

I AM NOT RESIGNED

By J. Frederic Voros, Jr.

THIS IS A SAD AND UNWELCOME OCCASION. DEATH is a part of life, as much a part as birth is: as surely as we are born, we shall all surely die. We know this. None are exempt. I am not; you are not; Daniel was not. This is no surprise.

But that he should leave *now* is inconceivable. A young forty-six, Daniel was more alive than anyone I know, in both mind and body. He lived life with gusto. Whether cross-country skiing, discussing the scriptures, or singing “Twist and Shout” and “Abide With Me” around a campfire, Daniel was fully present, fully alive.

So when we heard of his fall, we all reacted alike: there must be some mistake. He cannot be gone. Not Daniel. That radiant smile cannot be snuffed out yet. We identify with the poet who wrote:

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind;
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely.
Crowned with lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains,—but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.¹

WISE AND LOVELY, kind, intelligent, and brave—Daniel was all these. But, in the words of a friend, Daniel was “first and foremost a gracer.”² As a young man, Daniel had an encounter with Jesus Christ; he heard the sweet sound of amazing grace. He saw, as the scripture says, that eternal life is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23). We cannot earn, we need not earn, that gift. Daniel found this doctrine, among other places, in the Book of Mormon: “Come, my brethren, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price” (2 Ne. 9:50).

J. FREDERIC VOROS, JR. is a lawyer and writer living in Salt Lake City. These are the remarks he offered at Daniel’s funeral immediately following a rendition of the song, “Amazing Grace.”


I remember Daniel’s Sunstone symposium paper on “Joseph Smith’s Amplified Doctrine of Grace.” Salvation comes through grace but, he noted, for Mormons that is only the beginning. Consider, for example, the sheer generosity of the Mormon afterlife: kingdoms of glory all around. Even liars and adulterers inherit a kingdom of glory—one which they surely did not earn in mortality.

Daniel reflected this spirit of generosity. He respected everyone. He wrote off no one. As another friend has said, “He was a seeker of truth but also fairness and, above all, good will. He never let disagreement ruin a friendship. He valued people more than ideas.”³ Another friend, a psychotherapist, told me, “Dan didn’t waste his time with a lot of conflict or guilt or shame. He’d put people like me out of business.”⁴ I doubt that I will ever see another come so close to being, as Jesus said of Nathanael, a person “in whom is no guile” (John 1:47)

To have known such a man, even for too short a season, is a great blessing. I only wish I had known him better: talked more, sung more, laughed more. We all feel this.

Jesus himself wept at the death of a friend. Seeing this, the Jews remarked, “Behold how he loved him!” (John 11:35–36). On the same occasion Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Daniel’s body lies before us in a box of polished wood. Maddeningly, Jesus is not here to raise him as He did Lazarus. But in due time He will: we will see that smile again. In the meantime, his spirit is “taken home to that God who gave [him] life” (Alma 40:11). He has gone ahead; we will follow. And then,

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.⁵

For like St. Paul, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38–39). We will miss you, Daniel. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. 

NOTES

1. Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Dirge Without Music* (1928).
2. Barbara Haugsoen, email dated 5 September 2002.
3. Maxine Hanks, email dated 4 September 2002.
4. Glen Lambert, interview, 8 September 2002
5. John Newton, *Amazing Grace*, verse 4.

I MISS YOU TERRIBLY

By Sally Rector

DADDY, THERE WAS A LARGE SPIDER IN THE KITCHEN last night. I caught it and took it outside for you. Same with that silly moth that kept hitting the bedroom light. I thought twice when I wanted to throw my gum out the car window, and got frustrated for you over the extra food that will probably be wasted from last night's dinner.

I read to Stacy and Kristin until they fell asleep on Wednesday. Enchanted, mysterious lands such as Narnia and Middle Earth were brought to life through your voice by our bedside for so many years. And I can still hear Hartman's little voice crying, "Read! Read!" when you'd interrupt a passage to quiz us on what a difficult word meant.

This morning I looked at my skin, dotted with moles and constellations of freckles and suddenly became very fond of my dark hair, eyesight, and skin that reflects your features.

I smiled too this morning when I made toast and put applesauce on it, and when I noticed the nine open boxes of cold cereal and two canisters of oatmeal we have stashed in our cupboard.

It was always the simple things in life that made you the most happy—all those little things that you'd tell me were "one of life's simple pleasures . . ." Like cereal.

After the rain yesterday, the valley was so clean and clear. I looked at all the mountain peaks and missed you quizzing me on their names, or telling me how the canyons were formed: "What kind of rock is that?" and "How was it made?" You used to scare us driving down the canyon as you neglected the road to gaze up at Mount Raymond, or God's Lawnmower, or the Y-Couloir.

I noticed that our speed-dial still has the phone number for the Avalanche Forecast Center on it. I wish you would be here this winter to dial it religiously, and so you could tell me how many layers I should wear under my ski parka if the message says high winds are blowing up Little Cottonwood Canyon.

Remember that time we had a talent show in our living room, and you recited the entire *Alice in Wonderland* poem "You are Old, Father William" while doing a headstand? Or how you never thought twice about grabbing our hands to vigorously skip with us through large crowds of people? Life was always incredibly real when I was with you. And you taught us to love every second of it through your example.

I've always loved your perspective on history, religion, faith, and life, though I thought I'd have years to hear it all from you in that wonderful way in which you can mix reason, knowledge, faith, and logic. You were always learning. Always teaching. And we've picked up much of your convictions through example. But there are still questions that I never got to ask you.

SALLY RECTOR is a senior majoring in behavioral science and health at the University of Utah. Like her father, Sally loves the outdoors and was Daniel's frequent climbing, biking, and skiing partner.



THE RECTOR FAMILY. *Clockwise:* Daniel, Kristin (8), Sally (20), Hartman (21), Stacy (13), Lisa

I miss your laughter and your voice so much I can hardly stand it. You always told me about your adventures—with maps out, showing me the peak you hiked this morning, the drainage you plan on skiing this winter—like a little school boy telling his class what he did over the summer. Daddy, what kind of an adventure are you on right now? I long for you to be able to tell me about it.

NOT TOO LONG ago you told me that when I'm older I will always remember you as my young, fit, fun dad. You were right. I always will.

Oh Daddy, you loved your mountains, and you wanted everyone to love them as much as you did. Mom always worried about your morning outings, but I never did. You were Superman. You were invincible. You were superior, both physically and mentally. Superior in strength, knowledge, unconditional love. That's why I couldn't believe when I learned that the mountain you loved so much, the mountain we recently hiked together, was the same mountain that took you far too soon.

I had laughed upon that Mount Superior Ridge when you told me you'd like a memorial placed, and your life remembered there on that mountain when you had someday gone. I thought someday was so very far away.

And I miss you terribly.

Daddy, I know you loved me. Your hugs always healed, your hands always comforted and helped. Thanks for always carrying the extra water on our hikes, for backing up my arguments, for always believing in all of us. Thanks for teaching me to love this beautiful world, to love learning, love people, and love life.

I love you, my best friend, My Daddy.

Always,
Your Pal

A EULOGY ON DANIEL'S BONES

By Paul Toscano



All men are mortal.
Daniel Rector was a man.
Therefore, Daniel Rector was mortal—
Though you wouldn't have known it to look at him.
And I suppose he had his imperfections, too—
Though to save my life I couldn't name one now.

His family says he was an unblemished child,
A flawless father and husband.
To those who knew him best, he seemed
A man perfect in his generation—
Though they might not put it quite that way.

I should have realized this about him while he lived.
But I couldn't quite see it.
The grace that perfected him—
The grace in which he so much believed—
So filled him that it spilled over and touched all around him,
Convincing us we were his equals,
Perhaps, even his betters.
His perfection was such
It did not make us think of our imperfections.
His uncommon gift was to provoke admiration without envy.

I knew him long and well.
And should have spent more time in his company.
I thought there would be more time to spend.
It seems ridiculous to me now
That I should have been born before him
And should live after him.
I had imagined him speaking at my passing.
Not me at his.

PAUL TOSCANO is a Salt Lake City attorney and long-time friend of the Rector family, and especially of Daniel's. He read this tribute during the graveside service at Daniel's interment.

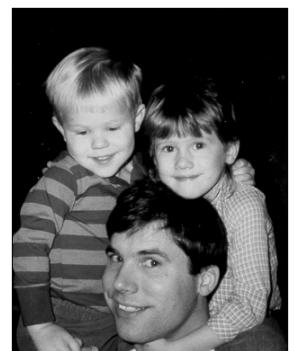
The way now seems cut off
To mete out grace for grace.
And I am left with thoughts both troubled and dark:
I cannot free my mind of beautiful Daniel's broken bones.

Of you, poor Jesus, it is written that,
Despite your agony in Gethsemane
Your scourging in Jerusalem,
Your crucifixion on Golgotha,
Not a bone of your body was broken.

But poor Daniel!
How different was your passing.
In my mind I see you falling—
Falling from the cliff face
And breaking on the rocks below,
Breaking like the Red Sea,
Breaking like the white bread of the sacrament
In the hands of a careless priest—
As the beauty of your soul escaped
Into the breaking sunrise
Like a bone-white bird soaring out of reach.

What meaning—if any—can be made of this?
What can we find in the fearful symmetry
Of bones broken and unbroken,
Hidden in the earth
Like the treasure of
Monte Cristo?

I have searched my mind,
But meaning eludes me;
My thoughts are snagged—
Riveted—
On your fall, Daniel,
On the unsupportable loss
Of a faultless friend
Shared in common by so many.



My thoughts are riveted on your broken bones.
I dwell on them,
But, God forgive me,
I cannot find a reason for their breaking;
My mind turns upon nothing,
But a single point, burrowing in my mind
Like a splinter:

Perfection has no sure footing in this place.
The best of us are doomed to climb against the pull of earth.



And in the curve of space and time all inevitably fall.
 All fall.
 Nations fall.
 Kings and judges fall.
 Armies fall, and governments.
 Markets fall, and memories and metaphors.
 Hopes and dreams and aspirations fall.
 And all the workmanship of man and woman, too.
 And all we love.
 All,
 Falling on the rocks below
 Like flecks of snow
 As white as bone.

And in the midst of this
 White cataract of death,
 We are asked to believe—

That falling bodies take to light,
 That life is more than mortality,
 That the bonds of love are stronger than the cords of death,
 That the uncertain grace of an invisible God
 Is sufficient to deliver us from
 The infinite indifference of the universe and
 The pointless zero of our own doubts.

Who can believe this?
 Who?

Daniel.
 Daniel could.
 Daniel did.



He believed the good news
 That Christ died so we might live,
 That those who count themselves righteous are sinners,
 While those who count themselves sinners
 Stand on the threshold of the Kingdom of God.

He believed
 In making allowance for doubt and disappointment,
 In giving and forgiving with an open hand,
 In uttering no derogatory word,
 In being fair.

Daniel was fair—
 Fair as the meadows,
 Fair as the woodlands he loved so much.
 He was favored with a complex, searching mind
 And boundless energy
 And matchless hope—
 Hope for reconciliation.

His great heart longed for the gathering together
 Of all that, in his life,
 He had seen broken and dashed to pieces.
 For him life was never a game,
 Nor a play,
 Nor a test.
 It was for him always
 A mystery—
 Pressed upon us by necessity,
 To be accepted
 Without the consolation of understanding.

If we were to climb, as he did, into the mountains in the night
 And look into the deep, starry sky,
 We would behold for ourselves this mystery—
 There in plain sight,
 All around us,
 Reaching out to us,

The dread and awe of it chilling our bones.

That mystery now enfolds him.
 And we are left shattered by his fall,
 And cannot be reconciled to it—
 Not by the first faith gifted to our youthful hearts,
 Nor by the hard won faith of our aging minds,
 But by the final faith we choose in grief and in despair.

Death and amnesia are the burden of the living—
 But those of us who loved him best
 Will carry the memory of his bones
 In the empty tomb of our hearts
 Through all the remains of our lives.



FINDING CHRISTMAS AT THE CENTER OF HISTORY

By Daniel H. Rector

This essay was originally published in SUNSTONE, September 1987.

MY FIRST CRISIS OF FAITH WAS CAUSED BY SANTA Claus. I can remember walking out of opening exercises in the Fairfax Ward Junior Sunday School at Christmas time with the devastating thought that if Santa Claus isn't real, then maybe the baby Jesus isn't either. The crisis passed soon enough when I became convinced that my parents were very serious about religion. And, like a Lamanite stripling warrior, once I had no doubt that my parents believed, that was enough for me.

My trouble with Santa Claus shows that my child-like faith was dangerously bound up in a child's understanding. Since then I've discovered a process that bible scholars call "deconstruction and reconstruction" which allows understanding to change without jeopardizing the fundamentals of faith. This process is illustrated by my recent re-examination of the New Testament Christmas stories using the best source available, Raymond Brown's *The Birth of the Messiah*. Brown is a Catholic priest and a believer in many of the supernatural elements of the bible. Using the same critical methods that have caused him to affirm the historicity of the synoptic gospels generally, Brown presents evidence for the conclusion of many mainline bible scholars that the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke are figurative and theological rather than historical in nature.

The consensus among these scholars is that the nativity traditions developed late and were added to the existing text of the gospels because they portrayed in historical terms what the Christian community was coming to understand through revelation: that Jesus was divine from his mother's womb. If the newer, more theologically developed infancy stories were tacked in front of an older, more historical Gospel collection, it would explain why the common knowledge of the baby's divinity in these chapters disappears later on. The cut and paste theory also explains a complete lack of corroboration, even in the subsequent chapters of Matthew and Luke, for the annunciations, the virgin conception, or the birth at Bethlehem.

Inconsistencies between the accounts also argue against their historicity. Brown's analysis reveals irreconcilable conflicts: where the family comes from, why they are in Bethlehem, and how they get to Nazareth afterwards.

Portions of the stories can be understood as reworked Old Testament themes: Herod is Pharaoh, slaughtering the innocents, and The Magi are Balaam who saw a star rise out of Jacob. Joseph has dreams and goes to Egypt like his namesake patriarch, and John the Baptist's parents quote verbatim from Abraham and Sarah. These allusions illustrate the evangelists' message that Jesus embodied the literal fulfillment of Israel's hopes throughout history.

The major events of Christ's ministry are foreshadowed similarly. The miracles and signs, the heavenly declarations, the joyful acceptance by the lowly and contrite, the violent rejection by the proud and powerful, the Messiah's humiliation and his final victory are dramatized to convey the significance of Christ's birth for all that would follow. The meaning is clear: Christmas is the center of all history.

Viewing the accounts figuratively does not necessarily deny them a factual basis. Those points common to both Matthew and Luke such as the virgin birth may be part of a single original tradition which evolved into two very different stories. From this perspective, a shortage of historical constraints would have worked in the authors' favor, permitting them to freely express their theology in the characters of the story. After all, Matthew and Luke were not biographers but prophets; testators of a truth not fully revealed in history.

THIS BRINGS ME back to Junior Sunday School, but with a difference. "Finding out" about the manger, the wise men and the star has not precipitated a crisis of faith similar to what I encountered because of Santa Claus. Since then I've learned to differentiate between the foundations of my faith anchored in religious experience, and the sometimes inaccurate assumptions and interpretations surrounding them.

Much of what I assume to be revealed truth is in reality my own interpretation. This fact becomes painfully clear when the weight of evidence makes a belief no longer tenable. At that point, my challenge is to deconstruct and reconstruct rather than abandon the belief. This involves separating revelation from interpretation, changing the interpretation based on the new information, and then joining the two again to form a new synthesis—a stronger testimony built on new revelation as well as new evidence. If a synthesis is not forthcoming, I suspend judgment, shelving momentous conclusions until I have enough information to reconcile the evidence with my experience.

As it applies to the infancy narratives, the process of deconstruction and reconstruction has shown me that my faith rests on much firmer foundations than the ones supporting the manger in Bethlehem. I had assumed that the historicity of the infancy stories was necessary to the doctrine of Jesus' divinity. Now I'm convinced that my faith in Jesus Christ rests on my own experiences with him rather than on historical evidence. This appears to also have been the case with the first Christians who, if we credit Brown, were trusting in Christ's divinity a generation before the nativity stories.

This brings me to a new synthesis of faith and understanding about the infancy narratives. I see that they are an



DANIEL WITH HIS PARENTS, BROTHER, AND SISTERS
(L to R): Hartman Rector, Jr., Connie Rector, Daniel, Lila Tueller,
John Rector, Laura Aston, Kathy Anderson, Lucy Morey

effect rather than the *cause* of Christian faith in Jesus as Lord—outgrowths of the redemptive experience which is the true bedrock of Christianity. They are also a testimony to the truth that all God's works in history, past and future, and all the hopes and dreams of God's people converge at the coming of his son into the world.

My study of the New Testament Christmas stories forces me to rely more on my own religious experience than external evidence. However, I've found that my testimony is more reliable

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after weathering the challenge. The process has also focused my attention on the message of the stories rather than on the mere sequence of events. More than ever, I am moved by the irony of God's condescension in coming to the world as a king born in a stable. And I see that we can no more avoid a decision for or against Christ than could Herod or the shepherds. The power of these stories is not in their evidence, but in the crucial centrality and the universal implications of Christ's advent which they so dramatically and compellingly portray. ☺

FRIENDS REMEMBER

TO ME, DANIEL Rector was always Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy with Jay Gatsby good looks. I first met him in Tallahassee, Florida, where his parents were serving as mission presidents. Daniel, a young Aaronic priesthood holder, was assigned as my home teaching companion. He was a clean-cut, good-looking kid eager to serve. Everybody liked him. And I had rotating crushes on President Rector's very attractive daughters and therefore let no excuse pass to hang out at the mission home.

I didn't see him again for fifteen years, then encountered him at a Sunstone symposium. Same Daniel. I recognized him instantly. He had that same young boy glow about him. He was always cheerful, inquisitive, and enthusiastic about life. He made everyone feel he was delighted to see them. He was so sincere you just had to trust him. You walked away from a conversation with him feeling refreshed, happy from the experience. He was impossible to dislike.

And he always stood for good things. He represented what I consider to be the best of Mormon life and community. I have not seen his parents since they served in Tallahassee, but they have every reason to be proud of him. He left something good in this life.

—KEN DRIGGS
Atlanta, Georgia

ONE OF MY earliest encounters with Daniel came soon after he'd become Sunstone's publisher. In the early 1980s, I lived in Denver but had come to Salt Lake for the annual symposium. The art sale that year included an auction of several original Calvin Grondahl cartoons, and I immediately coveted the "Are You Still Single?" cartoon (Faith-Promoting Rumors, page 50) I entered the first bid: \$50.

A short time later, I found that someone named Jeff Johnson had bid \$55. (I guessed that Johnson also belonged to the never-been-married club and, like me, found this cartoon particularly hilarious.) I upped my bid to \$60. Later, Johnson bid \$65. Bidding continued for three days until Johnson's bid was \$200. I took a deep breath and bid \$205 and wrote underneath: "Back off, Johnson! This is mine!"

A short time later, Daniel said that my last bid was final and, for \$205, the cartoon was mine. In fact, he said, since I had bid the most for any of the Grondahl cartoons, he would personally deliver it to me in Denver the following month. Wow, I thought, what a great guy!

A year or so later, I met Jeff Johnson for the first time and began teasing him about our past bidding war. Looking perplexed, he said he had bid only \$55 and had then left town on business. Not far from us stood Daniel Rector, with a big, Cheshire cat grin. He never openly admitted it, but I knew immediately that he'd been bidding against me in Jeff's name. And ever since then, Daniel always found great joy in telling others that story whenever I was around.

Whenever I see Daniel's photo with that huge smile, I always remember his dastardly bidding deed—and I will miss him.

—STEVE MAYFIELD
Salt Lake City, Utah

We welcome your memories of Daniel. Please post them on Sunstone's website, <www.sunstoneonline.com>, email them to <SunstoneUT@aol.com>, or send them to us: 343 N. Third West, Salt Lake City, UT 84103. We'll gladly send them along to his family.