

The Theology of Desire

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Part I

Note: This is the first of a two-part essay. The second part will follow immediately in Dialogue, 40, no. 2 (Summer 2007). The essay reconfigures the erotic within the context of LDS theology. It examines the tension which arises when the puritanical practices and modernist assumptions of contemporary LDS culture are contrasted with the erotic underpinnings of LDS metaphysics and anthropology.

And we must affirm (for this is the truth) that the Creator of the Universe himself, in his beautiful and good Eros towards the Universe, is, through his excessive erotic Goodness, transported outside himself, in his providential activities towards all things that have being, and is overcome by the sweet spell of Goodness, Love, and Eros. In this manner, he is drawn from his transcendent throne above all things to dwell within the heart of all things in accordance with his super-essential and ecstatic power whereby he nonetheless does not leave himself behind.
—Denys the Areopagite (ca. 500)¹

A friend who is a soprano once related a story to me of a time when she was accompanied by a male pianist. They worked together on the piece for some weeks; and finally, when they performed, the ecstatic release, the sense of the flowing together of their spirits, was, in her words, “like making love.”

She was a faithful member of the Church, sealed and devoted to her spouse, as was her accompanist. Was there anything inappropriate in their orgasmic experience of one another as beloved?

I think of this question whenever I feel the rain on my face, the new spring grass between my toes, whenever I smell the first steam of cooking lentils, or look up to the ceiling of the Notre Dame Basilica, midnight

blue and sprinkled with gilded stars. I think of it whenever I meet the open-pupiled eyes of old women in the temple, or of babies who suck my fingertips. I make love to all of creation, and all of creation makes love to me. If such experience is inappropriate, then my entire existence here on this earth is inappropriate.

Proponents of the arts, in their attempts to justify the aesthetic experience, are careful to distinguish the pleasure of hearing a concert or viewing a great painting from erotic pleasure. The former, they say (half-heartedly, unconvincingly), is noble and good, while the latter is vile, except within the closed compartment of marriage, and even then, only of teleological significance. This is an issue that has plagued the history of art, and particularly visual art, since the sex instinct, especially in males, is highly visually driven. Islam, for instance, forbids the visual representation of the body and limits art to abstract geometric design and calligraphy. Interestingly, this religious tradition also cloaks the female form so as to preempt temptation. A major schism occurred in the history of the early Christian church over the issue of icons. Referred to as the Iconoclast crisis, it pitted those who saw the need for representation as a base instinct leading to corruption against those who saw it as a means of accessing otherwise ineffable spiritual truths. No mere philosophical debate, this was an incredibly bloody contest that spanned several centuries. The issue again surfaced when Protestant Reformers, making a theological argument for bare, white walls, ravaged churches and destroyed artworks.² The polemic continues today. Questions of theology, art, and sexuality are inextricably connected. Why, and how? What is the nature of those connections, and how are they articulated in LDS theology and culture?

Mormon theology is unusual in a number of respects, not the least of which is its sexual ethos. We know, and are taught very early, about the law of chastity, which requires that no one of us shall have sexual intercourse except with the spouse to whom we are legally and lawfully married. What we are often not taught are the far-reaching implications of our other sexual doctrines: the physicality of the spirit,³ the concept of God as a physical being and a glorified man, and man as a potential god,⁴ the ascendancy of embodied beings over unembodied,⁵ the literalness of the fatherhood of God,⁶ the existence of the Divine Mother in whose image women are made,⁷ the sexual union of the Father with Mary in the conception of Jesus,⁸ the claim that Jesus, as a typical Jew of his day and a rabbi, was a married man,⁹ the belief that Mary consummated her mar-

riage with Joseph and had children by him after the birth of Jesus,¹⁰ the belief that an individual cannot enter the highest kingdom of Heaven without a spouse of the other gender, whereafter they may have "eternal increase,"¹¹ the insistence that gender is an eternal characteristic, existing both pre- and post-mortally,¹² the emphasis on genealogies, and finally, the matter of polygyny and polyandry.

It has been astonishing to me as a convert and a student of systematic theology to observe how little explored have been these most fundamental of doctrines and even more astonishing to witness what I see as the almost complete failure on the part of the Mormon people to put them into practice within the culture. I expected to find a race of highly evolved, morally self-directed, and holistically integrated beings. I suppose I expected the caretakers of such doctrines to have hearts as pure and minds as expansive as Joseph Smith's. I looked for Zion, and behold, Athens, Vienna, Provo.

So, let us begin our discussion by first tending to the objection many Latter-day Saint readers will register—namely, the idea that the erotic is synonymous with evil. It is obvious from a strictly theological standpoint, once we get some objective bearing, that puritanism is inconsistent with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, if not with common sense, and that therefore we must invent a new paradigm for thinking about the erotic.

Agency: Motion and Emotion

I believe a new understanding begins with an examination of our ways of thinking about agency and action. We are an action-oriented people. We have come to believe that a strong emotion like anger or a strong bodily instinct like the sex drive, if given notice at all, will immediately compel us to action. We believe our agency will be severely compromised if not taken entirely from us should we allow ourselves to experience these inner realities. We fear that our subconscious minds are cesspools of Freudian darkness and that we will be sucked under by forces too strong for any mortal to resist. Moreover, we view these inner realities within a Darwinian paradigm, as low, primitive, animalistic. We have accepted the notion that the cerebral cortex is superior to the "lower" parts of the brain that we share with pigs and reptiles, forgetting that we also share them with the Almighty God and his Son, Jesus Christ. With Descartes, we have come to believe that the reasoning ability of our minds is superior to the deeper, nonrational abilities of our minds—emotion, intuition, and

instinct. It would appear that the apostles of modernism have influenced us more than we know.

Prophets and apostles have warned us to flee from the very appearance of evil, and so we must. To thoughtlessly act out one's passions is surely destructive of one's own and others' well-being. We recall Jesus's experience in being offered temptations by Satan, and note that he "gave no heed" to them (D&C 20:22). However, we forget that he had just emerged from a full forty days and nights of fasting, prayer, and deep contemplation, during which, we may assume, he wrestled with his passions, getting them under internal control before the outer temptation presented itself. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). In retiring to his wilderness, Jesus gave space for thoughts and feelings to arise and be observed and mastered in tutorial with his Father. In so doing, he effectively inserted his agency between passion and action.

If Jesus is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," he feels the depths and vicissitudes of human emotion, every bodily pleasure and pain. And if he is the "express image" (Heb. 1:3; see also John 5:19, 12:45) of the Father, doing nothing but what he sees the Father do (John 5:19), obviously the Father emotes too.¹³ We blithely ignore the fact that the scriptures are replete with the passions of Deity. There are dozens of instances of God's "wrath" and "fierce anger," his "jealous" nature, his "bowels of mercy" and his "good pleasure." Jesus rebuked the Pharisees with harsh language and at one point with a whip; and he wept for his friend Lazarus, though he knew he would momentarily raise him from the dead. He apparently made himself merry at the marriage at Cana along with everybody else. These observations alone should be enough to dispel the myth that certain emotions are "good" and others "bad." God himself is neither stoic nor perpetually in a cheerful mood. Neither does he refrain from acting upon his emotions.

What distinguishes God's experience of emotion from ours in many cases is the level of self-awareness and sense of timing he brings to it. For example, when Enoch asked how the Lord could weep, He was fully articulate about it, going on for eight verses in explanation of His feelings (Moses 7:28-41). In Genesis 6, God was so "grieved at heart" that he decided to murder the entire population of the earth—but not without first explaining his reasons to the handful who would listen and instructing

them in the intricate details of building and outfitting a ship. When the Lord "swears in his wrath" (Ps. 95:11) that the wicked shall not enter his kingdom, his fury is directed as part of a comprehensive plan for the reclamation of the race. His emotion, in other words, meshes with his equally self-aware cognitive schemas. God's anger is ultimately productive of order, rather than destructive, showing us that even rage can be a constructive move, an appropriate personal and interpersonal motivator at times if it is handled with competence.¹⁴ If it is Satan who "stirreth up our hearts to anger" (D&C 10:24; 3 Ne. 11:29-30; Moro. 9:3), is God here under the influence of Satan? Of course not, any more than he is carnal, sensual, and devilish by the mere fact of having a body. We must conclude that it is not emotionality itself that is evil or inappropriate, but a blind, reactive emotion disconnected from the verbal and cognitive brain centers: in short, emotional illiteracy.

The phrase "thoughts of the heart" occurs many times in scripture. The heart is portrayed as a locus of intelligence and agency, as distinguished from the hands or arms, which represent action, and "the mind," which represents the rational intellect or sometimes the whole volitional complex. If any of these loci receive more emphasis in the scriptures, it is the heart. "Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding," says Abinadi, "therefore ye have not been wise" (Mosiah 12:27). Contemporary theories of multiple intelligences are nothing new—the designer of the human organism let us know from the beginning that we were multiply intelligent, with the heart as overseer. Zion, it turns out, is not the pure in mind or the pure in action, but the "pure in heart" (D&C 97:21). A pure heart is a whole heart; a pure heart is also a broken heart. The Lord wants beings whose emotions have been tempered by the humility of utter dependence on a Savior. A broken heart is not a numb heart or even a resolute heart, but a tender and sensitive one.

Alma, among other prophets, admonishes us to "bridle" our passions (Alma 38:12). Those who handle horses understand that the best way to break a horse is to first quietly and gently get to know it, to discover its natural patterns of behavior and work with them. The point is not to despise the horse, shut it up in a barn, or beat it into submission. How then will it carry us to our destination? Beyond this, what message do we give to the Creator of the horse when we neglect or mistreat it? In a society bent on action, it may be hard to believe that we can freely experience emotions, experience them deeply and in every nuance, without having to

impulsively act. We fear that we will be overwhelmed. Yet we are the offspring of a passionate God, redeemed by a Christ who also shares every passion we have. As such, we have divine ascendancy over temptation.

To have a sensitive heart is to have a sensitive body. Having "feelings," being "touched," and getting "the cold shoulder" or "a warm welcome" are apt ways to describe emotion, because *emotion is always connected to body*. Fear produces a surge of adrenalin that begins a chemical cascade involving everything from colon spasticity to visual acuity; sorrow produces a reduction in serotonin and catecholamines; and love—aah, love—produces a dizzying neuro-cocktail of dopamine and endorphins that spreads a glow from head to toe. "Emotion," says ecumenical guru Eckhart Tolle, "is the body's reaction to the mind."¹⁵ Beyond the metaphorical statement that the pre-mortal "sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7), we know little about the emotional experience of the unembodied. What we do know is that embodiment represents a higher stage of eternal progression than spirit organization. As embodied beings, we are capable of a far deeper and more sophisticated experience as a result of enhanced agency.

Mormonism assumes a connection between spiritual progression and physical state. Those who are faithful in exercising their priesthood and magnifying their calling "are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies" (D&C 84:33). Joseph Smith taught that there is a visible effect upon the body of a Gentile receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost as it "purge[s] out the old blood."¹⁶ As we are spiritually born of God and experience "a mighty change in our hearts," we "receive his image in our countenances" (Alma 5:14, 19). These are changes enacted here and now, not just in a far-off day of resurrection. Hence, we begin to think of life as the process of coordinating and integrating physical reality with spiritual. If the final fusion of the body with the spirit brings "a fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33–34), can we not conceive of *degrees* of joy, of a continuum of joy? Can we not say that the greater the level of integration we achieve, the greater will be our joy here and now, in this life? The sensations of the body as it interfaces with the spirit in time are the very foundation of why we are here. Their integration is the "object and design" of the second estate.¹⁷

In our well-meaning efforts to thwart evil, we have blunted our awareness of physical and emotional sensation; and yet, paradoxically, it is from this very physical-emotional awareness that all ethical behavior

springs, for only to the extent we connect with our own feelings are we able to connect with those of others. Social psychologists remind us that the roots of morality are to be found in empathy, since it is empathizing with the potential victims and so sharing their distress that moves people to act with altruism.¹⁸ Empathy is the essence of the mothering instinct; a mother who is bonded to her infant feels on some deep level what he feels and so can meet his needs. Empathy—not sympathy, which sets one person apart from and above another, but empathy, which dissolves ego boundaries—can also be considered the root of friendship. In its power to unite two souls, it could even be considered the essence of romantic love. In erotic love, empathy reaches its highest expression, as, ideally, our pleasure depends on one another's pleasure. Our consciences themselves can be said to depend on a sense that not only have we hurt or helped others in some way, but that we have hurt our Father's feelings or given him great pleasure. Only with empathy can we keep the spirit of the two greatest commandments, and of our baptismal covenant to "mourn with those who mourn." Only with compassion, a true feeling-with, will we know how to offer felicitous comfort to those who stand in need of comfort.

On the other end of the scale,

a psychological fault line is common to rapists, child molesters, and many perpetrators of family violence alike: they are incapable of empathy. This inability to feel their victims' pain allows them to tell themselves lies that [justify] their crime. . . . Psychopathy, the inability to feel empathy or compassion of any sort, or the least twinge of conscience, is one of the more perplexing of emotional defects. The heart of the psychopath's coldness seems to lie in an inability to make anything more than the shallowest of emotional connections. The cruelest of criminals, such as sadistic serial killers who delight in the suffering of their victims before they die, are the epitome of psychopathy.¹⁹

Rehabilitation programs for violent criminals are now being designed specifically to increase physical-emotional self-awareness and hence, empathy.

Temple Grandin, a high-functioning autistic, explains that one of the characteristics of autism is the inability to experience complex emotions. This deficit, while leaving the autistic person innocent of criminality, limits the ability to form and sustain human relationships. She says:

My emotions are simpler than those of most people. I don't know what complex emotion in a human relationship is. I only understand simple emotions, such as fear, anger, happiness, and sadness. . . . I don't understand how a person can love someone one minute and then want to kill

him in a jealous rage the next. I don't understand being happy and sad at the same time. . . . As far as I can figure out, complex emotion occurs when a person feels two opposite emotions at once.²⁰

Her observations make us aware of what we tend to take for granted—that normal emotional experience surrounding human relationships is richly varied, complex, and even paradoxical, requiring a sophisticated level of processing. Emotional interchange follows its own nonrational order and requires not only careful self-observation but also the ability to access, sort, and assimilate massive amounts of sensory data. In order to overcome the sensory disintegration and overload that autistic people commonly experience in their attempts to interact with others, Ms. Grandin invented a “squeeze machine” that could be adjusted to provide gentle pressure to both sides of her body. This device enabled her to settle down enough to tune in to her physical-emotional experience and make connections:

To have feelings of gentleness, one must experience gentle bodily comfort. As my nervous system learned to tolerate the soothing pressure from my squeeze machine, I discovered that the comforting feeling made me a kinder and gentler person. . . . It wasn't until after I had used the modified squeeze machine that I learned how to pet our cat gently. He used to run away from me because I held him too tightly. . . . After I experienced the soothing feeling of being held, I was able to transfer that good feeling to the cat. As I became gentler, the cat began to stay with me, and this helped me understand the ideas of reciprocity and gentleness.

From the time I started using my squeeze machine, I understood that the feeling it gave me was one that I needed to cultivate toward other people. It was clear that the pleasurable feelings were associated with love for other people.²¹

The courage and honesty with which Ms. Grandin approaches her peculiar life experience and the level of physical-emotional facility she has been able to develop as a result leave the rest of us without excuse. These are skills most of us can learn as we open our hearts to the gifts of mortality.

On reflection, we realize that the best friend or lover, parent or teacher, is one who can be aware of and sensitive to what we think and feel on levels that may not be logically obvious. We appreciate when someone has been willing and able to read our body language, our tone of voice, the subtleties of our facial expression, the even subtler vibrations of our stumbling spirits. In these ways we feel known and accepted, valued and loved,

in a more real and immediate way than having to guess it based on how many casseroles we have received, or deduce it based on certain words or phrases. Our identity and worth is confirmed directly. Beyond the blessings God bestows (or doesn't bestow) and beyond any scriptural promise, it is the experience of God as empathy that finally convinces human beings of his sincere love for them. A God who is without body, parts, and passions, or who is disconnected from his own experience of them, could never serve as lover of the human soul.²²

I would propose that it is not by fleeing from our earthly physical and emotional experience that we gain mastery over it, but rather by engaging it fully. I would propose that God himself is physically and emotionally competent on just such a basis. Only through emotional and physical self-awareness can we hope to access the empathy that motivates a genuine morality as opposed to a superficial, externally directed hypocrisy. What we most desperately need to give ourselves and one another is simply this: honest attention.

Sensual-Emotional Competence

I stress again that, in saying that we should fully embrace our passions and drives, I am not suggesting that we abandon traditional moral codes and become vulgar or promiscuous. Heaven forbid; for just as surely as one comes to himself, he comes to God. As Brigham Young observed, "No man can know himself unless he knows God, and he cannot know God unless he knows himself."²³ In considering the nature of Eros, it is important to distinguish between erotic love as ego-dissolving, desire-merging empathy, which encompasses a wide variety of human interactions and always, consciously or not, includes God in the equation; and the selfish and loveless "erotic" experience grounded in sexual brutality—for any loveless (antipathetic) experience of the sensual or sexual is necessarily brutal and brutish. In truth, there should be two entirely different terms for these two very different experiences.

I am using Eros to mean the fertile creative-generative love which, in its symbolic and actual purity, is the ultimate in goodwill, and not to mean sexual tyranny or brutality. That is its counterfeit, an unwhole approach, act unattached to and unconcentric with selfhood, otherhood, and godhood. In order to act without empathy, we must divide our intellects, our emotions, and our bodies into separate compartments, we must divide our own experience from our neighbor's experience, and we must divide

our souls from God's. This state of divided consciousness is the hallmark of the modern age, the result of a conception of ourselves as machines and cogs within machines. Such thinking emphasizes differences in form and function rather than similarities and connections. The machine model has proven useful in many practical ways but reaches its limits in application to things human—ergo, things divine. It has led us to think of our bodies as some sort of external cage or transportation device or holding tank for our minds/spirits, and to further compartmentalize the functions of the body into discrete systems.

The greatest challenge to medicine today is the exponentially increasing weight of evidence that no body system works independently of any other or independently of a social and emotional context. In one study, the greatest predictor of whether a heart surgery patient would recover was not obesity, blood pressure, or cholesterol levels, but a "yes" answer to the question, "Does your spouse show her love for you?"²⁴ Another study compared the life expectancies of two groups of terminal cancer patients: those who participated in a group where they explored and expressed their feelings about their illness and impending death, and those who did not participate. The results were astounding. The patients who participated lived twice as long as those who did not. The physician in charge of the study remarked that if such results were obtained by a drug, pharmaceutical companies would be battling for the rights to manufacture it.²⁵ The immune system has been found to be so intricately intertwined with the nervous system that a new field called neuroimmunology had to be developed. Further discoveries established such a strong connection between the psychological state of the patient and the functioning of the immune system via the nervous system that neuroimmunology was obliged to become psychoneuroimmunology. If the trend continues, we may eventually be led back to the truth that human beings are whole, with every aspect affecting every other. We may eventually be forced to relinquish the Cartesian mind-body split.

The inadequacy of the dualist concept of humanity has been the subject of a number of philosophical and literary works. The English philosopher Gilbert Ryle proposed that we have been duped into an inaccurate bifurcated conception of ourselves as a result of incorrect semantic bracketing, or what he called "a family of radical category-mistakes."²⁶ D. H. Lawrence lamented not only the alienation of our mind and spirit from our body, but that of human beings from other human beings, and

that of individuals from nature: "We plucked [Eros] from its stem on the tree of Life, and expected it to keep on blooming in our civilised vase on the table."²⁷ Emerson believed that by attending to life with rational understanding alone, man "masters it by a penny-wisdom; and he . . . is but half a man." In losing his coherence, "man is a god in ruins" and "he is shrunk to a drop."²⁸ As a result of such compartmentalizing and reductivism, we have lost sight of the fact that the erotic is a whole-person enterprise and instead have irreverently imprisoned it within only the body, and further shackled it down to only the genitals. In our unilateral view of the sovereignty of the individual, we have also lost sight of the fact that sex is a whole-society enterprise, indeed, a whole-universe enterprise.

Human heterosexual intercourse has been thought of by many cultures as the quintessential symbol of the cosmic order. It is the archetypal interface of opposites, the act that momentarily creates "a compound in one" (2 Ne. 2:11). Picture the arched body of Nut, Egyptian goddess of the sky, poised over the body of Geb, god of the earth, or notice the aniconic Linga-Yoni at the entrance to a Hindu temple. Once, passionate gods controlled the fertility of the earth and of people. Now, with birth control and genetic engineering, human beings control it. As humanity corrupts Eros, forgets who and what God is, and sets up cultures on false premises, as during the Great Apostasy and subsequent ages, it loses its cosmic roots, and sex becomes a mere thrill, an addiction, and eventually a banality.

As the lowest common denominator, promiscuous sex is the last sad, desperate attempt of the modern soul to relieve its isolation. The deep loneliness of disconnection from one's own emotional-physical sensitivity and that of others, as well as God's, drives the desire for pornography. A major theme of Walker Percy's *The Last Gentleman* (New York: Picador USA, 1999) concerns this reduction of man to his genitals, to a machine that voraciously consumes but is never satisfied. Much of contemporary art not only comments upon the reduction, but exemplifies it. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has referred to this fragmented state as "the moral schizophrenia that comes from pretending we are one, sharing the *physical* symbols and *physical* intimacy of our union, but then fleeing, retreating, severing all such other aspects—and symbols—of what was meant to be a total obligation." He warns, "If you persist in sharing part without the whole, in pursuing satisfaction devoid of symbolism, in giving parts and pieces and inflamed fragments only, you run the terrible risk of . . . spiritual, psychic damage."²⁹ Evil consists of seeking satisfaction in decon-

textualized, partial imitations of deep and whole realities—seeking “happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head” (Hel. 13:38).

Satan is an interesting figure in the way he utilizes the human propensity to vivisect reality through excesses of analytic thought. On the one hand, he wastes considerable energy encouraging the formation of unsustainable confederacies, or what the scriptures refer to as “secret combinations.” These combinations are doomed to failure, as many strictly rational syntheses have also been, because they attempt to base a comprehensive system on partial and untenable assumptions and to employ means that are inconsistent with their stated ends. Witness here the tragic failures of Marxism-Leninism. At the same time that he fosters unworkable plans, i.e., lies, Satan also wastes energy attempting to fragment humankind and deconstruct the wholeness of the Father’s inscrutable plan. He succeeded in separating Adam and Eve and their posterity from God, though in doing so he unwittingly furthered the “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8). He encouraged enmity between Cain and Abel. He continues to drive us to war by dividing our thinking in terms of “us” and “them.” Ultimately, however, evil always loses because its destructive power has been preempted by the “great plan of redemption” (Jac. 6:8). The ships that have launched civilization’s Nephis could not have been built without the help of its Lamans and Lemuels, and this is by design. Hegel’s insight that the dialectic method will achieve ultimate good is thus corroborated in Mormon theology.

The Lord has allowed and utilized fragmentation as a means of lengthening out humanity’s time on the earth, as with the confounding of languages at the tower of Babel, the physical dividing of Pangaea in the days of Peleg, and the scattering of the tribes of Israel. It has been proposed by philosophers of science (e.g., Hans Reichenbach, Karl Popper, John Searle) that the dividing and specialization of human consciousness that has occurred over the past several centuries has allowed for much genuine progress, and Mormons with their pragmatic cultural bias would not challenge that proposal. American Mormons are enamored of technology and scientific “progress” to the extent that they literally cannot imagine a heaven without electricity and automobiles. The downside of this sell-out (besides the fact that it has strained human adaptability past its limits and polluted God’s handiwork to the point that the elements must now melt with fervent heat to catalyze the filth) is that it promotes a Socratic notion

of evil, in which human beings are seen as evil only to the extent that they reject knowledge and reason. We come to equate reason with good and passion with evil. For instance, we tend to think of Hitler's evil as consisting of unregulated passion, forgetting that he was one of the most intellectually keen and reasonable men of our day and that, without such traits, he could not have planned the systematic destruction of millions. Is the gospel reasonable? Yes and no. And of what value is human reason? Mormons are fond of saying that God is orderly, forgetting that Satan is orderly too—and in point of fact, human order more closely resembles the latter's.

Ours is not the only age in which reason has assumed superiority to passion. Pharisaism could be seen as the reduction and abstraction of early Judaic thought. Greek philosophy could be seen as a reaction to the excesses of passion exemplified in their myth. Kung Fu Tze (Confucius) and Machiavelli and Peter the Great could be seen as holding this view. But the modern age has spawned an unprecedented metastasis of reason that pervades every aspect of world civilization and threatens to destroy everything it and God have created. The Enlightenment dream of adolescent omnipotence has matured into a midlife postmodernist crisis in meaning itself. Hyperconstruction has only led to deconstruction and despair.

Fortunately, the dialectical tide has turned. If there is one message we cannot miss in the theology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is that these are the latter days. We live in "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 27:13, 112:30, 121:31, 128:18) when all things scattered will be gathered together in one, "for behold, the field is white already to harvest" (D&C 4:4, 6:3, 11:3, 12:3, 14:3, 33:3, 7). We are the forerunners and preparers of a day in which "the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease" (D&C 101:26). Those living today must find ways to heal a shattered world, and this healing begins within the individual soul. In our postmodern state of existential fragmentation, we have lost sight of those deeper realities, those layers of nonrationality that rely on symbolic apperception and the wholeness of a sacramental vision of the world. Such vision comes only through opening to the inner experience of one's mortal condition. And with that awakening eventually, if inarticulately, arises the heartfelt need for Messiah.

Jack Kornfield, American Buddhist leader and psychologist, tells of

a time when, as a celibate monk, he struggled with lust and sexual fantasy. After spending some months berating himself, he decided that rather than fear his sensual-emotional experience, he would face it honestly and without prejudice. As he meditated and explored his deepest feelings with a self-accepting love and gentle curiosity, he came to the realization that beneath his lustful fantasies was a feeling of sadness and need, which he identified as "a deep well of loneliness." He reports that "by expanding my attention . . . and as I brought an acceptance to the feelings of loneliness, the compulsive quality of the fantasies gradually diminished."³⁰ This insight also gave him the opportunity to choose to fulfill his underlying desires in appropriate ways. Perhaps it was instrumental in his later leaving the life of a monk and marrying.

His most recent book, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry* (New York: Bantam Books, 2001), exposes moral and ethical issues in the lives of spiritual leaders of the so-called non-revealed religions, and challenges adherents to confront what in the Judeo-Christian idiom is called "sin." As an attempt is made to integrate Eastern traditions within a modernist milieu and within American pragmatist society in particular, the uniqueness of LDS truth claims begins to stand out. It may be that the end result of "applied" meditative spiritual traditions is the acknowledgement of the Incarnate God, whose nature is fully revealed only within Mormonism's radical sacralization of the physical. Hans Torwesten, a scholar of Hinduism, ends his book on the Hindu metaphysical movement Vedanta with the proposal that true "advaita" (non-duality, or a unified peace) will occur on the face of the earth only when the breadth of Vedantic mysticism is coupled with the impulse of Christian brotherly love.³¹ In the East-meets-West project, Mormon theology begins to shine as a uniting option. In doctrine, if not in practice, it encourages the synthesis of pragmatic and rational with physical-emotional and nonrational experience. As the Church moves into the future, the challenge for many American Mormons will be to learn to navigate internal states and develop facility in nonanalytic and nonverbal areas as a complement to their tidy legalism.

A further illustration of the benefits of consolidating rational and nonrational modalities is a rape prevention program designed by College of William and Mary professor John Foubert. Disturbed by a nationwide study that found that one in four college women has survived rape or attempted rape, he aimed his program not at the victims but at their potential attackers. Called the "One in Four" program, it teaches males how to

provide immediate support for a rape victim. In coming to empathize with the physical and emotional feelings of the victim, virtually all of the men attending the seminars report a drastic change in attitude and a long-term decreased likelihood of raping. One college saw a near one-third decline in sexual assault on campus after setting up a One in Four program.³² The time has come to tend to the inner vessel, to *feel* what is right and let the consequence follow.

Emotional competence is essential to the repentance process. Much of what passes for guilt is in reality only fear that we are guilty. Unless we openly explore the feelings of our hearts, we cannot truly know where we stand with God and will either fail to repent of inappropriate thoughts and intents or waste energy, dwelling in the fear that the Lord has not accepted our repentance. We may give undue power to the opinions of others and rely on "the arm of flesh" to provide affirmation, substituting a stultifying social guilt for an empowering conscience. The sense of being forgiven is not an intellectual or rational one but a deep inner peace manifesting on a level of emotional and physical sensation—a "burning in the bosom." If we fear to confront our innermost motivations or, like Alma the younger, expose ourselves to the potential of being "racked with torment," we can never access the equally exquisite joy of having that torment dissolved through the atoning blood of the Lamb, and our religion remains a form of godliness, but without the power thereof. Ironically, the suffering of avoiding reality is greater than the suffering of facing it, because in the latter we face God and discover his love, which is the only true source of self-esteem and inner peace.

As important as obedience is under certain circumstances, outward obedience to a moral code does not guarantee or even necessarily prompt a sacramental vision. It can even obscure it. A man may marry a woman in the temple with all proper ceremony, yet treat her in the bedroom as if she were an object. A mother may have seventeen children and treat them all as if they were extensions of her own ego. Here are a few snapshots from my Mormon photo album:

A father carries his firstborn son to the front of the chapel to be blessed. He tucks the infant under his arm, football style, and when he reaches the front, tosses the child up and down a few times—he has seen other fathers do this, and so it must be correct. But the child flies as high as the father's head, like a basketball, arms splayed in fear, while the father's eyes are on his audience. Is he doing it right?

Later, in Relief Society, the baby sits isolated from human contact in his plastic baby carrier on the floor. He begins to cry, and his mother panics because she doesn't know how to make him stop. She shakes the plastic carrier with her foot while her eyes, filled with guilt and fear, dart around the room to see if anyone is staring at her, thinking she is a bad mother.

Mandy comes home to her apartment and sees the loaf of bread her foreign roommate has baked cooling on the kitchen counter. Suddenly becoming enraged, she flings open the door of her roommate's bedroom and shouts at her, accusing her of baking the bread just to make her look bad. When the innocent roommate begins to cry in shock, Mandy's rage increases, and she accuses the roommate of crying just to make her feel guilty.

An investigator attends her first Relief Society dinner. She has been taught that Mormons regard the body as sacred and has read the Word of Wisdom, and expects organic and nearly vegetarian food to be served by svelte, pink-cheeked maharanis. She cringes as she watches overweight, shapeless women jostle for fatty, overcooked, oversalted meats, artificially colored, artificially flavored sugar-water, and rich desserts. She selects a few limp vegetables and timidly sits down.

A young convert is elected to assist a woman in her death throes. She later finds that other ward members had been called upon but had refused the task. At the funeral, there is much giggling and small talk, but few moans or sobs.

A meditation teacher attempts to teach a group of Relief Society sisters to relax. She instructs them simply to let themselves sigh. Despite the teacher's example, only a few sisters give it a try, and most appear too embarrassed to vocalize a pleasurable response of the body.

These examples show a profound emotional illiteracy and a lack of reverence for and acceptance of the realities and responsibilities of embodiment—a highly ironic circumstance given the liberality of LDS doctrine regarding embodiment. One LDS philosopher and would-be relationships expert has gone so far as to propose that we entirely rid ourselves of anger and other so-called negative emotions, claiming that this will lead to happiness.³³ Such a position cannot possibly be construed from the doctrines of the restored gospel.

Some have reacted against the sensual-emotional numbness of Mormon culture by belligerently advocating a loosening of traditional moral

standards. Their anger shows, at least, a refusal to be blinded in the name of sight. Surely superficial living makes a mockery of Zion, puritanism denigrates an incarnate Christ, and the goal-oriented attitude that "gaining a body" has been accomplished in one stroke upon being born insults the process-orientation of a living God. But what these well-meaning reformers often fail to see is that vulgarity and promiscuity are just as divisive and limiting as prudery and just as much a mockery of our divine natures. One may correctly claim that God does not despise him for urinating, defecating, or having pleasurable sex with his wife, but he cannot in the same breath claim that this gives him the right to utter profanities in anger or to view pornography. In rejecting the image of God as merciless dictator, some have made the equally incorrect assumption that God merely tolerates us with a kind of detached apathy or amusement.

Physical-emotional illiteracy is a contagious disease. The individual who has never been granted deep empathy by his or her parent or community has a very hard time envisioning a God who is present. The individual who has been brought up with fear and guilt about his or her bodily experience has a very hard time claiming agency in the world. The sense of powerlessness that results is the source of much sin, sexual and otherwise.³⁴ If the vicious cycle is to be broken, it is important for conservatives not to dismiss "sinning" nontraditionalists, but instead to enter into their deepest needs and converse with them there, where they are. It is equally important for liberals not to force their standards on those who function at a "less enlightened" level and are not ready for meat, but need the milk and honey of agency granted. This is an attitude of charity, as opposed to enmity. Ultimately, it is those who have discovered such compassion and practiced the forbearance that issues from it who will qualify for sexual relationship in the next life. All others remain "separately and singly" (D&C 132:17), neutered and spayed for all eternity.

An important caveat here is that there is such a thing as purposeful evil in Mormonism (Mosiah 16:4-5; D&C 76:31-39). While most commit sin blindly, there are those who with full awareness choose darkness at noonday. Some people, no matter how much empathy they're offered, will only turn and rend. They're bottomless pits that suck in all light and never generate a thing. They represent the total absence of generative power—of Eros—which is damnation. They are sons and daughters not of God but of Perdition, meaning they display the inherited traits of an unembodied, asexual, a-creative being. Such individuals are not only going

to hell, they are hell; and one would have to contort oneself into a hellish posture in order to try to empathize with them. Captain Moroni discerned this about Ammoron and Amalickiah. Concerning certain mobbers and "base traitors," the Prophet Joseph remarked, "Such characters God hates; we cannot love them. The world hates them, and we sometimes think the devil ought to be ashamed of them."³⁵ Even charity has its bounds. "What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice?" asks Alma. "I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God" (Alma 42:25). "For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man" (2 Ne. 26:11; Eth. 2:15). Yet as a general rule, most people respond to love, and it is that most irrational of attitudes that we as Christians wish to cultivate.

Charity does not compartmentalize the various aspects of one's own or another's identity, nor does it compartmentalize that identity by freezing it in time, either past or future. Love does not label or assume but leaves the door open to infinite possibility—i.e., repentance. The Lord said of Noah, "He was a man perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9), that is, within his dynamic time-space context. Georg Simmel, the brilliant late nineteenth-century sociologist and philosopher, observes: "Nothing more can be attempted than the establishment of the beginning and the direction of an infinitely long road—the pretension to any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at the very least, illusory. Perfection can be obtained here by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see."³⁶

This is something Mormons of all people ought to understand as a reflection of the doctrine of the eternal progression of human souls. We are perfect—or imperfect—*en passant*. The ground of the Mormon concept of being is a dynamic eternity, and that means not a succession of days, but rather an expansion of the Now.

Time and Eternity

Time is not an illusion in Mormonism, as it is in some traditions. Time is not a construct of the human mind, but one of the constructs of God by which he orders multiple layers of the universe. These "layers" or ascending levels of organization are described as "planets" in Abraham 3 and also in Doctrine and Covenants 130. In Doctrine and Covenants 88, they are called "kingdoms." Language becomes difficult when talking about alternative dimensions of space/time. As if in exasperation, the

Lord asks, "Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand?" (D&C 88:46) The Lord resorts to analogy, simile, metaphor:

The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth;
 But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass
 and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future,
 and are continually before the Lord.

The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim.

This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like crystal
 and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon,
 whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order,
 will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ's. (D&C 130:6-9)

The Abraham 3 passage repeats the idea that where there is one level of organization, there will be another above it, and so on, until one reaches God himself—the ultimate level of organization in the nested hierarchy. It's a stretch for those uncomfortable with ambiguity to comprehend the true nature of time and its relationship to eternity. Poet Wallace Stevens asks:

Is there no change of death in paradise?
 Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs
 Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,
 Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,
 With rivers like our own that seek for seas
 They never find, the same receding shores
 That never touch with inarticulate pang?
 Why set the pear upon those river-banks
 Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?
 Alas, that they should wear our colors there,
 The silken weavings of our afternoons,
 And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!³⁷

If eternity were but an extension of time, it would mean only stagnancy and boredom. The celestial world shall have no more night and day, "for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. 60:19-20; see also Rev. 21:23). At that point, "Satan is bound and time is no longer" (D&C 84:100, 88:110). This event reverses the effect of the Fall on time (Abr. 5:13). We may recall the "reckoning" of Kolob and the idea that "one day is with the Lord

as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8; see also Abr. 3:4) and assume this to be literal. Yet "all is as one day with the Lord, and time only is measured unto men" (Alma 40:8). The Lord says he "knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes" (D&C 38:2). "All things are present with me, for I know them all" (Moses 1:6). To live in eternity, then, means to live sensate of the continuum of past-present-future.

Viewed in this way, it is easy to see how the Lord knows the future. In a manner of speaking, it has already happened and is happening (D&C 29:32-3)—hence, the image of the celestialized earth as a Urim and Thummim, a place where the entire picture is made known. Though freedom with its infinite possibility is preserved, in some realm the facts of all our history are already written. God knows the end from the beginning—in fact, he is the end and the beginning, "the Great I AM, Alpha and Omega . . . the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made" (D&C 38:1). "The Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world"—is slain, not was or will be (Moses 7:47). Or expressed in a different way, "He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever" (D&C 88:41). Thus, time and eternity are not two exclusive realities, but the former is a manifestation of the latter, a relationship like that of ice to water or, to use an Eastern figure, of waves to the ocean.

It is difficult for the physically and emotionally impoverished to experience a God who is "in all things," who is involved and present in all we think, feel, and do, who not only personally urinates and defecates and experiences anger and pleasure, but is right there with us, and even within us, while we experience these divine realities. Immanence is not a much discussed topic in Mormonism, yet it is implicit throughout our doctrine.³⁸ Brigham Young disagreed with the idea proposed by Orson Pratt that the Spirit of God infiltrates all space on the basis that hell exists in space and has not the Spirit.³⁹ True enough; but that leaves all the known universe. Surely, this side of hell, God is everywhere present, and only the perception of him, to varying degrees, is absent. For what is presence without its perception? Like the question of the tree falling in the woods, this is a paradox—by definition, unavailable to reason.

Because we have not developed the ability to circumscribe paradox through a metaphoric vision of the world, we fail to see that the doctrine of the separateness of the members of the Godhead does not preclude their being one in more significant ways than "one in purpose." Joseph Smith articulates this simply: "Do the Father and the Son possess the same mind? They do. . . . What is this mind? The Holy Spirit."⁴⁰ Abinadi's ambiguity in Mosiah 15 suggests that the naming of the various members of the Godhead is a linguistic convenience, a formality that tells more about the conceptual boundaries of man than about the literal boundaries of God. Other scriptures echo this ambiguity (Alma 11:38-9, 44; 3 Ne. 11:27, 35-36; D&C 93:3-4, 14, 17; Col. 2:9). The Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer (D&C 109) is addressed "in the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 4) to "Holy Father," "Lord," "Jehovah," "Mighty God of Jacob," and "Lord God Almighty." The LDS description of the Christian Deity, while differing from that of mainstream Christianity in certain respects, is closer to the "one in three, three in one" idea than we are ready to believe. The Godhead shares a "mind," and for Joseph Smith that means an entire consciousness with all its perceptive, emotive, cognitive, and storage-recall abilities, and not merely a set of goals. And, miraculously, the Godhead wishes to be one with us and us with them in the same fashion (John 17:21-23; 1 John 4:15).

Like any loving father, God feels our anger and frustration, weeps with us, and rejoices in our righteous pleasure. Enoch discovered this fact to his amazement as he witnessed the Father, and even "the whole heavens," weeping over the suffering of humanity. "Behold," he sobs, "they are without affection, and they hate their own blood" (Moses 7:33-37; see also Jacob 5:41-60). This view of God is more mystical than we have been used to with our emphasis on the discrete personhood of the Father. Yet we must admit that individuality does not prevent the Father—that is, his consciousness, which is inseparable from his bodily experience, since he is a resurrected being⁴¹—from being everywhere at once, seeing all, hearing and answering prayers, receiving and transmitting feelings, and speaking directly to our beings (the complex that is body-intellect-emotion-spirit) through the Light of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It would appear that individuality and conformity are not mutually exclusive concepts in LDS theology as they are in American thought in general and that, in order to embrace our theology fully, traditional Western definitions of identity must be radically reassessed.

The fact that Mormonism proposes a high anthropology—human being as potential god—has resulted in the misperception that God is lessened thereby. Mormons refute the one-sided accusations of *The God-Makers* and other sensationalist propaganda. Yet some Mormons go around ignorantly and irreverently speaking of godhood as if it were no more complex or mysterious than a canning project. While Mormon doctrine proposes a higher and fuller vision of human potential, at the same time it proposes a higher and fuller vision of God, one grander and more incomprehensible than that of any other theology, precisely because of its paradox. Though we are coeternal, God has always been and will always be above any of us (Abr. 3:19, 21). We will remain “indebted unto him forever and ever” (Mosiah 2:24) and not just until we reach some exalted state. He is “the Eternal God of all other gods” (D&C 121:32). Though his posterity continues to expand, God is not progressing.⁴² He is “omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.”⁴³ Not one hair of our heads escapes his unfathomably expansive awareness.

The mystery of mysteries is why such a Being would bother with us at all, who are less than “the dust of the earth” (Mosiah 2:25). “Man is nothing,” says Moses after his encounter with Deity, “which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10). Is man everything, or is he nothing? The LDS answer is—yes. Is God somewhere, or is he everywhere? The LDS answer is—yes. God not only consists of discrete personages, but he is also omnipresent. He exists fully in multiple dimensions of time as well as in eternity. He is eternity itself. God not only loves, John tells us, but God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). And because of Immanuel, God is with us.

In this broader perspective, what we think and feel and do in any given moment is fully contextualized within not only our entire personal histories but within the whole of the salvation narrative. Everything we do is important, including eating and going to the bathroom, and can be not only accepted as a temporal reality but honored as an eternal sacrament. Our experience of the body and the emotions becomes eternal, not as we avoid the sensations of the present moment, but as we pay heed to them; for while the abstractions of the intellect create the past as memory and the future as projection, the sensations of embodiment reestablish us in the now.

In observing the workings of our own minds, we notice that we are very seldom present in the actual moment. For example, while eating breakfast this morning, I caught myself worrying about all the sewing I

needed to get done, planning and projecting how I was going to accomplish it. I decided to let that go and relax, and just let the sensations of the moment wash over me. Suddenly the bowl of rice pudding on the table in front of me sent up a tiny wisp of steam, and a simple delight filled me—what beauty! After the refreshing break from cogitation, I was able to resume my work with greater clarity. We tend to dwell on the past or the future and let the present pass us by. This is not to say that evaluation and planning are bad; of course, they're necessary and help lend meaning to life. But if we never open our full consciousness to the unencumbered now, remembering and projecting remain uninformed and degenerate into vicious cycles of joylessness. In the moment we touch the truth.

As I've become more accustomed to living in the now, I am less and less inclined to squander my attention on unproductive or poor quality input, such as the hyper-stimulation of TV or the glitz of the mall. When we open ourselves to the moment, our senses become so refined that we lose all taste for junk. We gravitate to those things that are more in keeping with our higher natures. When my uncle was on his deathbed, he marveled at the things to which he had never before surrendered his attention—the trees outside his window, the crease at the side of his wife's mouth, the curling hairs on the back of his own hand. His last words were, "How beautiful it all is!" It is in the present moment that we live, and it is in the present moment that we die. It is only in the present moment that we can exercise any agency at all, to decide and move and speak, only in the sensate now that we have any true power or existence at all. The rest is behind the veil and mere theory. In the present moment we act, once and for all, irretrievably.

I believe the essence of our fear of experiencing embodied life is this: a fear of our own incredible power to change the universe and everything in it, now and forever. It is a fear that mistrusts not only one's own deepest motivations, but the efficacy of a Redeemer to split time down the middle and transmute error both before and after it occurs.

Constructive Chaos

In chaos theory is a phenomenon called "sensitive dependence on initial conditions," also known as "the butterfly effect." Scientists dealing with natural systems noticed that, contrary to prevailing theory, an extremely small, almost immeasurable difference in the starting points of two curves led to large and erratic changes and an eventual breakdown in

the integrity of the system, interspersed with periodic returns to order. It was seen that while natural systems—the weather, the way water drips from a container, even the flip of a coin or the prices of domestic goods—proceeded according to pattern, there was an element of chaos that also occurred at regularly cycling points in the pattern and that led to its ultimate unpredictability. The sensitive dependence on initial conditions of natural systems is mind blowing. As mathematician Ian Stewart explains: “The flapping of a single butterfly’s wing today produces a tiny change in the state of the [earth’s] atmosphere. Over a period of time, what the atmosphere actually does diverges from what it would have done. So, in a month’s time, a tornado that would have devastated the Indonesian coast doesn’t happen. Or maybe one that wasn’t going to happen, does.”⁴⁴

If we are observant of the creations of God, we will note that the primary difference between them and the creations of modern industrial civilization lies in this fact. While we strive to standardize and eliminate as much unpredictability as possible, God incorporates chaos into everything he does. Contrast, for example, an internal combustion engine with a maple tree. The engine is manufactured on an assembly line where the goal is precision. Each piece is made to within narrow specifications and assembled so that, as much as possible, the resulting products will be identical. On the other hand, I have been looking at maple trees for forty-seven years and have yet to find two identical. Neither will we find two identical snowflakes or schnauzers or human beings. I have a set of genetically identical twins as siblings. Yet it is quite easy to tell them apart, and more so the longer they live. As the human genome study has ultimately proven, genetics alone is unable to fully account for the vast intricacies of human diversity.

We can certainly tell a maple tree from a pine or a sycamore. When we plant a maple seed, we know that a maple tree will result. And yet, as the seed sprouts and grows, we cannot predict the exact number of branches or their angle, the exact contour or placement of each leaf. In the developing mammalian embryo, there is a general pattern for the routing of veins and arteries, but no way to predict their eventual branchings in any given individual. Some of us have two flexor tendons on the anterior of our wrists, some of us three. I have worked with cadavers and seen other examples of this kind of internal anatomical variation.

Because we have taken refuge in the mechanical model with its false sense of control, organic processes frighten us. We rush to inject stimu-

lants or perform a C-section when a birthing woman's body functions don't conform to the regularities of a labor chart. We are surprised and concerned when the growth of a child doesn't appear as a nice diagonal on a chart but rather as a series of spikes and plateaus. In spite of folk wisdom and developmental psychology, we are still taken aback by the "terrible twos" and the "tumultuous teens," brief and crucial chaotic interludes in the formation of the normal personality. The inability to be flexible and at peace with chaos only prolongs it and amplifies its energy to crisis proportions, as in the now-common "mid-life crisis." Clearly, human beings are not machines, nor even ghosts within machines.

I believe that the spark of chaos inherent in all created things is this: Free Will. Desire. Choice. Agency. Questions of sex and violence turn on this fact, because they represent the two poles of desire: creation and destruction. It is simple-minded to categorize either one as "bad" or "good." If we look around us, we will observe what the Hindus have long recognized—that the sexual and the violent, the creative and the destructive, work together as complements in the evolution of the universe. In the Mormon recognition of the sexual conception of Jesus and the fundamental necessity of sacrificial bloodshed, we see this pattern also. It is impossible to live even one minute without having destroyed something and created something else. We step on ants while wearing the skins of dead animals on our feet; we keep livestock and breed them and kill them; we copulate or don't and use birth control or don't; we paint and sculpt and speak and build and go to war; we manufacture antibiotics and thin carrots. Everything kills and eats in order to live and procreate and is in turn killed and eaten so that something else may live and procreate. It is impossible to experience agency without experiencing sexuality and murderousness.

Much insanity derives from the attempt to evade this fact. Some of us would rather not eat the apple, it seems. Simone Weil's anorectic and anti-sensual/sexual philosophy is one example. Once one is here, like it or not, there is no way out but through. As Jewish theologian Martin Buber expresses it, "We cannot avoid using power, cannot escape the compulsion to afflict the world. So let us, cautious in diction and mighty in contradiction, love powerfully."⁴⁵

In his essay "In Defense of a Mormon Erotica," Levi Peterson excavates a profound theological truth: that the appropriateness of sexual expression must be contextually determined and that to fail to engage that

question is to fail to claim our mortal agency and embrace our second estate.⁴⁶ He then attempts to formulate a set of universal criteria, maintaining, for example, that non-sexual depictions of violence are more destructive than non-violent depictions of sex. I would say that both are equally destructive unless they are contextualized, not within a rational system, but within a sacred cosmic order; and today, virtually without exception, they are not. Violence and sex are equally potent exciters of the human psyche, impinging on us at the subconscious level of myth and archetype, the seat of our intuition and conscience. The notion that non-violent depictions of sex are benign ignores two important realities: that sex organs and acts form a psychic category distinct from that of other human organs and acts; and that what may be an appropriate and constructive experience for one person and under certain circumstances may be inappropriate and destructive for another and under other circumstances. Would we be tempted to buy a magazine depicting kidneys and spinal chords? And what would be the purpose of such depictions? Depictions of sex organs and acts hit us in a tender spot. They hit us in our agency. There is a need to move gently, to respect others' agency, especially when it is still in the formative stages. Additionally, there is a need to differentiate between visual portrayals and literary portrayals of sex in terms of impact. The processing of word-created images follows a more circuitous route through the brain, and therefore provides more opportunity to opt out. Visual portrayals are direct and immediate, with little to no filter between sight and storage.

Deconstructionism would have us assess the appropriateness of these various portrayals by self-reference, according to how they function within the limited reality set up by the artwork. Yet human art cannot supersede God's, and to ignore the wider context of eternal realities is to misunderstand the nature of choice. No finite formula, however liberal, can predict what is right in any given place and time in the complex flow of personal and global events or absolve us of the responsibility to work out our own salvation in moment-to-moment interaction with that context. The fact that the sacred record itself is permeated with violence and sex leaves us again with the question of context and only the hope of our own goodwill and spiritual discernment to guide us.

Because change is the only constant in this universe, and because we generate the motion as much as we are swept up in it, righteousness is a far more complex matter than we sometimes like to believe. Joseph Smith

taught: "That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. God said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.' This is the principle upon which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire."⁴⁷

Righteousness becomes, then, a matter of attuning ourselves within a larger, even a cosmic, framework. The will of God appears not to be a static condition, but a bubbling up of eternity into time, a fluid dynamic that can take endless forms. Timeliness becomes the standard by which to discern good from evil. The corollary of this doctrine is that anything is possible. In our legal-mindedness we assume that moral relativism and anarchy must follow.

Such was essentially the reasoning exploited by Satan at the Council in Heaven before the world began. If human beings were given actual freedom and actual power, wouldn't too many souls be lost? Satan's stated goal was not to damn all humankind but to force them all to be saved—quite a revolutionary rendering of the traditional two-dimensional concept of evil (Moses 4:1–4). Evil in Mormonism consists most fundamentally in the denying of freedom of choice. In the divine economy, the worth of such freedom outweighed the horrible cost in damnation and human suffering. It was a cost Heavenly Father considered necessary if any soul was to progress at all. In fact, according to Mormon theology, choice was a component of pre-earth existence as well. One third of the host of heaven followed the desires of their spiritual hearts and chose not to make the attempt at a second estate (D&C 29:36). Agency predates even spirit organization and is an inherent quality of all matter, because it is an inherent quality of intelligence itself. "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" (D&C 93:29–30). In Mormonism, then, the relationship between human will and God's will becomes not one of acquiescence to imperatives, but of self-discovery and self-determination through exploration.

We meet God's will not with an expectation of competition or domination by either party, as if only one of us can win, but with an attitude of

seeking his contours like a lover, wrestling, pressing in on his will with all the force and careful finesse of ours, and coming to know both him and ourselves in the contrast. Eros is an apt analogy for understanding our relationship with the divine, because it reveals the generative and even volatile complementarity of the union. For all their boundary-breaching intimacy, two lovers cannot become one another; but paradoxically, they become distinctly themselves. In full nakedness, a full contact is made and relationship is complete. In the process, a "third thing" is created. Erotic love is generative—this is why it is called *making love*. It is in this metaphoric sense that creation *as act* might be thought of as *ex nihilo*. Kindness is made out of nothing, love is made out of nothing, decision is made out of nothing. Choice simply is, from all eternity to all eternity. Because erotic love is generative, the Creator "does not leave himself behind" in his existential projection into the universe. The Son is launched into form by the Father, while the Father remains whole and undiminished; in fact, glory is multiplied.

The marriage relationship in its highest expression represents an elevated status of agency. One moves from primary relationship by default—parent-child⁴⁸—to primary relationship by choice, from childhood dependency through adolescent independency to adult interdependency. In Eros, we have matured to a position of trust. We are invited to be partners with God in the creative act. In granting virtually all human beings this power, Heavenly Father has entrusted us with each other's care and with the fulfillment of his plan to people the earth. The lover in the arms of his or her beloved is as vulnerable and needy as the infant in the arms of his or her mother or father. We exercise power over one another, entrusting each other with our identities, which are forever marked and changed by the sexual encounter. We also forever mark our children's identities with the impress of our own. Nowhere except in the taking of life does human will affect, or potentially affect, the designs of God than in the exercise of the procreative power. To organize a body of the materials of one's own body, to bring a soul to earth—or to take a soul from it—is serious business. Just as serious but less visible, wreaking havoc for generations, is the psychic mutilation inflicted by one whose sexual comprehension and skill are unwhole and inappropriate to context. For this reason sexual sin is considered second only to murder in Mormon thought.⁴⁹ Conversely, deftness in handling sexuality is second only to godhood. Brigham Young declared:

The whole subject of the marriage relation is not in my reach, nor in any other man's reach on this earth. It is without beginning of days or end of years; it is a hard matter to reach. We can tell some things with regard to it; it lays the foundation for worlds, for angels, and for the Gods; for intelligent beings to be crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. In fact, it is the thread which runs from the beginning to the end of the holy Gospel of Salvation—of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is from eternity to eternity.⁵⁰

Throughout scripture, God himself uses sexual imagery to symbolize Israel's covenant relationship to him. The imagery of Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as his bride assumes a sexual relationship, not illicit but fully authorized by the Father from before the foundations of the world. Both the "prudes" who reject the erotic as a model of interaction with the divine because it brings sex too close to their idea of God and the "free-thinkers" who reject it because it brings God too close to their idea of sex miss the point that the entire creation is both holy and sexual. However, while this is a useful analogy to understand some important aspects of spiritual life that contemporary culture has missed for far too long, it should be remembered that it is only an analogy and can be taken too far. Every analogy breaks down at a certain point, and another one becomes necessary.

Multiple and Eclipsing Paradigms

The difficulty of expressing the whole truth of our experience on earth is described by the physicist Stephen Hawking. In discussing correspondences between apparently different theories of physics, he admits the possibility of a unified theory but warns:

It may not be possible to express this theory in a single fundamental formulation. Instead, we may have to use different reflections of the underlying theory in different situations. It may be like our being unable to represent the surface of the earth on a single map and having to use different maps for different regions. This would be a revolution in our view of the unification of the laws of science, but it would not change the most important point: that the universe is governed by a set of rational laws that we can discover and understand.⁵¹

We are accustomed to thinking of maps as representational, but on reflection we realize the impossibility of accurately translating the entire curved surface of a sphere onto a flat paper. Sometimes we even think that north is "up," forgetting that this is an arbitrary designation and, more-

over, that we are hurtling through space in a planetary system which is spinning about in the arm of a galaxy, which in turn is spiraling and swirling about other structures in a vast cosmic dance. Suddenly we become dizzy with the realization and lose our footing. We seek security—something finite, something absolute, something that doesn't change. This state of being separated from God and cast into the fleetingness of life in time, what Vaclav Havel calls the "thrownness of being," is so disturbing that we are driven to great lengths in creating our own order, building things, establishing governments and institutions, imbuing our world with authority, cohesion, meaning. We write history books, erect memorials of stone and steel, repeat rituals, purchase and bequeath lands, bestow rings of diamonds and gold, all in an attempt to establish a sense of continuity. Though these institutions are the fruition of our individual and collective agency, we forfeit the tremendous opportunity that chaos affords us when we cling too tightly to a temporal form. Even the Church, as divinely inspired as its organization may have been, is but a temporary scaffolding for the building of mansions which are not of this world. True it is that the keys will not be taken from the earth again; but given the past record of human behavior, I would argue that the reason for this is not that the Church is exempt from corruption, but rather that the world is scheduled to end before the inevitable corruption fully ripens. The patriarchal order, driven as it is by holy desire, will replace the institution of the Church in the end.⁵²

In any earthly institution, it is unwise to expect one program to suit everyone or every situation in the flux of time. Joseph Smith taught:

We have reason to believe that many things were introduced among the Saints before God had signified the times; and notwithstanding the principles and plans may have been good, yet aspiring men, or in other words, men who had not the substance of godliness about them, perhaps undertook to handle edged tools. Children, you know, are fond of tools, while they are not yet able to use them.

Time and experience, however, are the only safe remedies against such evils. There are many teachers, but, perhaps, not many fathers. There are times coming when God will signify many things which are expedient for the well-being of the Saints; but the times have not yet come, but will come, as fast as there can be found place and reception for them.⁵³

The Church as institution must have one rule for everyone, and to be safe, it must cater to the center of the bell curve, or even the trailing end. But those capable of higher degrees of spiritual independence are

not hindered in their progression by a general adherence to a lesser law. Both the conservative who calls for the excommunication of the liberal, and the liberal who tempts excommunication by an attitude of spite and vengeance, are proceeding on the same false assumption—namely, that the Church, because it is true, has authority over personal conscience. It does not and cannot. “This is the wonder of this work,” asserts President Gordon B. Hinckley, “that every man may know for himself. . . . It is the privilege, it is the opportunity, it is the obligation of every Latter-day Saint to gain for himself or herself a certain knowledge that this is the work of the Almighty.”⁵⁴ The eleventh Article of Faith also affirms our belief in freedom of conscience. When the elders showed up on my doorstep, this is the reason I let them in (besides the fact that they were standing knee-deep in snow and visibly shivering). Whereas all other religionists had begged me to rely on their word alone, the Latter-day Saints said, “Don’t take our word. Find out for yourself.” It is easier, certainly, to shunt that privilege and responsibility. We like to give away our agency to others so that we can blame them for our situation. But in hiding from ourselves we hide from that God in whose presence alone it is possible for our “confidence [to] wax strong” (D&C 121:45).

I am reminded of a recent incident when a fan fell out of the window and hit me on the shins. I observed with interest that my first reaction was to seek someone or something to blame for my pain: my husband had not secured the fan properly in the window, the house was not constructed well and the sill was sloping, etc. How quick we are to toss out the gift of responsibility! Brigham Young had issues with some of the decisions of Joseph Smith but concluded that “he was called of God; God dictated him, and if He had a mind to leave him to himself and let him commit an error, that was no business of mine.”⁵⁵ From this perspective, what should I care whether the leaders of the Church or any other persons are doing right? Let God deal with them in his own way and time. And what should I care even if they excommunicate me if I know for certain in my heart that I am right with God? Who is the greater authority, God’s servants or God himself?

Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, and this is a general rule that can be applied to other hierarchies of paradigms. For instance, the discovery of quantum physics does not exempt us from the necessity of applying Newtonian and even Euclidian formulas in various real-world situations, for example, the erection of a steel span-bridge or

the manufacture of plastic polymers. Human beings are not machines, but the machine model continues to dominate in certain arenas, and when in Rome . . . The punitive measures the Church takes are consistent with a more mechanical model of human interaction, but perhaps it is the model that produces the greatest good for the greatest number at present. Notwithstanding that this approach is a form of bondage,⁵⁶ the Lord expects more from those to whom more has been given; and in the case of those on the leading edge of the bell curve, this expectation translates as a searing and purifying patience, a divine commission not only to raise others' consciousness but to lead by example, as in the case of Jesus submitting to baptism, not because he needed it, but "to fulfill all righteousness" (2 Ne. 31:6-7). Mercy begets mercy.

A recent cybersurvey on the *Indianapolis Star* website asked, "What should schools do with students who fight?" The choices were: daytime detention, Saturday detention, suspension, expulsion, and arrest. I sent an email objecting to the fact that there were no merciful choices. Did anyone care to find out why they were fighting? What about counseling to train them in alternative methods of dealing with high emotion? I received no reply. Much of the world functions on the level of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," having never risen above a law of Moses mentality.

Mormon theology comprehends something important about sacred history: that there are multiple levels of the law which eclipse one another (2 Ne. 25:23-27; D&C 84:19-27), and that God reveals to people as sophisticated a level as they are capable of living. If freedom is to sustain itself over time, it must be tempered with obedience in a toggling motion from faith to faith, and from grace to grace. Lesser laws involve more literal and outward performances, but this does not mean that higher laws abandon the physical expression of faith for a rarefied, strictly inner experience. As Mormon theology would have it, the higher law encompasses the lower within itself, expanding its depth in the way that a circle becomes a sphere. In moving from terrestrial to celestial modes of perception/emotion/cognition/action (from "bodies terrestrial" to "bodies celestial") (D&C 76:78, 88:28-32; see also D&C 84:33), we awaken from a flat reality to reality in-the-round.

The Lord offered the opportunity to thus advance when he attempted to institute Zion under Joseph Smith. In speedily apostatizing from the unifying celestial law of consecration and setting up a false politi-

cal economy based on the divisive precepts of Babylon, the early members of the Church forfeited their opportunity to circumscribe many more paradoxes than polygamy. That this apostasy is a historical fact documented in scripture and other official records⁵⁷ does not seem to have convicted us of the fallacy of our desire to serve both God and mammon.⁵⁸ Despite its many pretenses and fence-straddling self-justifications, Utah never was Zion in the full sense of the word. The attempt to live by only half the program has suspended the Church in a state of limbo. And as at the fault line where two tectonic plates meet, friction develops and pressure builds.

In moving from intelligence to spirit organization to physical embodiment to godhood, we keep the organizing features of all earlier estates (D&C 77:2; Eth. 3:16–17). Dimensional transition takes place within a nested hierarchy of order. However, as in all natural systems, there is a chaotic friction that develops at the cusp of that eclipse, when a portion of the collective consciousness, represented at first by only a handful of individuals, is ready for the next stage of evolution. Such individuals are by design unable to thrive within the present paradigm, and are fated to suffer martyrdom of one kind or another in the convulsive process of upshift to a higher law. Jesus Christ is, of course, the most extreme example of this; but, in a lesser sense, all innovators, whether in art, science, or religion, experience the fire of this ironic friction.

From the standpoint of those whose thinking had calcified around the old law, some of Jesus's behaviors seemed questionable. Their choice was either to be flexible, to pass through the momentary phase of disorganization with equanimity, to change, learn, and grow—or to kill him. Flexibility, the self-permission to be completely wrong, is a prerequisite to living by the Spirit.

We look to Nephi's slaying of Laban as an example of the non-formulaic aspect of righteousness, but there is an earlier scriptural precedent in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Kierkegaard sweated in intellectual anguish over this story. It nearly drove him insane, because God was asking Abraham to do something taboo not only in terms of ecclesial law, but in terms of conscience based on deep psychobiological instincts of familial survival and affection. Traditionally, we have gotten around this theological conundrum by saying that it was only a test, that God never meant him to go through with the horrific deed. But Abraham did not know it was a test. Moreover this excuse cannot work in the case of Nephi's slaying of Laban, nor in the case of Joseph Smith's practicing of polygamy, which

the Book of Mormon calls "abominable before . . . the Lord" unless temporarily and specifically commanded (Jac. 2:24-30). Polygamy also conflicts with certain inborn laws that physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually preserve the race. Taboos exist for some very good reasons. They protect and maintain our psychic and physiologic integrity through time.

For instance, the breaking of a taboo in the matter of abortion has proved to have devastating emotional consequences even decades after the event in women of all religious or irreligious persuasions. The breaking of the taboos against bestiality and homosexuality has resulted in a worldwide AIDS epidemic. Counselors' offices and jails are full of taboo breakers. The amount of psychic damage done to both victims and perpetrators of exploitative sex and their families is inestimable. I have had occasion to walk the halls of Riley Children's Hospital and note the large numbers of Amish families there, standing helpless in their bonnets and beards outside the rooms where their children die of congenital defects, the result of close inbreeding. We put excrement far from us because otherwise we die of cholera. Taboos, both those that are intuitive and those that are legislated through prophets, must not be dismissed lightly.

Yet if Hosea was commanded to marry a whore (Hos. 3:1)—indeed Jesus's genealogy contains two whores, a whore-frequenter, and a murderer—Ezekiel was directed to eat human dung (Ezek. 4:12) and so on, obviously there is some other principle at work.

The principle is this: God can only be known obliquely, by analogy. And any analogy for understanding God or any systematized way of relating to him in the world is necessarily partial and imperfect. Hence, the need for symbolism and a multivalent mythological corpus.

The partiality of models is illustrated by an old story about an elephant and three blind men. One day as the three men sat at a roadside asking alms of passersby, a strange creature ambled up and halted in front of them. Not recognizing the sounds and smells coming from the creature, the gentlemen attempted to identify it by touch. The first reached out and grabbed hold of a leg. "This is surely a strange creature," he said. "It's thick and sturdy, like a tree trunk." The second, who had grabbed hold of the tail, said, "Oh, no, it's long and delicate, more like a piece of rope or a snake." The third, who had grabbed hold of an ear, said, "You're both wrong. This creature is very flat and thin and broad, like a large leaf." The three sat arguing for some time, each convinced the others were

wrong. So it is with us if we fail to allow for the fact that we cannot know absolute truth absolutely, let alone express that truth in human language, whether it be the language of words, or of the arts, or of mathematics and science.

"Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord," says Jacob. "How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways" (Jac. 4:8). How vain and silly to believe that because we have "the fulness of the gospel," we comprehend everything there is to know.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. . . .

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12)

Apparently, not only are we humans limited in our everyday comprehension of things, but even after having been wrought upon by the Holy Ghost and having our minds opened to visions of eternity, we still at best can only "prophesy in part." Whether we view the past with our natural capacities or the future with our supernatural ones, what we see and can express is but a reflection of the totality that is God.

Joseph Smith confirmed this fact about prophecy when he said, concerning 2 Peter 1, "The things that are written are only hints of things which existed in the prophet's mind, which are not written."⁵⁹ Other than in the person of Jesus Christ, divine communication is not perfectly translatable into human forms. Paul notes that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26), as if to suggest that comprehension of the divine mind and will takes place on a visceral and intuitive level, and not a logical or linguistic one. The resurrected Lord himself prayed in this meta-physical manner as witnessed by the Nephite faithful. Having first "groaned within himself," Jesus

knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.

And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father;

And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man,

neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father. (3 Ne. 17:15-17)

This account suggests that the inability to express, or even to "conceive of" such "great and marvelous things" is more than a matter of grammatical awkwardness or lack of education, or of a dearth of dictionaries. The veil of time not only allows us to forget our pre-earth life but keeps us suspended in mystery. This suspension allows us "a probationary state" (Alma 12:24) in which to create ourselves and the world we live in by exercise of personal faith.

The language of Adam, given as it was "by the finger of God" (Moses 6:46), was pure in the Garden, as was yet everything else. In contrast to evolutionary theories of language development, Mormon doctrine claims that the first man had both spoken and written language and that language did not evolve but rather devolved from its original power to translate the mind of God.⁶⁰ Historical linguistics is messy business, but it offers some secular evidence to back up the idea of devolution. "The ancient languages of our family, Sanskrit, Zend, etc., abound in very long words," points out linguist Otto Jespersen. "The further back we go, the greater the number of sesquipedalia. . . . The current theory, according to which every language started from monosyllable roots, fails at every point to account for actual facts and breaks down before the established truths of linguistic history. . . . Primitive languages in general were rich in all kinds of difficult sounds [and were] highly developed languages."⁶¹ Mormon tells us that the writings of the brother of Jared, who had retained an early form of the Adamic tongue, were "mighty . . . unto the overpowering of man to read them" (Eth. 12:24). Of interest to us living in the last days is that "this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also" (Moses 6:7; see also Zeph. 3:9). In the beginning was the Word, but the Word in all of history except A.D. 1-33 has appeared elusively, between the lines. As analytic philosophy has endeavored to show, human understanding functions within an epistemic and hermeneutic circle. The imperfection of our language itself limits our comprehension. Many centuries before Wittgenstein, King Benjamin admonished us to "believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend" (Mosiah 4:9).

As the young Joseph Smith discovered, the Protestant notion of *sola*

scriptura—that truth can be reached by an appeal to scripture alone—is false. In addition to our perceptive, expressive, and interpretive limitations, Joseph experienced the communal dimension to the limitation of truth. “Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them. The Lord deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it.”⁶²

Contrary to popular sentiment, there are and will be many messengers of this light and intelligence beyond just the prophets who administer the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph,” said Joseph Smith, “but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him (who remain) from the least to the greatest.”⁶³ “The Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8; see also Mosiah 3:13).

In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18; see also Joel 2:28-29)

“He that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed” (Alma 26:22; see also Mosiah 5:3). These passages portray revelation and prophecy in a noncentralized way that many Mormons today would reject.

Since God knows all things, it is sensible that the knowledge of his ways includes every field of human study. Brigham Young taught:

The business of the Elders of this Church . . . is to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, to mechanisms of every kind, to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever they may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue and people, and bring it to Zion. Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every

useful attainment in mathematics, music, in all science and art belong to the Saints, and they rapidly collect the intelligence that is bestowed upon the nations, for all this intelligence belongs to Zion. . . . All the knowledge, wisdom, power, and glory that have been bestowed upon the nations of the earth, from the days of Adam till now, must be gathered home to Zion.⁶⁴

We do not expect Church authorities to have knowledge of chemistry or architecture or marine biology. We accept the idea that when we consult a physician for an illness, there is no conflict with our religious practice. The authority of the physician does not compromise the authority of the prophets. We applaud those who use their talents to maintain the status quo—the engineer or doctor or business executive who helps us maintain our level of comfort in the world and our illusions of human competency and our pretended subjugation of nature. We are less inclined to admire the philosopher or the theologian because of the perception that the great questions of life are not to be decided secularly. Yet as long as they keep their strange hobbies to themselves, we tolerate their existence.

But when an innovator comes among us who truly stands at the cusp of paradigms and attempts to pry us from our comfortable cultural assumptions, we shove him to the margins of our village, like a leper. Because we cannot face the inadequacy of which he dares to make us aware (since that would require us to change), we project our guilt and fear and anger onto him and classify him as a heretic, insane, or evil. Such was the fate not only of Jesus and Joseph Smith, Paul and Abinadi, but of Copernicus and Socrates, Gandhi and Pasteur, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rachel Carson. Even Einstein was forbidden to mention his theory of relativity at the ceremony where he was to accept the Nobel Prize. (He was being awarded the prize for a less controversial paper on the photoelectric effect.)⁶⁵

There is another type of innovator that has also been persecuted, in less obvious but not less painful ways. He or she is a type of revelator that has existed as a small percentage of the population across all cultures and all time. In many places and times, such individuals have been revered. In mainstream Mormon culture today, they go unrecognized (sometimes by even themselves) and underutilized. And yet the message they bear has the potential to increase physical-emotional awareness and competence and restore unity between doctrine and practice. The vision they seek to share has the potential to awaken those who are at ease in Zion, who cry, "All is

well in Zion; yea Zion prospereth" (2 Ne. 28:21), as well as those of the world from whom they have taken many of their cues. For as we have already mentioned, the Church is in a position of apostasy from the United Order, the celestial law of Enoch's Zion, and has been ever since it left Missouri (D&C 105:4-5, 101:17-20). And Zion cannot be redeemed until a sufficient number of individuals can comprehend a higher law. Who will prepare their souls?

[To be continued.]

Notes

1. Quoted in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. I: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 122.

2. For a historical overview of iconoclasm in the West, see Robert Elinor, *Buddha and Christ: Images of Wholeness* (Trumbull, Conn.: Weatherhill, 2000), 95-106.

3. D&C 131:7-8; Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology [and] A Voice of Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 79.

4. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp. and ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 357-58; D&C 130:22, 132:20.

5. *Ibid.*, 185, 315; see also Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 207.

6. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), 466; John A. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 50.

7. James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 4:203-6; Edward L. Kimball, ed., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 25.

8. 1 Ne. 11:16-18; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 467-69, 473; James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946), 81.

9. Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1, no. 10 (October 1853): 159-60, also [http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe? CISO ROOT=/NCMP1847-1877&CISOPTR=2915](http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISO_ROOT=/NCMP1847-1877&CISOPTR=2915) (accessed September 21, 2006); Orson Hyde, March 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855B86), 4:259-60.

10. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 466-67 note.

11. D&C 132:19,30; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 310.

12. First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.

13. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," *Ensign*, November 2003, 70-73.

14. In Isaiah 63:3-5 the Lord accomplishes the Atonement through fury; see also D&C 121:43.

15. Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now* (Vancouver, B.C.: Namaste Publishing, 2004), 25.

16. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 151.

17. Joseph Smith said: "Happiness is the object and design of our existence." *Ibid.*, 262. Lehi said, "Man is that he might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:25).

18. Martin L. Hoffman, "Empathy, Social Cognition, and Moral Action" in William M. Kurtines and Jacob L. Gewirtz, eds., *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, Volume 1: Theory* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 275-301.

19. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), 106-8.

20. Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 89-90.

21. *Ibid.*, 82.

22. Here and in other passages, gender-inclusive nouns such as "human being" and "humankind" and their accompanying pronouns "he or she" and "they" have been substituted for the author's preferred gender-inclusive nouns "man" and "mankind" and their pronoun "he," according to *Dialogue* editorial policy.

23. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 426.

24. Bernie Siegel, M.D., *Love, Medicine, and Miracles* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 183.

25. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 180-81.

26. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 18.

27. D. H. Lawrence, "A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" in his *Sex Literature and Censorship* (New York: Compass Books, 1959), 116.

28. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" in *The Portable Emerson*, edited by Carl Bode (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 47.

29. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments," emphasis his, BYU Devotional Address, January 12, 1988, <http://speeches.byu.edu/htmlfiles/holland88.html> (accessed June 30, 2005).

30. Jack Kornfield, *A Path with Heart* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 108.

31. Hans Torwesten, *Vedanta: Heart of Hinduism* (New York: Grove Press, 1992), 220.

32. Justine Van Der Leun, "The Good Guys," *O: The Oprah Magazine*, June 2005, 62.

33. C. Terry Warner, *Bonds that Make Us Free* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 2001), 51.

34. That madness and crime arise not out of an excess of power but out of powerlessness is the thesis of Rollo May's *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (New York: Norton, 1998).

35. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 128.

36. Kurt H. Wolff, ed., *Georg Simmel: A Collection of Essays with Translations and a Bibliography* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1959), 336.

37. Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning," in *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play by Wallace Stevens*, edited by Holly Stevens (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 7.

38. D&C 88:6-13, 37; D&C 84:88; Moses 6:61; 1 Cor. 6:19; Gal. 4:19; see Howard W. Hunter's commentary on Galatians 4:19, "Gospel Classics: The Real Christmas," *Ensign*, December 2005, 24.

39. Brigham Young, March 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:266-67.

40. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 65.

41. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 322; *Doctrines of Salvation: Compiled Sermons of Joseph Fielding Smith*, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56; 1972 printing), 2:258-301.

42. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:5-10; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (1966; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979 printing), 239.

43. Joseph Smith *Lectures on Faith*, 2:2; see also 2 Nephi 9:20.

44. Ian Stewart, *Does God Play Dice? The Mathematics of Chaos* (Oxford, Eng.: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 141.

45. Martin Buber, quoted in May, *Power and Innocence*, 241.
46. Levi S. Peterson, "In Defense of a Mormon Erotica," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 122-27.
47. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 263.
48. The issue is complicated by the speculation that one chooses one's parents premortally, but to my knowledge, such speculations have never been given doctrinal status.
49. Alma 39:5; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (1919; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 309-10.
50. Widsøe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 195.
51. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, tenth anniversary edition (New York: Bantam Books, 1998), viii.
52. Lynn A. McKinlay, "Patriarchal Order of the Priesthood," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 3:1067.
53. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 146.
54. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 645.
55. Brigham Young, March 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:297.
56. Joseph Smith described it thus: "Now the fact is, if any of the members of our body is disordered, the rest of our body will be affected with it, and then all are brought into bondage together." Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols. 1902-12, Vol. 7 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980 printing): 1:454.
57. D&C 101:1-9; 105:2-9; *History of the Church*, 1:453-54.
58. Hugh Nibley, "Our Glory or Our Condemnation" in his *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1-24.
59. *History of the Church*, 5:401-2.
60. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 95.
61. Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin* (1922; rpt., New York: Norton, 1964), 420-21.
62. *History of the Church*, 5:402.
63. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 151.
64. Hugh Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 316-17.
65. Jim Holt, "The Time Bandits," *New Yorker*, February 28, 2005, 82.