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FEET OF CLAY: QUEER THEORY AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

Gregory L. Smith

Review of Taylor G. Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay: Sexuality and Gender in Modern Mormonism* (Chapel Hill, NC The University of North Carolina Press, 2020). 288 pages. \$29.95 (paperback).

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 rethink[ing].

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

1. Taylor G. Petrey, “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 107, 129–30, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V44N04_420.pdf. Valerie Hudson Cassler offered an incisive and devastating review of the theological and logical problems in this article’s stance. See “Plato’s Son, Augustine’s Heir: ‘A Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology?’” *SquareTwo* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2012), <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleCasslerPlatosSon.html>. Readers should be sure to examine the exchange between both authors in the comments section. *Tabernacles of Clay* provides the evidence — such as it is — for that which was often merely asserted in the earlier *Dialogue* article.

2. Petrey, “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” 128.

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.

3. The present-day apostles have repeatedly taught that it cannot and will not change. For example: Russell M. Nelson, “Decisions for Eternity,” *Ensign* (November 2013): 106, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/10/decisions-for-eternity?lang=eng>; Tad Walsh, “LDS Church responds to inquiries about Harry Reid comment,” *Deseret News* (7 November 2013), <https://www.deseretnews.com/article/865590140/LDS-Church-responds-to-inquiries-about-Harry-Reid-comment.html>; Church Newsroom, “Church Responds to Inquiries on ENDA, Same-Sex Marriage” (7 November 2013), <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-responds-to-inquiries-on-enda--same-sex-marriage>; Church Newsroom, “First Presidency Shares Messages from General Conference Leadership Session,” (4 April 2019), <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-messages-general-conference-leadership-session-april-2019>.

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,⁴ and such works have their place — if they are honest with themselves and their readers about what they are.⁵ 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.⁶

I propose to treat five themes in this review:

- *Tabernacles's* claim (following D. Michael Quinn's *Same-Sex Dynamics*⁷) 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*,⁸ 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.⁹ Particularly on the issue of

8. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969).

9. Latter-day Saint treatments include the thorough enumeration of *Same-Sex Dynamics's* omissions, misrepresentation, and outright deception in George L. Mitton and Rhett S. James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn's Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” *FARMS Review of Books* 10, no.1 (1998): 141–263, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol10/iss1/13/>. Non-Latter-day Saint treatments include Klaus J. Hansen, “Quinn'speak,” *FARMS Review of Books* 10, no. 1 (1998): 132–40. See also Vella Neil Evans, “Women's Studies” (presentation, Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 16 August 1996), audio tape no. 238, cited in Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn's Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 195n129.

Further non-Latter-day Saint criticism is found in: Bryan C. Short, “Review of *Same-Sex Dynamics* among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example,” *Christian Century* 114, no. 2 (15 January 1997): 56–58 and Peter Boag, “‘Behind the Zion Curtain’ Homosexuals and Homosexuality in the Historic and Contemporary Mormon-Cultural Region: A Review Essay,” *New Mexico Historical Review* (1 July 1997): 259–66.

the Church's supposed "relative tolerance" of same-sex acts, *Same-Sex Dynamics* has been decisively rebutted by its more thorough reviewers.¹⁰ 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).

Brief favorable reviews include: Anne M. Butler, "Reviewed Work: Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (June 1997): 239–40; Timothy Miller, "Review: Same-Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 1, no. 1 (October 1997): 150; B. Carmon Hardy, "Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth Century Americans: A Mormon Example," *History: Review of New Books* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 111–12; H. Wayne Schow, "Same-Sex Dynamics," *Great Plains Quarterly* (Spring 1998): 186–87; James Gallant, "Same-Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth-Century Americans — A Mormon Example," *Utopian Studies* (1998): 301; Leila J. Rupp, "Abstracts of Books," *Journal of Women's History* 10, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 232; Ken Faunce, "Book Review," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 40 (2 July 2011): 1053–54.

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).

10. See Boag, "'Behind the Zion Curtain' Homosexuals and Homosexuality in the Historic and Contemporary Mormon-Cultural Region," 261–62, Hansen, "Quinn'speak," 136–39; Mitton and James, "A Response to D. Michael Quinn's Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History," 149–50, Short, "Review of Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans," 56–58.

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

11. Short, "Review of Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans," 56–58.

12. Fogerty, "Homoromance in Utah," 30.

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

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.

19. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 371–72.

20. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 109.

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.”²¹ *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.²²

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.²³ Ordained an apostle in 1918, Lyman was assigned to help Anna Jacobsen, a convert to the Church

21. In discussing the gay subculture of 1930–1950, *Tabernacles* cites Douglas A. Winkler, “Lavender Sons of Zion: A History of Gay Men in Salt Lake City, 1950–79,” (PhD diss., University of Utah, 2008), 14–48, but nothing therein mentions “high ranking church leaders” or even local ones engaging in same-sex acts. *Tabernacles* offers other unsubstantiated plurals based on a single example in “A Summary of Premortal Male and Female” and “Postmortal Biological Sex.”

22. Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies*, 109.

23. Gary James Bergera, “Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community: The Cases of Albert Carrington, Richard R. Lyman, and Joseph F. Smith — Part 2: Richard R. Lyman,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 173–207, <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=mormonhistory>. In this article and its follow-up on Joseph F. Smith II, Bergera should be complemented for both his thoroughness and his discretion; he commendably avoids sensationalizing a delicate subject.

who had been married in an unauthorized plural marriage.²⁴ 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).²⁵ By 1938, the relationship had become sexual.²⁶

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.²⁷ 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."²⁸

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."²⁹

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.

26. Bergera, "Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community, Part 2: Richard R. Lyman," 180.

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.

36. Gary James Bergera, "Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community: The Cases of Albert Carrington, Richard R. Lyman, and Joseph F. Smith — Part 3: Joseph F. Smith," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 98–130, <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1068&context=mormonhistory>.

37. Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 192.

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.”³⁸

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.³⁹

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.”⁴⁰ George Albert’s July 1946 journal reported, “Bad situation. Am heartsick.”⁴¹ 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.⁴²

George Albert Smith would arrange a meeting with both Joseph II and his accused partner, describing it as “a pitiable case.”⁴³ 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.”⁴⁴

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.”⁴⁵

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

38. Bergera, “Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community, Part 3: Joseph F. Smith,” 106n18. Compare Quinn, *Same Sex Attraction*, 369.

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."⁴⁶ Bergera argues that other contemporary evidence demonstrates that homosexual fondling, for example, was not typically treated with the same severity as completed intercourse.⁴⁷

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.⁴⁸

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.”⁴⁹ The admission that such “charges ... of a most serious nature” were true led to “sadness and heavy hearts.”⁵⁰

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.”⁵¹

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. ...

49. Bergera, “Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community, Part 2: Richard R. Lyman,” 184.

50. *Ibid.*, 186.

51. Bergera, “Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community, Part 3: Joseph F. Smith,” 113.

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."⁵²

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.⁵³

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."⁵⁴

52. Connell "Rocky" O'Donovan, "'The Abominable and Detestable Crime Against Nature': A Brief History of Homosexuality and Mormonism, 1840–1980," in *Multiply and Replenish: Mormon Essays in Sex and Family*, Essays on Mormonism Series, No. 7, ed. Brent Corcoran (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 138–40, internal citations silently removed.

53. Albert Carrington, ed. "Police Report," *The Deseret News* 14, no. 5 (2 November 1864): 36, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/desnews2/id/16385/rec/35>.

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.”⁵⁵ 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?⁵⁶

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.”⁵⁷ 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

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).

57. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 276; citing Joseph F. Smith, letter to F. Spence and W. H. Seegmiller, 15 September 1882. Emphasis added.

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.”⁵⁸

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.⁵⁹ The same bishop was later “excommunicated ... for what the anti-Mormon *Tribune* and some contemporary Mormons called ‘sodomy.’”⁶⁰

Conclusion — Nineteenth-Century Evidence

The pages of *Same-Sex Dynamics* cited by *Tabernacles* include several other examples.⁶¹ 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).⁶² “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).

58. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 277.

59. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 277; citing “City and Neighborhood,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 August 1886; “Our Beaver Letter,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 December 1886.

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.

64. Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 22 January 1843, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-22-january-1843-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/1>; also in Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenny (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 2:213.

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, Gomorah, Zoar,
&c. When the angels of God went they abused them.⁶⁶

One could, it seems, both reject the messages and be guilty of attempted homosexual mistreatment of the messengers.⁶⁷

Joseph did not repudiate the sexual aspect of their sin. In his theology, no group would be punished for their sins without prophetic warning.⁶⁸ 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.

66. John Taylor, "Evangelical Religion," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 14 (16 May 1842): 792–93, <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol3/page/n337/mode/2up> and *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 3, no. 4 (August 1842): 62, <https://archive.org/details/MstarVol03/page/n65/mode/2up>, emphasis added.

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.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.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 servant, <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.*⁷¹

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.

70. Mitton and James, "A Response to D. Michael Quinn's Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History," 164–65.

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, despiteful, 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

so this material was produced after that date but before March 1831. ("Old Testament Revision 1, Source Note," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-1/1>.) A later copy was made in Old Testament Revision 2, in handwriting of John Whitmer, Frederick G. Williams, and Sidney Rigdon ("Old Testament Revision 2," 47, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-2/54>) which contains only minor spelling and wording differences. See amalgamated version in "Joseph Smith Translation," entry for Genesis 19:9–15, *Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 798. An early reproduction is found in Robert J. Matthews, "The Inspired Revision of the Bible: Part Two — Some significant texts of the inspired translation," *Improvement Era* (March 1968): 236. Also available in Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 75–152.

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.⁷³ 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.

Joseph; material in the KJV original is crossed out. Original is "New Testament Revision 2 (second numbering)," 121, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/184>. Wayment indicates that production of the JST of Matthew 26:71 to the end of the New Testament occurred between June 1831 and June 1832 (loc. 166–81). Also available in Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, 229–581.

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 commonplace⁷⁴ 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).

Despite differing with him regarding religion, Latter-day Saint authors resorted often to Gibbon in their accounts of early Christian history. For example, "Why Christianity Lives," *Contributor* 10, no. 6 (April 1889): 218; B. H. Roberts, introduction to *History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1902) 1:ix, lxvi–lxvii, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_EylEIEiOmZAC/page/n47/mode/2up; James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1909), chapters 5–8, endnotes; B. H. Roberts, *Falling Apart* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1931), 67, 78; J. Reuben Clark Jr., *On the Way to Eternal Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), appendix sections A–D. *Tabernacles* acknowledges the use of Gibbon "to explain civilizational strength and weakness through the lens of sexual restraint or permissiveness" (58) and cites Marion G. Romney's use of Gibbon in 1969 (58–59n12), but does not discuss the Latter-day Saint use of it throughout the early twentieth century.

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 Herculaneum 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

75. John Taylor, “The Debased Position of U. S. Officials as Exhibited in the Courts of Utah,” (19 October 1884) in *Journal of Discourses by President John Taylor, His Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, eds., Geo. F. Gibbs et al (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depôt, 1884), 25:358, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/8786/rec/25>.

76. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 2. (New York: S. Converse, 1828), defined *sodomy* as “a crime against nature” and *sodomite* as “an inhabitant of Sodom. 2. One guilty of sodomy,” <https://archive.org/details/americanadictiona02websrich/page/n617/mode/2up>.

77. Examples include: “The Gospel, No. 1,” *The Evening and Morning Star* 2, no. 24 (September 1834): 188; “Dear Brother,” *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 12 (September 1835): 375; “The High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ, to the Saints of Nauvoo, Greeting,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 8 (15 February 1842): 700, see also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1908) 4:504–505; “Righteousness,” *Times and Seasons*, 4, no. 7 (15 February 1843):107.

not reproduced here.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹

Nineteenth Century

I will now review examples using Sodom, Gomorrah, Pompeii, and the “crime against nature” from nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint discourse.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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,

78. Examples include: “Gospel No. 1,” *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 1 (1 November 1840): 198, citing *Evening and Morning Star* (1834); B. H. Roberts, *Life of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1892), 376–77; Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:504–505; Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff, His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1909), 512; G. Homer Durham, ed., *Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1943), 79–80 and 320–21; Milton R. Hunter, *Pearl of Great Price Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1951), 230.

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.

83. W.W. Phelps, "Letter No. 12," *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 2 (November 1835): 223, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/7182>.

84. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois: Religion and Politics," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 6 (15 March 1844): 471, <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol5/page/n157/mode/2up>; reprinted in "Religion and Politics," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 5, no. 1 (June 1844): 9, <https://archive.org/details/MStarVol05/page/n11/mode/2up>.

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]

85. "The Lake of Sodom, or Dead Sea," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 2 (1 February 1845): 792, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9400/rec/4>.

86. Parley P. Pratt, "Heirship and Priesthood," *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, ed. G. D. Watt (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depôt, 1854), 1:259, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/1652>.

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]

Delivered by the Ancients, and as Restored in this Age, for the Final Development of Universal Peace, Truth and Knowledge (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855), 165, 167–68, <https://archive.org/details/keytosciencethe03pratgoog/page/n186/mode/2up>.

88. Brigham Young, “Faithfulness and Apostacy,” *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, ed. G. D. Watt (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855), 2:253, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/3962/rec/2>.

89. John Taylor, “The People of God in All Ages Led by One Spirit, and Subject to Persecution — Condition of the World,” *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, ed. G. D. Watt et al (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1860), 7:120, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/3024/rec/7>.

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.⁹¹ [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.⁹² [Probable]

In 1880, a Latter-day Saint wrote in his private diary: "I think this n[a]tion will beat the anti-deluvians [sic] or Sodomites for seduction, prostitution and whoredom."⁹³ [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."⁹⁴ [Certain]

JD Geo. F. Gibbs et al (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1881), 21:115–16, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/7794/rec/21>.

91. John Taylor, "Reverend Falsifiers and Their Dupes," *Journal of Discourses by John Taylor, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, eds. JD Geo. F. Gibbs et al (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1883), 23:269, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/1258/rec/23>.

92. "Epistle of Wilford Woodruff," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 41, no. 16 (21 April 1879): 241, 245–46, emphasis added; republished in Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 512, <https://archive.org/details/wilfordwoodruff00unkngoog/page/n545/mode/2up>.

93. Joel Hill Johnson, "Excerpts from a Journal of Sketch of the life of Joel Hills Johnson," cited in *Writings of Early Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020), 32.

94. William Fotheringham, "Criminal Laws of the Hindoos," *The Contributor: A Monthly Magazine of Home Literature* 4, no. 4 (January 1883): 131, <https://archive.org>.

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 Herculanaeum. ... 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 Herculanaeum, 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

org/details/contributor0404eng/page/130/mode/2up.

95. "Epistle to Saints scattered abroad, October 26, 1886," *Deseret News* 35, 24 November 1886; also quoted in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, Vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 95.

96. See "Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior."

97. Lorenzo Snow, "Letter VI," in *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, ed. Eliza R. Snow Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 526, <https://archive.org/details/biographyandfam00snowgoog/page/n553/mode/2up>.

to luxury, indolence and sin. Their theatres, baths, places of assignation and rendezvous are coming to light.⁹⁸ [Possible]

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.⁹⁹ [Certain]

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

98. De Valibus, "Travels in Italy," *The Contributor: A Monthly Magazine* 2, no. 12 (September 1881): 362, <https://archive.org/details/contributor0212eng/page/362/mode/2up>.

99. George Q. Cannon, "The Marriage Relation," in *Journal of Discourses by President John Taylor and Other Members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*, ed. Geo. F. Gibbs et al (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1880), 20: 200–201, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/7325/rec/20>.

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

100. George Q. Cannon, *Sixty-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Deseret News Publishing Company, 1897), 65–66, <https://books.google.ca/books?id=UUM9AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA65>.

101. Cannon, *Sixty-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference*, 66.

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.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.¹⁰³

102. Ibid., 64–66.

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

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.

106. Robert H. Briggs, "Chastity," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 27, no. 88 (8 July 1926): 430–31, <https://archive.org/details/millennialstar8827eng/page/430/mode/2up>.

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

107. Spencer W. Kimball, *One Hundred Sixteenth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5–7 October 1945): 124, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1945sa/page/n125/mode/2up>. Kimball's visit took place in 1937 (Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, *Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977], 214).

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

109. Kimball and Kimball, *Spencer W. Kimball*, 214.

110. Ben E. Rich, *Eighty-Third Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 4–6 October 1912): 84, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1912sa/page/n85/mode/2up>.

111. George Ludington Weed, "Life of Saint Paul for the Young," *Improvement Era* 9, no. 12 (October 1906): 938, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera0912unse/page/938/mode/2up?q=>; reproducing non-LDS author's text from George Ludington Weed, *A Life of St. Paul for the Young* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1899), 222, https://archive.org/details/MN41928ucmf_2/page/n327/mode/2up.

— 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.¹¹²

A Gap in References?

If there is any period during which *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.

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 **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 **debauchery** ... thousands ... go down to their graves every day steeped in sin and iniquity.¹¹³ [Possible]

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 **Sodom and Gomorrah**, and seek refuge in the mountains, because the Lord had decided to destroy the **wicked cities of the plain** [Mention only].¹¹⁴

112. See the sections “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior” and “Nineteenth Century.”

113. A contemporaneous edition of Webster's dictionary defines “debauchery” as “Excessive indulgence of the appetites; especially, excessive indulgence of lust; intemperance; sensuality; habitual lewdness.” [W. T. Harris, ed., *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1907), s.v. “debauchery,” <https://archive.org/details/webstersinternat01webs/page/372/mode/2up>.] W. A. M., “How to Teach the Gospel of Christ — A Suggestion,” *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 70, no. 6 (13 February 1908): 98–99, <https://archive.org/details/millennialstar7007eng/page/98/mode/2up>.

114. Andrew Jenson, *Seventy-Eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 4–6 April 1908), 46–47, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1908a/page/n47/mode/2up>.

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

115. George A[lbert] Smith, *Eighty-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 5–7 October 1917): 41, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1917sa/page/n41/mode/2up>.

116. Melvin J. Ballard, *Ninety-First Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 8–10 October 1920): 78, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1920sa/page/n79/mode/2up>.

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.”

119. Elmer G. Peterson, “The Evil in Modernism,” *Improvement Era* 32, no. 11 (September 1929): 894, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera32011unse/page/894/mode/2up>.

120. Isaac B. Ball, “Additional Internal Evidence for the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era* 34, no. 7 (May 1931): 387, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera3407unse/page/n11/mode/2up>.

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.**”¹²¹ [Probable]

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. ...

121. J. Reuben Clark Jr., “International Conferences,” *Improvement Era* 27, no. 5 (May 1934): 285, 310, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera3705unse/page/n29/mode/2up>.

122. Sidney B. Sperry, “Israel’s Clash with Canaanite Culture,” *The Spirit of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Department of Education, 1940), 46–47; citing Adolphe Lods, *Israel: From its Beginnings to the Middle of the VIIIth Century*, trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), 147.

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

123. Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., David O. McKay, “The Message of the First Presidency to the Church,” *Improvement Era* 45, no. 11 (November 1942): 758, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera4511unse/page/n15/mode/2up>; also available in J. Reuben Clark, “Message of the First Presidency,” *One Hundred Thirteenth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3–4 October 1942): 10–11, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1942sa/page/n11/mode/2up>; also quoted in “Message Of The First Presidency,” *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star* 104, no. 53 (31 December 1942): 834–35, <https://archive.org/details/millennialstar10453eng/page/834/mode/2up>.

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.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.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.¹²⁶ [Possible]

124. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Restoration of All Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1945), 256, 261.

125. George Albert Smith, *Church News*, 16 February 1946, cited in *Teachings of George Albert Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 187.

126. George Albert Smith, *One Hundred Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4–6 April 1948): 162, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1948a/page/n163/mode/2up>.

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.¹²⁷ [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.”¹²⁸ [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.¹²⁹ The premortal Christ told a Book of Mormon prophet:

127. Ibid., 179.

128. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 247, emphasis added.

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."¹³⁰ 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.¹³¹ 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).

130. Marion G. Romney, "The Worth of Souls," *Ensign* (November 1978), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1978/11/the-worth-of-souls?lang=eng>.

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

132. See the section entitled “The Eternity of Sex — Misreading Talmage.”

133. D&C 93:36; John A. Widtsoe, *Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1936), 191; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Glory of God and Man’s Relation to Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), 5–6; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Principles of Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 199; Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrines of the Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 65.

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.¹³⁵

Intelligence Prior to Spirit Birth

Tabernacles's account uses the last definition.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.”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

135. See the section entitled “Intelligence as Eternal Individual.”

136. See Paul Nolan Hyde, “Intelligences,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:692–93, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/EoM&CISOPTR=4391&CISOSHOW=3801&REC=1%7C>.

137. Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Willard Richards,” p. [69], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-willard-richards/3>

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 existing.”¹³⁸ [3] “the ... mind of man is as immortal as God himself.”¹³⁹ [4] “The mind of man — the 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

138. Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff,” p. [137], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/5>.

139. Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock,” p. 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/5>.

140. Joseph Smith, “Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by William Clayton [28],” p. 16 [28], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-william-clayton/6>.

141. Blake Ostler, “The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 62, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V15N01_61.pdf.

142. On the related but separate question of spirit birth, see Brian C. Hales, “‘A Continuation of the Seeds’: Joseph Smith and Spirit Birth,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 105–30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23292634>.

"intelligence" as referring to a sort of impersonal raw material of "primal particles"¹⁴³ that was organized into individual spirits at spirit birth.¹⁴⁴

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."¹⁴⁵

Intelligence as Eternal Individual

B. H. Roberts read Joseph's teaching and scriptural texts differently.¹⁴⁶ 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

143. Charles W. Penrose, "Spirit not Immaterial," *Journal of Discourses by President John Taylor, His Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, ed. Geo. F. Gibbs et al. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1886), 26:27, <https://archive.org/details/JoDV26/page/n33/mode/2up>.

144. Parley P. Pratt, "Spiritual Communication," *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, ed. G. D. Watt (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854), 1:7–8, <https://archive.org/details/JoDV01/page/n13/mode/2up>; Oliver Preston Robinson et al., eds., *The Journal of Joseph Lee Robinson — Mormon Pioneer* (self-pub, 1981) EPUB, 66–67, <https://archive.org/details/JlrBasicJournal/page/n65/mode/2up>.

145. Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," 68, italics in original.

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/mode/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

147. B. H. Roberts, “Immortality of Man,” *Improvement Era* 10, no. 6 (April 1907): 406–407, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera106unse/page/406/mode/2up>. Ostler (“The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought,” 68) notes that the matter was discussed with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in February 1907 (citing George Franklin Richards Journal, 6 February 1907, 128–29.)

148. Roberts, “Immortality of Man,” 407, italics added.

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.¹⁵²

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.”¹⁵³

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.¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵

In a book written in 1939, and used as the Church’s priesthood manual for 1940 and 1941,¹⁵⁶ Widtsoe wrote further:

In the Church no adjustment can be made. The Priesthood always presides and must, for the sake of order. ... Sex enters

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).

152. B. H. Roberts, *Seventy’s Course in Theology: Second Year* (Salt Lake City: Skelton, 1908), 2:8–9, <https://archive.org/details/seventyscoursein00robe/page/n193/mode/2up>.

153. John A. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915), 146, italics added, <https://archive.org/details/rationaltheology00widt/page/146/mode/2up>.

154. See the section entitled “Premortal Male and Female — Fixed or Fluid?”

155. Widtsoe, *Rational Theology*, 64–65, italics added, <https://archive.org/details/rationaltheology00widt/page/64/mode/2up>.

156. “Melchizedek Quorum Study Course Announced for 1940 and 1941,” *Improvement Era* 42, no. 12 (December 1939): 742, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera4212unse/page/n39/mode/2up>.

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

157. John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 90, italics added. *Tabernacles* also fails to mention one of its sources’ use of this statement — see the section entitled “Case #2: Rodney Turner.”

158. John A. Widtsoe, “Evidences and Reconciliations: What is an Intelligence?,” *Improvement Era* 51, no. 8 (August 1948): 513, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera5108unse/page/n33/mode/2up>; reprinted in John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1951), 76, <https://archive.org/details/evidencesreconci03widt/page/76/mode/2up>.

159. *Tabernacles of Clay* never mentions Widtsoe; it cites Roberts only on contraception (130n114).

160. *Tabernacles* (42n116, see 233) cites James E. Talmage, “The Eternity of Sex,” *Young Woman’s Journal* 25 (October 1914): 600–604, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/17248/rec/25>; reprinted in James P. Harris, ed., *The Essential James E. Talmage* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 130.

preexistence differently. For instance, he did not deal with the period of existence prior to a spiritual creation as intelligence (42).¹⁶¹

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.¹⁶²

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.

162. James E. Talmage, *The Vitality of Mormonism: Brief Essays on Distinctive Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1917), 240, 321, <https://archive.org/details/vitalitymormoni01talmgoog/page/n324/mode/2up>; see Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," 70.

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

163. Talmage, *Vitality of Mormonism*, 239–40.

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

167. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1899), 195. <https://archive.org/details/articlesoffaiths00jame/page/194/mode/2up>.

168. James E. Talmage, “Prophetic History of America; Freedom is National Heritage,” *Deseret News*, 17 July 1909; also in James E. Talmage, personal journal, vol. 12: 1909–1911, 70, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/p15999coll20/id/49214/rec/2>; Talmage, “The Lord’s Purpose in The Creation of Man,” Salt Lake Stake Conference in *Deseret News*, 20 August 1910; copy in Talmage, personal journal, 12:222, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/p15999coll20/id/49367>.

169. James E. Talmage, “Latter-day Gospel in Harmony with Bible,” personal journal, 12:334, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/p15999coll20/id/49487>.

170. Trevor Antley, ed, “James E. Talmage Journal Entries,” *Trevor Antley* (website), 12 March 1896, <https://trevorantley.com/james-e-talmage-collection/james-e-talmage-journals-full-text/james-e-talmage-journal-entries-1895-1896/>; 13 January 1899, <https://trevorantley.com/james-e-talmage-collection/james-e-talmage-journals-full-text/james-e-talmage-journal-entries-1898-1899/>; 8 January 1911, <https://trevorantley.com/>

the Roberts/Widtsoe view may reflect the concerns that his colleagues expressed that I examine shortly.¹⁷¹ 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

james-e-talmage-collection/james-e-talmage-journals-full-text/james-e-talmage-journal-entries-1911-1913/; 7 April 1931 & 21 November 1931, <https://trevorantley.com/james-e-talmage-collection/james-e-talmage-journals-full-text/james-e-talmage-journal-entries-1931-1933/>.

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*.”¹⁷³ 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

174. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, 116–17.

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).

176. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, 117–18, citing Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:7–8. See the section entitled “Premortal Male and Female — Fixed or Fluid?”

177. See the sections “Intelligence as Eternal Individual” and “Case #3: Rodney Turner.”

analyses.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹

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

178. Compare Hyrum Andrus, "Lecture-8 Pre-Earth Life," *Pearl of Great Price Lecture Series* (25–27 January 1996), 2 to Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, 114–15; Andrus, "Lecture-8 Pre-Earth Life," 6, 8 to Andrus, *Doctrinal Themes of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 17, 21, 23, 32; *Doctrinal Themes of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 29–30 to Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe*, 175; *Doctrinal Themes of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 31, 21–22 to *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, 113, 115–18, 127, 131, 133–36 and *God, Man, and the Universe*, 174–75, 181; *Doctrinal Themes of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 19 to *God, Man, and the Universe*, 173–74; "Lecture-8 Pre-Earth Life," 10 to *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*, 116–17 and *God, Man, and the Universe* 182–83, 191–92n45.

179. Andrus, "Lecture-8 Pre-Earth Life," 8–9.

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.¹⁸⁰ 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*.”¹⁸¹

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.¹⁸²

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.

181. Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood*, 16–17, emphasis added.

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."¹⁸³

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*."¹⁸⁴ (Remember, Widtsoe saw the primal intelligence as eternally sexed.)

Claudia Bushman described Turner as "widely revered as the conservative's conservative"¹⁸⁵ and Armand Mauss characterized his book as at "the fundamentalist extreme."¹⁸⁶ Turner cites Widtsoe repeatedly as an authority throughout his book.¹⁸⁷ *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

183. Turner, *Women and Priesthood*, 15n2.

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").

185. Claudia Bushman, "One Man's Opinion [review of *Woman and the Priesthood* by Rodney Turner]," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 85. In context, the characterization does not seem to be a compliment.

186. Armand L. Mauss, "Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 58, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V22N01_32.pdf.

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)

188. Rodney Turner, "The Moral Dimension of Man: A Scriptural View," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 73, <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/themencode-pdf-viewer/?file=https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/issues/V03N01.pdf>.

189. Turner, "The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten," 91–118.

190. Turner, *Women and Priesthood*, 22.

191. Abraham 3:18; Doctrine and Covenants 93:29; "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 15 (15 August 1844): 615, <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol5/page/n365/mode/2up>; Parley P. Pratt, "Heirship and Priesthood," *Journal of Discourses by Brigham Young, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles and Others*, ed. G. D. Watt (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depôt, 1854), 1:258, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/1653>; Parley P. Pratt "Spiritual Communication," *Journal of Discourses* 1:7–8, <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/1904>; B. H. Roberts, *Seventy's Course in Theology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907), 1:161, <https://archive.org/details/seventyscoursein00robe/page/n177/mode/2up>.

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.”¹⁹³

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,”¹⁹⁴ 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.”¹⁹⁵

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:

193. Turner, *Women and Priesthood*, 17, emphasis added. Compare Bergson: “We are free when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express it, when they have that indefinable resemblance to it which one sometimes finds between the artist and his work” (Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* [Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience], trans. F.L. Pogson [1889; repr., London: George Allen & Company, Ltd., 1913], 172, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.189070/page/n193/mode/2up>).

194. Turner, *Women and Priesthood*, 26.

195. Turner, *Women and Priesthood*, 27–28.

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," [writing:]

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)¹⁹⁶

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?¹⁹⁷

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?"¹⁹⁸ *Tabernacles* does not disclose how uncertain and tentative Critchlow was.¹⁹⁹

197. William J. Critchlow Jr., *Conference Report* (October 1965): 38, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1965sa/page/n39/mode/2up>.

198. Critchlow, *Conference Report*, 36–37.

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*

200. Critchlow, *Conference Report*, 37.

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.

204. Walter M. Horne, letter to Bruce R. McConkie, 22 September 1974, 2, copy in my possession courtesy of Dennis B. Horne.

205. Bruce R. McConkie, letter to Walter M. Horne, 2 October 1974, 1, copy in my possession courtesy of Dennis B. Horne.

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

206. McConkie to Horne, 1–2.

207. Bruce R. McConkie, "Memorandum," letter to Spencer W. Kimball, 23 July 1958, 1, copy in my possession courtesy of Dennis B. Horne.

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).

210. McConkie to Horne, 1–2.

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.

213. McConkie, “The Preexistence of Man,” 1, 5–6.

214. *Tabernacles* (42n117, see 233) cites Gordon B. Hinckley, “Live Up to Your Inheritance,” *Conference Report*, October 1983, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1983/10/live-up-to-your-inheritance?lang=eng>.

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 rebutt[ing]” 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:

Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1963), 4:64–67. This article is a reprint from the Church’s official magazine: Joseph Fielding Smith, “Differences in Bodies in the Resurrection,” *Improvement Era* 65, no. 1 (January 1962): 16, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera6501unse/page/n17/mode/2up>.

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

219. I here cite Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:288; *Tabernacles* (234n120).

220. Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:66.

221. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:288.

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].²²²

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.²²³ 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.²²⁴ 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

222. Bruce R. McConkie, “Mormon Doctrine Lecture #2,” (unpublished lecture notes, Brigham Young University, 1967), emphasis added, transcription provided courtesy of Dennis M. Horne. First published in Dennis M. Horne, “The Doctrine of Sex in the Spirit World and the Resurrection,” *Truth Will Prevail* (blog), 9 September 2020, <http://www.truthwillprevail.xyz/2020/09/the-doctrine-of-sex-in-spirit-world-and.html>. Horne provided me with his previously unpublished paper, and then made his work public prior to my publication.

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

225. Bruce R. McConkie, “Marriage and Exaltation,” (unpublished lecture transcript, University of Utah LDS Institute of Religion, 25 March 1968), emphasis added, copy in my possession courtesy Dennis B. Horne. First published in Horne, “The Doctrine of Sex in the Spirit World and the Resurrection.”

226. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 540.

227. Examples include Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:38; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 5:16; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 438.

in death.”²²⁸ He also describes “men and women ... assigned to the telestial and terrestrial kingdom.”²²⁹

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.²³⁰ 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.²³¹

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

228. Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:103.

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 materially stable; nor does it presume that this distinction is adequate to critically mapping complicated dimensions of embodiment.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 *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.²³³

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, *Tabernacles* is often unclear about what it or its sources intend by the term *homosexuality*. Do they mean what is called, today, a *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 *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 *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. When I refer to "the homosexual" and "homosexuality" here, I refer to the cultural forms these terms produced, linking

232. Cyd Cipolla, et al., eds., "Introduction," in *Queer Feminist Science Studies: A Reader* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 21.

233. Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 120; citing Annemarie Jagose, *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 apostle²³⁵ 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.”²³⁶

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.²³⁷ Foucault distinguishes between *sodomy* and *homosexuality*, but Clark declined to do so.²³⁸

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].²³⁹

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>).

237. Clark, "Home, and the Building of Home Life," 793.

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."

239. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 22.

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)²⁴⁰

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.²⁴¹

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."²⁴²

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*."

242. Lewis L. Robins in *The Why Book: A Book of 45 Interviews with Psychiatrists, Psychoanalysts, and Psychologists*, eds. Lucy Freeman and Martin Theodores (New York: Pocket Books, 1965), 202–203.

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

243. August Forel, *Sexual Ethics* (London: The New Age Press, 1908), 55–56, <https://archive.org/details/b28129398/page/54/mode/2up>.

244. David R. Reuben, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* (*But Were Afraid to Ask)* (New York: McKay, 1969), 214. Despite Reuben's sensitivity here, his discussion of homosexual patients in the hospital's emergency room is filled with mockery, condescension, unprofessionalism, and crudity (162, 192–93). Anyone who feels that Kimball is unduly harsh should compare him to this work, which was a No. 1 best-seller in 51 countries. Kimball comes off much better. (On Reuben's book's success, see Thomas Vinciguerra, "Word for Word / A Sex Manual, Then and Now; Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Changing with the Times*," *New York Times* [21 March 1999], <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/03/21/weekinreview/word-for-word-sex-manual-then-now-everything-you-ever-wanted-know-about-changing.html>).

245. The English translation of Krafft-Ebing's classic *Psychopathia Sexualis* (first published in German in 1886) has dozens of instances (Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study*, trans. F. J. Rebman [Brooklyn, New York: Physicians and Surgeons Book Company, 1931]), <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.200360/page/n357/mode/2up?q=perversion>, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.200360/page/n357/mode/2up?q=perverts>.

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

247. Spencer W. Kimball, “Love Versus Lust,” *BYU Speeches of the Year 1965* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020), 1–30, <https://speeches.byu.edu/wp-content/uploads/mp3/Kimball65.mp3>.

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.

250. Kimball, “Love Versus Lust,” *BYU Speeches of the Year — 1965*, 24.

251. “Live a chaste and virtuous life, including abstaining from any sexual relations outside a marriage between a man and a woman” (“Church Educational System Honor Code,” BYU: University Policies, <https://policy.byu.edu/view/index.php?p=26>).

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
4. Kimball's book, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, provides readers with a view from 1969. Its only mention of homosexual

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>.

254. Spencer W. Kimball, "Love Versus Lust," *BYU Speeches of the Year 1965* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020), 23, italics added. See above for recorded version.

255. Spencer W. Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1971), 22, italics added. On the origin see "Sources," in Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 621.

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

256. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 78. italics added.

257. Spencer W. Kimball and Mark E. Petersen, *Hope for Transgressors* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970), 1, italics added.

258. *Welfare Services Packet 1*, 14.

259. *Ibid.*, 4.

not be admitted to study at or be employed by any Church university, college, school, or program.”²⁶⁰

7. As I have shown, Boyd K. Packer’s 1978 BYU talk, “To the One,” began by insisting on *homosexual* as an adjective for a temptation, not a noun for a person.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 *homosexuality* as being a matter of behavior:

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”²⁶²

The manual discusses the various uses of the term *homosexuality*:

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.²⁶³

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’.”²⁶⁴

260. Ibid., 13, emphasis added.

261. See discussion in the section “Misrepresenting 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.

262. *Homosexuality* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 8, italics added.

263. Ibid., 1.

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

265. Ibid., 1.

266. LDS Social Services, *Professional Development Program: Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Problems* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 4–5, emphasis added.

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.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] [h]e then has increased power to forsake his homosexually-oriented thoughts and behavior and move to an exclusively heterosexual orientation.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*.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?

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.

271. Ibid., 8.

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.²⁷³

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.²⁷⁴ (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.²⁷⁵

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

276. Compare with the section "Causing Homosexuality?"

277. LDS Social Services, *Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Problems*, 30–31, italics added.

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.

278. David Thorstad, ed., “Sexual Preference vs. Sexual Orientation,” *Gay Activist* 6, no. 1 (New York, March 1977): 3, italics added, underlining in the original. Though published in 1977, the official statement was “adopted ... in early 1975” (3).

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.

279. Colleen C. Lanahan, "Homosexuality: a Different Sexual Orientation," *Nursing Forum* 15, no. 3 (1976): 318, italics in original.

280. John P. De Cecco, "Definition and Meaning of Sexual Orientation," *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1981): 57; citing Kinsey (1948), 29.

281. De Cecco, "Definition and Meaning of Sexual Orientation," 61.

282. *Ibid.*, 63.

283. *Ibid.*, 64, italics in original.

284. Michael D. Storms, "Theories of Sexual Orientation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38, no. 5 (1980): 784, 791.

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.”²⁸⁵

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.”²⁸⁶ “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.”²⁸⁷

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.²⁸⁸

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

285. Joseph Harry, “Sexual Orientation as Destiny,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 10, no. 3–4 (1985): 111, italics added.

286. Michael G. Shivley, Christopher Jones, John P. De Cecco, “Research on Sexual Orientation: Definitions and Methods,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 9, no. 2–3 (1984): 127.

287. *Ibid.*, 132–33.

288. *Ibid.*, 134.

providing clear or consistent definitions.”²⁸⁹ They argued that “sexual orientation is multi-variate” and these “variables ... differ over time.”²⁹⁰

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.²⁹¹

It is useful to compare Klein’s seven variables²⁹² 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.

| Klein Variable | <i>Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation</i> Approach |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Sexual attraction | “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.” ²⁹³ |
| 2. Sexual behavior | 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.” ²⁹⁴ |

289. Fritz Klein, Barry Sepekoff, Timothy J. Wolf, “Sexual Orientation: A Multi-Variable Dynamic Process,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 11, no. 1–2 (1985): 35.

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.

| Klein Variable | <i>Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Approach</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| 3. Sexual fantasies | “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”; “ <i>Homoerotic Fantasy Control</i> ... 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.” ²⁹⁵ |
| 4. Emotional preference | “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.” ²⁹⁶ |
| 5. Social preference | “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.” ²⁹⁷ |
| 6. Self-identification | “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.” ²⁹⁸ |
| 7. Lifestyle | “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.” ²⁹⁹ |

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.

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

300. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 78. See discussion below.

301. Connell "Rocky" O'Donovan, "'The Abominable and Detestable Crime against Nature': A Revised History of Homosexuality and Mormonism, 1840–1980," *Connell O'Donovan* (website), last revised 2004, <http://www.connellodonovan.com/abom.html>. This is a revised version of O'Donovan, "'The Abominable and Detestable Crime Against Nature': A Brief History of Homosexuality and Mormonism, 1840–1980," in *Multiply and Replenish*. In that earlier version, he omits the word "absurd."

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*.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).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].”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).³⁰⁵

302. Compare *Welfare Services Packet 1*, 8: “homosexuality is possible only with others.”

303. See also Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, ix–x.

304. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. I (1905; repr., New York: Random House, 1942), 240, italics in original, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.179937/page/n287/mode/2up>.

305. Albert Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, trans. Eden Paul (1912; repr., London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd: 1923), 265, <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.200468/page/n275/mode/2up>.

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."³⁰⁶

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 pleasurable-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.³⁰⁷

Moll saw a risk related to masturbation among the "homosexually inclined" — it would encourage unwanted behavior, but not create most

306. Ibid, 267, italics added.

307. Ibid, 313–14, italics added.

inclination to that behavior.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.”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 *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. ...

Homosexual behavior. ...

Cognitive Rehearsals — Those were reported in almost all of the men (99%). In 97% it was stated that cognitive 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.³¹⁰

308. A[lbert] Moll, *Les perversions de l'instinct genital: étude sur l'inversion sexuelle basée sur des documents officiels*, 6ième edition, traduit par Pactet et Romme (Paris: Georges Carré et C. Naud, 1897), 197, 200, 207–209, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_tpoaAAAAYAAJ/page/n249/mode/2up.

309. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 78. *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.”

310. Marcel T. Saghir, Eli Robins, and Bonnie Walbran, “Homosexuality: II. Sexual Behavior of the Male Homosexual,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 21 (August 1969): 219–23, underlining in original represents a subject heading.

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

311. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 215.

312. *Ibid.*, x, 15.

313. Kimball, “Love Versus Lust,” *BYU Speeches of the Year 1965*, 30.

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.)

314. Ladelles McWhorter, “From Masturbator to Homosexual: The Construction of the Sex Pervert,” in Cyd Cipolla et al, eds., *Queer Feminist Science Studies: A Reader* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 118.

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.³¹⁶ 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."³¹⁷ Even researchers "distinguish[ed] casual homosexual contact ... from exclusive same-sex attraction."³¹⁸

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);

316. See the section "'To the One' (1978)."

317. Winkler, "Lavender Sons of Zion," 14, 25–27, 29, 34, 35.

318. *Ibid.*, 26.

- “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

319. Packer, “To the One,” 2, italics added.

320. Ibid., 1, 18.

321. George Q. Cannon, *Report of the 68th Semiannual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1897), 65–66.

322. See the section “Misrepresentation of Nineteenth-Century Sources.”

323. Kimball, “A Counselling Problem in the Church,” 13.

324. *Welfare Services Packet 1*, 11, emphasis added.

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."

326. Kimball, "A Counselling Problem in the Church," 13.

327. Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals*, 12–13, 21–22, 26–27, 30–31.

328. Kimball, "Love Versus Lust," BYU Speeches of the Year 1965, 14. Compare Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals*, 20.

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.”³²⁹

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.³³⁰

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).³³¹ 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.”

330. Packer, “To the One,” 6.

331. Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, “Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) — 1000-Person Tool,” *Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care* (website), last updated in 2019, <https://canadiantaskforce.ca/tools-resources/abdominal-aortic-aneurysm-harms-and-benefits/>.

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."³³²

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"³³³ 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).

332. Packer, "To the One," 19. Compare Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 52.

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.

334. Kimball and Petersen, *Hope for Transgressors*, 1.

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.”

339. Kimball, “Love Versus Lust,” 21.

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."³⁴²

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.³⁴³

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."³⁴⁴ 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";³⁴⁵

"homosexuality, like *fornication, adultery, robbery, and other detestable sins* is curable."³⁴⁶

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.

344. Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals*, 19.

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

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.

348. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 170, 83–84.

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?"³⁵⁰

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."³⁵¹ 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! ...

350. Packer, "To the One," 5–6.

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's³⁵⁶: "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 1978.³⁵⁷

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.³⁵⁸

In 1995, he reiterated: "How all can be repaired, we do not know. *It may not all be accomplished in this life.*"³⁵⁹ Either *Tabernacles* is ignorant of these sources, or it is misrepresenting them.

356. Boyd K. Packer, "Ye Are the Temple of God," *Ensign* (November 2000).

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."

358. Boyd K. Packer, "Covenants," *Ensign* (November 1990), emphasis added, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1990/10/covenants?lang=eng>

359. Boyd K. Packer, "The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign* (November 1995), emphasis added, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/the-brilliant-morning-of-forgiveness?lang=eng>.

“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.”³⁶⁰ 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*.”³⁶¹ *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.³⁶²

360. Packer, “To the One,” 11.

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.*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 another³⁶⁴ — then he and his servants may properly tell us how to express them. Our desires about them are then of little moral moment. (If

363. Ibid., 13–14, italics added.

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.

Homosexuality (1981 Leaders' Manual)

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).³⁶⁸ 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."³⁶⁹ 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.³⁷⁰

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.³⁷¹

368. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reverence and Morality," *Ensign* (May 1987), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1987/04/reverence-and-morality?lang=eng>.

369. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 86; *Tabernacles*, 96n226.

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.

374. LDS Social Services, *Understanding and Changing Homosexual Orientation Problems*, 25.

375. *Ibid.*, 26.

376. Kimball, "Counselling Problem in the Church," 13; Kimball, "Love Versus Lust," *BYU Speeches of the Year — 1965*, 26; Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 83, 250–53. See also *Homosexuality*, 9.

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.”³⁷⁷

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.³⁷⁸ 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.³⁷⁹

It is hard to see this clumsy, convoluted approach to citation — when a single phrase could have been cited with more clarity — as accidental.³⁸⁰

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.”³⁸¹ So, even *Tabernacles’s* decision to highlight homosexuality and bestiality is deceptive — Kimball includes

377. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 79.

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.”

379. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 79.

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."³⁸² 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*.³⁸³

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.

383. Bruce R. McConkie, "Sex Immorality," in *Mormon Doctrine* [1st edition] (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 708, italics in original. *Tabernacles* also fails

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).

386. McConkie, "Capital Punishment," *Mormon Doctrine* (1958), 104.

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

388. McConkie, "Blood Atonement Doctrine," "Civil Governments," "Government of God," "Theocracy (Thearchy)," *Mormon Doctrine* (1958), 88, 136, 308–309, 713. Compare with Cannon's anticipation of the destruction of the sexually wicked — but only at the second coming (see the section entitled "Misrepresentation of Nineteenth-Century Sources"). That qualification is likewise absent from *Tabernacles's* account.

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.³⁹⁰ 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.”³⁹¹

In *The Miracle of Forgiveness* itself, fornication is termed “an act of defilement,”³⁹² and the more minor acts of necking and petting “are pernicious and abominable.”³⁹³ 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.”³⁹⁴ 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!”³⁹⁵

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.

394. *Ibid.*, 61–62, 65, 67, 74.

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 "shrivel 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.

399. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 45.

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:

405. Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report* (April 1965): 60, italics added, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1965a/page/n61/mode/2up>.

406. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 6, 210, 299

407. Spencer W. Kimball, “Why Call Me Lord, Lord, and Do Not the Things Which I Say?” *Ensign* (May 1975): 4, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1975/04/why-call-me-lord-lord-and-do-not-the-things-which-i-say?lang=eng>.

408. Area Conference, Bogota Columbia (6 March 1977); cited in Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 409.

409. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 227, italics added.

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,

416. Spencer W. Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” *Ensign* (June 1976): 4, 6, italics added, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1976/06/the-false-gods-we-worship?lang=eng>.

417. See the section entitled “An Early Twentieth-Century Gap?”, specifically the section “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior.”

418. See the section “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior.”

419. Cannon (1879) in the section “Misrepresentations of Nineteenth-Century Sources”; see citation in *Tabernacles*, 55.

420. For Gibbon, see the section “Identifying References to Homosexual Behavior.” For leaders see also the sections “Nineteenth Century” and “Twentieth Century.”

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

421. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 61.

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

423. 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>; also available in David O. McKay, *Conference Report* (October 1942): 10, though the address was read by President Clark.

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

425. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 88–89.

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);

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

428. Kimball, "Love Versus Lust," *BYU Speeches of the Year 1965*, 12.

429. *Ibid.*, 13.

430. Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals*, 5.

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.

438. *Ibid.*, 19, 25–26.

439. *Ibid.*, 36–37.

- Sin prioritizes things and honors over God;⁴⁴⁰
- Righteousness leads to “continuing prosperity” instead of political and economic strife;⁴⁴¹
- Sins affect others negatively: “break hearts, destroy reputations and wreck lives”;⁴⁴²
- Some sins (e.g., Word of Wisdom) support the evil and harmful actions of others;⁴⁴³
- Sin can cause physical accidents and loss of health.⁴⁴⁴

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.⁴⁴⁵

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.”⁴⁴⁹

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.⁴⁵⁰

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.”⁴⁵¹ 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.”⁴⁵² 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?”⁴⁵³

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.”⁴⁵⁴ 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

455. Daniel 2:31, 35 (NIV), <https://biblehub.com/niv/daniel/2.htm>.

456. Mitton and James, "A Response to D. Michael Quinn's Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History," 190–98; Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 231, 232, 242–44, 246–47, 429–30.

New York, even though the bathhouse had been closed for thirteen years prior to their visit;⁴⁵⁷

- 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.’”⁴⁵⁸ “This required the University of Illinois Press to reprint the dust jacket and ‘razor out’ the deceptive page from five thousand copies of the book before it was offered to the public”;⁴⁵⁹
- Presenting an example of Utah homosexual practice from the 1920s–1930s as “Mormon,” when the individual was also strongly opposed to the Church;⁴⁶⁰
- 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,”⁴⁶¹ but his lack of candor is obvious to any who have read the relevant passages).⁴⁶²

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*.)

458. Hansen, “Quinn speak,” 139.

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.

461. Pela, “The Truth Will Out,” 58, italics in original.

462. Mitton and James, “A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History,” 153–62; Hansen, “Quinn speak,” 137. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 110.

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."⁴⁶³

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.⁴⁶⁴

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."⁴⁶⁵ 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."

465. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 53.

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. ...

F[rancis] 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

466. Heber J. Grant, personal journal, 12 August 1887, transcript in my possession courtesy of Brian D. Hales. Portions reproduced in Gary James Bergera, "Transgressions in the Latter-day Saint Community: The Cases of Albert Carrington, Richard R. Lyman, and Joseph F. Smith — Part 1: Albert Carrington," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 152–57, <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1066&context=mormonhistory>.

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

467. “School of the Prophets Salt Lake City meeting minutes, 1883,” *Minutes, 1883 August–December*, 44–47, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=94111455-7896-451c-8cff-311dfd48c6c6&crate=0&index=48>; also quoted in Devery S. Anderson, ed., *Salt Lake School of the Prophets 1867–1883* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2018), 786–89.

468. Ibid., 46, italics added. Compare Taylor, *Journal of Discourses* 24:170.

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.”⁴⁷⁰

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.⁴⁷¹

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.

471. Ibid., 47–48.

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 talk⁴⁷⁴ 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,

474. George Q. Cannon, April 6, 1879, *Journal of Discourses* (London: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854–86), 20: 200.

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."

478. Joseph F. Smith cited in Grant, personal journal, 12 August 1887. 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.⁴⁸⁰ This is a leniency toward inexperience, youth, and those who had not yet made sacred covenants in the temple, not homosexual acts.

***Same-Sex Dynamics* Distorts the Lorenzo Snow Era**

To shore up a weak case, *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, *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."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.⁴⁸² The stake president disciplined the *accusers* for leveling "such a monstrous charge."⁴⁸³ Such punishment is not evidence that homosexual acts were approved; if anything, disciplining the source of a false accusation demonstrates the opposite.

men married between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-seven and fathered three or four children each" (277–78, by contrast see footnote 60 for the bishop's excommunication). *Same-Sex Dynamics* also refers to several court cases with no mention of ecclesiastical consequences. These are of marginal relevance for judging ecclesiastical attitudes, especially when the judges are non-LDS, though they do demonstrate that force and rape were condemned by all. For example, Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, Frederick Jones, adult rape of boy (272); gang rape (278–81).

480. For example, Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, three couples: (1) both in thirties, (2) age 19 and 18, (3) both aged 15 were excommunicated. *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").

481. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 282, 287.

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.

483. Quinn, *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*."⁴⁸⁴

"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";

484. Kimball, "A Counselling Problem in the Church," 11, 13–17.

- “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."⁴⁸⁵

New Horizons for Homosexuals (1966/1971)

This pamphlet (retitled *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*";

485. Kimball, "Love Versus Lust," *BYU Speeches of the Year 1965*, 9–10, 12–14, 17, 21, 23–27.

- “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”;⁴⁸⁶

***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”;

486. Kimball, *New Horizons for Homosexuals*, 5–6, 9–11, 13, 19–20, 22, 24, 28, 32.

- "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."⁴⁸⁷

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*";

487. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 78–82, 84, 88.

- “*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.”⁴⁸⁸

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”;

488. Kimball and Petersen, *Hope for Transgressors*, 1–8.

- "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*."⁴⁸⁹

"To the One" (1978)

- [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.”⁴⁹⁰

Homosexuality (1981 Leaders’ Manual)

- “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”;

490. Packer, “To the One,” 2–3, 5–7, 9, 12–13, 16–17.

- "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 properly 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."⁴⁹¹

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

491. *Homosexuality*, 1–8.

- 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

492. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 165.

493. R.W. Young, “A Second Daniel,” *Contributor* 2, no. 7 (April 1881): 213, <https://archive.org/details/contributor0207eng/page/212/mode/2up>.

494. Hyrum M. Smith, *Conference Report* (October 1906): 44, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1906sa/page/n45/mode/2up>.

495. Joseph F. Smith, “Editor’s Table: Marriage God-Ordained and Sanctioned,” *Improvement Era* (July 1902): 714, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera0509unse/page/714/mode/2up>; cited in John A. Widtsoe, ed., *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1919), 272.

496. Joseph F. Smith, “A Sermon on Purity,” *Improvement Era* 5, no. 7 (May 1903): 504, address from MIA annual conference, 1902, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera0607unse/page/504/mode/2up>.

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 covet, 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

497. William A. Hyde (Pocatello Stake President), "The Man in Scarlet," *Improvement Era* 15, no. 7 (May 1912): 581, 595, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera1507unse/page/594/mode/2up>.

498. Joseph F. Smith, *Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age* (San Francisco: The Newspaper Enterprise Association, n. d.), 15, <https://archive.org/details/unchastitydomina00smitrich/page/14/mode/2up>; also published in Joseph F. Smith, "Editors' Table: *Improvement Era* 20, no. 8 (June 1917): 738.

499. Melvin J. Ballard, *Conference Report* (October 1921): 102, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1921sa/page/n103/mode/2up>.

500. Melvin J. Ballard, *Conference Report* (April 1929): 69, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1929a/page/68/mode/2up>.

501. Heber J. Grant, *Improvement Era* 44, no. 2 (February 1941): 73, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera4402unse/page/n9/mode/2up>; also Grant, *Conference Report* (October 1944): 7, <https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1944sa/mode/2up>; Grant, *Improvement Era* 47, no. 11 (November 1944): 655, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera4711unse/page/n15/mode/2up>; G. Homer Durham, ed., *Gospel Standards: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Heber J. Grant*,

- 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?”;⁵⁰²
- 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;”⁵⁰³
- 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.’”⁵⁰⁴

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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Seventh President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Press, 1941), 55.

502. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Restoration of All Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1945), 264.

503. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation Covering the First Period Joseph Smith, The Prophet*, vol. 1 (The Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1953), 230.

504. Harold B. Lee, *Your Coat of Armor* (Salt Lake City: Mutual Improvement Association, 1950); also in Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 331–32; cited in *Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 169.