, but ignores the JST quoted therein.

\textsuperscript{70} Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 164–65.

\textsuperscript{71} I here italicize Joseph’s changes and strike out material from the original KJV; note that verse order has been somewhat rearranged. Materials marked <> are additions in the original transcription in “Old Testament Revision 1,” 47, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/48. By 1 December 1830, the work had reached what is now Moses 6:19,
The JST eliminates the idea of Lot offering up his virgin daughters to appease a mob; it emphasizes, however, that the homosexual acts were “after the wickedness of Sodom.”

Likewise, Joseph’s revision of Romans 1 — which even unedited contains one of the apostle Paul’s strongest condemnations of homosexual activity — reads:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

And even as they did not like to retain God according to some in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despitful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

And some are inexcusable, who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Romans 1:26–32)."


72. See Thomas A. Wayment, ed., *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament: A side-by-side comparison with the King James Version* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), loc. 7481–84, Kindle, italics is material added by
Instead of beginning with the JST, *Tabernacles* starts with evidence from late in Joseph Smith’s lifetime, noting that John C. Bennett was charged with soliciting sex from men (55). The Bennett material could be seen as an *ad hominem* attempt to undermine Bennett’s reputation. Joseph’s early revisions of the scriptures, however, cannot be seen in that light, and are thus even more convincing evidence of the Prophet’s view of homosexual behavior.

### Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior

That Sodom and its sister city have long been synonymous with homosexual activity needs no demonstration. To completely identify references among the Saints — particularly during the period in which the term *homosexual* was not in general use — it is necessary to look for *Sodom* and related words, as *Tabernacles*, following *Same-Sex Dynamics*, indicates.

When proper research is done there is, indeed, a large number of references. In addition to looking for *Sodom* and related words, the ancient Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum have long provided delicate authors with overt or oblique reference to homosexual conduct.


73. The Sodom and Gomorrah account deals with “both sexual perversity and gross inhospitality” (David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000], 1235). The narrative portrays Abraham as anxious to be an effusive and generous host to his angelic visitors, while in an ironic reversal the wicked city of Sodom attempts homosexual rape of those same guests. Christian prohibitions on same-sex activity do not require Sodom and Gomorrah for their cogency — Romans 1:26–32, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, 1 Timothy 1:9–10, and Jude 1:6–7 are all far more on-point, as is Jesus’s endorsement and intensification of the Mosaic sexual ethic and marital ideal (Matthew 19:3–12; Mark 10:2–12) and his use of Sodom as a city richly deserving God’s judgment (Matthew 10:15, 11:23–24; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12, 17:28–32).

In the restored Church of Jesus Christ, these scriptures are also applicable, but the prohibition of homosexual acts is also rooted in modern revelation to living prophets and apostles, who have been united and univocal in their condemnation. The key point, for our purposes, is not the proper exegesis of the Sodom and Gomorrah *pericope*, but how it was understood by Latter-day Saints and their contemporaries. The standard term *sodomy* for homosexual acts in both law (see the section entitled “Early Proposed Legal Code” for Utah example) and theology in the west is well-known, demonstrating that the common understanding of the cities’ sin included homosexual acts.
This was something of a nineteenth-century commonplace and in 1884

74. Of pagan Greek and Roman propensity for homosexual acts, Edward Gibbon famously wrote: “I touch with reluctance, and dispatch with impatience, a more odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea. The primitive Romans were infected by the examples of the Etruscans and Greeks. … The practice of vice was not discouraged by the severity of opinion: the indelible stain of manhood was confounded with the more venial transgressions of fornication and adultery, nor was the licentious lover exposed to the same dishonour which he impressed on the male or female partner of his guilt. From Catullus to Juvenal, the poets accuse and celebrate the degeneracy of the times. … Till the most virtuous of the Caesars proscribed the sin against nature as a crime against society” (Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 5 [1788–89; repr., London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854], 85–86).


Non-Latter-day Saint works from throughout the nineteenth century that demonstrate a similar awareness include: William Jenks, editor, The Comprehensive Commentary on the Holy Bible: Acts – Revelations (Brattleboro, VT: Brattleboro’ Typographic Company, 1838), 179 in discussing Romans 1:26: “This is well known to have been an abomination of the ancients, invented by the Lesbian women. In justification of the apostle’s censure, see the proof of these horrible crimes, heaped together. … Indeed the other vices … are known to be still practiced, even the worst of them. … Comp. the public obscenities of Pompeii, &c., of this very age, buried whole, and preserved for ages as if to convince us”; [2] The Universalist Quarterly and General Review, vol. 1 (Boston: A Tompkins, 1844), 267n12 discusses “the vices of adultery and sodomy” which can be seen in “the houses of prostitution in Herculanenum and Pompeii, and the revolting character of the architecture, furniture and paintings”; [3] James B. Walker, Living Questions of the Age (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1877), 200–201 says “The beastly vice of sodomy was prevalent in Rome. … The vile nature of their art has been illustrated by the excavations of Pompeii. … This is the pit from which the Gospel has rescued the human soul; and … this moral pollution, festering with sodomy, human blood, and all manner of impurity”; [4] D.L. Miller, Wanderings in Bible Lands (Mount Morris, IL: The Brethren’s Publishing Company, 1894), 97 describes how “in Pompeii … sodomy, and like vices, were among their sinful practices.”
John Taylor appealed to these cities’s proverbial corruption:

Was it at the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, when ten righteous persons could not be found to avert the wrath of an offended God, or in Pompeii or Herculaneum, who, in their turn, for their libidinous and unrighteous practices, as Sodom and Gomorrah, suffered the vengeance of eternal fire? No. Was it in the Saturnalia of the Bacchanals of ancient Greece and Rome? No. Those nations have been long overthrown. … Was it under the influence of Bacchus, or in the midnight revelings as exhibited in Rome under Nero. No.75

Thus, one ought to look for examples beneath Mt. Vesuvius too.

Furthermore, nineteenth-century Saints were not unaware of New Testament scriptures that condemned and forbade homosexual acts. These were sometimes characterized as the “crime against nature,” drawing on Romans 1.76

Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6 were popular texts in early Latter-day Saint publications; they were often cited as evidence of the wickedness of the world in which the Saints lived. One cannot know to what degree the audience focused on the condemnation of homosexual acts, but at the very least these examples demonstrate that the frank New Testament language was frequently before their eyes. There are at least five such usages, not reproduced here because they tend to be repetitive.77

In addition, Church leaders’ teachings are often repeated through republication or citation — there are at least nine examples. These too are


not reproduced here. It would be naïve to think that nineteenth-century leader-produced material didn’t influence subsequent twentieth-century leaders and the material they produced both for other readers and for the general membership.

**Nineteenth Century**

I will now review examples using Sodom, Gomorrah, Pompeii, and the “crime against nature” from nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint discourse. I have not, however, included every reference to “Sodom.” It is often mentioned in passing without discussing the sins of its people specifically (e.g., the *Millennial Star* contains at least 39 examples). Such cases do not add much to a history of the teaching targeted at homosexual sin. On the other hand, the frequent use of Sodom as a trope for peculiar and intolerable wickedness suggests that there was a great deal that often went without saying.

Given that same-sex acts are not always explicitly described, each example is categorized as either a Certain, Probable, or Possible reference to homosexual acts. A few cases (marked “Mention Only” herein) are included as examples of how often Sodom was referred to, if only in passing. Each categorization appears, in brackets, at the end of each example.

In 1835, the Church’s official periodical wrote:

> We believe it justly deducible for the foregoing premises; that God warned the Antedeluvians, the Sodomites, and others,


79. *Tabernacles* tacitly acknowledges this when one reads that leaders’ “teachings are quoted in church publications, disseminated among members, and cited by other church leaders to define the direction that the church takes. They also have incredible longevity in these roles — often spanning multiple decades — granting them both a relative stability of vision and control of the direction of the church” (4), but it does not seem to consider the implications in this context.

80. In all instances, italics in original, boldface emphasis has been added.

81. Of 43 examples, 14 (33%) are judged certain, 15 (35%) as probable, 8 (19%) as possible, and 6 (14%) as only a mention of Sodom. (Legal cases, republications, or citations of scripture are omitted from this tally, though the JST is included.)
previously to their overthrow, and that their destruction came upon them in consequence of their great wickedness and disobedience.82 [Possible]

Six months later, Josiah’s reforms were celebrated: “He brake down the houses of the Sodomites; he put down the idolatrous priests, and the priests that burnt incense to Baal.”83 [Probable]

In 1844, John Taylor wrote in the Times and Seasons:

Certainly if any person ought to interfere in political matters, it should be those whose minds and judgments are influenced by correct principles — religious as well as political. Otherwise those persons professing religion would have to be governed by those who make no professions; be subject to their rule; have the law and word of God trampled under foot, and become as wicked as Sodom and as corrupt as Gomorrah, and be prepared for final destruction.84 [Possible]

In 1845, soon after Joseph’s death, the Times and Seasons wrote:

Sure enough “hell” is in the midst of the earth, and when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed they sunk down to hell, and the water covered up the unhallowed spot. Jude knew this when he wrote: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” …

No wonder we have earthquakes, hot springs and convulsions in the earth, if the damned spirits of six thousand years, ante deluvians, Sodomites, Egyptians, apostates of Israel, and mobbers

82. W.A. Cowdery, “Letter No. 2,” The Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate 1, no. 8 (May 1835): 113, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9748/rec/3. In this and all examples below, bold emphasis has been added; italics in the original.
of Babylon, which have gone down (into the pit) quickly, act like their fellow servants of this generation.85 [Certain]

Moving to the Utah period, in 1853 Parley P. Pratt emphasized Sodom’s “lawless abominations” and “strange and unnatural lusts” when he said:

The Sodomites, Canaanites, &c., received the reverse of this blessing. Instead of giving them a multiplicity of wives and children, He cut them off, root and branch, and blotted their name from under heaven, that there might be an end of a race so degenerate. Now this severity was a mercy. If we were like the people before the flood, full of violence and oppression; or if we, like the Sodomites or Canaanites, were full of all manner of lawless abominations, holding promiscuous intercourse with the other sex, and stooping to a level with the brute creation, and predisposing our children, by every means in our power, to be fully given to strange and unnatural lusts, appetites, and passions, would it not be a mercy to cut us off, root and branch, and thus put an end to our increase upon the earth? You will all say it would.86 [Certain]

Two years later, in his Key to the Science of Theology, Pratt would warn:

While to pervert our natures, and to prostitute ourselves and our strength to mere pleasures, or to unlawful communion of the sexes, is alike subversive of health, of pure, holy and lasting affection; of moral and social order; and of the laws of God and nature. …

The people before the flood, and also the Sodomites and Canaanites, had carried these corruptions and degeneracies so far that God, in mercy, destroyed them, and thus put an end to the procreation of races so degenerate and abominable.87 [Probable]

87. Parley P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology: Designed as An Introduction to the First Principles of Spiritual Philosophy; Religion; Law and Government; As
In 1857, Brigham Young said: “We can make the Territory of Utah one of greatest sinks of iniquity upon the face of the whole earth, and exceed the abominations of the ancient Sodomites, if we are so disposed.”88 [Probable]

In 1858, John Taylor would caution:

You read of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the antediluvians, that every imagination of their hearts was only evil, and that continually. You read again of the abominations of Nineveh, of Babylon, of ancient Rome, and of the bestiality that was practised among them: they were sunk in an awful state of degradation and corruption. They still are under the influence of the god of this world, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and leads them captive at his will.89 [Probable]

It is clear that the nineteenth-century Saints were no strangers to the idea that the sins of fallen Rome involved more than adultery; it was associated with “bestiality,” “abominations,” “an awful state of degradation and corruption,” and “Sodom and Gomorrah.” It is likewise clear that Taylor understands this to refer to homosexual acts. In a later talk, he said:

[God] cut off the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in consequence of their corruptions, and by and by he will shake all the inhabitants of the earth … because of some of these corruptions that Brother Joseph F. Smith has briefly hinted at, namely, the perversion of the laws of nature between the sexes, and the damnable murders that exist among men.90 [Certain]


90. John Taylor, “Right of the Creator to Govern the Creature,” (Journal of Discourses by John Taylor, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others, eds.
And, in 1882 he returned to the same theme:

We cannot hold communion with people who are corrupt, low and degraded. … We know the infamies which exist there, the licentiousness, the corruption, the social evil, adulteries, fornication, sodomy, child murder, and every kind of infamy. And they come here and want to teach our children these things. … We don’t want these practices insidiously introduced among us. We want to preserve our purity, our virtue, our honor, and our integrity. [Certain]

In 1879, Wilford Woodruff warned:

Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people,” … and the devil is ruling over his own kingdom, and wickedness and abominations of every kind have increased … until the whole earth is filled with murders, whoredoms, blasphemies, and every crime in the black catalogue that was manifest in the antediluvian world, or Sodom and Gomorrah, until the whole earth groans under its abominations. [Probable]

In 1880, a Latter-day Saint wrote in his private diary: “I think this nation will beat the anti-deluvians [sic] or Sodomites for seduction, prostitution and whoredom.” [Probable]

In 1883, The Contributor wrote: “According to the laws of Moses, idolatry, violating the Sabbath day, homicide, adultery, incest, rapes, crimes against nature, blasphemy, witchcraft, and the striking and cursing father and mother were punished by death.” [Certain]
In 1886, two members of the First Presidency — John Taylor and George Q. Cannon — wrote:

The Gentile or Christian world today can no more commit sins, and be guilty of lying, stealing, blasphemy, whoredom or murder, or committing abominations, and escape the wrath of God, than could Sodom and Gomorrah, or the antediluvian world, or ancient Israel.95 [Probable]

Earlier I mentioned John Taylor’s 1884 reference to Pompeii.96 In 1873, future president of the Church Lorenzo Snow toured Italy and reported:

The next day we spent a few hours very agreeably in the celebrated Museum of Naples; which … constitutes a general depot of the two ancient cities, Pompeii and Herculaneum. … The “Secret Cabinet,” which was formerly closed to all visitors, is now open to gentlemen, but is still closed to ladies and the Catholic clergy. Its contents exhibit, in a striking manner, the dissipated public taste: and the licentious and beastly practices of the inhabitants of those doomed cities, Pompeii and Herculaneum, showing that they well merited the terrible judgment meted out to them so suddenly.97 [Possible]

A later nineteenth-century account in The Contributor echoed the same themes:

The frescoes or painted plaster from the walls, have in many instances been conveyed from Pompeii to the National Museum at Naples. … The high, well preserved coloring of the paintings is remarkable. The subjects suggest a very fast, immoral life, that doubtless made the judgment which decreed the destruction of Pompeii a just one. Many signs besides, remain to indicate how the Pompeians were a people given

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96. See “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior.”
to luxury, indolence and sin. Their theatres, baths, places of assignation and rendezvous are coming to light.  

**Misrepresentation of Nineteenth-Century Sources**

*Tabernacles* does briefly cite a talk by George Q. Cannon from 1879 (portion by *Tabernacles*, 55 is here in boldface):

I consider our false tradition upon this subject one of the greatest evils at the present time that exists upon the earth. It has come down to us from the Greeks and Romans, than whom [sic] a more abominable lot of people never lived upon the earth. To read their books is enough to make a man with the least feeling of modesty blush and be ashamed of his race. Yet they are introduced into our literature. Whoever reads Horace, Sallust, and numbers of those authors, well knows how full of corruption they are, Not only crimes, but *crimes against nature* were justified by some of the best and most noted of Greek philosophers, and were practised by Sophocles, Socrates, and others; and yet this is the philosophy that has come down to us.  

*Tabernacles* also mentions Cannon’s 1897 address via a summary: “Cannon suggested that the cure for sodomy would be the destruction of all such practitioners in one generation, preventing its spread through contagion” (55).

Compare this summary with the actual text:

The abominations and secret wickedness that are practiced among the nations are intruding themselves among us. Unspeakable practices are creeping in. They are varied in character. If we spoke of them at all, we would have to disguise their abominable character. In our own nation, and in the nations of the earth, there is a condition of things that, if we knew of it, would appall us. [Oscar Wilde] was found to be guilty

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of a most abominable crime — a crime for which under the old law the penalty was death; a crime which was practiced by the nations of old and caused God to command their destruction and extirpation. ... And is this common? If we may believe that which is told us, without going into researches ourselves, it and other kindred wickedness, is far too common. The same sin that caused the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah! This and other abominable crimes are being practiced. How will these be stopped? Only by the destruction of those who practice them. Why, if a little nest of them were left that were guilty of these things, they would soon corrupt others, as some are being corrupted among us. In coming to these mountains we hoped to find a place where we could live secluded from the abominations of Babylon.100 [Certain]

It is important to be clear that what Tabernacles calls Cannon’s “contagion” comes via example and teaching, not (as might be assumed from “contagion”) from the unwitting spreading the problem to the unaware. Tabernacles claims that “Cannon presupposed all were at risk of sodomy” (55). But he does not say so.

Instead, he emphasizes that the guilty “perpetuate the knowledge” and seduce others into “these dreadful practices” by teaching “the filthy details and the exact forms and methods.”101 So, one must actively seek to spread such knowledge, and another one must actively learn it.

For Cannon, this is the same model that applies to all sin: the wicked may tempt susceptible others into sin, as his talk makes clear.

If am determined to listen to Satan and to be influenced by his spirit, [God] will suffer me, in the exercise of my agency, to do that. …

We talk of Satan being bound. Satan will be bound by the power of God; but he will be bound also by the determination of the people of God not to listen to him, not to be governed by him. The Lord will not bind him and take his power from the earth while there are men and women willing to be governed by him. …

We should, as a people, guard against these things. All sorts of evils are introducing themselves. We have men here with whom a woman can no more be trusted that she could be in the

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den of a wolf — and men of respectable appearance, and who act as though they might be gentleman. ... This class of men prey upon the other sex, and have brought themselves to think that it is neither sinful nor wrong. ... And these people come among us, and consort with us! Our young men, too, consort with them and some of them take lessons from them.\textsuperscript{102}

The homosexual sinner is, for Cannon, just like the heterosexual one — both have weakness that can lead them to “take lessons” from a sinner and become sinners themselves. Others (like the true “respectable ... gentleman”) will not be susceptible to the proffered “lessons.” To teach and learn are choices, and so “contagion” may not be the best metaphor. Tabernacles tells readers that Cannon thought “destruction” the cure for sodomy. How did Cannon understand the matter?

We are looking forward ... to the time when primitive conditions will be restored; when we shall have paradise on earth, when Eden will be restored to the earth, when Satan will be bound, when a reign of righteousness will be ushered in, when sin will be banished from the face of the earth, when what has been termed Millennial glory will be ushered in. ... But here in this secluded place wickedness intrudes itself, and is practiced in this land which we have dedicated to the Lord as a land of Zion! How can this be stopped? Not while those who have knowledge of these filthy crimes exist. The only way, according to all that I can understand as the word of God, is for the Lord to wipe them out, that there will be none left to perpetuate the knowledge of these dreadful practices among the children of men. ...

When will these [evil] things end? When God visits the wicked with His judgments, as He will do. ...

The knowledge of the wicked and their destruction will be preserved in our midst; but the abomination and the wickedness itself will be concealed from human knowledge, so that wickedness may be abolished in the earth, and the reign of righteousness ushered in.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 64–66.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 64–68.
Tabernacles does not indicate that the “destruction” that Cannon recommends is simply God’s destruction of those who commit wicked acts in an eschatological cleansing of the earth at Jesus’s Second Coming.

Summarizing Nineteenth-Century Statements

Tabernacles returns to Same-Sex Dynamics as the authority for the claim that:

In subsequent [post-1940s] decades, church leaders adopted increasingly alarmist positions about the harms of same-sex intercourse and relationships. This was a change. Historian D. Michael Quinn traces a transition in LDS leaders’ attitudes toward homosexuality in these midcentury decades, arguing that during the 1950s the church moved from “relative tolerance” to “homophobia” and strident opposition. (63)

Tabernacles again uses Same-Sex Dynamics uncritically and with no acknowledgement of how dubious its claim of “relative tolerance” has been shown to be. It is difficult to read all these entries from the nineteenth century and conclude that there was any tolerance of homosexual acts. If anything, it is surprising how frequently early leaders mentioned an issue that was probably quite foreign to their ecclesiastical and personal experience.

Further, I have shown that those few statements that Tabernacles does cite are not adequately characterized. The many counterexamples make it difficult to accept that “the birth of LDS attention to … ‘homosexuality’ belongs to the period after World War II” (55), save in the trivial sense that it was called by different a name before then.

Twentieth Century

What, then, of Tabernacles’s treatment of the twentieth century?

Tabernacles argues that in 1897 George Q. Cannon was “among the last to speak publicly on this topic for decades” (55). As with “virtually,” and “mostly a profound silence,” “among the last” leaves considerable wiggle room.104 Such phrasing lets the book portray the sources as mostly empty, while avoiding the charge of omitting evidence if the reader knows of a counter-example or two.

It is this silence that is vital to Tabernacles’s theory. But this description does not accurately reflect all the evidence. To be sure, some of what follows is in written form, and thus technically not public

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104. See “An Early Twentieth-Century Gap?” for more wiggle room. Italics added in all cases.
speaking. But it is not fair to portray the twentieth century as mostly silent even if all the counter-examples were written for publication, not spoken. If nothing else, printed or spoken condemnation reveals the leaders’ attitudes, even if members never read or heard or understood.

Within five years of Cannon supposedly being “among the last to speak … for decades,” the official History of the Church would include B. H. Robert’s mention of the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah:

The rest of the epistle [of Jude] he devotes to a description of their wickedness, comparing it with the conduct of Satan, and the vileness of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah [Certain, since Roberts refers to Jude’s rebuke of those “giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh” (Jude 1:7)].105

It was not just Church leaders who spoke in such terms. In 1926, the Millennial Star again linked Sodom with the fall and decadence of Rome: “A chaste person is pure in morals, manners, and conduct. … Nations and cities have fallen because of impurity and iniquity; consider the cases of Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon, Rome, and others.”106 [Probable]

**Spencer W. Kimball and Pompeii**

At this point the pattern may be easier to see if I proceed in reverse order, before returning to the chronological approach. In 1954 Spencer W. Kimball stated:

Historians are still puzzled regarding the annihilation of the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. … Historians say the area has remained in “deathlike solitude and unmitigated and supreme desolation”. …

Some years ago we visited Rome [where] Christians [were] martyred in the arenas, while lecherous humans betrayed their sadistic depravity …

We saw the picture of Roman profligacy in excavated Pompeii, the Mediterranean resort, where the idle rich of Rome reveled in riotous living. The eruption of Vesuvius buried the city with its vomit of dust and stones and ashes.

105. Roberts, introduction to Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1: xlix.
We walked the streets of Pompeii where chariots had worn tracks in the stone. We saw the homes of the people, their bakeries, hospitals, and circuses. **We saw their laundries, drugstores, and baths; their liquor houses and brothels. The latter were padlocked, too revolting to open to general public gaze, as the walls carried pictures in colors, still preserved, depicting the depth of their degradation ...**

And now in the year of our Lord 1945, there are among us those same vices which we have seen wreck empires, and we see them becoming flagrant in our own beloved nation.\(^{107}\) [Probable]

Kimball’s use of this imagery may include homosexual activities, as noted in the nineteenth-century examples regarding Pompeii.\(^{108}\)

During a March 1944 mission trip Kimball told congregations of [his] trip to Europe in 1937, when he ... had stood a yard from the molten lava of Vesuvius and had toured the excavated ruins of Pompeii below, which had been **buried in volcanic ash.** He told of the stone roads, rutted by chariot wheels, the brothels, shown to men only, containing wall paintings portraying “all the vicious sins

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108. See the sections “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior” and “Nineteenth Century.” See discussion more generally in Marguerite Johnson, “The Grim Reality of the Brothels of Pompeii,” *The Conversation* (12 December 2017), https://theconversation.com/the-grim-reality-of-the-brothels-of-pompeii-88853. Kimball would later recall the same visit in *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, comparing Pompeii to Sodom and Gomorrah: “Their empty brothels and houses of prostitution were locked with padlocks and carried signs in Italian, ‘For Men Only.’ These places of shame stood after nineteen centuries, a witness of their degradation; and on the walls in these buildings, in color still preserved for these nearly two millennia, were the pictures of every vice that could be committed by human beings — all the vicious sins that have accumulated since Cain began his evil ways. ... Then I came to realize why Pompeii was destroyed. There came a time when it just had to be destroyed. ... Pompeii was destroyed. I think I know why. It was because of its wickedness and depravity. I think Pompeii must have been in much the same lamentable situation as Sodom and Gomorrah long before it” (138–39).
that have accumulated since Cain began his evil ways.” As in *Sodom and Gomorrah*, he emphasized, *fire from above* had extinguished the flames of human sin and uncontrolled appetite, which keep man from God’s kingdom.109 [Probable]

Here again a parallel is drawn between Sodom and Pompeii. Yet Kimball does not seem to be the only leader to have thought along these lines. Elder Ben E. Rich offered the same in an earlier 1912 conference. He reflected first on Rome’s persecution of the Christians, and then on the wickedness of Pompeii that was responsible for its destruction:

> It was my privilege to visit Rome, and as I stood in the ruins of the Coliseum, I remembered the history of the faithful former-day Saints who, refusing to deny the faith, stood there in the arena. …

> I went farther south [from Rome], and walked for hours through the streets of the *City of Pompeii* that, *on account of wickedness*, had been covered up by a terrible catastrophe, 79 years after Christ. But two-thirds of it is yet excavated … again I thought, here is another city that has suffered the wrath of God.110 [Possible]

Even earlier, in 1906, the *Improvement Era* used similar themes from a non-Church work:

> Vesuvius, as quiet as the day was calm, was decked with its vines of green. No one thought of the hidden fires beneath it that would soon destroy the *fair but wicked cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum* at its base, as those from heaven destroyed *Sodom and Gomorrah*.111 [Possible]

Here, as in Kimball’s 1944 account, Sodom and Gomorrah are explicitly tied to Pompeii and Herculaneum. Thus, even this one trope


— the wickedness of Pompeii and its analogy with Sodom — is mentioned repeatedly throughout the first half of the twentieth century: in 1906, 1912, 1944, and 1945. And this mention echoes multiple nineteenth-century statements.\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{A Gap in References?}

If there is any period during which \textit{Tabernacles}'s gap can be said to exist, it is between 1907 and 1925. But even here there are five mentions of Sodom, though most are less explicit about the city’s sins than previous examples.

\textbf{1908 — Millennial Star}

The inhabitants of the earth need to be taught — to repent of their sins and unbelief and turn to the Lord or they will perish as did the people of \textit{Sodom and Gomorrah}. The condition of the world at the present time is most alarming; the newspapers are filled with reports of crimes committed … drunkenness and \textit{debauchery} … thousands … go down to their graves every day steeped in sin and iniquity.\textsuperscript{113} [Possible]

\textbf{1908 — Andrew Jenson}

Of a little later period we read about some “cities on the plains” afterwards a part of the kingdom of Israel, in which the righteous were commanded to flee from the wicked cities of \textit{Sodom and Gomorrah}, and seek refuge in the mountains, because the Lord had decided to destroy the \textit{wicked cities of the plain} [Mention only].\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{112} See the sections “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior” and “Nineteenth Century.”


1917 — George Albert Smith

On the plains of Mamre, when Abraham petitioned his Holy Visitor to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, he was told that even if ten righteous persons be found, a very small number, too, of the multitude, that the cities would be preserved. But only Lot and his wife and two daughters were sufficiently righteous to merit preservation. The angels told them to leave the city, and fire rained down from heaven and consumed the people, who had been warned repeatedly by the servant of God that destruction would overtake them if they failed to repent.115 [Mention only]

1920 — Melvin J. Ballard

I believe that great responsibility rests upon this generation, because light has come into the world, and men sin in the presence of light and knowledge, and thereby their condemnation exceeds the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah.116 [Mention only]

1922 — George F. Richards

When we think of their [antediluvians’] physical destruction, their spiritual imprisonment, and their being consigned to the terrestrial kingdom, we are impressed with the seriousness of their mistake and the greatness of their disappointment. It is a terrible thing to reject the prophets and their message. All the dispensations since that time, should have profited by the unwise course and conduct of this people and the wisdom of the conduct of Noah and his family, who were true and faithful. The cities of Sodom and Gommorrah [sic] were burned by fire because of the wickedness of the people and because they rejected the messengers that had been sent them of the Lord. The same old story, and if we knew the further results, we would, perhaps, discover that they would be in the

same class with those ante-diluvians who were destroyed by the flood.117 [Mention only]

The association of Rome, Greece, Babylon, and Sodom with homosexual sin was, by this time, well-established in Church discourse.118 An Improvement Era article of 1929 drew upon these associations.

Educational institutions are not immune from the withering effects of this new propaganda. It is not uncommon to hear expressions from educators in advocacy of doctrines which cannot be designated as other than evil. Such degeneration which manifests itself in the world often indeed parades as advanced thought. It parades as the new freedom in advocacy of indulgence in any form necessary in achieving what is called “self-expression.” Strip these practices of the adornment of modern knowledge and they are as Sodom or Babylon or Rome.119 [Probable]

**Statements in 1930–1950**

Still more examples can be provided to finish the first half of the supposedly silent twentieth century:

1931 — Improvement Era

_Sodom and Gomorrah_ were destroyed by the Lord on account of their shocking wickedness.120 [Probable]

1934 — J. Rueben Clark Jr.

There is nothing to show whether Melchizedek had known either Abram or Bera [king of Sodom] before this time, but the close neighborhood of the Cities of the Plains, where Bera ruled, and the plain of Mamre,

117. George F. Richards, Ninety-Second Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6–7, 9 April 1922): 57–58, https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1922a/page/n57/mode/2up. Compare this reference to both rejecting the prophets and committing other serious sin to Same-Sex Dynamics’s claims in the section “An Early Twentieth-Century Gap?”

118. See the sections “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior,” “Nineteenth Century,” and “Twentieth Century.”


where Abram dwelt, and Salem, the home of Melchizedek, justifies the assumption that they were acquainted. Furthermore, having in mind the character of the men of Sodom — “wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” …

Abram had his mind fully matured, his course definitely determined. … Here Abram surrenders up all his own right to the booty from whatever source, and especially any taken from Bera because he does not wish to be placed under any obligation to Bera. The very terms of this self-effacement indicate the irritation, resentment, and disgust almost to loathing, which Abram felt for Bera: “I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.” One can nearly hear an aside remark from Abram: “I have had nothing to do with you; I shall have nothing to do with you; you are without ability, you are impotent, you are unclean, a subject for God’s wrath.”

1940 — Sidney B. Sperry quoting Adolphe Lods
Speaking of the morals of the Canaanites, Professor Lods has said:

Israelite writers of every period agree that among the Canaanites, family ties were lightly regarded, the paternal authority was flouted, while in the matter of sexual morality, liberty was carried to the extent of licence. … The depravity of the Canaanites was notorious: witness the vices attributed to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, the reason alleged for their destruction by the fire of Jahweh (Gen. 13:13; 18:20–1; 19).122 [Certain]

1942 — Letter from the First Presidency
This letter was read in General Conference and focuses on heterosexual sin, though it also discusses both Sodom and Gomorrah and “sodomites”:

Upon the heels of the demon drink, tread the demons of unchastity — harlotry, fornication, adultery, while murder itself lurks not far behind. From Adam until now, God has commanded that His children be sexually clean. …

But some of us have forgotten what the Lord has said about these sins. Some of us have failed to teach our children the need for sexual purity ... So, with too many, modesty has become a derided virtue, and the sex desire has been degraded to the level of hunger and thirst. From Sodom and Gomorrah until now, sex immorality, with its attendant evils of drink and corruption, has brought low the mightiest of nations, has destroyed powerful peoples, has reduced erring man almost to the level of the beasts in the field …

One of the ten basic principles of Christian society, and accepted by all worshipers of the true God, came to men at Sinai when God wrote with His own finger: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

By the laws of Moses, adulterers were stoned to death. (Deut. 22:24.) God said to Israel: “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel” (Deut. 23:17).123 [Certain]

1944 — Joseph Fielding Smith

There is no crime more degrading, more blighting to the soul, than the sin of unchastity. It is the enemy of society, destructive of the home and a menace to the welfare of the nation. It was because of this abhorred sin, more than to any other cause, that nations in the past decayed and fell. The people of today should take warning and profit by the experiences of the past, that we might escape like destruction. The Lord called down fire upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to hide their immoral shame. The Israelites were made instruments in the hand of the Lord to destroy the peoples of Palestine, when the “iniquity of the Amorite was full,” and, because of a similar reason, Nineveh, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Rome and other

nations, fell; and like destruction awaits the present nations if they follow in the immoral practices of the peoples of old. …

We cannot justify ourselves in the committing of sin on the ground of having some inherent or bodily weakness that demands satisfaction. There are some people who are foolish enough to blame the Lord for their frailties and inability to keep his commandments.\(^\text{124}\) [Probable]

Considering the remarks that followed Elder Kimball’s 1945 talk on Pompeii, it is clear that matters do not change:

1946 — George Albert Smith

And when large numbers of his sons and daughters, who have been enriched with all the comforts and blessings of life, suddenly turn their backs upon that which is good and become wicked and immoral, it is only a question of time until such disasters follow as the great flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews among the races of the earth, the extermination of the white race in this land, the sons of Lehi who were destroyed by the Lamanites.\(^\text{125}\) [Mention only]

1948 — George Albert Smith (twice)

Nobody knows, when we pick up a paper today, what the headlines may read. So many lives destroyed here, so many there, some from accident, some from warfare, some from wickedness, and the greatest destruction of all that is going on in the world today is the result of immorality. There was a time, as we have been reminded, when, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah could not produce, in those two cities, ten individuals who were worthy to live. They had been so wicked that they were not fit to live any longer, and so they were consumed by fire.\(^\text{126}\) [Possible]


It seems to me that the world never could have been in any worse condition than it is now, even at the time of the flood, or at the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the time of the destruction of other places in the world, the destruction in this country at the time of the crucifixion of the Savior. [Mention only]

1949 — J. Reuben Clark Jr.

Later, in the days of the kingdoms, Asa, king of Judah and son of Abijam, “took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.” [Certain]

Was there Institutional Silence on Homosexual Sin?

In sum, a more complete review of the evidence undermines any impression that the 1950s and 1960s broke a “silence” of attention to homosexual sin that needs to be explained or exploited. If there is a lacuna, it is during the period between 1907 and 1928, though even there the usage of Sodom imagery persists.

Biological Sex “Created and Contingent”

Premortal Male and Female — Fixed or Fluid?

The question of whether premortal beings are eternally male or female is a key example of Tabernacles’s tendency to find in the sources what its theory requires (whether it is there or not). Tabernacles’s presentation is probably most persuasive to those whose knowledge of Church theology and history is confined to what is found between its covers.

Tabernacles says, “Mormon leaders taught that human spirits were sexually dimorphic — whatever that might entail — but this cosmology of gender was far more complex in LDS theology” (40). This is a poor beginning. The scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ is clear on what sexually dimorphic spirits entail, as sources cited by Tabernacles declare repeatedly. [Certain]

127. Ibid., 179.
129. Hyrum L. Andrus, Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967): “To the brother of Jared, the pre-earth Christ said of His spirit body: Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image” (113); “We would
Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Ether 3:15–16)

In Church theology and scripture, premortal human spirits are sexually dimorphic in precisely the same way that mortal humans are. “It is clear,” said Marion G. Romney, “that man’s physical body is patterned after his spiritual body.” There is no mystery, though Tabernacles implies otherwise.

This demonstrates a recurring problem — Tabernacles’s fluid terminology that often seems to equate rather than distinguish sex and gender. While “sexually dimorphic” presumably refers to biological sex or its analogue, in the next instant the book is speaking of the Church’s “cosmology of gender.”

Tabernacles continues:

call it a spiritual [i.e., a spirit] body, an individual intelligence, an agent endowed with life. … We would conceive of it as possessing eyes to see, ears to hear, hands to handle; as in possession of the organ of taste, of smelling, and of speech” (118, citing Parley P. Pratt); “Christ then explained that as an organized spirit He was in the same general form and stature as His mature physical body would be on earth” (131); “The Doctrine and Covenants … declares that the spirit of man is ‘in the likeness of his physical body’ (133–34); “[Man] existed as a conscious, organized being in the same general form and stature that he now possesses, except that his pre-earth body was organized from a pure and fine substance called spirit” (135).

Rodney Turner, Woman and the Priesthood (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972): “The spirits entering mortality are physically mature men and women possessing distinctive attributes, capacities and proclivities” (20).

See also Andrus’s earlier and later work — Hyrum Andrus, Doctrinal Themes of the Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957): “intelligence or life is inseparably connected with spirit matter. … It was separate and apart from all other forms of intelligence; it had life within itself and was thus individual, regardless of what form or shape it may have had” (32). Hyrum Andrus, God, Man, and the Universe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968): “Latter-day revelation clarifies that the organized spirit of man resembled in form and stature the physical tabernacle which the spirit occupies on earth. Indeed, the physical tabernacle that man receives in mortal birth conforms, in general, to the image of the organized spirit,” (181); “Eventually the central primal intelligence of man was organized … to form a spirit personage with a form and stature such as man now possesses” (191–92).

131. See extensive discussion in the section entitled “Presentism and the Omission of Data.”
Before a spirit existed as a spiritual son or daughter of Heavenly Parents, there was a prior stage of existence; an individual existed first as “intelligence.” The doctrine of intelligence as an eternal being pointed to some aspect of humanness that preceded spiritual birth, some aspect that was more fundamental to one’s identity than being gendered offspring of divinity (40).

There are, then, two options for the flavor of theology discussed by *Tabernacles*. That is, individuals who exist as “intelligences” prior to spirit birth may (a) be sexed in some way, which corresponds with the sex of the child of God given a spirit body; or (b) not be sexed, but only receive a sex at spirit birth.

When discussing primordial intelligence *Tabernacles* might with more justification add: *sexed, “whatever that might entail.”* For clarity, in what follows, I refer to the intelligences’s potential “sexual” differentiation as the *proto-sex*. For my purposes, proto-sex is some characteristic that distinguishes male from female intelligences and determines whether they receive male or female spirit bodies. It need not be physical, merely something in their “nature.”

However, there is a more serious issue that must be confronted: there were in fact two major views regarding the intelligences. *Tabernacles* acts as if its formulation of doctrine was the majority view, but it was not; it was only one of the available options.

Joseph Smith’s use of the term “intelligence” was seen in multiple ways:

1. It was sometimes synonymous with “spirit,” (i.e., a spirit body generated by Heavenly Parents).\(^{132}\)
2. In other instances, it was the influence of God, his glory, and the Holy Spirit that extended through the universe.\(^{133}\)
3. Many thinkers saw it as a type of eternal, undifferentiated raw material from which spirit individuals were created.\(^{134}\)

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\(^{132}\) See the section entitled “The Eternity of Sex — Misreading Talmage.”
\(^{134}\) See the section entitled “Intelligence Prior to Spirit Birth.”
4. For some it was the ultimate core of human personality, an eternal, necessarily existing ego that would be joined with spirit bodies at spirit birth.\footnote{135}

**Intelligence Prior to Spirit Birth**

*Tabernacles’s* account uses the last definition.\footnote{136} It is important to understand, however, that this view was a relative novelty and potentially the minority one among leaders even in the 1950s–1970s.

There were three key sources from which theologies of “intelligence” would be constructed:

- Abraham 3:21–23 — “I [God] came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen. Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits”;
- Doctrine and Covenants 93:29–30 — “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence”;
- Joseph Smith’s King Follett discourse — This 7 April 1844 funeral sermon was the most detailed exposition of Joseph’s mature theology. We have four separate accounts. It included such concepts as: [1] “If man had a [beginning] he must have an end. … God never had power to create the spir[i]t of man at at all.”\footnote{137} [2] “My ring is like the [existence] of man it has no beginning or end, if Cut into their would be a beginning & end, so with man if it had

\footnote{135. See the section entitled “Intelligence as Eternal Individual.”}
a beginning it will have an end, if I am right I might say
God never had power to Create the spirit of man, God
himself Could not create himself. Intelligence is Eternal
& it is self exhisting.” 138 [3] “the … mind of man is as
intelligent part is coequal with God himself. … their spirit
exists coequal with God. … Is it logic to say that as spirit is
immortal and yet have a beginning because if a spirit have
a beginning it will have an end.” 140

As Blake Ostler summarized, “Joseph elaborated upon the concept of
man’s premortal existence. … There can be little doubt that he intended the
‘real’ preexistence of man’s primal self. … Joseph enumerated activities of
pre-existent man that require individual, self-conscious and autonomous
entities.” 141 Ostler thus holds that some version of the theological type
described by Tabernacles best matches Joseph’s meaning. This seems
likely, but it cannot be assumed that all saw it this way. 142

Intelligence in the Century after Joseph’s Death

It was left to others to work out the implications of Joseph’s teachings.
Surviving members — including Brigham Young, Orson and
Parley P. Pratt, Charles W. Penrose, and Joseph Lee Robinson — interpreted


“intelligence” as referring to a sort of impersonal raw material of “primal particles” that was organized into individual spirits at spirit birth.

In this view, individuals had a moment of creation at which they were imbued with sexed human-form bodies at spirit birth, even though the material from which such individuals were formed was eternal and uncreated. As Ostler observed, “The view that man originated when spirit matter was organized into an individual through literal spiritual birth seems to have been the only view consistently elucidated from 1845–1905.”

**Intelligence as Eternal Individual**

B. H. Roberts read Joseph’s teaching and scriptural texts differently. He believed:

The Nature of Intelligencies: There is in that complex thing we call man, an intelligent entity, uncreated, self existent, indestructible. … he is eternal as God is; co-existent, in fact, with God; of the same kind of substance or essence with deity, though confessedly inferior in degree of intelligence and power to God. He is called an “intelligence;” and this I believe is descriptive of him. That is, intelligence is the entity’s chief characteristic. If this be a true deduction, then the entity must be self-conscious, and “others-conscious,” that is, he must have the power to distinguish himself from other things — the “me” from the “not me.” He must have the power of deliberation, by

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146. Roberts was not the first to advance this reading. That honor goes to Lycurgus A. Wilson, *Outlines of Mormon Philosophy* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1905), 35–42, https://archive.org/details/outlinesofmormon00wils/page/34/2up. See discussion in Ostler, “The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought,” 68. I am aware of no evidence to suggest Roberts was aware of this work.
which he sets over one thing against another; with power also to form a judgment that this or that is a better thing or state than this or that. Also there goes with this idea of intelligence a power of choosing one thing instead of another, one state rather than another. These powers are inseparably connected with any idea that may be formed of an intelligence.147

These intelligences would go on to receive spirit bodies, says Roberts, in “an act of generation rather than creation.”148 Here, at last, is the theology to which Tabernacles refers. A key point remains, however. Roberts portrayed such primordial, eternal, necessarily existent beings as having a sex: “He — for that entity is a person; because as we shall see, he is possessed of powers that go with personality only, hence that entity is ‘he,’ not ‘it,’ — he is eternal as God is.”149

As Roberts saw it, “person” was necessarily sexed, and sex was therefore among the “essential qualities”:

But of their form, or the manner of their subsistence nothing … has been revealed, and hence we are without means of knowing anything about the modes of their existence beyond the fact of it, and the essential qualities they possess, which already have been pointed out.150

Tabernacles has not acknowledged, then, that the theology it describes was an innovation whose originator described intelligences as sexed. This flies in the face of the claim that there was “some aspect that was more fundamental to one’s identity than being gendered off-spring of deity” (40). The primordial intelligence is more fundamental than a being having a spirit body from divine Parents; it does not follow that this made it non-sexed.

Significantly, Roberts’s materials were reviewed prior to publication by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, and “both of these quorums found nothing contrary to the revealed word of God therein, and no one objected to his publishing it. In the preface to the essay, Elder Roberts makes it clear that the ideas in it are his own and are not

149. Ibid., 406.
150. Ibid., 407, italics added.
given as doctrines of the church.”  

151 The idea would also be republished in a 1908 Church manual authored by Roberts.  

Roberts’s theory was endorsed and used by one of the apostles, John A. Widtsoe, who in 1915 wrote “sex is an eternal principle. The equivalent of sex, dimly understood by man, has always existed and will continue forever.”  

It is of note that Widtsoe appeals to an ever-existing trait like proto-sex — “the equivalent of sex, dimly understood.” This must refer to the intelligences, because spirit bodies were clearly seen as having the same form as physical bodies.  

Widtsoe wrote further:

> Sex, which is indispensable on this earth for the perpetuation of the human race, is an eternal quality which has its equivalent everywhere. It is indestructible. The relationship between men and women is eternal and must continue eternally. … Whatever is on this earth is simply a representation of spiritual conditions of deeper meaning than we can here fathom.  

In a book written in 1939, and used as the Church’s priesthood manual for 1940 and 1941, Widtsoe wrote further:

> In the Church no adjustment can be made. The Priesthood always presides and must, for the sake of order. … Sex enters

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151. Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The History of Intelligence in Latter-day Saint Thought,” in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, eds. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 222, https://rsc.byu.edu/pearl-great-price-revelations-god/history-intelligence-latter-day-saint-thought. It is noteworthy that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve were quite willing to challenge both B. H. Roberts’s and John A. Widtsoe’s views about intelligences when they disagreed or felt that the speculation was too free (see Godfrey, “The History of Intelligence in Latter-day Saint Thought,” 227–29; Ostler, “The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought,” 68–71).


154. See the section entitled “Premortal Male and Female — Fixed or Fluid?”


here and is indisputable. It is eternal, so why quarrel with it? A wiser power than any on earth understands why a spirit in the far off beginning was male or female.\(^{157}\)

So, as of 1941, it was treated as a given in every priesthood quorum in the Church that sex was eternal, notwithstanding how it came about “in the far off beginning.” Widtsoe would also republish Roberts’s view in the Church’s official magazine in 1948.\(^{158}\)

*Tabernacles*’s silence on Roberts and Widtsoe is unfortunate, because these two thinkers — the originator and second main exponent of the strand of theology to which it appeals — both explicitly regarded the intelligence as having a sex that was eternal.\(^{159}\)

### The Eternity of Sex — Misreading Talmage

*Tabernacles* notes that in 1914, Elder James E. Talmage of the Twelve wrote: “Children of God have comprised male and female from the beginning. Man is man and woman is woman, fundamentally, unchangeably, eternally” (42).\(^{160}\) Talmage’s article was titled “The Eternity of Sex.”

Talmage says much that *Tabernacles* does not cite. His article begins: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms as reasonable, scriptural, and true the doctrine of the eternity of sex among the children of God.” Talmage declares that this doctrine is both scriptural and settled. And he insists (as evidenced in the portion cited by *Tabernacles*) that sex is “eternal” — that is, fundamental, unchangeable.

Definitive as this might seem, *Tabernacles* goes on to claim that Talmage does not address the intelligence stage of human existence:

But Talmage’s essay left many things undefined that had opened up the space for his successors to approach sexual difference in the

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159. *Tabernacles of Clay* never mentions Widtsoe; it cites Roberts only on contraception (130n114).

preexistence differently. For instance, he did not deal with the period of existence prior to a spiritual creation as intelligence (42).  

It should now be clear how the reader can be misled by the omission of Roberts’s and Widtsoe’s insistence that sex was both eternal and a characteristic of primal intelligences. It should be equally clear why it is important to know that there were two theological understandings of primal intelligence.

If, for example, Talmage did not accept Roberts’s and Widtsoe’s version, then he was omitting nothing — in that theology, intelligence is an undifferentiated material. The individual only appears after being created as a spirit son or daughter of God with a sex. The individual thus never exists, as an individual, without a sex.

If, on the other hand, Talmage agreed with Roberts/Widtsoe, then according to them, sex is likewise eternal. In either case, sex is not something grafted onto the individual after he or she has existed individually for some time (or eternally) without a sex.

What did Talmage believe? Prior to his call to the apostleship, Talmage wrote:

> In the antemortal eternities we developed with individual differences and varied capacities. So far as we can peer into the past by the aid of revealed light we can see that there was always a gradation of intelligence, and consequently of ability, among spirits. … Individualism is an attribute of the soul, and as truly eternal as the soul itself.

Talmage’s emphasis on eternal individualism certainly sounds like acceptance of the Roberts/Widtsoe model. But even here, one must be careful. Talmage also wrote:

> There are four states, conditions, or stages in the advancement of the individual soul, specified in Sacred Writ. These are (1) the unembodied, (2) the embodied, (3) the disembodied, and (4) the resurrected state.

161. The phrasing is potentially confusing. “Prior to a spiritual creation as intelligence” might imply to some that there was a period prior to being created as an intelligence. But Church leaders since the time of Joseph Smith have always taught that intelligence is eternal and uncreated.

In other words, (1) every one of us lived in an antemortal existence as an individual spirit; (2) we are now in the advanced or mortal stage of progress. …

As to the certainty of the antemortal state, commonly spoken of as preexistence, the Scriptures are explicit. …

In the light of these Scriptures it is plainly true that the spirits of mankind were there begotten and born into what we call the preexistent or antemortal condition. …

We were severally brought into being, as spirits, in that preexistent condition, literally the children of the Supreme Being whom Jesus Christ worshiped and addressed as Father.

The primeval spirit birth is expressively described by Abraham to whom the facts were revealed, as a process of organization and the spirits so advanced are designated as intelligences: “Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones.” (Pearl of Great Price, p. 65.)

The human mind finds difficulty in apprehending the actuality of infinite or eternal process, either from the present onward to and beyond what we call in a relative sense perfection, on, on, without end; or backward through receding stages that had no beginning. But who will affirm that things beyond human comprehension cannot be?

In the antemortal eternities we developed with individual differences and varied capacities. So far as we can peer into the past by the aid of revealed light we see that there was always gradation of intelligence, and consequently of ability, among the spirits, precisely as such differences exist amongst us mortals.163 Talmage has humans “brought into being, as spirits” and does not divide his unembodied state into primal intelligence and spiritual embodiment. Instead, those organized by spirit embodiment “and … so advanced are designated as intelligences.” Likewise, “The spirit lived as an organized intelligence before it became the embodied child of human parents; and its pre-existent individualism will be of effect in its period of earth life.”164

164. Ibid., 241.
Talmage even speaks of the “genesis of every soul” — but in the Roberts/Widtsoe model there was no such genesis:

The genesis of every soul lies back in the eternity past, beyond the horizon of our full comprehension, and what we call a beginning is as truly a consummation and an ending, just as mortal birth is at once the commencement of earth life and the termination of the stage of antemortal existence.165

Talmage titled another section, “Individualism is Eternal,” and wrote:

We are confronted by this profound fact: Individualism is an attribute of the soul, and as truly eternal as the soul itself.

(1) In the unembodied, preexistent or antemortal state, we were decidedly unequal in capacity and power.

(2) We know we are not equal here in the world of mortals.

(3) Assuredly we shall not be equal after death, either in the intermediate state of disembodiment or beyond the resurrection.166

Individualism is “as … eternal as the soul,” but for Talmage a soul has a “genesis” as well. Talmage also does not mention a pre-spirit-birth intelligence: he simply begins with the premortal spirit.

Talmage likewise seems to have refrained from using Roberts’s ideas elsewhere. In The Articles of Faith, his 1899 primer on LDS theology, he began his account with spirit children of God, not pre-spirit birth intelligences. This is to be expected, since it pre-dates Roberts’s novel approach. After quoting Abraham 3, he wrote:

This is one of the many scriptural proofs that the spirits of mankind existed prior to their earthly probation — a condition in which these intelligences lived and exercised their free agency before they assumed bodily tabernacles. Thus the natures, dispositions, and tendencies of men are known to the Father of their spirits, even before they are born into mortality. …

The spirits of mankind passed through a stage of existence prior to their earthly probation. This antemortal period is oftentimes spoken of as the stage of primeval childhood or first estate. That these spirits existed as organized intelligences

165. Ibid.
166. Ibid., 320–21.
and exercised their free agency during that primeval stage is clear from the declaration of the Lord to Abraham.167

Talmage again uses intelligences to mean spirit children of God ("organized intelligences"), not the eternal primal intelligence of Roberts/Widtsoe.

Talmage's other writing after Roberts's theory appeared did not change its approach. Talmage would often mention the premortal state, but always as children of God, organized intelligences.168 In a 1911 address, he had a perfect opportunity to discuss Roberts's themes, but demurred:

We regard this life as but a link connecting the eternities that have gone with the eternities that are coming; for we believe in the literal pre-existence of our spirits. We hold that the spirits of men existed as individual intelligences before they came and took upon themselves individual bodies here upon the earth, and that these spirits shall live and progress even after the body has gone to decay.169

Note, again, the mention of spirits and "individual intelligences"—but these are once again spoken of as taking on physical bodies, not taking on spiritual ones. These are not primal intelligences.

Talmage placed great value on harmony with the Quorum of the Twelve and with the First Presidency.170 His relative reticence regarding

the Roberts/Widtsoe view may reflect the concerns that his colleagues expressed that I examine shortly. Or he may, like some of them, have simply thought it too speculative.

In sum, Talmage’s silence is misused when *Tabernacles* appeals to it in order to explain why others thinkers in the 1950s–1970s purportedly felt the need to “fill in the blanks.” There is little evidence that Talmage embraced the minority view of Roberts/Widtsoe. But if he had, it is unlikely that he would have seen intelligence as unsexed. After all, neither Roberts nor Widtsoe believed that either.

Having tried to prove that there is no mention of the pre-spirit intelligence phase in Talmage, *Tabernacles*'s reading gets into further trouble when it says:

> Furthermore, citing the creation accounts (“male and female created he them”), [Talmage] assigned to God the choice of who was male or female as a feature of a spiritual creation. How could one both assert that God created male and female at a specific moment in time and hold that sexual difference was eternal and unchanging? (42)

This is easily answered if the reader knows that there were two schools of thought regarding intelligences. Those — like Roberts and Widtsoe — who believed in an eternal individualized intelligence held that it was sexed, and always had been.

Those who believed that intelligence was a non-specific, undifferentiated material from which new individuals were created would have had no problem with *Tabernacles*'s supposed dilemma either. For them, the individual did not exist until the moment of spiritual creation at “a specific moment in time.” Thus, the spirit child was sexed from the moment its individual existence began (just as a mortal child’s genetic sex is determined at conception). Its sexual differences were thus eternal and unchanged for its entire existence.

Talmage’s writings, then, do not seem to align with the Roberts/Widtsoe option — he likely avoided discussion of a primeval intelligence state because he did not accept that interpretation of “eternal intelligence.” He did not, as *Tabernacles* claims, leave space before “the

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171. See discussion in the section entitled “Other General Authorities.”
eternity of sex,” to be filled with later speculation, because he did not see that space as existing for individuals.

Readers who conceive of the teachings of the time only through what Tabernacles tells them will be misled.

Examining Supposed Non-Essentialists

Having told the reader that Talmage provided space for a theological problem to be solved, Tabernacles then claims that some sought a solution to this putative problem:

The idea that the original being, the intelligence, was ungendered received some attention in Mormon thought in the postwar period. … By portraying gender as a created and contingent feature of human identity, some church teachers used the idea of the primal agency to think about the choice an intelligence made to become male or female. (40)

Tabernacles then summarizes its argument:

Rather than appealing to an absolute, essential, and eternal form of sexual difference, Mormon leaders in the postwar period actually saw the pre-mortal and post-mortal periods as extensions of the gender fluidity and malleability of the mortal phase of human existence. That is, Mormons in this era were more likely to see sexual difference as the result of intentionally chosen gendered practices than as an unalterable nature of human identity.172 (40)

As I have shown, at least some “leaders of the postwar period” (such as Widtsoe in 1948) did not see it this way at all, and it is not yet clear whether any did.

Tabernacles cites three “LDS thinkers” in support of its view that sex was “a created and contingent” feature given to “uncreated intelligences”

172. Here, issues with Tabernacles’s imprecision in terminology again come to the fore (see detailed discussion in the section entitled “Presentism and the Omission of Data”). When Tabernacles talks about “sexual difference” the common assumption is that “biological sex” is meant. But Tabernacles says that this means that “Mormon leaders” (a poor label for two BYU religion professors, Andrus and Turner, who are not leaders) saw the premortal period as an “extension … of the gender fluidity and malleability” of mortal life (40). The switch between the two terms here seems to trade on ambiguity to assert what has not been proved. Even if Latter-day Saint leaders saw sex as a subject of choice in the premortal worlds, it does not follow that they would have seen this as equivalent to whatever queer theory’s twenty-first century mortal “gender fluidity and malleability” means. More clarity in defining terms at the outset would have prevented this sort of problem.
rather than being part of “an unalterable nature of human identity”: (1) BYU professors Hyrum Andrus and (2) Rodney Turner; and (3) Elder William J. Critchlow Jr., an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve.

Note, first, that these are presumably the best examples (and, perhaps, the only examples) available — which is both telling and damning given how important this claim is to the entire project. If the only leader that one can find teaching this doctrine is an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve (a position roughly analogous to the role played by today’s First Quorum of the Seventy), the reader might reasonably wonder how representative such ideas are and whether they were “often talked about” (ix).

Given the importance of these claims for Tabernacles’s interpretive model, it is worth examining the evidence from the three thinkers labelled “non-essentialists.”

Case #1: Hyrum Andrus

Tabernacles uses Andrus, a BYU professor, as follows:

By portraying gender as a created and contingent feature of human identity, some church teachers used the idea of the primal agency to think about the choice an intelligence made to become male or female. In a 1967 book, BYU religious education professor Hyrum L. Andrus described the “two stages” of pre-mortal life and the transition from intelligence to spirit. Intelligences are without form: “Nowhere in scripture or in any authoritative source is the central primal life of man said to be ‘an intelligence’ that existed as a living entity in the form and stature of man.” That is, intelligences were a pre-anthropomorphic — and pre-gendered — state of existence (40–41).

Tabernacles’s interpretation is superficial and reads more into Andrus than is said. Andrus does not say that “Intelligences are without form” — he says they are not an “entity in the form and stature of man.”

Thus, they are certainly “pre-anthropomorphic” (pre-human form) but that does not mean that they have no form at all. Nor does this mean that they do not have a proto-sex.

173. Remember that Tabernacles is unclear about what a sexually dimorphic spirit body would be, despite the Book of Mormon’s clear answer: spirits would have “the form and stature of a man,” but intelligences would not. See the section entitled “Premortal Male or Female — Fixed or Fluid?”
In the next paragraph, Andrus says that “Such life or intelligence, as stated above, is as eternal as the substance in which it is inherent.” 174 The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that “there is no such thing as immaterial matter” (131:7). Matter or substance cannot be immaterial in the Church’s theology. 175 Andrus emphasizes this by quoting Parley P. Pratt: “They are made of the element which we call spirit, which is as much an element of material existence as earth, air, electricity, or any other tangible substance recognized by man; but so subtle, so refined is its nature, that it is not tangible to our gross organs.” 176 Matter has a form of some sort, but not necessarily a human form.

Andrus says nothing whatever about the intelligence being “pre-gendered,” notwithstanding Tabernacles’s misleading gloss. He does not address the existence of a proto-sex at all. Contrary to what Tabernacles seems to assume, there is no necessity for a proto-sex to have any physical manifestation. It only needs to reflect some tendency or character of the primal intelligence. 177

Andrus, in short, cannot be enlisted to support Tabernacles’s theory. He does not say what Tabernacles claims — all he says is that primal intelligence does not have human form.

Andrus wrote frequently on this theme; he tended to repeat himself from work to work. He often resorted to the same citations and

175. Anything that is material has some form, just not necessarily an anthropomorphic one. Orson Pratt so argued in his “Absurdities of Immaterialism,” writing “Each atom of the Holy Spirit is intelligent, and like all other matter has solidity, form, and size” (“Absurdities of immaterialism: or, A reply to T. W. P. Taylder’s pamphlet, entitled, ‘The materialism of the Mormons or Latter-day Saints, examined and exposed’,” [Liverpool, UK: R. James, 1849], 25, italics added, https://archive.org/details/absurditiesofimm02prat/page/n23/mode/2up). Pratt went on to deny the claim that “matter cannot think” given his belief that “some atoms can possess various degrees of intelligence” (3, 9). He rejected the idea that “mind or spirit has no relation to duration or space — no locality — that it must exist ‘nowhere’ — that it has no extension” (4, italics in original). “We are willing to admit that power and intelligence, and some other qualities of mind, are far superior to the qualities of other matter; but we do not admit that the superiority of some of the qualities of a substance prove its immateriality” (3, italics in original).
177. See the sections “Intelligence as Eternal Individual” and “Case #3: Rodney Turner.”
analyses. One should not overlook that in a later work he even argued explicitly that primal intelligences had a proto-sex:

There is an interaction, and interrelationship, if you will receive it, between those kinds of primal intelligences that had the nature of male and those kinds that had the nature of female, even at that point had an interrelationship. …

There were those primal intelligences, I suspect, that placed primary emphasis and attention on the substance of truth. That is executive and that is male in character. Then there were those who placed primary emphasis, they still had the truth, but they placed primary emphasis on the light, on the radiance [of truth] application. On the nurturing program. By nature they fall into female category.

There was a basis for inter-relationship in various ways, I think between male and female back there.

These details are speculative, and one may well find them unconvincing. The key point is that when Andrus did specifically discuss the question, he saw the primordial intelligences as having a proto-sex, just like Widtsoe and Roberts before him.

Case #2: Rodney Turner

Of Turner, another BYU professor, Tabernacles writes:

By 1972, another BYU religious education professor, Rodney Turner, offered the idea that gender is not an eternal characteristic, nor did God arbitrarily assign spirits to one gender or the other. Invoking Mormon ideas of agency, Turner taught that God did not coerce anyone in the moment of


creation to being male or female. Instead, he proposed that pre-
mortal agency and proclivities influenced which spirits became
males and females: “The principle of agency must have played
a part in anything God did. … The arbitrary assignment of sex
would have rendered him particularly vulnerable to criticism.”
A human’s choice to be male or female was an ancient one that
went back much further than mortal birth but was nevertheless
a distinct moment of personal autonomy for a pre-mortal
intelligence, not assigned by God (41).

*Tabernacles* subtly misrepresents Turner’s words. There are five
problems here. The first problem is that *Tabernacles* says Turner claimed
that “pre-mortal agency and proclivities influenced” sex identity. But
this is not quite what Turner says. Instead, he says “it is very likely that
one’s sex reflects one’s own innate predisposition or personal choice, so
must the roles the sexes play stem from their own inherent proclivities.”

Turner does not say that “agency and proclivities” make the decision.
He writes instead of “predisposition or ... choice,” in intelligences
as a parallel to the “inherent proclivities” of embodied spirits. The
mischaracterization turns on a tiny word with a large impact.

The inaccurate word *and* misleads the reader by making it appear that
Turner is definitively arguing that personal choice (without the impact
of anything like proto-sex) was a factor. But he does not; Turner is quite
open to the view that “innate predisposition” or “inherent proclivities” — i.e., proto-sex — was the determining factor.

The second problem is that Turner’s footnote from the previous page
further contradicts *Tabernacles*’s reading, which leaves it unmentioned.
The note is obviously meant to inform the discussion that follows. Turner
says there:

> The origin of the sexes has not been revealed. A nascent form
> of sexuality [i.e., proto-sex] may have characterized each
> primal intelligence. In its fullness, maleness or femaleness was
> acquired as a genetic endowment from mankind’s celestial
> parents. In asserting that sex is eternal, John A. Widtsoe

180. It would be wise for *Tabernacles* to put quotation marks around words — such as “proclivities” — that are directly from Turner. The lack of proper citation practice enables the mis-citation.


182. Elsewhere in Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood*, he asserts that “Woman is co-eternal in her being with that Father who gave her organized existence as one of his daughters” (279). And the index declares that “men and women are all” “eternal intelligences” (317).
wrote: “A wiser power than any on earth understands why a spirit in the far off beginning was male or female.”

Turner’s view thus explicitly inclines to “a nascent form of sexuality.” Contrary to Tabernacles’s claim that Turner believed that “gender is not an eternal characteristic,” Turner expressly cites Widtsoe to support the claim that “sex is eternal.” (Remember, Widtsoe saw the primal intelligence as eternally sexed.)

Claudia Bushman described Turner as “widely revered as the conservative’s conservative” and Armand Mauss characterized his book as at “the fundamentalist extreme.” Turner cites Widtsoe repeatedly as an authority throughout his book. Tabernacles’s reading would have a conservative — some have said “fundamentalist” — BYU religion professor intentionally contradicting a cited apostle, which is implausible.

The third issue is that five years earlier Turner wrote of how “an unorganized intelligence” became a “spirit child of God” and then said that, “for all practical purposes, the moral nature of man had its beginning at his birth into the family of the Father.” This shows that at that point he did not regard primordial intelligence as necessarily being capable of meaningful choice. He continued: “an analysis … fails to support the assertion that man was morally good while in that

184. Ibid., italics added. As discussed earlier, Tabernacles also conspicuously failed to cite Widtsoe’s Rational Theology, 146, which work could have been discovered through this cited source (see the section entitled “Intelligence as Eternal Individual”).
187. Turner, Women and Priesthood, 98, 228, 229, 233, 239, 269. A later paper by Turner describes both the Roberts/Widtsoe theory and the view that intelligence was undifferentiated prior to spirit birth. He is aware of both options, but by that point had concluded that “there is merit in both positions, but neither can be proved nor disproved at this time” (Rodney Turner, “The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten,” in The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God, eds. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989], 91–118, https://rsc.byu.edu/pearl-great-price-revelations-god/doctrine-firstborn-only-begotten). The material quoted by Tabernacles may be the intermediate stage between his earlier views and this later one.
unorganized and independent state of existence. Indeed, the issue of man’s moral nature is not even mentioned until after the ‘intelligences’ were made subject to divine law.” 188 At that time, he clearly believed: “Intelligence … was devoid of agency or volition prior to spirit birth.” 189 At the very least, Tabernacles needs to acknowledge how tentative his views on this point were.

Fourth, even if one grants that Turner now accepted the operation of “personal choice,” that is not sufficient for the thesis in Tabernacles. Of sexed spirit children of God who receive physical bodies, Turner wrote:

Still, all things being equal, the chief determinant of one’s interests, attitudes, beliefs and behavior is the spirit’s own proclivities.

These proclivities are expressed through the human will which is ordinarily capable of responding to all external stimuli in its own unique way. And it is only when the spirit is free to exercise its own will (mind) that its true character can be ascertained. This is why moral agency is so vital to the work of God. 190

It is unlikely that Turner would see a spirit’s proclivities in a different light than those of primordial intelligences. In both cases, such choices are being made by eternally self-existent beings. 191 (In fact, he uses “proclivities” as a parallel term for “predisposition or … choice.” 192)

190. Turner, Women and Priesthood, 22.
192. Turner, Woman and the Priesthood, 16–17, emphasis added.
Choices must spring from reasons, or they are not true choices — they are, then, merely arbitrary or random. Turner realizes that agency is vital in part because it reveals the nature of the being making the choice. Each responds “in its own unique way” to reveal “its true character.” Predisposition produces choice. Turner makes this point clear in the next sentence that is unmentioned by *Tabernacles*: “What men and women are should determine how they will act — not vice versa.”

Turner does not insist on there being any choice, which undermines *Tabernacles’s* reading. But, as Turner sees it, if there was any choice involved, that choice would also reveal something innate about the primordial intelligence. God does not make the choice; the intelligence makes it, and so must make it on the basis of its own character or nature. No matter which way it is read, *Tabernacles* cannot escape proto-sex here.

The fifth and final problem is that it is deeply ironic for *Tabernacles* to enlist Turner to help prove that sex or gender is open and fluid, when Turner writes such lines as “The false prophet has been joined by the false prophetess. Strident female voices now proclaim the emancipation of woman from her womanhood. No longer is she to be bound by the restrictions of her traditional role in society,” and “The radical feminist movement is anti-woman. Those who succumb to its blandishments are not freed, but enslaved. … The sexual natures of man and woman encompass all of the emotions, powers and proclivities which serve both to unite and to distinguish the sexes.”

Much could be said of such ideas, but these are not the words of someone who thinks human sexual nature is contingent or up for grabs. The necessities of its thesis lead *Tabernacles* to omit or distort historical evidence.

**Case #3: William J. Critchlow Jr.**

*Tabernacles* writes of Critchlow:

In a 1965 General Conference address, an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, William J. Critchlow Jr. (d. 1968), considered Turner’s theory that one’s gender identity was the result of a pre-mortal choice. (41)

It is not clear how Tabernacles knows that Critchlow is “consider[ing] Turner’s theory.” Indeed, this scenario is impossible — Turner’s theory was printed in 1972, seven years after Critchlow’s conference address. If anything, it is Roberts’s theory, but Tabernacles doesn’t inform the reader that Roberts’s or Widtsoe’s views exist at all.

Tabernacles continues:

Critchlow hypothesized that in the preexistence some chose “mother’s love” and others chose “priesthood authority,”

Did women by their own first choice choose to be partners with God in his creative processes? Faced with an alternative — partnership or priesthood — did you, Sister, pass up priesthood? … Did women by their own free choice choose to be the family heart rather than the family head? … Now, Sister, faced with the alternative family head or family heart, did you turn down the head? Faced again with a choice between mother’s love or priesthood authority, did you pass up authority? … Now, which in this list of womanly virtues might possibly have influenced your choice — if and when, of course, you had a choice?

Critchlow proposed various considerations that “influenced you to be woman rather than man,” listing the roles and responsibilities of women for their husbands and children. He saw in the result a conscious choice to be male or female. (41)

As with the previous two authors, an examination of the unmentioned details in Critchlow undermines Tabernacles’s reading:

Critchlow and Turner suggested that prior to the choice to be male or female, a pre-gendered spirit may have certain proclivities that might push someone in one direction or the other. But … gender was ultimately chosen, not assigned (42).

196. All ellipses are in Tabernacles; I have omitted no material.
As in the case of Turner, proclivities imply proto-sex. Moreover, as with Turner, Critchlow regarded proclivities as important. In fact, the climax of Critchlow’s argument is a rhetorical question that *Tabernacles* does not mention. After all of the factors mentioned by *Tabernacles*, Critchlow asks:

Now seriously, Sister, were you given a choice — as of right now, or perhaps a choice sometime in the dim pre-mortal past — between homemaker or breadwinner, would you, or did you at some time, choose to be the homemaker, choosing motherhood over fatherhood?  

Critchlow can ask this “would you” question of his sister “as of right now.” And, he clearly anticipates an answer that must agree with him — she would, he is sure, not choose for things to change: “seriously, Sister.”

The same answer would come, he seems to think, right now. The question and its expected response presuppose a female nature that will ultimately win out. The choice in the present could be very real — but for Critchlow, the result is nonetheless inevitable, given her nature. To repeat — a choice that is not driven by one’s internal nature is no choice at all. It is, then, either a flip of the coin or shrug of the shoulders.

And if proclivities matter now, they likewise matter “in the dim pre-mortal past”; Critchlow anticipates the same answer *then* as *now*. As with Turner, for Critchlow, choice requires something that pushes the chooser one way or the other — implicitly, her actual sex now, or her proto-sex earlier. The tacit understanding is that her inherent nature has led her and *would lead her again* to one and the same answer — an answer not arbitrarily imposed by God or caprice or circumstance. In other words, the intelligence’s proto-sex determines the spirit’s sex. Otherwise, Critchlow’s rhetorical approach makes no sense if he thinks any woman could answer, “Yes, I would like to change to be a man right now!”

Critchlow’s talk was occasioned by a letter from a woman who demanded to know why she could not hold the priesthood and, “by [Critchlow’s] inference, Why am I a woman?” *Tabernacles* does not disclose how uncertain and tentative Critchlow was.  

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199. *Tabernacles* returns to Critchlow, *Conference Report* (126), but again says nothing about how cautious Critchlow is.
Critchlow described his first reaction: “I wrote … ‘I don’t know.’” Thinking that this was “too brief and too curt” he wrote a second draft: “I don’t know. I’m not supposed to know.”

“I still didn’t have the heart to mail it,” he reported, and so wrote a letter that formed the basis of his talk. “It probably did not satisfy her questions,” he admitted, “but it did at least satisfy a principle called courtesy.”200 “I wish I knew,” he continued after discussing priesthood, “Why the man is I and the woman you. … Why? I wish I knew” (37–38). His speech is larded with “perhaps,” “if,” and “possibly.” “No mortal man,” he observes

is born with a memory of his heavenly home. God planned it that way purposely. … Surely God has denied his children here on earth some knowledge of things that were, and things that are, and things to be — purposely. And again, it does not embarrass me to say there are some things I do not know.201

Critchlow’s extreme tentativeness coupled with the assumptions which underlie his rhetorical questions cannot bear the burden which Tabernacles’s thesis imposes. Critchlow is speculating. But that speculation assumes an eternal, fixed nature — a proto-sex.

If Tabernacles had several better examples, Critchlow might be contorted into a sort of confirmatory coda. But this example is the best of a scant, bad lot, and it is underwhelming.

Tabernacles claims that this evidence is sufficient to show that “Mormons in this era were more likely to see sexual difference as the result of intentionally chosen gendered practices than as an unalterable nature of human identity” (40, emphasis added). However, three relatively obscure figures prove nothing about what the bulk of Church membership was “more likely” to believe at that time, especially when two of them say nothing like what Tabernacles claims.202

Other General Authorities

After all this material, Tabernacles finally says that “not all Mormon leaders and teachers agreed with Critchlow’s and Turner’s position” (42). This is true, but misleading — Tabernacles presents no evidence that any

201. Ibid., 39.
202. Tabernacles here again commits the logical fallacy discussed in the section “Same-Sex Encounters Common among Leaders?”
other leaders agreed with the position that it ascribes to them.203 Neither Turner nor Critchlow could be said to have a position at all — at most, they had a meditation or musing, while Andrus is irrelevant to the question.

Tabernacles says that Talmage’s article “would play an important role in these debates over the nature of sexual difference,” but has presented no evidence that there was any debate being had. Given what Tabernacles has cited, none of the three purported “non-essentialist” authors ever mentions the essentialists’s supposed competing point of view. None seem aware they are engaged in a debate on eternal sex at all — with Talmage, Roberts, Widtsoe, or anyone else. (And, as shown earlier, Turner cited Widtsoe approvingly.)

Tabernacles says that, “In Bruce R. McConkie’s 1958 Mormon Doctrine, intelligence is the state after spirit birth, not before” (42). This is true too, but still does not reveal the problem at the heart of its analysis — after Joseph Smith’s death, all leaders prior to 1905 held the same view. It is likely that most did so even into the 1950s–1970s.

This is evident in McConkie’s reply to a letter two years after Turner’s book (the last published of Tabernacles’s three examples). His correspondent had been teaching the Roberts/Widtsoe perspective and read Mormon Doctrine’s differing view. He wrote, “I would hate to be found teaching false doctrine.”204

McConkie replied in a gracious two-page letter. “As far as I know,” he wrote, “there is no official pronouncement on the subject at hand.”205 “In my judgment,” he continued,

spirit element exists and it was organized into spirit beings, or in other words intelligence exists and it became the intelligences that were organized. In my judgment there was no agency prior to spirit birth and we did not exist as entities until that time. …

I don’t remember discussing this matter with any of the Brethren except that I know several of them have been present when President Joseph Fielding Smith expressed his views on

203. See the section entitled “The Eternity of Sex — Misreading Talmage” for a discussion of Talmage’s position.
the matter, and I assume that those present were in accord with President Smith’s expressions, at least I was.206

Nearly two decades earlier, McConkie had reviewed a Church manual for Spencer W. Kimball. McConkie reported to Kimball:

The material relative to man being eternal and becoming at some point in his progression a child of God, seems to be teaching the speculative view that there was a pre-existence to pre-existence. Would it not be better to teach that spirit element always existed and that man became a child of God when he was born in pre-existence as a spirit? It seems to me that the not uncommon teaching in the Church that spirits existed as entities or egos prior to their birth as spirit children is wholly speculative and probably totally false.207

This view seems to have predominated in the following years.208 In his 1974 letter, McConkie remembered:

I do know that this matter has arisen perhaps six or eight times in the years that I have been here209 and have been involved in reading and approving priesthood or auxiliary lessons. In each of these instances, the matter was ordered deleted from the lesson. In each case it was expressly stated that we have no knowledge of any existence earlier than our existence as the spirit children of God. The views in this field were described as pure speculation. President Joseph Fielding Smith personally, on more than one occasion directed this material not be published and said that he did not believe it, and of course, as you have indicated I do not believe it either.210

208. In general conference, Marion G. Romney saw being “begotten sons and daughters unto God” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:24) thus: “Through that birth process, self-existing intelligence was organized into individual spirit beings” (Romney, “The Worth of Souls”). Here undifferentiated intelligence (singular) becomes “individual spirit beings” (plural).
209. In 1967, McConkie would report that “at least a dozen times since I have been at 47 East South Temple, more times than that maybe” such material was removed from Church materials by LDS leaders (Bruce R. McConkie, “The Preexistence of Man,” [dated by another hand as “Tapes in BYU Religious Instruction A.V. Material, Summer 1967”], 9, transcript in my possession courtesy of Dennis B. Horne).
McConkie also reviewed the history of the alternative view, which he attributed to B. H. Roberts, and said, “This was pure fantasy and pure speculation. It caught on and has been bobbing to the top now and then ever since. … It is this doctrine that the brethren have described as pure speculation. In my judgment there is no revelation which sustains and supports it.”211 Despite these caveats, the topic was not “something about which I get very excited. … There isn’t anyone who hasn’t slipped and erred on some doctrinal point or another. All of us are in the learning process.”212

The view of the leading quorums is also likely reflected in remarks made by McConkie to a 1967 BYU class:

We are not going to say categorically that this is true or this is false. But I will suggest that some of the things that are said in the church are in the realm of speculation and can’t be definitely and categorically known as far as the revelations are concerned. …

[It] is not a bit uncommon in the church … for people, and you hear it everywhere and I don’t say it’s false, I just say it is in the realm of speculation, you find them going one step farther [to Roberts’s theory].213

Gordon B. Hinckley

Tabernacles attempts to reinforce its portrait of evolving, changing, competing views of sex or proto-sex by declaring:

The doctrine of a pre-mortal choice seemed to enjoy some currency in LDS teaching until it was officially rebutted in 1983. Apostle [second counselor in the First Presidency] Gordon B. Hinckley (d. 2008) reintroduced Talmage’s view. Hinckley taught, “I know of no doctrine which states that we made a choice when we came to earth as to whether we wished to be male or female. That choice was made by our Father in Heaven in his infinite wisdom” (43).214

It is quickly evident that Tabernacles has misread Hinckley. Just as with Andrus, if the question is about the existence of proto-sex, Hinckley says

211. Ibid., 2.
212. Ibid.
nothing at all. Instead, he is rebutting the idea that “we made a choice when we came to earth,” i.e., once we had spirit bodies and were about to enter mortality, not in the vast eons before spirit embodiment. Given Hinckley’s orthodox beliefs regarding the sexed nature of premortal spirits, he presumably saw God relying primarily on premortal sex to determine mortal sex.215

(And as I have shown, a robust alternative to the Roberts/Widtsoe model had long been available, even dominant. A statement by Hinckley would not have been novel or game-changing even if it said what Tabernacles claims.)

Tabernacles’s assumption that Hinckley was responding to Andrus, Turner, and Critchlow is unsupported, particularly when one considers how it misrepresents them.

Tabernacles goes on to argue that “If God chose the gender for any given individual, it was not an essential, uncreated element. The idea of a non-gendered ‘primal element’ common to all human beings rendered sexual difference a secondary, contingent feature of what it meant to be human” (43). Yet Hinckley is not talking about a non-sexed primal element; he is discussing our coming to earth in physical bodies as spirits who are already sexed. If, instead of the Roberts/Widtsoe model, Hinckley accepted the view that intelligence was undifferentiated material, then that sex had been with the individual from the moment of his or her creation, and Hinckley does not discuss why that divine decision was made.

In sum, Tabernacles provides no other evidence that the idea of premortal gender fluidity “seemed to enjoy some currency in LDS teaching” until 1983 besides the three authors listed, and those do not support the claims made.

Far from Hinckley “officially rebut[ting]” the non-essentialists by “reintroduc[ing] Talmage’s view,” Talmage’s view was not his alone, nor did it need reintroducing. Nor could the Roberts/Widtsoe view be rebutted by Hinckley’s remarks, since he was speaking about something different (43).

As has been shown, Tabernacles attempts to assemble sources that demonstrate examples of what its thesis needs — ideas in flux that are eventually quashed. But the sources cited, especially when put in context using uncited clarifications, do not support the case.

A Summary of Premortal Male and Female

“Teachers and leaders,” Tabernacles avers, “advanced a theory of gender-choice in the preexistence to explain and justify the hierarchy between

215. The issue of “inter-sex” individuals deserves discussion, but would take us too far afield from understanding Hinckley’s views on premortal sex or primal intelligence proto-sex.
men and women” (41). Even if *Tabernacles*’s assertion was correct, where are the *leaders* (plural)?216 There is at most one leader — Critchlow — who is a decidedly minor one and who speaks in a very tentative manner.

*Tabernacles* has misread and miscited sources. It has ignored data from its sources that do not agree with its theory. It ignores sources which bear on the question. It makes unfounded, sweeping claims, even if one grants its reading of every bit of evidence cited.

Yet in honesty, that cannot be granted. Talmage does not help; Roberts and Widtsoe definitively see gender as eternal; Andrus and Hinckley say nothing that applies; Turner explicitly mentions “eternal sex” and a type of proto-sex in his footnote; and rather than argue for an indefinite premortal gender, Critchlow (like Turner) seems to intend his reader to see her gender deriving entirely from factors within her uncreated and unconstrained self that not even God controlled. If this is not essentialism, nothing is.

There was discussion among Church leaders about the nature of primal intelligence but, crucially, not about “the eternity of gender.”

**Postmortal Biological Sex**

After claiming that Church leaders and thinkers saw premortal gender as chosen or fluid, *Tabernacles* then moves to complete the picture by arguing that Joseph Fielding Smith believed in a postmortal “neuter” state for those who were not exalted. *Tabernacles* describes Smith’s reply when asked how God would prevent the “less righteous” in the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms from engaging in sexual relations:

Smith’s answer was important because it tackled the problem from the member’s assumption about gender. He started out by assuring the member that God had thought about this potential problem and had addressed it. Both males and females will indeed be judged and sent to the other kingdoms together. Smith explained, however, that “there will be differences in the bodies of the inhabitants of the several kingdoms.” As evidence, he cited nineteenth-century Mormon theologian Orson Pratt’s idea of “some physical peculiarity” that marked the bodies in the lower kingdoms from those in the celestial realm. (44)217

216. Compare the sections “Same-Sex Encounters Common among Leaders?” and “Postmortal Biological Sex.”

217. *Tabernacles* cites the full information for volume 2 (dated 1948; see *Tabernacles* 234n120). Volume 4 was not published until later: Joseph
Tabernacles continues:

From this, Smith concluded that there will be a physical difference in the resurrected inhabitants outside of celestial glory that prevents them from both the “privileges” of reproduction and sexual intercourse. (44)

So far, so good — Joseph Smith did teach that only the exalted will enjoy eternal family relationships and eternal “increase” (the production of spirit children).218 This is the standard and uncontroversial view (D&C 131:1–4; 132:7–20, 30–32). Tabernacles veers into more dubious territory when it draws its own conclusions about what Joseph Fielding Smith’s answer meant:

What is the particular physical marker? Smith explained: “Is not the sectarian world justified in their doctrine generally regarding the kingdoms into which evidently the vast majority of mankind is likely to go.” Alluding to Galatians 3: 28 that there is “neither male nor female … in Christ,” Smith argued that other churches were largely correct in their rejection of a sexed afterlife. The idea that there would be some other sex, a neuter being that is neither man nor woman, as the norm for the vast majority of those in the afterlife made binary gender the exception for resurrected beings, not the rule. (44)

The questionable idea is that such beings will be “some other sex,” or “neuter,” in body. Tabernacles insists that Joseph Fielding Smith taught this elsewhere:


218. D&C 88:21–32; Joseph Fielding Smith, The Restoration of All Things: A Series of Radio Talks by Joseph Fielding Smith on Fundamental Principles of the Gospel (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1945), 243: “The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that ‘marriage is an institution of heaven, instituted in the garden of Eden, and that it should be solemnized by the authority of the everlasting priesthood.’ Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, ‘they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost, will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory’.”
Smith had thought through this issue before and taught it consistently in his ministry. In his 1954 book, *Doctrines of Salvation*, he made a similar statement about sexual difference as a privilege in the afterlife. He argued that those who do not dwell in the highest kingdom will lose the power of procreation just as they lose their marriages and families. Their bodies will be marked and will function differently. He explained, “Some of the functions in the celestial body will not appear in the terrestrial body, neither in the telestial body, and the power of procreation will be removed. I take it that men and women will, in these kingdoms, be just what the so-called Christian world expects us all to be — neither man nor woman, merely immortal beings having received the resurrection.” (44)²¹⁹

*Tabernacles* makes an interpretive leap when it concludes that “Since the functions of non-celestial bodies do not include reproduction and sexual intercourse, the form of these bodies will necessarily be different as well” (44–45). (Smith talks about an absence of function, not form.) This might be a plausible reading if the quotations are considered in isolation. The reader unfamiliar with the documents could be persuaded. In both cases, however, the material that *Tabernacles* sees as evidence of neuter beings is from “the sectarian world”²²⁰ and “the so-called Christian world.”²²¹ McConkie edited Smith’s *Doctrines of Salvation*, and so was well aware of what his father-in-law taught. He made the origin and meaning of Smith’s remarks clear and does not support *Tabernacles*’s reading at all. He told a BYU audience:

There are two kinds of beings in eternity: angels on the one hand, and gods on the other. And everybody [that is not exalted] is an angel — because they are unmarried. [Question: are these angels male and female?] Male and female — sure they are male and female but — a sectarian minister said to President [Joseph Fielding] Smith that he had heard about this [doctrine]; about God and the family unit continuing, and he said to President Smith: “There isn’t any sex in the next

world,” he said, “Everybody is neuter — not men or women.” President Smith answered: “That is right — of course that is right — as far as you’re concerned.”

This is true, not literally, but figuratively. It’s true in the sense that there is no family unit. There is no involvement of sex. For all practical purposes they just are neither male nor female although they still are men and women. But the only place the family unit continues is up here [among the exalted].

The most plausible reading of Smith is now clear. The attribution of “neuter” to the resurrected bodies is the sectarian minister’s, not Smith’s. The literal unsexed eternity is, in Smith’s view, from sectarians (and now Tabernacles), not him. McConkie is explicit both that males and females continue to exist, and that Smith’s provisional acceptance of the description “neuter” is figurative. Smith is simply teaching a standard doctrine of the Church — only the exalted continue in families or have eternal progeny. He is not making sex fluid or “binary gender the exception for resurrected beings, not the rule.”

It is utterly misguided to claim that “Many midcentury LDS leaders believed not only that being either male or female was a contingent feature of human identity but also that it was possible to be neither male nor female at all” (43, emphasis added). “Leaders” is another unsubstantiated plural. No other examples are provided and Smith alone is surely not “many,” even if he believed as Tabernacles claims. But the point is moot — Tabernacles has misread.

A second account from McConkie reinforces this reading:

Question: Was there male and female in the preexistence?

Answer: There would have been male and female spirits in the preexistence. There will be male and female spirits after


223. This is an example of the fallacy of misplaced literalism, discussed further in the section entitled “Curing Homosexuality?”

224. Compare the sections “Same-Sex Encounters Common among Leaders?” and “A Summary of Premortal Male and Female.”
this life. There will be male and female when they come up in the resurrection — in all the degrees [of glory] — but the only place it counts is in exaltation. The rest, in a sense, are imprisoned: their faculties are denied them.225

My reading is also far more congruent with Smith’s other writing and teaching. In *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, Smith wrote:

In the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, there will be no marriage, hence no continuation of the lives, for they remain in these kingdoms separately and singly through all eternity. This the Lord calls “the deaths,” because there is no increase. The question frequently arises: “If men and women live singly in the terrestrial and the telestial kingdoms, then what will prevent them from living promiscuously?” The Lord has given us the answer to that question. They will be quickened by different kind of bodies. They shall receive back their natural body, but they will be terrestrial bodies and telestial bodies and their bodies will be suited to the conditions prevailing in those kingdoms.226

Smith does describe a “natural body” — natural bodies are sexed — “suited to the conditions,” and incapable of eternal increase. But he says nothing of neuter bodies. This is exactly what one would expect given what McConkie has said about the origin of the ideas to which *Tabernacles* appeals.

In teaching about the resurrection, Smith repeatedly appealed to scripture: “it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself” (Alma 41:2).227 “Every fundamental part of every body,” he wrote, “will be restored to its proper place again in the resurrection, no matter what may become of the body


in death.”

Tabernacles’s claim that Smith believed that these bodies would be neuter is thus difficult to reconcile with both scripture and Smith’s personal insistence (even within the same book) that the body will be perfectly restored. This alone should make Tabernacles less confident. Were it more skeptical of its model, it might avoid missing the clear implications in the sources. McConkie’s additional information makes it obvious that Smith was not contradicting himself nor introducing a speculative new doctrine.

As with claims that leaders believed in a premortal state without sex, Tabernacle’s claim about the postmortal state turns out to be a historical mirage — it entices from afar, but vanishes as the documents are approached.

Misrepresenting Vocabulary

Given that Tabernacles is written from a queer studies perspective — making sex and gender central to its investigation — it is frustrating that “sex” and “gender” are used in ways that sometimes seem murky. Present-day scientists usually distinguish between the terms. By convention, sex is the biological state of being male or female. Gender is used to refer to one’s subjective experience of the world or the social roles that one adopts based on biological sex.

The terminological fluidity is perhaps unsurprising, given the queer theory lens. As one such author put it:

“The sex/gender distinction has been taken for granted both in the sciences and in many feminist approaches. Unlike mainstream scientific and (some) feminist approaches, queer

229. Ibid., 2:188.
230. This difficulty has previously been encountered. See the section entitled “Premortal Male and Female — Fixed or Fluid?” and “Examining Supposed Non-Essentialists.”
231. “Important to mention is what gender is understood to be and how it is distinct from sex. For most people, our sex is determined by our being born male or female. However, our gender refers to the ways in which masculinity and femininity are enacted; gender is a social construct, a set of behaviors, related to our sex but distinct from it. Our sex affects how we interact with the world because of what is linked to it (for example, the capacity to give birth) and what is associated with the linking of ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ to those around us. Sex is, therefore, related to gender but it is not the same thing” (Allyson Jule, A Beginner’s Guide to Language and Gender, 2nd ed. [Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2017], 28).
feminist science studies does not assume that the sex/gender distinction is either analytically or materiality stable; nor does it presume that this distinction is adequate to critically mapping complicated dimensions of embodiment.\footnote{232}

Two other authors argued that queer theory intentionally blurs language at the expense of clarity:

Because the central feature of Queer Theory is that it resists categorization and distrusts language, it is generally difficult to work with. Queer Theory is not only resistant to definition in the usual sense, but also to functional definitions based on what it does. ... As Annemarie Jagose, the author of \textit{Queer Theory: An Introduction}, puts it, “It is not simply that queer has yet to solidify and take on a more consistent profile, but rather that its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics.” The incoherence of Queer Theory is an intentional feature, not a bug.\footnote{233}

\textit{Tabernacles} is, of course, entitled to use the tools of its chosen paradigm. The choice becomes more problematic when applied to history as it risks obscuring what historical figures understood or intended by a word. For clarity herein, I will use “sex” in the customary scientific manner to refer to biology and “gender” to refer to social role or subjective experience.

In the same way, \textit{Tabernacles} is often unclear about what it or its sources intend by the term \textit{homosexuality}. Do they mean what is called, today, a \textit{homosexual orientation} — i.e., of being consistently and exclusively attracted to those of the same sex? Or do they mean those who engage in homosexual \textit{behavior}? Or someone who adopts that identity? Or some blend of them all and more besides?

Drawing on the post-modern philosophy of Foucault, a key aspect of \textit{Tabernacles}’s argument sees “‘the homosexual’ as a rhetorical construction, an imagined subject rather than a stable, clearly defined, ahistorical identity” (57). In the 1950s:

LDS leaders used the concept of “the homosexual” for the first time in this era and classified it as a type of gender failure. \textit{When I refer to “the homosexual” and “homosexuality” here, I refer to the cultural forms these terms produced, linking}

\footnote{233. Pluckrose and Lindsay, \textit{Cynical Theories}, 120; citing Annemarie Jagose, \textit{Queer Theory: An Introduction} (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 1.}
gender and sexuality as composite categories of identity. This new classification also entailed that “the homosexual” — a distinctive subjectivity and newly constructed character — was in need not only of ecclesiastical censure but also of pastoral care, blending the moral and psychological discourses together into a new therapeutic orthodoxy. (16, italics added)

Tabernacles thus argues:

As Michel Foucault pointed out, the term “sodomy” had generally described a set of acts, while the term “homosexual” was increasingly being used to describe a person’s identity. The implication of this historicizing perspective is not that people have not always engaged in same-sex sexual encounters and relationships across cultures but that the label “homosexual” is a distinctive concept of the modern West — a new way of thinking about people that produced, rather than reflected, a new identity. (57)

While this view of the homosexual is doubtless true of Foucault and many of the cultural avant-garde, the key question remains: was this truly the perspective of Church leaders in the 1950s and 1960s? When they said homosexual, did they intend “a new identity” instead of a new word describing an old behavior? Tabernacles indicates how it uses the word, but too often leaves unexamined how the sources use the word. Whatever the sources meant, it is unlikely that they intended the definition which Tabernacles uses here.

Tabernacles says that “It is worth noting at this point that in the 1950s and 1960s, church leaders regularly spoke of ‘homosexuality’ and ‘homosexuals’ without qualification. While they resisted the essentialism of these terms, they fully accepted the medical pathology behind them” (65–66).234

Having underlined the leaders’ lack of “essentialism,” Tabernacles then says:

234. Even this description is confusing, however, since this type of essentialism (believing that homosexual desires or acts make one “a homosexual” in essence) is not the same as an essentialism that Tabernacles discusses later (affirming that there is something eternal and essential about sex). Tabernacles argues that leaders in this period denied both of these essentialisms. This review argues that they rejected the first and embraced the second. The terminology risks blurring two very different issues, and in fact the leaders’ embrace of the second essentialism is part of what led them to so definitively reject the first.
[To Latter-day Saint leaders] homosexuality was a perversion, an illness, and unnatural — but could also be healed. However, as the term “homosexual” was increasingly associated with a fixed identity and immutable nature, church leaders later became hesitant to adopt it. But in the 1950s and 1960s, the term still implied sexual malleability for church leaders. (65–66)

To be sure, a new word — homosexual — became available from the broader culture. But what exactly is “sexual malleability?” Desires that change? Acts that change? Gender roles that change? Orientation that changes? Terminological precision seems in order so the reader can know exactly what claim is being made.

Given the availability of a new term, did it change anything about how, say, sodomite was once understood in the Church, i.e., as someone who engaged in sinful homosexual acts? Did leaders calling someone a homosexual in 1952 intend something different than leaders calling someone a sodomite in 1890? Tabernacles provides evidence that at least sometimes they did not:

The first mention of the [term] came in 1952, when apostle J. Reuben Clark became the first senior authority of the church to use the words “homosexual” and “homosexuality” in a public speech. … Clark complained of this “softer name” for the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. We can thus date the invention of “the homosexual” in Mormon thought to 1952. (63)

Clark used the novel term homosexual but clearly did not see it as anything different from sodomite. He perceived, even at the beginning, that the change in name could communicate something new. He did not, however, want to be understood differently, emphasizing that “gross abominations must be called by their right names.”

235. Clark was a counselor in the First Presidency.
236. Clark was addressing the Church’s female Relief Society; he was concerned both with being delicate and clear: “The sisters asked me, particularly, to say something about chastity. I am going to talk about it. I hope you will pardon the plainness of it, but in order that I might be reasonably sure that I meant what I said, I have written that out. … I shall speak with great plainness, yet as delicately as I can. But gross abominations must be called by their right names, and our attacks against them must be direct and as forceful as we can make them. … The person who teaches or condones the crimes for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed [is acting as an emissary of Satan] — we have coined a softer name for
Tabernacles claims that Clark’s use of the term represented the start of “the invention of ‘the homosexual’” — but Clark’s skepticism is clear evidence that he was not inventing or adopting a new social construct, much less introducing something novel. He was concerned about “the crimes for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed,” just as earlier leaders had been.\footnote{Clark, “Home, and the Building of Home Life,” 793.} Foucault distinguishes between sodomy and homosexuality, but Clark declined to do so.\footnote{Tabernacles concedes that sodomite and homosexual need not have been separate, hermetically-sealed categories: “There was certainly some continuity between sodomy and homosexuality as conceptual categories. Both imagined that same-sex intimacy was primarily about sexual gratification rather than a drive to create relationships” (65). But, if Church leaders were concerned primarily by behavior, one wonders whether any distinction at all was intended. Clark’s attitude is perhaps not much different from one sexologist’s: “Kinsey had proposed the use of the term ‘homosexual’ as an adjective to describe responses and acts, and he questioned the idea that homosexuals were a distinct type of person” (57). Kinsey and Clark would have seen the moral dimension of such acts in quite different ways, but likely agreed that homosexual described the act, not the person’s essence. See further discussion in the section entitled “Behavior versus Orientation.”}

Spencer W. Kimball likewise observed:

Sometimes a new generation gives old sins new names — often designations which remove any implication of sin — and as one reads the long scriptural list of transgressions he does not recognize them by their modern names. …

Sometimes a person, not discovering in the scriptures the modern name for the particular sin or perversion of which he is guilty, eases his conscience by trying to convince himself that, after all, it is not too bad because it is not specifically prohibited. … Other sins and perversions may not be named in the scriptures by their modern appellations, but a careful scrutiny of the scriptures will reveal [them].\footnote{Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness, 22.}

Change in the secular terminology over time is evident, but as Tabernacles says, this led to push-back from Church leaders. The terms came to imply something different, and leaders would disclaim the new meanings. Tabernacles cites material from Boyd K. Packer in 1978:

them than came from old; we now speak of homosexuality, which, it is tragic to say, is found among both sexes” (J. Reuben Clark Jr., “Home, and the Building of Home Life,” Relief Society Magazine 39, no. 12 (December 1952): 792–93, https://archive.org/details/reliefsocietymag1952reli/page/792/mode/2up).


238. Tabernacles concedes that sodomite and homosexual need not have been separate, hermetically-sealed categories: “There was certainly some continuity between sodomy and homosexuality as conceptual categories. Both imagined that same-sex intimacy was primarily about sexual gratification rather than a drive to create relationships” (65). But, if Church leaders were concerned primarily by behavior, one wonders whether any distinction at all was intended. Clark’s attitude is perhaps not much different from one sexologist’s: “Kinsey had proposed the use of the term ‘homosexual’ as an adjective to describe responses and acts, and he questioned the idea that homosexuals were a distinct type of person” (57). Kinsey and Clark would have seen the moral dimension of such acts in quite different ways, but likely agreed that homosexual described the act, not the person’s essence. See further discussion in the section entitled “Behavior versus Orientation.”

Packer’s speech marked the beginning of a new LDS discomfort with the language around homosexuality and its limitations. Packer began to believe that language itself could be constitutive of identity. At the outset, he explained, “To introduce [the subject] I must use a word. I will use it one time only. Please notice that I use it as an adjective, not as a noun. I reject it as a noun. I speak to those few, those very few, who may be subject to homosexual temptation. I repeat, I accept that word as an adjective to describe a temporary condition. I reject it as a noun naming a permanent one.” (89)

It is absurd to claim that Packer “began to believe that language itself could be constitutive of identity.” Tabernacles’s post-modernism is utterly foreign to Packer’s thought and worldview. Packer rejects using homosexual as a noun precisely because in the intervening quarter century since Clark, its common meaning had increasingly shifted to emphasize identity rather than behavior. Neither Packer nor Clark accepted that language would be “constitutive of” — i.e., making, forming, establishing, determining an essential part of — identity. (That is, Packer did not “begin to” have a view that differed from Clark’s.) It was precisely this identity that Packer denied. If anything, he believed that such a label would be a lie.

Packer was concerned about homosexual temptation or sins (the adjective) but rejected efforts to see a person as “homosexual” in essence (the noun). This concern was not new — Clark saw homosexual as referring to the “crimes [of] Sodom and Gomorrah.” Packer did not steer clear because he believed such labeling was “constitutive of identity” — he simply knew that some were using the label in other ways, and he wished to be understood unmistakably.

Tabernacles sees early Latter-day Saint use of the unqualified term homosexual as embracing sexual malleability (66). As I shortly show in more detail, Church leaders had always been overwhelmingly concerned with homosexual actions. They consistently denied both that one was inherently and inexorably compelled to commit such acts and that either homosexual temptation or homosexual experience defined someone in essence. This conviction did not begin with Clark, nor end with Packer.

It is vital, then, to know what the historical sources meant, and how their intent may have differed from the interpretation of a twenty-first century

240. See further discussion in the section entitled “Behavior versus Orientation.”
reader for words such as homosexuality, homosexual, or even homosexual orientation. Tabernacles rarely engages in this type of analysis.  

Presentism and the Omission of Data

Tabernacles repeatedly fails to properly characterize its sources. This problem continues with Spencer W. Kimball’s 1965 talk, “Love versus Lust.” Tabernacles asserts that “pervert,” was Kimball’s “preferred term for gay men and women” (65).

Although it is not clear how the reader is to know that this is Kimball’s “preferred term,” it sounds terrible to modern ears. Surely a term such as “pervert” could easily be used as a slur. Kimball joins “pervert” to two neutral, technical terms: “adulterer” and “fornicator” (65).

In 1965, the same year in which Kimball spoke, a book of interviews with mental health professionals was published. One psychiatrist wrote of homosexuals: “Their problem is society, because if society would leave them alone there would be no problem. Many of these men do not want to change, and they do not need to change.” Yet, despite this favorable sentiment, the same author also said:

Homosexuality is a perversion. … Perversion is simply an interruption in which some part of the foreplay becomes the goal and copulation is avoided. Anything which interferes with the survival of the species, whether it be homosexual perversion or any other kind, society tends to fight. … The point is simply that. … [heterosexuals] do not block mankind’s survival as does the pervert and homosexual by swerving from the main goal.”

Another friendly author from 1908 would write:

The various perversions of the sexual instinct … are [mostly] hereditary, and therefore inborn. … [including] inverted sexual feeling (homosexuality). …

The unfortunate people who suffer from these perversions are treated unjustly and, for the most part, far too harshly. Perverse instincts which injure no one when carried into practice … are ethically indifferent and harmless. …

241.  I revisit these issues in the section “Spencer W. Kimball and The Miracle of Forgiveness.”

If the pervert can only gratify his instinct by injuring other people, he must be regarded as a dangerous lunatic. …

Homosexual persons … are, on the other hand, comparatively harmless as long as they direct their attentions to adults, and provided there is no seduction or use of compulsion. … Our laws are still entirely at fault in these matters, and inflict punishment upon the basis of ancient theological dogmas.²⁴³

By the late 1960s, some were coming to see that “pervert is an unkind and loaded word,”²⁴⁴ but the reader cannot understand Kimball’s language without understanding that such terms had a long history of common and technical usage.²⁴⁵ By 1974, material published by Kimball’s administration would recognize the negative connotations despite the term’s technical origin, and urge other language be used.²⁴⁶

As Tabernacles notes, there is both an audio version of President Kimball’s original talk, and an edited print version. Tabernacles reports

²⁴⁶. “Perversion”: This term, while technically correct, is not the type of label that is likely to open communication between a stake president or bishop and a homosexual. It is true that homosexual behavior is a perversion or deviation from the Lord’s ways, but homosexuals are children of God, although they are fallen and wayward. One can avoid raising barriers to communication without in any way condoning evil practices” (Welfare Services Packet 1 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973], 15–16, emphasis in original).
material transcribed from the original audio (238n63). Here is the spoken original, with the portion cited by *Tabernacles* shown in bold:

I want to mention one other thing which must be spoken here and that is not only fornication and adultery. There are many other sins. And we know they’re sins, we don’t have to be told, whenever we have to hide and whenever we have to bend our heads we know that they are sins. And I want to speak of the perversions for a moment. For they are growing. There are far more people that are known to be perverts these days, men and women (largely men). This is an abominable sin, and there is no scripture and there is nothing that can ever justify. It is forgivable, like adultery is forgivable. It is a sin of such gravity that excommunication is the penalty like it is for adultery.

But there is this hope. Repentance is always here and possible and a great and total and continuing repentance can cleanse one’s garments in the blood of the Lamb when there is a total, sustained and continuing repentance. I cannot imagine that this university would ever enroll a pervert, knowingly, an unrepentant one. I cannot imagine this university ever tolerating on its campus one day or one week any adulterer, or fornicator, or pervert — unrepentant, I underscore, unrepentant, because all these sins can be wiped out pretty well if there is repentance. But unrepentant sinners have no place on the campus of the Brigham Young University. If they are repentant, there is great tolerance and understanding and the Brethren always will err on the side of leniency, I know. God bless you young people.247

A footnote in *Tabernacles* indicates that “in some cases” the published version of Kimball’s talk included “a softer tone emphasizing the possibility of forgiveness” (238n63).248 But, this is the only audio section that mentions anything besides heterosexual sins. It is the sole mention of homosexual behavior, even obliquely. *Tabernacles* also does not tell readers that Kimball warns a couple guilty of heterosexual sin

248. For the published version, see the section entitled “Behavior versus Orientation.”
that any lust creates “thought habits [that] are perverted,” demonstrating that Kimball would apply the same wording to any sexual sin. 249

Not only does Kimball mention forgiveness, but he assures any who repent of their actions that they will receive “tolerance” on BYU campus and a promise that the Brethren will “err on the side of leniency.” The printed version makes Kimball’s meaning clear:

> And I feel certain that this University will never knowingly enroll an unrepentant person who follows these practices nor tolerate on its campus anyone with these tendencies who fails to repent and put his or her life in order. 250

But all Tabernacles indicates is that “pervert” is Kimball’s “preferred term for gay men and women” (65).

Tabernacles’s term gay is, however, anachronistic. Gay can mean many things to a modern audience, but it usually includes the idea of “homosexual orientation.” The modern meaning may incline the reader to assume: (1) that Kimball accepted that an essential fixed homosexual orientation existed; and (2) that he used a slur to condemn and exclude anyone with that orientation. Neither assumption is true.

As used by Tabernacles, Kimball’s remarks may look like a bigoted banning of anyone with homosexual inclinations from campus. Instead, Kimball merely includes “perversions” in the same category as adultery and fornication, and promises tolerance, understanding, and leniency to all the repentant. The same standards apply at BYU in 2021. 251

**Behavior versus Orientation**

What can we learn about Latter-day Saint leaders’ focus during this period? Was homosexuality a constructed identity for Church leaders (57), or a description of behavior?

The book’s conclusion emphasizes, “Though I am arguing that the concept of homosexuality and heterosexuality came to dominate the structure of Mormon teachings about gender and sexuality in the period since World War II … I also want to underscore the dramatic changes that these categories themselves have undergone” (216).

249. Kimball, “Love Versus Lust,” *Speeches of the Year*, 13. See the section “Four Scare Words” for further examples of Tabernacles’s failure to report that the same words were used to criticize homosexual and heterosexual sin.


This is wise, though it would have been far more helpful — though harmful to many of its arguments — if Tabernacles had used this fact to inform its reading of the historical materials. The serious reader, unfortunately, must do that work herself.

Doing so requires consulting several documents.\(^{252}\)

1. Kimball’s “A Counselling Problem in the Church” (1964) focuses on behavior or actions at least eight times. Kimball emphasizes that, for those who repent, “thoughts are controlled and actions are above reproach.” “The difference between the reprobate and the worthy person,” he avers, “is generally that one yielded and the other resisted.”\(^{253}\)

2. Having already considered the audio version of Kimball’s “Love versus Lust” (1965) address, it is appropriate to examine the substantially expanded print version. Unsurprisingly, behavior is the focus at least 24 times. For example, Kimball states that “corrupted individuals have tried to reduce such behavior from criminal offense to personal privilege does not change the nature nor the seriousness of the practice.”\(^{254}\)

3. The pamphlet, New Horizons for Homosexuals (1966/1971), later retitled Letter to a Friend in 1978, was based on a personal letter written by Kimball in 1966. Behavior is likewise its theme in at least 28 instances. For example, “the prophets have denounced and condemned any of these unnatural and improper practices.”\(^{255}\)


\(^{252}\) Citations are available in Appendix III for readers who wish to make their own counts. The question of whether these documents teach that temptation or “orientation” can or should be “cured” is deferred until the section entitled “Curing Homosexuality?”

\(^{253}\) Spencer W. Kimball, “A Counselling Problem in the Church,” (address, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 10 July 1964), 16–17, italics added, https://archive.org/details/PresidentKimballACounsellingProblemInTheChurch/mode/2up.


attraction is defining *homosexual* as “sexual desire for those of the same sex or sexual relations between individuals of the same sex.” All condemnation, however, focuses on the *act*, not the desire, with behavior mentioned at least 13 times. “Social acceptance does not change the *status of an act*, making wrong into right.”256

5. The title of *Hope for Transgressors*, a 1970 guide for local leaders, tips its hand immediately by focusing on “transgressors” (i.e., those who have committed a sinful act). In at least 15 cases, it is abundantly clear that behavior is the concern, though it is emphasized that some have “tendencies” toward such acts, which are not condemned unless acted upon.257

6. The 1973 *Welfare Services Packet 1* likewise emphasized behavior, going so far as to say that “homosexuality is possible only with others,” thus making homosexuality without a partner a contradiction in terms.258 The packet is conscious of varied usage of the term homosexual or homosexuality, labeling only actions as “transgression”:

There are two parts of homosexual behavior:
The physical-sexual behavior and the emotional attachment. …

There are many degrees of homosexuality but homosexuals usually fit one of three categories: (1) Those who are fully involved and steeped in the *transgression of homosexuality* and engage in forms of sexual intercourse and genital activity. (2) Those who think about homosexuality without being sexually involved, and (3) Those in varying stages between these extremes. … Church officers will want to consider the degree of *homosexual involvement*.259

This document overflows with at least 38 references to behavior: “Persons who have engaged in homosexual *relations* and who have not totally repented and *forsaken these evil practices* will

257. Spencer W. Kimball and Mark E. Petersen, *Hope for Transgressors* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970), 1, italics added.
259. Ibid., 4.
not be admitted to study at or be employed by any Church university, college, school, or program.\textsuperscript{260}

7. As I have shown, Boyd K. Packer’s 1978 BYU talk, “To the One,” began by insisting on \textit{homosexual} as an adjective for a temptation, not a noun for a person.\textsuperscript{261} Like those who came before, he was preoccupied with behavior, mentioning it at least 15 times. Further, he reflected repeatedly on those who were tempted, and did not condemn them if they did not act sinfully.

8. A 1981 manual for bishops and other leaders continued to see \textit{homosexuality} as being a matter of behavior:

\begin{quote}
Bishops and stake presidents are expected to clearly inquire into sexual \textit{behavior} when they are considering youth for missions. Rather than using the term homosexuality, they might refer to “sexual \textit{contact} with women or men”\textsuperscript{262}
\end{quote}

The manual discusses the various uses of the term \textit{homosexuality}:

\begin{quote}
Homosexuality is erotic physical contact or attractions between members of the same sex, including erotic same-sex fantasy. It may include thoughts or emotional attractions without outward sexual behavior, or it may include complete emotional, sexual, and genital involvement with a member of the same sex. Homosexual activities may range from childhood experimentation to adult obsession.\textsuperscript{263}
\end{quote}

As in the previous examples, the rest of the manual continues to emphasize behavior as the locus of change. “It is better,” counsels the manual, “to refer to their ‘homosexual behavior’ than to call them a ‘homosexual’.”\textsuperscript{264}

\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 13, emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{261} See discussion in the section “Mispresenting Vocabulary” for more details. Boyd K. Packer, “To the One,” in pamphlet (Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 2, italics added.
\textsuperscript{262} Homosexuality (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 8, italics added.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., 4.
Let’s consider the final case — a manual entitled *Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Problems* (1981) for use by Church therapists — more closely. *Tabernacles* uses this work to claim that “the emphasis in the title on ‘changing homosexual orientation’ reflected the new goals of treatment” (92). “Despite the language of choice to describe these orientations,” it continues, “the psycho-developmental diagnosis was clear: ‘Homosexual orientation problems … are often a reflection of poor interpersonal relationships with parents, siblings, and peers’” (92).

This, at last, might appear to be something like the more modern idea of a “sexual orientation” which must be either repented of or changed. But if so, not much was said about it in the contemporaneous leaders’ manual.265 But in fact, this work intends something quite different by orientation.

There are factors in man’s mortal environment which affect his agency, in some cases limiting his options or making certain options particularly appealing. [These include] birth defects and genetic traits [and] environmental influences. …

*Negative influences in an individual’s mortal environment, however, do not cause his homosexual orientation.*266

The reader is informed that various influences do not cause the orientation, but it is acknowledged that these “factors in man’s mortal environment” can “mak[e] certain options particularly appealing.” Despite a lack of scientific consensus, the twenty-first-century reader would see these factors as precisely the sort of things (e.g., putative genetic, intra-uterine, or early life events) that might cause someone to “be gay,” i.e. to have homosexual options be particularly appealing.267 But those influences are explicitly ruled out as causing the type of *homosexual orientation* being discussed. What then is this orientation?

At some point he must assume responsibility for his actions, regardless of predisposing factors. Free agency means that he is not totally the product of his physical makeup, environment, external stimuli, or past history. It means, rather, that in the moment of decision, he has the ability to determine his own

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265. Ibid., 1.
267. For clarity, I use the term “gay” to distinguish between our modern idea of sexual orientation and the type of orientation being discussed in 1981.
course of action. He is not forced to choose sinful behavior against his will.268

Orientation is here tied tightly to actions: “the moment of decision,” “his own course of action,” sinful behavior,” “responsibility for his actions.” This orientation involves behavior, as is made clearer in the subsequent paragraphs:

Though a person is not born with a homosexual orientation[,] biological factors; social, family and environmental influences, habit; and continued sin can affect the alternatives available as he makes sexual choices. No one, however, can blame his sinful behavior totally on others … but must ultimately take responsibility for his behavior himself. Each new choice in a person’s life becomes an opportunity to move away from an unwanted orientation or behavior and toward a desirable orientation. … An individual is free to develop chastity, the controlled expression of sexual feelings.269

This paragraph does not dispute that various factors can affect “the alternatives available” for “sexual choices.” But it states that it is choice that determines orientation: orientation here is synonymous with behavior. One could, then, choose to forgo “an unwanted orientation or behavior” and instead choose “a desirable orientation.”

In a later chapter, Tabernacles claims that by 2012, “Church leaders … accepted that human agency may not be entirely at work in forming and transforming human desires” (176) — yet it appears from this work that the Church was accepting precisely that in 1981. Likewise, Tabernacles claims that in 1995, Elder Dallin H. Oaks’s idea that homosexual desires “have some connection to ‘nature’ represented a revision of earlier LDS teachings” (178–79). Yet I just showed that “biological factors” and “physical makeup” were listed as something that “can affect” sexual desires — in 1981.

Furthermore, the same concerns about labels persist and reinforce this reading:

A host of negative associations accompany the label “homosexual,” and when a client attaches that label to himself, he does himself a great injustice because many of the associations may not apply. In addition the label incorrectly implies something the person is rather than something he does. Discourage the client from using that inaccurate label.

268. LDS Social Services, Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Problems, 5.
269. Ibid., 5, compare 32.
… Use an alternative term, such as homosexual orientation or homosexual behavior instead.\textsuperscript{270}

Here, orientation is synonymous with behavior, and neither term describes a state of being but instead refers to acts. (For the manual, to say one has a homosexual orientation is both better and quite different than saying one is homosexual. This is not the meaning of sexual orientation in the twenty-first century.) Further on, the manual recommends that clients adopt the following stance:

“Though my thoughts and feelings may be different from many others of my own sex, I am a heterosexual with no special exemptions from living the law of chastity.” [In deciding this] he then has increased power to forsake his homosexually-oriented thoughts and behavior and move to an exclusively heterosexual orientation.\textsuperscript{271}

Again, there is no denial that the patient may be gay, i.e., have thoughts and feelings which strongly incline to same sex acts. But, one can choose to be heterosexually oriented by refusing to entertain or heed “homosexually-oriented thoughts” or engage in “homosexually-oriented … behavior.”

What then is the goal of this therapy? To make someone “non-gay”? Hardly:

The Lord views homosexual behavior as sin in the same degree as adultery and fornication. The overriding therapeutic goal, therefore, is to erase sinful homoerotic habits while building patterns of feeling, thinking, and acting which conform to the laws of chastity.\textsuperscript{272}

Chastity is about chosen behavior. Habits are behaviors. One is “oriented” simply by the way one faces based upon the choices one makes.

And, what does success look like?

\textsuperscript{270} Ibid., 9, italics in original. We see again the Church’s concern with labels — to label oneself as a “heterosexual” need not imply that hetero/homosexual are reified categories of identity. Instead, one conceptualizes oneself as someone that will act in a certain way (heterosexually) and not in another (homosexually). One’s thoughts and feelings may be different from others’ without affecting fundamental identity or one’s standard of behavior.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., 9, italics added.
When an individual changes his homosexual orientation, it does not necessarily mean that old thoughts, feelings, and temptations never return. It does mean, however, that he has made sufficient progress in the areas of self-control and personal development to cease overt homosexual behavior and gradually develop normal heterosexual patterns. As with any sin or negative habit [i.e., behavior], he may need to work continually to maintain the new, positive behavior.

By analogy, Peter might be strongly tempted to sleep with his neighbor’s wife. He did not choose this desire, nor the profound emotions associated therewith. Having such desires, however, does not grant him a different identity, nor place him under a different sexual ethic, even if his neighbor’s wife is the sole object of his desires. He is not “an adulterer,” simply because he has this strong desire — he is an adulterer if and only if he commits the sin of adultery. (That is, these Church documents argue that I am not a homosexual simply because I experience homosexual temptation. I am a homosexual if and only if I commit a homosexual act.)

Peter’s choice to exercise continence and control both his thoughts and actions are not an effort to change him from an “adulterous sexual identity” to a “faithful sexual identity.” It is instead a choice to either avoid or repent of sinful behavior. If one accepts the proposition that such “thoughts, feelings, and temptations” represent a sexual orientation in the present-day sense, then that type of sexual orientation is precisely what the document says may not change, though one seeks “heterosexual patterns” of behavior.

It is always a question of behavior. Tabernacles should acknowledge this. It even cites an abridged version of the material provided for bishops, but fails to help the reader see how omnipresent and consistent this message was:

The booklet Homosexuality advised church leaders that “homosexual behavior is learned and can be overcome.” It continued, “To believe that immoral behavior is inborn or

273. Ibid., 11.
274. To be sure, the sin of adultery can take more than one form (Matthew 5:28, D&C 42:22–25). In any case, the label of “adulterer” applies only to one who acts upon the desire, not to one who has the desire sans any action.
275. This idea is discussed in detail in the section “Curing Homosexuality?”
hereditary is to deny that men have agency to choose between sin and righteousness.” (92)

In Church materials, one does not have inborn behavior that one cannot control (as some professionals argued).276 An anonymous success story illustrates that success is in control of acts, not desires:

There have been disappointments and lapses along the way … but the evidence of nearly twelve months with no sinful sexual activity of any kind and the feeling of freedom … convinces me that the miracle I had so long prayed for has finally been granted. There are still times of particular stress or anxiety when I find myself aware of and attracted to other men, but I find such attractions ebbing in force and the intervals between them increasingly long. …

The Lord has given me strength sufficient, I know, to banish forever the possibility of my returning to homosexual activities. … If I do my part I know it will not happen.277

It is important to realize that the problems with terminology are magnified when Tabernacles does cite a source that mentions “homosexual behavior” — this too easily leads the reader to hear all the other mentions of homosexual or homosexuality in the modern way, when behavior is not specified in the quoted snippet. (Behavior is, of course, clearly intended, judging by the uncited surrounding text.)

**Contemporary Meaning(s) of “Homosexual Orientation”**

With the 1981 document’s meaning made clear, it is helpful to examine what contemporary non-Latter-day Saint authors understood by orientation. At this period in history, the terminology was in considerable flux among both researchers and gay rights activists.

**Gay Rights Group in 1975–1977**

In 1975, a California gay rights group urged legislators to use the term “homosexual orientation.” Their reasons are illuminating:

The Gay Activists Alliance [GAA] welcomes the growing number of gay rights bills that are being introduced. …

However, in such legislation we have noted a tendency to

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276. Compare with the section “Causing Homosexuality?”
substitute the phrase “affectional or sexual preference” for the phrase “sexual orientation” in reference to homosexuals. GAA feels that the interests and needs of gay people would be best served by retaining the phrase “sexual orientation.” … GAA finds the term “affectional or sexual preference” less desirable for the following reasons:

1. The term “affectional or sexual preference” is defined … as “having or manifesting an emotional or physical attachment to another consenting person or persons of either gender, or having a preference for such attachment.” This is vague and appears incomprehensible. … “Sexual orientation” (defined in some existing legislation as “choice of sexual partner according to gender”) is at least quickly comprehensible, and more clearly encompasses homosexual behavior.

2. It diverts attention from the real source of homosexual oppression — the fact that we engage in sexual acts that are forbidden and criminal in society. Neither homosexuality per se nor homosexual lifestyles are illegal in any state in the United States; it is certain kinds of acts that are illegal. …

4. It tends to obscure the reality … that human sexual behavior falls on a continuum between those who are exclusively heterosexual and those who are exclusively homosexual. …

This language both trivializes and obscures the struggle that gay liberationists are involved in: to argue and insure [sic] that sexual acts committed between consenting partners should not be punished.

6. It represents a concession to the prevailing heterosexual view that sex is good and justifiable only when it is complemented by “love.” Equal rights must be extended to homosexuals regardless of whether or not they are emotionally or physically attached to another person.278

In 1975–1977, then, a pro-gay group saw “homosexual orientation” and “sexual preference” as quite different things. The former was primarily concerned with behavior, not desire.

Homosexual Orientation as Behavior

In 1976, a nursing journal emphasized that homosexuals “have a different sexual orientation … [and] this [is] … a variant, rather than a deviant form of behavior.”279

In 1980, another author argued that sexologist Alfred Kinsey’s work demonstrated that “sexual orientation fluctuates, surely over a lifetime and, for some people, as often as the weather.” As evidence, he cited Kinsey’s claim that “Some males may be involved in both heterosexual and homosexual activities within the same period of time. … even in the same day. … Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual.”280

This author went on to argue that “homosexual orientation” is actually a cluster of traits including “physical sexual activity,” “interpersonal affection,” and target of “erotic fantasy.”281 Choice of label was more frequently based upon “physical sexual activity, either as behavior or desire.”282 Significantly, he concluded, “Sexual orientation is one of the few areas of human behavior in which biology is not destiny.”283 This is the furthest thing from today’s sexual orientation, which most see as innate and unchanging and separate from sexual acts, if any.

Homosexual Orientation as Desire

The above view was not universal, however. A year earlier, a different author wrote that Kinsey “argued that an individual’s sexual orientation should be defined primarily in terms of the type, extent, and frequency of his or her erotic fantasies,” while later work “suggests that people may initiate sexual behaviors, and thereby develop sexual orientations, in response to the contents of their fantasies.”284 Here, orientation is defined primarily by desire, though desire could also arise from behavior rather than vice versa.

282. Ibid., 63.
283. Ibid., 64, italics in original.
Likewise, a 1985 account stated that “[s]exual orientation, defined as erotic attraction rather than sexual behavior, is established at an early age and largely immutable in adulthood.”

**Research Implications of Non-Standardized Terminology**

This terminological variation caused significant problems for researchers. Three years after the Church’s 1981 guide for therapists was published, a key article bemoaned “the various ways in which sexual orientation was defined in the research literature and the apparent disparity among these definitions.”

“Some authors were thinking of etiology,” it continued, “some of observable behavior, and others of enduring mental states. … While some included only behavior, others included only emotional closeness or fantasy. The linguistic and conceptual confusion is readily apparent.”

It is this linguistic and conceptual confusion that can mislead when a modern reader examines Church documents from even a few decades ago. The article continues:

As a research concept, sexual orientation clearly has a perplexing array of meanings. … Sexual orientation was treated as if it were a palpable, unitary phenomenon although it was conceived in divergent and sometimes contradictory ways. … The idea of sexual identity [moreover] provides no more stable focus of investigation than the amorphous notion of sexual orientation.

**Attempts at Standardization — Klein’s Seven Variables**

In 1985, Fritz Klein and colleagues echoed these concerns, warning that “research instruments investigating sexual orientation tended to be as limited as the theoretical positions they were based on. Researchers have failed operationally or conceptually to define sexual orientation, by not

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287. Ibid., 132–33.
288. Ibid., 134.
providing clear or consistent definitions.”

They argued that “sexual orientation is multi-variate” and these “variables ... differ over time.”

To remedy this, Klein defined sexual orientation on the basis of seven factors and emphasized “the importance of viewing sexual orientation as a process which often changes over time.” Furthermore, the seven variables were independent — they were not merely “measuring the same dimension” under different names.

It is useful to compare Klein’s seven variables to the Church’s 1981 Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation document, as shown in the table below. It is evident from the comparison that 1981 Church efforts to change homosexual orientation focused on six of the seven domains later identified by Klein in 1985. Not incidentally, these areas are all behaviors subject to choice. There was clear acknowledgement that the sole area not under the individual’s control — attraction — was not something for which he was at fault, and its resolution was not promised. He was even warned that it could well persist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Klein Variable</th>
<th>Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Approach</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Sexual attraction</td>
<td>“factors in man’s mortal environment” can “mak[e] certain options particularly appealing”; “when an individual changes his homosexual orientation, it does not necessarily mean that old thoughts, feelings, and temptations never return.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sexual behavior</td>
<td>Extensive focus on actions (see the section of this essay entitled “Behavior versus Orientation”). “The Lord views homosexual behavior as sin in the same degree as adultery and fornication. The overriding therapeutic goal, therefore, is to erase sinful homoerotic habits.”</td>
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290. Ibid., 38.
291. Ibid., 43–44.
292. Ibid., 40–42.
293. LDS Social Services, Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Problems, 4–5, 11.
294. Ibid., 9.
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<tr>
<th>Klein Variable</th>
<th>Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Approach</th>
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<tr>
<td>3. Sexual fantasies</td>
<td>“Has increased power to forsake his homosexually-oriented thoughts and behavior”; “build … patterns of feeling, thinking, and acting which conform to the laws of chastity”; “Sometimes homosexually-oriented thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are so entrenched as to be automatic, requiring special help to bring them back into proper control”; “Stop masturbation, erotic fantasies, and the use of pornography”; “Homoerotic Fantasy Control … The importance of the client stopping homoerotic thoughts as soon as possible after they enter his mind cannot be overemphasized. This technique suggests ways to help the client gain this control.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Emotional preference</td>
<td>“Discuss the client’s ability to separate erotic feelings from social-emotional feelings. For example, there is a difference between wanting a close relationship with another male and wanting sex.”; “Increase social interaction,” “Give female interaction assignments.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Social preference</td>
<td>”Seems almost incapable of maintaining continuous close relationships with either sex”; “You may need to help the client strengthen his relationships with you and with others — family, friends, and strangers of both sexes”; “Eliminate contact with homosexual associates”; “Development [of] appropriate interpersonal relationship skills with both sexes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-identification</td>
<td>“When a client attaches that label [homosexual] to himself, he does himself a great injustice because many of the associations may not apply. In addition the label incorrectly implies something the person is rather than something he does. Discourage the client from using that inaccurate label”; “This is why it is so important not to incorrectly label”; “Identifies himself as homosexual”; “Help the client … see why the labels of homosexual or gay may not apply to him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lifestyle</td>
<td>“May need to change his lifestyle”; “Usually must change his lifestyle”; “May be steeped in the homosexual culture and life-style”; “Those with severe symptoms may be deeply entrenched in a homosexual life-style.”</td>
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**Homosexual Orientation, in Conclusion**

When a term such as *homosexual orientation* can mislead so badly, and when *Tabernacles* fails to help the reader understand it despite both historical usage and the Church texts’ clarity, it is again evident why precision in historical terminology is vital.

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295 Ibid., 8, 9, 15, 21, 25.
296 Ibid., 20.
297 Ibid., 16, 20, 21, 26.
298 Ibid., 9, 8, 15, 19.
299 Ibid., 15, 19.
Tabernacles says that “Poststructuralist queer approaches are attuned to … the genealogies of what is often taken for granted” (10). Better history would result if attention was paid to the genealogy of these ideas. Tabernacles’s approach relies on readers assuming that they know what words meant.

**Causing Homosexuality?**

The consequences of Tabernacles’s failure to be clear about what words meant to historical figures are evident in its treatment of masturbation’s link with homosexuality. Of Kimball’s *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Tabernacles says:

The chapter on homosexuality began with a condemnation of masturbation. While not equivalent in seriousness, Kimball warned that masturbation “too often leads to grievous sin, even to that sin against nature, homosexuality.” (71)

This is a recurrent theme in Tabernacles:

Because of Kimball’s belief in the close connection between masturbation and homosexuality, LDS Social Services assessed that there was a need to offer some clarification. Masturbation … “is not homosexuality when practiced alone. When one person masturbates another, it is a homosexual act.” (79)

Yet Kimball did not believe that solo masturbation was a homosexual act either.300

Of a Church manual for families, Tabernacles says, “Kimball’s teaching that masturbation may lead to homosexuality was now included in the training for parents” (93).

This purported link between self-stimulation and homosexuality has often been ridiculed. O’Donovan refers to Kimball’s “absurd theory that masturbation leads to homosexuality.”301 And, such skepticism is justified if one reads homosexuality as homosexual orientation in the


modern sense. Most people masturbate sometime, and few of these are gay.

Such an analysis assumes and relies on modern definitions, however. As I have shown, leaders’ use of the term *homosexuality* in this period — especially the homosexuality that they sought to discourage — was almost exclusively concerned with *behavior*.\(^\text{302}\)

Seen in this light, Kimball’s claim becomes both more plausible and more understandable. It is important to remember that he had long experience counseling practicing homosexuals (19, 68–70).\(^\text{303}\) He would likely have learned that solo masturbation while entertaining homosexual fantasies would often precede acting on those fantasies with another person. From that perspective, Kimball’s claim is less controversial and may even be valid.

Kimball was not alone in these realizations. Clinicians with exposure to the homosexual demi-monde had long remarked that homosexual masturbatory practices tended to precede homosexual acts with others, though the former did not always lead to the latter.

At the turn of the twentieth century, early sexologist Havelock Ellis wrote of a correspondent “who went to a French school, [and] told me that all the older boys had younger accomplices in mutual masturbation. … At my school, manual masturbation was both solitary and mutual; and sometimes younger boys, who had not acquired the habit, were induced to manipulate bigger boys. … In after-life they showed no signs of inversion [i.e., homosexuality].”\(^\text{304}\)

In Albert Moll’s *Sexual Life of the Child* (1912), he wrote:

> It is an indisputable fact that many boys … readily take to sexual practices with others. Examples of this constantly occur in [same-sex] boarding schools … they begin sexual practices very early in life (mutual masturbation and intimate physical contact, especially contact involving the genital organs).\(^\text{305}\)

\(^{302}\) Compare *Welfare Services Packet 1*, 8: “homosexuality is possible only with others.”

\(^{303}\) See also Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, ix–x.


In an effort to reassure the reader that co-education of boys and girls would not be unduly risky, Moll pointed out that “even if we believe that in isolated instances coeducation may lead to unfortunate results in the way of [hetero]sexual practice. … We have to think of the fact that by the separation of the sexes during childhood we may favor the development of homosexuality.”

Moll and Havelock evidently did not think that masturbation inevitably lead to homosexual behavior, much less what is today called orientation. But, Moll would draw precisely the same conclusion as Kimball regarding behavior in the dry prose of academic German science:

The German Imperial Criminal Code … assert[s] that homosexual tendencies appearing in the child necessarily indicate the future development of permanent homosexuality. [Moll disagrees.] …

The chief danger associated with the appearance of sexual perversions lies in the fact that the child thus affected … endeavors again and ever again to revive these pleasurably-toned sensations … and … as soon as the genital organs are sufficiently mature, the boy or girl obtains sexual gratification by masturbating simultaneously with the imaginative contemplation of perverse ideas. Such perverse psychical onanism, accompanied or unaccompanied by physical masturbatory acts, is *eminently adapted to favor the development of the perversion*. Obviously, the actual performance of the corresponding perverse sexual act *will be just as dangerous as its perversely associated masturbation*. Thus, a boy who is homosexually inclined may masturbate while allowing his imagination to run riot upon homosexual ideas; or he may take to homosexual acts with one or more other male persons. Every sort of gratification that is associated with perverse images is dangerous; and no less dangerous is the spontaneous cultivation of such perverse sexual images.

Moll saw a risk related to masturbation among the “homosexually inclined” — it would encourage unwanted behavior, but not create most

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306. Ibid, 267, italics added.
inclination to that behavior.\textsuperscript{308} Kimball, with more brevity, would write
“masturbation too often leads to grievous sin, even to … homosexuality. For, done in private, it evolves often into mutual masturbation — practiced with another person of the same sex — and thence into total homosexuality.”\textsuperscript{309}

This was, in fact, precisely what a study of “non-patient” adult male homosexuals “drawn from the community” found in the same year that \textit{The Miracle of Forgiveness} was published:

Of the homosexual men, all of them had practiced self-masturbation at some time during their lives. … Even during the peak of their sexual outlet by homosexual means between the ages of 20 and 29, almost all of the subjects (97\%) were engaged in self-masturbation. …

\textbf{Homosexual behavior. …}

Cognitional Rehearsals — Those were reported in almost all of the men (99\%). In 97\% it was stated that cognitional rehearsals had already started before age 20. …

The majority of the subjects (86\%) had already had homosexual contacts before the age of 15. …

Of the men that were engaged in homosexual activity before age 15, the large majority (93\%) practiced mutual masturbation … [and] a minority (19\%) practiced [homosexual] intercourse. …

Mutual masturbation was abandoned by the majority of the subjects after the age of 29. Even those who practiced it between the of 20 and 29, tended to engage in it only occasionally.\textsuperscript{310}


\textsuperscript{309} Kimball, \textit{The Miracle of Forgiveness}, 78. \textit{Tabernacles} claims that because of Kimball’s views, LDS Social Services needed to “offer some clarification.” But masturbation can hardly “lead … to homosexuality” if Kimball believed it to be a homosexual act in itself. Even mutual masturbation, for Kimball, is only a stepping stone to “total homosexuality.”

For this population, Kimball was right — one started with fantasies ("cognitional rehearsals") ultimately accompanied by masturbation, progressed to mutual masturbation, and eventually abandoned that for greater intimacies. One can quibble about whether masturbation “caused” these homosexual acts in a technical sense, but it is hard to see the behaviors as utterly unrelated. And behavior was what concerned Kimball.

In fact, he would have said that the person chose solo acts that simply made it easier to later choose other acts with someone else — one sin “leads to” another (71). He did not see the relationship as deterministic.311

Small indiscretions evolve into larger ones and finally into major transgressions which bring heavy penalties. ... Warning signals and guidelines are given to reduce the danger of one’s being blindly enticed into forbidden paths. ...

Those who yield to evil are usually those who have placed themselves in a vulnerable position.312

And, he saw other similar sins as preludes to heterosexual ones in the same way: “My beloved young folks, do not excuse petting and body intimacies. I am positive that if this illicit, illegal, improper, and lustful habit of ‘petting’ could be wiped out, that fornication would soon be gone from our world.”313

Without explaining all this, Tabernacles again sets the reader up for a presentist reaction. Even a present-day queer studies author understands what Tabernacles does not disclose:

Once the patient’s will-power or reason was compromised by masturbation [it was thought] ... “reversion” to the primordial bestial type would be the result. ... the slide from masturbation to homosexuality seems bizarre from a twenty-first century perspective. However, that is partly because current definitions of masturbation are very narrow compared to the definitions operative in the nineteenth century. We think of masturbation as self-stimulation only,” while the nineteenth century did not consider anything but

312. Ibid., x, 15.
intercourse to be a homosexual act, even if it involved same-sex genital play.314

Nineteenth-century thinkers also believed that

There were two categories of inverts [i.e., homosexuals]. First, there were those whose condition was a result of self-induced degeneracy through willful vice. ... However, increasingly influenced by the personal disclosures of inverts themselves, many nineteenth century physicians began to believe there was a second group. ... Maybe some people are born with the gonads and genitalia of one sex but the brain and neurological system of the other. ...

But it might not be fair to punish [these] congenital inverts, many physicians and sexologists believed, because their actions were not truly voluntary. As James Kiernan put it, “There can be no legal responsibility where free determination of the will is impaired.” Congenital inverts were naturally weak of will ... unable to resist the perverse urges that their degenerate condition aroused. Such individuals might undergo episodic periods of organically produced sexual furor during which they were entirely devoid of self-control.315

If these distinctions are understood, then Kimball’s argument makes further sense. Some believed that those with an in-born attraction for the same sex could not control their actions. Other homosexuals “learned” such behavior via a free-will choice to engage in masturbation, which, in some, could progress to group masturbation and ultimately to homosexuality (i.e., intercourse).

The nineteenth century theorists might not condemn those who were “innate” homosexuals who had not brought their habit upon themselves through masturbatory habits. But they did not believe this group could control themselves either — their compulsive activity would be almost a type of madness. (By analogy, today’s society would not condemn a schizophrenic for her hallucinations, though it might well institutionalize her against her will if she sought to harm others as a result of those hallucinations.)

315. McWhorter, “From Masturbator to Homosexual,” 120, italics added.
Church doctrine, however, revolted at the idea that any normal person was unable to control their behavior, however they might be tempted.\footnote{See the section “‘To the One’ (1978).”} So Kimball focused on avoiding the acts that could strengthen temptation and lead to further unwanted behavior.

Like Kimball, neither Ellis nor Moll saw same-sex mutual masturbation as fully “homosexual,” per se but observed that it could (in some cases) precede homosexual intercourse. This is a different conceptual world than ours.

Even one of Tabernacles’s sources demonstrates that this perspective applies. Twentieth century men in Utah often reported masturbation (either alone or with same-sex others) prior to considering themselves “homosexual.”\footnote{Winkler, “Lavender Sons of Zion,” 14, 25–27, 29, 34, 35.} Even researchers “distinguish[ed] casual homosexual contact … from exclusive same-sex attraction.”\footnote{Ibid., 26.}

Tabernacles’s failure to make it crystal-clear how Kimball used the term homosexuality — virtually always as an action that was under self-control, not an orientation or state of mind or act one was powerless to resist — thus leads to more confusion. A lack of contextualization regarding masturbation only muddies matters further.

Fragile Heterosexuality?

It is vital to Tabernacles’s argument that the reader be convinced that Latter-day Saint leaders regarded “heterosexuality” as fragile, with everyone at risk of being tempted by homosexual acts at every moment and at any provocation:

- “My goal is to provide an explanation for Mormon accounts of the nature of gender, sexuality, and race that rely heavily on concepts of fluidity and malleability” (15);
- “The contagious effects of homosexuality could also corrupt the ‘normal’ person … the practice could be enticing to anyone” (66);
- “Homosexuality had a clear cause and could happen to anyone who was not exercising self-mastery” (70);
- Boyd K. Packer’s “rejection of sexual essentialism suggested homosexuality was a universal risk” (88);
“Mormon leaders also sought for relativity, ambiguity, and especially malleability to explain the fragility of heterosexual desires” (103).

*Tabernacles* ignores the clear evidence that Latter-day Saint leaders saw things otherwise. Boyd K. Packer’s 1978 talk was tellingly entitled, “To the One.” Packer could hardly be clearer in rebutting *Tabernacles*’s account:

> What I say in this presentation will be serious and solemn. *I will not speak to everyone.* I ask the indulgence of the “ninety and nine,” while I speak to “the one.” I ask you, the ninety and nine, to sit quietly if you will, reverently if you can, and to generously help create an atmosphere where we can reach that one who desperately needs the counsel that I will present. …

> I speak to *those few, those very few,* who may be subject to homosexual temptations.319

Packer is clear that he views the temptation as uncommon and he is addressing those few who are vulnerable. He encourages others to listen, not so ‘you too don’t fall victim someday,’ but because “there may be a time in the years ahead when you can use something of what I say to help someone else, perhaps someone very close to you. … The principles … apply to any moral temptation, and you may likewise have been reinforced and forewarned.”320

As already demonstrated, *Tabernacles* also claims that George Q. Cannon’s 1897 talk321 shows that “Cannon presupposed all were at risk of sodomy” (55). As discussed, that grossly misrepresents Cannon.322 He believed that the susceptible could be taught or inducted into such behavior, just as they could with heterosexual sin — but nowhere does he say that everyone is vulnerable.

In 1964, Kimball saw homosexual behavior as something “which has been more in the background but which now is being written about … and is being brought out into the limelight.”323 In 1973, leaders would emphasize “these few young people,” who struggled.324

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319. Packer, “To the One,” 2, italics added.
320. Ibid., 1, 18.
322. See the section “Misrepresentation of Nineteenth-Century Sources.”
What, then, of repeated warnings that, if universally engaged in, homosexuality could “depopulate” a country or the whole world (116, 144)?

*Tabernacles* mistakes in this case a rhetorical figure for literalism. Kimball was often at pains to demonstrate that homosexual behavior is a sin.325 The New York Academy of Medicine described homosexuals as arguing for their “noble, preferable way of life, … the perfect answer to the problem of population explosion.”326

One strategy to demonstrate homosexual acts’ sinfulness was to point out that God’s plan required humans to come to earth, form eternal male-female families, and create bodies for others. Homosexual behavior was incapable of doing so even in principle, and thus was not an authorized use of procreative power.327 Kimball made this explicit in “Love Versus Lust”:

> After creating man in His own image, male and female, God then performed the holy marriage ceremony for eternity for His Adam and Eve. And in this beginning, He established a pattern of sex life consistent with all reason and propriety. In that first marriage blessing, the Lord commanded these two beings, who were complementary to each other, to multiply by being fruitful and bringing children into the world. … This command did not give license to merely satisfy biological urges.328

The use of the *reductio ad absurdum* of an entire country being depopulated by universal homosexual behavior does not mean that leaders literally believed all were vulnerable to homosexual temptation, and therefore that gender fluidity ruled. Fischer warned against this type of historical analytical error, calling it “The fallacy of misplaced literalism”:

> A form of context error, which consists in the misconstruction of a statement-in-evidence so that it carries a literal meaning when a symbolic or hyperbolic or figurative meaning was intended. …

325. See the section “Contextualization of Language.”
Barzun and Graff comment, “Misplaced literalism … has many forms, and it is particularly insidious because the reporter must begin by being literal. He must ascertain with all possible precision what his original text tells him. … [But] if he remains baldly literal and contents himself with quoting extracts, he invariably ends by showing his human subject to have been a mass of contradictions. … Misplaced literalism makes a shambles of intellectual history.”

Tabernacles’s claim does precisely this — making its subjects a “mass of contradictions” unless one accepts its claim that they believed in sexual malleability. Packer, too, rebuts Tabernacles’s reading, demonstrating the shambles of its intellectual history:

It becomes very important for them [those engaged in homosexual practices] to believe that everyone, to one degree or another, is “that way.” You hear them claiming that a large percentage of the population is involved, in one way or another, with this activity. Do not be deceived.

But if this is so — if leaders did not believe that everyone was at risk given the right provocation — why the universal warnings against such sin? A medical analogy may help.

A recent medical guideline recommends that all males aged 65–80 be screened for an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). A “triple-A” can be catastrophic. This dilation and resultant weakening of the main artery carrying blood to the abdomen and legs can rupture, killing the patient. If found early, it can be repaired.

“Screening” means that every patient gets tested — they are being “warned” of AAA and its risks, just as leaders warned all against homosexual sin. If nothing is done, three patients out of a thousand will die of an AAA and four will have a rupture that does not kill.

If the patients are screened, only two will die of the AAA, and only two will have a non-fatal rupture. For all the work and expense of screening 1000 men, one life is saved, and two ruptures prevented.

329. Fischer, Historians’ Fallacies, 58. The first ellipses is added here; the others, italics, and words in square brackets are all in Fischer’s original. Another example of this fallacy is in the section “Postmortal Biological Sex.”
Because everyone is screened, does this mean that the physician believes that every male patient she sees is likely to develop this condition? Or that every patient even has the capacity to develop it? Or that if she fails to warn them, their abdominal aortas’ inherent fragility will manifest and they will be susceptible to rupture?

No. The idea is absurd. Fully 99.3% of the patients will neither die nor rupture, even if AAA is never mentioned. In a similar way, the ninety and nine of Packer’s talk would never have trouble, even if he said nothing.

All thousand people are screened and told that they are all potentially at risk, not because most of them have an AAA, and not because anyone can develop an AAA if they aren’t screened properly. No, they are screened simply because there is no way of telling which one person of the thousand is truly at risk unless all are checked.

Prophets’ warnings about homosexual sin are like that. Packer did not fear that heterosexuality was “fragile” or “unstable,” or that homosexuality was “contagious.” He only knew that some few would be susceptible to this sin, and he had no way of knowing beforehand who those few were.

In his view, then, in matters of sexual behavior, there are things that can be done to lower (or raise) the risk for the vulnerable, as when Packer warns “we can very foolishly cause things we are trying to prevent by talking too much about them.”

It does not matter to the ninety and nine. But one life in a thousand is worth AAA screening. The rest can, as Packer said, “sit quietly.”

Curing Homosexuality?

*Tabernacles* claims that after decades of promising “cures” for homosexuality, “Mormons invented new doctrines about sexuality to accommodate gay and lesbian identities in this period by delaying the ‘cure’ until the next life” (18). And, *Tabernacles* will later assert that twenty-first century leaders who taught that such desires would end either in this life or the next, were guilty of “a repudiation of so many of the promises of earlier church leaders” (185).


333. Authorial disdain comes through in the frequent use of scare quotes around the word *cure* — it appears on page one — further reinforcing the reader’s inclination to hear it without historical nuance. See *Tabernacles*, 1, 18, 68, 97, 267, 268.
The Church’s 1970 *Hope for Transgressors* document says that homosexuals “can often be helped to a total cure by a kindly Church official who understands,”334 and *Tabernacles* repeats the “total cure” claim often (73, 88, 178, 215). It does not emphasize, however, the caveat that this “can often” happen — things that *can often* happen do not always happen. Even here there is a tacit acknowledgement that all does not always resolve.

Enough has been shown to understand how treacherous claims involving vocabulary may be. Nowhere is the language used of more importance or potentially more distorted by historical distance. *Tabernacles* seems to see the offers of a “cure” as reflecting the psychologists’ hope that what is currently referred to as orientation could be changed:

The internal dispute of the professional therapists foreshadowed coming shifts in church teachings that would manifest decades later — perhaps homosexuality could not be “cured” after all” (97).

*Tabernacles* thus urges the reader to see the early offers of a “cure” as inconsistent with today’s caution that the Church does not promise or require a change in orientation.

But as I have shown, until at least 1981 Church publications conceptualized homosexuality as a set of sinful behaviors that could and should be controlled. Thus, when Kimball or others spoke of a “cure,” were they promising a cure for inclinations, temptations, and so forth? Or were they promising a solution for sinful behavior? If I am right that they were concerned almost exclusively with behavior, one would expect to find the latter. And so it is.

**“A Counselling Problem in the Church” (1964)**

I have already demonstrated how, in 1981, even those who had left their “homosexual orientation” behind could still be tempted and have homosexual desires.335 What is found when looking at earlier times? In his earliest detailed discussion, Kimball emphasized mastering oneself:

In a few months, some have totally mastered themselves, while others linger on with less power and requiring more time to make the total comeback. We realize that the cure is no more permanent than the individual makes it so and is like the cure for alcoholism subject to continued vigilance.

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335. See the section “Behavior versus Orientation.”
... The cure for this malady lies in self mastery which is the fundamental basis of the whole gospel program.336

Kimball explicitly compared homosexual sin to alcoholism — something with which one might always be tempted, and thus requiring “continued vigilance.” A changed “sexual orientation” in the modern sense would not require such caution.

Few people believed even then that alcoholism — the temptation from and desire for alcohol — could be conquered “once and for all.” But one could abstain.337 Kimball’s cure is thus one of behavior, not necessarily desire — for “the cure is no more permanent than the individual makes it.”

Tabernacles later claims that, in 1995, Dallin H. Oaks “shifted the goalposts for therapeutic success” by comparing homosexual desire to

336. Kimball, “A Counselling Problem in the Church,” 13. The successful exercise of self-mastery, for Kimball, was only possible for the man who “leans heavily upon his Lord [and thereby] becomes the master of self” (Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness, 176; see discussion in the section “Curing Homosexuality?”).

337. Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism, 3rd ed. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1976), https://archive.org/details/alcoholicsanonym00wbil/page/n13/mode/2up: “Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. … We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: ‘Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.’ Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol” (33). “The first portion of [the book] … has been left untouched in the course of revisions made for both the second and the third editions” (xi).

See also Coll-Webb Company, The Little Red Book: An Orthodox Interpretation of The Twelve Steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous Program (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1957), https://archive.org/details/littleredbookort00webs/page/n5/mode/2up: “By trial and error they designed a simple philosophy to arrest alcoholism. It embraced knowledge of many vital facts. Recovery is possible but a cure cannot be effected. The man or woman who has become an alcoholic cannot become a controlled drinker. They have developed a serious illness against which their lower physical and mental resistance is powerless. Control over alcohol is gone. Continued drinking now brings only physical illness and insane behavior. They are truly sick people (21). … Physical health can be restored but no cure will permit us to become controlled drinkers (28). … When complacency develops we are apt to forget the part that God has played in effecting our rehabilitation. We overlook the fact that our nervous systems are still those of alcoholics. We seem to forget that as alcoholics we are susceptible to moods and emotions that we formerly appeased with alcohol (116).
such things as “[g]ambling, addiction, and a ‘hot temper’ [which] may be inborn or acquired” (179), but Kimball was drawing precisely the same analogy to addiction more than three decades earlier. Inborn biological or early experiential factors were likewise mentioned back in 1981.338

Tabernacles asserts that, as of 2006, leaders’ “statements were now open to the possibility that some people might never be completely cured in this life” (185). But Kimball was open to that in 1964 if one understands “cure” to mean a life-long absence of temptation. (By contrast, he firmly believed the behavior could be cured for life.)

This was a persistent theme through the 1960s and 1970s. Tabernacles misleads the reader when it implies that accepting the possibility that temptation would persist was a twenty-first century change.

“Love versus Lust” (1965)

In his published address to BYU, Kimball promised no fast resolution: “Sometimes it takes as long or longer to climb back up the steep hill than it did to skid down it. And it is often much more difficult.”339 “It is possible that he may rationalize and excuse himself until the groove is so deep he cannot get out without great difficulty, but this he can do.”340

Kimball emphasized again that homosexual behavior was not “just another different but acceptable way of life. … But it can be corrected and overcome.”341 The sinner may “heal himself” with several provisos:

We realize that the cure is no more permanent than the individual makes it so, and is like the cure for alcoholism, subject to continued vigilance. To such men, we say, ‘Physician, heal thyself,’ and promise him if he will stay away from the haunts and the temptations and the former associates, he may heal himself, cleanse his mind, and return to his normal pursuits and a happy state. The cure for this malady lies in self-mastery, which is the fundamental basis of the whole gospel program.

As in 1964, Kimball here insisted that the repentant sinner could still be tempted, and on-going vigilance was needed. He elaborated: “If

338. See the section “Behavior versus Orientation.”
340. Ibid., 27.
341. Ibid., 26.
one has such desires and tendencies, he overcomes them the same as if he had the urge toward petting or fornication or adultery."

If one were to have a problem with petting, fornication, or adultery (all acts) one would not expect a change in "orientation." One would not cease to have sexual attraction or sexual desire. Instead, one would control such desires and prevent their sinful expression. On-going temptation was a real possibility for the reformed homosexual sinner, as for all:

Temptations come to all people. The difference between the reprobate and the worthy person is generally that one yielded and the other resisted. It is true that one’s background may make the decision and accomplishment easier or more difficult, but if one is mentally alert, he can still control his future.

I know that some may view my inclusion of the above information as repetitive to make a point, and therefore unnecessary to that point. My point, though, isn’t that Kimball viewed the entire matter differently than what is represented in Tabernacles, but that Tabernacles repeatedly ignores and mischaracterizes what is over and over and over again stated, in many contexts. That is a failing that must be understood by anyone considering the points supposedly made in Tabernacles.

**New Horizons for Homosexuals (1966/1971)**

Kimball held out no illusions that change from homosexual sin would be easy: "You should now make the superhuman effort to rid yourself of your master, the devil, Satan." Kimball here repeatedly promised a "cure." And how did he see that cure?

"Homosexuality and like practices are deep sins; they can be cured; they can be forgiven";

"homosexuality, like fornication, adultery, robbery, and other detestable sins is curable."

The focus on behavior remains, and the cure from homosexuality is the same as being cured of fornication, adultery, robbery, or any other sin. This does not mean that one is devoid of homosexual feelings, any

342. Ibid., 23.
343. Ibid., 23.
345. Ibid., 32, italics added.
346. Ibid., 11, italics added.
more than one might become devoid of heterosexual attraction, or the desire for material possessions that might precipitate robbery. The cure is in ceasing sinful acts.

**The Miracle of Forgiveness (1969)**

Kimball returned again to his analogy with alcoholism.347

Thus when a man has made up his mind to change his life, there must be no turning back. Any reversal, even in a small degree, is greatly to his detriment. The reformed alcoholic who takes “just a little sip” again may have lost all the ground he has gained. The pervert who relaxes and returns to old companions or situations is in grave danger again. …

A healing process in the spirit and mind must come from within from self-will. Others may help to cauterize the wound, suture it, and provide a clean, proper environment for the healing, but the body, with the aid of the Spirit, must heal itself. Accordingly some totally conquer homosexuality in a few months, others linger on with less power and require more time to make the total comeback. The cure is as permanent as the individual makes it and, like the cure for alcoholism, is subject to continued vigilance. …

Soon the months have passed and their thoughts are under control and their actions are above reproach.348

Behavior is the focus, and there is no claim that temptation and desire will cease. One would have no need to control thoughts otherwise. Kimball remains consistent and clear, a point either not understood by Tabernacles or purposely glossed over. Either way, the treatment of Kimball is not fair to the readers of Tabernacles.

**Welfare Services Packet 1 (1973)**

In 1973, the theme remained the same: “As with the alcoholic or adulterer (or one participating in any other wrong behavior), the homosexual will have to avoid for the rest of his or her life the thoughts, circumstances, and temptations which lead to immoral behavior.”349

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347. It is clear that he sees alcoholism as continuously subject to potential relapse. Kimball recounts one sufferer who returned to drink after a long period of abstinence in *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 170–72.
349. Welfare Services Packet 1, 18, emphasis added.
There is no promise of freedom from homosexual attraction. Mastery of thoughts and behaviors is necessary, which it would not be if one’s orientation was changed, and this wariness must persist for life.

“To the One” (1978)

Boyd K. Packer rejected the idea that homosexual behavior was “incurable.” “If someone is heavily involved in perversion,” he said, “it becomes very important to him to believe that it is incurable. Can you not see that those who preach that doctrine do so to justify themselves?”

Packer focused on change. But what change? “It is not unchangeable. It is not locked in. One does not just have to yield to it and live with it.” The change he speaks of is not in the susceptibility to the temptation, but in not yielding to such desires.

Packer offered no false hope of a change in orientation, or an easy, miraculous fix for most:

Now, I hope I will not disappoint you too much if I say at once that I do not know of any quick spiritual cure-all. Setting aside miracles for the moment, in which I firmly believe, generally I do not know of some spiritual shock treatment that will sear the soul of an individual and instantly kill this kind of temptation — or any other kind, for that matter. No spiritual wonder drug that I know of will do it. The cure rests in following for a long period of time, and thereafter continually, some very basic, simple rules for moral and spiritual health. …

If I could announce to you some dramatic, even bizarre, cure for this condition, I am sure many would move without hesitation to accept it, but when we talk of little things, most, I fear, will receive it just as Naaman first received the message from the prophet Elisha. If I should tell you to do some great thing and you would be cured, would you not do it? How much better, then, for you to do the little things! …

351. Ibid., 4, italics added. Compare with Kimball, New Horizons for Homosexuals, “you are not permanently trapped in this unholy practice if you will exert yourself” (10). Welfare Services Packet 1 (1973): “To believe that immoral behavior is inborn or hereditary is to deny men have free agency to choose between sin and righteousness” (6); Professional Development Program (1981): “He is not forced to choose sinful behavior against his will.” (5). Italics added in all cases.
Overcoming moral temptation is a very private battle, an internal battle. ... Others can lend moral support and help establish an environment for your protection. But this is an individual battle. Establish a resolute conviction that you will resist for a lifetime, if necessary, any deviate thought or deviate action. Do not respond to those feelings; suppress them.\(^{352}\)

Like Kimball, Packer clearly believed that those so tempted might have to “resist for a lifetime.” This is not an admonition to ‘pray away the gay.’ Instead, it promises strength to avoid acting on what may be a powerful temptation throughout one’s life. “Bad thoughts often have to be evicted a hundred times, or a thousand. But if they have to be evicted ten thousand times, never surrender to them.”\(^{353}\)

You will have to grow away from your problem with undeviating — notice that word — undeviating determination. The longer you have been afflicted, or the more deeply you have been involved, the more difficult and the longer the cure. Any relapse is a setback. But if this should happen, refuse to be discouraged. Take your medicine, however bitter it tastes. …

You yourself can draw upon a power that will reinforce your will. If you have this temptation — fight it!\(^{354}\)

Something that requires “undeviating determination” is not a change in orientation. Reinforcements to the will are not needed unless another powerful inclination is also on-going. Packer even compared those who undertook this course to patients who required major surgery, with permanent consequences and life-long limitations as a result:

The cut must be [deep, to the quick] to repair many physical disorders. And yet our hospitals are full to overflowing with patients. They count it quite worthwhile to submit to treatment, however painful. They struggle through long periods of recuperation and sometimes must be content with a limited life-style thereafter, in some cases in order just to live. Is it not reasonable that recuperation from this disorder might be somewhat comparable?\(^{355}\)

\(^{352}\) Packer, “To the One,” 14–16.

\(^{353}\) Ibid., 16, italics in original.

\(^{354}\) Ibid., 18–19, italics in original.

\(^{355}\) Ibid., 13.
Cautioning of “a limited life-style thereafter” is not an over-rosy promise of an altered sexual orientation. It is a frank warning that the “cure” for such behavior may well be life-long effort and abstinence.

Tabernacles claims of a twenty-first century talk of Packer’s: “While Packer remained optimistic about the possibility of controlling same-sex desire, he now conceded, “That may be a struggle from which you will not be free in this life”” (183). Tabernacles’s insinuation that this stance was a change for Packer is false — he had been “conceding” the same thing since at least 1978.

And, he kept on saying it. In 1990 he said:

Some have resisted temptation but never seem to be free from it. Do not yield! Cultivate the spiritual strength to resist — all of your life, if need be. …

You may wonder why God does not seem to hear your pleading prayers and erase these temptations. When you know the gospel plan, you will understand that the conditions of our mortal probation require that we be left to choose. That test is the purpose of life. While these addictions may have devoured, for a time, your sense of morality or quenched the spirit within you, it is never too late. You may not be able, simply by choice, to free yourself at once from unworthy feelings. You can choose to give up the immoral expression of them.

In 1995, he reiterated: “How all can be repaired, we do not know. It may not all be accomplished in this life.” Either Tabernacles is ignorant of these sources, or it is misrepresenting them.

357. I have previously detailed the consistency of Packer’s teachings on this subject over time in “Shattered Glass: The Traditions of Mormon Same-Sex Marriage Advocates Encounter Boyd K. Packer,” Mormon Studies Review 23, no. 1 (2011): 61–85, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol23/iss1/7. Tabernacles is the latest example of an apparent inability to report Packer’s clear prose with fairness. The mistaken reading of Packer’s 2010 conference talk (“Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” Ensign [November 2010]) continues later in Tabernacles (191), and I likewise treat that error in “Shattered Glass.”
“Unselfishness” as Cure?

*Tabernacles* describes Packer’s 1978 diagnosis: “Invoking the unconscious, Packer believed that selfishness could be essentially invisible and only manifest itself in errant desires. Nevertheless, recognizing this spiritual infirmity was the key to a cure for homosexuality” (91).

Here, too, *Tabernacles*’s language risks distortion and confusion. It presents Packer as appealing to unconscious selfishness as an “invisible” cause of homosexual desire. But as has been shown, Packer’s concern is not with errant desire — it is with errant behavior.

He also does not appeal to “the unconscious” in a psychological sense (as *Tabernacles* frames it), nor claim it is “invisible.” True, Packer says, “the form of selfishness at the root of perversion is [not] a conscious one, at least not to begin with.”

But he had already made it clear why selfishness has remained unrecognized, out of conscious awareness: “The cause of this disorder has remained hidden for so long because *we have been looking for it in the wrong place*. When the cause is discovered, it may be nothing so mysterious after all. It may be *hidden* because it is so *obvious*.”

*Tabernacles* neglects to mention this explanation.

This is not a problem hidden in “the unconscious” — it is something that we are not initially conscious of because we have been looking in the wrong place. It is not invisible, just unseen.

By analogy, I might be completely unconscious of John standing behind me. But, John does not exist in “the unconscious,” and he is not The Invisible Man. I am simply unaware of him until I turn around and look in the right spot, where he has been all along — completely visible had I looked.

What is the nature of the selfishness to which Packer refers? This is central to his entire argument and perspective, but *Tabernacles* ignores it:

Individuals guilty of very selfish acts inevitably hurt those around them. No person ever made a conscious decision to make unnatural behavior his life-style without sending brutal, destructive, selfish signals to those who love him.

If you cannot understand perversion — and I admit that I cannot understand it — you can understand unselfishness and selfishness. And you can learn to cure perversion.

361. Ibid., 10, italics added.
362. Ibid., 12, italics added.
For Packer, this selfishness is manifested in actions. Homosexuality is a sin of behavior, not orientation. So, what is the selfishness that must be recognized to be treated?

We can do many things that are very personal, but these need not be selfish. For instance, it need not be a selfish thing to study and improve your mind, to develop your talents, or to perfect the physical body. These can be very unselfish if the motive is ultimately to bless others. But there is something different about the power of procreation. There is something that has never been fully explained that makes it dangerous indeed to regard it as something given to us, for us.\textsuperscript{363}

The selfishness, then, lies in regarding our sexuality as “something given to us, for us.” One could hardly find a better summary of the unexamined attitude which underlies queer theory and most modern sexual politics. This stance is, in those contexts, accepted as axiomatic and is rarely acknowledged or examined, much less debated. It is invisible to most, and they remain unconscious of it. Worldviews and presuppositions are like that.

This is why the selfishness Packer refers to can be unseen and unconscious (though not subconscious or in the unconscious) — most of us are in the habit of regarding our sexual powers as our own. If we consider them ours and for our benefit, then a host of conclusions follow:

- If the powers are to benefit me, then I have a right to use them
- If the powers are mine, if I enjoy what I do with them and do not believe I harm anyone, this cannot be morally wrong
- If the powers are mine, no one may tell me how to use them
- If the powers are mine, they and my desires about them form an integral part of my personal identity and way of being in the world

If, however, the powers are not ours — if they belong to God or another\textsuperscript{364} — then he and his servants may properly tell us how to express them. Our desires about them are then of little moral moment. (If

\textsuperscript{363} Ibid., 13–14, italics added.
\textsuperscript{364} Both the temple endowment and 1 Corinthians 7:4 suggest that we hold procreative power in a consecrated stewardship or trust for God and an eternal spouse.
I desire my neighbor’s sports car, this desire makes no moral difference as to whether I may drive it — it is not mine, so I may only use it with his permission, whatever my desires. This is especially true if he has delivered the car into my care with explicit instructions about how it may be used.)

Finally, desires about powers which are not even ours cannot define us in any absolute, essential sense.365

Once Packer’s actual argument is examined, it is clear why he does not promise a change of orientation. Such an idea is irrelevant to his carefully constructed argument. *Tabernacles* quotes the material immediately after Packer’s explanation, but ignores the heart of his message. As a result, readers cannot understand his full intent.


In sum, by 1981, little in the Church’s attitude to curing homosexual behavior had changed. It was again emphasized that

These people often speak of long, difficult, uphill struggles which sometimes take years, and of the infinite patience of relatives, friends, and Church leaders. *They do not say that the old thoughts never return.* But they testify of growing strength as their thoughts and behaviors become righteous. Like all people, *they must always be on guard* against temptation.366

There was no promise that one’s desires or attractions would cease:

A person who has repented of homosexual problems must continue to maintain vigilance and self-control. Overcoming homosexual sin *does not always mean that he will no longer have negative thoughts or temptations.* It does mean, however, that he has developed sufficient spirituality and self-control to *resist temptation* and avoid incorrect *behavior.*367

**Marriage as a Cure?**

*Tabernacles* makes much of efforts to encourage heterosexual marriage as part of the “cure” (96). This is an important point, and harm was done by the approach taken by some. As *Tabernacles* notes, as early as

365. I caution, however, that this is quite a different matter from saying that sex does not define us in an eternal, essential way. Biological sex is one thing; sex as an act using powers that are not ours is quite another.
366. *Homosexuality*, 9, italics added.
367. Ibid., 4, italics added.
1987, President Hinckley warned that “Marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices” (96). It seems that some did not get the message, since reportedly at least a few “LDS bishops and counselors reportedly encouraged homosexual men to marry women well into the early decades of the twenty-first century” (96).

Even here, though, it is important to be clear about precisely what Kimball and others taught. Tabernacles says, “In the 1960s and 1970s, Spencer W. Kimball had taught that marriage was the ultimate goal of the repentance process and rehabilitation. Homosexuality could be completely overcome, and once a young man felt ready, then he should marry” (96).

Note that the young man needed to believe himself “ready,” though Tabernacles’s source for this idea is not clear — the concept is not mentioned in either of the footnoted works. In the first document cited, Kimball wrote: “let this individual repent of his perversion, force himself to return to normal pursuits and interests and actions and friendships with the opposite sex, and this normal pattern can become natural again.” It is important to note that he said it can develop this way; he did not say that it must or will or should in order for forgiveness and repentance to be complete.

The only other source cited by Tabernacles for this claim says:

If they will close the door to the intimate associations with their own sex and open it wide to that of the other sex, of course in total propriety, and then be patient and determined, gradually they can move their romantic interests where they belong. Marriage and normal life can follow.

Here again, progress toward heterosexual “romantic interests” can occur and marriage can follow. There is no intimation that it must happen or that it necessarily will — patience is needed.

370. Kimball and Petersen, Hope for Transgressors, 6; Tabernacles, 96n226.
371. Same-Sex Dynamics has the same problem. It claims that Kimball in The Miracle of Forgiveness “publicly acknowledged: ‘Some say marriage has failed’ as a cure for homosexuality” (374). This is a staggering distortion. Kimball is not offering marriage as a cure for homosexuality or admitting that such efforts have failed. He is rebutting a claim that some homosexuals have made, arguing that marriage as an institution had failed. Kimball wrote in New Horizons for
The 1973 *Welfare Services Packet 1* does not mention marriage, and only mentions reluctance to date as a sign of a youth possibly at risk of later homosexual behavior:

It is necessary to instruct and help these few young people [i.e., those with homosexual tendencies] in their responsibilities to prepare for marriage. Healthy group associations with members of the opposite sex that provide the necessary maturing experiences should be encouraged. Resistance may be a sign of the need for help. Priesthood leaders can counsel young people, through their parents, to lead an active, healthy social life.\(^{372}\)

Advice to bishops in 1981 likewise does not push marriage:

The individual can more easily eliminate all overt homosexual behavior, friends, and places by replacing them with more appropriate friends and activities. …

Encourage the member to be in appropriate situations with members of the opposite sex, even if he has to force himself. If he is single, he might attend activities for singles with increasing frequency, and in other ways surround himself with good LDS people.

Encourage him (if single) to begin dating and gradually increase its frequency. …

*Homosexuals:* “Many men in this practice, conditioned against marriage, have used as an excuse that marriage has failed. Certainly, numerous marriages have not measured up. Divorce has proved the weakness and selfishness of man. But even if 99 percent of all marriages failed, the principle is still right” (22).

In the same way, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* says: “Some say that marriage has failed. And while the number of divorces causes us to fear and admit it partly to be true, the principle of marriage is right” (86). Elsewhere, Kimball expanded on the theme: “Marriage is not easy; it is not simple, as evidenced by the ever-mounting divorce rate. Exact figures astound us. … The divorce itself does not constitute the entire evil, but the very acceptance of divorce as a cure is also a serious sin of this generation. … These things worry us considerably because there are too many divorces and they are increasing. It has come to be a common thing to talk about divorce. The minute there is a little crisis or a little argument in the family, we talk about divorce, and we rush to see an attorney. This is not the way of the Lord. We should go back and adjust our problems and make our marriage compatible and sweet and blessed (Spencer W. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce: An Address* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 11–12, 30–31).

\(^{372}\) *Welfare Services Packet 1*, 11.
Help him recognize and retain those social skills, attitudes, feelings, and characteristics that are appropriate and uniquely his. …

Encourage the development and use of his talents, interests, and skills to bless others.373

There is no mention of marriage. Even dating is “encouraged,” not required. The contemporaneous guide for therapists suggests using guided imagery of temple marriage, but cautions, “Be sensitive to the client’s feelings and use only images with which he is comfortable.”374 Clients might “list the physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and personality characteristics of a woman he would consider marrying. … Through discussion, you can help him correct errors in his perception and gradually envision in his mind what women are really like and how he might appropriately increase his interaction with them.”375 Again, might is the key word.

One should also remember that many of those with whom Kimball worked were married, with wives and children. It is understandable that he would expect them to honor their covenant duties and return to family life as part of any repentance.376

There can be no doubt that some were given poor or premature advice on this front (President Hinckley’s caution would not have been needed otherwise). But to understand exactly what the documents say, it is important to be careful with the details. Tabernacles is not.

Homosexuality Worthy of Death?

Tabernacles seems to go out of its way to paint the acts and statements of leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ in dark undertones. For example: “Kimball noted that homosexuality and bestiality both were deserving of the death penalty and that ‘regrettably,’ ‘the law is less severe now,’ as was the community’s attitude” (71).

This makes it sound as if Kimball believed it regrettable that there was no capital punishment for homosexual sin. But, when his words are read in

373. Homosexuality, 6.
375. Ibid., 26.
their proper order, a quite different meaning emerges: “The law is less severe now, and so regrettably is the community’s attitude to these grave sins.”

Rather than cite the sentence as it is written, Tabernacles quotes a single word, then another phrase, and does not even indicate that the phrase “community’s attitude” is Kimball’s, treating it almost as an afterthought. It also reverses the order of “regrettably” and “the law is less severe,” leaving the impression that what Kimball regrets is the absence of the death penalty, when it is the lax societal attitude that he decries. This is clear in the paragraph that follows:

But let us emphasize that right and wrong, righteousness and sin, are not dependent upon man’s interpretations, conventions and attitudes. Social acceptance does not change the status of an act, making wrong into right. If all the people in the world were to accept homosexuality, as it seems to have been accepted in Sodom and Gomorrah, the practice would still be deep, dark sin.

It is hard to see this clumsy, convoluted approach to citation — when a single phrase could have been cited with more clarity — as accidental. Nor does Kimball say that homosexuality or bestiality were “deserving of the death penalty,” as Tabernacles claims. He says only, “All such deviations … are not merely unnatural but wrong in the sight of God. Like adultery, incest, and bestiality they carried the death penalty under the Mosaic law.” So, even Tabernacles’s decision to highlight homosexuality and bestiality is deceptive — Kimball includes

378. To use phrasing from an author without indicating that it is a direct quote is unwise. This is, unfortunately, not the only example of Tabernacles doing so and thereby misrepresenting its source. See further discussion in the section “Case #3: Rodney Turner.”
380. Kimball makes precisely the same point elsewhere: “I could not find [in the Bible] the term ‘homosexuality,’ but I did find numerous places where the Lord condemned such a practice with such vigor that even the death penalty was assessed” (Kimball, “Love Versus Lust,” BYU Speeches of the Year — 1965, 25). Compare the same rhetorical approach for heterosexual sin in Grant, Clark, and McKay: “By the law of Moses, adulterers were stoned to death” (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., David O. McKay, “General epistle of the First Presidency to the Saints in every land, October 3, 1942,” Improvement Era 45/11 (November 1942): 758, https://archive.org/details/improvementera4511unse/page/n87/mode/2up).
381. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness, 72.
adultery and incest as well. Again, all sexual sins are condemned; he is not singling out homosexual acts as worthy of death.

Kimball used the same type of argument when he referred to the death sentence in Israel for violating the Sabbath day: “Although Israel’s swift and severe punishment for infractions [of the Sabbath] is not exacted today, this does not lessen the seriousness of the offense to the Lord for violating his day.” Ought the reader believe that Kimball longed for the death sentence for Sunday shoppers? Hardly. He presents the old law’s severity simply to demonstrate that the Lord regards these acts as sins.

Kimball is not the only one falsely portrayed as longing for a return to the death penalty for homosexuals. Tabernacles likewise attributes this view to Bruce R. McConkie, while simultaneously and paradoxically trying to use McConkie as evidence that the Church said little publicly about homosexuality in the 1950s. To defend the latter point, Tabernacles writes:

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie’s encyclopedic 1958 Mormon Doctrine also offered little discussion of the topic. Both the entries on “homosexuality” and “sodomy” pointed to the more general entry on “sex immorality.” In that brief entry, same-sex sexual relationships remained a primarily legal concern — he lamented the lack of capital punishment for sexual crimes as evidence of society’s “apostasy” (63–64).

Tabernacles’s gloss makes it sound as if McConkie says nothing specifically about homosexual sins by referring to a “more general entry.” This is misleading, since that entry mentions homosexual sins specifically, and repeatedly, in a non-legal context:

Every degree and type of lewdness, lasciviousness, and licentiousness; of concupiscence, prostitution, and whoredoms; of sodomy, onanism, and homosexuality … of adultery, fornication, and uncleanness — all these things, as well as many others, are condemned by divine edict. … Fine distinctions between them are of no particular moment and are not necessary to observance of the divine laws involved. Counsel in the field of chastity is simply: Be Chaste!

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382. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness, 46. George Q. Cannon made the same argument, see the section “Misrepresentation of Nineteenth-Century Sources.” See the section entitled “Contextualization of Language” for a similar example.

McConkie’s entry demonstrates that homosexuality and sodomy were regarded in precisely the same class as other sexual sins, including fornication and adultery. He groups them because “fine distinctions between them are of no particular moment” — further evidence against Tabernacles’s dubious claim that homosexual sins were considered less serious.384

McConkie apparently felt no need to justify the Church’s supposed sudden increase in severity toward such sins (as Same-Sex Dynamics’s and Tabernacles’s thesis regarding the nineteenth century’s supposed laxity would require). Nor does he resort to catastrophizing about uniquely terrible homosexual acts as Tabernacles’s characterization of the post-war years would lead one to expect.385

Tabernacles claims the entry is “brief,” though the cited one is three and a half columns and contains no mention of anything like “legal concerns.” The intended reference may instead be a one-column entry on “Capital Punishment” that it does not cite but which does include legal matters. That entry quotes the apostle Paul, saying that “those who commit certain sexual perversions ‘are worthy of death’ (Rom. 1:26–32).”386 McConkie comments:

Anciently the death penalty was invoked for adultery and for many other offenses against God and man (Lev. 20:10) [This verse reads: “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”] Modern governments do not take the life of the adulterer, and some of them have done away with the supreme penalty where murder is involved — all of which is further evidence of the direful apostasy that prevails among the peoples who call themselves Christians.387

to tell us that the entry for “sexual perversions” likewise redirects to this article, bringing the cross-references regarding homosexual acts to three.

384. Same-Sex Dynamics claims “McConkie could find no early Mormon leader to quote against homosexuality or homoerotic behaviors” (375), but there is no evidence that McConkie sought such a quotation. He does not seem to have felt that any particular species of sexual sin needed distinguishing or discussing. McConkie did quote Joseph F. Smith’s statement: “Without the bonds of marriage, sexual indulgence is a debasing sin” (McConkie, Mormon Doctrine [1958], 638) which prohibition would include homosexual acts.

385. Nor did McConkie’s 1966 edition find it necessary to change the cited section at all (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 708–709).


387. Ibid.
Tabernacles cannot have it both ways. There is no specific mention of homosexuality at all in these lines or the scripture cited. Tabernacles claims McConkie believes that “the lack of capital punishment for sexual crimes,” evinced apostasy. This is, strictly speaking, true — for the sexual crime of adultery. As used, however, Tabernacles makes it appear as if McConkie shared Kimball’s purported nostalgia for the death penalty against homosexuality.

Instead, McConkie specifies the absence of the death penalty for adultery and murder — not homosexuality — as evidence of apostasy. If, on the other hand, Tabernacles concedes that McConkie sees homosexual behavior as included within “adultery,” and Paul’s “sexual perversions” then the point is proven — adultery and homosexuality were treated in essentially equivalent ways, and “same-sex sexual relationships” were therefore not being singled out (as Tabernacles makes it sound) for the death sentence.

Even this distorts McConkie’s point. A review of other entries makes it clear that he believed that the death penalty for anything but murder was not desired or anticipated, save when the apostasy had ended during the Millennial reign of Christ.388 Tabernacles’s treatment is substandard.389 It does not cite the page nor article that supports its claim. It misrepresents the contents of the article that it does cite, and even when the other material to which it alludes is located, one finds distortion. It also ignores additional entries which undermine its reading.

Spencer W. Kimball and The Miracle of Forgiveness

The misleading treatment of President Kimball demonstrated above recurs often. Tabernacles states:

by 1969 [Kimball] had published his pastoral magnum opus, The Miracle of Forgiveness. With all of its hopefulness about the possibility of repentance, Kimball represented same-sex


389. Tabernacles here once more follows Same-Sex Dynamics uncritically. The latter described McConkie’s hope for capital punishment for homosexuals as “wistful” (375).
relationships in the darkest terms — “revolting,” “detestable,” “ugly,” “repugnant,” and so on. While his earlier public statements had been harsh with a dose of pastoral empathy, Kimball’s rhetoric in this book was vitriolic (70–71).

Contextualization of Language

As argued earlier, one of the historian’s chief duties is contextualization. Tabernacles’s language and framing abrogate this duty and paint Kimball’s rhetoric regarding homosexual sin as uniquely severe and terrible.

This characterization could be true. But is it? To find out, the responsible historian would first set out to analyze Kimball’s other statements and rhetorical style. Tabernacles must demonstrate that such language is uniquely “vitriolic,” not merely assume it or leave the reader with that impression.

Examining Kimball’s rhetorical style, one finds that the language he applied to homosexual sin is not uniquely harsh at all — this is simply how he spoke about all sin. For example, sexual sin of any sort was described in one of his works as “the great demon of the day. Like an octopus, it fastens its tentacles upon one,” “leading … youths to these defilements.”

In The Miracle of Forgiveness itself, fornication is termed “an act of defilement,” and the more minor acts of necking and petting “are pernicious and abominable.” Opposite sex sins against chastity are variably described as: “diabolical,” “aberrations,” “corruption,” “filth,” “filthy as hell’s cesspools,” “pernicious,” “disgraceful,” “reprehensible,” “heinous,” “awful,” and “horrible.” Homosexual sin gets no special severity.

Nor is such tough talk restricted to sexual sins. “Strapless evening gowns and body-revealing sweaters … are an abomination in the sight of the Lord”; men judging a young woman in a bathing suit is “Abominable!”

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390. It should be remembered that Kimball spoke and wrote in the midst of the sexual revolution — a time when old standards and verities were being discarded and ridiculed by cultural elites and the general population. As an apostle, he spent a great deal of time working with members who denied that they were sinning at all. He was sent the “hard cases,” and so he often had to first persuade his audience that they were committing sin. (For examples, see The Miracle of Forgiveness, 65–67, 77, 81–82, 153–56.)

391. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, 161.

392. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness, 64.

393. Ibid., 66.


395. Kimball and Kimball, Spencer W. Kimball, 271–72; citing “A Style of Our Own,” address to BYU, 13 February 1951; reprinted in Spencer W. Kimball, A Style of Our Own: Modesty in Dress and Its Relationship to the Church, An Apostle
Beauty contests are “a deplorable exploitation of young women.”396 Even “early dating” is called “a vicious, destructive, social pattern.”397

These examples have been about sexuality or modesty and the like. Perhaps Kimball reserved his ire for those types of sins? No, “cheating, the first little dishonest act” is termed an “abominable practice.”398 Traitors to “a friend, a church, a nation, or a cause” are likewise condemned: “What could be more despicable?”399 “Unless they repent,” those who engage in “criticism of [Church] authorities and leaders” will “shrive in the destructive element they have themselves prepared, poison themselves with mixtures of their own concocting.”400 Those who make purchases on the Sabbath “are rebellious as the children of Israel, the dire consequences of whose transgressions against this and other commandments should be a permanent warning to us all.”401 “Murder … adultery … theft … [and] other[s]” are “heinous crimes.”402 A family “feud … [over] property … worth only a few thousand dollars” was “disgraceful.”403

Four Scare Words

In fact, of Tabernacles’s four vitriolic scare words referring to homosexual sin, two are used in The Miracle of Forgiveness to refer to other sins, and Kimball uses the others elsewhere.404 I will briefly share examples of each.

The first — revolting — is not used elsewhere in The Miracle of Forgiveness, but Kimball was willing to label a large number of sins revolting. Only four years earlier he included violence and vandalism among them:

These are turbulent times. The newspapers give front page to ever-increasing acts of violence, and magazines devote pages

Speaks to Youth, No. 4 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1951); see also Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, 161–68.
396. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, 163.
397. Kimball, Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 287; citing “Save the Youth of Zion,” MIA June Conference (1965); Improvement Era (September 1965): 760.
398. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, 225.
400. Ibid., 42–43.
401. Ibid., 46.
402. Ibid., 32.
403. Ibid., 36.
404. For an earlier example of Tabernacles failing to acknowledge that a description of homosexual sin was also applied to heterosexual sin, see the section “Presentism and the Omission of Data.”
to the growing menace. Such stories are revolting in their worldliness and debauchery. …

Insubordination reigns. Students rebel against restraints and limitations, demanding so-called freedoms in sex and social life. Youth, seemingly unafraid of law-enforcement officers, public opinion, or punishment, run wild. There seems to be an ever-increasing upsurge of rebellion in adults and youth. Vandalism continues in open defiance of officers with ever-increasing acts of violence.405

For Kimball, the sacrifice of Isaac was “revolting,” the Book of Mormon’s Enos “revolted” at his sins; the Lord was likewise “revolted” by Israel’s “filthiness.”406 “Abortion … [is] one of the most revolting practices,”407 and Christ found the “world’s ills” “revolting.”408

As for the second word, detestable, The Miracle of Forgiveness regards immodesty of dress as a “detestable expression,” that “no one but a depraved person could approve of … or grant its acceptance.”409

Immodesty merits the use of Tabernacles’s third scare word: “this ugly displaying of one’s private body.”410 Pornography is decried for its “ugly, vicious, sexy magazines, books and pictures.”411 The sins of “pride, jealousy, peevishness, lack of understanding, and anger” likewise have an “ugliness,”412 as do “fornication … and abortions.”413 Child abuse is likewise “vicious and ugly.”414 Elsewhere, Kimball used ugly to refer to the sin of racial “intolerance.”415

The fourth word — repugnant — is the same used by Kimball at the US Bicentennial to describe the state of the nation:

406. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, 6, 210, 299
408. Area Conference, Bogota Columbia (6 March 1977); cited in Kimball, Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 409.
410. Ibid., italics added.
411. Ibid., 227–28, italics added.
412. Ibid., 310.
413. Ibid., 65.
414. Ibid., 294, italics added.
415. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, 298.
We are, on the whole, an idolatrous people — a condition most repugnant to the Lord.

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel — ships, planes, missiles, fortifications — and depend on them for protection and deliverance.416

Just below Murder

Such rhetoric may seem over-wrought to the present-day reader — but the historian’s task is to help readers see beyond their immediate experience and expectations in order to truly understand. Tabernacles consistently fails to do so.

At times, the results seem deliberate. The reader is told that The Miracle of Forgiveness “[r]eferr[ed] to the ‘crime against nature’ and ‘sin of the ages’” (71). As I have already shown, naming sodomy the “crime against nature” was hardly unique or new in Latter-day Saint (or non-Latter-day Saint) discourse.417 The phrase was included in Webster’s 1828 dictionary.418 Even one of the few nineteenth-century talks cited by Tabernacles used the term.419 Both nineteenth- and twentieth-century Church leaders (and non-Latter-day Saint writers such as Edward Gibbon) had long attributed such sin to fallen Greece and Rome.420 If Tabernacles were less wedded to its thesis of relative lenience giving way to harsh disapproval, it might not entice the reader into seeing innovative severity in this rhetoric where there is only continuity.

The misrepresentation continues when Tabernacles claims “[Kimball] placed same-sex intimacy just below murder in the hierarchy of sins” (71). Tabernacles’s evidence is The Miracle of Forgiveness, pages 77–85 (71n95). This is misleading — these pages contain the entire chapter on homosexual acts,
and Kimball says nothing therein about placing them “just below murder in the hierarchy of sins.” *Tabernacles* could lead the reader inexperienced in Latter-day Saint theology to think that such extreme condemnation of homosexual sin was both unprecedented and terribly severe.

But the inexperienced reader would be wrong. Kimball *does* place opposite-sex sin as next to murder in the preceding chapter. (In fact, the entire chapter is titled “The Sin Next to Murder.”421) And, in the chapter referenced by *Tabernacles*, Kimball *does* put homosexual sin in the same category as heterosexual ones:

> Because of the seriousness of this sin it carries a heavy penalty for the unrepentant. The offender may realize that disfellowshipment or excommunication is the penalty for heavy petting, adultery, fornication and comparable sins if there is not adequate repentance, yet he often supposes that because his acts have not been committed with the opposite sex he is not in sin. Let it therefore be clearly stated that the seriousness of the sin of homosexuality is equal to or greater than that of fornication or adultery; and that the Lord’s Church will as readily take action to disfellowship or excommunicate the unrepentant practicing homosexual as it will the unrepentant fornicator or adulterer.422

“Equal to or greater” does place homosexual sin next to murder — but the context of the entire chapter would reveal that homosexual sin was being treated the same as all sexual sin. Clarity in this matter would destroy any implication that homosexual acts were being treated with unique and unprecedented harshness.

For those still with me at this point, the fact that homosexual sin was the equivalent of heterosexual sin should be unsurprising. More than a quarter century earlier, the First Presidency had said in an official statement:

> From Sodom and Gomorrah until now, sex immorality, with its attendant evils of drink and corruption, has brought low the mightiest of nations. …

> By the laws of Moses, adulterers were stoned to death. (Deut. 22:24.) God said to Israel: “There shall be no whore of the

422. Ibid., 81–82, italics in original.
daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.”
(Deut. 23:17)

The doctrine of this Church is that sexual sin — the illicit sexual relations of men and women — stands, in its enormity, next to murder.

The Lord has drawn no essential distinctions between fornication, adultery, and harlotry or prostitution. Each has fallen under His solemn and awful condemnation.423

Kimball’s placement of homosexual sin in the same category as other unchastity was not in the least a revolutionary development, nor was the language or rhetoric significantly different from before.

For example, Heber J. Grant could confidently claim that “thousands … who have been reared in this Church” had heard such teaching.424 Prominent general leaders and more obscure local leaders could all appeal to the idea and trust their audiences to understand. (Examples of Church authors’ placement of sexual sin next to murder are legion; many are collected in Appendix IV.)

Unmentioned Data

Tabernacles also misleads by that which it omits to mention in its analysis. It concedes that there is much “hopefulness about the possibility of repentance” (70) in The Miracle of Forgiveness before it launches into a recital of Kimball’s supposed vitriol. Any hopeful passages remain unquoted. Moreover, though Tabernacles quotes The Miracle of Forgiveness’s conclusion to demonstrate that “Kimball’s account of sin was completely psychologized” (70), it fails to mention the spirit in which President Kimball ended his chapter on homosexuality:

Bishops and stake and mission presidents must be alert and watchful and treat with kindness but firmness all such offenders whose offenses come to their knowledge. In the careful and searching interviews the leaders give, these weaknesses are likely to be revealed. Many yielding to this ugly practice are basically good people who have become

424. See Appendix IV for complete quote.
trapped in sin. They yield to a kind, helpful approach. Those who do not must be disciplined when all other treatments fail.

Remember, the Lord loves the homosexual person as he does all of his other children. When that person repents and corrects his life, the Lord will smile and receive him. 425

If included, these words that urged “kindness” towards “basically good people … trapped in sin” would temper Tabernacles’s picture of Kimball as vitriolic and condemning homosexuals in “the darkest possible terms” (70–71). Sadly, Tabernacles has largely excised texts that might moderate its portrayal of Kimball’s stance or approach.

By way of contrast to the encouragement offered the homosexual sinner, Kimball’s previous chapter on heterosexual sin concludes only with a repetition of his earlier warnings:

It is well to remember that, awful, horrible and serious as adultery and other sexual sins are, the Lord has kindly provided forgiveness on condition of repentance commensurate with the sin. But where these sins are concerned, even more than with less grievous ones, prevention is so much better than cure. Being warned, let us keep well away from the first step — the romantic thought outside of our marriage relationship, the drink which dulls the judgment and releases the inhibitions, the boy-and-girl “talk” in the parked car after the dance, and so on.

Preventing sexual and other sins will put us ultimately in the blessed condition Alma described: [Alma 7:25]. …

With this as the long-term goal, and with the assurance of peace of mind in this life, all the best motivations are on the side of righteousness. 426

All the confusion regarding The Miracle of Forgiveness detailed in the foregoing sections occurs in fewer than two pages of Tabernacles, demonstrating how much there is to unpack in the interests of accuracy.

**A Psychologized Account of Sin?**

Tabernacles argues that “Kimball’s account of sin was completely psychologized. Sin’s primary victim was the practitioner who was overwhelmed by guilt, anxiety, fear, and worry. For Kimball, sin was

426. Ibid., 74–75.
the cause of internal mental anguish and righteousness the solution for internal peace” (72).

This is yet another claim that is not put into its religious context. *Tabernacles* portrays Kimball as accepting scientific (or quasi-scientific, “pop”) psychology (1, 61, 66, 68, 74). I readily grant that Kimball saw those in the grips of sin as afflicted with guilt and all the rest, but this does not mean that psychology was the primary source of his view of sin. Nor does it mean he thought the suffering came only from within. For him, God stirred the conscience.

A close examination of his ministry and teachings makes it apparent that the most salient sources for Kimball’s conclusions are a close reading of the scriptures and personal experience through decades of ministering to individuals with serious problems of all kinds.

Inexplicably, *Tabernacles* ignores the Book of Mormon’s description of the consequences of sin. That foundational work of scripture (to which Kimball appealed often in his articulation of the fruits of sin427) is full of the same concepts that *Tabernacles* sees as evidence of “psychologization”: anxiety, guilt, fear, and internal mental anguish — all of which are relieved by repentance:

- To confront God unrepentant, said Jacob, is to “have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness” (2 Nephi 9:14);
- Sin, Jacob warned later, “will bring you to stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God” (Jacob 6:9);
- King Benjamin taught that “if … man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever” (Mosiah 2:38);
- Alma asked, “can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?” (Alma 5:18);

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427. For example, ibid., 13–14, 152, 157–58, 325, 365.
He repeated that “we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt” (Alma 11:43);

Repentant Lamanites reported that “he hath forgiven us of those our many sins and murders which we have committed, and taken away the guilt from our hearts, through the merits of his Son” (Alma 24:10);

Alma says he “was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments … the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds” (Alma 36:12–15).

And, when Moroni believed he was concluding his father’s record, he ended on this theme:

Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you (Mormon 9:3–5).

Perhaps by “psychologized,” Tabernacles means, instead, that the effects of sin occur almost completely in the mind or psyche. If so, Tabernacles ignores what Kimball said about the other effects of sin (and other reasons for avoiding sin) that have nothing to do with psychologization at all:
• Sexual relations outside of marriage objectify and instrumentalize another human being: “Sexual encounters outside of legalized marriage render the individual a thing to be used, a thing to be exploited, and make him or her exchangeable, exploitable, expendable and throw-awayable”; 428

• Sexual sin privileges immediate gratification over self-control; 429

• Some sins impair moral agency: “eventually take over control of the person and make him a slave”; 430

• Sin consists of acts contrary to the divine purpose of human existence; 431

• Sin leads to “broken homes, delinquent children, corrupt governments, and apostate groups”; 432

• Sin blocks God’s purposes: “Since immortality and eternal life constitute the sole purpose of life, all other interests and activities are but incidental thereto. It thus becomes the overall responsibility of man to cooperate fully with the Eternal God”; 433

• One purpose of life is “to be subject to all the weaknesses, temptations, frailties and limitations of mortality … to face the challenge to overcome self”; 434

• Sin violates knowledge of reality as it really is and can keep sinners from knowing that reality; 435

• Sins can lead us to mislead others or cause others to abandon the truth; 436

• Sin blocks human potential from manifesting itself; 437

• Sin keeps us from God’s presence; 438

• Sin alienates humans from each other; 439

429. Ibid., 13.
431. Ibid., 25.
432. Kimball, The Miracle of Forgiveness, x.
433. Ibid., 2.
434. Ibid., 5.
435. Ibid., 12–13, 53.
436. Ibid., 53, 59.
437. Ibid., 16–17.
439. Ibid., 36–37.
Sin prioritizes things and honors over God; Righteousness leads to “continuing prosperity” instead of political and economic strife; Sins affect others negatively: “break hearts, destroy reputations and wreck lives”; Some sins (e.g., Word of Wisdom) support the evil and harmful actions of others; Sin can cause physical accidents and loss of health.

No Grace?

Tabernacles also claims that in Kimball’s account of repentance, “There was little by way of appeal to divine grace or supernatural transformation as the means for being cured” (72). This seems unlikely, as the title of the book asserts that forgiveness is the miracle sought.

There are many examples of Kimball insisting upon the absolute necessity and primacy of “divine grace” and “supernatural transformation.” He emphasized the two-pronged nature of salvation — the willingness to change, and the grace of Christ:

This makes clear the two facets, neither of which alone would bring the individual salvation the grace of Christ, particularly as represented by his atoning sacrifice, and individual effort. However good a person’s works, he could not be saved had Jesus not died for his and everyone else’s sins. And however powerful the saving grace of Christ, it brings exaltation to no man who does not comply with the works of the gospel.

This, for Kimball, was “the miracle of miracles”:

There is a glorious miracle awaiting every soul who is prepared to change. Repentance and forgiveness make a brilliant day of the darkest night. When souls are reborn, when lives are changed then comes the great miracle to beautify and warm and lift. When spiritual death has threatened and now instead there is resuscitation, when life pushes out death when this happens it is the miracle of miracles. And such great miracles

440. Ibid., 40–42.
441. Ibid., 47–48.
442. Ibid., 52, 54.
443. Ibid., 55–57.
444. Ibid.
445. Ibid., 207.
will never cease so long as there is one person who applies the redeeming power of the Savior and his own good works to bring about his rebirth.446

Kimball offered Alma the Younger as a model for repentance (and Alma was forgiven by divine grace prior to *doing* anything but pleading for forgiveness, with genuine intent to reform and repair the ills he had caused):

The great assurance came to [Alma the Younger] that his repentance had been accepted, and a great peace came to his soul:

> For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

> And the Lord said unto me: marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters (Mosiah 27:24–25).447

Kimball elsewhere promised:

In abandoning evil, transforming lives, changing personalities, molding characters or remolding them, we need the help of the Lord, and we may be assured of it if we do our part. The man who leans heavily upon his Lord becomes the master of self and can accomplish anything he sets out to do, whether it be to secure the brass plates, build a ship, overcome a habit, or conquer a deep-seated transgression.

He who has greater strength than Lucifer, he who is our fortress and our strength, can sustain us in times of great temptation. While the Lord will never forcibly take anyone out of sin or out of the arms of the tempters, he exerts his Spirit to induce the sinner to do it with divine assistance. And the man who yields to the sweet influence and pleadings of the Spirit and does all in his power to stay in a repentant attitude is guaranteed protection, power, freedom and joy.448

446. Ibid., 362.
447. Ibid., 158, italics represent Kimball’s block scriptural citation.
448. Ibid., 176.
For Kimball, the Lord helps us abandon evil, transform our lives, and change our personality and character via “divine assistance.” He provides “guaranteed protection, power, freedom, and joy.” This is the “divine grace” and “supernatural transformation” that Tabernacles claims is mostly missing. Said Kimball: “I write to make the joyous affirmation that man can be literally transformed by his own repentance and by God’s gift of forgiveness.”

Kimball wrote, “in the hope that those frustrated and in sin may wash ‘their robes in the blood of the Lamb,’ so that peace may settle down on them as the dews of heaven.” Repentance moved one “from spiritual death to eternal life”; none of these are the sentiments of psychology or self-help.

There are other examples. Kimball quoted one bereaved couple as saying that “the Lord could put comfort into our torn hearts, we must get hatred and bitterness out of our hearts. Through fasting and prayer and determination we were able to eradicate these feelings. The Lord came to our assistance.” When two estranged members heard the scriptures read, “It was an appeal and an imploring and a threat and seemed to be coming direct from the Lord. … Shocked, the two men sat up, listened, pondered a minute, then began to yield. This scripture added to all the others read brought them to their knees.” Kimball promises, “The companionship of the Lord, light and knowledge, health and vigor, constant guidance by the Lord as an eternal, never-failing spring! What more could one desire?”

His attitude was summarized when he cited Joseph F. Smith: “When we cannot make restitution for the wrong we have done, then we must apply for the grace and mercy of God to cleanse us from that iniquity.” There was no cheap grace without doing what one could. But all one could do was hardly the whole story. The premise of the entire volume is that divine forgiveness and healing is a God-given miracle!

It is astonishing that Tabernacles would ignore these and other examples. The book acts as if Kimball believed that change was an entirely human affair, devoid of God or Christ or grace.

449. Ibid., ix–x.
450. Ibid., xi–xii.
451. Ibid., 289.
452. Ibid., 281–82.
453. Ibid., 306.
454. Ibid., 311; citing Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report (October 1899): 42.
Conclusion

In this review essay I have addressed mainly the first two chapters of Tabernacles, and not nearly everything in them, including its discussion of race. Little has been said about theoretical or broader interpretive issues; a separate essay of at least equal length would be required to do that.

It should go without saying that before a reader can assess arguments, logic, and interpretation, she must first have facts and sources. No fact or source interprets itself, but when facts and sources are ignored, misrepresented, or silenced, it becomes obvious. It is beyond question that Tabernacles has done so repeatedly and extensively. Even if one agrees with its arguments, the way in which it argues must be deplored.

At first glance, Tabernacles of Clay might seem, as in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, “an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance,” firmly braced by rigorous scholarship. Yet, as its foundational feet of clay collide with the stony sources, it is “all broken to pieces.” 455 I have examined several key bricks in its edifice, and those bricks crumbled, leaving the book’s merits difficult to sift from the rubble.

Despite these problems, like Same-Sex Dynamics before it, Tabernacles of Clay will likely continue to be lauded, cited, and brandished as evidence for many years, notwithstanding its incontestable failure to handle the sources responsibly. Too many will want to believe its claims, and thus will have reason to ignore the rot at the root of its argument.

And that is a great pity.

Appendix I:
Further Misleading Information in Quinn’s Same-Sex Dynamics

Other problems in sections not referenced by Tabernacles, but which speak to the unreliability of Same-Sex Dynamics’s claims, include:

- Claiming that articles in the Children’s Friend from 1919 were intended to be the “coming out” of a Latter-day Saint gay man and two gay women; 456
- Massive deception regarding the life of Latter-day Saint musician Evan Stephens, including a section that implies Stephens and his nephew attended a gay bathhouse in

New York, even though the bathhouse had been closed for thirteen years prior to their visit;  

- Improper cropping of a photograph to produce a distorted impression, which caused sufficient scandal that “the University of Illinois Press was forced to withdraw a dust jacket depicting Stephens and one of his putative homosexual ‘boy chums.”  

- Presenting an example of Utah homosexual practice from the 1920s–1930s as “Mormon,” when the individual was also strongly opposed to the Church;  

- Portraying Joseph Smith’s remarks about the joys of the resurrection as talk of endorsing “same-sex bedmates” engaging in “loving-pillow talk” (Quinn would later claim that all he said was that Joseph “slept with,” “men all his life,” but his lack of candor is obvious to any who have read the relevant passages).  

Appendix II:  

Other Nineteenth-Century Examples  
in Same-Sex Dynamics  

Other of Same-Sex Dynamics’s misleading and distorted information on nineteenth century attitudes toward homosexual sin is cited by Tabernacles.

457. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 198–256; on the bath house see 247–48; Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 171, 237–38, 241–42, 250, 255n52, 276, 369. (The last page is within the material cited by Tabernacles.)  
459. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 213.  
460. Ibid., 185–90; Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 195, 197, 200, 206, 219–21, 224–26, 228, 362, 429.  
Distortion of John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff Eras

Because Same-Sex Dynamics apparently aims to dispel some of the evidence that the Saints strongly disapproved of same-sex acts, it states that incidents of excommunication and imprisonment for same-sex acts from 1881 to 1887 occurred during the LDS presidency of John Taylor. Within days of his death, his counselors and the Mormon apostles expressed their dissent from the harsh response Taylor had required for all disapproved sexual conduct. On 12 August 1887, Lorenzo Snow told the other apostles that “Brigham Young was not so radical in his rulings on sexual crimes as John Taylor had been.” And Taylor’s first counselor George Q. Cannon added that “he had not been in full accord with the radical position taken by President Taylor regarding sexual crimes; and that he knew that President Taylor had changed very much in his feelings before the day of his death.”

Same-Sex Dynamics seeks to tie this to treating same-sex acts with leniency, so says that “the apostles may have been thinking of the 1882 excommunication” of three teenagers involved in sodomy.

This is the fallacy of the possible proof, which “consists in an attempt to demonstrate that a factual statement is true or false by establishing the possibility of its truth or falsity.” To be sure, Same-Sex Dynamics only asserts its possibility, but the point holds: “Valid empirical proof requires not merely the establishment of possibility, but an estimate of probability. Moreover, it demands a balanced estimate of probabilities pro and con.” The apostles may have been referring to same sex acts — anything is possible. But how likely is this reading?

Looking at Same-Sex Dynamics’s source in more detail, one finds that the entire discussion revolved around Albert Carrington, a former apostle excommunicated for repeated heterosexual adultery (I have bold-faced the material extracted for Same-Sex Dynamics):

After dinner the case of Albert Carrington was brought up. President Wilford Woodruff stated that he had received

463. Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 281–82; citing Heber J. Grant, personal journal, 12 August 1887, 365, 368.
464. Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, 282, italics added. Joseph F. Smith’s non-lenient reaction to the case is in the section “Other Ecclesiastical Examples.”
a number of letters from Carrington requesting baptism. He said he would feel much better to rebaptize him than to deny him this boon. …

[Moses Thatcher] asked if any of us had ever heard of a more horrible case of sexual crime than that developed in the trial of Albert Carrington? When he was in Europe preaching purity, he was practicing sin. Returning from Europe, he met with his brethren around the holy altar of prayer, kneeling with them and supplicating God for His blessings, being impure and cutting off his brethren from the spirit of the Lord, which they were otherwise entitled to. He had denied his sin repeatedly. At the time that President Taylor received a revelation, in October, 1882, calling on the Twelve and the people to repent of their sins, he had been accused of sexual crimes, and he denied them, and thanked God that He had preserved him from ever committing adultery. While holding the authority to seal men for all time and eternity, and exercising the same, he was debauching the wives of men that had thus been sealed. We had done our full duty when we cut him off the Church, so Brother Thatcher thought, according to the Doctrine & Covenants, and by our admitting him back into the Church, hundreds would be injured. …

Brother Joseph F. Smith felt that the light and knowledge which Albert Carrington possessed was such that he had committed the unpardonable sin, and was guilty of the shedding of innocent blood. …

Carrington’s is an exceptional case. If he had not been an Apostle, and received so much light and knowledge, then it would be different. …

Brother [Joseph F. Smith] felt that there was no comparison between him and a young man, filled with youthful passion, who had fallen in an unguarded moment, and then had sincerely and honestly repented. He felt that in such cases mercy should be extended.

Brother Smith was willing, as an individual, to consent to the baptism of Albert Carrington, as he had nothing against him personally; and if he had sincerely repented the Lord would forgive his sins; but he was not willing, as a member of our quorum to consent to his rebaptism. …
Lorenzo Snow stated, there had been times in his life, in years gone by, that he should have decided the same as Brothers Moses and Joseph F. Considering the position occupied by Albert Carrington, and the bad example that some felt would follow his rebaptism, years ago he would not have favored rebaptizing him. But there were many things that had come to his mind in later years that favored the exercise of mercy. He did not feel to exercise any mercy to Albert Carrington because he had been an Apostle. He stated that Brigham Young was not so radical in his rulings on sexual crimes as John Taylor had been. Stated that he knew President Taylor had changed considerably before the end of his administration. Brother Snow did not think that we could find anything in the Doctrine & Covenants or the Bible or any of the written word of God that would give us authority to prevent the rebaptism of any man who claimed that he had repented of his sins. He felt that Brother Joseph F was wrong in assuming the position that Albert Carrington had committed the unpardonable sin. …

Francis M. Lyman stated that twelve or fifteen years ago that Albert Carrington was accused of sexual crimes. The accusation was brought up before Brigham Young, and he lied to him. Again in 1882, he lied to the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, at the time that the investigation was being had in compliance with the revelation received by President Taylor. At the washing of the feet in the Endowment House, he was unclean and unfit to have this ordinance administered to him. Yet he deceived his brethren, and pretended to be a pure man. …

[John W. Taylor said] he felt condemned in refusing rebaptism to Albert Carrington. There are many men that have fallen in an hour of temptation; but, in their hearts, have sincerely repented, but because of the strict rulings and the feeling that there is no hope for them they have gone on from bad to worse: while, if the hand of mercy had been extended, and there was some chance for their redemption, he felt that they would have struggled back from their fallen condition. …

On several occasions while preaching to the people, and declaring that there was no forgiveness for those who
committed sexual crimes, he had become very radical in his remarks, and had afterward felt rebuked by the spirit.

George Q. Cannon stated that he had not been in full accord with the radical position taken by President Taylor regarding sexual crimes; and that he knew that President Taylor had changed very much in his feelings before the day of his death. He said he felt that it was wrong to make an indiscriminate condemnation of sexual crimes. …

President Wilford Woodruff stated that he could not agree with Brother Joseph F. that Albert Carrington had committed the unpardonable sin. Stated that he should not call a vote on the question, as our quorum was divided right in the middle. He felt that the Lord would not be pleased with a vote that was a divided one. Felt that we had better let this case drop. We all had a right to our views and our own feelings, and he was glad to have the brethren express their ideas freely and frankly, and he had no feelings because the brethren disagreed with him.466

_Same-Sex Dynamics_’s treatment of the evidence is without excuse. It is abundantly clear that the leaders were speaking of heterosexual sin — the debate revolved around whether Carrington could ever be forgiven by the Church for what he had done. The late John Taylor’s view was called “radical,” and his son John W. Taylor recounted his own “radical” speeches. The younger Taylor felt rebuked by God for having taught that no forgiveness for such sexual sin was possible.

Does this reconstruction match what John Taylor said during his life? Yes. As I will presently demonstrate, Taylor inclined at one point to the idea that endowed members of the Church guilty of sexual transgressions could not ever be rebaptized.

On 27 September 1883, Taylor met with the First Presidency and Twelve at the newly-reconstituted School of the Prophets. The leaders considered the question of whether the temple endowment ought to be

given in separate parts over a period of time to prevent less-committed members from violating more serious covenants.467

Taylor then outlined the consequences, as he saw it, of sexual sin for endowed members:

If they should commit adultery or fornication as it may be called, what would be the result? The result would be that they would have to make an acknowledgement before the church and ask the forgiveness of the church, and if they were forgiven after making their confession, they would pass, say for the first time; but for the second offense they must be cast out. That is the way I look upon people who have not entered into this covenant. When they have entered into the marriage covenant and commit adultery it is said they shall be destroyed. Now, I would not like to place my children in that position [by giving them the endowment too early] under these circumstances. I would much rather they had a chance under the first arrangement of overcoming their weaknesses and have a standing in the church.

I now speak of the law of God being carried out and we are supposed to carry them out. I cannot feel in the least to have people who commit adultery continued members of this church — that is people who have entered into sacred covenants[]. If there is anyway for their redemption it is not made manifest to me. Further more [sic], the law says they shall be destroyed. I would not want to place responsibilities upon people until their minds and character was matured, to enable them to act wisely, prudently, and intelligently, and to magnify their calling.468

Daniel H. Wells interrupted to ask, “Is that what is meant by being destroyed in the flesh?” When Taylor responded, “I think it would be pretty near,” Wells replied, “Well, cutting off the Church don’t pay the penalty.”469

469. Ibid., 47.
Taylor mentioned temple penalties as an illustration of the principle, emphasizing that such a penalty was not to be inflicted by any mortal: “Leave them in the hands of God, or in the hands of the devil.”

At this point, George Q. Cannon interjected, evidently not entirely comfortable with the idea:

I have some views on this subject which I would like to give expression to at the proper time. It is a matter in which I am deeply interested. I think there is not that harmony of views among us — I do not mean among the Twelve, but among the Priesthood, that there should be, and probably this is because of our not understanding each other. Some times when it is convenient to Prest. Taylor I would [illegible] talked over. I find a division of views on prominent men in the Priesthood upon this subject.

Taylor explained how he saw the difference in culpability for such sins:

I will mention another case which will serve to throw a little light upon both points that have been discussed. There was the case of a young woman who had committed adultery. When she went through the Endowment House she was about 16 or 17 years of age and did not comprehend the nature of the obligation into which she was entering, which is the position of a great many. Well, she committed adultery. The man who committed this act with her stood in another position. He was more aged and should have understood better, and to know what he was doing. That man cannot be forgiven. The other would be considered as a non-age. That is the way I have looked at that case. She had not arrived at the years of maturity; he had. In some of these cases there maybe perhaps a change in relation to these matters; but it is a thing ... we should be very careful about. But I did not make that revelation. I cannot change it. I am not authorized to change it. The law says they shall be destroyed; I cannot say they shall not. Unless the Lord manifests something to me about things of that sort, I do not feel authorized to go contrary to the word of God on these subjects. They are very important. As it is said, in times of men’s ignorance God winked at it. Now, he calls

470. Ibid.
upon all people everywhere to repent. I look upon it that we are called upon to carry out the law and will and word of God, and we have no right to change either.472

The next month, Taylor would return to a similar theme, as the minutes summarize:

Joseph [Smith] once said that in attending to the ordinances, as we have today, that if we violate our covenants we shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption. Prest. Taylor then spoke of the signs in the Endowments and asked what they meant — have thought that the ancient Japanese understood something in regard to these matters in the Hari Kari —

We do not interfere with the lives of men, those who violate their covenants, we leave them in the hands of God, and in many instances that you know he has visited signal judgments upon transgressors. In the cases of whoredom, harlots who engage in those matters do not live to exceed five years, so the statistics say. Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God — it requires the greatest care to properly control ourselves and those associated with us.473

Taylor again emphasized that it is God who will punish, not mortals. Note, as well, his mention of temple penalties and the non-negotiable need for endowed members to be “delivered over” to Satan for the remainder of their lives (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:26; see also 78:12, 82:21).

This reading of these documents aligns with the apostles’ later discussion about Carrington after Taylor’s death. Taylor had opined that endowed members guilty of sexual sins could not return to fellowship in this life. This idea had obvious implications for Carrington’s case, because if the principle applied to anyone, it surely applied to him.

Taylor had said he was open to revising his views if “the Lord manifests something to me about things of that sort,” and one sentence cited by Same-Sex Dynamics from the discussion about Carrington is George Q. Cannon’s report that Taylor had indeed changed his views prior to his death.

472. Ibid, 48, italics added.
473. Ibid., 90–91, italics added.
Same-Sex Dynamics’s reading also ignores Cannon’s 1879 talk\(^{474}\) that condemned homosexual sins in the strongest terms. Cannon would repeat this theme in 1897.\(^{475}\) It is implausible to sandwich Cannon’s insistence that Taylor’s severe stance had been moderated between two stern condemnations of his own, if the apostles are thinking of treating homosexual sin as less serious, as Same-Sex Dynamics claims.

As I have shown, Taylor’s son, John W., likewise witnessed that he had felt rebuked by God for preaching the same idea as his late father. Lorenzo Snow remembered Brigham Young being less “radical” than Taylor was inclined to be — not in downplaying homosexual sin, as Same-Sex Dynamics would have it, but in not regarding endowed sexual sinners as necessarily cast out of the Church forever.\(^{476}\)

This reading accounts for all the data; Same-Sex Dynamics must elide and resort to special pleading.

Same-Sex Dynamics Ignores the Implications of Its Examples

Same-Sex Dynamics also claims that Taylor’s severity applied to “all disapproved sexual conduct,” but that is likewise false.\(^{477}\) The severity from Taylor was explicitly said to apply only to those who were endowed.

Same-Sex Dynamics and Tabernacles are quick to point out any apparent “leniency” in the treatment of homosexual acts. The former’s telegraphic mention of the Carrington discussion ignores Joseph F. Smith’s argument for severity toward the fallen apostle: “there was no comparison between him and a young man, filled with youthful passion, who had fallen in an unguarded moment, and then had sincerely and honestly repented. He felt that in such cases mercy should be extended.”\(^{478}\)

Neither Same-Sex Dynamics or Tabernacles acknowledge that homosexual sin was treated with more mercy and patience if the culprit was young. Smith and Taylor agreed on this principle.\(^{479}\) By contrast,

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475. See discussion in the section “Biological Sex ‘Created and Contingent’.”
476. On Brigham Young’s attitude toward homosexuality, see the section entitled “Nineteenth Century.”
477. See Appendix II, “Distortion of John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff Eras.”
479. For example, Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics, George Naylor, 19 years old, was sent on a mission instead of excommunication, married age 26 and fathered 9 children (274); three teens involved with sixty-year old bishop, “all three young
repeat offenders and mature adults were dealt with much more harshly.\textsuperscript{480} This is a leniency toward inexperience, youth, and those who had not yet made sacred covenants in the temple, not homosexual acts.

\textbf{Same-Sex Dynamics Distorts the Lorenzo Snow Era}

To shore up a weak case, \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics} then refers to an unfootnoted case in which Lorenzo Snow “exonerated a polygamist accused of performing oral sex on his brothers, despite the testimony of multiple witnesses.” After a discussion of many other matters over five pages, \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics} claims that it was the stake president who exonerated the accused, because he “decided that all charges … were lies and therefore reversed the previous decision of the bishop’s court. … Snow was present and approved the decision.”\textsuperscript{481}

This is not evidence of Snow or the stake president’s approving of homosexual behavior, or treating it lightly. Instead, the evidence was assessed and found unconvincing.\textsuperscript{482} The stake president disciplined the \textit{accusers} for leveling “such a monstrous charge.”\textsuperscript{483} Such punishment is not evidence that homosexual acts were approved; if anything, disciplining the source of a false accusation demonstrates the opposite.

\textsuperscript{480} For example, Quinn, \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics}, three couples: (1) both in thirties, (2) age 19 and 18, (3) both aged 15 were excommunicated. \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics} notes that “all but one … remained unmarried the rest of their lives … the oldest bachelor was apparently living with the former polygamist twenty years later” (276); bishop excommunicated for fondling three teens in bed (277–78, discussed in the section “Nineteenth Century”).

\textsuperscript{481} Quinn, \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics}, 282, 287.

\textsuperscript{482} To the modern eye, the facts as reported look like a tragic miscarriage of justice in a case of serial abuse that contemporaries probably found difficult to credit. Even if the decision was in error, however, it does not demonstrate that the Saints treated homosexual acts lightly.

\textsuperscript{483} Quinn, \textit{Same-Sex Dynamics}, 287.
Appendix III: 
Behavior versus Orientation

“A Counselling Problem in the Church” (1964)

- “Now, this program is effective in all the fields of error. It is necessary for the adulterer to cleanse his life as well as the home breaker, the coveter, the fornicator, the one who does necking and petting, the pervert and the law breaker in all areas”;
- “requested to know of our work with regard to certain unholy practices. They asked about those deviates called ‘peeping toms’, exhibitionists, homosexuals, and perverts in other areas”;
- “When quite a number of men were being arrested for these ugly practices”;
- “We realize that the cure is no more permanent than the individual makes it so and is like the cure for alcoholism subject to continued vigilance. … if he will stay away from the haunts and the temptations, and the former associates, he may heal himself, cleanse his mind and return to his normal pursuits and a happy state of mind;
- “One man has committed every perversion the imagination could suggest”; 
- “The continued contact seems to be helpful. To have the man return to report success in his efforts or even partial failure is helpful. … Many find that since they will be making reports, and additional strength comes from that realization and they control themselves and their thoughts a day at a time, a week at a time, and soon the months have passed and thoughts are controlled and actions are above reproach;
- “Disfellowshipment or excommunication is the penalty for heavy petting, adultery, fornication, perversion and comparable sins, if there is no repentance”;
- “It is possible that he may rationalize and excuse himself till the groove is so deep he cannot get out without great difficulty. But this he can do. Temptations come to all people. The difference between the reprobate and the
worthy person is generally that one yielded and the other resisted.”

“Love versus Lust” (1965)

- “When the unmarried yield to the lust which induces intimacies and indulgence, they have permitted the body to dominate and have placed the spirit in chains”;
- “Because of this widespread tolerance toward promiscuity, this world is in grave danger. … when toleration for sin increases, the outlook is bleak and Sodom and Gomorrah days are certain to return”;
- “Sexual encounters outside of legalized marriage render the individual a thing to be used, a thing to be exploited, and make him or her exchangeable, exploitable, expendable and throw-awayable”;
- “Every kind of sex exploit for the unmarried from the first lustful stirrings of passions relating to self or to others is a sin”;
- “Fornication and all other deviations are for today, for the hour, for the ‘now’”;
- “It is true of illicit sex, which, of course, includes all petting, fornication, adultery, homosexual acts, and all other perversions”;
- “And still these young people [committing sexual sin] talk of love. What a corruption of the most beautiful term! The word is prostituted also in the realm of homosexuality. Both are in the realm of taking, not giving; killing, not saving; destroying, not building”;
- “It would be wholly improper to so completely condemn sex sins without explaining to those who may already have yielded to these persuasions and temptations and have defiled themselves that there is eventual forgiveness, providing, of course, that there is commensurate repentance”;
- There are “the more serious sins of exhibitionism and the gross sin of homosexuality. We would avoid mentioning these unholy terms and these reprehensible practices were it not for the fact that we have a responsibility to the youth”;

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“This unholy transgression [homosexuality] is either
rapidly growing or tolerance is giving it wider publicity. If
one has such desires and tendencies, he overcomes them the
same as if he had the urge toward petting or fornication or
adultery”;
The Lord condemns and forbids this practice
[homosexuality] with a vigor equal to His condemnation
of adultery and other such sex acts. And the Church will
excommunicate as readily any unrepentant addict”;
If one has such [homosexual] desires and tendencies, he
overcomes them the same as if he had the urge toward
petting or fornication or adultery”;
“This sin, like fornication, is overcomable and forgivable,
but again, only upon a deep and abiding repentance which
means total abandonment and complete transformation of
thought and act”;
“Corrupted individuals have tried to reduce such behavior
from criminal offense to personal privilege does not
change the nature nor the seriousness of the practice”;
“God-fearing men everywhere still denounce the practice”;
“The depraved one who had homosexual or other vicious
practices”;
“Let it never be said that the Church has avoided
condemning this obnoxious practice nor that it has winked
at this abominable sin”;
“This University will never knowingly enroll an
unrepentant person who follows these practices nor tolerate
on its campus anyone with these tendencies who fails to
repent and put his or her life in order”;
“I do not find in the Bible the modern terms ‘petting’ nor
‘homosexuality,’ yet I found numerous scriptures which
forbade such acts under by [sic] whatever names they
might be called”;
“I could not find the term ‘homosexuality,’ but I did
find numerous places where the Lord condemned such
a practice”;
“We have stated that even this ugly practice can be overcome
and can be forgiven”;
“The longer the habit has been fostered, the harder it is to
break”;


[Some claim] “that such a life is just another different but acceptable way of life. … But it can be corrected and overcome”;

“If the yielding person continues to give way numerous times.”

**New Horizons for Homosexuals (1966/1971)**

This pamphlet (revised as Letter to a Friend in 1978) was based on a personal letter written in 1966. Behavior is likewise its theme:

- “These practices are somewhat like the use of drugs, alcoholism or other vicious habits which eventually take over control of the person and make him a slave”;
- “These sins are forgivable and can be overcome if there is adequate restraint and repentance”;
- “If one lives all of the commandments of the Lord, then he has the power to withstand the temptations of the devil. If he yields … he gets weaker”;
- “The gospel is summarized in the Articles of Faith, one of which says, ‘We believe that men will be punished for their own sins … ’ While environment and associations and training have an important part in persons’ lives, every normal person is responsible for his own sins and may not blame them totally on others”;
- “You are not permanently trapped in this unholy practice if you will exert yourself”;
- “One of Satan’s strongest weapons is to make the victim believe the practice incurable regardless of one’s effort”;
- “Satan tells his victims that it is a natural way of life”;
- “This is a base lie. All normal people have sex urges and if they control such urges, they grow strong and masterful”;
- “If they yield to their carnal desires and urges, they get weaker until their sins get beyond control”;
- “Homosexuality, like fornication, adultery, robbery, and other detestable sins is curable”;
- “There are people in this practice who are novices and have only attempted to satisfy curiosity”;
- “Some continue until, when the changing gets difficult, they admit their inability to cope with it and yield”;

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“If you are one who has yielded to the enticings of evil people … then it should begin to be evident to you that the farther you go, the deeper you get. Today is the day to make the change and reformation”

“If you are one who has been deeply entrenched and who has given up the fight … and convinced himself that this perverted program is an honorable way of life”;

[When] “you justify yourself … pretend it is not sin … and that you cannot overcome it — that is the sad day”;

“The tragic moment has come” “when one … says ‘This is the way I wish to live; here I find my satisfactions; I commit no immorality’”;

“Pure logic also outlaws this practice … this ugly practice”;

“Where would the world go if such a practice became general?”;

“Is man created that he might gratify his urges, desires, passions and lusts, or, are such given as a part of his life to be controlled and used in proper ways”;

“The prophets have denounced and condemned any of these unnatural and improper practices”;

“Many men in this practice”;

“Homosexuality … is now trying to impress the public to make this vicious sex life acceptable”;

“The Lord and his true Church will never condone these sexual sins”;

“Men and women were not created to satisfy their lusts. Only controlled passion under proper circumstances should be a part of one’s life”;

“These unnatural practices are not of God”;

“Homosexuality and like practices are deep sins; they can be cured; they can be forgiven”.

The Miracle of Forgiveness (1969)

“Homosexuality is an ugly sin, repugnant to those who find no temptation in it, as well as to many past offenders who are seeking a way out of its clutches”;

“The revolting practice has persisted”;

“Sin in sex practices tends to have a ‘snowballing’ effect”;

“All such deviations from normal, proper heterosexual relationships are not merely unnatural but wrong in the sight of God. Like adultery, incest, and bestiality they carried the death penalty under the Mosaic law”;
“Social acceptance does not change the status of an act, making wrong into right”;
“That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself and willeth to abide in sin”;
“If the abominable practice became universal it would depopulate the earth in a single generation”;
“The offender may realize that dis-fellowshipment or excommunication is the penalty for heavy petting, adultery, fornication and comparable sins if there is not adequate repentance, yet he often supposes that because his acts have not been committed with the opposite sex he is not in sin”;
“The sin of homosexuality is equal to or greater than that of fornication or adultery”;
“The Lord’s Church will as readily take action to disfellowship or excommunicate the unrepentant practicing homosexual as it will the unrepentant fornicator or adulterer”;
“There are those who are deeply entrenched in the habit and have no apparent desire to cleanse themselves and build toward a moral life”;
 “[Leaders] must be alert and watchful and treat with kindness but firmness all such offenders whose offenses come to their knowledge”;
“Many yielding to this ugly practice are basically good people who have become trapped in sin.”

**Hope for Transgressors (1970)**

- If “you have members who have homosexual tendencies or activities, it will be your privilege and responsibility to assist them back into total normalcy”;
- “This dread practice”;

“Expressions of homosexuality and related perversions are varied and range from petting and love making to sodomy with its degradation”;

“It is a despicable practice”;

“In Old and New Testaments and modern scripture all may convince the deviate that the practice is serious transgression”;

“When the individual is convinced that it is transgression to be involved with those of his own sex or with anyone outside of proper marriage … then perhaps he is ready”;

“He should abandon all places, things, situations and people with whom this evil practice has been associated”;

“Where partners in the practice continue to associate and intend to have only platonic relations, they often return to their sin and find it then infinitely more difficult to abandon”;

“There must be positive action. Mere abandonment of the evil is only a first step”;

“He will throw away his pornographic materials”;

“Most people who have practiced this perversion in depth, have already ceased to pray”;

“If he has been long involved in this practice, he will be tempted and enticed numerous times to return to his folly”;

“It must be understood that the sin of homosexuality in its degraded aspects is as serious as adultery and fornication”;

“Homosexuality CAN be forgiven. Like other serious sins, it can be forgiven by the Church and the Lord if the repentance is total, all-inclusive, and continuing”;

“Abandonment of persons, places, things, situations which have been associated with the transgression is important.”

**Welfare Services Packet 1 (1973)**

“A homosexual relationship is … sin in the same degree as adultery and fornication”;

“Failure to work … with one’s bishop … in cases involving homosexual behavior will require prompt Church court action”;

“These instructions concern … members who seek to continue in both homosexual and Church activities”;

“Work with homosexual members in a spirit of love and compassion by exposing the lies and deceptions surrounding homosexual behavior”;

“The sin of homosexual behavior should be of grave concern”;

[There are] “lies and deceptions surrounding homosexual behavior”;

[The Church wishes to] “help … wayward members change their behavior”;

“Homosexuality is a sin, is learned behavior (not inborn), and can be stopped;

“It is important to differentiate between sexual misconduct and emotional or social problems. A person can change immoral habits through self-control. … He may have emotional or social problems that result from or contribute to this immoral behavior, but sexual sin cannot be excused due to social or emotional troubles”;

“Homosexual behavior begins in various ways”;

“In some cases, homosexual behavior begins in childhood”;

“No transformation will occur until the person abandons those things that lead to and include homosexual sin”;

“The first objective should be for the homosexual to change his behavior”;

“To believe that immoral behavior is inborn or hereditary is to deny men have free agency to choose between sin and righteousness”;

“Those who engage in homosexual behavior will have to submit to justice … so mercy can have effect”;

“Man’s proper course of behavior is gauged by God’s highest wishes concerning him”;

“Any behavior that prevents one from receiving these eternal blessings is evil”;

“The homosexual is often skillful at rationalizing, as are many who wish to maintain improper behavior”;

“Until the homosexual accepts the … truths about sexual conduct, he is in error and sin”;
• “Repentance involves changed or changing behavior. No amount of regret, sorrow, or emotion compensates for continuation of sin”;
• “Repentance must result in forsaking evil behavior”;
• “Bishops … are expected to clearly inquire into sexual behavior when considering youth for missions. Rather than just using the term homosexuality, they might refer to sexual contact with women or men”; 
• “Interviews throughout the member’s life will give him or her the opportunity to confess to homosexual behavior”;
• “Tragedies will be averted if this behavior is dealt with sooner”;
• “Applicants [for Church schools] are not approved if they are engaged in homosexual practices. Homosexuals should be dealt with as would fornicators and adulterers who apply to Church schools”;
• “Persons who have engaged in homosexual relations and who have not totally repented and forsaken these evil practices will not be admitted to study at or be employed by any Church university”;
• “Students or staff who engage in such behavior … will be dismissed”;
• “Procedures for dealing with missionaries who are found to be actively homosexual in the mission field are the same as for those who commit adultery or fornication”;
• “Those [Church officers and employees] whose thoughts are unhealthy but have not as yet given in to the temptation should be worked with closely as they repent but may, if wisdom and the Spirit dictate, be kept in their position so long as it does not intensify their temptation”;
• “The bishop … may need to make special confidential inquiries into suspected behavior” (14);
• “Makes it harder to stop their illicit behavior”; 
• “Homosexuality is a powerful habit”;
• “Homosexuality. … is a learned habit that can be repented of and controlled by learning other ways of life”;
• “Change is seldom easy or rapid and requires … mature self-control from within”;
“While it is an extremely difficult habit to change, homosexuality can be repented of as can any other deeply entrenched habit”;

“The alcoholic or the adulterer has as much to overcome”;

“As with the alcoholic or adulterer (or one participating in any other wrong behavior), the homosexual will have to avoid for the rest of his or her life the thoughts, circumstances, and temptations which lead to immoral behavior”;

“There is no place in God’s Church for those who persist in vile behavior. There is a place for those who present themselves ... for the purpose of penitent change.”

“[Homosexual temptation] “is not desirable; it is unnatural; it is abnormal; it is an affliction. When practiced, it is immoral. It is a transgression”;)

“Even one who is spiritually immature ought intuitively to sense that such actions are wrong, very wrong”;

“If a condition that draws both men and women into one of the ugliest and most debased of all physical performances is set and cannot overcome”;

“If someone is heavily involved in perversion, it becomes very important to him to believe that it is incurable. Can you not see that those who preach that doctrine do so to justify themselves? Some who become tangled up in this disorder become predators”;

“You hear them claiming that a large percentage of the population is involved ... with this activity”;

“If you are one of the few who are subject to this temptation, do not be misled into believing that you are a captive to it”;

“Drawn almost innocently into unnatural behavior”;

“Got off the track into some unnatural behavior”;

“If [someone] tries to receive comfort, satisfaction, affection, or fulfillment from deviate physical interaction with someone of his own gender, it can become an addiction”;

489. Welfare Services Packet 1, 1, 3–9, 13–15, 18, 20, emphasis added.
“No person ever made a conscious decision to make unnatural behavior his life-style without sending brutal, destructive, selfish signals to those who love him”;

“Don’t come up with some rationalization that participation in an act of sexual deviation is a generous and an unselfish gesture”;

“Don’t claim that it is an unselfish thing to relieve the craving of someone who is similarly affected”;

“That is no justification for any immoral or selfish act of any kind”;

“Do not try merely to discard a bad habit or a bad thought. Replace it”;

“Then, if an evil habit or addiction tries to return, it will have to fight for attention. Sometimes it may win. Bad thoughts often have to be evicted a hundred times, or a thousand. But if they have to be evicted ten thousand times, never surrender to them. You are in charge of you. I repeat, it is very, very difficult to eliminate a bad habit just by trying to discard it. Replace it.”


“The Causes of Homosexual Behavior. … Categories of Homosexual Behavior. … Preventing the Development of Homosexual Behavior” (Contents);

“Homosexuality is of grave concern to the Church because … It … pervert[s] the proper use of procreative powers … It is as sinful as heterosexual adultery and fornication”;

“Members of the Church who engage in homosexual behavior need … help. … They must accept responsibility for their sinful behavior and develop the determination to change their lives. Priesthood leaders should … help members involved in homosexual activities change their behavior and achieve forgiveness and joy in the Lord’s Kingdom”;

“Others … are trapped by habits of sexual indulgence. Sexual misbehavior, however, is almost always a symptom of serious social or emotional problems”;

homosexuality is a sin in the same degree as adultery and fornication. Powerful forces are seeking to establish this sinful practice as an acceptable way of life”; “We must never … normalize immorality”; “The only acceptable sexual relationship occurs within the family between a husband and a wife”; “Professionals do not agree on the causes of homosexual behavior”; “Many persons involved in homosexual activities during recent years … [claim that they] are not responsible for their homosexual behavior because it is caused by conditions beyond their own control. … [and that] Homosexuality is a harmless alternative lifestyle. … Such rationalization is evident even among some members of the Church who indulge in and justify homosexual practices”; [There are] “eternal, unchanging truths about their sexual misconduct”; “Homosexual behavior is learned and can be overcome. To believe that immoral behavior is inborn or hereditary is to deny that men have the agency to choose between sin and righteousness”; “It is inconceivable that — as some involved in homosexual behavior claim — he would permit some of his children to be born with desires and inclinations which would require behavior contrary to the eternal plan”; “The person must repent of his homosexual behavior and control it by learning other ways of life that are healthy and righteous. Change is seldom easy or rapid, and it usually requires support from others”; “You can use the following … categories of homosexual behavior as a guide. “Category II: Situational homosexuality. Individuals in this category include those who experience occasional, temporary homosexual feelings or behaviors through curiosity, experimentation, pornographic stimulation, peer pressures, drug or alcohol abuse, or living in close proximity to a member of the same sex”; “Category III: Rebellious homosexuality. This category represents primarily an attitude and lifestyle. These individuals … have chosen to fully accept a homosexual
lifestyle. They have little, if any, motivation to change their behavior and are openly active, even promiscuous in their homosexual behavior”;

• “When you consider involving non-LDS professionals, you should be careful to make sure they understand and support gospel principles relating to homosexual behavior”;

• “Your acceptance of the person does not mean you agree with his incorrect behavior”;

• “In many cases the person is guilty of homosexual thoughts or acts but is not deeply involved in the society of those steeped in homosexual activities. Be careful not to label people “homosexual” This both discourages them and tends to make them feel that they cannot solve their problems. It is better to refer to their ‘homosexual behavior’ than to call them a ‘homosexual’”;

• “It may be important to remind the individual that those with homosexual temptations are not the only members of the Church who are being asked to control and property channel their sexual desires. All members are expected to obey the Lord’s law of chastity”;

• “The person’s success in overcoming his homosexual behavior is directly related to how much he wants to change.”;

• “Those who are young or have had little actual homosexual involvement are able to overcome the problem much more easily than those who have been involved in such practices for many years”;

• “Those who feel inadequate … will find it difficult to overcome homosexual behavior until their social skills and behaviors are developed more fully”;

• “Does he understand that homosexual acts are sin in the same degree as fornication and adultery?”;

• “Masturbation is a sin, but is not homosexuality when practiced alone. When individuals of the same sex masturbate each other, it is a homosexual act. Self-masturbation is almost universal among those who engage in homosexual behavior, and is a very difficult habit for most to overcome. The fantasies that attend this behavior are often the most powerful aspects of the act”;
• “You should be sensitive to factors which may lead to homosexual behavior”;
• “Interviews for attendance at Church schools may also include questions about homosexual behavior. Applicants are not to be approved if they are involved in these practices. All with homosexual problems, including those who apply to Church schools, should be dealt with as would those who have committed fornication or adultery”;
• “Bishops and stake presidents, when prompted by the Spirit, should ask specific questions concerning homosexual behavior in interviews for temple recommends”;
• “Bishops and stake presidents are expected to clearly inquire into sexual behavior when they are considering youth for missions. Rather than using the term homosexuality, they might refer to “sexual contact with women or men”;
• “Persons who have engaged in homosexual activities and who have not totally repented and forsaken these evil practices will not be admitted to study at or be employed by any Church university, college, school, or program. Students or staff who engage in such behavior while involved with the Church Educational System will be dismissed”;
• “Procedures for dealing with missionaries who are involved in active homosexual practices in the mission field are the same as for those who commit adultery or fornication”;
• “A [Church] court may need to be convened in behalf of a member guilty of homosexual behavior”;
• “Since homosexual behavior is possible only with others, the individual should disclose his sexual partners as an essential part of repentance.”

Appendix IV:
Sexual Sin as “Next to Murder”

Many sources express the Church’s view that sexual sin is next to murder in its seriousness. Examples from 1829–1950 include:

• Alma 39:3, 5 (1829): “Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go … after the harlot Isabel. … Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the

Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?";

- Parley P. Pratt (1855): “If we except murder, there is scarcely a more damning sin on the earth than the prostitution of female virtue or chastity at the shrine of pleasure, or brutal lust; or that promiscuous and lawless intercourse which chills and corrodes the heart, perverts and destroys the pure affections, cankers and destroys, as it were, the well-springs, the fountains, or issues of life;” 492

- *Contributor* (1881): “Adultery in our code, is second only to murder;” 493

- Hyrum Mack Smith (1906): “‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’ Another soul destroying crime which is very rare among the Latter-day Saints. There is no other sin, save murder only, that will so soon destroy the spiritual and moral life of men — why, it is spiritual suicide to participate in any such deadly crime;” 494

- Joseph F. Smith (1902): “The law of God as to violation of the marriage covenant is just as strict, and is on a parallel with law against murder;” 495

- Joseph F. Smith (1903): “Above all things, sexual immorality is most heinous in the sight of God. It is on a par with murder itself;” 496

- *Improvement Era* (1912): “Virtue shall flee from our shores, and in her place shall sit the ancient goddess of Lust, who shall rule until, ripened past the iniquity of Babylon, we shall become even as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah! … This sin is strongly antagonistic of righteousness, for of

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all the sins except murder, it is essentially the most direct enemy of spirituality. A man may lie or steal, or bear false witness, or break the Sabbath, and thereafter come quickly to repentance and spiritual regeneration; but men who commit the sin of adultery, put the seal of condemnation upon their spiritual part, as though by this act they had locked their senses from the light;“⁴⁹⁷

- Joseph F. Smith (1917): “We hold that sexual sin is second only to the shedding of innocent blood in the category of personal crimes; and that the adulterer shall have no part in the exaltation of the blessed;”⁴⁹⁸
- Melvin J. Ballard (1921): “we shall teach our sons and daughters that next to murder itself, is the crime of sexual impurity;”⁴⁹⁹
- Melvin J. Ballard (1926): “Next to the crime of murder itself is the crime of sexual impurity. The boy who would deliberately look upon a clean, chaste, and pure girl to rob her of her virtue is almost as guilty as though he contemplated sending a knife into her heart to destroy her;”⁵⁰⁰
- Heber J. Grant (1941): “We have been taught, thousands of us who have been reared in this Church from our childhood days, that second only to murder is the sin of losing our virtue;”⁵⁰¹

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• Joseph Fielding Smith (1944): “May I say a word to you parents? ... Have we taught them that immorality, uncleanness of life, is a deadly sin, that the Lord has classed it as second only to the shedding of innocent blood?”

• Joseph Fielding Smith (1947): “This sin stands in the sight of God second only to murder (Alma 39:5) and denying the Holy Ghost. Those who are guilty and do not repent in a short time become fault-finders, criticizing their brethren, then the principles of the Gospel, and finally become bitter in their souls against the work and those who are engaged in it. The most bitter opponents of the Church and the Gospel many times have been proved to be immoral and leading unclean lives;”

• Harold B. Lee (1950): “[God] has written high on the decalogue of crime and second only to murder the divine injunction, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

There are more statements that could be cited, but this listing should be enough to demonstrate that *Tabernacles* is not accurate if it means to imply that seeing homosexual sin as next to murder is unusually harsh or punitive compared to heterosexual sin.

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THE CROWN OF CREATION

David Rolph and Jo Ann H. Seely

Abstract: The Seelys discuss the well-known concept of the universe as a temple, and link the creation story to the temple drama. They explore how God, in creating the universe, had the same roles the temple drama gives to Adam and Eve as archetypes of each man and woman (that of king, priest, and artisan), and how man, by participating in the temple drama, is raised to be the image of God, thus becoming the real crown of creation, participating in God’s creation by procreation.

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.


In ancient times the Israelites referred to the temple of God as “the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:17). To them, the temple was a place where the earthly and heavenly spheres combined and, therefore, a place where mortals could commune with the Lord.¹

These are the insightful words of Matthew Brown, who loved the temple and thirsted for the knowledge of heaven found
therein. Although Matthew has passed through this gate, we submit this paper in his honor.

The “gate of heaven” is a conduit for the presence of the Lord, and in this sense it is at the creation where the first associations with the temple are revealed. The connection between creation and temple can be illustrated by reviewing passages from the primary biblical narratives of the creation found in Genesis 1–3 and the descriptions of and allusions to creation found throughout the scriptures, most notably the narratives regarding the construction of the tabernacle. The passages concerning Solomon’s and Ezekiel’s temples also contain many connections with creation. In fact, there is an argument that the description of creation presents the creation of the world as the building of a temple.

The study of creation and its links with temple theology has found a resurgence in the last several decades with significant works by scholars such as Weinfeld, Levenson, Hurowitz, Wenham, Walton, Beale, and Barker, all of whom have examined creation and temples in a larger context of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian creation stories and temple building. Likewise, many Latter-day Saint scholars have also produced significant work on this topic, beginning with Hugh Nibley and including Lundquist, Parry, and Bradshaw.

Before focusing on the role of God’s crowning creation, the man and the woman, we would like to reference some of the significant symbols, as pointed out by Wenham and Parry, that connect the creation narratives and particularly the setting of the garden to the temple. We have chosen seven of these symbols — because seven is a wonderful biblical number and because, as we will point out, the number seven is also a unifying feature of both creation and temple narratives. These symbols include both visual and verbal connections.

1. The tree of life, with the fruit of eternal life, is found in the Garden of Eden. Many believe that the large candlestick known as the menorah in the tabernacle and temple was representative of the tree of life. In her excellent volume, The Tabernacle Menorah, Carol Meyers refers to the menorah as “a stylized Tree of Life.”

2. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is described using these phrases: “the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden … was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise …” (Genesis 3:3,6; emphasis added). The Psalms describe the law that is kept in the ark of the covenant located in the Holy of
Holies in the tabernacle with these verbal echoes: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple … rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalms 19:7–8; emphasis added). Both the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden and the law contained in the ark of the covenant represent necessary knowledge.

3. Another verbal echo involves Adam’s work in the garden and the work of the priests and Levites at the tabernacle. Adam’s work in the garden is described in the Hebrew as “to dress [ʿāḇāḏ] and to keep [šāmĕr].” These two words are used numerous times to describe the duties of the Levites in worshipping and guarding the tabernacle. “They shall keep [šāmĕr] his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service [ʿāḇāḏ] of the tabernacle” (Numbers 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6).

4. The verb used to describe God’s presence in the Garden of Eden is hithallek, “to walk to and fro” (Genesis 3:8). This is the same verb used to describe the Lord’s presence in the tabernacle: “And I will set my tabernacle among you … And I will walk [wĕhitĕhallakĕtî] among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Leviticus 26:11–12; 2 Samuel 7:6–7).

5. After Adam and Eve have partaken of the fruit, the Lord makes for them garments of skins in which He clothes them: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats [kātĕnôt] of skins, and clothed them [wayyalĕbišēm]” (Genesis 3:21). This is reminiscent of Moses’s clothing (using the same Hebrew verb l-b-š) the priests with coats (again kātĕnôt) in order to perform their duties (Exodus 28:40–41; 29:8; 40:14; Leviticus 8:13).

6. The cherubim, well-known traditional guardians of sacred places in the ancient Near East, are stationed to guard the way to the tree of life. Likewise, cherubim are found on the veils of the tabernacle symbolically guarding the holy places within, and they are found on each side and on top of the ark of the covenant. Related to the positioning of the cherubim, the garden is entered from the east — just as the tabernacle and temple are also oriented and entered from the east.
7. Finally, the passage in Ezekiel 28 appears to be a poetic version of the creation story that has a rather astonishing description of Adam as a cherub walking through Eden, described as the mountain of God amidst stones of fire. The passage also mentions stones reminiscent of the stones of the breastplate worn by the high priest at the tabernacle:

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. (Ezekiel 28:13–15).

In addition to these specific symbols the narrative of creation is structured around a series of sets of sevens — just as the narratives that describe the building of the tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple. For example, the seven days of creation are reflected in the seven speeches contained in the account of the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31, the seven years of building of the Temple of Solomon (see 1 Kings 6:38), and the seven petitions in Solomon’s dedicatory prayer (see 1 Kings 8). In the creation story, God created the seventh day, on which He rested from His work. Similarly in Exodus, following the completion of the instructions for building the tabernacle, there appears a commandment regarding the Sabbath (see Exodus 31:12–17). As the Lord rested in His creation on the seventh day, so in Psalm 132 the Lord found rest in His temple.

While there are many different ways of reading and understanding the creation narratives, the focal point of the story is the relationship of God with His creations. The description of the role of God and also of the man and the woman — Adam and Eve — serve as models for the reader. The role of God as Creator can be described from the texts in terms of various offices that would have been known and appreciated in the time and culture of these texts. We have chosen to explore three
such offices: God as King, God as Priest, and God as Artisan. These same offices are reflected in the roles of Adam and Eve, created in the image of God, which in turn serve as a model for the rest of the human family.

God as King, Priest, and Artisan

God as King. In Genesis 1, God as Creator is described like a king. Just as a king in ancient Israel and also the ancient Near East was a builder who built his palaces and temple with royal decrees, so God creates with His words: “Let there be light,” “and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). Many of the Psalms that celebrate the kingship of the Lord associate this kingship with creation. For example, Psalm 93 begins: “The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty … the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved” (Psalms 93:1). Similarly, Jeremiah 10:10 states, “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king,” and Jeremiah 10:12 says, “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.”

What is it that God the King is building in Genesis 1–3? He is building the cosmos that is described as a temple. One of the primary symbols for the temple is the presence of God, and indeed when creation is complete God is present in the Garden of Eden. Just as kings built palaces for their dwelling places and temples as dwelling places for their gods, so God created the world as His abode.

God as Priest. Genesis 1 also presents God in the role of priest. The priests in ancient Israel blessed and sanctified the people (see Numbers 6:24–26) — and God in creation blessed the living creatures (see Genesis 1:22), blessed the man and the woman (see Genesis 1:28), and blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day (see Gen 2:3). Just as the priests in Israel were to “distinguish” (hibĕdîl) between holy and profane (see Leviticus 10:10; Ezekiel 22:26), so God “distinguishes” in creation by dividing (hibĕdîl) the light from the darkness (see Genesis 1:4, 18), the waters from the dry land (see Genesis 1:6, 7), and the day from the night (see Genesis 1:14).

Furthermore, in Genesis 3 the presence of the Lord in the Garden of Eden is described as “the Lord God walking in the garden” (Genesis 3:8). The verb used here is the Hebrew hitĕhallēk, the same verb used in Leviticus 26:12 describing the Lord inhabiting His tabernacle and in 2 Samuel 7:6 describing the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle and the temple. After the Fall, the Lord clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skins (see Genesis 3:21), just as Moses clothes the high priest Aaron and his sons (see Exodus 28:40–41; 29:8; 40:14; Leviticus 8:13).
God as Artisan. Connected with God’s role as king and priest, the creation narratives portray God as an artisan who creates, makes, and shapes. At the beginning of the creation story in Genesis 1, there is the memorable image: “And the Spirit of God [rûaḥ ʾĕlōhîm] moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). This image has been understood as the divine wind, or breath. It provides an important link to the description of God as Artisan.

Proverbs 3:19–20 describes the process of creation thus: “The Lord by wisdom [ḥākēmâ] hath founded the earth; by understanding [tĕbûnâ] hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge [daʾēt] the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew” (emphasis added). The description of Bezalel receiving the divine gifts necessary to build the tabernacle uses these same words to describe his divine gift of craftsmanship: “And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship [ûbĕkāl-mĕlāʾkâ]” (Exodus 31:3, emphasis added) — the same phrase used in Genesis 2:2–3, referring to “all the works” that God had created.

Thus the Spirit of God, or rûaḥ ʾĕlōhîm, can represent the creative power of God associated with craftsmanship. In the biblical Wisdom tradition, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are seen as the virtues necessary to “craft” a good and full life.

Adam and Eve as Co-Regents, Priest and Priestess, and Artisans

Adam and Eve as Co-Regents. The Bible makes it clear that the “man” (Adam and Eve) do not exercise the same power of creation as God. The verb used for “create” in Genesis 1 is the Hebrew verb bārāʾ. This is the verb used in Genesis 1:1, “God created the heaven and the earth,” and in Genesis 1:27, “And God created man in his own image.” It is used 50 times in the Hebrew Bible and always with God as the subject. However, immediately after God created the man and the woman “in his own image,” He blessed them and then He commanded them: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

The words subdue and dominion indicate that Adam and Eve are commanded to represent God the King as stewards over His creation and thus they can be described as co-regents — acting as king and queen over creation in the absence of God. Much has been written about these
terms. The word *dominion* is used in the Bible to describe the rule of a king. Here Adam and Eve are commanded to rule like the ideal king, who models himself after God, who judges His people “with righteousness and judgment” (Psalms 72:2) and who “saves the children of the needy” and “breaks in pieces the oppressor” (Psalms 72:4).

**Adam and Eve as Priest and Priestess.** In connection with caring for the garden in Genesis 2, the Lord commanded Adam and Eve “to dress it [to till the garden] and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15). In the immediate context, these two verbs — to dress and to keep — suggest agriculture and vigilant care. However, elsewhere in scriptures these words are used in the context of worship and priesthood. The Hebrew word translated as “to dress” is the verb *ʿābād*. This verb can mean “to work” or “to serve,” but it is also the word that means “to worship” in conjunction with the priests in the tabernacle and the temple. The word “to watch over” (*šāmĕr*) likewise is used to describe the vigilant service rendered in the tabernacle or temple by the Levites as described in Ezekiel 44:14: “But I will make them keepers [*šōmĕrê*] of the charge of the house, for all the service [*ʿābōdātô*] thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.” (See also Numbers 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 28:5–6; 1 Chronicles 23:32.)

In addition, in Genesis 3 after the Fall the Lord made garments of skin for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. While the immediate significance of the garments was to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, sacred garments are also characteristic of kings and priests. Many scholars have noted that this is an indication that Adam is to exercise his “dominion” in the Garden as a co-regent and as a priest. This fits nicely with the role to “till and watch over the garden.” Priesthood is always associated with service. In spite of the fact that there is virtually no mention of it in scholarly literature, the fact that the Lord also made Eve a garment suggests that Eve can be considered a priestess.

Through the priesthood, the descendants of Adam and Eve would follow the model of God as Priest in creation and would bless and consecrate their fellows.

**Adam and Eve as Artisans.** Adam and Eve do not act as artisans in the creation story. The attributes associated with the artisan noted in Proverbs 3 — wisdom, knowledge, and understanding — are waiting to be acquired when they eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 2:9, 17). After partaking of the fruit they become “wise,” gain “knowledge of good and evil,” and gain the knowledge necessary to understand the difference between joy and sorrow and good and evil (see
2 Nephi 2:23–25). These virtues will give them the power to be artisans in order to craft a full and productive life.

**Created in the Image of God**

The crown of God’s creation in Genesis 1 is the creation of Adam and Eve; likewise, the climactic verse in the creation story in Genesis 1 describes that event:

> And God [ʾĕlōhîm] said, Let us make man [ʿādām] in our image [ṣelem], after our likeness [dĕmût]: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.


Several features of this text highlight the unique status of Adam and Eve in creation. First, God (ʾĕlōhîm) at the outset expresses His divine purpose: “Let us make” in the plural. Biblical scholars usually understand this to mean that God is addressing the Divine Council, while in the Book of Moses God addresses “mine Only Begotten” (Moses 2:26). Second, unlike the other creatures, a differentiation is made here between the sexes — the “man” (ʾādām) consists of “male and female,” Adam and Eve. Third, and most significant for our discussion, is the fact that “man” — Adam and Eve — are created “in the image and likeness of God.” The man and the woman in the likeness of God assume the co-regency, as we have discussed above, “having dominion” over all the creatures and “over all the earth.”

The search for the precise meaning of the terms *ṣelem* (“image”) and *dĕmût* (“likeness”) in this context has generated much discussion. It is most likely that these two terms are synonyms. The term *ṣelem* is a term used to refer to the images that kings set up in their empires and the images of the gods traditionally kept in temples. Biblical scholars explain the two Hebrew terms behind the words *image* and *likeness* as references to being created in the form of God, as well as having His divine attributes. The term *ṣelem* (“image”) has a wide range of meanings. One scholar has noted that “it refers to a representation of form, figure or physical appearance. Thus if the human race is created in ‘the image of God,’ there is an unavoidable, logical implication: God must also be material, physical, corporeal, and to a certain degree humanoid.”

Another scholar
notes that in ancient Near Eastern cultures the “image of god” in the Near East can also refer to the idealized representation of the attributes of Deity. For example, “When the Assyrian king Esarhaddon is referred to as ‘the perfect likeness of the god,’ it is his qualities and his attributes that are meant … . In the Israelite context as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, people are in the image of God in that they embody his qualities and do his work.”

Since Latter-day Saints understand God does have a body, they understand “in the image of God” to mean that the man and the woman are both made in the physical image of God. In addition, another scholar has noted that the term ἑλέμ can also refer to the “idealized representation of attributes of the king or deity” being depicted; thus, one who is imbued with the “image of a deity” is imbued with His divine attributes as well as His form. Whereas it was common in ancient Near Eastern temples to have the image of the god in his temple, in the Garden of Eden the image of God is found in the man and the woman.

With regard to the differentiation between male and female gender in this passage, a prominent biblical scholar, Michael Coogan, has recently suggested that the differentiation between the genders acknowledged in this passage might be retroactively applied to the God:

The general principle here is that humans are modeled on God, almost genetically — just as later in Genesis, “Adam fathered [a son] in his likeness, according to his image” (Genesis 5). But that abstract understanding immediately becomes concrete: humans are modeled on ʾĕlōhîm, specifically in their sexual differences … An alternative is to understand ʾĕlōhîm in the second line in its plural sense: humans are male and female in the image of the gods — because the gods are male and female, humans are as well.” Coogan goes on to wonder if ʾĕlōhîm here may be a reference to a heavenly father and mother.

Following the creation of the man and the woman, Genesis 1:28 continues:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28).

Here Adam and Eve are commanded to procreate. In Genesis 5:1, the creation of the man and the woman “in the image of God” is repeated, and it says that Adam “begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Genesis 5:1). These verses reveal that surpassing their role in creation as the co-regents and as priests and priestesses, Adam and Eve are
designated in the story of creation, through the power of procreation, to be co-creators with God in providing earthly tabernacles for Heavenly Father’s children. This they do in their own image, which is in the image of God. Thus God gives to Adam and Eve the gift of procreation — the creation of bodies for Heavenly Father’s children.

Elder Holland described the divine origin and importance of the use of the gift of procreation as follows: “You will never be more like God at any other time in this life than when you are expressing that particular power. Of all the titles he has chosen for himself, Father is the one he declares, and creation is his watchword — especially human creation, creation in his image.” So in connection with Adam and Eve’s being given stewardship over God’s creation, the Lord has also given them the gift of creating bodies for His spirit children and for having stewardship over them as well.

**Conclusion**

In the future, the commission to build temples was given to the descendants of Adam and Eve. The biblical narratives of building the tabernacle and the temple continue to reflect the model of creation. The building of the tabernacle reflects the same three roles described in creation: Moses the prophet delivered the divinely revealed “words” that provided the pattern for the tabernacle. Moses, like a king, decreed and then supervised the building. When the tabernacle was completed, Moses consecrated, anointed, and clothed the priests and turned the administration of the tabernacle over to Aaron, the high priest. The actual work and craftsmanship of the tabernacle was carried out by Bezalel the artisan — who, inspired by the Spirit of God (rûaḥ `ēlōhîm), executed the work with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (see Exodus 31:3).

The commission to “multiply and replenish” was passed to Noah (see Genesis 9:1, 7); to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and to the children of Israel (see Genesis 35:11–12). Along with the commission to procreate, Adam and Eve’s descendants are called upon to teach their children the gospel and to help Heavenly Father continue to shape and form His children in His divine image.

When the Lord gave His children the law of Moses in the Old Testament, He framed it with an important commandment — that His children, born in His image, should seek to become throughout their lives “in his image and likeness.” “Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy,” He said (Leviticus 19:2). And in the meridian of time, as
 contained in the New Testament, the Savior taught that the end of the
gospel of Jesus Christ is to become like God: “Be ye therefore perfect,
[even as I or] your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48,
3 Nephi 12:48).

And so the process continues. In the Book of Mormon, Moroni
teaches us that in the end of time, we who were in the beginning created
“in the image of God” will once again be measured by this standard:
“that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall
be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (Moroni 7:48).

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David and Jo Ann love teaching and writing together. In 2006 they were named the BYU Honors Co-Professors of the Year and have written several articles together, but their best collaboration has been their four children and three grandchildren.
“WHEREFORE, FOR THIS CAUSE”:
THE BOOK OF MORMON AS ANTI-TYPE
OF THE BRASS SERPENT

Scott Stenson

Abstract: Nephi represents the sacred record that becomes the Book of Mormon as a new brass serpent to heal the nations. Nephi’s typological project is reasonable given that he self-identifies with Moses, his family’s scriptures and compass are made of brass, and he consistently describes reading as an act of seeing, looking, or believing. Nephi understands from Isaiah that the book he (Nephi) prepares — and that he has so much to say about — will become an ensign, or sign, that will be lifted up and heal the nations that have stumbled in blindness. Nephi’s project emerges most fully in 2 Nephi 25, the introductory material to an extended prophecy wherein he points the Jewish people to their Messiah, a figure he equates with Moses’s raised serpent and Jesus Christ.

Serpent imagery features prominently in ancient texts and cultures, and in modern texts that strive for a primeval quality. The serpent as symbol can be found in all mythologies and literatures, including Egyptian, Hebrew, Babylonian, Greek, Latin, and English. So it is no surprise to find serpent imagery and symbolism in the Book of Mormon, particularly since it draws so heavily from Hebrew tradition. The serpent references in the Book of Mormon, including those from Isaiah, fit comfortably in that record’s ancient Near Eastern milieu. It is well known that Egyptian

2. See, for example, 1 Nephi 17:41; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19–22; Alma 37:46–47; Helaman 8:14–15.
culture, which figures conspicuously in the early pages of the record, was ripe with references to serpents and their sacredness or maliciousness. Moses, after leading his people out of Egypt, famously raised a brazen serpent in the wilderness to save his people from perishing. Part of the effort by Noel Reynolds and others to situate the Book of Mormon in its Near Eastern context has been to demonstrate that Nephi and Lehi saw themselves as reenacting Mosaic events (see 1 Nephi 17:23–32, 41–46). Others have argued that serpent references in the Nephite account suggest a Mesoamerican connection to Quetzalcoatl, the god represented as a feathered or flying snake. In accord with these earlier approaches, I propose that Nephi, and subsequent Nephite prophets and record keepers, understood their endeavor typologically. For them, not only did the record refer to serpents, but also it was to become a serpent, like the brass serpent raised on a standard by Moses, to figuratively “hiss forth” (2 Nephi 29:2–3, Moroni 10:28), “proceed forth” (2 Nephi 29:2, 4; Andrew Skinner, “Serpent Symbols and Salvation in the Ancient Near East and the Book of Mormon,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 10, no. 2 (2001): 42–55, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol10/iss2/8/).

5. See Numbers 21:4–9; Deuteronomy 8:15; see also John 3:14–17.


8. The verb phrase “hiss forth” will be examined at a later point when we consider its interpretive possibilities, but we note here that the clear association in English of “hiss” and serpents is not the same in Hebrew, where the word Isaiah and perhaps Nephi uses for “hiss” does not necessarily refer to serpents, though relevant connections may still be present. According to Royal Skousen, “hiss” appears “six times” in the Book of Mormon, excluding the quoted Isaianic material. Three times it is used in reference to an act of “scorn” (1 Nephi 19:14, 3 Nephi 16:9, 3 Nephi 29:8); and three times it is used in reference to the words of Christ issuing from his mouth to the nations (2 Nephi 29:2–3, Moroni 10:28). The word hiss was first introduced into the Isaianic passages in the English language with the

To situate the comparison, I examine two common Nephite artifacts (the brass plates of Laban and the Liahona) before analyzing Lehi’s blessing to his son Joseph (see 2 Nephi 3) and Nephi’s final extended prophecy (see 2 Nephi 25–30). I focus on 2 Nephi 25, as it is the most “hermeneutically relevant” and intimates three possible reasons Nephi equated or typologically likened his record to Moses’s brass serpent:¹¹

1) the messianic record would be lifted or raised as an ensign to the nations; 2) it would heal those nations and peoples who would look unto it; and 3) it would “hiss forth” to the nations, gathering all who would hearken to its urgent Christological message.¹²

In taking this particular typological approach, I intend, where possible, to let the record speak for itself.¹³ Grant Hardy has argued that the book has its own internal logic that should be honored where it can.

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¹⁰ The Hebrew word goyim can mean both “Gentiles” and “nations.”


¹² To support my argument, it should be noted that Nephi’s extended prophecy in 2 Nephi 25–30 is bracketed by Isaiah 14 (2 Nephi 24) and Isaiah 11 (2 Nephi 30:9–15), two sections of scripture that contain serpent imagery. The first compares successive Assyrian kings to serpents; the second suggests that even the serpents (and other fierce animals of prey) that once were at enmity with humankind will no more harm in all the earth. The “sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den.” The whole “earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

¹³ The structurally sophisticated record is in conversation with itself (or its writers draw upon its writers) and former sacred texts as well as its various readers,
be ascertained. One characteristic of the record is that it is profoundly reflexive or self-referential and is loaded with metadiscourse. Part of its reflexivity is manifest as allusiveness. Readers of the text have traced its intertextuality and intratextuality as well as its typology. However, those who have taken such approaches apparently have not yet identified and explained Nephi’s textual/typological project likening the book to a serpent of salvation. Those who have taken a textual approach (e.g., Hardy) have explored internal, parallel patterns and distinct narrative points of view; others, more interested in prototypes, types, and antitypes, have connected the text to historical characters and past and present. I acknowledge that the text is often challenging and thus that alternative readings are obviously possible and welcome.


15. In Abinadi: He Came Among them in Disguise, intertextuality and intratextuality are explored by such scholars as Nicholas J. Frederick and John Hilton III. Frederick’s project focuses on the presence of the New Testament in the Book of Mormon and Hilton’s project focuses on the influence of Abinadi’s teachings in the same record. See Nicholas J. Frederick, “If Christ Had Not Come into the World” in Abinadi: He Came Among them in Disguise, ed. Shon D. Hopkins (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), 117–38; and John Hilton III, “Abinadi’s Legacy: Tracing His Influence through the Book of Mormon,” also in Abinadi, 93–116.

16. Much earlier than Joseph Spencer, scholars such as George Tate (previously mentioned) and Richard Dilworth Rust were interested in the Book of Mormon’s use of typological method. See Richard Dilworth Rust, Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1997), chapter 8, 196–218; https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/34/. The Book of Mormon invites this approach as it refers to (see 2 Nephi 2, 4, 8) and even enacts typological reading (see Alma 37:38–47).

17. Hardy, Understanding the Book of Mormon.

18. An antitype stands opposite its type, like Jesus stands as the fulfillment of the sacrifices under the law of Moses, or like when the Father and Son’s atonement was shadowed forth by the near-offering by Abraham of his son, Isaac. “Typology relates the past to the present in terms of a historical correspondence and escalation in which the divinely ordered prefigurement finds a complement in the subsequent and greater event” (Treier, “Typology,” 823). Treier suggests that types may be identified using deductive or inductive exegetical methods. My approach is inductive. That is, I allow the text to speak for itself without attempting to impose a typology (or a theology) on it. Following this method may require quoting passages from the text at more length than other approaches. However, as the typological parallel I analyze is less than obvious and spreads throughout the Book of Mormon, it may be more accurate to call my hermeneutical approach metaphorical typology. Joseph M. Spencer more recently has defined typology
events (e.g., Reynolds). I demonstrate how Nephi understands and portrays his record itself and how his project is taken up and portrayed by others, such as Alma, who themselves were record keepers among the Nephites. This admittedly synthetic approach is *intertextual*, *intratextual*, and *typological* and assumes a high level of unity in the record, which, if required, would easily be demonstrable. I ask: “How did the writers of the Book of Mormon (especially Nephi) understand their own records in relation to former sacred history and texts?” The answer to that question gives insight into the book’s redemptive message, but in extended scriptural context. This method opens up the text to new readings and yet does not pretend to be definitive.

as “read[ing] in such a way that history [in God’s providences] is effectively rewritten in light of a graceful event” (Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 33). Even though Spencer attributes “two distinct models of typological interpretation in the Book of Mormon” (33), I propose a third, one other than those he has identified that pertain to Nephi (and Jesus) and Abinadi. Specifically, Spencer justifies his approach to Nephi in two passages wherein Nephi refers to his typology directly: 2 Nephi 11:4 and 2 Nephi 25:24–27 (33). My effort primarily focuses on a new reading of the second. Lastly, Spencer posits that Nephi’s typology is learned from Isaiah (99). Much of what I do is also grounded in the Prophet Isaiah’s writings. I follow Spencer’s standard divisions of the Book of Isaiah and see the authorship of Isaiah’s book much as he does (58–63).


20. Alma, carefully incorporates the words of Lehi and Nephi into his writings.

21. Some readers may fault this intratextual approach, saying it is an imposition on the text. However, it is demonstrable that Nephi’s writings are highly allusive and unified. For instance, in 2 Nephi 31 Nephi’s reader is required to remember both his brother Jacob’s former words and a person he calls “that prophet” (2 Nephi 31:1, 4). What makes this requirement interesting is that Jacob’s prior sermon (see 2 Nephi 6–10) is found about twenty chapters earlier and the prophet referred to is found about forty chapters earlier (see 1 Nephi 11:27). Clearly, Nephi asks much of his reader’s memory, and in doing so, suggests the unity of his record.

22. Spencer has explored a similar question using Alma 36 and 1 Nephi 1 (Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 8–11).

23. This method necessitating the pulling together of terms from different places within the text should not be dismissed lightly as Nephi and his successors were profoundly aware of each other as any close reading of the Book of Mormon demonstrates. Besides, Nephi’s prophetic manner was to lump language and ideas together as opposed to set up rigid categories like his brothers and the later Greek philosophers (see 1 Nephi 22:1–3).
Early Nephite Artifacts and Typology

This synthetic and figural method causes one to ask the related question, “What does the text of the Book of Mormon say about how the Nephites (especially Nephi) understood their inherited records and the reading of scripture” (see 2 Nephi 25:1–8 and Alma 32:28–43)?24 The first clues to answering this question may be derived from the early scene in the wilderness, wherein Nephi and his brothers return from Jerusalem with the brass plates, and Lehi “search[es] them from the beginning” (1 Nephi 5:10). The plates, prepared on “brass” so as to endure (see Jacob 4:1–2), “contain the five books of Moses” and a “genealogy of [Lehi’s] fathers,” and many prophecies, including the great prophecies of Joseph of Egypt (1 Nephi 5:11, 14; see 2 Nephi 4:2). On “beh[olding]” or seeing the brass plates, Lehi, “filled with the Spirit … prophes[ies] concerning his seed” (1 Nephi 5:11, 17; see also 2 Nephi 11:8 and Mosiah 1:5–6), predicts that they will “go forth unto all nations … who were of his seed,” adding they would “not be dimmed anymore by time” (1 Nephi 5:17–19). This wilderness episode, part of which resembles 2 Nephi 3 (both accounts speak of Joseph of Egypt and Moses and Lehi’s distant seed), wherein we observe Lehi as exegete reveals a pattern: 1) the record of Laban, himself of Joseph’s house, is made of brass; 2) the reading of the brass plates is described as beholding, seeing, or looking (see 1 Nephi 5:11, 17; see also 2 Nephi 11:8; Jacob 4:3; Mosiah 1:5–6); 3) it would go “forth unto all nations”; and 4) it would “not be dimmed anymore by time,” or to use Alma’s later language, it would “retain [its] brightness” or would not become corrupted in its meaning (Alma 37:3–5; see also 2 Nephi 25:22). This pattern descriptive of the brass plates (and, in part, the Liahona, as we shall see) Nephi and others projected onto the small record they kept that would be known as part of the Book of Mormon when added to Mormon’s plates.25

24. This question, more or less, is deeply explored in Joseph Spencer and Jenny Webb, eds., Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2016). Like many contributors to the edited volume just cited, I see Nephi in 2 Nephi 25–30 as creatively expounding Isaiah’s writings in terms of his own prophecy. He integrates, explains, re-contextualizes, repurposes, appropriates, adapts, and creatively expands and uses (as in Midrash) what is needed from the former prophet to make his own authoritative argument. He mines Isaiah, but also somewhat rewrites him. In this paper I use terms such as reference, allusion, echo, as synonyms. I am not creating a new methodology here, just applying a proven one to generate new understanding.

25. It is inconsequential that Mormon’s plates were apparently prepared on gold instead of brass. The material point is that Nephi and others intentionally prepared on precious metals a record to be preserved that would have healing
The italicized words and phrases above demonstrate how the account of Lehi’s reading of the brass plates relates to the biblical story involving serpents and salvation in Numbers 21:4–9. The following passage ascribed to Moses contains the language I analyze later on. However, the passages from the Book of Mormon that refer directly to the brass serpent episode are even more detailed (see footnote 2 for references). They were read and copied from the brass plates, and therefore, can be trusted where they are not also corrupted by error due to human weakness and other factors, such as the text’s translation into English (see 1 Nephi 19:6). Since the passage from Numbers is not found in full in the Book of Mormon, I provide the complete passage here as it stands in the King James Version of the Bible:

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Numbers 21:6–9)

If it is plausible that Nephi develops his typological project from his exposure to the brass plates, it is at least as plausible that he develops his approach to his record from the Liahona. That is because the compass power if looked upon. In the providences of the Lord, Nephi’s record was written well before Mormon’s work was completed. It does not matter that Mormon adds the Small Plates of Nephi late in his abridgement process. For one thing, it can be demonstrated that many parts of Nephi’s record anticipate Mormon’s abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi (see 1 Nephi 16:10, 26–29; 17:3, 41, 51; Alma 37:6–7, 38–39, 40–41, 44, 46). The frequency of stark direct allusion (or subtle reference) cannot be a coincidence. An article by Clifford P. Jones (“That Which You Have Translated, Which You Have Retained,” Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship 43 [2021], 1–64) suggests that Mormon became aware of the small plates while abridging the Book of Mosiah, after which he was heavily influenced by the small plates in his abridgement work.

26. Stan Spencer has argued that the Liahona, a kind of “urim,” served three purposes among the Nephites: 1) like a urim, it provided written instruction; 2) like
itself is described in Nephi’s account, much as an inspired book (and in Alma’s later account as the “word of Christ”) (Alma 37:44). It too is made of “brass” and is to be “looked upon,” and according to one’s “faith and diligence,” its “new writing” is “plain to be read … [giving] understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:29). In addition to the cultural artifacts that may have informed the production of Nephi’s small record, a record meant to heal the nations, he must also conceive of himself (or the record’s future translator) as an antitype of Moses. Fortunately, as indicated, both are true (see 1 Nephi 17:50; 2 Nephi 3:9–10). Nephi clearly understands his family’s sojourn in the wilderness after fleeing Jerusalem as a type of Israel’s Egyptian exodus (see 1 Nephi 17:23–32, 41–46).

To support the claim that Nephi finds correspondence with Moses’s raising of the serpent, I examine a brief but early characteristic passage from the Book of Mormon, which allows one to identify more evidence for the proposed reading. 1 Nephi 17, a chapter that frames the broad Mosaic typology involved as it relates to the word of Christ, also conveniently concentrates the relevant terms. The passage that follows directly echoes the language of Numbers 21 and prefigures other passages I examine in more depth later. In this passage, Nephi reproves his brothers because they have murmured, much as did the more ancient Israelites, against the Lord their God and against his chosen servant (see 1 Nephi 17:30). In the midst of Nephi’s defense of his father, he uses the miraculous episode of the brass serpent to advance his point:


27. George Tate explains as early as 1981 that “Nephi senses that he and his family are reenacting a sacred and symbolic pattern that looks back to Israel and forward to Christ — the pattern of the Exodus” (Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon”). Further, he writes, “Nephi is conscious of replicating Exodus and that he reads texts and visions figurally.” Importantly, in Tate’s treatment of the Exodus pattern in the Book of Mormon, he includes the passage my argument concludes with from 3 Nephi 15:9.
their iniquity. He sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way [Nephi’s phrase that Alma also employs] that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. (1 Nephi 17:41)²⁸

Admittedly, this more detailed Book of Mormon passage does not directly connect the brass serpent episode from Numbers 21 to the Book of Mormon, but as stated, it enables that analysis by providing certain interconnected words and phrases (“flying,” “healed,” “look,” “prepared a way,” and “simpleness of the way”) that when associated with Nephi’s record effectively confirm what is claimed. This is not unreasonable, given that this key language appears concentrated in chapters that emphasize the word of Christ. For example, in the above passage one sees Moses’s phrase “flying serpents” and his word “look” coupled with slight variations of Nephi’s and Alma’s words “simpleness” and “easiness” (see Alma 37:6, 44, 46). So, although Nephi’s typological teaching in 1 Nephi 17 does not refer to a book, Alma’s deployment of it refers his reader to the word of Christ and demonstrates that he reads Nephi (and Moses) in textual terms. But the argument is that Nephi’s typological project is taken up by Alma, and not vice versa. Thus we begin to see that the early Nephite artifacts and Nephi’s self-identification with Moses and his people’s wilderness sojourn may have contributed to Nephi’s understanding of his record and its transmission as sacred text and serpent with power to condemn or heal.

**Lehi’s Blessing to Joseph and Typology**

2 Nephi also draws upon these emergent patterns and preliminaries. Moses is again invoked in a textual context early in 2 Nephi 3, where Nephi records his father’s blessings to his posterity. The blessing I focus on contains a typological prophecy from Joseph of Egypt (see 2 Nephi 3:6–21). Lehi recounts it while blessing “[his] last-born … in the wilderness of [his] afflictions” (2 Nephi 3:1). In the last part of 2 Nephi 3, we may again find artifacts to consider: a “rod” and “judgment [in] writing,” —

²⁸ First Nephi 17, a chapter about the power and place of the word of God in salvation history, seems to structurally draw attention to this particular and isolated brass serpent episode. Whereas miracles have been recounted like the parting of the Red Sea, the raining of manna from heaven, the smiting of the rock, the brass serpent episode receives different treatment. It is presented as a test of faith that, if passed, qualifies them to enter the Promised Land.
a possible reference to sacred records such as tablets (2 Nephi 3:17). However, this time the artifacts identified are used only to introduce two ancient persons: 1) Moses (original custodian of the rod), and 2) Aaron, Moses’s “spokesman” (2 Nephi 3:17). These two persons, according to the prophecy’s logic, are to be typologically comparable to a later servant, a “choice seer,” and the record he would translate: presumably Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 3:7). Although there are alternative ways to understand the servant (“him”) and his “spokesman” referred to in 2 Nephi 3:18, the reading I propose is reasonable, since the servant seer referred to would be “great like unto Moses” (2 Nephi 3:9), and yet, also like Moses, would not be gifted in speaking: “I will not loose his tongue” (2 Nephi 3:17). And, what could be a more fitting “spokesman” for the seed of Joseph than the record of Joseph’s seed to be known as the Book of Mormon, as it would “cry from the dust” unto future generations (2 Nephi 3:18–20)? The blessing given by Lehi, therefore, not only provides a prophecy but compares Moses (a servant who brought forth a text written by the “finger [of God’s] own hand”) and his spokesman Aaron with Joseph Smith and the text he would “bring forth” by divine “power” that would convey those “words which are expedient in [God’s] wisdom should go forth unto the fruit of [Joseph’s loins]” (2 Nephi 3:11, 15, 19). That the Nephite record would “cry from the dust” announcing its message of “repentance” was apparently known to more than Isaiah, for here we find it originating with Joseph of Egypt (2 Nephi 3:20; see Isaiah 29:4).

Further, the reader of Lehi’s blessing is tacitly invited to typologically connect Moses’s raising of the serpent referred to by Nephi in 1 Nephi 17:41 to what becomes the Book of Mormon itself. This connection is signaled in verses 20 and 21 of 2 Nephi 3 where the comparison between Moses and Aaron with the servant seer and the Book of Mormon becomes understandable. The connection emerges when Lehi explains that “after this manner did my father of old prophesy,” implying that Joseph of Egypt had prophesied in a less than direct way (2 Nephi 3:22; see also 2 Nephi 25:1–8). From Joseph of Egypt’s prophecy, we learn that he was promised by the Lord that in a latter day he would “raise up” a seer who would “bring forth [his] word” (2 Nephi 3:6–11, 15). The word the seer would bring forth would also have the effect of “convincing” people of the “word which shall have already gone forth among them” (2 Nephi 3:11). The later book (Book of Mormon) would convince its

29. Second Nephi 3:17 again refers to the tablets later in the same verse: “I will write unto him [Moses] my law, by the finger of my own hand.”
readers of the truthfulness of the former (Bible). By the end of the prophecy (along with Lehi’s framing explanations in 2 Nephi 3:1–5 and 22–25), Nephi’s reader learns that the later book would fulfill one of the “covenants” made to Joseph of Egypt (2 Nephi 3:4). In the forthcoming record, Lehi explains, the “Messiah should be made manifest … in the spirit of power” (2 Nephi 3:5; see also 1 Nephi 13:35–42; 14:1). Notably, it is in this context that part of the prophecy in 2 Nephi 3 again employs a variation on Nephi’s earlier phrase from 1 Nephi 17:41: the “simplicity of the way” or the “easiness of [the way]” is evoked by the phrase the “simplicity of their words” (2 Nephi 3:20; see also Alma 37:46):30

And [the Nephites] shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their brethren, even after many generations have gone by them. And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go, even according to the simplicity of their words.

Because of their faith their words shall proceed forth out of my mouth unto their brethren who are the fruit of [Joseph of Egypt’s] loins; and the weakness of their words will I make strong in their faith, unto the remembering of the covenant which I have made unto thy fathers. (2 Nephi 3:20–21)

In the verses just cited, the similarly rare phrase “weakness of their words” suggests the imperfect character of the promised record as a translated document. The second of the two verses, vs. 21, equates through parallelism the phrase “simplicity of their words” with the “weakness of their words.” The repetition of the three-word phrase, “of their words,” and the common English suffix, “-ness,” links them in Nephi’s reader’s mind. Further, the parallel pulls together the earlier comparison between Moses and the servant seer and their spokesmen as well as 2 Nephi 3:20 with 1 Nephi 17:41 and Numbers 21 by means of the rare phrase “simplicity of the way” and its similarly contextualized.

30. Each of these last phrases appears only once in scripture. Because of the phrases’ clear similarities, I propose that they should be read in relation to each other. It appears that Nephi’s phrase “simplicity of the way” may derive from Joseph of Egypt’s phrase “simplicity of their words.” Alma seems to borrow from one or both of the former writers when he uses the phrase “easiness of the way,” easy being a synonym for simple, a word Alma uses only once and in reference to the Word (see Alma 37:6–7). Alma, in discussing the brass plates and other plates to come forth, employs the strongly related phrases “by small and simple things” and “by very small means” (ibid.). “[S]mall means” is only found in two places in scripture: 1 Nephi 16:29 (a passage about the Liahona as inspired text) and in Alma 37:6–7, 41 (passages about the brass plates of Laban and about the Liahona as the Word).
variants, which emphasize the phrase “their words.” Narrators of the emerging Nephite record lamented their “weakness” in writing. Nephi concerns himself with his weakness in writing (2 Nephi 33:1–4, 11) as does Jacob (Jacob 4:7) and Moroni (Ether 12:22–40). The servant seer himself also, according to the prophecy, was “out of weakness … made strong” (2 Nephi 3:13). The use of the word “simpleness” (or its variants) and its sister term “weakness” in 2 Nephi 3:20–21 and in the passages previously quoted (see 1 Nephi 17:41) intimates that they all should, as Joseph of Egypt predicts, in some sense “grow together” in Nephi’s reader’s imagination. According to the prophecy’s logic (and its framing commentary from Lehi), the later translated book described in 2 Nephi 3 would bear powerful witness of the “Messiah” and “grow together” with the earlier biblical record (2 Nephi 3:5, 12).

The claim for a Nephite type that effectively pulls together the writings of Nephi (and Alma) with the narrative of Moses’s brass serpent will get more attention. From Lehi’s blessing containing Joseph of Egypt’s prophecy, Nephi’s reader encounters at least two typological truths: 1) that the servant seer would not only become another Moses when he would “deliver my people, O house of Israel,” but 2) that what he would translate also would become a “spokesman” “from the dust” to future generations that would “bring [the Lord’s] people unto salvation” (2 Nephi 3:15, 17–18, 19). Like Moses, the servant seer would by means of a small and simple record deliver Israel “out of captivity unto freedom” (2 Nephi 3:5). Specifically, if we follow Lehi’s framing commentary, Joseph of Egypt received a promise from the Lord that through a “book” translated by one from his loins (see 2 Nephi 3:16–23), “the Messiah should be made manifest unto [his posterity] in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light — yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom” (2 Nephi 3:5; see also 1 Nephi 14:1; Isaiah 29:4, 18). Moreover, Joseph of Egypt was

31. Nephi has already been weaving the words of the brass plate’s prophets together with his small plates record in a rather ingenious way since at least 1 Nephi 19. He has intentionally multiplied witnesses and will yet do more of the same.

32. Apparently following Nephi, Alma directly compares the word of God to the Liahona and then indirectly compares the Word to the brass serpent account in Numbers 21 (see Alma 37:38–47; 38:2). Further, Alma directly speaks of typology or “shadow[s].” For him, typology compares the “temporal” to the “spiritual” (Alma 37:43). These interpretive distinctions were also made in Nephi’s day (see 1 Nephi 15:31–32; 1 Nephi 22:1–3).

33. The rare phrase “out of darkness unto light” found in 2 Nephi 3:5 appears only in two other passages of scripture, both of which discuss sacred records
assured that the servant seer commanded to do this work would be “great like unto Moses” and bring to pass “much restoration [gathering of] the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 3:9, 24). Lehi’s blessing describes in typological terms a foreordained seer who would raise up a messianic book to restore or heal Jew and Gentile and all nations.

Nephi’s Final Prophecy and Typology

Joseph of Egypt’s prophecy (see 2 Nephi 3:3, 5, 11, 14, 16, 19, 23) is again broadly alluded to in 2 Nephi 25 in similar typological context (see 2 Nephi 25:18, 21). Nevertheless, however convincing the foregoing argument has been, it has only been a beginning. Much transpires between 2 Nephi 3 and 2 Nephi 25 (too much to be considered in any detail here). For instance, Nephi records Jacob’s sermon on the fulfillment of the covenant (2 Nephi 6–10; see also Isaiah 49–52) along with several chapters from Isaiah on the “judgments of God, that … come upon all nations” (2 Nephi 25:3, 6) unless they, “see[ing] these words” (2 Nephi 11:8), repent and begin to believe in Christ (see 2 Nephi 12–24; see also Isaiah 2–14).

2 Nephi 25 is the first part of a longer prophecy on the eschatological role of the Book of Mormon in converting the Jews and Gentiles to Christ in a day of pending destruction. Oddly, the bulk of the Isaiah material in 2 Nephi is followed with a chapter that begins with a hermeneutic for Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 25:1–8). The chapter launches the reader into a prophecy and commentary that carefully interplays both with the foregoing writings of Nephi (including 2 Nephi 3) and Isaiah 29, a chapter he never actually fully records. 2 Nephi 25 is framed by two general subjects: 1) the prophets’ role in predicting Christ, and 2) the law of Moses’s role in predicting Christ. It is a chapter written for the benefit of Nephi’s people and other Jews of the house of Israel and can be divided further into three additional parts, the last two of which frame my discussion: In Part 1, as indicated, Nephi acknowledges the difficulty and yet importance of understanding the prophets, especially Isaiah (see coming forth (see Alma 37:23–25; Mormon 8:16). So, although in 2 Nephi 3:5 a people emerge from darkness unto light when the “Messiah [is] made manifest unto to them,” its sequential phrases “out of darkness unto light” and “out of hidden darkness” and “out of captivity” elsewhere suggest the coming forth of a messianic record out of the “ground,” “dust,” or “earth” (see Isaiah 29:4, 18; Mormon 8:16). In practical terms, the record would come forth out of darkness unto light before its readers could come forth from their spiritual darkness unto spiritual light through conversion to the Messiah.
2 Nephi 25:1–8). Parts 2 and 3 are framed, as stated, by the subjects of the prophets (see 2 Nephi 25:9–23) and the law (see 2 Nephi 25:24–30).

What harmonizes the chapter’s three parts is that despite Nephi’s repeated claims to communicate in “plainness” (see 2 Nephi 25:4, 7, and 20), his reader, if not familiar with typology, can easily miss what he suggests by his comparative method, much as he/she may do when interpreting 1 Nephi 17 and 2 Nephi 3. Unlike his people, Nephi has experience with the “manner of prophesying among the Jews,” and now that he seeks to communicate with the Jews (they understanding the prophets as they do), he may intentionally speak to them in the manner he believes they will best comprehend (see 2 Nephi 25:5). So, Nephi’s typological approach that compares Moses’s brass serpent to the record to be known as the Book of Mormon may be part of his attempt to be so plain that “[no person] can err,” even if communication by allusive comparison is not how his modern readers normally define plainness in writing (2 Nephi 25:20). In an interesting way, as poets know, figurative approaches may strike a kind of clarity far more memorable and powerful than mere straightforward prose.

Nephi’s prophecy in 2 Nephi 25 focuses his reader’s attention yet again on the brass serpent, but this time in terms of the book referred to in 2 Nephi 3:23 (and Isaiah 29:18). For Nephi, the book for the nations is a second brass serpent, but in a new expanding international context. Nephi’s prophecy deals with the Jewish and Gentile reception of the record in the final dispensation. There are at least three reasons for saying that Nephi likens the record he engraves on plates to the brass serpent raised by Moses in Numbers 21: 1) According to Isaiah’s prophecies (and the revelations Nephi has experienced), the record would lift up the name of Messiah (serpent) to a perishing world before his second coming; 2) it would heal all those nations and peoples who look unto it and thereby are convinced or persuaded to believe in Jesus

34. Nephi’s writings present a paradox. That is, he frequently extols plainness and yet composes an often sophisticated presentation (see 2 Nephi 25:4, 7, 33:6). I think we are to comprehend Nephi’s plainness in relative terms. He is not writing in what modern Gentiles would call a professional or academic mode. Instead, he writes prophetically, typologically, and allusively, and with all the energy of his soul. His plainness is an ancient Eastern plainness, not a modern Western plainness. Further, he confesses that he has a weakness when it comes to writing that is not present when he speaks (see 2 Nephi 33:1–3).

35. Andrew Skinner in “Serpent Symbols and Salvation” equates the serpent with the Messiah using Genesis 1–2.
Christ and enter into his latter-day kingdom; and 3) it would *hiss*\(^{36}\) *forth* and gather the “meek” and “poor among men” before the end (see 2 Nephi 27:29–30; Isaiah 29:18–19). To begin, the specific writings that Nephi desires his readers to “see” that they might “rejoice for all men” often are punctuated by reference to the lifting up of a “standard” (sign) in a latter day (2 Nephi 11:8; see also 2 Nephi 25:17; 3 Nephi 29:4). The following three sections provide examples of Isaiah’s standard motif from 2 Nephi 15 (see Isaiah 5) and 21 (see Isaiah 11).

**He Will Lift Up an Ensign**

Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, their [God’s ancient covenant people] root shall be rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore, is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them; and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets [i.e., Israel would be destroyed and scattered to the nations]. For all this [God’s] anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still [possibly in great mercy].\(^{37}\)

\(^{36}\) In most biblical commentaries, the Hebrew word translated in the KJV as “hiss” (*sharaq*) in Isaiah 5:26 is said to mean “whistle,” “signal,” or “call.” See Terry B. Ball, “Isaiah Chapter Review: 2 Nephi 15 // Isaiah 5” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company 2003), 149, 365, 610; and H8319, James Strong, “*Sharaq*,” in *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1995), 610 (also see H8322). (Another way “hiss” is commonly deployed, as mentioned in footnote 6, is to suggest condemnation, scorn, or ridicule.) I will later suggest that Nephi may be adapting Isaiah’s words or building on them to add further allusions or implications. Suggesting that Nephi uses an “adaptive methodology” when he *likens* Isaiah to his own situation and later generations’ receipt of his Nephite record is consistent with several recent essays collected on the subject of Nephi’s creative appropriation of his prophetic predecessor Isaiah. In addition, “not only does Nephi creatively adapt Isaianic images into new, prophetically projected contexts, but Isaiah himself consistently employs images, metaphors, and symbols that are already open to multiple interpretations and readily available for future adaptation,” as stated by Joseph Spencer regarding Isaiah 29 in “Summary Report” in *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah*, 9.

\(^{37}\) This last image of the outstretched or lengthened arm or hand of the Lord is a common Isaianic refrain in the chapters that Nephi quotes in 2 Nephi. For instance, it appears as a poetic refrain three times in 2 Nephi 19:12, 17, 21 (see
And [because he is merciful] he will lift up an ensign to the nations [i.e., a book containing the fullness of the everlasting gospel of the Messiah] from far, and will hiss unto them [its readers] from the end of the earth; and behold, they shall come

Isaiah 9:12, 17, 21) and twice in 28:32. It appears that Nephi creatively adapts the phrase to convey mercy (signified by a book’s emergence in a day of apostasy) as opposed to the threat of further judgment, which is the common way to understand this Isaianic use of the image. In the Nephite mind (Jacob also uses the image as does Nephi, see Jacob 6:5), God’s promise to extend his arm/hand in great mercy is to be understood as his effort to gather the seed of Abraham from among the nations through the Book of Mormon and the Restoration, as can be seen by reading 3 Nephi 22 (see Isaiah 54) in context with Jesus’s other teachings in 3 Nephi 9–27.

38. The treatment of the word “ensign” in its various iterations in the prophecies of Isaiah is somewhat complicated (Isaiah 5:26 and 11:10, 12). However, they are remarkably consistent as to the word’s literal meaning. According to most sources, an “ensign” is “a standard, banner, flag, or signal to which the nations are to rally” (Ball, “Isaiah Chapter Review,” 365). Where the complexity comes in is in attempting to determine what Isaiah’s word “ensign” may refer to symbolically, for it is variously to be “lift[ed] up” (5:26), “stand” (11:10), and/or be “set up” (11:12). Most LDS scholars view the ensign as referring to one or more aspects of the gospel restoration, or the restoration itself. Terryl L. Givens explains that for certain early members of the Church, the Word could represent the Church, its elders, or the Book of Mormon. I agree in spirit with this general understanding (Givens in a later chapter heading also suggests that the book can be understood as “A Standard”) but argue specifically that the “ensign” (or “standard”) in Isaiah’s writings primarily refers to the invitation underscored in the new covenant (it is also “everlasting”), the Book of Mormon, to believe in Christ and come unto him and his kingdom. The ensign is the book and its message, making it a “messenger before [God’s] face to prepare the way before [him]” (D&C 45:9). As the Book of Mormon suggests of itself, it is the “sign” (or in-“sign”) of the gospel restoration (see 3 Nephi 21:1 and 29:1–4). See Terryl L. Givens, By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 64–66, 240.

Furthermore, there are certain scholars (for example, Wallace E. Hunt, Jr.) who assert that the phrase “fiery flying serpent” cited in the Book of Mormon (differing from the account in Numbers 21 by addition of the word “flying”) may refer to the manner in which Moses’s serpent was placed horizontally on its pole or standard, making it more of a “flagstaff” (Hunt, Jr. “Moses’s Serpent,” 129). I would add that the addition of the adjective “flying” to the phrase in the Book of Mormon (probably a phrase derived from the more perfect brass plates’ account) may also correspond to the familiar teaching in Nephi’s great prophecy concluding his record that the Messiah would, “rise from the dead with healing in his wings,” wings being suggestive of flying and the name Messiah being suggestive of serpent (2 Nephi 25:13; 26:9; see footnote 35). Some work has also been done on Nephi’s use of “flying” in “Why Did Nephi Say Serpents Could Fly?,” Book of Mormon Central, May 22, 2017, https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/why-did-nephi-say-serpents-could-fly.
with speed swiftly [i.e., be gathered]; none shall be weary nor stumble among them. (2 Nephi 15:24–26)

And relatedly, in 2 Nephi 21 (see Isaiah 11) Nephi records a prophecy that the angel Moroni instructed Joseph Smith in 1823 was “about to be fulfilled” (see JSH 1:40):

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse [possibly a latter-day servant], which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it [the record the servant would translate] shall the Gentiles seek [i.e., they shall look to its message and the work it ushers in]; and his rest [presumably the translator’s] shall be glorious.

And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people [another reference to the book and work that would come forth; see also 2 Nephi 3:15] which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

And [God] shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (2 Nephi 21:10–12; see also D&C 45:9)

The above Isaianic passages quoted at length by Nephi (and rehearsed by the angel Moroni, the heavenly being who holds the keys to the Nephite record) describe a servant and/or object lifted up that would signal a gathering of the Lord’s people. What would be “lifted up” would be a sign, antitype, or signal “set up” “to the nations” or “for the nations,” suggesting that the Lord had “set his hand again a second time to recover his people” (2 Nephi 15:26; 21:12). The Book of Mormon is referred to as the “sign” (“these sayings”) of the commencement of the work of the Father in at least two places: 3 Nephi 21:1 and again in 3 Nephi 29:4. Thus, I infer that this second event, when the Lord would “set his hand again a second time to recover his people,” serves as an antitype of the event described in Numbers 21, wherein we learn that the serpent was lifted up, and because of its divinely bestowed power, was able to “heal the nations” of Israel who looked unto it (2 Nephi 25:20).
In Nephi’s prophecy in 2 Nephi 25, astute readers see he draws attention to two names. That is, what is lifted are names that would have healing properties. The first is the name of “Messiah” and the second is the name of “Jesus Christ.” As if for emphasis, Nephi uses the name of Messiah eight times in only seven verses in Chapter 25. The following verse from Nephi characterizes the title’s frequency in the text:

Wherefore, [God] shall bring forth his words unto them [the Jewish peoples], which words shall judge them at the last day, for they [the words] shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come, for there should not any come, save it should be a false Messiah which should deceive the people; for there is save one Messiah spoken of by the prophets, and that Messiah is he who should be rejected of the Jews. (2 Nephi 25:18)

Nephi’s emphatic approach makes some sense at this point in his prophecy since he seeks to “convince” the Jews who are familiar with the title of Messiah to “believe in Christ,” the same being who came among them only to be “rejected by them.” Moreover, Nephi employs the name Messiah because it conveys the typological intention involved. In this passage, Nephi redirects the Jews’ vision, for he admonishes them that they “need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come,” for he has already come, and, Nephi implies, that Messiah now should be looked to if they desire to live (2 Nephi 25:18). Nephi may enfold something else into the passage. That may be why he exults near the beginning of his account after prophesying that the Messiah would “rise from the dead with healing in his wings” that “[his] heart doth magnify [or glorify, lift up, or make appear enlarged] his holy name” for all to see (2 Nephi 25:13). At verse 20 in the same chapter, Nephi ceases to repeat the name “Messiah” and begins to invoke the name “Jesus Christ,” thus reorienting the eyes and hearts of his Jewish audience to the Messiah’s Christian name. It is here that Nephi directly refers to and dwells on the

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40. This name is apparently first revealed to the Nephites by Jacob as recorded in 2 Nephi 10:3. His account, however, is largely concerned with the name, Holy One of Israel. Before this time, the Nephite writings emphasize names for the Lord, such as Messiah, Savior, and Redeemer (see 1 Nephi 10:4–6).
account of Moses’s holding up the brass serpent for the nations of Israel that they might be healed from the bites they had sustained.

**That He Should Heal the Nations**

As indicated, Nephi’s prophecy underscores the spiritual healing that would take place among all the nations for those who would choose to believe in or look unto the name Jesus Christ as revealed through the book (ensign) Nephi struggles to engrave. The following important passage from Nephi’s argument highlights his position that the Jews (and all who read his prophecy and book) should look unto Jesus Christ to be restored and healed:

> And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err. And as the Lord God ... gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto the serpent ... behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved.

> Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me [Nephi] that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph [of Egypt], that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand [see 2 Nephi 3:3, 5, 11, 14, 16, 19, 23].

> Wherefore, these things [Nephi’s writings] shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; and the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written.

> For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren [the Lamanites and others of the house of Israel], to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:20–23)

This pivotal passage from Nephi that identifies and develops an intertextual comparison and type or shadow, and others that follow it which develop the meaning further, emphasizes also the importance of looking to Jesus Christ for salvation. Salvation in this sense has to do
with remission of sin. In marking the relevant language that follows, it is
clear that Nephi understands his record to be a type of brass serpent like
that found in Numbers 21 to those among the nations of the earth in the
last days. He continues to exhort his Jewish brethren in what remains of
the same chapter and prophecy:

And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of
Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ,\textsuperscript{41} until
the law shall be fulfilled.

For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath
become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because
of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments.

And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of
Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our
prophecies, that our children may know to what source they
may look for a remission of their sins.

Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children
may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the
deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which
is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. And
after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden
their hearts against him when the law ought to be done away.
(2 Nephi 25:24–27)

As Nephi concludes his high-stakes argument, he has three
times spoken of choosing between “life” and “death” — the Nephite
record’s emergence would force a choice (see 1 Nephi 14:7) and cause
a division (see 2 Nephi 30:10). He directs the ears, eyes, and hearts of his
audience to Jesus Christ, the name above all names under heaven (see
2 Nephi 25:20), using language reminiscent of Numbers 21:4–9 and later
passages in the Book of Mormon dealing with the same Mosaic motif
(see page 4). The phrasal repetitions underscore Nephi’s teaching that
“believ[ing] in Christ” is the “right way,” and apparently, the opposite
Finally, Nephi invites his audience not only to believe in Christ, the Holy
One of Israel, but he commands them to “bow down before him and

\textsuperscript{41}. The phrase “look forward,” or its negative variant, “look not forward,” appears
first in 2 Nephi 25, and among the LDS scriptures is only in the Book of Mormon.
About one third of the phrase’s thirteen mentions occur in 2 Nephi 25–26 (see
2 Nephi 25:16, 18, 24, 27; 26:8).
worship him” (2 Nephi 25:29). The remainder of the extended prophecy after 2 Nephi 25 describes the book’s miraculous coming forth and its mixed reception among the Gentile nations which are “drunken with iniquity” and in a “deep sleep” (2 Nephi 27–30).

**My Words Shall Hiss Forth**

Nephi’s extended prophecy makes a few more connected contributions as it advances to its end (an end that alludes to 1 Nephi 8, 11–14, 19–22, 2 Nephi 3; 2 Nephi 6–10; and Isaiah 2–14), not the least of which is Nephi’s representation of the poisoned condition of the nations and their potential redemption through hearing and accepting the words of a sealed book. *Hearing the word in faith or belief is prerequisite to seeing or knowing by the power of the Holy Ghost in Nephi’s holistic ontology of the prophecy* (see 2 Nephi 27:12–13). Thus, hearing precedes convincing and conversion, which process brings healing. Nevertheless, the readers of the sacred book to spring forth are initially identified as both “deaf” and “blind,” both “meek” and “poor” (2 Nephi 27:29–30). These receptive readers are they who shall believe in Christ upon hearing the new and additional “testimony,” and then they shall “see out of obscurity” and “sanctify his [Christ’s] name” (2 Nephi 27:29–30, 34; 29:8). Speaking of the remnant of Lehi (and implicitly all nations), Nephi says that the “scales of darkness shall fall from their eyes” when they hear his words of testimony and begin to believe in Christ (2 Nephi 30:5–8).42 In light of my claims about Nephi’s typological project that derives from Numbers 21, 2 Nephi 29 is particularly interesting. In the midst of Nephi’s discussion of the Gentile’s response to the Nephite record in the last days, his readers

42. It appears that the spiritually benighted Lehites (those with “scales” — perhaps snake scales — over their eyes) who have heard the voice of Christ again and seen the merciful hand of God reaching out for them may be figuratively represented as serpents themselves. They shed their scales/skin from their eyes and partake of a newness of life in Christ. Scholars have recently compared Nephi’s creative adaptations of Isaiah to the breathing of new resurrected life into the letter of the scriptures. See Jenny Webb, “Slumbering Voices: Death and Textuality in 2 Nephi,” in *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah*, 59–74, and George Handley, “On the Moral Risks of Reading Scripture,” in *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah*, 89–104. Likening is enlivening or resurrecting the text, giving it new possibilities. These Lehite converts having “dwindled in unbelief” for many generations have allowed the poison of false traditions, error, and sin to transform them into serpents who are now healed by looking to the true serpent (2 Nephi 26:15). After healing, they become the spiritual seed of the true serpent, Christ, becoming his sons and daughters. This fulfills the Lehitic covenant as articulated to the Nephite fathers.
encounter this material probably influenced by an Isaianic passage he had quoted earlier (2 Nephi 15:26; Isaiah 5:26):

But behold, there shall be many — at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work [e.g., bring forth the Book of Mormon and other associated events] among them [the Gentile nations43], that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed [the Nephite record] should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And because my words shall hiss forth — many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be anymore Bible. (2 Nephi 29:1–3)

Near the end of Nephi’s prophecy, English language readers might assume that the prophet, picking up on Joseph of Egypt’s and Isaiah’s Mosaic suggestiveness, typologically likens the sibilant sounds of a serpent (a hiss) to the words that would “whisper out of the dust” to the stumbling nations (2 Nephi 26:16; see also Genesis 3:14–15, Isaiah 66:25, and Micah 7:17, which associate the serpent with dust, further supporting a relationship between the hissing of the “voice from the dust” and the brass serpent). As discussed further below, such a reading may be plausible, even though the Hebrew word for “hiss” does not carry the same association to serpents that it does in English.

Nephi, drawing upon biblical teachings, describes the faint but urgent voice/hiss of his fallen people to his reader variously as a “cry,” a “speech,” or a “whisper” from the dust (2 Nephi 3:19–21, 26:15–16; cf. 2 Nephi 27:9, 33:13; Mormon 8:23; and Moroni 10:27). Accordingly, Nephi appears to use Isaiah’s term for “whistle” or “call” from Isaiah 5:26, translated as “hiss” in the KJV, to suggest the distant but intense voice of his fallen people. Isaiah indicates that the sign (ensign/pole/staff/standard) and hiss (familiar voice of a fallen people) would come “from far,” arguably consistent with a New World source.

43. See the previous verse in 2 Nephi 28:32, which is directed to the Gentiles.
Here is how Nephi puts it in 2 Nephi 29:2 “I [God will] remember your [Nephi’s] seed … that the words of your seed [the Nephite record] should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard/ensign unto my people, which are of the house of Israel.” The same Hebrew word is used for “ensign” in Isaiah 5:26 that is used for “pole” in Numbers 21:8–9. Here I propose that the voice of a remote fallen people, possibly like a snake’s small or weak (but distinct) hissing forth or whispering forth, would come from out of the dust (adding to the serpent association), and, importantly, from out of the mouth of Christ (the real antitype of the brass serpent raised by Moses) in a record to heal the blind and perishing nations.44 So, although Egypt was mockingly exhorted to seek “balm” in “Gilead,” it would be “vain [ … for them to] use many medicines; for [they would] not be cured [healed]” without turning and looking to God (Jeremiah 46:11).

The question remains as to whether the use of “hiss” in the Book of Mormon might have been intended in some way to invoke the concept of a serpent, given that the KJV “hiss” in Isaiah 5:26, which Nephi draws upon, does not actually refer to the aspirate sound of a serpent. The answer may be no, though some speculative possibilities might be considered. “Hiss,” as in Nephi’s phrase “hiss forth” in 2 Nephi 29:2, in Hebrew means something like to be shrill, such as with the shrill noise or sound of a whistle, or other sharp call or signal. One possibility is that the leading sibilant in the word for “hiss,” sharaq (and its close associates), may stir still other associations with the sibilant-containing word for serpent, nachash (the word repeatedly used in Numbers 21:9). Victor Avigdor Hurowitz employs an onomatopoetic method to Numbers 21:4–9, not solely focusing on a single word’s literal meanings, but also considering the allusions to serpent sounds through repeated sibilants in proximity.45

Interestingly, while Nephi quotes Isaiah 5 in 2 Nephi 15, he uses Isaiah 5:26 in 2 Nephi 29:2 in a way that may bring together several sibilants in the Hebrew and add one more. Isaiah 5:26 begins by using the words nasa’ (raise up) and nes (standard/ensign, the same word translated as “pole” in Numbers 21:8–9 that held the brass serpent), and then later has three sibilants from the roots sharaq, qatseh, and erets,

44. A type may have several antitypes, without diminishing the worth of its application to Christ in whom all things center (see 2 Nephi 11:4).
translated as “hiss unto them from the end of the earth.”

2 Nephi 29:2 has the phrase “my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel,” invoking the sibilant-containing roots sharaq, qatseh, erets, nes, and Yisrael. Perhaps Nephi achieves here the serpent-suggesting onomatopoetic effect described by Hurowitz. This is, of course, speculative and merely a suggestion for further study.

Further speculative possibilities may be considered involving the word “whisper.” While Nephi in 2 Nephi 26:16 most likely used the same Hebrew word Isaiah used for the KJV “whisper” in Isaiah 29:4, tsaphaph, Strong’s H6850, another Hebrew word for “whisper,” lachash, Strong’s H3907, is quite similar to the word for serpent, nachash, and again has a sibilant, like the word for “hiss,” sharaq. Both possibilities for “whisper” begin with a sibilant (tsaphaph begins with the letter tsade, one of several sibilants in Hebrew), and there is the possibility that these or related words used by Nephi may have resonated with or invoked concepts associated with the serpent, nachash, or the fiery serpent, seraph.

Whether “hiss” or related words may have been used to provide a subtle suggestion of serpents in the Hebrew, Nephi’s use of the “ensign” or “standard,” apparently based on the same word used for “pole” in the account of the brass serpent in Numbers, and the association of the standard with the words of the Lord that will hiss forth in 2 Nephi 29:2, links the future Book of Mormon with the brass serpent that can heal the nations. When the “standard” is lifted up and “hisses forth,” many hearing and understanding it would “look to God and live” (Alma 37:47), while many others, when it would be lifted up, not understanding it,


48. Ibid.

49. Strong, The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, 610 (H8319, H8322), 93 (H5172, H5173, H5174, H5175), 149 (H8319, H8322 [see entry for Jeremiah 51:37]).

50. A related connection is the concept of conjuring, known to be associated with serpents and also a meaning of lachash (Strong’s H3907). Laman and Lemuel apparently accuse Nephi of planting the brass Liahona before their father’s tent in these accusatory words: “and he [Nephi] worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness” (1 Nephi 16:38), suggesting that conjuring was the implicit charge.
would refuse to look (some even raging against it, as in 2 Nephi 28:20, 28), though the “labor which they had to perform” would be simple or easy (1 Nephi 17:41). Those readers who would be meek and charitable enough to receive the record, even though it is written in weakness, would “come to [an] understanding” and “learn doctrine” (2 Nephi 27:30, 35). Moroni, apparently also aware of Nephi’s project, concludes the Book of Mormon with similar language to that of his predecessors. Here are his parting words concerning the record he seals up to be raised up and carried forth:

I declare these things [the emergence of the Nephite writings in a day of salvation] unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God (see 2 Nephi 27:23); and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.51

That last phrase, “from generation to generation,” as indicated earlier, conjures up again Nephi’s extended prophecy wherein the phrase is repeated four times (see 2 Nephi 25:9, 16, 21–22; see also 2 Nephi 3:19–20).

**Conclusion**

We have seen that Nephi, apparently drawing on his experience with cultural artifacts, on the inspired words of his father to his brother, and on his own searching of Isaiah, understood that his writings (and the writings of others who would keep the records after him) would come forth in a future day. The record as typological figure would represent three truths: 1) a sign would be raised to proclaim the name and grace of Jesus Christ to a perishing world before the end as a means of saving it; 2) the ensign or record would effectively heal all those nations and peoples who would look unto Christ when they, hearing it, would believe and be persuaded of it and all it confirms; and 3) the record would “hiss forth” in some sense, as a call that would help gather the meek and poor of the earth, and all those who would be willing to repent and be baptized and enter the kingdom of God on earth. When Nephi transferred his sacred records, he transferred his project. It is unclear how much of his understanding made it down to later writers and editors of the record. Nevertheless, it seems possible that much the same understanding was passed down to figures like Alma as they demonstrate an awareness of aspects of the original project. For instance, Alma, as indicated, fuses the “word of Christ,” the brass “compass,” and

51. The phrase “from generation to generation” appears fourteen times in the Book of Mormon, seven of them in 2 Nephi (four of them in 2 Nephi 25).
the narrative from Numbers 21 in the context of typology in his record (Alma 37:44).

Alma seems to adapt the typological tradition established by Nephi even as he persuades his audience to “believe in” Jesus Christ, “the Son of God” (see Alma 33:18–22). In his message, he accentuates the healing properties of Jesus Christ who would “come to redeem his people,” or all those who would look to him and believe on him:

Behold, [the Son of God] was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live.

But few understood the meaning of those things, and this because of the hardness of their hearts. But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished. Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would heal them.

O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief, and be slothful, that ye would not cast about your eyes, that ye might perish?

If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead … (Alma 33:19–22).

This passage highlighting the healing power that results from “casting about [one’s] eyes” to Christ seems a fitting conclusion, since healing is a characteristic of the text with which we began (see 1 Nephi 17:41). Like Nephi, Alma understood the brass serpent Moses “raised up” as a type of Christ’s crucifixion and mission (Alma 33:19–22). It suggested to Alma’s mind that Christ would “suffer and die to atone for their sins” and also “rise again from the dead” (Alma 33:22). That is the most common way to see the typology involved. What I have argued, in contrast to that common Christological approach, is that the record prepared by the Lord would also point its readers to Christ in a latter day, and therefore serves

52. It appears that some looked and were healed but never really understood by whom they were healed. What is implied here is that some not only looked but also pondered the sign given and began to understand the meaning of those things.
as an eschatological fulfillment of the type. The Book of Mormon, which bears persuasive witness of Christ and his gospel, was also anticipated by Moses's act, if not by Moses himself. This was understood by the prophets (see Helaman 8:14–16, 24).

Lastly, the curative qualities of the record (or rather of Christ who speaks in spiritual power through the record) that Nephi and others prepare for the nations is a serpent of brass in another important sense: it teaches them of the universal resurrection through Christ, which central truth provides the ultimate healing, hope, and consolation. The serpent has long been a symbol across cultures of divine resurrection and regeneration. Many of the prophets understood that the record would speak from the dead. It would “shine forth out of darkness” as if it were itself raised from the slumber of death (Mormon 8:16). Lifted up, and having “retained [its purity or] brightness,” it has power to save all from perishing from the philosophical poisons and moral pollutions of the world, whether sectarian or secular in origin (Alma 37:5). As the passage above illustrates, the doctrine of the universal resurrection is fundamental to the messianic message of the Book of Mormon. It is addressed powerfully page after page.

In fact, the grand climactic scene in the record depicts the promised descent of the resurrected Christ to his people with “healing in his wings” (2 Nephi 25:13, 20; 3 Nephi 17:5–10). On that sacred occasion, he instructs the Lehites in many truths relative to the eventual fulfillment of the prophecies and the covenant made to Abraham, Lehi, and Nephi. In the midst of that unparalleled, two-day sermon spanning the body of Third Nephi, Jesus Christ demonstrates his awareness and acceptance of Nephi’s former declarations and offering, and of the promised record’s eschatological destiny to bring to pass the gathering of the house of Israel.

53. Hugh Nibley and Michael Rhodes have done much work linking the serpent as symbol to resurrection and regeneration in their work on facsimile 2 from the Book of Abraham. See Hugh Nibley and Michael D. Rhodes, One Eternal Round (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 250. Andrew Skinner reminds his reader more than once of this ancient Egyptian idea of the snake as symbol of regeneration. See Skinner, “Serpent Symbols and Salvation.” One reason for this understanding is that the snake sheds its skin periodically and, therefore, has become a symbol of regeneration and resurrected life. Saint Augustine, for instance, attributes the sluffing off of the skin of the snake to its passing through a “narrow opening.” In this manner, Augustine says, the snake not only “sheds its skin” but “renews its vigor.” For him, the snake is a symbol of the “old man” put[ting] on the “new” man in Christ. See Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 51.
He says, in essence, the law of Moses, which the Nephites have observed for so long, is fulfilled in me. Then, apparently alluding to typological elements from Nephi, he authoritatively commands all to look to him and live: “Behold, I am the law and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end,” he promises, “will I give eternal life (3 Nephi 15:6–9; see also 3 Nephi 9:13; 17:5–10).”

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54. This final reference (see 3 Nephi 15:6–9) appears in a passage that touches upon the law and the prophets, as does 2 Nephi 25, although, there, the prophets come before the law.
Abstract: During the last century there has been a prophetic emphasis on the understanding of women and their priesthood power and authority that has been unprecedented since the days of Joseph Smith. Through the use of scripture and teachings of our prophets and leaders of the restoration, this paper seeks to clarify the contemporary role of women in relation to their priesthood power and authority. By integrating the patriarchal priesthood—that priesthood entered into by Eve and Adam, lost during the time of Moses, and again revealed in our day in the Kirtland Temple—with the administrative priesthood found in the public Church and spoken of more traditionally, we can better understand the privileges, powers, and authorities associated with the temple that are critical for our day.

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.


In the past decade, we have seen an acceleration of invitations for women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to understand their
priesthood power and authority. In reference to the 2013 worldwide leadership training meeting she attended, then Relief Society general president Linda K. Burton related that “Elder Oaks emphatically stated: Men are not the priesthood! To me, that is a wake-up call as well as an invitation to all of us to study, ponder, and come to better understand the priesthood.” She then declared, “Sisters, we cannot stand up and teach those things we do not understand and know for ourselves.”

Six years later, Sister Jean B. Bingham, who had replaced Sister Burton as the Relief Society general president, extended the following invitation to the women of the Church:

To all of us who have daughters and sons, nieces and nephews, young women and young men—will you teach them this? Teach them that in church callings, temple ordinances, family relationships, and quiet, individual ministry, Latter-day Saint women and men go forward with priesthood power and authority.

Teach them that the interdependence of men and women in accomplishing God’s work through His priesthood power is central to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and will help prepare the world for the Savior’s second coming.

This statement advances Sister Burton’s thoughts further. In addition to asking the women of the Church to understand their priesthood power and authority, Sister Bingham was asking them to use it!

In her 2019 women’s conference talk, Sister Bingham clarified, “I bear my witness that each woman is a beloved daughter of Heavenly Parents, and in this latter-day has been given the opportunity to be endowed with priesthood power that will help her achieve all her righteous desires and dreams. My hope is,” she continues, “the same as President Nelson’s, that each will take [our] ‘rightful and needful place in [our] homes, in [our] communities, and in the kingdom of God—more than [we] ever have before.’”

Between these talks, other Church leaders, primarily the First Presidency and senior apostles, have invited the women of the Church to learn more about, understand, and use the priesthood for various reasons. The prophet himself, the members of the First Presidency and leaders of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Relief Society general president, all her counselors, the Young Women’s general president, and the Primary general presidency are all asking the women of the Church to start studying, understanding, and using their priesthood power and authority as never before.
Some of places where leaders have asked women to do this include but are not limited to the following:

- Sharon Eubank, “This Is a Woman’s Church,” (FairMormon conference, August 2014).
This focus of women understanding their priesthood power and authority is unprecedented in this dispensation since the days of Joseph Smith. Like President Nelson, Joseph Smith also seemed to have a prophetic priority on preparing people, both women and men, for the temple and their priesthood power and authority. This paper will look at the priesthood in terms of its more holistic definitions, its historical context, and the significance and emphasis the prophet and Church leaders have put on women understanding their priesthood power and authority both during Joseph Smith’s leadership and today, especially in regard to the temple. Perhaps with this understanding, women in our day will fulfill the prophet’s blessing to “understand the priesthood power with which you have been endowed and that you will augment that power by exercising your faith in the Lord and in His power.”

The Definitions of Priesthood

It has become apparent that one of the major struggles in understanding and using the priesthood for women is a matter of semantics. Recently, members often speak of and discuss the priesthood as if it has one definition only and as if that definition is all encompassing. A single definition of priesthood causes many to have a very narrow view of what the priesthood is. Recently, Church leaders have tried to expand and help clarify a broader definition of priesthood that is more inclusive than some might have previously articulated. For example, Elder Dale G. Renlund and his wife recently wrote a book on the priesthood. In this book they explained,

Many members of the Church who accept, love, and appreciate the priesthood may find themselves “fuzzy” on the doctrine and principles. Perhaps that is because the term priesthood is used in at least two ways. First, *priesthood* is the term used to describe the total power and authority of God. Second, *priesthood* is also the term used to describe the power and authority that God gives to ordained priesthood holders on earth to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God’s children.

Elder and Sister Renlund refer to the two definitions of priesthood in the same way that we might define the earth. We use the term *earth* to describe the entire globe and planet on which we live, but yet we would also use the term *earth* to describe the dirt that we hold in our hands.
The second definition of the priesthood is the most commonly used and understood by the members of the Church for many reasons. One is that we have priesthood-holding men speaking to priesthood-holding men in general conference. In these settings, male leaders are doing specific training and teaching, primarily regarding the second definition of the priesthood. As most administrative functions of the Church are also held by men, these talks are understandably perpetuated by men through the Church Educational System, Temple Department, Priesthood Department, Curriculum, etc. with historically little distinction or focus on women or the larger definition of priesthood. Thus, historically, we have many more talks, training, and educational material regarding the second definition than the first. Until recently, the priesthood session of general conference was held twice as often as the Relief Society session and was considered more official. And for years it was, frankly, quite taboo for women or men to talk about women and their priesthood power and authority.

Therefore, in our efforts to help members of the Church understand the more inclusive definition of priesthood and how it relates to women, it is important to talk about it in terms that do not require ordination to a priesthood office but rather focus on the broader definition of God’s power and authority (see Figure 1). By focusing our definition of the priesthood on the second definition, we are missing the more expansive concept of priesthood, which, by need of ordination, cuts women almost completely off from this conversation.

Figure 1.
Perhaps another way to understand priesthood, which is both doctrinally accurate and more inclusive toward women, is to use a more holistic and historically accurate approach (see Figure 2). As is the same in the previous diagram, the largest circle of the priesthood represents God’s total power and authority. The inner circle is the priesthood described as God’s power and authority delegated to man. The final two circles are the two priesthood organizational structures that have been on the earth since the times of Adam and Eve: the hierarchical and ecclesiastical or administrative priesthood, and the patriarchal or familial priesthood. By understanding these two priesthood structures, not only do women become more included but the focus also turns from the ecclesiastical or administrative structure of the Church to temples and families, which, in reality, is the eternal structure.

Figure 2.

The Historical Context of the Priesthood

Adam and Eve through Christ

Throughout the history of the earth, the Lord has used two organizational structures to administer his priesthood: the more public structure, being the ecclesiastical structure, which is more commonly discussed and understood and is culturally primarily related to men, and the more private structure, being the patriarchal or familial priesthood structure,
which is better understood to apply to both women and men. (In fact, both genders must enter into the patriarchal or familial priesthood structure in order to receive exaltation.)

Let’s look more carefully into the patriarchal order or structure of the priesthood. Regarding this order of the priesthood, President Benson instructed,

Adam and his descendants entered into the priesthood order of God. Today we would say that they went to the House of the Lord and received their blessings.

The order of the priesthood spoken of in the scriptures is sometimes referred to as the patriarchal order because it came down from father to son.

But this order is otherwise described in modern revelation as an order of family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God—just as did Adam and Eve—to be sealed for eternity, to have posterity, and to do the will and work of God throughout their mortality.

It is important to note that both Adam and Eve entered into the covenant and that both were promised the associated blessings or given the same guarantee from the Lord. This priesthood organizational structure, as we know, continues on from Adam and Eve to Abraham and Sarah and throughout the generations until we get to Moses. Although the Lord gave the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham, it is clear that the covenant would not exist without Sarah. There is no Abrahamic covenant and there is no Patriarchal Order, or Fulness of the Priesthood, without a woman and a man sealed by God through the sealing ordinance, where both wife and husband make the associated covenants. President Benson continued,

Moses taught this order of priesthood to his people and “sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God;

But they hardened their hearts and could not enter his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fullness of his glory.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also.” (D&C 84:23-25)
We learn through the Joseph Smith Translation that the Lord further instructed Moses: “I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them” (JST, Ex. 34:1).

It is through this holy order that Adam and Eve and their righteous posterity were able to enter into the presence of God. It is through this order that any individual can enter into the presence of God and live (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:22). After this order of the priesthood was taken from the children of Israel at the time of Moses, there were only few exceptions as to who could enter into this order of the priesthood until the time of Jesus Christ. As President Benson explained, Elijah was one of those.8 It was Elijah who gave these keys to Peter, James, and John, and it was Elijah who would eventually give these same keys to Joseph Smith.

When Christ came to the earth, he of course had the fulness of the priesthood and desired to use it. But he set up a completely different organizational structure. Why didn’t we still have the patriarchal order of the priesthood? Why was this no longer a familial priesthood? Well, Elder McConkie states very simply in a pragmatic way,

"The church operates in the easiest and harmonious way because of the social setting that exists from the world. The social circumstances of the nations and the governments reflect that we can’t operate through families like they did in Abraham’s day. You can’t have civil and ecclesiastical authority combined, because the great masses of men don’t belong to the Church."9

This may be an obvious point, but Elder McConkie talks about Abraham’s day, which connects us to the Abrahamic covenant. There is no Abrahamic covenant if there is no Sarah. The Abrahamic covenant requires two individuals to enter into the fulness of the priesthood together. Sarah must also have received her endowments. That is obvious. Sarah and Abraham together must have received and entered into the patriarchal order of the priesthood. Both had the benefits of, the knowledge of, and the privilege of using that priesthood for the benefit of their family. And this holds true for any man and woman who enters into and receives the fulness of the priesthood that requires the temple.

Elder McConkie added to our understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant when he explained,
Now what was the gospel of Abraham? Obviously it was the commission, the mission, the endowment and power, the message of salvation, given to Abraham. And what was this? It was a divine promise that both in the world and out of the world his seed should continue "as innumerable as the stars; or, if ye were to count the sand upon the seashore ye could not number them." (D&C 132:30)

Thus, the gospel of Abraham was one of celestial marriage…. This power and commission is what Elias restored, and as a consequence, the righteous among all future generations were assured of the blessings of a continuation of the seeds forever, even as it was with Abraham of old.”

Both men and women receive this promise, and today they receive it together in the sealing ordinance.

After Christ’s crucifixion and the ensuing death of the apostles, the world went into an apostasy; God’s priesthood power and authority was taken from the earth. After the death of the prophets in the Book of Mormon, there no longer existed a church on the earth that was led by a prophet who held and was responsible for all priesthood keys.

**Restoration of Priesthood**

**Ecclesiastical, Administrative, and Hierarchal Priesthood**

All this changed in May of 1829 when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were visited by John the Baptist, who ordained them with the Aaronic Priesthood, and later when they were visted by Peter, James, and John, who gave them the keys and authority associated with the Melchizedek priesthood, specifically, the priesthood keys of presiding. With these priesthood keys, Joseph was able to establish The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, call members of the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency, and perform other ecclesiastical duties within the Church. He also delegated priesthood authority for a variety of purposes such as performing priesthood ordinances like baptism and conferring the Holy Ghost.

All these functions are extremely important, but the Lord needed Joseph and the Saints to go way beyond this priesthood structure in order to create Zion and reach their ultimate exaltation.
Patriarchal, Temple, and Familial Priesthood

Throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reveals that the priesthood would be received, found, and used in the temple by both women and men. Women and men would be blessed to enter into an order of the priesthood and receive their endowment, make and keep sacred covenants, and perform priesthood functions. Women would be given the priesthood authority to do so regardless of ecclesiastical ordination. In the temple, members of the Church would be given instruction and endowed with priesthood power and authority.

On June 1, 1833, the Lord once again emphasized the importance of building his holy house and promised to endow his servants with power and authority (Doctrine and Covenants 95). The prophet and apostles had already received the keys of the priesthood and the power and authority associated with the administrative function of the Church, but this power and authority came only through the temple. This was the Patriarchal or familial priesthood structure and was the power and authority associated with the fulness of the priesthood.

Joseph Smith thus received revelation both on the hierarchical structure and on the patriarchal structure of the priesthood. While he was restoring the administrative function of the Church—the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, etc.—he was also receiving revelation regarding the temple and the patriarchal structure of the Church.

This becomes apparent as we look at the early scriptures and at the Doctrine and Covenants. As early as 1831, Jesus Christ declared, “I am Jesus Christ, the son of God; wherefore, gird up your loins and I will suddenly come to my temple” (Doctrine and Covenants 36:8). Joseph had already received priesthood administrative language in Doctrine and Covenants 18 with information regarding the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

This temple language continues in Section 38: “And there you shall be endowed with power from on high” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:32). Members of the Church most likely didn’t understand this point, but Joseph had known since Moroni visited him in 1828, as part of the revelation now known in part as Doctrine and Covenants 2, that something was missing; Elijah had not yet come. In Section 42 of Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explained one of the purposes of the temple: “That my covenant people may be gathered in one in that day when I shall come to my temple. And this I do for the salvation of my people” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:36).
Finally, in 1836, the Kirtland Temple was dedicated. Mary Fielding, wife of Hyrum Smith, spoke of the feelings and experiences she had at the Kirtland temple. She scribed,

The hearts of the people were melted and the Spirit and power of God rested down upon us in a remarkable manner. Many spake in tongues and others prophesied and interpreted.... Some of the Sisters while engaged in conversing in tongues their countenances beaming with joy, clasped each others hands and kissed in the most affectionate manner. They were describing in this way the love and felicities of the Celestial World....Some of the prophecies delivered in tongues and interpreted were so great that I cannot begin to describe them....I believe as do many others that Angels were present with us. A brite light shone across the House and rested upon some of the congregation. What I felt that day seemed to outweigh all the affliction and distress of mind I have suffered since I came here.11

It wasn’t until after the dedication of the Kirtland temple that the keys promised by Elijah were finally restored. Were these keys not delivered by John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John in May of 1829 to Joseph and Oliver? Apparently not. This was the assignment of Moses, Elias, and Elijah. Why? The prophet Joseph Smith explains why Elijah was necessary. He said, “Because he holds the keys of the authority to administer in all the ordinances of the Priesthood,” or the sealing power.12 Joseph also explained that these keys were “the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth.”13

Yet the endowment was not yet given; the fulness of the priesthood had not yet been restored to the earth. Nearly two years after of the dedication of the Kirtland temple, the Saints evacuated the city and abandoned their temple—not by choice but as a result of the extermination order. Thus, although the temple had been built according to God’s command and the keys had now been received, the power and authority given to the Saints through the ordinances and covenants of the Melchizedek priesthood had not been entered into or received.

What would be the significance of these ordinances and covenants? What were these keys to do? They would create families and save souls.

Who would become a vital part of this divine mandate? Both women and men!

President Ezra Taft Benson explained,
Even though the Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood had been restored to the earth, the Lord urged the Saints to build a temple to receive the keys by which this order of priesthood could be administered on the earth again, “for there [was] not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost...even the fulness of the priesthood” ( Doctrine and Covenants 124:28).14

Following the forced exodus of the Saints from Ohio and Missouri to Illinois, Joseph would turn his attention primarily to the building of the new temple. Having now obtained the keys of apostleship given to him by Moses, Elias, and Elijah, Joseph was determined that these keys would be used. This time, however, the temple the Saints would build would allow for priesthood ordinances not yet available that, unlike the Kirtland temple and the administrative priesthood functions, would require women. In the Nauvoo temple, both men and women would enter into a specific order of the priesthood, even the patriarchal order or fulness of the priesthood.

To these faithful saints, Joseph Smith declared, “Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this Priesthood.”15 There is only one place where the order of the priesthood, which is patriarchal authority, is made known, and that is in the temple. You enter into an order of the priesthood in the temple.

Thus, the building of the temple in Nauvoo began line upon line. With the building of the temple came new ordinances, new opportunities, and new privileges for women that were unheard of since the days of earlier dispensations. Regarding the Nauvoo temple, the Lord revealed to his prophet in January of 1841,

> And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people; For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before te foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times. And I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house, and the priesthood thereof, and the place whereon it shall be built. (Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–42)

In this same revelation, the Lord calls his temple, “the house of the daughters of Zion” (124:11)—perhaps a foreshadow of the necessary involvement of women in these sacred priesthood ordinances and its
associated power and authority given to women. It wouldn’t be long before women would become full participants in both receiving and performing priesthood ordinances and making covenants in the temple. On April 6, 1841, the cornerstone of the Nauvoo Temple was laid.

About a year later, in March 1842, the Lord inspired the prophet Joseph Smith to organize the women of the Church, “after the pattern of the priesthood” and to teach them “how [they] would come in possession of the privileges, blessings and gifts of the priesthood.” When Joseph Smith turned the key of the priesthood in the women’s meeting held in the upstairs room of the Red Brick store in Nauvoo, he “made the Relief Society an official part of the Church and kingdom of God.” In fact, Joseph Smith stated that the women of the Church were organized after the organization that existed in Christ’s Church anciently. He then visited the Relief Society frequently and at least six times taught the women the doctrine of the gospel to prepare them to receive their endowment in the house of the Lord, focusing particularly on priesthood and how it related to them. This opened new opportunities to women for receiving knowledge and intelligence from on high such as through the temple ordinances that were soon to be instituted.

Shortly after the Prophet instituted Relief Society, in May of 1842, prior to the completion of the Nauvoo temple, Joseph introduced the endowment to nine men in the upper room of his Nauvoo store. Shortly after Bishop Newel K. Whitney received his own endowment, he spoke to the sisters of the Relief Society in May of 1842. To these sisters he declared, “In the beginning God created man male and female and bestow’d upon man certain blessings peculiar to a man of God, of which woman partook, so that without the female all things cannot be restor’d to the earth it takes all to restore the Priesthood.”

The importance of the establishment of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society in context of the temple cannot be overstated. The women would be included and needed to perform every one of the Melchizedek Priesthood temple ordinances, including baptisms for the dead, initiatories, endowments, sealings, anointings, etc. In June of 1842, in anticipation of the completion of the Nauvoo temple, the prophet Joseph encouraged the sisters to be prepared to “move according to the ancient Priesthood.” He told the women of the Relief Society that he intended “to make of this Society a kingdom of Priests [as] in Enochs day—as in Paul’s day.” Bathsheba W. Smith later explained, “We have that ceremony in our endowments as Joseph taught.”
It becomes clear through reading the early records of the Relief Society, the papers and journals of Joseph Smith, and early Church history that endowed members of the Church recognized the relationship between the endowment—the fulness of the priesthood, power, authority—and the celestial kingdom for both men and women and the need for both genders to enter into this priesthood order for exaltation to be possible. One of Joseph’s journal entries in April 1842, for example, states that he “met the members of the ‘Female Relief Society,’ and…gave a lecture on the Priesthood, showing how the sisters would come in possession of the privileges, blessings, and gifts of the priesthood, and that the signs should follow them, such as healing the sick, casting out devils, &c., and that they might attain unto these blessings by a virtuous life, and conversation, and diligence in keeping all the commandments.”

In fact, the temple seemed to connect mortal with immortal, earth, and heaven. The temple was necessary to fulfill Joseph’s and the Lord’s calls for members to become priests and kings, priestesses and queens and to create a holy nation.

In September of 1843, Emma Smith became the first woman to receive her endowment in this dispensation, and shortly after, she administered the ordinance to other women. These women and men who had received their endowments, united as a whole, would be termed “anointed quorum,” “Holy Order,” “Council,” or simply “Quorum.” Bathsheba W. Smith, who was later called as the Relief Society general president and a member of the Relief Society during the time of Joseph Smith and who also received her endowment from him prior to the completion of the Nauvoo temple, explained in 1905 that the prophet “wanted to make [them], as the women were in Paul’s day, ‘A kingdom of priestesses.’” She continued, “We have that ceremony in our [temple] endowments as Joseph taught.”

Clearly, there were two priesthood organizational structures: one in which only men were ordained to priesthood offices in a hierarchal structure, and the other, a familial or patriarchal structure, in which both men and women had priesthood power and authority and which was more private and sacred.

In the temple, women performed and were given priesthood privileges and responsibilities. In fact, for many years, the Relief Society president was also the head of the female temple officiators. This included women like Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, Zina Young, and Bathsheba Smith. “In these women, the ecclesiastical authority of the Relief Society president was coupled with the ritual authority of the leading female
temple officiator. Snow was known by her contemporaries both as ‘a Priestess in the House of the Lord’ and as ‘President of all the Relief Societies in the Church.’”26 The women of the Relief Society were clearly taught their role in the temple and were able to distinguish their roles and responsibilities in the Church with those of the temple.

It is also significant to note that in the days of Joseph Smith, women’s priesthood power and authority was not necessarily associated with their husbands, and their relationship with God was not dependent on any mortal intermediary.

Following the death of Joseph Smith, however, the principles of women’s use of priesthood seemed to have a stronger connection to the women’s husbands. For example James E. Talmage once said,

> It is a precept of the Church that women of the Church share the authority of the priesthood with their husbands, actual or prospective; and therefore women, whether taking the endowment for themselves or for the dead, are not ordained to a specific rank in the Priesthood. Nevertheless there is no grade, rank, or phase of the temple endowment to which women are not eligible on an equality with men. True, there are certain of the higher ordinances to which an unmarried woman cannot be admitted, but the rule is equally in force as to a bachelor. The married state is regarded as sacred, sanctified, and holy in all temple procedure; and within the House of the Lord the woman is the equal and the help-meet of the man. In the privileges and blessings of that holy place, the utterance of Paul is regarded as a scriptural decree in full force and effect: ‘Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.’”27

In no way does he minimize women’s role in the priesthood, but he does seem to tie it to men as the prophet Joseph did not. This perhaps was a cultural concept that seemed to have perpetuated for decades; yet, throughout the teachings of President Nelson, it does not seem prevalent if present at all. In fact, through President Nelson’s recent talks and temple ordinance changes, it would seem that women’s temple covenants and priesthood privileges are more in line with what Joseph Smith taught than at any other time since then.
Contemporary

Church, Ecclesiastical, and Administrative Priesthood

Like Joseph Smith and his contemporaries, many Church leaders today have encouraged both women and men to better understand the priesthood in terms of the priesthood power, authority, and privileges. In our day, there seems to be a greater focus on the distinction between women performing priesthood duties and women using the priesthood privileges in the ecclesiastical and administrative structure of the priesthood and in the temple. For example, in his landmark talk to the men of the Church “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” then Elder Dallin H. Oaks, now the first counselor in the Church’s First Presidency, declared,

We are not accustomed to speaking of women having the authority of the priesthood in their Church callings, but what other authority can it be? When a woman—young or old—is set apart to preach the gospel as a full-time missionary, she is given priesthood authority to perform a priesthood function. The same is true when a woman is set apart to function as an officer or teacher in a Church organization under the direction of one who holds the keys of the priesthood. Whoever functions in an office or calling received from one who holds priesthood keys exercises priesthood authority in performing her or his assigned duties.28

Therefore, although perhaps not widely understood at the time, President Oaks made it clear that women perform a priesthood function and use the priesthood that has been given to them as they fulfill their callings in the Church. This is a significant shift for both men and women in their understanding of priesthood power and authority. Perhaps President Joseph F. Smith’s definition of priesthood makes sense here, especially if the term man is understood, in this case, to include both men and women. He described the priesthood as: “the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family.”29 Tying this description with President Oaks’ furthered understanding of the priesthood in regard to women, therefore, makes sense. Women, as well as men, according to President Oaks, use God’s authority, and therefore God’s power, for the “salvation of the human family.”30
Sunday School teachers, regardless of priesthood ordination or gender, therefore, use the same priesthood and have the same authority to teach, as both receive that authority under the direction of one who has priesthood keys. A man who has been ordained to a priesthood office and who serves as a joint Sunday school teacher does not possess any more authority or power to teach in that calling than his female counterpart. His ordination to a priesthood office gives him the authority to perform a priesthood ordinance or other priesthood function. That is not given to women, but it by no means excludes women from using the priesthood authority they have been given.

**Temple and Family Structure of the Priesthood**

That understanding of women’s priesthood power and authority through her callings is helpful and empowering, but it pales in comparison to the priesthood power and authority that a woman receives as a result of her temple covenants. This topic has also been addressed by leaders of the Church, but as it is sacred in nature applying to the temple and family, it is perhaps explained and discussed in a more sacred or private manner. Understanding the relationship between women, men, and the priesthood as a result of temple ordinances and covenants is a critical factor in women’s abilities to learn of, teach about, call upon, and take advantage of their priesthood privileges as they have recently been asked to do by the prophet and other Church leaders. This will be discussed later as we analyze current Church leaders’ teachings regarding women, priesthood, and the temple.

Why is it so important that we understand the history of the temple in our dispensation and its relationship to women? President Ballard said very, very clearly again in 2015:

> Although the church plays a pivotal role in proclaiming, announcing, and administering the necessary ordinance of salvation and exaltation, all of that, as important as it is, is really just the scaffolding being used in an infinite and eternal construction project to build, support, and strengthen the family. And just as scaffolding is eventually taken down and put away to reveal the final, completed building, so too will the mortal, administrative functions of the Church eventually fade as the eternal family comes fully into view. In that context, it’s important to remember that our Church assignments are only temporary, and that at some period we will all be released, either by our leaders or by death. But we
will never be released from our eternal callings within the family.\textsuperscript{31}

In other words, the most enduring priesthood unit in eternity is the family. Those who will have the priesthood are women and men who have entered into the patriarchal order of the priesthood together so they could raise their family with priesthood power and authority. The structure of the Church as we see it today is no longer going to be in effect in the next life, and we are seeing that being fulfilled even in our day.

If we look carefully at the talks that President Nelson has given, we will see that he has been carefully talking about the temple in regard to women, not only in a nuanced manner but in a very open manner, trying to help people understand their roles in a way they never have before. In 2015, when President Nelson was called to be the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he significantly declared,

We, your brethren, need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices. The kingdom of God is not and cannot be complete without women who make sacred covenants and then keep them, women who can speak with the power and authority of God!\textsuperscript{32}

Again, we witness the leaders of the Church teaching of priesthood power, of priesthood authority, and of women being able to speak with such. President Nelson, also said,

We need women who are devoted to shepherding God’s children along the covenant path toward exaltation; women who know how to receive personal revelation, who understand the power and peace of the temple endowment; women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families; women who teach fearlessly.\textsuperscript{33}

How do women do this? Through their temple endowment. Note President Nelson’s constant and clear reference to the temple endowment. He’s talking about the temple, covenants, and the priesthood power that are associated with those covenants. When President Oaks spoke about women and priesthood authority, he made this statement: “What other authority can it be?”\textsuperscript{34} When women have power coming through their endowments, of course, what other power would it be? I submit to you that anytime President Nelson or any of the leaders of the Church speak
about women having priesthood or having power and authority, what other power and authority could it be than that of the priesthood? Note then, this statement and invitation to women by President Ballard in 2015,

You have been baptized into the Lord’s Church. You have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and many of you have been endowed and some of you have been sealed in the house of the Lord.

Like faithful sisters in the past, you need to learn how to use the priesthood authority with which you have been endowed to obtain every eternal blessing that will be yours.35

So again, emphasis on the temple. By saying, “Like faithful sisters in the past,” he was referring to those sisters who were in England as the early Church was starting. He was referring to the authority these early saints received through their temple covenants and was instructing women of our day to use the same.

I want to make it very clear that the brethren are talking about priesthood power and authority in the temple in a different way than they are talking about priesthood power and authority that is received through priesthood callings or callings within the Church structure.

Only a few years later, but now as the prophet of the Church, President Nelson voiced the following concern in the April 2018 general conference: “Too many of our brothers and sisters do not fully understand the concept of priesthood power and authority.” He later continued, “I fear that too many of our brothers and sisters do not grasp the privileges that could be theirs.”36 It is important to note that although the talk was directed to the men of the Church, President Nelson was specifically stating that even the women were not taking advantage of the priesthood privileges that were theirs.

What are these privileges that the women and men are not taking advantage of? Although he specifically cited examples of men in this talk, in his footnote President Nelson opened the door to a further, more specific understanding of the privileges that belong to both genders. In the official publication of President Nelson’s talk, footnote 3, which references the above quote, significantly cites Doctrine and Covenants Section 84:19–22 and Section 107:18–19. Thus, while sections 84 and 107 have typically been used in reference to men and their priesthood roles and responsibilities, by tying this footnote to women, President Nelson expanded the typical paradigm to include women and their priesthood
responsibilities. What priesthood privileges then apply to both women and men? Section 84:19-22 reads,

This greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

I have come to recognize that this revelation from the Lord through Joseph Smith is often misunderstood and perhaps takes more looking into than we often do. For example, although women are not ordained to a priesthood office in the ecclesiastical structure of the Church, they do enter into an order of the Priesthood in the temple. According to President Benson, all members who enter into the temple receive the key of the knowledge of God. 37 It is therefore critical to recognize that this key is not a key of presidency or even a key like Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received in the Kirtland temple but is rather a key of knowledge. Beyond the knowledge of how to access the priesthood power that women have been endowed with in the temple, women also gain an even clearer knowledge during the ordinances of the temple of who they are and what they ultimately can become. The Lord has revealed that “the power of godliness,” including the power to become like Him, is manifested through priesthood ordinances (Doctrine and Covenants 84:20). Thus, both women and men are able to ultimately become exalted beings like their Heavenly Parents. President Joseph Fielding Smith instructed, “Because of that priesthood and the ordinances thereof, every member of the church, men and women alike, may know God.” 38 I do not believe that we, as members of the Church, recognize the impact it has on us to literally know that we are children of divine parents and that have the potential to be like them.

President Nelson also asks the members of the Church—both women and men—to better understand their priesthood privileges as shown in Section 107, which says,

The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of
the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. (Doctrine and Covenants 107:18–19)

Do these promises and blessings not apply to women as well when women enter into the highest level of the Melchizedek priesthood and make covenants associated therein? Do not all the blessings of the temple apply to both men and women? Do we correctly understand and teach that women as well as men have the privilege of “receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 107:19)? Are we empowering the women in our day as Joseph empowered the women in his? It seems that President Nelson is trying desperately to do so.

In October of 2019, President Nelson said the following:

The heavens are just as open to women who are endowed with God’s power flowing from their priesthood covenants as they are to men who bear the priesthood. I pray that truth will register upon each of your hearts because I believe it will change your life. Sisters, you have the right to draw liberally upon the Savior’s power to help your family and others you love.39

He continued in the talk by once again asking the women of the Church to study sections 84 and 107 in the Doctrine and Covenants as well as Section 25 to better understand the priesthood and how to call upon the priesthood power with which they have been endowed. He added, “When a man understands the majesty and power of a righteous, seeking, endowed Latter-day Saint woman, is it any wonder that he feels like standing when she enters the room?”40 Where does this happen? In the temple and perhaps even in our homes and other places where the importance of these principles is understood.

So what does this mean, this endowment with power? President Nelson instructed,

Every woman and every man who makes covenants with God and keeps those covenants, and who participates worthily in priesthood ordinances, has direct access to the power of God. Those who are endowed in the house of the Lord receive a gift of God’s priesthood power by virtue of their covenant, along with a gift of knowledge to know how to draw upon that power.41

Sheri Dew’s book Women and the Priesthood has incredible insights about the importance of priesthood power, and I invite you to read her
book to study more about priesthood power and authority. From her book and from many other sources from Church leaders, I have come up with this short list of the powers that are available for both women and men:

- The power of enlightenment, testimony, and understanding
- The power to thwart the forces of evil
- The power that enables us to use our gifts and abilities with greater effectiveness and increased intelligence
- The power to overcome the sins of the world
- The power to become even better qualified to teach
- The power with which to strengthen our earthly families
- The power of personal revelation to strengthen and bless our lives with knowledge, understanding, light, beauty, and truth from on high
- The power to protect children

If you think about your temple endowment, is it not both men and women who are taught how to thwart the forces of evil? What about the greater powers to teach, the power to strengthen our families, and the power of knowledge and light and beauty? When you associate with these powers through the temple, you increase these powers and these possibilities substantially.

So again, how do you increase this power? Section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that Christ learned line upon line, grace for grace. It’s the same that we need today. Doctrine and Covenants 84, a revelation that President Nelson has now asked the sisters of the Church twice to study, states, “For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood” (D&C 84:36–39).

Do not women do these same things? Do not women receive the servants of the Lord? Do not women make covenants with God when they receive their endowment, including the initiatory, and does the Lord not give them an oath or guarantee? Imagine the strength given to covenant-keeping women to know that “all that [the] Father hath shall be given unto [them].” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:38) Imagine the peace and hope and joy this statement in and of itself gave to the early pioneer women, who as they left Nauvoo, looked back at their burning temple with the fire of this covenant burning in their hearts. Clearly, the Lord’s timing is manifest when we realize he had the women receive
their temple endowments before crossing the plains. Imagine what a difference it makes for covenant-keeping women of all situations to know that in the future they are promised to receive “all that my Father hath,” and that God has promised that He will “go before your face.” That He “will be on your right hand and on your left,” and that his “Spirit shall be in your hearts and [his] angels round about you, to bear you up” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:38, 88).

Can we imagine the strength this truth gives to our single sisters who are living away from home, working, in school, on missions, raising children, or living in their own homes as adult mature women with no male in the home who has been ordained to a priesthood office? Can we recognize the assurance this may give to a divorced woman or single mother who made and continues to keep sacred temple covenants? I know for me, as a single sister until I was forty, this knowledge of having God by my side and angels round about me was real and significant.

United in Saving Souls

During the days of Adam and Eve, those of Emma and Joseph, and in our day, the purpose of the priesthood has been and always will be to save souls. Regardless of ordination or temple covenant, both women and men are given the directive and duty to save souls. Working hand-in-hand, we draw these things together. “My dear sisters, your power will increase as you serve others. Your prayers, fasting, time in the scriptures, service in the temple, and family history work will open the heavens to you.”42 The importance of saving souls in a united fashion on both sides of the veil cannot be underestimated.

Elder Bednar said the following:

Across the generations, from the Prophet Joseph Smith to President Russell M. Nelson, the doctrinal purposes of temple ordinances and covenants have been taught extensively by Church leaders…to keep the law of obedience, the law of sacrifice, the law of the gospel, the law of chastity, and the law of consecration.43

We have been asked by leaders of the Church to understand these laws, to speak about these laws, to use these laws, and to abide by these laws for our own salvation and exaltation and to save others, perhaps and especially those in our family.

Continuing, Elder Washburn, a previous General Authority, said,
We go to the temple to make covenants, but we go home to keep the covenants that we have made. The home is the testing ground. The home is the place where we learn to be more Christlike. The home is the place where we learn to overcome selfishness and give ourselves in service to others.44

Regarding this idea of both women and men using their priesthood privileges to bless their family, Elder Andersen testified,

As you worthily participate in the ordinances of the priesthood, the Lord will give you greater strength, peace, and eternal perspective. Whatever your situation, your home will be “blessed by the strength of priesthood power” and those close to you will more fully desire these blessings for themselves.45

This priesthood power that is talked about is given to every woman in the Church regardless of marital status through their covenants. In fact, in mentioning some of the false teachings regarding the priesthood and women, President Nelson, speaking to the sisters, clarified,

If you are endowed but not currently married to a man who bears the priesthood and someone says to you, “I’m sorry you don’t have the priesthood in your home,” please understand that that statement is incorrect. You may not have a priesthood bearer in your home, but you have received and made sacred covenants with God in His temple. From those covenants flows an endowment of His priesthood power upon you.46

Sister Bingham talks about the importance of women and men working together for the salvation of souls. Quoting President Nelson, she says,

Today, “we need women who have the courage and vision of our Mother Eve” to unite with their brethren in bringing souls unto Christ. Men need to become true partners rather than assume they are solely responsible or act as “pretend” partners while women carry out much of the work. Women need to be willing to “step forward [and] take [their] rightful and needful place” as partners rather than thinking they need to do it all by themselves or wait to be told what to do.47

And then referring to partners, President Eyring actually talks about the role of nurturing in the Church especially for women.
Part of the Lord’s current sharing of knowledge relates to accelerating His pouring out eternal truth on the heads and into the hearts of His people. He has made clear that the daughters of Heavenly Father will play a primary role in that miraculous acceleration. One evidence of the miracle is His leading His living prophet to put far greater emphasis on gospel instruction in the home and within the family...

In the proclamation, He gave sisters charge to be the principal gospel educators in the family in these words: “Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.” This includes the nurture of gospel truth and knowledge.48

So who in the home has a primary responsible to teach the gospel? The women. The women who have made covenants in the temple, who have received priesthood power and authority, and who have been given that ability to teach and to write and to speak those things of God.

**Conclusion**

Sister Jones, speaking at the last general conference said that one of the greatest things that she wished she knew when she was younger was how important the priesthood was to her and how she had the power to use it.49 I testify that this Church is the Church of God and that He does have this power and authority given to both women and men on the Earth. And I say that in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Endnotes


12. History of the Church, 4:211.

13. History of the Church, 6:251


23. Jill Derr, Carol Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew Grow, “The First Fifty Years of Relief Society,” (Salt Lake City: Church Historians Press).
24. Church History Topics, “Anointed Quorum,” ChurchofJesusChrist.org/study/history/topics.


