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MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, AND ART

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MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, & ART

JULY 2008 Issue 150

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YEA, YEA NAY, NAY

OF PROPHETS & PROTESTS

I MUCH ENJOYED THE FIRSTHAND reflections about President Gordon B. Hinckley in the April 2008 SUNSTONE. In truth, I envied them. I never met the man myself. The closest I ever came to a personal interaction was when I sang in the youth choir at the dedication of the Boston Temple. President Hinckley stood a few yards in front of us, waving his handkerchief. I heard voices start up immediately behind me: "Look at this kid in front of us." "Yeah?" "He's gonna sing for the prophet and he doesn't even comb his hair." "Yeah."

A year later, I got a haircut and left on a mission to Brazil, where I collected President Hinckley stories like baseball cards. Here's my favorite: President Hinckley comes to Campinas, an hour north of São Paulo, to preside over the dedication of a temple there. It's an occasion for joy and celebration among Church members. It's also an occasion for the Church's detractors—some well intentioned, I imagine, others less so—to set up camp outside the temple grounds and air their many grievances. I imagine the usual trappings of a protest: at least one John 3:16 poster, at least one Galatians 1:8, probably one or two inviting the Mormons to accept the real Jesus, and maybe one displaying a pair of sacred temple garments for dramatic effect. I imagine these trappings and how the Saints must have resented them. In any case, it was Brazil, and the protesters were out in the heat of the day. At length President Hinckley acknowledged the wilting crowd, waving his white handkerchief, wishing the protesters well. Then he had juice and cookies sent out to them.

No instant conversions followed, no public recantings. The protesters accepted President Hinckley's offering—some with gratitude, I imagine, others with misgivings—and then continued their protest. It is this last part that makes me think the story might have actually happened. Still, a Google search turns up nothing to substantiate the story, and neither does a scouring of the Church's website, so I'm tempted to file it away with the many other faith-promoting myths I heard on my mission.

But I'm only tempted. Whether it happened or not, the story doesn't finally belong in that category of myth. As Tim O'Brien writes: "Absolute occurrence is irrelevant. A thing may happen and be a total lie; another thing may not happen and be truer than the truth." The story of the prophet and the protest squares perfectly with what I knew and loved about President Hinckley: here was his characteristic kindness, his ecumenism, his refusal to hold a grudge, his white waving handkerchief. Here was a good, good man—a Christian. If the story really did take place, it follows perfectly from President Hinckley's character. If it did not, it is simply "a true story that never happened."

RYAN MCILVAIN
Florham Park, New Jersey

WINCING AT P.R.

I VERY MUCH ENJOYED YOUR APRIL 2008 issue. I am impressed by Ashley Sanders's article, "Compromising the Kingdom: An Interpretive History of Mormon Politics," and certainly agree with her conclusions: "When political opposition is denounced as disobedience to God and his servants, democratic dialogue becomes impossible. The paucity of dialogue within Mormonism is dangerous" and that as Mormons, "we are susceptible to vote for candidates who argue for preserving the security of institutions . . . by eroding the civil rights and liberties that make those institutions vital in the first place" (p. 51).

I also enjoyed Hugo Olaiz's reflection, "Gordon B. Hinckley and the Ritualization of Mormon History," which struck a responsive note in me. Of course, the history of any event, anywhere, is likely to reflect the viewpoint (and bias) of the writer of that history, but I find myself wincing spiritually when public relations concerns find their way into a religion. We have too much of such *realpolitik* in our secular world.

NOLA WALLACE
Pocatello, Idaho

NOT A MATTER OF MORALS

I WAS AT TURNS AMUSED, HORRIFIED, and bewildered by Val Larsen's short essay about Mormonism and politics in the April 2008 SUNSTONE issue (p. 65–66). Larsen preaches an unholy mix of politics and religion, arguing that his own political choice—to be a member of the Republican party—is the earthly equivalent of choosing God's side in the War in Heaven, while being a Democrat is the equivalent of following Satan's plan. Because it frames politics in the language of religion, Larsen's particular blend of scripture with the philosophies of men im-

plies that opposing political views are not merely different but also unrighteous. That is a dangerous fallacy—and one that would be amusing, if it were not so common among a certain segment of Latter-day Saints.

Let us be clear: Larsen's fallacy is in direct contravention to very clear statements from LDS general authorities. Less than a decade ago, the Church issued an official statement on politics, which stated that "principles compatible with the gospel may be found in the platforms of all major political parties." This was followed by a public interview with Elder Marlin K. Jensen, then of the Presidency of the Seventy, who was acting under the direction of Church leaders. Elder Jensen was absolutely clear about what he called the "notion that may prevail in some areas that you can't be a good Mormon and a good Democrat at the same time. There have been some awfully good men and women who have, I think, been both and are both today. So I think it would be a very healthy thing for the Church—particularly the Utah church—if that notion could be obliterated."

Elder Jensen then elaborated: "When people say to me, 'How do you rationalize being a Democrat?' I just say I take everything that's true and good and hang onto it. And the basic, historically the basic foundational principles of the Democratic Party have appealed to me more. But that's a matter really of personal choice, it has nothing to do with our salvation."

This position echoes consistent statements of other Church leaders, and it also meshes well with Doctrine and Covenants language that "we do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government" (D&C 134:9).

Even if it had not been expressly rebutted by Church leaders, Larsen's fallacy would be unsustainable for several reasons. For one thing, it would lead to results that mainstream Church members would view as ridiculous. For instance, Elder Jensen is himself a lifelong Democrat. Many other past and present general authorities have also been members of the Democratic party, including Heber J. Grant, Hugh B. Brown, and the late President James E. Faust. In fact, Elder Faust was a long-time, prominent figure in Utah Democratic politics. Is Larsen really suggesting that this beloved First Presidency member was a leader in Satan's Party? The thought makes reason do a double-take.

In another section of his essay, Larsen condemns lawyers: "When Zeezrom and others of his profession are given the power to reshape the moral landscape, general moral degradation follows." If this statement were more than silly rhetoric, how would Larsen account for the fact that many of today's current apostles are lawyers? It seems odd for Larsen to level such a criticism at the likes of Dallin H. Oaks, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson—not to mention past LDS leaders such as Rex E. Lee and J. Reuben Clark.

Why is Larsen's fallacy in direct contravention of Church leaders' statements, and also a road to ridiculous results? Probably because it's also wrong on a factual level. It's simply not the case that the Republican party is categorically aligned with righteousness. Nor is it correct, as Larsen writes, that the Democratic party "thoroughly [and] consistently embraces one patently false secular gospel after another." Of course, there are areas where Church doctrine more closely resembles one party platform. Larsen points to topics such as abortion and same-sex marriage; and it may be true that in these areas, recent statements from LDS leaders are similar to Republican political ideas. However, that is hardly the end of the analysis; after all, the gospel is much more than just abortion and who marries whom.

It's fairly clear that a moral case could be made for belonging to either major party. A person wanting to make a moral case for the Democratic party (which some writers in the April 2008 issue did) might focus on ways that Democratic attitudes towards caring for the poor align with scripture (and ways that Republican tax cuts favor the wealthy), how Democratic policies towards immigration dovetail with the Tenth Article of Faith, how Republican ideas on preemptive war conflict with Book of Mormon strictures like 3 Nephi 3:20–21, or how a true living wage would strengthen families. From those angles and many others, one might easily conclude that it is the Democratic party that is more closely aligned with LDS values.

And on a personal level, reaching a conclusion like this would be entirely appropriate. Of course, we all make our political decisions based on factors that we find important, and moral values are very important for most Church members. However, it would be wrong to suggest that these decisions are anything other than "personal."

JEANETTE ATWOOD

—"Next season of Big Love?"
—"No. News reports from Texas."

CORRECTION

READER KENT OLSON of Louisville, Colorado, pointed out to us an error in the Update section of the April 2008 SUNSTONE. On page 75, SUNSTONE stated that President Uchtdorf "is one of only five foreign-born leaders ever to serve in the First Presidency, and one of only two born in a non-English-speaking country." Olson believes there are nine First Presidency members born outside the U.S. and provided the following chart:

Counselor	*Birth Nation*	*Tenure in Presidency*
William Law	Northern Ireland	1841–1844
John Taylor	England	1880–1887
George Q. Cannon	England	1880–1901
John R. Winder	England	1901–1910
Anthon H. Lund	Denmark	1901–1921
Charles W. Penrose	England	1911–1925
Charles W. Nibley	Scotland	1925–1931
Marion G. Romney	Mexico	1972–1985
Dieter F. Uchtdorf	Czechoslovakia	2008–

We appreciate this opportunity to provide SUNSTONE readers with more accurate information.

There are complicated ways that each party's ideas interact with a variety of different gospel principles, and each party is both good and evil. As individuals, we focus on strengthening the good in whatever party we support. It is wrong to suggest that either party enjoys a monopoly on righteousness across the board; or, conversely, that either party is the Great Satan.

That is the underlying fault with Larsen's essay. He claims, in effect, that there is One True Political Party—and that sort of claim is bound to be wrong, no matter the substance of one's political convictions. Gospel principles cannot be reduced to a major party platform. It is not Larsen's Republican-ness that is misguided—it's his overreaching insistence that Republican-ness is evidence of greater righteousness (and the related implication that political opponents are unrighteous).

As Church members, we should focus on unity and community—and, as Elder Jensen also suggests, should be striving to improve *both* major parties. Polemical overemphases on political differences are divisive and unhelpful.

Elder Jensen again: "Everyone who is a good Latter-day Saint is going to have to pick and choose a little bit regardless of the party that they're in, and that may be required a lot more in the future than it has been in the past. But I think there's room for that, and the gospel leaves us lots of latitude." Latitude for what? "We've got to take political life more seriously as a church. We have an obligation to take part in the governance to establish righteousness so that there is an environment where people can live a life like the gospel prescribes."

It is that idea—not a fallacious belief that one particular party enjoys divine favor—which should be the guiding principle in political discussions among Latter-Day Saints.

KAIMIPONO (KAIMI) D. WENGER
San Diego, California

OF CHICKS AND FOXES

I ENJOYED THE MANY REFLECTIONS on faith and politics in the April 2008 SUNSTONE. Though it was not overly emphasized in any of the issue's articles, I've noticed the tendency among many Latter-day Saints to think that anti-Mormon sentiments were the primary reason a large percentage of Republican primary voters chose not to support Mitt Romney's bid for the presidency. After all, they argue, Mitt was the candidate who, by the numbers, shared all the values positions that mattered to most Republican voters.

I don't want to specifically assess this question of anti-Mormon bias within the Republican Party as much as to look at what lessons Mormons might learn from Log Cabin Republicans, another group that is despised by certain members of the Republican Party. Log Cabin Republicans are members of the GOP who agree with the party's emphases on limited government, strong national defense, and most of its other platform issues but who also support equality for gay and lesbian Americans.

Mormons are primarily block voters. With anemic exceptions, they vote Republican as a group as an identity issue, and, as Don Nielsen's article in the April 2008 issue points out, they do it largely without regard to their own individual self-interests. This habit makes Mormons the kind of voters political parties like the most: block voters are chicks that parties can count before they've hatched. Mormons today are among the most reliable voting blocks either party has. But what's a chick to do when he finds out he's seen as an ugly duckling?

Let's compare Mormon Republicans with Log Cabin Republicans. After the anti-gay vitriol of the 2004 U.S. election (which easily trumps the anti-Mormon sentiments shown this year), a lot of people were saying, "You'd have to be crazy to be a Log Cabin Republican!" and asking, "Who are these guys?"

Well, I'm a gay small business owner, and I have a bunch of Log Cabin Republican friends. If they're crazy, I'll tell you that it's like a fox.

By maintaining a high profile in the GOP, Log Cabin Republicans do two things. In the first place, they donate a considerable amount of money to support candidates in the GOP who avoid anti-gay demagoguery. This year they campaigned hard against Mitt (who flip-flopped from being moderately supportive of gay issues to becoming a hardliner against them) and in favor of McCain, who is on record as being opposed to a pro-discrimination constitutional amendment. This year the gay foxes won while the Mormon chicks lost.

Second, and more important, the activism and political clout of Log Cabin Republicans illustrates to the Democratic Party that gays are not just block voters it can keep in the bank and ignore. And it is this contrast between Mormons and the GOP that should be eye-opening to Latter-day Saints. Gay people are a tiny, tiny minority group. Our population is concentrated in urban areas that are Democratic strongholds, and even there, we don't have the raw votes to be a majority in a single municipality of any size. Mormons, by contrast, are geographically concentrated and have the ability to make a very serious and immediate political impact this election. And yet hardly any pundit takes seriously the idea that the GOP might lose Utah's electoral votes this fall.

In 2004, Log Cabin Republicans showed their disdain for what was happening in the GOP by closing their pocketbooks. It wasn't enough to throw the election, but it did illustrate that their money, time, and votes could not be taken for granted. After this primary season, in which Mitt and Mormonism took

many major hits generated by fellow Republicans, if the Mormons still line up like good chicks and give their electoral votes to the GOP, why would the party do anything but take Mormons for granted now and in the future?

JOHN HAMER
Ann Arbor, Michigan

SELECTIVE HISTORY

CONGRATULATIONS TO SUNSTONE for the memorial on President Hinckley in the April 2008 issue and for the articles on current politics. As both an admirer of President Hinckley and a political junkie, I thoroughly enjoyed the different vignettes and interesting perspectives. The entire issue balanced differing opinions and viewpoints. I agree wholeheartedly with Carl Brinton's conclusion in his excellent article "Is the Book of Mormon a Political Treatise?" that it is counterproductive for Latter-day Saints to use scriptural justifications to articulate contemporary political positions—a guideline Don Nielsen ironically didn't follow in his article in the same issue, "What's the Matter with Mormons?"

However, it appears that Brinton may have inaccurately depicted President Hinckley's actual "opinion" of U.S. intervention in Iraq. Using an excerpt from Hinckley's 2003 general conference talk, Brinton writes that Hinckley "defended U.S. involvement in Iraq" which Briton imputes as Hinckley's opinion. This conclusion, however, does not take into account Hinckley's later statements about his actual opinion. For example, CBS newsman Mike Wallace reported that President Hinckley "was not and is not happy with the war in Iraq" and "deplores what's going on there." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 July 2005). Wallace's comment indicates that Hinckley was likely opposed to invading Iraq at the time of the April 2003 address. Moreover, Brinton fails to consider Hinckley's remarks in the context of the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and the larger war on terror, which the late prophet likely supported. But in Brinton's defense, Hinckley's position is ambiguous because his conference talk presents justification for a citizen's right to support or not support armed conflict.

I am also disappointed with the mean-spirited and selective rendering of facts regarding Mitt Romney's recent presidential run that Ashley Sanders perpetuated in her article, "Compromising the Kingdom: An Interpretive History of Mormon Politics." Moreover, the article contained a frustrating absence of footnotes, making it difficult for readers to identify sources for her claims. One has to wonder if the author intentionally wrested facts to support partisan interpretations. Sanders's specious metaphor comparing Romney and the LDS Church revealed a merely cursory knowledge of the 2008 Republican primary and Mitt Romney's record as governor of Massachusetts.

For example, Sanders writes, "Mike Huckabee mostly escaped the kinds of questions about his religion that bedeviled Mitt Romney" (p. 49). The truth is that Huckabee was actually peppered with questions about his faith, including his views on the creation of the earth, biblical inerrancy, and women's role in the ministry. Near the end of the primary season, Huckabee was quoted as saying, "I think I've probably been asked far more questions about my faith than Mitt Romney's been asked about his" (Mike Baker, *Associated Press*, 6 December 2007).

Sanders also described Romney as switching from being a "moderate liberal governor" to a "hard-line Republican" (p. 49). Those who followed Romney's career as governor would be aware that he was not a "moderate liberal governor." To the contrary, Romney's gubernatorial record on entitlement, pro-growth taxes, regulation, school choice, and tort reform was lauded by the conservative group Club For Growth. Moreover, the conservative publication *National Review* praised Romney's record on abortion, human cloning, and same-sex marriage (*National Review,* 11 December 2007). Sanders must have confused some of his 1994 Senate campaign comments with his actual record.

Sanders claims with no explanation or reference that Romney provided for "universal healthcare" in Massachusetts while being a member of Church that discourages such a policy (p. 50). I am not aware of any authoritative statement by the LDS Church opposing universal healthcare. By making this assertion, Sanders unnecessarily creates a straw man. She could have instead used illegal immigration, an issue where Romney's position appears different from the LDS Church's.

Sanders stunningly writes that during Romney's presidential run, he "relied increasingly on the impenetrable language of theocracy more than a rhetoric of dialogue and pluralism" (p. 50). Actually, Romney's speech entitled "Faith in America" quotes the founding fathers of our country. Surely, Sanders does not consider the words of John Adams to be the "impenetrable language of theocracy."

Sanders offensively and repugnantly compares, as moral equivalents, my Mormon ancestors with modern-day Islamic fascists (p. 50). I found this personally disheartening and hope a retraction will be published.

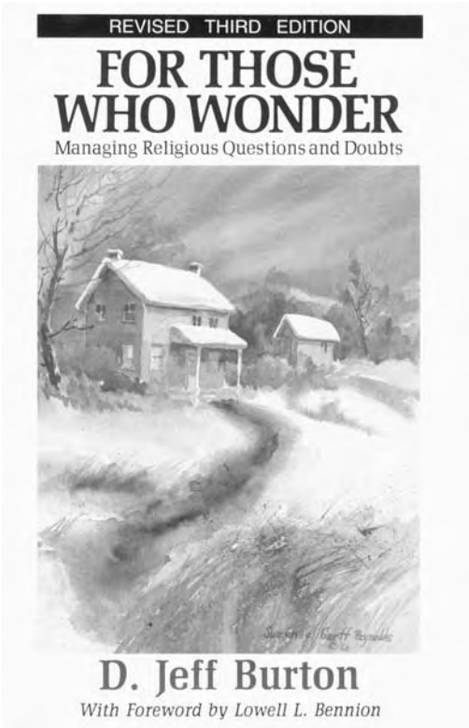
Finally, Sanders appears to have completely given over to partisan rhetoric when on page 50, she claims that terrorism is America's fault—a fallacious example of blaming the victim.

MIKE PAULOS
San Antonio, Texas

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Mike Paulos criticizes Ashley Sanders's article, "Compromising the Kingdom" for not documenting its sources. The decision to forego endnotes in favor of a general "Sources" list was made by SUNSTONE, not Sanders. We made this choice in the service of preserving space in the magazine and increasing the article's readability. Although SUNSTONE has far fewer staffers available for fact-checking than *Newsweek*, *Time*, or *Atlantic Monthly* have for the non-sourced articles they run, we worked very hard with Sanders to be sure factual claims could be substantiated through credible sources.

ASHLEY SANDERS RESPONDS: My thanks to Mike Paulos for identifying some mistakes in my article and offering factual counterpoints.

Pontius' Puddle



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In the overwhelming process of writing a history that covers nearly two hundred years of political and religious history and ends by analyzing the trajectory of a prominent Mormon politician, I admit that I got some facts wrong and that my resulting arguments might have seemed misleading because of that. I never intended to write anything misleading and would certainly not have done so to bolster a partisan agenda.

In my piece, I tried to articulate a tension—the tension between the freedom *of* and the freedom *from* religion in a modern democracy—and follow that tension throughout my article. My goal was to fairly apply that tension to different aspects of Mormon history and to Mitt Romney's political career. Thus, I cannot agree with Paulos's assessment that my treatment of Mitt Romney was mean-spirited, because I was merely trying to apply the tension fairly, both defending and criticizing him when compelled by my thesis. I tried to apply the same fairness to Mormon political history in general, and if the result was more negative than the average reader is used to, I believe that the fault lies in Mormonism's general tendency to paint only favorable portraits of its history rather than in any malicious intent or partisanship on my part. If, as Paulos implies, we should be scrupulously accurate in our treatment of religious and political history, then we should have just as much of a problem with histories that inaccurately favor the Church as those that inaccurately malign it, and we should certainly never automatically equate negative history with bad historiography.

My article was an attempt to offer a version of history based on a principle other than allegiance, a tension that would interrogate both sides of the story fairly and consistently. I mention this because the focus on Mitt Romney at the end of my article should be interpreted in light of the tension that I consistently developed throughout. I made mistakes with some facts, it is true, but I believe that the parts of the article Paulos disagreed with still stand as conceptual arguments. I did partially confuse the 1994 Mitt Romney with the gubernatorial Mitt Romney, and my phrasing made it seem like Mike Huckabee escaped all questions about religion during the primaries. I also used the ambiguous adjective "universal" when describing the Massachusetts healthcare plan and said that the Church itself discourages universal healthcare. I will try to respond to Paulos's specific criticisms while defending my conceptual arguments.

It is true that Mitt Romney has opposed gay marriage since the beginning of his political career, but it is also true that he was endorsed in his gubernatorial race by a prominent gay advocacy group (Log Cabin Republicans) who vetted him and found him fair enough to win their approval. He won that approval by pledging to not fight on either side of the gay rights issue and by declaring any platform differences on partner benefits between him and the Democratic candidate to be minimal. He had already won gay Republican support from comments he had made in his 1994 Senate bid, when he co-authored a letter with Log Cabin Republicans in which he promised to go even farther than liberal Ted Kennedy in defending gays against discrimination and making "equality for gays and lesbians a mainstream concern."

True, Romney also spent considerable time fighting the amendment that would allow gay marriage in Massachusetts and was at other times harsh in his condemnation of the gay lifestyle. By not including that in my article, I misrepresented Mitt Romney as a "moderate liberal governor" (NB: the inclusion of the word "liberal" was a mistake I did not catch in the editing process). Despite these mistakes, I believe that my conceptual points are still accurate. While Romney was personally and often politically against gay marriage, he followed the judges' orders when they told him to dispense gay marriage certificates, and he compromised on his personal positions in order to understand the gay community and give credence to their minority voice. He fought them at times, yes, but he fought them within a pluralistic political system that required him to sometimes defer to their voice and the law even when he did not want to.

That kind of behavior is a far cry from Romney's position in the primaries as he led the charge for an amendment banning gay marriage and promised Iowa voters that he had fought gay marriage "in every way I know how to"—a fight, according to him, that was far from over.

As governor of Massachusetts, Romney remained—despite his personal conservatism—fairly moderate, allowing the tugs and pulls of pluralism to change the shape and direction of his political decisions. As a presidential candidate, however, Romney increasingly shunned the demands of pluralism and the claims of minorities to fight for policies that would jeopardize minority recourse and threaten minority logic with majority self-evidence.

Romney cited the founding fathers in his Faith and America speech, but that never guaranteed that his policies would match his quotes. And indeed, Romney's abdication speech at CPAC insisted on perpetuating a neoconservative notion of an Other that needed to be contained or abolished. Whether that Other came in the form of an immigrant, a homosexual, or a terrorist, Romney used rhetoric that completely obscured minority logic and promised policies that—whether by doubling the size of Guantanamo, building a border wall, or passing an amendment that banned gay marriage—endangered the Constitution's commitment to minority rights (including the habeus corpus rights of terrorist suspects) and played on the fears and prejudices of misinformed Americans. In this way, he adopted the same stance toward the Other that many government officials had adopted

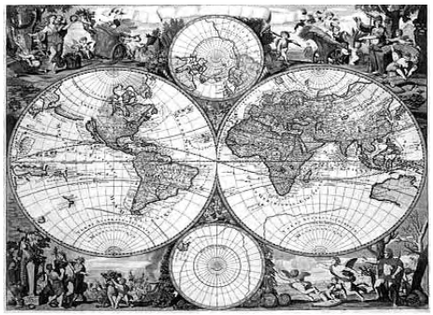
towards nineteenth-century Mormons—ignoring those Mormons' motivations, flattening their beliefs, and preying on fear—and he conveniently disregarded the unconventional marriage practices, guerrilla violence, and migrant status of his religious ancestors. Romney practiced amnesia at multiple levels, first forgetting the atrocities that had been perpetrated against his minority ancestors and then forgetting—and hence, mimicking—the flat and insular logic those ancestors had used against "outsiders."

As for Paulos's argument against blaming the victim, it reveals his unwillingness to follow his scrupulous philosophy of history into uncomfortable places. If he is intent on telling accurate history in order to ascertain people's motivations, then we must talk honestly about the history that motivates so-called terrorists (for the word is thrown around so easily) to commit acts of terror. To talk about that, we would have to mention the United States's numerous interventions into foreign countries, particularly Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Palestine, and the deaths and terror that resulted from them. We would have to mention our complicity in arming Afghanis against the Soviets in the '70s, our unapologetic coup against Mossadeq in the '50s, our continued funding of Israel, and our shifting allegiances to Iran and Iraq in general (allegiances that had nothing at all to do with democracy, often propping up dictators and ignoring the ensuing violence). We would have to acknowledge that it is hypocritical to proliferate nuclear weapons, use them, refuse to disarm, and then claim the right to decide whose nuclear weapons programs are dangerous. We would also have to acknowledge that our current presence in Iraq is regarded as an invasion, and our corporate control of the state is viewed as an extension of soft imperialism. In short, we would have to acknowledge that many of the acts that we call "terrorism" are acts of self-defense (often against us) that do not get the free pass that is so often granted to institutionalized violence. In other words, we would have to see that it is hypocritical to suggest that the United States can respond to the death of its civilians on 9/11 by staging two separate (and nefarious) wars but that the same action is not acceptable for an Iraqi or Afghani who has lost his family members.

In a continuation of themes from my article, the issue is clearly not an issue of right or wrong; the issue is one of majorities and minorities, of ideas that are sanctioned by virtue of being institutionalized (no matter how unfair or awful) and acts that are not. Therefore, what Paulos calls my attempt to "blame the victim" is actually a consistent application of the concepts in my article and a failure on his part to stick with his own historical principles. It is a final act of double amnesia, since Paulos prefers to forget that our Mormon ancestors responded to the violent overreach of a majority with violence, and since he applies that forgetfulness on a national scale by forgetting the wrongs America has committed against minority Others in order to misunderstand the violent responses of those Others. If we expect people to sympathize with Mormon acts of violence by pointing to majority abuse, we should certainly offer the same sympathy to others.

NOTE: All Romney quotes are from Michael Luo, "Romney's Tone on Gay Rights Is Seen as Shift," *New York Times,* 8 September 2007)

MAPPING MORMON ISSUES



SUNSTONE's Mapping Mormon Issues (MMI) project has been created to commission "framing articles" that will orient students within the ongoing discourse about difficult Mormon issues.

These articles will strive to be dispassionate summaries of the scholarship and debates—how the discussions have unfolded over time, what the main arguments are for this position over that one—instead of actually weighing in on the debates themselves. Each completed article will be published in SUNSTONE magazine and online through the Sunstone website. In addition to written text, MMI will offer interviews with experts and key players in the discussions of each topic, as well as other audio and visual helps to students of the issue. The project will also offer links to free versions of past and current Sunstone symposium discussions about each topic and will actively seek permission to provide links to the best scholarship in other journals and forums.

To be successful, the Mapping Mormon Issues project will require considerable commitments of time, effort, and money. MMI will be administered by a group of people consisting of the SUNSTONE editor, Sunstone's director of outreach, two Sunstone board members, and several people outside the formal Sunstone organizational structure who are committed to the serious study of Mormon issues and to the project's success.

THE fundraising campaign for this initiative is off to a great start, as Sunstone friends Mike and Ronda Callister have pledged to match up to $5,000 in donations others send to the project. Several new donors have contributed since the first announcement about the project, and we have now commissioned work on the first six topics, with presentations on three of them scheduled to be given at the 2008 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium. We still need several thousand more dollars to meet the matching pledge amount and reach the goal of having ten MMI topics completed by the end of 2009. **Please pledge your support today!**

To donate or learn more about the Mapping Mormon Issues project, please visit WWW.SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM, contact Sunstone by phone at 801.355.5926, or email us at MMI@SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM.

TOUCHSTONES

CROSSROADS

ACROSS THE MEADOW

A COUPLE OF months ago, I saw an interesting contrast in sacrament meeting. The bishop was conducting the business of the ward, and at one point he called two children to come up to the pulpit. They were twins: a girl and a boy just turning twelve. As they stood before the gaze of their family, friends, and all the ward members, the bishop handed them certificates of advancement from Primary.

So far, this brother and sister were still traveling side by side. But then, the focus changed.

The bishop put his hand on the boy's shoulder and began his speech about how this young man was now of age to receive the Aaronic priesthood, that he had been interviewed and found worthy to be ordained, and that now this boy would enter into the brotherhood of the priesthood, going on to receive the Melchizedek priesthood and serve a mission. The bishop paused there, letting the congregation fill in the blanks up the ranks.

All the while, the girl stood looking down at her hands holding her certificate. Her only piece of recognition. She must have been aware that she was now out of place. What was she supposed to do? Go sit down while the bishop talked about her brother? What about her? What was in store for her?

As the bishop talked on about the power her brother was soon to receive, I wondered what this girl was thinking. What power would she receive? There was, of course, the traditional path that had been worn through the meadow of female experience in her religion: She would join the Young Women and listen to many lessons about staying worthy so she could marry a returned missionary in the temple and raise children, strong in the Church. And then she'd spend the rest of her life doing it.

But, even as she stood there, her body was engaged in a transformation that would change her from a girl to a life-bearer. She was automatically connecting to the supreme creative powers of the universe—without needing to be ordained or interviewed by the bishop. Without needing the ward members to raise their arms to the square to give their assent that her woman's blood could flow and her womb awaken.

The culture would hush and maybe even shame her body's monthly manifestation of the power to give life. It would never be officially recognized as part of her power, but that didn't mean she couldn't claim it.

She might decide not to walk the well-trod path through that meadow. She might decide to climb through the rusted, half-fallen, barbed wire fences to find a new path into mountains or forests. Or perhaps to blaze one of her own.

Surely, the beaten route was there, with an endless multitude of signs pointing along it, and many guides ready to instruct and lead her. But would she look further? Would she realize that this path is just a sliver of the possibility of experience? Would she find her own way? Would she find her own power?

At the end of the day's meetings, her brother would be ordained to the "power of God." By then, she would have heard her first lesson as a Beehive.

The bishop finished, and the twins made their way back to their family. Twelve years old—and no longer on the same path.

LIA HADLEY
Orem, Utah

STUART OR CARNEGIE?

IN MY EARLY teens, I dreamed of performing at Carnegie Hall. Many an afternoon during biology class, I imagined myself, cello in hand, gracefully walking across the stage to the thunderous applause of a packed house.

But then a high school English teacher changed everything with one simple remark on a returned paper, "You should major in English."

English? But I was already accepted into BYU's music program.

It's true that my earliest memories were of my mother sitting on the edge of my bed reading to me and my little brother. Sometimes we could keep ourselves up long after our bedtime by begging her for "just one more chapter" of *Stuart Little* or *The Wind in the Willows.*

But it's also true that the poem I wrote for my Grandpa Charlie's birthday made no sense at all, even though I had such a good time coming up with the rhymes. And on lazy summer afternoons after our chores were done, my brother and I would lie feet to feet in the old canvas hammock under the maple tree in the back yard and read away the hours until dinnertime.

It's also true that I did not bring my cello with me when I was fourteen, flying to Wisconsin to spend a month with some family friends in the lake country. Sitting on the end of their old wooden dock on a sultry June afternoon, I wrote free verse describing my worldly experiences (this was the 60s after all) and a tragic short story about a frustrated ballet diva.

TOUCHSTONES is a SUNSTONE section that debuted in the December 2005 issue. It was inspired by "Readers Write" in The SUN *magazine.*

TOUCHSTONES topics are intentionally broad in order to give room for personal expression. Writing style is not as important as the contributor's thoughtfulness, humor, and sincerity. SUNSTONE *reserves the right to edit pieces, but contributors will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove of editorial changes prior to publication.*

To submit a reflection by email, send it to SUNSTONE *editor Stephen Carter at:* STEPHEN@SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM. *If submitting by mail, send it to Sunstone, 343 N. Third West, Salt Lake City, Utah 84103. Submissions should be kept somewhere around 400 words, but we are willing to make exceptions for exceptional pieces.*

Please submit right away for these upcoming topics!

Upcoming Topics: { COMING CLEAN
A WINDOW OPENS

RESONANTS

I also kept a journal through my three years of high school, filled mostly with my teenage romantic yearnings but sometimes with short diatribes on the idiots running the war or, closer to home, the idiots running our school.

I practiced the cello, too.

Then I ended up in that senior English class during the last period of the day, with a teacher who was really into literary criticism. And against all odds, she soon had me hooked. It was like a game, finding the metaphors, tearing apart the characterizations, tracing the thematic nuances. So when she handed back that critical analysis paper at the end of the term and I read her final comment, it stopped me cold.

I was already on my way to the Harris Fine Arts Center at BYU. My name was on the rolls in the music department. But three months later at registration (we did it by hand in the field house in those days), *Stuart Little*, free verse, and hammocks won out over Carnegie Hall, and I quietly changed my major to English.

CATHERINE OCKLEY
Helena, Montana

LAST DANCE

THE HALL IS full of preoccupied students—blond hair, green sweatshirts, shin guards, cotton candy. I'm sitting in a little circle with the rest of the ballet students; we're stretching before class, pointing our pink-clad toes at each other.

Outside the door, the UVSC ballroom team is rehearsing its routine. I stare at the lean female dancers, their long hair and high heels. The boys spinning and dipping them all wear smug expressions. They're obviously showing off their moves—not to mention their nubile partners—to the passersby. It's like they're saying, "Who's gay now?!" to the passing basketball players as their hands slip smoothly around their partners' tight waists.

I suddenly wince and look at the end of my leg. My ankle is wrapped in a white bandage, the result of a clumsy landing the week before. It was my second injury in the semester, and the teacher told me I had to be careful. But she didn't *just* mean careful.

The girl sitting across from me is talking to her black-haired friend:

"So I was like, no way! We can't get married just because you barely came back from the mission and your biological clock is ticking. Who do you think I am? Mother Teresa?" The black-haired friend gasps in outrage and nods in agreement. I'm not sure the speaker knows who Mother Teresa is, but I keep my thoughts to myself.

I find that I can't keep from staring at the dancers. They're young, barely out of high school, but their skill is better than mine will ever be. Dancing is my world. I gave everything to it. But I'm finally realizing that dancing has decided that it's not going to give back. It will never let me go where I want to go. So I have to sit here watching my world disintegrate around a bum ankle.

I feel tears coming on fast. I close my eyes and take a deep breath. A girl next to me touches my shoulder. I think her name is Amanda.

"Are you OK, sweetie?"

"Yes," I lie. She doesn't look like she's buying it.

"I will be," I amend, though I'm not sure of that. I stand up and walk back to the dressing room, limping, feeling several pairs of eyes drill into the back of my head. I slam the door of the dressing room, walk to a

bench, and bury my face in my palms. The dressing room is empty, smelling of sweat and baby powder.

But then I hear the door open and close. Amanda walks in. As she approaches, for the first time, I see a small pregnant tummy bulging under her leotard. She sits next to me and puts an arm around my shoulder. We're both quiet.

"I can't dance anymore," I finally say.

She smiles, and we're quiet again. I pull off my point shoes and look at the clock on the wall; if I hurry I can still make it to the English lab. I take another breath and feel the knot in my stomach loosen a little. I dress and look back at my comforter.

"Thanks," I say.

ELENA YAZYKOVA
Orem, Utah

THE VIADUCT

BACK IN MY college days, I took a break from my studies late one evening, jogged to an old railroad viaduct, sat down with my legs dangling over the edge, looked down at the tracks, and contemplated suicide. I was majoring in computer science, and the thought of spending the next forty years writing arcane code was killing me. My GPA for the quarter was a dismal 1.9. I didn't really want to die, but debugging Fortran didn't feel like living. Jumping from the viaduct presented an easy solution to a difficult problem.

I decided to jump.

But not from the viaduct.

I had taken a few English classes and thoroughly enjoyed the literature, the professors, the discussions, and the creative act of writing. I had no idea how I would make a living (my main impetus for studying computers) with a degree in English. But I did know that studying literature calmed my soul.

So I jumped . . . and flew (if a 4.0 GPA is any indicator of my relative position to the earth).

I learned from that evening to trust my instincts, to go with my gut feeling, and to leap with faith—even when I don't have all the answers at hand.

Unfortunately, leaping hasn't always served me well since then. I've made a few business and career decisions rather impulsively, where I trusted my instincts, only to find that my instincts were wrong, or at least weren't exactly right. My family and I have survived, but sometimes at great cost. We would have benefited by exercising less faith in my gut and by seeking out information and counsel from several different sources, weighing the pros and the cons in the light of day, before making critical choices.

Now I'm a professional counselor, and when clients contemplate their own crossroads, I rarely say, "Trust your instincts" or "Go with your gut feeling." Far too often, instincts, feelings, hormones, premonitions, and impulses lead people from disaster to disaster, and relying on those influences alone results in needless suffering.

I recently returned to the old viaduct. The train tracks have been replaced by a bike path, and the steep rise and fall of the viaduct is now a gentle bump. The scene is so changed, so peaceful, that it brings forth no memory of my earlier struggle. I can hardly remember why I struggled at all.

Computer science or literature? A no-brainer. Where did I put that book I'm reading?

BRETT WILCOX
Sitka, Alaska

DONATE TO SUNSTONE BY 31 AUGUST AND YOUR GIFT WILL GO AT LEAST TWICE AS FAR!

WE ARE THRILLED to announce that once again, we have had generous donors step forward to offer matching grants for this year's mid-year fundraising season.

Between now and 31 August, Jordan Kimball and Rebecca England of Salt Lake City, Utah; Steve and Nicole Kovalenko of Ashburn, Virginia; and Charles T. Schofield of Pasadena, California, have, among them, agreed to match up to $20,000 of donations Sunstone receives during this vital giving period. With these matches, you can double any donation you make!

As noted on page 7, Sunstone's Mapping Mormon Issues project has also received a generous $5000 pledge of matching funds from Mike and Ronda Callister of Logan, Utah.

Fundraising is an integral part of the life of nearly every non-profit organization. Although we charge for subscriptions and symposium registrations, these amounts don't cover much beyond publication and event costs. The rest of our annual budget relies on the generous support of friends who value open, honest, respectful discussion within Mormonism and Sunstone's role in helping foster this kind of reflection—and who show that high regard through donating what they can.

At this important time of year, when we begin to get a bit nervous about seeing things through to year's end and beyond, we ask that you please consider an extra generous donation to Sunstone this year, directing your gift to either our general appeal or to the Mapping Mormon Issues initiative.

With your help, Sunstone can be fruitful and multiply, replenishing minds, hearts, and spirits. Perhaps you'd like to join in to offer a matching grant of your own. Together, let's create a way to have every donation received between now and the end of August be tripled, quadrupled, or even more! Of course, all donations to Sunstone are tax-deductible.

FROM THE EDITOR

150!

By Dan Wotherspoon

Stephen Carter and Mary Ellen Robertson

SUNSTONE MAGAZINE IS now 150 issues old! What a perfect time to welcome new leadership.

With this magazine issue and the 2008 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium, which is taking place while this issue is at press, Sunstone officially welcomes Stephen Carter and Mary Ellen Robertson as its newest staffers. Stephen comes aboard as Sunstone's Director of Publications and Editor, Mary Ellen as its Director of Symposia and Outreach. With some shuffling of existing duties and the addition of others, Stephen and Mary Ellen have been hired to succeed both me and former symposium coordinator and SUNSTONE managing editor Allen Hill, who left in April to pursue a great opportunity at Utah Valley University.

Stephen officially began his tenure 1 July, and we've been using this magazine issue as a sort of shake-down cruise. He's taken the bulk of responsibility for about half of the pieces in this issue, and he'll more fully take the helm for the next issue while I step into the co-captain's chair. Mary Ellen started with us on 17 June, just a tad too late to have the major role in planning the symposium program; but since arriving, she's been leading out on recruiting the remaining panelists, respondents, session chairs, and managing all the correspondence with participants as well as all the hotel and audio-visual details—none of which are small things. She's also learning a new-to-her design program. We used the marine metaphor of a cruise for Stephen's first month. For Mary Ellen, we'd have to go with a sailor thrown into stormy waters who has been asked to just keep swimming and swimming until 10 August. I am happy to report, however, that both cruiser and swimmer are managing wonderfully!

We'll soon have both Stephen and Mary Ellen introduce themselves and their visions for Sunstone's coming years. Readers will have a bit of a head start getting to know Stephen, as he has an essay in this issue. Those who have been reading SUNSTONE for a few years will also know other things about him from his several England Contest-winning essays and other pieces we've published. I encourage you to do a search for these at SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM. SUNSTONE has also published Mary Ellen a couple of times, plus your search for her name at the Sunstone website will turn up dozens of symposium sessions. She's been a regular fixture as both presenter and planner of past Sunstone West symposiums and has attended or presented at all but one Salt Lake Symposium since 1992. She's also served for seven years as a member of Sunstone's board of directors. Stephen and Mary Ellen may be young, but they're definitely Sunstone vets!

SUNSTONE magazine has undergone quite an evolution in its first 150 issues. As founding editor Scott Kenney's inaugural editorial indicates (reprinted on page 80), SUNSTONE was originally envisioned as a "forum for the participation of Latter-day Saint youth in the intellectual and spiritual life of our times." In its thirty-three-year journey since that first issue, and especially after the foundation began organizing symposia, SUNSTONE shifted from presenting primarily young voices to including the voices of all Latter-day Saints and interested, insightful friends.

In those early years, SUNSTONE also began to embrace being a magazine more than a journal—an evolution that is still ongoing. With the splitting of my combo position as editor and primary symposium decision-maker into two separate, salaried positions with their own specific emphases, we expect to increase the number of magazine issues per year and also to see the Sunstone website and blog become a much more active source for the latest in LDS news and insightful conversation. In this way, the magazine's "News" and "Update" sections will contain fresher stories, but Stephen and news editor Hugo Olaiz will also be able to concentrate more on soliciting and presenting thoughtful commentary on the stories that make the magazine's pages. Don't worry, though—we'll also be sure to continue to share some of the less-serious or "Oh my heck, what will Mormons try next?" kinds of stories. And count on SUNSTONE's continuing to increase the number of insightful (and sometimes even LOL funny!) cartoons per issue.

As Bob Dylan sang, "The times they are a'changin'." And nowhere is this truer for Sunstone than in its plans to increase its outreach through the Web and in more and more formats. In her Director of Outreach role, Mary Ellen is charged to help Sunstone create a much higher online profile through podcasts and links to materials related to magazine topics and features, a much more dynamic blog, increased community building through newsletters and local Sunstone groups, greater connection to the students and scholars involved in the ever-growing field of Mormon studies, and more!

SOME have suggested that in this world of blogging and search engines, Sunstone has lost its relevance as a major forum for LDS commentary and connectivity. We disagree, for in the online arena, the "signal to noise" ratio is getting increasingly worse. More than ever, Mormonism needs an independent, fully staffed, and totally motivated Sunstone Education Foundation to identify the best thinking out there, subject it to keen editing, publish it in accessible (and often fun!) ways, and then discuss it at dynamic conferences and on an energetic blog. Your time and ours is too valuable for anything less.

Thank you for being a part of Sunstone's wonderful past. We know you'll enjoy what's ahead!

CORNUCOPIA

SUNSTONE invites short musings: chatty reports, cultural trend sightings, theological meditations. All lovely things of good report, please share them. Send to: <editor@sunstoneonline.com>

Blogwatch

GRANDMA'S FINAL PREPARATIONS

Following is a slightly revised version of a reflection posted 7 July 2008 on the LDS group blog BYCOMMONCONSENT.COM.

I NOTICED IT A FEW MONTHS AGO: GRANDMA YOUNG (my husband's mother) had added a picture to all of her children's wedding portraits. Finally, there was a photo of Daren and Steve.

When I married into the family, the sexual orientation of the youngest son was not only kept secret but also skirted around, danced around, squirmed around in rather silly undulations. My in-laws speculated about "the boys'" romantic life, inventing girlfriends for each (actually a lesbian couple who hung out with them). Grandma would declare how obviously attracted Daren was to one of "the girls," and Grandpa would argue that Steve seemed to be better matched for "that one." Both stated that things were looking pretty serious between "the boys" and "the girls."

Then suddenly, nobody was mentioning "the girls" anymore.

I had been a part of the family for two years before my husband made the great confession: His brother was gay. I wish I had a picture of my face back then, of my "Did you honestly think I hadn't figured that out?" expression.

Sometimes, Grandma would let slip something about the "sin" of homosexuality, or the idea that it was an exaggerated Peter Pan complex, or the "love the sinner, hate the sin" cliché. But her phrasing evolved. Over the past while, I heard only praise for her biological son and his gifted partner—who had become another son.

Through the years, Daren proved to be the best and most loyal of the Young sons. Whenever there was reason for gifts or flowers, he would outdo everybody. It had nothing to do with overcompensation, but with innate generosity. I could always tell when he had been over to visit Grandma and Grandpa. Sometimes I would bring a little bouquet of columbine from my garden and quietly place it in the shadow of the sprawling roses and lilies Daren had brought.

It didn't end with flowers, either. Daren and Steve often had Grandma and Grandpa over to their home for a gourmet meal—meticulously prepared and artfully presented by Daren. Sometimes, when Grandma found herself exhausted, she'd go to their house to sleep. (She once slept there for eighteen hours and felt herself fully renewed afterwards.) And on Grandma's walls were many of Daren's paintings. He filled her life with beauty.

When Daren and Steve decided to have a commitment ceremony, Grandma and Grandpa attended. That marked the biggest change. There were other things, too. Would the gay couple sleep together at family reunions? (Yes.) Would Steve be included with the in-laws in family activities? (Yes.)

Grandma died 5 July in the Utah Valley Hospital. Bruce and I went to the care center where Grandpa was playing Bingo, took him out of the game, and broke his heart in the hallway. "Dad," Bruce said, and I could feel Grandpa holding his breath, prolonging the moment before the words were uttered, hardly daring to look at his son. "Mom has died."

There. It was spoken. Grandpa doubled over in an anguished cry. We walked him to his room. I left Bruce with him while I went to the hospital to sit with Grandma's body until the mortician arrived.

Daren and Steve arrived at the hospital shortly after I did, both of them weeping. We all hugged and cried and stroked Grandma's lifeless arms. Grandma had boxed up her burial clothes years ago in preparation. I had brought the box with me, and did a quick inventory on the hospital chair. Veil. Brand-new garments, still in their packages. "Daren, I don't see any slippers here. Do you think she needs slippers? Does it matter?"

"Is everything else there?" He checked the robes with me. "Maybe she doesn't need slippers. We'll ask Dad."

Besides preparing her clothes for her burial, Grandma had written her own obituary. This is how she listed her surviving children:

> Daren C. and Ruth became the parents of six children. Two daughters, Nancy Young Layton and Lynda Young Tuckett, preceded her in death. She is survived by her husband and four children and their partners: Bruce (Margaret Blair), Provo; Annette (Jim Thomas), Blackfoot, ID; Lawrence (Christine Horne), Pullman, WA; Daren Kurt (Steven Fisher), Salt Lake City; as well as Joseph Tuckett, Payson, husband of daughter Lynda, deceased.

Back at Grandpa's place, I read the list out loud. I reached over to Steven, sitting next to me, as I read his name. "That's good," I said. "That's just right."

MARGARET BLAIR YOUNG
Provo, Utah

Scripture notes

OF WEASELS AND HENS

Nevertheless, I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God, in the wickedness of my heart. —ALMA 10:6

MY TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH OSCILLATES between my scholarly and spiritual self. I'll go off on a tangent studying some aspect of the Book of Mormon (DNA and the Lamanites) or Joseph Smith (plural marriage) or Church history (Mountain Meadows Massacre), and doubts will start collecting above me like thunderclouds on a July day. One minute, everything looks clear, but when I look up again, the view is dark and threatening. I'll go to church in a gray mood and sit in sacrament meeting like Garrison Keillor, thinking weaselish thoughts in the henhouse of the Lord.

Last Sunday as the speaker commanded us from the pulpit to have regular family home evenings, I whipped out my mental red pen and did the grammarian's version of slash and burn. "*You don't do 'good' in the gospel,*" I scolded, "*you do 'well'—do they even* teach *grammar in high school?*"

That was my pompous self at sacrament meeting, so deaf I wouldn't have been able to hear the Lord even if he had called to me through the screeching chapel loudspeakers.

More than thirty years ago, I was finishing my bachelor's degree at BYU when, at the beginning of the semester, I learned that I needed one more Book of Mormon class to graduate. After some looking for a good fit with my already tight schedule, I settled on Jeffrey R. Holland's honors class. I certainly looked out of place the first day: most of the class were freshman honors students while I was a married returned missionary on the cusp of graduation.

There were several of us old men in the back of the class that morning, and Brother Holland noticed. Before beginning the day's discussion, he asked each of us if we had taken this class before. Most of us said we had and then got up and left the classroom. When my turn came, I said that this was my last semester at BYU and I needed this class to graduate. That seemed to satisfy him, and though I still harbored a few weaselish thoughts in Elder Holland's henhouse, I settled into a routine of Tuesday and Thursday morning religion classes with the then-president of BYU.

Brother Holland's passion for the Book of Mormon was evident in every class. Although he was BYU president at the time, he never spoke about problems he was facing in that arena; instead, the time was always spent discussing the Book of Mormon. I learned that he enjoyed reading the reprint of the first edition of the Book of Mormon because it wasn't divided into chapters and verses. I also noticed that he kept quoting from one particular book: Henry Fairlie's *The Seven Deadly Sins Today*. When I asked him about it, he said that it was one of the best books he had ever read. I promptly went out and bought a copy.

Fairlie's book tackles the sins of modern-day life and political liberalism (with a small "l"), but what I identified with was his unremitting condemnation of pride. Fairlie wrote that every one of the sins St. Augustine identified was infused with pride: my sloth (because I didn't need to work as hard as others); my anger (self-evident); and my gluttony (I deserved to eat whatever I wanted), among others. Fairlie's greatest insight was that pride separates us from the community of others, which we so urgently need—even if it is a country ward in rural Wyoming.

I knew that my contemptuous attitude at sacrament meeting was just another of my many signs of pride (billboards, actually, not signs), but I didn't *really* know it until I remembered that I was supposed to ordain my son to be an elder that same Sunday. A little too late, I said a silent prayer in the middle of high priests' meeting asking the Lord to forgive my poor attitude and allow me to feel his Spirit again.

I was begging, of course—abjectly. But I reminded God that, according to Benjamin's discourse in Mosiah, I'm a beggar no matter how righteous I am. After church, we gathered outside the bishop's office, and soon it was time to place our hands on my son's head.

It wasn't until I said the first part of the ordinance that I

JEANETTE ATWOOD BASED ON A CONCEPT BY JOHNNY TOWNSEND

"Well, I'll be. . . . God really DID create Adam and Steve!"

started wondering if I shouldn't have given more thought to the blessing beforehand.

And then the sun broke through all my clouds.

I spoke on and on. My eyes filled with tears, and I listened to myself, thinking, "That's an amazing blessing. How could you ever have had any doubts?"

I guess it could be called the *gnosis* of blessings: the particular way of knowing that comes only through the Spirit. That kind of knowing you can feel all the way down to the quick of your soul. Amulek described it when he said that his change of heart had come when Alma, who was staying in his house, "blessed me" (Alma 10:11). Somehow after that blessing, he had a desire to know the things that he hadn't wanted to know before.

I still wonder at the fact that a simple blessing can turn old weasels like Amulek and me into chickens who want nothing more than to roost contentedly in the henhouse of the Lord (3 Nephi 10:5).

MICHAEL VINSON
Star Valley, Wyoming

Choose the left?

THE PARABLE OF THE PART

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY, MY HAIR WAS brown and silky-smooth. My parents trained it a certain way and always parted it on the left side. As I grew, I continued to comb it that way.

When I got old enough, I went off to public school. On my first day there, however, I noticed that a lot of other children didn't part their hair on the left side. Some parted it in the middle, some on the right, and some even tried to part it (rather unsuccessfully) several different ways at once. I was amazed at the number of ways hair could be parted.

One day a boy laughed at my hair, saying, "Why do you part your hair on the left?" "Because that's how my mom and dad showed me. It's the right way to do it," I said. "How do you know it's the right way?" said a boy sitting across the aisle from me who seemed unsure of himself and a little defensive. His hair was black and parted crookedly down the middle.

A girl with curly blond hair interrupted us. "It doesn't matter which way you part your hair as long as it's clean and neat," she declared with great authority. Upon hearing that, a large boy with a crew cut scowled at us: "My dad says people who part their hair are weak and stupid. They're like sheep. They just keep doing it out of tradition because they don't know any other way."

As I progressed through school, I tried different hair styles. I thought some looked pretty good for a while, but eventually the newness wore off. I still had the same face and the same hair no matter how I combed it. Nothing had really changed. As I finished my schooling and moved out into the world, I noticed the astounding variety of colors, coifs, and parts. The people who wore them seemed truly happy with their hair parts—as happy as I was with mine.

What Would Jesus Drink?

THE LITE OF THE WORLD

WHEN *VANITY FAIR* REVEALED that the waterboarding techniques used by the CIA had been designed by LDS psychologists James Elmer Mitchell and Bruce Jensen, known by colleagues as the "Mormon Mafia," few in the Mormon community were upset. When BYU alumnus D. Kyle Simpson resigned from Attorney General Alberto Gonzales's staff in the midst of a scandal over attorneys being hired and fired for political reasons, hardly a Mormon seemed to care.

But when Kirby Heyborne, best known to LDS audiences for his roles in movies such as *The Best Two Years* and *The R.M.*, appeared in a Miller Lite commercial last month, all hell broke loose. Bloggers, reporters, and columnists, from Orson Scott Card to Robert Kirby, spilled so much digital ink on the subject, that now when you type "Kirby Heyborne" into the Google search engine, the top automatic response is "Miller beer commercial."

"One of the important reasons for abstaining from evil—both in public and private is to maintain a separate identity that lets others (and perhaps more importantly, ourselves) know Who we represent," wrote LDS blogger Connor Boyack in an entry titled "Kirby Heyborne's Promotion of Babylon." "That identity is blurred when we associate with things we should not, whether it is 'acting' or otherwise. Calling something 'art' does not give us spiritual license to set our standards aside while we consume, participate in, or represent evil."

The controversy was so animated that Heyborne himself jumped into the debate. "I'm a temple-worthy member that loves his wife and kids and fulfills his calling at church and does his home teaching," Heyborne told *Mormon Times* reporter Molly Farmer. "And yet I'm going to play characters that might have moral dilemmas, or do a commercial—or whatever it is—because my job is the way that I provide for my family . . . I look at it as Heavenly Father was blessing me with a way to support my family and stay afloat for another year."

Watching the commercial, currently posted at YouTube, one sees immediately why Heyborne got the part: Neither a beau nor an eyesore, with unkempt dirty blond hair, and wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers, Kirby is the spitting image of the archetypical white, American, twenty-something slacker who, along with a buddy, roams the streets of a sunny West Coast city (San Francisco or Los Angeles) in search of beer, ladies, and a party.

Heyborne utters all of three words during the 30-second commercial. "C'mon, man!" he urges his buddy, rubbing his

hands in anticipation of locating a kegger. "West?" he asks later, to confirm the direction his friend has indicated after laying his ear to the ground. Five seconds after that, the two smile as they realize they have reached the eagerly sought destination: This is the place. Then comes the coup de grâce which has become Heyborne's fall from grace: Heyborne and his buddy each grab a bottle of Miller Lite; greet two fantastically beautiful, implausibly interested young ladies; and go inside to join the party.

"Seek the perfect combination of taste and refreshment," the commercial admonishes. In real life, Heyborne is seeking the perfect combination of religious devotion and worldly success. And he's finding out what a tough balancing act that is—not because his devotion to Mormonism has ebbed—but because Mormon fans can be such an unforgiving crowd.

JEANETTE ATWOOD BASED ON A CONCEPT BY HUGO OLAIZ

—"Did she find out about the commercial?"
—"No. That he's MARRIED."

If Jesus himself, accompanied by his own buddy (John the Beloved?), were to roam the streets of San Francisco or L.A. and happened onto a similar party, hosted by publicans and tax collectors, what would he order?

Water, of course. But how long would it *stay* water?

HOW ART THOU FALLEN FROM HEAVEN!

Climbing High and Falling Hard in Mollywood

1972. *Johnny Lingo* star MAKEE BLAISDELL—Johnny Lingo himself—plays the lead role in a B-movie, a vampire-themed erotic thriller titled *The Mason Massacre.*

AFTERMATH: Blaisdell never gets a part in another movie. He dies of heart disease fourteen years later, at age 56.

1990. Mormons are appalled when they discover that KATHLEEN BELLER, the heroine of the LDS production *Legacy*, has appeared topless in two previous films: *The Betsy* and *Surfacing*. To make things worse, the Internet begins to swarm with rumors that the man who played the part of Joseph Smith is gay.

AFTERMATH: The Church begins to cast LDS actors only. At the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, *Legacy* is eventually replaced by *The Testaments*. Though *Legacy* becomes available on DVD, the Church never releases the name of the actor who played Joseph Smith.

2003. *The Salt Lake Tribune* reveals that NOAH DANBY, the star of *The Book of Mormon Movie,* appeared nude in the racy, gay-themed cable series *Queer As Folk.*

AFTERMATH: Critics pan the movie, which fails to generate revenue. Subsequent "volumes" of the project are never made. A non-Mormon, Danby continues to enjoy a career in TV and film.

2005. Mormon actor AARON ECKHART uses the F-word, drinks a bourbon julep, and is seen engaging in athletic extramarital sex in the satirical comedy *Thank You for Smoking*. In a scene deleted from the theatrical release but available on the DVD, he also smokes a cigarette.

AFTERMATH: Eckhart is nominated for a Golden Globe for his role in that movie.

I began to wonder if perhaps there was no one "correct" way to part my hair. I wondered where the idea of parting hair had come from in the first place, about whether—as butch boy had said—our proclivity to part was simply meaningless ritual handed down from past generations. I pondered the social value of hair parts. I studied the history of the left-sided part in particular. I wondered, "If hair parts had not existed at the foundation of the universe, would we have invented them?"

And then I began to have my bad hair days.

I DON'T PART my hair on the left side anymore. It's not that I've given up the left-sided part. I still feel a strong tribal bond with all left-side parters. But I've moved on. Which is to say that I am now quite bald. Still, I'd like to think that if I did have any hair left, I'd part it on the left.

SPENCER R. BRADY
Santa Rosa, California

This side of the tracts

JEREMY GETS A PASS

WHEN I ARRIVED EARLY SATURDAY MORNING, I wasn't surprised to find out that the work crew consisted of my neighbor Jeremy and the elders quorum president. Someone in the ward had found out that a single woman within the ward's boundaries had a leaky roof that forced her to place five-gallon buckets throughout the house to catch the rain water. This problem had worsened over the previous winter.

Pausing to discuss the daunting task at hand, Jeremy and I stood on the roof, pulling on our work gloves, leaning on shovels and brooms, and taking just a moment to chat and enjoy what was left of the cool morning air. It was going to be a long day. But not as long as last Sunday.

JEREMY IS MY type of folk—a little country (okay, a little redneck), but curious, friendly, and easy to talk to. That's probably why I hadn't noticed that as we talked and walked following sacrament meeting the next day, we were heading for a seat on the second row of the Gospel Doctrine class. It wasn't until someone began offering the opening prayer that I realized my error: Normally during that hour, I prefer the hallway.

The Gospel Doctrine teacher began with an angry diatribe against the recent California supreme court decision on gay marriage. He declared that he wanted to march out to California and personally argue with those judges. At this I involuntarily gasped.

He continued with a third-hand account of a senior missionary couple at the MTC who had told an apostle they felt their call to serve in Georgia was a mistake. The couple repented and eventually found their long-lost son in Atlanta where they re-converted him.

While the teacher, whom I will call "Gospel Doctrine" from here on, continued orating on yet another faith-promoting

whopper, I quietly gathered my things and attempted to smile while making my way to the back of the room, trying to look like I had an important errand or appointment. By the time I hit the door, I'm quite sure smoke was rolling out of my ears. "My mistake," I thought. "I am clearly not made for Gospel Doctrine class."

But I *am* made for roofs.

AS THE SUN crested over Mount Timpanogos, I began to acquire a large blister on the palm of my right hand. The day would have been looking bad except that by now, thirty of my neighbors had found their way to the house, and the roof was bustling with workers scraping shingles and sweeping away the debris. Several of our sons had arrived and were clearing the yard of fallen tarpaper and flashing—occasionally stumbling across one of the woman's errant cigarette butts. Two high priests dragged over basins filled with ice and bottles of water, followed by more older men who fired up the woman's rickety BBQ. Miraculously, trays of hamburger fixings appeared.

My elders quorum president estimated that some sixty people had devoted some part of their day to help replace this woman's roof. But more than this was accomplished that day. As a group, we did some problem-solving, laughed together, engaged in a bit of bantering, and maybe healed a few old wounds. Probably only about five men there were strangers to me. I learned they were also my neighbors. The only person I don't remember seeing was Gospel Doctrine.

I realized that whenever someone is in need, my buddy Jeremy shows up with his truck, his tools, and, when necessary, his checkbook. Several years ago, Jeremy purchased the materials and constructed, painted, and stocked the chuck box for our Scout troop, which, incidentally, has included my two sons. Jeremy is young, conservative, and occasionally says things in priesthood class that I don't agree with.

Jeremy gets a pass.

I can't recall seeing Gospel Doctrine at a service project except for when we moved him into his house. I'm sure my feelings are mostly a reflection on my inability to truly be a Christian, but Gospel Doctrine doesn't get a pass.

TOM KIMBALL
American Fork, Utah

The Sugar Beet

"All the Mormon News That's Fit to Print"

In spite of everything our mothers predicted, The Mormon Tabernacle Enquirer, *a collection of* The Sugar Beet's *best articles, is still in print! But don't worry, you can buy used copies at such dubious franchises as Smoky Mountain Books and Woody's Books. And if you're feeling really supportive, head over to* ALLBOOKSWEB *where a friendly associate will charge you double the cover price and donate the proceeds to the purchase of a case of Dr. Pepper.*

GAY HUMILITY PARADE KEEPS A LOW PROFILE

By Christopher Bigelow

PROVO, UTAH—"We're here, we're same-gender challenged, and we're awfully sorry to impose," said Provo Gay Humility Parade organizer Thomas Smith. "If we had our choice, believe me, we wouldn't hold this parade at all. But who are we to deny what God hath wrought?"

Involving about fifty men and a handful of women, the parade started at the corner of Fifth East and Second South in a Provo residential neighborhood and disbanded a block later at Fifth East and Third South. "We stayed on the sidewalk so we wouldn't get in anyone's way," said Smith. "We didn't want to trouble the city for a permit."

Most of the men wore white shirts, ties, and clean, ironed Levi's creased down the middle. "We handed out rainbow keychain fobs to our marchers beforehand," Smith said, "but we asked everyone to keep them in their pockets during the parade."

Some of the participants carried signs. Held discreetly in front of her chest, Lily Spainhower's sign was laser-printed on white paper in Helvetica 16-point font: TELESTIAL KINGDOM OR BUST. "I'm actually hoping for terrestrial," Spainhower said, "but I wouldn't want to presume." A man who declined to give his name carried a sign that said, JESUS LOVES ME, BUT HE'S NOT IN LOVE WITH ME.

Smith arranged for a handful of protesters to picket the parade and berate the marchers in order to intensify their humility. "Walking through the fire of affliction burns away the dross," Smith said. Priests and teachers from the East Bay Twenty-Second Ward held signs reading GET THEE BEHIND ME—BUT NOT LITERALLY and NO PRIESTHOOD FOR PANSIES. As instructed, the hecklers chanted, "Gay, gay, go away—get born again some other way!"

Jeff Paulsen marched next to his long-term partner, Frank Hume. As per parade rules, both men kept their arms reverently folded and did not indulge in any kind of physical contact with each other.

"Frank attends the local family ward, and I attend the over-thirty singles ward," Paulsen said after the parade. "When the sacrament comes around, we don't take it, and we pinch ourselves until it hurts."

"While we didn't want to draw undue attention, it felt good to be ourselves in public for a few minutes," Smith said. "I'd say about twenty onlookers saw us. We just hope the Provo City Library still honors our library cards after this."

Views from the Street

The State of Texas recently raided the FLDS compound. What do you think?

Polygamy? Communal living? Child brides? What reality show are we talking about again?.

Wait, I thought this LDS religion was the one where you could have more than one wife. Shoot. My women folk'll be after my head when I tell "em.

If Jeffs were a true prophet, he wouldn't have led his people to some godforsaken place like Texas. A true prophet led the Saints to a gigantic salt basin, which is clearly superior.

I just feel fortunate that the three greatest threats to the Church are now polygamists, gays, and Mitt Romney. We so-called intellectuals really need the break.

Great, now they're just going to come back to Utah.

I'm glad the Church has cleared up the confusion. FLDS is nothing like LDS. There's an "F" in front. Totally different.

Pillars of My Faith

THE GIFT OF A BROKEN HEART

By Phyllis Barber

Just what is faith? Is it a finger pointing to the moon? Is it a finger pointing to the moon which is a reflection of the sun?

JENEANE BARBER

I WISH I COULD SAY HOW solid my faith has always been, but I've had my bouts with cynicism, with loss of trust and pie-eyed innocence. My faith has changed shapes through the years—sometimes seeming thick, then thin, tiny, then huge. It hasn't always been impressive and exemplary. I've sometimes felt I had no faith, but in truth, it has always been there, somewhere, quietly persistent and alive in my core. This seed.

In the mid-Nineties, after the end of a seismic event in my personal life which totally crushed the sense of who I was and what I was all about, I found myself in the middle of a disconcerting wilderness, caught in the twist of what Joseph Campbell calls "the hero's journey," confused in the labyrinth. I entered into a seven-lean-year-plus period which felt more barren than the sands of Egypt. I hadn't been attending the LDS Church for fourteen years, though so habituated was I to weekly attendance at church I sometimes found myself sitting in the pews of other churches on Sunday morning.

When I realized I was not surviving this journey with much grace, that I was indeed free falling toward an emotional crash-and-burn, I heard about a therapist who specialized in clients with deeply religious backgrounds. After listening to me carefully, she concluded I had deep spiritual roots and that I needed to stop denying my need for spiritual expression. As I had equated spirituality with religion, I'd been trying to squash it, for at the time I believed that religion had failed me (or that I'd failed religion). But there was a heat-seeking missile in me that wanted to re-connect to Spirit—like a very small bursting seed that couldn't help sending up shoots toward the sunlight because the sunlight was there warming me even if I didn't make that request. I couldn't turn away and tunnel back into the cool soil like an earthworm. The sunlight insisted.

IN HIS BOOK, *Stages of Faith,* James Fowler speaks of faith as "imagination," which he defines using the German term: *Einbildungskraft*: literally, "the power (*Kraft*)" of "forming (*bildung*)" into "one (*ein*)." "Faith," he says, "in its binding us to centers of value and power . . . into communities of shared trusts and loyalties, gives form and content to our imaging of an ultimate environment" (24).[1]

Fowler continues on to outline the progression of faith through six stages:

- The Intuitive-Projective stage, which is "the fantasy-filled, imitative phase in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible faith of primally related adults" (133).
- The Mythic-Literal stage in which the person "begins to take on for him- or herself the stories, beliefs, and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community" (149).
- The Synthetic-Conventional stage, which is a "'conformist' stage in the sense that it is acutely tuned to the

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expectations and judgments of significant others and as yet does not have a sure enough grasp on its own identity and autonomous judgment to construct and maintain an independent perspective" (172).

- The Individuative-Reflective stage in which one begins "to take seriously the burden of responsibility for one's own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes" (182).
- The Conjunctive Faith stage in which one reclaims and reworks one's past and opens up to "the voices of one's 'deeper self.'" This fifth stage understands "the sacrament of defeat and the reality of irrevocable commitments and acts. . . . Alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions, this stage strives to unify opposites in mind and experience" (197–98).
- Universalizing Faith, which is represented by such people as Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Thomas Merton, and Mother Teresa.

While I accept the idea that my faith is made up of pieces found in every one of Fowler's stages, I find three aspects of his stage descriptions to be the most interesting:

The first comes from his description of the Individuative/Reflective Stage (Stage Four) which speaks of a person taking seriously the burden of responsibility for his or her own commitments, beliefs, and attitudes. Accepting responsibility for my own beliefs has been a hard one for me as somewhere in my bone marrow and bloodstream, I have believed strongly that faith is all about having faith in the Right Way, the Correct Way, the Iron Rod, and about following absolutely every tenet of Mormonism, even though I feel that some of these are folkways and established norms born of the culture as much as the doctrine. How do I separate the pure from the not-quite-as-pure? The wheat from the chaff? As I find myself drawn to the desire to be counted among the builders of the Kingdom of God, I regularly find myself having to ask if I'm shaving, shaping, and limiting my vision to fit onto some kind of LDS checklist.

I admit that I sometimes wake up at 4:00 a.m. with that kind of thinking flooding my brain along with a nudge from within to "Get with the program, my friend." But in the light of day, I don't believe that faith is about checklists or rubber stamps or a numbers game. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not emphasize praying from the housetops or appearing to be a follower when one's heart is elsewhere. However, having to take responsibility for that attitude makes for a sometimes lonely place in the Mormon populace which is proud of possessing the schedule to follow to find the ultimate truth.

Second, I'm fascinated with the notion of being fully alive to paradox and to the truth of apparent contradictions. I happen to believe there's a place where we can unify opposites, transcend dualities, and live above the either/ors, the goods and bads, the blacks and whites. I have faith that God dwells in this transcendent, all-encompassing place.

Addressing this point on a practical level, the absolute essence of being a Latter-day Saint, we are told, is faith in God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. But, paradoxically, the Mormon way contains other requirements, such as covenants, ordinances, and specific patterns of behavior. How can I be that good soldier who sings, "Carry on, carry on, carry on," and do everything in lock-step, precise fashion and still ask the question, "Do I exist solely in one sharply defined spot on the entire spectrum of what it means to be alive *and* a Latter-day Saint? Is it all about putting myself in step with what is supposed to be saintly, or is it about finding the deepest authentic truth in myself and respecting what I feel is God inside of me as well as God outside of me, if there is such a division?"

I want to give myself wholeheartedly to those things that ring true with me, to those things which give me joy in the Divine—kindness, an open heart, integrity, sincerity, respect for others as I would want respect for myself. Even though these attributes have been well-formed by my Mormon experience and upbringing, for which I'm absolutely grateful, this search for faith isn't about proving who's right and wrong. It has to do with respecting those things in alignment with the purity one can conceive through prayer, study, enlightened obedience, and faith itself.

The third thing Fowler describes that resonates with me is the mention of "the sacrament of defeat" in his discussion of Stage 5. I have known defeat. I have known what it feels like to feel utterly alone and to live at the lowest point of the spectrum. I know brokenness—a broken heart and a contrite spirit—which isn't an easy place for a proud person. I once thought I had mighty faith, but I had no idea what real faith was until I fell to the bottom of the well, looked up at the circle of light, no rope or hand in sight, and said, "Help me. I have no answers. I have no idea of what to do here." Through this spiritual death, I saw that I had absolutely no idea what courage really was, and that I had to summon all the courage I'd ever heard about to emerge from the deep narrow well.

While this may seem a bit melodramatic, that is how I can best describe the way I've come to understand brokenness. It is one of the most valuable experiences of my life, even though I don't welcome even the thought of being broken in that way again. But do we welcome God's fire and God's purification? Do we accept what is asked of us? Indeed, I accept this brokenness as a sacrament—a sacrament of defeat, a sacred covenant with the Divine to lie down in flames while still lifting a finger out of the ashes and the lingering red hot coals to motion to God for help: "Yes, this proud, proud person needs you, dear One. Forgive me my pride."

I have been comforted by the words of George MacDonald, a nineteenth-century writer who was once a clergyman, then a professor of English literature at Bedford and King's College in London, and whom both J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis claimed as a spiritual mentor. McDonald once wrote: "That man is perfect in faith who can come to God in the utter dearth of his feelings and desires, without a glow or an aspiration, with the weight of low thoughts, failures, neglects, and wandering forgetfulness, and say to Him, "Thou art my refuge."[2]

WHAT DO I have faith in? Paul Tillich once asked, "What values have centering power in your life?" James Fowler asked the many people he inter-

viewed while trying to discover the essence of faith: "When you're most discouraged, what gets you up in the morning to return to the struggle?" "When and where do you experience wonder, awe, or ecstasy?" Those are the questions that provide intimate glimpses into the various ways our lives have meaning and purpose. Those questions are windows onto the scene where we might find the pillars of faith standing.

The following things have centering power in my life. These are my reasons for getting up in the morning:

• I have faith in The Spirit which permeates everything. I have faith in an ultimate meaning to this existence and in something larger and much wiser than myself.

• I find this Spirit's manifestation in Beauty—those things which catch my breath, those things called ecstasy—like happening upon a young moose standing calmly in the forest eating grass or a covey of quail waddling through your backyard with young ones trailing behind, like a beautifully shaped vase fired in the unpredictable heat of a wood-burning kiln; like the distant lights of the city from the top of Salt Lake Overlook in Millcreek Canyon at sunset; like the clear eyes of someone who trusts; like a friend reaching out for your hand; like music that speaks every language and yet can't be pinned down to any one language and that can open doors to places you can't always see and offer intimations of glory if you listen carefully enough. When I was at the nadir of my faith and courage, wondering if there were sufficient reasons to continue living, I finally emerged from that hard place with this answer: "It is enough to be alive and to appreciate the beauty of this world. That is reason enough to live." I came to a new understanding of Keats' poem, "Ode to a Grecian Urn," and his words, "Truth is beauty; beauty is truth."

• I find the Divine Spirit in beautifully wrought words even though I recognize that those insubstantial vehicles called words are often not strong or large enough to carry what needs to be carried. I'm stirred with faith at the thought of a poet or prose writer working away to say something as concisely, essentially, and beautifully as possible. I've gleaned scraps of faith from the lyrics to songs—"Climb Every Mountain," "It's a Wonderful World"; from the words to hymns—"Love one another," "All is well, all is well"; and from the sublime and ecstatic poets who seem to be a direct conduit to the Divine. A poem from Shams-ud-din Muhammad Hafiz—a 14th-century Persian poet (1320–1389), a Sufi from the heart of Islam who's not well known in the Western world though he's the most beloved poet of Persia—does this for me.

Listen—
Listen more carefully to what is around you
Right now.

In my world
There are the bells from the clanks
Of the morning milk drums,

And a wagon wheel outside my window
Just hit a bump

Which turned into an ecstatic chorus
Of the Beloved's Name.

There is the Prayer Call
Rising up like the sun
Out of the mouths of a thousand birds.

There is an astonishing vastness
Of movement and Life

Emanating sound and light
From my folded hands
And my even quieter simple being and heart.

My dear,
Is it true that your mind
Is sometimes like a battering Ram

Running all through the city,
Shouting so madly inside and out

About the ten thousand things
That do not matter?

. . .

O listen—
Listen more carefully
To what is inside of you right now.

In my world
All that remains is the wondrous call to
Dance and prayer

Rising up like a thousand suns
Out of the mouth of a
Single bird.[3]

• My faith is fortified by my Mormon heritage and the strength and determination of those ancestors who came before me. I am a product of what they began and insisted on creating with their ardent belief in a Kingdom of God and a United Order. These roots are my roots, and my faith is stronger because these roots have nurtured me and provided a platform of belief and trust in divine guidance. I'm inspired and moved by the power of my Mormon community, in which people are striving to love with pure and open hearts; in the knowledge that I am a cell in the body of this community, that there is a place for me and that love is at the core of this community, even though humans sometimes struggle with what love means.

There was a time when I could barely walk in the door of a Mormon church, when I was more comfortable attending a Christian church in Denver that had a large sign out front: "Sinners Welcome Here." Swallowing pride is not an easy thing, though we talk about it so glibly, as if it were a matter of swallowing a gulp of milk. It was like

walking the gauntlet to come back to church, to sit in the midst of family after family when I was alone and divorced, to find the courage to hold my head up and still believe in who I was even if I felt like a stranger in a strange land among the forever families sitting together each week.

It still takes faith to walk into my particular ward, as I'm aware of my need to find balance between the promptings of my own faith and integrity, and the desire to be part of the flock, the fold, the ward. I don't discount the fold in any way nor my current ward, which has compassionately nurtured my return to the fold. Yet I don't want to live by a "flock" mentality. Maybe this can be resisted by "being in the ward but not of the ward"? We all want to belong. I want to belong. This is a huge temptation. But at what price does belonging come? What do we give up if we're more interested in belonging than in following the dictates of our conscience? Where's that fine balance point between self, which is a creation of God, and God himself?

No matter how overwhelming and authoritative the community can seem at times, however, there is a built-in elasticity based on the inherent plea for a Christ-centered response from all members to all members—their needs and their fears. That goodness is no simple accomplishment, and it's a thing of beauty when it's being practiced. I have faith in this goodness and kindness, and I thank my own dear father for setting an example of respecting every human and teaching me that I can learn something from even the most humble, arrogant, or disenfranchised.

• My faith is nurtured by Love. This shows itself as I behold the faces of my sons, their wives, and my grandchildren, my loves, my neighbors, my friends. I've come to know that even though my children, their father, and I are not configured in the same family constellation we once were, we are still together in that we have a deep and abiding love for each other's welfare. I've experienced love in the sensitivity of both men I've married and their caring for me. I've come to know that family can expand and include and does not have to come to an end at its natural or legal boundaries. We are all family as we offer our love and caring to each other. We are all children of God, not just some of us. We are the Other. The Other is Us. Love is there if we can only allow it to show its face in the way it wills instead of in the way we expect it to.

From George MacDonald again:

> We are and remain such creeping Christians, because we look at ourselves and not at Christ; because we gaze at the marks of our own soiled feet, and the trail of our own defiled garments. . . . Each, putting his foot in the footprint of the Master, and so defacing it, turns to examine how far his neighbor's footprint corresponds with that which he still calls the Master's, although it is but his own.
>
> Or, having committed a petty fault . . . instead of hastening to make the due confession and amends to our fellow, and then forgetting our own paltry self with its well-earned disgrace, (we forget) to lift up our eyes to the glory which alone will quicken the true man in us, and kill the peddling creature we so wrongly call our *self*.[4]

JENEANE BARBER

We are all family as we offer our love and caring to each other. We are all children of God, not just some of us. Love is there if we can only allow it to show its face in the way it wills instead of in the way we expect it to.

A FEW YEARS AFTER my first divorce, I moved to Minnesota. Casting about to find the place where I belonged after becoming not only an empty nester but a bird without a familiar nest, I found myself in the descending whirlpool of a dead-end romance and in circumstances where I didn't think I'd make it out in one piece. When the relationship came to the end to which it was destined, the darkest nights kept getting darker, and I couldn't pull myself out of an ever-deepening depression.

Finally, one morning, I knew I had to get out of the house and go to water. Water had always calmed me, and the closest was the Mississippi River. I drove halfway there, biked the rest of the way, and walked along some railroad tracks on the Wisconsin side. The ground was soggy with spring rain; the flowers had not yet bloomed; the day was overcast, but the smell and the sound of water began to calm the fright in my soul. I've never felt so alone, so frightened, or so far from God.

That night, as I packed my bike in the back of my Explorer

and drove toward home, I passed through a small town in which everything was closed for the night. But in the middle of the main street, where all other businesses were closed, I saw a lighted store and a man cleaning straw from the window display. It was just before Easter, and something in me told me to turn my car around and go into that store. Which I did. The door was ajar, and I poked my head in and asked if I could come inside. There was a box of noisy chicks on the floor.

The following description of what happened next is excerpted from my soon-to-be published novoir, *Raw Edges*:

> "Do you mind if I look around?" I heard myself saying, surprising myself with the words that came out even though I didn't feel like words or sociability.
>
> "Why not?" the man said, setting the last chick in the cardboard lid. Then he shook his head and put two fists on his hips. "See how they've already messed this cardboard lid? I wanted to keep this display for the kids until the weekend's out, but these chicks might take over the store in the meantime. I wish they weren't such a big tradition around here. Feel free to look around. My wife's in back unpacking a shipment. There's Pepsi and Sprite in the back room if you want anything to drink."
>
> The store: a potpourri of ceramic flowers, cups and beehives, candles, teapots, cards, things I'd seen many times before in small gift shops. But as I approached the back of the store where the man's wife worked at a counter, I could feel something different about this place. Something deep and old. Something contrary to the usual knickknackery. The box the woman was unwrapping had the aura and smell of a faraway place. The cover paper was thick. Woven from something dusky. It had postal markings from another world. Bolder inks.
>
> "I hope I'm not disturbing you."
>
> "Oh no," she said. "The store's closed, but I needed to unpack this shipment." The woman spoke with a Russian accent.
>
> As I eyed the boxes on the floor, the woman bent to retrieve one, laid it carefully on the counter, unwrapped it, then cradled a nesting doll next to her heart. "*Matryoshka*," she said, as if cooing over a small child. "Let's see how many are inside," she said. "There will be seven or nine or eleven. If there are eleven, the smallest one will be like a comma. How anyone could ever paint it is my question. So hard not to lose."
>
> As the woman took the first doll apart, I watched the next and the next and the next doll appear, all painted with winter scenes: a road to a house overshadowed by woods; a snow-topped barn with a picket fence; a Russian-orthodox cathedral with onion-bulb domes. And the smallest of the seven dolls finally appeared. She was painted with a picture of the deep dark woods, that forbidden place where wild wolves and fanged bears lived.
>
> Six dolls were now lined up on the counter, each one issuing from the inside of another, except, of course, the first one—the mother who presented the prime *matryoshka* self to the world. Each birthing, each splitting, had produced another doll wearing the green-painted scarf and the gold-leaf babushka crown, yet each was a slightly different self from the one before. The woman still held the smallest doll in her hand, and I wondered if I was looking at the core of something, except this doll didn't feel like the be-all, end-all essence of anything or anyone. She looked like a hard, darkened, shriveled peanut. A painted chip of wood. Was there something profound about arriving at this last doll? The breaking apart was done, but so what?
>
> Should I make a metaphor with this smallest doll? Was it possible for humans to disassemble themselves and eventually find a pure self? What was the truth of these nesting realities? Was there a seventh, ninth or eleventh self in each of us that was the real thing? Or were all the selves the real thing? Maybe there was only a mysterious river of divine liquid flowing through the terrain of everything. The core may not be solid after all. It may melt into the river of everywhere, everything and everyone.
>
> Tears started out of my eyes. I squeezed them back, though not too successfully.
>
> Still holding the smallest doll in her hand, she looked at it intently as if it might spring to life. Then she looked up at me as if asking if I thought this thing could be something more than a piece of wood. She smiled over the tops of her thick eyeglasses—a slightly mischievous smile. I felt I was in the middle of a powerful, musky fairy tale—the archetypal wise woman smiling at me, passing on something from the ancients.
>
> "Thanks for letting me look around," I finally managed to say, realizing I couldn't contain my emotions if I didn't hurry out of the store. I needed to go home, even if it wasn't full of children or a husband or a lover or anyone else. It was time to stop entertaining sadness and drama and get on with the business of being alive. Time to know that one can't really know the whys of anything, that one has to put one foot in front of the other and be grateful for the gift of *matryoshka*, the gift of someone changing straw for baby chicks, the gift of light in a store long past its closing hours.

I WROTE EARLIER about being fully alive to paradox and to the truth of apparent contradictions, and I end on that same note. I've expressed my ambivalence about my feelings regarding faith and my participation in the LDS Church, and, in the spirit of embracing apparent contradictions, I must also express my absolute gratitude for the companion of faith that has accompanied me throughout my life, through my trials, and has offered me comfort and the hope to carry on

JENEANE BARBER

Because I have experienced despair, I have come to savor beauty in a heightened way, like the clarity of a view of the valley after the rain. Beauty is even more beautiful to me, and I believe more than ever that beauty is truth, and truth is beauty.

when I felt as if there were no use in carrying on. Faith has been my best, if not only, friend at times. If I were asked to name the pillars of my faith, I would name four in the spirit of the tradition of pillars supported by the spirit of paradox:

• Because I have known brokenness or a broken heart and a contrite spirit, I have come to experience a greater fullness or wholeness. The crack in my heart and in the foundation of who I thought I was has been the opening through which the scar tissue of my fortified heart has softened.

• Because I have been stubborn and proud and resistant, I have experienced the difficulty and yet the sweetness of surrender as I have found the courage to give over to what I believe is God's ultimate goodness and His hand in all matters. In precise terms, I may not have exact answers, but I've experienced what I think Amulek was saying: "Yea, even that ye would have so much faith as even to plant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness" (Alma 34:4).

• Because I have experienced despair, I have come to savor beauty in a heightened way, like the clarity of a view of the valley after the rain. Beauty is even more beautiful to me, and I believe more than ever that beauty is truth, and truth is beauty.

• Finally, because of the light of Jesus Christ which has sustained me unfailingly through my winding journey, I acknowledge this light as the pillar of faith that has supported me more than anything else. All along the way, I've had a deep, well-etched, carved-into-the-synapses belief that somehow, Someone is listening and there is meaning to all of this craziness called life. Even in the face of trial, loss, betrayal, even as I try to figure out what it means to be human and to have faith and to believe, there's something in me that deeply believes in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. There is something in me that is so willing to bow before this very large Presence, to zip open my chest and take my heart out and put it in God's hand, to trust this very exquisite relationship where I ultimately have no doubt but that I and those I love will be guided in the direction which we need to be guided. "Dear To the Heart of the Shepherd," "The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want."

I CLOSE WITH an excerpt from a poem by Stanley Kunitz, *The Layers*, lovingly shared with me by a dear friend via the Internet:

I have walked through many lives
Some of them my own
And I am not who I was
Though some principle of being
Abides, from which I struggle
Not to stray.

NOTES

1. James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).
2. C.S. Lewis, ed., *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 1.
3. Hafiz, *The Subject Tonight Is Love: Sixty Wild and Sweet Poems of Hafiz*, Daniel Ladinsky, ed. (New York: Penguin, 2003), 28.
4. Lewis, ed., *George MacDonald: An Anthology*, 1.

2008 Eugene England Personal Essay Contest First Place Winner

THE SISTERHOOD OF THE PURPLE MESH PINNIES

By Dana Haight Cattani

The cure for anything is salt water:
sweat, tears, or the sea.
—ISAK DINESEN

I LIKE TO GET TO THE CHURCH gym a little early on Tuesday mornings to warm up, do some lay-ups, shoot a few free throws. It helps to shake out my muscles and test my joints before the duress of play. The other women arrive in ones and twos, some with babies on their hips, some holding toddlers by the hand. With their action figures and raisins and port-a-cribs, they caravan to the stage at the far end of the gym. A young ballerina plugs in a CD player, turns up the volume on Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, and begins pirouetting among the car seats and Tonka trucks. The place looks like a YMCA nursery.

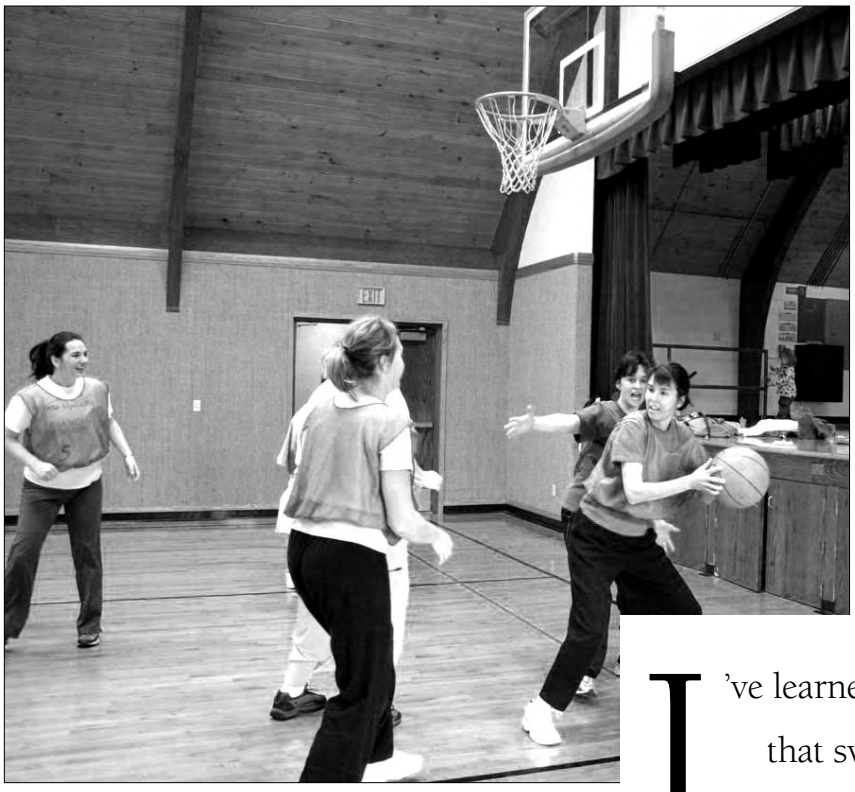
With the children settled, the women begin to stretch and talk: qualifying exams, head lice or strep throat epidemics, job offers or empty mailboxes, forwarded regrets from those who can't make it this time. In a university ward of a college town, the conversations are predictable but generally interesting. Better yet, the demographics can support a weekly Relief Society pick-up basketball game. There is a swift-moving but self-replenishing stream of women—post-Title IX women—young and active enough to field two teams week after week. Granted, sometimes the teams are small or uneven, but other times the gym is crowded with more than the ten players allowed in regulation games. No one sits out, ever.

DANA HAIGHT CATTANI *is the author of* A Classroom of Her Own *and the co-author, with Angela B. Haight, of* The Man with the Midas Touch *(AuthorHouse, 2009). Dana grew up in the Pacific Ten Conference, lived for eight years in the basketball powerhouse Atlantic Coast Conference, and now makes her home in Bloomington, Indiana, the Hoosier heartland of the Big Ten. She can be reached at dana_cattani@sbcglobal.net.*

That's because it's all about sweating. Other than that shared desire and our common religious affiliation, we are a disparate group of graduate students or wives of graduate students in law and business and music, mothers of newborn twins and high school students, a medical resident, a home-school teacher, people with part-time jobs or their own cottage industries. We play for the love of sport and of fellowship, but also to fend off depression or loneliness, process grief, get back into pre-pregnancy shape, and do the weight-bearing exercises our doctors recommend for bone density. We have, if not the full spectrum, at least a broad swath of body types: six feet tall or petite, quick or not-so-quick, substantial or slight, pre-menopausal and postpartum, with all combinations of freckles and pony tails and acne, crow's feet and wisps of gray. At 43, I am one of the older ones. Osteoporosis permitting, I hope I'll be playing for years to come. I know eventually I'll have to do yoga instead, but I don't want to go gently.

Know that it is good to work. Work with love and think of liking it when you do it. It is easy and interesting. It is a privilege. There is nothing hard about it but your anxious vanity and fear of failure.
—BRENDA UELAND

WE NEVER KEEP score. Instead, we divide ourselves into teams, and half of us pull on purple mesh pinnies or scrimmage vests. The teams are fluid, of necessity. Mothers step out of the game briefly to comfort crying babies, break up toddler spats, or take a child to the bathroom. If a team is left short-handed or if there is an obvious imbalance, someone shifts. Since we switch up the teams every week—and often during the game—each person has a chance to play both with and against everyone else. The culture of this game and the transience of our roster allow no per-



manent or exclusive alliances.

The style of play is generous. We pass a lot before shooting, especially to teammates who have not scored much that day. We referee ourselves and enforce rules on a sliding scale. A clearly inexperienced player can travel or stay more than three seconds in the key without repercussions, but only until her shots start dropping. If a problem becomes chronic or flagrant, we may interrupt play for a brief clinic and demonstration. As we are women, we generally make decisions by consensus, apologize for fouls, and erupt in praise for any player on either side who makes a three-pointer.

Enjoy your body. Use it every way you can. Don't be afraid of it or of what other people think of it. It is the greatest instrument you'll ever own. —MARY SCHMICH

THIS PICK-UP GAME is a place to teach the give-and-go and demonstrate the proper use of a pivot foot, but it is much more. It is an investment, really, in a culture of activity and fitness, of mental and physical health, of confidence, friendship, and joy. It is a play date, a scrum, a workout, and visiting teaching efficiently packaged in sixty minutes.

How's the caliber of play? Fair to middling, I'd guess. We're nobody's WNBA. On the other hand, we have quite a few women who have played extensively on school and recreational basketball teams. They set screens, make fade-away jump shots, throw no-look passes, and crash the boards. Then they teach the rest of us.

On vacation days, those of us with school-age children bring them to basketball. For the first half, they cheer for their moms, and for the second, we let them join in. They get more than their share of open looks at the basket. I can think of no better lesson for my children than cheering for women who, with respect and generosity, tower over them.

If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. —JOHN WOODEN

BEFORE WE START, we put on the accoutrements of sport: a shoulder harness, lace-up ankle braces, gauze tape binding fingers together. A bag of frozen corn in the kitchen freezer, undoubtedly an artifact of some long-forgotten ward activity, is our all-purpose ice pack. A year ago, I jammed the knuckle on my ring finger, which swelled so much that I could not remove my wedding band for seven months. When I finally worked that ring off, I put it away. My knuckle is never again going to be the size it once was, and in the contest between basketball and jewelry, I know where I stand. The only consolation for a scratch over my cheekbone or a gimpy knee is the satisfaction of telling the tale, with embellishments, at the dinner table that night.

I've learned to beware of that sweet and mild Primary secretary who will bowl you over in the nicest possible way. I've learned that in the mind of a two-year-old, a poster of Michael Jordan can look "just like Mom."

Aside from injuries, we have other problems. Basketball isn't always blissful camaraderie. Some days we're dragging, the shots aren't falling, someone is coming down with a cold, or someone was up half the night with a sick child. Occasionally, we've had testy exchanges over fouls or rule enforcement. Every once in a while, someone goes home in a huff and in the best womanly tradition, denies it. Usually, everyone comes back the next week, eager to play again. The most difficult part of basketball, as anything else, is managing the human relations. In a transient group with ever-shifting participants, it is an endless task; the chemistry changes every time one person leaves and someone new comes.

Like most organizations, even informal ones, we struggle with the twin problems of recruitment and retention. At first, I watched for tall, trim women to move into the ward so I

could draft them. I have discovered, however, that pick-up basketball requires willingness more than height or athleticism. Desire qualifies people for this work. Retention is easier than recruitment. The people who stop coming generally fall into one of three categories: injured, pregnant, or unable to be two places at the same time. One third trimester woman wanted to play so much that she strapped on a hernia belt and came in as a point guard. We gave her a wide berth so as not to induce premature labor.

The worst of doing one's duty was that it apparently unfitted one for doing anything else.
—EDITH WHARTON

I SHOULD BE a Title IX girl, but I am not. Not really. Reading was always my sport, followed closely by violin and piano, and the revolution in girls' athletics happened around me without much notice or interest on my part. I did play junior varsity basketball in ninth grade, and I was half of the fourth-ranked doubles badminton team my sophomore and junior years, but this experience no more made me an athlete than finishing a novel makes someone a reader. So how do I come, in early middle age, to basketball?

For me, Relief Society happens on Tuesdays at 9:15 a.m. I wear men's gym shorts, a gray T-shirt, and New Balance shoes that cost as much as my last four pairs of tennis shoes combined but make a satisfying squeak on the court. I don't worry too much about saying the wrong things; I just play.

In this Relief Society, I've learned lessons that do not appear in any manual from Salt Lake City. I've learned to beware of that sweet and mild Primary secretary who will drop her shoulder, drive to the basket, and bowl you over in the nicest possible way. I've learned that in the mind of a two-year-old, a poster of Michael Jordan can look "just like Mom." I've learned that it is a fine idea to square up before shooting. I've learned that if you play regularly, you can run and not be weary—or at least you can gasp less. I've learned that the sound of women's feet thundering like wild ponies on the gym floor to the accompaniment of Tchaikovsky is a wonderful oxymoron. For that matter, Relief Society basketball itself is an oxymoron: communion through unabashed competition and conflict.

The Tuesday game is a vote with my thundering feet for something more authentic and encompassing than Sundays of scripted, stilted lessons. It is an antidote to defining women in terms of inadequacy, justifying contingent and auxiliary roles, and taking silent exception. It is a rejection of an ethos of deference and timidity in favor of self-assurance, competence, and action. The game is a proclamation that humility and meekness have a place in this world, but so do fist-pumping, back-slapping, and high-fiving. It is an argument for *sweat* as a feminine noun and verb. It is a relief.

The Tuesday game is a proclamation that humility and meekness have a place in this world, but so do fist-pumping, back-slapping, and high-fiving. It is an argument for sweat as a feminine noun and verb.

One of the few things I know about writing is this: spend it all, shoot it, play it, lose it, all, right away, every time…. The impulse to keep to yourself what you have learned is not only shameful, it is destructive. Anything you do not give freely and abundantly becomes lost to you. You open your safe and find ashes.
—ANNIE DILLARD

LAST FALL, I inherited the role of basketball coordinator. No one called me to this position, unless you count the women who moved away in the annual springtime exodus. Several of them told me that basketball is the thing they would miss most. "I'll think about you in this gym on Tuesday mornings," one said. "You better be here." Another woman, preparing to leave for a three-year assignment overseas, took me aside one day. "Keep it alive," she said. "I want to play when I come back."

I want her to play when she comes back, too. So, since our regular basketball was driven away in a moving van last summer, I headed down to a sporting goods store to buy a new one. I was overwhelmed. There were so many sizes and colors and textures and prices. Then I saw one in a box labeled "For the Serious Female Athlete." With a slightly smaller circumference and lighter weight, it was sized for women. Sold. I took it to basketball the next Tuesday to try out with this year's new recruits.

We've been using it ever since. It fits.

What happens when a girl won't respond to the commitment pattern?

THE SIXTH STEP

By Jace Anderson

Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.
—GENESIS 2:24

HOME FROM MY MISSION ONLY A WEEK, I SAT alone at the kitchen table—filled to the brim, both in thought and in stomach. Though I was slightly out of shape, and still awkwardly recovering from the effects of faithfully avoiding females for two years on my mission, it was at that moment that I audaciously decided I would be engaged to be married by the end of the month. Then, in a fit of righteousness, I broke the news to my parents who received the startling declaration with open arms and a few tears.

This marriage epiphany had not come out of left field. I had it in mind that my life was to follow a successive plan. Childhood led to adolescence, which took me to my mission, which advanced me to marriage. Since up until that point in my life none of those steps had let me down, it seemed only logical to move on to the next. This idea received further fuel from the Sunday school lesson that day.

Since it was my first Sunday in a singles ward, I was new to what I later came to learn was the most common lesson in a singles ward. It starts out with the teacher cleverly asking what the six steps to exaltation are. Baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost are shouted out almost before the teacher can finish writing the question on the board. Then the smart kids speak up from the back and knock out receiving your temple endowments and, if you're a man, getting the priesthood. The guy on the front row (the one who has already told three unrelated mission stories) takes care of enduring to the end. The teacher responds affirmatively to each of these, . . . and then an awkward stillness fills the room. After about thirty seconds of silence, the teacher strides to the chalkboard and, with a grin on his face, writes the word "marriage."

That night I pulled out my newly purchased cell phone and scrolled through the few phone numbers I had acquired since my homecoming. I decided I would give several girls the opportunity to help me cross out that elusive sixth step.

But my smile vanished as I dialed the first number. It was dawning on me that I was going to have to try to flirt with a girl. Maybe even touch one (something I hadn't done since hugging my sister goodbye more than two years previously). But as the phone began ringing, it occurred to me that asking girls out should be as easy as asking a potential investigator to hear the discussions. That thought gave me confidence. I decided that I would just be calm and deploy the missionary's subtlest tool, the commitment pattern.

I had first heard about the commitment pattern in the MTC. Halfway through the introductory lesson, a huge smile had crept over my face. I was convinced no one would ever be able to say no to baptism if only I could master this technique of obtaining commitments. My teacher taught me that the commitment pattern consists of three simple steps: First, prepare by building a relationship of trust. Second, confidently invite until a commitment is made. And third, follow up on previous commitments.

The girl (let's call her Stacy) picked up the phone, and the conversation went something like this:

STACY: Hello?

JACE: Hey Stacy, this is Jace, how are you?

STACY: I'm good Jace, what's new with you?

(Build relationship of trust, check.)

JACE: Oh, not a whole lot. Just trying to get back to normal life. Hey, I was wondering if you wanted to go up to Temple Square and see the Christmas lights with me?

(Invite, check)

STACY: Oh, I can't tonight. I'm going out on a date.

(Invite, uncheck)

JACE: … Oh, okay. Well maybe later on in the week. Would it be better for you on weekends or weekdays?

STACY: What? I don't know… I might have to work or something.

JACE ANDERSON is a student at Utah Valley University and is still single. Any female who would like to attempt changing his marital status can reach him at gobios14@yahoo.com.

(Panic sets in)

JACE: Ah… ok, um… if you don't work, is it usually better for you in the evenings or the day?

STACY: Uh… I don't know. I'll just give you a call or something.

(Anything to get out of the most awkward conversation of my life)

JACE: Ok, yeah, call me anytime… or you can text me… it's the same number that you would call me on… later. So, ok, I'll talk to you later then, or read you… if it were a text, ha ha…

STACY: Ok, sounds good. See ya.

(Click)

I sat there in stunned silence as I reviewed the conversation. *"It's the same number…"* what was that all about? It wasn't that the commitment pattern had never produced the age old "Don't call me, I'll call you" excuse before; it was just that for the first time, it wasn't my *message* that was being rejected, it was *me*. This realization hit me like an uppercut to the chin, and my confidence that I was going to reach my goal by the end of the month hit the proverbial mat.

Stacy never called. Neither did any of the other girls I tried to commit that night. The stark realization that maybe I wasn't quite as suave as I had thought pushed my end-of-month goal not only onto the back burner but completely off the stove. Having nothing else cooking, I went back into an old pattern: hanging with my buddies.

WE'VE BEEN THE same crew of six since the seventh grade. Whether it was scarfing down huge quantities of dirt as freshman or sending a personalized valentine to the hottest girl in the school, "the buddies," as we called ourselves, knew how to lighten any situation or how to make fools of ourselves—whichever was more fun.

Avoiding girls in high school was easy. The Church taught: date after you were sixteen, but avoid having a serious girlfriend. For us buddies, this admonition was coupled with the knowledge that if we were to go on a date, we'd miss out on the night's jokes. I got away with dating a girl for a few months my junior year, but anytime I returned to my buddies, I seemed to be on the outside of all the inside jokes, so I quickly ended the relationship and found my way back in.

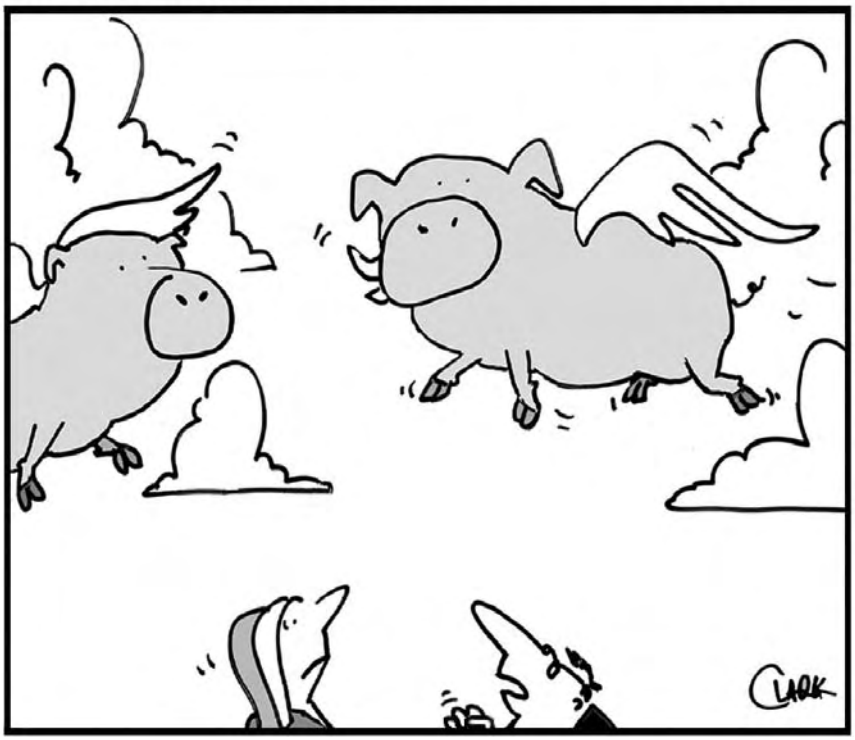
Upon our return from our missions, the Church gave us the green light to go ahead and start dating seriously. The six of us decided to join forces and nip this sixth step in the bud together. At first we attempted group dates. Group dating sounded a lot easier than entering the dating world alone, but we soon ran into trouble. We found that our tastes in women were so similar that we often ended up all liking the same girl, which led to some awkward situations. Picture it, six guys crowded around an "eight-cow" girl, while the "three-cow" girls who are ostensibly on the same group date with us are left to their own devices.

This, surprisingly, never engendered any animosity among us as buddies, but it also didn't land us any second dates. The whole situation was like when the entire team leaps to grab a rebound in basketball. Initially each player is so anxious to secure the ball from the other team that he doesn't realize he is competing only against his teammates. Once this realization hits, all the team members drop the ball at the same time, not wanting to exert any more unnecessary effort. Which is when the opposing team typically scoops the loose ball up and heads for the basket.

Once this had happened several times, we all gave up for a while. After all, none of us were twenty-five yet (official "menace to society" age) and, aside from an occasional gaze at a pair of shapely ankles, we had each other, and that was enough.

I RECENTLY HAD an epiphany about marriage. I am not naïve enough to claim this is the case with all couples who get married, but I believe it applies to the majority. A lot of people I saw getting married either had no friends or friends who would bore even Al Gore. If you have no friends, all you have to do is find one person dumb enough to hang out with

HONEST JON by Jonathan David Clark



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"Yeah, baby. Now you have *to marry me!"*

you all day, and your problem is solved. At this point in my life, I had all the friends and all the fun I needed. It was like high school again but with more money and no curfew.

But living that kind of life in Utah Valley became hard after a while. The constant nagging from parents and Church leaders to find that lucky lady and get a mortgage and a house with a front gate and some little ones to play in that yard started to wear on us. We agreed that we all needed to put the life of midnight basketball games and Friday nights at the local arcade behind us. Eventually one of my friends, the one renowned for being "on the ball," started dating a girl relatively seriously. After about a year of dating this girl, the pressure started to mount because he had not yet proved he could take the next big step. The stress finally forced him down onto one knee with a diamond ring in his hand. I was away in Texas when he proposed, but upon my return, I could see that something was wrong.

Though the buddies supported our friend's decision, I was ambivalent about the whole situation. On the one hand, I was happy to see that he had grown up and was ready to move on with his life. But it was also quite clear that doubt was eating away at him. His fiancée was great. She was smart, pretty, and sweet. But for some reason, she just wasn't right for him. On the surface, my friend seemed to be choosing the right, but no matter how many times he was congratulated in elders quorum, or how often he was told that he was setting a good example for the rest of us, he just felt his engagement was wrong. After three sleepless nights, he broke it off. So now another year has come and gone, and the buddies remain single.

DURING A RECENT Sunday dinner, my mother lovingly pointed out that I have only a few more "good" years left before I start to lose my hair and metabolic vigor. Apparently my mother knows enough about my genes to predict that if I wait much longer, I'll have to comb my hair over and suck in my gut until I can trick some nearsighted girl into taking the ring. Then after I lock her in for time and all eternity, I will finally be able to allow a relieved smile to creep over my face as I brush my remaining hair back to my head's bad side, undo my belt a few notches, and reveal that the joke is on her. Sorry, Mom, if a girl is not smart enough to notice my receding hair line and understand the basic concepts of aging, I'm not so sure I want to hang out with her for time or eternity either.

Several months ago, I was given some decent advice in church. One of the married women assigned to attend our singles ward stood up and declared that "it is better to marry the right person at the wrong time than to marry the wrong person at the right time." I began to wonder how many returned missionaries are pressured into thinking the "right time" is when they step off the plane ride home. I know I was. In how many cases is the end result that they are married at the perfect moment to the wrong person? Kind of like a tattoo that seemed like such a great idea at the time.

I am ready to accept the right person at the wrong time but not the other way around.

To that certain crowd that still shakes its head disapprovingly at me, I simply declare that I do want to get married. I completely agree with the author of Genesis who counsels me to replace my mother and father with a young woman. I know that there is a happiness that comes only from finding that special someone and having kids and grandkids and going on a couple's mission. But for now, since I haven't met the right person, I am going to ask that same crowd to spare me the rolled eyes after hearing my response to the question, "So, are there wedding bells in your future?" I'm going to get married when the person is right. Trust me, I'm not planning to be that guy at the family reunion who shows up forty minutes late in an X-Terra, Bluetooth in ear, and a way-too-young-for-him girlfriend on his arm.

In a perfect world, I would get both the girl and the timing right, and that would definitely be cause for celebration. Maybe even a wedding. But for now, while I still have friends, and there isn't any girl I'm doing back-flips over, I think I'm just going to continue to live my life—without the timetable.

YOU, ME (AND BACH)

Long roads threading through desert sage and blush
skirting Las Vegas,
the calm before L.A. . . .

Enclosed in the car
with pour and pause of talk, we recall

a Salzburg concert,
shin splints in American Fork Canyon,

your broken Chrysler key,
love in a castle.

Tennis rackets rattle, mingle
with duffle-rolled T-shirts, shorts,
a six-pack of V-8.

Tires massage the road,
my fingers walk your neck,

unwind knots that lump
beneath your raven fringe of hair,
the gray insisting.

Your dinner jacket and starched shirt
hang over one door in the back,

my black sequined dress guards the other.

High-class scarecrows,
they keep the world at bay.

—MARILYN BUSHMAN-CARLTON

"That they might have joy . . ."

In the early planning for the cluster of essays that follows, we toyed with the idea of calling it "The *Sex*ion," but our better selves talked us out of it. The next seventeen pages explore a topic that gets little discussion in Mormon consexts—er . . . contexts. It's true that we have Standards Nights for our teenage children and that from time to time a general authority will give a talk on the subject, but that's where the conversation about sex seems to end.

We find this sad. A culture that values joy and completeness so much should have more room for conversation about this essential part of life. To that end, we offer the following perspectives on sexuality.

In these essays, you'll probably find people who you can relate to, such as the young woman who spent the first part of her marriage not understanding how to enjoy sex, or the father who wonders how to help his children have a healthier view of their bodies and sexual desires than he had. You'll also find some words of guidance from people who have written and counseled on the topic of sexuality. And who knows, you may even find a connection with the man who is both a Mormon and a naturist (a fancy word for "nudist").

We promise you an exciting and enlightening read. So don't hide this magazine under your mattress. Read it with gusto, and pass it around.

CHUWY—ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

The day a talk show answered a prayer . . .

WHEN VIRGINS COLLIDE

By Anonymous

At age twenty-four, I, a female virgin, married a twenty-five-year-old male returned missionary, also a virgin, in the temple of the Lord.

While most modern, non-LDS Americans consider the marriage of virgins miraculous, for my husband and me, it was simply the one true way. After all, we were obedient Latter-day Saint kids with our sights set on eternal exaltation. We were prepared for temple marriage. We were eager to fulfill our duty to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, raise up righteous seed unto the Lord, and fill an Econoline van or two with our offspring.

We were not, however, prepared for sex.

We believed then, as now, that the salvation of our souls depends on our willingness to align ourselves with God's commandments. So, as an unmarried couple, we followed the sage advice of our church leaders and parents. You know it well: Be in by midnight. Feet on the floor at all times. Never enter the bedroom of a member of the opposite sex for any reason. Don't touch anything that bulges on your date's body. Don't touch yourself.

JEANETTE ATWOOD

Admittedly, we paid less attention to the admonitions against kissing. Our kisses were hardly like those between a brother and a sister, and had President Kimball (the prophet at the time) happened upon one of our embraces, he might well have tapped us on the shoulder and said, "Dear children, that behavior is in similitude of the marriage act." But all temptations considered, our courtship experience was downright wholesome. So wholesome, in fact, it's a wonder we got married.

But we did wed.

I FINALLY DANCED with the last uncle on the list, the band packed up, the reception ended, and suddenly we were joining the generations of Mormon newlyweds before us who had raced toward the Moment—that singular moment when two virgins collide atop the marriage bed.

My brand-new husband, who drove in near silence, broke every traffic law en route to the hotel. He was thinking . . . Well, actually I don't think he was thinking at all. My mind, on the other hand, brimmed with one dreadful realization: Everyone who knew me knew exactly what I would be doing in half an hour. (Of course, that minor embarrassment wasn't going to stop me.)

Alone in the bathroom of our bridal suite, I slipped into the white negligee I had bought at J.C. Penney with my mother's credit card. I skipped the blush since I didn't need it and instead, touched up my lipstick and mascara.

I stepped out into the darkened bedroom. By the light of the muted television, I watched my new husband, clad in his

THE AUTHOR OF this essay has asked to remain anonymous. Her choice to write without identification does not stem from fear of repercussions from her culture or the Church but because she is a teacher with curious, Web-savvy students. Enough said?

sacred, polyester garments, turn down the bed covers. He came to me, kissed me, and invited me to lie down.

Being a perfectly prepared new bride, I asked, "Don't you want to pray first?"

His brows pinched and he looked at me like I'd lost my marbles. "No," he said and gave me a gentle, downward push of encouragement.

I complied. He stood at the foot of the bed, between me and the flickering television, and slowly removed his garment top—a striptease I suspected him of rehearsing alone in front of a mirror.

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I didn't mean to scream.

As I watched his silhouette, backlit by a muted, late night television show, I worried that we weren't starting our marriage off on the right foot. My mind replayed the testimony meeting in which the token young-married counselor in my BYU ward had told the story of his wedding night—of how he, as the priesthood bearer in their newly formed family, had insisted that his virgin bride pray with him before they consummated their marriage. He indicated that, to this day, they continue to pray before intercourse as a reminder that sex within marriage is sacred.

My new husband obviously wasn't thinking about anything sacred. And quite frankly, I was having a hard time myself considering that he now had his thumbs hooked in the waistband of his garment bottoms.

Down they went.

I'm sure my husband expected a squeal of delight, but I'm afraid the noise that came out of me as he pulled down his drawers wasn't quite that. I had never seen a naked man before, except for that time my younger brother had chased me around the house with a magazine photo he'd rooted out of a dumpster: Burt Reynolds in his all and all.

And let me tell you, Burt's limp little buddy bore no resemblance to my new husband's noble Prince Albert. I had no idea Prince Albert would jump up like that.

I didn't mean to scream. More than twenty years later, I'm still apologizing for it.

TO THIS DAY, I clearly recall the expression on his face as my shriek subsided. I knew that, at that moment, my husband was having his first complete cogitation since we'd left the reception. Sadly, like mine, it went something like: "This isn't starting out right."

In spite of his shattered ego and my shattered illusions, we proceeded on schedule and completed the deal in record time. He rolled over, thanking God marriage is eternal, and I lay, sprawled out on the bed, wondering, "Was that it?"

Though we practiced faithfully throughout our honeymoon, sex didn't get any better for me, and I began to wonder if God hadn't made me right.

Needless to say, "it" was not like in the movies—not that I'd ever seen movies that showed detail. But my husband made plenty of suggestions to remedy our problem, culminating in the desperate act of visiting the local bookstore. I went along, but in the end, I found it too humiliating to stand beside my S-E-X partner and in front of "those kinds" of books.

The result? My husband picked the book. I soon found myself sitting beside him on the edge of our mattress looking at sketches of naked couples in the most diverting of positions and listening as he earnestly read instructional excerpts from *More Joy of Sex*. Somehow I lacked faith in the title.

My husband pointed to one particular pose and said, "Let's try that."

I turned the book sideways, then upside-down . . . "I don't think that'll help."

"It can't hurt," he said.

I've always been a pretty good sport, so we tried it. It didn't help, and when my husband wasn't looking, the book mysteriously vanished.

I WON'T DIVULGE how long it was before I figured out that my anatomy wasn't aberrant and that my button could be pushed, but I will say that it was a long time. A *very* long time. I mean, it seemed like such a really, really, long, long, long time. Interestingly, I didn't figure it out until I did what a stay-at-home Mormon mom like me wasn't supposed to do.

I watched TV.

Then as now, the prophetic counsel to LDS women who

spend their days at home with small children included the advice to refrain from watching television unless, of course, the show was educational for the children or had to do with cooking or decorating. Those soap operas would put strange ideas into our heads, and the talk shows were godless. But loneliness is a powerful enemy, so I'd leave on the television in both the family room and the bedroom. This way, no matter through which room I chased my little one, I had the soothing companionship of an adult voice.

Generally speaking, though, I tried to be a good girl even with the TV on. I religiously kept away from the soaps and turned off the talk shows that outraced my minivan lifestyle. In fact, on the day of my epiphany, I had changed the channel on the television in the family room when the talk show promised a sex therapist who would give advice to several unmarried couples. When I passed into the bedroom with an armful of clean laundry and a screaming toddler clamped to my kneecap, I reached for the remote, intending to turn the show off in this room as well.

But just as my finger poised over the power button, that sex therapist uttered the sentence that changed my life. She said, "No woman has ever had an orgasm from sexual intercourse alone."

Stop the presses! Hold the door! Step away from that remote!

I plopped down on the edge of the bed (suddenly a hopeful place). I clasped my hand over my little one's mouth and tried to listen while he struggled for air. Fortunately, they quickly broke for commercials.

I ran back to the kitchen, filled up a sippy cup and shoved *Peter Pan* into the VCR in the family room. I returned to my bedroom and drank in every word that therapist said, even though she was giving immoral advice to people participating in illicit sexual relations. Hallelujah and thank God for them. To my consternation, I realized that my husband had had the right idea all along. But now I knew the secret that would make it all better. That night I slipped off to the grocery store, bought my first tube of K-Y, and finally, finally, learned what all the fuss is about.

I began to wonder if God hadn't made me right.

I KNOW WHAT you're thinking. You're wondering what on earth possesses me to air the intimate corners of my life in so public a place. I've chosen to do so because I expect that my experience is not uncommon. The topic is on my mind because I have children who walk the straight and narrow and are now approaching a marriageable age. I know that they think as I thought: that since they understand the mechanics of procreation, they know all they need to know about sex. But I also know from discussion with them that they don't understand the pleasure principle, at least as it relates to women. I think ahead to the time each becomes engaged. How will I broach the subject?

I realize that for most couples in the Western world the idea of receiving sex advice once they are already engaged is akin to telling a child how to use a spoon after

JEANETTE ATWOOD

he's wolfed down his oatmeal. But faithful Latter-day Saints are not like most people. We'd sooner starve than eat before the prayer is said.

But once those few magic words over an altar change "No! No!" into "Go! Go!"—physical passion ought to become a gospel principle that is freely and openly supported and discussed by our people. We often claim that sacred is not secret. If we believe this, we must, as parents, be sure that our children are prepared to not only engage in, but also enjoy, the intimacies of married life.

I've heard it said that you don't have to teach a hungry person how to eat, but hunger has never been declared a sin second only to murder. As a parent who has been there, done that, I will make sure my children are better prepared for sex than my husband and I were when we married. If that means sitting down with them and their intendeds and drawing a diagram, then I guess that is what I'll do.

Thoughts of my own children lead me to thoughts about others. I worry about the young LDS women who, like me, enter marriage unaware of how their bodies work. They're embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, or simply naïve. They lie beside their husbands at night thinking that something is wrong with the way God made them. I worry about the young faithful men who risk feeling inadequate and frustrated.

Furthermore, I am unsettled by a story my husband told me about a conversation he'd recently had with an elderly Mormon man—a husband, father, and grandfather to dozens. The topic was lesbianism.

"I just don't get it," the old man said, looking squeamish. "What do those women do to each other, you know, to feel good?"

Somehow, as I think about the cluelessness of this aged gentleman and what I imagine as the heartache of his wife who has lived for so many decades with a man who believes intercourse alone is what satisfies, my decision to be brutally candid about my husband's and my youthful sexual missteps seems worth the trouble of "baring" a little more than my testimony. If our culture can produce married men and women who reach old age without understanding the mechanics of female orgasm, something is obviously amiss.

It is difficult to overcome cultural taboos. We can't exactly call on the Church to produce a video about the topic or to write a handbook to be given to brides and grooms on the way out of the temple. There won't be a Sunday School class on the subject. No one will ask you to raise your hand to the square and give a sustaining vote to some good, healthy carnality among Mormon married folk. If our culture is to become more open, more willing to discuss physical pleasures, the change can occur only through the attitudes and behaviors of individual members.

SPEAKING ABOUT SEXUAL pleasure with Mormons can be difficult, to say the least. When I get together with my non-LDS girlfriends, we talk sex. Not dirty sex. Marital sex, and we do it joyfully. But when I meet with LDS women, we talk about our kids; we talk about our jobs; we talk about scrapbooking, and occasionally world events, but we never—and I mean never—discuss our personal level of sexual satisfaction, though we might bemoan the frequency of male desire or the resulting painful episodes of childbirth. This lack of frank discussion comes at a price, and, as with most things, the cost is often highest for those least prepared to pay.

I recently had the opportunity to practice what I am preaching. A member of my Relief Society presidency felt inspired to ask me to substitute-teach a lesson that included a discussion about the marital bond. I read a remark by a prophet that referenced "wifely duties," and we listed on the board what those duties might include. But all the words they came up with were more than three letters long.

So I asked them to think of "wifely duties" as a code phrase spoken by a genteel, nineteenth-century prophet, and then I waited some more. Finally, I drew a hangman on the board with three lines for letters underneath. "Give me a letter."

Silence. Wide-eyed silence. Jaw-hanging silence.

I laughed and told them the noose I'd drawn wasn't going away. Then I wrote a great big "S" in the first spot.

Nervous laughter.

I waited.

Finally, one of our unmarried college students, home on break, blurted out: "I'm not afraid to say it. Sex."

The response was instantaneous. We had a conversation like none I'd ever experienced in the Church. Fun, but in no way frivolous. The end result was a general agreement that the physical pleasure associated with sex is a gift from God intended to draw husband and wife closer. We concluded that it is a holy thing to enjoy sex.

The Relief Society president may have turned white, but she allowed the closing prayer.

Needless to say, I became an overnight sensation with the elders quorum. I also received an outpouring of appreciation—over the phone, by email, and in person—from mature, married women who confessed to being uplifted in a whole new way. I discovered that my people do hunger to approach the topic of physical pleasure and intimacy with a sense of joy and thanksgiving.

I ENCOURAGE THOSE of you who are like me—people with more passion than brains—to find ways to open the discourse, both in your families and among your Mormon friends. Go ahead, brethren. Use a double entendre in priesthood meeting. And sisters, if you really want to have fun at the next bridal shower, leave the toaster on the Wal-Mart shelf and wrap up a silky pair of bikini briefs—for him. Then, when the hostess asks you to give the bride some marital advice, skip the rote and boring "never go to bed angry" and "pray every night." Instead, give a good, solid piece of sex advice. You'll be at the top of every guest list created by every future bride in attendance, regardless of what her mother thinks. Or, for that matter, knows.

More important, you'll go to bed at night knowing you have helped a young married couple to sleep much, much better.

Finding peace with myself and the jaws of hell . . .

AFRAID OF THE DARK

TALKING WITH OUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX

By Stephen Carter

Several years ago at church, our bishop rounded up all the adults and sat us down in the chapel. Turns out it was time for "the talk."

Our bishop was a very kind and sensitive person. He took the job of keeping his congregation on the straight and narrow with the utmost seriousness. I'm certain that he put everything he had into his calling. That day, he was worried about the youth.

His words to us were very quotable: "If there's an unsupervised Internet connection, there's a pornography problem." "I take the women's underwear ads out of the newspaper before bringing it in the house." "Our children should have no privacy in our homes."

He endorsed (and exemplified) the practice of going through our children's rooms, bureau drawers, mattresses, closets — anywhere that they could be hiding girly magazines or those endlessly propagating underwear ads. He admonished us to leave no temptation festering in any corner of the house, lest our youth be drawn into sin.

"Imagine you've been fasting all day," he said, "and there's a cream puff sitting on the counter. You're going to be tempted,"

My wife leaned over to me and said, "Sounds like there's a lot of hunger going on."

She said this just as a lot of old feelings came swimming to the surface. I was a teenager all over again, aboil with hormones and unable to sleep, afraid that I would die during the night and wake up in flames.

I'm almost embarrassed that I was so certain I was going to hell, because as I've talked with other males my same age, it seems that my adolescence was much the same as anyone else's. My wife had thought my teenage angst was pretty neurotic, blowing things out of proportion. But that day she got an earful of what I grew up with: leaders who saw Satan simmering in my darkest places.

So I wondered: why does so much of the Church discourse I've experienced on teenage sexual desire connect sex to Satan? Why do we invariably place it in the realm of the dark and forbidden? It seems that we Mormons simply assume that if someone is going into a dark place, they must be sinning. After all, in Lehi's dream the landscape around the tree of life was dark, and those who wandered into it were lost.

What's in the darkness? Will it really swallow us up forever? It's a question that has bothered me for a long time, so I've been doing an experiment with the dark.

FOR MOST OF my life, I was certain that R-rated movies were a scourge to humankind, a doorway to hell. I believed this because my church had brought me up on the "poison" metaphor, the idea that books, pictures, and movies are like lead: once they get inside your system, they poison you, and there's no way to get them back out. "The mind through which filth passes is never the same," quoth Ezra Taft Benson.[1]

However, during graduate school, I started to study screenwriting and found out that there were some R-rated movies that seemed to have no clue how debauched they were. I was struck by the power of their stories and their depth of moral vision. Of course, I had read only their screenplays; who knew what watching the actual movie would do to me! But, I was intrigued by the possibilities in these stories. I thought they might have something to offer me. So, taking my eternal soul in my hands, I ventured into the darkness of the movie theater.

I'll never forget the sense of moral pulverization and renewal I felt when I saw *Seven*, *Monster*, and *Requiem for a Dream*. Or how deeply I felt I could see into the battlefields and sanctuaries of family life in *Ordinary People* and *You Can Count On Me*. Or the way *Kadosh* and *Heaven* dredged up startling alternative visions of spirituality.

I noticed that in the best movies I saw, the story broke me into a million pieces, exploding my perceptions and tearing

STEPHEN CARTER has not as of yet died in his sleep and woken up sizzling in the flames of hell. Of course, he didn't sleep much at all after watching Ringu. *Call him a sissy, but that movie scared the poop out of him. Stephen can be contacted at: stephen@sunstonemagazine.com.*

my morality up by its roots, showing me in the turn of a beautifully constructed climax that the world is bigger than I had thought it was.

Why did it take me so long to see how much my soul needed these stories? I think it is partially because I believed that when a scene came that had material my church didn't condone, the movie had challenged me, saying, "If you let this go by, you tacitly accept the morality I have just presented. You agree to let it become a part of you, and when it becomes a part of you, you will start to see the world under my influence." In other words, I saw a movie's audience as a crowd of gaping mouths that would indiscriminately consume anything that flitted across the screen. The only way to stop our mouths from sucking in everything the movie threw at us was to turn the movie off or leave the room.

But now I'm developing a new theory. Movies are storytellers, not hypnotists. They present their vision of the world, but I get to decide what I, the viewer, think of it. Movies are metaphors about life; through them I can see the world from a different perspective, and I can approach any idea or image the movie presents from many different directions. But at no time can the story make a claim upon me unless I allow it to. In other words, I eat only what I want.

I had some help developing this skill. Eugene England was the first person I heard who questioned the poison metaphor, and a few of my more liberal Mormon friends pointed me toward movies they admired. But from official Church channels, I got only worried glances at my temple recommend.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT many Mormon teenagers find themselves in the same difficulty I did when I began my excursion into R-rated movies. They have been thrust into a "dark" place: a budding awareness of sexual desires. It isn't something they choose, but they're forced to deal with it. Right now, as far as I have been able to see, official Church channels classify anything related to sex and teenagers as sinful. If sex is discussed with the youth, it is discussed only in negatively charged terms. I certainly understand that engaging in sexual relations is a complex endeavor and often accompanied by more consequences than the uninitiated might expect. So I can see why we'd hesitate to let young people loose in such a charged area.

For myself, the fear of hell (plus an unfortunate skin condition) kept me from having sex before I was married. Even though I'm glad I waited, I realize now that I was ruled by fear. To me, sex was a mythical state inhabited by goddesses; it was a heaven on earth, a fruit desirable above all other things. But it was ensconced within the darkest of places. If I went anywhere near it, my Church leaders taught, I would be committing a sin second only to murder. Can you believe it? I was attracted to the second worst sin in the universe! I fantasized about it. I wanted it more than anything. Only my ugliness and fear of damnation kept me from partaking of the fires of the flesh.

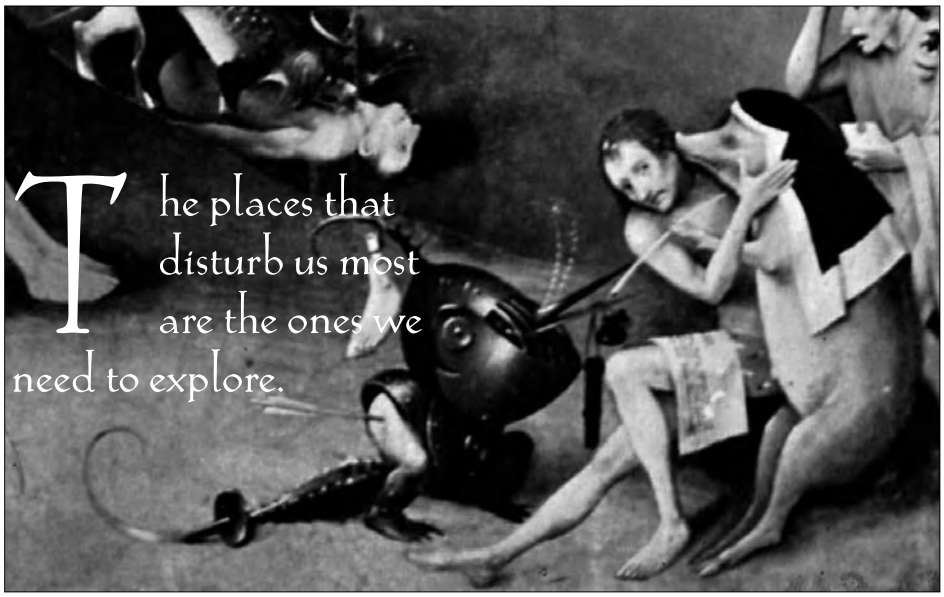
But the fear worked. I didn't have sex till I was married. Is there something to be said for that? There probably is. But I have another story. It's about my brother. He has a child out of wedlock, a bitter divorce, and a heart of gold.

He told me about it one night many years afterwards, undeniable wisdom in his voice. He told me about a rave he attended and a line of tequilas he downed, not understanding their potency. He woke up the next morning in bed with a girl he didn't remember even meeting. That's how it all started: my brother thrusting himself into a dark place, a place defined by his church culture only as sinful. The Church and his parents, feeling their responsibility to raise him well, warned him about those places and kept him as far away from them as possible. So he had only one context from which to approach that dark place. The context of sin. And a bit of exploratory sin was sounding good to him at the time. He was trying to forge his own identity, separate from his parents. And the rave was one place free from their influence.

> I was a teenager all over again, aboil with hormones and unable to sleep, afraid that I would die during the night and wake up in flames.

"THE SIMONIAC POPE" BY WILLIAM BLAKE

But he didn't know how to navigate skillfully through that context. "I wish I had known how hard tequilas kick," he said. "I didn't want to get *that* drunk." My brother was not seeking debauchery; he was merely hungry. I know what that hunger feels like. On its basic level, it's a hunger for sex and highs. But perhaps these hungers, though potent in themselves, are metaphors, just as the movies I saw were metaphors for something larger. I wonder if they don't represent a hunger for meaning beyond the banalities of life, for entry into mythic states, into heaven? But how can we understand the meanings of the metaphors if we never go near them?



"THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS" BY HIERONYMUS BOSCH

Dante got to heaven only through hell. But my brother had no Virgil to guide him.

MY SONS ARE ten and eight years old. I love them. I want them to be happy and make constructive decisions. They aren't teenagers yet, but judging by how quickly they have grown so far, they will be soon. Their hunger will stir, and the great myths of body and spirit will approach them veiled, offering to show them unexplored lands. I want to know how to guide my boys.

My bishop saw Satan lurking around his beloved children. He saw them as if standing at the edge of the clearing around the tree of life, the mists of darkness crawling toward them. Easy prey for the devil.

What's in the darkness?

In the movie *Sixth Sense*, written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan, a young boy named Cole is visited by spirits in various states of dismemberment or disgorgement. Understandably, he's disturbed. No one wants to get up at night to find a woman with the back of her head blasted off raiding the refrigerator. He's similarly distressed by the hanging corpses he has to make his way past at school. But his mentor, Dr. Malcolm Crowe, starts to wonder if these dark spirits aren't trying to tell Cole something. He encourages Cole to stand his ground, despite his perfectly sensible fears, and listen to the spirits. As it turns out, they do have something to communicate.

Ringu, a Japanese horror film recently remade in America as *The Ring*, has a similar theme. In it, a reporter investigating a series of mysterious deaths realizes that each victim had watched a particular videotape one week before his or her death. The reporter herself watches the tape, as does her son. Afterwards they are both visited by a dark spirit, informing them of their upcoming demise.

By the end of the movie, the reporter finds out that the only way to remove the curse of the haunted videotape is to make a copy of it and pass it on to someone else, who is in turn infected by the curse and must make a copy of the tape for another person. Though the film doesn't explain how the original tape was made (it couldn't have added to the suspense to show a ghost working long hours at the video editing machine), we learn that the ghost of a murdered girl wants her story told. She wants people to remember her and know how she died. Though she isn't very forgiving of people who don't understand her obscure request, we should certainly be able understand her impulse.

In these stories, the way you rid yourself of the curse and make peace with the threatening spirits is not to cast them out through the priesthood—or to repent and turn to a higher power. It is to turn to the source of the curse—to acknowledge the dark spirits and come into communication with them. Their stories aren't always pleasant, but they're often necessary.

A mentor once told me, "The places that disturb most are the ones we need to explore."

I KNOW WHAT it's like to grow up inhabited by a dark, unspoken hunger. It terrified me. It probably scared my parents and my church leaders as well. This hunger remained dark, it remained in the context of sin, and consequently, I was certain of my damnation. I've had only the beginnings of an autodidactic education on how to explore dark places skillfully. But the darkness of dealing with sexual desire before marriage is a place I never learned to navigate.

All I have to go on is my own experience. And experience tells me that I don't want my children to grow up afraid of the dark. I don't mean to turn them into bats or owls or another creature of the night. But perhaps we can learn a part of the language together so we can converse with the darkness and become acquainted with the night.

Because it will come.

NOTE

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the 'Youth of the Noble Birthright,'" *Ensign*, May 1986.

Seeing sexuality as a gift . . .

IT'S MORE THAN SEX

By Anne Arnold

My thoughts for this presentation arise from my experience of being a woman raised in the LDS Church, which, of course, includes sitting through many Standards Nights, both as a teenager and as a parent.

Enormous messages are conveyed on those nights. The speakers talk of the joy you experience if you are chaste and virtuous, thus becoming worthy to be married in the temple. They also talk about the terrible despair and darkness that comes if you lose your sexual purity. Negotiating those messages as a young person can be quite a daunting task.

I know for myself, the messages in and of themselves made sense, but in application, I found myself confused and full of questions. Part of that questioning occurred because those Standards Nights just did not always make me feel good. The other part was that I am a daughter of a gay father. So to make sense of my love for the gospel, which my father had taught me, and also my love for him, I started asking hard questions about sexuality and relationships at a very young age.

I am also the mother of three sons, who are twenty, twenty-four, and twenty-seven. While they were teenagers, I was raising them as a sole parent, so I was the one they talked with while making sense of their own Standards Nights, not to mention their bishop's interviews (where they were often asked quite personal questions about their sexual thoughts and behaviors). And, like me, they were also making sense of their great love and devotion for their grandfather, who after spending twenty-five years in a marriage to my mother spent another forty years in a very devoted, committed relationship with his partner.

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HOW SHOULD WE be teaching our teenagers about sexuality? Too often, we use fear. In fact, fear is probably the most used tool we have for controlling and eliciting appropriate behavior. I think we rely on fear because we're frightened that we don't have answers to our children's questions of, "But why? What do I do with these feelings? Why do I have to do things your way?" We use fear because we lack words and we lack knowledge.

The easiest thing parents can tell their children is to wait before becoming sexually active. Now, putting off sexual activity is a great idea based on wonderful truths that the Church teaches. But what else are we conveying when counsel our children this way? What do they think they're waiting for?

Unfortunately, I've seen that males often believe that the reward for waiting is that when they get married, they get to *have* sex, and that they can take as much as they want without any regard to what a relationship is. On the women's end, I think they are taught to wait so that they can freely *give* whenever sex is asked or demanded. So, for both genders, understanding how their bodies can be a vehicle for the expressions of meaning and relationship can become lost.

So, yes, our children may wait. That's the good news. But they may not understand the relational aspect of sexuality. This disconnect is what keeps therapists employed. People come to us because they are unable to connect with others. They don't know how to reach out. They don't know how to make sense of their lives even though they love a partner.

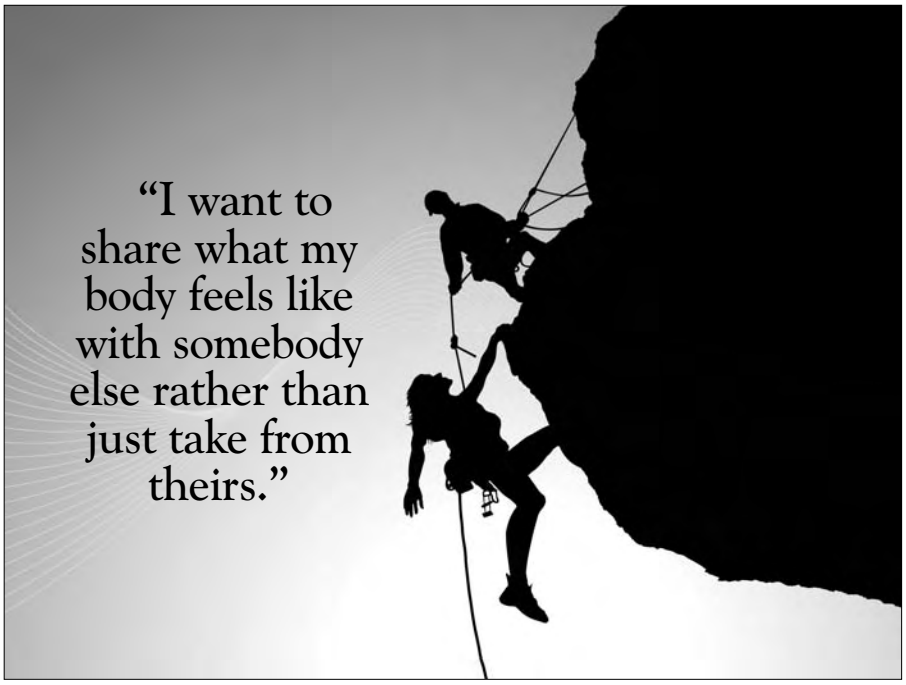
Therefore, in addition to teaching our children to put off sexual activity until maturity, do we teach them about bonding? Do we teach them about devotion? Do we teach them that coming into sexuality too soon could cause them to lose the freedom to learn about the deeper expressions that can emerge from sexuality?

But at the same time, should we steer our children away from knowing passion? Not at all. Rather, do we teach them that there should be passion in all things? Do we teach them that while they are teenagers they should not act on their passion sexually but that they should most definitely embrace their feelings, their emotions, and their desires? That there are other expressions for these passions?

We give our children a gift when we as parents explain our own lives to them. Are we able to be transparent with our own

children about what sexuality means to us? Do we talk about sexual intimacy in a way that encourages the sacred, the joy, the wonder, and the power? Do we talk about it as Elder Holland did in one of his first conference address as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve: that sexual intimacy is a sacrament[1]. Do we use that language?

I DON'T THINK I would have come to these kinds of conversations with my boys if I hadn't had to. I was forced into it by the age we live in. If we don't share with our children, the Internet will, their friends will, movies will. In many ways, I've also been very grateful that because of my father, my children and I had to have conversations about heterosexuality, about homosexuality, about expressions of meaning, about emotional meaning. We had to make sense of the fact that though the gospel teaches wonderful truths, there's still so much that is not yet known.



D. J. GUNNER

In preparing to share some of my own experience on this topic, I called my sons to find out how they view sexuality. I called because I want to be respectful. I don't want to talk about them unless they've told me how I can talk about them.

One son reported, "When I wanted to act out sexually before I was married, I didn't stop out of fear. It wasn't out of, 'Oh, I'm going to end up with the worst sins and be cast out into outer darkness.'" Rather, he said, "I knew that sex was something you taught me was valuable. But though I'd still be able to have it in my life even if I didn't wait, I trusted your words that if I acted on it too soon, I would somehow change its meaning."

My second son attended BYU and served a mission before declaring that part of his identity included homosexuality. He lives in London. When I called and asked him my questions, he said to me, "I don't know what the big deal is." I was kind of surprised by this opening. But he continued: "For me, being gay is just a trait. It's like having hazel eyes; it's like having blond hair; it's like being tall. I still have to choose how I will express meaning in my life, whether it's through my music, my art, the five languages I speak, or through who I'm going to choose to have as a partner in my life. Those choices are mine, and I have to make them regardless of whether I'm gay or straight."

Of course my next question to him was, "You're just turning twenty-four? How is it you're not fifty-four?" I have found from my experiences with those I consult with that my son's kind of mature thinking can often take decades to form. I'm grateful that through his life experiences, he learned to think about sexuality as being a gift rather than as a sin that would lead him to outer darkness.

My youngest son is a little bit different. At the time of my call, he had just entered the MTC, so it was a different experience to be asking him about all this. He said, "Well, at least I know I'm straight, but that's about as far as I can go." He's very thoughtful and has written a great deal about how he expresses his passions in his life. He is a rock climber, and he often writes about how his body feels when his muscles really stretch, or when he truly challenges himself. He said, "I think because of this, I will be better equipped to enter into an intimate relationship because I will want to share what my body feels like with somebody else rather than just to take from theirs."

These insightful comments didn't come about because I have been a great parent. And it's not because my children haven't had plenty of trials, struggles, and dilemmas trying to make sense of pop culture, Church teachings, and Internet access. Rather, I think it's because, as I pointed out earlier, we were forced to examine sexuality outside of dominant Mormon culture. For that I'm grateful to my father.

I LOVE THE gospel. And I love the experience I had of teaching my children the complexity and multiplicity of sexuality.

About the question posed in Stephen Carter's essay, "Do we need to be afraid of the dark?" I think we need to be more afraid that we're leading our youth and ourselves into the dark. We should instead focus on journeying into the light with great respect for what that light can be. We need to not be afraid of teaching, sharing, and expressing new ideas about sexuality. And that will require enormous stretching from all of us.

NOTE

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Personal Purity," *Ensign*, November 1998, 75–77.

Tracing the roots of sexual morality . . .

SEX ED.

A CURRICULUM FOR TODAY

By H. Wayne Schow

I appreciate Stephen Carter's personal description of confronting as a youth and young adult the enticing, dangerous, dark realm of sexuality. And I think he has framed very nicely the problematic nature of this matter, not only as it concerns the sexual education of LDS youth but also as it affects the sexual lives of LDS adults. Regardless of how we develop into adulthood, those conceptions and attitudes toward sex that we are indoctrinated with as youth tend to influence us still.

I like Stephen's illustration—through his experiences with R-rated movies—of how sin and fear were the principal lenses through which he viewed and evaluated sexuality while growing up (which is probably typical of most young Latter-day Saints). I agree with his implication that, if eventually he came to a more judicious, life-affirming view of this challenging, appealing, and rich element of our humanity, he did so not so much because of but in spite of Church influence. I admit, as a considerably older fellow, that my own progress through this territory was very similar.

"Not so much because of, but in spite of, Church influence." That is a sad assessment to make. It shouldn't be that way. On the contrary, Church teaching ought to be preeminently helpful in the development of healthy sexual attitudes.

In this reflection on the sexual preparation of our youth, I've chosen to focus not only on what individual parents and teachers might consider doing to create a healthier, well-rounded understanding of sexuality, but also on what the Church itself promotes—its dogmas and teaching practices—for that's where much of the problem lies—the origins of the guilt, the fear, the shame, the embarrassment, and the dammed up, repressed sexual lives of many adult Latter-day Saints.

I believe we need to rid sexuality of its trappings of disrespectability, sinfulness, and irrational fear. For that to happen, I suggest the following:

• FIRST, we should frankly acknowledge that we are sexual beings, the inheritors of God's gift of sexuality, and we should be proud of that and grateful. The fact is, for most of us, sex is one of the most mysterious and intriguing aspects of life. Like the Grand Canyon, it is awesome, dazzlingly beautiful, and very challenging to negotiate. On some primordial level, we know that sexuality is a divine energy that underlies and drives creation. We should stop trying to pretend it isn't so.

But our sexuality is more than this. In the fully realized personality, it is complexly present. It is central to the Dionysian life force in us, a means of surrendering ourselves to a power larger than ourselves, of being swept up in an all-encompassing union that temporarily obliterates our individuality. At the same time, paradoxically, our sexuality is self-expressive, a dynamic assertion of personal identity; it is a "fingerprint" of personal force. Further yet, it is a means by which we can overcome our isolation, a means by which we can focus our desire to be fully present to and with another person. As the primary ritual of interpersonal intimacy, sexual connection has the potential to integrate the mysterious, soulful facets of human life. More than simply gratifying our physical senses, sexual union can unify body, mind, and spirit. To ignore this is to give up a rich and integrative dimension of personal wholeness. A life without sexual realization is not a complete life, however good it otherwise may be. Our youth should hear us say these things.

• SECOND, we should abandon the old Pauline/Augustinian/Book of Mormon dualism that sees the body as the enemy of spirit and the avenue through which Satan has access to our immortal souls. The body is not merely a poor, disreputable servant of the spiritual self; King Benjamin's warning about the natural man is not about sexuality; sexuality itself does not de-

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file our bodies, God's temples. Teaching otherwise, explicitly and implicitly, is at the root of much misunderstanding, inner conflict, and repression. It stands in the way of psychic wholeness, of full self-realization, and it undermines healthy sexual fulfillment.

• THIRD, we need to understand more rationally the real basis for sexual morality. Many Christians—and many Latter-day Saints—assume that sexual prohibitions (and moral tenets in general) originate at some universal level of abstraction. In other words, that they were decreed in the beginning by God, more or less arbitrarily, as a test of obedience—"thou shalt not." Or they believe that sex is somehow inherently evil or that God thinks asceticism is good for us and doesn't want us to have too much pleasure. Granting that God does care how his children mature sexually and can communicate his wisdom to us, we must also remember that history teaches that moral codes have evolved as a response to cultural conditions and collective social experience.

Social groups have long understood that in order to promote stability, peace, safety, and justice, certain natural impulses need to he restrained. These include the inherently disruptive potential of sex. Absent the responsibility that needs to accompany sexual behavior, society is left to deal with the fallout. Therefore, sexual prohibitions arise out of practical social concerns. For example, adultery is forbidden in order to secure fidelity and stability in marriages, reducing the disruptive effects of sexual competition, sexual promiscuity, and sexually transmitted disease, thereby creating conditions conducive to rearing children. Fornication is forbidden to discourage relationships wherein the participants are not prepared to assume responsibility for the complex outcomes of sexual intimacy.

CHUWY—ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

We should frankly acknowledge that we are sexual beings, the inheritors of God's gift of sexuality, and we should be proud of that and grateful.

In short, sexual moral codes arise from the practical relationship between acts and outcomes. That is what justifies them. This is precisely what we need to emphasize in our sexual/moral education of youth and adults, not some vague, guilt-engendering notion of sexuality as inherently sinful.

WHILE I CONSIDER sexual self-realization to be highly desirable, by no means do I advocate sexual license. A great force uncontrolled has as much potential for damage as for benefit. As the gospel teaches, appropriate boundaries should be laid down, and this is indeed challenging. But in our zeal to control, we ought not draw the rules so rigidly as to stifle the very benefits we would protect. We don't need to say "no" just for the sake of saying "no." The trick is to grant as much leeway for sexual realization, with as much acceptance of individual human differences, as is consistent with positive outcomes.

If two people join to give each other sexual pleasure, is there anything inherently wrong with that? On the physical side alone, probably not, no more than there is wrong in dancing with someone or in enjoying a fine dinner with a companion. No, the problem is not necessarily the legitimacy of sharing pleasurable bodily sensations per se (which can be seen as generous), it lies rather in the complications of the larger contexts—psychological and social—that surround sex. And that is where morality must focus. If two people engage in a sexual act with a damaging psychological cost to one or both, or to others to whom they are committed, or with a social cost which they may not justifiably ask society to pay, then there is a moral complication that cannot responsibly be ignored. So, in educating our youth about sex, we should stress its power, its beauty, its rewards, but at the same time its inherent complications and responsibilities.

But that is a challenge, for potential complications exist most of the time, and they can be very subtle and hard to evaluate responsibly, particularly in the heat of passion. If there really were a strict duality of body and spirit/mind, casual or unfaithful physical sex could occur with fewer negative consequences—as with brute animals. But we humans are

more complexly constituted: our bodies, with their acts and sensations, are inseparable from our psyches. Our sense of self derives from all we are and do and from how we are situated in the world; our sexual feelings and interactions—powerful as they are—ultimately influence and are influenced by that larger, holistic context. Accordingly, sexual intimacy with another is inevitably more than simple physical gratification: it makes the participants vulnerable in a potentially very far-reaching way. That is at once its beauty, its wonder—and its danger.

CHUWY—ISTOCKPHOTO.COM. ALSO FOR TREE IMAGE ON FACING PAGE

RELIGIONS have long been the principal policers of sexual morality, in part because from early times they have been the conservative guardians of social stability. In addition to whatever spiritual wisdom they have access to, some influential leaders and theologians emphasize firm restrictions and even ascetic renunciation, using the formidable resources of theological authority and language in an effort to control the effects of sexual behaviors.

As I was growing up, my Church leaders apparently believed that the "sin next to murder" (Alma 39:5) meant fornication because they used it again and again to put the fear of damnation into us horny teenagers. I'll forego a detailed analysis of how this scripture is taken out of context,[1] or, even if Alma were referring specifically to sexual sin, how such a label begs for qualification: Are not some crimes of deception, violence, betrayal, or desertion much more hurtful overall than simple fornication?

I would discuss sexual morality not in terms of sin, guilt, shame, and repression but as a challenging stewardship.

I appreciate the restraining role that religions assume for governing sexuality. We certainly see in society today some of the considerable problems that come from irresponsibly permissive attitudes toward sexual indulgence. But I regret religious indoctrination that, whatever its good intentions, oversimplifies or ignores individual contexts. And I regret religious indoctrination that, whatever its good intentions, paints sexuality heavy-handedly in ugly, disgusting colors, making individuals ashamed of their sexual feelings, inhibited, and shut down.

AS a grandfather, I have thought about what kind of sexual/moral training I want my grandchildren to have. Based on prudence and long conditioning, I favor strategies that promise safety in the present permissive cultural climate. But at the same time, I want my grandchildren to acquire the qualities of mind and character that will enable them to look over the edge of the Grand Canyon of sexuality and, when they can do so responsibly, go into that thrilling place with zest and confidence to discover its inner grandeur. I hope their religious upbringing, with its potential for guilt and fear, will not have compromised their ability to do that.

I believe it possible to teach sexual discipline and responsibility without some of the adverse outcomes of negative suppression. What should we as Latter-day Saints do differently?

- Avoid educational strategies that awaken shame about the body and its natural responses.
- Abandon the teaching of a body/spirit dualism that implies the body is suspect, the avenue of temptation, the enemy of spirit.
- Take a modified approach to Standards Night programs: jettison metaphors of shared chewing gum, nails pulled from boards that leave holes behind, and roses blighted by handling—all of which encourage shame, guilt, and a negative view of sexuality.
- Throttle way back on the futile crusade by overzealous bishops and stake presidents to stamp out masturbation by young people. In moderation, masturbation is a mostly harmless and natural means of self-discovery, as well as a safety valve. I am persuaded that the psychic damage caused by guilt and self-

loathing (which are often the results of worthiness interviews on this subject) far outweighs any negative effects of the act itself.

• Encourage young people to be completely honest in acknowledging the orientation of their sexual desire. Allow those who are attracted to their own gender to acknowledge that desire without shame or guilt, without its being regarded as a moral failure or character flaw. But expect them to meet the same moral tests required of all of us: that their acts and feelings produce good fruit.

• Discourage the kind of distortion that results in seeing sexual virtue in oversimplified terms of black/white, either/or—the kind of distortion evident in an oft-cited quotation from a Church leader some years ago who said he would rather see one of his children in the grave and "virtuous" than alive and stained with the sin of fornication.

Instead, I would emphasize the positive aspects of our sexuality. I would encourage the young to see themselves holistically, and not least to feel pride in the body, its beauty and its power. I would discuss sexual morality not in terms of sin, guilt, shame, and repression but as a challenging stewardship over a pearl of great price. I would attempt to prepare them not through fear, not by diminishing sex, but by helping them understand the opportunity, the complexity, and the accompanying responsibility of this divine gift. The stress would be laid on self-mastery and on the wisdom of patient deferral of gratification. As Hamlet said to Horatio in another context, "The readiness is all."

I would help them understand the practical and emotional costs of carelessness and impulsiveness. Such a positive emphasis seems greatly preferable to sullying their perception of the impressive sexual power that is theirs. And if a youth acts unwisely and goes into the canyon prematurely, I would try very hard not to compound the practical price by heaping on him or her a lifetime of guilt.

PERHAPS I AM unrealistic in thinking that we could, in these respects, have it both ways. Such an approach would unquestionably set the bar higher—not only for the youth but for their teachers as well. To present sex as potentially positive, desirable, beautiful, as an aspect of our fully realized humanity, and yet to bring its expression under reasonable control would require greater openness and a willingness to consider moral issues painstakingly in holistic contexts. A great many adults among us, raised with negativity and repression, conditioned to feel that in a religious context they cannot openly acknowledge their own sexuality, may find this very hard to do.

But after all, isn't such an approach more in keeping with principles that lie at the heart of LDS theology: a bedrock belief in the importance of experience, belief in the necessity of freedom to choose, but with acceptance of the risk and responsibility that these entail?

NOTE

1. A good discussion of this scriptural passage that takes it out of the sexual arena is Michael R. Ash, "The Sin 'Next to Murder': An Alternative Interpretation." SUNSTONE, November 2006, 34–43.

OBSCURE OBJECTS OF DESIRE

By Paul Swenson

Our bodies are our own
misshapen artifacts of lust.
In otherworldly orbits,
they wobble on a tether
we cannot control. The weather
of our brains' electric selectivity
interprets what we think
we see and feel out there,
in alternating flashes
of delight/despair.

While they are remote
from us, partially concealed
from view, we own our bodies.
They are our own,
yet are not subject to us.
Obscure objects of desire,
they pull us
through the void
to other bodies
and someone else's storm.

Mormon nudist. An oxymoron?

HOW I BECAME A MORMON NUDIST

By D. Michael Martindale

As everyone knows, nudity is bad. It's simple. Nudity equals sex. Which is why my jaw dropped when eight years ago, I learned about a website called LDS Skinny-Dipper Connection[1]. To me, this name was an oxymoron on the level of "military intelligence." I *had* to check it out.

According to the site, its constituency is "Faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." "Families forever, naked and not ashamed," it said. "Wholesome interest in social nudity under appropriate circumstances," it said.

I smirked. This was going to be entertaining, reading the rationalizations of these people trying to justify this kind of thing!

I read through the website. I read every word—and there were a lot of words! They claimed that nonsexual social nudity is a positive, beneficial thing. It's educational because it allows everyone to see what human bodies *really* look like—rather than consuming the glorified, air-brushed images we see in the media every day. It strips away the mystery of the human body—especially those parts we keep hidden from each other—and decreases lust because people become comfortable and familiar with all the body parts. It combats body shame and negative self-image. It fosters openness and trust because it allows you to be *completely* who you are and still be accepted by others.

When I finished, to my shock and amazement, I exclaimed, "They're right! There is no doctrinal objection to *wholesome, nonsexual* social nudity!"

Oh, there were all sorts of LDS cultural objections, all sorts of "folk doctrines" against it, lots of objections to sexualized nudity. But no bona-fide official doctrine against nonsexual nudity.

It's just that most people don't know there is such a thing as nonsexual nudity. Remember the equation, "nudity equals sex."

THAT WAS ALL I needed: permission from people who understood my LDS hang-ups. I printed out the entire LDS Skinny-Dipper Connection website and presented the thick sheaf of paper to my wife. "Read this, and tell me what you think," I said to her.

She didn't read all of it (there were a lot of words!), but she read a large portion of it, handed the papers back to me and said, "Well, I think it's rationalization, but if you want to do it, go ahead." (Bless her heart.)

I did. I became a full-fledged, practicing Mormon naturist. From other naturist hikers, I learned how to hike nude safely. I visited places such as Diamond Fork hot springs in Spanish Fork Canyon where a tradition of nude soaking has existed for decades, and eventually I visited a few naturist resorts and nude beaches.

The first time I attended the temple after I started practicing naturism, I was apprehensive. Walking into that environment, I didn't know how I'd feel, knowing all the things I had done naked. Because, really, all I had was an "intellectual testimony" of naturism Rationally, I was convinced. But being born and raised in America and within the LDS Church, I had a lot of emotional conditioning that wasn't so easily overcome. Would I feel guilty? Would an evil spirit follow me inside, alerting a discerning temple president to my unworthiness? Would God strike me down? These were the agitated thoughts that churned in my mind as I entered.

But as I walked from the front desk where I showed my recommend to the changing room, a feeling of peace came over me. It seemed to say, "Don't worry about it. Everything is okay."

For three years, that was the only spiritual manifestation I had that my choice to embrace naturism was acceptable to God. But from time to time, it would hit me how out of step my naturism was with traditional Mormonism, and doubts would arise—am I really deceived like most Mormons would consider me? I remember one time in particular when my wife

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and I were invited to a hot tub party with a clothing-optional dress code. She brought her swimsuit; I didn't.

Before the party, we attended the wedding reception of a family in the ward. We sat and ate mints and nuts and white cake with another couple in the ward. The whole time, I kept wondering what this couple would think of me if they knew what I'd be off doing right after the reception. After all, it was not so long ago that I was laughing at the thought of a Mormon nudist.

WHILE MANAGING NORMAL day-to-day living, I struggled and studied and meditated and prayed over the doubts engendered by both halves of my life. But the doubts always vanished when I hiked. To commune with nature in my natural state was such a transcendent experience that doubt just melted away.

I discovered how "blind" I had been before, smothering almost my entire organ of touch with clothing. Hiking clothed was like hiking with my hands over my eyes and peeking through little slits between my fingers.

Feeling nature on every square inch of my body was exquisite. I craved the touch of the wind where it had never touched me before. I could sense the slightest changes in temperature. The connection I felt with nature was palpable.

One summer I took a trip to Moab, Utah. I'd learned about a trail called Negro Bill Canyon that had a tradition of nude hiking, and I wanted to check it out. The first half of the trail extended through a tall slot canyon with a perennial stream running through it. Trees and vegetation filled the base, and Moab's characteristic red rock towered above.

After the halfway point, the trail rose above the vegetation and plunged into a side canyon. Austere beauty surrounded me—cliffs and rock formations here, a partially formed arch there, all blazing with color.

The sun beat down on me, but at the end of the trail I found a small shaded cove beneath a large arch. Water trickled down a slit in the wall, and I knew that trickle would become a waterfall during a rainstorm. The water formed a small pool in the middle of the cove. The shade and moisture cooled and refreshed me.

On my way back, a storm swept in. The sky crackled with thunder and lightning, and the wind funneled through the canyon. I walked through a narrow corridor with willow-like trees thrashing on either side of me. At the trailhead, I lay with my naked back against a flat, sun-heated boulder and let the wind and raindrops pelt and chill the top of me. The sensation was indescribable!

When the wind starting pelting me with sand, I ran for my vehicle. It was lunchtime by then, and I was starving. But there was one more trail I wanted to explore that was further up the highway from Negro Bill Canyon. I decided to take a quick peek at that trail before driving into town for lunch.

The trail is called Fisher Towers. I'd learned about it in a book on hiking trails in Utah. It was supposed to be a gold mine of astounding rock formations etched by the wind over eons. The storm had subsided, but it had done its job and cleared any other hikers out. Nude, I stepped out of my vehicle and examined the area. Even at first glance I could tell this would be an incredible hike.

I decided to walk up the trail—just a little to check it out—even though I was starving and had left my water bottle in the car. But as I walked, more and more fascinating shapes came into view, enticing me to walk a little farther, and a little farther, and a little farther. . . .

The main formations came into view, and they were breathtaking. Tall towers that looked like cathedrals and monstrous statues straight out of *Lord of the Rings* loomed above me. There was an eagle head, a gargoyle, titanic sundials. One formation looked for all the world like a *Planet of the Apes* version of Mt. Rushmore.

Awe is the only word I can use to describe my feelings. I had never seen anything like it. As I hiked and admired the view, I meditated on the exquisite beauty of nature, on the deep connectedness I felt to God's creations enhanced by my embracing of naturism. I was also thinking about sharing the principles of naturism with others.

At one point, I became so overwhelmed with the panorama before me that I cried out, "I am seeing the hand of God!"

Immediately I was blasted with an indescribable power that washed through my entire body. The burning drove me to my knees and caused me to pray. I had felt the Spirit of the Lord

CALVIN GRONDAHL, *SUNDAY'S FOYER*

before, but this was more intense than anything I'd experienced in my life.

And it went on. The burning engulfed me as I hiked on, step after step, minute after minute. It wouldn't let up. Five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, thirty. The trail brought me higher above the Colorado River valley, and the view from up there was astounding. Before me stretched endless miles of red desert and exotic formations, and through it cut a path of green on either side of the river's blue ribbon. The river stretched across my view laterally, and then plunged away into more of the wide canyons that follow the Colorado River wherever it goes.

For an hour, the burning continued, never relenting. I felt like an integral, intimate part of nature. I felt so right being there without the artificial covering of clothes separating me from God's creations. If someone had come along clothed, I would have felt they were violating this sacred place.

If someone had come along clothed, I would have felt they were violating this sacred place.

I ended up hiking about two miles before turning back. The powerful burning finally subsided, giving hunger and thirst a chance to kick in. I struggled to get back. My legs became wobbly as I suffered from dehydration, and it took all my energy to return safely to my vehicle. As I walked, I realized that—albeit unintentionally—I'd been fasting from food and drink when that experience had hit me.

I'd planned on staying another day or two in Moab, but anything after that experience would have been anticlimactic. I returned home at once, eager to share my experience with my family and naturist friends.

There was no doubt in my mind I'd had a spiritual experience that testified of the existence of God. But I also felt it was a divine affirmation of my acceptance of naturism, and a calling of sorts to share my beliefs with others—to go ahead with the plans I'd been contemplating.

AND NONE TOO soon! Just a few weeks later, my bishop called me in to his office. He'd found out I did things naked.

I knew he wouldn't understand any more than I understood before I learned about naturism, but I also knew that, because it was so clear and obvious to me, I could explain it.

It didn't work. To him, I was indulging in perverted things, and I needed fixing.

First he played the modesty card—the one that underlies every Young Women's lesson and permeates the BYU honor code. I explained my view that modesty is a relative thing changing from circumstance to circumstance, from culture to culture, from time to time. I explained that modesty is in the heart and in the mind, not in the amount of fabric we drape over our bodies. I explained to him how naturism had helped diffuse the intense lust I could feel at the sight of an attractive female because the body had been divested of its mystery and titillation.

Possibly feeling that he was losing ground in the discussion, the bishop switched to the policy on wearing garments. He pulled out the statement the First Presidency had sent to local leaders about wearing garments night and day and read it to me. I pointed out the sentence in that statement that says that how one wears the garment is a decision between the individual and the Lord. I told him that I did wear my garments day and night, and intended to for the rest of my life, but that I believed naturist experiences were one of those times when the wearing of garments was impractical, since it's impossible to wear garments when you're trying to be naked. I told him I believed naturism was a wonderful, positive thing well worth removing garments for—certainly more beneficial than the mere recreational pastime of swimming, which is considered a perfectly fine time to remove garments.

Finally, he pulled out the big guns. He asked me if I could imagine President Gordon B. Hinckley doing things naked. (I couldn't, but there were many other things I couldn't imagine him doing, either.) He asked what I thought the prophet would say if I asked him about naturism.

I have no idea what he'd say, but I'm not sure he'd condemn it. And I told my bishop as much.

I finally decided to play my trump card. I bore my testimony of the experience I had in Moab—how the Spirit of the Lord had witnessed to me that naturism is a positive thing. I knew he couldn't resist my powerful statement of testimony.

He could resist it. He told me my spiritual experience was deception from Satan and dismissed it.

My bishop decided he needed to escalate the issue to the stake president. I met with the president and my bishop together, but I said as little as possible. I knew it would be a waste of time. The stake president explained that if my inspiration was in contradiction to his inspiration and that of my bishop, I should consider myself on shaky ground.

By that point, I had studied, meditated, observed, experienced, and prayed for three years about naturism. They had spent, at most, an hour or two, praying—just praying—making no attempt to study or understand naturism. I couldn't understand how that put me on shaky ground.

I guess that was the day I learned that living the life of an LDS naturist requires living a double life. As a naturist, you reveal your beliefs on nudity to fellow Latter-day Saints at your own peril. It's one of those topics for which rational discussion seems impossible. The concept of naturism is so alien to the orthodox Mormon mindset that there is little common ground to build on.

I expected that disciplinary action would be brought against me, but nothing ever happened. I eventually moved away from that ward. My former bishop kindly made sure my next bishop knew I was a naturist, but I moved twice more and managed to escape my reputation.

Though I escaped, friends of mine in the LDS naturist community (yes, there *is* a community) have not always fared as

well. One friend stood before a stake-level disciplinary council and made a heroic effort to explain naturism. When he finished, they admitted they couldn't come up with a viable reason to condemn naturism, but they just didn't feel right about it, so they disfellowshipped him for "conduct unbecoming a member."

Another good friend of mine was excommunicated because the whole ward assumed things about him based on the fact that he enjoyed being innocently nude.

But not all reactions from Church leaders are negative. There is no way to predict how a local leader will react to the revelation that one of his members is a naturist. One engaged couple I know ran afoul of the BYU Honor Code because they had skinny-dipped together and were barred from the university. Their bishop asked them one question: "Was it sexual?" When their answer was no, he promptly interceded and got them readmitted.

Reactions of local leaders are unpredictable because there is no official Church stand on naturism. This is as it should be. Naturism is one of those issues where members should do their own study and prayer and seek their own answers from the Spirit. Indeed, if you talk with many Mormon naturists, you will find that they have received compelling spiritual witnesses about their practice.

THIS IS WHAT I have found from my past eight years of being a naturist: Naturism is modest in the right settings. It diffuses lust. It fosters trust and acceptance among people. It teaches a healthy attitude toward the human body and heals body shame. It educates children and helps them develop healthier attitudes in their relationships with the opposite sex. It even protects them from predators because they are more open about their bodies and are more prone to report suspicious behavior.

I have seen naturism help individuals heal from pornography addictions. Naturism provides positive, wholesome images of the human body. Naturist children have their curiosity about the human body satisfied in safe, controlled environments under adult supervision instead of sneaking peeks at pornography with their friends. Adults who finally experience the difference between pornographic images of the human body and innocent images available through naturism can see the ugliness in the pornographic image. It begins to lose its appeal.

These are the things I've learned in the eight years I've been a Mormon nudist. I'm as converted to these beliefs as any Mormon is to the teachings of Joseph Smith.

Yet I can't share these discoveries with my fellow Saints. As I've sat in endless lesson after lesson, sermon after sermon on the ills of pornography and watched the efforts of Church leaders to combat this problem largely fail, I anguish to know I have a simple solution that can help many people heal, but I have to keep it to myself.

NOTE

1. The URL for LDS Skinny-Dippers Connection is WWW.LDSSDC.INFO. Further information on naturism can be found at: www.naturistsociety.com/.

THE MODESTY BLOG

By Paul Swenson

Modesty's the hottest
topic in the Bloggernacle.
The body is a tabernacle
and must be covered
by a sack or tent,
in order to prevent
the baring of a shoulder,
or of skin above
an older woman's ankle.

If you are female,
what you're wearing
may be sin, if it inflames
the lust of Mormon males,
whose lonely struggle
with testosterone entails
that they avert their eyes,
or disguise awareness of
a woman's bust or thighs.

Not only men are penitent
about forbidden thoughts
that may arise from
tight, revealing clothing.
"Heterosexual Married
Woman" writes that she
is flustered by immodesty.
"Won't notice breasts of
women clad in modest tees,"
she says. "But please avoid
a clingy shift—especially
if it's cold. Catch my drift?"

Some bloggers hasten
to confess a secret
yearning for a sundress,
or self-consciously disclose
they burn to wear J. Crew,
as liberated women do.
A few still grieve they
bought the obligation
to venerate the sleeve
as sanctified, when they
put on the Mormon
vestments of a bride.

When slogging through
the product of male blogs,
observe a certain reticence
to gauge appropriateness
of manly dress—except
the rightness of white shirts
and ties. Which leaves guys
free to contemplate indecent
penchants of their mates.
Tim scathingly complains
he can't imagine why their
mothers can't refrain from
dressing little girls in two-
piece bathing suits. Another
dense galoot alludes to
a distressing prevalence
of "non—wife nudity."

Forgive my rudeness,
if I see beauty in the human
form—and do not look away.
Show me the marbled limbs
of lovers in Rodin's "The Kiss,"
and—pray—the-full-blown
masculinity of David
by Michelangelo. Artist
who sculpted us to model
God and Goddess may find
idolatrous and pat, fixation
on false modesty. Blog that.

2007 R. L. "Buzz" Capener Memorial Contest in Comparative Religious Studies First Place Winner

OF TIME AND ALL ETERNITY

GOD AND OTHERS IN MORMONISM AND HETERODOX CHRISTIANITY

By James McLachlan

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; . . . having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery . . . Wherefore . . . there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and . . . also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

—2 NEPHI 2:11–12

[With the Fall], the eternal free will has introduced itself into the darkness, pain, and source; and so also through the darkness into the fire and light, even into a kingdom of joy; in order that the Nothing might be known in the Something, and that it might have a sport with its contra-will, that the free will of the abyss might be manifest to itself in the byss [ground or foundation]*, for without evil and good there could not be any byss.*

—JACOB BOEHME,
Mystérium Magnum 26:37

UNLIKE THE MAINSTREAM CHRISTIAN VIEW THAT there is one Absolute God who by very definition enjoys the blissful perfection of ultimate Being, Mormonism teaches that there are two Ultimate Realities—one personal, and one impersonal—and that God's eternal perfection implies anything but pure, uneventful enjoyment. Entailed within the mainstream Christian premise is an understanding that the world and all that takes place in it lacks ultimate status, for whatever happens in this world ultimately does not affect God's enjoyment of perfection. God is without body, parts, or passions—the final quality meaning the ability to be truly affected by anything external to God's own self, including the righteousness, or lack thereof, of God-created beings.

Many ramifications of this view of God's self-sufficient perfection have troubled certain Christian theologians ever since this notion became firmly established in the creeds. Especially troubling is how this view implies that human evil and suffering are illusory, that they have no ultimate reality. Still, rejecting the premise of God as the single Ultimate Reality, so that one can view the world and all that goes on within it as also being ultimately real creates its own difficulties. For how can one speak of the ultimate reality of both God and the world—both unity and the individuality of separate actors—without creating a metaphysical dualism and all the problems that flow from dualism, including the conclusion that suffering and evil are ultimately eternal?

Though mainstream Christian thinkers have shied away from the effort, some heterodox Christians have attempted to affirm both God and the world as Ultimates—that both God and the world are ultimately real and that what happens in this life genuinely affects God and everything else in the universe.

Because of this shared view that there are two Ultimates, it is worthwhile for Latter-day Saints to look at these heterodox traditions in Christianity so we might discover resources for our own development and articulation of this difficult but enriching theological position. The particular heterodox tradition that interests me here is one that began with the seventeenth-century German shoemaker and mystic Jacob Boehme and

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was continued by F. W. J. Schelling and other German idealists, as well as by many romantic and personalist philosophers and theologians.[1]

JOSEPH SMITH AND JACOB BOEHME

TWO CAVEATS AND a brief framing to begin: First, I am not suggesting that there is any historical link between Jacob Boehme and Joseph Smith or early Mormonism, only that they have similar projects, governed by similar intuitions about the superiority of the relationality of time to the totality of eternity. We can also find similar sensibilities in certain Mahayana Buddhist thinkers and sects and in the Hindu philosopher Ramanuja and some of his followers. Yet no one would claim any historical connection between them and Joseph Smith, just as no one would claim that Joseph Smith influenced Russian philosophers Nicolai Feodorov and Vladimir Soloviev, who both claim that the primary human project is the resurrection of our dead ancestors and tying the generations together.[2]

What Smith, Boehme, and these other thinkers share is the common-sense notion that time is real—perhaps more real than eternity—and that love requires both a lover and a beloved. But because of the widespread appeal of the idea that reality is a single, perfect Oneness and not a community of beings, this sensibility has always been a minority and heterodox position in both Eastern and Western philosophy.

Second, when I speak of eternity in this article, I do not speak of what I take to be the usual Mormon understanding of eternity as everlasting time. Instead, I'm talking about a Platonic notion of eternity as totality, as fulfillment—what Jean-Paul Sartre called an "In-and-for-itself" totality. This notion of eternity implies that God is able to exist completely outside the picture of the world, that God is able to take such a long view so as to be removed from the direct struggle and yet at the same time be in communion with the world though completely unaffected, completely isolated and safe from its strivings. One of the longtime goals of philosophers both in the East and West has been to achieve this view from "no where" for themselves.

What makes this view of eternal perfection unsatisfying to Mormons and the heterodox Christian thinkers we're engaging here is how it necessarily trivializes the import of not only the everyday but even the most momentous struggles of this life. For the traditional view, what happens here has little import. The purpose of life is to escape the world. In the words of an old mountain hymn, "I am a pilgrim and a stranger traveling through this wearisome land; but I have a home in yonder city, good Lord, not made with hands" ("I Am a Pilgrim"). We are just passers-through in this world, and the sooner we are out of it, the better. Nothing here has eternal value. In John Bunyan's Christian classic *Pilgrim's Progress,* Pilgrim begins his journey by forsaking his family and running toward the eternal city.

> Then said the Evangelist, If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? He answered, because I know not whither to go. Then he gave him a Parchment Roll, and there was written within, Fly from the wrath to come.
>
> So I saw in my Dream, that the Man began to run; now he had not run far from his own door, but his Wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return: but the Man put his Fingers in his Ears, and ran on crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life: so he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the Plain.[3]

No earthly love can compare with the glories of the perfect heavenly realm. It is best to stop up your ears and run as fast as you can from such love toward the eternal beauty. In another classic, *The Divine Comedy,* Dante, at the end of his journey, arrives in paradise and is greeted by his earthly love Beatrice; but when he ascends to to the highest point in paradise, he turns from her as she turns from him and contemplates the perfect beauty of God. Dante, enraptured by the beatific vision proclaims: "O light eternal, who alone abidest in Thyself, alone knowest Thyself, and, known to Thyself and knowing, lovest and smilest on Thyself!"[4] God's eternal perfection is the only thing of ultimate worth. This otherwordliness spawns the atheist critique that we lose all hope of love and justice in this world. As Joe Hill says, the long-haired preachers who come out at night claim that if you "work and pray, live on hay, you'll get pie in the sky when you die."[5] A line to which Cisco Houston added in his version of the song, "but it's a lie."

To the contrary, Smith and Boehme maintained the world is *necessary* to God.[6] The world is the reflection of God and was made from God's own nature.[7] The world is created in a process much like that in which God is created, in a struggle with chaos.[8] Both Smith and Boehme suggest that the world was spiritually created in the mind of God before it received its physical creation, but both see this spiritual creation as insufficient because it is only imagined and not truly realized. An actual existent is superior to an ideal. The "Divine idea" is less rich than reality; the world is richer *after* its history than at the beginning.[9]

Both Smith and Boehme stand outside the main Platonic traditions of Western theism. They are neither pantheists nor traditional theists but naturalists for whom God is both within and affected by the creation and is affected by what happens in this world. Both Smith and Boehme reject doctrines of predestination and *creatio ex nihilo* and, in doing so, create radically new interpretations of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience that offer strong affirmations of freedom. Smith and B. H. Roberts are more radical than Boehme, however, for though Boehme eliminates the ontological distinction between God and humanity, seeing both rooted in the absolute, he still makes important distinctions between the relative eternal status of God and humanity. In his King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith smashes the distinction, declaring that God is a glorified human being. This is a vector that becomes further radicalized in a line extending from Smith through Brigham Young to Roberts and John A. Widtsoe.[10]

As non-privileged non-academics who stood outside the majority theological tradition, Boehme and Smith both discard

JACOB BOEHME, 1575–1624

JOSEPH SMITH, 1805–1844

Latter-day Saints can benefit from looking at heterodox traditions in Christianity, as they may discover resources for the better development and articulation of some of their own theological positions.

the traditional notion of omnipotence, in which all real freedom and power is reserved to God, and the supporting doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in favor of a type of "dialectical voluntarism" in which the world emerges from the "opposition of all things."[11] God creates the world from a pre-existing chaos. For Boehme, this chaos or *Ungrund* is the no-thing. Nothing actual, formed, or ordered exists; it is all just potentiality. In Mormon terms, this formlessness before the creative act might be thought of as raw agency before the determination found in the exercise of free will. It is like sitting before a blank computer screen or a blank canvas. There are an infinite number of ways we might create something, but it is only our action that will determine what we will do. This is not, however, the same idea that some philosophers have suggested, that God chooses between an almost infinite number of possible worlds in which every action is already decided. It is something much more like artistic creation and daily life as we live it. New possibilities arise the moment I start writing or acting, and new ones arise as we write and act. Like us, God responds to them as they appear. As Indiana Jones said back in 1981 in the original *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, "I'm making this up as I go."

Boehme's concept of the *Ungrund* provides a potential synthesis to the continuing debate among Mormons about whether we existed as independent persons from eternity (called "intelligences") or were created from an undifferentiated primal soup (called "intelligence").[12] Boehme's notion synthesizes both positions. Everything that "is" has its basis in freedom or creativity. God calls us to higher degrees of perfection, eventually to personhood, and finally, to Godhood. We are not persons from eternity but become such in relation to our responsiveness to God's call. But neither are we an inert substance that God mixes together to produce spirit children.

Free response presupposes the possibility of refusal. Boehme's dialectical voluntarism is based on the image of groundlessness which is the beginning point for the development of Being. For Boehme, the *Ungrund* contains within it all antimonies, but in this state, they are unrealized and only potential. Boehme calls the *Ungrund* the "eternal silence" that lies at the basis of both God and the world, and he argues that it is the actualization in being of these potentialities that is the source of life. As such, in creating the world, God creates God as well.

Unlike Boehme, Joseph Smith does not develop a discussion of a groundless impersonal absolute, but we can see hints of what it might look like in places such as the discussion of opposition in 2 Nephi 2, in the declaration about Christ's being "in and through" all things in Doctrine and Covenants Section 88, and in the discussions of intelligence in Section 93 and of the primordial chaos in Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse. Boehme's descriptions of the theogonic and anthropogonic processes could also be read fruitfully by Mormons seeking new and interesting ways to express their tradition's theology of human perfectibility.

MORMONISM'S TWO ULTIMATES

THE MORMON DOCTRINE that there are two Ultimates—one personal, the other impersonal—is easily seen in the following description of the Mormon understanding of God by Charles W. Penrose:

> But, if God is an individual spirit and dwells in a body, the question will arise, "Is He the Eternal Father?" Yes, He is the Eternal Father. "Is it a fact that He never had a beginning?" In the elementary particles of His organism, He did not. But if He is an organized Being, there must have been a time when that being was organized. This, some one will say, would infer that God had a beginning. This spirit which pervades all things, which is the light and life of all things, by which our heavenly Father operates, by which He is omnipotent, never had a beginning and never will have an end. It is the light of truth; it is the spirit of intelligence. . . . If you see a living blade of grass you see a manifestation of that Spirit which is called God. If you see an animal of any kind on the face of the earth having life, there is a manifestation of that Spirit. If you see a man you behold its most perfect earthly manifestation. And if you see a glorified man, a man who has passed through the various grades of being, who has overcome all things, who has been raised from the dead, who has been quickened by this spirit in its fullness, there you see manifested, in its perfection, this eternal, beginningless, endless spirit of intelligence.
>
> Such a Being is our Father and our God, and we are following in His footsteps. He has attained to perfection. . . . This spirit cannot be fully comprehended in our finite state.[13]

In this passage, Penrose is describing the experience of the Ultimate in a personal and impersonal form. The personal form is God, the Eternal Father; the impersonal is Spirit and intelligence.

The LDS assertion that there are two Ultimates naturally raises the charge that Mormonism is polytheistic. B. H. Roberts argues that this is not the case, that God's essential oneness is located in the Divine Nature, which is singular. In Roberts's terms, "God" is a "generic idea" that describes a being of perfect love. In this sense, there is just one "God." However, "godhood" is a state of being that any human being can achieve when she or he arrives at full identification with basic reality. The term "God" therefore identifies all beings who have taken on themselves the Divine Nature, who have become morally perfect because they have achieved perfect love. The Divine Nature is One, though there are many individuals who fully identify with this singular Divine Nature and are therefore "God."[14]

Roberts is also an excellent expounder of other theological commitments that follow from the LDS assertion of the existence of two Ultimates. One of these is a fuller and ennobling understanding of the interrelationship between the being, God—the individual supreme intelligence and Creator of the universe—and other intelligences—God's children. This relation is a mutually dependent one: God cannot be perfect without them, nor they without God. Each entails the other. For Mormonism, being "God" means to be in a state of being that can occur only in relation to other self-existent beings.[15] Joseph Smith taught that God found himself "in the midst of spirits and glory."[16] God did not create these others *ex nihilo* (literally: "out of nothing") but is related to them from the very beginning. God's creative act is calling these others from chaos into the sociality of community. There is something eternal about each and every other person in the universe. The Mormon revelation is that God desires these others to enjoy the same fullness that God enjoys, that they too may be exalted. The freedom or creativity that they possess, that they are, makes possible differing responses regarding how fully they enter that community.

God's creative act is calling others from chaos into the sociality of community. The Mormon revelation is that God desires these others to enjoy the same fullness that God enjoys.

Roberts's distinction between the generic idea of God and a being who is "God" allows us to make sense of the passages in Alma 42 that refer to the logical possibility of God "ceasing to be God" (Alma 42:13–25). God is "God" as a matter of good will, of choice. Being "God" is not a matter of being but of love. It is logically possible that the personal being that is "God" could choose not to love. But if God so chose, at that very moment of decision, God would cease to be "God" (in the sense that this being would have fallen out of harmony with the Divine Nature).

THE SUPERIORITY OF TIME OVER ETERNITY—WITH HELP FROM THE MOVIES

BOTH JOSEPH SMITH and Jacob Boehme map out a development of humanity toward deity that strongly favors the superiority of time and creation over a timeless perfection and the riskless unity of the One. Because, as Schelling often says, some concepts can't be understood but only felt or acted upon, the movies can help us here. They can help illustrate the nature of the passage from a barren, desolate, eternal oneness to the multiplicity and risk of real plurality.

Vincent Sherman's 1948 film *The Adventures of Don Juan* begins with some of the most memorable, though also admittedly corniest, seduction lines in the history of cinema. Don Juan (played by Errol Flynn) climbs the trellis toward his next conquest, Lady Catharine. He says, "I've loved you since the

beginning of time." To which she semi-skeptically replies, "But you only met me yesterday." Don Juan comes back with the knee-weakening zinger: "My lady, that was when time began." We know that Don Juan will not remain true to the lady and, in fact, will never really love anyone. But we are not surprised that the line works on Lady Catharine because she wants to be seduced and is therefore open to his lies.

But why is the line so appealing to us and to Lady Catharine? I believe it is because we want a choice to be made that pulls us out of the dizzying chaos of the multiplicity of choices and gives us forever to another person. A commitment makes time begin. This is what happens in Wim Wenders's film *Wings of Desire* when the character Marion says that now time can start, life can become serious, because she has met Damiel, the angel, who through his love for her has left eternity for time.

In both examples, the characters are articulating a psychological longing to experience that moment when the limitless possibilities of eternity begin to have a direction, a meaning—an indication that we aren't just playing around anymore, that this is serious. The risk, of course, is that the other may lie to us. For Don Juan, time hasn't begun, only the eternal return of his own desire. In fact, he actually reveals his egoistic pursuit in his next seduction line as Catharine says to him, "But you have loved so many women," to which he replies: "An artist can paint a thousand canvases before achieving a single masterpiece. Would you deny a lover the same privilege?" In Don Juan's response, love is reduced to an aesthetic pursuit of personal satisfaction and fulfillment, the creation of a masterpiece. Don Juan loves the "ideal woman" but doesn't really care for any particular flesh-and-blood woman except as she reflects the ideal. Although Don Juan is lying—to Catharine and even to himself—his two seduction lines can be used as metaphors for interaction with the Divine. In the latter, the ideal is conceived aesthetically as the masterpiece that steps out of the vicissitudes of time, while in the former, time begins with the relational commitment to another.

We see something similar to Don Juan's ideal of the masterpiece in this description of the consummation of love from Plato's *Symposium*.

> But what if a man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean pure, and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colors and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities for he has hold not of an image but of a reality, and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?[17]

Here is eternity with no risk and no attachment to a particular, finite person. The lover of wisdom, as he moves toward the love of perfect beauty, loves another person for the *eternal form of beauty in that person* rather than loving the person. One moves from the appreciation of the eternal, unchanging form behind the changing physical body to the appreciation of the eternal form represented in the character of the individual. Finally, the lover of wisdom looks past all finite forms to contemplate the eternal One.

Plato's desire is for an eternal absolute purity beyond individuals, something not "clogged with the pollutions of mortality." One loves nothing but the ideal untouched by the world, and the world is real only so far as it approximates the ideal. In this view, we don't love another as an individual but for the eternal that is within that person, even though this eternal is imperfectly reflected. We escape the pollutions of mortality in the immaculate beauty of eternity. Don Juan doesn't love Lady Catharine, only her ideal form. As she ages—which, for him, will happen by the next morning!—he will leave her in pursuit of his masterpiece.

In this Platonic view, the world in which we live, including all the beings within it, are imperfect copies of the ideal beauty that alone we should love. When we love something here, we fall into the unreal.

This same kind of relationship between the eternal ideal and the imperfection of the physical world is echoed in all negative versions of the Fall in the Christian tradition. The desire to be an independent being, to be free, and to love other beings in addition to God, or independently of God, is an impiety. Having created the world from nothing, God is the only real Being on which creation depends and derives its finite being. Creation has independent existence, and thus it is completely predestined by God, just like a movie in which the writers and directors have already determined the screenplay and will allow no modification by actors. There is a certain comfort in such stories because we know from the very beginning that good will triumph and the hero and heroine will end up together—even though they didn't get there by choice. All suffering is just a part of the beauty of the story.

This is Augustine's aesthetic solution to the problem of evil. God, who sees the whole from a perspective outside of time and space, sees that it is all good: the light and the darkness together complete the beauty of the composition.

> We are like people ignorant of painting who complain that the colours are not beautiful everywhere in the picture: but the Artist has laid on the appropriate tint to every spot.[18]

From God's vantage point, there is no such thing as evil in this world, just as when we watch a movie or admire a great painting and see only beauty even though much of the beauty is created by tensions and contrasts. For Augustine, the suffering found in this world, even the eternal damnation of countless beings, is part of the masterpiece achieved by the ultimate artist. All that we perceive as evil contributes to the goodness of the whole. God perceives the drama of the whole in one continuous glimpse. We, the players in the story, don't quite see how it will end, and this ignorance is our only freedom.

Frankly, this "aesthetic" solution to suffering works better in

the movies and other artistic endeavors. In the world, where real suffering happens to countless creatures, we would like to think that all this activity changes something.

There are, of course, other ways of thinking about God, love, creation, freedom. A good example from the movies of seeing the world and its many beings as superior to a changeless eternity is Harold Ramis's comedy, *Groundhog Day*. In the film, a weatherman, Phil Connors (played by Bill Murray)

In both films, the characters articulate the psychological longing to experience that moment when the limitless possibilities of eternity begin to have a direction, a meaning—an indication that we aren't just playing around. The risk, of course, is that the other may lie to us.

finds himself thrown into eternity: he wakes up day after day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where it's always February 2, Groundhog Day. After an initial period of adjusting to the fact that no matter what he does, he cannot die nor does he have to face any negative consequences for his actions, he begins to see this fall into eternity as the fulfillment of a dream to do anything he wants. He even imagines himself as a god, or perhaps even God. He is the only real being—others, who are not indestructible as he is, are not as real as himself.

Phil eventually grows bored, however, as he realizes that he is actually in a hell in which nothing matters. He only escapes this hell when he actually commits to the others around him, and particularly—this is Hollywood after all—to his producer Rita (played by the lovely Andie McDowell). Time finally begins with Phil's act of decision to enter into real relations with other persons around him, when his love for Rita becomes more than just an attempt to seduce her. In real relationships, both beings in the relationship are affected by the other.[19]

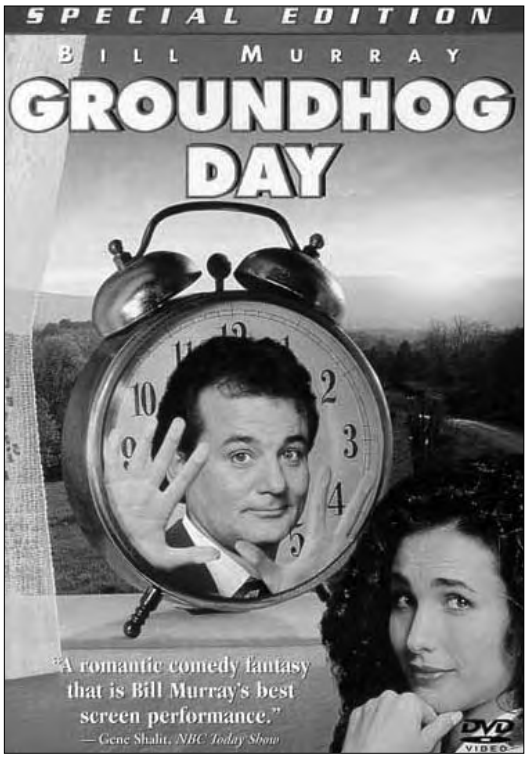
Slovakian philosopher Slavoj Zizek uses *Groundhog Day* to explain the rebellion against the Platonic ideal of eternity by Boehme's nineteenth-century follower F. W. J. Schelling:

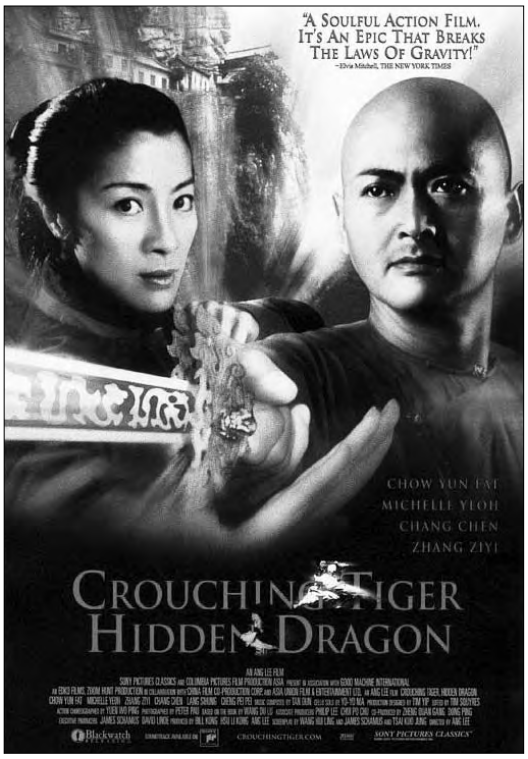
> The "Schellingian" dimension of the film resides in its anti-Platonic depreciation of eternity and immortality: as long as the hero knows that he is immortal, caught in the "eternal return of the same"—that the same day will dawn again and again—his life bears the mark of the "unbearable lightness of being," of an insipid and shallow game in which events have a kind of ethereal pseudo-existence; he falls back into temporal reality only and precisely when his attachment to the girl grows into true love. Eternity is a false, insipid game: an authentic encounter with the Other in which "things are for real" necessarily entails a return to temporal reality.[20]

This sense of the meaninglessness of eternity in comparison to the significance of temporal existence led Schelling to reject the traditional theistic doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, because this view of God creating from nothing separates God from his creations in a timeless eternity. For Schelling, the created world has added to God. In a significant way, it has created God.[21] Traditional theism uses creation from nothing to make God a totally self-centered being apart from the world. The world is not real to God in the same way that Connor's endlessly repetitious Punxsutawney was not real to him.

As God moves toward personhood, Schelling, following Boehme, argues that we move from eternity to time, from the indifference and unity of the absolute to the strife and plurality of the world. But this is a move in the right direction. The move into the world is not simply a Fall from the absolute but also an ascent though which not only humanity but God finds God's true self.

Just as the films *The Wizard of Oz* and *Pleasantville* do, Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* uses a change from black-and-white to color to illustrate a broadening of perspective. In this case, with his renunciation of angelic status for love of the human Marion, the Angel Damiel moves from the black-and-white of





Time finally begins again when Phil's love for Rita becomes more than just an attempt to seduce her.

"I would rather be a ghost, drifting by your side as a condemned soul, than enter heaven without you."

eternity into the color of love and world. The world has pain, yes, but also love.

Another wonderful example of the renunciation of immaculate eternity for pain and love in the world is the speech made by the monk Li Mu-bai in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. As he is dying, the woman he loves, Yu Shu-lien, tells him not to waste his energy but to save it for meditation for final release from the world and entrance into eternal bliss. Instead of taking her advice, Li declares that his entire life has been a waste because his quest for nirvana made it impossible for him to declare his love for Yu:

> I've already wasted my whole life. I want to tell you with my last breath that I have always loved you. I would rather be a ghost, drifting by your side as a condemned soul, than enter heaven without you. Because of your love, I will never be a lonely spirit.

In all these films, the message is that passion and commitment can be fulfilled only through renunciating the immaculate bliss of eternity and actually entering the world. The finite is no longer a fall nor a descent from God but an ascent to something far better.

OPPOSITION IN ALL THINGS

FOR BOEHME, ONCE God chooses to create the world, God becomes involved in its destiny and is affected by the suffering and love that develop here. As the absolute, God is the Eternal Nothing, the eternal One, the impersonal ultimate. As the absolute, God is not really worthy of worship. God as the One is the No-thing.

> [A]s an eternal Nothing; he hath neither foundation, beginning, nor abode; he posesseth nothing, save only himself: he is the will of the abyss; he is in himself only one; he needeth neither space, no place; he begetteth himself in himself, from eternity to eternity; he is neither like nor resembleth anything; and hath no peculiar place where he dwelleth. . . [22]

God as the One is nothing. Without the creature, without nature, without real others, there is no determination about God, there is nothing to say about God. God is not will, not body, not space. If one called such a being perfect, it would have to be the perfection of perfect vagueness—perfectly boring, perfectly empty. This vagueness, this boring oneness is, of course, also bliss. It is like the vague, boring, meaninglessness of the statements made by many American politicians. We find nothing to disagree with because there is nothing there. If they were actually to say or do something, conflict would arise.

In his magisterial work about the philosophy of Jacob Boehme, Alexandre Koyré articulates how this oneness also translates into morality. He writes: "God, in Himself . . . is not even kind or cruel, not good or evil."[23] Boehme wants God to be personal, to be not only perfect but "good."

> [W]hat Boehme believes prior to any doctrine, what he searches, what his thought is destined to justify, is that God is a personal being, even more, that he is a person, a living person, conscious of himself, an acting person, a perfect person.[24]

The centrality of the personality of God and a personality tied to choice and relation to others is central to Mormonism

as it is to Boehme and a good deal of the tradition that followed him.

Like Boehme, Joseph Smith rejects *creatio ex nihilo* in favor of a type of dialectical voluntarism in which the world emerges from the "opposition of all things." Just as for Boehme, God creates the world in relation to already existing, and perhaps eternal, chaos, and Smith's very personal God should be read in terms of will, not being. God chooses to be the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and though Smith and most Mormons don't believe it will ever happen, God, through the use of coercion, could "cease to be God" (Alma 42:13–25).

Also central to the notion of the person for both Boehme and Smith is the existence of real others and real sociality. This is evident in Mormonism in its basic eschatology, which holds that an individual has a pre-mortal existence followed by a mortal existence followed by a post-mortal existence. We give up the serenity, innocence, and banality of pre-mortal existence to become real persons.

Lehi's marvelous deathbed instructions to his son Jacob (2 Nephi 2) give a quite sophisticated outline of Mormonism's basic eschatology, which reflects a movement from an unconscious or dead unity—in either Eden or the pre-mortal existence in which humans are in the presence of God or in the unity of the primal chaos before God's creative acts—to an alienated conflictual multiplicity that is this world, and then, finally, into a freely chosen, conscious unity in multiplicity or sociality of love in both this world and the world to come (see D&C 130:1–2). In this view, the plurality of the world, with all its conflict, is clearly superior to the serenity of the One.

> For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.
>
> Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God. . . .
>
> And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth. . . .
>
> And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.
>
> And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. . . .
>
> Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:11–12, 19, 22–23, 25)

IMAGE FROM *WINGS OF DESIRE*

In the Mormon plan of salvation, we choose to give up the serenity, innocence, and banality of pre-mortal existence to become real persons.

The problem with the eternal bliss of the One is that it is dead. It may be unified, but it is not something to which one would want to return. It is the opposition of all things that make joy—indeed, that make persons themselves—possible. This movement from the serenity of oneness to the difficulties and richness of the world is also found in the *Mystérium Magnum*, Boehme's commentary on Genesis. First, about the original state of God and creation, Boehme writes:

> For in the eternal speaking Word, which is beyond or without all nature or beginning, is only the divine understanding or sound; in it there is neither darkness nor light, neither thick nor thin, neither joy nor sorrow; moreover, no sensibility or perceivancy; but it is barely a power of the understanding in one source, will and dominion; there is neither friend nor foe unto it, for it is the eternal good, and nothing else.[25]

But with the Fall, humanity and the dialectic dance begin:

> [T]he eternal free will has introduced itself into the darkness, pain, and source; and so also through the darkness into the fire and light, even into a kingdom of joy; in order that the Nothing might be known in the Something, and that it might have a sport with its contra-will, that the free will of the abyss might be manifest to itself in the byss [ground or foundation], for without evil and good there could not be any byss.[26]

Both Jacob Boehme and Joseph Smith read the Genesis narrative as a "positive Fall" that opens a future, richer relation with God and others even as it also opens the possibility of suffering.[27]

The theme of the positive Fall which leads toward the creation of persons in relation with God continues when the prophet Alma explains that through the Fall, humans become subjects, and because they are cut off from the Lord, they can follow their own will. This independent devel-

opment of subjects is necessary to the drama between God and humanity.

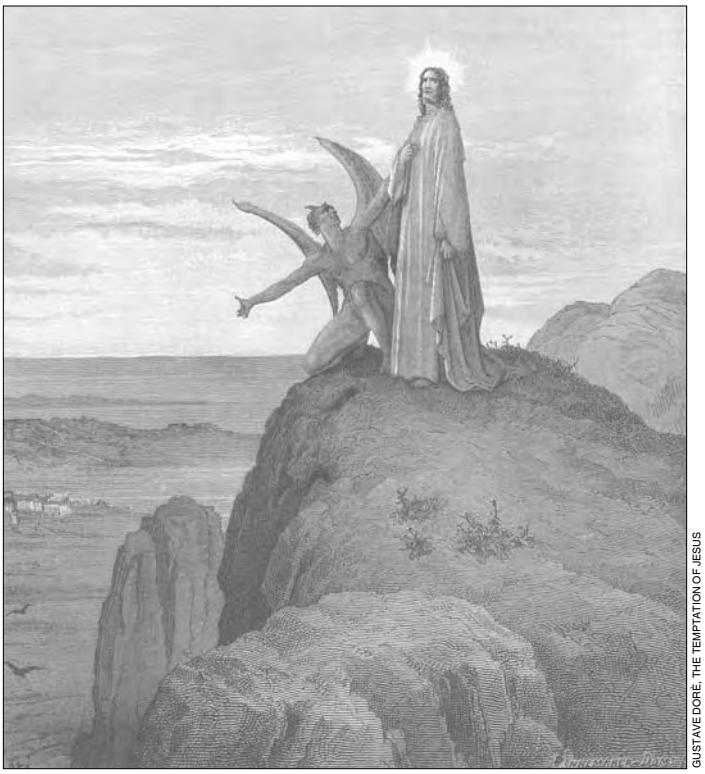
> Now, we see that the man had become as God, knowing good and evil; and lest he should put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever, the Lord God placed cherubim and the flaming sword, that he should not partake of the fruit—
>
> And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto man to repent, yea, a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God.
>
> For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever, according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated. . . .
>
> And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see *they became subjects* to follow after their own will.
>
> Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness. (Alma 42:3–5, 7–8, italics mine)

Lucifer outlined his plan to be god only to be thwarted by Jehovah, who eliminated the possibility of Lucifer fulfilling his project by calling his imagining into question.

With the line, "they became subjects to follow after their own will," Alma is describing the moment when Adam and Eve became real persons capable of real choices—bad ones as well as good.

As Alma's teaching continues, he emphasizes the non-coercive character of the Divine. Human subjects are real subjects who participate in the determination of the open future. In this respect, Alma rejects the notion of universal salvation, for were God through His mercy to save humanity despite themselves, "God would cease to be God."

> And now, there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state, which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience;
>
> Therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God. (Alma 42:12–13)



GUSTAVE DORÉ, THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

"HELL IS OTHERS"

IN HIS GENESIS commentary, *Mystérium Magnum*, Boehme develops a concept of God as a harmony of opposites in which God continually wills the perfect balance between darkness and light, and between unity and multiplicity.[28] In Boehme's creation story, evil begins with Lucifer's free choice of death and darkness over the light. This choice separated him from God and represents the destruction of harmony.

The willful distortion of reality was also an act in which Lucifer separated himself from relation. In his refusal to return to the harmony, Lucifer completely denied the light within him and chose the darkness.

Absolute independence of any being is the ultimate lie. All are related. In fact, Lucifer represents the will to isolation, to be cut off—a selfishness that is in all things. For Boehme, this is the key to the power of temptation. As Boehme commentator David Walsh writes, for Boehme "Lucifer can 'imaginate' his angry fire into all things and by hardening their will can extinguish the divine light within them."[29]

In the Book of Mormon, this same kind of false imagination that leads one to close off relations to God and others is found in the metaphor of "hardening one's heart." In the demonic forms of this kind of hardening, one imagines oneself as an image of God, as transcending the world and being in control of all things. In the Book of Moses, when Cain chooses against further relationality with his brother Abel and kills him, he

imagines himself as master and as free:

> And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret.
>
> And Cain said: Truly I am Mahan, the master of this secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness.
>
> And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him.
>
> And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free. . . (Moses 5:30–33)

Unfortunately for him, Cain's badly imagined freedom ultimately leads to his isolation and vagabondism on the earth. All other beings are his enemies. Brigham Young carries this further when he argues that the isolation of sons of perdition leads to dissolution:

> They will be decomposed, both soul and body, and return to their native element. I do not say that they will be annihilated; but they will be disorganized, and will be as it they had never been; while we live and retain our identity and contend against those principles which tend to death or dissolution.[30]

Lucifer and Cain dwell in a fantasy. They see themselves as self-made men independent of others and free of relation and responsibility. Like Korihor, they think we deserve what we gain by our strength or talent (Alma 30:17). To them, being a "God" means to be free from the give and take of relation with another and instead to impose raw power upon the other. The irony, of course, is that this is the way that traditional theologies have largely thought of God—as a being apart, sitting on top of a topless throne, completely self-sufficient.

As commentator Andrew Weeks writes, for Boehme, Satan is the "prince of hierarchy."[31] He seeks to be God in the sense of an independent being that transcends and controls all of reality. But this is a fantasy that can take place only in the mind and not in the presence of the other; thus Satan's earthly model, Cain, must kill his brother to imagine himself free.

This fantasy of escape from relationships represents is not simply the absence of the truth but a feverish opposition to it. If actualized, Cain's and Lucifer's acts and imaginations would return all of creation to the centerless chaos of non-being through the creation of billions of pseudo-centers, a universe of little Gods focused on themselves. The demonic hope is self-destructive—it cannot be realized. A being with a demonic attitude refuses to accept the existence of the Other as an equal, instead projecting her- or himself as the unique center of its world. Whether God or man, devil or angel, the demonic sees the Other as the source of continual pain because the demonic imagines the Other as the source of its misery, as the limitation of the possibility of realizing the demonic vision of a private universe.[32]

There is a great similarity between Boehme's conception of the demonic and the Mormon understanding of the Council in Heaven, in which Lucifer outlined his project to be god only to be thwarted by Jehovah, who eliminated the possibility of Lucifer fulfilling his project by calling his imagining into question.

Boehme describes hell as that darkness where each of the damned blames the others for his or her despair:

> In the Darkness there is in the essence only a perpetual stinging and breaking, each form being enemy to the other—a contrarious essence. Each form is a liar to itself, and one says to the other, that it is evil and adverse to it, that it is a cause of its restlessness and fierceness. Each thinks in itself: If only the other form were not, thou wouldst have rest; and yet each of them is evil and false. Hence it is, that all that is born of the dark property of wrath is lying, and is always lying against the other forms, saying they are evil; and yet it is itself a cause thereof, it makest them evil by its poisonous infection.[33]

This is the same hell Jean-Paul Sartre describes in his play "No Exit" when one of his characters states: "Hell is others."[34] Hell is others because others constantly interfere with my making it to the top of the food chain.

To hold this view of others, one naturally desires the destruction of all others—an outcome actually described by the Marquis de Sade in his book, *120 Days of Sodom.*[35] In this work, torturer "godlings" end up torturing each other and finally destroying each other in their desire for ultimate power. It is de Sade writing from his madhouse and fantasizing the final destruction of all Being. The Book of Mormon ends in a similar orgy of death when the damned can no longer forgive the others and live only to kill and be killed.

CONCLUSION

BOTH JOSEPH SMITH and Jacob Boehme had similar intuitions about the hellishness of a Platonic-type eternity. For them, a God who is fully "in the mix" with others is far superior to one who is completely self-sufficient and ultimately unaffected by the choices of others. For both, a God can be God only in relationship. Ideals cannot exist in and for themselves. Love requires a lover and a beloved. God's ultimate act, as in the movies analyzed in this article, is in God's movement to commit to others. Our most important acts are to commit in the same way to other persons. The promises we make to them unite the past, present, and future of our lives as we say that we will be the same towards them over time. I believe this is also the meaning of God's promise to be the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Even with the many similarities between Smith and Boehme, Mormon views of God and humans have gone far beyond what Boehme imagined. Mormonism replaces the God of traditional Western theism with the Gods of Zion, with the idea of a blessed community in which the hierarchy of being is replaced by the equality of Zion. In this equality, Gods share the Divine Nature, having achieved perfect love and fully embracing relationality with all beings. This understanding of

Zion and deification in Mormonism sits within but also goes radically beyond the Christian heterodox tradition that began with Boehme and flowered in the writings of Schelling and the idealists, romantics, and personalists who followed.

NOTES

1. Though opinions vary on Jacob Boehme's importance and place in the history of Western thought, he has earned the acclaim of some of his most important successors. G. W. F. Hegel called Boehme the founder of German philosophy. Intellectual biographers also note his influence on Johann Gottlieb Fichte as well as the later philosophy of F. W. J Schelling and Boehme's disciple Franz von Baader. Boehme was also read by such divergent minds as Sir Isaac Newton, John Amos Comenius, John Milton, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, William Law (the British politician, not the early member of the LDS First Presidency), Emanuel Swedenborg, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, and William Blake. Nicholas Berdyaev points to the importance of Boehme's influence (via Schelling) on the Slavophiles and says that his influence can also be found in the second generation of Russian philosophers beginning with Soloviev and including Bulgakov, Frank, and the Symbolist poets Blok, Beyli, and Ivanov. Berdyaev also acknowledges his own debt to Boehme.

The idea of two Ultimates is not unknown in the history of religious and philosophical thought in the East and West. Ramanuja's qualified non-dualism is a Hindu version of this, as is Nagarjuna's affirmation of the reality of both samsara and nirvana in Mahajana Buddhism. This position is developed in the twentieth century by Nishida Kitaro and the Kyoto School of Japanese Buddhism. In the West, besides Boehme, the position shows up in personalistically oriented philosophers such as Schelling, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, George Holmes Howison, and, once again, Nicolas Berdyaev. Process theology is not necessarily personalistic, but it, too, affirms two Ultimates.

2. John L Brooke has argued that there is a line of influence between Boehme and Smith, but it is impossible to demonstrate. See his *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For more on Feodorov's and Soloviev's notions of resurrection, see Nicolas Feodorov, "The Question of Brotherhood or Relatedness, and of the Reasons for the Unbrotherly, Dis-Related, or Unpeaceful State of the World, and of the Means for the Restoration of Relatedness," trans. Ashleigh Moorhouse and George Louis Kline, in *Russian Philosophy,* Vol. III, *Pre-Revolutionary Philosophy and Theology, Philosophers in Exilem, Marxists and Communists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 11–54; George M. Young Jr., *Nicolai Feodorov: An Introduction* (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979); Vladimir Soloviev, *Lectures on Divine Humanity*, trans. Peter Zouboff, revised and edited by Boris Jakim (Hudson, New York: Lindesfarne Press, 1995); Vladimir Soloviev, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay in Moral Philosophy*, trans. Natalie Duddington (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 2005); D. Stremooukhoff, *Vladimir Soloviev and His Messianic Work*, trans. Elizabeth Meyendorff (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Publishing Company, 1980).

The theme of resurrection and overcoming the alienation of fathers and sons shows up strongly in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov.* Feodorov and especially Soloviev were both close associates of Dostoevsky. See Marina Kostalevsky, *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The Art of Integral Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Strangely enough, the theme of resurrection even shows up among the Bolsheviks in the person of Anatoli Lunacharski, who was Lenin's Peoples Commissar for Education. See George L. Kline, "The God Builders: Gorky and Lunacharski" in *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 103–26.

3. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 13–14.

4. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy III: Parodiso*, trans. Charles Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), Canto XXXIII: 123, 379.

5. "Long-Haired Preachers," *Little Red Songbook,* 5th ed. (n.p.: Industrial Worker, 6 March 1913).

6. Moses 1:39; Alexandre Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 392; Jacob Boehme, *Mystérium Magnum, or an Exposition of the First Book of Moses Called Genesis,* trans. John Sparrow (Kessinger Publishing Reprint, 2002), 71:20.

7. D&C 93, 130; Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, 348–49; Boehme, *Mystérium Magnum* 2:9.

8. D&C 88:6–16; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 346–47.

9. 2 Nephi 2:11–25; Boehme, *Mystérium Magnum* 1:3.

10. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345–46.

11. The most famous proponent of the idea of the world advancing toward higher and higher forms through a dialectical process was Schelling's old college roommate Georg Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel. Hegel looked at history as a progress toward perfect knowledge and freedom. This happened through the unfolding of the absolute idea in the conflict of the world. Hegel's dialectic is usually caricatured as an idea (a thesis) being challenged by another idea (an antithesis) and, after conflict, coming together in a more adequate notion or synthesis. This works nicely until we realize that Hegel never used these terms to describe what he was doing.

But let me try to illustrate using concepts used in this article. In Hegel's famous analysis of masters and slaves, he says that the master believes he is completely independent, the essential being, not realizing that he is dependent on the slaves. Try as you might, you cannot be a master without them. Also, they do all the work, which makes them more interesting than the master. Hegel follows this master/slave idea through time and finds that we have often thought of God and humanity in just these terms. We have also thought of government (nobility and subjects) this way. Eventually we will get to a more humanized religion, a more democratic government, and a complete (absolute) way to think about all things.

Schelling's view is close to Hegel's, but Schelling believes that freedom prevents complete or absolute knowledge and the end of history. This is why he, like Boehme and unlike Hegel, can be called a "dialectical voluntarist." For Schelling, there is something about freedom that can't be explained by reason; it remains an "irreducible remainder." This might be an interesting way to think about what Mormons call "eternal progression," for though we will constantly advance to greater and greater understanding and love, we will never completely eliminate the otherness of another. They are always free.

> The world as we now behold it, is all rule, order and form but the unruly lies ever in the depth as though it might again break through, and order and form nowhere appear to have been original, but it seems as though what had initially been unruly had been brought to order. This is the incomprehensible basis of the reality of things, the irreducible remainder which cannot be resolved into reason by the greatest exertion but always remains in the depths. Out of this which is unreasonable, reason in the true sense is born. (F. W. J. Schelling, *Of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann [Chicago: Open Court, 1936], 34)

12. For a good outline of this debate, see Daniel H. Ludlow, et. al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), s.v., "intelligence," by Dennis J. Packard. See also Truman G. Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 24, note 5.

13. *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1860), 26:25–26.

14. In his book, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, Roberts lays out his notion of a "generic idea of God" in the larger sense that God is the community of intelligences:

> Man being by the very nature of him a son of God, and a participant in the Divine Nature—he is properly a part of God; that is, when God is conceived of in the generic sense, as made up of the whole assemblage of divine Intelligences that exist in all heavens and all earths. (B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1903],166)

15. Roberts writes:

> To this Supreme Intelligence are the other intelligences necessary? He without them cannot be perfect, nor they without him. There is community of interest between them; also of love and brotherhood; and hence community of effort for mutual good, for progress, or attainment of the highest possible. Therefore are these eternal, Divine Intelligences drawn together in oneness of mind and purpose—in moral and spiritual unity. (B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:399)

16. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 354.

17. Plato, *The Symposium in The Works of Plato,* trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: The Dial Press, 1936), 342–43.

18. Augustine of Hippo, *The Enchiridian on Faith Hope and Love* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1996). Elsewhere Augustine writes that from God's view, which transcends time and space, all is beautiful—it is the perfect creation of the ultimate artist:

> To thee there is no such thing as evil, and even in thy whole creation

> taken as a whole, there is not; because there is nothing from beyond it that can burst in and destroy the order which thou hast appointed for it. But in the parts of creation, some things, because they do not harmonize with others, are considered evil. Yet, those same things harmonize with others and are good, and in themselves are good. . . . I no longer desired a better world, because my thoughts ranged over all, and with sounder judgment I reflected that the things above were better than those below, yet that all creation together was better than the higher things alone. (Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions,* trans. Henry Chadwick [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 7:13)

19. Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* contains a wonderful example of this movement from egoism to love in Dmitri's statement about Grushenka:

> I revere her, Alexei, I revere her. . . . Before was nothing! Before it was just her infernal curves that fretted me, but now I've taken her whole soul into my soul, and through her I've become a man.

Dmitri has moved past the purely egoistic desire for Grushenka's body to really loving her, and this means that she affects him. Now life has finally become serious because of relation to another person. (Feodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky [New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990], 594)

20. Slavoj Zizek, *Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 1996), 53.

21. F. W. J. Schelling, *"Stuttgart Seminars" in Idealism and the Endgame of Theory,* trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 210.

22. Boehme, *Mystérium Magnum*, 1:2.

23. Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, 320.

24. Ibid., 315.

25. Boehme, *Mystérium Magnum,* I:3.

26. Ibid., 26:37.

27. Boehme does not see evil as an eternally existing actuality. For him, the potentiality for evil is the negative side to the freedom that is located in each individual's passionate nature, but he also sees the passionate nature positively because only in projecting our nature do we realize individuality. Freedom cannot be passive indifference; it is activity and has a tendency to manifest itself. From freedom is born Being, nature, and all reality. This aspiration to create contains within itself all of the possible contraries and thus explains the possibility of evil, though not its actuality. Thus, for Boehme, it is possible that evil could be destroyed because evil is only a *potential* reality that presently exists in actuality but is not a *necessary* part of reality.

28. Jacob Boehme, *The Signature of All Things; Of the Supersensual Life, Of Heaven and Hell; Discourse Between Two Souls,* trans. John Sparrow (Kessinger Publishing Reprint, 1997), 16:7.

29. David Walsh, *The Mysticism of Innerworldly Fulfillment: A Study of Jacob Boehme* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1983), 44.

30. *Journal of Discourses*, 7: 57. See also John A. Widstoe, "Who Are the Sons of Perdition?" *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 212–14; John A. Widstoe, *Rational Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 79.

31. Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth Century Mystic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 199.

32. It is interesting that Vladimir Soloviev saw the third temptation of the devil in the book of Matthew in much the same terms that Mormons see Satan's plan in the Council of Heaven: as an effort to eliminate freedom and force goodness and happiness. Soloviev thought this is the strongest of the temptations. After the rejection of the second temptation, Christ has attained a moral height and is conscious of himself as higher than the rest of creation. From here, humanity can be perfected if he only takes power and compels their perfection. He could become like Dostoevsky's Inquisitor, willing to take on the yoke of freedom and make everyone else a happy slave. He could do the worst possible thing out of love of humanity. Notice how close this is to what the Inquisitor says about weak humanity. The temptation is actually to believe that evil (coercion) is more real than good (love) and thus to worship evil. (Soloviev, *Lectures on Divine Humanity,* 162–63). Soloviev says that Christ humanized his divinity by descending into human form. In overcoming the three temptations, he divinized his humanity and called all humanity to divinization.

Soloviev (1853–1900) began his *Lectures on Divine Humanity* in 1878, completing the series in 1881, which was while Dostoevsky was writing *The Brothers Karamazov.* Dostoevsky and Soloviev were close friends at the time and influenced each other's thought. Many think that Soloviev was the prototype for both Alyosha and Ivan Karamazov.

Like Dostoevsky, Soloviev had read Schelling, but Soloviev read him in German and was even more profoundly influenced by the German romantic than was Dostoevsky. One cannot help but notice the similarity to what Soloviev says about the third temptation and the story of the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov.* The Inquisitor is the Mormon Satan. He alone is free—all others are slaves, but it is all for their happiness and good.

33. Jacob Boehme, *Six Theosophical Points and Other Writings*, trans. John Rolleston Earle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 9:2.

34. Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976). "No Exit" has three characters in Hell, where the economy is such that the inmates torture each other. All that is necessary is that others be there to smash the others' illusions of greatness and independence. Sartre's plays always reflected his philosophy, and "No Exit" reflects the notion of "the desire to be god" from Sartre's philosophical masterpiece *Being and Nothingness.* The desire to be god is a general term for our desire to see ourselves the way we want to be seen, to have the world run the way we like it, to feel ourselves as completed and thus godlike. Others constantly remind us that this is not the case, so "Hell . . . is other people."

35. Marquis de Sade, *120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings* (Berkeley: Grove Press, 1987).

JONNY HAWKINS

2005 Brookie & D. K. Brown Fiction Contest Moonstone Winner

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BOBCAT

By Lisa R. Harris

THE FIRST TIME HE KICKED THE NURSE, HE REpented of it. It was unseemly conduct for a man of God. He'd been a bishop for ten years, and a patriarch for more. He made no excuses, forsook the sin, and cringed every time he saw the blue-black bruise through her white support hose.

The second time, he repented of repenting. It was no sin to kick the brusque and vulgar, he decided. The Lord witnessed how she rammed chicken down his gullet and followed him into the privy.

The nurse took his boots after that. His Tony Lamas would appear only on visiting days.

He had been a patient at the nursing home for more than a year now, he who had never been patient about anything. But he couldn't leave his wife.

He couldn't face the heavy silence in their home. But he couldn't take care of her either. The dementia had worsened with each week until one night she announced she couldn't sleep in their room anymore. A little man lived on her nightstand and when she got into bed, he would leap onto her chest and start jumping—up and down, up and down—just like the grandkids jumped on the bunk beds. She asked him, would he be able to sleep if someone were bouncing on him like a trampoline?

After that, his three daughters convinced him to put her in the home. He'd felt like a deserter. All his life, he'd been a caretaker. He'd taken care of one thousand acres, two hundred horses, six hundred cattle, fifty pigs, three dogs, an entire congregation, and three women all his life.

Every woman but Eliza. She would never let him. She took care of him. It was their secret. No one knew that she wrote every sacrament talk he ever gave. No one knew that she made him give up chewing tobacco. No one knew that the only reason they married in the temple was because she wouldn't marry him any other place.

Once she told him, "A bishop's wife doesn't get the glory. She just feeds the pigs on Sunday." And she did. One Sunday she had forgotten to take off her fuzzy brown, slop-spattered chore coat before she came to church. She noticed the smell when she bowed her head during the opening prayer, but waited until after the sacrament to remove it. With quiet dignity, she left the meeting and put the coat in the trunk of the car, praying that the smell wouldn't infect the upholstery.

IN THE BEGINNING, he'd visited Eliza almost every day, his shaking hands steering the brown Pontiac. Once he'd brought their twelve-year-old granddaughter with him. Eliza never recognized the child. Instead she looked up at him and said, "So you've left me for another woman, have you? Is this your new mistress?" Their granddaughter stopped in her tracks. She dropped her outstretched arms and looked to him for explanation. He motioned her to come to his side and began to speak: "Eliza, now don't be funny. You know this is little Natalie . . ." Eliza interrupted him, "Have you come to introduce me to her? I guess that's proper." Her voice crescendoed. "I should've guessed this would come out in you, what with how many wives your granddaddy had. Too bad they outlawed polygamy. I guess I should be glad she isn't Japanese. You can't trust a Jap. Why in the jungle..."

By this time, Eliza was screaming. But at least she was screaming about World War II instead of accusing him of adultery. He preferred racial slurs to damning accusations. And at least Eliza was still Eliza. He knew this woman: fiery, redheaded, and outspoken. The nurses elbowed him out of the way and swarmed around her. He backed away and turned to find his granddaughter. Natalie was bawling in the shadows of the hallway. He wondered briefly if there was anything of Eliza in this dough-faced blonde baby.

He soothed her and took her out to the car. He opened the car door for her. Before she got inside, Natalie turned to him: "Are you sure that woman was Grandma? She didn't even know me."

He slipped an arm around her shoulder. "Honey, that was

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Grandma." Then he laughed. "Do you remember when I fell asleep and you and she and all the other grandkids hogtied me to the chair and painted my fingernails red?"

"Yes," Natalie snuffled. "It was Grandma's idea." She hiccuped. "But it's like Grandma's gone."

"No honey, it's not. She's still the same woman." And he believed it. In fact, to him, Eliza had been stripped of all her veneer, leaving a core of emotions and opinions. She might be a stranger to his granddaughter but not to him. Natalie got in the car. He shut her door. Then he turned, faced the nursing home square, and walked inside. He would call Natalie's parents from the front desk. They would come, sort out the paperwork, and take care of their girl. Right now, he needed to take care of his girl.

As he passed the threshold, trading sunlight for fluorescent tubes, he felt like Ruth from the Bible. Maybe he wasn't giving up his people or his faith, but he was forsaking his freedom. Thy place shall be my place, he thought, as he pressed his hands against the coolness of the Formica desk. The touch soothed him and firmed his resolve. Yes. It was right. He would not leave this place without her ever again.

SO HE FOLLOWED her here, to the sterile white room. He wasn't afraid, he told himself. Why he used to wrestle steers and rope bobcats! The old gang, he thought, would laugh at him now. When they'd ride out, he would always lead. Once in the steep back country, he spotted a buck across a ravine. "Come on, boys!" he yelled, as he spurred Kip. But when they landed on the other side, he and Kip were alone. Across the gap, Wayne yelled to him, "Only a fool would follow you! You and that damned red horse." He had always loved red. His cattle were red Herefords. His horses, bred for conformation and color, had sorrel coats, white feet, and full blazes. And he had Eliza, his red-haired wife.

The first thing he did after moving in was push their two twin beds together in the center of the room. The nurse had hung a bright red parrot with tissue paper wings over Eliza's side of the bed to help her focus. Funny, since Eliza hated birds. "Messy creatures," she'd always said. But now she just stared unblinkingly up at it. She didn't throw fits anymore. Not even when she saw the Asian man who lived across the hall. She just stared, drooled, and picked at the coverlet. He wondered if she even knew he was here. He wondered if the little man who lived on her nightstand still bothered her. He wondered where she went in her head. She seemed like a stranger to him, this silent grim woman. Until at this place, where they'd let it go gray, he'd never known she'd colored her hair.

He knew he went places in his head now, too. Mostly the past. The past infected his brain, eating away the present. Some days he knew when he was, and some days he stretched to reach his boots, to walk out and feed the stock. But his boots were frequently missing. And those were the days that he ached to kick the nurse.

Today was a nurse-kicking day. He knew it when she shoved the door to their room open with her behind. She was a solid woman, over 200 pounds. She had short brown hair and several piercings in both ears.

"Time for your medicines, Henry!" she sang, dragging a metal cart inside.

"I don't need no gosh darn medicine," he retorted, "Give some medicine to Eliza. She hasn't blinked for an hour."

"Well, it isn't blinking medicine. Your eyelids may be fine, but your blood pressure isn't. And you need to shower today."

He looked out the window. How long had it been winter? In his mind, it was spring and he was about to saddle up and head out to the north pasture to check the new calves. Instead he'd have to wrangle with this old heifer. He rallied. "I don't need to get dipped. I've already been baptized."

The nurse glared at him. She'd heard this diatribe before. "Henry, if you don't get in the shower, I'm going to lift you up and take you into that bathroom myself!"

"I dare you to, young lady."

"You threatenin' to kick me again? Well, I have my shin guards on this time, old man!"

"Who says I was planning to aim for your shins? I was a big game hunter. And a hunter always knows to aim for the most ample target." He looked pointedly at her rear. "And don't call me 'old man.' That's not respectful for a sprout like you."

"What do you want me to call you?"

"Why, what everyone used to call me before I came to this darn motel. Call me Bishop."

"Well Bishop, can you take off your clothes or do you need my help?" She was coming at him.

He stretched out one feeble hand to ward her off. Without his boots, he was no match for her. He'd shrunk down to less than a hundred pounds himself. She could sling him over her shoulder like a sack of spuds. She stopped, her hands on her hips. He sat down limply. It was no use. He looked at her and pleaded, "Can't we skip it today?"

She softened. Anything with Henry was an ordeal. The other nurses avoided him. "Well, since we showered you yesterday. . . ." Yesterday it had taken four of them to wrestle Henry into the shower, and he had slipped and fallen in the fight.

Henry didn't offer a word of thanks. He turned his back on her.

She said, "You know, I remember when you were the bishop. I was in your ward. I remember when you had a full head of hair and all your own teeth." She smiled at him. "You gave me my patriarchal blessing."

This stopped him. He turned around. His arch nemesis, the nurse he loathed above all other nurses, had been one of his own flock? Was she once a little child in his Primary? Had she sat reverently, her head bowed beneath his hands as the Lord had spoken through him? "No, I didn't remember that." He shook his head.

"'Course that was years ago, before my good-for-nothing first husband and my worse-than-nothing second husband. I left the church after that."

He squinted his eyes, trying to read her name tag. It had

never occurred to him that this nurse had a name. He had always just thought of her as a minion of the devil. "That's right," he said, trying to sound confident, "And your mama's name was . . ."

"Parker. Sister Iona Parker."

"You're Iona's girl?" Henry shifted, trying to remember. What was her name?

"Ruth," the nurse whispered.

Henry closed his eyes, and tried to call up memories of Little Ruthie. A dark-haired girl, bangs cut straight across her forehead, running up to him, tithing envelope in hand. And then, he could see the day he had given her a patriarchal blessing. She had been sixteen, just starting to put on weight. He saw her shake his hand, and sit down on the chair. She'd folded her arms and bowed her head, but probably kept her eyes open. That was her way. He couldn't recall what promises the Lord had made to her. But he did recall how it had felt when he placed his hands on her head, the Lord's love for her coursing down his fingers. And the memory made him ache.

"But I'm not a religious woman anymore. I've changed too many stinking sheets to believe now," she joked. "But some of those promises have been fulfilled."

He didn't want to cry in front of her. "Oh?" he said vaguely.

"You told me that the Lord knew that my mission would be a mission of service and that I would fulfill the promise of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers. You said that I would serve those who had once served me. I thought it meant that I had to do genealogy with the old ladies."

He wanted her to go away. He got out his pocket handkerchief and blew his nose.

"Every time I walk in this room, I remember that promise, Bishop." She walked over to Eliza and waved a hand in front of her staring eyes, then patted her head. "I'm going to turn on the TV now, Bishop, to see if that will catch Eliza's attention." She turned on the TV and the VCR, and asked "You like *Lawrence Welk*, right?" Then she wheeled the tray out, and shut the door.

Eliza hadn't stirred once during the exchange, but when Lawrence's orchestra swelled, she tried to sit up straighter and her hand beat in time to the music. "Well, can you imagine that?" he asked her. "Iona's girl is the nurse here. Don't that beat all?" He eased himself into the chair by his side of the bed. "And to think that I'd blessed her. She remembered it, too. She knew that blessing had power in it. Did you remember Eliza, that you're married to a powerful man?" Eliza didn't respond. It was like he wasn't even there. But then, the old Eliza probably would have ignored that comment too.

He leaned his head back and closed his eyes, savoring the memory of God's power, when he had been the Lord's instrument. He tried to forget this room, the old woman, the TV screen, and remember when he had been a man of God. He tried to slip back to the past. But this time, the present kept intruding. He couldn't erase the image of Eliza, her trembling hand keeping time. Wasn't he still a man of God? Would a man of God let his wife waste away? Wouldn't a man of God defend her? Protect her? Rescue her? The power was still in him. Maybe, if he got her away from here, she would be Eliza again. Maybe it was just this place. He could come up with a plan.

He always had in the past. When they'd been first married, in the days of the great depression, they hadn't had two nickels to rub together. Her family had scattered, and his was no help. But instead of meekly starving to death, like his father had prophesied, Henry had become a bounty hunter. Coyote hides went for as much as a quarter, and bobcat hides went for more, if they hadn't been ripped up by a bullet hole.

In the winter, when their coats were thickest, Henry would track the animals from Kip's back. When the prey would flounder in the deep snow, Henry and Kip would pounce, loop ready. He'd rope the critter round the neck, dally round his saddle horn, then choke it good and dead. He'd knock it on the head with the butt of his pistol, for good measure, then tie it behind him on the saddle. Then he and Kip would trot home to Eliza, who would shake her head when they rode through the gate. "Well, I hear there's more than one way to skin a cat," she'd say, "But I've never tried it frozen." And he'd laugh and say, "No need to skin Mr. Bobcat right now. He'll stay frozen in this weather. There aren't anymore wolves at the door tonight." Then he'd tack down Kip, leaving the bobcat frozen on the back of the saddle.

HE WOULD WAIT until the dawn. When the darkness and the stillness ebbed, giving way to light and life, he would ride out again, with his redheaded beauty at his side. Before *Lawrence Welk* ended, he knew what he would need to do.

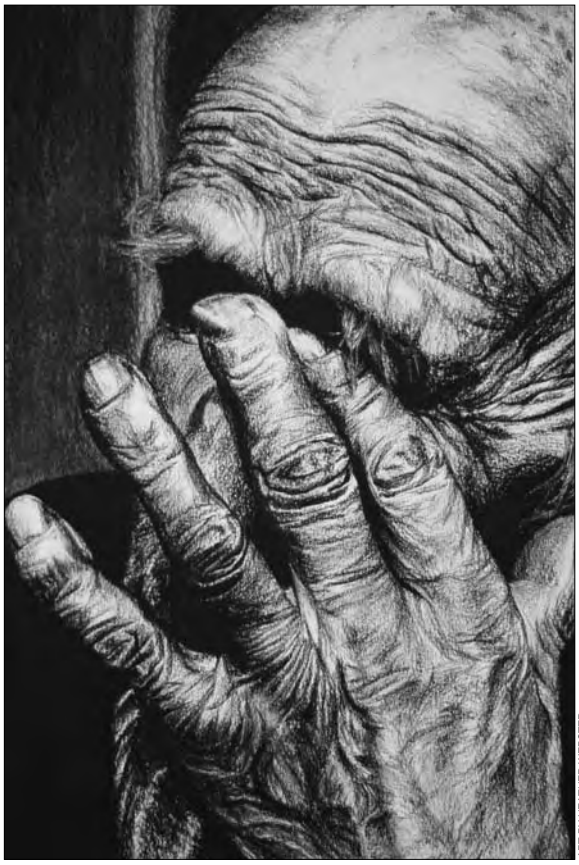
His mind woke him when it was still dark, when even dairy farmers struggle to shake sleep away as they trudge out to milk. He looked out the window at the wavering stars that would soon slip away. Then he looked at Eliza. She had turned back toward him. With slow and deliberate movements, he dressed himself. Under the bed were his Tony Lamas, stowed away from the last visiting day. He pulled them on and gently stamped his feet. Without bothering Eliza, he got up, went to the bathroom, and then tiptoed to the hall to check for nurses. Back in the room, he pulled the curtains closed. Then he looked at Eliza. Her eyes were open. She had watched him the whole time. He leaned over and kissed her forehead. Her eyes stayed on him. "Why Eliza, it's a beautiful day! Why don't we go out and greet this fresh new morning?" She didn't even blink. "Did you know that we're going home today?" He felt as if he were lying to a child, even though he wasn't. Because home was the truth.

"Could you get dressed and come with me this morning?" he asked her. She didn't respond. "I thought you'd say that, and I'll take that as a yes." He took her into the bathroom, helped her to the toilet, then stepped away to give her some privacy. He came back, wiped, flushed, and washed her hands. He half carried her back to the bed, huffing and puffing like she was a bale of hay instead of a wasted woman. What if I can't do this? he thought as he sat back on the bed to take a rest himself. He still had to get her dressed and into her wheel-

chair. The nurse had always done this before. He thought back to the days when he had cussed Eliza for being late to church. "I had to dress the girls," she'd claim. "And it's easier to move sprinkler pipe than get those girls ready." Now he understood. He took a deep breath, went to the dresser, and prepared to wrestle Eliza into a pair of sweat pants.

When he finally got her in her chair, his arms ached so that he had to rest again. The sky had begun to blush before he pushed her out into the dim hall. Using the chair to steady himself, he wheeled her toward the door. The hall was clear except for a few other patients hunched in their chairs. One poor woman was struggling to get her shirt off. She had managed to get most of it up around her ears. Henry averted his eyes from her wrinkly flesh, and tried to push Eliza a little faster. "No need to worry, Eliza," he whispered, "If we can make it around this corner, we'll be to the lobby." He worried, though, that if the shirt-befuddled woman called out, a nurse would come and the game would be up. He couldn't bear that. He couldn't. Well, he thought, today I have my boots.

They were four doors from the lobby when the woman called for help. "My shirt is eating me! My clothes are trying to strangle me," she called over and over. Henry looked for places to hide. He couldn't take Eliza with him. But there were others in the hall. She was safe enough. He parked her and shuffled to the nearest door. He stepped inside and swung it nearly closed behind him. He stood peering at the hall through a tiny crack. No one yet. Eliza looked to be dozing. A horrible stench, like a feedlot, crept up behind him. He turned around. Beside him stood a huge plastic hamper labeled "soiled linens."



ART BY HEATHER WEBSTER

THE PAST INFECTED HIS BRAIN, EATING AWAY THE PRESENT.

Someone was snoring. Another someone was starting to wake, a large woman with a potato shaped nose. She half sat up, and whispered "Is that you, Billy?" Henry froze, then lied. "Yes m'dear. I'll be back soon." The woman lay back down. Henry put his eye and his nose back to the crack. A nurse was on the scene. He could see her long brown ponytail bob as she fought against the willful and disobedient shirt. "That's really stuck," she said. The woman's head still wasn't visible. "We'd better take you back to your room, Thelma, and work this out." The nurse wheeled the woman in the opposite direction.

Henry waited until he could no longer hear footsteps. He slipped out of the room and made his way back to the wheelchair. "That was a close one," he whispered to the back of Eliza's head, as he heaved and lunged against the chair. The chair had stalled like a balky horse. He put one boot against the back of the chair, and said, "Now hang on, Eliza, we've got to get this pony going." With a mighty shove, the chair budged half a rotation. He saw that a bit of Eliza's afghan had caught in the wheel. He knelt down, and cleared it out with careful fingers. "Now, this pony should take us on a smoother ride," he said, looking up into Eliza's face.

But to his surprise, it wasn't Eliza's face, but another shriveled woman, with brown eyes hard as marbles, eyebrows raised in alarm. She clearly wanted to scream, but she was too busy hyperventilating. With great effort, she brought her arm crashing down on Henry's head. The blow knocked him to the floor, and he rolled away from the unknown woman. He tried to apologize. "I'm so sorry, ma'am. I thought you were my wife." The woman still couldn't speak, but her chest moved less spasmodically. Henry looked down the hall, and there, back where he had left her, was Eliza, staring at him. I should have known by the blasted afghan, Henry thought. I dressed her this morning.

The false Eliza had quieted down. She was trying to turn herself around. Using the wall as leverage, Henry straightened to a standing position. He came back to the false Eliza, and said, "Can I oblige you by taking you back to where you were?" She nodded and pointed over her shoulder. Henry turned the stubborn chair around and wheeled her to her desired destination.

Then he had to face the real Eliza. If he'd had a hat on, he'd have drawn it low over his eyes. Instead, he shook his head, and took his place behind her and lied, "Dang these old eyes, Eliza. They played me false. You know I can hardly see for my cataracts." He pushed, and the chair went smoothly into an easy gait that reminded him of Kip. Machines, he thought. Kip would never have betrayed him. If Eliza had been on Kip, he would never have mistaken her for another woman. Although Eliza had never liked Kip much.

Once when the cattle had gotten out, Eliza used one of the Percheron plow horses to round them up. Henry saw her on

his way back from irrigating. Eliza sat tall between the hames, her skirt kilted around her knees. She made that old plodder pivot and dive like a show pony. When she got back in, he teased her about riding a plow horse to do a cutting horse's job. She retorted, "That's your fault. If you're not going to keep the fences up and the cattle in, then you might as well leave me a decent horse!" "Well," he said, "Kip was here. I left him saddled in the backyard." Eliza shot him a dirty look. "I said a decent horse, not a demon horse!"

Henry snorted. He looked down at his Eliza. She seemed to be making an effort to speak. The muscles in her mouth puckered and straightened. Henry felt brave, so he bit. "Do you want to tell me something, Eliza?" She looked over her shoulder back at him, her blue eyes clear as liquid. But she didn't say anything. Instead she moaned.

At first Henry was afraid he had hurt her. He stopped pushing and checked her hands, her arms, and her legs, to make sure nothing was pinching her. She made the sound again, but with her lips closed this time. It didn't make any sense to him. Then he realized that she was trying to hum. Slowly, the notes began to coalesce, and he could hear the tune "I Know that My Redeemer Lives" coming from deep within her. This hymn was Eliza's trouble song. Whenever she was worried or frightened, or an early frost killed the crops, she sang this hymn. The song was her way of telling him that this shenanigan worried her. Henry felt offended. Why would she doubt him? He could pilot this ship.

He whispered, "Now Eliza, I don't want you to fret. I'm at the helm. We'll be all right." Then he dropped his head closer to hers and pleaded, "But you've got to stop that noise now. It's noise that draws nurses. You've got to stop." Eliza kept humming for a few seconds more, finishing the song, and then subsided. "Good girl," he whispered.

To think that I'd blessed her. She remembered it, too. She knew that blessing had power in it. Did you remember Eliza, that you're married to a powerful man?

ART BY HEATHER WEBSTER

They were nearly to the lobby now. The front desk loomed in front of him. If only the receptionist was occupied. Henry pulled Eliza over, then peeked around the corner. He was in luck. Headphones on, the receptionist was staring slack-jawed at her computer. He could hear the sound of the nursing staff having a meeting in the room off to the left. The lobby itself was dark. He took a deep breath and forged ahead, with Eliza in front of him. Just like hunting bobcats, he told himself. Keep to the shadows. No noise. Small fluid movements. Now the doors. Heavy double doors. Henry rubbed his hands together. He wasn't an old cowboy for nothing. "Get ready to make a run for it, Eliza," he said.

He closed his eyes, said a silent prayer asking for the assistance of ministering angels, and threw his weight against the doors. To his great joy, they swung outward. He wedged them open with his leg, and stretched toward the handlebars on Eliza's chair. He pushed her through, and then finessed the doors closed.

THE IDAHO SKY stretched before him, heavy with garlands of pink clouds. He walked forward and raised his arms before him in an embrace. "We thank thee, O Lord, we thank thee," he murmured, moisture in his eyes. He turned back to Eliza. She was shivering. Snow lay heaped over the lawns and bushes, softening all the angles of the frozen world. "Better get you moving, Eliza. That will keep us warm." He turned her chair onto the sidewalk, and made for the street. As they headed toward town, Henry started to worry. He hadn't thought beyond the front doors. How would he get them home? Their spread lay thirty-five miles east. His daughters would just bring them back here. Who'd understand? Maybe Wayne would come. Yes, his buddy would be game. Henry walked on.

After four blocks, Henry spotted a car coming toward them. He worried, then decided that confidence was his best option. It didn't say "Escapee from the Rest Home" across his back. "We're just out for a morning stroll, right Eliza?" he said. The car was almost past. Almost past. Almost. Henry started to

breathe. But suddenly the car stopped. The driver threw it in reverse and rolled down the window. Henry froze. It was the nurse. Iona's girl.

"What in the hell are you doing out here, Bishop?" she asked.

Henry thought fast. "Just going to get a bite to eat. The food at your motel doesn't agree with Eliza," he said. "Now if you'll excuse us . . ."

She got out of the car, and stood in front of them, hands on her hips. "Now Bishop, I know that's a lie."

"You do?" Henry asked, crestfallen.

"Because it's fast Sunday."

She knelt down in front of Eliza, and felt her hands. They were tinged with blue. "You're gonna kill your wife this way, Henry. Her hands are frozen. Is that what you want?" She didn't wait for an answer. She pushed him out of the way, and wheeled Eliza close to the back seat. "You get in the car now. We need to take care of Miss Eliza." Henry didn't answer. He felt sick. Eliza was in trouble, and it was his fault. He got in the front seat and strapped his safety belt across his lap.

Later, Henry watched the twilight descend from their window. They'd rushed Eliza to the hospital. He had braced himself for lectures from the nurses. But no one said anything. He was left alone for the rest of the day.

Ruth went with Eliza in the ambulance. At the hospital, she called her supervisor. As she waited for him to come, she kept her warm hand on Eliza's cold one. What would have happened if I hadn't been late today? she thought. How far would they have gone? Eliza had been her Primary teacher, and a nurse herself. Eliza had helped deliver Ruth's first child when she had been young, unmarried, and shunned. Even her own mother wouldn't speak to her then. It was Eliza who had found Ruth a place to live. It was Eliza who had driven Ruth to doctors' appointments. And later, it was Eliza who held Ruth's hand throughout the delivery. Eliza had even tended her kids while Ruth took night classes. Ruth looked down at Eliza's sunken face on the pillow. If only there could be a transfusion, she thought. If only I could give you my health, my mind, my youth, I'd do it. You'd use it better than I have.

Her boss knocked on the door. "I checked with the doctors. They're concerned about hypothermia, but otherwise she checks out fine. We can take her back tonight. Have you notified the family?"

Ruth shook her head. "Not yet. I was waiting to see what you wanted me to tell them."

He ran his hand over his bald head. "It's pretty obvious we'll have to separate her from Henry. It's just not safe for her."

Ruth looked at Eliza's closed eyes. Eliza understood more than she let on. She remembered the boxes. One day, Eliza kept pointing at the boxes in the top of her closet. "Do you want something from up there?" Ruth had asked Eliza. She shook her head, but kept pointing. Ruth waited. Finally Eliza spoke. "They're like my words, those boxes. Can see them, but can't get at them."

Ruth turned toward her boss. "When?"

"The sooner the better. I think we better move her to a different room tonight. I'll call the family and have them meet us there." Eliza muttered something. "What did she say?"

"I don't know," Ruth lied. "Why don't you let me handle it? I'll move her while you talk with the family."

He shrugged, then nodded and left the room.

Ruth bent over Eliza and stroked her hair. Eliza muttered again.

"Yes, I know," Ruth answered. "I'll take you to see Henry."

IT WAS LATE when Ruth wheeled Eliza back in. Henry was in bed. "She's okay, Henry," she said. "She kept calling for you."

"She talked?" Henry said, surprised.

"Just said your name, over and over." Ruth said, "And I stayed with her the whole time. I love her, too, you know."

Henry couldn't meet her eyes. "Thank you," he whispered.

Ruth lifted Eliza into bed beside him. She patted Eliza's arm, then left the room. I'll just leave them for a few minutes, she thought. Then I'll come back, tell Henry, and start packing.

Henry and Eliza were alone together. Henry rolled to his side and closed his eyes. Then in the darkness, Eliza spoke. She said Henry's name. In the hallway, Ruth heard her too. She hurried back to the room, stood by the door, and listened.

Henry rolled over and took her hand in his. "Eliza." It was all he could say.

"Said you'd never leave me," Eliza said. It was the longest sentence she'd uttered in years. Then she said it again.

Finally Henry answered. "I didn't leave you. I took you with me!"

Eliza moved her hand away. "You left me for that old lady."

"In the hall? I made a mistake. I thought she was you."

"You never had cataracts."

"Well now, you're mighty talkative tonight." Henry muttered. "Yes I did have cataracts, but I had surgery for them right after you moved here."

"I hated it when you did that."

Henry sounded baffled. "Did what? Had cataract surgery? Lied to you?"

"Hunted bobcats. I worried myself old and silly on those nights." The voice croaked, but the words were hers.

"I might have guessed. You were always one to worry, Eliza."

"You didn't come home one night."

Henry was surprised she remembered. "That was the night the bobcat was resurrected on the back of my saddle. I'd only knocked him out." It was a good story, and he loved to tell it. "That bobcat went to clawing and ripping, and Old Kip went to pitching and bucking. I was caught in the middle, trying to hang onto my paycheck with one hand and my ride home with the other. But Kip pitched me into the snow and took off for home, with the bobcat still aboard."

Eliza interrupted him. "I called your Dad that night, to tell him that you weren't home. He said you were a damn fool, and God loves fools. I tried to track you myself. With every step I cursed you and wished I'd married a respectable chicken farmer."

I know you're here. I don't always know, but today I do.

Henry hadn't known that. "Well, maybe a dairy farmer, Eliza. I can't see you on a chicken farm, the way you hate birds."

"I'd enjoy cutting their heads off."

"No doubt you would."

"I was ready to carve you up when I found you."

"As I recall, you cried when you found me."

"I was too young to be a widow, and with you gone, I'd have to feed those pigs myself."

"Oh Eliza, admit it. You wouldn't trade me in for a chicken farmer"

"I'm wiser than I look, and you look wiser than you are," Eliza retorted. "People expect you to be full of wisdom, like a prophet, but you're still the same young buck chasing bobcats in the snow, without a lick of common sense. I knew it then, and I know it now," she paused and looked at him. "I know you're here. I don't always know, but today I do." And with that, she lapsed into silence.

In the hallway, Ruth wiped her wet cheeks. She wanted to clap. Eliza had found her words. She turned down the dark hallway toward the nurses' station. Eliza and Henry would stay together tonight. She'd see to that.

Henry held Eliza's hand through the night, until her fingers grew cold, until the dawn came again, and Ruth appeared at their door.

BIT BY BIT UNNOTICED

Something that was ours
is gone. I know it
by its absence, here
in what had been our home.

What's missing grows,
replacing all we had with nothing
that drains the house,
cracks windows;
all heat swept out,
no light gets in.

I'm tired of trying
to warm this old place up,
tired of walls closing in.

Follow me outside. We'll stand
on the furthest rise behind the house
and fill ourselves:
a slice of drowning sun
flights of evening birds
the mackerel sky, gathering clouds
the sound of our cattle, far away.
Then we'll try to bring these things
back down the hill.

—Marcia Buffington

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2007 BROOKIE & D. K. BROWN FICTION CONTEST WINNERS!

***Sunstone Award* ($400)**

"Silver Wings"
Kevin Holdsworth,
Green River, Wyoming

***Starstone Awards* ($200 each)**

"Nanny Princess"
Johnny Townsend, Seattle, Washington

"Scotoma"
Helynne Hollstein Hansen,
Gunnison, Colorado

BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

ANONYMOUS CONFESSIONS OF AN LDS WEBMASTER

by D. Jeff Burton

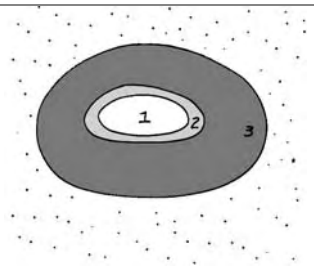


FIGURE 1. GROUPS IN THE LDS ORBIT

1—CORE MEMBERS: *true believers, unwaveringly supportive, the acceptable.*

2—BORDERLANDS MEMBERS: *those who consider themselves faithful to and part of the Church but don't fit comfortably in Group 1.*

3—MEMBERS-OF-RECORD ONLY: *non-participators, non-believers, non-supporters.*

DOTS—*previous members, prior investigators, and non-LDS family members.*

IN THIS COLUMN, I share excerpts from my exchanges over the past few months with Bill (not his real name), the founder of the website MORMONTHINK.COM, which attempts to present in a fair and balanced way both sides of difficult LDS historical issues.

BILL: As an avid SUNSTONE subscriber, I enjoy your Borderlands column. I guess I'm a Borderlander, and my story might interest your readers.

JEFF: Okay, please begin by answering our standard questions.

I then sent Bill my questionnaire, to which he responded as follows.

Describe your upbringing in the Church.

My family was converted by the missionaries when I was about six, although my father did not join the Church. I have always been an active member, although not exactly a "Peter Priesthood." I was married in the temple.

What is your current status in the Church?

I am active and attend most meetings (although I don't worry about it if we take a Sunday off and spend the day as a family at the park or something). I teach a Sunday School class. But I no longer attend the temple.

What caused you to move into the LDS Borderlands?

One day a trusted, knowledgeable friend told me that he no longer believed that the Church was true. I was shocked and asked why. He told me about many historical problems that I had never encountered, so I decided to do my own detailed study of Church historical issues. I concluded that much of what we've been taught in church is simply inaccurate or misleading.

Why do you stay in the Borderlands (as opposed to moving on)?

I think the Church has value for me and my family even if it may not be 100 percent true. I am comfortable in Group 2 but tend to drift into Group 3 as I continue to learn about issues that trouble me and that I cannot reconcile with the beliefs I've always had growing up as a member of the Church.

How did your study of Church history affect you?

I was very distraught when I started learning these things. At first I felt as if my entire world had collapsed. Spiritually I wondered how God could allow this to happen.

How do you cope?

I try to separate the good the Church can do for me and my family from whether or not it's really the "one true church." This usually works pretty well, but sometimes it's difficult—like when someone in a meeting says something I know is wrong, If I give a correction everyone looks at me as if I've done something wrong.

How open and honest are you with others about your situation?

I waited about two years before I told my wife. I wanted to come to some conclusions before I told her. I have also discussed things with some family members and ward members, but for the most part, I keep this to myself. I have discussed a few of these things with my bishop, but I think his knowledge of these issues was really limited, so he simply dismissed everything we talked about.

Why do you keep it secret?

I have seen how some others who "come out" are treated. Most Latter-day Saints seem to think the problem is with the person rather than the disconnect between what is taught and what the research says. Unfortunately some people assume that those with questions have committed some sort of sin and that the historical issues are just an excuse for their wanting to live an immoral lifestyle or something. I've also seen other nonbelievers somewhat ostracized for their lack of testimony.

What would it take for you to be honest and open with others?

First of all, understanding. Second, the willingness of my LDS friends and family to accept the possibility that I may be correct without immediately dismissing my arguments. I found that it is most constructive for me to talk with people who are willing to look at the same information I have—and most active LDS are unwillingly to look at "unapproved" sources.

How did your experience affect others close to you?

My wife was very troubled at first. I think she wished I would stop going down this path. My mother was afraid I would stop going to church all together. One good LDS friend was troubled by my research at first but managed to reaffirm his faith. Another good LDS friend was *very* disturbed. He was probably afraid he would lose his testimony completely. Some of my relatives really don't like it when I talk about religion. They probably think I'm not doing the right thing.

My wife eventually examined the issues troubling me, came to her own conclusions, and is now very comfortable with my views. My mother discusses the issues with me often, and we try to reach common ground. The first LDS friend I talked about is very supportive, and we debate these issues fre-

D. JEFF BURTON is an author and a former member of the Sunstone Board of Directors.

quently in a friendly manner—although we hold totally opposite views. I lost the other good friend by telling him of my doubts. Although he agreed with my facts and, to some extent, my conclusions, he no longer associates with me for fear of jeopardizing his own testimony. Some relatives simply avoid discussing any aspect of the Church with me.

What about your children?

We have two children ages seven and three. A boy and a girl. They are too young to know about any of my concerns. They are typical kids who don't like going to church, anyway, and we usually have to drag them along. As they get older, I plan to help them go over the things they learn at church, and, when I feel it's necessary, "correct" any errors in what they have been taught.

Probably the biggest issue I have with my children is deciding what to do with them at baptism time. Part of me wants to baptize them into the Church just as I was baptized . But I'm torn because I want to spare them the pain that I went through when I discovered that the Church isn't all it claims to be. Also I worry that others who know I don't believe in the divinity of the Church may see the decision to baptize my children as my admission that the issues I've been wrestling with are somehow unimportant.

What does your personal religion look like now?

I am very open-minded on religion but much more skeptical. I have to shy away from bishop's interviews and anything else that would "out" me. So I guess I'd say that I'm not a full-fledged, temple-going member. This works for me now, but it's not always easy.

What would you suggest to other members now having the same experiences you've had?

Try to find supportive people outside your ward with whom you can be totally honest. I found it helpful to have dialogue with people with differing views—those who fully support the Church, those who are critical, and those in between.

What do you believe you will do about this in the future?

I'd like to participate in the Church as long as I feel comfortable. I would not want the Church to be absent from my life. I've been a member too long to simply abandon it completely. But I know I will never be able to view it with the same rose-colored glasses I used in my younger days.

What would you like the Church to do about the things that brought you into the Borderlands?

Ideally I would like the Church to acknowledge that there are historical issues that trouble many Latter-day Saints. If the Church had an official outlet for members to vent their concerns without fear of reprisal, I would really appreciate that. I would also like the Church to stop referring to faithful critics as "anti-Mormons."

JEFF: Tell me more about your website MormonThink.com.

BILL: After being introduced to the historical problems, I spent about three hours every day for three years studying these issues. I went back and forth between supporting the LDS apologists and supporting the critics. It was a very intense time. But I found that, in their zeal to "prove" they are right, both sides are guilty of making errors and misrepresenting the facts. I decided, partly as a form of therapy, that I would gather all points of view and put them on a new website. So on the site, I include the critics' arguments and faithful LDS responses. I then add my own thoughts.

My ultimate aims for the site are to share all that we know about an issue and then let people do what they want with the information. I want to educate and support those who stay in the Church and make the Church a better place for people like me. When all is said and done, I really want us to remember that the Church is about people and service, not history. It's okay to be a cafeteria Mormon and accept the Church for what it is.

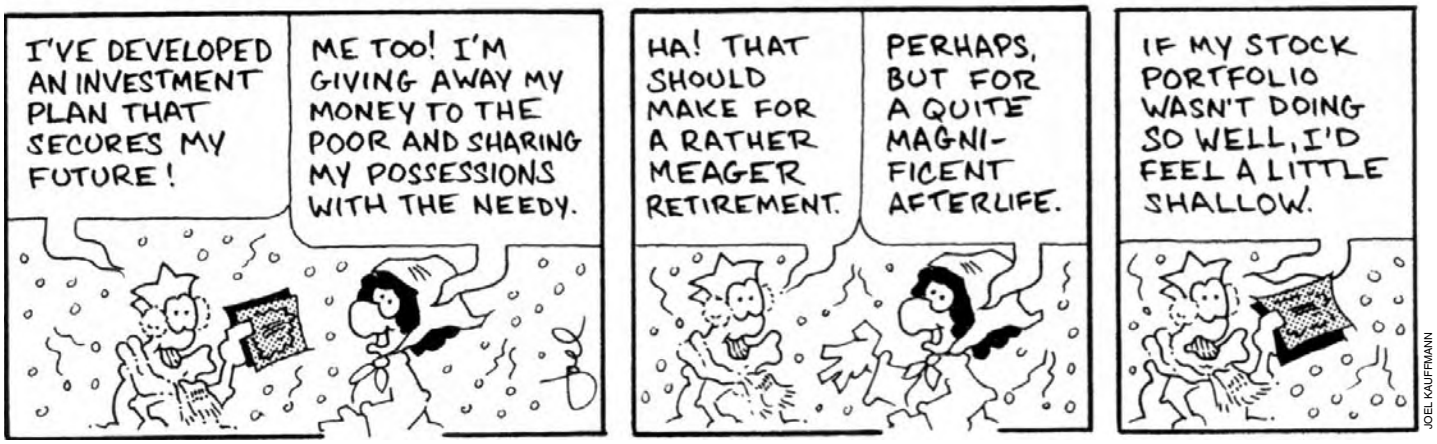
JEFF: Congratulations on not falling off a cliff when you first started dealing with your problems. What has the response been to your website?

BILL: The response has been overwhelmingly positive. I receive many thankful emails. Even those who write to say that they disagree with the information "on the other side," say that they respect the fair way I present it. They like the fact that we link very generously to both critics and defenders of the faith.

JEFF: I am wondering about the "Our Thoughts" sections at the end of each topic covered on your website. Who writes and reviews the "our thoughts" portions? Why do you feel the need to provide your own conclusions when your stated goal is to simply provide people all the background data and various approaches and points of view?

BILL: Initially I didn't have the "Our Thoughts" section, but some readers thought

Pontius' Puddle



"I'd really like everyone to remember that the Church is about people and service, not history. It's okay to be a cafeteria Mormon and accept the Church for what it is."

the website wasn't "making a point." Also I have taken so much time organizing the research and views of others that I feel like I have a few good opinions to offer. So now I approach the people who contribute to MormonThink, get their opinions on particular issues, and craft a summary that takes into account our common views. Besides that, I think people should know about any bias I have on each topic.

JEFF: Do any of the apologetic sites link to yours?

BILL: Our website links to all the faith-promoting websites such as FAIR, FARMS, SHIELDS, the official LDS page, and others, but none of these sites links to ours. Someone at FAIR recently wrote me to correct something on our website—which I gladly did—but they don't want to take input from me. We at MormonThink want everyone to look at all of the credible information out there, even if we don't agree with it. But it seems as if the apologists only want people to look at their information.

JEFF: That's their role—to present the positive view. How do regular "true believers" respond to the website?

BILL: We get emails all the time from faithful members. Some will try to convince us that the faithful arguments we present are too weak, and when we agree with them, we strengthen them. We want the strongest arguments from both sides, so we will update them accordingly. I invite anyone with strong arguments not already included on the site to help us punch up our existing arguments. I am especially interested in hearing faithful members responses to the critics' arguments.

JEFF: Why is your website anonymous?
BILL: I'm afraid I might be excommunicated if it were common knowledge that I owned it

Jeff: Why? I've had the FORTHOSEWHO WONDER.COM website and the "Borderlands" column for some time now, and no one has suggested that my membership could be in jeopardy because I present viewpoints other than the official ones.

BILL: I'm not entirely sure why I maintain the secrecy—maybe the Lyndon Lamborn case spooked me.[2] I wrote to him, and he said that he gave someone his research, and that person must have gone to his bishop, which eventually led to his excommunication. Now some people like you and John Dehlin have been open about their sites, and nothing has happened to them. So I'm not sure.

I'm also worried about coming out just yet because I feel my family would be treated poorly if people found out about my activities. I live in a neighborhood teeming with LDS families. We often have social get-togethers, and our children play together. I consider all these people my friends. If they knew that I didn't have a real testimony and knew things about the Church that are very damaging (regardless of whether these things are true or not), I fear they might start excluding us from the social group. Although I personally can handle that, I don't want my children to be ostracized.

JEFF: We all look forward to the day when you'll feel comfortable about being completely open with everyone in the church.

Please send me any of your experiences from life in the Borderlands.

D. Jeff Burton,
jeff@eburton.com

NOTES

1.In my first column (this is the twenty-ninth), I introduced the Borderland member as one who may have an unusual but LDS-compatible outlook on life; a distinctive way of thinking about faith, belief, and testimony; a different view of LDS history; some open questions about a particular aspect of the Church; reduced or modified activity; or feelings of not meeting Group 1 acceptability criteria. See the figure. Copies of former columns are available free at WWW.FORTHOSEWHOWONDER.COM.

2 Lyndon Lamborn is an Arizona man who was excommunicated in August 2007 following his queries into LDS history, which were prompted by a co-worker's questions about things she'd read in John Krakauer's book, *Under the Banner of Heaven*. A newspaper account can be found at: http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/98035?cp=59%23comments%20%3Chttp://www.eastvalleytribune.com/story/98035?

A TITHING OF MY PEOPLE

. . . verily it is a day of sacrifice,
and a day for the tithing of my people
—D&C, 64:23

If it's O.K. Lord, there's a few of my fellow
Mormons I'd like to contribute—

home-teachers who never come;
BYU sports fanatics; Sunday speakers

who keep saying "Jesus Christ, Jesus
Christ"; missionaries who sleep in.

There *is* one Saint I'd like to have
back—it's dead Uncle George—he

farmed five acres on the Milford flat,
drank beer and swore—he swore

he could read those Indian pictographs
he took me to see on the West Desert

in his Dodge pickup rattletrap, his
bib-overalls and Ben Hogan hat,

an unfiltered Camel stuck to his lip—
"That means fifty miles to water"—"That

means God—or the Devil!" he'd laugh.
Fooling with a gun in a miner's shack,

the thing went off—killed his little brother.
He never went to Church after that.

—R.A.CHRISTMAS

NEWS

NATION REACTS TO TEXAS RAID ON FLDS COMPOUND

IN A CASE THAT RECEIVED heavy national media attention, a Texas judge ordered the removal of more than 450 children, along with their mothers, from a compound in Eldorado, Texas, owned by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), unleashing the largest child custody case in U.S. history.

In early April, Texas authorities conducted a massive search of the "Yearning for Zion" compound in Eldorado, 320 miles southwest of Dallas, and obtained evidence that could be used to show that FLDS men are marrying underage girls. During the five-day search of the grounds, Texas Child Protective Services removed more than 200 women and nearly 460 children from the compound. Authorities also gathered hundreds of boxes of documents and computer hard drives, broke into the FLDS temple, and arrested two men for interfering with the raid and tampering with physical evidence.

The Eldorado raid began on 4 April, when Texas Child Protective Services acted on a call from someone claiming to be "Sarah," a 16-year-old girl who was being physically abused in the compound. The caller is now believed to be Rosita Swinton, a 33-year-old Colorado woman with a history of making hoax calls.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE RAID

TEXAS AUTHORITIES CLAIM the massive removal of children was warranted, in part, because of the difficulty they had dealing with uncooperative or coached witnesses while conducting their investigation into child abuse and neglect. In one affidavit, a Texas Child Protective Services staff member says that when she asked one girl her age, the girl asked her husband, who responded, "You are 18." In another case, a Texas CPS spokesperson said they found a 16-year-old girl who already has four children.

One of the most sensational aspects of the raid is that several beds were found inside the compound's white stone temple, which authorities pried open using a hydraulic tool. An informant told investigators that adult FLDS men use the beds to have sex with underage girls inside the sanctuary.

On 15 April, the normally secretive FLDS responded with a public campaign—the first of its kind—with two dozen women from the compound denying the charges about temple sex but mostly describing to reporters how they were surrounded by troopers and forced to leave their children in state custody. After spending a week with their children in two makeshift shelters, the women and children were separated, and the women were told either to go to a domestic violence shelter or to return to the ranch. "They told us the state is in charge of [the children] now," a woman named Donna told reporters.

"They wouldn't even let us go back and say goodbye to our children," said Sarah, who left five children, ages 8 to 16, in state custody.

Allison Castle, a spokesperson for Texas governor Rick Perry, told the media that the separation of mothers and children was necessary "to ensure the accuracy of the investigation." State workers claimed that they received "coached" answers, and some of the children could not or would not identify biological relationships. Because of this coaching concern, the mothers' cell phones were also confiscated during the first week of their being held.

Because of the difficulties experienced while trying to establish ages, names, and family relations, authorities plan to use DNA testing and documentary evidence found at the ranch. One of the documents, called the "Bishop's Record," includes the names, ages, and relationships of FLDS Church members. Some men in their 40s are listed as having wives between the ages of 16 and 19 with small children.

THE HEARING

ON 17 APRIL, at a San Angelo, Texas, court, Angie Voss, a supervisor with the Texas CPS, testified before Judge Barbara Walther. Voss said that the FLDS belief system "turns boys into perpetrators and girls into sexual assault victims."

"There are young girls who feel the pinnacle of their existence is to get married whenever they are told and have as many children as they can," Voss declared to the judge. "It's not about religion. It's about child abuse," she added, drawing derisive laughter from many of the hundred or so FLDS members in the audience.

The atmosphere of the hearing was chaotic, with some 200 parents, attorneys, and reporters making their way past security into the courthouse. Another 300 people watched the procedures via closed-circuit TV from an auditorium at San Angelo City Hall.

Voss told the judge that authorities originally believed they would find about 150 people at the ranch—not 600.

"The girls indicated that there is no age that is too young to be spiritually united," Voss told the judge. She added that investigators used journals found in the girls' classrooms to put together information about the underage mothers.

Voss explained that she decided to remove the children from the compound because "I heard a report that a tank was coming on the property. Things were getting more scary to me. It was a situation of a very huge magnitude with so many law enforcement officers around." She said the Department of Family and Protective Services wanted to

interview the children in an environment that didn't seem "so scary and dangerous."

Voss said the mothers at first protested the decision to remove the children but acquiesced when FLDS bishop Merrill Jessop, who communicated with them by cell phone, advised them to cooperate.

An attorney for the state said that this is "not a case against the Church. It is about child sex abuse—a pattern of sexual assault."

THE SEPARATION

ON THE EVENING of 18 April, Judge Walther decided that the children should be placed in state custody. "This is the hardest, toughest decision a judge makes," Walther said. "It's no easy decision to rip families apart."

By 22 April, more than 110 children, ages 5 and older, had been moved to foster homes across the state. By 25 April, all FLDS children who were at least a year old were in foster care.

Some of the mothers gave the media tearful accounts of the separation. Velvet, who did not give her last name, said that her 13-month-old daughter, who is still breastfeeding, was removed from her. "I don't know where she is. She's never had a bottle before. I need her back."

"Help, mother kidnapped!" yelled one of the mothers from a bus leaving the San Angelo Coliseum, where they had been temporarily housed. She also held a sign that read, "S.O.S.—Mother Separated, Help."

Walther admitted that CPS and the court had been "stretched beyond belief" by the magnitude of the case, which involved hundreds of lawyers representing individual clients filing separate motions.

PREGNANCIES, BIRTHS

ON 28 APRIL, CPS spokesperson Carrell Azar said thirty-one of fifty-three girls ages 14 to 17 have children, are pregnant, or both. "This includes that group of girls that once claimed they were 18 or older," he said. "It was determined they were not adults."

Pamela Jeffs, whose age was disputed, gave birth in San Marcos, Texas, on 29 April. Rod Parker, an attorney and spokesperson for the FLDS, told the media Jeffs is 18. "Her husband is 22, and they are a monogamous couple."

Louisa Bradshaw Jessop, who maintains she is 22 but was classified as 17, gave birth in Austin. She has two other children, ages 3 and 2. Jessop's husband, Rulan Daniel Jessop, 24, filed a *habeas corpus* petition arguing that his wife is being improperly detained by the state.

The two births brought the total number of children in custody to 465. However, days later, officials acknowledged that nine of the suspected underage mothers are adults.

"It's not about religion. It's about child abuse."
—ANGIE VOSS, Texas Child Protective Services

RULING OVERTURNED, NEW CONDITIONS SET

ON 23 MAY, the Third Court of Appeals in Austin reversed Judge Walther's ruling that separated the mothers and children, holding that the state failed to show that the youngsters were in any immediate danger and giving authorities ten days to return the children to their parents.

"Even if one views the FLDS belief system as creating a danger to sexual abuse by grooming boys to be perpetrators of sexual abuse and raising girls to be victims of sexual abuse, . . . there is no evidence that this danger is 'immediate' or 'urgent,'" the court said.

Twenty-four hours after the decision, CPS lawyers filed with the courts a photo showing convicted FLDS leader Warren Jeffs giving a romantic kiss to a girl whom lawyers allege is a 12-year-old wife. The photo was widely circulated on cable news.

On 29 May, the Texas Supreme Court ruled 6 to 3 that the massive seizure of children was an abuse of judicial discretion. "On the record before us, removal of the children was not warranted," the majority decision read. It added that although there are "important, fundamental issues concerning parental rights and the state's interest in protecting children, it is premature for us to address those issues."

The dissenting opinion cited several cases of teenage girls seized who were pregnant or had given birth, as well as religious leaders who had "unilateral power to decide when and to whom [the girls] would be married."

"The evidence supports the trial court's finding that there was a danger to the physical health or safety of pubescent girls of the ranch," the dissenting judges wrote.

While the Texas Supreme Court ordered Judge Walther to return the children, it also allowed her to set conditions. Walther's conditions included placing the FLDS children under the supervision of Texas Child Protective Services indefinitely. Parents had to agree to be photographed when picking up their children, to be fingerprinted, to provide identification, and to attend parenting classes; they must not interfere with the CPS's ongoing investigation; and they must allow CPS workers to visit, question, and examine the children. The parents were also prohibited from leaving Texas with their children.

FLDS VOWS TO NO LONGER MARRY UNDERAGE GIRLS

THE SAME DAY that a judge signed the order to return the children, FLDS leader Willie Jessop told the media the polygamist group will no longer perform underage marriages.

"In the future, the Church commits that it will not preside over the marriage of any woman under the age of legal consent in the jurisdiction in which the marriage takes place," said Jessop, reading from a statement. "The Church will counsel families that they neither request nor consent to any underage marriages. This policy will apply Church-wide."

"With the help of thousands of prayers that have been offered, we believe that God can start to mend so many broken and devastated hearts," Jessop added.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LDS RESPONSES TO THE RAID

TWO DAYS AFTER news of the raid broke, the LDS Public Affairs office issued a statement reiterating that the LDS Church "has no affiliation whatsoever with a polygamous sect in Texas." On 24 April, it issued another statement that was almost verbatim.

A survey commissioned by the LDS Church revealed that more than a third of those surveyed (36 percent) thought that the Texas compound was part of the LDS Church or "Mormon Church" based in Salt Lake City.

As part of a major campaign to help the public distinguish between LDS and FLDS, a new series of video clips was posted to the online newsroom at LDS.ORG. Seven of the clips feature LDS members from Texas talking about their faith, their love for the state of Texas, and their love for their families. Three additional videos feature Apostle Quinton L. Cook, LDS spokesperson Michael Otterson, and then-President Gordon B. Hinckley distancing the LDS Church from the polygamist movement.

"I would like to make an appeal to [the media] in the name of the Church to clearly make that distinction," Elder Cook says in one of the clips, "to not include 'Mormon' with the word 'polygamous,' to not identify the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormon Church, with polygamy. They are entirely separate. If they cease doing that, it would make it so that everybody understood the situation better, and we would appreciate it."

On 11 May, *Deseret News* editor Joseph A. Cannon went so far as to write a column comparing the polygamous sect's use of the FLDS acronym to identity theft. "While not strictly speaking identity theft, the adoption of FLDS by this group at best is confusing and at worst undermines the credibility of the Latter-day Saints and tarnishes the LDS 'brand,'" Cannon complained. "Sometimes damage to a brand or a trademark has been called attempted identity theft at the corporate level."

In addition to its general appeals, LDS officials also responded assertively to individual cases in which reporters called the FLDS faith "Mormon" or suggested commonalities between the two churches. For instance, when reporter Timothy Egan posted on the *New York Times* website a comparison between 21st-century FLDS culture and 19th-century Mormonism, LDS Church Historian, Marlin K. Jensen, wrote a 735-word rebuttal.

"The conditions surrounding the practice of polygamy in Texas today bear little resemblance to the plural marriage practiced by Mormons more than a century ago," wrote Elder Jensen. "Mr. Egan's cavalier comparison of FLDS polygamous practices with those of 19th-century Latter-day Saints is historically unsupported and simply wrong. By implication, he also unfairly impugns the integrity of all Latter-day Saint marriages and families, the very institutions they hold most dear."

In 1998, President Gordon B. Hinckley stated that that "there is no such a thing as a 'Mormon Fundamentalist.' It is a contradiction to use the two words together" (*Ensign*, November 1998, 71).

Writing on the *Newsweek/Washington Post* blog, reporter Claire Hoffman said she received two dozen emails of protest after she described the FLDS as a "polygamist sect of Mormonism."

"To say that the FLDS should not be considered Mormons, well that is a simplification of a very complex history and if you ask me, truly wishful thinking," wrote Hoffman. "I've spoken with former members of the FLDS, and they certainly consider their former belief system 'Mormon.' Its history and its holy books—including the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's Laws and Covenants [sic]—are Mormon, and members believe themselves to be carrying out the true covenant of Joseph Smith."

ERIC GAY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hoffman went on to quote Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants to show that it was Joseph Smith who stated "that plural marriage was required to receive the highest glory from God."

In response to the LDS Church's assertions, on 9 July, a group of fundamentalist Mormons issued a statement declaring their right to be called "fundamentalist Mormons."

"We strenuously object to any efforts to deprive us and others of the freedom to name and describe ourselves by terms of our own choosing," the coalition wrote. "Fundamentalist Mormons have been referred to by that name since the 1930s, often by the Church itself. We are proud of our Mormon heritage. Plural marriage is only one of the tenets of our religion, the Gospel of Jesus Christ as restored through Joseph Smith."

Fundamentalist Mormons say they are "adherents to Mormonism (and Christianity) no less than were Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and John Taylor."

"What distinguishes us from the modern, mainstream Church is that we have endeavored to observe the original, fundamental precepts of the restored Gospel, while the Church itself has, since the early 1900s, repudiated several of them."

The letter is signed by representatives of the Principle Voices Coalition, the Apostolic United Brethren, the Davis County Cooperative Society, and The Work of Jesus Christ (Centennial Park). The text of the full statement can be found at PRINCIPLEVOICES.ORG.

The local LDS congregation of San Angelo distanced itself from

the polygamist group when Judge Walther suggested that local Latter-day Saints supervise FLDS praying sessions. The state was concerned that if FLDS women were allowed to pray privately with the children, they would use the time to discuss the ongoing investigation and coach the children.

According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, LDS spokesperson Scott Trotter said it would be "erroneous to base any request for assistance from members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the basis that our beliefs and practices are close to those of this polygamous group because they are not."

GRASSROOTS RESPONSES

ACCORDING TO *SALT Lake Tribune* reporter Peggy Fletcher Stack, some Latter-day Saints, especially those who come from polygamous families, were torn by the raid.

"As the FLDS are, we once were," said Guy Murray, a lawyer in Southern California who blogged in defense of FLDS civil rights. "Back then, we were the ones in the compound. We've all seen the photos of our brethren who went to prison rather than give up their wives."

Murray critiqued the LDS Church's reaction to the raid. "They're more concerned with the Church's public image than they seem to be at what's happening to these [FLDS] people," he told the *Tribune*. "It goes beyond religious ties. This is an issue that every American should be concerned about—whether LDS, FLDS, Muslim or atheist."

Michael Nielsen, who serves on the editorial board of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* wrote an editorial in the *Salt Lake Tribune* suggesting that the Church "acknowledge that we're polygamous" and "discontinue the policy allowing men to be sealed to more than one woman."

"The current policy [of sealing multiple wives to widowers] seriously undermines the claim that polygamy is in the past," Nielsen wrote. "Instead, it suggests that polygamy is in both the past and the future, and that current policy is the exception rather than the rule."

Ed Firmage, an LDS law professor who wrote a book about the relationship between the LDS Church and the courts, strongly condemned the raid.

"The perpetrator of any crime of abuse upon any young boy or girl must be punished," Firmage wrote in the *Deseret News* on 20 April. "But this massive war against polygamy is unconstitutional, savage, and utterly self-defeating. This is a tragic example of the misuse of the criminal law, made much worse by the idiotic reporting by CNN, Fox, and all the feeding frenzy inclinations of 24/7 news media, with blood—the blood of all the victims of abuse in this tragedy—in the water."

Mary Batchelor, who went to San Angelo for the hearings, said she was shocked by the raid, comparing it to the raids that occurred in Utah and Arizona between the 1930s and 1950s. Batchelor is the executive director of Principle Voices, a Utah-based organization that advocates for people in the Fundamentalist Mormon culture.

"We ask that people not rush to judgment," Batchelor said. "Our hearts go out to the mothers. We'd like to see reunification if possible."

According to a *Deseret News*/KSL-TV poll, Utahns changed their mind about the raid as events in Texas unfolded. In early April, 62 percent of Utahns believed that authorities were definitely or probably justified in removing the children. Nineteen percent disagreed with the decision. By late June, only 42 percent believed removal was justified, and the number who disagreed with the decisions had climbed to50 percent. The poll of 405 Utahns had a 5 percent margin of error.

THEN AND NOW—COMPARING THE 1953 AND 2008 POLYGAMY RAIDS

DATES OF THE RAIDS
26 July 1953
4–8 April 2008

WHERE?
1953: Short Creek, Arizona (now Colorado City)
2008: FLDS compound near Eldorado, Texas

LDS INVOLVEMENT
1953: In preparation for the raid, LDS bishops in Phoenix and Mesa determine which homes can take additional children. The *Deseret News* commends the raid in an editorial.

2008: The LDS Church denies being connected to the FLDS. LDS members in San Angelo, Texas, decline to monitor FLDS prayer sessions.

HOW MANY REMOVED?
1953: 39 men, 86 women, and 263 children
2008: 2 men, 139 women and 456 children

NOTABLE CRITIC OF THE RAID
1953: LDS historian Juanita Brooks: "I was shocked and saddened that the [*Deseret News*] should approve of such a basically cruel thing as the taking of little children from their mother."

2008: LDS law professor Ed Firmage: "The massive raid upon a polygamist compound in Texas is one of the major violations of human rights in this country."

COST
1953: $600,000
2008: $14 million and counting

AFTERMATH
1953: Six months after the raid, most men are placed on probation and allowed to return to Short Creek. After two years as wards of the state, children and mothers are also allowed to return. Public opinion turns against the raid. Widespread scorn forces Gov. Howard Pyle out of office.

2008: Two months after the raid, a court orders the children to be reunited with their parents. Public opinion turns against the raid.

SOURCES: *Mormon Polygamy: A History*; *Salt Lake Tribune*; *Deseret News*.

UPDATE

PRESIDENT MONSON PRESIDES OVER GENERAL CONFERENCE

LDS.ORG

President Thomas S. Monson speaks at the April 2008 General Conference, Monson's first as Church president.

LDS PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON PRESIDED LAST April over his first general conference as Church president, a conference that included expressions of gratitude, affirmations of respect toward all religions, and counsel on the sensitive topic of sexual abuse.

"This has been a wonderful conference," said Monson, who was ordained Church president 3 February. "We have been edified by wise and inspired messages. Our testimonies have been strengthened. I believe we are all the more determined to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"I express my great love for all those who have participated and to all of you who have listened," the octogenarian leader added. "I have felt your prayers in my behalf and have been sustained and blessed during the two months since our beloved President Hinckley left us. Once again, I appreciate your sustaining vote."

"We Honor All Religions"

IN A SPEECH titled "Faith of Our Fathers," President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, who was born in Czechoslovakia of German parents, explained that his ancestors were not among the pioneers who made the journey across the plains. "But as a member of the Church," he added, "I claim with gratitude and pride this pioneer legacy as my own."

"When my own family contemplates the phrase 'faith of our fathers,' often it is the Lutheran faith that comes to mind," Uchtdorf continued. "For generations, our ancestors belonged to that denomination. In fact, my son recently discovered that one of our family lines connects back to Martin Luther himself."

"We honor and respect sincere souls from all religions, no matter where or when they lived, who have loved God, even without having the fullness of the gospel," Uchtdorf added. "We lift our voices in gratitude for their selflessness and courage. We embrace them as brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father."

Sexual Abuse Discussed

APOSTLE RICHARD G. SCOTT talked about sexual abuse, revisiting a topic he had discussed in general conference 16 years earlier. Elder Scott's speech included advice to the victims, to perpetrators, to parents, and to Church leaders.

"As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time, the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her," Scott said. "When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser."

Scott admitted it is hard sometimes for ecclesiastical leaders to believe the victim. "Do not be discouraged if initially a bishop hesitates when you identify an abuser," he said. "Remember that predators are skillful at cultivating a public appearance of piety to mask their despicable acts."

Marion Smith, an LDS author who has often written and spoken on the issue of sexual abuse, feels that Scott's message was sensitive and compassionate. At the same time, she wishes Scott had been more direct in encouraging victims of sexual abuse to report the abuse to civil authorities and in encouraging perpetrators not only to go to their Church leaders, but also to apologize to the victim, to make whatever reparation is possible, and to go to therapy.

"I agree with Elder Scott that forgiving is the ultimate way of healing, yet the problem is that forgiveness is not a process that can be forced on the victims," Smith told SUNSTONE. "For victims of sexual abuse, forgiving themselves is more urgent than forgiving their perpetrators."

"Victims may not be ready to forgive," Smith added. "Before asking them to forgive, bishops must convey empathy and compassion. What victims need the most is to know that they're loved."

New Apostle Named

DURING THE OPENING session of the conference, Elder D. Todd Christofferson, 63, was appointed as the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve, filling the vacancy left by President Uchtdorf's call to the First Presidency. Born 24 January 1945, in American Fork, Utah, Elder Christofferson received a bachelor's degree from BYU and a juris doctorate from Duke. He was an associate general counsel of Nations Bank Corp. (now Bank of America) and practiced law in Washington DC, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

A returned missionary, bishop, stake president, and regional representative, Christofferson was sustained to the First

LDS.ORG

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Quorum of the Seventy in 1993. In the intervening 15 years, he and his wife have traveled to 44 countries on six continents.

As executive director of the Family and Church History Department, Christofferson reaffirmed in 2005 an agreement with Jewish organizations to block the names of Holocaust victims from being submitted to temple work (see SUNSTONE, May 2005, 72–73).

During an 5 April press conference between general conference sessions, Christofferson was asked why a non-American was not called as an apostle.

"It's just a question of time," the junior apostle replied, "and that will come to pass."

"Remember, though, that we are not called to represent any place, any group, any region," he added. "We don't need to try to tell the Lord about his sheep and how to take care of them. He knows them better than we do."

Christofferson said President Monson extended the call to him forty-eight hours before the beginning of the conference. Christofferson said he first felt "a degree of incredulity and a deep sense of humility."

"At the same time, [I felt] a great sense of gratitude for the trust that is manifest in such a calling," he added. "Since then, thinking more about it, I've felt something of a real anxiousness to be out and about and involved. I look forward to doing that the rest of my life."

CHURCH ASKS CALIFORNIAN MORMONS TO HELP BAN GAY MARRIAGE—AGAIN

ON 20 JUNE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY sent a letter asking LDS Church members in California to "do all you can" to support Proposition 8, which would amend the constitution of California and reverse a recent decision by the California Supreme Court allowing same-sex couples to marry.

"The Church's teachings and position on this moral issue are unequivocal," reads the letter that was directed to be read from the pulpit in California wards on 29 January. "Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, and the formation of families is central to the Creator's plan for His children. Children are entitled to be born within this bond of marriage."

"We ask that you do all you can to support the proposed constitutional amendment by donating of your means and time to assure that marriage in California is legally defined as being between a man and a woman. Our best efforts are required to preserve the sacred institution of marriage."

Maurine Proctor, editor-in-chief of the Meridian Magazine website, fears that unless the constitutional amendment is passed, California will be "exporting same-sex marriage possibly to every state in the nation."

"Residents of other states whose marriage laws do not allow genderless marriage can come to California, get their nuptials, and then head home claiming their marriage is legal," she wrote at MERIDIANMAGAZINE.COM. "This not only opens the door for legal chaos, but for courts, along with rogue state officials, to systematically dismantle state statutes and amendments designed to protect the traditional definition of marriage."

Since the letter began circulating, several dissenting grassroots Mormons organizations have spoken against the proposed amendment. These include Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons, Signing for Something, the Safe Space Coalition, and Mormons for Marriage.

"We stand united in the belief that each individual should have the civil right to marry the spouse of their choice and to have that union recognized by civil authorities," wrote the owners of SIGNINGFORSOMETHING.ORG. "[This stance] runs contrary to the LDS Church's current policy, which asks its members to actively work toward making marriage between one man and one woman the only legal option. Our goal is to empower members of the LDS Church in sharing their views and making political decisions for themselves."

"We are deeply dismayed that the Church ignored our request that they not meddle in California politics," said Olin

JEANETTE ATWOOD

"Sorry guys. . . . Still no recommend."

Thomas, executive director of Affirmation. "This initiative will hurt so many people. Without marriage, a couple who have been together thirty years could be torn apart at the doorway to the emergency room."

According to a recent *Los Angeles Times*/KTLA poll, 41 percent of Californians surveyed approve the state Supreme Court's decision to allow same-sex couples to marry while 52 percent disapproved of the decision. There are more than 750,000 Mormons living in California, making them just over 2 percent of the state's population.

LDS CHURCH CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY OF 1978 REVELATION

IN AN EVENING FILLED WITH SPEECHES, PRAYERS, AND music, more than 2,500 people gathered in the Tabernacle on Temple Square on 8 June to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the LDS Church lifting the ban on black men receiving the priesthood and on families of African descent receiving temple blessings.

Catherine Stokes, one of the speakers, quoted Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who shortly after the 1978 announcement told students at BYU, "It's time for disbelieving people to get in line and believe in a living prophet."

Stokes urged her audience to "reach out to those with a lack of understanding about this matter . . . that we might help them come unto Christ and by so doing, help ourselves to come unto Christ. Since our coming to this land in chains, I believe it was the blessing of forgiving that enabled us to survive. Today we're capable of even more—of loving those who do not love us."

"Do we have a ways to go? Yes—a very long way to go. But we're raising a generation so much less color-conscious than the last one. . . . I have great hope for the future."

Two African American stake presidents, Ahmad Corbitt, of the New Jersey Cherry Hill Stake, and Fred A. Parker, of the Miami Stake, were among the speakers. Soloist Alex Boye of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sang two hymns, and choir director Mack Wilberg led a multicultural choir of more than 300 voices.

Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy spoke about his experiences serving as a mission president in New York City and living in West Africa.

"There are no strangers or foreigners among those who enjoy the blessing of the priesthood, make sacred covenants, and keep them," said Child. "They belong to the household of God. Because of God's love for all his children, in every gospel dispensation, he has placed prophets on the earth to communicate his will to them. His love and his will was made manifest to us on 8 June 1978."

This is the first event of this kind officially sponsored by the Church. Five years ago, the Church provided space for a low-key celebration sponsored by the Genesis group, a Church organization for Latter-day Saints of African descent.

Darius Gray, who in 1971 helped organize the Genesis group, told the *Deseret News* that for many blacks who con-

Celluloid Watch

CUT AND RECUT: NEW EMMA SMITH FILM SKIRTS POLYGAMY

EMMA SMITH, FIRST WIFE OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH Smith Jr., finally stepped out of the footnotes of Church history with the release of the feature film *Emma Smith: My Story.*

Scene from Emma Smith: My Story

The film, which premiered 9 April in Sandy, Utah, combines material used in the recent LDS-produced *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration* with new footage, presented as a series of flashbacks as an aged Emma Smith reminisces about her life.

The scene most commented upon portrays Emma in a fictional conversation about polygamy with her daughter Julia. According to THE-EXPONENT.COM, the dialogue in the film's general-release version goes something like this:

EMMA: There are still places and rapids in the river.

JULIA: Polygamy was one of those rapids for you. Wasn't it?

EMMA: Yes, it was.

JULIA: And, yet, you've never spoken of it.

EMMA: What could I say?

However, in a different version shown in advance screenings last November, Emma went on to explain that, despite her struggles with polygamy, she eventually concluded that it was of God, even testifying to Julia of it. This material was cut from the general-release version.

It is not clear when the decision was made to recut the film; but Mike Kennedy, one of the producers and a descendant of Joseph and Emma, told the *Deseret News* that leaders of the LDS Church attended an early screening in mid-March.

"Our purpose was to understand her nature and personality, rather than to interpret how she dealt with [Joseph

Smith's polygamy]," said Kennedy. "She never really discussed it. She didn't like talking about it. . . . These were not things that you talked about."

"Maybe this is too big to try and tackle, maybe we should be glad it was mentioned at all," conclude EmilyCC and Jessawhy on the Mormon feminist site THE-EXPONENT.COM. "But, this seems like the easy way out."

Some critics complain that the movie focuses too much on Emma's famous husband Joseph Smith Jr., casting Emma back into the recesses of her own story. "It is merely Emma's side of Joseph Smith's story," writes Blogger Jason Pyles. "Her beautiful moments are eclipsed by [the film's] shameless dips into blatantly overblown melodrama."

"At one point, a distraught Emma yells for Joseph and is shown running toward him in slow motion," Pyles continues in a review posted at EDISONMEN.BLOGSPOT.COM. "Meanwhile, the soundtrack's music swells, and even her speaking of his name is drawn out into painful slow motion."

"The portrayal of their marriage is idyllic and feels false," EmilyCC and Jessawhy remark. "We missed seeing some real character development between [Emma and Joseph] as all of their interactions were positive."

Linda King Newell, who co-authored *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, feels that most of the dialogue and information are historically accurate. "I don't have an argument with the accuracy of what they portrayed as far as what their purpose in making the film was," Newell told SUNSTONE. "It's just not the whole story."

"Polygamy was a huge struggle for Emma," Newell added. "But the movie itself is a faith-promoting movie and a family-promoting movie. I think it will touch a lot of people and bring greater understanding of a woman who for over a hundred years was vilified by the Church, and give her a more prominent and rightful place."

Salt Lake Tribune film critic Sean Means was less forgiving: "This melodramatic biography depicts Emma Hale Smith as a dutiful wife and helpmate to her husband, Joseph Smith Jr., during the early history of the [LDS] Church," Means wrote. "But the movie is so stiflingly reverential that it would fit better in an LDS visitor center . . . than in a place that sells popcorn."

DUTCHER'S FALLING *EXPLORES DARKER TERRITORY*

IF YOU THOUGHT THAT RICHARD DUTCHER'S *STATES of Grace* was edgy, wait until you see *Falling*, the R-rated movie he wrote in 1999 but only released earlier this year.

Falling focuses on the difficult choices made by Eric Boyle (played by Richard Dutcher), a freelance videographer and lapsed Mormon who makes a small fortune when he sells footage of a gang murder to a Los Angeles news station. The action of the film is rife with violence and intensity, which one reviewer describes as "grueling and painful to an almost medieval extent." Instead of wrapping up neatly, the story ends with an ambiguous scene that leaves the viewer unsettled and unsure about the film's message.

Film critic Sean Means compares Dutcher's artistic and spiritual journey to that of playwright Neil LaBute and novelist Brian Evenson, artists who found Mormon cultural standards too confining for their creativity.

"The doctrines of Mormonism . . . demand that an artist grow as much as he can," Dutcher told Means. "But the culture certainly doesn't."

Wade Major, film critic for *BoxOffice* magazine believes Dutcher's films, as they have grown darker and more provocative, have also become "more mainstream and meditative, embracing themes that few other filmmakers of faith would dare even acknowledge."

Eric Boyle (played by Richard Dutcher) colapses after filming a gang murder in the movie Falling.

"Some will see a more petty agenda here—Dutcher angrily stabbing back at both Mormonism and Hollywood for their perceived slights and offenses," Major wrote. "But the reality is more complex, a filmmaker still wrestling with his faith and his art, and flatly refusing to allow his audience the luxury of not caring one way or the other."

"It's an important and indelible work," Major concludes, "excruciatingly difficult to watch and impossible to forget."

Dutcher wrote the screenplay for *Falling* around the time he released *God's Army*, his first Mormon-themed feature film. At the time, Dutcher was undergoing what, at the 2007 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium, he called a spiritual rebirth.

"I wanted to write something purely for myself," Dutcher told Means. "When I wrote [*Falling*], there would have been more of a feeling of hope, of redemption. I think that's still there. It's just harder."

sider joining the Church, the history of Mormon racism continues to be a painful issue.

"Before this church can move forward, we need to acknowledge the dead mule in the room, clean it out, and air it out," Gray said. "For me, an apology isn't the issue—teaching correct principles is."

Since the LDS Church has never issued an apology or repudiated racist statements of the past, black members hope new statements will eventually replace old teachings—such as the speculation that peoples of African descent were "less valiant" in the pre-existence.

"This folklore is not part of and never was taught as doctrine of the church," LDS spokesman Mark Tuttle told *Salt Lake Tribune*'s reporter Peggy Fletcher Stack. He added that the Church has no policy against interracial marriage, nor does it teach that everyone in heaven will be white.

CHURCH WANTS HANDBOOK REMOVED FROM WEBSITE

THE LDS CHURCH HAS FILED A FORMAL COPYRIGHT infringement claim with the WikiMedia Foundation. It claims that WikiMedia violated copyright by posting the Church Handbook of Instructions to the World Wide Web.

The handbook, which contains information on many ecclesiastical procedural issues, both trivial and sensitive, is available via WikiLeaks, a site dedicated to disseminating censored documents of various kinds. Although focused mainly on oppressive political regimes in Asia, WikiLeaks also contains sensitive documents relating to the Church of Scientology and other organizations.

In a statement to WikiNews, a WikiLeaks representative stated, "WikiLeaks will not remove the handbooks, which are of substantial interest to current and former Mormons. WikiLeaks will remain a place where people from around the world can safely reveal the truth."

Since the original claim was filed, WikiLeaks has posted other LDS documents, including the 20 June First Presidency letter asking Californians to campaign and vote against same-sex marriage.

In 1999, the LDS Church successfully forced the Utah Lighthouse Ministry to remove from its website pages of the handbook which described the procedure members must follow to resign their membership from the Church.

ALLEGED JOSEPH SMITH IMAGE CAUSES INTERNET FUROR

THE CHURCH HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT DISTANCING itself from the Scannel daguerreotype, a purported image of the Prophet Joseph Smith which scores of Latter-day Saints have been circulating over the Internet under the belief that it had been or was about to be authenticated by the Church.

"Some persons have mistakenly claimed that this image belongs to the [LDS Church] and that Church officials have verified or are verifying its authenticity," the 19 March statement read. "These claims are not true."

The daguerreotype image some believe to be of Joseph Smith.

The picture, which is owned by the Community of Christ, is analyzed in a new book by LDS author S. Michael Tracy, *Millions Shall Know Brother Joseph Again*. A computer technologist who has compared the death mask of Joseph Smith to 1928 pictures of his skull, Tracy believes that the daguerreotype is very likely Joseph Smith, but admits that provenance (an explanation linking the owner of the artifact to its alleged origins) is missing.

"The individual who gave [the daguerreotype] to the Community of Christ . . . claims to be a descendant of Joseph Smith," Tracy said in a *Mormon Times* interview, "but we can't link her back into the Smith family. Because that's missing, a lot of historians are very uncomfortable with this."

Daguerreotype expert Dennis Walters told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that the image can't be Joseph Smith's. Walters says the quality of the daguerreotype is too good to have been taken before Joseph Smith died in 1844, and he believes the suit the man is wearing did not become fashionable until about 1846. Further, Walters argues, the person pictured looks younger than 34—Joseph Smith's age when daguerreotypes first became available in 1839.

Tracy, who conducted a 32-point alignment between the face in the photo and Joseph Smith's death mask, disregards Walters's objections. Contemporaries commented on Joseph Smith's "'youthful' countenance," Tracy told the *Tribune*. Tracy believes that because the daguerreotype is slightly out of focus, it may obscure the Prophet's receding hairline. He also believes one of two new suits the Prophet bought shortly before his martyrdom could match the suit in the photo.

The Community of Christ, which first announced having obtained the daguerreotype in 1995, has never authenticated it (see SUNSTONE, April 1995, 86).

THE VATICAN BANS MORMONS FROM DIGITIZING PARISH RECORDS

A 5 APRIL LETTER FROM THE VATICAN CONGREGATION for Clergy asked all Catholic bishops around the world to keep Latter-day Saints from microfilming and digitizing Catholic records.

Father James Messa, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said the step was taken to prevent Latter-day Saints from using the family information they gather to posthumously baptize de-

ceased individuals by proxy.

"The problem is with baptisms for the dead," said Monsignor Terrence Fitzgerald of the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City. "I wouldn't want my mom and dad, who were lifelong Catholics, to be baptized LDS. I don't think it works, but I still think it's disrespectful."

Kathy Kirkpatrick, former president of the Association of Professional Genealogists, finds it ironic that the effects of the ban will be felt by Catholics who rely on LDS Family History Centers to do their family history.

"Most parishes can't or don't answer letters because they are understaffed and their highest priority is the living," Kirkpatrick told The *Salt Lake Tribune*.

In 2001, the Vatican issued a ruling that LDS baptisms are not valid Christian baptisms, meaning that Mormons who convert to Catholicism must be rebaptized.

"We don't have an issue with the fact that the Catholic Church doesn't recognize our baptisms, because we don't recognize theirs," said LDS spokesperson Mike Otterson. "It's a difference of belief."

People

Finished. Second and fifth, Latter-day Saints DAVID ARCHULETA, 17, AND BROOKE WHITE, 25, respectively, contestants in the 2008 season of *American Idol*. A high school student from Murray, Utah, Archuleta has attracted an intensely devoted fan base, including teenage girls who dub themselves "Archies" or "Arch Angels." White, from Mesa, Arizona, drew comparisions to musical artists Carly Simon and Carole King.

Appointed. Former Mormon Tabernacle Choir director CRAIG JESSOP, 58, as chair of the Utah State University music department. On 4 March, Jessop resigned abruptly from his prestigious post with the Tabernacle Choir.

Excommunicated. Chad Hardy, 31, the creator of *Mormons Exposed,* a 2008 calendar featuring shirtless returned missionaries (see SUNSTONE, October 2007, p. 11). "They felt the calendar is inappropriate and not the image that the Church wants to have," Hardy told the Associated Press. Hardy says several of his models have been asked by their bishops about the calendar, but none have faced disciplinary action. Hardy was disciplined just as the 2009 *Mormons Exposed* calendar went to press. A 28 July *Newsweek* feature on the excommunication claims that Hardy plans another project: *Mormon Muffins*—"a calendar of Moromon Moms and their favorite recipes."

Missing. The remains of LDS pioneer PARLEY P. PRATT, from its burial site in Rudy, Arkansas. Planning to re-inter the 19th-century apostle in Salt Lake City, workers spent four days searching unsuccessfully for Pratt's grave. The failure is blamed on the age of the site, the shallow depth of the grave, and the moisture in the clay soil.

Ruled out. As Joseph Smith descendants, MOSIAH HANCOCK and OLIVER BUELL, two purported descendants of the Prophet through his plural wives. Ugo Perego, of the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation, has now used DNA testing to rule out a total of five alleged descendants. The other three eliminees are MORONI LLEWELLYN PRATT, SEBULO JACOBS, and ORRISON SMITH.

Convicted. LDS businessman VAL E. SOUTHWICK, after swindling more than 800 investors, many of them fellow Mormons. Southwick emphasized his Mormon affiliation and used his connections in the LDS Church as his Ponzi schemes cheated investors out of as much as $180 million.

Elected. Grand Master Mason, BYU law graduate GLEN COOK, believed to be the first Mormon in nearly a century to receive that title. Angered by the similarities between Masonic rituals and Joseph Smith's endowment ceremony, Utah Freemasons long banned Latter-day Saints from joining the fraternity. The ban was rescinded in 1984.

Published. *Stolen Innocence*, a book by ELISSA WALL that chronicles her marriage at age 14 in a ceremony performed by FLDS Church leader Warren Jeffs. Last year, Wall's testimony helped secure Jeff's conviction on two counts of being an accomplice to rape (see SUNSTONE, October 2007, p. 76).

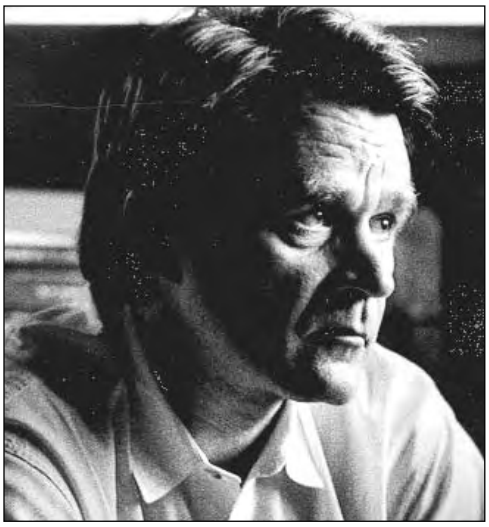
Poised. For a comeback, JIMMY FLINDERS, fictional lead of *Saturday's Warrior,* 35 years after the LDS-themed musical premiered. A sequel, titled *The White Star*, has been written by Doug Stewart and Lex de Azevedo, the writing and composing team responsible for the original.

AN OLIVE LEAF

"INTELLECTUALLY VIGOROUS *AND* SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING"

By Scott Kenney

As SUNSTONE *notes the milestone of its 150th magazine issue, we feel it is appropriate to re-run the editorial by founder and first editor Scott Kenney that appeared in* SUNSTONE*'s inaugural issue (Winter 1975). Although Kenney's framing of* SUNSTONE *as primarily for the publication of reflections by Latter-day Saint youth has expanded to include writings and thinking by those of any age, the spirit of Kenney's call, made through the words of B.H. Roberts to "thoughtful disciples" who will cast Mormon doctrines in "new formulas" and, with the Spirit's help "give to the truths received a more forceful expression," still drives all that today's Sunstone Education Foundation staff and board try to do today.*



SHORTLY AFTER THE CAMP OF ISRAEL HAD LEFT the wilderness of Sinai, the Lord commanded Moses to select seventy elders to preside over the people. After a month's preparation, the seventy gathered about the tabernacle, where the Spirit of the Lord descended upon them, and "they prophesied."

But there were two other men on whom the Spirit also rested, who were not at the tabernacle, were not of the seventy—and they prophesied as well. When Joshua heard this, he said, "My lord Moses, forbid them."

"And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:24–29).

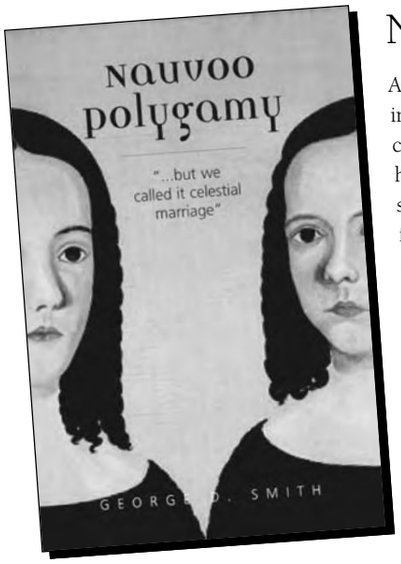
In modern Israel, the prophetic spirit is renewed among the people—"to every man is given a gift . . . that all may be profited thereby." Latter-day Saints are enjoined to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom," with the promise that "my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly . . . in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God" (D&C 46:11–12).

In teaching the things of the kingdom, young people play an increasingly important role, for it is by the light of their vision that the future of Mormonism gradually emerges. SUNSTONE is a forum for the participation of Latter-day Saint youth in the intellectual and spiritual life of our times. It is for Latter-day Saints who treasure their religious heritage and labor faithfully for its future.

In 1906 Elder B. H. Roberts of the First Council of Seventy declared that the "crying need" of Mormonism is

> for thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of its truths, but will develop its truths; and enlarge it by that development. Not half—not one-hundredth part—not a thousandth part of that which Joseph Smith revealed to the Church has yet to be unfolded, either to the Church or to the world. The work of the expounder has scarcely begun. The Prophet planted the germ-truths of the great dispensation of the fulness of times. The watering and the weeding is going on, and God is giving the increase, and will give it more abundantly in the future as more intelligent discipleship shall obtain. The disciples of "Mormonism," growing discontented with the necessarily primitive methods which have hitherto prevailed in sustaining the doctrine, will yet take profounder and broader views of the great doctrines committed to the Church; and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas; cooperating in the works of the spirit, until they help to give the truths received a more forceful expression, and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of its development" (*Improvement Era*, 1906, 712–13).

MAY SUNSTONE ATTRACT the best efforts of young Latter-day Saints who, true to the faith that their fathers have cherished, will raise the questions, pursue the discussions, and bear the witness worthy of a living faith that is both intellectually vigorous and spiritually discerning. For above all, SUNSTONE is an expression of faith in the commitment, insight, and integrity of youth—and the working of God among them.



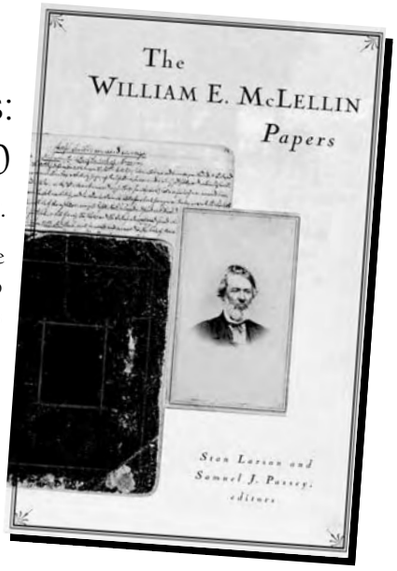
Nauvoo Polygamy *by* George D. Smith

As Joseph Smith enlisted men and women in the cause of polygamy, a pattern of initiation developed, including what might be called courtship and persuasion—long walks in the woods, urgent appeals, secrets confided, promises made, and threats to discourage rejection or disclosure. This volume contains a comprehensive scrutiny of available records from Nauvoo, Illinois. Readers will learn how the practice spread among some 200 men and 700 women even before the dispersion out of the city. The author traces a recurring fascination with polygamy back to the sixteenth century and forward to the nineteenth in answer to the question of where the idea in Nauvoo came from. Nauvoo Polygamy: ". . . but we called it celestial marriage."

George D. Smith. 672 pages. hardcover. $39.95. March 2008.

The William E. McLellin Papers: 1854–1880

Stan Larson & Samuel J. Passey, *eds.*



The well-educated, highly enigmatic school teacher of Tennessee origin, William E. McLellin, converted to Mormonism early on and rose quickly to become one of the original twelve apostles. In 1836, he saw his peaceable kingdom turn violent in the Zion's Camp march and became disillusioned. Yet throughout his life, he retained his belief in the Book of Mormon and revelation by "peep-stones," the Second Coming, and spiritual gifts. His perspective is unique in that he associated with nearly every faction of Mormonism—and his wife was RLDS. In later years, he reminisced about what his early experiences meant and what he believed. *The William E. McLellin Papers: 1854–1880.*

Stan Larson & Samuel J. Passey, eds. 608 pages. hardcover. $39.95. December 2007.

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Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest

Call for Entries

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION invites writers to enter the 2009 Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest, made possible by the Eugene and Charlotte England Education Fund.

In the spirit of Gene's writings, entries should relate to Latter-day Saint experience, theology, or worldview.

Essays, without author identification, will be judged by noted Mormon authors and professors of writing. The winner(s) will be announced in SUNSTONE and at the 2009 Association for Mormon Letters conference. Only the winners will be notified of the results. After the judging is complete, all non-winning entrants will be free to submit their essays elsewhere.

PRIZES: A total of $450 will be shared among the winning entries.

RULES: 1. Up to *three entries* may be submitted by a single author. *Five copies of each entry* must be delivered (or postmarked) to Sunstone by 31 JANUARY 2009. Entries will not be returned. A $5 fee must accompany *each* entry.

2. Each essay must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white paper and be stapled in the upper left corner. All essays must be 3500 words or fewer. The author's name should not appear on any page of the essay.

3. Each entry must be accompanied by a cover letter that states the essay's title and the author's name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number. Each cover letter must be signed and attest that the entry is the author's work, that it has not been previously published, that it is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere, will not be submitted to other forums until after the contest, and that, if the entry wins, SUNSTONE magazine has one-time, first-publication rights.

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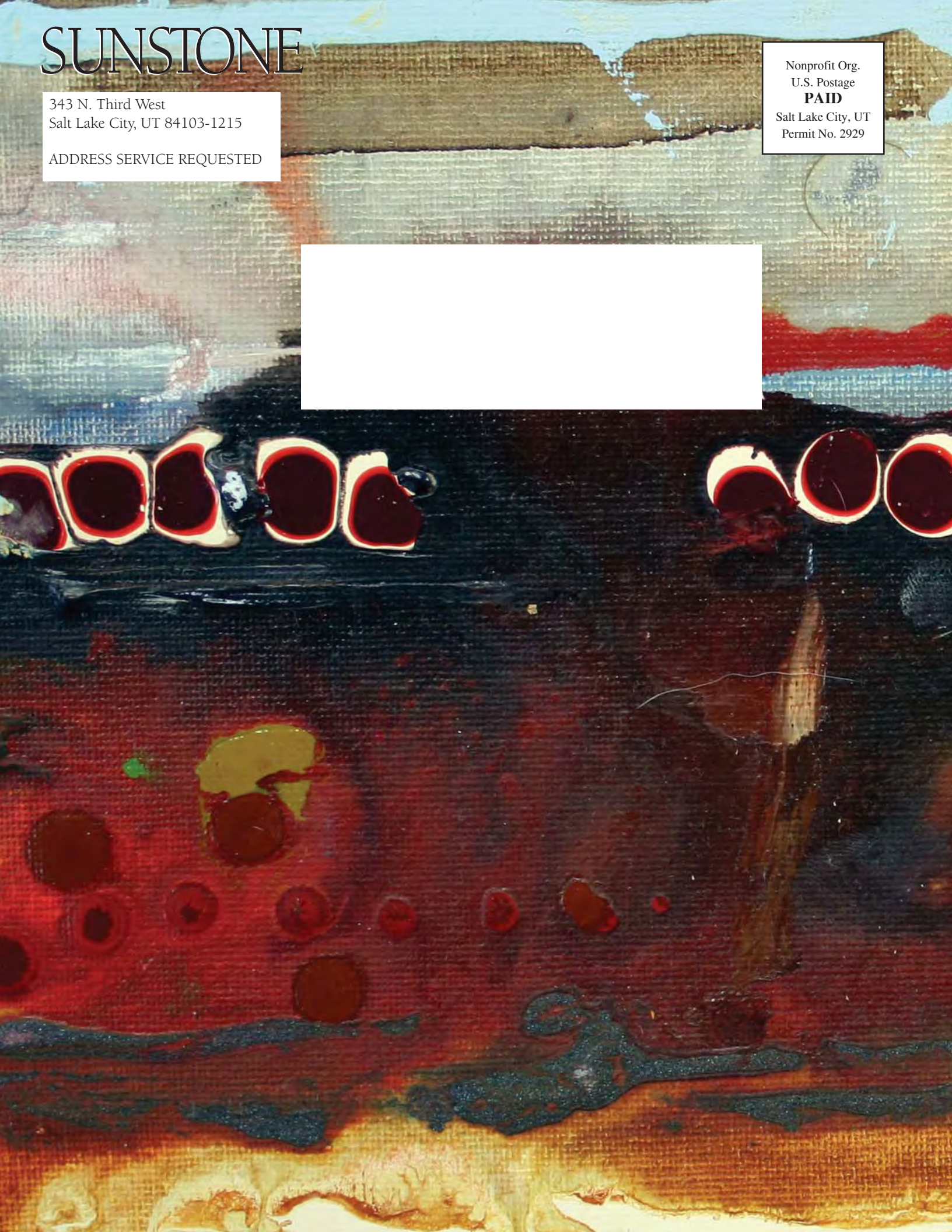

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