

“An Exquisite and
Profound Love”:
An Interview with
Andrew Solomon

Note: Andrew Solomon has written about mental health, politics, and culture for the New York Times and the New Yorker and is the author of four books. The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression won the 2001 National Book Award for Nonfiction and was a finalist for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. In his most recent book, Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity, Solomon explores what it means to be a parent in the context of adversity. Dialogue board member Gregory A. Prince interviewed Solomon on March 28, 2011, in New York City.

Solomon: Where to begin? I'll begin with a little bit about my own experience, before I try to address anything that is highly specific to Mormonism itself.

I grew up feeling that to be gay was a tragedy. I didn't grow up thinking that it was morally wrong, but I grew up thinking that it would make me marginal, prevent me from having children, and quite possibly prevent me from having a meaningful long relationship. It seemed that this condition would leave me with a vastly reduced life.

What has become clear to me is that it is not the inherent nature of being gay that causes such a reduced life; it is, rather, the social circumstances around being gay: the perceptions of it and the cultural norms that it is said to violate. As some of those norms have changed, I have been able to be gay, to have a marriage, to have a family, and to have—if there is wood to knock on—a fortunate and happy life.

Prince: And even an extraordinary life, from where I see it.

Solomon: Thank you. It feels extraordinary to me, certainly, as I live it. Emerging from a sense of my life as tragic to a sense of my life as joyful has been a transformation so profound that it is almost impossible to come up with language fully to describe it.

I happen to have come of age in a place and at a time that facilitated that transformation. There are many people for whom it hasn't taken place. So I would start by saying that the reason that I am talking to you is not because I am outraged myself by the Mormon Church's positions on gay issues, though I am. It is rather because I think those positions deprive an enormous number of people of the kinds of joy that I have experienced. I feel, as a matter nearly of faith, that if you have known a certain amount of suffering and have emerged out of it into the light, you are obliged to share that light with as many of the still-beleaguered as possible.

My purpose in this conversation is not to get a lot of rage off my chest, but to help some Mormons to achieve more openness, tolerance, and acceptance. Their doing so would allow gay Mormons some of these experiences that have been so meaningful to me. In my view, there is a moral obligation to be an evangelist for such fulfillment.

As I said when we were at lunch, I also feel that many benighted views on this and other subjects come from a relative lack of exposure. The more gay people can tell our stories, the more other people will accept gay people. Any community that remains an abstraction is an easy target for prejudice and cruelty, but any community that becomes fully humanized is much harder to treat in that way.

When I was younger, I certainly didn't plan to be a big activist. A lot of people are very political when they are young, and then they outgrow it. I was very timid on these subjects when I was young, and have grown into activism. Initially, a lot of the activism was about getting to the point where I am now—and even now, I encounter a lot of prejudice and a lot of darkness. I have to negotiate constantly through situations that are uncomfortable or difficult or strange. When I remember how unhappy I was in adolescence—about the fact that, though I wasn't really using the term to or for myself, I knew that I was *gay*—I think, “Oh, if someone then

could have shown me just an hour in the life that I have now, I would have made it through all of that misery and despair just fine.” The pain lay in thinking that I had a desolate future. It remains, still, shocking and surprising that the future turned out so differently. It seems so incalculably precious and rapturous to me, the experience of love and marriage and family.

Religion is so focused on family. These days, for many people, being gay is also focused on family. The Mormon Church is especially focused on family, and I’d have hoped, therefore, that the Mormon Church would especially have celebrated how all of these people who might have been lonely and suicidal and childless are now able to lead this other life. I would have thought it would be a cause for immense celebration. Instead it has been, obviously, a cause of great concern to the Church and its leadership.

Prince: And not just to sit in the back pew, but to become pillars of the community.

Solomon: Yes, and also people of faith and love and kindness. I look at the life that I have with my husband, John, and our son George, and with the more complicated family that I will explain, for interview purposes, in a second. I have spent a lot of my life trying to do good and be a humanitarian, to write about difficult places, and to tell the story of oppressed peoples. But no experience has felt to me like as unqualified a good as this experience. The idea of anyone contemplating our family and witnessing the affection that we all have for one another and seeing evil in it is deeply hurtful and sad; and also deeply bewildering. This is not to say that I haven’t read all of the texts and that I don’t understand some of the theological arguments; but the ultimate tenets of religion are mercy and love and faith, and those are the things that we represent in abundance. It is unsettling to run up so often against the opposite view.

I’ll explain the family, just so that it is there for the record.

I got into my first serious relationship with a man when I was twenty-three. I had, before that, sort of a typical, sad history of relatively promiscuous sexual encounters with men I didn’t know, because I felt that if I were involved with people I did know, other people would know that I was gay, and it was something that I needed to keep so secret.

I do some lecturing at Yale University, where I studied, and I support fellowships in the Department of Lesbian and Gay Studies. I became involved in the department at the behest of the gay activist Larry Kramer, who was funding the first days of the department. Larry described what it had been like to be gay at Yale in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I listened to his description of it and I thought, "How could you even stay alive, surrounded by so much fear and so much hatred and so much rage?" Larry, in fact, made a suicide attempt while he was an undergraduate. I listened to what he had to say and I thought, "I don't think that I would have survived it." I felt so lucky that I went to college in the mid-'80s. I had a lot of issues and concerns, but there were openly gay people, there were openly gay faculty, there was a wholly different atmosphere.

Now, once a year, I have the students who have won these fellowships in Lesbian and Gay Studies that I sponsor come to dinner at my house in New York, with their professors. They are planning families, planning marriage, out and open and just fine about it, with parents who are just fine about it. I think, "Oh, how wonderful it would have been to grow up in that atmosphere." I usually tell them how different Larry's experience was from mine, and how different my experience was from theirs. I always end by saying, "My most fervent hope is that when you are my age and you come back to talk to the students, you will feel the same jealousy of their lives that I feel of yours."

Anyway, back to me. I was an undergraduate. In retrospect, I don't know why I was so fiercely closeted. I don't know what I thought was going to happen if anyone found out.

Prince: Did your parents know?

Solomon: No. Did they have some suspicions? Perhaps. But I was determined that nobody could ever know. It was this terrible, terrible, terrible thing. I thought that if anyone found out, I would die.

In the meanwhile, I was awakening as a sexual being. But there was no connection between sexuality and affection for me at that stage. It was a desperate physical need, and it had no bearing at all on what I thought of as my emotional life. It had absolutely no connection to intimacy of any authentic kind.

Finally, when I was twenty-three I finished my graduate degree at Cambridge, and I decided to stay in London and work there. In retrospect, I can see that I had gone to England because I had to go away to a place of my own where I could invent myself. I got involved with my first serious partner, Michael, who remains a close friend and who is the nicest person in the world. We were involved for a couple of years.

Prince: Aside from being geographically removed, did you perceive that British society was more inviting?

Solomon: No, I didn't. British society is more inviting in some ways, and less inviting in other ways; but that wasn't really the issue for me. The issue for me was going away. And going away was both liberating and quite sad. I loved and in many ways was very close to my parents. I was only away in London; I wasn't on the moon. But still, in retrospect, I wouldn't have felt the need to run away from my family in the same way if it weren't for this issue.

My mother refused to meet Michael. She knew he existed; she knew I was living with him. She didn't say "I don't love you" or "I disown you." She just said, "I don't want to deal with this, and I don't want to meet him." I was terribly upset by it.

Then, we were on a family trip in Paris: my brother and his girlfriend, my parents, me, and a friend of mine. I couldn't bring Michael, so I brought a female friend, Talcott, who had known my parents for years. I was getting ready to explain, however, that this would not happen again, and that in the future if we were going on a family trip and I couldn't come with Michael, I wasn't going to come at all.

My mother wasn't feeling well. She went to a doctor in Paris, and he ordered a scan, and said that she had a mass that suggested ovarian cancer. He thought that she should have exploratory surgery immediately. My parents said, "You kids should stay and have a nice time on this trip, and we'll go back. As long as it is not cancer, we'll be fine." So we went through this very weird, dumb show: David and his girlfriend, and Talcott and me. We were all so immensely worried about my mother.

Four days later they did the procedure, and she did have cancer. We got on a plane and went straight home. She was very depressed and overwhelmed, and it was a very difficult time. My

mother eventually said to me, “Well, you know that cancer is brought on by extreme stress.” I said, “Ah yes, so it is.” She said, “Certainly the most extreme stress in my life has been this thing of your being gay and living with Michael.” The implication that the life that I was leading had actually precipitated her illness—it was probably the worst conversation of my life. I thought, “Oh, that’s why I felt, for all those years, that I couldn’t be myself and admit to who I was, why I felt that this thing I carried within me was toxic and poisonous. Here it is, all borne out.”

She apologized, afterward. She apologized any number of times. A couple of months after that, she and my father came to London and they had dinner with Michael, whom they both liked. In the comparative scheme of things, it wasn’t so bad; but the pain of that conversation has stayed with me all these years. And the atmosphere from which that conversation rose had this terrible, devastating effect on me through my adolescence and early adulthood. She was also embarrassed by the idea of having a gay child. There was still the idea in circulation that gay children were caused by overbearing mothers. There were all of those things going around. It was very difficult to separate out the fact that I was gay, which was one narrative, from the fact that my mother had a gay child, which was another narrative.

Now, my mother had a genuine belief, which she articulated frequently long before she knew that I was gay, that the most valuable and important things in life are love and a family. She said, “You don’t know, until you have children, what the love you feel for them is like. People who never have children never get to know that. It is the most beautiful emotion that there is, and there is nothing else in my life that has given me a joy comparable to the joy that having children has brought me.” That enormous love was palpable throughout my life, despite the episode that I have just described.

My father was kind of neutral on the whole thing. He vaguely said, “Having a family is wondrous, and it would be a shame if you didn’t get to have that experience.” But he was more remote about it all. His feeling about it essentially was, “We can’t get your mother too upset. Your mother is having a very hard time with this.”

So the prohibition, for me, didn't really come out of religion. I'd had a vaguely Jewish upbringing, but no deep connection to faith. But I did grow up in a household in which I felt that to be myself was to damage the people I loved. So I am very well acquainted with that burden.

Prince: How early did you come to that realization?

Solomon: I think I came to it, at a subtle level, very early. I didn't come to an explicit understanding of it until well after my mother had died.

I went through elementary school being bullied and teased. I remember someone—I can't recall his name, but I can see his face—who decided on the school bus, when I was ten or eleven, to call me "Percy." That was somehow supposed to connect to the fact that I wasn't very athletic. I was, in fact, also not very coordinated. I was not very masculine, by the standards of ten-year-olds. I remember being on the school bus and everyone chanting, "Percy! Percy! Percy!" at me. I've just been thinking about this because I have a close relative, a child in my family, who has been going through something a little bit similar.

It had been going on for a year, probably, and somebody told his mother, who told my mother. My mother said, "Has this been happening? What is all this?" I said, "Yes, it has been happening." She said, "Well, why on earth didn't you tell us?" She arranged for a chaperone on the bus, and that whole business came to an end.

When I stop to think about why I hadn't said anything about the Percy business, I think it was because I knew I was being attacked for being something that wasn't good, and I believed that my parents would discover it, and that they, too, would think that it wasn't good.

My mother died less than two years after she got sick. Michael and I had broken up by then. I remember when I told her, and she said, "Oh, just when I was getting fond of him." One of the things she said to me the night that she died was, "What happened to me has nothing to do with who you are. The only thing I have ever really wanted for you is love, and I hope you find it in whatever form it takes."

There followed a decade in which I was involved with a man for a couple of years, and then I was involved with a woman for a

couple of years. Then, I was with another man for a couple of years, and then I was involved with another woman for a couple of years. I was really trying to make the straight thing work because I really wanted to have kids; and also, I think, because I felt as though I could fall emotionally in love with women. There was a piece of myself that I held back in the relationships with men.

Finally, when I was 37, I met John. We have now been together for nearly 12 years. It wasn't until I met John—even though I had written about being gay, even though everyone knew—that I finally felt that I was able to transcend the idea that who I was was a grave misfortune.

In the meanwhile, shortly before I met John, I had a speaking engagement in Texas. One of my closest, closest friends from Yale was Blaine. She was the most beautiful woman at Yale when I was there. She was kind and charming and incredibly bright, and always beloved of everyone. She married her college boyfriend, and then divorced; I was out of touch with her for some years.

But I was down to do this speaking engagement, so I called her and said, "I am going to be in town, and I have some friends who are organizing a little dinner, and we'd just love it if you would join us."

So Blaine came along. I was so overjoyed to see her. I said, "Do you feel very sad about your marriage ending?" She said, "No. My one great sadness is that I really would have loved to have kids." I said, offhand while we were sitting there at dinner, "Gee, the thing I most want is to have kids, too. If you ever decide that you want to have them, I'd be glad to be the dad." Blaine was so beautiful, popular, and beloved of everyone, and she would have many opportunities to marry anyone she wanted to, and have children in a much more conventional way. So I didn't take the conversation too seriously.

But when I got home I wrote her a letter that said, "I would, actually, really love to have children, and I would be delighted, more than I can say, to have children with you. But if you decide not to have children with me, I hope you will have children with someone, because you are such a good and loving person, and you would be a wonderful mother."

Then I met John, and although that was very happy it took, as

any relationship does in its early stages, some adjustment. Bit by bit I began to think, "Oh, this is really the one."

Then, my father and stepmother threw a beautiful surprise party for me for my fortieth birthday. When I walked in, of all the people who were there from various different parts of my life, the person I was most surprised to see was Blaine, because she had lived in New York at the beginning of her marriage and she had never come back.

John and I had been together for two and a half years by that point, and he knew that I loved Blaine and didn't get to see her very often. He had made up an appointment for the following evening, so that I thought we were doing something, in order that I would have the evening free. That evening Blaine and I went out to dinner. She said, "I just wanted to say that I really would like to do this. Would you really like to do this, have a kid?" I said, "I really would like to do this. Are you sure you really would like to do this?" And she said, "I think I really would like to do this."

John has some close friends who are a lesbian couple, Tammy and Laura. They wanted to have kids, and they had asked John to be the sperm donor. So he had two biological children in Minneapolis with whom he didn't have a close relationship, but with whom he had a kind of fond relationship. Their parents were definitely their two moms; John and I were more like uncles.

I'm not going to go through all the permutations, which would take hours, but John and I went through a very, very difficult time of working through the idea that I was going to have this child with Blaine. I thought it was like his situation with Tammy and Laura, but he thought it was not; he had a distant relationship to those children, and I would have an explicitly paternal relationship to this one. He was jealous, he was anxious, he felt that he was going to be usurped; but eventually he came around to the idea, partly because you can't not love Blaine. And frankly, you really can't not love John, either. The two of them ended up being enormously close, and they adore each other. It all began to work.

In the meanwhile, John had said that he wanted me to marry him. Some of that old homophobia and shame was still quite strong in me. I said, "I'm happy to be with you forever, but I don't see that we should make a big, public fuss about it." But I finally

decided that he was being nice about my having children with Blaine, and I needed to be nice about this marriage thing if it meant so much to him. I'm a dual-national, U.S. and U.K., and Britain had just passed its civil partnership law, which grants civil partners all of the rights of marriage except that it's not called marriage; and at that time it was not possible to have the ceremony performed in a consecrated religious space.

We started putting together our wedding. I was amazed by how powerful the experience was and how much it meant to me. I had started off thinking, "OK, if you really want to." Then I thought, "Well, it will be great party, and I love putting together great parties. That will be a lot of fun." So I was ambushed by its profundity. There was real intimacy in the process of planning it with John. But I think the real revelation was having this community of people all bearing witness to our love for each other. It strengthened that love. It's not that the love wasn't there before the wedding, but it just felt, somehow, as though something that was private and therefore vulnerable acquired an additional layer that was public, which strengthened it. It was as though it got an exoskeleton. The presence of all of our friends and, more than acceptance, the love and exuberance of all of our friends on that occasion was stirring and revelatory. I felt as though it eliminated, in some profound way, any feeling that the kind of love that I enjoyed was a compromise, or was secondary, or was different, or wasn't as good as the love that my brother and my sister-in-law had, or that my parents had had, or that so many of my friends had. I had felt compromised all my life, without even realizing how much that feeling depleted me. On my wedding day, I felt, "This is love and this is celebration."

John and I both felt quite strongly that we wanted to have a religious element in the wedding. Even though neither of us is profoundly involved in day-to-day organized religious life, each of us has a deep sense of the mysterious and unknowable in human relations. John was raised as a Catholic, though his father was Lutheran. I grew up as a Jew. We spent a lot of time thinking through what we wanted the service to be, and eventually asked Peter Gomes, who was for a long time the minister at Harvard, to perform a Christian ceremony. At the end of the wedding we re-

ceived a blessing from a British rabbi, Julia Neuberger, whom I knew and admired.

We spent such a long time writing the ceremony. We didn't want it to be hypocritical, and we didn't want it to assume an apparent engagement with dogma that was not real to us. But the presence of our friends and that feeling of the presence of God in the experience came together in a way that I had no ability to conceptualize until it happened. It made our love seem to be part of a much bigger and greater idea of love—a more exquisite and profound love that buoyed and buoys us enormously.

My brother was my best man, and I had asked my father to give a speech at the wedding. Various friends gave speeches at the rehearsal dinner. John had asked a couple of his closest friends to speak. His parents were both deceased, and he did not invite his sister, Mary—who is a devout Catholic and lives in the conservative context in Wisconsin where John grew up—to speak; he felt she was still somewhat uncomfortable with the fact that he was gay. She was coming to the wedding, about which we were delighted, but we didn't want to push it.

The day of the wedding she said to John that she wished to make a toast. John said to me, “We have everything so scheduled, but is it OK if my sister says a few words?” I said, “John, she is your sister. Of course she should say something if she wants.”

She delivered an incredibly beautiful, deeply moving speech. She invoked the memory of their parents, and said how happy she felt they would have been to be there that day and to see how happy John was. It meant so much to John that she was able to make that leap.

My brother and my father both made beautiful speeches. My father said, “There are some people to whom love comes easily, and that has a little bit to do with the world around them. The love that Andrew and John have took a lot of work. Social prejudice prevented its being easy, but it is a beautiful and true love. I would only wish for my son,” he went on, addressing us, “that your marriage be like my marriage to your mother, only longer.”

There were articles in various places, both in England and the U.S., in the *Times* and various British papers and magazines. Then the paper from John's hometown got in touch with John and

asked how he felt about their running an article. John said, “Well, I think it would be kind of fun, but I don’t live in Grafton. My sister lives in Grafton, and I don’t know how she would feel about it. We really would have to talk to Mary.” When he mentioned it to Mary, she said, “Everyone I care about in this town knows that I went and knows that I had a wonderful time. The people who don’t know it are people I don’t care about anyway. I’m delighted for them to do this piece.” So the story ran in the Grafton paper.

John had Tammy and Laura, his lesbian friends, come with their two children. Oliver was John’s page, and mine was my eldest nephew. Lucy was a flower girl. Blaine came to the wedding, pregnant with the child we would soon have, little Blaine.

People say, “Well, you could have just had the celebration, and not called it marriage.” But it wouldn’t have been the same. John and I had registered as domestic partners in New York, in case either of us needed to have hospital access or secure certain other legal rights. We had a couple of friends join us for lunch afterwards. It was very pleasant. But it wasn’t the same. It didn’t have that feeling of exaltation. It had a feeling of pragmatism. There are purposes that are served by having legal recognition for your coupledness. But that is such a small part of what marriage is about, or at least what I understand marriage to be about.

We went down to Fort Worth for the birth of little Blaine. There was still some tension between John and Blaine, and then the fact of this baby seemed so much more monumental than any jealous tensions. There was this child in the world who hadn’t been there before, and who was going to have me as her father, and John—“Papa John,” as she calls him—as a significant figure in the whole of her life. It was so shocking, so thrilling, so daunting.

Prince: Shocking for both of you?

Solomon: I think so. It was shocking for me to look at her and think, “All those years, I thought I would never have a child. And look, I have a child! I am a father!” I remember trying on the word and thinking, “I am a *father*. I am a father?” It seemed so inconceivable. It had been such an elusive goal for so long. And also, of course, I suddenly thought, “Do I know how to do this? Will I be any good at it? Will her growing up in this unusual family be hard for her? What if she turns into someone I don’t feel any connec-

tion to?” All of the worries and anxieties. For John, too, it had all felt abstract, and suddenly we were actually holding this little girl. And Blaine was glowing.

People talk a lot about “downward spirals.” But I feel like it was like this was an upward spiral: John’s moving to New York. Our getting married. Blainey being born. It somehow kept getting better. John and Blaine have had hardly a minute of tension between them since little Blaine was born.

John had said at various stages, “What you are doing is not really like my arrangement with Tammy and Laura. I like those kids and I said I would be there for them if they wanted, but I’m not so deeply involved.” I said, “Why aren’t you more involved?” John really wanted to engage with them, and just about then, Laura said that we were really important to the kids, and that she wanted to invite us to be more involved in their lives. That was really good.

The arrangement with Blaine was that I would go to Texas, or she would come here every month for a few days; but that is not the same as living with a child. I said to John, “OK, we’ve now got all of these kids who matter to us, but there is a part of parenting that occurs only when you are actually bringing a child up, hands-on, all of the time. We should have a child together, with the two of us.”

Prince: Let me interrupt at this point.

Solomon: Please.

Prince: You’re going through all of this. When, for you, did relationship become family?

Solomon: Relationship with John?

Prince: Yes.

Solomon: In many ways it had become family when he moved in with me in New York, but I feel it really changed when we got married. It wasn’t as though on June 27th I didn’t care what happened, and on July 1st I felt that this was my whole life, but the process of committing to marriage was transformative for us.

Prince: I am assuming that love is part of relationship, but there is some type of transformation—whether it is a process or an event, I don’t know—whereby it becomes family. At its base, that is what I see as so crucial in this whole discussion—not just of homosexual-

ity, but also of society. We are all recognizing the crucial importance of family, and it goes way beyond relationship.

Solomon: We met in 2001 and we got married in 2007. John moved to New York at the very end of 2003. The first year that he was in New York was a big adjustment for both of us, for many, many reasons. At the end of that year, we went on a trip to China, where I had a journalistic assignment. We both always say that somehow, the day we left for that trip—we left the day after Christmas, and we celebrated ringing in 2005 there—it suddenly became clear that we were in this together. I had had a tendency in prior relationships to be wondering if there was a better relationship out there. I think it was about when we went to China, four years after we met, that I realized that I had absolutely no interest in being in another relationship. I wanted to be in *this* relationship, permanently. That's not to say that we never argued. But I felt, "Whatever our flaws are, they are the ones that we are going to be dealing with." I didn't want to be at the beginning of intimacy ever again. I wanted to be *in* this thing.

So that was the beginning of 2005. Between then and the time we got married in 2007, I think that grew and strengthened and became more profound. My father had been very warm and welcoming to John, as had my brother and stepmother; but now John became much closer to and much more involved with the family.

We loved our wedding, and we had a great, great time at it. It was a wonderful occasion. I think that one of my ways of being in the world had always been to blend ambivalence, nostalgia, and uncertainty. I think I had never really expected that I would outgrow having profound ambivalence at the center of my relationship. I thought that I would find someone and I would try to make it work, and I would settle for imperfection. But I really don't have reservations about John, and I would say that it was in that 2005–2007 period that my regretfulness was pushed into abeyance.

And then, as I say, getting married really did it, in a way that I had never expected. I felt, "OK, we have implicated a lot of other people and God in this. We must be pretty serious about it." I thought it would be a way to mark the reality that already existed, but in fact, it created a reality that had not existed and that would

not have existed had we not been able to marry. We could have lived together for the rest of our lives very happily. It's not that without marriage it would all have fallen apart. But marriage reified the love. It made it seem that it wasn't only something inside us. It was something that existed unto itself in the world, this love. I wanted to emphasize, in the religious text of the ceremony, all the language about forever. I know that marriages disintegrate and people get divorced, but I don't think that that will happen to us. We forged an unshakeable commitment, and we did so very publicly.

To go back to your idea of family, I think that my greatest strength, and my greatest weakness in some ways, is that I came from a very strong family. My parents deeply and truly loved each other, and if my mother hadn't died they would have been together forever. They were together for as much of forever as was given to them. They really loved my brother and me and were very good to us. It gave the model of how to have a happy marriage and family, but it also set the bar very high. I was so attached to my family of origin, and it took time for him to matter as much to me as any of them. I hate the comparative idea that you have to love your spouse more than you love your parents. But there was a moment when I realized that I no longer felt that the emotion of later life was smaller and less significant than that profound emotion and love in my childhood. I felt that the relationship with John had risen to that occasion.

Prince: Somehow, from what I am hearing, that interaction with God was a transformational experience. Is that fair to say? Not that it was the whole process, but that it was a part of the process.

Solomon: It was a part of the process. I had written my book on depression,¹ and I had studied a lot about the biochemistry of the brain. I am not a scientist, but I have some understanding of brain science. The conclusion that I came to, which I articulate at the end of my book on depression, is that even when we understand a thousand times more than we can currently understand, science still won't explain the mysterious nature of love and despair. And despair is part of love. I won't go too far down that tangent, but if your love didn't always contain the possibility of loss, it would be very different from human love as we know it. The experience of

being depressed and emerging from depression made me understand the idea of a soul. I felt that the language in which one could best acknowledge that drew from faith. I believe very deeply that this beauty I call the soul is not a random occurrence. I don't know what its meaning is at some larger level, but I know that it has meaning. I very much want to acknowledge that understanding of God. I have always believed in trying to be a good person and giving to the world, and treating others in a just, kind, merciful way.

It wasn't just that my neurotransmitters were surging at the moment when John and I met. That's another language to describe what happened. I'm sure that if we had enough sophistication, someone could look at what my changes in brain structure were as I came to feel more deeply in love.

I have a very difficult time believing that there is some being who is going to invite me into heaven or not on the basis of whether I wear a yarmulke or whether I have been sprinkled with water while someone said something. Some of the ritual is very beautiful, but I find it difficult to believe that it really has to do with God. I believe that dogma comes from man.

I grew up in a very rationalist household. My father, in particular, came from that mid-century tradition of thinking science will ultimately explain everything. I'm a huge believer in science. But I don't think it explains everything. I first really felt that when my mother died. I thought, "What happened to her? She was here a second ago, and now she is gone." Obviously, I had known that people died. I had known a couple of people who had died, but the loss of my mother contained something of the profoundly unknowable. In the beautiful relationships that have blossomed since then, there seems to be the same. Does that make sense?

Prince: Yes, it does. It's a long response to a short question, but the short question demands the long response. Anything less would trivialize it.

Solomon: It's interesting—I joined the First Presbyterian Church largely because I hoped to send George to their very good preschool, which for various reasons he is not going to attend; and partly because they have a large social justice program, in which I believe very strongly. They feed the homeless, and I wanted to at-

tach myself to an institution that was doing that. I love going to church on Sundays. It's slightly ridiculous, because the church is around the corner from my house in New York, but we spend weekends at my dad's house in the country, so it's an hour commute to get down to go to church, and then an hour to get back to my father's home. I love the punctuation at having time consecrated, as it were, to thinking about these issues. I don't believe that raising my voice in song is going to be pleasing to a God who is sitting upstairs somewhere, waiting to be pleased. But I love the regular acknowledgement of how little we know and understand, and the repeated appreciation of how much there is to be grateful for in life altogether. I like the church; the music is beautiful; I have become quite close to and really love the pastor, who is very wise and who speaks beautifully in his sermons. But it has also been a journey for me into gratitude and contemplation. Those are the things that I consecrate to God. Within my narrow understanding, those are the things that I would wish to be able to give.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James talks about the idea that if you have a pet dog, you will do things for the dog's good that he hates. I take my own dog to the vet and he looks at me as though to say that he hates going to the vet, and why am I doing this? I can never explain to the dog, "You would be very sick if I didn't do this." He goes on, it being the 19th century, to say that sometimes, in fact, you kill the dog because the dog is actually part of a scientific experiment and by his death will save innumerable human lives. You can never explain that to the dog. The dog only knows that he was alive, and that now you are killing him. James describes us as all "dogs at the feet of God." I don't understand what the nature of God is. But I do have the feeling that I'm at some feet, and lucky to be there. I think that would be the essence of it.

Is this all making sense?

Prince: Yes.

Solomon: We're just talking and talking and talking.

Prince: Isn't it making sense to you?

Solomon: It is, actually.

Prince: It may not be what you talk about every day, but it makes a

lot of sense to me. I think that is the essence of any religion: does it put you, even temporarily, not only in a better place, but in a place that is so different that it causes you to reflect in a way that you couldn't otherwise.

Solomon: Right.

Prince: It's not just more of the same of every day; it is qualitatively different.

Solomon: Yes.

Prince: But not all religion does that to people, and in fact some of it is ugly and brings out the worst in human nature instead.

Solomon: Working on the penultimate chapter of my current book, which is about people who are transgender, I have found that the greatest stories of acceptance and love and the ugliest stories of hideous cruelty and abuse have equally been perpetrated in the name of Christian faith. I've chronicled the experience of the mother of a transgender child who got attacked by the Ku Klux Klan in Tennessee, and that of a transgender woman who was asked to deliver a sermon at her Montana church and got a standing ovation from her congregation. The idea that Christianity is a blanket term that encompasses both of those attitudes seems ludicrous to me.

I'm sort of free-associating here. Many years ago I was in Zagorsk, which is the center of the Russian Orthodox Church, the equivalent of the Vatican—or perhaps of Salt Lake City. I was at a service that two American women, whom I didn't know, were also attending. The way that Russian Orthodox services work generally, and certainly the way that this worked, is that it goes on for hours and hours, and people wander in and wander out, and people talk the whole way through. One of the American women said to the other, "This is *so* beautiful. I can actually imagine maybe even becoming Orthodox." She went on and on, and finally a Russian seated just in front of her turned and said, "You are not member of church because it is beautiful; you are member of church because it is the single truth of God!" I don't believe that. I believe that organized religion is an ornament to the truth, and that aesthetics are part of its power.

I feel that my most profound experiences are the death of my

mother, the birth of my children, and the arrival at my relationship with John. The idea of a religion that opposes some of those experiences is utterly bewildering to me. But the idea that those are the windows through which I can see the extraordinary gift that is human experience—that makes perfect sense to me. I really feel as though those are the three experiences about which I felt, “Oh, now I see. It’s much bigger than we are.”

You know the rest of the actual narrative, but just so that you’ll have it on your tape: I then wanted to have a child with John, a child who would be with us all the time. John thought that it sounded like an awful lot of work. We were really happy, and why did I have to always make things more complicated? We had that conversation for quite a while. Then, it was my birthday and he gave me a cradle tied up with a bow. He said, “If it’s a boy, can we call him George, after my grandfather?”

I am the biological father; we had an egg donor, and Laura offered to be our surrogate. George is a source of such delight. I didn’t have, as some people do, instant bonding. He was my child and I would have done anything for him, but he didn’t stir such gigantic emotions the minute he was born. They have just grown and grown, and every time I think that really that’s all, they seem to grow more. I really feel—and I said this to John even before George was born—“You think our being married meant that we would be together forever. Certainly, our getting married meant that I intend for us to be together forever. But if we have a child together, I just want you to know that from my side, at least, I’m really in this for the long haul.”

John is besotted with our child and spends so hugely many hours with him. I always wonder, if he were a less lovable child would I have loved him as much? I don’t know. He seems to me to be a very, very lovable child. He is charming. People like him. He is bright. He is interested in things.

Last night, George got overtired and was having a meltdown. I tried to put him to bed and he wouldn’t stop screaming, and it was exhausting. But this morning we were driving in from the country, and he was in a chatty and cheerful mood. It’s so hard not to lapse into banal cliché, talking about the fact that you love your own children. It’s so par for the course, but it’s also been a revela-

tion to me, as it is to parent after parent. As I mentioned, my mother said that the love one has for one's own children is like no other feeling. In some ways, that frightened me, and in other ways it has made parenthood much easier for me. I thought that the love for my children should feel ecstatic, and I didn't know whether it would, and I felt enormously relieved when I realized that it was escalating toward rhapsody.

Without these children, my life would have been only a shadow of what it is and will be. I am sure I am making a thousand horrible mistakes, because I think that's the nature of parenting; but I like to think that George has given me this great joy, and that he enables me to give some of what I have to give, some of what otherwise might just have rotted away, unused.

Now, I am going to add another piece of my history, which is that before John and I met, I had a romance for a little under two years with an ethnic Hungarian from Romania. He seemed incredibly sweet and very intelligent. I loved him, though I always felt that there was a little bit of our conversation that was getting lost in translation—and not because of his language skills, since his English was impeccable. We had met in Budapest, where he was a student, and he had wanted to move on and be in a bigger world, but he was somewhat uneasy in our American life. He had not come out of the closet to his family because his family were religious and he felt that they would take it badly. I thought that was up to him. He was working here at the Met Museum in their internship program, however, and a bunch of other interns all said to him, “You have to tell your family. That's crazy that you haven't told your family.”

So Ernő decided to tell his family. His brother's immediate response was, “That is evil and wrong, and you will burn for eternity in Hell.” His mother's response was a more moderate version of the same thing. He didn't tell his father. But his brother was so vehement, and Ernő was completely traumatized by it. He was not surprised, but I think it was more judgmental than he had expected. He and I talked about it, and I found it difficult to respond fully because I didn't understand fully what was going on. Now I can say that I also didn't understand how much it mattered to him.

One night, a few months later, he and I had a big argument. He tended, as many Eastern Europeans do, to drink too much. I was having dinner at home with a family friend, and we came downstairs and he was quite drunk. He said a couple of vaguely inappropriate things to this person. I said, "I can't stand this drinking. You have to get it under control." I was very, very annoyed. I had to go out to interview somebody. When I came home from the interview, he was gone. I never saw him again. I was completely devastated. I couldn't figure out where he was. I thought, "It's New York and he could have been hurt," but I saw that he had taken his passport, even though he had left most of his things behind. Eventually, a friend of mine who spoke Hungarian called his brother's house and he was there.

I wrote a long, long, long letter that a friend who was going to Budapest took and delivered by hand. Ernő finally sent a letter back and said, "I realized that our life was against the will of God, and I can't live with myself in such a life." He went home to Romania, and he married a woman and had two children. Five years later, at the Christological age of 33, he died. I was very briefly in contact with his wife, and wondered to her whether it had been a suicide. She said, "No, no. Certainly not. He was incredibly happy with me and with the family." Of course, I had thought he was incredibly happy in his life with *me*, and that's why I was so utterly unprepared for what happened. Ernő and I never argued. We got along beautifully; we had a lovely time. And then suddenly, he was gone.

I'll never know why he died, but my own strong feeling is that if it wasn't, in fact, suicide, it came from the incredible stress of trying to turn yourself into someone who you aren't, and live a life to meet alien expectations of other people. The letters he had sent to me contained a great deal of anxiety and anguish. I don't have any ache for Ernő in the sense of wishing that he and I were together, instead of John and me; but I have a little shard of despair about the fact that he is dead. I had, of course, hoped that he would find real and true happiness. The destruction of the relationship that he and I had, the falseness of the life into which he tried to place himself—all of it is the product of his brother's

“Christian” intolerance, and while his brother thought our life was evil, I think that intolerance is evil.

I’ve written a whole book on depression. I look at the rates of suicide among gay teens. They are so, so high for suicide attempts and for completed suicides. Being gay is immutable. Maybe someday we’ll figure out more of the science and it will be changeable, but we have no leads so far. We see people of kindness, compassion, and possibly even faith being told, “Because of a characteristic with which you were born, you are evil and bad.” Anything that even implies such a stance is profoundly toxic.

The Mormon Church has become so aggressively involved in this area. If you don’t want to have gay weddings in Mormon churches, that’s fine. That’s absolutely up to the members of the faith or the leadership of the faith. I would never suggest that the Mormon Church has to consecrate gay unions. But homosexuality runs at a fairly constant rate through all populations. There are many gay Mormons. I have a friend, whom I mentioned to you when we first had lunch, who is an ex-Mormon lesbian. It has been devastating to her to be cut off from the Church. I know one gay ex-Mormon who is a talented, self-destructive alcoholic. Whenever he is drunk and going on a tear, we are back to the Mormon Church and his being thrown out of the Mormon Church and growing up with this sense of being evil. I grew up with much milder disapprobation, and I know how poisonous that was for me. The idea of what it is like to lose everything is awful.

When, however, the Mormon Church moved beyond rejecting non-celibate gay Mormons and got involved in trying to prevent non-Mormons from accepting gay unions, as happened most visibly in the Proposition 8 debacle, it was very hard for me not to think of the Mormon Church as an evil organization without which the world, as I see it, would be better off. To pursue those policies insistently and so aggressively when there are people who are starving, who are dying of AIDS, who have no education, who have no drinking water—I thought, “All of those resources? Really? So that people like John and me can’t have the life that we have? Is that *really* the priority of a church?” I have read the Old and New Testaments many times. I know there are lines that are used to justify such positions, but I think the message is of love

and mercy and turn the other cheek is far more central than the prohibitions, most of which we now ignore. How do Christ's words about compassion justify financing Proposition 8 to take away marriage rights where they had already been established? What is the harm that these people who were getting married were doing?"

We are sitting here because of Helen Whitney. Helen is one of my closest, closest friends in the world, and I not only love but also admire her. I had real problems with her doing that Mormon film,² because I really saw the Mormon Church as an evil force in the world, and she didn't. She persuaded me, over time, in our conversations, in her film, in introducing me to you, that I was making a facile judgment. We are morally complicated, and we all do good and bad things. Every organization does good and bad things, and she opened up for me a way to see what is good and beautiful and wonderful in Mormonism. I found her film incredibly powerful. It certainly shifted my understanding enough so that I was eager to meet you, and so that I'm sitting with you now and trying to speak as much from my heart as I possibly can.

Despite all of that, I really feel that the Church leaders have blood on their hands. I feel that there are gay Mormons who have committed suicide or whose lives have been destroyed because of the attitude of the Church. I also think that when you got Proposition 8 through, you sent a message to all kinds of people who were tentatively thinking that maybe they were going to have an OK life. You made them think, "Everyone hates us. It's not just my mom, my church, my family; the kind of person I am is repulsive to the world." Some of those people end up killing themselves even if they're not Mormons, even if they're not religious. When a church manipulates the law to say, "These people are lesser," it takes a lot of resilience to hold your head up and say, "I am not lesser!" Some people can do it and some cannot; and some of those people who cannot will be destroyed.

The absence of marriages will result in all kinds of financial burdens that gay people wouldn't face if they could get married. If my brother gets hit by a car tomorrow, my sister-in-law will go on living materially in the same way that she does now. If the same thing happens to me, a great deal of what I have will go off to the

taxman. That's because of one of, as you doubtless know, eleven hundred federal laws that favor marriage.

John and I just returned from a trip with George. We got an inquisition at customs as to where the child's mother was and whether we had permission to travel with the child without his mother. I knew this kind of thing could happen, so I had the birth certificate and I had all of the other legal papers we needed. But this kind of thing is toxic, and it's pervasive.

Having said that the Yale undergraduates whom I sponsor are doing so much better, I also mention that a child in my extended family has been subjected to terrible bullying in a liberal New York school where the administration has effectively said, "We'll do our best, but kids will be kids." I thought, "Well, it's partly the way kids are because it comes from their parents and families." The law supports or undermines social values, and that's doubtless why the Mormon Church wants to be so involved in them.

So I have two nexuses of sadness about the Mormon Church. The first is the effect the Church's position on homosexuality has on Mormons. Two people I know whose lives have been destroyed, for whom this is a devastating experience, and the untold thousands of others like them.

Prince: And where would they be had they still remained in that community?

Solomon: Yes.

Prince: Certainly in a better place than they are now, both of them.

Solomon: Yes. And the woman, at least, has been cut off from all of what she, herself, perceives to be the good that there is in Mormonism. And whose interest can that possibly serve? Not theirs; but also, I think, not the Mormon Church's.

The second concern about the Mormon Church's stance, the thing that makes me really outraged, is the idea that the Mormon Church would presume to get involved in decisions that have little to do with Mormonism.

I understand perfectly well why the Catholic Church preaches against abortion. But it shouldn't be the purpose of the Catholic Church to prevent non-Catholics from having abortions if they feel that abortions are morally acceptable. They can certainly only

argue for what they believe to be right in the court of public opinion and try to persuade people. And frankly, if the Mormon Church still supported polygamy, and if it appeared to be a system that was not exploitative of women, I wouldn't feel that it's my place to forbid it.

It does seem to me, though, that there is a difference between the Mormon Church saying, "We don't accept gay people within the Church; we don't accept gay marriage within the Church; we don't accept people who act on their homosexual desires within the Church;" and trying to interfere with what happens outside of the Church. That seemed to me to be an abomination. As I say, if it weren't for Helen, I wouldn't sit down with a practicing Mormon.

Now, because it is for Helen, I have seen that there is a lot that is beautiful and wonderful in the Church. It would have been sad for me to miss out on all of that. I think it is sad for lots and lots of other people to end up with the very reductive understanding of Mormonism that is generated by such a high-profile campaign as that organized around Proposition 8.

Does that sort of answer the question about the Church?

Prince: Yes. It answers the past and the present. Let's talk about the future. Part of that future is a minute but significant transformation that is taking place within Mormonism. We spoke of it a little bit at lunch. If you go back into the Church handbook three to four decades ago, when homosexuality was first mentioned, the sin was to *be* homosexual. If you were homosexual and if it were known that you were, you would be expelled if you were a student at Brigham Young University; or, even worse, perhaps subjected to electrotherapy. It was that draconian, and you know horror stories about that kind of treatment. And you probably would have been excommunicated. All of this would have been on the basis of *being* homosexual.

That has changed now, so that not only is being homosexual OK, but you can serve a full-time, proselytizing mission if you are openly homosexual, as long as you have not engaged in homosexual acts. Now, there is a bit of a double standard there. I know how pervasive heterosexual promiscuity is in our society in general, and Mormonism is not immune to that. Were that same standard

to be enforced in the heterosexual population, we would have a lot fewer missionaries out there. That said, this is nonetheless a significant shift in a church that otherwise has had a pretty dismal track record in dealing with homosexuality. There are gay men in the Church whom I know now who feel that their spiritual life is starting to blossom in the open because they can be gay in a church that otherwise has not countenanced that in the past. So there is some progress there.

Where do we need to go? How do we get there? How much of it involves doing what we are not doing, and how much of it involves ceasing to do what we have been doing? Those are the issues that I throw to you. This, of course, is in the form of commentary from both of us. We don't know the future, and yet I think that some thoughtful speaking and writing on the subject has the potential for steering us in a better direction.

Solomon: In coming to an appreciation of the Mormon Church, one of the things that has been most compelling to me is the Mormon understanding of family, which extends beyond the general injunction to be fruitful and multiply, and addresses the permanence of love relationships into eternity, and embraces the sanctity of having children.

If I understand correctly, part of the objection to homosexuality used to have to do with the fact that gay people didn't reproduce. Part of it seems to have to do, as a lot of Christian resistance to gayness does, with a dim view of sex that is not procreative, and that is therefore lascivious. There is a great deal of sin that comes from homosexuals who believe their homosexuality is a sin. This is a downward spiral. If you can remove some of those negative associations, it will bring enormous riches to the Church. The Church responds to antiquated social realities, and those realities remain much more current in Utah precisely because of the Church. People who believe that they are going to be excommunicated and shamed, or whatever other dark things may happen to them, are much less likely to enter open, loving relationships. And they are also much less likely to have the self-esteem that is required to be monogamous and loving. And in consequence, they are much less likely to create families. So I think the Church is exacerbating the very problem that it seeks to erase.

I am enormously heartened by the news that you shared with me about the Church's disengagement from this issue in Maryland.

Prince: And by Harry Reid's engagement in "Don't Ask, Don't Tell". He did that as a thinking, believing Mormon; clearly not acting on behalf of the institutional church, but clearly not abandoning his Mormon identity at the same time.

Solomon: Yes, absolutely. He was heroic, and he is a hero to me.

I think these signs are promising. I'd love to see the process accelerate. I don't know the inner workings of the Church well enough to say how that acceleration could be achieved, but I do think that if the Church can see its way to greater tolerance, Church members will have greater exposure to gay people, and the lives of those gay people will be better.

Having read Martha Beck's book,³ having heard the story that you shared with me earlier, I feel like this Mormon thing of gay people who get married to members of the opposite sex and really try their best to make it work, and then the marriage falls apart and everyone is devastated—that is not a very happy or positive or constructive story.

Prince: No, and I have seen many of those. I know two of them that wound up in death by suicide. Who wins?

Solomon: One has to weigh all of one's values always in relative terms. On the upside, you get people who are not acting on their homosexual attraction, who are avoiding the sin of practicing homosexuality. On the downside, you have destroyed marriages, traumatized children, and dead people who have taken their own lives.

My own moral calculus—and I am not a devout Mormon—is that there is no comparison. The tragedies that are being brought about vastly outweigh the benefits that are being achieved.

Prince: Even though we can claim that there have been incremental improvements—and there have been—we have a long, long way to go. One of the most telling parts of Helen's documentary was when a Church authority acknowledged on camera that the Church practices a double standard for unmarried heterosexuals and gay people. I'm paraphrasing, but the sentiment was some-

thing like, “We don’t offer hope to gay people. If you are heterosexual and single, maybe tomorrow or maybe next year you will fall in love, and you will be able to get married. There’s no similar hope or promise for homosexual singles.” I wish that had not been cut from the televised version of the documentary. That is something that we have to wrestle with. There is no easy resolution to it. It’s a much bigger theological problem for Mormons than, say, for Catholics, who have a doctrine of consecrated celibacy. Celibacy is unthinkable as an ideal in Mormonism, so what we offer to gay people is inevitably a second-class status.

It is wonderful that I have friends in the Church who are openly gay, who feel that they are now thriving spiritually. But, if they choose not to remain celibate, it is a game changer.

Solomon: It comes back to my previous point, which I know is contentious to people who are deeply committed to dogma. At the end of the day, will God be interested primarily in whether I have been kind and helped others, or in whether I was baptized and how? If really good people who are deeply committed and who are thriving spiritually have to beat down the nature with which they seem to have been born and cut themselves off from the full realization of love, how can that be pleasing to God?

It seems particularly ironic that a church that at one stage, a long time ago, fought to redefine marriage should now be so opposed to these attempts to redefine marriage. As I said, my own view is that the campaign against polygamy, around which a lot of anti-Mormon sentiment was organized, seems horrific to me. What was the basis for everyone else getting up on their high horse about it?

Penalizing homosexuals does not save any innocent victims. The idea that God and the Church accept these people while they are celibate; and then if they go off and do something with someone else and both derive joy from it without any apparent harm to anyone else, the Church excommunicates them—that, to me, is bizarre.

I understand why there would be prohibitions on straying from monogamy because of the harm that it does not only to the person who is betrayed, but also to the person who is betraying. “Betray” is a sort of shorthand for what happens. If you are mar-

ried and you go off and have an affair with someone, if you are a husband who does that, it may potentially hurt your wife enormously. But it seems to me likely also to compromise your marriage. That seems to me to be a harm.

Prince: And certainly the kids are injured.

Solomon: Yes. I think that's different from my life with John. I come back in the end, always, to the autobiographical. I just look at my own life, which is full of error as all life is. I have done plenty of things that I am not proud of. But that central fact of the life that John and I have with George, Blaine, Oliver, and Lucy, and the extended family of parents: I just don't find that there is any perspective from which it feels to me like a crime against God.

Prince: And where has it allowed you to go that you weren't?

Solomon: Right. As I said, deeper into a relationship with the idea of God, and deeper into the territory of joy—and not of selfish joy. There is also somehow the idea that this gay thing is all just about indulgence in carnal pleasure. When I was twenty and felt that nobody could know I was gay, I was having sex with strangers in public parks. I don't think it was evil exactly, but it wasn't so great either. There was nobody particularly benefitting from it, except, I suppose, to the extent that it gave some pleasure to me and perhaps whomever I was with.

But I don't feel as though the relationship that I have with John or with the family is one in which I am wanton. I feel as though it is one in which I am, or try to be, enormously responsible. It comes with a great debt of care and caretaking and support. There is a line that I always loved from Lucretius. He said, "The sublime is the art of exchanging easier for more difficult pleasures." The presumption of that formulation is that the more difficult pleasures are actually better than the easier pleasures. That is why one makes the exchange. Being in a marriage and having children is the greatest pleasure, but it is certainly not the easiest pleasure. It is not like eating ice cream. It takes a lot of effort and work, and I feel like that is where, to me, the Mormon Church is missing the point. Though I don't expect that that epigram from Lucretius would be the basis of church policy, I think what the Church should ideally do, and does appear to do in the context of

straight relationships, is to support people in crossing from the easier pleasure of momentary carnal satisfaction, into the more difficult pleasure of love and family and relationship.

So when you ask about the future, I feel it would be presumptuous of me to say, “Well, they should pass this rule, and they should do this and that.” I am not a Mormon, and I am not as profoundly informed as I would wish to be, and I don’t think the Church wants to hear my instructions. But I hope the Church will examine what is good and what is ill, and what good could be achieved by getting the suicidal, self-destructive, possibly carnal, or celibate to move toward this experience of love. I don’t believe that there is anyone of faith whose faith would not be strengthened by those experiences of family. And the strengthening of faith, I think, is the ultimate goal of organized religion altogether.

Notes

1. Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (Scribner and Sons, 2001).
2. Helen Whitney, *The Mormons* (PBS, 2007).
3. Martha Beck, *Leaving the Saints: How I Lost the Mormons and Found My Faith* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005).