

DIALOGUE

A Journal of Mormon Thought



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A Journal of Mormon Thought

is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage. The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.

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Contents

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remembering <i>Dialogue</i>	Steven Orton	v
Thoughts on <i>Dialogue</i>	Gary Hernandez	v
Scriptural Cosmology	Michael E. McDonald	vii
An Artist Declares His Independence	Lane Twitchell	viii
Filling Gaps and Responding to “Silences in Mormon History”	D. Michael Quinn	ix

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

The Theology of Desire, Part II	Cetti Cherniak	1
Making the Absent Visible: The Real, Ideal, and the Abstract in Mormon Art	Barry Laga	47

PERSONAL VOICES

Trial of Faith	John Donald Gustav-Wrathall	78
Once upon July	David Clark Knowlton	108
More Musings on Motherhood	Tracie A. Lamb	126

FICTION

Follow Me, Boys	Kristin Carson	133
Sister Love	Susan Morgan	161

POETRY

Quantum Gospel: A Mormon Testimony	Ronald Wilcox	168
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REVIEWS

Dining with the Devil		
R. A. Christmas, <i>A Long Spoon: Poems</i>	Robert A. Rees	179

Safe Haven for a Time		
Thomas Cottam Romney, <i>The Mormon Colonies</i>		
<i>in Mexico</i>	<i>Paul H. Wright</i>	182
Heartfelt Theater		
Thom Duncan, <i>Matters of the Heart</i>	<i>Nan McCulloch</i>	185
A Touching Remembrance		
Helen Elizabeth Nebeker, <i>Bittersweet:</i>		
<i>A Candid Love Story</i>	<i>Richard J. Jacob</i>	189
<u>CONTRIBUTORS</u>		193
<u>ABOUT THE ARTISTS</u>		194

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Remembering Dialogue

I cannot remember exactly when I first tapped into the *Dialogue* phenomenon, but it was early on. I can remember sitting in a meeting room during the time of LDS general conference in the 1960s when Eugene England was speaking about this new publication. What he had to say resonated with me, and I subscribed immediately.

At the time I was a young military officer stationed on the East Coast or, as it was called then, the mission field. My wife and I were members of a small branch; and while life was full with Church callings and the demands of a growing family, it lacked the spiritual and intellectual stimulation I had enjoyed as a student at BYU. *Dialogue* helped fill that void.

The most influential article I read as a new subscriber, and perhaps still the most influential article for the past forty years, was Richard Poll's, "What the Church Means to People Like Me" (2, no. 4 [Winter 1967]: 107–17). I had in my college days developed a passion for Church history, which is both inspiring and messy. There are few topics more exciting and inspiring than the story of the Mormon pioneers, but embedded in the same story are sometimes unsettling issues, such as the Mountain Meadows Massacre, polygamy, or blood atonement, just to name a few.

I grew to suspect that many aspects of the gospel were not as straightforward as I had gathered from my years growing up in Mormon Utah. But liv-

ing far away from the center stakes of Zion, I found few ways to work through issues and doubts. I found myself envious of those in my branches and wards who seemed so sure of everything and never doubted. The "Iron Rod/Liahona" construct proposed by Brother Poll provided me with the perspective I needed to mature more gracefully in the Church. Over the years, various articles in *Dialogue* addressed such subjects in a way that I could see them in a clearer light. For me, when *Dialogue* tackled ticklish subjects, it served to dispel doubt, not cause it.

Over the last forty years I have gone on to hold multiple Church callings. My testimony has flourished and deepened. And for all those years, I have continued to enjoy *Dialogue* articles. They have enriched my life immeasurably. I own and have read every issue published. They are all lined up on my bookshelf and enjoy an honored place in our home and in my heart. It has been a great journey. I salute all the authors and editors who have labored so hard over the years to keep this vibrant and worthwhile publication going. It certainly has made a difference in my life.

Steven Orton
Burke, Virginia

Thoughts on Dialogue

My father-in-law introduced me to *Dialogue*, sort of. Actually, he gave me a copy of *A Thoughtful Faith*, edited by

Philip L. Barlow (Centerville, Utah: Canon Press, 1986). Early in our relationship, my father-in-law recognized that I was a little different than your average woven-into-the-quilt Mormon but maybe not so different from himself. As I read the liner notes for the book, I noted that a number of the essays had been originally published in *Dialogue*. It wasn't long afterward that I was buying *Dialogue* off the shelf where and when I could find it and eventually taking out and renewing my own subscription.

Since the time my father-in-law gave me *A Thoughtful Faith*, I have recommended and lent the book out several times. I have lent and given out issues of *Dialogue* as many times. In fact, it is typically to the same people that I offer both. However, if you were to compare the number of times I have given out and recommended *A Thoughtful Faith* and *Dialogue* to the number of years I have been in the Church, you would be somewhat underwhelmed.

But herein is my point: *Dialogue* is not for everyone. It is for people who (dare I say?) are not afraid to be thoughtful about their faith. Unfortunately, I have found that a lot of people *are* afraid to be thoughtful. Even more unfortunately, I have found that those same people often become (1) hopelessly neurotic, (2) racked with guilt, (3) nonmembers, (4) all of the above.

So what has *Dialogue* meant to me over the years? *Dialogue* has given me a sense of community, a sense that I'm not the only one out there. *Dialogue* is the member I wish were in my ward. To be fair, sometimes people who emulate the spirit of *Dialogue* have been in my ward. But when I'm part of those wards

in which such people do not exist, *Dialogue* has taken on paramount importance.

Of course, this doesn't mean that I hold on to every word printed in the journal. There are times that *Dialogue* and I have disagreements, times when I roll my eyes in exasperation and flip on to the next article, essay, or poem. But I think that is what a real dialogue is supposed to be like—a balance of agreements and disagreements. Too many agreements become a panegyric; too many disagreements become an argument. In the end, it's not the dialogue but the discourse that matters.

What I love most about *Dialogue* are the personal essays, the short fiction, and the poems. That's where the voices reside. That's where I feel the breath of life, where I find community. A confession: one of my favorite sections in the journal is the bios. Reading the bios is like having a look through someone's refrigerator. I look for similarities and differences between their lives and my own. Finding someone with a similar background is like discovering a half-finished jar of English mustard in their fridge and realizing I'm not alone in my taste for potentially lethal condiments. (This should take care of being invited to dinners for a while—or at least being left alone in kitchens.)

So that's about it. What *Dialogue* means to me: Being mentally healthy, being part of a community, poking through refrigerators.

Gary Hernandez
Ascot, England

Scriptural Cosmology

As a life-long amateur astronomer, I found Kirk D. Hagen's article, "Eternal Progression in a Multiverse: An Explorative Mormon Cosmology" (39, no. 2 [Summer 2006]: 1-45), to be an adept synopsis of the current principal scientific cosmologies. However, as a long-time convert to the LDS faith I found Hagen's proficiency in scriptural cosmology wanting.

Hagen asks: "How can the universe spatially or temporarily accommodate [eternal beings]?" And "where is there space or time for the innumerable 'intelligences' or 'spirits'?" (3). Revelatory cosmology answered Hagen's query in 1832: "There are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom" (D&C 88:37).

John Stewart Bell, a theoretical physicist at the CERN accelerator in Geneva, developed Bell's Theorem, which asserts that reality is nonlocal. In plainer terms, the three dimensions of space are illusory. Many scientists are understandably reluctant to accept the seeming absurdity of a nonlocal cosmos, although repeated accelerator experiments have confirmed some key elements of the hypothesis. If the nonlocal Mormon multiverse reflects scientific reality, then there is ample room for universes in one's thumb, and ultimately our universe may be in someone else's.

The scriptural Mormon multiverse is so vast that the Lord must prohibit Moses, in his exuberance, from seeing it all: "No man can behold all my works

and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth. . . . The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man" (Moses 1:5, 37). Given the distinctly parochial scientific and theological views of the universe that were contemporary with Joseph Smith, these scriptural cosmologies are shockingly expansive and will be for years to come.

As for the death of God at this universe's demise, Hagen quotes philosophers Paul Copan and William Craig, who maintain that God would be "swallowed up and crushed into oblivion in the Big Crunch" (18). God instructs Moses on this issue as well: "As one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works" (Moses 1:38). Hebrews 1:10-12 illustrates the same concept: "Lord, the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up [think: "Big Crunch"], and they shall be changed [Big Bangs]; but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail."

Neil Turok, Cambridge University, suggests: "The universe may be infinitely old and infinitely large." He is quoted by Francis Reddy, who adds: "The scientists argue the universe is at least a trillion years old and underwent repeated Big Bangs" (Reddy, "Is the Big Bang an Encore"? *Astronomy Magazine*, October 2006, 26).

On the subject of innumerable "intelligences," cosmologist Frank Tipler of Tulane University is the author of the Omega Point Theory, which stipulates that the ultimate

product of universal evolution must necessarily be God. He concedes that a significant vulnerability of the theory is that the math appears to lead to a metaphysical absurdity: “an infinite number of gods” (Kip Thorne, Caltech, and Tipler, “A Cosmological Dialogue on the Physics of Immortality,” *Skeptical* 3, No. 4 [1995]: 64). Thorne rejoins: “So instead of verifying the tenets of Christian theology you [Tipler] have verified the tenets of polytheistic theology” (65).

Imagine: an infinite, nonlocal, polytheistic cosmos! It really does sound delightfully absurd and unabashedly Mormon, doesn’t it? Science will always lag behind revealed cosmology, naturally; but the empirical vindications of our faith are certainly welcome.

Michael E. McDonald
Chester, Idaho

An Artist Declares His Independence

When initially contacted about the reproduction of my work for the cover of *Dialogue* in conjunction with an article by Glen Nelson (“The Mormon Artists Group: Adventures in Art Making,” 39, no. 3 [Fall 2006]: 115–24), I agreed without much thought. I recognize that *Dialogue* is a small publication with a highly specialized audience. However, the arrival of the journal and its contents have occasioned some introspection and concern.

In the development of my work, I have often included Mormon themes. I have done this for several reasons that are perhaps too elaborate for this note. The one that seems most relevant to this forum is as a process of psychologi-

cal tension release. The process of making images has been, and remains, a way of sorting through my relationship to the world.

Anyone who becomes interested in the *Sunstone/Dialogue* forums has become aware of the tensions that exist in the Mormon world, and there are many. While I have never subscribed to either publication, the presence of both has always been something of interest. I am frequently amazed at the kind of organization and dedication that “the Mormon people” can exhibit. Glen Nelson is to be commended for his project.

However, upon opening this issue of *Dialogue*, the first I had held in a number of years, I was taken back to some of the issues that have ultimately informed my decision to leave the Church.

Specifically, it was the first letter to the editor, “Shall I Go or Shall I Stay?” by Name Withheld (v–vii). In it, the author vividly depicts the kind of contradictions that some Mormons face. Caught between what is feared, an empty secular world, and the warm embrace of the local Mormon community, this family chooses activity in the Church, but not without cost. It left me feeling sad. It saddens me that American culture seems to force people into this kind of bargain. It saddens me that this obviously thinking and caring person belongs to a Church where he is embarrassed to sign his name to a letter that expresses his true inner dialogue.

But I was also irritated and disgusted. Activity in the Mormon Church, and in particular financial

support, facilitates a host of activities that are wrong. Left-leaning, practicing Mormons like to believe that the good of the Church outweighs the bad. But I'm not sure that's true. Most big institutions are probably 50/50.

The Mormon Church has never, and probably will never, stay out of politics. Political developments in the last five years mandate a level of consciousness, advocacy, and action that is the moral duty of every citizen of this nation. That Utah is seemingly the last state in the Union that supports the administration of George W. Bush is an embarrassment.

In short, my work appearing on the cover of *Dialogue* felt somewhat like an endorsement of Mormonism. I do not endorse Mormonism.

Lane Twitchell
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Filling Gaps and Responding to "Silences in Mormon History"

Editor's note: On December 12, 2006, D. Michael Quinn sent Dialogue the final version of his article, "Joseph Smith's Experience of a Methodist 'Camp-Meeting' in 1820." Dialogue posted it several days later as the expanded, definitive version of E-Paper #3 on Dialogue Paperless. It may presently be viewed at <http://www.dialoguejournal.com/excerpts/e3.pdf>. Accompanying the article was the author's cover letter, which he has kindly given us permission to quote.

I cannot thank you enough for suggesting last spring that I post this article on *Dialogue's* website (a possibility I hadn't known about). Its huge length has (alas!) made it unpublishable in

print-form, but your innovative website has allowed me to distribute it without my paying to photocopy and ship it by Pony Express to interested readers.

I will always be grateful to you for this opportunity of internet publication, because this is the most important article I've ever written. It's the supreme demonstration of my decades-long affirmation that it is ultimately faith-promoting to insist on rigorous scholarship that doesn't flinch from challenging traditional LDS historians and revising official histories.

Far beyond my expectations when I began this project in June 2005 to write what I thought would be a ten-page research note about faithful "possibilities," I have proved the accuracy of Joseph Smith's statements that there was significant local revivalism in 1820—a claim that BYU religion professors and other LDS apologists had said (or implied) was unprovable for nearly forty years. It took me a year of research and writing in my spare time to do the preliminary version of July 2006, plus three months to produce this expanded revision that (I think) demonstrates Joseph Smith's religious honesty beyond doubt concerning the circumstances leading to his First Vision of deity.

Naysayers will continue doubting the theophany itself, because no vision can be "proved" historically, but (if I am not being too arrogant) no one can honestly challenge Joseph's account of the vision's prelude after reading my article's final version.

Why I was able to do this with such relative ease, while the traditional

LDS apologists were not able to (or gave up trying) with the same sources available to them for decades, is something they will have to explain, because I can't figure it out. Filling gaps and responding to "silences in Mormon history" have been my stock-in-trade as a social historian, but I never expected to do so with such a well-worn topic as Palmyra's revivalism.

As an excommunicated historian, I offer this 1820 camp-meeting article as my gift to the people I've always loved, the believing Latter-day Saints. And if the feedback I've received from friendly skeptics is representative, even nonbelievers appreciate the historical context and lush descriptions I've provided for the Methodist revivalism that descended on Palmyra in the late spring of 1820.

If most Mormons choose to ignore what is written by someone they regard as a "disgusting homosexual apostate," that's their problem—not mine. I've been an ardent believer as long as I can remember, have defined myself as homosexual since the age of twelve, and am tired of trying to persuade naysayers that Mormonism has a loyal opposition—even of gay activists who are "uppity" when consigned to the back of

the LDS bus. Now I've at least done my part to make a faith-promoting article about Mormon beginnings available to anyone who might be interested (or who should be).

I appreciate your patience, and thank you, thank you, thank you for giving me a way to distribute this article electronically to a worldwide audience!!

D. Michael Quinn
Rancho Cucamonga, California

Erratum: The biographical statement about Henry Miles ("My Mission Decision," *Dialogue* 40, no. 1 [Spring 2007]: 138–51) was inadvertently left out of the Contributors' list in the spring issue. It is as follows:

HENRY L. MILES retired after a career in the Foreign Service. During his eleven years in Latin America, he served as counselor to three mission presidents while his wife, Carol, served on mission boards and as Relief Society president. After retiring, both took degrees at BYU. They have five children and twenty grandchildren, the oldest just returned from a mission. Henry spends his time writing family narratives and personal essays.

The Theology of Desire

Cetti Cherniak

Part II

This is the second of a two-part essay. The first part appeared in Dialogue 40, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 1–42. 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.

Artists and Revelators

The Lord, like the artist, uses symbol to get his meaning across.¹ Hosea married a whore to symbolize the Lord's continuing commitment in the face of Israel's brazen unfaithfulness and conjugation with idolaters (Hos. 1:2). Ezekiel ate dung (though he objected to human dung and was allowed to substitute cow dung) to symbolize Israel's assimilation of that which was abominable and rejected of God. He also lay on his left side with his face to an iron pan for three hundred and ninety days, to symbolize the number of years Israel would be under siege due to their unfaithfulness (Ezek. 4:12–17, 3–5). Isaiah was commanded to beget children and give them names symbolic of prophetic events (Isa. 8:1–4, 18, 7:3). In a day of rational abstraction, we find it difficult to relate any more to symbol, which is grounded in physical and emotional experience. We barely relate any more to the agricultural parables of Jesus, since most of us no longer get elbow-deep with the soil or the plants or the animals. Nature is no longer experienced by humankind² as that benevolent power which provides sustenance. As Bart Simpson so eloquently expressed it in his pastiche of a dinnertime prayer, "Dear God, we pay for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing." With our factory farms and grocery conglomerates, we have insulated ourselves from all but the destructive power of nature—earth-

quakes, tornadoes, etc.—and this has affected our perception of the disposition of God toward us. In our short-sighted mania for progress, we have silenced symbol and reduced its referents.

The ability to navigate symbol is imperative if we are to understand scriptures, rituals such as the sacrament, baptism, and the endowment, if we are to access an atonement that “defies comprehension,”³ and if we are to understand the created world and our place in it under an ineffable God. Scholars of anthropology and folklore have long seen the need for a return of a symbolic, mythic understanding of our collective and individual experience to contemporary culture. The resurrection of myth could serve to heal our fragmented postmodern consciousness and enable a return to faith for those whose intellects have separated them from a more direct sensation of God and an appreciation of his mystery. Mythologist Joseph Campbell insists:

Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are artists of one kind or another. The function of the artist is the mythologization of the environment and the world. . . . There’s an old romantic notion . . . that the ideas and poetry of the traditional cultures come out of the folk. They do not. They come out of an elite experience, the experience of people particularly gifted, whose ears are open to the song of the universe. These people speak to the folk, and there is an answer from the folk, which is then received as an interaction. But the first impulse in the shaping of a folk tradition comes from above, not from below.⁴

While we may be comfortable attributing divine inspiration to medical researchers and billionaire philanthropists, we feel a bit more squeamish about attributing it to artists. We want to believe that enlightenment and progress come through righteous persons, persons who, if not members of the Church, are at least living by its standards. Geniuses in any field tend to be eccentric; but in the arts this eccentricity so often translates into alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual deviancy, misanthropy, and suicide that we are automatically suspicious of an artist. We may wish to consider the extent to which these behaviors represent the natural reaction of any individual human beings who inexplicably find their experience of the world to be so vastly different from that of their fellows that they cannot in their whole lives find an existential pillow to rest their heads. Artists tend to be the more deviant the more they and their vision are disfranchised and devalued within the culture. Art today is severed from its place in everyday life and religious ceremony and relegated to museums where it

becomes just another consumer-spectator commodity. Psychologist Rollo May observes:

Society *appears* to worship artists, but this is pretense; actually contemporary society buys and sells him, and any individual with money can buy up all an artist's canvases and dump them into a big hole in a field. . . . The artist is actually a second-class citizen; he is accepted as the "frosting" and not the bread of life. . . . The contemporary artist finds himself in a strange bind and is tempted to fall into despair. . . . How can you force people to see—which is the artist's function—with such competition [as televised war, which desensitizes the citizenry]?⁵

Artists are seers in a very literal way. All of life for them is a trance and a vision. The true artist I am speaking of here is not just anyone who picks up a paintbrush or even who makes a living at painting or dancing or writing poems, but someone who has seen a vision and feels compelled to share it. Campbell identifies the artist as today's shaman:

The shaman is the person, male or female, who in his late childhood or early youth has an overwhelming psychological experience that turns him totally inward. . . . The whole consciousness opens up, and the shaman falls into it. This shaman experience has been described many, many times [in world folklore]. It occurs all the way from Siberia right through the Americas down to Tierra del Fuego. . . . This is an actual experience of transit through the earth to the realm of mythological imagery, to God, to the seat of power.⁶

What has happened in this kind of experience is that the partition between the conscious and subconscious minds has dissolved. An artist may or may not claim to have "seen God." The experience may not come so suddenly. But however it comes, it is this visionary consciousness that sets such an individual apart from his fellows. As Picasso said of Chagall, "He must have an angel in his head."⁷ Because artists have navigated the subconscious realm and lived to tell about it, they have lost the usual fear of those inner realms where instincts, drives, and emotions lurk. They know their place within the picture of everyday life and attempt to translate that knowledge for us in allegorical terms. Art cannot be fully reduced to rational explanation any more than God can. What does a painting "mean"? A symphony? Though rational analysis of symbolic elements may enhance our access, we apprehend the arts on the level of gut instinct. The physically-emotionally illiterate find themselves faced with their own ignorance and fear.

Artists thus challenge our assumptions about the world, both by the

content of their art and by the very fact of their existence as enlightened beings and types of Christ. As types of the Prototype, they represent the height of a human ability or abilities—in this case, visionary power and creative agency. For Mormons, the idea that an individual may be so set apart presents an extreme challenge to notions of authority and personal revelation.

Contrary to the scriptures, we have come to believe that legitimate visions and spiritual gifts come only by institutional association and/or through conscious and persistent righteous living. Paul was certainly not “living righteously” at the time of his epiphany, nor was Alma the Younger. And they along with Alma the Elder received their commissions unmediated by the institution. King Lamoni had been a murderer and a heathen when he was struck down with a vision of Christ. He promptly rose up and prophesied. His wife was also cast into a visionary state. Upon arising, she “cried with a loud voice, saying: O blessed Jesus, who has saved my soul from an awful hell!” and began speaking in tongues (Alma 18:41–43, 19:12–13, 29–30). When Lamoni’s father asked Aaron what he should do to have eternal life and be born of God, Aaron did not say, “Get baptized and endure to the end,” though the church and the baptismal ordinance were fully in place at the time. “But Aaron said to him: if thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest” (Alma 22:15–16). And, in Southern Baptist or Pentecostal fashion, he did. Joseph Smith was hardly prepared at age fourteen for what happened in the grove. The scriptures tell us that there are many gifts, many ways of receiving them, and many levels of spiritual intelligence (Abr. 3:18–19). The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. The Church is the Church’s, but the universe is the Lord’s.

In addition to the scriptural record, we have examples from life that confound our neatly packaged theories. One is the existence of psychics. Notwithstanding many opportunistic frauds, there are decent and good persons with the gift of clairvoyance. I knew one such person, a woman to whom I was assigned as a visiting teacher. A recent convert, she shared with me her sorrow at being treated by other members as if she were “a witch.” Interestingly, she worked as an artist in the entomology department of a university. Her drawings of insects were incredibly detailed and seemingly flawless. She drew many of them in a trance-like state. She often

“saw” events before they transpired; and when I asked her how it was she knew these things, she said, “People don’t realize. The information is just out there. It’s a matter of accessing what is around us all the time but that we just don’t see.” This accords with Brigham Young’s statement, “Where is the spirit world? It is right here.”⁸ It would seem that certain gifts and abilities are neither good nor evil in themselves but could more accurately be thought of as powers to be employed for whatever ends the recipient desires. Artists are in possession of great powers, and they know it. This knowledge is their greatest burden and blessing.

The young Joseph Smith insisted that he had seen the Father and the Son, despite persecution, because it was his personal testimony. It would have been a lie and an insult to God to say other than that which expressed the truth of his peculiar experience. Though we may not feel comfortable putting the controversial scientist or painter or novelist in the same category with Jesus and Joseph Smith, this same indomitable sense of personal knowledge characterizes all innovators. Since the most fundamental sin is the denying of agency, the question is not whether persons have a right to think, feel, act, and express themselves, but how, when, and to whom it would be most appropriate to do so.

Naturally, since ideas go abroad in the world, especially these days, there is little one can do to control the latter two variables. And given the extent of our personal limitations, we may feel that we can do only slightly more to control the former. Many artist-priests have agonized over this dilemma—Tolstoy renounced his greatest works, Gerard Manley Hopkins burned sheaves of poetry, and Emily Dickinson avoided the problem by shutting up all her work in a trunk. We are faced daily with a profusion of choices whose consequences are far too complex for us to gauge. Either we numb ourselves to that reality, or we summon the courage of our convictions. In either case, the rest of the universe will continue to churn around us.

It is reassuring to the artist and, by extension, to all who exercise creative agency to note that even the word of God—especially the word of God—has been grossly misunderstood and misapplied, taken out of context, exploited for ends quite opposite those for which it was originally intended. But for the sake of the immortality and eternal life of the few who could and would utilize his word—and his Word—the Lord did not withhold. “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not my-

self" (D&C 1:38). The light—and the Light—shone in darkness whether the darkness comprehended it or not.

To act for oneself in any way is risky business because there is no precedent that fully applies to the present context. The essence of creativity is that it is not repetition. "The first man to compare the cheeks of a young woman to a rose," said Dali, "was obviously a poet; the first to repeat it was possibly an idiot."⁹ Each moment is new and represents potential life and death, salvation and damnation. Whereas the average citizen is oblivious to this responsibility, the artist-priest carries it around in his very body.

"I am the poet of the body," said Whitman. "And I am the poet of the soul. / The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with me, / The first I graft and increase upon myself. . . . The latter I translate into a new tongue."¹⁰ Poets stir up our senses and emotions. Playwrights and fiction writers remind us of our own mortality—the uncontrollability of the circumstances of our own births and childhoods, the unpredictability of the moments and manners of our deaths, our fickle and easily broken hearts, our bodies that sicken and age and become crippled and ugly, the changing meanings we attach to past events, the psychological and societal roots of sin and crime, the cruel complexities of family life, the ironies of injustice. They confront us, in short, with the naked facts of existence and challenge us to arrive at moral decisions regarding them. What if we were Count Ugolino or Juliet or Anna Karenina or Stanley Kowalski or Janie Crawford or Bigger Thomas? How would we choose under their circumstances? Fiction gives us an opportunity to explore our agency without the inevitable and non-retractable disasters of actual trial and error. As an extension of agency for both reader and writer, fiction readies us for the creation of worlds.

Visual artists put us in touch with questions of beauty and desire—what brings us pleasure or pain, how we react to our own sensations of pleasure or pain, what we long for and what we forcibly deny, and how we respond to the novel juxtaposition of shapes and objects, primordial symbols and direct sensual-emotional stimulants like color, line, and texture. Visual language is of a different class than music, mathematics, and linguistics, which use more of the conceptual-analytical left hemisphere of the brain. The raw visual experience speaks first to the right cerebral hemisphere, which processes data in a nonrational fashion. While music comes to us linearly, visual art presents us with a whole reality all at once, a

gestalt. Puritans are generally more comfortable with music than with visual art because music has no concrete physical presence. It is less representational and therefore less susceptible of censorship. Lyrics may come under condemnation; but as long as the music itself does not arouse overt physical sensation, as with drums, it is difficult to pin a label of evil on it (though some have tried.) It is much easier to cry untruth or immorality against a visual or a literary work. Mormon writers tend to stay in the perceived safe-zone of historical fiction, which can supposedly be verified objectively and rationally, and fantasy, which does not claim to represent reality, and so is exempt.

The visual faculty uses more concerted brain capacity than any of the other senses, evolutionists tell us, because it is more important for our survival. Neuronal activity in the visual cortex is closely correlated with voluntary movement, as sight significantly informs proprioception and spatial awareness. More than any other sense, sight engages desire. Compare, for instance, the level of interest engendered by a man's meeting a woman over the phone versus meeting her in person. Or consider the appeal of packaging and store displays. We want what we see. Imagination is built of image, because it, like sight, fills in the blank spaces in data to complete patterns. The nature of the act of seeing brings us into the realm of multiplex and holistic reality and infinite possibility. Those who know the future are seers, not hearers.

We are uncomfortable with ambivalence and multivalence. We would prefer, if it were possible, to be presented with a complete pattern, one that has no blanks to fill in. We want to skim across the surface of life and think only very literally about our experience here. Art which is strictly illustrative keeps us in the safe realm of linear and pragmatic rationalism. Much of Mormon "art" falls into this category.

There has been some movement in recent years toward acknowledging the nonrational in Church-approved art, as for instance in the emotional postures and facial expressions of the figures in Liz Lemon Swindle's Smith family paintings. While this is a step in the right direction, still the nonrational is experienced indirectly, being mediated through conceptual-narrative content. What is treated is not the artist's gut response or the viewer's gut response, but only the figure's response in isolation, as if it were a subject in a laboratory whose emotions we are coolly observing. There is a visual *analysis* of emotion as opposed to a direct visual experience of emotion, or a synthesis of the two.

Artist Walter Rane takes us another step closer to balance and synthesis in combining narrative portrayal of emotion—bold gestures and facial expressions—with its non-analytic portrayal through dynamic lines and curves, mood-enhancing color, and sweeping, suggestive brushwork. He also employs some symbolic devices as, for example, the dividing line that the ship’s rigging creates between good and evil forces in *They Did Treat Me with Much Harshness*.¹¹ Though his style still feels a bit stilted and self-conscious, seeming yet to do more explaining than revealing, it is a vast improvement over the bland LDS “program art” of the mid-twentieth century.

The reason Edvard Munch’s painting *The Scream* hits us so strongly is that it integrates narrative with similar-meaning nondiscursive elements, thereby inviting a profound translation, and Rane is headed in that direction. Still, these attempts are far from Chagall’s free-floating and overlapping symbol or Rouault’s bold visual testimony of the emotions of Christ. To the extent we are unfamiliar with the raw visual idiom, we fail to notice the incongruity between form and content in much of Church-use art. But such incongruities are just as jarring or silly as “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief” would be sung to the tune of “Praise to the Man.” Even strictly naturalistic works that portray Christ frankly as a physical-emotional being, for example, Caravaggio’s *The Doubting of St. Thomas*, Kramskoy’s *Christ in the Wilderness*, or Ge’s *Golgotha* are viewed with shock and contempt by many Mormons.¹² The full implications of the nonrational aspects of LDS theology have yet to find artistic expression within the culture.

In producing a puritanically sanitized and rationally finite art in preference to a multidimensional and multivalent one, we miss the fact that God’s creation is also multivalent: “And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me” (Moses 6:63). We cannot quantify God and his creations according to human mathematics. The law of types has been his mode since the beginning, and he continues to speak to us in types, shadows, likenesses, symbolic densities, and telescoping truths. In his supreme concentricity, he reveals the whole pattern of the universe in a drop of water:

The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God.

Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms that ye may understand?

Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power. (D&C 88:45–47)

Often we fail to access the sublime truths in a work of art simply because we lack an interpreter for its unknown tongues. If such an interpreter appeared, perhaps we would be willing to hear the message. Sometimes we purposely avoid “the message in the bottle” through indiscriminate censorship. When we ban books on the sole basis that they portray adultery or deal with other hard issues of our day—environmental pollution, poverty, homosexuality, depression, technoimperialism, divorce, child abuse—or ban paintings solely because they portray some amount of nudity or violence or make a statement on some social ill, we miss crucial lessons that may come in no other way in our mechanized world. Despite having read the scriptures, we miss the fact that adultery can be symbolic of deeper spiritual realities, as can violence. In equating all sexual or violent or unpleasant or intensely pleasant images with the evils of commercial pornography and the exploitative designs of the entertainment industry, we miss many lessons that are rich in truths about God, the world he created, and our place in it. Joseph Smith said, “Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss.”¹³ To be unafraid of our own pleasure, pain, sickness, and sin, and to develop discernment thereby, is to contemplate salvation.

At the center point of all gospel laws and types stands the figure of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 11:4). Jesus Christ exists in Mormon theology as a historical figure as well as a *perceptual* facilitator (“the Light of the world”) (John 8:12; Mosiah 16:9; Alma 38:9; 3 Ne. 9:18; D&C 10:70) and a *conceptual* facilitator (“the Word made flesh”¹⁴), as both a personage and a way and means of being. He is both a literal and a figurative reality. Because of the generosity of the symbolic, art may bear testimony of Christian truth without explicit mention of Christ or scriptural personalities or members of churches. Or it may mention all of those things and be rife with falsehood, hypocrisy, and just plain sloppy craftsmanship. Since Christian truth is not limited to talk of Christ but encompasses all “things

as they really are" (Jac. 4:13), any honest and organic description of human experience can be considered Christian.

Furthermore, we learn by contrast, and the Christian agenda cannot be served by denying the existence of evil. As with the parables of Jesus, it is up to listeners to use their spiritual along with their physical ears. The testimony of the artist is not always easy to hear. But of what worth would Shakespeare be if he had avoided sex and violence? Of what worth would Dickens be, or Steinbeck, or Arthur Miller, or Picasso, if they had avoided the issues of their day? Not every painting ought to be viewed and not every book ought to be read by every person. It would be unwise to tout any particular work—say a portrait of the Savior—as the absolute model of truth, since truth cannot be captured, or to try to delineate a Christian standard—since what will provoke one person's testimony to grow will shrivel up another's. Let the Holy Spirit guide our personal selection, and let artists work out their own salvation on the same basis. And let those who are responsible for exposing others, especially youth, to art respect its power and tread carefully. In these ways we can avoid the unproductive extreme of codification and censorship.

When a society straps its artists into a "moral" straitjacket, the result is an art that resembles the propagandist Socialist Realism of the former Soviet Union. Such experiments in the politicization of art have shown the folly of trying to manipulate the course of inspiration. The Lord will inspire whom he will, when and where and in what manner he will, and neither ecclesiastical nor political nor academic institutions, however well-meaning, can hope to direct that process and neither, for that matter, can artists themselves. A tightly controlled society where standardization and conformity are valued over personal freedom of conscience and expression can never hope to produce great art, for art is forever outside the usual grammar of orthodoxy, which it understands as a provisional form. Artists answer directly to God. They are put here to dance and play before the Lord:

And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. . . .

And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. . . .

Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, How glorious was the king of

Israel to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants; as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord.

And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death. (2 Sam. 6:14, 16, 20–23)

To deny art its place is to be cursed with sterility.

The true artist may be heretical; but if so it is probably not because he or she is trying to be. And likewise, if he or she is orthodox it is probably not because he or she is trying to be. The artist by design is simply not motivated by the expectations of society but, like the prophet, is driven almost exclusively by inner conviction. He or she embodies that constructive confusedness that leads the society on to new order. In May's words: "He is by nature our archrebel. I am not speaking here of art as social protest: it can be that, as it was with Delacroix, and artists are almost always in the front line of social causes. I mean rather that his whole work is a rebellion against the status quo of society—that which would make the society banal, conformist, stagnant. . . . He does not *impose* form on a chaotic world as the thinker does; he *exists in this form*."¹⁵

During his reign, Pope John Paul II issued a letter to artists in which he encouraged the revelation of art as a complement to God's other revelatory means. Calling works of art "genuine sources of theology," he said, "The Church has always appealed to [artists'] creative powers in interpreting the Gospel message and discerning its precise application in the life of the Christian community. This partnership has been a source of mutual spiritual enrichment."¹⁶ But in a church culture in which revelation on all deep questions of human existence is viewed as coming only through the auspices of the institution, in which much revelation has become standardized and codified, the artist is implicitly mistrusted as a competitor with the prophets rather than welcomed as a partner. In a society in which no mystery is perceived to exist, the calling of the artist to depict the Christian mystery is moot. This view bespeaks a general ignorance about the nature of the creative act and a seeming fear of beauty.

All art that is worthy of the term is erotic in nature, because it is a "third thing" born from the intercourse between God and a human be-

ing. Artworks have often been likened to children, who take on a life of their own as they are released into the world and are received and used. True art, like a child, is born out of the desire for communion (with self, other, and God) and the desire for eternal continuation of the identity and, for these ends, makes use of the human attraction to beauty. To be attracted is to be enticed, to be seduced, and with this alluring comes the rationalist's fear of "losing control," what the mystics call "ecstasy."

We fear beauty because it touches us in a very deep and private place. In experiencing the ecstasy of beauty, whether in art or nature, in orgasm or in mystical union with Deity, we experience a kind of death, the death of the ego. "Except a [grain] of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24–25). In the experience of beauty, we are transformed. Scholar of religious art Jane Dillenberger explains: "For a precious moment, we stand within the work of art, see with the artist's eyes, and feel with the artist's pulse beat. In that instant all of our accustomed and limited ways of thinking and feeling are transcended. As the moment fades we are like travelers returning from a strange and wondrous country to our own. But that new seeing remains with us and hallows even the most familiar and mundane details of everyday living."¹⁷

It has been said that beauty is whatever brings joy; but joy, as it happens, comes after the storm. Childbirth is preceded by a process of travail, a process which follows the same chemical cascade as orgasm and which entails the same empowering surrender of self, riding as it does on the very edge of pleasure/pain and life/death. In order to rise above all things, it is necessary first to descend below them. Through a grace-mediated alchemy, beauty is created from ashes (Isa. 61:3). This the poets well know. "Death is the mother of beauty, mystical, / Within whose burning bosom we devise / Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly."¹⁸ "Those masterful images [of poetry and art] because complete / Grew in pure mind, but out of what began? / A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street, / Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can, / Old iron, old bones, old rags. . . / In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."¹⁹

True artists make us uncomfortable because their mode of creation is organic—that is, not only does it follow the law of types, but it also follows the model of constructive chaos that, as we have discussed, God employs in his own creative work. Mormon theology states that God did not

create the world out of nothing but that he “organized” it out of eternally existing matter.²⁰ We have vainly assumed that this organization follows the two-dimensional pattern of human organizing, in which efficiency, functionality, and uniformity are the goal. Lavishness and beauty are superfluous and even a hindrance to pragmatic ends. Yet how different are the creations of God, especially in the area of reproduction! Who has not marveled at the sheer superfluity of seeds in the world, both animal and vegetable? Anyone who has gazed into the swirling purple galaxy of a passionflower or looked at pond water under the microscope senses that God is as much artist as engineer. The whole living planet bursts forth with an unstoppable fecundity and lavish beauty, a quasi-chaotic superabundance.

Evolutionists are quick to point out that the beautiful is also practical; a single plant produces a billion seeds because there may be a drought that only a few survive. Flowers scintillate with bright colors in order to attract pollinating insects. But even in its practicality, organic creation differs from the nonorganic in its goals. God’s goal is the eternal continuation of the generative power. The goal itself is dynamic. Human beings’ goal is more frequently comfort. Our wish is to achieve stasis. God created the world “to please the eye and to gladden the heart” (D&C 59:18). Humans more frequently create their world to please the ego and to gloat in a sense of self-sufficiency. When in our pride we attempt to create without divine partnership, we may ostensibly seek to please the eye, but all we succeed in doing is tricking the eye with unsatisfying combinations that titillate but fail to gladden the heart:

Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use of man, both to please the eye and gladden the heart.

Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.

And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments. (D&C 59:18–21; see also Moses 3:9, 4:12–13)

This passage clearly links the pleasure of God with the pleasure of humanity. One of my first impressions of Mormons was that they just didn’t know how to party. I don’t mean party in the sense of vile, “riot-

ous living” but in the sense of celebration, spontaneous delight, jubilation. Mormons don’t seem to get excited about much of anything. Weddings in my family are always big celebrations—ribbons and bells and gorgeous attire, live bands playing, dancing, storytelling, and lots and lots of food and drink and hugging and kissing and laughter and tears. The Mormon wedding receptions I’ve attended were more like small-business office parties. Boring! What people have greater cause for celebration, for hand-clapping and shouting and leaping for joy, than the Latter-day Saints? We have even been instructed to do so in scripture: “If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving” (D&C 136:28). Yet we seem to take this instruction no more seriously than the commandment to “weep for the loss of them that die” (D&C 42:45). As to loud laughter, that may not be so much a function of decibels as of quality and intent, whether it be the innocent trill of spontaneous delight, the mindless cackling of flippancy, the bellowing of pride, or the snicker of derision.

If God rejoices in the pleasures of the body, how do we distinguish between a righteous sensuality and hedonism or carnality? After urging fasting and prayer, the Lord declares that “inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances. . . . Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours” (D&C 59:15–16). The key to the distinction, it seems, lies in what Buddhists call “letting go of attachment and aversion,” Hindus call “relinquishing the fruits of one’s actions,” and Christians call “not my will, but thine be done.” I like the Buddhist terminology, because it points out two sides of ungodliness: the attempt to avoid pain on the one hand and the attempt to guarantee pleasure on the other—or, in the perverse theology of the ascetic, to avoid pleasure and to guarantee pain. Both kinds of dualist thinking represent a rational attempt to escape chaos and paradox. Nietzsche called this propensity “the will to power.” In today’s vernacular we would call it “control.” We speak of living in “an age of addiction” in which “control freaks” cannot “let go and let God.” Our affluence has made us fat and bound us in mental cages with silken cords.

To be faced with deprivations—or to face ourselves with them through fasting and other acts of sacrifice—puts us in touch with the strength and contours of our own desire and allows us the opportunity to transmute it, to surrender it to a higher good which remains beyond

our control. Deprived people are always more capable of merriment than satiated ones. We don't have to become ascetics. What we need is simply to accept fully and with gratitude sensual pleasures "in the season thereof" (D&C 59:18), meaning according to the Lord's timetable and commandments, and handle them according to a patience that can be content without grasping at excess portions by extorting another's portion from him or her, either directly as in adultery or indirectly as in capitalist consumerism.

To follow God is to trust the ebb and flow of "seasons," to embrace with equanimity both feast time and famine, both living and dying, both speaking and silence. This is the pathos of obedience. As we consciously—not blindly, but with full self-awareness—decide to keep our appetites and passions within the bounds the Lord has set, we face the depth of our neediness and concentrate the power of our desire. This is why masturbation is so draining—because we let the power of our desire and will leak from us formlessly, without the firm resistance of another will. In seeking to guarantee and prolong our own comfort, and again in our presumptuous self-condemnations and self-justifications, we deny the Lord's "hand in all things" and force our own hand.

Faith, Will, and Women

In making use of the figure of erotic love as an analogy for the human interface with God, it may be helpful to explicate the nature of the relationship between male and female in LDS theology. Whereas it is common to align male sexuality with assertiveness and female with passivity, I have purposely avoided this polarity. While on a physiological level it is true that there must be desire on the part of the male, though not the female for intercourse to occur, the female's receptive-negative-inward role in penetration and conception is balanced by her equally female expressive-positive-outward role in expelling a child into the world and secreting milk to feed it. Additionally, the act of surrender is indeed an act of will and is required of both genders in their relations with each other as well as with God.

Mormon practice segregates the genders in a variety of contexts, beginning from an early age. There are clear differences in roles both within the ecclesiastical setting and in the home. However, on a soteriological level, there is no distinction made in Mormon doctrine between genders. Leaders have consistently (in the past few years, insistently) preached that

men and women are equals before God and that marriage is to be a partnership of equals.²¹ This is the kind of equality taught, and even practiced, in the temple, where women perform priesthood ordinances and are inducted into ascending levels of priesthood organization alongside the men. The endowment is a priesthood initiation ceremony for both genders, and both come out of the initiation wearing the sacred garb of priests. Women also receive promises of priesthood power and authority in the afterlife identical to men's.²²

All of this, along with the continued affirmation of the existence of Heavenly Mother,²³ suggests a picture of interdependency between the genders that more closely resembles the Eastern yin-yang or linga-yoni model than the Mosaic-Pauline one. Feminists have made the mistake of attempting to empower women by having them become men in their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, while Mormon doctrine would have them assume power on the basis of their irreplaceable uniqueness and complementarity. The doctrine that no male gets exalted without a female is more generous than many women would give it credit.

The LDS teaching that Mary and Jesus, and even Heavenly Father, were and are sexually active clears female sexuality of any trace of filthiness. Whereas many theologies, Christian and non-, promote celibacy as the ultimate in godliness and purity, Mormon theology sees sexual union as godly and the forbidding of marriage as an affront to God (D&C 49:15). The Lord could have designed for progeny to be created in some other way. He chose to link the power of procreation with the erotic. The religious thought that comes closest to the Mormon in my mind is the Hindu celebration of Krishna's erotic relationship with Radha. "The highest worship of Krishna must bring the worshipper to Radha. Krishna and Radha are the supreme predominating and the supreme predominated aspects of divinity, respectively. One complements the other, and each are interdependent aspects of ultimate reality."²⁴ What a glorious day it will be when Mormon artists depict Heavenly Father and Mother, or Jesus and Mary Magdalene, with the frank and innocent eroticism of the Hindus' beautiful depictions of Krishna and Radha. Certainly no better confirmation of female sexuality exists in Christianity than in Mormonism. If the culture represses the female, it does so in spite of its own doctrines.

Traditionally, there has been a tendency to think of the male as the prototypical and nonsexual or presexual human being, and the female as

the repository of (or scapegoat for) human sexuality. There is some doctrinal (though not, as some believe, embryological²⁵) precedent for this notion. Creation accounts state that the male was created first, and then the female, as a sort of variation on the theme (Gen. 1–2; Moses 2–3; Abr. 4–5). In Old Testament-based theologies (Jewish, Muslim, historic Christian) which fail to acknowledge the eternal nature of sex and gender, human sexuality might be assumed to originate with the creation of the female. However, LDS theology renders this interpretation invalid. Sexuality is an eternal reality and God has made both genders equally responsible for their individual and collective sensual-emotional experience as a condition of embodiment.

Joseph Smith taught that “it is natural for females to have feelings of charity and benevolence.”²⁶ But nowhere is it written that it is unnatural or improper or impossible for males to have feelings of charity and benevolence—in fact, without such feelings, men cannot be saved or retain their priesthood, and are “nothing” (D&C 121:41–42, 45; 1 Cor. 13:2; Moro. 7:44, 46). Heavenly Father and Jesus are both male, yet they epitomize charity and benevolence. Only beings who can feel and feel deeply are Christ-like, since a large part of Christ’s mission was empathizing with every human sensation. To what extent does the cultural prohibition of male feeling and of physical and emotional closeness between males contribute to one-upmanship, violence and aggression between men, and conversely, to homosexuality? The notion that either males or females are inherently more “spiritual” or “righteous” than the other is false, based on the fact that God is no respecter of persons and has given free agency to all alike. To view women as inherently more righteous than men is to view them as limited in their agency. To force women to shoulder the emotional load of men in the belief that men are incapable of feeling as deeply is simply bad theology.

If the whole of creation is both holy and “sexual,” as I have proposed, then intimacy between human beings is not, or should not be, limited to genital intercourse. Is the expulsion of a baby from the vagina and the breastfeeding of the baby “sexual”? Certainly. Is the mother committing a lesbian act if the child is a girl or involved in incest if it is a boy? Of course not. Freud correctly identified the attraction of the developing child for its other-gender parent (not really “opposite-gender,” after all, since they have all but a few parts in common); but this is an innocent and beneficial process of sexual imprinting which prepares the

child for eventual choices in marriage and parenthood, and not an unhealthy “complex.”²⁷ Since the female has a primary biological sexual relationship with both genders and both ages of humanity in the processes of conception, parturition, and lactation, her sexuality is more diffuse. The female tendency to emotional self-awareness and empathy may arise from the same processes. Yet all stand to learn and benefit thereby, and female modes of being in the world are as universal psychologically, spiritually, and symbolically as the male.

Additionally, female sexuality supports the notion of pleasure for pleasure’s sake, as the female continues, and even increases, sexual activity both during pregnancy and after menopause. In fact, one of the best ways to induce labor is to have a deep orgasm, as both processes rely on a surge of the hormone oxytocin. This biological fact links female sexual pleasure to the continuation of the race. Tradition holds that most women seek affection over sexual pleasure. I will not dispute the validity of this rule other than to say that I have spoken with numerous exceptions to it, particularly among the younger generation. I, myself, am certainly an exception to it. It is my belief that, as women come to exercise more agency in general in contemporary society, they also discover their sex drive. The entire history of humankind, from the Fall on, could be viewed as the attempt of men to run from the agency of women.

Perhaps the ugliest practice ever instituted for the control of women’s sexual agency is the African practice of female genital mutilation, sometimes euphemistically called “female circumcision.” At the age of seven or eight, a girl is bound and her clitoris is scraped out with a crude blade, her labia minora and all potentially hair-bearing areas of the vulva are cut off, and her labia majora are slit and the raw edges sewn together with only a straw to hold open a hole out of which to urinate and menstruate. If the girl survives the process, she is considered “cleansed” and worthy of marriage. On her wedding night, her husband must use extreme force or a knife to cut the opening large enough for entrance. Infections are frequent, as the urine and menses can barely escape. For child-bearing, the woman must again be cut and her mutilated genitalia resewn. Not only does this practice subject a woman to indescribable suffering but it also, with the removal of the clitoris, insures that she will never enjoy sex.

In the West, the attempt to scientifically control female sexuality can be seen in the appropriation of childbirth by technocrats. Most Western

women today are grossly ignorant of their own bodies and the uniquely female processes of labor and delivery. They divert this power to “specialists,” accepting the disease-management and crisis-intervention model of childbirth. Many women approach childbirth as a strictly mechanical event and are willing partners in the banishment of the spiritual component from this and other sexual events in their lives. The compartmentalizing of birth, like the compartmentalizing of death, shields us from the realities of our own embodiment. But at what price do we shield ourselves from fear and pain?²⁸ It is ironic that such ignorance should exist among members of a religion that preaches the high calling of motherhood. It seems that we prefer a sanitized version of motherhood. We want to get the results (posterity) without the messy God-designed process. And if possible, we would prefer to get them after they are out of diapers.

I enjoyed very much assisting in the home births of my two grandsons and at the home deliveries of the two daughters of a close friend. Both women were naked and unashamed. Childbirth is the most orgasmic experience in all of life, and I shared that experience with these women, not in some dirty way, but in complete innocence and love.

I remember the warm feeling of my grandmother’s full breasts pressed against my chest as we embraced, the sense of nurturance it gave me. Of course, I had absolutely no desire to “have sex” with my grandmother—at the time, I didn’t even know what that meant—but I was appreciating her sexual characteristics. I have great admiration for the massive musculature of an Angus bull or an NFL running back. I have always enjoyed seeing and feeling others’ bodies—male and female, old, young, and in between—not for some sort of perverse, isolated genital stimulation, but for sheer delight in the beauty and variety of God’s supreme creation and for the sense of acceptance and human unity it gives me. We live in an age when sexuality has been reduced to a nasty mechanical twitch, when innocent hugging and kissing between parents and children or between same-sex or other-sex friends has been decontextualized and associated exclusively with this soulless genital twitch. I even hesitated to write this paper because of the warped associations people might make.

Yet silence is complicity. In promoting emotional literacy and competence in both genders, in accepting and promoting honest and open physical sensation and expression, in embracing a more whole and nature-honoring lifestyle through home birth, home death, home schooling, home food production, home health care, etc., and in promoting the arts,

especially the visual arts, in the home, Church, and community, we re-infuse feminine creative power into everyday life. In seeing the connections or disconnections between doctrine and practice, in standing for true doctrine and refusing to be determined by false tradition, Mormon women and men have an opportunity to usher in a new age. I feel that it is imperative that Latter-day Saints view their own theology apart from its conventional cultural interpretations as it applies to the confused issues of the day, because I fully believe that, in its purity, it can correct those confusions.

A case in point is the current confusion in Western society over gender roles and the nature and purposes of marriage. We know that “marriage is ordained of God” (D&C 49:15; “The Family . . . Proclamation”). But seldom do we stop to consider just what marriage means. In her book *Marriage, a History*, scholar Stephanie Coontz charts a historical process of action, reaction, and negotiation that very neatly and, for me, quite delightfully resembles a chaos formula.²⁹ Most of us are aware on some level that, for most of history, marriage had little or nothing to do with romantic love; yet we persist in projecting our own psychology onto peoples of the past, as in certain kitschy novels about biblical women. For many thousands of years and across the globe, marriage was for the most part an economic and political institution. Prior to modern birth-control technologies, sex meant children, and children meant workers and heirs to the throne, or to lands and houses. Marriage was a way to regulate sexuality and organize inheritance.

It’s not that people didn’t fall in love in ancient times—there is a record of love poetry to the contrary—but they may have thought it incongruous to do so with their potential spouses. For the ancient Israelites, marriage was a religious as well as an economic and political arrangement, and sexuality was confined to it primarily for purposes of sustaining the faith through posterity. Romantic love was incidental and even inimical to that purpose. Jacob “loved” Rachel, we are told. Yet the business contract had priority. This thinking explains the well-known infractions of European nobility as well as even events in our own time, such as the sudden marriage of Aristotle Onassis to Jackie Kennedy when he had kept Maria Callas as a mistress for so many years.

We assume that women in such situations felt themselves to be horribly oppressed, and some did; yet it would appear that, in general, people felt that their systems worked and that they derived needed advantages. A

girl may have welcomed her elders' arrangement of her marriage just as we today would welcome a professional arrangement of our 401K. If the educated and independent woman of today whose high-tech, global, human-rights-conscious environment has made brute force and unilateral thinking obsolete were transplanted intact into a past age, she would certainly feel oppressed. For those of us living on the high end of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, marital love and the freedom to choose one's partner are not luxuries. In the LDS debate about polygamy, opponents and apologists alike speak of oppression as if it were objectifiable, whereas oppression is experienced relative to one's level of consciousness and is culturally modulated. One's level of consciousness and one's culture are intertwined, and both influence how we construct the narratives of our lives.

Our expectations of marriage today arise not just out of the fact that we are developmentally advanced in terms of the evolution of consciousness, but also because our culture of isolation puts more pressure than ever on the marriage relationship to fulfill the need for intimacy. In a highly mobile and virtual world where intimate contact with extended family members, neighbors, and townspeople has all but disappeared, intimacy has come to be associated almost exclusively with the sex act. And the sex act detached from procreation allows for multiple options beyond the heterosexual or even the human one. The Church thus preserves Eros as a holistic ideal in promoting marriage and childbearing within supportive communities, in proscribing extramarital sex, and in providing, through segregation, an intimate group setting where close same-sex relationships can theoretically flourish. The black and white of yin and yang are not diluted to a neutral gray.

Though the idea of physical evolution from species to species has been declared false by Mormon prophets,³⁰ the idea of the psycho-social evolution of the human race, and particularly between the sexes, coincides well with LDS spiritual cosmogony. The last shall be first, in part because they are more spiritually evolved. Relations between the genders have experienced a series of growth spurts in our day, beginning with the Enlightenment. As the analytical mode came to fore, it generated its equally evil twin, sentimentalism. In the unnatural separation of mind from body, the feminine became defined in terms of affection and "refinement," and marriage was given an otherworldly status. Men hesitated to have sex with their wives, seeing them as too "pure" and angelic for such rough "animalism." Admirable men of the late eighteenth and early nine-

teenth centuries, among them Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Webster, and Charles Dickens, kept mistresses for that reason.

Motherhood was severed from its deep sexual and sensual roots and put on a pedestal as a delicate and ethereal quality. Childbirth became cloaked in secrecy, women stopped attending each other's births, and obstetrics intervened. (And anyone who believes that this was an improvement ought to read obstetric history.) The free-love communalists and polygamists of the nineteenth century, along with the flappers of the 1920s and the beatniks and wife-swappers of the 1960s, represent efforts, however inarticulate, to reintegrate the physical and sexual with the spiritual and emotional within Western culture, to reassimilate female sexuality into the collective psyche. These attempts appeared as well-timed intrusions of chaos into hyperrational designs—labor contractions in preparation for today's nascent concept of unity between mind and body and between the sexes. The recent vogue of pregnant Hollywood divas, metro-sexuals, and vagina monologues represent (we can only hope) the last spasms of societal paradigm shift.

While many people decry the current state of marriage and pray for a return to the supposedly stable male-breadwinner, female-domestic marriages of the 1950s, it is becoming increasingly apparent that this split-level system contained the seeds of its own demise. It was a concession to the mechanical age that we are beginning to realize could not be sustained any more than the consumption of fossil fuels or the use of biocides. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" states that "by divine design," "fathers are to preside over their families . . . and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and the protection of their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children." But they are "obligated to help one another as equal partners."³¹

These roles were assigned, or perhaps we could more accurately say predicted, at the time of the Fall (Gen. 3:16–19), and have taken on many variations throughout history. In our post-industrial age in which the separation of home and family from work and sustenance and the association of employment with identity and worth have reached an extreme, it has become more and more difficult to negotiate the equality of the partnership. The proclamation is sound advice for keeping a family as intact as possible, given the present circumstances. The suggestions of our prophets keep us from experiencing the more destructive aspects of chaos.

But when the earth is restored to its paradisiacal state, will society be divided along economic lines, with fathers under the necessity of leaving their families for eight to ten hours a day? Will people be defined by their worldly careers as they are now? Is the rat-race a divine pattern? Are factories and refineries and chemical plants eternal? Will we need jets and neurosurgery? Moreover, when the enmity of all flesh has ceased and Satan is bound, what will there be for men to protect women from? If the earth is to become again as the Garden of Eden, we may expect to be doing a lot of gardening and animal husbandry. In an agrarian society, everyone is literally a breadwinner; and in a terrestrial world, everyone has the time to nurture children. Perhaps we need to view the technological achievements of humanity as we do the toys of a child—necessary for the development of the mind and body but, after a certain stage, mere silliness. There is far greater technology involved in the creation of a single blade of grass than there is in that of the most sophisticated toy.

In Christ, we are redeemed from the Fall; and when he comes again, we may assume that women will no longer need to bear their children in sorrow and men will no longer need to sweat over noxious weeds. There is a resistance among Mormons to the idea that we can or should prepare for the millennium by beginning to institute its principles now. We expect to continue unthinkingly to marry and give in marriage until the last second, when the Lord will impose the millennial order upon us. Yet “the righteousness of [God’s] people” is what binds Satan (1 Ne. 22:26). Joseph Smith taught that “men must become harmless before the brute creation, and when men lose their vicious dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play with the serpent in safety.”³² The Prophet here seems to go as far as the Christian Scientists, who believe that humankind will bring about a return to paradise by our own efforts and raised consciousness. Our doctrine strongly supports the idea of preparation, and preparation includes adjusting our mindsets and, where possible, our lifestyles toward a higher order.

Today’s “peer marriages,” the culmination of the collective trial-and-error process of the human race, represent, I believe, the Mormon theological ideal. How this ideal will play out in practical terms remains to be seen, both in and outside of the Church. We stand on the cusp of paradigms with many conservatives crying out against the culminating wave of change. They fail to see that God’s hand is in both sacred and so-called

profane history and rail against trends that are extreme only because they are attempting to cancel out a previous extreme. While encouraging us to speak out and stand for right, LDS prophets caution us not to panic or resent the inevitable. Resistance is vain because, to the extent processes follow the constructively chaotic laws of natural systems (God's laws), they cannot be stopped. One is reminded of Joseph Smith's comment about the futility of stretching forth a "puny arm" to stop the Missouri River (D&C 121:33). The God-intended end state of the male-female relationship will be reached only by passing through periods of reconstructive chaos. We may as well relax and enjoy the storm, confident that it will soon peak and that the earth will be delivered thereby.

It would be impossible, unfortunately, to treat the issue of gender in LDS theology without noting the effect on the Mormon corporate sexual psyche of the prolix practice of polygamy. There are two conflicting doctrines regarding this practice. Jacob 2:24 tells us that "David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord." This practice was and still is common in some cultures of Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, consistent with a view of women as sexual property and of men as not responsible for restraint. Jacob transmits God's word thus:

Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the loins of Joseph.

Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old.

. . . For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife: and concubines he shall have none;

For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments . . . or cursed be the land for their sakes.

For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise, they shall hearken unto these things. For behold, I have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

And I will not suffer . . . that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts.

For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto

utter destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old. (Jac. 2:25–33)

The Lehighites were to establish a new society based on a more accurate psychosocial perception of the female and a higher erotic ideal. After all, in the beginning God created Adam and Eve, who together as a unit were known as “Adam,” “one flesh,” or “man” (Gen. 5:2, 2:23–24; Abr. 4:26–27). The Gods did not create Adam and multiple Eves, nor Eve and multiple Adams; and as far as we know, though the whole of the human race waited for tabernacles, Adam and Eve remained monogamous. For that matter, nowhere is it written that there exists more than one Heavenly Mother, as some winking men have proposed. It is Lamech, a descendent of Cain and a murderer, who is first mentioned as having had more than one wife (Gen. 4:19, 23). From the Jacob passage, it would appear that the Lord acknowledged the devastating emotional impact polygamy had on women both in “the land of Jerusalem” and in other areas where it was practiced, suggesting that even low-consciousness women were affected.

Jacob tells the Nephite polygamists that the Lamanites were more righteous than they because “their husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children” (Jac. 3:7), suggesting that the practice of polygamy undermines natural affections. Despite the nineteenth-century rhetoric of love and affection, one wonders how affectionate a man could be when he visited his wife only a few weeks out of the year and then only for the purpose of impregnating her. The ill effects on children of emotionally or physically absent fathers are also affirmed in this passage. Jacob warns the Nephite offenders, “Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children” (2:35). The Lord acknowledges the practice as a kind of captivity for women (2:33).

Clearly this passage does not indicate that David and Solomon were justified in taking multiple wives. On the contrary, the Lord says that their having many wives and concubines was “abominable” before him. The word “abominable” or “abomination” is perhaps the strongest pejorative used in scripture, reserved for such practices as sodomy and bestiality. At the same time, the Lord leaves open the possibility that he might override the higher law and command this “abominable” practice in a specific context for a specific temporal end—the increasing of the population.

Doctrine and Covenants 132 presents a conflicting picture. There,

not only David and Solomon, but also Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses are presented as having been fully justified in possessing many wives and concubines. The assertion is made that the Lord had commanded such behavior and, other than in the case of David with Bathsheba, had accounted it as “righteousness” (D&C 132:37–39). In contrast to the Old Testament account (Gen. 16:1–3), Abraham is pictured as having taken Hagar to wife, not at Sarah’s insistence but at God’s command (D&C 132:34, 65.) The practice of polygamy is portrayed as not just *a* but as *the* “new and everlasting covenant” (132:4)—and if everlasting, then not provisional—which all those to whom it is revealed must obey or be “damned” (132:3–4, 6). Many nineteenth-century Utah leaders vehemently taught that polygamy was necessary for exaltation.³³ While falling short of condemning a practice that consumed Mormon apologetics for fifty years, contemporary Mormon leaders hasten to stress that polygamy is not a requirement for salvation or exaltation; they diplomatically leave it as an option.³⁴ What is disturbing about the conflict between these two doctrinal passages is not the fact that they command different things—that, as we have seen, is a frequent occurrence in the historic dealings of God with humankind—but that both views purport to be the higher and eternally enduring (“everlasting”) principle.

It is clear, for instance, that the cases of Nephi and Abraham being commanded to kill represent brief and time-specific exceptions to the higher and more general principle and commandment against murder. But the hierarchy is not clear in Mormon thought surrounding polygamy. If we accept the Jacob passage as the higher and more general principle and commandment, then we must view the nineteenth-century Mormon practice of polygamy as an exception—and perhaps as one that went on far longer than the Lord ever designed it should. We chalk it up to the tendency in all emergent religious traditions to codify and concretize passing phenomena, and to the tendency of “almost all men” to exercise unrighteous dominion if given a foothold (D&C 121:39). If we accept section 132 at face value, then we view the Jacob passage as an antiquated exception and see the Church’s abandonment of polygamy as a cowardly acquiescence to social pressure. Worse, if we also accept the divine origin of the Manifesto, we see God himself as having acquiesced to social pressure.

We cannot reconcile these two doctrinal viewpoints, even within the system we have set up of constructive chaos and multiple and eclipsing paradigms, because they possess no concentricity. One of them is simply

an aberration; that is, one (or both) of them is the temporary program. Some Mormons have concluded, along with non-Mormons who take a common sense perspective, that Joseph Smith, if only in this one instance, was not a prophet and was, perhaps, even a lecher. This was the view held by the editors of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, who accused Joseph of being a “fallen prophet” for his secret-to-the-death practice of polygamy, an accusation that fueled the flames that led to his murder. Others, along with non-Mormons of an academic bent, such as Harold Bloom, see religious genius in the practice.³⁵ Bloom believes that it is the nature of men to be polygynous, though by what criteria he arrives at this conclusion, no one knows; perhaps such criteria would also prove it is the nature of women to be polyandrous, and Joseph Smith participated in that practice as well. But early Utah leaders denied this motivation. Said Apostle Orson Hyde: “It is true that the people of Utah believe in and practice polygamy. Not because our natural desires lead us into that condition and state of life, but because our God hath commanded it. . . . We also wish to be counted Abraham’s children . . . ; and being told that if we are the children of Abraham, we will do the works of Abraham, we are not a little anxious to do as he did. Among other things that he did, he took more than one wife.”³⁶

According to this logic, one wonders whether the brethren felt impelled to live in tents, wear sandals, ride camels, eat falafel and tabouli, and sacrifice animals and their own sons. In reading through records of the early Utah period, several things become quite apparent: that plural marriage was a reprehensible idea to nearly every woman and most men upon their first being introduced to it; that leaders strenuously promoted it as the eternal plan of God and declared that failure to comply would result in damnation; that the sole stated purpose for the institution was for men to have multitudinous offspring (Heber C. Kimball bragged that he could produce seventy-five thousand in twenty-five years)³⁷ and that therefore, younger and younger wives must be taken and the marriages consummated; that women entered into it on the basis of faith but that the majority had extreme heartache over the practice. Polyandry as a countervailing practice was never instituted after the death of Joseph Smith.

When the wives complained (after all, they were virtual single parents without the privilege of sexual or emotional access to their spouses or of decision-making power over practical affairs, such power being sternly proclaimed as the husband’s prerogative), Brigham Young berated them

for “whining,” told them not to expect happiness here but only hereafter, and accused them of “henpecking.”³⁸ His second counselor, Jedediah M. Grant, accused the women of faithlessness and trying to “break up the Church of God.”³⁹ Meanwhile, one wonders whether the brethren were equally miserable enacting the ultimate male fantasy of having sex with an endless supply of virgins. That the Lord would burden me with such a duty!

The women of nineteenth-century America were very different from the women of the Near East in two or three thousand B.C. The women of today are even less capable of enduring the neglect of basic human needs and desires. I thank God for sending me to earth no sooner than he did and for a patriarchal blessing that directs me to become a mother and homemaker as well as to enter a profession and “earn a living” in order “to support your husband and children in righteous endeavors.” In addition to thanking God for the timely guidance of living prophets, I thank him for the latitude I’ve been given in this winding-up stage of history to pursue self-actualization through ways of being that are both traditionally male and traditionally female. As women explore and live out the deepest aspects of their free agency and feminine power—and only as they do so—will they discover the deepest aspects of masculine power that merge with and define it within the psyche, the spot of yang in the yin, the X-chromosome in the pirouetting double-helix of DNA. The same must be true for men. What better way to learn to empathize with and ultimately honor the other gender than to be partly that other oneself?

If the Light of Christ serves as a rudimentary indicator of right and wrong, can we dismiss the fact that the first natural instinct of virtually everyone to the idea of polygamy is revulsion, as it is to the idea of homosexuality or abortion? I am reminded of the saying of a Christian radio show host: “I can’t help it if I’m homophobic—I was born that way.” It seems obvious to me that polygamy is an aberration. Happiness is not its object and design. According to the Canadian Department of Justice’s exhaustively researched report, worldwide and cross-culturally, women and children of polygynous unions today fare worse—sometimes drastically worse—than their monogamous counterparts along every measurable indicator of happiness, well-being, and human potential.⁴⁰ They also fare worse in several comparison studies with homosexual unions. Mental illness, physical illness, low self-esteem, poverty, stunted education, family conflict and violence, and delayed personality development are not God’s design for his

daughters. In a slight twist on Bloom, I see the genius of a prophet rather than the genius of a genius (applying Kierkegaard's definition) in Joseph's transgression, and see the polygyny and polyandry he practiced within a chaos paradigm as a brief and perhaps necessary experiment on the order of other social-sexual experiments of his day. Most Mormons simply choose to shelve the issue in light of the value of so many other doctrines and practices, and are content to let sleeping dogs lie.

Meanwhile, however, one cannot help but note that Utah women consume more Prozac than any other demographic group in the nation.⁴¹ Some apologists have attempted to mitigate this statistic,⁴² yet it certainly accords with my personal observations as a convert who has lived and moved among many cultures. I see a tremendous amount of unexpressed femininity in American Mormon culture, as well as a huge smoldering bolus of repressed anger on the part of women.

These truths first came home to me as I read the novels of Virginia Sorensen. She repeats the same characters and problems in story after story with a noticeable increase in artistic frustration over the years, but no psycho-spiritual growth and movement with its corresponding formal development as in, say, James Joyce. Her last novel, *The Man with the Key* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974) is a horrific testimony to the desperation of repressed female sexuality. I had the impression that she, along with other Mormon artists, was not only at odds with her culture but was actually being absorbed and digested alive by it, like a bacterium by a macrophage.

The painting *The Responsible Woman* by James C. Christensen, in which a female figure loaded down with baggage like a pack mule succeeds in flying while holding out a candle to light her way, seems to me obscene in its unconscious consent to dysfunction.⁴³ Especially in the work of female, but also of male, Mormon writers, one registers a sense of entrapment and despair beneath the veneer of realist dailiness. Poetry is either sappy sentimentalism or emotionally constipated intellectualism, sadly exemplifying the "evil twins" of dualist philosophy.

The repression of the sensual-emotional and intuitive in any culture represents the repression of archetypically female ways of being. Reliance on the god of science in the form of pharmaceuticals also signals the devaluation of a more feminine-holistic "earth-mother" approach to healing. Fear of the seduction of art is also connected with fear of women's procreative power and cyclic-dynamic modes of sexuality, which seem to men at

times to be sheer chaos. In actuality, as the failures and excesses of the Enlightenment project (not to mention the Taliban project) have shown, either gender's modes of being without the balancing influence of the other will sooner or later create destructive chaos. Only in the delicate dance of Christian Eros, a charitable love full of self-awareness, empathy, and the firm, free desire of both parties, can we reach the full measure of our creation. The erotic ideal is one man and one woman equally joined in a sacrificial and sacramental act which in turn unites them with a personal God. Rollo May observes:

The fact that love is personal is shown in the love act itself. Man is the only creature who makes love face to face, who copulates looking at his partner. Yes, we can turn our heads or assume other positions for variety's sake, but these are variations on a theme—the theme of making love vis-à-vis each other. This opens the whole front of the person—the breasts, the chest, the stomach, all the parts which are most tender and most vulnerable—to the kindness or the cruelty of the partner. The man can thus see in the eyes of the woman the nuances of delight or awe, the tremulousness or the angst; it is the posture of the ultimate baring of one's self. This marks the emergence of man as a psychological creature: it is the shift from animal to man. Even monkeys mount from the rear.⁴⁴

It may sound strange to speak of a Christian Eros; yet as the most concentrated expression of agency, sexual desire is a type of all other desire. The being who is denied it here is demoted to a premortal level of agency.

Alma 32:27 tells us that the first prerequisite to faith is desire: “Behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.”

We commonly associate “desire” with lust and covetousness. Yet Alma insists that, without desire, and strong desire at that, we can be neither happy nor good:

All things shall be restored to their proper order. . . .

The one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward when the night cometh.

And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness. (Alma 41:4–6; see also Alma 29:4)

Doctrine and Covenants 88:121 tells us to “cease from all lustful desires,” but also encourages “the offering up of [our] most holy desires” unto the Lord (D&C 95:16). Through holy desire, we have communion with Deity, a mutual sensitivity and responsiveness. Lust asserts itself without feeling for a response. Lust appears to be not a function of wanting per se, but of wanting too much and too soon (covetousness, attachment)—or too little and too late (laziness, aversion). Lust is an attitude of grasping at that which has not been given, or refusing to accept with gratitude that which has. Lust, in other words, is pride. Lust fails to see life as a gift and seeks to consume it as spoil. Lust cannot allow the whims which arise out of the neutral realm of infinite possibility to be simply observed and noted in passing but instead, indiscriminately (or sometimes with conscious evil intent), identifies with them and begins to crystallize them into desire, and from there into action.

On some level, I may wish to have sexual intercourse with approximately one-third of the men I see; but contextualized within my marriage and family life, my entire past experience, and my present sense of deeper needs, that wish never solidifies as true desire. Contextualized within the even more comprehensive mind of God through the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, I find that I “have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2; see also Mosiah 4:13). The capacity to desire is a neutral potential, and one that must be engaged, for God spews the lukewarm out of his mouth. The Lord never meant for us to relinquish our desires, only to relinquish control of their final result; for in shunting aside our agency we lose the ability to analyze and make critical judgment, to be curious, to feel and to imagine and to be alive. The result would be rampant depression, for joy comes through the exercise of will.

It follows that any system that seeks to coerce one human being to relinquish his or her desire in order to fulfill another’s in a one-sided relationship, as in political dictatorship, slavery, or polygyny, is contrary to the ultimate, that is celestial, law of God. The reason given for the institution of the United Order, the order of the City of Enoch, was:

... that you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things.

For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things.

For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you. (D&C 78:5–6; emphasis mine)

This order was to be “a permanent and everlasting establishment and order” (D&C 78:4; see also D&C 82:20) so that every human being could have equal privilege in exercising agency, or stewardship, and in answering for his or her own sins. The principle here is that there is a direct correlation between one’s ability to progress spiritually and the control one is allowed to exercise over one’s environment. “And the soul who sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it . . . shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption” (D&C 82:21). That the early Utahns so zealously promoted polygyny as an everlasting, celestial order, while failing to reinstate the less personally gratifying but more egalitarian revealed social order, says something about their level of Christian love.

It has always been God’s desire to share all he has equally among his people. Those who live a celestial law do likewise, and here is a great secret. Women are to obey their husbands as their husbands obey the Lord, and to obey the Lord means this: that you share your power equally. In fact, according to the model of personal sacrifice and servant-leadership as exemplified by the Savior, we might argue that men ought to be subservient to women instead of the other way around and that, from this perspective, polyandry makes much more sense than polygyny. It is when we view power in a godly sense that these zero-sum arguments begin to break down. We begin to see power-sharing as agency-building.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks reminds us of the distinction between agency as will, and freedom as the ability to enact that will.⁴⁵ The Lord alternately grants and withholds freedom in order to help us develop our agency “line upon line.” The greatest task in becoming godlike is to learn to give others freedom in an equally constructive way. Heavenly Father provided for our agency in the Garden of Eden, and he provided for our freedom when he sent his Son:

And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

Wherefore men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captiv-

ity and death, according to the captivity of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. (2 Ne. 2:26–27)

What “men,” male and female, have inherited is not disposition or necessarily freedom, but agency. In the end, we receive according to our desires, because it is our desires that have governed all of our choices, whether to think or feel, to speak or act. Accidents, acts of God (see, e.g., Alma 19:22–23; Mosiah 13:2–3), or oppression by others may prevent us from enacting our choices, leaving them in an inarticulate state. Unrighteous dominion will seal the sins upon the heads of the oppressors. But the deepest intents of our hearts count just the same. Whether one performs an action out of habit or duty or fear of punishment or hope of reward or pure love, the difference in result is not immediately or externally apparent, and so the pharisaically minded make no distinction. Yet if we get nothing else out of Jesus’s teachings, we must acknowledge his emphasis on the soteriological importance of inner states.⁴⁶ A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil one evil. Brigham Young taught, “When you judge a man or a woman, judge the intentions of the heart. It is not by words, particularly, nor by actions that men will be judged in the great day of the Lord; but in connection with words and actions, the sentiments and intentions of the heart will be taken, and by these men will be judged.”⁴⁷ It behooves us, therefore, to awaken to a consciousness of our deepest desires and meet God there.

In LDS theology, the surrender of self and the assertion of self are not mutually exclusive but complementary and integral processes. Spiritual development consists in the balance between learning to give up what one wants and learning to get what one wants. In his erotic encounter with the divine, neither does the human being “leave himself behind.”⁴⁸ Jacob pitted his will against the Lord’s, wrestling with him all night. When the representative of the Lord said, “Let me go, for the day breaketh,” Jacob answered, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” His name was changed to Israel then, “for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Gen. 32:26, 28). Can a man prevail with God? What do we make of Jacob’s hubris? We often hear the saying of Job: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”; but seldom do we hear the second half of the verse: “but I will maintain mine own ways before him.” “Behold,” Job declares, “I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified” (Job 13:15, 18). Enos’s “soul hungered,” and he “prayed with many long strugglings” and “labored [internally] with all diligence” until

he received according to his desires (Enos 1:4, 11, 12). The brother of Jared insisted that the Lord provide air and light during the long voyage to the promised land. He did his part in smelting the stones. Then, like Jacob, he pressed the Lord for a blessing. For what might be considered from a certain perspective to be an attitude of murmuring and an act of daring, he was granted the sublime privilege of seeing the Lord and told that no man had attained to greater "faith" (Eth. 3:2, 9). In the most poignant example of the righteous clash-and-merge of righteous wills, Jesus "fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).

Desire, like hunger and thirst, arises out of dissatisfaction. All progress, personal and societal, religious and secular, has been born of discontent. Edison invented the light bulb because he was a bored insomniac. The Church itself would not exist but for the questioning discontent of a fourteen-year-old boy with the religions of his day. Virtually all of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants were received in answer to specific queries by a man for whom suspense was the greatest suffering.⁴⁹ We are to study things out in our minds, and only then go to the Lord and ask if it is right (D&C 9:8). Men and women are not to be commanded in all things but "should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves" (D&C 58:27-28). Jesus assures us, "Whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you. Therefore, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (3 Ne. 27:28-29). This, however, requires that we "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16).

"Faith," taught Joseph Smith, "is the principle of action in all intelligent beings." This is not a startling statement. But he continues:

Faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. . . .

We understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in HIM.

Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed neither would man have been formed of the dust. It is the

principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist.

Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers, and the lesson which they have been endeavouring to teach to man. . . .

It was by faith that the worlds were framed. God spake, chaos heard, and worlds came into order by reason of the faith there was in HIM.⁵⁰

We have come to think of faith as being opposed to knowledge, assuming that once we return to the presence of the Lord, there will be no further need to exercise faith. But neither the scriptures nor the teachings of Joseph Smith bear this out. In the account of the brother of Jared's physical encounter with the Lord (Eth. 3), the words *desire*, *belief*, *faith*, and *knowledge* are compounded one upon the other with no clear boundaries, used almost interchangeably in a quantum leap across the veil. In the premortal world, we walked personally with God, yet we exercised faith there as well (D&C 29:36; Abr. 3:26; Alma 13:3–4). An omniscient God continues to exercise faith in the creation and governance of worlds. Who or what does he have faith in? In himself, in his son Jesus Christ, in us, in the ultimate triumph of good. In the creative act, “the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed” (Abr. 4:18). God watches and “broods” (Abr. 4:2) and from within him stirs desire. “And the Lord said: Let us go down” (Abr. 4:1). “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said: Let there be light” (Gen. 1:2–3).

Faith is a self-existent power and attribute of intelligence, a power that begins with desire. Scientists may trace with precision the path of nerve transmission from a point on the cerebral cortex to the specific muscle that produces a movement, but what initiates the process? The source of decision cannot be scientifically discovered because it is its own source.

Descartes believed that, because he could think about his actions, thought and not action was the fundamental source of identity. Yet underlying our thinking is feeling. And more fundamentally still, we can choose, if we so desire, to observe our own thoughts and feelings as they occur. When we analyze some thought or feeling or action we performed in the past, we understand that we ourselves exist in the present and are

observing, in a sense, a person we used to be. It is when we simultaneously think or feel or act *and* observe ourselves doing it that questions of identity arise. In such meditative states, we become a watcher who exists outside thought and feeling, and our consciousness has transcended linear time. Therefore, identity precedes both thought and feeling. Identity originates with desire. I desire; therefore, I am.

Erotic love represents the ultimate in self-existent power. It is the desire for the continuation “of the seeds” (D&C 132:19), of being itself, of identity. It is a desire for immortality and eternal lives, and it is a desire to pass that gift on through self-sacrifice, self-assertion, and ecstatic, abounding love. Such love by its very nature overflows, multiplies itself, and replenishes the universe. Erotic love is the culmination of faith as the creative power in both God and man. Sacred desire is the power to create worlds.

We tend to dismiss creativity as an attribute of Deity and fail to recognize the need to develop it as Christians. We commonly say, “I’m just not creative,” not realizing that this is tantamount to saying, “I’m just not loving,” or, “I’m just not honest.” We are not all called to be artists, just as we are not all called to be prophets; but we are all called, invited, to develop and exercise the powers they typify. In the arts, in all creative enterprise in the world, we experience a rush of agency and a relief, if temporary, of the burgeoning burden of pregnancy. Through desire, we become pregnant and impregnate, we beget ourselves in multitudinous forms, from ideas to words to concrete objects to children. If we are in the end according to our desires, we may assume that this is how God himself is all that he is. Desire begets desire. God is desire, and Christ is desire incarnate.

The Fall and Eros

LDS theology of the Fall departs significantly from that of other Christians. Many have interpreted the Fall as a great tragedy and believe humankind is under the curse of “original sin.” While Mormon doctrine acknowledges a breach of commandment, it conceives of the act, not in the tragic sense of “sin,” but in the more neutral sense of “transgression.” Brigham Young taught:

Some may regret that our first parents sinned. This is nonsense. If we had been there, and they had not sinned, we should have sinned. I will not blame Adam and Eve. . . .

Did they come out in direct opposition to God and his government? No. But they transgressed a command of the Lord, and through that trans-

gression sin came into the world. The Lord knew they would do this, and he had designed that they should. Then came the curse upon the fruit, upon the vegetables, and upon our mother earth; and it came upon creeping things, upon the grain in the field, the fish in the sea, and upon all things pertaining to this earth, through man's transgression.⁵¹

And what did this "curse" consist of? It consisted of two things: the ability to die, and the ability to procreate. It was the beginning of our having to live by sexuality and murderousness. God himself ritually accepted responsibility for that inescapable fact when, with his own hand, he shed the first blood on earth in order to make animal-skin coverings for our nakedness. The Fall did not automatically cause sin, for sin can come only through the free exercise of dichotomous choice; but it opened the door for that choice to be exercised in a more evolved context than had previously been allowed. Human beings did not become "carnal, sensual, and devilish" until sometime after the Fall when Satan came among the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve and dissuaded them from believing the gospel of Jesus Christ that had previously been taught them by their parents (Moses 5:12–13). LDS scripture teaches that evil is a matter not of being incarnated but of being "*carnally-minded*" (2 Ne. 9:39, emphasis mine; Alma 30:53, 36:4; D&C 67:10, 12), meaning that evil does not originate with or reside in the body alone, but is a potential of intelligence which infuses the whole spirit-body complex.

That the Fall enabled procreation is a point missed in biblical Christianity; it is first mentioned explicitly in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 2:22–25), and is reiterated in the Pearl of Great Price (Moses 5:11). On this seemingly small hinge turns a great weight of doctrine, for to say that Adam and Eve could not procreate until they partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil of which they were commanded not to partake is to say that they were given two conflicting commandments, for the first of all commandments they were given was to "multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:27–28). Therefore, God had set them up. They could not keep the first commandment unless they transgressed the second. In other words, the choice was not dichotomous.

This insight aligns with our discussion about nested hierarchies of paradigms, the friction that develops on the cusp of paradigms at points of dimensional transition, and the contextual determination of righteousness. Brother Brigham assures us:

It was all in the economy of heaven, and we need not talk about it; it is

all right. We should never blame Mother Eve, not the least. I am thankful to God that I know good from evil, the bitter from the sweet, the things of God from the things not of God. When I look at the economy of heaven my heart leaps for joy, and if I had the tongue of an angel . . . I would praise God in the highest for his great wisdom and condescension in suffering the children of men to fall into the very sin into which they had fallen, for he did it that they, like Jesus, might descend below all things and [have the potential to] then press forward and rise above all.⁵²

Some have equated the transgression in the garden with sexual sin. This idea is repugnant in LDS theology. Apostle James E. Talmage writes:

I take this occasion to raise my voice against the false interpretation of scripture, which has been adopted by certain people, and is current in their minds, and is referred to in a hushed and half-secret way, that the fall of man consisted in some offense against the laws of chastity and of virtue. Such a doctrine is an abomination. . . . The human race is not born of fornication. These bodies that are given unto us are given in the way the Lord has provided. . . . Our first parents were pure and noble, and when we pass behind the veil we shall perhaps learn something of their high estate.⁵³

Sex and death, the greatest mysteries of mortal life, are thus rendered as blessings in Mormon theology. Rites of passage in all cultures involve initiating youth into these mysteries. Mythologist Mircea Eliade explains:

There is, to begin with, the first and most terrible revelation, that of the sacred as the tremendum. The adolescent begins by being terrorized by a supernatural reality of which he experiences, for the first time, the power, the autonomy, the incommensurability; and following upon this encounter with the divine terror, the neophyte dies: he dies to childhood—that is, to ignorance and irresponsibility. That is why his family lament and weep for him: when he comes back from the forest he will be another; he will no longer be the child he was . . . ; he will have undergone a series of initiatory ordeals which compel him to confront fear, suffering and torture, but which compel him above all to assume a new mode of being, that which is proper to an adult—namely, that which is conditioned by the almost simultaneous revelation of the sacred, of death and of sexuality.⁵⁴

In the absence of such mythic rituals and narratives in contemporary culture, we have lost touch with the cosmic meaning of the creation, the fall, sex and death, and therefore of the atonement made by the Creator for the terror and grief, torture and suffering created by the human mismanagement of sex and death, our own small alphas and omegas. Many members of the Church, untrained in the mythic imagination, fail

to enter these mysteries in the temple ceremony and, to that extent, forfeit their endowment of power.

It is tempting to think that, since human beings had intelligence and agency prior to coming to earth, there is no real advantage in being embodied—in fact, given the intensity of the pain caused by unfulfilled desire and given the atrocities embodied beings have committed as a result of both their impatience and their sloth, one wonders whether the whole proposition is a mistake. Such thinking misses the fact that it is only in this estate, where intelligence-spirit has evolved into intelligence-spirit-body, that procreative power is enabled. I personally feel, like Brigham Young, that the prize is well worth the price. The prospect of losing my procreative power and the manifold joy that comes only through embodiment and the fecundity of erotic love is not an acceptable one to me. I am filled to overflowing with the painful/pleasurable fire of divine love and seek continuous forms for it. This is what it means to be a god.

The unembodied do not fully experience pain and pleasure, which experience is necessary for a wise creator and governor of worlds, whether the small fiefdoms we erect in this life or the larger ones of the next.⁵⁵ I would not trade either, for this reason: Pain is not always abject suffering. It is possible to reach a point even in this life where pain loses its sting and relativity releases its hold. Joy is not the absence of pain, but the assimilation of it. This is the escape from eternal torment. This is the door of the sky. This is the peace which passeth all understanding. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In theological tandem with the Fall is the atonement of Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 9:6–26) Though in liberal circles anthropocentrism is passé, Mormon doctrine maintains that the development of the human race is the purpose of the entire creation and all of God's concern (Moses 1:39; D&C 88:20).⁵⁶ Yet because of the Fall, "man could not merit anything of himself" (Alma 22:14). "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19).

Some Mormons speak of "the natural man" as if the phrase indicates an inherently evil disposition. Obviously, in context with all our other doctrines, the "natural man" is but one side of the coin. Residing in the same soul as the "natural man" with base spiritual-physical instincts is

the “supernatural man,” a god in embryo with noble spiritual-physical instincts. This aspect of humanity surfaces as often as the other. Some have also assumed that, as a result of the curse, all creation was demoted from its original status as “very good” (Abr. 2:31) to a position of very bad. However, Mormon doctrine conditions sin on accountability, and the earth, plants, and animals cannot sin due to insufficient awareness. They will enjoy their “eternal felicity” (D&C 77:3) because their behaviors here, even within the dog-eat-dog scheme of enmity, cannot but obey the laws that are encoded in their physiologies. Whereas Adam and Eve were given the choice to obey or disobey the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth, the plants and animals were “caused” to be fruitful (Abr. 4:22). Sin is the province of humans; and exaltation and godhood are the province of humans, who alone of creation are the offspring of Deity. Human beings alone have the capacity to decide between the two propositions that “invite and entice” (Moro. 7:12–13) their psychophysiology.

The status of any given individual’s accountability, however, is dependent on two factors: “That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, *through disobedience*, from the children of men, and *because of the traditions of their fathers*” (D&C 93:39; emphasis mine). This doctrine is a crucial one but is poorly understood. We tend to focus on the sovereignty of the individual and frame sin only in terms of personal disobedience. But there is a communal aspect to sin as well as an individual aspect. Throughout the scriptures, people are frequently blessed or cursed as a group. In fact, the destiny of each is the destiny of all, since “we cannot be made perfect without them, nor they without us.”⁵⁷ We limit and are limited by others.

On the one hand, the concept of communal accountability clears us of much guilt. To the extent that our parents—by extension, all people born prior to our births—failed to comprehend and apply true doctrine (regardless of their stated intent or external religiosity), our awareness is compromised. How much sexual sin, for example, is the result, not of an individual’s failure to intellectually accept the commandments or of a perverse will, but of a failure on the part of his or her parents to come to terms with their own physicality and to provide a guilt-free example and a safe environment for experimentation? It is a grave sin for parents to prevent their children from innocently experimenting with their bodies and emotions. To manipulate their experience through shame and guilt is to leave them unprepared for young adulthood when the stakes of experi-

mentation are much higher. An embodied spirit that is uninformed by parental physical-emotional literacy and graduated trial-and-error experience runs riot. To avoid immorality, youth need self-awareness and empathy in addition to rules and avoidance strategies.

On the other hand, as adults we stand culpable of all we have passed on or failed to pass on to our children—by extension, to all people born after our births. Hence, the sin of every person impinges on every other from Adam and Eve on; and in this sense, sin is not volitional but original, or in other words, human beings are “conceived in sin” (Moses 6:55). Because of the Fall and the cumulative effects of time, there is no possibility of our not sinning. Here we begin to sense that we too, along with Adam and Eve, have been “set up.” For this reason, a merciful and just God thrusts his hand through the veil to retrieve us. The acts that rend the temple veil and recrosses the dimensional barrier transgressed at the Fall, opening the possibility of our growth through experimentation, is the conception, life, death, and undeath of the Son of God, the Son of Man, the ultimate Form. The Father, “in his beautiful and good Eros towards the universe,”⁵⁸ has produced an heir, and asks us to “Hear Him.”⁵⁹

There is only one reason that everything is “all right” after humankind’s leap into sex and death. A Savior was begotten; the holy seed pierced the shell of the earth, took root in the womb of time, was born of blood and baptized in water. He tasted, smelled, touched, heard, and saw. He ate and drank, urinated and defecated, laughed and sobbed, hugged and kissed, sang and danced, shouted and sweated, and sighed and ejaculated. He moved among us so that we could see and hear and smell and feel and be felt by him, touched by him, healed by him. Displaying perfect interaction with context, he remained without sin, and “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24), a tree of death for a tree of life. By our choice he was murdered and, on the third day, rose above it. We become “his seed” (Mosiah 15:10–14; Isa. 53:10) as we awaken to the potential destruction of each step we take in space and time and accept his atonement wherein he absorbed and transmuted that destruction in his very body. The price of our sexuality and murderousness has been paid by someone who waits patiently for us like a groom on his wedding day.

Through all levels of mythological and concrete reality, he is the One True Way. We can make our second estate our own. We can be endowed permanently with the power of Eros even as God is. May we seek ever to embrace that power in bold humility through the abundant grace

of God in Christ Jesus and the radical doctrines of his restored gospel. Amen.

Notes

1. Hosea 12:10; see also verses listed in Index, Triple Combination (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, 1981 LDS edition), under "type" (379).

2. 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's* editorial policy.

3. No editor, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 28.

4. Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Broadway Books, 2001), 85.

5. Rollo May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (New York: Norton, 1998), 234; emphasis his.

6. Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 85, 87.

7. Joseph A. Harriss, "The Elusive Marc Chagall," <http://www.Smithsonianmagazine.com/issues/2003/december/chagall.php> (accessed December 14, 2006).

8. John A. Widstoe, comp. and ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 376; see also D&C 131:7–8.

9. Salvador Dali, quoted in Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, translated by Ron Padgett (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 13.

10. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in Mark Van Doren, comp., *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 52–53.

11. Walter Rane, *They Did Treat Me with Much Harshness*, painting reproduced in his *By the Hand of Mormon: Scenes from the Land of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 8; reprinted *Ensign*, January 2004, inside front cover.

12. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's *The Doubting of St. Thomas* (1601–2) may be viewed at www.ilibio.org/wm/paint/auth/caravaggio/st-thomas.jpg. Ivan Nikolaevich Kramskoy's *Christ in the Wilderness* (1872–4) may be viewed at www.auburn.edu/academic/liberal_arts/foreign/russian/art/kramskoy-christ.html. Nikolai Nikolaevich Ge's *Calvary* (1892, unfinished) may be viewed at www.auburn.edu/academic/liberal_arts/foreign/russian/art/ge-calvary.html (accessed January 2, 2007).

13. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (1938; American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002 printing), 138.

14. Joseph Smith corrected John 1:1; however, he let the figure stand in John 1:14 and 1:16 of the JST, as well as in 1 John 1:1 and 5:7, and used the figure again in D&C 93:8 and Moses 1:32.

15. May, *Power and Innocence*, 233; emphasis his.

16. "Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists, 1999" 8–9, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul-ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii-let_23041999_artists_en.html (accessed December 14, 2006).

17. Jane Dillenberger, "Reflections on the Field of Religion and the Visual Arts," in *Art as Religious Studies*, edited by Doug Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 13.

18. 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.

19. W. B. Yeats, "The Circus Animals' Desertion" in *Selected Poems and Two Plays of William Butler Yeats*, edited by M. L. Rosenthal (New York: Collier Books, 1978), 185.

20. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 362–64; Abr. 4:1.

21. Edward L. Kimball, ed., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 315–16; *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 690; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," quoted in (no author), "As Equal Partners," *Ensign*, October 2005, 8–9.

22. James E. Talmage, "The Eternity of Sex," *Young Woman's Journal* 25 (October 1914): 602–3; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972), 3:178.

23. First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.

24. Swami B. V. Tripurari, *Form of Beauty: The Krishna Art of B. G. Sharma* (Novato, Calif.: Mandala Publishing, 2000), 123.

25. In the development of the normal human embryo from the undifferentiated stage (before eight weeks) through full differentiation at term, the genitals of both sexes make a gradual transition and lose each other's features equally. It is not the case that we all begin embodiment as boys with some going on to become girls, or vice versa. We more accurately begin as hermaphrodites.

26. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 233.

27. For a discussion of healthy versus unhealthy sexual imprinting, as well as a fascinating look at a hypothetical sexually healthy culture, see Anne Stirling

Hastings, *Body and Soul: Sexuality on the Brink of Change* (New York: Insight Books, 1996).

28. See Sheila Kitzinger, "Ritual in the Western Way of Birth" in her *Ourselves as Mothers: The Universal Experience of Motherhood* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 141–65; Robbie Davis-Floyd, "Hospital Birth as a Technocratic Rite of Passage," *Mothering*, Summer 1993, 69–75.

29. Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005).

30. John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 52; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 25; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954).

31. First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 102.

32. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 69–70; idea repeated 326–27.

33. See B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Passage: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 18–19.

34. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979 printing), 578. For a discussion of the implications of the current official policy of silence regarding polygamy's doctrinal status, see Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 338–39.

35. Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 96–111.

36. Brigham Young, March (no day), 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 4:259.

37. Heber C. Kimball, February 8, 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:224.

38. Brigham Young, September 21, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:56–57.

39. "We have women here who like any thing but the celestial law of God; and if they could break asunder the cable of the Church of Christ, there is scarcely a mother in Israel but would do it this day. And they talk it to their husbands, to their daughters, and to their neighbors, and say they have not seen a week's happiness since they became acquainted with that law, or since their husbands took a second wife. They want to break up the Church of God." Jedediah M. Grant, September 21, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:50.

40. Canada Department of Justice, *Polygyny and Canada's Obligations under International Human Rights Law*, Chapter 2: "Harms of Polygyny," <http://www.justice.gc.ca/en/dept/pub/poly/chap2.html> (accessed September 2006).

41. Rumors have circulated that the original study confirming this fact is difficult to locate, with the insinuation that it therefore may not exist at all. How-

ever, a .pdf file of the original fifty-page drug-industry study, Brenda Motheral, Emily R. Cox, Doug Mager, Rochelle Henderson, and Ruth Martinez, Prescription Drug Atlas," 2001–2 for ExpressScripts, Inc., is available at <http://www.express-scripts.com/ourcompany/news/outcomesresearch/prescriptiondrugatlas/> (accessed December 18, 2006). See also Kent Ponder, Ph.D., "Mormon Women, Prozac, and Therapy," <http://home.teleport.com/~packham/prozac.htm> (accessed December 16, 2006); Julie Cart, "Study Finds Utah Leads Nation in Anti-depressant Use," *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 2002, A6, also at <http://rickross.com/reference/mormon/mormon64.html> (accessed December 16, 2006).

42. Andrea G. Radke, Ph.D., The Place of Mormon Women: Perceptions, Prozac, Polygamy, Priesthood, Patriarchy, and Peace," http://www.fairlds.org/FAIR_Conferences/2004_Place_of_Mormon_Women.html#en23 (accessed December 16, 2006).

43. James C. Christensen, "The Responsible Woman" (reproduction of painting), *Ensign*, March 2003, 15.

44. Rollo May, *Love and Will* (New York: Dell, 1974), 308.

45. Dallin H. Oaks, "Free Agency and Freedom," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, the Doctrinal Structure*, edited by Monte Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 1–16.

46. Dallin H. Oaks, "Why Do We Serve?" *Ensign*, November 1984, 12.

47. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 273–74.

48. Denys the Areopagite (ca. 500), quoted in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. 1: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 122.

49. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 296.

50. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 1:9, 13, 15–17, 22; emphasis his.

51. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 103; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (1955–66; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972 printing), 2:214.

52. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 103.

53. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946), 30.

54. Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, translated by Philip Mairet (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), 195–96.

55. Joseph Fielding Smith, in *Conference Report*, October 1967, 122.

56. See also Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 57, beginning with "The whole object . . ."

57. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 162.

58. Denys the Areopagite, quoted in von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 122.

59. 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): 1:5. See also Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35.

Making the Absent Visible: The Real, Ideal, and the Abstract in Mormon Art

Barry Laga

But then people have always known, at least since Moses denounced the Golden Calf, that images were dangerous, that they can captivate the onlooker and steal the soul. —W. J. T. Mitchell¹

In April 1993, President Bill Clinton, Elie Wiesel, international dignitaries, and Holocaust survivors celebrated the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Initiated by President Jimmy Carter in 1978, the monument is one of the most expensive additions to the federal museum system. Its mission, described by the museum's project director Michael Berenbaum, is to "memorialize the victims of Nazism by providing an exhaustive historical narrative of the Holocaust and to present visitors with an object lesson in the ethical ideals of American political culture by presenting the negation of those ideals."² These desires are echoed by Edward Linenthal, a professor of religion and American culture and privy to design meetings, museum archives, and interviews. Linenthal describes the effect of the memorial as a life-giving "assault" on participants: "The Holocaust is to be 'inflicted' on the museum visitor as the narrative seeks to arouse empathy for victims, inform visitors about wartime America's role as both bystander and liberator, and ask visitors to ponder the power of a murderous ideology that produced those capable of implementing official mass extermination."³ This experience serves as a kind of "initiator passage" created to help Americans "appreciate the virtues and frailty of American democracy and designed to instill an attitude of civic responsi-

bility.”⁴ Invoking seemingly ironic Christian imagery in the name of nationalism and patriotism, Linenthal hopes that museum participants will be “born again.”

Two competing impulses strike visitors as they stroll through the museum. First, there is an intense desire to document and historicize the Holocaust. Countless photographs, testimonies, films, displays of shoes, ovens, hair, and luggage provide the weight that allows one to anchor the Holocaust in reality.

In contrast, the nonrepresentational art displayed throughout the memorial, which includes Ellsworth Kelly’s immaculate white panels, Sol LeWitt’s geometric wall painting, and Richard Serra’s steel monolith, as well as the void invoked by the Hall of Remembrance, allows the viewer to peer into a space but prevents access to a tangible reality. These pieces of art and architectural spaces work to some degree in refusing easy access to the time, space, and significance of the Holocaust.

This vacillation between the tangible and the ethereal makes sense, for as Jane Caplan, a professor of modern European history at Oxford, points out, discussions of historical events are often caught up in dualistic metaphysics. What she calls the “derealist” position attempts to mythify experience by making it a “transhistorical event whose real meaning may perhaps only be appropriated in its fullest sense by those who are said to have participated in it” whereas the “hyperrealist” seeks to resist this dehistoricization by fixing explanations of events in “textual sources and readings that are as precise and incontrovertible as possible.”⁵ Both approaches ultimately share the desire to fix or frame events in interpretive or causal terms. The Holocaust Museum insists on a narrative form that becomes the apparent core of a historical account, using countless books, photographs, testimonies, and personal visits to fill the gaps and ground the narrative in concrete sources, while on the other hand, the site simultaneously foregrounds the inability to fully represent the experience by stressing that all accounts are contaminated, skewed, and infinitely inaccessible. Visitors experience this double gesture of certainty and indeterminacy.

The museum’s struggle to represent the Holocaust provides a useful framework to discuss religious art, for displays of the divine often participate in this tension between the historical and the unrepresentable, the tangible and the intangible. This particular tension is especially evident in Mormon art celebrated and privileged by official Church publications

and displays. The conflict is, oddly enough, evident in the conspicuous absence of a spectrum: Mormon art displayed in official documents and spaces reflects the Mormon confidence in the ability to know, and this emphasis indicates its greatest limitation. An essential element of spirituality—the emotional, the intangible, the inexpressible—is unacknowledged or lost.

My aim here is simply to reveal the embedded assumptions of realism and idealism in officially approved Mormon art as well as offer an apology for nonrepresentational aesthetics presently missing from those images. What follows is intended as a sampling of the representational and the nonrepresentational in Mormon art—a “making strange” of the ordinary and familiar—rather than an exhaustive survey. While I want to examine a few paintings in detail, I also want to offer a theoretical framework that stimulates discussion leading toward a wider spectrum in officially approved Mormon art. Instead of closing a gate, I want to expose a path.

The Quest for Certainty

Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. —Pablo Picasso⁶

Mormon theology is surprisingly unburdened by epistemological hand-wringing. That is, while Mormons certainly address epistemological questions—“How do we know what we know? How can we know God? How can we know truth?”—these questions don’t seem to vex the community because most rank-and-file members are comfortable with the idea of personal revelation: “Ask, and ye shall receive” (John 16:24). What could be simpler than a parent answering a child’s question?

Two foundational texts provide the Mormon epistemological paradigm. First, the archetypal model of Mormon epistemology is the narrative describing Joseph Smith’s First Vision, first published in the *History of the Church*, and now canonized in the Pearl of Great Price. This event sets the pattern rehearsed in Church-sponsored films, countless images, and expressions of belief over the pulpit. The process is simple: First, acknowledge ignorance or uncertainty. Second, demonstrate faith by seeking the answer by direct prayer to God. Third, interpret the consequences of that petition in spiritual terms. While Joseph Smith was not alone in his era when it comes to claiming divine revelation, Terryl Givens reminds us that nineteenth-century mystics often avoided censure and critique by

couching their revelations in terms of the “subjectively real and privately experiential.”⁷ However, Joseph Smith insists that “I had actually seen a light and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me” (JS–History 1:25). This emphasis on the literal, the concrete, and the rational distinguishes Joseph Smith’s story and early Mormonism from many of the early nineteenth-century mystics and congregations and provides the epistemological framework that persists today.

The second text is a key passage in the Book of Mormon, Moroni 10:4–5. Near the end of the book, the ancient editor Moroni directly addresses the reader:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moro. 10:4–5)

Although the passage certainly reinforces a nineteenth-century celebration of individualism and the possibility of personal spiritual epiphanies, Terryl Givens is again helpful by reminding us about the more important insight of Moroni’s editorializing: “Our knowing that the particulars of Moroni’s history are true . . . is clearly not the point of his challenge. Knowing they are knowable is.”⁸ Givens further points out that Mormon theology rejects an ineffable God, the “negative mysticism” of medieval theology. And this insistence on “knowability” is echoed loudly every first Sunday during fast and testimony meetings when individual members take the opportunity to speak from the pulpit and proclaim: “I know . . .” The phrase is not mandatory, of course, but one can easily sense the hierarchy between faith and knowledge, belief and certainty.

I dwell on this concept of knowability because of its relationship with pictorial literalism and realism. Spiritual experiences and artistic realism enjoy a dialectical relationship, a connection that now deserves more attention.

Portraying the Historical Real

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . (Gen. 1:26)

Much of the art we see in Church publications and the Museum of Church History and Art exemplifies this desire to ground spiritual experiences in a knowable and palpable reality. Figures and events are rooted in a specific time and place. And this grounding does not merely refer to, for example, Joseph Smith as a real person who had a vision during the spring of 1820 near his home in Palmyra, New York. What is literalized is the vision itself. Joseph does not maintain that he saw God and Jesus Christ in a dream, that he saw Jesus and God with his “spiritual eyes,”⁹ that his vision was an internal, subjective experience. Instead, Joseph maintains that God and Jesus were actually present, in flesh and blood, taking up space in real time, and they “did in reality speak to me.” Joseph also maintains that he was awakened by the angel Moroni who was equally tangible and concrete, and he recounts another episode in the Kirtland Temple when he and Oliver Cowdery were visited, in person, by Jesus. For Mormons, these spiritual experiences are not spiritual in the sense that they are not tangible. Instead, they are spiritual because they involve spiritual beings who are also corporeal.¹⁰

What is also significant in many of these narratives is the embedded rationalism of Mormon narratives. E. Brooks Holifield, a historian of early American Christianity, points out that early American Christian thinkers simultaneously resisted rationalism even as they used it to defend their faith.¹¹ We see this tension in Mormon representations. While I will address the battle *against* rationalism shortly, the literalism that we see in the First Vision narrative and the Book of Mormon reinforces rationalism by insisting on the viability of our senses to gain knowledge about the world around us. Sound certainly plays a prominent role, and texture has its place, but the accounts privilege sight. Joseph Smith maintains that he saw God and Christ. The Three Witnesses testified that “we have seen the plates,” and the Eight Witnesses claim that they “have seen and hefted” the plates.¹² And a much-cited episode in the Book of Mormon describes how the Brother of Jared gains spiritual knowledge by seeing the finger of God: “And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood” (Eth. 3:6). Time and again, sight is equated with knowledge, but sight is not merely a metaphor for spiritual perception. People gain knowledge by literally viewing the divine, thus reinforcing the rational basis of Mormonism.

Representations of these experiences do not simply make them ac-

cessible to others, but they shape our perception and define the experience itself. Art historian Noel Carmack asserts: "Latter-day Saint visual perceptions of Christ throughout the last century were images born out of a form of biblical literalism. Mormon literalism disregarded the skepticism of textual scholarship in favor of studies that supported the LDS canon of scripture. Consequently, official Latter-day Saint publications adopted images from a large body of Western art that substantiated Christ's ministry as a historical reality."¹³ Carmack points out that, not only does the theological emphasis on an objective experience encourage artists to represent these events via realism, but also that artistic realism encourages interpretations that literalize internal, subjective experiences. Thus, realism and literalism reinforce each other. Or, as Carmack puts it, "The affection for highly realistic art, then, reinforced a literal view of the scriptures,"¹⁴ but I would add that a literal view of the scriptures and literal interpretations of spiritual experiences such as Joseph Smith's First Vision and nocturnal encounters with the angel Moroni encourage highly realistic art grounded in specific times and places.

This literalism, this desire to rationalize spiritual experiences by making them concrete, is evident at every turn. For example, the Church encourages teachers to use the Gospel Art Packet, a small, portable portfolio containing images displaying stories from the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, events from Church history, and a few miscellaneous images of temples, baptismal fonts, and latter-day prophets. Printed instructions suggest, "Carefully select appropriate pictures that illustrate gospel stories or principles." Of the ninety-seven images highlighting stories from scriptures and Church history, not one strays from a literalist reading of the texts. Of course, we should not be too surprised, for most of the images merely offer a pictorial account of a specific story. But the stories that are, perhaps, more allegorical (as with *The Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark with Animals*) or more subjective (as with *Moses and the Burning Bush, The Announcement of Christ's Birth to the Shepherds, The Brother of Jared Sees the Finger of the Lord, The First Vision, and Moroni Appears to Joseph Smith in His Room*) convey a concreteness that offers nothing other than a literal reading of those passages or events. As for "principles," one could, as the Gospel Art instructions recommend, reorganize the images according to categories like "Family," "Service," and "Ordinances"; but again, the images convey a highly tangible representation of those principles. For example, "family" is not a subjective impression with flexi-

ble boundaries, but a husband, wife, and children. Service is not an abstract concept suggesting a giving up of self, but the act of giving a man sight, defending one's group from invaders, or rescuing a frozen pioneer.

The *Ensign* is equally committed to literalism. While we could extend my assertion to previous years, a quick look at the 2004 issues reminds us of the complete commitment to pictorial realism. There are twenty-five paintings on the covers, inside covers, and inside back covers of the twelve issues. Four portray images directly depicting Jesus (with the Nephites, with Mary after the resurrection, breaking bread with the apostles, and raising Jarius's daughter) and two depict New Testament scenes (one of Mary and Joseph and the second of Mary alone). Seven depict scenes from the Book of Mormon (Laman and Lemuel tormenting Nephi, Lehi building an altar, Lehi and the Tree of Life, an Anti-Nephi-Lehite woman and child, an angel visiting the sons of Mosiah, and two depictions of the waters of Mormon); eight paintings portray events from Church history (three of the pioneer trek, two of Joseph Smith, one of Nauvoo, another of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and one of a mother quilting with a child nearby); and four others depict a baby being blessed, a winter scene of Salt Lake City, and two temples. In every case, the images simply illustrate a person, an event, or a place. While the degree of detail differs, each painting is representational and literal.

My point is not to undermine this impulse to "illustrate" a story or principle, but merely to identify the persistent desire to ground scriptural stories, people, or principles in historically specific times and places, thus privileging a rationalist epistemology. External appearances—what we see with our eyes—count as knowledge. From this point of view, spiritual experiences are objective realities, not subjective impressions. All we have to do is open our eyes.

Portraying the Ideal

Art does not produce the visible; rather, it makes visible. —Paul Klee¹⁵

Surprisingly, insisting on the particular time and place of spiritual experiences often works against the appeal of sacred texts and important spiritual events. Historicizing may ground an event in a reality accessible to our five senses, but it simultaneously distances us from those events. As Richard Oman, curator at the Church Museum of History and Art, points out, "One of those problems [of realism] is that realism can focus the viewers on the trivial instead of on the transcendent."¹⁶ Oman's no-

tion of the transcendent echoes Aristotle's attempt to differentiate between history and poetry. Aristotle argues that the difference is that "one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history, for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars."¹⁷ This difference is what makes poetry so appealing to Aristotle, but it is also the appeal for many a Mormon reader who desires to follow Nephi's lead: "I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Ne. 19:23).

Readers, in effect, translate the story, shifting the emphasis from the concrete to the metaphorical, from the historical to the poetic. In other words, this interpretive move allows readers to take a story about Nephi, Laman, and Lemuel, three young men purportedly living in Jerusalem 600 years B.C., attempting to acquire scriptures on metal plates before their flight into the Arabian Peninsula, and turn it into a mythic story about the value of obedience, persistence, and faith. The story becomes myth—from the Greek *mythoi* meaning plots—in the sense that it offers a narrative representing the values, interests, and aspirations of the Mormon community. The story loses its historical mooring, but this portability actually makes it more useful to those seeking ethical, edifying, and timely instruction. It is no longer history but poetry.

This desire to translate an event from one context to another leads to a specific kind of aesthetic. Noel Carmack argues that representations are effective to the degree that they allow viewers to personalize the image. Referring to Del Parson's popular painting of Jesus, Carmack quotes Lynette, Del's wife: "Del's purpose in painting the Savior was to create an image in which the members of the Church could project their feelings of the Savior."¹⁸ Oman echoes this line of reasoning when he claims that, speaking of Rembrandt's portrait of Jesus, Rembrandt communicates immanence by obscuring the eyes and mouth: "Obscuring them causes the viewer to fill the features in, subconsciously expressing his or her personal feelings about the Lord."¹⁹ But this obscuring often has less to do with a refusal to delineate a specific feature, as Oman suggests, than with decontextualizing Jesus. Ironically, what allows viewers to personalize the image is its ahistoricism. Jesus is nowhere in particular. As we look again at Del Parson's popular painting of Jesus, we note that the clothing does not suggest a distinct time, place, or event. The background, reminiscent of a backdrop one might find at an Olan Mills photographic studio, does

not situate Jesus in history, but this absence makes it easier for viewers to “project their feelings of the Savior.”

Another way to frame this desire for a portable or universal Jesus is to produce what Mormon artist James Christensen calls “an acceptable generic icon”: “In struggling with the issues involved in painting Christ, I have (as have artists other than myself) come to realize that we do not actually need to have a physically accurate portrayal of Jesus Christ. For artists, the goal is to create a character in an image that we can identify with, that we can relate to. But at the same time that character should not remind us of a neighbor or some acquaintance. Christ is too personal to each of us. He must be portrayed with universal but distinct qualities.”²⁰

This phrase, “universal but distinct qualities,” accurately describes the role of an icon, a representation that is based on a resemblance of the object yet contains elements that readers or viewers use to recognize the image. Clarifying the insights of semiotician Charles Peirce, W. J. T. Mitchell, professor of English and art history at the University of Chicago, explains that “an iconic account of the relation ‘stone-represents-man’ would stress resemblance: a certain stone might stand for a man because it is upright, or because it is hard, or because the shape resembles that of a man.”²¹ That is, an icon tries to reproduce in concrete form the exterior appearance of a person, place, or thing.

Admittedly, a community must largely agree on those salient features or elements that allow one to recognize that resemblance. In other words, this strategy of representing Jesus as an icon has its limits, and a religious community defines those limits. As Christensen notes, the image must be an “*acceptable* generic icon.” But what defines “acceptability”? Certainly, the answer addresses physical features. For example, I’ve never seen a beardless, short, dark-skinned, or chubby Jesus in Church art work. However, acceptability has less to do, perhaps, with realism than with idealism, less to do with resemblance than symbolic value. As Christensen reminds us: “It would be unseemly to depict him in an undignified way—even if that image might be historically or pictorially accurate.”²² Mormon artist Arnold Friberg takes idealism one step further when he claims that “artists are not painting a likeness, but an idea—a spiritual concept.”²³ Friberg and Christensen are less concerned with iconic resemblances of physical qualities than with iconic resemblances of Mormon ideals, principles, or attitudes.

Of course, this ideal grows out of descriptions in sacred texts, but



Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus by Greg Olsen; oil on canvas, 34" x 27". © 1990, by Intellectual Reserve. Courtesy of the Museum of Church History and Art.

also out of specific and changing cultural traditions. We all recognize that different cultures celebrate different values and attributes. A quick review of western art reveals a Jesus who at one time is elongated, emaciated, and fair, but who at another times sports a chiseled, full face with long, stringy hair parted in the middle. He plays a number of roles: humble servant, sacrificial victim, dignified martyr, triumphant savior, virile warrior, passive shepherd, or calm teacher. He is at times patient, calm, or protective, but other times he demonstrates sensitivity, humility, or anger.²⁴ Carmack traces a specific trajectory in Mormon history from Orson Whitney's "noble stature and majestic mien"²⁵ to late nineteenth-century's "muscular Christianity," from Hugh B. Brown's "consecrated manliness" to recent celebrations of a "strong, but passive, shepherd type."²⁶

This trend toward portraying the strong shepherd type is perhaps most evident in the popular prints by Greg Olsen. His paintings *O Jerusalem*, *Simeon Reverencing the Christ Child*, and *A Light to the Gentiles* grace many a Mormon chapel, and his prints often appear in the *Ensign* and at Deseret Book. Olsen provides an interesting illustration, for his paintings combine iconic and symbolic elements. For example, his painting of the raising of Jairus's daughter, part of the Gospel Art package, demonstrates a mix of literalism and idealism. The painting depicts an episode from the New Testament and places Jesus, to a degree, in a specific time and place. I say, "to a degree," because of the anachronistic details. Certainly Olsen suggests an ancient Middle East setting, evident in the traditional Hebrew dress and plaster walls, but we also note that the daughter lies upon a raised bed, complete with headboard, fitted sheets, and pillow. Next to the bed lies a small area rug and a nightstand supporting a matching cup and saucer. The table has a routed top and beveled edges. These anachronistic details allow contemporary Western viewers to identify with the scene more easily, for the scene parallels many contemporary bedrooms. However, the painting's more important function is to reinforce key concepts and ideals: the cup and saucer are perhaps a mortar and pestle, suggesting the primacy of Jesus's power over mere mortal remedies, and Jesus exemplifies compassion, dignity, and serenity as he serves others—portable concepts that followers strive to attain.

A popular image found on the back cover of the 2001 August issue of the *Ensign* provides another example. *Time to Laugh* by Liz Lemon Swindle portrays Emma Smith surrounded by her four children. In the foreground a daughter kneels at Emma's feet, doting on a baby who sits in



Time to Laugh by Liz Lemon Swindle; oil on canvas, 30" x 40", 1998.
© 2006, by Liz Lemon Swindle. Courtesy of Foundation Arts.

Emma's lap. The two sons are more reticent, one seemingly reluctant to embrace his mother, the other almost "camera-shy"; he hides behind Emma's bonnet as he peers out toward the viewer. The image places Emma and her children in a specific time and place, but the ideals portrayed matter most. In the background we see a glimpse of a home, an icon of domesticity, a pristine fence enclosing the orchard, suggesting order and division, while trees, grass, and flowers—all signifying fertility and

growth—surround the Mormon Madonna. A mother preoccupies herself with her children, and the daughter's interest in the baby echoes that focus. Emma is the center as her children seem to swirl around her. Following in the tracks of the sentimental tradition, Swindle does not portray Emma and her children as much as she celebrates motherhood and the maternal. Instead of giving us a visual representation that resembles Emma and her children (something she cannot do because she doesn't know), Swindle offers us an emotional fiction that teaches a moral lesson about women, domesticity, and piety.

The Value of Nonobjective Art

The need is for felt experience—intense, immediate, direct, subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic. . . . Abstract art is an effort to close the void that modern men feel. —Robert Motherwell²⁷

While realism and idealism serve many useful functions, they provide an incomplete view of spiritual experience, and these modes are problematic for other reasons. Realism risks distancing us from the original event, for the image places the event in a remote time and place. By representing a concept, idealism describes what does not even exist. The image presents us with an intangible concept or what “should be,” not necessarily with “what is.” As a result, realism and idealism often reduce intimacy, confounding the very intentions of their makers and the expressed pedagogical logic of Church authorities.²⁸

As I noted in my opening example describing the Holocaust Museum, when it comes to conveying and even transmitting the full range of spiritual experiences, we need an aesthetic that offers an appealing and necessary complement to idealism and realism. I am not, of course, insisting that we eliminate attempts to imitate external appearances or refuse to convey communal ideals. I am arguing that these two modes convey only a portion of religious and spiritual experience. We are impoverished by the absence of an aesthetic that acknowledges internal, emotional, and intangible experiences.

Admittedly, reductivism stares me in the face as I attempt to find a term that contrasts with idealism and realism. I'm keenly aware that it's impossible to locate a definition that encompasses the sheer diversity of art that does not embrace realism or idealism, for twentieth-century art in particular is littered with -isms: movements, concepts, and practices that challenge the assumptions that support objective representations. But for

ease of conversation, I will use the baggy term “nonobjective art” to refer to an aesthetic that challenges the imitative and idealistic traditions, an aesthetic that shifts the emphasis from the external to the internal, from the objective to the subjective. This aesthetic serves a tradition (albeit neglected) in Mormon thought that the divine is beyond our comprehension and that our convictions are grounded in extrarational, unarticulatable feelings and intense emotions.

That nonobjective art has long been used to convey internal, even spiritual, experiences should not surprise us. I’m not suggesting that twentieth-century modernists dovetail seamlessly with Mormon notions of the divine. Admittedly, connotations of “spirit” and “feelings” may differ wildly from Mormon definitions. However, what these avant-garde artists and Mormons seem to share is a belief that external appearances often veil the divine, that non-material realities exist and exert a force, and that personal feelings are authentic and often convey truth.

For example, an artist like Piet Mondrian explores the mystical implications of vertical-horizontal opposition and the emotive qualities of formal elements. Kasimir Malevich, a devout mystic, describes the possibility, the responsibility even, of conveying sensations or feelings. The term he coins, “Suprematism,” describes “the supremacy of pure feeling in creative art.” He explains that “the Suprematists have deliberately given up the objective representation of their surroundings in order to reach the summit of the true ‘unmasked’ art and from this vantage point to view life through the prism of pure artistic feeling.”²⁹ Along the same lines, Constantin Brancusi concerns himself with the “eternal type,” for “what is real is not the external form but the idea, the essence of things. . . . It is impossible for anyone to express anything essentially real by imitating its exterior surface.”³⁰ Matisse observes: “There is an inherent truth which must be disengaged from the outward appearances of the object to be represented. . . . *L’exactitude n’est pas la vérité* [Exactitude is not truth].”³¹ Oskar Kokoschka exclaims that “we must harken closely to our inner voice. We must strive through the penumbra of words to the core within.”³² Wassily Kandinsky explains how “inner resonance” and “outer elements” produce a “spiritual vibration”: “It is only as a step towards this spiritual vibration that the physical impression is important.”³³ He also argues: “This seemingly unrestrained freedom and the involvement of the spirit arises from the fact that we are beginning to feel the spirit, the *inner resonance*, in everything.”³⁴ Sol LeWitt maintains that “conceptual artists

are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions logic cannot reach.”³⁵

Despite the seeming “shock of the new” and explicit iconoclasm, this desire to celebrate the presence of an intangible, inexpressible reality should sound familiar to most Mormons, for Alma 32:21 proclaims, among many other scriptural passages, “Therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” Surely Mormon notions of spiritual experiences share common ground with these artists’ desires to represent or convey a reality beyond the material. These artists and Mormons may disagree about what hides behind the door, but they share a belief that whatever lingers there is more important than what we see with our eyes.

This shared impulse certainly goes beyond Alma 32. First, much of LDS liturgy and theology deals with intangible abstractions. That is, the concepts we encounter most often—forgiveness, redemption, atonement, guilt, happiness, purity, sin, salvation, love, spirit, eternity, and faith, just to name a few—are mere concepts that can only be grasped intellectually or felt emotionally. Of course, we try to express intangible, abstract, spiritual experience by comparing it to something more familiar by using linguistic metaphors and images. We translate an elusive, raw, and emotive experience to a tangible, orderly, and concrete image. We often compare the unfamiliar event with a familiar experience, guiding and assisting viewers in the process.³⁶ Nevertheless, we are immersed in abstractions, intangibles, and “unrepresentable essences.” Elder Boyd K. Packer’s well-worn anecdote relating an inability to describe the taste of salt while simultaneously attesting to its flavor should be familiar to most Mormon audiences. The anecdote articulates a truism of spiritual experience: verbal or visual language fails to adequately represent spiritual experiences.

In fact, spiritual experiences are often described as extrarational. In a 1982 address to Brigham Young University’s J. Reuben Clark Law School, Rex E. Lee, then Solicitor General of the United States and later BYU president, frames the tension between realism and abstraction by describing two processes by which we “gain understanding.” Lee argues that the “rational process” is characterized by the “hard, frustrating straining of our mental abilities,” while the “extrarational process” is characterized by “direct revelation from God.”³⁷ Lee maintains that “since the answers to these questions have come through the only infallible source of knowledge—direct revelation from God—there is no need to resolve them ratio-

nally.”³⁸ Putting aside Lee’s epistemological naiveté for now, we can easily understand a need for an aesthetics that attempts to represent this extrarational approach to knowledge.

Second, we often privilege feelings, and we often equate—perhaps too sloppily—emotional experiences with spiritual experiences. Church discourse is saturated with “I feel . . . I felt. . . .” This tradition is legitimized by a revelation given to Joseph Smith in April 1829. Joseph allows Oliver Cowdery to attempt to translate the Book of Mormon, but Oliver fails. In the revelation, the Lord proclaims:

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me. (D&C 9:7–9)

This process has, admittedly, a rational element demonstrated in the need to “study it out in your mind,” and the passage still flirts with tactile senses: “I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you.” Nevertheless, the confirmation is based on “feelings” or what could be called spiritual intuition or spiritual sensation. Oddly enough, most readers do not literalize this passage to the same degree as other scriptural passages. We are more likely to hear phrases along the lines of “My decision felt good,” or “I didn’t feel good about the situation” instead of any assessment of the literal warmth of one’s “bosom.”

Third, although the tradition is not as prominent, the sacred texts Mormons accept do acknowledge that knowledge is always, only, and inevitably incomplete, from Paul’s “For now we see through a glass, darkly . . .” (1 Cor. 13:12) to a recognition that God must speak in our language so that we might understand (D&C 1:24, 29:33). Moses 1:11, for example, talks about the need for a vision, a transfiguration, or a transcendent experience. For some believers, the intangibility of spiritual experience testifies to the complexity and mystery of religious faith: the divine exists in the gaps. The spiritual is beyond language, beyond complete knowing, beyond articulation. While this way of conceptualizing the divine may add to the mystery and perhaps power of godly beings, it also challenges direct experience. We should never be so presumptuous as to think that

our images, our attempts to confine the divine, can contain anything that we find around us. Our comparisons are nothing but pale versions, creative fictions, familiar but incomplete associations.

This shift to the subjective and internal does not contradict Mormon notions of spirituality. In fact, the move toward the internal or abstract would merely articulate a spectrum that already exists. Importantly, despite their sustained attack on visual representation and knowability, nonobjective art promotes intimacy, for this refusal to submit to the external forms encourages viewers to reflect and engage themselves in making meaning. Although his commitment to this aesthetic seems fragile, Richard Oman acknowledges that the best way to engage the viewer is to “let the viewer be involved in the creation of the work of art.”³⁹ He insists that personal involvement “requires designing areas of interpretation and entrée to leave at least some space for viewers to look at and be involved in that creation and, in the process, achieve intimacy.” As I have pointed out, Oman cites a portrait of Jesus where Rembrandt’s leaving “the image a little open-ended, as in those small areas of the eyes and mouth, provides a place for the viewer to look at the painting and become involved.”⁴⁰ This request to leave an image a “little open-ended” seems very tentative, but the insight is compelling. Ambiguity, obscurity, indeterminacy—all demand that the viewer become a co-creator with the artist. Viewers don’t discover meaning as much as they actively generate meaning. This desire to ask the viewer to participate in the construction of meaning certainly resonates with anyone familiar with modernist and postmodern aesthetics, from William Carlos Williams’s description of a page as a “field of action” to John Cage’s musical performance 4’33 to Roland Barthes’s notion of “readerly” and “writerly” texts.

Barthes’s theory deserves closer attention here, for he explains that “readerly” texts are “products” that plunge the reader into a “kind of idleness—he is intransitive. . . . He is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a *referendum*.” A “writerly” text, however, makes “the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.” The writerly text is not “unimpooverished by any constraint of representation (of imitation).” Barthes explains, “In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest. . . . It has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one.”⁴¹

The artist—verbal or visual—offers a field of possibilities, and the viewer is invited to make meaningful connections. Although Barthes is describing the process of reading a written text, his insights apply equally well to the process of interpreting images: like writerly texts, nonobjective art empowers viewers by encouraging them to share in the construction of meaning. Mitchell says much the same thing about certain kinds of art. Although the insight isn't intuitive, Mitchell points out that abstract art, instead of suppressing language, actually accomplishes the opposite: "The fewer verbal promptings provided by the painter in the form of titles, narrative clues, or subject matter, the more demand for the spectator to fill the void with language."⁴² This invitation seems especially valuable when it comes to religious art where engagement, intimacy, and connection are so important.

Nevertheless, there is a near-complete absence of nonobjective art in Church magazines and official Church displays. This decision is not due to the lack of nonobjective art by Mormon artists. For example, for decades Alexander Darais, M. Clane Graves, Hal Douglas Himes, Antonio Madrid Hendricks, and Bethanne Andersen, among many others, have produced a range of expressionist, abstract, and metaphoric work that reverently explores gospel themes. Their work encourages us to examine the nature of spirituality, personal commitment, and the role of Jesus in our lives. Importantly, these works encourage a great deal of inquiry and reflection. We can't be passive viewers.

Hal Douglas Himes's *Tabernacle* is an especially useful example. (See upper back cover.) The image portrays what seems to be a dead or sleeping body before a threshold flanked by trees—conceivably the tree of life and the tree of knowledge—suggesting a passage into another life as well as new awareness. A white goblet whose stem forms a key-hole of sorts invokes, perhaps, purity while a goblet half-filled with red liquid implies sacrifice. The right angle formed by repeating white dots—nearly a draftsman's compass—invokes a sense of symmetry and circumference. The occasional checkerboard patterns provide a repeated contrast, perhaps between life and death, for we are witnessing a moment of transition from one state to another, especially echoed by the bird imagery which suggests movement and transcendence. And we can't neglect what appears to be a white heart—even a bird and butterfly—that conveys love and a reminder to have a clean heart.

I neglect many details, of course, but the image engages me, de-

manding that I pay attention and work to sort out the imagery and make connections. I establish relationships and write narratives while other viewers find equally compelling—perhaps even competing—connections. The painting becomes an opportunity to fill in the void, but the image also encourages me to reflect on passages, transitions, and death. I'm partly responsible for the image's significance and meaning, for I am a co-creator. This process enriches me. This is not to say, however, that all will find the painting as appealing or rewarding. My reading of the Bible, my exposure to art history and iconography, and my experience making sense of texts all help me construct meaning. But on the other hand, others who view the image will draw from their own well of knowledge, will recontextualize the painting in different ways; and this invitation to participate in the construction of meaning is what makes the painting writerly and active. Put yet another way, *Tabernacle* focuses on the process of generating meaning rather than providing a finished product. Like many contemporary performances, the image is incomplete without us.

Framing Art: Limits, Boundaries, and Authority

Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance. —Michel Foucault⁴³

If nonobjective art can serve religious aims so well, how might we explain the apparent refusal to display nonobjective explorations of the spiritual? Picasso tries to put us at ease when he asserts: "There is no abstract art. You must always start with something. Afterward you can remove all traces of reality. There is no danger then, anyway, because the idea of the object will have left an indelible mark. It is what started the artist off, excited his ideas, and stirred up his emotions. Ideas and emotions will in the end be prisoners in his work. Whatever they do, they can't escape from the picture."⁴⁴

Despite Picasso's insistence that we are never left with mere abstraction, Oman offers a reason that many Mormons might echo: "If we move toward abstraction, we have the potential of sliding down the slippery slope to disembodiment of God—to removing him from a historical context and from the tangible, physical body that he acquired here on earth. Such attempts can become quasi-agnostic and turn God into an idea or a strange mixture of pantheism."⁴⁵

Oman is careful in his response. Abstraction has the "potential" to disembody God, and "can" suggest an indefinable notion of God, perhaps reminiscent of the medieval mystics noted earlier or the tradition of

the aesthetic sublime that “posits a realm of absolute negation, of radical otherness and unknowability. The sublime, located in pain, death, transcendence, and the unknowable, is precisely the unrepresentable.”⁴⁶ While idealism is no less a threat when it comes to portraying a disembodied God, I can also understand why nonobjective art challenges our traditional notions of the divine. However, they are not the reasons Oman lists, and they are the very reasons why we should celebrate nonobjective expressions.

First, nonobjective art celebrates and encourages individualized and personalized interpretation, not communal myth-making. Admittedly, nonobjective art encourages individual responses, responses that may vary from those of other individuals and from traditional narratives and conclusions. Thus, nonobjective art celebrates the radical individualism that was evident in early Mormonism; but it is this individualism, perhaps, that Church authorities want to patrol and contain. We are supposed to stay within acceptable boundaries.

Second, nonobjective art admits and acknowledges ambiguity and uncertainty, confessing the inadequacy of representation. In other words, nonobjective art problematizes the very concept of knowability, reminding us yet again that we see through a “glass, darkly.” Knowledge is illusive, and faith is an active process of constructing meaning.

For example, consider LDS artist Wulf Barsch’s *The Temple*, a painting presenting three silhouetted pyramids in the background, a row of palm trees in the middle-ground, and a series of geometric, architectural drawings in the foreground. At one level, the painting merely represents an Egyptian landscape, with a nod toward the beauty of planning, symmetry, and order. (See lower back cover.) And even at a theological level, Barsch’s painting flirts with spiritual literalism, for Mormon theology maintains that the creation of the earth followed a divine pattern, that the earth was created spiritually before it was created temporally (Moses 3:5). Given that context, Barsch presents us with literal architectural plans that visually precede temporal creation.

However, Barsch provides an enormous amount of interpretive room. One could argue that the painting also celebrates form itself—the pleasure of straight lines, symmetry, systematic relationships, and cause-effect relations between conception and result. However, the painting potentially offers much more: A palm tree on the left leans to the left, pointing away from the pyramids, perhaps suggesting an unplanned de-

parture from architectural plans, perhaps alluding to Satan's fall, an image reinforced by the horizontal red line below the tree which contrasts with the vertical red line on the right. The painting also invites us to reflect on the relationship between the authentic and the artificial, the scientific and the natural, human creations and natural creations, and the concept of convergence itself.

I can continue to spin out possible interpretations, but that's my point. By refusing to give us a literal narrative, Barsch encourages us to reflect on the notion of templates and patterns, the intellectual and the tangible. He encourages us to become involved in the making of meaning. We are no longer passive observers, empty vessels in the presence of revealed truth. Instead, the painting engages us, inviting us to share in the process of generating truth.

While the Church rarely uses nonobjective art in its magazines or instructional material, the Museum of Church History and Art occasionally displays nonobjective art. For example, it has displayed the work of Darais, Graves, Hendricks, and Andersen, among others. However, the institution often patrols or limits the proliferation of meaning by using paratexts. By paratexts, I mean "verbal frames," additions that include "names and pseudonyms, titles and subtitles, cover notes, blurbs, dedications, notes, prefaces and postfaces, epigraphs and 'epitexts.'" ⁴⁷ Paratexts function in various ways, from defining the text to defining the context. The paratext may "enhance the text, it may define it, it may contrast with it, it may distance it, or it may be so disguised as to seem to form part of it." ⁴⁸ While the paratext is "subject to reading and hence to interpretation," ⁴⁹ I'm more interested in the way it shapes or mediates our efforts to make sense of an image.

In "The Loss of a Creature," theorist and critic Walker Percy explores this concept of mediation in terms of travel, nature, and classrooms. He comments on the way, say, material gathered at a travel bureau provides a "symbolic package" that mediates our experience of the Grand Canyon. Percy claims that this "generalized surrender of the horizon to those experts within whose competence a particular segment of the horizon is thought to lie" amounts to a loss of sovereignty, a loss of openness, thus rendering us a "consumer of a prepared experience." Sadly, the pleasure of encountering a raw experience is replaced by an experience that satisfies "by the degree to which the canyon conforms to the preformed complex." ⁵⁰ We arrive at some version of, "Oh, I see what they mean. I see



Crossing the Sweetwater, by David Koch; oil on canvas, 55" x 44".
© 2002, by David Koch.

what they are talking about.” Percy admits that an unmediated encounter with raw experience is problematic, but it’s a question of submission and subordination, a question of what role the paratext or “symbolic package” asks us to play.

Admittedly, we are not a *tabula rasa*, free of all forms of mediation. I suppose I’m less optimistic than Percy about the possibility of becoming completely sovereign. At the same time, however, Percy’s observation that “symbolic packages” turn us into consumers of prepared experience makes a great deal of sense, especially in the context of religious art. The presence of titles and names, but more importantly, the presence of explanatory notes that often accompany religious art, certainly provides a framework that limits possible connections even as the notes clarify and enrich our experience. This process may be comforting, a kind of buoy that keeps us afloat as we struggle for meaning, but it bridles the proliferation of significance, undecidability, and indeterminacy. In short, it circumscribes meaning.

Oddly enough, paratexts accompany even realistic and idealistic art. For example, the July issue of the 2004 *Ensign* reproduces a David Koch painting of men and women crossing the Sweetwater River. Without much effort, we can conclude that these are iconic handcart pioneers who exemplify tenacity, strength, and sacrifice. The mother lifts her skirt as she carries a baby across the water and provides stability to a teenage daughter. A man and woman pull a handcart as another man pushes, and we see that these pioneers are but one of many groups. The title *Crossing the Sweetwater* is helpful for the uninitiated; but below the image, we read, “In 1856 J. D. T. McAllister wrote a happy tune for the handcart pioneers: ‘For some must push and some must pull, / As we go marching up the hill; / So merrily on our way we go / Until we reach the Valley’ (*Children’s Songbook*, 220). Here the pioneers cross the Sweetwater River.” The paratext does more than explain the image—for little needs explaining. The caption provides a rather Pollyanna version of the experience by putting a happy face on what was always an arduous if not life-threatening and life-taking journey. The paratext shapes our perception of the handcart experience, framing the experience in terms of children playing.

In the January 2003 inside cover of the *Ensign*, we find a work by Linda Curley Christensen who attempts to convey an abstract concept using juxtaposition between the image and the title. The painting appears at first to be a rather ordinary landscape rendered in realist fashion.

Christensen portrays a stream and pool amid some trees, shrubs, and flowers. However, in the upper center of the image, there is a hint of a stone doorway allowing a beam of light so bright that we no longer recognize trees or shrubs. However, the incongruous title of the painting, *Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear*, encourages us to move beyond realism into abstraction. As a paratext, the title provides a context for the image, but doesn't explain the image. We work hard to make sense of the juxtaposition between the landscape and the scriptural passage that functions as its title. But immediately below the title and attribution, we read, "The glorious light of the sun illuminating our lives is often used as a symbol of our Savior and His love for us, reminding us that 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect. . . . There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear' (1 John 4:16–18)." This paratext interprets the painting for us, limiting the connections and associations we might generate on our own. The scripture is a "preformed complex" or a "symbolic package" that mediates our experience. Of course, we can continue to make sense of the work, but we are not encouraged to do so. In a sense, the painting now merely illustrates the explanatory text.

Finally, I can sympathize with a viewer who desires paratextual commentary or symbolic packages when faced with, say, Bethanne Andersen's *The Last Supper (Place Setting)* (1982) reproduced in *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints* but once featured at the Museum of Church History and Art.⁵¹ We see a bluish-white, textured background. In the center of the painting, we notice two purple circles. To the right of each circle, we see what resembles a two-year-old's attempt to draw the letter "Y." A few vertical lines are also to the right of each purple circle. Below the circles and centered, we see a portion of a rainbow. (See front cover.) The painting mystifies. What are these enigmatic figures? The rainbow suggests a connection with Noah, but the purple circles and brown lines don't necessarily invoke a boat, flood, or animals. Perhaps we're peering at a vineyard with grapes and stakes. Perhaps the rainbow conveys a sense of promise, and the "vineyard" suggests Christ and the true vine, the ultimate fulfillment of Noah's sign of peace.

The artist's title, *The Last Supper (Place Setting)* steers us in another direction. As we refocus, we now see plates, goblets, and perhaps knives. We might notice the extra light that seems to flow into or out of the "goblet,"

implying, perhaps, a difference in revelation, insight, and purity. We then read the paratextual commentary supplied in the margin:

Bethanne Andersen (1954-)

Pastel on Paper, 22" x 30" (55.8 cm x 76.2 cm)

Museum of Church History and Art

This unusual view of the last supper shows Christ's place setting at the table during his final meal before the crucifixion. His plate and goblet sit on the table. The work is an attempt to understand from Christ's point of view all that would go on before and after that famous meal. Many of Andersen's works are introspective and personal. In her work, she tries to understand the inner state of the soul. She has written, "In my drawings I use personal symbols to rethink an experience and create new ones."⁵²

Admittedly, this explanatory note is helpful. The text opens up interpretive doors that many find comforting and enlightening. And the information is more complex than it looks, for in addition to the explicit interpretive claims—"The work is an attempt to understand from Christ's point of view all that would go on before and after that famous meal"—the note contextualizes the artwork in terms of the artist's identity, medium used, size, ownership, and artist's own commentary. The paratext provides us with multiple contexts to begin to make sense of the painting. Nevertheless, the commentary mediates our experience, privileging certain ways of viewing the painting while ignoring others.

Let me be clear. I am not suggesting that we can make sense of a work of art outside of a signifying context, that meaning is inherent in a work, or that we can spontaneously understand a work of art's complexities, layers, and nuances. However, I am saying that contexts—symbolic packages, interpretive frames, paratextual commentary—constrain even as they enable. Contexts generate certain meanings even as they limit meanings. Therefore, it is not a simple choice between authenticity and artifice, purity and contamination, innocence or knowledge. And this is no idle observation. As art historian and painter John Berger reminds us, "The idea of innocence faces two ways. By refusing to enter a conspiracy, one remains innocent of that conspiracy. But to remain innocent may also be to remain ignorant."⁵³ My point is that we should acknowledge the force and function of paratexts, that we should identify the gains and limitations of commentary that accompanies works of art. This move shifts our attention from mere evaluation—Is paratextual commentary good or bad?—to a focus on function or effect: In what ways does this paratext shape my response?

Signature

While I don't find any sinister intent in this desire to guide viewers, the result still makes me pause. This practice of circumscribing meaning implies that there is only one valid reading of an image. Alternative interpretations are, supposedly, examples of "reading too much into an image" or instances of trespassing on an artist's intention. But the implications are, perhaps, more profound. Uncertainty, proliferation of meaning, abstraction, and ambiguity are not recognized as legitimate forms of religious experiences. They are problems, obstacles to overcome, perhaps even evidence of a wandering soul who has gone astray, adrift in a sea of meaning. Just as we are supposed to be "one in Christ," we are supposed to arrive at the same interpretive conclusions. Unity, harmony, and agreement must prevail.

I suppose my analysis merely echoes Elder Stephen L Richards who, in "An Open Letter to College Students," ponders the limiting effect of our human attempts to portray the divine: "What if Hebrew prophets, conversant with only a small fraction of the surface of the earth, thinking and writing in terms of their own limited geography and tribal relations did interpret Him in terms of a tribal king and so limit His personality and the laws of the universe under His control to the dominion with which they were familiar?" Elder Richards points out that even a prophet, an inspired "interpreter," cannot escape his historical context, for he cannot "present his interpretation and conception in terms other than those with which he has had experience and acquaintance." And what if Divinity reveals "higher and more exalted truths than he has ever before known and unfold[s] to his spiritual eyes visions of the past, forecasts of the future and circumstances of the utmost novelty, how will the inspired man interpret?" Acknowledging the enabling and constraining effects of context, Elder Richards concludes that this prophet will make sense of and convey his observations "in the language he knows and in the terms of expression with which his knowledge and experience have made him familiar."⁵⁴

We can conclude that pictorial realism and idealism reveal more about us and our cultural baggage than they do about spiritual truths. Our images display our own interpretations and our own yearnings. And so the phrase, "We make God in our own image," seems to make a little more sense. I can understand why Jewish law prohibited graven images, and I can sympathize with medieval mystics whose theological treatises often celebrate an ineffable, indescribable God. Our penchant for worship-

ping our own concepts of the divine is, perhaps, too strong for our own good. The figurative becomes literal, and the literal limits and misguides us. On the other hand, I'm comforted that there are artists seeking to express the intangible, or as Jean-François Lyotard proclaims, "It is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented."⁵⁵ These attempts may inspire art that may not be "safe," for these images revel in openness, multiplicity, and individualism. Conceptual lines are blurry; interpretations are unpredictable, and there may not be an arrival point. Ironically, compared to the images we encounter most often, perhaps these works represent life more realistically, and they may be more accurate in embodying our ideals that often transcend worldly attempts to articulate the divine.

The presence of risk in art recalls Wayne Booth's observations in "Art and the Church: or 'The Truths of Smoother,'" the keynote address for the 1980 BYU Humanities Symposium. Booth uses the model of C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters* to comment on the state and function of Mormon art. At one point, the "Chief" instructs his protégé "Smoother" about their mission: "What we are out to do, I must repeat, is to prevent spiritual awareness, the depth of spiritual experience, and the genuine growth in individual souls that comes through loving exchange of experience in a community of such souls. . . . Have you forgotten our slogan, inscribed over the very door you must pass through each time you return from Earth? 'Homogenize, tranquilize, desensitize!'"⁵⁶ I am not suggesting that realism and idealism always deaden us, and I don't mean to imply that nonobjective art always enlivens. But I am saying that we need art that stimulates, and we need art that expresses the full spectrum of spiritual experience. Anything less diminishes our existence, leaving us with more of the same. We stagnate.

As I reflect again on the Holocaust Memorial Museum, I'm reminded of Latter-day Saint temples whose architectural spaces echo the tension between presence and absence. Nearly every celestial room in the temple system is void of any representation of the divine. At most, the divine is conveyed abstractly in that the rooms merely express simple utility (chairs, couches, tables with flower arrangements) and fine craftsmanship in furniture and architectural and interior design. Encouraged by this abstract space, participants sit and reflect with a minimal amount of distraction or interference. The relatively sparse room is a striking departure from previous rooms that either present a barrage of slick images and sur-

round-sound available in newer temples or the elaborate, sensory-rich allegorical murals and live drama in older temples. Celestial rooms testify to a need to reflect and engage in the construction of meaning. The rooms acknowledge and reclaim an essential element of spirituality—the emotional, the intangible, the inexpressible. My plea is that we have more opportunities to do so.

Notes

1. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

2. Quoted in Philip Gourevitch, "Behold Now Behemoth: The Holocaust Memorial Museum, One More American Theme Park," *Harper's Magazine*, July 1993, 55–62.

3. Edward T. Linenthal, "The Boundaries of Memory: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1994): 429.

4. Ibid.

5. Jane Caplan, "Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians," *Central European History* 22, nos. 2–3 (1989): 277.

6. Pablo Picasso, "Statement," in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, edited by Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 264.

7. Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 38.

8. Ibid., 228.

9. Note that Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, does, in fact, use this language. Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 2:270.

10. Note "Items of instruction given by Joseph Smith" in 1843: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22).

11. See E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).

12. Testimonies of both groups published in front matter (unpaginated) of Book of Mormon, 1981 edition.

13. Noel A. Carmack, "Images of Christ in Latter-day Saint Visual Culture, 1900–1999," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2002): 20.

14. Ibid., 21.

15. Paul Klee, "Creative Credo," in *Theories of Modern Art*, 182.
16. Richard Oman, "'What Think Ye of Christ?': An Art Historian's Perspective," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2002): 85.
17. Aristotle, from *Poetics*, in *Classical Literary Criticism* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 69.
18. Lynette Parson, quoted in Carmack, "Images of Christ," 61.
19. Richard Oman, "'Ye Shall See the Heavens Open': Portrayal of the Divine and the Angelic in Latter-day Saint Art," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1996): 123.
20. James C. Christensen, "An Artist's Personal Perspective on Images of Christ," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2002): 10, 9.
21. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Representation," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 14.
22. Christensen, "An Artist's Personal Perspective," 13.
23. Arnold Friberg, quoted in Carmack, "Images of Christ," 41.
24. For a booklength treatment on how Americans have appropriated Jesus in various ways, see Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003).
25. Orson F. Whitney, quoted in Carmack, "Images of Christ," 26.
26. Hugh B. Brown, quoted in *ibid.*, 41.
27. Robert Motherwell, "Symposium: What Abstract Art Means to Me," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 564.
28. See, for example, Boyd K. Packer, "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord," *BYU Studies* 16, no. 4 (1976): 575–88.
29. Kasimir Malevich, "Suprematism," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 341, 344.
30. Constantin Brancusi, "Aphorisms," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 365.
31. Henri Matisse, "Exactitude Is Not Truth," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 137, 39.
32. Oskar Kokoschka, "On the Nature of Visions," in *Art in Theory: 1900–1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), 103.
33. Wassily Kandinsky, "The Effect of Color," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 153.
34. Wassily Kandinsky, "On the Problem of Form," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 159.
35. Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," in *American Artists on*

Art: *From 1940–1980*, edited by Ellen H. Johnson (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 125.

36. See my "Cultivating Identities: Reflections on Our Mormon Root Metaphors," *Sunstone*, March 2004, 53.

37. Rex E. Lee, "By Study and Also by Faith," in *Educating Zion*, edited by John W. Welch and Don E. Norton (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 133, 134.

38. *Ibid.*, 134.

39. Oman, "What Think Ye of Christ?," 85.

40. *Ibid.*, 88, 87.

41. Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974), 4–5.

42. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 219.

43. Michel Foucault, "Panopticism," in *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*, edited by David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky, 4th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 197.

44. Pablo Picasso, "Conversation," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 270.

45. Oman, "What Think Ye of Christ?," 79, 85.

46. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 419.

47. Marie Maclean, "Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the Peripheral," *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 273. See also Gerard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 261–72.

48. Maclean, "Pretexts and Paratexts," 274.

49. *Ibid.*, 278.

50. Walker Percy, "The Loss of the Creature," in Bartholomae and Petrosky, *Ways of Reading*, 518, 521, 512.

51. Richard Oman and Robert Davis, *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 139. I would have preferred to offer the paratextual commentary that accompanied a nonrepresentational work displayed in the Museum of Church History and Art, but none was available at the time.

52. *Ibid.*

53. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 32.

54. Stephen L Richards, "An Open Letter to College Students," *Improvement Era* 36, no. 8 (June 1933): 453.

55. Jean-François Lyotard, "What Is Postmodernism?" in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, edited by Thomas Docherty (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 46.

56. Wayne Booth, "Art and the Church: or 'The Truths of Smoother,'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1980): 21.

Trial of Faith

John Donald Gustav Wrathall

On a recent visit to Utah, I was excited to attend church with my parents at their LDS ward. Regular attendance at my own ward in Minneapolis has become an important part of my life. But perhaps because of the unique role of family-centered piety in Mormonism, I always find special comfort in attending church with my parents. Furthermore, because of my many years of alienation from the LDS Church, my parents find it deeply gratifying that for the first time in twenty years, I *want* to go with them. Attendance at church as a family is perhaps an affirmation of the bonds we hope will endure between us in the eternities.

On this particular visit, we were treated in Sunday School to an outpouring of homophobic commentary from members of the class unlike anything any of us had ever heard before. Homosexuals were evidence of the collapse of society in the end times. The gay rights movement was an example of evil displaying itself shamelessly before the world. Homosexuals were among those “that call evil good, and good evil.” We sat helplessly as, for several minutes, one stereotype after another was rehearsed. My mother held my hand, trying to reassure me. The teacher finally drew the discussion to a close by commenting that we ought to have compassion for sinners. After the class was dismissed, I could only whisper to my parents my great relief that my non-LDS partner had decided he would rather sleep late this particular morning than join us.

I can’t say that this episode did not hurt me. Members of this ward know that my parents have a gay son. I was introduced to the class as their son, visiting from distant Minneapolis. Were these comments made deliberately for my benefit? Or is the Church’s anti-gay-marriage campaign stirring ugly sentiments that until now remained latent? I wanted to leave. If I could have left without drawing attention to myself I would have. But at

that moment, the Spirit was there quietly saying, “Don’t listen to that. You are in the right place. You are doing what you need to do. Your Heavenly Father is very pleased with you.” The Spirit reassured me that the Lord would take care of me and that I simply needed to be patient. So I did not regret the experience. I learned that my dignity does not depend on what others say and that the Holy Spirit will sustain me even through situations I would have imagined unbearable.

Over the past year or so, in response to a dramatic spiritual experience I had at the Sunstone Symposium of August 2005, I have been trying to define for myself a middle path between the polar extremes of, on the one hand, embracing the Church and rejecting the love I share with my partner and, on the other, rejecting the Church and embracing my sexuality.¹ If the Church is becoming increasingly polarized over this issue by the current political debate, perhaps it is absurd to hope for such a middle road. Still, I believe that rejecting judgmental postures while enhancing openness, love, compassion, hope, and humility on all sides of this debate is more crucial now than it ever was before.

* * *

In recent decades, gay² Latter-day Saints have elaborated in print varying responses to “same-gender attraction.” The earliest published response might be characterized as the Mormon “liberalization” position. In 1978, one year after the founding of Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons, Cloy Jenkins and others produced a pamphlet entitled *Prologue: An Examination of the Mormon Attitude toward Homosexuality*, making a case for the Church to liberalize its views of homosexuality and to end its policy of excommunicating sexually active gay or lesbian members.³ This position, though it has resonated well with large numbers of gay and lesbian Latter-day Saints, has been rejected by Church leaders and by the majority of the orthodox LDS rank and file.

I am aware of only one statistical study, based on published memoirs and a survey of Mormon gay men and lesbians. The data from this study corroborate my own impression, drawn from extensive reading of personal accounts and personal knowledge through friends and acquaintances, that the vast majority of gay men and lesbians who hope for a liberalization of the Church’s position tend to be alienated from the Church right now. Gary T. Horlacher in October 2006 presented a paper at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) conference, reporting

the results of his review of fifty personal accounts published by LDS gay men and lesbians and his in-depth qualitative and quantitative survey of 165 individuals. Almost all of his survey respondents were once highly active as measured by Church attendance, tithing payment, and missionary service. About one-third of his respondents were celibate, heterosexually monogamous, and/or actively participating in reparative therapy. Among the two-thirds of survey respondents who were no longer active in the Church, 52 percent classified themselves as “inactive,” 16 percent as “excommunicated,” 8 percent as having joined “other religions,” while 24 percent considered themselves “non-religious.”⁴

Other responses to same-gender attraction have accepted the premise that same-sex sexual expression is a sin but have varied in their view of the best way to deal with same-sex orientation. In 1989, Evergreen International was founded, promoting what might be called the “reparative therapy” position, that homosexuality can be diminished or completely healed. Five years later, Deseret Book published *Born That Way?*, one Mormon woman’s account of how she completely overcame homosexual attraction and is now successfully married.⁵ This second point of view has at times received encouragement and support from the Church hierarchy. Until the late 1990s, Church leaders encouraged many gay men to get married as a means of “overcoming” their homosexuality. Though many who have self-identified as gay have tried this approach, it does not seem to have been successful for more than a handful. Based on a preponderance of evidence, this position is probably unrealistic for those who do not experience at least some opposite-gender attraction to begin with—in other words, those who are not at least somewhat bisexual.

In the face of mounting evidence that “reparative therapy” is not feasible for the majority of same-gender-oriented individuals, an alternative position increasingly endorsed by Church leaders has been, in President Hinckley’s words, that gay Mormons should be allowed to “go forward” in the Church so long as they remain celibate.⁶ The case for this third or “celibacy” position was made eloquently by Ty Mansfield in 2004, in *In Quiet Desperation*, which he co-authored with Fred and Marilyn Matis and which Deseret Book published.⁷ In it, Mansfield discusses what it has meant to him to contemplate lifelong celibacy as a faithful response to living with same-gender attraction: “Even though family is a critical part of the gospel and an important part of the mortal Church, our faith and conviction should not be built entirely upon having our own family here in this life.

... Although it may be difficult for someone with same-gender attraction to stay in the Church and remain faithful to its standards, if we have true faith that there is something more after this life, we are assured that the faith and sacrifice will be worth it.”⁸ This position has the advantage of acknowledging the real-life experience of the vast majority of gay and lesbian Mormons who have made good-faith efforts to change their sexual orientation but have failed. It offers a path to acceptance in the Church that is within the realm of possibility for all, without requiring an ability to “change.” This position was strongly endorsed in a recent interview that LDS Public Relations conducted with Apostle Dallin H. Oaks and Seventy Lance B. Wickman, an interview to which I will return in some depth.⁹

A fourth position might be characterized as the “mixed orientation marriage.” The case for this position was made by Ben Christensen in a provocative essay describing his decision as a gay man to marry a straight woman, with full disclosure before marriage and with a mutual commitment between him and his wife to work around the emotional and sexual limitations inherent in such a relationship.¹⁰ As a model for negotiating one’s same-sex orientation and Church practice, this position is similar to reparative therapy in its hope that heterosexual marriage can be a way forward. But it is also similar to the celibacy position (and different from reparative therapy) in its acknowledgment that a change in sexual orientation is unlikely.

Lester J. Leavitt, in a self-published memoir,¹¹ discussed his mixed-orientation marriage from the point of view of a man who initially married in hopes of changing his sexual orientation, but who did everything possible to make his marriage succeed once he realized that a change in sexual orientation was not forthcoming. During my conversations with him and his wife, Barbara, at the Affirmation Conference in Portland in October 2006, they spoke about honesty and fidelity as the bedrock of their marriage. Lester’s stake president excommunicated him in June 2006 as a consequence of publishing his memoir. Ironically, he feels certain that, had he not been able openly to express his feelings about men in his memoir, it would have been impossible for him to remain faithful to his wife. Thus, the vehicle that enabled him to honor his marriage became the cause of his excommunication.

After his excommunication, Lester made it clear to me that his commitment to his marriage was no longer based on any personal belief that

temple marriage is necessary for exaltation, nor, obviously, was it any more a strategy for maintaining good standing in the Church. It was based solely on his genuine feelings of affection for his wife. Barbara confirmed to me that she chose to work at preserving their marriage for the same reasons.

In a recent email correspondence, Lester announced to me that, after more than twenty-five years of marriage, he and his wife have finally decided to separate. In his words, they decided that continuing as a married couple was a “compromise” that was unfair to both of them. He poignantly wrote: “[Had I] been repeatedly unfaithful to Barbara, or hidden my behavior, or been dishonest, then we could not have achieved what we did. We reached the point that she wanted what was best for me, our love had become that strong.”¹² Clearly there are enormous challenges involved in making such a relationship work, even when there is a high level of communication, trust, and affection between two partners of differing sexual orientations.

I have observed a bifurcation in the LDS gay and lesbian community between, on the one hand, those who have reconciled themselves with their gayness and who are alienated from the LDS Church (i.e., those who typically embrace the “liberalization” position) and, on the other hand, those who seek good standing in the LDS Church and who see their same-sex orientation as problematic and define same-sex sexual behavior and relationships as sinful (i.e., those who typically embrace one of the latter three positions).

In a personal essay published in the April 2006 issue of *Sunstone*, I described my own recent conversion experience and my efforts to reconcile being gay and living in a committed same-sex relationship with my testimony of the Church.¹³ At the August 2006 *Sunstone* Symposium, I presented a paper in which I discussed two scriptural models of faithfulness for those who are gay and Mormon and living in same-gender relationships, in which I affirmed the importance of acknowledging the teaching and doctrinal authority of current LDS leaders.¹⁴ I would describe my own position as I am developing it in writing and public speaking as a “waiting” or a “growth” position. In this paper I would like to explore more fully what it means to affirm my relationship with my partner as good and also to embrace the LDS Church and the LDS gospel.

Oddly, the belief that there can be no such “middle ground” seems to be held alike by conservative Mormons *and* alienated ex-Mormons. The

attitude on the conservative side seems to be fueled by the belief that, as long as I am in an intimate relationship with a person of the same sex, punishment and exclusion are the only interactions that can possibly motivate me to reform myself. The attitude on the anti-Mormon side seems to be that gay people are better off just weaning themselves permanently away from the Church, because the Church today is corrupt and blinded by prejudice. I reject both premises. In my experience, polarization and extremes like those we see over this issue seldom allow for growth or change.

While I find great hope and comfort in LDS doctrine about the eternal family, I hope to avoid interpretations of that doctrine that needlessly cause despair among those who don't fit the norm. While I believe that commitment to a life of celibacy can have value among both straight and gay Latter-day Saints, if embraced in the right way, I believe we undermine its value when we make it a requirement. While I don't appreciate the use of scripture to humiliate and "bash" gay folks, I believe that scriptural teaching about sin is central to faith and that scriptural teaching about sexual morality has direct relevance to our search for meaning and happiness. In my understanding of Church history and human destiny, I believe that we gay Saints need the Church and the Church needs us. Great joy and opportunity await us if we find it in our hearts to reconcile ourselves, despite the unique challenges we face in becoming reconciled.

* * *

When I first began work on this essay, I intended the primary focus to be the doctrinal or theological questions related to homosexuality. Many who have written on this subject have asked: Why would God allow so many to come into mortality with this condition if it was his will that we marry and have families? This question has sometimes led to speculation about the possible role—positive or negative—that homosexuality may play in the plan of salvation. As I have continued in my present path, however, I have gradually found that the ability to move forward is less a question of doctrine and more a question of faith and practice. The very nature of mortal probation requires us to walk without ultimate knowledge. I believe that the ability to cultivate the virtues of charity, faith, and hope without always knowing *why* we are called upon to exhibit certain kinds of faith is exactly what we are supposed to do. The time may come when we will know why some of us are gay and others are straight, but that time is not now.

It is possible that our spirits were created both gendered and heterosexual and that homosexuality in this life is produced by a kind of earthly, mortal flaw that thwarts our fundamentally heterosexual spiritual natures. It does not *feel* this way to me. The basic sense of completion I find in my relationship with my same-sex partner suggests that my connection to him flows from a deeper spiritual reality. It is not as if my attraction to him is merely a physical attraction, a “temptation,” while some deeper, more spiritual part of me longs for union with a woman. I find so many longings—physical, emotional, and spiritual—met in my relationship with him. However, for the sake of intellectual honesty, I must confess that I do not know how much these kinds of feelings are determined by our spirits and how much are determined by the mortal temples in which our spirits currently dwell. If the temple is flawed in some way, then perhaps how this *feels* to me while I dwell in mortal flesh is misleading.

However, as I have sought guidance from the Holy Spirit about how to proceed in relation to my partner of fifteen years, it has been made clear to me that it would be not just a terrible mistake but a sin for me to abandon him. I don’t profess to know more from these spiritual affirmations than that my course of action is right for me. The reasons may be very specific, very mortally contingent. We know of cases in the scriptural record—God’s commandment to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac or Nephi’s slaying of Laban—where the demands of a particular situation overrode general moral principles.

But I believe it is also entirely possible that, if our spirits are in fact created gendered, the range and expression of eternal gender is much broader and more diverse than we, in our limited mortal fashion are capable of comprehending. It could be that the Spirit is affirming that my partner and I must stay together because our relationship holds eternal promise and potential. If intellectual honesty on my part demands that I acknowledge the first possibility—that homosexuality is nothing but a mortal flaw—then based on my experience of my relationship with my partner and my growing self-understanding, it also demands that I not rule out this second possibility.

In a brief autobiography I published in the *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance* in 1997, I have described how, as I obeyed the teachings of the Church, I found that instead of being healed of my feelings of attraction to men, these feelings seemed only to grow stronger. I decided to openly acknowledge my homosexuality both to myself and others after a

period of fasting and prayer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As I “came out,” I had a powerful sense of the presence of the Spirit in my life, affirming that my move toward greater openness and self-acceptance was the direction God wanted me to go.¹⁵

Now more recently, as the result of my decision to renew my faith as a Latter-day Saint and reconnect with the LDS Church, I have experienced a deepened connection with my life partner. It seems that, at key junctures in my life, greater acceptance of my sexuality has enabled me to experience a greater connection to God and that deepening my relationship with God has similarly led to intensified appreciation of my sexuality. This dynamic once seemed contradictory to me. But this is how Ty Mansfield described a similar experience in his own memoir: “No matter what level of personal righteousness I attained or how close I felt to God, the feelings weren’t going away. To the contrary, they were increasing. It was a paradox!”¹⁶ Over the years, I have received similar reports from other gay friends, who described how times of spiritual awakening or focus in their lives also seemed to correlate with a heightened awareness of their same-gender-oriented sexuality. If our Heavenly Father created some of us both gendered and homosexual, it would explain why, no matter how much we plead and pray and try, our sexual orientation *simply does not change*. I present these observations because I think it is important information to consider in pondering this problem.

There was a time when I would have insisted on affirming the latter scenario—that God “made me this way”—rather than the former—that being gay means my mortal temple is flawed. The prophet and a number of apostles have acknowledged that they simply do not know what causes homosexuality, nor do they know why so many members of the Church must struggle to come to terms with this condition in their lives.¹⁷ I have come to the point that I am willing to acknowledge that I do not know the answer to these questions either. Given the intense nature of the struggle for most of us—many have succumbed to despair and suicide—I have found that the safest course for me is to listen carefully to the Spirit. Honestly acknowledging that I simply do not know and that I must simply trust God has brought healing and has enabled me to experience a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God. It is God alone who understands the unique path I must follow, and it is through the Spirit alone that I receive the guidance I need to continue safely. I believe that we, as a Church, will receive answers to these questions when we have demonstrated that we

have the wisdom to use this greater understanding. But I also believe that, on occasion, divine knowledge is deliberately withheld from us that God may test us.

* * *

In recent years, the leadership of the Church has distanced itself from approaches to homosexuality that encourage marriage as a cure and has instead moved toward the official position of the Catholic Church and some conservative Protestant denominations that emphasize celibacy as the appropriate response to same-sex orientation. The August 2006 interview that LDS Public Affairs conducted with Elders Oaks and Wickman answered in greater depth than ever before a series of questions about same-gender attraction.¹⁸ They stressed that the Church neither endorses nor encourages reparative therapy as a response to “same-gender attraction.” They also emphasized that men who have struggled with same-gender attraction should marry only if they “feel a great attraction for a daughter of God.”¹⁹ On the other hand, they encouraged Church members and leaders to fully embrace and support in every way those who have chosen to live celibately. They reaffirmed a recent statement of the First Presidency that “we of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reach out with understanding and respect for individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender.” Quoting President Gordon B. Hinckley, they reiterated, “We love them . . . as sons and daughters of God. . . . If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church.” Regarding the kinds of Church service gay or lesbian members could be involved in, they acknowledged that callings having marriage as a prerequisite could not be extended to celibate individuals, but Elder Oaks stressed, “Every teaching position, every missionary position can be held by single people. We welcome [them] to that kind of service.” A substantial portion of the interview was also devoted to justifying the Church’s political opposition to same-sex marriage.

The interview acknowledged the criticism that the Church’s current policy is unfair because it holds gay men and lesbians to a much more difficult standard of conduct—lifelong celibacy—than that to which it holds its heterosexual members—sexual abstinence until marriage and fidelity afterward. The interviewer asked: “If somebody has a very powerful heterosexual drive, there is the opportunity for marriage. If a young man

thinks he's gay, what we're really saying to him is that there is simply no other way to go but to be celibate for the rest of his life if he doesn't feel any attraction to women?" Elder Oaks acknowledged that there are "differences" between the situation faced by gay and lesbian members and that faced by heterosexual members and even acknowledged that the situation was "tragic." Elder Wickman conceded, "There's really no question that there is an anguish associated with the inability to marry in this life. We feel for someone that has that anguish. I feel for somebody that has that anguish." Nevertheless, both defended the Church's policy by comparing the situation faced by gay folks to the situation faced by people living with severe mental or physical disabilities (such as "total paralysis") that do not permit them to marry.²⁰

There is, of course, a significant difference between a person living with a mental or physical disability so severe as to preclude an adult relationship and the situation of a gay or lesbian person who has the capacity to enter into a loving, committed, intimate adult relationship but who is being told that he or she must not. The dilemma posed by this difference could not have been more eloquently stated than by Ben Christensen in defending his choice as a gay man to marry a woman:

The problem is, no one offers any better solutions within the bounds of LDS doctrine. Apparently, the current alternative offered by the First Presidency is "great loneliness." What kind of alternative is that? Am I to accept that a Church which proclaims "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" would say that marriage and family simply aren't options for me? Yes, many people don't have the opportunity to marry in this life. That, in my opinion, is a tragedy. Why then should I *choose* loneliness? But if heterosexual marriage is "doomed to fail" and homosexual marriage is a sin, that's exactly what I'm expected to do.²¹

Very few indeed would *choose* to live a life of celibacy, especially in a Church community and culture that values family and relationships as highly as the LDS community.

Shortly after leaving the LDS Church, I explored the possibility of lifelong celibacy by seeking out a community that not only values celibacy but sees it as an exalted state. During my mission in southern France, I taught a young man who never joined the LDS Church but who always impressed me as a deeply spiritual, Christ-centered individual. We continued to correspond after I returned from my mission, and he ultimately joined a Roman Catholic monastic order, the Order of St. John. As I was

coming to terms with being gay, through this friend I sought and received permission to spend a summer at the monastery, praying, studying, and working with the monks, generally living under the same rules they lived under.

Though we usually observed silence as part of the discipline of the order, there were many opportunities over the course of the summer when it was appropriate to speak with the monks. Whenever I had a chance, I asked members of the order one-on-one to tell me more about what had moved them to make such an unconventional decision. I specifically asked them to tell me about what celibacy meant to them. Every single person responded that it would be very unwise to commit oneself to a life of celibacy because one was running away from one's sexuality. This motivation would not be sufficient to sustain an individual over the long haul and could, in fact, become destructive. One had, in effect, to feel *called* to celibacy. Furthermore, every monk I spoke with expressed the strong sense that it was a calling for a relatively small number of people.

The time that I spent with the brothers of the Order of St. John was one of the most spiritual experiences of my life, comparable in many ways to the spiritual high I had experienced as an LDS missionary. Taking the monks' advice to heart, I used this time for soul-searching, fasting, and prayer—asking God to help me discern whether I had a calling to celibacy—be it within a cloister or out in the wide world. Gradually it became clear to me that celibacy was not my calling. This realization came with a growing sense—congruous with my LDS upbringing—of the role an intimate relationship can play in our eternal, spiritual development.

Much of the language used to discuss homosexuality in the Church describes it as an urge to commit a sinful act. One can and must resist sinful urges. But I believe that it is more accurate to describe homosexuality as the way in which certain individuals are able to experience intimacy. No gay men or lesbians that I know view their same-gender orientation as being just about sex. I believe a more accurate description is that our sexual orientation determines what kinds of people we are most comfortable experiencing a broad range of intimacies with—emotional, spiritual, and social as well as sexual. While some remarkable individuals—both heterosexual and homosexual—do not experience such an intense need for intimacy, the majority—both gay and straight—long for it and feel incomplete without it. Confronted with the denial of any prospect of ever having an intimate relationship, many experience deep despair. Those who do not

achieve such intimacy experience this inability, in the words of Elder Oaks and Ben Christensen, as “tragic.”

While Roman Catholics, who have a long and rich history with celibacy, stress that it can never be externally imposed and that it should be viewed as a unique calling, the current policy of the LDS Church is to make it a requirement for an entire class of people, to which our failure to conform is considered sinful enough that it must result in excommunication. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the LDS Church does not hold a very exalted concept of celibacy. Traditionally those who are single have generally been viewed as less fortunate—or even more sinful—than those who are married.²² Those who choose to remain single have traditionally been viewed as fated “to remain separately and singly, without exaltation . . . ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory” (D&C 132:17, 16). While in the Roman Catholic Church, all positions of ordained leadership are explicitly reserved for those who have committed themselves to lives of celibacy, Elders Oaks and Wickman acknowledged that the LDS Church reserves its positions of high leadership, even on the ward and stake level, for those who are married. It is hard to imagine many Latter-day Saints embracing celibacy purely out of a negative motivation to avoid sin. Indeed, if the witness of the brothers of St. John has any value, it would be counterproductive to do so.

Celibacy is one of the greatest sacrifices that could possibly be asked of us. If I were to commit myself to it, I need to know that some higher purpose is served by it—and not just the purpose of my own personal salvation but the kind of larger purpose we find in the LDS belief that God’s purpose unfolds through families. As Ty Mansfield has written:

My whole life and perceived place in the Church had been built partly on my aspirations for a future family. When I finally confronted the hard reality that my lifelong desire might not be realized in this life, I became completely despondent. . . . But the Spirit of the living God has helped me to know that I do have a place in His kingdom—that I and every child of God who is willing to make and keep covenants, despite our differences, are desperately needed as part of His “body” if it is truly to be whole.²³

Mansfield would hesitate to describe celibacy as a calling, *per se*. He sees his commitment to celibacy simply as preparation to receive celestial marriage. Still he discusses living with same-gender attraction as an opportunity to serve others and to be a witness of Christ to the world. In this, I ap-

prehend a growing sense of how the sacrifice of celibacy can embody the love of God.

It is hard for me to know what life choices I might have made differently twenty years ago if the greater openness in relation to same-gender attraction that seems to be emerging in the Church today had prevailed when I was coming of age. What if I had grown up in a church where singleness had not been viewed as a sin and a curse, but instead as a possible means of blessing the Church and blessing others? When I was coming to terms with being gay in the mid-1980s, there was never any hint that I might be supported by the Church or its leaders in a path of celibacy. Homosexuality was still largely regarded in the Church as a “choice,” a “disease” that could be “cured,” or a “sin” that could be repented of. The language used to discuss homosexuality included words like “perversion” and “abomination,” which were factors in the plummeting self-esteem and rising depression that almost led me to attempt to take my own life. I can only imagine how things might have been different for me if someone, a bishop or a priesthood leader, had lovingly put his arms around me and told me: “I understand you did not choose this. God loves you and this will not interfere with your chances of returning to your Heavenly Father’s presence. I love you, so let’s work together on finding a way to help you be faithful and to help you be of service, even within the constraints you are living under.” This never happened, and I was forced to find my own way as best I could—outside of the Church. I am still convinced that leaving the Church for a very long time was the only way I could rebuild my self-esteem and begin to experience divine love again in the wake of the spiritual damage I suffered in the Church.

It is possible that even if someone had reached out to me in a compassionate way, I could not have stayed attached to the Church at that time. After reading Marilyn Matis’s account of her son’s life and suicide, I was struck by how loved and supported Stuart was by everyone significant in his life—his parents, his Church leaders, his friends. This impression was underscored by Robert Rees’s review of *In Quiet Desperation*, as he described his own interactions with Stuart.²⁴ Stuart had many fine Latter-day Saints who loved him and supported his commitment to celibacy. Yet he still succumbed to suicide, “choking,” as his suicide note put it, “on my own inferiority.”²⁵ To assume that my situation would have been just fine if only I had had then the kinds of support the Church is today willing to offer people is just too simplistic.

In their interview on same-gender attraction, Elders Oaks and Wickman implied that same-gender-oriented individuals enter into intimate relationships with each other because they cannot resist the pressures of living “in a society which is so saturated with sexuality.” As a result, Elder Wickman continued, “it perhaps is more troublesome now . . . for a person to look beyond their [sic] gender orientation to other aspects of who they are.” While I agree that TV advertising and programming, movies, pop music, magazines, and other aspects of mass culture are sex-saturated, even pornographic, and that this factor can make it more challenging to live chastely, I feel that the subsequent generalization about same-sex relationships misses an important point. We don’t enter into relations and forge long-term commitments (such as my fifteen-year commitment with my partner) because we are succumbing to a sex-saturated culture. Ultimately, we enter into and maintain such commitments because we need and are nurtured by intimate love. We seek and enter into intimate relationships, not because we are gay but because we are human.

Just like straight Latter-day Saints, gay and lesbian Latter-day Saints find meaning in intimate relationships. Regardless of the gender of one’s partner, fostering a successful lifelong commitment requires us to resist pressures and temptations that threaten to fray and undermine that relationship, including sexual temptations. Many of these relationships include children from previous marriages or by adoption. It requires us to develop all of the qualities that we as Latter-day Saints believe we came into this life to learn: selflessness, honesty, fidelity, and compassion. My committed relationship with my partner has been the context for the most significant spiritual and moral growth I have experienced in my life. It feels more akin to what I learned growing up and attending church than what I see reflected in our sex-obsessed popular culture. I thank my Heavenly Father daily for it, and I have never received any spiritual indication that my perception of this relationship as a gift of God was inaccurate.

Nevertheless, our relationships with significant others, no matter how significant, do not meet *all* our needs. I have, after twenty years away from the LDS Church, found myself turning back because of the realization that I am more whole, joyful, and centered with the Church’s teachings, guidance, community, and communion in my life. But increasingly I find my love for the Church and my love for my partner intertwined. I could not reject either and remain a person of integrity. I could not be dis-

loyal to either and not feel that at some level I was betraying both myself and God.

I believe that celibacy can be a positive path for gay and lesbian people. I know from my experience with Catholic monks in France, and now from my more recent experience with celibate gay Latter-day Saints like Ty Mansfield, that the practice of celibacy can bring a powerful and positive spiritual focus. It can permit those who commit to it in the proper spirit to grow in ways not otherwise possible. It enables forms of service not possible to those who enter into relationships or nurture families. If, furthermore, as some Church leaders are currently suggesting, chastity in this life is the only thing that can qualify gay and lesbian people for eternal marriage in the next life, it might be argued that, whatever the spiritual, emotional, or psychological costs of celibacy, it is worth the sacrifice. I have no basis for denying this as a general principle, though I trust Heavenly Father and I trust the guidance I have received through the Spirit that if I am faithful to my partner everything will eventually work out for the best.

As a practical matter, the cost of imposing celibacy on someone against his or her will is extremely high. Living up to such a standard is difficult and can be terribly isolating. I am concerned that imposing celibacy on an entire class of people based on a personal attribute which they did not choose and cannot change will inevitably foster a sense of inferiority and shame, especially in a Church that values family as highly as ours. At the very least, a growth-oriented approach should encourage us to seek ways to welcome gay and lesbian people into Church fellowship, even if they are not willing or able immediately to commit to celibacy. We would learn to trust that positive change occurs in people's lives as a result of inviting them into fellowship, not excluding them.

* * *

The debate about homosexuality in American churches has focused on whether it is a sin.²⁶ In LDS circles, an additional focus has, not surprisingly, been on the role of marriage in the LDS community and in the LDS concept of salvation.²⁷ In both LDS and non-LDS contexts, the argument has been advanced that sin implies the capability of choosing; and if a same-gender sexual orientation—which most concede is not chosen—inhibits an individual from finding intimacy within the bonds of heterosexual marriage, then the failure to marry cannot be a sin. Neither, argue the liberalizers, can seeking intimacy in a same-gender relationship.²⁸ In re-

cent years, while softening some of the harsh rhetoric describing homosexuality as an “abomination,” Church leaders have maintained that LDS scripture is unequivocal that exaltation can only be achieved through heterosexual temple marriage and that, if such marriage is not possible, then chastity is the only acceptable path. Therefore homosexual behavior must be sinful even if homosexual orientation is not.²⁹

Early in my spiritual journey, I felt I had a huge stake in this debate. The debate was clouded, I think, by fear and misunderstanding or hate on the part of many who insisted that homosexuality was a sin. I was naturally drawn to the genuine love, openness, and tolerance among the courageous few who embraced the liberalizing arguments. But I have gradually come to believe that my need to feel justified, and engaging in debates about the sinfulness of homosexuality to defend myself, was spiritually harmful.

A moment of truth came for me when I first began to read the Book of Mormon again after almost twenty years away from the Church. It was an emotional moment for me. I had felt the Spirit for some time prompting me to read it. As I sat on the edge of the bed holding in front of me an old, battered copy of the Book of Mormon that a friend had found at a garage sale and given me, partly as a joke, I realized that, in order to pray, I needed to acknowledge my many years of stubbornness, pride, and anger—at God, at the Church, at members of my family. I needed to acknowledge that I needed forgiveness and that I needed God’s guidance. That meant acknowledging my sinfulness.

As I made these verbal acknowledgments in my prayer, I was overcome by the purest sense of God’s love, by a completely transforming experience of God’s grace and forgiveness. If I wanted forgiveness, all I had to do was ask. All I had to do was turn to God. This overwhelming moment of grace prompted me to lay everything before God, to promise him that I would do “whatever you ask of me.” This was the most frightening, vulnerable prayer I have ever prayed. I had to acknowledge almost any possibility. Might the Spirit prompt me to leave my partner? But I received through the Spirit an assurance that whatever God asked of me, it would be based on love, he would prepare me to give it, and he would never ask of me anything that I could not give. I simply had to let go of my expectations and learn to trust. This has been the foundation of my relationship with God and has been my main source of strength ever since.

I understand now that I could never enter into this kind of a rela-

tionship—this kind of covenant—with God in a spirit of self-justification. Arguing about what constitutes a sin is precisely the kind of spirit that drives a wedge between us and God, that makes it impossible to do the one thing that makes any relationship with God meaningful: to listen. To listen without rationalizing, without justifications, without arguments. To listen to our fellow human beings, to the wisdom embodied in scripture, and, most of all, to the Spirit. Ultimately, if we listen to the Spirit and follow what we hear, we have no need of self-justification, not before God and certainly not before others. We may trust that what we cannot control or fix is forgiven through the Atonement, and we can focus on growing into the full stature of our creations.

I now have a new appreciation of why the fourth Article of Faith states that faith and repentance are the *first* principles of the gospel. I have come to understand repentance not merely as seeking forgiveness for and turning away from discrete wrongs that we commit—though a repentant person will do plenty of that—but as an approach to life that involves the recognition that, no matter how sanctified we become in this life, we will still not have reached the state of perfection to which God ultimately calls us. Repentance must not be something we do only when we commit some egregious error; rather it must be our fundamental orientation in this life and the eternities. The moment we think we are not in need of repentance, we have strayed.

I believe that this is why, when the wealthy young man came to Christ proclaiming that he had obeyed all of the commandments from his youth, Christ's immediate response was, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22). If we think that the point of discipleship to Christ is to bring us into conformity with some set of rules rather than to become what God would have us become, which is always more than what we are at any given moment, it is inevitable that we will reach a point where Christ asks more of us than the rules, and we will, like the young man in the story, go away sorrowful. This discipline of living a repentant life requires a type of humility that is absolutely inconsonant with self-justification or setting rules or bounds on what is expected of us. "That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, *but seeketh to become a law unto itself*, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still" (D&C 88:35; emphasis mine).

If self-justification drives a wedge between us and the Spirit, so does condemnation of others. In the parable of the debtors, after being forgiven a debt of 10,000 talents, a former debtor leaves his lord's presence only to go to a "fellobservant" who owed him one hundred pence, take him by the throat and demand, "Pay me that thou owest," and then have him cast into prison for his inability to pay. When news of this behavior reaches the lord, he revokes forgiveness of the 10,000 talent debt, and the ungrateful servant is "delivered . . . to the tormenters" (Matt. 8:23-35). When we undertake to judge others, we in essence establish the parameters for our own eventual treatment before the judgment seat of God. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:1-2; see also 3 Ne. 14:1-2). When we arrogate to ourselves the judgment which is reserved to God alone, we undermine the very mercy on which our own salvation depends. I believe this is why a repeated theme in scripture is the admonition to the believer to leave the lofty prerogative of judgment to God alone. "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:10). In the words of Alma, if we "are merciful unto [our] brethren," we "shall have mercy restored unto [us] again"; if we judge "righteously" we "shall have a righteous judgment" (Alma 41:14).

Apart from the spiritual peril involved in condemning others, from a practical standpoint we convince no one to repent by preaching at them or judging them. When married individuals tell us that we must be celibate for life, it feels as if "ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers" (Luke 11:46). Heterosexual Latter-day Saints may court, fall in love, make and enter into lifelong commitments, and then sexually consummate a relationship with the person of their choice, and feel that they do so with the approval of God and the blessing of the Church, even when to do so is simply to act on urges and impulses that come naturally to them.

The rhetorical device of emphasizing that "we all have struggles" usually comes across as self-serving. We *do* all have struggles. We *all*, gay and straight, have to struggle with selfishness, pride, addictions, anger, envy, or lust. Some of us face special challenges, such as a severe disability or the debilitating illness of a spouse. But citing one's own—or worse, another person's—struggles as a justification for condemning someone else does not demonstrate empathy. In my experience, those who have suf-

fered the most in life are those who are least likely to assume that they know exactly what someone else is going through or how someone else should conduct his or her life. Empathy is about learning and understanding, not about presuming. Gay folks are frequently condemned for making choices under circumstances that those condemning have never bothered to learn about.

The Church's mission has always been to encourage souls to come unto Christ. We do not do this by adding to people's burdens with misunderstanding and judgment when they are already weary and discouraged. We invite all to come to Christ by reminding *all* that "my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). We invite all by exhibiting unfeigned empathy, patience, compassion, and humility. We invite by putting our arms around those who are weary, by reminding them that we love them and will be there for them no matter what. If homosexuality is a sin, then we should be able to trust that the Spirit will lead those who struggle with same-sex attraction to deal with that attraction positively. To assume that we must alienate, exclude, and ostracize gay folks or they will not repent shows a lack of faith. "Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit" (D&C 11:12). But we cannot follow the Spirit if we have not entered into a relationship with the Spirit. And how will we enter into a relationship with the Spirit when we are driven from the heart of the Church, where we have the greatest opportunity of recognizing and receiving the Spirit?

On the other hand, if our negative views of homosexuality are simply culturally conditioned prejudice, if homosexuality is not a sin, then needlessly driving gay folks away from the Church through judgmentalism and arrogance will only be judged all the more grievous at the last day. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6). Surely there is no point in entering into debates about this. Surely, regardless of what the "true" understanding of scripture is, there is only one imperative in scripture for believers and that is, first of all, to repent daily of one's own sins and then to invite and encourage others to enter into the same path. I believe that the ultimate right and wrong in any "issue" hinges on how we deal with and treat one another. Neither self-justification nor self-righteousness makes sense within a gospel context.

I am not suggesting that we abandon the rules. The order of the Church requires rules and also requires that disciplinary decisions be made by Church leaders. I count myself lucky—and most members should also—not to have to make those decisions which are necessary for the administration of God's kingdom here on earth. In a broader sense, I truly believe that if we are obeying the Spirit, we will subject ourselves to a rule far more exacting than the Ten Commandments. Scripture and our temple covenants enjoin us to give up everything that we own and everything that we are. The question for gay and straight Latter-day Saint alike becomes, "How can I, given the unique constraints of my mortal existence, live in such a way as to maximize love, compassion, and mercy?" If we are truly following the Spirit and exercising free agency as Heavenly Father intended us to, it is possible that every one of us may answer this question differently, and yet we will find ourselves growing in a truer and more complete unity than we might ever have imagined possible.

* * *

I believe that a growth-oriented approach to the conflict over homosexuality will call us to focus more on loyalty—to each other and to the cause of the Church—than on perfect conformity. I look at the question of commitment to the Church from the wide-angle viewpoint of millennia of history and from the viewpoint of prophetic destiny. I consider our history as a Latter-day Saint people particularly instructive. In the early years of the Church, the first converts—our spiritual forebears—faced tremendous, seemingly overwhelming adversity. At times, that adversity literally threatened to annihilate them as a people. They survived by pulling together.

In the early Church, Joseph had tolerance for shockingly divergent points of view but little tolerance for disloyalty.³⁰ Doctrinal latitude combined with loyalty was functional in the early Church. That early community was too small and vulnerable to risk fragmentation over doctrinal differences. On the other hand, intense external pressures made it extremely advantageous to promote an ethic of supporting one another and bearing one another's burdens. This ethic, developed by the very concept of gathering with the Saints in a center place, sacrificing to build the Kirtland Temple, and suffering together through the Missouri trials, stood the Saints in good stead in the months and years following Joseph's assassination, as persecution drove them out of Nauvoo and sent them to the Great

Basin. The internal cohesion developed in these years made it possible for the Saints to withstand incredible external pressure during the decades of the federal government's antipolygamy campaign. I find it significant that, in these years, a much more tolerant attitude in relation to homosexuality also happened to prevail among Latter-day Saints than that which prevails today. Michael Quinn has documented that statutes against sodomy were enacted in nineteenth-century Utah only by federal imposition and that nineteenth-century Mormons did not really show much interest in enforcing them. Nineteenth-century Church leaders virtually never spoke about homosexuality, nor did they tend to excommunicate for homosexual offenses.³¹

In the years since the Manifesto, as the Saints have experienced ever-growing prosperity and inclusion in the American mainstream, we have seen a growing emphasis on conformity and a greater willingness to single out, isolate, and expel Saints who are viewed as nonconformist. But I believe the time is near when we will face ecological, economic, social, and political crises on a global scale. I believe that, as times get harder, those foundational values of loyalty, solidarity, humility, humanity, and discipline will stand us in good stead again. The sooner we come to see value, not in conformity but in diversity, the more successfully we will be able to work together in coping with the coming challenges. If we do not learn these values now, we will be forced to learn them later, just as the Saints of the nineteenth century were forced to learn them in Kirtland, Missouri, Illinois, and on the Great Plains.

The conventional values that prevail in America, grounded as they are in concepts of enlightened self-interest, will not enable us to make the kinds of sacrifices that will be required of us to meet the challenges of the coming millennium. I believe the values embedded in LDS scripture, teachings, and practice *will* prepare us, to the extent that we internalize and live them. Conventional American values tend to encourage us to strive for good, but only as long as the pursuit of goodness does not interfere with our own personal pursuit of happiness. Conventional American values tend to encourage philanthropy, but not sacrifice. Conventional attitudes toward sexual morality tend to focus on self-fulfillment, rather than on loyalty to the other. Such values can only take us so far.

Gay and lesbian Latter-day Saints currently have an opportunity to learn these lessons in ways that other Latter-day Saints do not. We know what it is like to be excluded for no reason other than who we are. Even in

wards where we experience a relative degree of welcome, we face constant misunderstanding. To the extent that we wish to participate in the LDS community, we are required to cultivate an unusual degree of patience and humility. If we learn to accept these burdens with equanimity and if we can, despite them, seek out opportunities for service, I am convinced that such service will prepare us for a much more important work in coming years.

* * *

Some will accuse me of picking and choosing which commandments I want to obey. I hope that more thoughtful people will understand that I am seeking a way forward through a complex and difficult issue, a way that can succeed in drawing real people to the Church, rather than utterly alienating them or driving them to despair and suicide. A truly gospel-oriented approach will not promote the all-or-nothing proposition that gay people must either live in full conformity with current Church standards or that they must live in a state of promiscuity and alienation. As long as our straight brothers and sisters have no interest in lifelong celibacy, rather than condemning gay Saints for their unwillingness to commit to it, we need to celebrate and support decisions to embrace and live as many of the principles of the gospel as possible. Surely the wider Church, gay and lesbian people themselves, their families, friends, and loved ones, and the communities they live in all have a vested interest in promoting moral choices, spiritual living, and a constructive, nurturing relationship with the Church, even if they do so under conditions that are not ideal. On the other hand, a willingness to accept and promote progress, even when it falls short of the ideal, is a hallmark of the Christian virtues of patience, hope, faith, and compassion. It reflects the vision that by entering into constructive relationships and making improvements today, we are taking a road that will some day lead to better and greater goods tomorrow until, in a time and a place currently hidden from our view, we enter the perfect realm.

We especially need to embrace those who make the very difficult decision to attend meetings regularly and participate in worship in places where previously they have experienced alienation, rejection, and denigration. We need to trust that, when an individual chooses to attend church, it is usually a sign that the Spirit is at work in that person's life. Even if an individual is unable to be received into formal membership and cannot

take the sacrament, be ordained to priesthood office (if male), accept ward callings, or attend the temple, a rich spiritual life can still be fostered through meeting attendance, prayer, scripture study, and service. It is impossible for me to see why such involvement should not be creatively fostered in every way imaginable, perhaps even developing new and unique programs to address specific needs of gay and lesbian Saints.

For gay and lesbian Saints, such a course will require a special kind of patience. It is extremely difficult to participate wholeheartedly in a community in which there is a painful history. Sometimes it may be necessary to take time away. It can seem unbearable to participate actively in a community where you encounter constant comments or behavior that make you feel inferior. Even if we make the Promethean sacrifice of lifelong celibacy, in a Church where the highest callings are available only to those who are married and where there is such a huge focus on families, in wards where we sit alone in the pews while others are accompanied by a spouse and children, it will be hard not to feel inferior in some fundamental way. If, on the other hand, we choose a relationship with a significant other of the same sex, the feelings of inferiority that can flow from the fact of being excommunicated and excluded from partaking of the sacrament, from Church callings, and from temple service may overwhelm any remaining sense of connection to our Church.

The only way any of us can remain committed under these circumstances, I believe, is through an intimate relationship with God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The only reason I have entered into this path is because the Spirit drew me into it. My ongoing relationship with the Spirit reassures me of God's infinite love for me, of my infinite value to God, and of the unique role I have to play in the unfolding of God's kingdom, even if that role is not understood by my heterosexual brothers and sisters. The Spirit reminds me that the indignities I suffer in this life cannot detract from my relationship with God or frustrate my ultimate destiny as God's child. The Spirit reminds me that there is nothing under heaven that can stand between me and the love of God. And that love is constantly calling me—and all of us—into a deeper relationship with God and with God's Church. The Spirit testifies to me that the Church is true, that its leaders are called by God and inspired, and that they hold the keys of authority to establish God's kingdom here below. To affirm these beliefs enhances my humanity as a child of God; it does not detract from it. The Spirit also testifies to me that even when I feel excluded from the

great stream of activity in the Church, I am not excluded in any ultimate sense, so long as I remain as faithful as I possibly can under the constraints within which I am called to live now.

* * *

I also believe that we gay and lesbian Saints are not the only ones being tried. As I complete the writing of this essay, I have reflected on my recent experience at the national convention of Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons, in Portland, Oregon. I was struck by the depth of faith and love I saw exhibited in so many gay Latter-day Saints who have had to struggle too often all alone. It was heartbreaking to contemplate how many have been forced to find a way with no support from the one institution so many of us have given our whole hearts and lives to. While some of us are gradually seeing our families become supportive (I am blessedly one of these), almost all of us have suffered alienation from our families for at least some time or to some extent. Many of us are still cut off from the one group of people we were taught by the Church to expect unconditional love from. Despite the painful isolation and misunderstanding many of us have experienced, I am amazed at how many of us have clung to our moral compass; at how many of us have clung to the basic principles of love, tenderness, patience, mercy, humility, forgiveness, compassion, and, yes, even chastity; how many of us have found that even when we were all alone, if we turned to God, God was there for us and was willing to guide us in our journeys.

Among my brothers and sisters at Affirmation, I witnessed much alienation from the Church and anger at its leaders. But I do not believe this alienation and anger are because we hate the Church or do not value it. It is because of the opposite: because we loved the Church with our whole hearts. If many of us dared to admit our love, the pain and sadness of being so profoundly alienated from the one institution that has provided so much meaning and hope in our lives can feel almost too great to bear. It feels as if the sadness will swallow us up. Part of the reason I have written this is because I have learned that, by opening ourselves to the love we feel not only for God and for our families but for our Church as well, we can discover new depths of joy. I have discovered that if we open ourselves to engage, the Spirit will walk every step of this journey with us.

I am gradually learning that there is only one characteristic that ultimately can make us godlike, and it is love. Every other virtue flows out of

love. We believe, even against incredible odds, because we love. We obey because we love. We reserve our sexual expression for the right time and the right place and the right person because we love. We forgive because we love. We give thanks because we love. We wait in patience and hope because we love.

The practice of love in all its manifestations refines and perfects our souls. It is what prepares us for the eternities. As we pass through the fires of adversity in this life and as we come in the next life to the watchers and guardians who keep the way into eternal life, it is love that will teach us the signs and the passwords that can bring us back to our Heavenly Father and Mother. Love is what will enable God to recognize us as his children and enable us to recognize God as our Father. Love, not the incidents of mortality, is what will train us to become divine parents in the next life.

Learning all of the dimensions of divine love—love of God, love of neighbor, love of parents, love of enemies, and intimate love of one's life partner—is, I believe, what this life is all about. That is why I suspect the Spirit prompts me to continue to nurture my love for my partner. It is why those gay men and women who have renounced intimate love to claim the love of Church fellowship—even in a Church that for the most part does not understand them—have discovered a path of love that will surely save them as well. It is also why I believe we should support in whatever way we can the love of men and women who have chosen to negotiate the difficult dynamics that arise when spouses are of different sexual orientations. The choice to love should always be supported. Love is too grand, too large, too divine for any one of us to learn every aspect of it in this life. This is why we need to come together as a Church: to see love reflected in the lives of others. Only by learning as much of it as we can will we be ready for everything God has prepared for us.

Notes

1. I've described this experience in more detail in John D. Gustav-Wrathall, "The Tug of Home," Letter to the Editor, *Sunstone*, Issue 139 (November 2005): 2–4, and John D. Gustav-Wrathall, "A Gay Mormon's Testimony," *Sunstone*, Issue 141 (April 2006): 52–57.

2. There has been a fair amount of discussion in print about whether to use the terms "gay" and "lesbian," "same-sex attraction," "same-gender attraction," or "homosexuality." Part of the difficulty of choosing one term over another is that they each connote slightly different things, which highlights one of the historic difficulties in discussing this topic: We're not all agreed on the

exact nature of the phenomenon we're talking about. One of the reasons "gay" has been rejected by those who prefer "same-sex attraction" or "same-gender attraction" is that it supposedly connotes a "lifestyle" which they reject. Among those who self-identify as "gay," however, the term does not generally connote any particular lifestyle but is simply used to describe anyone who is sexually attracted exclusively to members of the same sex. This includes individuals who have not admitted their sexual orientation to themselves or others, who are celibate, who are heterosexually married, etc. Another objection to the term "gay" is that using it implies that one's whole existence is defined by it. Again, most who use this term to describe themselves see gayness as nothing more than a characteristic, like "white," "left-handed," "middle-aged," "American," "Mormon," etc. That is why turning the adjective "gay" into a noun (eg., "gays") is generally frowned upon, while continuing to use "gay" as an adjective is preferred (e.g., "gay man," "gay Latter-day Saint," etc.). I prefer the term "gay," though I am not uncomfortable with other terms.

3. Cloy Jenkins et al., *Prologue: An Examination of the Mormon Attitude toward Homosexuality* (Los Angeles: Prometheus Enterprises, 1978).

4. Gary T. Horlacher, "Religion and Sexual Orientation in Conflict: Changing Values of Same-Sex Oriented Mormons," Paper presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) Conference, Portland, Oregon, October 19–21, 2006. I also discussed Horlacher's research with him in person. Horlacher contacted his interviewees through organizations such as Evergreen International, Family Fellowship, Reconciliation, Gamofites, and Affirmation. His participants were self-selected and may therefore not have been representative of Mormon gay men and lesbians as a whole.

5. Erin Eldridge, *Born That Way? A True Story of Overcoming Same-Sex Attraction with Insights for Friends, Families, and Leaders* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994). Because "Erin Eldridge" is a pseudonym, there has been some controversy about whether she is a real person. David Pruden, executive director of Evergreen International, claimed to know her personally and stated that, as of this writing, "she and her husband are currently expecting their third child." David Pruden, "Just the Facts," August 5, 2006, Evergreen International's website, http://www.evergreeninternational.org/Just_the_Facts.htm (accessed September 11, 2006).

6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "What Are People Asking about Us?" *Ensign*, November 1998, 70.

7. Fred and Marilyn Matis and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation: Un-*

Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004).

8. *Ibid.*, 228–30.

9. Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman, interviewed by LDS Public Relations, “Same Gender Attraction,” August 2006, <http://www.lds.org/newsroom/issues/answer/0,19491,6056-1-202-4-202,00.html> (accessed August 22, 2006).

10. Ben Christensen, “Getting Out/Staying In: One Mormon Straight/Gay Marriage,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 121–32.

11. Lester J. Leavitt, *Forbidden Friends*, 2d ed. (Self-published, 2006), PDF in my possession courtesy of Lester Leavitt.

12. Lester J. Leavitt, Email to John Gustav-Wrathall, December 24, 2006.

13. Gustav-Wrathall, “Gay Mormon’s Testimony.”

14. John D. Gustav-Wrathall, “Homosexuality and LDS Faith,” Paper presented at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, August 9–12, 2006.

15. John D. Wrathall, “Sexual Terrorism,” *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance* 3 (1997): 166–82; see also Gustav-Wrathall, “Gay Mormon’s Testimony.”

16. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 63–64.

17. Boyd K. Packer, “Covenants,” *Ensign*, November 1990, 84; No author, “Understanding and Helping Those Who Have Homosexual Problems: Suggestions for Ecclesiastical Leaders,” pamphlet (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992); Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?”; Dallin H. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, October 1995, 7–14; Gordon B. Hinckley, Interview with Larry King, “Larry King Live,” CNN, December 26, 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0472/26/lkl.09.html> (accessed December 15, 2006); Oaks and Wickman, “Same Gender Attraction.”

18. Oaks and Wickman, “Same Gender Attraction.”

19. Although the language in the interview is very male-oriented, one assumes that Elders Oaks and Wickman would view their comments as applying to both men and women. It seems reasonable to assume, for instance, that women with same-gender attraction are encouraged to marry only if they “feel a great attraction” for a “son of God.” *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Christensen, “Getting Out/Staying In,” 150–51.

22. Marybeth Raynes and Erin Parsons, “Single Cursedness: An Overview of LDS Authorities’ Statements about Unmarried People,” in *Multiply*

and Replenish: *Mormon Essays on Sex and Family*, edited by Brent Corcoran (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 217–30; and Delmont R. Oswald, “A Lone Man in the Garden,” in *ibid.*, 231–38.

23. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 228–30.

24. Robert A. Rees, “Between Suicide and Celibacy,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 208–17.

25. Stuart Matis, quoted in Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 19.

26. In Protestant and Catholic circles, discussion about homosexuality has focused on five or six biblical texts that have historically been used to condemn homosexuality. Discussion has also centered on the natural order and God’s intention for creation. The biblical texts in question include two Leviticus texts (18:22, 20:13) that describe it as an abomination for a “man to lie with a man as with a woman.” Discussion about this text has concentrated on whether it is appropriate to apply portions of the Levitical purity code when Christians believe the Levitical law was superseded in Christ. The Sodom and Gomorrah story in Genesis 19 about an incident of threatened homosexual rape has occasionally been used as proof of God’s wrath toward homosexuals, though liberal interpreters have pointed out that the scene merely illustrated the inhospitality and wickedness of the Sodomites in threatening to rape an angelic messenger and cannot be used to generalize about consensual, committed same-sex relationships. Romans 1:26–28 describes those who forsake “natural affections” as examples of what happens when one turns away from the Creator. Liberals have questioned the application of Paul’s term “against nature” to those who, by nature, are born gay or lesbian, and have pointed out that many gay men and lesbians devoutly worship the Creator. Finally, two catalogs of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9–12 and 1 Timothy 1:8–10 that condemn effeminacy and sexual perversion have been seen as a condemnation of homosexuality, though the translations of the Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* as “homosexual” in these texts has been disputed. See Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?: A Positive Christian Response* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994); James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); John Shelby Spong, *Living in Sin?: A Bishop Re-thinks Human Sexuality* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990); John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Villard Books, 1994).

27. See Wayne Schow, "Homosexuality, Mormon Doctrine, and Christianity: A Father's Perspective," *Sunstone*, February 1990, 9–12; Ron Schow, Wayne Schow, and Marybeth Raynes, *Peculiar People: Mormons and Same-Sex Orientation* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991); and the following four articles from *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*: Gary M. Watts, "The Logical Next Step: Affirming Same-Sex Relationships," 31, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 49–57; Robert A. Rees, "'In a Dark Time the Eye Begins to See': Personal Reflections on Homosexuality among the Mormons at the Beginning of a New Millennium," 33, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 137–51; Wayne Schow, "Sexual Morality Revisited," 37, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 114–36; and Ron Schow, "Homosexual Attraction and LDS Marriage Decisions," 38, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 133–43. There is no mention of homosexuality (either implicit or explicit) in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, or the Pearl of Great Price. Obviously, however, heterosexual marriage plays a much more elevated role in LDS theology than in Protestant or Catholic theology.

28. See especially Watts, "The Logical Next Step," and Schow, "Sexual Morality Revisited."

29. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction"; The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102; Oaks and Wickman, "Same-Gender Attraction."

30. Don Bradley, "The Grand Fundamental Principles of Mormonism': Joseph Smith's Unfinished Reformation," *Sunstone*, Issue 141 (April 2006): 32–41; Van Hale, "Exploring the Mind of Joseph Smith on LDS Diversity," Paper presented at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, August 9–12, 2006. The portraits in these papers of the Prophet's tolerance of doctrinal latitude and simultaneous insistence on personal loyalty are consistent with the conclusions of other biographers, including Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1977), see esp. chap. 13, "Dissent in Nauvoo"; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), esp. chap. 2, "The First Five Presiding Priesthood Quorums," 39–77, and chap. 3, "Theocratic Beginnings," 79–103; Richard Lyman Bushman with the assistance of Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), esp. chap. 24, "Temporalities and Spiritualities," 417–35, chap. 26, "Perils," 459–81, and chap. 27, "Thickets," 482–99. Joseph's vision of freedom of conscience was breathtaking for his day. For example, Michael Quinn, *Origins of Power*, 107–8, documents how Joseph's Nauvoo was one of the first American cities to extend full religious freedom to Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. But Joseph also had a concern for personal loyalty that verged on paranoia, illus-

trated by his formation of a secret police force in Nauvoo in 1843. Ibid., 116–17.

31. D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); and Rocky O'Donovan, "‘The Abominable and Detestable Crime against Nature’: A Brief History of Homosexuality and Mormonism," in *Multiply and Replenish*, 123–70.

Once upon July

David Clark Knowlton

*What hue lies in the slit of anger
ample and pure as night
what color the channel
blood comes through?*

—Audre Lord¹

At home it was hot . . . days and days above a hundred. I could imagine the leaves of summer wilting in the afternoon heat. But that was so far away on the other side of the equator.

Here it was cold. Although it was July, I had on my parka and a sweater as I walked down a rough, cobble-stoned street shaded by two-story, pastel-colored adobe walls. I listened to the sibilant clipping of Bolivian Spanish and the soft guttural rattle of Aymara as people negotiated prices and shared gossip in the small stores whose light rushed out, like warmth, into the narrow street.

It was July 1994. My teaching duties had finished at Brigham Young University; and come that fall, I would work at Colorado College. My mother's health was improving, and I felt I could go to Bolivia. I was staying in an inexpensive hotel, in a cold, narrow room. Instead of a window it had curtained, glass doors that opened onto a second-floor balcony above the street by the market. It was noisy and had a lumpy, uncomfortable bed, but it brought back memories. I had stayed here years ago when I came to this small, but important, town on Lake Titicaca to do field research. But I really wasn't talking with anyone. I felt wilted, as if the water of my life had evaporated under a mean sun.

I was trying to write a book about Bolivia and Mormonism, the book I was given leave to write before BYU announced it would not retain

me after my third-year review. My leave, though, had disappeared in writing a lengthy appeal of their decision in vain, in hoping futilely for reason and brotherhood in that process, and in many nights on hospital couches, sometimes sleeping fitfully and sometimes praying desperately for my mother's life to be spared.

I felt I had withered to a faint, green speck, the size of a period. At night, every night, I relived the harsh words spoken and written about me at the university and my anguish about my mother who wanted so badly to live that she let them slice her stomach in three sections to peel it back, remove her wilted liver and connect over hours and hours of painstaking surgery a new one from someone else's tragedy. When I wakened, I ached. I did not have a firm hold on who I was, but I knew there had been a long, leafy sentence before the period I now had become.

Somewhere, I suppose, I knew it was really a semicolon with more to come. But I felt small, fetal, and closed at the end of an existence that somehow kept gracelessly slipping past the period's guard.

As I wandered around town like some silent wraith, I could feel the cobbles through the soles of my shoes, as if I walked only on periods and couldn't even wish for commas, colons, or question marks.

I had first come to this town almost twenty years before on a P-day excursion with my district of missionaries. I remembered my awe at this hamlet watched over by an old, elaborate, Moorish basilica in honor of the Virgin of Copacabana. She was named after the town. But the surrounding terraced hills and the deep blue lake whose distant shore I could not see dwarfed her massive church. I had been back many times as an anthropologist and had lived there for some months nine years before while doing fieldwork.

Then I was a Latter-day Saint, nursed with faith and swaddled with identity. Now I did not feel I was anyone. I had become used to nightmares at night and silence, emptiness, and solitude during the day.

* * *

A year before, on a June evening in 1993, I awaited the much-belated results of my third-year review from BYU. I knew what was coming, but I hoped I was wrong. I waited and waited, anxiety surging through my veins.

To survive the wait on that June evening, I threw myself over and over into the sultry melody, filled with *saudades*, of Heitor Villalobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras Number 5*. Whether in the cellos or the wordless so-

prano, I, too, would sway soulfully in the delicious presence of absence described by that Portuguese word that cannot find a mate in English. The music reminded me of other cultures, other worlds, other ways of being, and other feelings as I waited.

Around 2:00 A.M. on that sultry summer's night, the chair of the anthropology department, John Hawkins, his face sharpened by tension and his voice weakened with grief, walked through my apartment's open door with a letter from the university retention and tenure committee.² He read the letter to me, his voice conveying a sense of almost disbelief. In his decades at BYU, he had never heard of the university firing people at third-year review. He was in shock. He had not believed me when I predicted this would happen. Oddly, I felt a strange calm, perhaps still from the music, and perhaps from finally reaching what I had felt for several months was likely to happen.

We discussed strategy, and he expressed his loyalty and support, although I know that I was difficult for him. He had struggled to find ways to mentor me and to rein in what he saw as self-destructive, or perhaps just quixotic, tendencies. He had warned me not to report, in an article on Mormon masculinity, what I had been told about the Church Office Building being a phallic symbol, but his warning didn't make sense to me.³ John felt people might be deeply offended by comparing a symbol of something sacred to them, the Church, to genitalia, despite the rich Freudian associations. Yet to me, it all seemed so obvious and so ho-hum. But he was right. That image, and indeed the article, threatened many people, as did my research on the guerrilla movements that were targeting the Church in South America with bombings and missionary assassinations.

At the long table where the university's vice presidents heard my second appeal during the fall of 1993, BYU President Rex Lee slyly argued that, while the image was not legally obscene, it felt so in the context of Mormonism. He challenged my use of Freud, whose thought he felt was much discredited and had no place in the academy. One of the vice presidents insisted over and over that by using Freud I had done something unacceptable in the academy.

Then it was my turn to be in shock. I felt as if I had moved into a world where everything was not what I had always assumed it was. White was gray and red was orange. Freud was taboo. What the guerrillas had said about Mormons was interpreted as my words. I was made out to be a

bad anthropologist who just wrote personal essays; but as they also seemed to suggest, I was such a good anthropologist that I had quit being a Mormon, since I was guided more by anthropology, they felt, than the gospel. I suffered from a peasant-centered view that mangled my science, yet I wrote such interesting essays that the accuser hoped I would stay at the university, even though it seemed to me he was doing everything to keep me from staying.

John had warned me, but I had not understood and instead had published that evidently offensive image and had spoken many other things that evidently offended many men at BYU. I still could not believe how strongly offense was taken.

Another time John and I were sitting on the lawn outside the Harris Fine Arts Center, after listening to Elders Neal A. Maxwell and Henry B. Eyring deliver diatribes against critical theory and so-called postmodernism, because of challenges these bodies of thought made to authority. As we sat there, against a background of passing legs, John shifted the subject and said, "David, you wouldn't be in trouble if you only dressed differently." I did not know that there was a dress code that disapproved of how I was dressed—in sandals, jeans and a bright-colored shirt. At most universities I would have been almost conservative in my dress. Another BYU anthropologist sent the message through his son that I was a good ethnographer and that, as a result, he could not understand why I had not figured out how the system worked. But, as I asked John, bewildered, "Why didn't you tell me there was an unwritten dress code? I didn't attend this university as a student, so came to it unaware of its culture."

John, in his dress slacks, light pastel shirt, tie, and spit-shined shoes, struggled to understand me. He had gone out of his way to recruit me, treated me as a younger brother, and, uncomfortably, sat beside me when the representative of the university committee rejected his arguments on my behalf, refused his observations of procedural irregularities, and attacked the department's integrity and quality. The committee claimed that John had provided the dagger with which they slaughtered my record. He was hurt because he had never intended such an effect.

A little over a month later, in November 1994, John left his classes to sit with me all day in the LDS Hospital waiting room while the surgeons struggled, hour after hour, to give my mother a new liver, despite the shriveling of a critical artery or vein needed for that vascularly rich organ. He brought me food.

Alan Wilkins, who had been appointed associate academic vice president in the fall of 1993, if I remember correctly, and President Rex Lee both called the intensive care waiting room while we struggled with fear and anxiety, to express support and to tell me my mother was in their prayers. As I stood in the harsh light of the reflectively waxed hospital hall and people pushed past my huddled back, they also asked permission to speak with my stake president about my personal worthiness. I interpreted this as a trap. It made their well-wishing cruel. I refused to give up my legally sanctioned priest-penitent privilege because I thought it a bad precedent but gave them permission to ask me the temple recommend questions, if they were worried about my worthiness. They did not call back.

I was furious that they tried to use my time of anguish to persuade me to give up that important privilege, thinking they might have found an ecclesiastical loophole that would release them from ruling on my appeal. They spoke with kindness and solicitousness, but to me their purpose seemed vile.

After two very long operations over two consecutive days, the surgeons told my siblings and me that they had done their best but that there were complications. They did not know if the transplant was a success.

We were allowed, from time to time, in the shock trauma intensive care room where they were caring for my mother. She seemed a pale, haunted cyborg with all the machines attached to her, larger tubes down her throat, and smaller tubes draining various wounds in her abdomen. She oozed blood through those smaller tubes; and minute by minute, still smaller tubes dripped a constant supply of new blood into her veins.

She wanted to live. Twenty years previously she had received an unknown disease, later called hepatitis-C, from just such a bag of blood. Year after year she had less energy and had more trouble concentrating as her skin yellowed and physicians struggled to understand why her liver was scarred when she never drank alcohol and had no history of hepatitis. Yet she wanted to enjoy her grandchildren, perform on the organ, and continue her research. She wanted to return to her parents' homelands in Friesland and Yorkshire again.

I had accepted the job at BYU in 1990, despite serious misgivings and concerns, because I needed to be by her side and my father's side as she fought. After my first four months, in early 1991, my father died of a sudden heart attack. Grief devastated my mother. As she weakened and

required more constant care, the “Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve” issued its “Statement on Symposia,”⁴ and my stake president, Kerry Heinz, took a sudden interest in my writings and speeches. My mother said, “Son, I trust you will listen to the Lord. I believe in you, but I cannot pay attention. I have to devote all my energies to fighting for my life.”

During the intervening years, my sister-in-law and I had to make her meals, even though her sense of taste was troubled and her dietary requirements ever more exacting. Nothing was ever good enough. She watched and recorded all the cooking shows and assiduously collected recipes for us to try. She had constant appointments with a host of medical specialists as they drew ever more blood until her arms were mottled black, brown, and purple. One day a doctor said, “Too bad you’re in your mid-sixties; otherwise you would be a good candidate for a transplant.” We were shocked, because we had been led to believe that a transplant was, in fact, the goal, that we were struggling to keep her in good health while waiting for a liver to become available. But she had never been placed on the list.

We hustled. We found the right doctors and got her on the list, requiring ever more visits to another host of specialists and meetings with successful liver recipients. Around this time John made his night-time visit to my apartment with the fateful letter, and President Heinz called me in one last time. He had a pile of selections from my writings and partial transcripts of my talks with phrases highlighted in florescent yellow by, presumably, some unknown Church bureaucrat, along with the full texts I had provided him. After a long and difficult conversation, he said, “David, this may cost me my Church career, but I can find no reason to hold a court on you. I am washing my hands of this situation.”

For almost two years before this, 1991–93, he would call me in every few months to speak with me about something I was reputed to have said or written. Sometimes our conversations were angry. Often they involved long questions and disagreements as well as attempts at understanding, but always they were difficult and tense.

He had not known me before being instructed to call me in. As a result he spoke with my bishop to try to understand me. Richard Lambert was my bishop. An attorney and distant relative of mine, he also claimed friendship with Michael Quinn, who had been forced out of BYU in January 1988. Bishop Lambert always expressed interest, support, and love.

During one long conversation in his office, we were talking about the difficulties of being single and thirty-something in the Church. Somehow the conversation turned to God, and I started to cry. I could not believe the tears that flowed down my face nor the sobs that shook my chest, since I cried only in private. But I was crying in front of him, because of his care, because I trusted him, and because everything was so very hard.

He asked if he could give me a blessing. As he placed his hands on my head, I continued to weep. He gave a long blessing that opened me and let me know that God loved me and that I had favor in his sight. Big, heavy tears poured down my cheeks, darkening the front of my shirt.

* * *

While my mother was still in the hospital during the fall of 1993, slowly gaining strength and color, my aunts and my two brothers insisted I keep my reservation to go to the national anthropology meetings in Washington, D.C. I did not want to go. I wanted to be at the hospital, to watch and help. They insisted. I booked my flight.

When in Washington, the American Anthropological Association meets at the Hilton off Connecticut Avenue. I sat in the entrance watching people swirl around, leadenly talking to those I knew. Inside I was at the hospital. My confidence in myself as a scholar and anthropologist was slipping. The phrases used to attack me and my scholarship echoed insistently. I wrote only I-centered essays. I did not do research. Anthropologists would dismiss my work as unworthy. My mind muted the myriad voices of support, acceptance, and approval.

I could not stand to be in the building and walked down Connecticut Avenue and across the bridge over Rock Creek to go to another hotel where the American Academy of Religion, I believe, was meeting. The street was icy, and it was biting cold. But the sharpness of the air as it stung my cheeks felt good against the overwhelming hurt inside.

I roamed around the book exhibits and sat for awhile in that hotel before deciding to return to the Hilton. As I crossed the bridge over Rock Creek's deep chasm, a strong feeling imposed itself on me. Jump. Jump. It will be over. Jump.

It frightened me. I did not have the confidence that I could resist it. I was so afraid of walking near the edge that I walked down the middle of the bridge, in the road, frightening the drivers. But I could not trust myself near the sharp, icy edge.

* * *

When I returned from Washington, my family insisted I fulfill a contract to spend three weeks in Colorado teaching a block class on world systems theory, since I was on leave from BYU. I went, but I did not want to be there either. I wanted to be at the hospital. In Colorado Springs, other than when I was teaching or prepping, I would sit in an armchair in the apartment provided by Colorado College and wait for it to become night so I could go to bed. Yet every night I had nightmares.

While I was sitting in that chair that cold and dark December of 1993, Alan Wilkins called me. He apologized for not calling me earlier. He said that the decision of the BYU vice presidents regarding my appeal had already been released to the press but that I should have received it first. He said they had turned down my appeal. I was effectively fired.

I asked when the university would give me a copy of its reasoned responses to the issues in my appeal. He said no such thing would be forthcoming. I said, "That means, Alan, that you are firing me without letting me know why. When will I be informed as to the reasons for my firing?" He said they would not tell me. I pushed. He hesitantly admitted that the vice presidents had looked into the future and decided I would be a detriment to the Church and for that reason they were letting me go.

My head spun. "You mean you are firing me for something I haven't even done?"

Alan, tall, thin, dark-haired and solicitous, known for his applications of anthropological theories of culture to understanding corporations, had entered my case when he was named associate academic vice president the year before. My relations with the administration prior to that had been difficult and conflicted. Alan brought a smoothness, an apparent concern for my well being, and an important civility into the process. He was so nice. It was seductive.

But in that niceness and solicitousness, I felt hurt. What the administration did struck me as nasty. It was hard-ball, vicious politics, in an ostensibly religious context of brotherhood. Alan's kindness, ironically, made it hurt more.

When my block class ended, I drove back to Utah over the snowy Colorado Plateau and went to the hospital. Shortly before Christmas they released my mother.

* * *

When I awoke one morning in my Bolivian room, my breath was visible and winter's chill had stiffened my joints. Frost feathered the glass panes of the doors as the first bus honked its horn in warning of its pre-dawn departure.

I dressed: long johns, pants, shirt, sweater, extra socks, gloves, parka, cap and a long scarf of alpaca wool wrapped round my neck. It was too cold to type. Unusually cold.

The stars of the Milky Way, like a flickering band of white, so wide it covered half the sky, still shone in the almost-dawn sky, challenging the town's faltering lamps. Like a million cobbles, it paved a path from horizon to horizon. It was a *thaki*, a *ñan*, a road for souls to wander from death to life as it stretched from horizon to horizon. So many points. So many luminous bumps.

I sat on a rustic bench in the market huddled over a glass of hot *api*, a fruit-flavored, purple corn gruel. The air filled with the rush of kerosene flaming under huge kettles of *api*, coffee, and milk as the market women, made bulky under layers and layers of skirts, sweaters, and shawls, called out to each passerby and ladled many a cup of purchased warmth.

They say the dawn is dangerous. It is the coldest time of night, and it is humid. It is when it freezes the hardest, when frost is like a tangible being, falling from the night sky and haunting your every breath. I sat, staring into my *api*'s purple and white swirls while tearing at a piece of bread, as if I had no language, no way of sharing my thoughts with others. My thoughts were too much. They were the entire night's sky that somehow would have needed to be stuffed into words and sentences. I could not do it. And so I sat, my hands slowly warming but my heart cold, listening as morning slowly came.

When the bells rang, calling people to first mass, I too got up, wrapped my scarf firmly about my neck and creakily made my way to the basilica gleaming white in the morning's first sun. I sat on the hard pews, among a huddle of pilgrims and townsmen in the vast stretch of church, gold leaf, and colonial religious art. I looked up at the baroque, golden altar, an excess of movement and yellow light, at the dark Virgin, child in arms, among the panels and levels of a vertical spiritual world.

I listened to mass, standing and sitting, trying to repeat the prayers, "*Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos, santificado sea tu nombre . . .*" the choir and organ sounding reedily behind me. This wasn't my tradition, but I tried to participate and to feel the faith of the pilgrims. As we knelt, and

around me they prayed, I felt their yearnings, their pain, their desires. My back tingled and tears moistened my eyes. I looked at the Virgin, but she seemed so distant, so loving for others. She wasn't mine.

When mass ended, I walked down to the lakeshore around the intensely blue half-moon bay where umbrellas awaited visitors and tables stood empty. Boats, small wooden boats with outboard motors, were firing as they filled with passengers and headed into the seeming endlessness of the lake, a swelling, azure void.

* * *

The Christmas of 1993 was the last Christmas, but we had hoped it was the beginning of many. We gathered 'round the tree, my mother still with tubes in her arms, to watch my niece and nephews open gifts as they chattered and chirped with excitement. We all were surprised to find among the mound of presents gifts to each of us from my mother.

"But, Mom, you were in the hospital for almost two months. When did you shop?"

"I asked someone to buy them for me and have them wrapped."

My gift was a long, heavy box containing a baritone set of wind chimes tuned to a Japanese scale. I had stood in Shapiro's a month or so before, sounding it softly, over and over, while my cousin shopped. Of all the wind chimes on display I liked that one the best. Its resonant notes had an almost transcendent sound, as if in their vibrations they could create a new world.

* * *

I used to carry a beeper and for months I lived, waiting for it to sound. All of us—my brothers, my mother, and I—had been given them, part of the waiting for the doctors to find my mother a liver. Every day she was weaker, her mind more fragile from the toxins. It was harder and harder to make food she would eat, much less like. I wore that beeper all through September of 1993 as, instead of writing my book, I labored over two hundred-plus pages responding to the ambiguous and inconsistent allegations of the university. I showed in great detail how they were not true, but how, even if they were true, they still had no standing in BYU's regulations. I gathered hundreds of pages of supporting documents, creating a mass of more than a thousand pages. But the beeper did not sound.

I went to the appeal dressed in a suit and accompanied by John

Hawkins, my department chair, to argue my case. I do not remember in much detail what happened other than sitting around a table with all those suit-clad, white men saying bad things about me and my record. It was solemn and decorous. The only woman present was a secretary scratching out a transcript to which I would never be allowed access.

We were sworn to confidentiality concerning the content of the meeting. They argued that this provision was for my protection, but I did not need that secrecy. I was willing to let the public into the hall. But they obliged me to agree. I had to accept the secrecy, since I hoped this would be a rational procedure and that they would rule on the facts. I had expended an extraordinary amount of time preparing to argue them.

Del Gardner presented the university's case. An economist, he wrote an essay published shortly before the university's hearing arguing that most of sociology and, therefore anthropology, was unacceptable social science because of roots in so-called conflict theory. I felt we answered every one of his points cogently. Perhaps the most telling was when he claimed to be quoting me, but I pointed out that he was citing a block quotation. Those words were direct quotations from someone else—not my voice, but the material I was analyzing.

At one point, while I was articulating some argument, the beeper went off. For months I had awaited it, and *now* it went off. That meant my brother and I had a little over an hour to get my mother and ourselves to LDS Hospital. A liver was en route. Flustered, I had to explain the situation to the men and excuse myself to start making calls, while they continued their discussion.

It turned out that beepers sometimes beep in vain. It was a false alarm.

I made a second appeal, accusing the various committees of being blinded to my record because of the religious tensions surrounding the case. Rex Lee and BYU Provost Bruce Hafen took advantage of that appeal to bring allegations of academic citizenship violations against me, by which they meant that they felt I had not fulfilled my obligations as a member of the university community. They had already besmirched my scholarship, one of the three areas in which faculty are evaluated. Now they were challenging my citizenship and service to BYU and the larger community. Only the quality of my teaching was left untouched. The judges of last resort became, instead, prosecuting attorneys. This was the first time anyone had ever accused me of violating the moral standards of

good citizenship because of the Mormon masculinity article or for any other reason. I felt we dealt well with the issues; but at the very end one of the vice presidents, Robert Webb, I believe, spoke for perhaps the first time to deliver the *coup de grace*. He said, "David, if it ever comes to a conflict between your discipline and the Church, with which will you side?" In honesty I answered, "I hope the Church." But I knew it was not good enough.

* * *

I spent October of 1993 writing a paper to be presented as the Glen Vernon Memorial Lecture at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion meetings in Chapel Hills, North Carolina.⁵ It was a great honor for a junior scholar to be asked to present a named lecture at a professional meeting, and I put into it all of the energy that did not go into the daily care of my mother and constant trips to doctors' offices.

As I left to fly to the conference, I had a strong feeling of dread. When I arrived, I tried to call home. The phone rang busy for almost an hour. I stayed by the phone to keep trying. Finally I got through. My mother had collapsed with massive bleeding from her esophagus. The liver had caused the blood vessels there to expand and become ever thinner. Finally they broke. Before the beeper could legitimately sound, I was at an airport in North Carolina.

Fortunately the paramedics had arrived almost immediately. They rushed her to St. Mark's Hospital where her surgeon happened to be at that precise moment. In the emergency room, I am told, he had an argument with the staff over protocol. They refused his instructions. So he had my brother forcefully push down on bags of blood to get it quickly in her system and make up for the lost blood. They life-flighted her to LDS Hospital while I was trying to catch the next flight back to Salt Lake. Nothing was flying out until the next morning. I left my paper for someone else to read and I returned to Salt Lake devastated, exhausted, and frightened.

* * *

After Christmas 1993, I dreaded returning to teach one final semester of classes at BYU where I had been so publicly shamed. I sat in my darkened room and sounded the wind chimes over and over. It seemed there was no one around. Almost no friends, no support. I had only the chimes sounding over and over in the dark.

I love teaching, but that semester I dreaded going to class. It seemed somehow indecent to have to remain at the university for another five months after they had fired me. When I would arrive on campus, I would walk toward my office or classroom, head up and eyes forward but focused on some invisible point, without seeing the people around me. I knew everyone had seen me in the press.

One day I was walking through the bookstore when I heard my name. Instead of continuing forward, eyes fixed ahead, I turned. It was a former student who had formed part of a group who wanted to study liberation theology. I taught an extra class so they could have the chance to read and discuss this important current of Latin American thought.

He said, "David, I have to ask you something. What is the real reason you were fired?"

I said I did not know; there seemed to be many shifting issues but it was hard to put my finger on precisely what the reasons were, particularly since the university would not tell me. When I had asked Alan Wilkins, he said I could sue and maybe then they would tell me.

The student, eyes on the ground, shifted and hesitated. "They're saying the real reason is that you were sleeping with your male students. Look, a lot of us fought for you. We put our necks on the line, and I have to know if it is true."

I felt as if someone had thrust a dagger repeatedly into my chest. I do not know how I managed to stay standing and continue talking with him. No, I told him. It was not true. I had heard a similar rumor that the "real" reason was a long-term affair with a female staff person. Now the rumor-mongering had dragged my students into the mud. For days I walked dazed, that accusation ringing in my head, before I realized that it was how those opposing me tried to explain to themselves my interest in the students and my dedication to teaching. Originally the administration attacked me for inadequate scholarship; then they besmirched my citizenship. Now through the rumor mill, someone was grinding my reputation as a teacher out of existence.

* * *

Toward the end of February 1994, I received a phone call from the American Association of University Professors. They said they could not intervene in my case, although it was filled with red flags. Had there been

one more witness, they said, to a conversation between Rex Lee and me, they would have initiated an investigation.

At the first hearing, Rex Lee passed me a note in Spanish, asking if he could meet with me. Rex was courtly and solicitous. He always treated me with respect but for some reason I was also aware that under that surface of decorum was a wrestling match, although I was never quite sure exactly who was wrestling whom.

He asked me why I didn't just get a job somewhere else and resign from the university. I said that academic hiring wasn't that easy; it was a process requiring months, generally involving national searches. The next phase of academic hiring in my field would not start until the next fall. He said that, although I had presented a creditable appeal, there was no way that I would prevail and that I should save myself embarrassment by leaving.

I was stunned. Here was the judge of last resort in my case admitting his prejudice against my case before I had even finished presenting it.

He added, very delicately, that the board of trustees would never allow the university to find in my favor, no matter what arguments I might raise. He then offered to speak with them and see if he could arrange some kind of payment to encourage me to resign.

I told him that I had worked hard on my appeal and that I believed in the process. I also said that I believed in the academic freedom issues and that they needed ventilation, but that I would listen. Later he called me with an insulting financial offer, which I rejected, and the appeal continued.

President Lee told me we were cousins. Evidently his family had been sealed in the temple into the Shumway family. My grandmother was a Shumway. In my mind I started seeing this struggle as filled with kin ties and histories that went far beyond the immediate event. It was a social drama with evidently clean lines in public, but behind the scenes were confusing and overlapping connections and histories.

A friend told me, on credible evidence, that, on a number of occasions, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve phoned President Lee and challenged his manhood because he "wasn't doing anything" about Knowlton and Farr. Cecilia Konchar Farr, a professor of English, was eventually dismissed along with three others at the third-year review. I was told that President Lee was ordered to fire us but that he resisted, with considerable difficulty, arguing that the process needed to be allowed to

play itself out. He held out for institutional order. I do not know the truthfulness of this report, but I would like to have known the pressures exerted on this man dying of cancer who had been known in the Reagan administration for his integrity. President Lee had told me he had been warned that academic freedom would be the hardest issue he would ever face as president of the university.

* * *

One day in Bolivia, starting at thirteen thousand feet, I climbed the steps leading up the hill Calvary. I carried stones with me, as if I were a pilgrim, to leave them like cares or sins at each station of the cross. I arrived at the halfway point, winded and tired from the altitude, my nails starting to turn a light shade of blue. I sat on a boulder and watched a *rezador*, a native offerer of prayers, do his preparations. For some reason I was drawn to him and asked if he would pray for me. He burned incense and gave it to the winds and mountains. He offered beer to the earth, the cross, and the saints. And he blessed me with it as I repeated after him a set of prayers to cleanse me of cares.

Another part of me could not believe I was undergoing this ritual, standing between the massive Cerro Juana, the highest peak nearby, and the rolling waters of the lake that splashed against the foot of the hill Calvary more than a hundred feet below. This was not my religion. It was not my culture. It was not my way. Yet off and on over two decades I had seen the *rezadores* at work. They moved me.

* * *

After my mother came home from the hospital, my brothers, their families, and I nursed her with the help of various home care nurses. We would bathe her, change her dressings, administer her medication intravenously, check her temperature and her blood pressure, bathe her and prepare special meals. This was the rhythm of our days, as she gradually gained strength and began to care for herself. As spring came, then summer, she started going out to church and to visit friends. The promise of a new life stretched falsely before her.

During the spring semester of 1994, after I had been fired and was living in a new ward, a new bishop, who was a workmate of my former bishop, called me to be gospel doctrine teacher. It was a challenge to go before the class and teach the scriptures. Inside I ached. I did not know what

I believed any more. I felt beaten and mauled. But I had to stand and teach the official view of the Old Testament. I put a lot of time into preparation. I went to the library and worked through the main biblical commentaries and other works. I thought through the structure of history and the nature of Old Testament society. And to the degree that this information would not contradict too overtly the manual, I presented it as explanatory background. Most people seemed to love it, and the class kept getting bigger.

After almost every class, however, someone would leave a note on the music stand that held my manual and scriptures accusing me of heresy. Obviously someone in the class did not like what I—and many of the people in the class—had to say. That person held a different view of Mormonism from mine. But instead of speaking to me, instead of arguing for his interpretation, he would leave a handwritten note on the stand calling me to ideological repentance.

Furthermore, the bishop told me that “spies from the Church Office Building were coming to listen closely” to what I might say. I doubt that these were the same persons. The tension of this surveillance and the discrepancy between my scarred but aching soul and the vigilance I had to exercise over what I said was wearying.

Later, when I had accepted a teaching position in Colorado, I tried to go to church, but I could not. Instead of worshipping, I would either get very angry or very depressed, so I stopped attending. Similarly I could no longer wear my garments. The fabric hurt, like so many fine needles poking me, every time I would put them on. So I learned to walk without the clothing and without the institution that had informed every waking moment of mine for a very long time—arguably for my whole life. Life felt very empty and lonely. I did not know how to live without those clothes and that identity.

* * *

One day during my stay in Bolivia, I walked to my room and tried writing, but my laptop looked back at me vaguely accusingly, a bright empty light in a cold, dark room. I roamed the town’s streets watching people, as if by seeing their ordinary joys, hungers, and pains I could somehow unfold myself from that dry, faintly green point into a broad, outreaching leaf, while under my feet each single cobble made its rounded finality known.

"Señor David, Señor David." I turned and looked into the broad, open smile in the round face of my *tocayo*. He and I shared the same name. When I first came to Copacabana to do field work, he was the first person I met. He had been standing just past the bus door, a twelve-year-old boy, inviting us to come to one of the hotels he represented. I walked with him, and he became my friend, assistant, and guide during the year I kept coming back to stay sometimes for months at a time. But I had not seen him in more than a decade.

He came running forward, a man now, tall and angular. "Señor David, it is you." And he drew me into the *abrazo*, the hug of recognition and greeting.

* * *

Three months later, wishing for life, my mother died.

"Guai a chi con gioia vitale
Vuole servire una legge ch'è dolore!"
(Woe to him who filled with vital joy
desires to serve a law that's only sorrow)
—Pier Paolo Pasolini⁶

Notes

1. Audre Lord, "Outlines," in *Our Dead behind Us* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), 8.

2. Formally known as the Faculty Council on Rank and Status. Copies of this document and others pertaining to my dismissal from BYU, as well as a contemporary oral history interview of me performed by Everett L. Cooley, can be found in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

3. David Clark Knowlton, "On Mormon Masculinity," *Sunstone*, Issue 88, August 1992, 19–31.

4. Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "Statement on Symposia," Friday, August 23, 1991, printed as "Statement," *Deseret News*, August 31, 1991, B–1.

5. David Clark Knowlton, "The Religion: Mormonism and Postmodernism," Glen Vernon Memorial Lecture, presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, October 1993.

6. "La Religione de Mio Tempa," in *Pier Paolo Pasolini Poems*, translated by Norman MacAfee (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1982), 68–69.

More Musings on Motherhood

Tracie A. Lamb

I was unprepared when my daughters became teenagers. In fact, I was blindsided by this phase of life. I never claimed to have native talent in mothering; but after years of study and practice, I thought I had gotten the hang of it a little. I have been proven sadly mistaken.

As I expressed in my first essay on motherhood,¹ written more than a decade ago, I found motherhood both exhilarating and overwhelming; but I never doubted that I would be a mother. As a good Mormon girl, I always had marriage and motherhood as my ultimate objectives. Even though I was also a returned missionary with a graduate degree, my life was not complete until I had children.

I believe in the gospel and the tenets of the Church. I usually believe in the plan of salvation, although there is nothing like parenting teenagers to make me question the wisdom of the eternal nature of the family. I believe what we as members have been taught since Primary. It is myself I doubt—although in my own defense, I have to say that having and raising children are the only things in my life I have done with clear intention. Most everything else I just sort of fell in to. From before my two daughters were born, before they even began, I studied and planned and prepared. I did not come to motherhood lightly, nor have I ever taken it lightly since.

Maybe that's part of the problem. I need to lighten up. Yet I accept the teachings of the Church that motherhood, parenthood, family are paramount in our existence. However, when I'm honest with myself, I have to acknowledge that I deeply resent being put in a position where the thing I have no talent for is the very thing that is supposed to be the most important and have eternal consequences. I have scratched and clawed my way to what I thought was at least competence in motherhood only to be thrown into the melee of my daughters' adolescence where nothing I thought I knew applies and everything I do seems to backfire.

One of the most difficult lessons of motherhood I have had to learn

is that my children are not me—in many cases, not even a close approximation thereof. I don't know if I came to the recognition of them as individuals more slowly than other mothers or if the intense intimacy of infancy and childhood requires a slow, torturous separation, but this lack of understanding has caused me not a little distress. Somewhere along the way, I had adopted the *tabula rasa* child-rearing philosophy. I don't think I read it directly in the very large pile of child-rearing books I went through, but somehow I came to believe that my child would come into my home and my life, I would teach her important principles, and she would learn them. In particular, I would impart the wisdom I gleaned from my experiences so she could avoid the pitfalls I had encountered. She would grow up knowing what to do and how to do it because I would teach her or find the best teacher I could for her. She would learn and do and we would all live happily ever after.

What I did not understand or refused to believe or somehow failed to grasp is that each child—even though from the same parents as her siblings, raised in the same house in the same way—comes with her own pre-assembled package. I encountered the practical application of the nature versus nurture dilemma. A child can be very different from her parents or siblings, or can be similar in some ways and different in others, a crazy combination of training and parents' and grandparents' personalities and characteristics, and on and on. Where did that propensity for adventure come from, or that eye for fashion, or that voluptuous shape, for heaven's sake? There is something inherently unfair about both daughters being generously proportioned while I have never had more than a hint of a bust line.

Of course, that physical difference has never really been a problem. It certainly hasn't caused the clashes that some other differences have since my daughters reached adolescence, not to mention the weird cosmic sense of humor that adds menopause to that pot.

I have always been a never-lose-anything, punctual, responsible kind of person. My older daughter is mercurial. She is wonderfully artistic and creative. She has an artist's eye (as well as an artist's temperament) and notices details that most others do not. I first realized this when she was much younger and we were in the doctor's office. She let out a shriek and I thought she had seen a spider or some other alarming thing. She said, "The plug-in is crooked," pointing to the wall in horror. I looked at her and looked at the wall socket. If I looked very closely, I could tell that it

was maybe a little crooked. I never would have noticed if she hadn't pointed it out, but to her, it was so obvious and disturbing that she was almost beside herself.

Recently, she had a similar reaction to balloon letters—some big, round letters used on a signboard. We were driving down the road, and she squealed in dismay. “If people can't make decent balloon letters,” she said in disgust, “they shouldn't try to make them at all.” Such things are very significant to her.

The difficulties come because many of the concerns of our lives are invisible to each other. We simply see the world differently. I realized this most clearly when my own mother was visiting. While I was at work, my mom asked my daughter to vacuum the hallway. The Saturday before, my daughter's chore had been vacuuming, which she had done, but she had left the vacuum by her bedroom door and never gotten around to putting it back in the coat closet where it belonged. Out of principle, I didn't put it away but waited for her to do it. For days, the vacuum sat in the hall, and every time she went in or out of her bedroom, she had to walk around it.

After waiting for a while for my daughter to vacuum, my mom asked her again if she wouldn't please do the vacuuming, to which my daughter replied, “But, Grandma, where is the vacuum?” It wasn't in the closet where it was supposed to be, and she simply hadn't noticed it otherwise. I want structure in my life, routine, clean rooms, and I'm darned good at organizing cupboards. “A place for everything and everything in its place,” sounds like heaven to me. She sees nuances of color, potential in chaos, freedom in disorder. She can create beauty out of nothing and whip up a poster or scrapbook page that looks professional.

My younger daughter, though more similar to me in some ways, has become an athlete and likes outdoor adventure. I have never been athletic and can think of few places I would rather *not* be than in a gym. She began life long and lean and stayed that way—always in the 90th percentile in height and the 50th percentile in weight. In addition, she routinely ended up in the hospital: dislocated elbow, swallowed penny, bumped chin, mangled toe. The absence of the robust, well-fed baby look and the frequent trips to the doctor made me think of her as a fragile little thing. And she is my youngest, so regardless of how big she gets, I will always see her through baby-colored glasses.

My image of her was shattered, however, at Mount St. Helens when she was seven and her sister eleven. A good friend of mine came to visit

with her three boys who were similar in age to my girls. We went sightseeing to Ape Caves at Mount St. Helens and somehow ended up going on the most difficult hike through the cave. We were woefully unprepared and sadly misguided by the park ranger into thinking it was a hike manageable by two middle-aged women and their five young children. Nevertheless, four hours later, we made it through.

And who was in front like a little mountain goat, scouting the way, yelling back encouragement from her vantage point at the lead? My baby. Never again would I think of her as fragile when she was so obviously made for action and adventure. That trip to Mount St. Helens presaged a life of activity and a taste for travel. She is a proven champion, having made it to Nationals for the Junior Olympics in long jump (14'9" when she was twelve). That is *really* far. We were driving down the freeway once and saw an overpass with the height painted on it: 14'9". I pointed out how far she had jumped. We were both surprised by what a great distance it was.

She has a big world map on her wall with stars on it: green stars for places she has been and silver stars for places she wants to go. There are lots of stars of both colors all over. She went to Hawaii last spring, took scuba lessons, and went surfing. Going to Hawaii might seem like an extravagant thing for a thirteen-year-old to do except that she paid for it all herself. She has a real knack with money—something else I wish I had. I'm encouraging her to read up on investing because, with her ability to make money, she could make a killing on the stock market.

My little fragile baby has turned into an adventurous athlete without any help from me—well, other than the hours of driving to and sitting through track practice and meets, the money for training and travel, and my long legs—great for jumpers. I guess I did contribute to who she is, though in some ways we are so different.

Although our differences have caused us not a little trouble, I hope I have finally figured out that they really don't matter. My daughters do see things differently than I do, and often that's a good thing. They have an excitement and interest that I have little access to anymore—except when it comes to them. I admit I can be very intense when one of them is involved in a track meet, or a performance, or a competition of any kind. I acknowledge that I have stage-mother tendencies, but who wouldn't with stars like I have?

The first time I saw my older daughter do a waltz routine with her

ballroom dance team, I cried. She was just so beautiful and graceful. Was this lovely person really the teenager who not so long before had freaked out about her sister wearing her clothes and thrown the door open so hard it put a hole in the wall? Was this the girl who was impossible to get up for seminary in the morning or get to bed at a decent time at night? This lovely creature with her dark, thick hair, dark eyes, brilliant smile, almost ethereal in her graceful movements—was this my daughter? She's forgetful and messy and always late. She's clever and compassionate and creative beyond belief.

And her little sister, the gazelle-like creature who runs so fast and jumps so far. The little girl who disciplines herself to do a hundred sit-ups a night and grueling exercises up and down the field to strengthen her legs, who does push-ups in a handstand. Where is my frail little baby? Where did that determination come from that I see in her face as she races toward the finish line? Where did she get so much grace and ease under pressure?

Could it be that I've finally learned? They are not me. My daughters are themselves and they are wonderful.

Just as I begin to accept and incorporate the lesson that my daughters are and should be independent individuals, another lesson in parenting has been driven home to me. I have thought lately about the song that goes, "Is that all there is? Is that all there is, my friends? Then let's keep dancing." Because of my children, I can never say, "Is that all there is?" The roller coaster of motherhood has forced me to face my weaknesses, assess and reassess, plumb my depths over and over again. Instead of "Is that all there is?" I have often felt more like saying, "Enough already!"

As my older daughter has finished high school and prepared to go to college this year, one lesson has been that her life is no longer my work. Next to the divorce from their father eight years ago, nothing has been so hard on me as this transition from one phase of life to the next. A wise friend says God made the senior year of high school so that we would be able to let go of our children.

This transition has felt like a death. I have realized that I have been in mourning much of the time. This child, once my baby, is gone. I was the center of her universe. Her very existence depended on my care. Now she is a young woman diverging not only from me but also from my vision of who she should be. I careen between grief and relief at her leaving.

The teachings of the Church are such a blessing in raising children

in so many ways; but at the moment, I find them problematic and at the heart of much of my difficulty. What we as Latter-day Saints expect from our children goes against almost everything they get from mainstream society. I always believed that I could be happy for and supportive of my daughters' individuality, but my lovely daughter is choosing a path that does not follow my idea of what she should become or what we are taught at church.

When she got her eyebrow pierced recently, I have to admit that one of my first thoughts was of what the people in the ward would think. Once I got past that shallowness, I realized that the deeper concern was the rift between her and members of the Church that her piercing would create. All of the dear friends in our ward know what a fine person she is and how this piercing is probably just her artistic outlet. But she is no longer in our ward. What will the members in her new ward think—if she decides to go to church at all? Whether the decision was conscious or not, the piercing will put a barrier between herself and her church.

And there is nothing I can do about it. A huge challenge of being a Mormon with teenagers is feeling such a heavy responsibility and yet having so little influence. Sometimes it makes me want to wash my hands of her now that she is eighteen. I am not sure how to let go of the responsibility and control without letting go of the relationship. Nevertheless, here is my most important lesson: Although we are told, "No success can compensate for failure in the home," we are taught even more emphatically to "Love one another." A woman I greatly respect put it this way in a word of advice to me: "Don't make not being part of the Church the deal-breaker for being part of the family."

I believe I need to measure success differently right now. I am successful as a mother if my daughter feels loved when she is with me. I am successful if she is comfortable sharing details of her life with me even though sometimes it is painful for me to hear them. I am successful if she feels that we have a good relationship. The last few months, I have been using a quotation from Sister Marjorie Hinckley as my mantra, "Save the relationship first." Many of my former goals and ideals have fallen away as dross in this latest refiner's fire and have left relating to my daughter in a positive way as the single shiny nugget I cling to.

I have heard that mothers and daughters can become good friends in adulthood. I am hoping that it is true, which is another reason I am trying not to sabotage our relationship. I am trying to be more flexible and

less judgmental, more available and less demanding, more willing to listen and less to talk. And I'm learning to let go of things that are not so important and cleave ferociously to those that are.

Note

1. See my "Musings on Motherhood," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 21–25.

Follow Me, Boys

Kristen Carson

The station hall echoed with the rumble of waiting buses every time the door opened. The restroom door squeaked. A mother on the far row of chairs scolded her child—"Don't climb on that!"—as her breasts threatened to spill out of her tank top.

April hoped Marc was too occupied with the leaves and carbons of his bus ticket to notice the difference between his own send-off and the one the family had given Kevin, just two years ago. Back then, Mom, Dad, and nine Feldsted kids had spilled out of a van big enough for a reform school. Dad had cornered Kevin, man to man, and pulled out his wallet. Mom smiled through her tears and rubbed her hugely pregnant belly. When the bus chugged away, Kevin smiled out the window while they all waved wildly, shouting "Have fun at college!"

Now, as the station door swung shut behind them, the bus engine growled, spewing a cloud of fumes, its cargo doors opened up like bent insect legs.

April studied the bus driver, wondering if he was the kind who counted heads after a lunch stop or if he just drove on with a shrug and a glance at his watch. She hesitated, then threw her arms around Marc's neck. "Dad would've come if he could," she told him.

"Yeah, sure." With one last mirthless smile, he was up the steps. Then she could only watch his face through the window.

Seemed like she'd been seeing Marc that way all summer—from a distance.

That day in June, when she and Ginni Runyon sat outside the library, he'd been just a dark-haired dot across the river.

With only a few minutes left before Ginni had to go back to shelving books, the two girls had watched him guiding the lawnmower over the

bumps and hillocks of the hospital lawn. "I'm wondering if he's wearing the boots," said April.

"What boots?"

"Our neighbor, Mr. Golonka died. And Mrs. Golonka brought over a pair of his boots. She thought maybe we could get some good use out of them."

"How awful!" A liver-smelling grimace marred Ginni's face. "What kind of boots are they? Cowboy boots? Rain boots?"

"No. Kind of square-toed. Zippers up the sides."

"What happened?"

"Well," said April, picking at the crusts left from Ginni's lunch, "all the princes of the realm had to try on the shoe, of course. Actually, just Dad, Marc, and Tom."

"And?"

"They fit Marc."

"And he wore them?"

"No, he refused. But Dad thundered, 'They're perfectly good boots! The day I refuse to wear a pair of perfectly good boots . . .'"

"By the way," April peered into a long Tupperware box at the end of the table, "there's like a dozen cookies in here. Are you running a concession stand or something?"

"I wouldn't give me a hard time if I were you," said Ginni. "Not unless I wanted to be teased about those loose threads clinging to my shirt."

April looked down and flicked off a pink one. "Ah, the fate of someone whose mother sews for a living. Hey, aren't these the same cookies we had at your house Sunday night?"

"Fresh batch. Marc liked them, so I made more."

"Ginni, Ginni, what am I going to do to cure you of my brother?"

"I don't wish to be cured. Oh, and after your family left, my mom said she felt sorry for you, like you won't have any fun all summer, working for your mother like this."

"It's just the cooking and the errand-running. The LadyForm Bra Company is putting a lot of pressure on Mom. 'Ship us more or lose your job to Hong Kong.' So she's got to turn out enough bra bows to fill four or five boxes a week instead of the usual two or three. But, hey, I don't mind. Errands can be stretched, you know."

A sharp whistle pierced the air. The girls looked across the river. Marc waved at them.

"Well, well," said April, "there's my Irish twin."

Ginni raised an eyebrow. "Maybe it's his lunch break, too." She opened the Tupperware lid and arranged the cookies in more perfect rows.

Marc's head appeared over the crest of the bridge. He was not handsome. Nature had given him his mother's overbite, his dad's thick neck and square body. April, to her sorrow, had inherited the same square body, softened only by a smattering of freckles across her nose.

His hand dove into the cookies as soon he got to the table.

The day was a fine one, with a touch of breeze blowing in from the Atlantic, thirty miles away. It was the kind of noon in June that inspired the firemen across the street to pull the trucks out of the bay, hose them down, shine them up. The weather drew lunch-hour walkers to the brick path along the river, which was actually more like a lazy canal. Cars with windows down and bumpers declaring "Carter/Mondale" hurried over the bridge.

Then a pair of paramedics strode out the emergency room door, hopped into an ambulance, and pulled out of the driveway, siren whining. Well, for someone out there, it was not such a fine day.

"Remember when we used to go to the Dairy Queen just because we might see an ambulance going down the boulevard?" April asked.

"And as we watched it go," said Ginni, "you all made sure I remembered that your dad worked at the hospital. No, no, admit it, you wanted me to think he was the doctor that'd be on the scene, sewing on dismembered parts. Come on, admit it."

"Okay, okay," Marc laughed. "So we didn't tell you he was just the plant engineer."

"Well, you could have told me that it was the engineer's job to stand there, handing the half-dead over to the nurses or something. I probably would've believed you."

"No, his job's a lot duller than that. About the only drama he gets is the irate phone call. 'The light bulb's out! The toilet's overflowing! Send somebody quick!' But I guess it's not a bad job for someone who hasn't got the courage or the imagination to do anything else."

"Marc!" April glared at him.

He just shrugged and took another cookie. "Gotta go, ladies," he laughed, and swung off the bench.

* * *

Erväl Feldsted left the hospital at 5:30 every evening.

Marc sat beside him in the car. The boy smelled of good honest sweat after a long day of mowing the hospital grounds, a job Erväl had gotten for him the day after Marc's graduation. Now that they worked together, the father looked forward to talking shop as he negotiated the turns and stoplights of the route home.

The boy never said much. Dried twists of hair clung to his forehead. A stripe of skin, glowing white against his sunburned neck, peeked out from his t-shirt. He was tired, probably. But it was a good kind of tired, right?

Erväl was always telling his kids that. That, and "Work makes things happen. Work brings rewards." Why, since Ruthalin had started sewing for the LadyForm Bra Company, the kids could have things like school pictures every year.

And Erväl's own sweat equity had dotted the "I's" and crossed the "T's" on their house.

After turning by the meat-packing plant that blew out the smell of bacon for a half-mile radius, Erväl motored down a curbless road, a strip of asphalt that wasn't sure whether it was city or country. Power wash stalls gave way to simple frame houses, ending finally in stands of pine. His car pulled into the driveway at the end of the road, crunching over the pine cones and the gravel.

And there it was: his house.

Nobody thought he could pull it off. Brick, with four bedrooms (five, if you counted the pass-through room at the corner, where the three youngest boys bunked), and a kitchen big enough to seat all his ten children at dinner.

Some people had said, "Why not pick a dream that won't hurt so bad when you can't get it?" But he had gotten it. He had come out here after work, night after night, laying brick for the fireplace, debating window choices with Ruthalin. "Well, sure, casements for the family room would be nice, but we don't have the budget for it."

And when it was done, he had moved his family out of the aging white hulk they'd been living in, over in the broken-sidewalk part of town.

Now, he shifted the car into park. He reached for the door handle, only to face the black rubber gasket hanging from the door frame. Darn, but the thing was sagging again. The glue that held it in place always weak-

ened in heat like this. He stuffed it into its channel again with no faith that it would stay there.

Marc, still silent, jumped from the car with more energy than you'd expect from somebody so exhausted. He dashed past this man, this creature that no eighteen-year-old ever wanted to become: hairy arms jutting out from his short-sleeved work shirt. A lone, thin tuft of hair holding its ground against the field of baldness on the top of his head. Shoulders drooping from the weight of the briefcase.

Ervall frowned at the windows. He looked at the cracked and peeling paint. And those little moisture pockets that dewed up in the corners last winter—he shouldn't have gone with the cheaper models when he built this house. But it wasn't as if he had a big budget to work with, like at the hospital.

He walked past the couch in the garage. This was one of his "finds." It sat out in a wheat field one day as he drove by. He had slowed the van, all the kids moaning, "Dad, no! Please!"

But he had stopped anyway. "Looks to be in pretty good shape," he said, circling around, inspecting.

"Dad, don't! Remember the dryer?"

But he ignored their groans. "Help me load this thing in."

Now he shuffled through the gloomy garage and opened the door he had hung. He stepped onto the linoleum he had laid, where a few wisps of ever-present thread blew along the baseboards. He sniffed the air to see what might be cooking. Smelled like something with Campbell's soup in it.

He put down his briefcase just as Heidi clumped by wearing a pair of boots, square-toed, with zippers up the side, much too big for her young feet. He pushed past Olivia, her nose planted in yet another summer-love library book. In the corner of the family room, his wife bent over her sewing machine. He leaned down for a kiss, his cheek brushing the heat-dampened curls at her neck. She handed him the latest aerogramme from Kevin.

When April finally called the family to dinner, Ervall took his seat at the head of the long table. He turned to Marc for another try at the shop talk. "Watson giving you any trouble?"

"Nah." Marc was freshly showered, his wet hair carefully combed, the sleeves of his white dress shirt rolled up.

"Keep an eye on him, if you could, for me. Kind of quiet-like, you

know. Watson doesn't work any harder than he has to. Seems like he's always off flirting with the X-ray techs or taking another smoke break."

"I saw him smoking at the Chevron station," said Tom.

Ervall looked down the long table, past the two milk jugs, past the many small hands grasping for the bread plate. He nodded to his wife. "See what kind of fellow I have to put up with? I'd fire him, but it's not easy these days."

"That's what I mean," said Tom. "Maybe you won't have to fire him. Maybe he'll just sort of," he snickered, "fire himself."

A smile twitched at the corner of Ervall's mouth, but he fought it off.

The doorbell rang.

Marc stood up. He wiped milk off his lip and grabbed the tie that hung on the back of the chair.

And Russ Buckman stood in the Feldsted family kitchen.

"Home teaching tonight?" asked Ervall.

Marc mumbled good-bye and followed Russ out the door.

Russ Buckman was a slip-on shoes kind of guy. He jingled coins in his pocket. He snapped his gum. He entered a room, scanned the action and rubbed the beard shadow on his chin. He planted his hands on his hips and demanded, without saying a word, *When do we get started?*

You could always tell when Marc had been out with Russ. For the next day or two, parts and pieces of Russ spilled out of Marc like socks out of a laundry basket. Drive past a roadhouse and Marc told you, "Russ says they have the best oysters this side of Baltimore." Let Mom and Dad dress up for the annual hospital dinner at Ocean City's Queen Ann Hotel and it was, "Russ says they do a mean Beef Wellington."

Clearly this was a guy that got around, and in style, too, because "Russ ordered his Thunderbird straight from the factory. It came with a blue roof and he sent it back because he'd ordered *white*."

In a house where couches that "looked to be in pretty good shape" just got adopted off the roadside, such tales were met with stunned silence. Who was this guy? Son of a brain surgeon? Spoiled by summer camps, stereos, and ski vacations?

Not according to Marc. "Russ had a childhood about like Al Broadnax."

"Who's Al Broadnax?"

"You know, the head of the American Winners Institute. Russ is reading a book about him. Russ says Al reminds him of himself and the

way he scrambled around as a kid, collecting bottles, mowing lawns. And now Al's a rich man. Owns a huge ranch in Colorado, raises horses. He and his sons go golfing in Scotland every year. Russ'll loan me the book when he's done."

"So I take it that Russ wants to be just like Al."

"Something like that." Russ had plans, big plans, Marc said. "Russ always says, 'Too many people are content with splashing around in a plastic, kiddie-pool kind of life when they could have the whole tile-terraced, palm-tree version.'" Russ wasn't going to stick forever with traveling the roads of three states, selling vent hoods to all the Denny's and Arby's and the Joe's Bar and Grills along the way. Not that it was a shame to do that. No, not at all. Unless you were satisfied to keep doing it year after year.

Marc could hardly wait to get his hands on the Broadnax book. Until then, Russ kept him busy with something else.

* * *

The voice coming from Marc's room had the fervor of a preacher, warmed up just enough for the sweat marks to break through his suit coat. "You **KNOW** it, in your mind and your heart, that you **WANT** what I've been talking about." How had someone gotten into the house? And why did he have to make it so hard for April to read her Ann Landers?

April peered into Marc's room. Nobody strange or new in there. Just Tom on the top bunk, and Marc on the bottom, bathed in a cone of light shining down from his headboard lamp, and Mom's tape player on his belly.

Back in her own room, she could still hear the voice's fire and cajolery through the closet wall. She heard Tom: "Some of us are trying to sleep in here!"

It was the time of night when Mom turned out the last kitchen light and Dad locked all the doors. In the bathroom, toothpaste foam escaped April's mouth as the voice, now moved to the living room, shouted about someone "willing to be paid just enough, **JUST ENOUGH**, to keep him an eyelash above **BROKE**."

April peeked around the corner. Marc switched the tape off as their dad walked into the room. "Whatcha got there?" Erval asked, his thumbs in his belt as he looked down at his son on the floor.

"Just a speech."

"Carter? Ford? Not that Jerry Brown guy, I hope."

"No, Dad."

Ervall sat on the couch. "I didn't know you were interested in politics." The father propped one leg over the other and settled in, draping his arm along the back of the couch. Finally, a moment when they could understand each other, man-to-man. His face lit up like a talk show guest's. *Tell us how your new mousetrap works, Mr. Boopquist. Why, certainly. I'd be glad to.*

But Marc just lay there, his hands caged around that tape player, his lips tightly closed.

April didn't want to watch this anymore. She ducked back into the bathroom and spat toothpaste noisily into the running water. She sat on the edge of the tub, cradling her head in her hands, hoping the silence out in the living room had broken. But when she listened, it was still there, as hard as her bones against the white porcelain.

Suddenly her father stood in the bathroom doorway. He examined the wallpaper, which was peeling rather severely. Then he went upstairs.

* * *

Things didn't used to be this way.

Whatever happened to the days when Marc trailed around in the back yard, following Dad as the spinning blades of the lawnmower spat out grass? And when Dad went to the hardware store, who walked right behind him, admiring the same flashlights and extension ladders and screw-in doorstops that Dad admired? Who was it that got in the car first when Mom said, "Anybody want to visit Daddy at work?"

His basement office at Tidewater General was just two doors down from the morgue. The office never failed to enthrall his children, who were allowed to visit in small, manageable platoons. Behind the door labeled "Plant Engineer," men in coveralls met urgent demands, hauling ladders away to check the burny smell just reported in the pediatric wing. Sometimes Dad handed out fifteen cents for you to spend at the vending machines down the hall.

Dad himself worked in an inner sanctum, the beam of his desk lamp shining down on a set of plans just in from the architect. Even April liked to be there, sitting across from him at his desk, coloring a picture, imagining Tidewater General's own version of Joe Gannon somewhere upstairs, valiantly saving the life of some beautiful but reluctant woman who refused surgery on her brain tumor.

Later, at lunch, white-coated doctors, Important Men, walked out of the cafeteria with Dad. They followed him past the elevator, lingered with him outside his office door, discussing the expansion plans up on the fourth floor.

Marc and April would look up at their dad and the doctor, both men talking with their hands. The children watched the passing cast of characters, who all nodded to their father. Women in scrubs. Men in overalls.

A fellow suited up in the best wool, his hair FBI-trim, clicked down the hall in his shined shoes. The bulky briefcase at the end of his arm was embossed with the letters, UPJOHN. He looked deep in thought, pondering the mission ahead of him. Then he brightened as Dad and the doctor parted ways.

"Heyyy, Dr. Herbert. I've got tickets to the Orioles and Tigers. Could you use some?"

The doctor held up a dismissive hand as he returned to work through the construction zone shortcut.

Marc's lips parted. What luck! When had he ever been in the right place at the right time like this? His eyes watched as if the man had just dropped from parted clouds.

The man's good shoes clicked nearer. Dad seemed unaware of his approach. But any second now, the man would tap Dad on the shoulder and offer those tickets. He probably gave them away to Important Men at the hospital, and Dad was Important, no doubt about that.

But when he caught up, he walked on by with the briefest of nods.

Marc couldn't say he'd never been to a baseball game. Three summers ago, Dad had taken them to see the Brandywine Blackbirds.

They had earned their way there, spending six dawns cleaning up the cigarette butts, straw wrappers, and caramel corn at the county fair.

Erval Feldsted had a warm spot for schemes like this. No reason in the world why his children should feel bad that other dads took their kids to baseball games. If the Feldsted children wanted to go, there was always a way. He'd find them a work project. Then, because of what they'd done to earn their place on those bleacher seats, the Feldsted children would appreciate the game more than any other child there. They'd learn for themselves that work is good for the soul, that work makes things happen!

Erval's excitement for the game never quite matched his fervor for the clean-up project. When he got off the phone with the fair chairman, he rubbed his hands together in a way that must have made his old cal-

luses burn. "They said they'd be glad to have more help!" When he herded all of his children ages eight and over into the family van and took his place behind the trucker-sized wheel, he broke into a rapturous "Heidy ho! And away we go!"

Wounded tomato slices that had fallen off sandwiches into the flattened grass; flies on a corncob; toilet bowls clogged with swollen tissue—none of it bothered him. None of it bothered him because he was saving his family from his own unintended mistakes. Sure he was the farmboy that made good; but now, here he was, off the farm, with a bunch of children who couldn't possibly learn those farmboy lessons. It wasn't enough to tell them tales of that day at dawn, and him a thirteen-year-old boy with his eleven-year-old brother, gripping their shovels like Moses' and Aaron's staves as their father pointed down the line of leaning fence posts and sagging barbed wire. It was not enough to tell them how their dad handed them their lunch bags, waved good-bye, and drove the wagon off in a cloud of dust, not returning until the sun dipped behind the distant Utah buttes.

No, there was nothing in the telling that made the children understand. But maybe they'd figure it out, steeped in the rubbish of the county fair.

* * *

"That's not enough! Your neighbor probably wants it, too! But he's AFRAID of success! Just the fact that you're HERE TONIGHT shows something. That shows you're NOT LIKE your neighbor. You're not WILLING to be just barely better than BROKE!" The man on the tape was, no doubt, mopping his forehead with his white hanky now.

April wandered into the living room and slid onto the couch. She thought Marc might turn the tape off again, but he didn't.

"... You're not SATISFIED. You know there's something MORE . . ."

"What is all this?" she asked.

Marc held up a finger and walked into his dark bedroom.

"... want it BAD enough. You have to BELIEVE . . ."

He returned with a brochure. April opened the glossy pages and studied the bottles and the tubes in the pictures.

"Russ sells this stuff," Marc said, "and he's going to get me started

with it. It's all from the moyocuni plant. See, here's the CuniShield. That's from the sap. Just a drop on your pulse points repels insects."

And with the voice on the tape winding up for the altar call, April flipped through pages of ointments and lotions and cosmetics—Cuni-Soft—even household paints, all derived from the lush, white-flowered plant pictured on the front cover.

Actually, it was less like selling, said Marc, and more like just using all the stuff, and showing others how to use it, too. When they learned to use it and introduced it to other people, money began flowing back your way. If you did it right, if you did it the way Russ explained, money came in every month. Buckets full of it. "I mean, all it takes is a couple hours a day. Give up two or three TV shows a day and do this instead. And there you are. You can quit your job, and the cash is still rolling in. I mean, only an idiot would have a job. Right? Only an idiot would carry a briefcase and trip all over himself trying to be somewhere at eight o'clock every morning."

And the speaker ended in a shower of applause that still rang in her head as she laid it on her pillow that night.

* * *

April pushed the doors open and stepped from the cool of the Larkin Building into the hot July noon. Having just handed the telephone company its money—"Hurry, it's too late to mail it," said her mother as she dropped the check into April's hand—she blinked at the bleached-out light of day and jay-walked to the shady side of the street, where she'd parked the family van.

She started the motor, pulled at her shirt where it stuck to her ribs, and glanced up the street at the time and temperature displayed on the Shoreline State Bank. 12:30. Maybe Ginni was on her lunch break now.

April found her at the usual table. Ginni looked up from a magazine.

"Is that the latest *Seventeen*?" April said.

"Nope. Back issue. The only kind they'll let you take out."

April scooted on to the bench and looked at a page portraying a sad girl drawn in frayed pencil lines.

"I was just turning to page 287 to see if she took the bottle of pills or not."

"I see," said April.

Ginni arrived at the back page.

"Well?" April waited. She shouldn't care about the fate of the sad, pencil girl, but these stories—they sucked you in.

"Ooooh, look here!" Ginni pointed to the opposite page. "Stop Dreaming about Becoming a Stewardess. You're Just Steps Away with This Handy Guide.' Oh, do you have a piece of paper? A pencil?"

"Ginni, why?"

"The uniforms. They look so crisp and cute. No, no, don't roll your eyes. I mean, remember the girl in *Airport*? That belted jumper she wore? And the snappy cuffs on the blouse?"

"She got blown up, for heaven's sake! Why would you want . . ."

"Yes, yes, but before that, she just looked so pretty and efficient, talking on the little speaker phone, with the accent and all."

"Are you going to send away for the accent too?"

Ginni shot her a that-will-do look. "I'm not sending away for anything just yet. I don't have the \$3.95. But when I get it . . ."

They heard a sharp whistle from the river. They turned. Marc stood on the bridge, waving.

"Some people," he said, when his shadow fell over the table, "have the time to sit and read a magazine."

"Ginni's just planning how to spend her money."

"Except that I don't have that much," said Ginni. "So I have to plan really good."

"Oh. Well." He swung his legs over the opposite bench and sat. "Maybe I could help you out."

April looked at Ginni. If Marc had ever lent anybody \$3.95, it had been a secret up to now.

"You could help me?"

"Sure. And you could help me back, all in the same move."

Ginni raised a skeptical eyebrow.

"You could sell Moyocuni with me."

"Oh, no, no, no, no. Selling's not something I could ever do."

"I know how you feel. Really, I do. I didn't think I could sell anything either. But actually, you don't have to. You've got the product, see? Very good stuff, high quality, helps bug bites and all that. You get it and use it yourself. Then you tell other people about it and get them to try it. And it's so good, naturally they will want to use it all the time . . ."

"That sounds like selling to me," said April.

"No, it's not, because you're just using a product and getting others to do the same. And you train those people to find others to use it. Then, as they move the product, whatever money they make, you get a cut because you found them, trained them, sponsored them. And the people they found and trained—your people get a cut, you get a cut. The possibilities are unlimited."

Ginni gripped the magazine, fingering the corners of the pages. She studied his face, which was frozen like a TV pitchman's, testifying about toothpaste that *really* whitened. "I just don't think I could do all that," she said.

"Believe me, I know how you feel. I felt the same way. But when you think about all that money coming in, you know, and what you could do with it—well, why wouldn't you try something like this if it could buy you your dreams? What are your dreams, anyway? What do you want?"

Ginni froze. No way was she going to tell him what she really wanted.

"Do you want a red Firebird?"

She looked surprised.

"A Corvette? A cute little Volkswagen? Ice-blue maybe?"

Now she looked as if she needed to sneeze.

"No? You're not into cars? How about beachfront property? A seventy-foot yacht? What? What is it? A couple snowmobiles? A private jet?"

"I don't want any of those things."

"Well, you must want something."

"I do. I want this." She held out the open magazine.

He read the fine-print ad. "Stop Dreaming about Becoming a Stewardess? You want to be a stewardess?"

"I want to get the book. It'll explain how."

"Why do you want to be one?"

"It's a neat job. You get to travel."

He absorbed this information. "Tell you what. If you'll sign on and help me sell Moyocuni, if you'll work real hard at it, you can travel all you want. You won't need to get a job to do it."

"It's not just the travel," said April. "She wants to wear the uniforms, you know."

He looked, with his brows knit together, as lost as a boyfriend at a baby shower. "So? Buy a bunch of uniforms!" He shook his head. "You know, if you work for the airlines, you're their slave. Sure, you get to travel,

but only where they say and when they say. You probably don't get to see much of Paris or whatever, because you're only there long enough to rest up for the next flight." He shrugged. "But it's up to you. With Moyocuni, nobody tells you what to do. You can take it as far as you want."

And April knew Ginni would say yes. Ginni would do anything for Marc, anything to prove that she wanted what he believed worth wanting.

* * *

Ginni looked happiest when sitting across the picnic table from Marc, studying brochures, learning the party line.

"No, with that kind of person, you don't play up the financial security angle," he told her. "You say, 'You can make friends doing this.' That's what gets 'em."

She looked less happy on the day he said, "Now, let's make a list of people for you to approach." She struggled over the blank page, strangely forgetting every person she had ever met.

"How about your parents?" he said. "That's a natural."

Ginni screwed up her face. The price of love was so high. "Can't we try somebody else?"

"What? You don't think your dad would like to dump his professor job and cruise around the world or something?"

She chewed on the end of her pencil, then brightened. "Maybe it will get him out of his sweater vests and into one of those cool Ascot-tie things." She wrote "Latham and Ada Runyon" across the top of the page.

"You might try the Laid-Off-in-Your-50s approach," Marc told her. "That works great on guys your dad's age."

When the phone rang in the Feldsted kitchen that night, April knew it was Ginni. April heard her voice wailing into Marc's ear.

"Wait!" he told her. "Don't do anything! Tell you what. Meet me at the Dairy Queen."

April followed him out the door and into the car. When they arrived, Russ was already there, patting Ginni's hand as she cried into a pile of red and white napkins.

"He said, 'What's this? You're selling something for school? In the summer? Too bad it's not Girl Scout cookies, har, har. I never turn away Girl Scout cookies, har, har.'" She sniffled. "And then when I told him the price, he goes, 'Twelve-fifty! What—are there little flecks of gold or something in the lotion, har, har, har.' And then, when I suggested how

he could quit his job," she shuddered into another napkin, "he said, 'But I like my job. And don't give me that crap about guys getting laid off in their 50s! I have *ten-yure*, young lady! Or don't you even know what that means?' Oh!" she moaned. "I told you I could never do this."

Marc slipped into the booth and put his arm around Ginni. He looked at Russ. Any ideas here?

"Now, Ginni," Russ began, patting her hand. "It is Ginni, right? See here, there are no problems in this life. Just opportunities. And do you want to be stuck working at the library all your life? It is the library, right? The library controls your time. They control your money. What does that mean? Right, they control your life. Are you gonna just shrug your shoulders and accept that?"

"And you," he pointed at Marc. "What have I told you a million times already? That's right. You can make excuses, you can make money, but you can't make both. And no wonder we're not making what we ought to. We can't have this negative stuff all the time."

And as Marc took his chewing out like a man, Ginni, still shuddering a little, leaned into the arm he laid across the back of the seat. She was enjoying that part way too much.

* * *

Marc became the Church button-holer. He cornered Dan Keating by the Church drinking fountain. Dan, fresh off the plane from a two-year mission to Guatemala, needed money for school, and fast. Why not see what Moyocuni can do for you, Dan?

Then he went brow to brow with Sister Tarasco. His parents had whispered about the Tarascos for years, about how they were in the bishop's office at least twice a month, pointing fingers at one another for various unspecified marital problems. But finally, they were calling it quits. So Sister Tarasco couldn't just stay home anymore, ignoring her housework. Sure, she could sling mashed potatoes at her children's school lunchroom. But why settle for that when she could act like a kept woman, Moyocuni-style?

Not everybody could be cornered. When men opened the restroom door and saw Marc at the urinals, they backed out. *We can hold it just fine, thanks.*

April was not sure Marc noticed the shunning. He was too full of taped speeches that goaded him to "BELIEVE!"

* * *

The box sat on the kitchen table. Children climbed over it all afternoon. They asked their mother to open it. She looked up from her sewing machine. "It has Marc's name on it. We'll have to wait until he gets home."

When he walked in that evening, his shirt clinging to his chest in the usual wet spots, he moved the box to the floor to make way for a supper of hamburger pot pie, two pans' worth. Then they would not let him delay any longer. He cut the box open with a knife.

Lifting away the flaps, they saw the rows of yellow plastic bottles inside. Ruthalin, the most curious of all, reached inside.

Like a good salesman, Marc let her rub the lotion over her hand, smell it, read the label. "So how much is a bottle?"

"Twelve-fifty."

"What! But the high-dollar stuff down at Rite-Aid is only \$2.89."

"But, Mom, the moyocuni is a rare plant. Harvesting it and getting it all the way here from Venezuela and extracting the various parts—well, who would bother if it didn't do all the neat things it does?"

"I just don't see . . ." she shook her head. "I just don't see how you're going to make money selling . . . It's outlandish!"

"It's not so much the selling where I make my money. Mostly I sign up other people to sell under me, and they sign up others. Then, any product that they move, I get a cut."

Eral narrowed his eyes. "Yeah, but first it has to be a good product at a good price."

"Look, Dad, this is the wave of the future. Making a living by producing things is on its way out. The world is changing. People don't want to be chained to desks from nine to five anymore. Don't tell me you wouldn't want that for yourself, Dad. You know how you're always complaining that there's never enough time for the window project or whatever."

Eral's frown lightened a bit. He looked over the yellow bottles like a lawyer considering his next line of attack. "Are you saying this all comes from just a few hours of work a week?"

"Actually, it's a lot more than that at first. But pretty soon, your organization grows. You have money coming in from your downline. And at that point, your time is all your own."

"That's some pretty fancy claims there, son. How well have you looked into this?"

Ruthalin stopped smelling her hand. She put the bottle back on the table.

Marc sighed. "I know what I'm doing, Dad."

Ervall put up his hands. "Fine. But it seems to me this is a mighty brave new world we're talking about here. I just don't see how nobody has to go to work. Didja ever think that some fellow has to come in and punch a time clock, to fill all the little yellow bottles with the overpriced Muna-Guna here? . . ."

"Moyocuni, Dad."

" . . . or maybe a chemist has to show up to extract the sap from the plant. And I'm thinking there's got to be a secretary somewhere, keeping track of the shipments."

"Well, Dad, maybe there are people that still want to do that sort of thing."

"No, son, it's not a matter of 'want to.' It's a matter of 'that's how the world works.' People still have to do the things that need . . ."

"Look, Dad, I know what I'm doing. I know the program, and I know it only comes through for you if you are willing to put in a lot of hard work . . ."

"Wait a minute. I thought your Moya-Goya was promising you a life of leisure here . . ."

" . . . and I sure am meeting a lot of people who aren't willing to do what it takes." Marc plopped bottles back into the box, as if to protect them.

"Say, son, you weren't thinking of signing your old dad on to sell little yellow bottles, because . . ."

"No, I sure wasn't, because I don't think you want to stop being poor."

"We're not poor, son," said Erval.

"Marc!" Ruthalin put on the look she always wore when a baseball came through the window. "You shouldn't talk that way about your father! If you could just hear what your aunts and uncles say about him. They're amazed at what he's been able to pull off."

"It doesn't take much to amaze some people, does it?"

" . . . He's gotten an educated job. He's been able to build a house big enough for all of us."

"On which he cut corners all over the place! Yeah, that's the part the aunts and uncles don't see, living all the way out there in Oregon and Utah. They don't see that, maybe if he hadn't chosen the cheapest windows, he wouldn't have to come home from work every night and lose his whole evening cutting wood to replace the rotting sills. Maybe if he'd chosen a carpet pad thicker than a graham cracker, he wouldn't have to dream up work projects to raise money for a better one! I mean, who else do you know that drags their kids out to the fairgrounds to pick up cigarette butts and fry baskets and—and scumbags out behind the cattle barn—"

"There is nothing dishonorable about picking up litter," cried Erval. "And you kids got a baseball game out of that."

"With not enough money to buy a hot dog!"

"Do you know how much a hot dog costs, son?"

"And we thought it wouldn't hurt our children to learn how to work," Ruthalin bristled.

"That's right, son. It's how we solved problems in my day, and it was a tough time then, believe you me."

"What problems does it solve?" Marc cried. "You're barely keeping up."

"And what's so bad about it? Lots of people can't even boast of that."

"Don't tell me how it is for lots of people! Do you think I can't see it for myself? Do you think I don't choke on the two-percent milk every time we eat at the Runyons' 'cause it's so much richer than the powdered stuff Mom mixes up? Do you think we don't notice that they have lots more boxes under their Christmas tree? And some of 'em are as big as furniture! Meanwhile, back at our house, Heidi gets bike streamers made from a bread bag. And she's thrilled! Just like she's thrilled to play dress-up in Mr. Golonka's boots. Do you think we don't notice that lots of people out there aren't asked to wear a dead guy's boots? People think we'd be glad to have 'em! People know the Feldsteds will take stuff nobody else wants!"

"It didn't hurt me, son, and it won't hurt you!" Erval's voice rang from the walls to the ceiling beams to the linoleum. "And the day I'm too proud to wear a perfectly good pair of boots is the day that I . . ."

"Look here, Dad!" Marc pointed his finger into his father's face. "I can't honor you or whatever by reliving *your* times, *your* problems." He closed up the box flaps, swishing with contempt. "You got answers for ev-

everything, doncha, Dad? But mostly you got answers for problems that aren't around anymore." He picked up his box and left the room.

* * *

April sat on her bed. Looking across the room, she wondered: how could Olivia sleep through the arguing and shouting? Through Marc kicking and throwing things next door? How could Tom sleep through it?

The door opened and Marc looked in. "I need paper."

She scrounged through a pile next to her bed and came up with a few sheets.

"Not the lined stuff," he said. "This is a grown-up message and I don't want some school-boy piece of paper!"

"I'll look around."

When she returned from the kitchen drawer where Mom stored paper and envelopes, he had already retrieved the typewriter from her closet.

"They're talking out there about you. They're saying they don't think they've done enough for you and maybe they need to do something special before you leave."

"Oh, boy. I can't wait."

"What are you writing?"

"My resignation. I'm sick of mowing lawns."

"But you can't quit! You need the money for school."

"Yeah, you're right. I can't quit, not yet. But if I wait until I can, I'll lose my nerve. Then I'll be like *him*: timid." He rolled a piece of paper in. "I wanna see this letter every morning and evening until then." He pounded furiously on the keys. "So what do you think two people like that mean by 'something special'?"

"They're talking about a camping trip."

"Camping!" he snorted. "It figures."

* * *

Two days before Marc's departure for college, Captain Erval banged around in the garage, directing children up the ladder into the attic to retrieve the tents and the lanterns, Ruthalin's cot, and especially the giant Styrofoam cooler, big as a hope chest. He'd gotten it from the hospital, where it was used to transport organs, severed limbs, and other gore.

He dispatched Marc to the Gas-N-Go for bags of ice. When Marc returned, Erval loaded gear onto the little trailer he'd made from salvaged

wood, while April stood in the doorway, holding the phone. "For you, Marc."

She went back to her sandwich- and cookie-packing. But she could hear him—"Hey! How's it goin'?"—until he stretched the phone's long cord far around the corner, into the living room.

He reappeared at the door to the garage, holding the receiver against his thigh. "Where we going, Dad?"

"Sheephouse Neck. Same as last time. We'll be by the river."

Marc carried the phone away again.

"Who called?" April asked when he came through the kitchen again.

He shrugged. "Pack your swimsuit?"

"Why? Come back here! Why do I need my swimsuit?"

"Ya never know."

Soon they were on their way, the whole family plus Ginni packed into the maxi-van, the little trailer wiggling along behind. Erval drove along the gently curving roads, past mailboxes at the end of lanes, past bushes that blew in the van's wake, past the long, low buildings of a chicken farm. The forest closed in, then cleared away for yet another chicken farm.

Once inside the state park, they spread out over three camp sites, pitched their tents, tied their garbage bag to a white ash tree, all while a whistling Erval fanned the campfire to life.

Later, full of hot dogs and marshmallows, Marc fell asleep to the hum of cicadas. He slapped at another mosquito against his bicep and regretted having a father who hated crowds, distrusted oceans, and therefore never took them camping in the sea-breezy air of Nassowango Island.

In the morning, haze hung over the trees and smoke wafted from beneath the griddle where Erval, whistling again, flipped pancakes. Ruth-alin yawned, and measured a heaped spoonful of Tang into a pitcher of water.

E rval was eager to try the Foggy Bottom Trail this morning. "But have another pancake, Duane. It's a long time 'til lunch. Derek, you stop fussing with your brother," he shook his spatula, "or you won't be hiking with us!"

As soon as he put the griddle over the fire to burn off the pancake bits, and as soon as Ruthalin released kids from wiping the oilcloth clean and putting away the egg cartons, and as soon as he lined up his troops

and checked their feet on suspicion that someone would try to march into the woods wearing their drugstore thongs—he clapped the fishing hat over his balding head and led off into the woods.

Soon enough, children complained that they would never find camp again, at least not in time for lunch. So Erval sang, in a voice that startled the birds into silence, his wood-tramping theme song, something from his favorite Fred McMurray movie:

*Follow me, boys!
Follow me!
When you think you're really beat,
That's the time to lift your feet . . .*

Marc brought up the rear. He even sang along, sort of:

*Swallow me, boys,
Swallow me!
Worms and bugs are great to eat,
Mashed to bits by stinky feet. . .*

Tom giggled at the words until, as the lead hikers' footsteps echoed across a plank bridge, Heidi began to cry and point at the water below. A pine cone—her hike souvenir—swirled slowly in the river's lazy flow.

"I'll get it!" Tom jumped off the path. Kneeling on the muddy banks, he reached across the water, his fingers closing, dipping, missing.

The sun rose higher. Marc looked at his watch. He pulled his shirt away from his neck. If he wasn't back in camp by 11:00 . . . What were they doing out here, a bunch of sweaty hikers, holding their breath on a plank bridge, and Heidi bawling like the world would end, and Tom wading, stumpy-legged in the water, reaching into the webby world under the bridge? "Can't you get another pine cone?" Marc said. "It's not like they're hard to find out here."

Tom waded back to the bank, empty-handed. He scanned the forest floor. He found a nice, craggy forked branch. Then he returned to the river. He caught the pine cone with his branch, and swept it to shore.

Heidi quit sniffing and they were on their way again. They trudged through spots of shade and sunlight. They slapped bugs attracted by their sweat. Erval promised that, sure thing, they'd rent some fishing poles and

even a couple canoes after lunch, and find a shady spot on the river and . . . Marc looked on at his little brothers' excitement with a cold pity, until finally, *finally*, they found their tents in the clearing again, catching Ruthalin in the act of bagging a dirty diaper.

Marc lifted an upturned bowl on the picnic table and tore off a piece of leftover pancake. He lay along the bench in the gappy shade, still swatting bugs. Then he heard the motor idling out on the camp road.

* * *

April looked up from the rock she still had not coaxed out of her shoe. She saw a shiny Dodge truck turn into the campsite, and Russ Buckman behind the glare of the windshield. How did he know the Feldsteds were here? And behind the truck, a boat hung halfway out into the camp road.

The bass tones of the motor trembled under the trees as Russ greeted her father through the open window. His wife Danae, in all her Ivory-Soap loveliness, with a long braid down her back today, smiled from her side of the cab. And their three boys leaned over from the back seat.

"How's it goin'?" Russ, ever the salesman, acted like Erval's nearest and dearest friend. "I was wondering if we could borrow your son for a little while."

Erval's eyes wandered over to the boat. Russ stepped out of the truck and stood dwarfed beneath the boat's bow, his arms folded, his head tucked back on his neck in a pride-of-ownership swagger. *Yep, new toy. Gonna try it out today.* Erval walked along as Russ ran his hand down the red stripe on the starboard side.

Russ had even christened her already: *Cuni-Babe*, written in fine, swirly script above the stripe.

Erval circled the boat, politely asking about the fuel specs and the trailer hitch, not terribly interested in the answers. But it bought him time to debate with himself. *Do I let him go? Or am I still the dad around here? Am I still the one in charge?*

He might have saved himself the trouble, for when he and Russ finished their lap around the boat, Marc hoisted a duffle bag into the truck bed and brushed off his hands.

"Ready to go, buddy?" Russ asked.

"Sure enough."

Small brothers clung to Marc's t-shirt. "Can we go too?" Heidi pled with Erval, "What about me, Daddy?"

Erval looked over the babbling defection before him. He frowned and opened his mouth. Nothing came out.

"Welllll," Russ looked at Danae, "I don't know about today. Maybe . . . How old are you?" He clapped Tom on the shoulder.

"Sixteen."

"Tell you what. We'll take anybody sixteen or over today, and then we'll pick another day to take the rest of you."

April wiggled her heel into her now-rockless shoe. She caught her breath. He might as well have invited her to step onto the mountain slopes of a calendar picture, the idea was so exotic and delicious. No wonder Marc warned that one never knew when one might need a swimsuit. She had heeded the warning, annoyed as she was with all his crypto-mystery.

She climbed into the truck bed. Ginni, Marc, and Tom were already settled against its hard metal ribs. They grinned at their amazing luck. They laughed loud and joked with Danae and refused to look at anyone but each other, because if their eyes wandered just three inches to the left, there would be all those disappointed faces staring back at them, and Dad, too, standing there with his thumbs in his belt, his shoulders hunched, his eyes squinting against a sudden patch of mid-day sun that shone down on his bewildered head.

Maybe Dad would forgive this. Maybe he would understand that any kid would want to feel speed and spray and sun-dappled water. And if he couldn't give it to them, he should let them go with somebody who could.

The wind plastered April's hair across her face as they sped past forests and chicken farms again, as they turned on the landing road. They passed through a village where miniature lighthouses and wishing wells adorned the lawns of porchy old homes, where ivy girdled the shady trees. Beyond the village, the trees gave way to marsh grasses. Then the road disappeared into the glittery waters of Nassowango Bay.

Russ turned the truck on the broad apron of asphalt. April hoisted herself out of the truck bed and stood with Ginni under a lonely-looking streetlight. Out in the lapping waters, a fortress of broken pilings guarded the approach to a forlorn old crabbing shack. Far out into the water stood Nassowango Island, a faint purple streak on the horizon.

Russ, grinning in his Ray-Bans, backed the *Cuni-Babe* down the land-

ing, between two piers, directed by Marc and Tom. Danae, on the pier, snapped her sons into life jackets.

Then they were off.

The afternoon wore itself away as they bounced along ahead of the boat's churning wake. April knelt on the back bench, elbows on the stern, bathing in the spray. She lent a hand to dripping skiers as they climbed up the ladder. All of them but Danae were bumbling novices, but April cheered when Tom managed both feet on one ski, if only for a moment. She gasped when a sharp and thrilling turn of the boat swung Marc across the wake, where he nearly collided with one of those crab-shack pilings. As for her own turn in the water, she mostly remembered Ginni, over on the other ski rope, screaming her amusement-park scream.

Russ idled the boat out on the bobbing waters and Danae produced cheese sandwiches and Orange Crush. She ducked into the cuddy cabin to change her toddler's diaper. When she emerged again, she smoothed out a blue cotton hat. "The sun's getting to you, young lady," Danae said, and she settled the hat on Ginni's head.

Ginni looked out from under the floppy brim. "Do I look like an old-lady gardener now?"

"With all the lime green and magenta in that beach towel," said April, "you look like a color-blind old lady gardener. You know, you don't have to stay wrapped in your towel like that."

"I do, too. My legs are white and horrible."

April sighed. "We're all friends around here. Nobody cares."

Ginni raised her chin and tucked the towel more firmly around her waist. Then she stood to watch as they reeled Jeremy Buckman out into the water. He wanted to try the one-ski trick himself.

April turned her face up to the sun and played a mental slide show of the day. She saw Marc, his wet hair separated into curls; Tom offering a corner of his sandwich to the youngest Buckman; Ginni who, with one hand on her hat and the other gripping her towel knot, smiled into the breeze. She also saw her father, slouched and unreadable, looking up at Russ's truck as it drove away, but she blinked the image away and looked out over the rippled bay.

When the rope played out and the *Cuni-Babe* jerked into motion, the knot in Ginni's towel loosened. All that lime green and magenta fell away. She scrambled to catch it. Her hands fussed and tucked.

Meanwhile, the wind lifted the brim of her blue hat and carried it away to the water. Ginni stood, surprised, patting her head.

Marc tugged on Russ's Hawaiian shirt. It was his wife's hat, after all.

Russ cut the motor and looked back.

"I'll get it," said Tom, and he dove over the side of the boat.

Whale-humping through the sparkling waters, he followed the patch of blue. It floated away as if it had envied every other creature on the bay today and wanted to show that it, too, knew how to skim the waves.

When Tom returned, he perched on the swim ladder, rubbing water out of his eyes. He grinned, all Boy-Scouty and helpful, in spite of the way Jeremy pushed past him on the ladder, which made the hat leap into the water again.

"Aaah!" Tom jumped after it.

All hands on deck untangled lines, handing Jeremy his, stowing the others. When Russ was satisfied, he turned the key and put his hands on the throttle of the now-humming boat.

April rested in her seat. The purr of the accelerating boat made her drowsy. Marc, up in the spotter's seat, rested back on his elbows.

Then April felt the bump.

She looked at Marc. Had he felt it too? He ran a languid hand through his hair, then turned to look at her. Reading the disquiet in her eyes, he sat up. "Where's Tom?"

She tried to remember the bump. Was it a scrape? A mere tap? Maybe just a little rock of the boat? No, there was a definite catch-and-release to it.

"Russ, cut the motor!" Marc shouted. "I said—" he gave Russ a streetfight shove, "—cut the motor!"

April looked over the edge. As Marc jumped in the water, a blue hat floated in the dying wake. She sank against the wall of the boat. She summoned up Tom's face, the grinning, dripping one of just a minute ago. It seemed terribly important to hold on to that face.

But the face that rose from the water was pale and stunned. Tom's eyes darted from the sound of Marc's shouts to Danae shooing the children up to the cockpit. Flaglets of blood swirled in the water around his emerging body until his leg appeared.

Then, April only heard Ginni, vomiting over the side of the boat.

April gathered the blanket tighter around her shoulders. Some blue-haired volunteer had handed it to her. She looked now in the mirror at her own curls, dried, finally, and mussed from dozing against the wall out in the waiting room.

She opened the bathroom door. Down the hallway, past the nurses' station, a nurse stepped in on her parents. They rose.

They'd been waiting, watching doorways, rising like this for hours. First, it was the doctor, talking in hushed and authoritative tones, saying things like *Four units . . . Mid-shaft, like this*, as his hands sliced across the meaty part of his own calf.

Completely severed?

Fortunately not but, and whatever the doctor said next made Ruthalin's hand fly to her mouth. April didn't need to hear it. She had seen the tangled meat and protruding bone herself. She had watched the blood soak through Ginni's precious towel while waiting eons for the Coast Guard boat.

Save the leg?

The doctor had crossed hairy arms over his scrubs.

How do you deliver bad news? How do you drop barbells without cracking the floor?

They can try. He's gone upstairs. You can wait there.

And now, here they were. Every time April had nodded off, then awakened to the jolly sounds of TV-land from the softly humming set in the corner, the world felt as normal as dust motes and lawnmower noise. She could almost believe Tom sat up in bed right now, laughing and happy, the little brother she had always known. But now, the canned laughter and Pepsi jingles had given way to the national anthem.

And that nurse stood there. She held out the clipboard and pen to Dad.

A clipboard could mean lots of things. More units of blood, maybe. Or transfer to another hospital. April stood at the corner of the station, where two nurses chattered about perms for men. *It doesn't mean they tried and couldn't save it.*

He did not reach for the clipboard.

He did not look at his wife's stricken face.

The chatter died away. The two nurses looked at the waiting room, at April, at each other. The tall one with the coarse hair smiled, sympathy with a professional polish. News travels fast in a hospital, April guessed.

That was Erv Feldsted's kid they brought in this afternoon. Nice guy, Erv. Tough, tough break.

And Erval Feldsted lifted the pen away from the clipboard and handed it back to the nurse.

April turned for the elevator. Inside, she pressed the button she knew best, B for basement.

The doors opened. They revealed, behind the gleam of vending machine glass, Pay-Days and Snickers, hard-puck bear claws, greenish tuna sandwiches. She leaned her forehead on the glass, trying to decide. But she knew none of it would help.

She wondered where to go next. To the right, the night lights of the silent cafeteria glowed out into the hallway. To the left, she knew every bend and doorknob and nameplate.

She turned left.

Just beyond the last corner, she found Marc, on the floor outside Dad's office. His elbows rested on his drawn-up knees. His feet were a cold, waxy white, slipped into Russ's sandals.

He looked up, troubled and whisker-shadowed. He slid his back up the door, struggling to his feet.

She held out the blanket to him.

He took it, his fingers fumbling with the edges.

She lost patience and gathered him into her arms. He clung to her, the blanket rumpled between them. She would have let go, but a cry—deep and strange and lonely—rose up out of him, and then another. And another. And another, echoing down the hallway outside his father's office.

* * *

The bus engine hummed, emitting a steady chug of fumes, its cargo doors opened up like bent insect legs. She hesitated, then threw her arms around Marc's neck. "Dad would've come if he could," she told him.

"Yeah, sure."

With one last mirthless smile, he was up the steps. His face appeared in the window.

She stood, pinned to the oily, gum-dotted sidewalk, seeing this thing through until the bus creaked away from the gate and rolled toward Mill Street. It waited there, its turn signal blinking like a bored zoo lion at high

noon. Then, moving into a break in the traffic, it wheezed down the street.

April got into the car, alone.

Sister Love

Susan Morgan

“You’re acting like a child,” said Karen.

“I’m not,” said Lynn, and looked with determination at her dinner plate. She could feel Karen’s anger vibrating against her skin.

“Oh, don’t talk to me—”

Lynn glanced sideways at her sister. Karen had taken off Fritz’s ring before she came into the house, the one he’d given her a week ago, so her long, tapering fingers were bare. The chain around her neck was hanging inside her white cotton blouse.

Not Karen’s blouse, Lynn reminded herself. My blouse.

Lynn was sure the ring was on the chain. She turned her head, trying to see.

“It’s not polite to stare,” Karen said, and then stood up. Her napkin fell from her lap to the floor in an awkward pyramid. Lynn didn’t turn as Karen left the room. She could hear Karen’s feet going up the stairs to the room they shared. Lynn counted the steps. At the top, Karen took two steps instead of one and slammed the bedroom door.

Both parents were silent. Lynn waited.

“You did start it,” her father said in an apologetic voice. She looked at him without comment. He was stroking the edge of his water glass, circling the rim with one finger.

“I know.”

“Don’t you think you could apologize, Lynn?” This time it was her mother, sitting at the other end of the table.

“It’s my blouse.”

More silence. She could see the way her father mulled the words over in his head before speaking. “Is it just the blouse, Lynn?” he asked.

She thought, Can’t you see? Karen’s so far from us, like a car on autopilot. She lifts her fork and makes a comment; she even smiles. It’s like

making a marionette dance. Karen knows exactly how to move its strings, but she doesn't ever really join us anymore. I just want—

What? Attention? No use saying so, of course. She turned and picked up Karen's napkin from the floor, folding it carefully and setting it next to Karen's plate. She waited for her mother to say something about the floor being dirty, about putting the napkin in the dirty laundry instead. Her mother sat, relaxed, watching her, silent. Talking about any of this with them was impossible. If she started talking, she'd say too much, or say things wrong. Not talking at all was a lot safer.

"It's just the blouse," Lynn said. Her voice was too loud and there was another long silence. She picked up her fork and then put it down again. "I'm not hungry." She folded her napkin next to Karen's, and then pushed herself away from the table.

She looked at the pictures on the wall as she walked up the stairs. The picture of the Salt Lake Temple was at the bottom. Karen's picture was next, the one taken three years ago for school, then Lynn's picture. She still had braces. Next was her parents' wedding picture, and above that was the prison picture of her father's maternal great-great-grandfather, standing close to other well-fed polygamists who wore bow ties and pajama-like suits with broad, mismatched horizontal stripes just like his. They seemed relaxed as they stood or sat on the steps of the prison door, and they held striped caps. George Q. Cannon seemed to be sitting in a chair in the middle, with a small houseplant in his hand. No one smiled. Lynn found it hard to believe that even one woman would marry any of these old, dry men. Mom had said the picture was taken at the old federal prison, where Sugarhouse Park was now, but Lynn thought the dirt they stood on and the stone-and-brick building behind them was more like Fort Douglas, up by the University of Utah.

The bedroom door looked strange when it was shut: flat, blank wood. Lynn stood at the top of the stairs and knocked. Her hand was shaking. She watched it but couldn't make it stop.

"Go away."

"Karen—"

"I said go away." Lynn could hear one drawer of their dresser opening and closing. "Your blouse is on your bed, if that's what you're worried about." Slam. "But you know as well as I do that you said I could borrow it."

"Let me in, Karen, please?"

She stood there, leaning against the door. The wood was smooth against her face. She could smell the varnish. Karen's feet moved about in the bedroom, back and forth. Lynn put the palms of her hands flat against the door.

"Karen?"

No answer. After a few minutes, she went downstairs again. Mom was washing dishes in the kitchen. Dad had gone in the living room to watch some basketball on TV. Lynn sat down across the room from him, pretending he wasn't there, picked up some magazines and tried to read them. She'd gone through three of them before she heard Karen come out of the bedroom. Lynn kept her head down, hoping Karen would come in and sit down on the couch, ready for peace. Karen went outside instead. When she came back in, she went into the study and shut the door.

Lynn waited a long time. The study door stayed firmly shut. She said goodnight to her dad, who was watching the news now, said goodnight to her mom in the kitchen, went upstairs, and went to bed.

* * *

It was still dark when Lynn woke again; a car driving down the street roused her. She'd been dozing on and off for hours and could still feel the tension in her neck and arms. The house was making hot, creaking sounds. She turned over in bed. In her dreams, her sister Karen was still angry. "You're acting like a child."

"I'm not," said Lynn, and shoved the blankets away from her body. The other twin bed was still empty.

So dark, she thought now. When does the sun rise? She didn't want to look at the clock again. The last time she had looked at the clock, it had been almost four in the morning. The sycamore was scratching at her bedroom window. It had rained earlier in the night, but there was no rain now, and even the smell of the water had faded. Lynn rubbed her hands up and down her arms. The palms of her hands felt hot, and she wondered what had made her shake so much earlier.

That other bed was so silent. And Lynn wanted to talk—or to hear Karen talk: half-yawning, sleepy, with that husky voice of hers.

But not about Fritz.

Dinner was late because Karen had been with Fritz again. Mom and Dad didn't know that part. Lynn had covered for Karen as usual, waiting for her sister at Sugarhouse Park in the pavilion closest to the pond. She

sat at one of the picnic tables with her homework, working trigonometry problems, but after a while she felt hungry. A couple of seagulls were waddling in mud next to the water. She packed up her homework, picked up an empty bag from Kentucky Fried Chicken that was lying on the ground, put it in the nearest trash can, and slowly walked east under the trees next to the stream. Karen and Fritz were on the bridge at the east end of the park. Fritz had his arm around Karen.

Their family had known his family for a long time, ever since his family had moved onto their street ten years ago. Mom had taken them cookies; Dad invited them to a barbecue. They reciprocated, once, by inviting Lynn's family over for dinner. The meal had been a lot more casual than the kind of meal Mom liked to prepare: paper napkins instead of cloth ones, and a casserole instead of a meat, a vegetable, and a starch. Mom brought a tossed green salad with silver tongs to serve with and some rolls she'd made from scratch. Mom and Dad had talked about the ward. Fritz's mom and dad talked about their wonderful Presbyterian pastor. After that dinner, the two sets of parents had settled on being friendly but uninvolved.

It was different with the children. Fritz was an only child with short blond hair and a quiet way of speaking. He moved quickly—more like a gymnast or a dancer than anything else. His sense of balance was superb. There was assurance in the way he walked or sat or smiled; it wasn't as if he was trying to attract attention, but it was as if he knew he was worth watching, and he didn't mind knowing. When he looked at you he made you feel as though he thought you were worth watching, too. Both girls liked that. And he was the only other child who lived on their street.

Fritz taught Lynn how to ride a bike and taught them both how to nail two pieces of wood together. Fritz's dad built him a tree house in the backyard. When they got older and it was summer, all three of them walked together once a week past Sugarhouse Park, carefully crossed the busy street west of the park, then walked to the Sprague Branch Library. They would help each other carry the books home and spend hours together, reading out loud or quietly, and talking about ideas and stories while they ate apples and cheese or peanut butter and jam sandwiches. Gradually, Lynn realized that somehow she had gotten outside their conversation, and she couldn't get back in again.

If their parents had known how serious things were between Karen and Fritz, there would've been trouble. Their parents didn't like him. No,

that was too strong; how could you not like someone who understood so well how adults like to be treated and who was so willing to oblige? But they didn't like the fact that he wasn't a Mormon and that his mother wasn't a member of Daughters of Utah Pioneers. They were glad he was planning to go to Stanford after he graduated from high school in the spring. California was a much more comfortable distance than just down the street.

Sometimes Karen talked to Lynn about Fritz incessantly. Sometimes she got abstracted and could not successfully navigate from one end of a conversation to the other without falling silent, losing the ends of her sentences in some private thought. If she talked, there was always a sense of things being left out. The important words were still inside, and the outside words were merely placeholders for all the things she did not want to share. Lynn didn't know which was worse: to listen while Karen talked and talked and talked, or to watch her sister's face and the way it shut her out.

What would have happened if Lynn had said something about Fritz at dinner? Lynn closed her eyes tight.

What if she'd said, "Did Fritz like the blouse, Karen?"

She hadn't said it. She smoothed the covers with one hand. She shouldn't have made such a fuss over the blouse. She hadn't been able to stop herself.

Lynn got out of bed and felt her way to the door cautiously, groping for the door handle. It took three careful steps, brushing the floor with her toes, before she found the edge of the top stair.

Downstairs, the doors to the study and the guest bedroom were both closed. Of course, Karen would be in the guest bedroom. Lynn repeated that to herself as she made her way into the kitchen and got out a glass. The water was warm coming out of the tap. She filled her glass and carried it out of the kitchen. The guest bedroom was just down the hall.

Lynn opened the door, holding the glass of water as her excuse for being up at all. The room was light enough that she could see the bed.

Karen wasn't in bed.

Lynn stood at the door. Her legs itched, and she was sorry she hadn't dried off her hands after getting the water. She could hear the sound of the kitchen clock and the refrigerator. Maybe Karen was still in the study after all.

She was thirsty. She drank the glass of water and took it back to the

kitchen. Then she walked to the study. The doorknob was cool under her damp hand, and she turned it gently before pushing the door open.

No Karen.

Lynn walked in, went to the window, and examined the screen. Karen had detached it and then had carefully propped it against the window from the outside. Lynn could feel the night air, cool and delicious, against her face; the window was open just enough. It was warmer inside than out.

Lynn went back to the desk. Karen liked to do her homework here. The desk was bare, though. If she'd done her homework here tonight, she'd also put away the books and papers afterward.

Karen's with Fritz again, Lynn thought. Of course she is. She probably waited here just long enough to give their parents the impression she was working late on homework before going to bed. They would have kept their distance, letting their girls work things out without too much comment, giving Karen some space. Lynn pushed her thoughts away, opened the door, and started to go upstairs, then stopped halfway up. Karen's picture watched her from the wall, smiling.

What was I doing when she took the screen off the window? While I was looking at the bedroom wall, waiting for her to come upstairs?

Lynn turned around and came downstairs again.

It was easy to put the screen back. When she had finished, she walked into the living room. Their father usually bolted the door; she wondered whether he had forgotten tonight.

He had not forgotten.

Lynn went upstairs quietly, trying not to make any noise on the stairs. Not that it mattered: her parents always slept soundly. She wondered whether she would be able to sleep. The bed was comfortable, and the house felt cooler. She pulled the covers up to her chin. Gradually the darkness began to lessen, and she heard a car outside. She lay staring at the ceiling. Another car went by. Her heart was beating hard, and she lay with her hands pressed against her body.

She waited for the front doorbell to ring. There was enough light for her to see the small crack that was in the corner of the ceiling. Her anger was gone somehow, or maybe it was just waiting. Putting the screen back and making sure the door was locked—that had changed things, balanced them out. Maybe Karen would try throwing pebbles at their bedroom window instead of ringing the doorbell, and Lynn would let her in.

The doorbell didn't ring. Her eyes were on the crack in the ceiling, and she listened without making a sound. She heard her parents get up: water running, the smell of bacon. Karen had always been home before morning. Always.

Outside, the sycamore scratched at the window while Lynn lay silent in her bed.

POETRY

**Quantum Gospel:
A Mormon Testimony**

Ronald Wilcox

1

Symmetry exists in exact reflections of Love:
Take a patch of chaos circling beforehand,
Sling it past black stars circling at random,
Create light in rings inside particed sparks,
Glowing in random points and recognitions,
Moving and brewing beneath your own hand.
Respond to Word of God inside your mind:
Call the involvement creation, as the eyes
Of the Gods gaze infinity into finite forms.

2

Had I reckoned further I would have wakened
A dream of being being born inside my mind;
Had I known my urging soul, inviting my eyes,
To behold myself admitting a verge of sky,
Had I been born a babe unto regenerations,
Electric with crackling insights and intuitions,
I would have borne witness to the Holy Soul,
Whipping like lightning the spark embedded,
The rumbling inside, my own seething Vortex.

3

Where did I begin, beside the counsels of God?
The intelligences swarming like flaming bees
About the instigations of the centered glory,
Unfettered, as multicolored gardens explode
In waves of flowers, streaming beaming leaves,
Vanguards of redeeming Impulse, to be living,
The very air alive with incessant buzz of Love,
The desire for good and sheer deep believing,
Redoubted in swarms, informed by beauty alone.

4

Heaven gleaned as home, taken as a given form
Of loving, Father and Mother, intent on feeding
The baby beam, redeemed from an infinite river
Of flashes, flowing by the garden of belonging,
The place of becoming, the seed of my being,
Where I began, uninformed and searching, to see,
My harvest of options returning upward to the sun,
Redeemed, to become one with a hovering spirit:
The beginning of all beginnings, my beginning.

5

The mysteries peak at evening, unquiet shadows,
Bounding a flaming horizon in red inscriptions,
Burnishing in blue the downward fall of time,
Inconstant quest for perfection in a golden ball,
What the sky said as it died alone, ungrieving,
Awaiting deeper meanings than departing stars
Or a storming moon silent in the shivering air,
Reflecting the patterns of man, briefer than ice,
Ages of discontent, scattering flecks of the sea.

6

My flesh is wrapped about schisms of intentions,
Inordinate struggles inside me, woven of dreams,
The bleeding strands, the hollow bones, risen up,
The dust a cough of speculation, burrowing deep,
Created by my God, aware of myself as a mirror
Of feeling and shape and apprehension of him
Who shattered the night sky into edges of light
And thrust my soul into these wavering sounds
And visible flutes of breathing, trilling glories.

7

Who am I to accede to ramparts of knowledge,
Climb the high vistas of separation like cliffs
Calling the clouds to order, parsing the brief
Echoes, stirring evanescence, chips of Phosphor,
White marble crags, crumbling under my view?
Am I all mind when I slide into ivory ravines
And seal with quickening beams a silver sky?
Who made of me a mannered imagining man
To breathe in whispers of mist a sundown sea?

8

Oppositions collide inside my reflecting themes,
Defy the burn of being with sleek considerations:
Imagine the metaphysics underlying a magic ball,
A world gone mad in teeming tones of reasoning,
Undoing itself like flinging patterns of lightwaves
Unweaving, intertwining signs of curving beams,
Unfiltered and bursting, these shrieking atoms split,
Resist this knowledge, insidious as cancer cells,
A gleam of evil inevitable and adversary's glare.

9

Could I tremble a way to understanding I would,
Or speak of him who stood amid the smouldering,
Satan rebuffed and fell with deep inclination down,
To set against the infinite will a personal grudge,
Unhoned and embittered by self-congratulation,
Fierce with withering hatred of all, refurbishing
Good for all among them not him, screening eye
Decrying the holy plan, receiving no good thing,
Seething inside for sake of blank empty hate . . .

10

Expedient with fear I avoid saying more of this,
Nor will I embellish our histories of evil-seeking
In the woof and webs and warping of humankind:
They are there for all to see, this ancient tapestry
Winding about our bones in sheets of winnowing
Oppression, a decaying film of incessant surmise,
Where a faint hint of ending, the same as briefest
Surprise, ignites the final light of dying, dimming,
The shuttered eyes invariably closed forever.

11

I sat in the awesome councils of God and gazed
Over these resplendent faces, seawaves of intent,
Intelligences, fierce splashes of eyes, unendingly
Whirling horizons, specifying attractions, powers
Of electrified combinations, reflecting all and me,
And knew then that I knew my soul being called
Into form would be among their planetary plans,
The galaxies reverberating the beginning word
And solemn enhancements of my perfect Father.

12

I ward off a worm in my bone with memories
 Immediate as lusters of stars inside my mind,
 Reawakening a precision imagination of body
 And soul, flowing illumination inside my brain,
 Echoing a far and spherical center of creation,
 Breathing the presence of a love I knew then,
 The careful hand that bathed me in becoming,
 An all invisible view, a parallax of perfection,
 Revisiting my source beyond disappearance.

13

I hack at perplexity like sandstorms in my eyes,
 I grope at my flesh untied by time and wonder,
 I seize ratchets of belief to etch my broken teeth,
 I catch an easy passion flown past me like wind,
 I try to inhale my darling whose essence lingers,
 I misplace pickets of me and stagger over pieces,
 I reach to my feet and find them dematerialized,
 I coast to sleep into a moonlit sea of memories,
 I forget to wake when the town is up and about.

14

If dolphins clarify the sea before them surging,
 Inborn with echosystems of seeking shrieks,
 If whales levitate with appealing ease in spray
 The eyes of wonder under a water-gilded sky,
 If seeming vastness remembers each drop flung,
 Belying these involvements, blue encroachment,
 Who am I to seize upon my own faint designs,
 To identify the doming and delving mysteries,
 Their translucent cries, their teeming selves?

15

Try to organize inchoate thrusts of perceptions:
See hummingbirds dart in and about tiny points,
Needles of insights telling the bees where to go,
Weaving secret scents at the heart of red roses,
Bedazzling themselves as notes in open throats,
High C's high, white hot sighs, the Holy Ghost,
Creations unfolding in blooming infinite petals,
To see the least of creations like looping strings,
Praise too fine to see, except in righteous eyes.

16

Numberless sparrows and each a quantum digit,
Grackles along wires like strings of calculation,
Insects so many beyond senses, rendering dust,
Variegated skies like charcoal-pastel visions,
Showers of numbers spattering on white sand;
Immaculate seasons' code of frost encompasses
All this, as my own beating heart counts days,
Secures a grief against the empty hand of loss,
And pressured flesh, ensaddened, remembers.

17

Quantify particulars at the risk of consciousness,
Crack each fissure inside a reason reluctantly,
For flocs of particles like irradiant radar blips,
Whirl about screens&circles&locate themselves
Turning inward toward presuppositions known
Only among the amazed, our brief convolutions
Among us walking with solemn considerations,
Simple as Christ our Lord touching a forehead
Unto raising up a deathbound flesh everlasting.

18

Holy Word unspoken, Holy the Spoken Word,
 Patterns unveiling in infinite recesses of spirit:
 I have seen the briefest eyes becoming glazed,
 Wink at what they do not see and recognizing
 Me as part of the pattern unfolding in a drop
 Of consecrated oil, reflections of Jesus Christ:
 Holy, Holy, Holy, the moment of this passing,
 The blending of Creation into the shadow end,
 The leaven of morning stirring a rising beam.

19

Consider conduits of moving intervals inside us,
 Impossibly resolved in shimmers of interference,
 Threats of staccato reversals, visible visitations
 Radiating flashes of magic disassembling cities,
 Blisters forsworn in superheated inducements,
 Auroras of radio waves under a rotting swamp,
 Electrical currents crackling throughout a rock,
 Men miming the sun like dropped cups of red,
 Blowing smoke rings to galaxies of black holes.

20

Tell me men ignite no sparks or stir another soul
 Inside eyes of women awaiting homeward shade;
 Tell me roots of vegetation twist to our invention,
 Blind as random slipstreams above us gathering,
 Skies inside us emptied of knowing intelligence;
 Invent calculations entangled as beads emerging,
 Abacus of breath strung among lyres and singing;
 Tell me I know no soul inside the body of my bride,
 Quietly unwinding her God-intoned escapements.

21

We do believe inevitable adversities commingle
In thickets, in clods, in pods, in deeds, in shards,
In stasis, in streak, in twitch, in tears, in creases,
In keep, in sleep, in wake, in call, in cease, in be,
In part, in bleed, in sigh, in sin, in click, in birth,
In pile, in smile, in turn, in join, in break, in fate,
In take, in drop, in raise, in lose, in heart, in fall,
So joy be full in Adam abandoned and ever Eve,
The seek we share, sight of Him again, our God.

22

Meaning dances in mirrors upon a shattered sky,
We see behind the blaze a form in naming Adam,
The Seem involved in bytes of knowledge risen
Suddenly up, foretold, generations resurrected,
As if surprise in our eyes in mysteries unblinking
Were thinking in quantum and redefining reasons
Never told before rolled up in scrolls of scripture:
A plot unfolds in a furrow's day of recompense,
Certain verification of God and our Father's Son.

23

I can only say what I say knowing next to none,
Wedge between an aloneness and Holy Spirit,
Snatching at forgotten understandings in dreams,
Recall in spots the wisps of where I came from,
Report a blur of years like a clear kaleidoscope
Turned inward, perplexity becoming perspective,
Aim a brief arrow at my heart and teletype a word,
Like a click of telegraphy or electric acupuncture,
The slurred underpinning of faith and belief allied.

24

I cannot try to deify entirety of encyclopedias:
 I revere immortal Milton with third espoused saint
 By his side divining iambics and squeezing apple
 Pear shapes into miles of thundering colloquies,
 Skipping at hedges of politics and picking fights
 In Eden, his masterly knowhow in blinding light,
 Explaining man to God with diplomatic relations.
 Notwithstanding quickstars in crystalline domes,
 My inverted bowl stirs whirlpools of pinpricks.

25

Blinded by reason I devise new ways of seeing,
 Emerge in shapes of self-inclination imagining,
 Skew perspective's spiral sides and turn two ways,
 Be as a bird who knew beforehand up and down,
 Repeat the sky like crystal lakes subsume blue,
 Resonate each rocky click repeatedly clashing,
 Forego foregone conclusions alluding in clouds,
 Synthesize ambiguities in razors and measures,
 Cut along an edge of pictures carefully and paste.

26

I think I will glue it all upon a butterfly's flutter,
 Fork a spotlight sideways by a beam in my eye,
 Count backwards from infinity to a firecracker,
 Start a falling line of dominoes I have in mind,
 Inspect agitations on the other side of the moon,
 Redo the blue of daytime with a silver zipper,
 Speak secretly into split rocky chips blinking,
 Scrabble codes in vortices of my inner seeds,
 While away singularity as if waiting my turn.

27

The enfolded codes adorning a morning sun
In streams of creation radiate into this boy
Who gathered his questions in sacks of veils,
Kneeling among green energies above him,
Simply asked Father why and who to trust
When all voices he heard combined in din,
When not knowing why before he was told
Is a razor splitting open these closed skies,
Admitting bright answers as from new sun.

28

Joseph looked over a wooden crooked fence,
Constructed by his own hands for his father,
Listened fervently to the meadowlark's echo,
That far cry wherein his God could hear him.
Nearby he knew a sacred grove all his own,
Ringing and enshrining with gleaming leaves
Being melded into shadows of ancient truths,
Where he could tell the sky secrets to glorify
Straightforward uncurving rays of knowledge.

29

They stood still as double suns above the boy,
Smiling down upon his knee-prone amazement,
His simple faith the fiery center unveiling truth
As tangled amid the ebbs of withdrawing tides
Of mankind, confounded by knowing too much.
Centers of affirmation in forms he recognized,
Like as his father and brothers and of himself,
In a moment knowing more than all consigned
Before in sentient convening of human minds.

30

I know I need my Father's love as Joseph did:
How I hold a word sacred as a piece of bread
Between my fingertips, how water is blessed,
How I believe I fit an overview of everything
With no limits on imagination, how I comply
With promises I made as I was ordered with
An emergence: this celestial symmetry breaks,
Organized into miracles of crystalline lattices,
Atoms emerging bright chips in my own form.

REVIEWS

Dining with the Devil

R. A. Christmas. *A Long Spoon: Poems*. Morrisville, N.C.: Lulu Enterprises, 2005. 61 pp., \$11.13.

Reviewed by Robert A. Rees, former editor of Dialogue and specialist in American literature at various universities

Over the past forty years, Robert Christmas has been one of the best and most consistent poets writing about Mormon life and culture. His distinctive style and voice are readily recognizable. What makes Christmas's poetry so interesting, and so valuable, is the extent to which he probes Mormon experience with personal candor and penetrating honesty. As an inside outsider (or is it the other way around?), Christmas writes his poetry from the perspective of a believer (a true believer, but not in the way that term is generally understood), a reformed (but struggling) sinner (who, like J. Golden Kimball, is readily forgiven because "he repents too damn fast"), an astute social critic, and, always, a multi-dimensional saint. As a Mormon, Christmas's poetry reveals a persona who is, to adapt Cole Porter's line, "always true to the Lord in his fashion," even if that fashion is irreverent and brash while at the same time devoted and humble.

I first learned of Robert Christmas through his wonderful essay on Parley P. Pratt in the first issue of *Dialogue* ("The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt: Some Literary, Historical, and Critical Reflections," 1, no. 1 [Spring 1966]: 33-43) and then shortly thereafter through his poetry, also published in the same journal. It was my privilege as the second editor of *Dialogue* to publish what I consider some of Christmas's best poems. To be honest, during this period I was not certain that he would stay in the Church. He seemed more suited to being a jack Mormon than a Mormon. But, like Faulkner's Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*, he has endured; and more than this, he has prevailed, serving recently two missions for the Church, one in California and one in France. Nevertheless, along the way he has traveled a rocky road, with three marriages, seven children and four stepchildren, itinerant teaching positions at various colleges and universities, and a variety of business experiences, demonstrating all along the truth of Bruce Springsteen's line, "It's hard to be a saint in the city." If

nothing else, all of these experiences have provided him with a rich mine for his poetry.

A *Long Spoon* fits clearly in the tradition of confessional poetry. As explained on the Art and Culture website, “Confessional poetry [in America between 1955 and 1975] ruptured the topical taboos of its time. Abortions, alcoholism, divorces, mental hospitals, suicide attempts—nothing was sacred and everything was fair game. The Confessional poets created a disturbing, often autobiographical, poetic of pain that shocked the world with its raw anatomy of human suffering.”¹

Thus, through Christmas’s various transparent personae (“Rob,” “Our Hero,” “the other fella,” “I,” but mostly “He”), he writes about being sexually abused by a Scout leader (“some dirt won’t wash away”), adultery, a homosexual encounter, making out with a BYU English teacher, surreptitiously sneaking a cigarette, drinking beer or mescal, and other *petits vices*. He also writes about picking up hitchhikers, hiding his poetry from his wife, picking up a son who returns early from his mission, disobedient and recalcitrant children, a senior couple having sex on their mission (“They started some days with sex— / a practice not covered in the *Missionary Handbook*”)—not exactly the material one associates with main-line Mormon poetry, which makes it all the more relevant—and enjoyable to read.

As the line from the above poem reveals, Christmas’s poetry is often humorous. Sometimes he plays off Mormon language, teachings, and practices. In doing so, he writes in the long tradition of poets who, as my teacher Helen White said of John Donne, “play hob with holy things.” White also remarked that Donne sometimes had a fear of God’s displeasure with his writing—“as well he might.” Christmas might, too! Thus, in “Matriarchal Gripe,” Christmas takes a standard Mormon temple concept, “the patriarchal grip,” and turns it into a long wifely complaint about how her husband is not living up to his role as patriarch of the home.

Some might be put off by Christmas’s playing hob with holy things, as, for example, in “Liahona,” a poem about his father’s last menial job, replacing toilet paper in bathrooms. Here he compares the Book of Mormon directional spindles for pointing the way the Nephites should travel in the wilderness to “those / little spindles in the bathrooms.” In doing so, he appropriates the language of a powerful religious symbol (“curious / unworkmanship,” “restoration of toilet paper,” “sense of direction”) for something so completely and absurdly opposite

that it becomes a metaphysical conceit wherein two things so dramatically dissimilar create an incongruity, the purpose of which is to somehow connect them. In this way, the poet pays honor to a father reduced in the world of work to something so potentially demeaning but who nevertheless, by “faithfully attending to the / way the spindles worked,” somehow finds dignity in what he does.

The wife persona in these poems represents the practical, stable, anti-poetic voice. She worries, for example, that the poet will write things that will embarrass her and the Church. In “Couldawouldashoulda,” he says,

She wanted him to write
something she could buy at
Deseret Book and share with
her sisters in Relief Society.

Not much chance of that, thankfully.

My favorite poem in his collection is “Hop Hornbeam,” a poem that beautifully illustrates a common sentiment for contemporary Mormons, as it was for members of the Congregational Church during the first century of this nation—the inability to reach the spiritual standards set by the founders of the religion. In this poem, the narrator stands in the Sacred Grove, the beginning space for the Restoration. As he surveys the scene, he says, “There’s hardly a tree / old enough to have been / around when Joseph / Smith envisioned the / Father and the Son.” The lone exception is an ancient ironwood,

somewhat off the path
by the west boundary—
dark and nearly leafless

standing in contrast to how it must have appeared that spring day when young Joseph went into the woods to pray. Joseph sought to know who on the earth had the authority to act for God on the American frontier, not imagining that it was he who would bear the mantle of that authority. In contrast to the trees that witnessed that first calling to authority, Christmas’s ironwood stands with

limbs raised to the square
 like some monstrous
 authority—ghostly
 branches that in 1820
 might've been just what
 a fourteen-year-old
 prophet would swing on,
 but now I can't reach.

The final line of the poem brings us to the present and the distance between that first foundational experience in the Sacred Grove and the contemporary challenge of rising to match it.

The title of the collection comes from an old proverb, "If you're going to dine with the devil, make sure you have a long spoon." In this collection, Christmas does indeed dine with the Devil (as well as with the Lord), but keeps his long spoon, just in case. In "The Philosophy of a Man (Mingled with Scripture)," as the narrator and his wife are preparing talks for sacrament meeting, his wife warns, "Don't start confessing your sins," to which he responds (to himself), "his struggle with sin / was the best part about him." And so it is.

Note

1. "Confessional Poetry," Art and Culture website, <http://www.artandculture.com/cgi-bin/WebObjects/ACLIVE.woa/wa/movement?id=548> (accessed October 14, 2006).

Safe Haven for a Time

Thomas Cottam Romney. *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*. 1938; rpt. with new foreword by Martha Sonntag Bradley, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005. 352 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Paul H. Wright, Dallas, Texas, who was raised in Texas among Tenneys, Pratts, Turleys, and Romneys

The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS) and its currently jailed leader, Warren Jeffs, recently established the

1700-acre Yearn for Zion Ranch in dry country northwest of San Antonio, amid alfalfa fields, oil wells, cattle, and, fittingly, goats.

It is the second time that polygamists revering the non-canonical 1886 revelation to President John Taylor—that polygamy was an irrevocable “everlasting covenant”—have fled to Texas. The first was in 1912, when Mormon colonists in northern Chihuahua retreated to El Paso to wait out the Mexican Revolution, reluctantly abandoning orderly homes, orchards, barns, and schools. Most of them never returned. Even worse, polygamy was dying, and it had been both the core of their religion and the reason for settling in Mexico in the first place. New marriages were out of the question; even cohabitating with the old wives was a scandal.

The Mormon Colonies in Mexico, first published in 1938 and now available in reprint with a sympathetic new foreword by Martha Sonntag Bradley, is an insider’s history. Its author, Thomas Cottam Romney, was only nine when, in 1885, he arrived with his mother, the third of his father’s five wives, to settle in the Sierra Madres. Tom was a hungry boy: “The food was coarse, consisting mainly of frijoles (beans), cornbread and molasses with an occasional piece of bacon thrown in, but what was lacking in variety of food was made up in appetite” (77). He would witness the entire colonial experience: the Saints’ early privations; sturdy faith; rise and expansion with children, produce, and livestock; and the sorrows of their precipitous exile. Romney speaks with the immediacy of one who has lived through the events.

Had he not ignored the actual practice of polygamy in the colonies, how compelling a story this might have been! What an enviable position from which to describe life inside the Principle—and what an opportunity lost! When Thomas Romney wrote, “Our family was an unusually large one and to feed and clothe them was a problem not easy to solve” (318), the man wasn’t exaggerating. His father had a quiverful of children, five wives, and many grievances to manage. Thomas’s mother, Catherine Cottam Romney, for example, was irritated by her husband’s attentions to his fifth wife, a widow with money whom he married seven years after the Manifesto, while Catherine was still birthing children. But you won’t read about it in this book. Polygamists, particularly women, have no voice in *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico*. It is a work of social history that mostly manages to avoid describing the one aspect of Mormon social life in the Mexican colonies, marriage arrangements, about which the reader is most curious.

Mormons first explored Mexico in 1875, according to Orson Pratt, "to look for places where our brethren could go and be safe from harm in the event that persecution should make it necessary for them to get out of the way for a season."¹ The colonies were deliberately insular, the Spanish language and the Mexicans who spoke it a secondary concern. Settlements hugged the U.S-Mexican border, far from the state capital, Chihuahua City, and impossibly far from the population centers of the central Mexican highlands. In Romney's view, "People having different social standards, resulting from radically different environments, will have more enduring friendships for one another if they do not become too intimate" (147).

Faced with crippling anti-polygamy statutes at home, Mormons sought, according to Bradley, "a stable or favorable political climate" for practicing their religion (Foreword, 4). That did not mean they intended to live within the law as much as they hoped to live free from harassment. Polygamy was not then, nor has it ever been, legal in Mexico or anywhere in North America. Intimate but ambiguous meetings with members of the Diaz cabinet provided cover for polygamy, but Mormon authorities always seemed to know they were skirting the law. They were more careful with the laws of Canada.

Was it racism? Romney repeats the now discredited claim, once taught in LDS Seminary, that "white and delightsome" ancestors of Amerindians built the Mayan glories at Uxmal, Palenque, and Chichén Itzá. Race was part of the colonists' troubles in Mexico: "Genetically the two peoples differed. The Mexicans were predominantly Latin, by nature temperamental and given to intense emotionalism; inclined more to be theoretical than practical. On the other hand, the colonists were largely of Nordic extraction, less emotional than their neighbors and strongly inclined toward the practical, having a tendency to be cool and calculating and having a bent toward thrift" (146).

Like other Mormons, Romney emphasized that his own northern European bloodlines had produced civilization's great legal, literary, and scientific advances. Did the progressive, democratic laws of Nordic Canada deserve more compliance than the laws of Mexico?

How many colonists practiced polygamy? Romney will only repeat that 4.5 percent of men Churchwide were polygamists, although such precise numbers obscure more than they reveal. Was the number closer to 40 percent in Mexico? Romney possibly thought that it was impolitic to discuss marital arrangements in his colonial home or that he had no special

access to understand them. But even if he couldn't fully comprehend (and who can?) his neighbors' marriages—their promises, sharing, and sexual dynamics—there were still numbers to be adduced: How many young “widows” did he know? Who supplied their milk and coal? How many children did they have? What were their residential arrangements?

The reader suspects the author knows more than he will say. His hagiography of Anthony W. Ivins may even be a case of active obscuration. While Ivins, the first Juarez Stake president, was an exemplary man, it is also true that the Church used his monogamy to quell rumors of ongoing polygamy in Mexico, of which Romney cannot have been wholly unaware. Ivins, when he was later in the First Presidency, claimed to have performed more polygamous marriages after the Manifesto than anyone else in the Church.²

The practice of polygamy after the Manifesto in the Mexican colonies, until 1912, was partly responsible for the convulsions threatening Mormonism after the turn of the century. When the author's cousin Junius Romney told a congressional inquiry that the Saints had settled in Mexico mainly for the cheap land and warm weather, few believed him. Skepticism in Washington nearly cost Utah's senator Reed Smoot his seat and President Joseph F. Smith his reputation when his truthfulness under oath was challenged. In Utah, ungovernable factions arose and split from the leadership and many believed that Apostle John W. Taylor, who had wives in Mexico, and Apostle Matthias Cowley had been unfairly sacrificed. The Mexican colonies' importance in the larger Mormon history is, unfortunately, absent from this account. Nonetheless, the account offers a valuable documentation of many other aspects of daily life in the Mormon colonies of Mexico.

Notes

1. Orson Pratt, quoted in James Z. Stewart, *Journal, Archives, Family and Church History Department*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

2. Quoted in B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 172.

Heartfelt Theater

Thom Duncan. *Matters of the Heart*. A staged reading sponsored by The

Nauvoo Theatrical Society, Bronson residence, Orem, Utah, Friday, September 8, 2006. Script available from Encore Performance Publishing, South Jordan, Utah, <http://www.encoreplay.com>.

Reviewed by Nan McCulloch, Draper, Utah, an avid theatergoer who studied dance at Brigham Young University and theater at Weber State University

You might say that Thom Duncan is the founding grandfather of The Nauvoo Theatrical Society. In 1983 Duncan owned Theatre-in-the-Square in Provo, Utah, the first theater dedicated to the production of LDS-themed dramatic works. This was where, in 1985, Duncan first produced his play *Matters of the Heart*. When this theater closed, he, Scott Bronson, and several other persons founded a writers' group. The group wanted to form a society to showcase and promote Mormon theater. A number of years passed before they succeeded in organizing a non-profit foundation, which they eventually agreed to name The Nauvoo Theatrical Society.

In 2002 The Nauvoo Theatrical Society opened its Center Street Theatre in Orem, Utah, the first theater company devoted solely to the production of Mormon theater. For a season Mo-theater caught fire and was proclaimed a success by audiences and critics. The high-quality productions that ensued proved excellent, from the well-written scripts to the acting and directing. Sadly, the playhouse closed after the first season due to city building codes and insufficient financial support. But in spite of this symbolic death of Mormon theater, its purpose—to preserve, enrich, and expand the Mormon cultural landscape—remained a small spark smoldering.

Fast-forward four years and the phoenix rises from the ashes. In the shadows of the Provo Temple and Brigham Young University in conservative “Happy Valley,” Mormon playwrights are springing forth and staged readings are happening at the BYU Talmage Building Auditorium and UVSC Black Box Theatre. *Matters of the Heart*, just as relevant as it was in 1985, was staged Friday, September 8, 2006, as a fund-raiser on a make-shift stage in Scott Bronson's backyard. Plans are currently in the making to house The Nauvoo Theatrical Society at a new location.

Thom Duncan is the first author, to my knowledge, who has developed the concepts put forth in Richard D. Poll's essay “What the Church Means to People Like Me” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 4 [Winter 1967]: 107–17). Poll's Liahona/Iron Rod dichotomy, taken from

the Book of Mormon, has since become standard in the body of Mormon thought. This essay began an intellectual awakening in me which was further fueled by the writings of Eugene England and Lowell Bennion. I can imagine Duncan's questioning young character, Paul Baines, following a similar path.

Matters of the Heart is a story about Robert and Alice Baines and their son Paul who is coming home from his mission in France a year early. Obviously Paul's parents are worried and haven't a clue about why he's coming home. The mission president assured them that Paul was an effective missionary and said that Paul would explain his reasons when he arrives home.

Robert Baines is a respected stake president—kind but inflexible. Alice Baines is a loving mother and a devoted helpmeet to her husband; she accepts her role as “the example” in the stake over which her husband presides. Awaiting Paul's return, Robert and Alice try to go about life as usual, but agonize over this turn of events. When Paul finally arrives, the audience encounters a sensitive, intelligent young man who loves his parents and wants to please them but seems conflicted in his feelings about the Church. Alice and Paul have no problem relating to each other and resuming their former comfortable relationship, but Robert and Paul are ill at ease and self-conscious. A return to normal for them seems unlikely.

When Paul finally tells his parents why he left France early, it is clear that Robert cannot accept Paul's decision. Were Paul's reasons for coming home related to incompetence or indiscretion, Robert could have understood, but they are far more complicated. During his mission, Paul's youthful idealism and borrowed testimony have been challenged, leaving him questioning and insecure. Paul asked for divine inspiration before making this critical decision to return home early, and he feels that his decision was confirmed by the Spirit. Robert infers that Paul's inspiration may have come from another source.

When Robert and Paul voice their feelings about the Church, neither understands the other. Both are “good Mormons” but differ in their approach. Robert believes that obedience is primary, that there is an answer to every gospel question, and that the prophets are infallible. Paul values his agency, questions all aspects of the gospel, and thinks all humans are flawed—even the prophets. He still has faith that the gospel is true, but isn't so sure about the Church. Robert tries to force Paul to pray with him, but Paul is angered by what he considers intimidation. After this uncom-

fortable attempt by Robert to manipulate Paul, Paul leaves in anger and Robert takes a phone call saying, "It's OK, I wasn't doing anything important."

After Robert leaves the stage, Paul and Alice are able to discuss what has just transpired. He feels that his relationship with his father is unsalvageable. Paul says that his father is an Iron Rod Mormon and that he considers himself to be a Liahona Mormon. Alice admits to having doubts herself but is definitely a closet doubter with no intention of coming out. She understands both Paul and Robert and loves them fully in spite of their flaws, but is not sure she will still be loved if her weakness is revealed. Nevertheless, Alice comes down as the "voice of reason" in the play. She reminds Paul that God made both of these persons and that the Church needs Liahonas and Iron Rods to accomplish God's work.

Duncan uses an azalea bush as an analogy throughout the play. Robert planted the bush when Paul went on his mission, hoping it would thrive and bring forth blooms. For the past year Robert has watered, pruned, and fussed over his now-sickly bush, trying to make it beautiful. The nurseryman told him that he watered the shrub too much. At the end of the play, Robert comes home from the nursery with a new azalea bush. The replanting seems to symbolize a new beginning for them.

While he and Paul dig up the ailing bush and plant the healthy one, Alice, at Robert's request, reads aloud from Jacob 5 in the Book of Mormon. This chapter is a parable recounting how the master of a "vineyard" sees his olive tree start to decay and responds with redoubled care. He prunes it, digs about it, and nourishes it, but finds the top beginning to perish. The master is grieved because he doesn't want to lose his vine. He asks his servant what he could have done differently. He wants to know who has corrupted his vineyard. The servant answers that it could be the loftiness and the pride of the vineyard. But he says that the roots are still good; but the branches have grown faster than the strength of the roots. The lord of the vineyard asks again what he could have done more, and the servant says to spare the bush a little longer.

I have trouble with this ending. The clear message I get from the parable is that the lord of the vineyard overwatered the olive but that the roots were still good and he must "spare it a little longer" or be patient. Since Paul was also impatient and prideful, his branches grew faster than his roots could support. He has some maturing to do. It therefore seems

inappropriate to have the characters plant a new bush. Not giving up on the original bush would have made a more satisfying ending for me.

I would also like to see Thom use a bush that is more suitable to this region. Azaleas don't usually do well in Utah, except on Temple Square where the heat comes up from the underground parking area. Call me picky; but as a gardener, I would like Robert to understand more fully the needs of his bush. When the roots are good and strong, there must be a way to bring it back to health and full bloom. Faith and understanding are required on the part of both the Liahona and the Iron Rod.

The play is insightful and thought provoking. The characters have universal appeal—real, likable, and interesting. Although the Poll dichotomy is used throughout, this play is about a father and a son in need of understanding. Duncan plans to film his play and assures us that The Nauvoo Theatrical Society will soon be making its second start. There are also plans to publish the play in an issue of *Irreantum*.

If Mormon theater can't make it in "Happy Valley," then where?
Help make it happen.

A Touching Remembrance

Helen Elizabeth Nebeker. *Bittersweet: A Candid Love Story*. Phoenix, Ariz.: Acacia Publishing, 2005. 424 pp., \$21.95.

Reviewed by Richard J. Jacob, professor emeritus of physics and dean of the Emeritus College, Arizona State University

Extracting one's memoirs from correspondence can be emotionally hazardous. This is especially true if the subject is romance and the sources are love letters. But if the settings, both global and personal, are unusually profound, the task can be draining almost beyond endurance. Helen Nebeker relates how the tears would flow endlessly as she transcribed and narrated the letters and circumstances upon which is based this engaging and touching remembrance of her and her husband's passionate and rocky marriage.

Helen Nebeker is professor emeritus of English at Arizona State University, where she helped pioneer professional opportunities for women in academia during the 1950s and later, until her retirement in 1988 as associate chair of the English Department. She wrote her story

with revealing openness for a faithful LDS woman in her late seventies, in a period of just a few months. Beautifully and skillfully written, as one might expect from a teacher of literature, it required, as the author reports privately, no more than fifty word changes after the initial draft had been serially completed.

The greater part of the effort was the transcription of nearly 800 letters exchanged between Nebeker and her recently married husband, Aquila Chauncey Nebeker Jr., or more simply, “Neb,” while he served with the 106th Infantry Division, which took tragic losses in the Battle of the Bulge near the end of World War II. The format of her account is a final love letter to Neb, who died in 2001. She fondly, coyly, and sometimes chidingly “recalls” along with him the issues and nuances uncovered in these letters and confronts with equal frankness cupids and demons as they are resurrected.

Helen Nebeker’s story begins in Indianapolis, her home town, in 1944. She left home at age seventeen, pretending to be twenty—a white lie she maintained with Neb until circumstances required her to “come clean” many years later—to obtain a job. Neb, a smoking, drinking, returned Mormon missionary from Mesa, Arizona, is stationed in town with the 592nd Field Artillery Battalion. They meet under typical war-time conditions, have a whirlwind romance, and are married within four months. She recounts this portion in great detail, even what Nebeker herself refers to as the “steamy parts.” Steamy, yes. Some readers may be moved by the boldness with which she describes deeply personal matters—but not seamy.

Two months later, Neb is deployed overseas, where he experiences the harshest of fighting and weather conditions on the German front, and Helen returns to work, along with countless other war wives. Neb soon persuades her to visit his parents in Mesa, which she does and eventually decides to stay. Although initially unfamiliar with the Mormon Church, she is baptized before Neb’s return. Her convert faith provides the strength to face the lifetime of intense challenges ahead of her.

Neb’s eventual return from war and their meeting in Los Angeles are described in a gem of romance writing:

How I managed to get from the airport to that Pershing Square—to this day I don’t really know where it is—and *then* to find it a huge place, with hundreds (it seemed to me) of people milling around, most of them uniformed service men, I shall never understand. I only know I searched the

crowds, bewildered. . . . Oh, how am I to find you, my love? I wait. And I wait. And you are not there. Am I in the wrong place? On the wrong day? At the wrong time? I begin to grow afraid. Then suddenly, just as in my dream . . . I see you! And you see me! And we are running. And I am in your arms. And I see your sweet face. And then, at last encircled tightly in your arms, I know that all is well. . . . Well dear, I have no letters to remind me of that night—nor of the three more nights to come—either in your words or in mine. But I remember. There was no fear, no holding back by you or me. You had, indeed, saved all your strength and love, for me. And I had waited for it, wanted it with all my being. (286, 288)

Helen's letters are transcribed exactly as written; she did not permit even minor typographical alterations by the publisher. They demonstrate remarkable maturity and facility with language from the still-teenaged letter writer. In December 1944, while Neb was on the allied front near Bastogne, she wrote:

I don't think I'm being sacrilegious if I think that Someone took the trouble to direct our fate so that we could meet. Suppose you had left the country and I had never gone to the Claypool that night. I wouldn't be sitting here writing and you—well you might have been someone else's husband, sweetheart or lover. (And I couldn't stand that!) Even if it is lonesome, I'd much rather be your wife, waiting and planning for your return, than lead any kind of life I can think of. Of course, I would have never known what I missed. . . . But I would have grown old without really living. (781)

Her facility with language and thought pointed to the academic career, so far from her mind at the time, which she began at the age of twenty-five, when, with two small children and a vexing husband, she made the decision to enroll in college.

The remaining third of the book recounts their stormy marriage. Neb has returned, in the pattern of many World War II combat veterans, with emotional and behavioral dysfunction. Helen endures these challenges throughout their lifetime together, but not without two filings for divorce and a suicide attempt. She also experienced the sorrow of an adult son's untimely death.

All is recounted with candor and prayerful thanks as this final "love letter" continues. Of her most desperate moment, she writes: "In the end, I clearly saw that only God could solve my dilemma. Quite deliberately, dear love, I wrote you a final letter of goodbye, swallowed the pills, lay down on my bed—completely at peace. And left the choice to God" (353). Helen's faith does not fail her, and she is miraculously rescued. This plac-

ing of her very life in God's hands is an act probably not recommended by Church canon; but with heroic determination, she rebuilds her life with Neb and enjoys his last decades with him as he finally, if not completely, overcomes his past and provides her the potential for eternal companionship for which she had so long prayed.

It would have been easy for Helen to make Neb a villain in the reader's eyes. She pulls no punches in portraying his dysfunction as a husband, a father, and a Latter-day Saint. But her love for him will not allow that. Her belief in redemption underscores the "sweet" in this bittersweet memoir. Neb remained and remains her love and, in the end, shares the heroism of this tale with his adoring wife.

CONTRIBUTORS

KRISTEN CARSON lives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and has published previously in *Dialogue*. Her work has also appeared in the *Indianapolis Star*, *Gettysburg Review*, and *Irreantum*.

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JOHN DONALD GUSTAV-WRATHALL is the author of *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand: Same-Sex Relations and the YMCA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). He has a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Minnesota. An activist, writer, and public speaker, he lives with his life partner in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

DAVID CLARK KNOWLTON, associate professor of anthropology at Utah Valley State College, specializes in the anthropology of religion in Latin America. Acknowledgements: "Once upon July" would never have been written without the invitation, encouragement, and thoughtful editing of Lavina Fielding Anderson, whom I thank. I also deeply appreciated the efforts of an anonymous reviewer and Levi Peterson to make this essay work.

BARRY LAGA is professor of English at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, Colorado, where he teaches American literature, literary theory, and cultural studies. He is married to Caprice Stewart, and they have three children.

TRACIE A. LAMB writes essays, compiles personal histories, and edited *Yearning for the Living God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), the memoirs of her mission president, F. Enzo Busche. She teaches English as a second language and lives in Auburn, Washington, with her husband, one of her two daughters, and a herd of feral cats.

SUSAN MORGAN, a native Salt Laker and a former technical writer, has been writing stories since the fifth grade. She has an English degree from the University of Utah, where she studied mathematics as well as literature. Married to a "golden convert" from Massachusetts, she has a young daughter, an even younger son, and four adult stepchildren.

RONALD WILCOX's poetry has appeared in *Dialogue* since 1967. The title poem of his collection, "Multiplicity," was published in *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*, edited by Eugene England and Dennis Clark (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989). He lives in Irving, Texas.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Last Supper (Place Setting)

Bethanne Andersen

A graduate of Brigham Young University's BFA and MFA program, Bethanne Andersen initially focused on abstract painting but later moved to New York to study illustration at the School of Visual Arts. As an illustrator, she has received critical praise for her work and has earned the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, the Boston Globe Horn Book Honor Award, and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Golden Kite Honor Book Award. She currently teaches art at Brigham Young University.

Tabernacle

Hal Douglas Himes

Born in Park City, Utah, Hal Douglas Himes earned a B.A. and MFA from Brigham Young University where he trained in painting, drawing, and printmaking. Acknowledging Paul Klee and Rufino Tamayo as strong influences, he also credits his BYU mentors Wulf Barsch, Alex Bigney, and Alex Darais as important teachers.

The Template

Wulf Barsch

Born in Bohemia, Wulf Barsch von Benedikt is now an American citizen. He received a rigorous Bauhaus training in Germany from master students of Kandinsky and Klee. He got an MFA at Werkkunstschule, Hanover, Germany, in 1967, before coming to America. He is a professor of art in the Department of Visual Arts, Brigham Young University. He presently resides in Boulder, Utah, and commutes to Provo.

Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus

Greg Olsen

Greg Olsen was born in Idaho and resides there still. He studied art at Utah State University where he met and married Sydnie Cazier. They have six children and a number of grandchildren. For more information about his art, visit <http://www.gregolsenart.com>. Of his painting depicted in this issue, Greg

writes: "In a home near the Sea of Galilee, Jairus and his wife are given an unfathomable gift as Jesus rescues them from overwhelming grief by raising their twelve-year-old daughter from the dead. The Savior's healing touch and gentle command truly are a miracle never to be forgotten."

Time to Laugh
Liz Lemon Swindle

A lifetime resident of Utah, Liz Lemon Swindle studied art at Utah State University. Liz initially worked as a set designer and painter for Osmond Studios, then focused her attention on oil painting, guided by wildlife artist Nancy Glazier. After gaining a reputation as a wildlife painter, Liz turned to representing scenes of her faith, particularly portraits of Joseph and Emma Smith and episodes from the life of Jesus.

Crossing the Sweetwater
David Koch

David Koch has loved art ever since he was in grade school but didn't realize that he could also make a living at it until his second year at Utah State University. He paints various subjects but particularly enjoys recreating historical events. His paintings can be found in many art collections, including that of Vice President Dick Cheney and in the LDS Nauvoo Temple. David, his wife Lori, and five children, Thomas, Hannah, Megan, Mitchell, and Mallory, have a home and studio in Richmond, Utah. He writes: "I am very blessed to be doing what I love while enjoying the support and company of my family. I am very excited about the future where there is so much to learn and discover." For more information about his art, visit www.davidkochartist.com.

Front cover: *The Last Supper (Place Setting)* by Bethanne Andersen, pastel on paper, 22" x 30", 1982, © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc., Courtesy of the Museum of Church History and Art.

Upper back cover: *Tabernacle* by Hal Douglas Himes, oil on canvas, 48" x 72", 1989, © by Springville Museum of Art, Springville, Utah.

Lower back cover: *The Temple* by Wulf Barsch, oil on canvas, 52" x 72", © by Wulf Barsch.

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Colby Fletcher, "*Heloise and Abelard*"

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Fall issue, \$100 award

Aaron Guile, "*Tonkas*"

Fall issue, \$100 award

Lon Young, "*Jonah in the Belly*"
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Spring and fall issues, \$100 award

Nathan Robison, "*Mouths*"

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