

Easter Weekend

By Eugene England

Perhaps England's most personal of all his personal essays, this brutally honest reflection intersperses both humbling and elevating experiences from trips to New York City and Montreal with confessions of faith, uncertainty, sorrow, and joy, along with the story of a car accident that almost took the life of his father and a "report" from England's guardian angel.

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IT MIGHT HAVE been 1986, because Easter came in March and I was on my way to Montreal. But I went to see Dustin Hoffman in *The Death of a Salesman* (bought a ticket at the last minute from a scalper), so it must have been two years earlier on my way to Boston. When I left the theater Wednesday afternoon, I walked east along Forty-second toward the small circulating library on Forty-first and Fifth Avenue, where I was to wait for Greg Reece, a young friend who had lived with us for awhile and now worked in New York. I grinned as I watched the confidence games being played by sidewalk hustlers—giant showy posters and pirated tapes for sale, and shell games of various kinds, especially the one using three cards on a cardboard tray held by a strap around the neck. I knew the games were basic small cons that worked on tourist gullibility and greed, and I went by without even stopping. But then I decided to get a snack, jaywalked to the Burger King for some french fries, and came out right onto a game in progress.

There were three black locals and the obvious mark—a white, thin-faced tourist. I watched, munching and smiling to myself, as the dealer placed three different cards on his tray, one the ten of clubs, then turned them over and shuffled them. The three others could place twenty dollars or more on the tray, then guess which card was the ten and turn it over. If they were right, the dealer matched what they had put down; if not, he took it. The other two locals—one an older man, with a startling band of pure white hair frizzed out between his black beret and his neck, and the other, perhaps twenty, in royal blue stretch pants—won occasionally, but the tourist kept missing, even though it seemed to me quite easy to follow the movement of the cards. In fact, every time he missed and wiped his hand nervously on his red tie I congratulated myself that I had guessed right.

As I became engrossed, the dealer began to ask me after each miss if I knew where the ten was, and I said "Sure" and pointed to it—correct every time. Slowly the bets got larger and the dealer, keeping up a constant patter about how easy it was ("See how often these guys win?"), began to chide the tourist for his misses ("See how this guy," pointing to me, "does it."). Finally, after the tourist missed on

a sixty dollar bet, the dealer asked me to point out the ten without turning it over. “Just look under a corner and see if you’re right.” I said I was, and he said, “Show this guy. Put down sixty dollars, turn over the card again, and you can win.” I refused (“That wouldn’t be fair to you,” I said), so he had Black Beret do it and win sixty dollars. They all made fun of me, and some others now gathering around did, too.

I felt my heart going, pulsing in my head as the game continued, and then the same sequence developed again: a miss by Red Tie, constant patter, invitation to look (right again), then insistence by all that I turn up the card again and take the sure winner. I thought of the ticket I’d bought for *Death of a Salesman*, four times what I had ever paid for a play before, and I thought about other plays I wanted to see. I took out my wallet, looked down to count—\$149 for all the rest of the trip—and watched myself put out the sixty dollars and turn over the card. Three of diamonds.

I was dazed. The game went on without a hitch—mostly wins by Black Beret and Stretch Pants, losses by Red Tie. The pace accelerated and the crowd was growing and talking, some commiserating with me. I tried to pull away. The patter motored on, and I knew the panic of loss, of betrayal, of desire. I wanted everything to stop. I wanted bitterly not to have lost, to be back at Burger King before all this, to have watched the cards more carefully. But I could still see, as a great calm in the frenzy of talk and shuffling, the cards—and how right I was each time. The patter focused more on me. “Turn it over. See, you’re right. Put your money on it. I owe you one, I’ll make it up to you, this time three for one.” Black Beret was helpful, like a kind uncle: “Do it,” he whispered. “He wants you to win it back—it’ll get the crowd with him.” The dealer’s eyes were enlarged, protruding, the mouth constant. I looked into my wallet and—with a lurch—put sixty dollars down and turned the card over. Six of hearts.

“No, look, it’s this one,” said Black Beret, sympathetically, turning over the ten. The crowd jammed in and swelled its noise. “That isn’t fair, you promised him.” “Mind your business,” snarled the dealer—then, with a quick glance toward Fifth Avenue, “Oh, oh, cops coming.” The crowd left, and the dealer, Black Beret, Stretch Pants, and Red Tie walked quickly together toward Broadway, leaving me frozen, spent, swirling in a tempest, damned, gaping, clear only about one thing—I was the mark, the only mark.

As I stood there and then walked east I was absolutely serene and absolutely violated: calm, unsurprised to see no police descending on the illegal game, intensely aware of people, food carts, lights, dimming sky—but cordoned off, invisible. I walked down Fifth Avenue to the library and went up to the reading room and got out my paper for the Shakespeare meetings to go over until Greg came, but I could not see the words.

I watched a lady across the table in a print dress and imitation fur-collared coat that she kept partly buttoned. She had notebooks and folders full of bills and receipts and lists and slips that she kept shuffling and restacking and poring over and making new lists from. At first I thought she was balancing her checkbook, but she kept going over the same things, shifting in her chair, restacking the lists, sighing, copying new figures, pursing her lips, returning to the notebooks and then the slips of paper,

erasing, writing, always intent, I couldn't tell what she was doing. I had to stop watching.

GREG AND I walked back along Forty-second, past Burger King to Broadway, where we went underground and caught the B train local up to Seventy-ninth. Greg could see something was wrong but didn't pry, just stopped suddenly—twice—to look at me as we talked, once putting his hand on my shoulder. We got off and walked back to Seventh-sixth, where he had booked tickets for Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind* at the Promenade. (But that was 1986, wasn't it?) "I'm a little short on cash. Can I send you a check?" I asked, and he said sure and didn't object when I suggested that, instead of going to dinner before the play, we walk down to Lincoln Center and see the Chagall windows in Avery Fisher Hall and grab a soft pretzel with mustard on the way ("My favorite tourist indulgence," I said with just the right touch of self-mockery). My mind had come unfrozen enough to begin to calculate how I could make it home on my remaining twenty-nine dollars cash without getting any more money or admitting my plight—and in a way that would make me suffer (that seemed very important) : One dollar for the subway, one for the pretzel, another dollar fare to Greg's apartment in Brooklyn after the play.

But what about getting to the airport? As we walked, Greg filled me in on his job with a new TV production company, but he could tell I was preoccupied. "How can I get to LaGuardia from your place by 7:30 in the morning?" I suddenly asked. (That must have been 1984). He stopped and looked at me, then went on. "Well, you can sleep in, have one of my great breakfasts, and take a taxi right up there, maybe twenty minutes," he said. "Or you can get up at 5:00, *leave me asleep*, grab a piece of toast, and take the subway back in here and then out to the airport—give yourself two hours." After a moment, seeing I was serious, he added, "The taxi is twenty dollars, the subway plus the bus from the nearest stop is two."

Back at the theater, Greg told me we were in the old Manhattan Ward meeting-house. He pointed to the unusual arched doorways and alcoves and blocked-in windows as we went through the foyer and up the stairs into the main theater. When my eyes adjusted I could see the huge encompassing arches on four sides that had framed the original chapel and supported the dome above. The space was now filled on three sides with banks of seats, with a wide stage on the fourth side and a catwalk above. In the program I read, "First constructed in 1928 as a Mormon Church, the building was refurbished and officially opened as the Promenade Theatre in 1969. . . . New York's only Off-Broadway theatre on Broadway."

Shepard's play, one of his earliest, is a preparation for the more well-known *Fool for Love*; both plays chart the agony of Western misfits, grotesque and universal in their irrational revenges and bizarre, literally or spiritually incestuous, loves. Greg doesn't like Shepard's work and had gotten the tickets after my phone call only out of kindness, but I find Shepard the most attractive as well as troubling new American dramatist. He is willing to use the bleak lives and dry landscapes and tacky motels and vicious words that are one part of a section of America usually neglected in drama, the twentieth century West I grew up in. And he does not merely imitate those lives but invests them believably with the great human themes of love and

death and with passages of poetry and even occasional, quite “unrealistic” but believable epiphanies. For instance, at the end of this play, Jake, who has nearly killed and then deserted his wife in one of his recurrent fits of jealousy, returns to tell her that her reality, the truth of her generous, ingenuous being that has so infuriated him, is also what makes all other ideas and presences unreal, merely a lie of his mind. In an act of amazing mercy that her unique reality has taught him and finally made possible for him to do, he gives his life to preserve her—and in doing so finally changes himself.

IT HURTS VERY much to think of you. How could you suffer not only our pains but our sicknesses and infirmities? Did you actually become sick and infirm or merely feel, with your greater imagination, something *like* what we feel when we are sick and infirm? But could you actually “know according to the flesh,” as you say, if you didn’t literally experience everything with your body? And if you did literally experience our infirmities, did you know our greatest one, sin? Everyone says you didn’t sin, that you were always perfect. But how then could you learn how to help us? And yet if you did sin, if you actually became sick and infirm and unwilling, for a moment, to do what you knew was right, how does *that* help us? I don’t want you to hurt like this, like I do now, to be ashamed, to hate the detailed, quotidian past. Yet I want you to know the worst of me, the worst of me possible, and still love me, still accept me—like a lovely, terrible drill, tearing me all the way down inside the root, until all the decay and then all the pulp and nerve and all the pain are gone.

Can’t you tell us directly, without all the mystery and contradiction, if what I feel is right? Could it be that your very willingness to know the actual pain and confusion and despair of sin, to join with us fully, is what saves us? It’s true, I feel your condescension in that; I feel you coming down from your formidable, separate height as my Judge and Conscience. I feel you next to me as my friend. Did it happen in Gethsemane, when you turned away from your father and your mission for just a moment? I think so. So how can I refuse to accept myself, refuse to be whole again, if you, though my Judge whom I hide from, know exactly what I feel and still accept me? Yet it hurts so much to hear you tell of your pain to Joseph Smith, when you remember that moment in the Garden. You say, “Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.”

Was that preparation so painful, even when you recalled it as the resurrected Lord—and so many hundred years later—that you still shrank and could not complete your sentence? Is that pause between “shrink” and “nevertheless” the actual moment of your Atonement? And why did you also tell Joseph that you will be *red* in your apparel when you come, in garments like one that treadeth in the winevat? Why will you have to say then, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me.”

Who is it can withstand your love?

IT COST ME five dollars from Dorval Airport to the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Montreal, but I had paid for the room in advance and could fast for a few days. The other participants in my seminar Thursday afternoon seemed to like my paper on “Shakespeare as a Healer,” though they were more interested in his possible knowledge and use of Renaissance psychological therapy than in my evidence for his preoccupation with Christian ideas about healing the soul. It was just as well. I was feeling very much a hypocrite, a talker, an absurd posturer who knew to do good and did it not. What did I really know about healing?

The next day I slipped out between sessions to visit the Montreal Fine Arts Museum, just up Rue Sherbrooke from the hotel, but found it closed. It was Good Friday in heavily Catholic French Canada. Walking back I heard singing from a small stone Protestant church. A constantly smiling, bustling, very delicate black woman found me a seat and gave me a program and hymnal (I watched her a moment, noticing her color and her soft, scurrying solicitude; New York had seemed all black, the Shakespeare Association meetings lily-white). The choir finished singing a Monteverdi motet, and a lay reader, a tall blonde woman with a black surplice hanging loosely over her bright orange dress, gave the Old Testament lesson from Isaiah 53, the “suffering servant” passage: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him. ... by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. ... he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors.” Then we sang Bach’s Chorale from the St. Matthew Passion:

O sacred head, sore wounded,
 With grief and shame weighed down,
 Now scornfully surrounded
 With thorns, Thine only crown. ...
 What Thou, my Lord, has suffered
 Was all for sinners’ gain:
 Mine, mine was the transgression,
 But thine the deadly pain.

Back at the hotel I asked about other Good Friday observances. Were any scheduled at Notre-Dame, the large cathedral-like church I had seen while walking through the Old City by the St. Lawrence River the night before? The concierge was uncertain but thought there would be something at 3:00 p.m., the traditional hour of Christ’s death. He confirmed by calling the church for me. Since I had to walk, I left right after the general session that ended at 2:00 and hurried east along Rue Sherbrooke to Rue Université and then south to Notre-Dame, which in daylight seemed built somewhat like the two-towered Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Only two blocks away I found police cars setting up barriers for a crowd of several thousand people just coming along Rue Ste. Catherine from the east and turning down Rue Université” to the church. I joined them and found an English-speaking participant who explained they had made a twelve-mile march beginning that morning, an annual pilgrimage complete with “stations of the cross” as the stopping places. A truck with large loudspeakers was leading, and a man in the front seat

continuously sang religious songs for the marchers. They were of all ages and dress: priests, nuns, groups of children, solitary housewives, blue-collar men, young couples, many with wooden crosses hung around their necks, some in groups carrying full-size crosses, a few with banners: “Vendredi Saint,” “Jesus, Notre Sauveur,” etc. They were welcomed at the Cathedral by a brass band and a large crowd; then all of us pushed in to fill the huge main floor and the two galleries.

As we waited I walked the full circuit of aisles, trying to respond, as I had in the cathedrals in Europe, to the builders’ sense of space and light. The stained glass in this church is too realistic and sentimental for my taste, but the sanctuary, with its high altar, is gorgeous: rich in light, simply proportioned but with much sculpture, which is focused in a huge figure of the risen Christ, seated in glory above a figure of the crucified Christ. The artworks and small chapels on the perimeters are ordinary, except for a striking painting of an early French nun earnestly teaching Indian children, the children’s faces angled in what seems accusing innocence toward the viewer. I thought of Tuckerman’s chilling line, “They have their tears, nor turn to us their eyes.”

A white-robed priest began to address the congregation about 2:30 and continued for twenty minutes. My French was only good enough to get the general drift: an informal homily on the sins of the day. I moved up the left outside aisle and slipped into a marble corner at the side of the stairs from the nave up to the sanctuary, where I could watch both the priest and the audience. He was obviously very popular, occasionally joking, using the device—which seemed to work well—of repeating a rhetorical question, “And have we sinned?” followed by an example or two and then the question again. Occasionally his exhortations led him to mention a hymn, which he would then start singing, and the congregation would join in. Finally an usher spotted me and sent me to find a seat; but by this time there weren’t any, so I stood at the back. The priest, now far away from me, mentioned Mary and then began singing “Ave Maria.” I heard a trumpet behind me softly join in and turned to see a black teenager, who reminded me of Stretch Pants, slowly move forward through the main doorway, playing the melody. Then, as the singing ended, he continued playing solo, slowly moving back. His mother was standing in an alcove, watching, and after he finished, she moved to stand by him, her hand on his arm.

At 2:50 the priest quickly finished his talk and a complete silence fell over the congregation until 2:55, when a group of priests, white-robed and hooded, evidently representing all of us, filed up to the altar and gazed up at the crucified Savior until 3:00. The signal of the moment of death was a sudden lighting of the brightest altar lights; all the congregation stood and remained in silence for a few minutes. Then slowly we left.

IN THE MID-SEVENTIES I sometimes went fishing at North Eden. That tiny delta and valley, opening into the east side of Bear Lake in northern Utah, was homesteaded, along with a similar, smaller valley, South Eden, late in the nineteenth century. Two small reservoirs were built in North Eden to hold water through the summer for irrigating hayfields and perhaps a few gardens. Someone planted the reservoirs with rainbow and brook trout, which grew, as did the native cutthroat,

into huge fish in those isolated, food-rich lakes: the cutthroats lean, fierce fighters; the rainbows and brookies jeweled and heavy-sided. One of my father's complicated business transactions had left him with a partial interest in the one remaining ranch and a key to the gate at the valley's west end that kept most people away from the reservoirs.

On a mid-August morning before sunup, one of Dad's clients, who insisted on taking his Jeep Wagoneer, drove us east from Salt Lake City to Evanston and then north along the Utah-Wyoming border through Woodruff and Randolph, down the long incline to Laketown on the south shore of Bear Lake, then up the east side.

I was alone in the back seat, only half-listening to my father's usual cheery commentary and storytelling. My own thoughts were dull, almost despondent: I had been released from St. Olaf College the year before in what looked to me (and some colleagues) like a decision to eliminate my influence on students, one of whom had joined the Mormon Church. Then I had been turned down for a position at BYU, apparently because of concern about what parents might think about how a person of my unorthodox views and background might influence students. At the same time, I was turned down at the University of Utah, because, as one of my former teachers there confided with regret, "This department simply won't hire an active, believing Mormon." (Which was I, too devoted a Mormon—or not devoted enough? Where was my home, my vocation? In Zion or in exile?)

We had moved to Utah and were subsisting on part-time institute teaching for the Church in Ogden and Salt Lake and a writing fellowship in Leonard Arlington's Church History Division—and a large garden at our home in Kaysville. And I had begun to lose confidence. Perhaps I didn't have a job simply because I wasn't good enough, didn't have enough scholarship published or good enough teaching evaluations to overcome those other qualms administrators were having (after all, I hadn't been accepted at the other places to which I had applied either). I had felt the mantle leave me when I was released as branch president in Minnesota, and no spiritual security had replaced it. I found it hard to pray, to remember what it had felt like to bless my branch members and family with complete assurance and to know with certainty the Spirit's response. I wondered constantly, in blank repetition through broken sleep as we drove, if I had lost my way, if the Lord knew there was such a person anymore. I wondered where the deepest part of me had gone.

We had our boat in the higher lake by 7:00 a.m. and headed for the upper end, where the fishing just out from the stream mouth had been best in late summer. I sat in the prow facing the early sun and the sharp canyon wind, smelling the water and observing the long scar the mule-pulled Fresno scrapers had made long ago as they brought down fill for the dam. Suddenly I saw to my right a V in the water, much like our boat's wake but very small, moving rapidly across to the shore on our left. I silently pointed and Dad slowed so that we intercepted the double riffle, just behind a four-foot rattlesnake, moving with the same motion it makes on open sand, its yellow on black diamonds and beige rattles and thick body clearly visible under our prow. None of us spoke.

Using wet flies cast with a bubble, we each took our limit of three trout over five pounds and, acknowledging the mutual agreement of those fishing on this

private lake, put the many others we caught back. Two that my father caught with his own self-designed version of a double woolly worm that ended in a red tuft must have weighed over eight pounds.

We tried some dry fly casting in the early afternoon, and I watched a huge brookie rise to take my dragonfly and then, coming in, suddenly turn uncontrollably under the anchor rope and snap the delicate leader, close enough that I could see the rich scattering of blue and red-gold aureoles down its side. I felt it go, with no regret. By 4:00 the wind up the canyon off Bear Lake was too strong for good fishing, and we left. Dad and I both offered to drive, but the client, who had taken a nap, insisted he wasn't tired and for variety headed around the lake to Garden City and down Logan Canyon, with me sleeping across the back seat and Dad dozing in the front.

WHEN I CAME up out of unconsciousness I had my hands on my father's head and could feel his hair and blood. I couldn't hear the words I was saying, but I felt them from the blessing part of me, the deepest part, before consciousness. Dad was more conscious than I was but more hurt. I gradually began to see the ground, the fir trees, then the cars just down from us. There was a blue Austin impaled at a slight angle onto the front of the Jeep. All of the Jeep's doors were sprung open, and the freezer of huge fish was splashed across the highway. I kept my hands on Dad's head and began to hear his moaning, then felt pain emerging in my own chest and struggled to breathe.

Police came over soon and told me our driver had fallen asleep and run head-on into the Austin, which had been driven by a German tourist whose legs had been broken. Ambulances were on the way. Each new face asked me where we caught the fish. Our driver, who wasn't hurt at all, kept apologizing, frantically. He knew my father was dying. When the ambulances came, they put Dad in the first one and tried to get me to lie down by him, but that made it even harder for me to breathe. At the Logan hospital they made me lie down for x-rays of my broken ribs, and I nearly fainted. Then the technician told me they had seen what looked like a bruise on the upper aorta in my father's x-rays and were going to rush him to Salt Lake because the artery could burst at any moment.

I asked the technician if he would help me give my father a blessing, and he nodded and went for some consecrated oil. We found Dad on a gurney in the next room, barely conscious, the whole left side of his face, where he had struck the dashboard, going purple. I blessed him with life, specifically with the five years he had told me that spring he needed in order to complete the arrangements to consolidate our family investments and transfer them into the Church's missionary funds. The words were given to my tongue, beyond my mind. I called Charlotte and Mom and told them we'd had a slight accident, to call Dad's friend, heart surgeon Russell Nelson, and to meet us at the LDS Hospital.

But all confidence left me on the ninety-minute, blaring-sirens ambulance ride to Salt Lake. I sat in the front seat, Dad and a doctor and nurse just behind me through a curtain. As the driver radioed ahead, asking Dr. Nelson to be ready and describing the emergency, I was constantly sure someone would soon push through the curtain to tell me the aorta had burst and my father was dead. When we arrived,

Dad was rushed into surgery and Charlotte stayed with me while I got us checked in and walked to my own room. Then I couldn't breathe again. Charlotte got them to look at my x-rays, which I was carrying; they decided that my collapsed lung needed immediate attention and sent Charlotte out while an intern gave me a local, made an incision, and pushed a hollow needle between my ribs and began to evacuate the chest cavity so my lung would reinflate.

Charlotte came back to tell me my father was fine—except for some missing teeth and a broken jaw. The new x-rays they took for Dr. Nelson showed no bruise on the aorta. I thought of the fish, the brookie, and the part of me that moved to heal my father before I knew anything. We were alive.

I MADE IT back to Manhattan (another seven dollars, leaving me twelve dollars) in time to meet Greg for the matinee of *Hamlet* at the Joseph Papp Shakespeare Festival Theater near Astor Place. “Put both these tickets on the tab for that check I'm sending you,” I said when he came up. “I owe you for the toast.” I was anxious to see what Liviu Ciulei, the great Hungarian director who is now in charge of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, would do with this difficult and (in my opinion) usually butchered play and to see the popular movie actor, Kevin Kline, do the lead. (This was certainly 1986.) I was disappointed in both of them: more of the same traditional misreading of the play as simply a struggle by a romantic intellectual to get enough courage to take bloody revenge on the uncle who killed his father.

Ciulei's best decision was to let the costuming and instincts of the actors follow Shakespeare's words and *show* Hamlet becoming more and more like his monstrous uncle as he succumbs to the revenge spirit. The poison that symbolizes that spirit is initially dropped by the uncle into Hamlet's father's ear, then, in the call to revenge, is dropped into Hamlet's ear by the father's ghost and, in direct response to Hamlet's threats, into Laertes' ear by Claudius. By the play's end that poison is spreading to corrupt and finally kill them all. Ciulei also allowed Harriet Harris to play Ophelia in a way that let the words speak true, even against the rest of his direction. She was able to show a woman and her innocent love being ground to pieces between the sinful male “honor” of Hamlet and the sinful male “protection” of her father.

After the play we walked up past Christopher Park and found, at the corner of West Fourth Street, a quartet of young men, two on violin, one on viola, and one on cello, just beginning Haydn's “Sunrise Sonata.” They were about the same age as Stretch Pants and the trumpet player in Montreal but were dressed in levis and T-shirts, like the dealer. They were excellent musicians, and most of the rowdy crowd stood quietly or passed by carefully. Nearly everyone put a quarter or two into the open case, but I waited, thought, felt within me the war of blame for the con game—and guilt and racism—against all my opposing beliefs, and furtively put in five dollars. As we caught a bus up Seventh Avenue, I told Greg I thought I'd get some rest before Easter, left him at his station on Forty-second, and transferred across and up Madison to the empty apartment on Sixty-third that Dave and Karen Davidson had lent me for the weekend. I bought bread at the corner deli and explored the refrigerator—but still felt I shouldn't eat and slept uneasily.

THIS IS MY report. I have been assigned to George England, one of my descendants, for thirty years now. He carries my own name but does not use George often, though that is his first name. I have protected him well, but I do not understand him. I think I should remain on this assignment for at least one more ten-year term.

The main problem is that George understands what is right to do but does not do it. He knows more about the Atonement than I did when I was branch president in Lyme Regis—or even when I became a patriarch in Plain City after the crossing to Utah. He writes constantly about it, even when he is writing for the gentiles about literature. Many people praise him for what he says; they write letters to him telling how he helped them live the gospel better and helped them understand repentance. But he still does terrible things. It is still hard for him to be honest. He covers up his mistakes with lies. He pretends he knows things or remembers people or has read books when he has not. I think he loves to do right, but he has a hard time being honest or kind when the chance to do so is sudden or embarrassing or when he is in pain or lonely. If he has time to think, he is very often good, but not when he is surprised.

When I helped him marry Charlotte Ann, you know how much better he was for awhile. He began to learn from her to be generous before he thought about it. He even began to be honest like she is, without toting up the cost. But after all that self-pity when he lost his job at St. Olaf ten years ago he began to be a hustler, to cut corners, to take advantage. I was able to use that car accident to help him know he was good. And when you arranged for him to be a bishop, that was fine for awhile. But he seems to have lost contact with Charlotte Ann. He isn't listening to her very well, and he isn't telling her what he really feels. I think she is getting tired.

Perhaps he is writing too much. I am certain he is not praying enough. He is worried, though, and wondering, sometimes frantically, I think, why there is not someone to help him the way he has helped some who have needed him. He does not seem to be able to ask for help. Perhaps something will happen that we can use. I hope so. My heart reaches out to complete the circle. I think some good chances will come now that he is in a bishopric again and working with the Primary and the Cub Scouts—and also when he becomes a grandfather in two years.

I am sorry about the language of this report. I know you want me to learn from him, but it is hard when he talks so very little. Please excuse all mistakes.

I COULDN'T SLEEP and then overslept, so I had to run all the way up through the Easter-dressed people on Fifth Avenue to make it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Eighty-first by the 10:30 opening. I paid one dollar of the four-dollar suggested contribution (leaving me one last bus fare plus just enough to get to the airport the next morning). I went right to the Rembrandts and Vermeers, but even there I found I could only focus well on two paintings: Rembrandt's gentle "Christ with a Pilgrim's Staff" and Vermeer's quiet, consuming "Woman with a Blue Pitcher," the young housewife working calmly in that corner of a room that Vermeer painted again and again, as if he might understand the whole world through one place seen completely. Then I hurried down the long hall, past the antique pianofortes, to the south wing—Manet's white apparition, "Woman with a Bonnet,"

framed in the doorway as a beacon visible all the way. But I turned quickly to find my favorite Manet at the far right: “The Dead Christ with Angels.”

Critics of the nineteenth-century French Academy did not like the extreme realism, the precisely bird-like blue wings on the two angels and the heavy, black-shadowed cadaver. But I find the moment captured by Manet extremely moving. It is not the traditional moment of shining glory after life returns. It is the dark time of struggle as Christ’s divine spirit is still creating the resurrection from within his still-dead mortal body, with the angels still sorrowing, holding him up, urging life to return. I agree with Emile Zola, the French novelist, who wrote of Manet’s “obstinate eye and audacious hand,” his ability to imagine and realize such angels, “those children with great blue wings who are so strangely elegant and gentle.” These are the angels Mary Magdalene saw later, when she found the tomb empty, the two still “sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain” (John 20:12). At the front of the painting is a snake, the one from Eden, its head about to be crushed according to the promise.

I took the bus across Central Park to the chapel on the second floor of the Church-owned office building on Sixty-fifth and Broadway so I could make sacrament meeting at noon. After the sacrament was administered, a short Easter musical program preceded the regular testimony bearing. But if this was 1986 then it was on the *last* Sunday of March, rather than the first Sunday, when Mormons normally fast for twenty-four hours and bear testimony. And the printed program I saved proves that it was indeed Easter. Anyway, after the choir’s “Easter Hymn” and a woman’s quartet singing “The Lord’s Prayer,” the choir leader (Andrea Thornock, I see from the program) sang “He Was Despised” from *The Messiah*. She had dark hair and wore a long surplice-like overdress. It was made of what looked like velvet and was dyed a striking grape red. Her somber alto voice reminded us of the costs of salvation: “He was despised, rejected, a man of sorrows”—her voice pronounced exactly the grief in that three-note dying fall on “sorrow” that must have come from Handel’s own pain. She looked straight into our eyes, as she slowly turned and looked across the congregation: “He hid not his face from shame, from shame and spitting.”

Then Liz Hodgin, in a lovely floral print and pink hat, sang the soprano solo that has been called by Kenneth Clark and others the greatest piece of human music: “I Know That My Redeemer Liveth.” But it is that, I believe, only when it is sung by someone, like Liz, who believes, who sings her own testimony as well as Handel’s. And our hearts were lifted from the depths Andrea had properly taken us down to. I blessed Andrea for planning such a program and for being part of it, for remembering, though we Mormons don’t often notice Good Friday, what that somber day is meant to recall: that Christ was suffering servant as well as glorious victor, that, like all of us sinners, he had to die before he could be resurrected.

The bishop bore his testimony, not about the resurrection but about the power of repentance, which he had experienced personally. An elegantly dressed businessman picked up the theme by confessing, in a careful, broken voice, how Christ had changed him twenty years before, suddenly, completely. A short man with a beer belly, thinning, long black hair, and a black leather jacket, almost a caricature of the

aged hippie, spoke softly of his long, slow, still-backsliding conversion. And a young Puerto Rican on the bench in front of me, whom I had noticed struggling for courage to get up, spoke last. He told how a few weeks before he had made a Saturday trip to see this strange part of New York, had wandered into the LDS visitors' center on the main floor just below us, and had met some missionaries and joined the Church. He tried to describe his former sins and how he had changed. "I'm sorry in all the world," he kept saying. "I'm sorry in all the world."

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