

SUNSTONE

MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, AND ART

Biological Evolution

TOWARD A RECONCILIATION OF
THE SCIENCE AND OUR FAITH

BY WILLIAM S. BRADSHAW

March 2010—\$7.50



**SILVER
WINGS**
Fiction by
**Kevin
Holdsworth**

**DIVINE
MALFEASANCE**
Personal Essay
by **Holly Welker**

**BECK,
SKOUSEN,
AMERIGO,
AND ME** by
**Eric
Samuelsen**

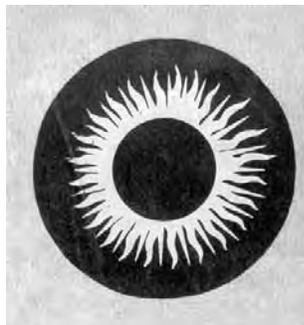
**GOOD
WOMAN**
Personal Essay
by **Dana
Haight Cattani**

SUNSTONE

MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, & ART

MARCH 2010

Issue 158



SUNSTONE (ISSN 0363-1370) is published by The Sunstone Education Foundation, Inc., a non-profit corporation with no official ties to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Articles represent the opinions of the writers only.

SUNSTONE is indexed in the *Index to Book Reviews in Religion and Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBBR 1975—on CD-ROM*.

Submissions may be by e-mail attachment or on IBM-PC compatible computer discs (MS Word or WordPerfect format). Submissions should not exceed 8,000 words and must be accompanied by a signed letter giving permission for the manuscript to be filed in the Sunstone Collection at the University of Utah Marriott Library (all literary rights are retained by authors). Manuscripts will not be returned; authors will be notified concerning acceptance within ninety days.

SUNSTONE is interested in feature- and column-length articles relevant to Mormonism from a variety of perspectives, news stories about Mormons and the LDS Church, and short reflections and commentary. Poetry submissions should have one poem per page, with the poet's name and address on each page; a self-addressed, stamped envelope should accompany each submission. Short poems—haiku, limericks, couplets, and one-liners—are very welcome. Short stories are selected only through the annual Brookie and D. K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest (next submission deadline: 30 September 2010; \$5 fee per story). Letters for publication should be identified. SUNSTONE does not acknowledge receipt of letters to the editor. Letters addressed to specific authors will be forwarded, unopened, to them.

SUNSTONE will not provide subscriber addresses to mail list solicitors without permission. Send all correspondence and manuscripts to:

SUNSTONE
343 N. Third West
Salt Lake City, UT 84103-1215
(801) 355-5926
email: info@sunstonemagazine.com
website: www.sunstonemagazine.com

United States subscriptions to SUNSTONE are \$45 for 6 issues, \$76 for 12 issues, and \$106 for 18 issues. International subscriptions are \$58 for 6 issues; \$100 for 12 issues; \$138 for 18 issues. All payments must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. All international subscriptions will be sent via surface mail. Bona fide student and missionary subscriptions are \$10 less than the above rates. A \$10 service charge will be deducted from refund amount on cancellations. All subscription prices subject to change without notice.

Printed by K and K Printing

Copyright © 2010, The Sunstone Education Foundation Inc. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

FEATURES

- 13 *Holly Welker* DIVINE MALFEASANCE—2009 Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest Second Place Winner
- 18 *Eric Samuelsen* GLENN BECK, CLEON SKOUSEN, AMERIGO VESPUCCI, AND ME
- 25 *William S. Bradshaw* BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION: Toward a Reconciliation of the Science and Our Faith
- 38 *O. Cliff Clay* GENESIS 1 AND SCIENCE SIDE BY SIDE
- 41 *Kevin Holdsworth* SILVER WINGS—2008 Brookie and D.K. Brown Fiction Contest Sunstone Winner
- 59 *Jeanette Atwood* NOAH RISING

POETRY

- 17 *Simon Perchik* EBB

COLUMNS

- 4 *Stephen R. Carter* FROM THE EDITOR: Intricate Fray CORNUCOPIA
- 6 *Dana Haight Cattani* THE BIBLE ACCORDING TO BASEBALL: *Good Woman*
- 7 *James P. Harris* A PLACE FOR EVERY TRUTH: *Church and Politics—1932*
- 9 *Dallas Robbins* IN THE WORLD: *The Seven Deadly Sins*
- 11 *Michael Vinson* SCRIPTURE NOTES: *Was Eve Created as a Helper for Adam?*
- 12 *John Wilcox* NOTES FROM ABROAD: *Island of the Misfit Mormons*
- 51 *D. Jeff Burton* BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS. . . : Young Adult Borderlanders Confront Dating

REVIEW

- 53 *Lisa Torcasso Downing* NOT YOUR MOTHER'S BOOK ON MOTHERHOOD: *The Mother in Me*, edited by Kathryn Lynard Soper, and *The Year My Son and I Were Born*, by Kathryn Lynard Soper.

UPDATE

- 55 A new genealogy for Joseph Smith; Vigil held for Stuart Matis; Missionary force shifts from Europe to Latin America, Glenn Beck and social justice; and more . . .

This was issue 156



In October 2009, we published *The Best of Mormonism* under our imprint Curelom Books and sent it to our subscribers as an annual. It was counted as issue 156. We put up a survey hoping to hear what you thought of it and whether you would like us to continue sending *The Best of Mormonism* every two years. Visit <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XYDD5L3> to give us your feedback. Thanks!

Front cover art by Serknor—istockphoto.com
Back cover art by Jeanette Atwood

SUNSTONE

Founded in 1974

Editors Emeritus

SCOTT KENNEY 1974-1978
ALLEN D. ROBERTS 1978-1980
PEGGY FLETCHER 1978-1986
ELBERT EUGENE PECK 1986-2001
DAN WOTHERSPOON 2001-2008

Publishers Emeritus

DANIEL H. RECTOR 1986-1991
WILLIAM STANFORD 2000-2008

Editor

STEPHEN R. CARTER

Director of Outreach and Symposia

MARY ELLEN ROBERTSON

Associate Editor

CAROL B. QUIST

Section Editors

PHYLLIS BAKER, Fiction Contest
CHERYL BRUNO, Touchstones
SCOT DENHALTER, "Cybersaints"
ALAN AND VICKIE EASTMAN, "Righteous Dominion"
JAMES P. HARRIS, "A Place for Every Truth"
HUGO OLAIZ, News/Update
DIXIE PARTRIDGE, Poetry
DALLAS ROBBINS, "In the World"
ALISON TAKENAKA, "Margin Notes"
MICHAEL VINSON, "Scripture Notes"

Editorial Assistants

JOHN-CHARLES DUFFY, HUGO OLAIZ

Contributing Columnist

D. JEFF BURTON

Cartoonists

JEANETTE ATWOOD, CAMI THORNOCK
JONATHAN CLARK, JONNY HAWKINS

Much-Appreciated Volunteers

ADRIANE ANDERSEN, SUSAN ANDERSEN,
PHYLLIS BAKER, LES AND SHANON GRIPKEY
DON AND LUCINDA GUSTAVSON,
ANN M. JOHNSON, LLOYD PENDLETON,
MARY BETH PENDLETON, SHERRI PENDLETON
CAMI THORNOCK, SHARI THORNOCK



THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The mission of The Sunstone Education Foundation is to sponsor open forums of Mormon thought and experience. Under the motto, "Faith Seeking Understanding," we examine and express the rich spiritual, intellectual, social, and artistic qualities of Mormon history and contemporary life. We encourage humanitarian service, honest inquiry, and responsible interchange of ideas that is respectful of all people and what they hold sacred.

Board of Directors

MICHAEL J. STEVENS chair, RORY T. SWENSEN,
BILL BRADSHAW, LAURA L. BUSH, LAURA R. COMPTON
DOE DAUGHTREY, NADINE R. HANSEN, KIM MCCALL
J. FREDERICK (TOBY) PINGREE, JANA BOUCK REMY
J. BONNER RITCHIE, CHARLES T. SCHOFIELD
MARK D. THOMAS, MATT THURSTON, CLAY WHIPKEY

Office Manager

CAROL B. QUIST

Regional Symposium Partners (2010 symposia)

MOLLY BENNION, Northwest
JOHN HAMER, MIKE KARPOWICZ,
JEANNE MURPHY, DON COMPIER, Independence

Audio Assistants

WADE GREENWOOD, STEVE MAYFIELD,
MATT WRIGHT

Photographer

STEVE MAYFIELD

YEA, YEA



NAY, NAY

PAY ATTENTION TO THE WIRING

...AND CHECK YOUR CONNECTIONS

AS A 48-YEAR-OLD, I loved Tracie Lamb's article, "Wanna Know What Women Want?" in SUNSTONE's issue 157. I have my own career and have raised a large family. What I want is someone all to myself; someone who adores me, who wants to have fun before we have sex.

Lamb is right on about how the *Sex in the City* ethos has hijacked our romantic imaginations. I have said for years that Hollywood's version of intimacy is from a man's point of view. I hate it. I don't want to scratch an itch with another man; I want real intimacy. Glenn Beck would even make my list!

More important, I know men and women are wired differently. We do not approach sex the same way. Each gender has to set aside his or her hunger to see and try to fulfill the other's need. Only then can both be satisfied. Boohoo if some women only want to use a man instead of creating "one" with two.

Kudos to the author!

SHELLY MARTIN
Morgan, Utah

IN RESPONSE TO Tracie Lamb's article "Wanna Know What Women Want?" in issue 157 of SUNSTONE, Stephenie Meyer (and her fans) make a big mistake in equating the obsessive "love" Lamb describes with Mormon values. By linking positive values such as abstinence and fidelity with danger and codependency, Meyer romanticizes a dangerous type of relationship. I would argue that the dangerous obsession of a man mixed with a woman's debilitated self-esteem and belief that her only value is what the man gives her, creates a dynamic that is more dangerous than teenage promiscuity.

We need to be teaching our daughters about their true value and how to develop lasting self-esteem. Once our daughters see the gold in themselves, they will naturally create good values and relationships. We need to see *far fewer* girls and women in relationships with men who exhibit any of the behaviors so blatantly illustrated (and romanticized) by Edward's character.

LAURA BRISCOE LAVOIE
Chicago, Illinois

HONEST JON by Jonathan David Clark



The opening band for the heavenly host.

STEALTH SOUP FOR THE TEENAGE SOUL

I ADMIT THAT I'm not into the *Twilight* series, though I've always admired the book cover designs. However, I found myself more intrigued than I thought I would be by the collection of *Twilight*-themed articles in SUNSTONE's issue 157. I am especially interested in Tyler Chadwick's implication (in "Why *Twilight* Is Good for You: How the Uncanny Can Make Us More Christlike") that *Twilight* could be interpreted as a kind of stealth "For the Strength of Youth" pamphlet. By dressing moral values in "uncanny" vampire clothing, Meyer manages to sneak them through the (usually firmly locked) gates of the teenage mind.

In his book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell argues that teens are more likely to make life choices based on exposure to dramatic, easily romanticized behavior than on the use of logic. Thus, the reason cigarette use remains so consistently high among teens—despite its well-trumpeted health risks is because it has an alluring image.

In the *Twilight* books, Edward and Bella don't actually have sex until after they're married, and these characters are the epitome of dramatic, easily romanticized behavior. It follows then (we hope) that, as *Twilight* catches on, sexual abstinence until marriage will become just as sexy as cigarette use is among our hormone-ridden teenage population. If this is the case, then I'm sure I stand with Young Men and Young Women leaders across the world in saluting Meyer for doing what a thousand and one Standards Nights can only dream of. And making money while she's at it.

RUBEN SWENSON
Orem, Utah

FROM WAL-MART TO UNITED ORDER

I ALWAYS ENJOY reading James Harris's columns on James E. Talmage's life. The article in SUNSTONE 157 ("Beastly Reflections") tickled a little thought I've had in my head for a while.

Talmage reports that many of his brethren thought that labor unions may be a modern manifestation of "secret combinations" or "the mark of the beast;" I used to feel that Wal-Mart sailed under these flags as well—but then the

light of truth filled my mind.

It happened on a day when I saw a Wal-Mart employee waiting in a checkout line, then another eating a sandwich in the in-store Subway shop. I remembered that when I visit my Wal-Mart-employed brother in the Northwest, the great majority of his friends are fellow Wal-Mart employees. He was even trying to date a cashier.

I realized that far from being the devil's kingdom on earth, perhaps Wal-Mart may actually be a prototype for an Orderville-esque United Order.

There is little distinction among employees, all dressed in their blue vests as they move through the acres-large store maintaining order in their various departments. They aren't paid much, but Wal-Mart doesn't charge much for its merchandise either. If the company were willing to provide sleeping quarters in the back, the employees could probably find all the necessities of life right there in the store.

Wal-Mart is certainly trying to take over the world, moving into communities and hiring its workforce from the shops it puts out of business. The stores get larger and

larger, and some are even installing sections for organic food. If events continue this way, it won't be the Kingdom of God but Wal-Mart that covers the earth—everyone a full-time employee. Then all the Church has to do is buy out Wal-Mart and we'll be ready to usher in the Millennium.

Is it any wonder, then, that Wal-Mart spelled backward is Tram-Law? A tram is a train, transporting people down a single track; and in this case, the destination is the "law" of consecration to come.

RON LEAVITT
Albuquerque, New Mexico

VIVA GLENN BECK

I HOPE I don't get lynched on the way out of the magazine today, but I gotta say, I'm glad Glenn Beck is a Mormon.

After returning from my mission, I worked in construction with a guy who listened to conservative talk shows all day long. I was innocent in those days and was quite captivated by Rush Limbaugh's aggressive rhetoric and sense of mission. But then I made the mistake of taking a philosophy class, and suddenly Rush didn't seem so right. We'll he was definitely *right*, just not right. Ever since, I've been leery of people who think they're too right . . . er, correct: righteousness turns me off as much as lefteousness does.

I agree with the commentators critical of Beck, cited in "Mormonism and the 'Glenn Beck' Phenomenon," (SUNSTONE 157). He really isn't helping the Church's image much, and a lot of what he says goes against my understanding of Church teachings. However, I think Beck's extreme-right ethos has laid the groundwork for left-leaning Mormon figures to take the stage.

In his book *The Angel and the Beehive*, Armand Mauss points out that the Church has always been in the process of finding its balance, leaning alternately in liberal and conservative directions. Beck has brought such a significant weight to the right side of the Church's balance that I think everyone will be relieved if we can get some weight on the left. There may be room now for a Mormon commentator to go public with stronger left-wing politics than ever before and still find an accepting—even welcoming—church.

Or perhaps Beck was sent to us to balance out Harry Reid?

MARSHYLL WELLS
Omaha, Nebraska

REVISED THIRD EDITION

FOR THOSE WHO WONDER

Managing Religious Questions and Doubts



D. Jeff Burton
With Foreword by Lowell L. Bennion

www.forthosewhowonder.com
FREE DOWNLOADS!

\$7 • LDS Bookstores • ISBN 1-883992-06-0

FROM THE EDITOR

INTRICATE
FRAY

By Stephen R. Carter

Earlier versions of this essay were posted on the group blog *The Red Brick Store*, 14 April 2009 and 16 June 2009.

The day before my sister married, my father sat the family down and told us that she was heading into the most important day of her life. For some reason, this idea rubbed me wrong, but I didn't know why at the time.

I figured it out a few years later when my wife and I were lying in bed staring at the ceiling. We had just started jobs as schoolteachers in a small Wyoming town, and the initial adrenaline of moving ourselves and two sons 3000 miles, starting new jobs, and buying a house had worn off.

For five years before that night, we had been attending graduate school. We had been excited; we had worked hard; we had looked forward to receiving our degrees. We had felt that we were setting up an interesting and rewarding life for ourselves by investing all this time, money, and energy. But now, with these new jobs, we suddenly felt like our lifeworld had derailed onto a track destined for a town called "And then they taught school for thirty years, retired, and died."

"Is this it?" we asked each other as we stared into the darkness. "Is *this* what we spent so many years working for?" Would the rest of our lives be falling action? My wife and I were suffering from what we now call narrative poverty—a state where one suddenly finds oneself without a meaningful story for one's life.

I believe that the same thing can happen with marriage. If the act of marrying in the temple is the single most important event in a Mormon's life, then what is the rest of life about? Who wants two-thirds of their lives to be an epilogue?

This is probably one of the reasons so many of us invest so heavily in landing that job promotion or buying that larger house. We're looking for some kind of

rising action to define our married lives; some kind of progress indicator. It's probably one of the reasons my wife and I went to graduate school. We were looking for a solid narrative.

I wonder if the reason for the high divorce rate nationally is partly that our marriages suffer from a lack of narrative. After all, the story of marriage doesn't get much help from the mass media. I'm trying to think of the last blockbuster movie or novel with a substantive story taking place within a marriage, and I'm not coming up with anything. This lack is probably because stories are built around change, and the easiest changes to see are the big ones. Why else do so many stories start with people not in love and end with them in love, or vice versa? Because those are pretty big changes.

Providing the world with compelling marriage narratives is where I believe Mormon authors should be uniquely qualified to make a significant contribution.

Our doctrine of eternal progression provides a high-octane fuel for the marriage narrative that few other traditions have. We believe that this life is only the preface to an eternity of progression—that the story should only get more interesting as it goes along. The plot has only just begun when vows have been exchanged.

Most Mormons marry in their early 20s, about one-third of their way through life. Interestingly, in most stories, the inciting event (the event that really gets the plot going) hits about the one-third mark too. So, narratively, marriage is positioned at the most dramatically weighty turning point of a Mormon's life.

We are also steeped in the culture of family. Our families are often larger than the national average. We tend to keep close ties with extended family. We cast our ancestors in integral roles when we tell our family narratives. In fact, we consider the entire population of the planet—past,

present, and future—to be part of a great big family. Family is pretty much our central metaphor.

So falling in love may be fun, but Mormonism avers that marriage and family is where substantive soul work is done.

However, if building up a strong tradition of marriage literature is something we want to do, we have our work cut out for us. As I said earlier, we aren't going to get any help from the mass media—they're interested only when someone is falling in love or breaking up. (Or did I miss the headlines reading "Pitt and Jolie Spend Day in Matrimonial Bliss"?) Even one of the great novelists of the 20th century fails us: "It is a sound instinct of the common people which persuades them that with [marriage], all that needs to be said is said," writes W. Somerset Maugham on the first page of *The Razor's Edge*. "When male and female, after whatever vicissitudes you like, are at last brought together, they have fulfilled their biological function and interest passes to the generation that is to come." And I am unaware of a strong current of marriage literature in Mormonism. Plenty of sermons, yes, but few narratives. The main story I hear is the pulpit joke about the husband who takes lots of walks.

Also, sadly, in practice, Mormon culture isn't so hot at creating marriage narratives. We're so obsessed with getting our children to that temple ceremony that we forget to set the stage for the rest of their play. We'd have to start thinking about marriage not as a story's background, but as its main character, complete with goals and dramatic needs.

Perhaps with the development of a robust marriage literature, we could have a hand in creating a world where people talk about the stories of great marriages the same way they talk about the stories of great leaders or great fictional characters. People might start to get into marriage because they see it as an adventure, because they're excited about the things they can do there, because they want to add their unique story to the larger body of marriage literature. Marriage will be like the Amazon river, or Mount Kilimanjaro; and the married will be their explorers.

We'll have to give up a few things, though. First, we'll have to redefine the perfect marriage. A good step would be to take down the façade we currently present of our marriages being the paragon of unflappable domesticity and let the rest of the world know that we're struggling just like they are. But we should also let them know that we're

trying to savor the struggle; we're trying to see it as productive. We're trying to make something here, not just endure to the end.

We'll have to give up the safe, simple stories of marriage maintenance and forge into the stakes-laden, complex stories of marriage *making*. We'll have to develop fecund new metaphors. "Marriage is a partnership"? "Marriage is a tender flower"? Nice sentiments, and helpful in their way, but boring. If we want to create compelling marriage narratives, we need to leave our well-intentioned advice behind. Marriage literature is not marriage therapy. It's the creation of possibilities.

A few months ago I had some free time and wandered into my old haunt, Deseret Industries. In my early 20s, I would bring home a bag of used books almost weekly, but on this particular visit, only one book caught my eye: Nick Hornby's novel *How To Be Good*—a topic no Mormon can help but be interested in.

The story is about Katie, a general practitioner married with two children. Her husband, David has an ill-paying job writing a column called "The Angriest Man in Holloway." Their marriage is falling apart and on the verge of ending when David meets a spiritual healer named DJ GoodNews. The encounter turns David completely around, and he becomes the most ineptly philanthropic man in Holloway.

GoodNews moves into their home and, with David, concocts one grandiose humanitarian scheme after another. David gives away the family's computers, makes the kids donate the toys they *like*, and convinces his neighbors to take in homeless kids.

Being a family practice doctor, Katie has always considered herself a good person, but she has a hard time dealing with these changes. David and GoodNews throw the household and Katie's life and beliefs into chaos.

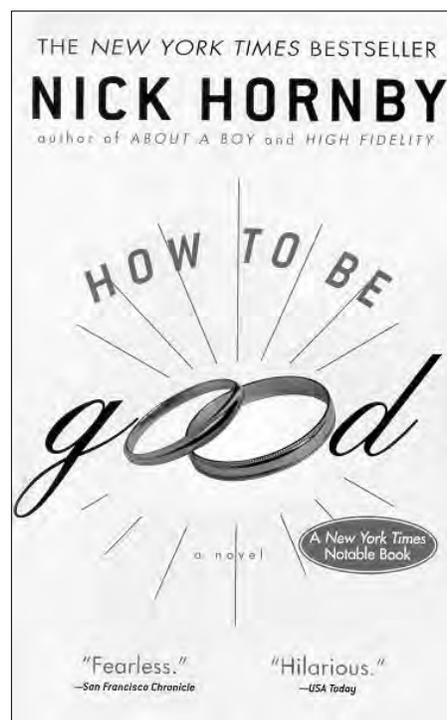
About halfway into this book, I realized that it would make a great model for Mormon marriage fiction.

The difficulty with Mormon fiction (and anti- or critical-of-Mormon literature) is that someone is always right, and the purpose of the story is to show why that someone is right. Often, the author makes no bones about who that enlightened person is from the very beginning.

I realize that a lot of people enjoy this kind of fiction. Reading it is like riding a roller coaster where you know that, as wild

as it may get, numerous engineers have tested this thing countless times, ensuring that you will come out the other end as whole as you went in. I assume the same principle is at work in romance novels, where the reader automatically knows who needs to get together with whom; or sci-fi, where the reader knows that the alien lord will be overcome; or literary fiction, where the protagonist will inevitably end up alone, in the rain.

How To Be Good, however, is different. Though the reader is meant to side with Katie—the normal, sane, rational person



—and look askance at David and GoodNews—the two who are trying to do good in the world—real goodness seems up for grabs.

For example, the reader completely agrees with Katie that housing a faith healer and a homeless boy named Monkey are terrible ideas. And, indeed, some neighbors get burned during the course of the project. But, by golly, as a result, three homeless kids find their way into a better life.

However, while saving homeless kids, Katie and David's family is going to pot. Their son starts stealing from fellow students, their daughter slowly loses her humanity to sanctimony, and Katie's brother shows warning signs of suicide.

A battle is certainly raging here, but the book is not about who wins and who loses, or who's right and who's wrong. Instead, it

tracks the intricacies of the fray. It shows how the people caught in this tension grow.

One of my favorite parts of the book is when Katie and her daughter Molly go to an Anglican church. There they listen to a slightly cracked pastor who sings pop and Broadway songs in her sermon. At one point, she quotes St. Paul's thoughts, "Charity is not puffed up and does not vaunt itself." Katie grabs the quote as ammunition to shoot down her husband's inflated righteousness.

She takes her shot during a particularly tense moment, but David points out that the same scripture was quoted at their wedding ceremony, except that charity was replaced with love. Then he drags out a box of memorabilia he had assembled a few days after their honeymoon. "It was a fantastic day. I was so happy. I just didn't want to forget it," he says.

And, for just a moment, despite their battling worldviews, a tiny bit of warmth sparks between them.

Her own warmth, Katie reflects later, "is sick, dying, or dead . . . there is just enough for Molly and Tom [her son], but it doesn't really count, because it's a reflex, and my occasional flashes of warmth are like my occasional desire to wee."

In the end, David becomes less reliant on utopian visions, and Katie, a little less reliant on rationality. They both become more fluid. In other words, in this novel, we don't have the triumph of an idea or principle. Neither David nor Katie is right. Instead, we get some character development.

It seems to me that eternal progression is exactly what *How To Be Good* is all about. People don't progress because they get righter and righter. They progress because in all its idiosyncrasy, their humanity becomes larger, more robust, and more diverse in response to their circumstances.

At the end of the book, Katie compares her transformation to a house, which she wants to "keep extending . . . until it becomes a mansion, full of rooms."

Happily, we have a few excellent works from Mormon writers to start with. Eric Samuelsen's play *Family* (available on Sunstone's website), Margaret Young's novel *Heresies of Nature*, and Angela Hallstrom's *Bound on Earth* all do a bang-up job of delving into the intricacies of marriage and family. I hope they are paving the way for more to come.



CORNUCOPIA

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

The Bible according to baseball

GOOD WOMAN

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

Proverbs 31:10

IN OCTOBER, I WATCHED PART OF A NATIONAL League Championship Series game with my 13-year-old son. A passionate San Francisco *Giants* fan, he already had tracked 160 games that season, not including his fantasy team. During the 7th inning stretch, the TV cameras panned the crowd for images of baseball fans: kids waving pennants, heavysset guys eating hot dogs, two men and a woman wearing matching *Phillies* jerseys with names in red lettering on the back. Then the cameras homed in on those names: Bride, Groom, and Priest. As the organ played “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” the older man—Priest—said something, and Bride and Groom answered. Then a few people in nearby seats began to applaud, and it was time for a commercial break.

“Good woman,” my son said, nodding.

Good woman, indeed. My son is part of a long line of people dating back at least as far as Plato who have weighed in on this subject, but he is too young to know how treacherous, how laden it is. He has not spent years of his life sitting through Young Women and Relief Society lessons where the culture wars are dramatized, week after week, as one-sided routs of straw women. I have. And in moments of meandering or willful inattention, I have developed my own rendering of Proverbs 31.

WHO CAN FIND a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. She appreciates a good metaphor, but she expects to be paid in legal tender and at market rate. She knows her worth, and she asks for it.

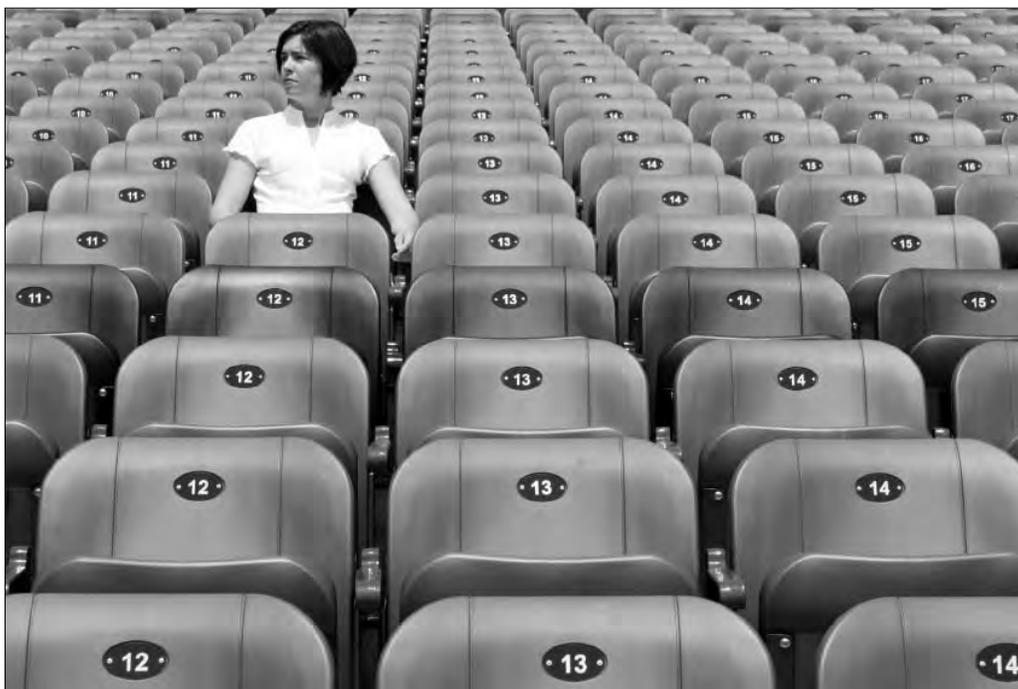
She lives providently by investing in her own education and career skills. As every flight attendant knows, she must secure her own oxygen mask before she can help others.

She looks for love as a master woodworker seeks a fine piece of cherry or mahogany that can age into something cherished. She knows that pine and poplar will not last and that it is better to keep both hands free than to clutch a load of cheap veneer in order to hold onto something.

Marriage, she may come to know, is a froth of olive oil and lemon juice. Shaken together, they form a tangy dressing for all kinds of greens, but in quiet moments, they always tend toward their own natures. She respects the line that appears between them and the permeable boundary it affords.

A good gardener, she knows a plant that bears fruit too early may snap under weight its limbs cannot yet support. She waits for the last frost date and plants no more than she is confident her small field can nourish.

If she has children, she studies their natures as a surveyor seeks to understand and appreciate the contours of the land.



ERIC MICHAUD

If she had hoped for a level field but finds a grassy knoll instead, she resists the urge to drive in a backhoe. She respects God's landscapes.

She prepares her children to live resiliently in a world she cannot predict or control, like a woman packing clothes for October on a bright June morning. Without expectation or anxiety, she folds them neatly and lays them in an open suitcase.

She knows the difference between nonfiction and fantasy, and she makes decisions based on her life as it is and not on hope or magical thinking. She does not speak as a child when she is no longer a child.

When she can see with her own eyes that the emperor has no clothes, she does not feel obligated to comment on their beauty or utility. She states her opinions without apology and trusts the authority of her own life experience.

If she wakes up one morning and realizes that the life she is living and the template she had sketched for herself are not congruous, she considers the options for bringing the angles and sides into alignment. Then she picks up a sharp pencil with a soft pink eraser, purses her lips, and begins to revise: template, life, or both.

When she is stricken, when life breaks her heart, she grieves. She grieves until she is done, until she can bear to take up her life again, broken as it is. If fear and pain lie at the foot of her bed at night like faithful dogs, she learns to breathe their slow, inexorable rhythm until sleep comes, or dawn.

She knows that mortality can be a solitary walk across the desert in blistering heat and coldest dark. She finds joy and solace in companionship, but she does not expect anyone else to make her happy or silence her existential questions. She carries those thirsts and whatever bottled water she has prepared in her own rucksack.

Whatever else she is, a virtuous woman is her own woman. If there is anything lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, she seeks after these things, on her terms. Her own works praise her in the gates.

AT THIS MOMENT in his life, my son thinks a good woman is a bride wearing a ball cap with her pony tail threaded through the back. If he ever changes his mind, I will feel a little sad: I like a man who appreciates a woman who wears her true colors right on her jersey.

DANA HAIGHT CATTANI
Bloomington, Indiana

A place for every truth

CHURCH AND POLITICS — 1932

This regular Cornucopia column features incidents from and glimpses into the life and ministry of Elder James E. Talmage as compiled by James P. Harris, who is currently working on a full-length biography of this fascinating Mormon apostle. The column title is adapted from the statement inscribed on Elder Talmage's tombstone:

"Within the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is room and place for every truth thus far learned by man or yet to be made known."

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1932 PROVED to be especially contentious among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nationwide, the country was in the midst of the Great Depression, which historically began on Black Tuesday, 29 October 1929, when the stock market crashed. Herbert Hoover was the sitting president, running for reelection.

In Utah, Elder Reed Smoot of the Quorum of the Twelve was running for reelection as a U.S. senator. Smoot was the Dean of the U.S. Senate, being the longest serving. In 1930, Smoot and Willis C. Hawley (R-Oregon) helped pass into law the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which many felt exacerbated the effects of the Great Depression. Along with Smoot's Senate seat, the Utah governorship was also open.

Since the death of Heber J. Grant's second counselor, Charles W. Nibley, in December 1931, there had been no second counselor in the First Presidency, and Grant himself was suffering from prostate issues and was recovering from surgery.

On Saturday, 29 October 1932, James E. Talmage recorded in his journal that

the campaign incident to the current presidential election is characterized by an unusual degree of partisan feeling, and many rumors are afloat . . . In Utah the election of a United States Senator is being hotly contested. Our present senior senator, Reed Smoot, is a candidate for reelection on the Republican ticket and is opposed by Elbert D. Thomas, of the University of Utah Faculty, on the Democratic ticket. One of the rumors recently set in circulation is to the effect that the Church Authorities desire the defeat of Senator Reed Smoot in this election so that he can remain at home and attend to his Church duties, and that moreover, he is to be the choice for the second counselorship in the First Presidency.

In reaction to the whispering campaign, the First Presidency published the following in the *Deseret News* on 29 October 1932:

CHURCH OFFICIALS MAKE STATEMENT REGARDING ELECTION

Reports have reached us to the effect that our names are being used by politicians in support of, and against candidates and parties in the present political campaign.

We wish it distinctly understood that in our official capacities we neither aid nor oppose any candidate or party.

We offer no counsel to members of the church

which may be considered partisan in its nature. We urge all to a dispassionate, intelligent and honest use of the ballot, but we do not attempt to influence the choice of any voter.

Moreover, we discountenance the use of any Church agency or facility in favor of or against any partisan or political interest. We trust that all Church authorities and officers will co-operate with us in an effort to maintain, officially, an attitude of neutrality and fairness that shall justify no criticism or offense on the part of opposing candidates, or parties, in the present election.

In view of reports that are being circulated, we desire to say that the result of the forthcoming election will have no bearing on the selection of a counselor in the Presidency of the Church, for the reason that the selection was made months ago and accepted, subject only to the approval of the Church membership when the proper time comes.

The statement was signed by President Grant, his first counselor Anthony W. Ivins, and Rudger Clawson, president of the Quorum of the Twelve. The individual who, according to the announcement, had already been selected as second counselor was J. Reuben Clark, who was subsequently sustained at the April 1933 General Conference.

On 30 October, Talmage gave a speech at the Tabernacle, eliciting two news reports. The *Deseret News* of 5 November printed the complete text, titling it "Midst Scenes of Confusion, Turmoil and Strife," and the *Salt Lake Tribune* of 31 October printed an article headlined "Citizens Urged to Cast Votes as They Desire."

In his journal entry of 7 November, Talmage said that the Salt Lake papers of that day carried the previous statement from the L.D.S. Church regarding the election, "with an additional paragraph signed by President Heber J. Grant himself." The additional paragraph read "Any other statement by the president or any other officer of the church is his personal preference and is not intended



JEANETTE ATWOOD

to influence members of the church.” Talmage added that the statement was in answer to “the impression that President Grant desires the people to vote for certain Republican candidates. It seems difficult to avoid the imputation for partisan preference. Even I am not exempt, for a portion of my address in the Tabernacle on Sunday, October 30, is quoted in full page advertisements as favorable to the Democratic Party, whereas my remarks urged independent action on the part of the voters without any thought of Church influence or partisan coercion.”

In a 31 October entry, Talmage reflected on how weary he was of the constant campaigning:

“The political campaign is characterized by increasing heat and bitterness in both nation and state. The radio brings us the addresses of the President of the United States—who is running for reelection—his opponent on the Democratic ticket, and prominent speakers on both sides. The flood of speech-making—a little of which may be called oratory—would be overwhelming as brought to us by the radio but for the pleasing fact that by a turn of the knob we can cut it all off. Criminations and recriminations, startling declarations and heated denials, come through the air every evening, at frequent intervals between 6 o’clock and midnight.”

On Monday, 7 November, Herbert Hoover came to Salt Lake City and “participated in a great Republican rally at the Tabernacle, at which . . . he delivered what was announced as the last of his major addresses in the present campaign. It is both unusual and significant that in the course of the campaign the President and Vice President of the United States, three members of the President’s cabinet, and other prominent Republicans of national eminence, have spoken in Utah, a State that is numerically small, having but four votes in the electoral college. The principal object of these visitations is understood to be the advocacy of U.S. Senator Reed Smoot.”

When the election results came in on the evening of 8 November, Talmage wrote:

“Before 8 o’clock tonight, Mountain Time, the air was burdened with proclamations of a great Democratic victory. As the reports increased, it soon became evident that the Republican Party had been completely defeated in nation and in most of the states. Senator Reed Smoot, who had been called the dean of the U.S. Senate, and whom President Hoover designated as the doyen of that body, has clearly gone down to defeat, with the election by a great preponderance of votes of Dr. Elbert D. Thomas, Professor of Political Economy

at the University of Utah, and formerly President of the Japanese Mission.

In his journal entry the next day, Talmage would also include that Henry H. Blood was the new governor of Utah. “All of these are Democrats, and among the candidates for varied offices in many states the rule has been that by the voice of the people Democrats only are victorious. President-elect Roosevelt is at present Governor of the State of New York, and the elected Vice President, John N. Garner, is the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Henry H. Blood has long been and is the head of the Utah State Road commission, and President of the North Davis Stake.”

In a Thursday, 10 November, entry, Talmage stated, “It is hoped that the animosities and rancor aroused by partisan differences will speedily abate, though it is to be feared that the memories of some of the regrettable features will prove ineffaceable. Naturally Senator Reed Smoot is severely affected by his defeat. In Utah, of course, the vote for U.S. Senator loomed big in the minds of the people. Some of the campaigners tried to make the Latter-day Saints believe that it was their duty to vote for Senator Smoot because of his and their Church membership, and every such attempt was hotly resented by the other side. The Church had no candidate nor did the General Authorities of the Church attempt to impress or influence the people as to their choice. It is likely that the Democratic administration will experience difficult sailing.”

In the world

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO UTAH, JAMIE WYETH decided to take a walk around the famed Temple Square. While considering the Seagull Monument, possibly intrigued by the bas-relief sculpture by Mahonri Young, he was approached by two sister missionaries who asked him, “Have you ever heard the story of the seagulls?” In fact, Jamie Wyeth was in town for the premiere of his art exhibition, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, where seagulls are depicted as allegories of anger, sloth, greed, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. Wyeth shared his dark vision of seagull sin with the young missionaries, and later remarked to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, “I probably told them a little too much . . . I think their heads are still spinning.”

Jamie Wyeth is a celebrated painter from a hailed American artistic dynasty, which also includes, most notably, his father Andrew Wyeth and grandfather N.C. Wyeth. His art has been shown in the National Gallery of Art, National Portrait Gallery, John F. Kennedy Library, and Museum of Modern Art, a prestigious list to which the Salt Lake ART Center can now be added.

Seagulls have been a lifelong interest for Wyeth, having painted or drawn close to 200 over his career. This particular exhibit germinated as he began seeing seagulls in a darker light—"It always bothered me the way gulls have been depicted through the years and particularly in Maine art they're made to look like white doves and in fact gulls are scavengers. They can be evil."¹

But when Jamie Wyeth started to dream of seagulls, little did he imagine that his dark vision would find itself in the land of Zion, where seagulls are honored as state bird for the part they played in saving the crops of the Mormon pioneers.

As the story is told in Sunday School and sacrament meeting talks, the winter of 1847 was especially difficult for the pioneers due to low crop yields and a dwindling livestock population suffering from wolf attacks and Indian raids. The pioneers survived on crow, wolf, tree bark, and any random root they could dig up. After the pioneers had planted new crops in the spring of 1848, the upcoming harvest looked promising. But then the crickets came, described by one pioneer as a cross between a spider and a buffalo, overtaking the crops and eating up the Saints' security.

Orson Pratt recalled in an 1880 sermon how the crickets

came in immense droves, so that men and women with brush could make no headway against them; but we cried unto the Lord in our afflictions, and the Lord heard us, and sent thousands and tens of thousands of a small white bird . . . And what did they do for us? They went to work, and by thousands and tens of thousands, began to devour them up, and still we thought that even they could not prevail against so large and mighty an army. But we noticed, that when they had apparently filled themselves with these crickets, they would go and vomit them up, and again go to work and fill themselves, and so they continued to do, until the land was cleared of crickets, and our crops were saved. There are those who will say that this was one of the natural courses of events, that there was no miracle in it. Let that be as it may, we esteemed it as a blessing from the hand of God.²

Jamie Wyeth might wonder: without the vice of gluttony would the gulls have been able to clear the fields of all those crickets?



Taking some time off from saving pioneers from starvation, seagulls occupy center stage in artist Jamie Wyeth's exploration of the Seven Deadly Sins, on display at the Salt Lake ART Center.

HAVING LIVED ON the Maine coast, Wyeth has observed all kinds of startling behavior from gulls. As his obsession developed, his interest dovetailed with the Seven Deadly Sins, which he first encountered in the 1960s. Wyeth recounts, "I could really pin it to Lincoln Kirstein of the New York City Ballet who was sort of a mentor of mine . . . in the hallway of his house in Gramercy Park were the *Seven Deadly Sins* by Paul Cadmus . . . and I was intrigued by those. They were very small temperas, kind of more cartoon-like than really interested me, but sort of horrifying and impressive."

When first visiting the exhibition at the Salt Lake ART Center, I was immediately attracted to a larger-than-life piece, titled *Inferno*, depicting a child burning garbage amid a flock of gulls. The image was inspired by a real scene that Wyeth had encountered: "To burn the garbage on the island,

ANGIER, 2005. COMBINED MEDIUMS ON HAND-MADE, TONED PAPER MOUNTED ON ARCHIVAL BOARD. 34 1/2 X 24 1/2 INCHES

they created this moveable tank, an oil tank they cut a hole in it and then put wheels on. I remember when I first saw it I just about fainted. I mean, it was something out of Wagner . . . It stunk [sic], and the gulls were streaking in, and here is this angelic boy shoving the garbage in with his oar.

As this image haunted his imagination, he painted it several times. The *Inferno* and the *Sins* “really sort of evolved together, because although I started with the *Inferno*, the idea built and built and finally culminated with the *Sins*. It’s not that I did it as an addendum to the sins, it was just my state of mind.”

This state of mind revolved around reading Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Dante’s *Inferno*. Wyeth studied how the *Sins* were depicted in Western art, particularly by Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Brughel. He says, “I was really just consumed with it. I didn’t want to anthropomorphize. I didn’t want to say how cute these birds are and oh, they’re doing dirty things. I tried to keep in the world with the knowledge of Bosch and Dante.”

The first *Sin* in the exhibition is *Anger*, with two seagulls, one confronting the viewer and the other partially within frame, shrieking with ferocity. They are a good metaphor for how the exhibition confronts our ideas of sin among human and animal nature. *Greed* portrays a seagull standing over a picnicker’s pile of pie and ice cream, raising its voice in victory, while other birds look on, separated by the lack of possessions. A favorite of mine, *Envy*, depicts a trio of gulls, two at the top cavorting, while the odd one out sits with its eyes closed in desperate jealousy. Jamie clearly has inherited his father’s devotion to realism and his grandfather’s instinct for illustrative action, making each of these pieces an immediate and visceral experience. In addition to the *Sins*, the exhibition includes other pieces exploring the world of seagulls, with the same haunting quality exemplified by the rest of the exhibit.

The *Seven Deadly Sins* collection speaks close to the truth of their subject. While in contemporary art, meaning is blithely relative and ambiguous, sometimes bordering on nihilism, Wyeth’s seagulls carry a weight of meaning as heavy as the burden of sins they embody. There is darkness amid loneliness and isolation, resulting from the chaos and discord of mortal frailty. In the land of Zion, where self-proclaimed visionaries are not uncommon, Wyeth’s *Sins* are a singular and beautiful vision to behold.

The exhibition at the Salt Lake ART Center runs until May 22nd, 2010. Visit www.slartcenter.org for more information.

DALLAS ROBBINS
Salt Lake City UT

NOTES

1. Quotations attributed to Jamie Wyeth come from the exhibition catalog, *Jamie Wyeth: Seven Deadly Sins*, (Rockland, ME: Farnsworth Art Museum, 2009).

2. Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:276–77.

Scripture notes

WAS EVE CREATED AS A HELPER FOR ADAM?

In this regular column, Michael Vinson, a master’s graduate of the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge and resident of Star Valley, Wyoming, delves into personal and scholarly aspects of scripture.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him.

KJV Genesis 2:18

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW EXHAUSTED Adam probably felt after his first day of working in the garden. After all, he had to tend, cultivate, and then name everything by himself. Did he complain about having to do all the work by himself? Did he hope for a companion to help with the work? Was he disappointed when the Lord said, “Look, here’s a wife instead”?

Mark Twain had a little fun with this story in his novella, *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*. In it, Twain’s Adam becomes increasingly annoyed as he has to change his behaviors to accommodate the preferences of a new “woman creature” in the garden (i.e. he must wash himself, clean his dwelling, and, most tediously, listen to her talk). She claims she was taken from his rib (though Adam slyly notes that none of his ribs are missing) and calls herself Eve. At one point, worn out from interacting with her, he has an epiphany. “She says it is ordered that we work for our living hereafter. She will be useful. I will superintend.”

Twain’s Adam is not the only man guilty of wistfully imagining that he will supervise the woman. The ancient Jewish rabbis sometimes read their own desires into the verse, “It is not good that man should be alone,” as in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis: “It is not right that Adam should sleep alone.” But let us set aside what men have traditionally written about the role of Eve and take a closer look at the scriptural context.

First, the creation of Adam is the only instance in the creation that God declares “not good.” For every element of the creation thus far, there has been something that corresponds to and completes it. For example, the seas are incomplete until the fish are created; the sky is incomplete without the sun, the stars, and the birds. Accordingly, God declares that man is incomplete without the woman. Indeed, it seems that even God is incomplete without both the man and the woman, as Genesis 1:27 reads, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Thus, the creation of man is “not good” (or incomplete) until woman is created.

The problems in understanding the role of Eve derive from our understanding of the scriptural phrase “an help

meet for him.” This is perhaps one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. The traditional interpretation—that Eve was created to be Adam’s helper—is prevalent in Bible translations, as in the King James Version quoted above. It is also found in the Revised Standard Version as “helper fit for him;” in the New King James Version as “helper comparable to him;” and in the NJPS Torah Commentary Genesis as “fitting helper for him.” This traditional interpretation is also common among LDS General Authorities as a simple Internet search of how this verse is used in Conference talks will show; a modern exception is President Hinckley, who said of Eve: “I do not regard her as being in second place to Adam.”

This Hebrew word, עֵזֶר or ‘ezer, which is popularly translated as “helper,” can be better understood by looking at its other usages in the Old Testament. For example, in Exodus 18:4, the word denotes the power of God when humanity requires his assistance. Moses names his son Eliezer, meaning “my God is help,” referring to the times Moses was delivered from Pharaoh’s sword (see also Deut. 33:7 and many of the Psalms).

The meaning implicit in the usages of ‘ezer can be seen more formally as a cooperative partnership when the power of one is inadequate; in the case of the Hebrew Bible, this is usually rendered as “Divine aid.” The ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint) translates ‘ezer as βοηθός or *boethos*, a word that includes usages such as “help from a stronger one.” In the New Testament, for example, *boethos* is used in Hebrews 13:16, in relationship to God as “helper” of the righteous (Psalms 117:6), and to refer to the healings of Jesus (Mark 9:22). This word is also used in the classical world to refer to help from a physician (Epictetus *Discourses*, II:15,16). Thus, God created a “strength” or “power” in the form of a woman, whose assistance to Adam could be seen as similar to God’s aid to his people.

But then why does the Bible say “help meet?” The Old English definition of “meet” is “fit to” or “corresponding.” It was probably inevitable that “helpmate” would slip into the discourse and further confuse the real meaning (because “meet” is so close to “mate”). The Hebrew עֵזֶר or *kenegdo* is a preposition which is more properly translated literally as “in front of him,” or “that which corresponds to.” The Hebrew root of this word, עָזַר or NGD, which would be rendered in English as “before,” has legal and covenantal connotations in the Old Testament—as in swearing an oath before the Lord. The creation of Eve “before” Adam could be seen as the fulfillment of an unwritten promise between God and Adam to end his isolation.

Thus, the creation of Eve is best seen in the Old Testament as the female manifestation of God’s strength, and the completion of the creation of God’s image. We can read Eve as a “helper” in the same sense that God “helps” mankind, not in the manner of waiting on us, but in the sense of saving Adam and mankind from both our isolation and incompleteness before God.

Though Twain could write tongue-in-cheek about the re-

lationship of Adam and Eve, I like to believe that he saw in his fictional Adam some of his own deep feeling about the tragic loss of his spouse (Twain’s wife, Olivia, died in 1904; the *Diaries* were published in 1906). When Twain’s Adam stands at Eve’s grave, he gives voice to the importance of Eve in his life, and to the women in men’s lives: “Wheresoever she was, there was Eden.”

Notes from abroad

ISLAND OF THE MISFIT MORMONS

ON 25 OCTOBER 2009, THE ARIZONA CHAPTER of Sunstone met for a regional conference. But that’s the boring way to put it. The tales told that evening were, as one participant put it, “exhilarating”. Imagine a room full of people all practicing—or not—their Mormon faith as they see fit. Oh how lovely was the evening.

Sitting in a rough circle in Doe Daughtrey’s living room, people talked about their legacies in the Church, their conversions to the Church, and, most important, their place in the Church. Now that the Internet has shed light on the myriad issues of Mormonism, the religion has become a much bigger tent; where does one fit in?

The tent was certainly large that evening, containing an assorted group of misfits: Internet Mormons, Chapel Mormons, Ex-Mormons, Post Mormons, Feminist Mormons, Gay Mormons, and a couple of Catholics thrown in to add some diversity. The Catholics must have wondered what all the hubbub was about. The hubbub was about widening the definition of what it is to be Mormon.

As the evening progressed, it became clear that, the definition of a Mormon is difficult to pin down precisely. One woman talked about her re-baptism and her need to feel re-connected to the Church after many years outside it, but on *her* terms this time. An older gay man spoke of sending his letter of resignation from the Church as a protest against Prop 8. Many women spoke of their feminist awakenings and how those new discoveries motivated their activity or inactivity in the Church. Another woman didn’t speak at all, taking it all in silently.

Small as the group was, maybe 25 to 30 people, we felt united in our experiences of being Mormon—Sunstone Mormons. There is a difference you know. Sunstone Mormons are willing to ask questions, wanting to contribute their talents even if their views differ from the mainstream of the Church.

Some had to leave early to get back to life and children. Some could have stayed all night, talking and sharing what is certainly the most influential thing in their lives: Mormonism.

Oh how lovely was the evening. An evening of open wounds and hearts.

JOHN WILCOX
Phoenix, Arizona

2nd Place Winner 2009 Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Competition

DIVINE MALFEASANCE

By Holly Welker

ONE SACRAMENT MEETING IN THE LATE 1980s, an aggressively cheerful nineteen-year-old lectured the university ward I attended on the fact that we could achieve anything—absolutely *anything*—if we worked hard enough, adding derisively, “Hard work never killed anyone, people—remember that.” Her statement was indeed memorable for its breathtaking inaccuracy and the smug ignorance it revealed: Had she really never heard of the horrible ways coal mining can kill you, or the Poles who had toiled as slave labor for the Nazis til they dropped dead, or the million or so people worked to death in Soviet labor camps?

It wasn’t what I attended church for, so when the meeting ended, I accosted my bishop. “I want you to let me give a talk next week,” I said.

“What about?” he asked.

“Humor,” I said grimly. “I want to talk about humor.”

“Are you sure? Two weeks ago, I couldn’t help noticing you looked miserable. I almost expected you to start crying. You don’t look very happy right now, either.”

“That’s why I need to talk about humor,” I insisted. The next week I delivered a talk about God’s sense of humor, my conviction that he had to have one, even though it went unmentioned in our Topical Guide. Surely God could understand a joke, I said. Surely he could tell one. Look at the story of Job—OK, not a funny joke, but a joke nonetheless, arguably the original practical joke (Hey! Let’s ruin this guy’s life, and see what he does!), the ur-text not only of tragedy, but of *Candid Camera* and *Punk’d!* If God could feel anger, love, approval, and grief, surely he could feel amusement. Surely there was something not only healing but divine about a good laugh. Surely, I said, though I didn’t feel sure at all, God wasn’t some joyless

authoritarian. Wouldn’t it be nice if God laughed not only *at* us, in the superior way evoked by the joke, “Know how to make God laugh? Tell him your plans,” but with us? Surely Isak Dinesen was right in “The Dreamers,” when she had a character declare, “I have been trying for a long time to understand God. Now I have made friends with him. To love him truly you must love change, and you must love a joke, these being the true inclinations of his heart.” Or maybe not. The talk bombed. My university ward disliked the idea of a god who could tell or get a joke, though they apparently had no problem with one who demanded the sacrifice of firstborn children.

Talks like that didn’t proceed from pure contrariness, though I’m sure some who heard them thought so. Instead, I gave the kinds of talks I wanted to hear, talks that explored alternate theologies, respected doubt, acknowledged suffering and sorrow, drew on wisdom from unconventional sources, and tried to determine and supply what was missing in the Church, because I’d noticed a profound lack for most of my life.

I was a child both dutiful and plagued by guilt and doubt. I prayed and read scripture daily but agonized over whether I did either with enough sincerity of heart. I accepted that scripture meant what we were told it meant, but questioned the logical and ethical premises preceding and following a particular statement. I believed completely that we must “offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (D&C 59:8). But how broken was broken enough, how contrite was contrite enough, and *why*? Why did God require those things? What, ultimately, did he do with them?

In my teens, all that doubt and guilt translated into severe depression. In the 1970s, when I first dealt with it, depression, especially in the young, was often viewed as self-indulgent malingering. I experienced it not as a medical condition but as a world view and a personal failing. What was wrong with me, that I felt the world was fundamentally unjust, that I fixated on abuses of power, that I was obsessed with the nature of suffering?

In an effort to discover and fix what was wrong with me, I served a mission. My mission succeeded in that I



HOLLY WELKER was born and raised in southeastern Arizona, the descendant of pioneers who moved south from Salt Lake City shortly after arriving in it. Having recently relocated to Salt Lake City, she is pleasantly surprised at how much she loves the city. Her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have appeared in publications ranging from the *New York Times* to *Bitch* to *Seventeen* to *Best American Essays*.

baptized well above the average number of converts for my area, fulfilled all 18 months of service, and was honorably released. In other ways, it wasn't so successful. My questions were more numerous, more complex, and more urgent after my mission, and I was more fatigued and aggrieved than ever by anyone who met my questions with platitudes or clichés. And ironically, given that God requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit, coming home with one of each should have been a mark of success, but it didn't feel like one: it felt like a failure, since I couldn't say with enthusiasm that my mission had been the best period of my life. Furthermore, no one wanted to hear—no one could hear—my first, confused attempts to explain what I'd learned about suffering, the thing I knew best by the time my mission ended.

During and after my mission, I repeatedly offered God my broken heart and contrite spirit. He gave both back to me, and that's what I was left with. Neither was much use in trying to figure out how to live in a world dominated by vanity and vexation of spirit.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, I brooded over the story of Job. Many people are moved by Job's refusal to do as Satan predicts after diverse afflictions are heaped upon him, namely to "curse God to his face," nor what Job's wife advises, which is basically the same thing, with the added gesture of dying afterwards—whether by suicide or by being smitten by God for blasphemy isn't made clear. Job's refusal is remarkable, particularly as God is, if not the author of his suffering, at least involved in it, the friend whose complicity is necessary for the punking to proceed: God gives Satan permission to torment Job any way he desires, save killing him outright. So before smiting Job with boils, Satan kills all Job's livestock and servants, as well as his children, a tradeoff that frankly seems more affliction than blessing: most parents I know would sacrifice their own lives to prevent the violent deaths of all their children. And all this happens because God accepts Satan's bet.

What always struck me as the most important point in the entire story was Job's commitment to justice and accountability on a cosmic scale. Upbraided by friends for complaining that his suffering is undeserved, Job replies, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (Job 6:24). But his friends can't show where Job has erred, because he hasn't erred. He is afflicted not because he deserves it, but precisely because he doesn't deserve it. That's what makes God's bet with Satan interesting.

What Job wants most isn't even an end to his suffering, but an explanation for it, to the point that he demands an audience with and accountability from God, in such a way that God knows Job deserves at least the audience if not the accountability. It never escaped me that God refuses to answer Job's questions about the ultimate causes of suffering. Instead, God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind (a

symbol and agent, after all, of chaos), saying, essentially, "Who are you? Do you think you're my equal in power, might, or knowledge? If not, don't dare question me."

Job cowers before the show of force and withdraws his demands, saying "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2-6). All of which constituted strong evidence, I thought, that self-loathing and despair were appropriate responses to greater knowledge of God and his workings.

Although God denies Job the explanation he desired, God tacitly admits the injustice done to Job, and God's role in it, by replacing what Job had lost. He gives Job a completely new family, as if the children who'd been killed were interchangeable with the new ones. And everyone who didn't die in the beginning of the story lives happily ever after.

I never considered my suffering equal to Job's; I never thought that Satan had engineered my travails because I was particularly special to God. I just wanted clarity on who was in charge and how the system worked. Thus, I wrote things like this in my journal:

Talked to my MTC companion. We agreed that it would be totally cool to have, say, a fifteen-minute interview with God. Just meet him for lunch somewhere, and ask a few questions. Seriously, there are things I would like to have explained. We have interviews with all kinds of other Church leaders; why not God? We are accountable to *him* and to other people for our stewardship; since we are part of God's stewardship, is *he* accountable to *us*?

One thing that worried me on my mission was God's success rate—I had a feeling that if he were accountable to someone, he might not get glowing performance reviews. I was well acquainted with Moses 1:39, which states, "For this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." Considering the fact that when I began my mission in 1985, only about nine million of the earth's five billion inhabitants were Mormon, I couldn't help thinking, "For someone who's supposedly omnipotent, God isn't meeting with much success in his work and his glory." Surely if it mattered to him that the whole world hear the message of Mormonism, he'd work harder to get it out there. The Church had only been around for about 150 years; if he were really anxious to offer the truth to every last human who ever drew breath on this planet, why wait so long to reveal it? I saw several logical conclusions to draw from this state of affairs: perhaps God wasn't omnipotent, or he didn't really care about us, or the Church wasn't as necessary to salvation as its adherents liked to claim—or per-



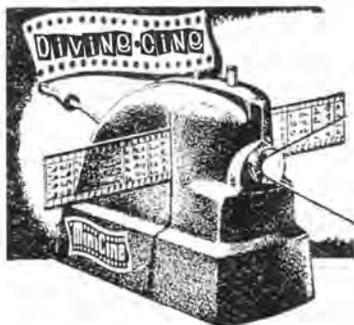
God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind, saying, essentially, “Who are you? Do you think you’re my equal in power, might, or knowledge? If not, don’t dare question me.”

haps all those things were true.

And yet, during my mission and after, I continued to accept fundamental aspects of the plan of salvation—the idea, for instance, that we would someday be judged for our choices and actions, and that it was vital that we learn to forgive. In fact, I still believe those things. But how far did forgiveness extend, I wondered? What was the greatest act of forgiveness an individual could make?

One fast Sunday shortly after my talk on God’s sense of humor, the bishop began testimony meeting by discussing a time when he and his wife had gone away for a week, leaving their eldest child, a high school senior, in charge of the five younger children. The parents had issued explicit instructions: Feed the dog regularly. Lock the doors

before leaving the house. Since no shopping can be done on Sunday, buy milk Saturday night so there’s still milk for Monday morning. Make sure everybody gets to church. Make sure everyone survives. The parents returned Sunday afternoon to find all the doors unlocked and the refrigerator empty of milk. However, the dog had been fed and the kids were all at church. “They didn’t do everything right,” the bishop said, “but they got the biggest things. Everyone was alive and well, and everyone went to church. So we didn’t have milk. So what. It was good to know we could trust our children to take care of one another and not play hooky from church. And I loved them so much when I saw how they were trying to be good, and I felt grateful that I’d managed to teach them



I sometimes have this vision of the final judgment. God says, “OK, everybody, sit down: we’re going to watch a movie.” And we see a movie of all the events of the world from his perspective.

anything at all, because as any parent can tell you, parenting is hard. We call God ‘our Heavenly Father,’ and I think we need to keep in mind the ways his relationship with us is that of a loving parent. Yes, he gives us all kinds of rules and responsibility, but he understands the difficulty in learning to obey those rules. And he knows what the most important rules are, and he’s grateful when we manage to obey them.”

I got up immediately after he sat down, and said, “I think the bishop is right in every part of the analogy he drew. He mentions feeling grateful that he managed to teach his children anything at all, because parenting is difficult. I imagine God often feels the same way. Recently one of my teachers said, ‘The parent-child relationship goes like this: I forgive you, you forgive me, throughout all eternity.’ I think that’s right. We believe in the doctrine of eternal progression, we believe God was once like us. What that might mean, and what we don’t often acknowledge, is that God might still be learning.

“In any event, we have to acquit God of responsibility for all the horrible things that happen in the world, one way or another. All the time, people point to something like the Holocaust, and ask, ‘How could a loving god let that happen?’ And people come up with some doctrinal explanation or another, or just say there is no god.

“I sometimes have this vision of the final judgment. God judges everyone, gives his assessment of our sins and our virtues. Then he says, ‘OK, everybody, sit down: we’re going to watch a movie.’ And we see a movie of all the events of the world from his perspective. We see the miracles he could have performed but didn’t. We see the mistakes he made. We see the things he learned along the way. Then he turns the projector off, and says, ‘OK, what do you all think?’

“And I imagine people responding in one of three ways. The first group will say, ‘Oh, but you’re God, so whatever you did was OK; after all, you’re in charge, and we agreed to be obedient.’ And their reward will be their own complacency, and their punishment will be their willful ignorance and inability to accept responsibility. The second group will be very angry and will say, ‘You lied. You said you were perfect. You said you were fair.’ Their reward will be their understanding of justice, and their punishment will be an implacable rage. And the

final group will give God a hug and will say, ‘We never expected you to be perfect; we were trying to do our best and we knew you were too. It’s OK.’ And their reward will be their ability to love and forgive, and their punishment will be their understanding of the truth that despite what Einstein said about ‘I can’t believe that the gods play dice with the universe,’ the universe really is a crap shoot.”

No one got up afterwards and condemned me for blasphemy—in fact, a few people complimented me on my “bravery.” But neither did anyone engage seriously with what I’d tried to say. And within a year, I left the church. I couldn’t bear the resounding indifference to this issue of accountability, justice, and forgiveness that obsessed me so. Let me assure everyone that not for a moment did I imagine myself or even aspire to be among those who could forgive God: I was firmly with the enraged justice seekers, those who resented being deceived and manipulated—even if as part of some benevolent plan and for our own good. And I was angry not only at God but at those in the first category, those who took Richard Nixon’s claim, that “If the president does it, it’s not illegal,” and elevated it to divine status, so that “If God does it, it’s not evil.”

Many religions include in their pantheon a god or goddess of death—deities neither righteous nor benevolent, merely powerful expressions of real forces. Only in monotheism does “God” automatically equal “righteous.” Like many children raised on that idea, I was horrified when I first read Graeco-Roman mythology, replete with gods who assumed animal form in order to rape, torture and torment human beings; gods frankly and unapologetically selfish, deceitful, and cruel. They weren’t any more ethical than human beings, just more powerful and long-lived. For the longest time, the situation repulsed me. But at some point, I realized that I admired the Greeks and Romans for judging their gods. An immoral act was still immoral, even when committed by a god. Divine beings might be much harder to hold accountable than mere mortals, but the patricide, infanticide, and trickery they engaged in were still patricide, infanticide, and trickery.

WITH THAT IN mind, consider this story. Imagine that a man deems all his offspring unworthy and unrighteous, and in disgust de-

cides the world would be better off without them. Without consulting his wife, he insists that all his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren attend a family reunion—except for one son and the son’s family, whom the father sends away because he wants some of his DNA to persist. When everyone else is at the family reunion, the father takes out a rifle and kills them all. Then he tells the son he didn’t kill that because he and his family were spared, they must henceforth worship the father, praising his compassion, generosity, and loving-kindness, because he’s in charge, and if he decrees his actions compassionate, generous, and lovingly kind, well then, they are.

This, of course, parallels the story of Noah. In that story, God engineers the planet’s first genocide.

What do we do with the story of God killing all but a handful of people? I believe that once we examine it closely, we cannot claim that it demonstrates God’s goodness, even if he did promise afterwards never again to destroy the earth by flood. We shirk our intellectual, moral, and spiritual responsibility if we assert that genocide isn’t genocide if God commits it.

So what do we do instead? Do we consider the story evidence that God is indeed progressing, outgrowing behavior unworthy of a loving deity? Do we say it’s simply a myth explaining the origin of rainbows? How do we let it teach us a truth other than the one we’re used to?

I believe that we who were taught this story are obligated to consider these questions. I believe that one way a religion offers redemption, salvation, and growth to believers is by giving them something to question and struggle against. Religion asks us to determine what constitutes goodness and righteousness, and it offers us standards by which to make those assessments. For instance, Mormonism teaches that “almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose . . . will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion”—or in other words, our leaders (both religious and political) can sin. Jesus told us that “by their fruits ye shall know them”—or that actions are judged by their consequences.

I reject the idea that the moral nature of an action is determined primarily by the reputation, role, or affiliation of the person who does it—i.e., if the guy in the white hat kills someone, it’s necessarily justified; if the guy in a black hat kills someone, it’s necessarily depraved; if the U.S. engages in waterboarding, it’s justified; if anyone else does it, it’s cruel and sadistic torture. The concepts of mistakes, sins, and errors are meaningful only if they are things the “righteous” can be guilty of, and the concepts of repentance, spiritual growth, and forgiveness matter only if they are also available to the “wicked.”

I confess that I haven’t managed to forgive the God I grew up with, which is another way of saying I lost faith in him. Instead, I’ve learned to question the actions and attitudes attributed to him. I’ve found ways to chart, if not his progression, then *my* progression in terms of what I

think ethics and righteousness truly consist of. I still believe in a god of sorts, a supreme force beyond our comprehension that animates the universe and endows life with ultimate meaning. I cannot believe that it engineers a genocide when humanity disappoints it; I cannot believe it expects us to accept that if a personage is powerful enough, his crimes are not crimes, his cruelty not cruelty.

And so I say: Let us all emulate Job, and reject the logic and ethics of Richard Nixon, even in our theology. Let us demand that God provide an account of his stewardship. Chances are slim that we’ll get it. But perhaps we will acquire an understanding of how divine righteousness is possible if divine malfeasance is not—or perhaps we will learn that if divine malfeasance is impossible, divine righteousness is too. Perhaps we will learn to hold ourselves, our scripture, our leaders, and our concept of the divine to a higher standard, one that elevates us all.



EBB

What chance does this moon have
for a few hours every day, held down

as the thirst that never lets go
and you swallow hillside into hillside
—a few hours! that’s all and the moon

still trying, takes from your jawbone
some ancient sea half marrow

heavier and heavier with the Earth
backing you up when the moon is lifted whole
from inside your mouth, to be returned

for the fire that is nothing
without the night sky
still claiming you with headwinds and rain

even when there is no rain
—there is no fire left though the moon

never dries, clings to your lips
and everything it touches is want
empty with all these flowers.

— SIMON PERCHIK

*America in the Mormon imagination*GLENN BECK, CLEON SKOUSEN,
AMERIGO VESPUCCI & ME

By Eric Samuelson

I N THE PROVO TOWNE CENTRE MALL, THE McNaughton Fine Art Gallery sells nicely framed prints of the paintings of LDS artist Jon McNaughton, most of whose works—landscapes, windmills, lighthouses—suggest that he’s a Mormon answer to Thomas Kinkade. One painting, however, really stands out. Called “One Nation Under God,” it’s a painting of Jesus—who to me sort of looks like Matthew McConaughey—holding a copy of the United States Constitution. You can see it interactively at http://www.mcnaughtonart.com/artwork/view_zoom/?artpiece_id=353#.

Behind Jesus are certain figures from the American past: George Washington’s just off Jesus’s left shoulder. James Madison’s off his right shoulder. In front of Jesus are two other groups of people: sheep and goats, perhaps. On Jesus’s left hand, a shadowy Satan looms over seven iconic figures: a liberal journalist, a professor, a Supreme Court justice, a lawyer, a politician, a Hollywood producer, and a pregnant woman, who, we’re told on the website, is contemplating terminating her pregnancy. The professor is holding a book: Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. The Supreme Court Justice has dropped papers which, the website explains, are the texts of certain Court decisions. They’re a strange collection of decisions. *Roe v. Wade* seems inevitable, but *Marbury v. Madison*? Jesus has a problem with judicial review?

I’ve talked this painting up a bit among friends and colleagues, and a number of them have checked it out, either online or in person. We all think it’s pretty funny: such a perfect illustration of current obsessions and anxieties of the American Right. The Hollywood producer is a particular favorite: my friends and I have made quite a game of it, guessing which recent films Jesus is specifically unhappy with: *Gigli*? *Wild Hogs*? *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*? *Saw VI*?



ERIC SAMUELSEN is a professor of drama and film theory at Brigham Young University and a three-time recipient of the Association for Mormon Letters award for drama. His play *The Plan* was published in SUNSTONE issue 155.

It’s easy to dismiss the painting as an artifact of the lunatic fringe, easy to find it comical and foolish. Like this: Even if Jesus really doesn’t want us to read Darwin, or see Hollywood movies, what does that have to do with the Constitution? And anyway, are we meant to seriously regard the Constitution as inspired in a scriptural sense? Did he literally hand it down, as Moses was handed the tablets? Is there seriously a school arguing for the Constitution as scripturally inerrant? I don’t even believe in *scripture* as scripturally inerrant. Are we heading towards Sunday School classes discussing the theological implications of, say, the three-fifths rule?

AS I WRITE this, it’s February 2010. Barack Obama is president; Harry Reid is Senate majority leader. The Senate has passed a health care reform bill; the House passed a similar bill earlier, but despite overwhelming majorities in both chambers, no reconciled bill seems to be forthcoming. Both bills are moderate and reasonable, compromise measures, flawed but not without merit. But for many of my LDS brothers and sisters, “Obamacare” is a catastrophe, the apocalypse, the end of everything good. I’ve felt for years that the best guide to the Mormon zeitgeist is the letters-to-the-editor page of the *Deseret News*. If that’s true, then Utah Mormons are collectively losing their cool. President Obama is routinely described as a socialist, a fascist, a Maoist, and a Communist; his administration as something dark and seductively satanic. Our nation is descending into chaos and anarchy; we’re in the Last Days; we’re just about beyond redemption.

In short, a large number of Utahns have been watching Glenn Beck and taking him very seriously indeed. And the movement he leads and inspires seems to be growing. Call them tea partiers or 9/12ers or Palinistas, there’s a widespread anxiety on the Right that’s finding a voice. And the ideas aren’t just those of Beck. In addition to satanic Supreme Court decisions, Darwin, and the Constitution, one other publication is prominently featured in the McNaughton painting. On Jesus’s right hand, in the Good People group, an African-American college student holds a

copy of Cleon Skousen's *The Five Thousand Year Leap*.

Published in 1981 and long out of print, Skousen's book has resurfaced recently thanks to Glenn Beck. Beck has touted it as the book that "changed his life." He wrote a preface to a new edition, published with permission of the Skousen family. It has appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list. And the ideas that animate Beck's program come directly from Skousen. There's a connection between Skousen and Beck, the John Birch Society, Evan Mecham, and President Ezra Taft Benson. And one of the things they all have in common is a certain definition of America. Exceptionalist America, defined not as a landmass or a political idea but as a fundamentally religious construct, eschatological, millennial, apocalyptic, and ecstatic. By describing the past, these people intend to found a movement that will define a future built on manifest destiny, overt religiosity, moralism and aggressively laissez faire capitalism.

Reading *The Five Thousand Year Leap* and Beck's own book, *Arguing with Idiots: How to Stop Small Minds and Big Government*, it's easy to see how something as ham-handed as the McNaughton painting could become popular in Mormon culture. In the Book of Mormon, the North American continent is described as particularly blessed. In the Doctrine & Covenants, the Lord tells Joseph Smith of "the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established . . . and for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood (D&C 101:77-80). And so we talk of our "divinely inspired Constitution"; and it's not a far leap to embracing paintings in which Jesus cradles the Constitution as a sort of holy relic.

But anyone who's seriously studied American history knows that whatever happened in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, it wasn't a revelation. Fifty-five very bright,

well-read, mostly wealthy white men, many of them slave owners, met together and argued and disputed and compromised and eventually created a document none of them were really all that wild about. They weren't for the most part, religiously inclined, and they certainly didn't begin their deliberations with prayer, as is widely believed in Mormon culture. Quite the contrary: Madison's journal describes how, at one particularly contentious point in their deliberations, Benjamin Franklin suggested they pause for prayer. But the necessity of bringing in a pastor to say one killed the idea. In Madison's words, seeing a pastor enter the hall might "lead the public to believe that the embarrassments and dissensions within the Convention had suggested this measure." And so no prayer was offered. Certainly the idea that one of the delegates might say the prayer never occurred to any of those debating. Gentlemen did not pray.

They created a political document, and it's served us well. And we should read it, study it, think about it. Skousen's book presents itself as a kind of Constitutional primer, describing twenty-eight fundamental Constitutional principles which we Americans have apparently forgotten. It's meant to be a book of legal and histor-



WHILE READING BECK'S BOOK, I HAD AN EPIPHANY, A TERRIFICALLY SHOCKING ONE: I AGREED WITH GLENN BECK ABOUT SOMETHING! AND NOT JUST SOMETHING TRIVIAL, SOMETHING UTTERLY FUNDAMENTAL.

ical analysis. But what are we to make of a book which, while discussing the history and content of the Constitution, makes no mention of the Civil War, mentions slavery only once in passing, and passes off the entire civil rights movement as a Communist conspiracy?

The Skousen narrative: In the two or three years before the Revolution, “a spirit of ‘sacrifice and reform’ became manifest in all thirteen colonies.”¹ “Many Americans became so impressed with their improvement in the quality of life as a result of the reform movement that they were afraid that they might lose it if they did not hurriedly separate from the corrupting influence of British manners.”² The British, with their “elegance, luxury and effeminacy”³ threatened the American way of simple virtue. So Americans rose up in revolt and established a nation that was not only uniquely virtuous but also uniquely open to market principles in economics. As a result, we took a “five thousand year leap,” in which we managed to cram five thousand years’ worth of human progress into a little more than two hundred years.

Virtuous Yankee farmers versus effeminate mincing British dandies: it’s a neatly metaphoric narrative and a serviceable one. It forms the plot of the first American-written stage comedy: Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* (1787), in which the stout-hearted American backwoodsman, Colonel Manley, outwits the British swell Billy Dimple. Eighteenth-century British propagandists were just as fond of this narrative during the Napoleonic wars, portraying sturdy British tars fighting frog-and-snail-eating French fops. It’s king-men vs. freemen. And conservatives still love it: see for example, Charles Krauthammer’s op-ed piece in which that snooty elitist Barack Obama is portrayed as disdaining “ankle-dwelling peasants.”⁴ But Skousen presents no evidence for any of his “history,” probably because no evidence of pre-Revolutionary moral improvement exists. And it’s difficult to see what any of this pre-Revolutionary cultural war nonsense has to do with the Constitution.

There’s another narrative at play, here, though: a narrative of paradise lost, of purity defiled. The Founders were uniquely virtuous, uniquely inspired. Just as the primitive church represented perfect Christianity, which then—degraded by sophisticates and sophists (those odious Gnostics)—fell into apostasy, so has once-pristine America fallen into an apostasy, driven there by secular humanists. One turning point was the passage of the 17th Amendment instituting direct election of Senators by the voters, for those who don’t know their Constitutional amendments by heart. Another was the New Deal; another, the Great Society. And then there’s Obama who was elected on a platform of “change.” I think that’s why so much of Beck’s rhetoric constructs Obama as Other—a socialist, a Maoist, a smooth-talkin’ charmer. I expect that Obama’s race is also a factor, and his suspiciously Muslim-sounding name. Obama’s different. And “different” suggests corruption, yet another variant on our national loss of innocence. Innovation equals apostasy.





It's strange to me that this particular meme would find a foothold in Mormonism. Our story is less about apostasy than restoration. We don't see early nineteenth-century America as a paradise—we're more inclined to view early nineteenth-century Americans as the guys who were trying to kill us. Joseph Smith was a fervent Jacksonian—Andy Jackson, who saw the Founders as Pharisees; the hot-tempered firebrand who kicked the money-changers out of the temple. Later, though, Joseph came to recognize the limitations of Jacksonism—the states'-rights, limited-government conservatism that, to Joseph, was holding back progress. Joseph wanted an activist government, funding the building of levees on the Mississippi, even paying slave-owners to end slavery (what a colossal expansion of the powers of the federal government *that* would have entailed!). Specifically, Joseph wanted the federal government to force Missouri to give us our money back. Honestly, why aren't we all progressives?

It's possible, for example, to believe that the Constitution is an inspired document, while also recognizing its limitations, flaws, and political compromises. Elder Dallin Oaks, in a 1992 *Ensign* article, said "one should not expect perfection in a document that must represent a consensus." He went on to say "reverence for the United States Constitution is so great that sometimes individuals speak as if its every word and phrase had the same standing as scripture. Personally, I have never considered it necessary to defend every line of the Constitution as scriptural. For example, I find nothing scriptural in the compromise on slavery or the minimum age or years of citizenship for congressmen, senators, or the president." And Joseph Smith faulted the Constitution for the national government's lack of power to intervene when the state of Missouri used its militia to expel the Latter-day Saints from their lands. Given Skousen's attachment to states' rights, it's worth pointing out that Joseph Smith blamed the Constitution for giving insufficient power to the federal government. Mormons know President Martin Van Buren for his famous line to Joseph Smith: "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you . . . If I take up for you I shall lose the vote of Missouri." The way we usually parse that is as the most venal of political calculations: he was on our side, but chose not to act out of partisan considerations. According to Skousen's reading of the 10th Amendment, Van Buren would have been justified if he'd said, "Your cause may be just, gentlemen, but this is a state matter. The federal government is powerless to intervene."

Skousen's method is to announce some principle, offer some context-less quotations to support it, and draw some predictably partisan conservative conclusions. For example, he says that the Founders believed that natural law should form the basis for sound government. That was certainly true for Madison and many other Founders. Skousen then creates a list of examples of how natural law might influence policy. A casual reader might assume that all the examples reflect the Founding Fathers' understanding of natural law. But the examples are without attribution, and many reflect



WE ARE BOTH COLUMBIA AND AMERICA, BOTH THE SHINING CITY ON A HILL, AND ENRON AND WALL STREET AND USED CAR LOTS.

only Skousen's political views. For example, when Skousen asserts that "the concept of Separation of Powers is based on Natural Law," it's at least an arguable position. But "Laws protecting the Family and the Institution of Marriage are based on Natural Law" asserts a right not found in the Constitution, and though the 2nd Amendment's right to bear arms is Constitutional, it's very unclear what the Framers meant by it, and it's certainly not founded on any laws they would have recognized. Reading Skousen and Beck, I'm reminded of a favorite headline from the satirical online magazine, *The Onion*: "Area Man Passionate Defender of What He Imagines Constitution to Be."

And of course, Skousen applauds the Founders for their religiosity and what he calls their "public morality." I'm not sure what he means by public morality—the main example he gives is George Washington's refusal to collect a salary for his service as general or as president. But surely Skousen knows that most of his heroes—Washington, Jefferson, Madison—were slave owners. Doesn't that have moral implications? If he means that slavery was a private matter, not involving "public morality," it's difficult to

imagine an institution more public than slavery. And Jefferson did invite Sally Hemings to live in Europe with him. As for their religious views, Skousen gathers a number of quotations from a variety of Founders where they thank Divine Providence for this or that. But the Founders were public men, and *pro forma* declarations of conventional piety were as much a part of their political lives as they are for politicians today. In short, Skousen's project is not to read historical documents in an effort to discover what the Founders really thought or believed; he's looking for material to support an *a priori* stance.

THE WORD THAT often attaches to both Skousen and Beck is "crazy." Beck, in fact, tends to take it and run with it on his show: "People will say I'm crazy. Well, how crazy is it that . . ." Skousen, and now Beck, love to cite U.S. history and love to present themselves as lovers of American history. Well, what's history? I define it

as a narrative of events from the past consistent with extant documentation. Presumably the histories taught in schools are tainted by current academia's America-hating, socialist agenda. Is the only alternative, then, to make up a history entirely from your own imagination? Skousen found evidences of Communism behind every bush; his views were so extreme that J. Edgar Hoover's FBI found it necessary to maintain a file on Skousen for years that eventually totaled some 2,000 pages. If you're too weirdly conservative for J. Edgar Hoover, that says something. Even in *The Five Thousand Year Leap*, a book which was meant to sanitize his views for broader public consumption, Skousen nods approvingly to ancient criminal codes that would provide the death penalty to homosexuals. As for Beck, I don't watch his show much, but I can say that I've never watched it without seeing something bizarre: pouring "gasoline" (actually water) on a guest, describing President Obama as racist, comparing him to Chairman Mao, and discussing strange symbols encoded in the retired lobby art of the Rockefeller Center. He's convinced that an innocuous organization of community organizers, ACORN, is trying to

kill him. He's talked at some length about a fantasy in which he'd kill filmmaker Michael Moore. Just watch him sometime; all the crying, all the histrionics.

Here's where things get embarrassing, though. Both Skousen and Beck insist that America stands primarily for two things: religious virtue and free market economics. I have recently written a play, *Amerigo*, that also tries to define America. And while reading Beck's book, I had an epiphany, a terrifically shocking one: I agreed with Glenn Beck about something! And not just something trivial, something utterly fundamental. Because in my play, I also describe America as a place defined by twin impulses: Christian, and also commercial.

In *Amerigo*, I take up the discovery of America as key to the definition of America. And so I examine the competing claims of Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci. And in their claims, I also see an America uniquely religious and also uniquely capitalist. In Mormon culture, we have a stake in Columbus: 1 Nephi 13:12 describes a man who "was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it . . . wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren." We think that refers to Columbus, not Leifr Eiriksson. Columbus was a religious man, albeit with religious views that were thought strange even by the peculiar standards of fifteenth-century Catholicism. But he also liked a lot of the same scriptures we Mormons like: "other sheep I have who are not of this fold," for example. If Columbus was nuts, he was *our* kind of nuts. Most Americans don't know much about Amerigo Vespucci, but he was a successful businessman in some peculiarly modern ways in addition to being an explorer. The New World came to be named America after him, for example, because the German publisher Martin Waldseemuller published a popular map calling the New World that in 1507. I think it's a cross-promotion—Waldseemuller had published Vespucci's book about his journeys a few months before. But I see Vespucci not as a businessman/hero ushering in an American Great Leap Forward, but as a con man, a pimp, a hustler.

I add a third character, the most important character of the play: the eighteenth-century Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Sor Juana was a playwright, novelist, poet, and scholar, a Christian humanist, and a woman deeply engaged with what was left of Native American culture. In her mind, the "discovery" of America meant an unprecedented human catastrophe, the wholesale destruction of peoples and cultures. In other words, the meaning of America is neither historic triumphalism nor a fundamentalist future, but tragedy. And I tie it all together with a fourth character, the most pragmatic political thinker of the Renaissance, Niccolò Machiavelli, because I think a certain amoral attachment to realpolitik is also part of what defines America. And that too has led to tragedy: to Vietnam and Iraq and the United Fruit-driven massacre Colombians call *Matanza de las bananeras*. (I love comedian Dave Barry's description

of the Monroe Doctrine: 1. No European country can intervene in the internal affairs of any other country in the Western Hemisphere. 2. But we can. 3. Neener neener neener.) My play is a comedy, and I'm fond of comedy, but we must ruefully admit that the narrative of America is something much closer to tragedy.

Isn't that written into our own historical narrative as well? The story of the Book of Mormon is fundamentally tragic, is it not? Isn't our most unique scripture's narrative one of war and destruction and genocide? And can't we even read that sense of tragedy into D&C 101? "I redeemed the land by the shedding of blood?"

SO WHAT DOES America mean, aside from paradox and contradiction? In America, "all men are created equal," and in America, the man who wrote those words owned slaves. We believe white men were led to America by the hand of God, and we know that their arrival set off the deadliest pandemic in the history of the world. Our greatest president spent his four years in office waging a horrific civil war. We are both Columbia and America, both the shining city on a hill, and Enron and Wall Street and used car lots.

Here's my counter-narrative, then. And it goes back a ways. It is, in any case, what I believe about America.

God exists, and His ways are inscrutable. He put us here, on this testing ground we call earth, knowing we would be subjected to violence and disease and horror. And also beauty and love and kindness. The history of mankind is a tragic and violent one. God has had to work through very imperfect vessels. But all civilizations tend to agree on certain moral principles: that murder is wrong, that families matter, that freedom is preferred above slavery. Above all, the human capacity for reason has provided some hope, some truth, some insight. And we can learn from all human history, provided we study it honestly and with some effort at scholarly objectivity.

The Enlightenment, and its thinkers and writers, influenced the ideas of such hard-headed secular humanists as Madison, Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin. The light of Christ, which is also the light of intelligence, influenced their ideas, and the great documents they created—the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence—inspired a new democratic reform, based on the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau, yes, but also with precedents in the Islandic þing and ancient Greek democracy and the Great Binding Law of the people gathered in the Iroquois Confederation. And America's Founding Fathers were flawed, as all humans are flawed. Many owned slaves and defended the practice of chattel slavery, though most knew it was deeply immoral. America was built on religion, yes, but also on genocide, on the murder of Native Americans, and the enslavement of Africans. Like all nations, America was built on a foundation of violence, and that legacy remains part of our heritage.

But gradually, through intelligent application of reason to social problems, through trial and error, through sen-

sible government intervention, we've solved at least some of our nation's problems. Business regulation ameliorates the worst anti-social excesses of open capitalism. We've made progress in combating racism, in allowing women the same freedoms men have traditionally enjoyed, in allowing people trapped in desperately unhappy marriages a way to form new lives and new attachments. The elderly can live out their golden years with some measure of financial security, and help is available for the poor and sickly. The 1950s saw the last culturally accepted expressions of openly held racism and sexism and the abuse of women and children. Quite frightening attitudes and ideas that were broadly held fifty years ago are no longer openly part of our national cultural conversation. The Sixties were a time in which the human need for freedom found expression in music, art, movies, television. Even our understanding of human sexuality improved and has blessed the world.

Today, Americans live in a dangerous world, but one immeasurably better, in almost every sense, than ever before in world history. We live in a less violent world than any of our ancestors, and in a world where almost all children grow to maturity in health and safety. We live in a world where science has made it possible for us to know more about more of our brothers and sisters across the globe than ever before. Information technology, transportation technology, entertainment technology, and above all, the glorious revolution of medical technology have changed almost all aspects of life for the better for more people than ever before. The free exchange of goods and services in a market economy can do extraordinary good.

But not always—markets are famously amoral as the great institution of the Family is under attack economically, as we see the working poor crushed by the inhuman violence inherent in laissez faire economics. The lives of women have improved immeasurably over the last hundred years or so, in large measure because of the steadfast courage of the valiant pioneers of feminism. Nonetheless, the commodification and exploitation of women, the soul-destroying falseness of pornography, threatens to undo much of the progress that's been made. The rich get richer, and the poor have to work ever harder to keep up, often without social safety nets, and the effect on families and children can be devastating. The progress we take for granted in America isn't as widely shared as it should be. Too many of our brothers and sisters live lives of desperation, pain, and fear.

We see before us a great task: to create a millennial peace ourselves, as Christ's spirit urges us to see all people as brothers and sisters. As Mormons, we believe in prophets, and although the Brethren are also flawed and sinful human beings, at times the Spirit speaks through them. We would do well to listen and employ their ideas thoughtfully, the way we'd use any evidence, any ideas, as we work through problems, trying to think our own way through to answers and solutions. Perhaps the world will end nonetheless in apocalyptic violence. Meanwhile, we have work to do.

America, in a word, means the possibility of Zion. Mormonism places Zion on many maps, from Jackson County, Missouri, to Utah, to Jerusalem, to all of North America, to the meaning *du jour*, which would be a watered-down "everywhere there are some Mormons." But the most significant meaning comes again from Joseph Smith. I'm paraphrasing D&C 105 here: Zion comes about when we are so unified as a people that there are no poor among us.

This is the point I believe Skousen and Beck miss. The greatness of America is inextricably linked to the goodness of America—on that point, we agree. But the goodness of America is defined by our commitment to ending poverty and caring for the poor, our commitment to tolerance, diversity, and social justice. Those are the principles and values that define the Constitution, and they are the principles neither Beck nor Skousen seem ever to have noticed.

But their story, the story of America Virtuous and Triumphant is compelling, and carries a presumption of patriotism that our other, truer but grimier story does not necessarily enjoy. I don't know how to combat Beck-ism. I've written a play; I'm a little worried that no one will see it who doesn't agree with it. So come. Bring a friend; preferably an unlikely friend, someone from your ward, perhaps, someone more conservative than you. Start a conversation. That's what good plays, and good history, should do.

NOTES

1. Cleon Skousen, *The Five Thousand Year Leap: Twenty-eight Great Ideas that Changed the World* (Franklin, Tennessee: American Documents, 2009), 52.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 53.
4. Charles Krauthammer, "Obama Doesn't Speak to Ankle-dwelling Peasants," *Deseret News*, 7 February 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700007442/Obama-doesnt-speak-to-ankle-dwelling-peasants.html> (accessed 6 March 2010).

Plan-B Theatre Company Presents
the World Premiere of
Eric Samuelsen's *Amerigo*
April 8–18, 2010

Featuring Kirt Bateman (Niccolo Machiavelli), Matthew Ivan Bennett (Amerigo Vespucci), Mark Fossen (Christopher Columbus) and Deena Marie Manzanares (Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz). Directed by Jerry Rapiet.

Studio Theatre, Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center
Downtown Salt Lake City
Tickets: \$20
To purchase: 801-355-ARTS or planbtheatre.org/amerigo

Bringing Brother Darwin into the fold

BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

TOWARD A RECONCILIATION OF THE SCIENCE AND OUR FAITH

By William S. Bradshaw

DO YOU BELIEVE IN EVOLUTION?" IN MY experience, the chance for positive dialogue to take place among Church members following such a beginning is not very good. The problem is that the word evolution elicits such a wide range of reactions that the discussants are rarely able to focus on a common concern long enough to achieve an understanding, let alone appreciation, of one another's positions. Because few people are neutral on the subject, hostility and ill feelings can sometimes crop up. This generates in many of us a real uneasiness if not fear of approaching the subject. LDS members often go out of their way to avoid the issue or tune it out.

I, for one, am not happy with this situation and would like to see it change. What follows, then, is a modest attempt to promote reasonable dialogue among committed Latter-day Saints, particularly students, about evolution.

Let me be candid at the outset about my own position: I am convinced evolution is a correct principle. If you limited me to a one-word answer to the standard opening question, I would have to reply, "Yes." Furthermore, I believe that evolution is compatible with the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is not an enemy to faith.

I have proceeded, then, to divide the larger subject into smaller, "bite-sized" pieces. In this article, I identify the most important issues in the evolution controversy and

frame them as questions. I respond with an initial brief answer and then discuss each at greater length. These are my own views. I am certainly not trying to represent a Church position, though I have tried to put the issues in the context of LDS theology as best I understand it.

Q: What is the scientific status of evolution? Is it legitimate to discount it as "just a theory"?

A: Evolution stands on very secure ground. It is the central and definitive principle of the science of biology. The hard data supporting it are numerous and varied. Evolution is as satisfying and compelling an explanation for the diversity of living things as gravity is for explaining the behavior of falling objects. In scientific parlance, the word "theory" does not mean an unsubstantiated speculation.

The statement "After all, evolution is just a theory" has muddied many a discussion. It is often quoted to advance the view that evolution need not be taken seriously because when all the facts are in, it will be shown as incorrect. Such arguments are based on the vernacular definition of the word "theory," namely, a guess, an opinion, an unproven assumption, a speculation without a basis in the real world, a second-class proposition near the bottom of the hierarchy between truth at the top and falsehood or fraud at the bottom.

The evidence is overwhelming that this earth is extremely old (in terms of human years), that organisms have been living and dying on the earth during its billions of years, that our planet's diverse life forms are related by means of historical descent through time—with early species giving rise to later ones—and that the physical de-



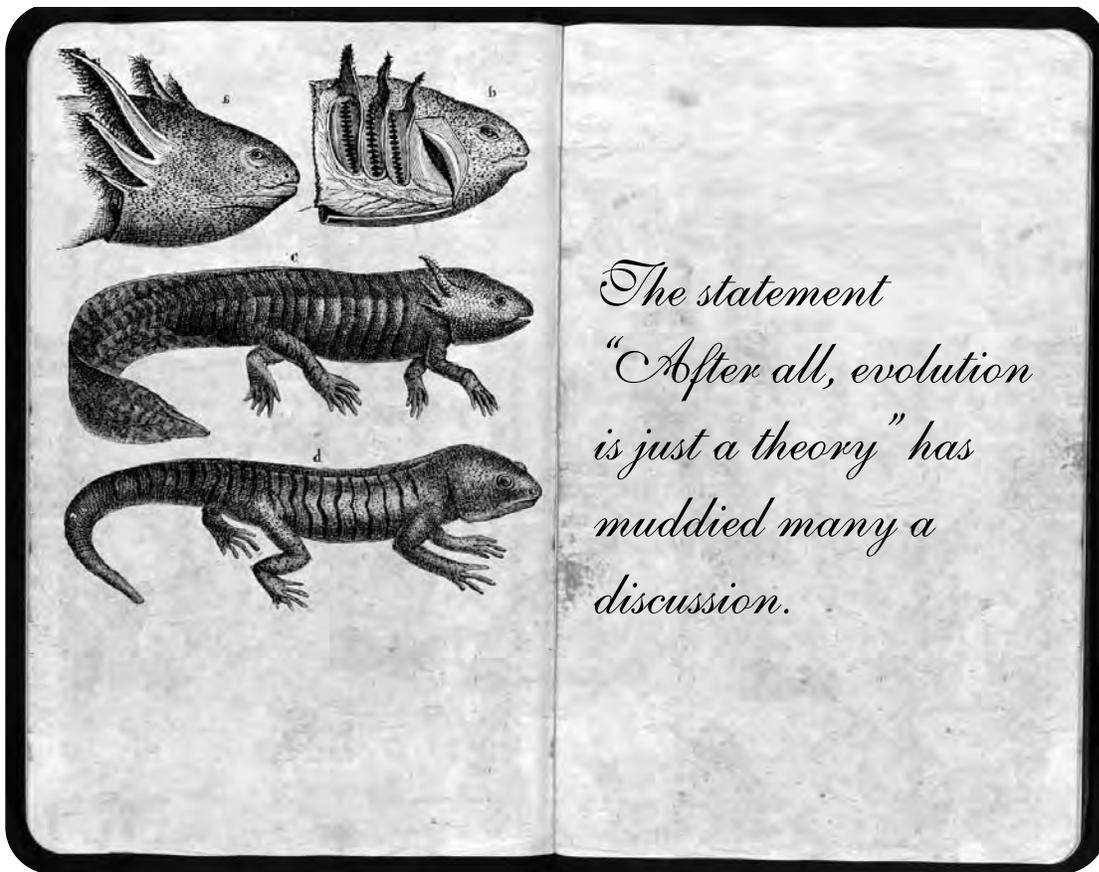
WILLIAM S. BRADSHAW taught at BYU in the departments of zoology and microbiology and molecular biology from 1970–2007. He presided over the Hong Kong Mission 1971–1974. He is currently a chair, with his wife Marge, for LDS Family Fellowship, a support group for parents of gay and lesbian children.

velopment of humankind is part of this story. The catalogue of facts supporting these conclusions is enormous, with contributions coming from thousands of honest men and women in a wide variety of scientific specialties over many, many years.

To a scientist, the word “theory” usually means a broad proposition based on facts and observations, which has undergone testing, stood the test of time, and best explains and gives meaning to the phenomena under study, though it could be altered if a more adequate, more valid explanation comes along. In what company does evolution travel? What other propositions also bear the title “theory”? Gravity,

electricity, and atomic energy are also notions that have demonstrable consequences (are based on evidence) but are understood, explained, and applied in practical circumstances through theories. Consider, for example, “the law of gravity,” a common phrase for a universally accepted truth. In fact, there is no “law” of gravity. Properly, there is a “law of falling apples”—when released from a tree branch, they always go down, not up—hence a “law” based on repeated observations without exception. Gravity, however, is (in this formal sense) a theory—and as such, it is a much more important and useful idea than “law,” because the theory helps us understand *why* apples fall. We use this theory to inform the calculations of a host of human endeavors from baseball to space exploration. In this sense, evolution is indeed a theory and therefore merits the same respect as gravitational theory.¹

In short, if after extensive, successful scientific investigation, an idea is granted the title “theory,” this is high praise indeed. And in this sense, if people persist in undervaluing evolution as “only a theory,” then to be consistent, they must also be willing to state, “After all, LDS theology is only a theory,” because it, too, is a theoretical framework we use to explain our observations. We do not, however, hold the gospel suspect because it is a theoretical framework. Instead, having accepted evidence and experience from a variety of sources, we prize and apply the gospel in a way that is analogous to the way we prize and apply evolu-



tion—because it helps make sense of our existence in the long term and guides the practical conduct of our lives in the short term.

Q: At present, considerable debate and differences of opinion exist among evolutionary biologists. Does this indicate scientific uncertainty about the validity of evolution and leave me free to reject the idea?

A: No.

True, differences of opinion exist, but not about whether evolution occurred. The differences focus on how it took place. It is the mechanism of evolution, not its existence, that is under scrutiny. The vigorous exchange between scientists with different points of view is actually a healthy and necessary part of the process for achieving a clearer understanding of the mechanism.

Q: Who is a creationist? Is it correct to identify Latter-day Saints as creationists?

A: Though this may seem to be a straightforward question, the word “creationist”—like so many used in conversations about evolution—needs careful definition. As generally used in the context of the contro-

versy over teaching creationism in the public schools, Latter-day Saints are not creationists.

Putting one-word labels on people to categorize their positions on a certain issue is nearly always unfair and inaccurate. Often the term “creationist” is used carelessly, as if its meaning is self-evident. Thus a creationist is commonly thought to be one who believes in a divine Creator, and creationism is the designation for a religious person’s political stand. This notion is reinforced by the fact that creationism is nearly always positioned as the antithesis of evolution. Thus, a false dichotomy has been born, and creationism/evolution joins the ranks of white/black, good/evil, and theism/atheism as mutually exclusive alternatives at opposite ends of a single continuum. This polarization is not helpful.

Although Latter-day Saints accept Jesus Christ as the Creator of the earth, we cannot theologically and should not politically align ourselves with “creationism” as generally understood in the United States today. Our beliefs about the Creator and his methods are not compatible with the tenets of the ultra-conservative Protestant tradition espoused by contemporary “creationists.”² Unlike “creationists,” we do not demand a literal interpretation of all scriptural passages. We regard some biblical statements about the origin of life on earth as figurative. For example, we do not believe that the earth was created in six 24-hour days out of nothing. Also, in contrast to contemporary creationists, we do not pursue a political agenda calling for the insertion of religious belief into the science curriculum of the public schools.

I believe that the divine revelator and the inspired human writers intended the scriptural accounts of creation to convey general, spiritual aspects of the events, not a literal description of specifics. I am not, therefore, a creationist as the term is generally used today.

Q: Is creationism a science? Is evolution a religion?

A: Creationism (or Creation Science) including its latest reincarnation as “intelligent design” is not science but a religious/political movement. Evolution is the central, unifying theory of biology, not a religious principle.

To try to legitimize and promote acceptance of their religious views, contemporary creationists have labeled their dogma, “creation science.” However, they have neither experimental nor historical evidence for their assertions. Because creationism lacks a scientific methodology and empirical data for support, it is not science. There are certainly some people whose enthusiasm for evolution might be likened to religious zeal. Others doubtless feel that the evidence supporting evolution must invalidate religious faith. But evolutionary science has neither the intent nor

the means to substitute for or contradict religion.

Under the 1981 Balanced Treatment Act, Louisiana law required the teaching of creation science alongside evolution in the public schools. However, in 1987 the Supreme Court ruled that because that Act “advances a religious doctrine by requiring either the banishment of the theory of evolution from public school classrooms or the presentation of a religious viewpoint that rejects evolution in its entirety,” it violated the First Amendment’s prohibition on government promotion of religious beliefs.³

Q: Is evolution an atheistic concept? (Does evolution assume the absence of a divine Creator?)

A: Unfortunately, many commonly assume that evolutionary theory operates on the premise of the absence of a Creator. This is not true. No data generated by chemistry, biology, earth sciences such as geology and paleontology, or other related academic disciplines either validate or invalidate the conclusion that a divine Creator exists. Theological questions are outside the realm of science. True, some evolutionary scientists are atheists, but many others adhere to their religious faiths and maintain a strong belief in God.

The mistaken conflation of evolution and atheism is a result of a popular belief during the latter 19th century (after Darwin presented the case for natural selection as the mechanism for evolutionary change) that science and religion were at odds with each other, irreconcilable enemies destined to fight for the souls of men. The truth is that scientists, evolutionary biologists included, have neither the means nor (generally speaking) a motive to discount, invalidate, or repudiate religious faith. Consider the following statement from the concluding paragraph of an entry in a popular book about dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures:

So, nowadays, although they argue about the details of what controls the rates or pattern of evolution, almost all biologists accept that extinction and evolution have taken place, and that Darwinian natural selection is the major mechanism underlying them. There is nothing in this that necessarily contradicts a belief in God or even in Divine intervention, for the record in the rocks could be interpreted as a testament to the way in which God chose to create the natural world.⁴

Q: If evolution is valid, does that mean that life originated “by chance”?

A: Let’s rephrase the question. “Could life have originated without the hand of God?” I believe the answer is no. “Could God have employed a mechanism for creation that depended on the random behavior of molecules and other probabilistic biochemical and bi-

ological events, confident that the outcome would be as he envisioned?" I believe the answer is yes. God would not have needed to intervene at each stage of the creation process in order to insure the eventual appearance of living organisms on the earth.

People whose view of creation is based on a totally literal interpretation of all the scriptural accounts have difficulty understanding how evolution could allow Deity a role. In contrast to the idea that God effected creation instantaneously, the scientific scenario of gradual change over billions of years, irregular patterns of appearances and extinction, and hereditary connections between apparently diverse organisms can seem directionless and precarious, as if the earth and its inhabitants are a chance occurrence.

But this problem is at least partly semantic. For example, when a chemist describes the random behavior of molecules, his nonchemist listener may develop the sense of a haphazard, purposeless event and, by extension, perhaps, of a world in which Deity is excluded. On the contrary, in large samples, random processes are predictable with very high precision, which means that their outcome could be understood, foreseen, and even utilized by Deity. In discussing evolutionary concepts, "chance," like several other important terms, needs to be carefully defined

I believe that if, during the early stages of the primeval earth, the Creators left matter to act for itself, its activity, though random, would still be predictable and its outcome foreseeable, at least in general outline. Viewed in this way, evolution is not an accidental or fortuitous process, but an inevitable one. Given a set of elements from which to construct molecules, cells, tissues, and organisms, and given air, water, and rock as environments in which organisms can live, evolution will fashion lungs and gills—wings, fins, and feet. Living things reflect both the properties of their raw matter and their environment. Thus the assembly of life, even a self-assembly, could not be totally capricious. I expect that if we were able to go elsewhere in the universe and study the history of life on other planets with conditions similar to earth's, we would find evidence for sets of organisms remarkably similar to those that have inhabited this planet. Evolution will have mainly achieved there what it has here.

Clearly randomness operates in the chemistry of living cells today. Molecules move and react in a nondirected fashion, subject to somewhat arbitrary environmental forces. Nevertheless, the maintenance of life is not at risk. God does not have to follow the path of each molecule of

glucose nor check each enzyme-catalyzed reaction nor monitor the replication of chromosomes in order to insure that they will behave predictably. He can trust these objects to follow the laws governing life processes.

Q: Based on LDS theology, is it reasonable that God could have employed evolution as a mechanism for effecting the creation?

A: Given my understanding of the strategy God employs to elevate his spirit offspring to a celestial state, creation through evolutionary processes seems more likely than creation by fiat.

An attempt to understand the theological implications of an evolutionary mechanism might begin with an examination of the LDS concept of the plan of salvation. This is a vision of the eternal nature and possibilities of humanity. In broad outline, a premortal spirit—the literal offspring of Deity—experiences mortal life in order to prepare and qualify for a future of unlimited potential. It seems very useful to distinguish between the role performed by God as Creator in this enterprise, and the program he has prepared for his children as "createes." For us who are attempting to achieve godliness through this program there are two essentials for success as represented in Figure 1: (1) time (life is a probationary period, Alma 42:10), and (2) a chance to exercise agency and prove worthiness (Abraham 3:25–26). Most important is that we are active, not passive participants in the enterprise. What we know of the kingdoms of glory and their inhabitants suggests that this program will result in diversity—a very wide range in the quality of people's preparation and hence in their potential for ultimate accomplishment.

And what is God's part in this plan? In the words of the hymn, "He will call, persuade, direct aright, . . . but never force the human mind."⁵ God knows what the end result ought to be; he knows what is required to achieve it; he provides the circumstances under which it is possible. He may or may not need to engage in trial and error as Creator—but for us would-be gods, trial and error (sin and repentance) are, in fact, indispensable in implementing our own creation (working out our own salvation).

A statement from the Doctrine and Covenants seems to capture the fundamental principle upon which this program operates: "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence" (D&C 93:30).



Figure 1

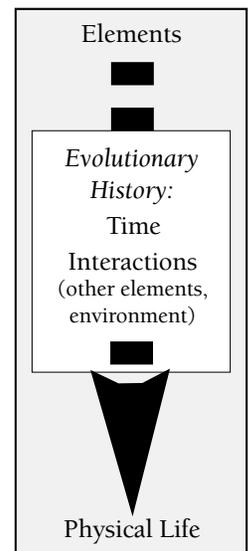


Figure 2

Though our first inclination may be to assume that acting as Creator, an omnipotent God would act quickly and directly to bring his creations into existence, the scripture implies that efficiency is not his first priority. Allowing eternal entities to act for themselves takes precedence. Likely this same principle governed the process that generated physical life in its wonderful variety.

Figure 2 suggests that this might also be appropriately applied in the biochemical/biological world for generating physical life. This proposition begins with the assumption that the chemical elements of the earth are eternal, at least in the sense of premortal (D&C 93:33). Though

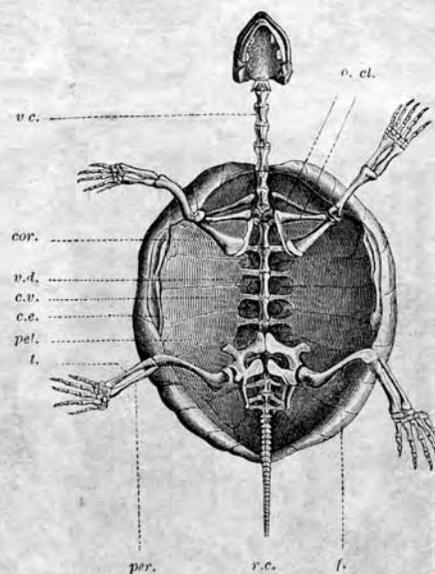
agency probably doesn't apply in the physical realm (the chemical behavior of molecules is not subject to their "will"), the range of reactions into which the elements can enter (defined by their intrinsic attributes such as atomic organization, bond lengths, and angles) might be properly considered a sphere of action, an estate that they can keep (see Abraham 3:26). Just as God does not force his will upon people's spirits in their quest for godliness, would he not also preserve the opportunity for the elements to "fill the measure of [their] creation" (D&C 88:19, 25) without coercion? After all, it is contrary to the priesthood, which is God's creative power, to operate by control or compulsion (see D&C 121:37–39).

My reading of the Book of Abraham's description of the world's creation suggests that the elements (earth, water, etc.) were allowed to "act for themselves" under the creative direction and oversight of Deity—a scenario consistent with the evolutionary process. Consider verses 12 and 21:

12. And the Gods organized the earth to bring forth grass from its own seed, and the herb to bring forth herb from its own seed, yielding seed after his kind; and the earth to bring forth the tree from its own seed, yielding fruit, whose seed could only bring forth the same in itself, after his kind; and the Gods saw that they were obeyed.

21. And the Gods prepared the waters that they might bring forth great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters were to

Though our first inclination may be to assume that acting as Creator, an omnipotent God would act quickly and directly to bring his creations into existence, the scripture implies



that efficiency is not his first priority.

bring forth abundantly after their kind; and every winged fowl after their kind. And the Gods saw that they would be obeyed, and that their plan was good.

Verse 18 of chapter 4 is an especially intriguing description of the Creators during an interim stage: "And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed." There is here a clear suggestion of periods of time during which those objects undergoing creation, as agents, were left to themselves to follow the divinely instigated program.

At the conclusion of several stages of his work, the Creator proclaimed achievements up to that point as "good." In this context, what does "good" signify? Among others, Nephi, Abinadi, and Alma explored the notion that an event, idea, or behavior is good if it leads to or promotes life. "He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death" (Helaman 15:31; see also 2 Nephi 23, 26–27; 3 Nephi 26:5). Often, of course, in these references, life is used in a spiritual, not biological sense. But isn't it possible that the statement "I God, saw that all things which I had made were good" was a recognition that conditions now existed that would give rise to physical life?

I can more easily believe in a scenario in which the Creator permits the elements to participate in an evolutionary process which in 4-1/2 billion years produces a horse, than one in which the Creator, by virtue of his omnipotence, stretches forth his hand and achieves a complex

creature instantaneously with the proclamation, “Let there be horse!” Perhaps he could do it this latter way if he wanted to, but would he? Would that be in keeping with his mandate to let “truth act for itself”?

Q: Is evolution a concept that demeans and degrades humankind?

A: Though some people may feel this way, such a conclusion is certainly not necessary. The notion of man’s biological kinship with the organisms of the world can be interpreted as an ennobling and uplifting concept that gives an extra dimension of meaning to our stewardship of the earth.

Whether people have a positive or negative reaction to an idea depends on their conceptual framework. For some people, the attributes of human beings constitute a superiority that does not permit comparison with other animals, making the suggestion of a physical relatedness between ourselves and “lower forms” unthinkable. It is quite correct to identify humans as unique, but not because we are singular or dominant or superior in a strictly biological sense. Even a quick comparison will readily demonstrate that many animals perform specific biological functions better than humans do. Instead, it is our self-conscious intelligence with a capacity for language and reasoning that sets humans apart, and these traits, though they certainly have some physical basis in anatomy and biochemistry, we attribute primarily to our spirits.

Though we maintain a strong faith in the reality of our heritage as the spiritual offspring of our Heavenly Father, our understanding of the relationship of the spirit to the physical body is limited. We don’t know how the unique spirits of human individuals are introduced into their physical bodies. That process was initiated at a particular time in evolutionary history, however, as humans joined the ranks of the living creatures of the earth. That we are a part of the living community of the world, not above and outside of that community, is the important insight of evolution.

We have received a divine commission to be stewards of the earth, to care for it and its inhabitants (Genesis 1:26–28; D&C 59:16–20). My understanding that I am biologically related to other organisms gives that stewardship added meaning, compelling me to be sensitive to all living things, to use the earth’s resources moderately without waste, to avoid polluting, and to promote replenishing. Sadly, there are countless examples of exploitation, extinction, and devastation by humans who suppose that man’s uniqueness among the animals grants license for such acts.

Finally, we can attempt to carefully distinguish between what a study of nature can and cannot teach us about the divine. In pre-Darwinian Western culture, people viewed the earth and its creatures as a perfect

system, the efficacious attributes of plants and animals and their harmonious relationships with one another simply a reflection of the mind of God.⁶ The evidence that natural selection is the major driving force in creation forces us, uncomfortably perhaps, to reconsider this position. I believe that Latter-day Saints ought to agree with Darwin that, in fact, it is not appropriate for people to draw moral lessons from nature. Life on earth is quirky, and living systems display violence, suffering, and uncontrolled instinct-driven behavior that kills and maims. While we can properly permit our aesthetic appreciation for the earth and nature to rekindle our reverence for God, we should look only to God himself, and to our own ability to reason and distinguish good from evil (unique among living things, our legacy as God’s spiritual offspring), as sources of moral guidance.

Q: Does acceptance of evolution lead to a loss of faith, religious skepticism, or an inclination to sin?

A: The answer is no. Though sinners or skeptics may seek reasons to explain or excuse errant behavior, it is incorrect to view evolution as a pathway leading to sin. Many faithful, active Latter-day Saints accept evolution as a true principle.

In the preceding pages, we have argued that evolutionary biology is not atheistic: no scientific data suggest the absence of God, and no theoretical considerations exclude Deity from the processes that generated living things. If one accepts these premises, then a person cannot find in evolution a reason to cease activity in the Church nor disclaim its teachings. Apostates will be punished for their own sins and not for Darwin’s transgression.

Consider the following personal expressions by two university students written at the conclusion of their study of evolutionary biology:

I have, for the most part, resolved the conflict I had with evolution and my religious beliefs. I believe God could and may have used evolutionary means to develop the organisms on the earth. I do not believe He would make the earth appear in a “zap,” but rather would use scientific devices. The same goes for the organisms He created. I believe the evidence for the evolution of other creatures is valid and do not believe He would change His method to make man. The thing He did differently is to give man a soul and the ability to use free agency in order to return back to Him.

I find the theory of evolution to be a beautiful explanation of the creative process. The idea that the organisms here on the earth, including man, have evolved from “lower forms” and are genetically related is to me a remarkable concept—a con-

cept that increases my belief in a Supreme Being who has governed this wonderful process. Indeed, I feel there need be no conflict between the theory of evolution and LDS theology.

Many active, faithful Latter-day Saints find the evidence for evolution to be compelling, accept it as a true principle, and view it as a support and confirmation for their religious commitment (see, for example, the recent book *Relics of Eden* by LDS scientist Daniel K. Fairbanks).⁷

Q: Does the Church have an official position confirming or denying the validity of the claims of evolutionary science?

A: No. Pronouncements by the First Presidency have set forth, in general terms, LDS belief in the divine nature of creation, including man; but with respect to the particulars of man's origin, and the interface of faith with scientific principles, statements by past and present LDS authorities reflect a wide diversity of viewpoints.

Several studies document in detail the views of LDS leaders regarding evolution.⁸ Following is a very brief outline of the most relevant 20th-century statements.

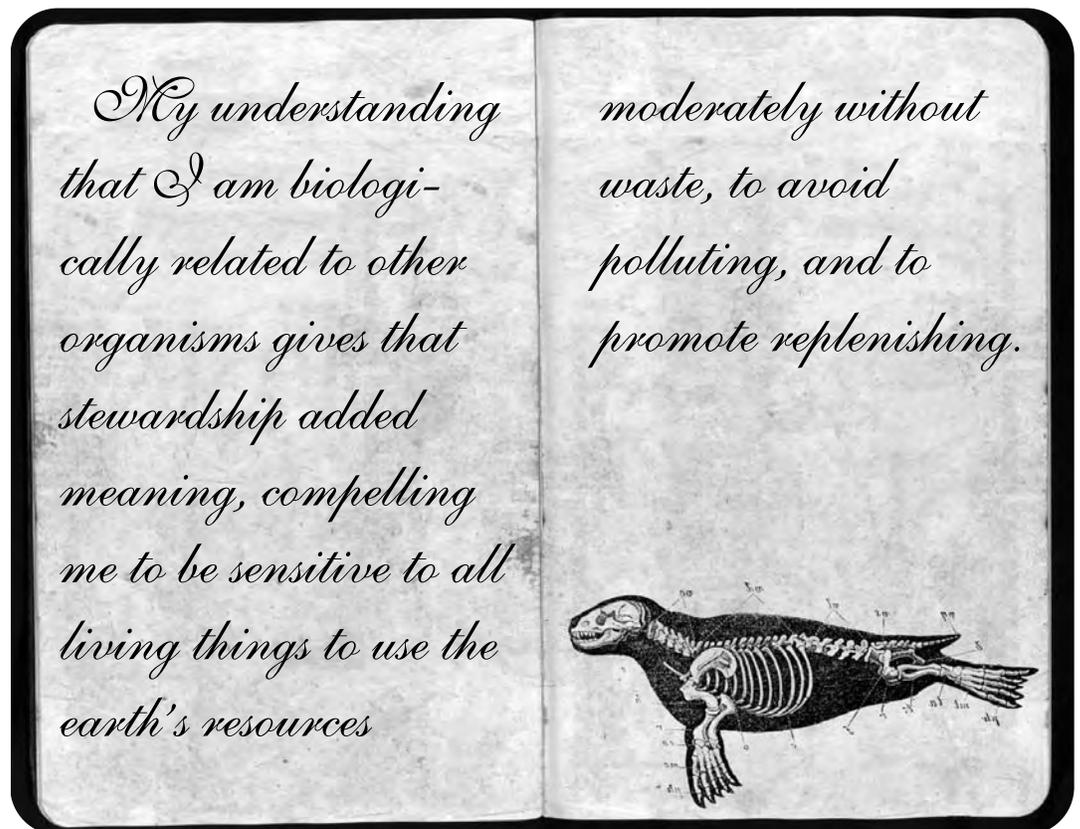
In 1909, the First Presidency issued a statement titled "The Origin of Man."⁹ Written amid the widespread discussion of evolution prompted by the centennial of Darwin's birth and the 50th anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*, this pronouncement is often cited as evidence of a formal anti-evolutionary LDS position. I believe a more accurate appraisal is that the document reaffirms fundamental theological principles (God created man in his own image, the reality of spiritual and physical creation, the Father and Son have bodies, and Adam is the parent of our race) and implies that evolution will be in error if it repudiates these concepts. Shortly thereafter, a remarkably liberal editorial¹⁰ by President Joseph F. Smith left open the possibilities that the bodies of Adam and Eve (a) "evolved in natural processes to present perfection," (b) were "trans-

planted [to earth] from another sphere," or (c) were "born here . . . as other mortals have been." In addition, President Smith later stated that "the Church itself has no philosophy about the modus operandi employed by the Lord in His creation of the world."¹¹

Controversy over evolution was revived in 1925 during the famous Scopes trial in Tennessee. After the trial, the First Presidency (headed by Heber J. Grant) published "Mormon" View of Evolution," excerpts of the 1909 document shortened by excluding the paragraphs with the strongest anti-evolutionary tone.¹² In 1930, a dispute over evolutionary concepts arose between Joseph Fielding Smith and B. H. Roberts. After lengthy debate between the two and discussion with the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency, the First Presidency announced that the Church had no doctrinal position one way or the other on "pre-Adamites" or whether there was death on the earth prior to Adam's fall. The brethren also declared a moratorium on further debate of these issues.

When, in 1954, Joseph Fielding Smith published *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, an unqualified denunciation of evolution, many assumed that he spoke for the Church. However, President David O. McKay, who had been an active, first-hand participant in the events 25 years earlier, repeatedly wrote that the Church "has made no official statement nor taken an official position on the subject of evolution, and [Elder Smith's] book contains his personal views which are neither authorized nor published by the Church."¹³

Significantly, whereas the *Handbook of Instructions*,



which details principles and policies governing the Church, comments on a number of biologically related sensitive matters (such as abortion, artificial insemination, and AIDS), it contains no statement whatever on evolution. In June 1992, the BYU Board of Trustees approved a cover letter to a packet of evolution-related statements issued by the First Presidency, which includes the following sentence: “Although there has never been a formal declaration from the First Presidency addressing the general matter of organic evolution as a process for development of biological species, these documents make clear the official position of the Church regarding the origin of man.”¹⁴

Despite the absence of a definitive, direct statement, in an authorized organ, that the concepts of evolutionary biology might be in direct conflict with LDS theology or religious practice, a large fraction of contemporary Church members perceive that conflict exists. Consider the following response to a study administered to 1,347 BYU students enrolled in Biology 100 during fall semester 1994.

In your view, which statement below best represents the official position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints toward the principle of biological evolution?

12% A. The official position of the Church is that evolution is incorrect. The idea is not in harmony with statements of the scriptures and Church leaders and is harmful to the spiritual growth of Church members.

5% B. The official position of the Church is that evolution is correct. It is scientifically sound and compatible with the principles of the gospel.

63% C. There is no official position of the Church concerning evolution. A wide difference of opinion exists among both Church leaders and members on the subject.

20% D. None of the above.

The anomalously large number who responded with option D, “None of the above,” seems to reflect the general uncertainty and anxiety over this issue which persists among members of the Church. This is not surprising in view of the periodic suggestions by some Church leaders that evolution is incompatible with our doctrine.¹⁵ Less well known, it seems, are statements that reflect a spirit of openness or acceptance. For example, Elder Stephen L. Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve wrote in 1933:

The time of creation has ever been a subject of much comment and dispute. Yet I challenge anybody to produce from the Bible itself any finite limitation whatsoever of the periods of creation. By strained inferential references and interpretations

men have sought to set the time in days or periods of a thousand years, but I feel that no justification of such limitations is warranted by the scriptures themselves. If the evolutionary hypothesis of the creation of life and matter in the universe is ultimately found to be correct, I shall neither be disappointed nor displeased if it will turn out so to be. In my humble opinion the Biblical account is sufficiently comprehensive to include the whole of the process . . . If you will take the counsel of one who loves science and reveres religion, permit me to admonish you: Never close your mind or your heart; ever keep them open to the reception of both knowledge and spiritual impressions. Both true science and true religion are the exponents of truth. Their fields are different, their provinces are distinct, but their purposes are identical—to enlighten man, to give him power, to make him good, and bring him joy.¹⁶

Apostle John A. Widtsoe argued against the idea that the creative periods were either 24 hours or 1,000 years. He also repudiated the idea that fossil-bearing rocks were reconstituted from other worlds—views held by some Church members that contradicted the scientific evidence.¹⁷

In 1976, President Spencer W. Kimball offered the view that the account of Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib was figurative and that we don’t exactly know how Adam and Eve’s coming into the world happened.¹⁸

Finally, Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Quorum of Seventy wrote that “four prophets whom he had asked about the age of the earth said they didn’t know.”¹⁹

There are other thoughtful and illuminating statements in Church publications to which the reader is referred.²⁰

Q: What principles of evolutionary biology are acceptable to Latter-day Saints?

A. *The earth is 4.5 billion years old.*

There is no reason for believing Church members not to accept the evidence of “deep time” for the age of our planet. The “days” of the Genesis account may properly be interpreted as indeterminate periods of time. This was the opinion articulated in an editorial in the *Improvement Era* in 1909:

The Book of Abraham, in the 3rd and 4th chapters, very distinctly points out, or conveys, the idea that the creative days or periods included long periods of time. This is plainly set forth on pages 56 to 59 in the Manual. We are not told how long these periods were. It is only demonstrated in the Manual that science declares the creation to have covered long periods of time; and that Joseph the Prophet, through the Book of Abraham, also declared that

long periods of time were consumed in the preparation of the earth for man.²¹

B. There is a long history of life and death on our planet.

Living organisms have occupied the earth continuously for three-fourths of its existence. Exhibiting a great variety of life cycles, individual bacteria, plants, animals, and other organisms have been born, developed, and died over the past millions of years. In 1931, the presiding councils of the Church deliberated about the possible conflict between this proposition and LDS religious beliefs. Apostle James E. Talmage summarized the decision of the First Presidency as follows: "That there was no death upon the earth prior to Adam's fall is likewise declared to be no doctrine of the Church."²²

C. Physical characteristics of living things have changed over time; the genealogical history of organisms very different in appearance and behavior can be traced to a common ancestral lineage.

As a single example, the whales of 50 million years ago had legs, having evolved from earlier, four-footed, terrestrial mammals.²³

The scriptural language that organisms reproduce "after their kind" (Moses 2:25) is consistent with the scientifically documented mechanisms of heredity: offspring inherit genes from their parents and resemble them.

There is nothing in this to demand a fixity of species over hundreds or thousands of generations. In fact, the success of humans in generating new breeds of farm animals or dogs clearly demonstrates that species aren't fixed. Whether or not there is a genealogical connection between animals of very different form, like birds and reptiles, ought to be resolved by scientific investigation, not theological speculation.

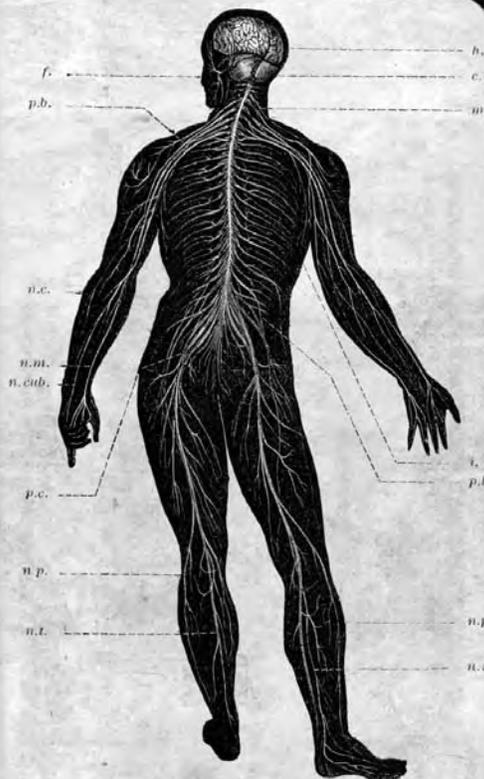
Q: How should I respond to the widely divergent views about evolution held by persons I respect, especially Church teachers and leaders?

A: Any important idea of consequence deserves thoughtful consideration. Our difficulty lies in giving a fair hearing to ideas we think we disagree with. We ought to conduct such an investigation with open minds and in a spirit of humility and kindness toward those whose opinions are different from our own. Latter-day Saints can properly expect unity on fundamental doctrines. But on issues for which revelation is incomplete, a diversity of opinion is natural and valuable.

This may be the most important question in this list and perhaps the most difficult to answer satisfactorily. The issues seem to be: How can one determine the truth when reputable people have such large differences of opinion on the subject? What weight should the views of Church authorities carry? Because they are entitled to special inspiration, shouldn't one yield to their views?

Good people (parents, seminary teachers, Church authorities, and others) have issued unequivocal denunciations of evolution and perpetuated the view that the idea is totally irreconcilable with the principles of the gospel. "From the day of their first announcement, these theories of organic evolution found themselves in violent conflict with the principles of revealed religion as such are found recorded in the scriptures and expounded by inspired teachers . . . There is no harmony between the truths of revealed religion and the theories of organic evolution."²⁴ Thus, for many, the "evolution

Evolution is among the issues about which revelation is limited and at least partly figurative. It seems only reasonable, then, that we would generate different interpretations of some scriptural passages.



problem” is less a concern about biology and more directly an anxiety about not being in harmony with the doctrines and leaders of the Church.

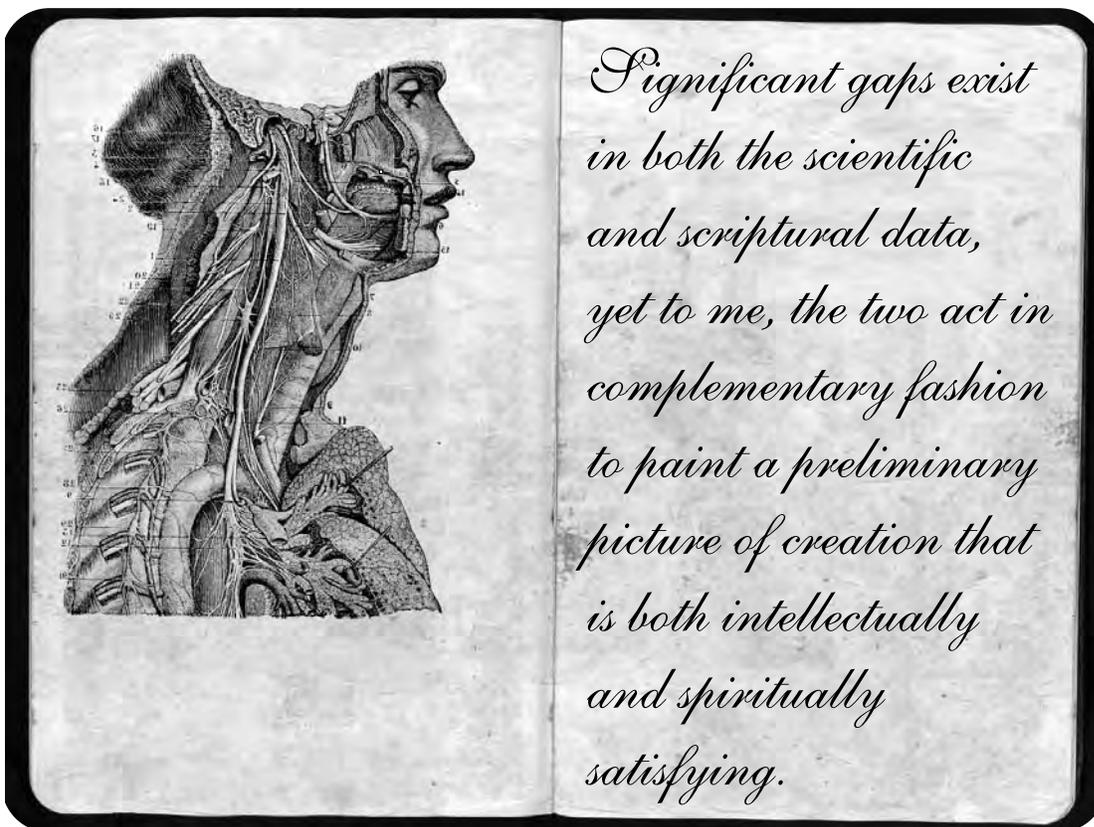
On what issues is it reasonable for Latter-day Saints to expect unity, and on what issues is diversity acceptable, even healthy? We readily agree on a number of religious principles and aspects of practical living (examples include the reality of the Restoration, the cornerstone role of the Book of Mormon, the 4th Article of Faith, the Word of Wisdom, missionary work, the focus on family ideals). However, some of us are uncomfortable when that

unity is incomplete, preferring that we be of one mind on all issues. As a result, we do not tolerate differences among us very well. If the arguments expressed above are valid, then evolution is among the issues about which revelation is limited and at least partly figurative. It seems only reasonable, then, that we would generate different interpretations of some scriptural passages and diversity in how we relate them to the scientific facts. But whatever our differences, we ought to respond to one another with thoughtful consideration, courtesy, and good will.

The principle of continuing revelation is fundamental for Latter-day Saints, but it is also one that is subject to abuse. Perhaps this was the view of Brigham Young when he said:

I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way.²⁵

When confronted with evolution, many students are so fearful of making a wrong decision that they quickly defer



Significant gaps exist in both the scientific and scriptural data, yet to me, the two act in complementary fashion to paint a preliminary picture of creation that is both intellectually and spiritually satisfying.

to the security of adopting a particular Church leader's view as their own. Differences are thus not settled on the merits of the arguments but by recourse to “My General Authority can ‘beat up’ your General Authority.” The wisdom, experience, and spiritual guidance of Church leaders can be very helpful, and we ought to pay respectful attention to their counsel. Ultimately, however, each of us is responsible for our own salvation and for making individual decisions along the way. Consider these remarkable sentiments from one who served in the First Presidency of the Church:

I have been very grateful that the freedom, dignity, and integrity of the individual are basic in church doctrine. We are free to think and express our opinion in the church. Fear will not stifle thought . . . I admire men and women who have developed the questing spirit, who are unafraid of new ideas as stepping stones to progress. We should, of course, respect the opinions of others, but we should also be unafraid to dissent—if we are informed . . . We should be dauntless in our pursuit of truth and resist all demands for unthinking conformity. No one would have us become mere tape recorders of other people's thoughts. . . . While I believe all that God has revealed, I am not quite sure I understand what he has revealed, and the fact that God has promised further revelation is to me a challenge to keep an

open mind and be prepared to follow wherever my search for truth may lead.²⁶

Elder Marion D. Hanks conveyed a similar spirit in remarks to the BYU university community at the preschool conference in the fall of 1988. Quoting A. J. Cronin, he said, “I would fondly wish, though honestly do not anticipate, that no teacher or worker will remain at BYU, and no student ever depart, filled with ‘that bumptious security that springs from dogma rather than from faith,’ who does not have and is determined to stifle in others ‘inquisitiveness and tenderness,’ who is not ‘sensible to the distinction between thinking and doubting.’”²⁷

Q: Are there any negative consequences for the Church or individual members of an anti-evolution sentiment in the LDS community?

A: Among the potential problems is an unhealthy mistrust of science or rational inquiry in general. Such an attitude can lead to sloppy thinking, which may be just as inimical to one’s eternal development as misuse of physical or spiritual faculties would be. Also, if people outside the Church perceive that the Church eschews reason or rejects science as a legitimate process for finding truth, they may be less likely to respond to its missionary effort.

The following are direct quotations from LDS college students when asked to express as honestly as possible their primary response to the concept of biological evolution. These were formulated before they had undertaken a thoughtful study of the subject.

- Evolution has always been an insulting and unsettling idea to me.
- The first thoughts that this theory brings to my mind provoke a feeling of disgust and disagreement. Evolution is nothing more to me than a thoughtless idea created to explain how man came to be.
- I hate having to learn evolution in a biology class. I do not think professors should teach this kind of stuff.
- To the natural man, evolution is both logical and acceptable, but as far as I am concerned, it is nothing but a foolish tale taught by the learned men of our day.
- I am a child of God, not of an ape. When I think of evolution, my first feeling is of rage. The images that come to mind are of amoebas, of fish, and of apes. The only word I have to sum up my opinion

of the subject is “sick.” I am outraged that Charles Darwin would come up with [this] disgusting idea.

- The concept of evolution is an insult to the human race. My ancestors don’t have ape lineage running through their veins . . . Evolution is a negative, degrading, and faithless idea. I get upset with the scientists and researchers who are so discontent and unbelieving, as far as the religious aspects of their lives go, that they feel they must resort to their own explanations of where we come from.
- As with many members of the Church, from the time I was young, I was warned that not everything I was taught in the world would be true . . . [Evolution] seemed a dark and evil concept, and I remember feeling as if I would be in danger if someone tried to teach it to me.
- It seems that my logical mind is fighting my spiritual mind. I realize that the scientific world has come to accept the theory of evolution as the most probable explanation. I can see the logic in the theory. I feel a sort of loyalty to it for these reasons. But the Church which I believe in implicitly has informed me that this is not so. There is no evolution in the history of man. I can accept this. Unfortunately, the Church offered no alternative explanations to the question of how God created man without breaking the laws of nature to which He is subject.

According to these respondents, this was the composite legacy each had received from parents, peers, or Church teachers in Sunday School and seminary. These comments are not unusual; a very large proportion of our young people bear similar burdens.

A common LDS response to questions about evolution is, “Well, it’s not necessary for your salvation; don’t worry about it.” On the one hand, this is true; in one’s list of priorities are probably a number of practical and spiritual concerns with greater short- and long-term significance than ascertaining the validity or meaning of evolutionary principles. I believe, however, that this offhand dismissal of the issue often becomes a rationale for an unwillingness to examine the data upon which those principles rest. If applied generally, such an attitude may be detrimental to people’s ability to develop a state of mind that will help qualify them for a place in the Lord’s kingdom. Consider how we are saddened when people respond to our efforts to introduce them to the Book of Mormon by saying, “Why should we read a book we already know is false?” There are bad habits of *behavior* that certainly threaten one’s eligibility for exaltation; but there are bad habits of *thinking* that may have an equally negative impact on a person’s efforts to achieve the same

HOW I HARMONIZE EVOLUTION AND THE GOSPEL

LDS THEOLOGY

1. *Age of the Earth*

The exact age of the earth can't be determined from the scriptures; parts of the scriptural accounts are best interpreted figuratively. I will accept the scientific data as valid.

2. *My Relationship to God*

I am a literal child of God; he is the Father of my spirit. This is a divinely inspired doctrine whose truth has been confirmed for me by the Holy Ghost.

3. *My relationship to the living organisms of the world*

The scriptures do not disclose my physical/historical relationship to other living organisms. I will accept the scientific data as valid. I believe those data yield an ennobling concept that helps give meaning to my stewardship of the earth.

4. *My relationship to Christ*

I accept the inspired doctrines of the fall of man and the atonement of Jesus Christ.

5. *The origin of man*

The spirit of "the man Adam" is different from that of all other creatures. How Adam was introduced into the world is not specified. I view Eden as an immortal state which prepared our first parents to enter an otherwise mortal earth.

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

1. *Age of the Earth*

There is an enormous volume of convincing data demonstrating that the earth is very old (at least in terms of human years)—4.5 billion years.

2. *My Relationship to God*

No attempt is made to validate or invalidate this relationship. There are no data on this subject; the methods of science are not capable of generating this kind of information. I will defer to the epistemology of faith and accept the ennobling concept of my individual spirit and its divine origin.

3. *My relationship to the living organisms of the world.*

The scientific data demonstrate a genealogical relationship through time for the plants and animals of the earth. The evidence is compelling.

4. *My relationship to Christ*

There are no scientific data on this subject. I will defer to the epistemology of faith, accepting the doctrine of the plan of salvation.

5. *The origin of man*

I accept the data for the existence of "protohumans" (human-like creatures) pre-dating modern man.

goal. Each of us in the course of our private, family, and public lives will encounter complex issues the resolution of which will require the very best of both intellect and spirit. We should not avoid those encounters.

Consider the following excerpts from a letter written by a bright, committed young Latter-day Saint who had recently completed studying the principles of evolution.

Until [now] my attitude towards evolution has been that it is totally false and opposes my religious beliefs. I think that attitude came partly from my own misunderstanding of what "evolution" means, and also from the general attitude of the other Mormons I associated with. Until this week, it was my understanding that evolution meant

there was no God and that man evolved directly from apes, including our spirits.

I found great difficulty on my mission because of this misunderstanding. I served in Tokyo, Japan. Many of the Japanese people believe in the theory of evolution, and it caused me stress when they stated this belief. There usually followed a non-productive argument/discussion on the issue. If I had understood then what I understand now about evolution, I could have shown them how evolution can fit into the concept of a God who created this earth and man.

How many potential investigators have declined to listen to the message of the restoration of the gospel because they

have accepted the misconception that Latter-day Saints have an irrational contempt for science?

A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW

I DON'T BELIEVE there is a conflict between my enthusiastic belief in the validity of biological evolution and my spiritual commitment to the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I do not suggest that all questions about the origin of life are answered or all potential conflicts resolved; our ignorance about these matters is large. Nevertheless, my study of the issues leads me to conclude that there are no irreconcilable differences between Latter-day Saint theology and evolutionary theory. Significant gaps exist in both the scientific and scriptural data, yet to me, the two act in complementary fashion to paint a preliminary picture of creation that is both intellectually and spiritually satisfying.

NOTES

1. Stephen Jay Gould, "Evolution as Fact and Theory," *Discover* (May 1981): 34–37; Stephen Jay Gould, "Darwinism Defined: The Difference between Fact and Theory," *Discover* (January 1987): 64–70.
2. Ronald L. Numbers, "Creationism in 20th-Century America," *Science* 218 (5 November 1982) 538–44.
3. "Supreme Court strikes down 'Creation Science' law as promotion of religion," *Science*, 236 (28 June 1987) 1620; "Setback for creation science," *Nature*, 327 (25 June 1987), 643.
4. Dougal Dixon, Barry Cox, RJG Savage, and Brian Gardiner, *The Macmillan Illustrated Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Animals* (New York: Macmillan, 1988).
5. "Know This That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 240, 1985.
6. William Paley, *Natural Theology* (London: R. Faulder, 1803).
7. Daniel J. Fairbanks. *Relics of Eden* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007).
8. Duane Jeffery, "Seers, Savants, and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface," *Dialogue* 7 (Autumn–Winter 1973): 41–75; Richard Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum: Mormon Reactions to the Darwinist Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 33–59; Richard Sherlock, "We Can See No Advantage to a Continuation of the Discussion: The Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair," *Dialogue* 7 (Fall 1980): 63–78; Jeffrey E. Keller, "Discussion Continued: The Sequel to the 'Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair,'" *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 79–98.
9. Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund [First Presidency of the Church], "The Origin of Man," (Editor's Table), *Improvement Era* 13 (November 1909) 75–81.
10. "Origin of Man" (Priesthood Quorums' Table), *Improvement Era* 13 (April 1910), 570.
11. Joseph F. Smith, "Philosophy and the Church Schools" (Editorial Thoughts), *Juvenile Instructor* 46 (April 1911): 208–09.
12. Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, Charles W. Nibley [First Presidency of the Church], "'Mormon' View of Evolution" (Editor's Table), *Improvement Era* 28 (1925): 1090–1091.
13. William Lee Stokes, "An Official Position," *Dialogue* 12, no.4 (1979) 90–92.
14. William E. Evenson and Duane E. Jeffery. *Mormonism and Evolution: The Authoritative LDS Statements* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2005).
15. Bruce R. McConkie, "Seven Deadly Heresies," 14-Stake Fireside Speech, BYU, June 1, 1980; Elder Boyd K. Packer, "The Law and the Light," in *To Learn with Joy*, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1990) 1-31.
16. Stephen L. Richards, "An Open Letter to College Students," *Improvement Era* 36 (1933), 451.
17. John A. Widtsoe, "The Time-Length of Creation," *Improvement Era*, 12 (6 April 1909): 491–94 .
18. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign* March, 1976, 70–73.
19. Letter to Robert Miller, 14 October 1982, copy in author's possession.
20. Bertrand F. Harrison, "The Relatedness of Living Things," *The Instructor* 100 (July 1965): 272–276; Morris S. Petersen, "I Have a Question: Do We Know How the Earth's History as Indicated from Fossils Fits with the Earth's History as the Scriptures Present It," *Ensign* September 1987, 28–29.
21. Edward H. Anderson, Editors Table, "Age of the Earth," *Improvement Era*, 12 (1909) 489.
22. Jeffery, "Seers, Savants, and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface."
23. "What Is a Whale?" *Science* 263 (14 January 1994) 180–181.
24. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 229–38.
25. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 9:150.
26. "A Final Testimony," in *An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown*, edited by Edwin B. Firmage, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 135–40.
27. Marion D. Hanks, "The Authority of Personality, Competence, and Character," in *I the Lord Am Well Pleased That There Should Be a School in Zion: Addresses, 1988 Annual University Conference* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1988), 37–47.

For an expanded version of this article, please visit <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/?p=803>

Genesis 1 and Science Side by Side

By O. Cliff Clay

It is widely accepted in Mormon circles that Moses was an eye witness to the creation of the earth and that he authored the book of Genesis according to this experience. Some may assume that Moses observed the creation from “outside” the universe and should therefore have seen the “Big Bang” and all of the cosmos being created before the earth; thus the sun, moon and stars should have been created before day four. This line of reasoning overlooks the possibility that Moses viewed the creation of the earth from the perspective of the earth. In Moses 1:35, the Lord says to Moses regarding the Creation story: “But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you.” From this premise, it is possible to read chapter one of Genesis as agreeing with the scientific view of earth’s creation.

Genesis

Science

Reconciliation

DAY 1

PRE-HADEAN EON

MUCH MORE THAN 4.6 BILLION YEARS AGO

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Prior to the Hadean Eon, our solar system consists of dark dust and gases slowly rotating around a central point where the sun would ultimately coalesce. The play of internal gravity on the matter creates a fluid, liquid-like appearance similar to water.

Both accounts agree that light comes first. Genesis, using phrases such as “earth was without form, and void” is entirely consistent with the scientific account.

The visual appearance of the elements that would create the earth could have had a quality and appearance like fluid or water.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Heat and light emanate from the sun as it comes into existence. However, from the vantage point of where the earth would be, the mass of dust and gases make the sun indistinct.

If one were located in the vicinity of the earth (or what would become the earth), light would have been apparent first, and then a division between light and darkness would have occurred as the earth first begins. Incidentally, another Hebrew rendering of the word that was translated as “created” could be “organized,” which nicely describes the process proposed by science.

HADEAN EON

3.8 TO 4.6 BILLION YEARS AGO

4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Later, loose matter coalesces into planets. The earth forms, revolving around the sun, and spinning on its axis for the day-and-night effect. Likely this occurred 4,600 million years ago. The oldest rock on earth is dated at 3,800 million years.

DAY 2

ARCHEAN EON

2.5 TO 3.8 BILLION YEARS AGO

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

The oceans come into being largely through the cooling of the crust and atmosphere, and are eventually able to support life, starting with single-celled organisms. An evaporation-precipitation cycle ensues. No consistently dry land is in evidence yet, possibly due to tectonic issues and the lack of polar ice caps.

Both accounts agree that oceans come next and that there are clouds above them. The use of “heaven” and “firmament” in Genesis refer to the sky and air in this case. Genesis’s omission of single-cell organisms or other minute details should not be deductions from Genesis’s summary of events. This is consistent with what a human eyewitness would have seen and reported.

Genesis

Science

Reconciliation

DAY 3
DAY 4
DAY 5
DAY 6

SILURIAN PERIOD
408-435 MILLION YEARS AGO

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. 11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

1 billion years later, defined, dry, continental land manifests itself. The continental split that creates the Atlantic Ocean will not happen for another 260 to 290 million years. Land plants are prevalent. Life in the ocean has progressed to more complex, fish-like creatures. The Venus-like atmosphere is still full of greenhouse-type gases that limit visibility and completely obscure the sky.

Both accounts agree on the state of land and plants. Both accounts are consistent with what someone standing on the earth would have seen.

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

Oxygen makes up a larger percentage of the atmosphere, having displaced the greenhouse gases such as methane and carbon monoxide. The atmosphere clears, and the sun, moon, and stars become visible from the earth's surface (occasional water vapor clouds notwithstanding).

While there is some debate on the exact timing, accounts agree that plants and even some lower life forms appear before the atmosphere is clear enough to see through. A local observer may have experienced the sun, moon, and stars appearing "suddenly": a relative term for a process that takes place over a short few million years or less.

DAY 5

DEVONIAN 360-408 million years ago,
PENNSYLVANIAN 286-320 million years ago,
TRIASSIC 208-245 million years ago, and
JURASSIC 145-208 million years ago

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. 21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind.

Life emerges from the water, starting with amphibians (Devonian Period), reptiles (Pennsylvanian Period), dinosaurs (Triassic Period), and birds and small mammals (Jurassic Period).

Both accounts are still consistent, including the suddenness of the appearance of diverse creatures after 3 to 4 billion years of slow change. The Hebrew word that was translated to "great whales" (verse 21) could also have been translated to "sea monsters" which could be a fair description of some dinosaurs and other animals that lived near or in large bodies of water.

DAY 6

CENOZOIC ERA
66 MILLION YEARS AGO TO NOW

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

100,000 years ago or less, or some 66 million years after large mammals appear, modern human beings appear. By this reckoning, 99.998% of the earth's existence has passed without human beings. This is compared to the dinosaurs that lived during 4% of the earth's existence, and ocean life that has lived during 9% of the earth's existence—and counting.

Both accounts state that mammals (beasts, cattle, and creeping things) materially come into being after all the other types of life. Both accounts state that, later in the same day (or era), human beings appear on the earth.



SILVER WINGS

By Kevin Holdsworth

1

COMPANY-SUPPLIED BINOCULARS AND A couple of field guides could be spotted on the seat of Ron Larsen's work truck beside his lunch pail. There were places he'd favor for birding, and many owed to happenstance. He had to check out the substation on the Parker Range and scared up some sage grouse. He bet he'd found a lek. On the line in Boobe Hole, he came across chukars. Whenever his duties took him near water, he made time to watch and learn. The pelicans at Fish Lake. The cinnamon teal at Pine Creek Ponds. The canvasbacks at Koosharem Reservoir. The grebes in Solomon Basin.

Papa Olaf supported Ron's new avocation and shared it with him as it fledged. Hell, there were plenty of birds in the Bicknell Bottoms. It wasn't good for anyone when Ron didn't have an interest. Just what the interest was didn't matter. Ron had gone through two dozen hobbies and followed them for a while. Ron's strength was sticking with something once he found the scent. Papa Olaf knew his boy was like a gun dog that needed work. Take him out to the marshes and let him run all day, or at least watch birds all day. Watch and learn. Ron would plunge into any bottom, pond, or stream.

In the meantime, Shirley was getting into the children business again. She scolded Ron relentlessly and always for small things. She felt entitled to because he had left the fold. The left back pockets of his jeans were embossed with the bleached full moon of Copenhagen tins, a very public sign of sin.

Often when she began to talk, his mind filled with the wet slippery sounds of red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds: birds perched on cattails, chattering. The sounds rose until he no longer heard Shirley at all. He then saw ibis circling, mallards scooting across flat water, mer-

gansers mergansing, and avocets, cranes, curlews, and sandpipers making the Bicknell Bottoms their home.

He knew that the spirit children obsessed her. Once he'd let slip a careless and unfair comment about her weight. She'd immediately taken up aerobics, step and swing. She'd gone in for the full plumage, too: neon headband, torn pink T-shirt, teal tights, buff leggings, white Reeboks, Olivia on the cassette player with "Let's Get Physical," and Richard Simmons in the mail.

It was very uncharacteristic of her to be forward, but just then she did offer to get physical, very physical. Ron really liked the leggings. They reminded him of an image that he carried deep—saucy French girls in a dirty magazine.

She still looked good to him, as good as anybody, but there were problems. Maybe she was right—it was his drinking. He avoided getting too close to her for fear she'd smell it on his breath and scold him. The special Mormon underwear—garments—didn't help. Foreplay was like trying to grope someone in a beekeeper's outfit. He wasn't even sure if she liked it. He knew that she had been taught not to, that the purpose of sex was procreation.

He remembered the early days when she had pranced around in sexy little next-to-nothings, the days before her mother, Nola, had started in with the temple business and moved on to the spirit children. Ron was visual; he liked to watch. Shirley had taken to wearing garments all the time.

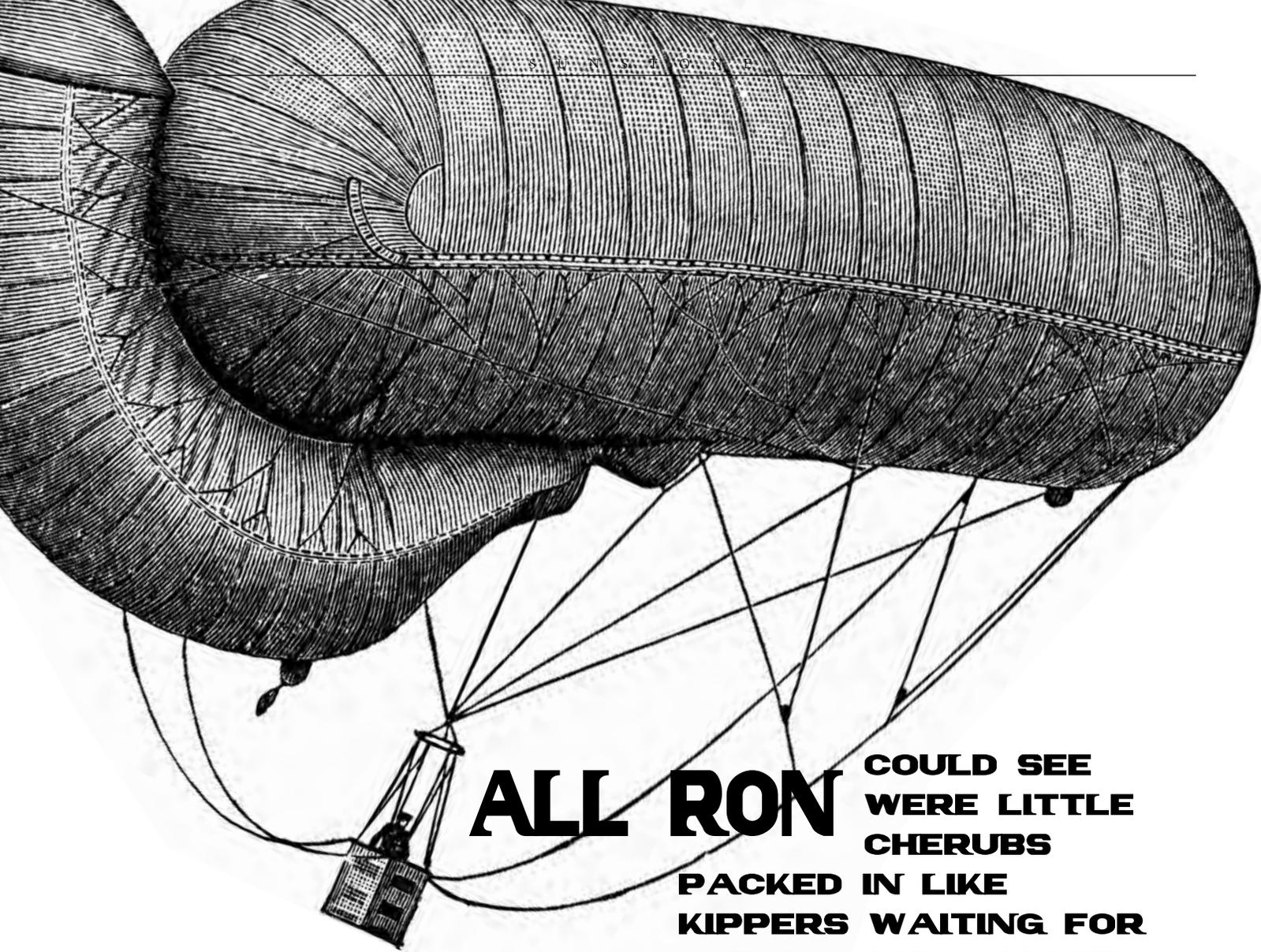
She'd once said that the General Authorities had counseled them to pray before doing it. They tried that. Talk about awful. There he was trying to get warmed up and interested, and all he could see were the spirit children up above in heaven—watching them—little cherubs packed in like kippers waiting for a body and earthly domain. They were waving the windshield-wiper index finger.

Whose fault was it, anyway? Was he shooting blanks? Did she have problems in the egg department? It was impossible to know without outside help. Ten years of marriage was a long time to be childless. He knew that in Shirley's world, a woman could not be truly fulfilled if she were childless.

Ron didn't want a place in the Latter-day Saint world. Mainly he wanted to be left alone. Mainly he wanted to watch the birds.



KEVIN HOLDSWORTH is the author of *Big Wonderful: Notes from Wyoming* (Univ. Press of Colorado, 2006). He lives with his wife Jennifer and children Jacqueline and Christopher in Green River, Wyoming, and Torrey, Utah.



ALL RON COULD SEE WERE LITTLE CHERUBS PACKED IN LIKE KIPPERS WAITING FOR A BODY AND EARTHLY DOMAIN. THEY WERE WAVING THE WIND-SHIELD-WIPER INDEX FINGER.

"I MUST DO my work here," Papa Olaf would say any time Ron would tell him he ought to move away. "It's my calling."

"It's not your calling, Dad." Endlessly Ron tried to reason with him. "You call this a calling? How could it be?"

Papa Olaf let himself get so aggravated by the righteousness of the Bicknellites that he returned the favor in spades. He met the fast offering boys at his door with a shotgun. In his living room hung an oversized lithograph of the Scandinavian Jesus wearing Ray Bans.

Papa Olaf asked the owner of the grocery store in Loa why the hell didn't he carry beer every time he visited, and since Shirley worked part-time in the store doing the books, these outbursts were intensely embarrassing to her.

He named his horses after the Church presidents, the prophets. He named one of his cats Spencer W. Kimball. "Listen, Shirley, he's got a little voice box, too."

"Your calling should be to move away, Dad."

"You just want the farm."

"I don't just want the farm. You can sell the farm. I want you to be happy."

"That's nice, Ron," said Papa Olaf. "You Phil Donahue in

your spare time now? Where's Marlo? What's the point of being happy? Anyone can be happy. Delbert D-Dumas is happy in his d-d-doublewide over there. Happy? Not when you've got a calling like mine."

"Like yours?"

"Wise men have always agreed on this one thing, son . . . Life, it is no good. It must be endured." He spat. "Happy—"

It exasperated Ron. Hell, Papa Olaf had plenty of money: all his holdings, the big settlement from the death of his mother, Renee. Maybe get a Winnebago, a wardrobe of zip-up jump suits and corduroy slippers. A little dog. Spend the winters in the south. Find a special someone in a state with no income tax. Spread your tiny wings and fly away, Papa Olaf. He wasn't going to find someone special here, and

ALL ILLUSTRATIONS: IVAN BURMISTROV—ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

little dogs were always helpful to meet the ladies.

But no, Papa Olaf stuck in his self-imposed gulag. He wasn't going anywhere until he got Ron taken care of, and if that included Shirley, so be it. Part of his calling was to educate Ron and his gang, admittedly a long-shot task, about as lengthy as the migration route of the Arctic tern, but worthwhile.

Lately Papa Olaf had professed to be a modernist. He wanted to reenact Sputnik and work backward from where the world had gone wrong.

SOME MONTHS LATER, as he looked proudly at Ron's shiny radio-controlled airplane, Comrade Aeroflot, Papa Olaf said to the gang, "The thing you don't remember . . . And some of you are old enough to remember, is just how damned scared the Ruskies made us. Those Soviets. Excuse me, I mean those former Soviets. Send up a rocket with a dog in it—right up the sky's ass and into our living rooms. We thought the whole world was going to end up Communist. Being from the old country like me, the last thing you wanted was to end up Communist."

Ron knew his father was not from the old country, but he might have been.

"That's nice, Pop," said Ron. "But this plane is not exactly a rocket, and I'm really not sure it'll hold this little runt." He patted the guinea pig's head. It wiggled and squeaked in the open cockpit, held in by chicken wire and duct tape. "This cute little runty..."

"Oh, it'll hold," Papa Olaf said. He looked south toward Boulder Mountain. "And I'm not going to deny it's not a rocket. It's a plane, and radio-controlled, but you've got to start somewhere. And what we're after here is the effect."

"The effect on what?" Ron said adjusting the chicken wire as the guinea pig gnawed on his finger.

"You'll see."

The gang had started with domestic beer but moved on to vodka with spiced tomato drink chaser. Papa Olaf ran through all his stock Russian ticks.

"Boris, Vladimir, and members of the Politburo . . . Here we meet at my grand country dacha . . . To celebrate the culmination of the most recent Five Year Plan . . . To show the capitalist swine the power of the working man and also the working wimmen . . . Comrades, meet Laika, the space dog—the world's veddy first space dog . . ."

Space dog or guinea pig, it was only a matter of degree.

Ron felt ready. The lane featured an easy grade down toward the Bottoms. The cargo might affect flight dynamics, so he gave the poplars wide berth. Comrade Aeroflot swayed and shimmied on its way down the runway. Ron pulled back on his radio-control panel levers, and with one brief listing skip, the plane nosed up and cleared the row of cottonwoods over toward Cemetery Hill. Comrade Aeroflot then climbed boldly southward into the high-hazed spring sky.

Ron ran around the front yard with the control panel like a badminton player chasing a high-lobbed shuttlecock.

He made a long banking turn, then brought the plane closer in. Its wings glinted as it passed overhead. It made a sharp tinny sound like a tree shredder. Somebody pointed out how natural the caged rodent looked, and natural was good, always good.

Papa Olaf thought that things could not get much better than watching his boy fly this plane around.

Ron gained confidence with each pass. Still, he didn't want to press his luck. And you never knew with Bicknell weather. Wait five minutes, and it'll change—especially in the spring. So, after one broad final triumphant sweep, he brought it in for a landing.

Comrade Aeroflot cleared the trees, dipped a little too steeply, recovered, then touched down on the graveled lane, bounced toward the cheering gang, and swerved to a stop amid the greening alfalfa. There ensued much back-slapping and high-fiving. Success.

Ron was carried on their backs like a successful football coach.

In the rush of excitement, they forgot about the runt guinea pig. Papa Olaf flourished it free using his Leatherman. The little brown-and-white thing took off squealing in greased-lightning circles, dodged the lunges and dives of the gang, and then veered toward a sheep fence. Tripped up on a tuft of grass, it collided with a low-down strand, which folded its neck and flung it backward. The gang looked at each other, cringing. The guinea pig quivered for a few sickening moments, pawed the air as if running on slick glass, twitched twice, and was still. A gritty breeze blew up.

Ron Larsen suddenly thought about Shirley.

THE STORY OF the guinea pig went round. In testimony meeting a week after the tragedy, Shirley Larsen drew a tearful analogy between Ron's lost rodent and the sacrifice the Lord made in giving up His Only Begotten Son. People's hearts went out to her. Everyone was aware of all the details. Ron could not be made to go to church. She stood quaking and alone.

Ron had lost interest in his plane, and Comrade Aeroflot languished in the garage next to some shovels, rakes, and hoes. Hoping to reignite his passion, Papa Olaf took him on a long Sunday drive over Hell's Backbone and down into Escalante before returning toward Bicknell by way of the Aquarius. Grebes at a pond in the high country seemed to pique his attention.

After church, Shirley brooded out the kitchen window, waiting for Ron to get back from who-knew-where. She had to admit that Ron had a hard time finishing anything. What it was that caused him to stop, she never knew. He'd be working on it—and thinking about it for twenty hours at a time, and talking about it or not talking about it—and for days, but then, inexplicably, he'd drop it. She'd ask why and he'd just say, "I don't know," or "Saw all I needed to see, I guess."

The moods bugged her. Shirley liked things neat and or-

derly, not chaotic. That's how she'd been raised. You pay your bills on time, and you keep track of things. She feared Papa Olaf's extremes, too. Sure, he was generous, and sometimes he really did seem to care about her—and certainly about Ron—but then he'd snap and get funky up and dismal.

This line of thought depressed her, so she chose another window from which to brood. But as she looked at the sorry backyard, she was confronted by more evidence. The unpainted greenhouse still missing a window. The little blue Fiesta still up on blocks and still surrounded by stacks of still unused boards.

Ron was not a very successful hunter, either. Yet hunt he did, each fall with his gang of idiots. Just what they did on those hunting weeks, she didn't know or want to know. When he came back, though, he smelled of wood smoke and he wanted her. He wanted her in a frankly insistent way. But she wasn't really sure if he wanted her, or someone else—just anyone. The image of someone else. Someone like the sluts in *Playboy* that she knew where he hid.

Shirley was a private person. It's not like she wanted to share her problems with the world. Even if she had just spoken in front of the whole ward—the entire congregation—in testimony meeting, it's not like she had wanted to. It just came out that way. She was private, and all of Ron's junk was a billboard. All of Ron's bad habits were a loud-speaker. His dumb plane and dead guinea pig, a For Sale sign in the front yard. And what had she done to deserve this? She remembered the time he had asked her to strip and then tried to take photos of her. Take photos with his stupid little Polaroid. "Honeymoon" photos. It had gotten worse from there. He made her tell him where the leggings were, and then, and then he'd tied her up with the leggings and had his way with her.

She had trusted him. It was impossible to trust him like that again.

There came a phone call from her bishop, Brother Allred, just calling to see how she was doing.

Late as always, Ron always came back, always the prodigal, always saying it was his daddy's fault they got carried away up at Ajax Reservoir with the grebes and geese.

Shirley never spoke a word to Ron about the mishap with the little runt. Nor too many, really, about his low-life friends, his drinking, her humiliation, his stacks of unfinished projects, his lack of affection, his inability to do anything meaningful to help her around the house, the fact that if he had been ambitious in life, he might have a better job than being line foreman for the local electrical cooperative, their need for counseling, maybe even fertility treatment, her strong feelings that if things didn't change, she certainly wasn't going to spend the rest of her life with him in Bicknell, Utah.

Instead, two days after the testimony meeting, when Ron was at work, Comrade Aeroflot went away to the Wayne County Landfill, courtesy of Brother C. Boyd Allred, who took the opportunity of letting more air into the craft

by emptying three clips of his 9mm pistol until he felt quite certain that the plane would not fly again. The bishop and Shirley grew closer. Whom else could she turn to?

2

AND YET THERE were still some good times. Papa Olaf was always generous with Ron and Shirley, whether it was the new VCR with the Richard Simmons tapes or the matching Stump Jumper mountain bikes. Unexpected visits with "Let's go down to Torrey for dinner, for heck sake," or "How about a picnic at Sunglow—it might as well be my birthday."

They went fishing in Papa Olaf's *Sea Ray* on Fish Lake, and the conditions were perfect. Hardly a breath of wind, the aspens on the Seven Mile Cirques golden and glittering, the pines on Mytoge Mountain dark and sweeping, the water six shades of dark blue, and just good times. No, the fishing wasn't great, and yes, they did spend a little too much time in the channel that flows into Widgeon Bay, glassing pelicans and talking, but the lovely dinner at the lodge, and all the rest of it made one of those days to remember.

In the meantime, Papa Olaf spent hours poring over the catalogues to get the necessary parts for a replica B-17. From the 141st Division, Army Air Force, Screaming Eagle Squadron. Four powerful engines. A massive payload capacity. Gun turrets. An eight-foot wingspan. A ten-man crew, some of whom might not be expected to return from such a mission.

Shirley Larsen soon refused to acknowledge her father-in-law. Whenever he came round to help Ron, she ground her teeth, pretended not to see him, and cranked up KLRD.

But two could play at this game. Papa Olaf electrical-taped a line down the center of the garage. Shirley could park her Taurus on the right side, but it was clear without words that Ron's side was left, especially once plane parts were hung and dangling with fishing line from the trusses.

Things went missing: Exacto knives, bottles of booze, catalogues, string, cigarette packs, playing cards with topless women, screwdrivers, chisels, packs of matches, film canisters, straws, tubes of Gorilla Glue.

There were a lot of "war cabinet meetings" held in the garage. Coached by Papa Olaf, they played various roles. Lord Beaverbrook, General Ismay, Field Marshall Montgomery, Premier Molotov, General de Gaulle.

Papa Olaf would perorate. "Oh boys, let me tell you how it came to be. If that drunk-by-noon Churchill and Franklin D. hadn't been such good buddies and great allies, we'd all be speaking German today. It would be *Jawohl* and *Schweigen Sie bitte* and *Haben Sie ein kaltes Bier?* and *Vielen Dank, mein Fuehrer*. But that is not exactly the way things turned out, is it? I would say not. No, and the reason is simple, boys, simple. You've got your hands on it. The B-17. The Flying Fortress. Best damned airplane there ever was. Hell on the guys in the turrets. Freedom Bird!"

It was not in Shirley Larsen's nature to open up. Any time she talked to Nola about her problems, her mother always used the confession against her and adopted a superior, all-knowing air, usually complemented by saying how the Larsens were never any good, not one of them.

With her lady friends, it had taken years just to get her past second base. Eventually they did share intimate details. For instance, Ron was pretty much an in-and-out guy. Not that Shirley was comfortable talking about it. It seemed that a lot of them were married to in-and-out guys, but with one important difference. Her friends all had children. She and Ron did not. Ron was an in-and-out guy, not a very good hunter, and he could never finish anything. She wondered sometimes if Ron had another woman. As lacking as their sex life had become, she feared he might have chosen to lead a secret life, that he might be swinging both ways.

Her meetings with Boyd Allred were altogether more confusing. At first they had met at his office in the ward house, but as time passed, he began to visit her at home, like a home teacher or visiting sister would, as someone in his office might minister to the sick. With Brother Allred there was something different, something special. She knew it was the power of the priesthood. She sensed it. She felt it. It wasn't like Ron with Boyd—he wasn't evasive or dodgy.

No, Boyd talked about the old days—the nineteenth-century days in the Church, before the Principle, polygamy, had been abandoned, before statehood, even before Bicknell had been settled. It was a better time, a clearer time. Sometimes Shirley would see a vision, and it took her breath away.

THE SMALL TOWN of Bicknell was situated with its back against red and white cliffs and open to the south, with gently sloping fields and pastures running down to the Fremont River. The town had originally been called Thurber and had arisen in the bottomland along the river's banks. Disastrous floods in the 1890s had convinced settlers to seek higher ground. Site and topography combined



PAPA

**OLAF HAD
PROFESSED
TO BE A
MODERNIST.
HE WANTED
TO REENACT
SPUTNIK AND
WORK BACK-
WARD FROM
WHERE THE
WORLD HAD
GONE WRONG.**

to make a felicitous scene, yet there lingered among the inhabitants a kind of communal chip on the shoulder, probably a memory of those early deluge days.

The only time it rained was when the hay was fresh cut on the ground. The such-and-such federal government wouldn't let them cut all the timber they needed for the sawmills to survive. Tree huggers and drought had forced grazing allotments to

be reduced in size, and hell, there was no money in cattle to begin with. Bicknell stood sun-kissed and wind-dappled, but it was not a town that rewarded daring, innovation, or change.

To first hear, and then indeed to see, as so many Bicknellites did, a surprisingly large airplane, silver wings glinting in the noonday sun, buzzing the town and its environs, seemed a strange and somehow wondrous thing. Not that news of Miss Lana had been confined to Ron's garage. No, everyone knew about the new plane, just as everyone knew that the only time Ron would have the huevos to fly it was when Shirley was up at the Manti temple with Nola or shopping in Provo. People dropped what they were doing, stood outside on their porches, and watched.

Miss Lana soared over the fresh-plowed fields and lines of poplars and clumps of Russian olives. The four matched engines roared louder than a dirt bike, blithely shredding the cloud-mottled sky. Ron reflected on the progress that had brought him here. Comrade Aeroflot was just a toy compared to this. The power and surge, the heft of Miss Lana, etched against the darkness of the mountain, or against the lighter gray plateau, and the way he felt to be in charge—man, there had been nothing else like it. So many times in life, he thought, you'd build things up, only to be disappointed. But Miss Lana was no disappointment. It far exceeded his feathery dreams.

"This, my friends," shouted Papa Olaf, "is what liberated Europe. American industrial might, combined with the right on our side!"

"Here, here!"

They had estimated the fuel capacity would allow for a half-hour flight. He steered Miss Lana into a lazy bank over the Awapa.

Alvin Jones was working his north pasture, turning it under and discing it in preparation of planting a few acres in barley. People often joked that the only sure way to bring on a dust devil was to go plow a field. Invariably the fresh-tilled topsoil would corkscrew up, making a tail for your International, Case, or John Deere. The western sky had darkened and a cold high-country breeze blown up.

From where they stood, the gang could see the flecks that would be airborne cardboard boxes and newspapers and other trash, for Alvin Jones was a lifelong bachelor and not tidy around his place.

Dust devil and dark cloud merged alarmingly. Dust devil and dark cloud and Miss Lana met on the slow bank back from the Awapa. The plane began to shimmy and wobble, diverging from its earlier crisp course. Ron ran around the front yard, pointing the control panel this way and that, trying to get Miss Lana to respond. It worked—the plane started heading for home. It didn't work—she started to waggle around like a sock in a puppy's mouth. The gang shouted oaths and directions.

They then watched, silent, as Miss Lana began to rise in slow-winding circles, taking on a life of her own, disappearing in the dust devil now grown immeasurably large.

She rose upward and upward like a red-tailed hawk, or a band of turkey vultures, twisting upward and upward into the dark-curdled sky. Then she was only a speck at eleven thousand feet, still twisting upward and upward until she was no longer visible to the naked eye, until she was lost even to field glasses and spotting scopes. Upward until Miss Lana was gone.

"Somebody better get hold of the FAA. That plane just invaded commercial air space."

"Hell you say. They'd toss Ron's ass in the slammer faster than you can say Intermountain Farmer's Cooperative."

"What goes up must come down, Ron."

"We'll find it. You bet we will."

"It's just a matter of time, surely."

Ron Larsen stood, unable to move. He just clutched his control panel, and it seemed as though he would cry.

"What we have here is just a leetle setback," said Papa Olaf. "Let us go out now, boys, to find this leetle darling and see what we can do."

They couldn't just sit there doing nothing. They got in their pickups and rattled off, each one stopping from time to time to look up at the inscrutable March sky.

3

ALL OF HER lady friends knew that Shirley was desperately unhappy. They all knew the reasons. Or thought they knew, for in many tear-tinged speeches Shirley had listed Ron's many transgressions. Imagine their surprise, however, when Shirley dropped a little bomb.

"How do you know he is? Swishy? I mean, Shirley, Ron don't seem that way to me?"

"Really, Shirley. I've heard some things about him and they sure don't sound that w-a-y."

"You haven't caught him...with, you know, have you?"

"I heard he used to spend a lot of time with that Ruby Danvers over to Slice 'Em Thins . . . before he knew you, of course, but I never in my wildest dreams would've thought that."

"He doesn't watch those Richard Simmons workout videos, does he?"

She shook her head.

"He's not what you might call a florist, Shirley."

"Or a fashion designer."

"Well," she stammered. "It's just that . . . It's . . . I used to think it was all about the plane. But lately, he's gotten really . . . He's acted really strange. And he gets phone calls. And he has some specially marked videos, and they're, well, there are groups involved. And he does seem to spend a lot of time with that new guy at work—you know, the one who lives over to Torrey. We all know there's something not quite right about him, something quest-ion-able . . ." She made the limp-wristed gesture.

"Shirley!"

"The Bishop told me he thought Ron might have those inclinations, probably was, you know, too—says it goes

back to Boy Scout camp and some experiences—that's what he calls them, experiences, that him and Ron had. It sounds . . . I mean, far-fetched . . . to me. But I believe it.”

“Then there's those phone calls. He's in this rotten mood until he gets a jingle from that new guy at work. Then he lightens up, just like that. Then he leaves. He goes over to Torrey. And then he comes back, and, well, you know . . . I do think it's because of the new guy. Not going to say this or that, only that it's wrong.”

They all agreed that she deserved better. They also agreed on a plan.

FOR DAYS, WEEKS, Ron would stop on his rounds and look into ravines. Nothing. He would spend Saturday morning walking the marshes, looking for his plane. He'd drive out on the Awapa with a twelve-pack and see nothing but golden eagles circling, a few jackrabbits scampering, and horned toads poised and ready to squirt blood out of their eyes when he got out to get a closer look at the lay of land.

For his birthday, Ron received a bottle of cologne, some videos (to be unwrapped only in her presence), and a Speedo swimming suit from Shirley. Also a ten-part set of videos from Papa Olaf, *The History of Flight*.

Ron was not the type to talk about regrets. Even when he talked about his mom, and missing her, there was a note of finality to it that bothered Shirley. “Shouldn't've happened, but it did. Goshdangit, but it did. And that's about it, Shirley.” She'd seen him cry, and even Papa Olaf tear up, with a kind of angry resignation, talking about Renee.

There were other regrets they didn't talk about, mainly about Crystal Jackson. She'd dumped Ron, everyone knew that. And Shirley had ended up with Blake Rasmussen—who'd dumped her. They wouldn't have ended up together only because they both got dumped, could they have? There was a lot more than that, or at least there used to be.

It was good to talk about regrets if not to dwell on them. Dwelling on them was wrong, but admitting that you had them, that was just taking care of business. Everyone had regrets. They were just part of living—not dwelling on them, but admitting to it.

Regrets were one thing. But when she got down to it, she had to wonder how could she be married to someone who missed a dumb plane? And he did, too. More than his mom. More than her. It was obvious. There were photographs of her in the garage. Stupid Miss Lana, gone and good riddance. How was she supposed to talk to Ron about it? It was so plainly ridiculous. “Oh Ron, I'm so sorry about what happened. I'm so sorry that you spent half a year on that idiotic contraption that got taken up to heaven because it was just too good for the earth . . .”

WHILE MOST EVERYONE in Bicknell knew that the Larsens' marriage was in trouble and knew the reasons why, the next unexpected move came from Shirley. One brisk

fall Sunday after church, where she had been touched by a missionary homecoming story of the conversion of a poor native family to the ways of the gospel. The family had lived on the shores of Lake Titicaca and had twelve children and no father, for he had been killed in a mining accident, and how through the power of faith they had been able to overcome even this terrible adversity and learn to love the Lord. And how the missionary, a lanky Blackburn kid named Kyled, pronounced ‘Clyde,’ had grown to love the Peruvian people, and testified of the truthfulness of the one true church and its prophets.

After church, Shirley dressed her rat terrier Angel in some baby things tearfully borrowed from her trousseau and then placed Angel in her perambulator, which Nola had saved for the hopeful day when the Larsens would give body to a spirit child and have one of their own. Shirley then paraded Angel in the baby carriage up and down the gravelly Bicknell streets, humming and sometimes even singing a number of hymns, including, “The Lord is My Light” and “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning.”

Ron, who had been watching a football game at one of the gang's, received a bustle of phone calls and updates. Disgusted, he grabbed the rest of his twelve-pack and steered his rig out toward the Awapa, aiming to drive all the way to Antimony if he had to. Maybe even Circleville. The lonely Parker Range at sunset reminded him of Miss Lana. And Miss Lana led to Shirley. And Shirley led him to a dark place.

He stood on the rim at sunset. Hell, it was thousands of feet right there, thousands of feet of empty space, on the west face of the Parker. He imagined how it might feel to fall at 120 miles per hour, as fast as he could fall without wings, so that the landing would be suddenly quick and busting up and nothing but thud and squish and silence. He stood facing it and wondering, really, what was the point of going on?

The trouble was, he hated endings. Is this the way he wanted to be remembered?

Miss Lana was gone. He'd held her in his arms and she had gone. He could hold Shirley, sure, but he couldn't control her, couldn't make her feel the way he felt right now, couldn't get her to see things his way, either.

Love her? Did he really care for her? Part of him wanted just to be left alone, to disappear like grass under thick-falling snow. The valley below darkened. Part of him wasn't sure he still loved her, but he did. Alone but not that alone. Loved having her around, usually. Liked . . . Love? Was it love? Was she more like a sister? Was there something wrong with that? He'd never had a sister but liked the idea. He'd grown accustomed to her, sure. What did he really want? Not to be scolded. What did she really want? Was it kids? Kids would be okay. Maybe they should try again. Maybe they should talk about a few things.

A few hours later, remorse and no beer had gotten the best of him. He drove back to town, thinking of all the good make-up scenes they had shared. Sometimes it took a little

bit out on the extreme to bring things right again.

Somehow all his good intentions came out as, "What in the hell are you trying to do, ruin me in this town?"

"What did you say, Ron Larsen?"

"Shirley, you took that stupid little dog of yours around in a baby carriage. A baby carriage, Shirley, and people think I'm nuts. I know you did, so don't try to deny it, and by the way, just what the hell is wrong with you?"

"With me. With me. With me? With me! With me, oh you are a good one, Ron Larsen. A real gem. What's wrong with me? With me? You are the one who would rather spend his time with a stupid airplane or watching your stupid videos or drinking, Ron Larsen, and you are drinking all the time, and spending time with the lowest of the low, and hunting, and never really doing the things that a good husband should be doing, and who knows what else, because when you get that far away from me, you are really far away from me, and is that really what you want, and is that really the way you want to treat me, Ron, and I'm the one who let you in and said that you could be with me and no other, and you flitting around to other nests, when you could be with your wife who loves you or who at least used to love you."

"Used to love me? What's that supposed to mean?"

"I don't have any respect for you, Ron Larsen, and I happen to know about your secret life."

"My secret life?"

"Yes, your secret life."

With such a dramatic opening, it should come as no surprise that Shirley Larsen then began to make quite an involved list of her complaints, made far more lengthy by the fact that she had kept all this inside for so long. In psychology this is called stockpiling, and she had about ten years to get through.

Ron hardened his heart and mind against what she was saying, but she did begin to wear him down. True, he had been distracted; there could be no question of that. True, he did ignore her, sometimes even belittled her in front of the gang. True, regarding the list of unfinished projects, he did admit that he often lost interest in things—including her, yes, he was willing to admit, even her—and this took the better part of an hour. Yes, he was willing to admit that he might have a drinking problem and that his drinking did get in the way of their marriage, and that it was his fault not hers. But when she began to question his fondness for birding, when she ridiculed Miss Lana, and then when she probed using the many tools Boyd Allred had lent her, especially about the new guy and those puzzling "experiences" at Boy Scout camp, well, Ron Larsen knew when he had had enough.

A door slammed loud as a pistol shot, another swirling drive out on the Awapa.

Papa Olaf heard the door slam. He hoped that it was only love, the echo of love.

Although Shirley had been frightened by his response and she felt guilty that it had taken so long for it all to come

out, she prayed for two things. First, that Ron would come back to her. Second, that he would see that she was right.

And she was. He finally came back in a mood to make up, make up without talking too much about it. There would be time for that later. Right now they needed to dance around their history.

She scolded him for smoking, listed a number of his shortcomings—and even made a list of her own. They vowed to try to work it out. They both vowed to do things better. She let him tie her up again—playfully, with the leg-gings.

Their lovemaking was passionate and real. She felt things she hadn't in years. He remembered what had messed up his mind all those years before. Pictures of French dancers in leggings.

It was just the way it should have been. Shirley liked a little restraint. Ron liked to be in charge in that department.

Ten years. Maybe sometimes it takes ten years to make things right. Shirley, heaven waits for you.

4

PAPA OLAF OWNED an old dairy, just a cinderblock building that needed a new roof, with a few old stalls and stanchions. He used it to store equipment, mainly. He knew better than to deliver Ron's present in Shirley's garage. Several thousand dollars worth of stuff in boxes and crates—a kit for an ultra light, a personal aircraft, a snowmobile with wings. The line back that had led from Sputnik to the B-17 now pointed to the beginning: to Orville and Wilbur Wright, and thence to Leonardo's contraptions, to the purity of the original inspiration but with a technological twist.

The idea grew on Ron Larsen. His mind was a magpie nest. Every day brought a few more sticks, another layer.

As he worked, he listened. "Who thought the Wright brothers stood a snowball's chance in hell? And who were they? Bicycle mechanics, son. Bicycle mechanics. But dreamers, boy. Dreamers . . . Kitty Hawk. You know how long the first flight lasted?"

Of course he knew. He'd seen it on "History of Flight" a hundred times and more. "A minute. Only a minute and six seconds, but a minute that changed the world."





SHIRLEY

PRAYED FOR TWO THINGS. FIRST, THAT RON WOULD COME BACK TO HER. SECOND, THAT HE WOULD SEE THAT SHE WAS RIGHT.

well: Ron no longer saw Bicknell. Instead of Bicknell, he now saw the fog-thick plains of Lombardy. Lombardy, Italy. And his mind was filled with stripped-down flying machines, and the movements and wing-sound of birds.

He was in danger of losing his job, sick days and lame excuses building up like mounds of swallow guano beneath the eaves where they roosted. There were threatening calls from his superiors in Loa.

Concentrating on all the tasks and preparation, there was no time to think of the consequences or implications.

That's how it was with astronauts, with pilots. Get lost in the details of routine and thereby ignore the obvious—for example, that you were strapped to a cylinder with enough whoomph in it to flatten a fair-sized city.

All the work, all the effort. He knew he should have talked about it with Shirley, and there were many times when he almost had, but in the end that seemed like going back, and going back to where he really had no purpose in his life. And once you sample certain delights, take certain steps, when you realize that Crystal Jackson wasn't worth half the woe she'd caused him in high school, and Shirley, Shirley was bars on the windows, and a little tub full of water, a tray full of seeds that needed filling, and a piece of bone to sharpen his beak on, once you reach a certain point, there is no turning back. No sir.

5

SHIRLEY AND BROTHER Allred employed informants to discover just what was going on at Papa Olaf's dairy. A list was made and checked. The new guy from work came out there too, often, apparently when Ron was alone. Homosexuality was a choice and Ron Larsen had chosen it, had chosen it over his wife, his unborn children, and his earthly duties.

Wasn't Leonardo da Vinci a notorious sodomite? Hadn't he been exiled from Florence for taking indecent liberties with other boys? Later, didn't he keep a curly-headed youth with him, a catamite whom he called Salai, little devil?

Hadn't Ron taken to wearing a Leonardoesque hat, a kind of maroon pillbox beret? To be sure Ron identified with the painter of the *Virgin of the Rocks* in this sense as

THE ULTRA LIGHT.

They gathered at the Wayne Wonderland Airport.

Showmanship that Ron had secretly worked to master was something Papa Olaf had always hoped to foster in his boy. Without showmanship, without spectacle, there just

wasn't any point to it. Papa Olaf knew he'd done his work right. There's endurance, and there's endurance with embellishments.

Papa Olaf thought of Renee and felt a surging mixture of sadness and joy. She would have approved of his efforts. Maybe not approved in specific terms, no, but approved it in general. Death doesn't leave you with choices. Papa Olaf had had both good and bad days beneath the goddamned sun, and this was certainly a good one.

Ron Larsen stood at the verge in a leather jacket, with a white scarf, throw-back goggles, jodhpurs, and a cheroot held rakishly in the teeth. He tipped his hat to his dad. He then acknowledged the gang with hammy flourishes and a few swashbuckling pulls of the bottle of remarkably fine tequila.

The gang joshed and cajoled. They envied Ron suddenly, for they realized that they had just been hangers-on. They wished they'd showed half his daring. This was a real plane now, and he was going to fly it. Circle it around the valley and bring it back in. Soar like a bird and return safely to the earth. Their own trucks seemed like Hot Wheels. His knee boots were black and shiny; their boots were mud-caked and old.

Ron hugged his dad and felt him slip something into his jacket pocket. "That'll hold you for a while, Son."

Inspections: passed, checked, re-checked. The strapping in: both terrifying and strangely exciting. The vibrating whine of the two-stroke motor. The taxi-ing up and down. Waving to the crowd.

Ron checked the flaps and wires, pulleys and stabilizers, struts and wings for the twentieth time. He throttled up, and the plane just shook with it. He pushed the brake lever forward, and engaged the clutch wheel. The runway blurred past. He brought the stick toward him and watched the tarmac fall beneath his feet. Like the first foray from the nest, Ron was in the air.

Ron imagined he heard cheers, but he couldn't have for the drone of the motor, the rush of the wind.

The airstrip shrank below him. His dad, the gang waving like dark clumps of bunch grass. Nothing but air below him, sky above.

It glowed in sapphire and indigo. Nine hundred feet off the deck, he banked again and leveled. It was at that point he most clearly perceived the beating of wings. And he was one with them. Alone with the motor and frame and struts and nylon wings. No past, no future, just open air and movement.

The fuel gauge looked good, and the air was chilly as he framed himself between the orange cliffs of Sunglow, rose boldly against the sun, then leveled again, turned slowly, and found good bearing S-S-W, aiming for the big wide gap between the Timbered Knolls.

To say there was no turning back was to say that there was not fog on the plains of Lombardy. It settled thick and gray among the poplars. He smelled the rich waft of wet leaves, cattle, basil and thyme, Salai and pine wood.

If he ran out of fuel, hell, this bird was made to glide and

coast. He saw antelope on the Awapa that looked like striped ants. Beyond the guard station, between the Knolls, he banked as he reached nine thousand feet, turned west, and sailed over a gray-green wasteland toward the Parker Rim.

The updraft roaring off the mammoth west face rocketed him up like an elevator in a skyscraper. The G-forces pummeled him like the concussion he'd gotten in football. He gasped for breath and saw streaks and streamers. Struts wobbled and zinged, fabric sang, and the motor skipped, too much oxygen suddenly mixed in with the oil and fuel.

SHIRLEY MOVED BACK in with Nola at Annabella. She would keep herself busy. Maybe the return would be good. Of course it would. Leave time for things to settle. Her former life was over. Ron was gone. Ron was gone, and she needed some time. There was no closure. She had to endure a multitude of I-told-you-sos and Oh-poor-Shirley, you-can-stills. Yet, she was ready to start again. Start again at thirty. All right, thirty-one. Thirty-one was not sixty. Ron had left her. Ron had to be dead. There was no real closure. She would find hidden strength. She deserved to achieve happiness. She had known much sorrow. She could wait. She knew for what, and Nola would never have to know.

Shirley Larsen stared out at the dingy winter sky. She listened to old-school country turned up loud—Tanya Tucker and Marty Robbins and Merle Haggard. A lot of what had happened just plain wasn't right. She had a stake in it, a share, but people make choices. People make choices, and he had made his. He had made his, and she would make hers. She looked outside and steeled herself. She would push on—she knew she could. She would push on just as her ancestors had pushed across the Great Plains, over the Rocky Mountains and even unto the Promised Land.

She would endure. She looked at the sky, and she looked at the birds.

She waited for the call from Bicknell. She knew Boyd meant it. Even if it was complicated and took some time, it would be worth it. If he could keep his promises during the time of testing, then she could keep hers. She had lived in sorrow with Ron Larsen; she knew she could live the Principle, for the Principle was ordained and sacred. She had felt its power. If things worked out in a certain way, it might not even come to that.

PAPA OLAF WAS certain Ron would return, someday soon. He'd just drift into town like a well-traveled boomerang, and he kept his eyes low like the sun on the blue-gray Awapa winter horizon, watching, waiting for the speck to grow larger.

He'd been over to Circleville and joined up with the Wild Bunch.

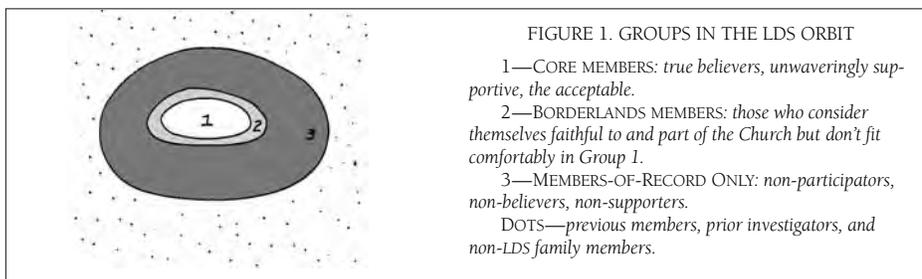
He'd been down to Argentina and ridden through the pampas.

No, he'd come back with Elvis, and with Sundance, and with Etta Place in tow. Hell, it wasn't that far from Bolivia to Bicknell. Not these days.

BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

YOUNG ADULT BORDERLANDERS
CONFRONT DATING

by D. Jeff Burton



IN THIS COLUMN, I share the story of Brad (not his real name) a Borderlander who is dealing with dating and finding a suitable mate. I have changed some details to protect his identity.

BRAD: Although raised in an active LDS family, I've always had nagging doubts and questions. I'm in my second year of medical school, and after some serious soul-searching, I would now describe myself as an agnostic, with a slight atheistic bent. I'm also an executive secretary in our bishopric. Go figure.

While I've thought about being blunt with my bishop, ward members, and family about my real beliefs, I don't see any real benefits from it. Even without the religious beliefs, so much of who I am is Mormon. I stand to lose a lot if I come clean with my leaders and family. While not a believer in the "truth" of the Mormon Church as we normally use that word, I feel the Church is a fine place for me to fulfill my spiritual needs. I have gotten a little better at remaining honest with myself, giving an acceptable talk during sacrament meeting, and learning how to deal with ward members.

But I'm not sure about how to handle dating. I seem to be too Mormon for the non-Mormon women I've dated but not Mormon enough for the Mormon women I meet and date. My main question is, how early should I come clean about my beliefs with a Mormon woman I'm dating? I don't

ever straight-up lie about my feelings about God or the Book of Mormon, but I can see how someone would assume from what I say that I'm just the average returned missionary with a normal testimony.

JEFF: Right now, you apparently have an approach that works for your bishop, family, and ward members. Though you may want to change your approach in the future, for now, you can work on moving towards honesty without causing too much trauma for yourself or others. When in a similar situation, I told my leaders that I didn't have a "knowing testimony" but that I had faith, hope, and a willingness to go along. It was always enough for them and allowed me to consider myself honest enough.

But the dating issue is much more complicated, serious, and urgent. I think most people who have been through this problem believe that early-on and up-front honesty with prospective mates is important. One of the first Borderland columns relates the story of someone like you who let a relationship develop too much before being open. His potential mate bolted when she found out that our man was not a "true-believer," which left both of them in considerable emotional stress.

When dating looks as if it could get serious, and when you're thinking about a woman as more than just a fun night out (or when she seems to think this way), it is important to get a positive view of your beliefs out on the table.

People have a range of specific (but mostly subconscious) pictures of the "ideal" mate. Early on, you should explore with your date her picture of the man she'd like as her husband. This may be a good time to be honest and help her compare you with her ideal. But even this isn't a cure-all. Sometimes a woman may go ahead and marry a man "in spite of what I really want," or, thinking that she'll change him, but still encounter problems later when the bloom wears off. This situation happens for men and women, Mormons and non-Mormons.

To avoid the issue of the "uncomfortable disclosure" entirely, you could look to find someone just like you, someone who would be happy to know on the first date that she is with a kindred spirit, or someone with a broad-brush approach to religious acceptability. You could visit groups who have similar beliefs and outlooks as yours. The Sunstone group, for example, has many Mormons like you who wouldn't be a bit surprised by your outlook and beliefs. Campus student groups leaning towards liberal arts or letters issues might be good place to look, too, if you're thinking a non-Mormon could be an acceptable mate.

You might also consider the shotgun-and-list approach to dating. When I was looking for a wife, I wrote a list of behaviors, attributes, and outlooks I'd like in a mate. I could tell pretty quickly whether a woman met the main criteria. So I went out with a number of women (mostly once) until I found someone who rated many check marks. This system may sound programmed and cold, but the items on my list weren't tough or inflexible. Here are some examples: "Kind." "Happy." "Laughs." "Knows how to listen and communicate." "Likes me." "Accepts my religious outlooks." "Doesn't see life in black and white terms." "Honest but tactful." "Cares about others." "Understands and accepts the Mormon culture." "Thoughtful." "Reasonable and likes to talk things through." "Compatible with me."

Before we became too serious, I showed the woman who turned out to be my future wife the list so we could discuss it. Turns out she had a list, too. She and I met most of the criteria on our respective lists. Nobody will meet every item on the other person's list. It turned out that Marlene was just right for me, and vice versa. We've been very happily married for years.

If you go the "shotgun-and-list" route, you'll make your own list, of course, but be

D. JEFF BURTON is an author and a former member of the Sunstone Board of Directors.

willing to modify it as warranted and be flexible.

BRAD: I've been explicit about my beliefs with very few people. Early on, I tried being honest with Church members, but they always reacted poorly—very poorly—so I shut my mouth. It is strange that I am so much more comfortable telling non-members/outside/heathens my true feelings and beliefs. I guess I'm actually somewhat worried about my possible loss of status in members' eyes.

Last night I had a conversation with a long-time Mormon friend in another city. When I explained that for as long as she has known me, I would best be described as a skeptic, almost as an agnostic, she was definitely surprised. She asked some questions, such as what I based my life upon and so on. She finally said she was sad for me but then out of nowhere said she didn't think my beliefs made me a bad person, as if that's how most Mormons would react if they knew. That comment has stuck in my craw all day. I really don't know what to make of it. Is it just another example of the common belief that doubts or testimony issues are all based in problems with chastity, tithing, or the Word of Wisdom?

As for finding a suitable mate, your approaches to dating may have merit, but for several reasons, seem somewhat impractical for me. One, I've actually already tried a version of the shotgun approach to dating. I first floated the idea to a few male and female friends, all of whom endorsed the idea. I resolved to start asking out whomever at least once. The one consequence none of us foresaw (and this sounds arrogant to say) is that my dates seemed to develop an attachment to me, even after one date. I engendered a rash of bad feelings from women I had dated once who now felt I ignored or disliked them.

The other approach, finding someone in a Sunstone-type group, would be great, but such a forum does not exist here [in the midwestern part of the USA]. I know only a few "Liahonas" in town, and we have stumbled into each other quietly. Also, all are male, and so (for me) not dateable.

JEFF: Sorry to hear about your experience with the shotgun dating approach. That outcome is probably not unusual for a "good catch" like you. But I think the idea of developing and sharing your list of wants and needs with your dates is still worth working on. As for finding a Sunstone-type group, if you want, I could invite female

readers with a sympathetic ear to contact me and I could forward their contact information to you. Sunstone is a global community.

As for eventually "coming out" to members and leaders, that is a tough call for all Borderlanders, and each individual must approach it in a self-tailored way. One extreme approach is to simply keep your most "troublesome" beliefs (e.g., atheism, doubts about the official Joseph Smith story) secret and go through life "living on faith." Many do that, staying in the closet all their lives and living on hope, faith, and non-disclosure. The Church seems to be moving in the direction of letting "faith" be acceptable in lieu of having a "testimony." I've seen that attitude more and more at the higher levels, but such changes take a few years to translate down to the local level. At church today, I heard more about "how important it is to have and gain a testimony; live your testimony," than I did in all the sessions of the last General Conference. (I live in Bountiful, which might explain some of that. The story was different when I lived in Las Alamos, New Mexico.)

The other extreme is to just let it all out. There are benefits to this "suddenly honest" approach, but there are also major downsides if not handled with care. The main problems with this approach are that (1) you could cause your family emotional pain, (2) your life as a Mormon (or as a non-Mormon) will become different, (3) like many of us, in a few years, you may find yourself looking at life and religion in a completely different way, (4) you could experience a lot of emotional pain, and (5) regardless of how clear your explanations seem to you, others will not understand you or, worse, assign incorrect and damaging meanings to your experiences. The typical active Church member is just not ready for such upfront, bold honesty.

When you do find a way to come out, it will definitely be easier if you have a mate who is understanding and loves you for who you are. So, finding the right someone now could be quite liberating, both for now and the future. But there's no hurry on the "coming out" business. Take your time. Find that "helpmate."

BRAD: Okay, I'm exploring the idea of how to best communicate the fact that I have what one might call an "alternate faith" lifestyle in the Mormon Church, and finding someone to share that lifestyle with. I'm not sure I'm ready for "e-dating," though.

I spoke with another Mormon friend about the difficulties of telling a potential spouse about my belief set. She said I need to become a better salesman. I'd come out to her by saying something along the lines of, "I would describe myself as an agnostic with leanings towards atheism. And I've been this way for quite a while." She said those words were almost as "bad,"—her word—as if I'd said, "I'm a hermaphrodite"—again her words! Because I regard what she described as "good salesmanship" as really sugar-coating the truth, possibly even lying, this response probably just reflects what a poor businessman/politician I would make. However, I think she does have a point. In the chapter on honesty in your book, you briefly note that there is a significant difference between brutal honesty and honesty. I think I could benefit from exploring this idea more—I'm not sure really how to "pitch" my belief profile to others in a way that is positive and honest, not just blunt.

JEFF: I'm not sure about the "better salesman" approach. But early on, you do need to show prospective steady girlfriends (and especially a potential mate) that you are multi-dimensional, honest, good, and non-threatening (as well as someone who wonders about his religion and God). But that takes work and effort as well as finding someone with an open mind. And no matter what, it will require compromise and negotiations with "the one."

As for connecting you with others, I wasn't really thinking about "e-dating." I was thinking more along the lines of just inviting people on a similar intellectual/faith/spiritual path to be in contact with you and others for simple communication, friendship, and the sharing of ideas via email. If that sharing develops into something more . . . well, okay. In the past, Sunstone has maintained a "list" of people interested in talking with and meeting others. Let's see if they would be willing to revive that list.

The next column will explore the issues of accepting and serving a mission. If you have a story to share, please contact me. ☺

*Please send me your
experiences from life
in the Borderlands.*

*D. Jeff Burton,
djeffburton@gmail.com*

BOOK REVIEW

NOT YOUR MOTHER'S
BOOK ON MOTHERHOOD

THE MOTHER IN ME:
REAL WORLD REFLECTIONS ON
GROWING INTO MOTHERHOOD

Edited by Kathryn Lynard Soper

2008

256 Pages, \$19.95

Deseret Book

AND

THE YEAR MY SON AND I WERE BORN:
A STORY OF DOWN SYNDROME,
MOTHERHOOD, AND SELF-DISCOVERY

By Kathryn Lynard Soper

2009

336 Pages, \$24.95

GPP Life

Reviewed by Lisa Torcasso Downing



The Mother in Me reminded me that when a woman narrows her focus, she doesn't see less. Instead she sees what is before her with more clarity, more distinction, and with deeper meaning.

MILK AND COOKIES. Peanut butter and jelly. Family reunions and green Jell-O. Some things are just made for each other. Take for instance, Mormon women and motherhood—the topic which editor Kathryn Soper makes the bread and butter of her collection of essays and poetry aptly

(though not surprisingly) entitled *The Mother in Me: Real World Reflections on Growing into Motherhood*, published through Deseret Book.

I'm not a feminist. At least not in that 1970s sense. I'm a card-carrying Mormon mother of three children who spent fifteen years as a stay-at-homer instead of building

a career. But I'm also, I admit with trepidation, a member of the Mormon literati. A critic and writer. Some days an accusation of my being a postmodernist could stick, but mostly I'm a keep-it-realist. I'm also one who has stayed as far away from LDS women's groups as possible. I've sampled Deseret Book publications and, generally speaking, not loved them. So when *The Mother in Me* arrived at my door, along with an assignment to review it, I approached it with caution, lifting the cover with my eyes half-closed as if half-expecting the sugar and spice contents to explode in my face. Maybe blind me, or sand down my ability to think. In other words, no one would have classified me as the book's target audience.

But then I started to read—and was absolutely charmed.

This book is authentic. I hadn't made it past Beverly Campbell's "Forward" before all my crusty pseudo-intellectualisms sloughed away, leaving me raw in spirit, and remembering what is truly large about living.

There are no apologies in *The Mother in Me*; no self-indulgent whining or glossing over the stickiness of staying home with young children. Babies die before they are born. Pregnant women eat dirt. Identities are lost. Relationships are tested. Hearts break.

The essays are so intimate, in fact, that each left me lingering in my own memories. I remembered the feeling of closing the door on the world and shutting out a career in order to center my existence on raising my small children. I remembered all the uncertainty and insecurity. I remembered feeling dismissed and inconsequential in the eyes of the world. The joy of *The Mother in Me* is that it proffers a view of motherhood that does not constrict a woman's world, but broadens it. It argues that everything good and true can play out right under our feet, here under the kitchen table or in the back yard, at the park, or on a walk around the block. Even in a patch of freshly tilled earth. *The Mother in Me* reminded me that when a woman narrows her focus, she doesn't see less. Instead she sees what is before her with more clarity, more distinction, and with deeper meaning.

I won't lie. Some essays do caramelize their conclusions in classic Deseret Book fashion. Once or twice I finished an essay and wished I could reach into the book, grab an author by her ponytail, shake her, and shout, "Your narrative *breathed* that truth. You didn't need to beat me over the head with it at the end!" But as far as



LISA TORCASSO DOWNING lives in Heath, Texas, with her family. Her writing has appeared in several publications, and she is the recipient of the Association for Mormon Letters 2007 Award for Short Fiction. Currently she serves as the fiction editor for Irreantum.

writing “sins” go, the sin of philosophizing is a small one. There is no slow, maple-drip sweetness many may associate with memoirs by this publisher. This collection is not a lecture about what an ideal mother should be but a series of snapshots admitting what motherhood is. Reading it is living life by proxy, with all the joy and wonder, the sorrow and disappointment that enlightens our understanding and stretches our soul. It is a book about women growing up as much as it is about their raising children.

Nowhere in the book is this theme better exemplified than in Melonie Cannon’s moving tale of her summer spent as a teen among orphaned children in South America. She writes in “They Weren’t Mine to Keep”:

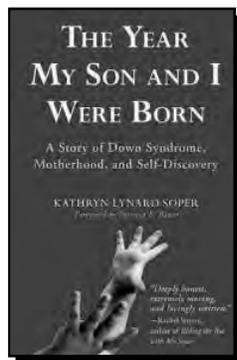
Stories were rampant of guerillas kidnapping people and taking them to the mountains to join their forces. Many women were raped, and the resulting offspring were left in dumpsters and orphanages.

I cannot describe the shock it was for a Utah girl who grew up in a Mormon home to see another world for the first time. When the rain came down in torrents, I put on my swimming suit and stood under the warm deluge, letting myself cry as much as the San Salvadorian sky.

I missed home. I missed being innocent. I missed walking through life with my eyes shut.

That summer, Cannon escorted two babies, each under a year in age, from a San Salvador orphanage to the waiting arms of adoptive parents in the United States. The older child “clung to me like a little monkey,” she writes of their journey, of her awakening to the power and importance of parenting. “I had never been held like that before, and it stirred a feeling deep inside me that I did not recognize. I was needed.”

The cadence in Cannon’s essay, the imagery she uses, seems magical. It is both gentle and confident, hopeful and fulfilling, and reflects the tone and talent of the ladies from *Segullah*. *The Mother in Me* is a vibrant, earthy, and life-affirming read that kicks mommy-guilt to the curb and allows truth with a small “t” to reveal the larger Truth. Not sugar and spice but milk and honey, sustenance for the mother’s soul.



When writers can be this honest, when they know themselves this well, when they can stand this naked before the world, then maybe, if they work hard, they can achieve this ideal.

I INHALED KATHRYN Soper’s *The Year My Son and I Were Born*. Then, in preparation for this assignment, I sought out previously published reviews and found myself agreeing wholeheartedly with the unanimous praise: The narrative is, indeed, beautifully conceived and executed; its pulse is both vibrant and frightening; its message, raw and rejuvenating. It is a tale of redemption, of hope, and eventual peace after trial. It is the definition of honesty.

And yes, on its surface, Soper’s memoir is the story of a picture-perfect mother whose frame shatters when God places an “imperfect” infant in her arms. Born brutally premature and with Down Syndrome, Soper’s little Thomas quickly becomes our Thomas. We grow to understand and love him because his mother loves him first—and because she has a phenomenal mastery of the craft of writing.

But it unsettles me to think of this book as the tale of how one mother comes to accept and love her disabled son. Certainly it is that story . . . and yet it is also not that story. In fact, every page of Soper’s narrative is a march toward her ultimate declaration that Thomas is not a diagnosis but a human being who is as valuable and as awe-inspiring as any other. *The Year My Son and I Were Born* never makes a spectacle of disability. It never reduces Thomas to a metaphor, to some symbol of what ails the world. It never exploits his life situation to further staid homilies or platitudes which are designed to make it easier for people to avoid the tough questions and the messy details, to keep a safe emotional distance, to tie a bow on the problem and give it away. In this respect, Soper’s text is iconoclastic. And pure. Breath-takingly real, it stands with no ulterior motive other than to rejoice in life.

The Year My Son and I Were Born is about

overcoming ourselves, about facing that which in our nature is undesirable, even ugly—our pride and our fear—and about succumbing to the often slow and painful process of humility so we can evolve from what we think is good into what is truly good. Soper’s circumstances—premature delivery, the NICU existence, the diagnosis of Trisomy 21 for her seventh child, postpartum depression—all these stand this stalwart Mormon mother in front of life’s mirror and demand she take a good, long look at her weakness, her failings, and her sin.

And as she looks, we look, but not at her and not at Thomas. We look into ourselves and experience the trembling that comes from knowing we are as imperfect as she. This is why we cry when we read *The Year My Son and I Were Born*—not because a sweet new life begins with difficult challenges, but because we feel intensely and personally the shock of Soper’s discovery that no matter how strong, how able, how mature a living force we think we have become, our knees can be cut out from behind by the quietest whisper from heaven.

Soper does not “overcome” or “rise above” her trial. Instead she fills it up with a wider love and truer insight until the hollowness and loneliness of that trial fades as echo. This proxy reassurance is, likewise, reason to weep.

I loved this memoir as I have rarely loved a memoir. It will live on my shelf beside Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes* and hold its own. In the future, when young writers ask me how to write effective personal narrative, I will direct them to read and study *The Year My Son and I Were Born*. When writers can be this honest, when they know themselves this well, when they can stand this naked before the world, then maybe, if they work hard, they can achieve this ideal.

UPDATE

WEBSITE CONNECTS
JESUS, JOSEPH SMITH

HELEN RADKEY, WHO HAS BEEN MONITORING LDS posthumous baptisms since 1995, recently made a perhaps startling discovery—the temple record of Mary, the mother of Jesus. According to this record, Mary was vicariously baptized and confirmed on 9 December 2009, in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple. A few days later, she received her initiatory and endowment ordinances. Then on 7 January 2010, she was sealed to her parents, Joachim and Anna.

On the record Radkey discovered, God the Father is listed as Mary's husband, and Jesus Ben Joseph CHRIST (born on 1 AD, deceased on 33 AD) as her son. Although the LDS database doesn't allow patrons to see the records for God the Father or Jesus (Radkey believes the Church has blocked access to those records because they are controversial), the record does indicate the source of all the data: the Joseph Smith Sr. genealogical website (JOSEPHSMITHSR.COM). The site is sponsored by the Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Foundation, an organization which lists LDS Apostle M. Russell Ballard, former RLDS president Wallace M. Smith, and emeritus patriarch of the LDS Church Eldred G. Smith among its board members. The genealogical coordinator for the foundation is Michael Kennedy, who in 1973, became the first direct male descendant of Joseph and Emma Smith to re-join the LDS Church.

Affirming that Joseph Smith Sr. “was fruit from royal bloodlines and perpetuated that fruit,” the website provides pedigree charts which imply that Joseph Smith Jr. is a descendant of Jesus and, through Jesus, of the patriarchs of past dispensations. The website quotes Brigham Young as stating that “the Lord had his eye [on Joseph Smith], and upon his father, and upon his father's father, and upon their progenitors clear back to Abraham, and from

Abraham to the flood, from the flood to Enoch, and from Enoch to Adam. He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its foundation to the birth of that man.”

Unlike the LDS database, JOSEPHSMITHSR.COM does provide access to the genealogical record of God the Father (www.josephsmithsr.com/lucymack/d0009/I12815.htm) which is empty except for a “Y” on the line where the date of death is to be recorded. The record of Jesus Ben Joseph CHRIST states that he married Mary Magdalene and that the couple had three children. From that point on, the site presents a genealogy connecting Jesus's bloodline with kings and queens of Britain and Scandinavia.

JOSEPHSMITHSR.COM contains at least three genealogical databases. The first one, which includes the record of God the Father, traces Jesus's genealogy back to “Adam The Red Man OF EDEN,” and “Eve or Issa ‘mother of all living’ OF EDEN.” According to this database, Adam was born in the year 4000 BC in the Garden of Eden and died on 15 Barmudeh 3070 B.C. in Anakim, Hebron. Adam's record includes nine different documentary sources as diverse as *The Autobiography of Edmund Bohun*, the King James edition of the Bible, and the writings of Josephus.

Two other databases stored on the same site trace the ancestry of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, respectively. Joseph Smith Sr.'s genealogy is traced through 27 generations to Alexander Catchman, born in the year 1050. Lucy's genealogy is even more impressive: it goes back hundreds of generations and includes kings and queens of Europe, including Charlemagne, who is listed as a descendant of Joseph of Arimathea. The line from Lucy Mack Smith to Joseph of Arimathea is crucial for the website's effort to establish that Joseph Smith is a blood descendant of Jesus. Lucy's genealogy as given on the site does not include Jesus. However, elsewhere on the site, “Joseph or Josephes The Rama-Theo” —presumably Joseph of Arimathea—is listed as one of Jesus's three children. The source of that claim appears to be certain legends about the Holy Grail.

The nineteenth-century LDS notions that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and that early LDS leaders are descendants of that couple gained new momentum in 2006 when Vern G. Swanson, director of the Springville Museum of Art, wrote *Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mormonism's Sacred Bloodline* (see SUNSTONE, March 2007: 77). After providing abundant quotations from nineteenth-century leaders, Swanson concludes that “the patriarchal and matriarchal bloodline of the Lamb's chosen family presently flows through the veins of Joseph Smith” (*Dynasty of the Holy Grail*, 365). JOSEPHSMITHSR.COM is a

Contributor: LDS Church Temple Records
Name: Mary Mother of Jesus
Contributor: [REDACTED]
Note: <http://www.josephsmithsr.com/lucymack/d0014/I149103.htm>

Mary
BIRTH: 0016 B.C., Nazareth, Palestine
DEATH: Y

Father: Joachim
 Mother: Anna

Husband #1: God the Father _____
MARRIAGE:

+Jesus Ben Joseph CHRIST ...
 Read more

Also known as: Blessed Virgin Mary, Madonna (My Lady), Mary (Aramaic: מרים, Maryām, Hebrew Miriam, Greek Μωριαμ or Μαρια, in Arabic ٱلْمَرْيَمُ)

The alleged FamilySearch record for Mary, the mother of Jesus

I138474: Jesus Ben Joseph CHRIST (0001 - 0033)

<http://www.josephsmithsr.com/lucymack/d0034/1138474.htm>**Jesus Ben Joseph CHRIST**

- **BIRTH:** 0001, Bethlehem, Judaea
- **DEATH:** 0033, Jerusalem, Israel

Father: [God the Father](#)Mother: [Mary](#)Wife #1: [Mary Magdalene](#) - 0063

- **MARRIAGE:**

+[Joseph Or Josephes](#)[The Rama-Theo](#)[Jesus II the Justus](#)[Damaris or Tamar](#) 0033 -

[My
Biography
Download
GEDCOM
File](#)

[Contact
Webmaster:](#)

[HOME](#)[INDEX](#)

The geneological record for Jesus on JOSEPHSMITHSR.COM

new instantiation of this old Mormon belief.

“This website is designed to develop and make as accurate as possible this blood line,” JOSEPHSMITHSR.COM explains. “A great deal of time and work has been given towards the accuracy of the records already contained within these pages. However, it is not expected to be infallibly accurate, [as] family history is an ongoing effort.”

MISSIONARY FORCE REDUCED IN EUROPE, INCREASED IN LATIN AMERICA

THE CHURCH'S MISSIONARY FORCE IN EUROPE WILL be cut back as the Church intensifies its missionary efforts in other parts of the world. According to a *Salt Lake Tribune* story of 12 February 2010, two German missions will be folded into one. Spain, which once boasted nearly 800 missionaries, will be cut to ninety.

“We were told that the Church was pulling about 900 missionaries from Europe,” returned missionary Alex Curtis told the *Tribune*. “Our mission president told us that he expected the 90 of us to do the work that 120 of us used to do.”

The reduction is part of a global plan to increase the missionary force in Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Utah, and New Mexico—all of which will see the opening of new missions.

In Southern Utah, the Church is growing especially among Latinos, who now make up more than 10% of the Beehive State's population.

During the last 30 years, the LDS Church has experienced remarkable growth in Latin America and the Philippines. Mormon anthropologist David Knowlton, who has often written about the LDS Church in Latin America, believes such growth could mean that someday

the highest quorums of the Church will be predominantly Latino.

“I expect these Latin American members to increasingly rise in leadership,” Knowlton told the *Tribune*. “And, if they follow the pattern of Scandinavians, then sometime in the next hundred years, probably toward the end, we can expect them to take control of the reins of authority.”

VIGIL HELD FOR STUART MATIS

A GROUP OF MORMONS HELD A MEMORIAL VIGIL for Stuart Matis, a gay LDS man who a decade ago committed suicide at a stake center in Los Altos, California, in the midst of a Mormon-supported campaign against same-sex marriage. (See SUNSTONE, April 2001: 90-91.)

Robert Rees, a former bishop who counseled with Matis shortly before his suicide, said the event was meant “to honor a good man who left life much earlier than he should have, whose passing was tragic but whose message was one of hope to other people.”

George Cole, a director with Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons, said that he has lost too many friends to suicide. “I know what it is like to seriously consider taking your life,” he said. “I chose happiness and fulfillment at the cost of not having the Church in my own life.”

After singing hymns in a nearby park, a procession walked to the stake center, where they set up a memorial display that included a photo of Matis's gravestone and obituaries remembering other gay or lesbian Mormons who had committed suicide.

“We're here because it's a horrible thing that someone's life was lost,” said Laura Compton of Mormons for Marriage, which was created in 2008 to oppose California's Proposition 8. “Let's come together and share our stories with ourselves and let other people know that they're not alone.”

In a statement posted on a site for same-sex attracted Mormons within the Church, Matis's parents Fred and Marilyn state they do not "support or endorse this event in any way."

"We further state that we do not condone use of Stuart's death for a political purpose of any kind," they wrote at LDSLIGHTS.ORG. "The best way to honor Stuart, and avoid causing further hurt and grief to his family, is to take the time and effort to understand the difficult struggle the men and women who deal with this issue are going through, one by one, one person at a time. As those who knew Stuart best, we can say with confidence that this is what Stuart would truly have wanted."

The suicide of Stuart Matis and other gay Mormons has been the inspiration for two plays, essays, a *Newsweek* article, a 2004 book co-written by Matis's parents, and several online memorials. Video clips from the Matis vigil can be viewed at MORMONSFORMARRIAGE.COM.

FOX HOST URGES VIEWERS TO LEAVE CHURCHES

A FIRESTORM OF CRITICISM BEFELL CONSERVATIVE political talk show host Glenn Beck after he urged his viewers to leave their churches if they found the phrases 'social justice' or 'economic justice' on their church's website.

"I beg you; look for the words 'social justice' or 'economic justice' on your church website. If you find it, run as fast as you can," Beck said on his 2 March 2010 show, "Am I advising people to leave their church? Yes!" Beck alleged the phrases are "code words" for Communism and Nazism.

His warning raised a din from many denominations.

Rev. Canon Peg Chamberlin, president of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA, which oversees 100,000 United States congregations, told *ABC News* that Beck's words are "an attack ... a misunderstanding, at least, of what the Bible says."

Jim Wallis, CEO and president of *Sojourners*, a Christian

networking group in Washington, D.C., went farther. "When Glenn Beck is asking Christians to leave their churches, the Catholic Church, the black churches, Hispanic, evangelical, to leave all our churches, I'm saying it's time for Christians to leave the Glenn Beck show," Wallis said. He urged Beck's viewers to "out" themselves as believers in social justice to Beck before they leave, even providing an online form for them to fill out.

Beck seems to hold even the LDS Church, to which he has belonged since 1999, up for scrutiny.

"If it's my church, I'm alerting the church authorities: 'Excuse me, what's this social justice thing?' And if they say, 'Yeah, we're all in that social justice thing,' I'm in the wrong place," he said.

Loyd Ericson, a graduate student at Claremont Graduate University, wrote on his blog "Project Mayhem" that he followed Beck's directions and searched for "social justice" on the LDS Church website. He found three positive references to it—two from James E. Faust, former second counselor in the First Presidency. He also found a single negative use of the phrase from an *Ensign* article published in 1971.

"If you follow your own advice, you must soon be exiting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which we are both members," wrote Jana Riess, co-author of *Mormonism for Dummies*, on BELIEFNET.COM.

The LDS Church seemed to distance itself from Beck's comments. "Public figures who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints represent their own views and do not speak for the Church," said Scott Trotter, an LDS Church spokesperson.

In a blog post titled, "Yo, Glenn Beck! Stop Hijacking the Mormon Faith!" Riess contends that Beck "does not represent the best of who we are as a people. Mormonism is about how, when you are in the service of your fellow human beings, you are always in the service of your God."

Kent P. Jackson, Dean of Religion at BYU, is quoted in the *New York Times* Caucus Blog as saying, "I have seen social justice in practice in every L.D.S. congregation I've been in."

Pontius' Puddle



Philip Barlow, professor of Mormon history at Utah State University, characterizes the Book of Mormon as “a vast tract on social justice. It’s ubiquitous in the Book of Mormon to have the prophetic figures, much like in the Hebrew Bible, calling out those who are insensitive to injustices.”

“A charitable interpretation of Beck’s initial comments is that he intended social justice to refer more narrowly to the coercive redistribution of wealth via government interventionism,” said Brian D. Birch, director of the religious studies program at Utah Valley University. “As the ensuing discussion has shown, the term social justice has a complicated history and has been used to refer to a wide variety of theological and ethical positions. Beck’s references to Catholicism, for example, were embarrassingly naive and demonstrated his illiteracy with regard to both Christian history and theological ethics.”

“If he acknowledges the multifarious dimensions of social justice,” Birch continued, “then he has to acknowledge

that one can advocate the ‘social justice thing’ (to use his language) and not necessarily be a socialist”

Birch sees a possible positive side to the entire episode, saying that Beck’s remarks “could be the catalyst for long-overdue discussion within Mormonism over issues that lie at the center of the Book of Mormon narrative, the early history of Church organization, and the construction of modern Mormon social practices.”

Matt Bowman, a doctoral candidate in American religious history at Georgetown, argues on the *Juvenile Instructor* blog that Beck’s “great failure . . . is his insistence on reading religion through the lens of his politics, or perhaps his confidence that the two are so perfectly blended that the seams are invisible and the language of one blends effortlessly into that of the other.”

But then Bowman digs deeper, wondering if Beck, for all his hyperbole, hasn’t hit on something. “I feel an incessant, nagging suspicion that perhaps Beck’s salvo is a justified one . . . to point out that as in every age, idolatry may be the most pervasive sin of our own.”

People

Deceased. Author SUSAN TABER, 62, of cancer. Taber was chair of the Department of Elementary Education at Rowan University in New Jersey. In 1993, she published *Mormon Lives: A Year in the Elkton Ward*. She was a volunteer for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, which she helped index between 1982 and 1987, and she presented at Sunstone symposiums.



Deceased. The Rev. Canon Dr. ALAN CONDIE TULL, 76, a Utah-born Episcopal priest known for engaging in theological dialogue with Mormons. A canon theologian to the Bishop of Utah and the Rector of St. Mary’s in Provo, Tull discussed theology-related issues as a presenter at Sunstone symposiums during the 1990s.



Off the hook. BYU graduate and federal judge JAY BYBEE, 56, who during the George W. Bush administration authorized the use of waterboarding and other harsh tactics that the Obama administration now regards as torture. An investigation by the Justice Department concluded that Bybee showed “poor judgment” but did not commit professional misconduct.

Released. An FBI file discussing several death threats made in the 1990s against then-president GORDON B. HINCKLEY. One of the documents describes another, un-

named, target who seems to match the description of then-counselor THOMAS S. MONSON. DAVID JAY HESS, a man with a history of mental illness, is believed to have written some of the threats. Hess received a 32-month prison sentence after pleading guilty to one count of sending a threat by mail.

Sentenced. GERALD W. HICKER, 58, after confessing to the 1974 murder of BYU classmate BARBARA JEAN ROCKY. More than three decades after her death, re-tested DNA evidence placed Hicker at the crime scene. Hicker received a relatively short 5-year sentence in exchange for explaining to the victim’s family in court the reasons for his killing Rocky.



Apologetic. Conservative Idaho gubernatorial candidate REX RAMMELL, 49, after neglecting to invite any women or people of other faiths to a public series of discussions around the so-called “White Horse Prophecy.” After the first meeting, in which he discussed the prophecy’s contention that the Constitution will hang by a thread but be saved by LDS priesthood holders, he said future meetings would be open to all. The LDS Church issued a statement distancing itself from Rammell and affirming that the prophecy “is based on accounts that have not been substantiated by historical research and is not embraced as Church doctrine.”

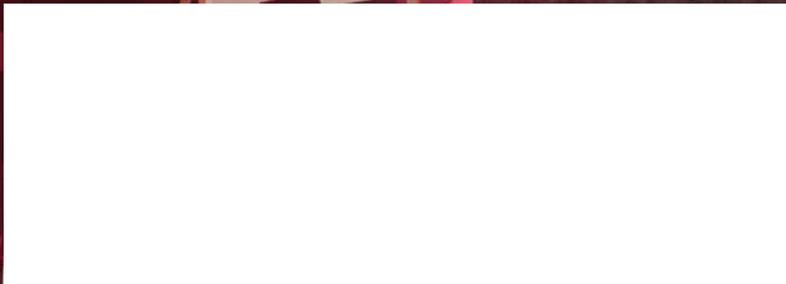


SUNSTONE

343 N. Third West
Salt Lake City, UT 84103-1215

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Salt Lake City, UT
Permit No. 2929



NOAH RISING