We incredibly rich and largely spoiled North Americans need to turn to finite and material things, rather than flee from them, for this may be the character of our continuing and eternal existence.

REFLECTIONS ON MORMON MATERIALISM

By John Durham Peters

Much in Mormon thinking suggests a positive attitude toward the realm of matter—the Earth, our bodies, material things. At the most basic level, Mormon cosmology is the story of humankind’s increasing immersion in matter for the sake of progress and growth. Though life on Earth may sometimes feel to us like a brief sojourn in an alien condition or an enforced terror in a dark place of forgetting and temptation, it is more fundamentally a sort of homecoming. We live on Earth, not as exiles from a more perfect realm of spirit and crystal, but rather as initiates into a new, and higher, stage of existence: the realm of element, of matter, of bodies.

The world of pure spirit is a preschool: Earth life is a higher order where spirit and element commingle. Mortal life is not a deviation but a foreshadowing of what is to come; it is an invitation, not a condemnation. This continuity of present and future spheres is emphatically expressed in the distinctive Mormon doctrine that the very earth on which we now live, not some distant heaven, will be the eternal dwelling place of its valiant citizens. Heaven, in a Mormon vision, is not an alternative to but the exaltation of this world. The marriage of matter and spirit is the order of the eternities: “spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy; And when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy” (D&C 93:33-34).

A positive attitude toward matter shows up in key places of Mormon thought. Joseph Smith wrote that spirit was a form of matter, and that God the Father and his Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone (D&C 130, 131). Orson Pratt’s classic treatise, The Absurdities of Immaterialism, denounced as absurd any theology that was not materialist. Brigham Young saw Zion as a place where holiness was crowned by the beautiful and good things of the earth. Such examples, doctrinal and historical, could be extended almost endlessly. Mormon thinking traditionally melts down the metaphysical barrier between matter and spirit. Matter, for Mormonism, does not weigh down spirit; it brings glory to it. The glory of God is described in Mormon scriptures as inseparable from the increasingly wondrous collaborations of spirit and element throughout the universe.

Despite this magnificent heritage, we hardly have any inkling of the philosophical and practical consequences of the materiality of spirit and the spirituality of matter. Much of our doctrinal discourse slips into older Christian habits. Thus we talk about the spirit and the body at war, or about the dual nature of our existence. Further, current Mormon attitudes and practices are often confused about the realm of matter. On the one hand, the most wondrous of all material things, the human body, is often mistrusted as a source of sin (or sinful tendencies) and hence in need of mastery. On the other, we Mormons are almost famous for being heirs of the Protestant ethic—the notion that (to simplify) if you are righteous you are rich and vice versa. That these two attitudes—the distrust of the body and the love of material success—coexist should strike us as something of a puzzle: how can you simultaneously disdain and adore material things? In what follows, I offer a few reflections on this puzzle, bearing in mind the curious fact that while denunciations of the lust for fine things are a dime a dozen, hardly anyone votes with their checkbook against fine things when all else is equal.

THE BODY

Why the Body is Not a Source of Sin

A distrust of the body is one of the major legacies of the Christian tradition. Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and Hellenic culture generally helped teach Christians that their bodies were a gross weight and a bondage from which the spirit should long to soar free. A whole language and set of disci-

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PAGE 47
plinary practices developed around the lusts of the flesh, the passions of carnal (i.e., fleshly or embodied) beings, and so on, that blamed the body for sin. We inherit, by default and lack of a positive alternative, some of this language and the attitudes that go with it. All too often Mormons feel their bodies to be sinful, as sources of temptation, as secondary to the spirit, and in need of the spirit's discipline. The reasoning seems to go like this: We live on Earth as spirits in bodies. Our spirits are eternal, pure, and born of God. Our bodies are temporary and earthy. Further, we all sin. What then is the source of sin? It can't be the spirit, since it is eternal. Therefore, it must be the body.

I do not believe that anything in the gospel truly obligates us to such a conception of bodily evil. Consider King Benjamin's dictum: “The natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). What is this “natural man”? Is it man and woman embodied, with our built-in inclinations to eat, sleep, mate, and so on? Clearly not. Benjamin is not referring to humans in the state of nature, but to socialized adults. This is clear in his point that the little child is the opposite of “the natural man.” Benjamin's terminology is a bit confusing since “natural” can signify both the innocent joys of paradise and the animal brutishness of raw physical need. Clearly, in any case, the “enemy to God” is not the body. Worldliness, not bodilyness, seems to be the problem. Furthermore, if the body were the source of sin, then infants indeed would need baptism; but they do not (Moroni 8). That we baptize children when they are eight years old testifies that it is not the body per se that leads to sin, but something else. Likewise, humankind did not instantly become “carnal, sensual, and devilish” upon exiting Eden, but as a consequence of a specific choice some people made (Moses 5:13). (One wonders if one could choose to avoid this state afterwards—a problem for another paper.)

The relative contributions of the spirit and the body to human sinfulness is a complex theological problem that I hope to address another time. Clearly, the body cannot be singled out as the prime culprit. In fact, Mormon theology can be read in a way that sees our bodies and their appetites as good and beautiful—it is choices and abuses that corrupt them. Hence the spirit, as the agency of choice, might be a more likely candidate for the source of sin.

**Fasting is an act of solidarity with our Father's children who are perpetually hungry—to feel, briefly, as they do and to do something about it—not an exercise in self-affliction.**

Why the Notion of the Spirit Mastering the Body Makes No Sense

The whole imagery about the relation of spirit and body that we have inherited is one of the spirit as master and the body as slave—an imagery that needs to be examined for its violence: whips, chains, subjection, enslavement, mastery, taming, and so on. Too often it is implied, for instance, that we fast monthly to somehow let the spirit breathe free from its dead bodily weight for awhile. Fasting thus becomes a sort of spiritual discipline designed to knock the body into shape, a self-denial in the name of increased “spirituality.” Where did this strange asceticism come from? In contrast, the spiritual foundations of the monthly fast in Mormondom have less to do with the discipline of self than the love of others. Fasting is an act of solidarity with the many of our Father's children who are perpetually hungry—to feel, briefly, as they do and to do something about it—not an exercise in self-affliction (see Isaiah 58). More centrally, the scriptures are clear that the urge to lordship and domination is suspect in whatever shape it appears. Even (or especially) when you're doing it to yourself or your body, it's still domination. You don't need a Nietzsche, the German philosopher, to tell you that there is usually a lot of resentment—the frustrated desire for power or recognition—at the heart of self-denial. Nietzsche had a keen eye for seeing how some people get pleasure from suffering stoically, all the while enjoying a fine sense of their own nobility. He believed that Christianity was “nothing but” the will to power turned inward: since the kingdom was not built on Earth, Christians turned their desire to rule and reign on themselves. Asceticism (which he saw as the predominant character of Christianity) is the last resort of the urge to be master somewhere and over something, if only one's own body. You don't have to agree with Nietzsche's conclusions to learn from his analysis (and there's no reason, given the Mormon view of the history of Christianity, why we cannot take Nietzsche as an acute analyst of the fruits of apostasy). Civilization naturally rests on some channeling of biological appetites, but when Mormons think of the spirit as beating the body into submission, as we often do, we perpetuate a long tradition of flawed thinking and practice about the body. Instead, we need to find new—or better yet, old—and more healthy ways of thinking about the relation of...
body and spirit.

The Mormon theological imagination has barely begun to explore how to think about the mix of body and spirit. But let us imagine for a moment—what if we thought the task of Earth life was not to make the body behave, but to teach the spirit moderation? Many of the foibles of mortals are not anchored in the body’s appetites, but in our capacity for imagination and aspiration, rivalry and pride. When the Lord says to Moroni, “I give unto [my children] weakness that they may be humble” (Ether 12:27), this might be imaginatively interpreted as saying, “I give unto my children bodies that their desires not be infinite.” Maybe the real lesson of mortality is not to master the flesh, but to mellow the spirit. Maybe we come into the world with an eternity’s experience of boundlessness. The task here is to become comfortable in an imperfect body, to encounter checks on infinite desires. “Why am I no longer infinite?” is a question behind many resentments, ambitions, longings, and dominations. The body is the school of finitude. The real evils are less those of the flesh than of run-away ambition. Meanness, snideness, cruelty, spouse or child abuse, torture, inquisitions, and genocides are not evils that arise from the body, but from the desire for power, the urge to rule and reign. People can be more dangerous when they try to be gods on Earth than when their bodies are insufficiently harnessed. We try to be lords, only to end up lording over our fellows. The twentieth century shows clearly that rationally organized procedure can be a million-fold more dangerous than run-away passion. A cool Hitler is ultimately more dangerous than a hot Elvis.

Clearly not all these problems—as acutely diagnosed in the pages of the Book of Mormon as they are by Nietzsche—can be attributed to the spirit. I do not aim to celebrate the body and blame the spirit—you don’t cure an unhealthy dualism by inverting it. The point is that we mortals get lost more often in chasing after the infinite than in dwelling in finitude and that our bodies have much to teach us about sanity, modesty, and moderation. Lust exceeds in imagination anything the body could endure in practice. Admittedly, we can dream, long, and imagine in ways we can never act, fulfill, or create; this makes us human. There is a sort of built-in “disproportion” between the vastness of human desires and the limitations of mortality. This disproportion makes us human; it fuels action and creativity and dreaming; but it can also lead to strange results.

Three scriptural images present three different ways of dealing with this gap; we may be able to learn something from them about the relation of spirit and body.

TOWER, TEMPLE, IDOL: Images of the Gap between Human Limitation and Desires

The Tower of Babel is the story of desire run berserk, of a longing for the infinite that distorts the finite realm. The story, of course, concerns an attempt to reconcile heaven and earth. We read in Genesis 11 that a group of people in the plains of Shinar apparently decided that temples—which throughout the ancient world were called the binding points of heaven and earth—were not enough. “After all,” the builders must have reasoned, “anyone can see that temples do not really reach the sky and hence are at best a mere metaphor of the union of earth and sky.” So they decided to actually reach heaven by building a tower. With care and calculation, they thoroughly baked bricks so that they would not crumble beneath the weight of the tower, and started to build skyward. Up and up they went. The project was interrupted by a confusion of tongues sent by a God worried about their ambition. Perhaps the confusion, however, was less a curse motivated by God’s fear of his potentially uncontrollable offspring than his intervention to stop a quest doomed to be lost in infinitude. If they had not been interrupted, how far would they have gone before they found the sky? With resources and energy enough, the tower would today be swiping through the asteroid belt, still unable to get to heaven. Their quest would have assumed the infinite proportions of its object: they never would have found what they were looking for; they would have sought endlessly. For heaven is always beyond, somewhere else. The more bricks one applies, the less attainable heaven becomes.

The tower was motivated by what is essentially a religious quest: to get to heaven. The aim was legitimate, the method mad. The tower builders wanted to construct a bridge from mortality to immortality on which one could physically ascend. The whole project was an attempt to erase the tension between heaven and earth. This tension, in contrast, was acknowledged by the temple. The temple had no pretensions of selling tickets to the sky-train; its devotees, if we follow Hugh Nibley’s claim that temples anciently were first and foremost observatories, gazed at the heavens in wonder. The stars were enigmas and
OMENS TO BE READ, NEVER TO BE ATTAINED. THE TEMPLE DERIVED ITS ENERGY AND POWER PRECISELY FROM THE TENSION THAT THE TOWER SOUGHT TO OVERCOME. THE PRESENCE OF HEAVEN IN THE TEMPLE WAS METAPHORICAL, OPEN, AND UNFULFILLED. A TEMPLE-GOER SAW THE STARS, LONGED FOR THE TREASURES IN THE HEAVENS, AND FELT THE RELATIVE NOTHINGNESS OF HUMANITY'S PRESENT STATE (MOSES 1:10). THE UNION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH WAS A DREAM, A CONTEMPLATION, A HOPE THAT ONE COULD BRIDGE THAT GAP; THOSE DREAMS DID NOT DENY BUT CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE NEGATIVITY AND PERMANENT UNFULFILLMENT OF HUMAN LONGING. THE TOWER BUILDERS THUS DENIED THE GAP IN A QUEST FOR THE INFINITE; THE TEMPLE-GOERS EMBRACED IT IN ALL ITS PARADOXES. THE TEMPLE CONVERTED THE ELUSIVENESS OF THE HEAVENS TO AN ENERGY OF DEVOTION THAT RECOGNIZED HUMAN LIMITS; THE TOWER STROVE TO ERASE THE ABBYSS VIA A MASSIVE PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT.

THE CASE OF IDOLATRY MANAGES THE GAP BETWEEN LONGING AND OBJECT IN THE EXACT OPPOSITE WAY. WHILE BABEL'S ARCHITECTS SAW HEAVEN AS BEYOND, IDOLATERS BELIEVED IT TO BE IMMEDIATELY PRESENT. IF THE TOWER-BUILDERS SUFFERED FROM TOO MUCH TRANSCENDENCE, IDOLATERS SUFFERED FROM TOO MUCH IMMANENCE. THE TOWER MAKES A PARODY OF LONGING, IDOLATRY OF FULFILLMENT. IN THE IDOL ALL DIVINITY IS TO BE FOUND, HERE AND NOW; THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO STRIVE FOR, FOR HEAVEN HAS TAKEN UP RESIDENCE ON EARTH. IDOLATRY BRINGS HEAVEN DOWN TO EARTH; THE TOWER BRINGS EARTH UP TO HEAVEN. IN BOTH CASES, THE MARRIAGE OF SPIRIT AND MATTER, INFINITE AND FINITE, IS ADULTERATED: THE TOWER GIVES EARTH THE INFINITE PROPORTIONS OF THE HEAVENS (THE BUILDING); IDOLATRY GIVES HEAVEN THE FINITE PROPORTIONS OF EARTH (A PIECE OF WOOD OR CLAY THAT IS A DIVINITY). IN BOTH CASES, ONE PARTNER IN THE MARRIAGE TAKES OVER AND DOMINATES THE OTHER.

THE TEMPLE, IN CONTRAST, IS A PLACE OF MARRIAGE: IT IS THE BOUNDING POINT OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, AND ALSO THE PLACE WHERE THE UNION OF MAN AND WOMAN IS SACRIFICED. BOTH GIVE, BOTH TAKE; TOGETHER THEY ARE ONE, BUT THEY CAN BE ONE ONLY BECAUSE THEY ARE DIFFERENT. SO ALSO SPIRIT AND MATTER ARE AT ONCE FOREVER DIFFERENT AND FOREVER INTERDEPENDENT.

MATERIALISM

"MATERIALISM" IS A COMPLEX AND CONFUSING WORD. IN EVERYDAY SPEECH, "MATERIALISM" REFERS NOT TO A PHILOSOPHICAL DOCTRINE ABOUT THE FUNDAMENTAL COMPOSITION OF THE COSMOS, BUT SERVES AS A TERM FOR ACQUISITIVENESS. IT IS IRONIC THAT THE DESIRE TO HAVE IS CALLED "MATERIALISM." WHILE THE TERM ACCURATELY DESCRIBES THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DESIRE (THE ACCUMULATION OF A SHEER BULK OF MATERIAL THINGS), IT DOES NOT DESCRIBE ITS ORIGINS. MATERIALISM IS A QUEST MUCH LIKE THE TOWER OF BABEL—RUNNING TOWARD SOMETHING THAT YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE, BUT DON'T RECOGNIZE. IT RESULTS, PARADOXICALLY, FROM A LACK OF APPRECIATION OF MATERIAL THINGS, AND WORKS AS A TEMPORARY SALVE TO A SPIRITUAL WOUND.

OUR BODIES ARE ACTUALLY NOT ALL THAT DEMANDING, IN GENERAL, FOR BASIC MAINTENANCE. IT IS SURPRISING (AS THOREAU DEMONSTRATED IN WALDEN) HOW LITTLE IT TAKES—OF FOOD, LABOR, AND MONEY—TO KEEP OUR BODIES HEALTHY AND OUR MINDS LIVELY. TO BE SURE, AS ANIMALS WE HAVE BUILT-IN NESTING INSTINCTS AND A PREFERENCE FOR SECURITY, BUT THESE ARE ALMOST ALWAYS DEFINED SOCIALLY. WE LISTEN TO WHAT SOCIETY SAYS ARE SUITABLE CLOTHES, “GRACIOUS HOMES,” FASHIONABLE CARS, AND SO ON, RATHER THAN TO OUR BODILY NEEDS (WHICH WOULD LIKELY GIVE MUCH MORE MODEST ANSWERS IN GENERAL). CONSIDER DONALD TRUMP'S NINETY-FOOT LIVING ROOM THAT HE HAD IN THE LATE 1980S. AS HE ADMITTED, HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY NEED IT—but he liked being the only person in New York City to have one. What, then, brings him enjoyment? He takes pleasure not from the room, but from the realm of social comparison. Just as a few more bricks to Babel shows that heaven is not there yet, so as soon as someone else gets a hundred-foot living room, Trump's pleasure will evaporate. Only pleasures that lose nothing when removed from the public eye are genuine.

THIS IS TO SAY THAT “MATERIALISM” IS NOT REALLY CONCERNED WITH MATTER—with goods or things in themselves—but with signs, status, comparison, prestige. IT IS NOT PROPERLY MATERIALIST BUT THE MOST METAPHYSICAL OF QUESTS. WE WANT FANCY CHARGE CARDS AND TAILORED SUITS NOT SO MUCH FOR WHAT WE CAN DO WITH THEM BUT FOR WHAT THEY MEAN OR FOR WHAT THEY WILL BUY US IN THE MARKETPLACE OF OTHER'S OPINIONS—which buttress our wavering opinions of ourselves. ADVERTISING SHOWS THAT SYMBOLIC ASSOCIATIONS, MORE THAN PRACTICAL USES, SELL PRODUCTS. ADVERTISEMENTS GIVE US LIFESTYLE, PRESTIGE, HONOR, GLEAM, AND SPARKLE MORE OFTEN THAN THEY DO USABLE OR MODEST PRODUCTS.

IF WE HAD MORE CONFIDENCE IN WHAT OUR BODIES—as opposed to others—tell us what we need, we would likely have a saner relationship to the material world. We would want...
houses that pleasantly meet our needs rather than ones that allow us to admire ourselves through the eyes of others. I just bought a used car, and I find myself often studying its appearance, discovering its angles and overall shape. I like how it looks—but I can never see how it looks when I am driving it. Only others can. I would be hard pressed to sort out the mixture of my personal feelings for the car and my sense of its symbolic meaning in the more general automotive universe. Materialism can be a spiritual quest gone haywire, a quest for a better world, in the skies or in the eyes of others, where one will never find it. How can we redirect the theological esteem for matter and element in Mormon thought into sane attitudes toward things?

We are talking about matters of economics here, and a great treatise on the sources of value (the centerpiece of economic theory) is Lehi’s dream of the Tree of Life (1 Nephi 8). This story contrasts two competing sources of human motivation: public esteem and private satisfaction. Lehi sees a tree, more beautiful than all others with fruit sweeter than all others. That the fruit in itself is delicious and that one must endure major stress to acquire it are taken for granted—Lehi has no problem with a fervent desire for the sweetest, finest, and most beautiful of all things. Those who eat the tree’s fruit know its satisfactions in an immediate, bodily way. But across the way is a tall, “great and spacious” building filled with fashionable souls who point mocking fingers at the tasters. Does Lehi blithely assume that taste buds are stronger evidence than the opinions of others? No—he warns that whoever pays heed to the mockers leaves the tree. The choice posed is stark: what to use as a guide for action? Your own experience or the approval of others? More often than not, we place more trust in the wisdom of the world—which is visible, public, and secure as convention can make it—than our own quiet satisfactions (if we even know what they are). We desire things desired by others. Or, as with Donald Trump, enjoyment is dependent on the esteem we reap, while the immediate joy (or sorrow) our bodies feel gets ignored.

“Use-value” versus “exchange-value” is a classic contrast in economic theory. Use-value is defined by the relationship between a person (or society) and a commodity. Thus I may use a cherry tree for shade, for fruit, for wood, for a tree-house, for decoration. The variety of uses depends on the inherent properties of the commodity and my needs and practices. Exchange-value, in contrast, is defined by the abstract workings of the market. The cherry tree’s exchange value only abstractly relates to what kinds of immediate uses or enjoyments it can yield; it is determined by the current supply of and demand for cherry trees in the market. Marx’s critique of capitalism, for instance, was partly that use-value was being gobbled up by exchange value, that concrete uses were disappearing before the tyrannical and illusionary workings of the market. In Lehi’s terms, one’s treasures come to be defined not by the taste or sweetness of the fruit but by the current state of opinion in the great building across the way.

Once while in Washington, D.C., I crossed the Potomac to nearby Alexandria, trying (unsuccessfully) to find the childhood house I had lived in twenty-five years earlier. Driving through Old Town, I was impressed by the lovely shops, the appealing array of colors, the exotic restaurants, the charming colonial architecture, and the beautiful people walking about. How could anyone, I thought, be sourpuss enough to deny the loveliness of the place? The beauty and attraction of it is real. But that beauty occurs within a larger geography. Semiotics, the general study of signs and their relations, has taught us that all symbols take meaning with reference to the entire system of which they are a part, and Alexandria cannot but help derive some of its appeal from its contrast with other places, such as southeast Washington, D.C. Beauty needs squalor and takes strength (negatively) from it, at least in this fallen world.

Could it not be that our private pleasures are the symptoms of inequality? That matters of personal consumption are fundamentally linked to the social and spiritual welfare of the human family as a whole? It is not comfortable to recognize that some of our pleasures may be predicated on others’ discomforts, that one man’s meat is another man’s starvation. My point is not to condemn lovely things or to denounce our appreciation of them. Indeed, beauty may be the most eternal of all—in a celestial world, the good and the true could be taken for granted, but beauty never could. The problem is not with beauty or with finery but with the social system in which they are asymmetrically circulated. Beautiful things should not be swept away in some vast, totalitarian Puritan purge, but should abound and be open to all.

Material things are intensely moral because of the unequal social and economic system in which they circulate. The whole world lies in sin in that some have more and others have less (D&C 49:20). Some pleasures—of basketball court-sized liv-
ing rooms or Imelda Marcos's infinite regress of shoes, never broken in to the unique use-value of her own feet—consist only in the intoxicating air of feeling oneself at the top. Parking lots outside California wards or neighborhoods along the Wasatch Bench sometimes become theaters of competitive blessedness. Material goods can be spiritual goods, if they are only used to reenforce the sensation of your own holiness. Goods (in the tangible sense) are related to the good (in the moral sense). Should Christians follow some kind of categorical imperative in our pleasures? This would mean that we would enjoy what in principle only could be enjoyed by everyone. What would a society look like in which no enjoyment or pleasure was predicated on another not being able to have it? Who can hear such doctrine in this world? There is a difference between taking pleasure in the fact of excluding others (Donald Trump) and taking pleasures from which others are excluded. The first we can decide to avoid, but to avoid the second would require us to quarantine ourselves from the global economy—perhaps an impossible task.

CONCLUSION

I HAVE explored attitudes toward the body and toward possessions—two sorts of material things—and argued that while Mormon thinking can encourage much positive thought toward the material world, we generally neglect the lessons that matter has to teach us (a main point of being on Earth, after all, according to Mormon cosmology). The lust to possess is not a case of the body's appetites running out of control, but something else—a twisted spiritual adventure run rampant. We have to learn from matter: lessons of dwelling, hominess, modesty, plainness, the joys of the everyday uncanniness that is all around us. A farm, said Emerson, is a mute gospel. Almost everyone can luxuriate in the animal joy of simply being alive, savor the colorful glories of the crabapple trees in spring, the greenness of the grass, the blue sky though the magnolia trees, the ever-changing expressions of children. There is enough and to spare, and nobody is excluded from partaking. Many of these sorts of joys are already distributed democratically. All the earth is a temple, as are our bodies: we needn't build towers to find heaven or shrines to capture it when it visits. Happiness is the condition of one's desires having found a dwelling; misery is when desires wander about like dispossessed spirits, seeking rest and finding none.

It may sound paradoxical to suggest that a cure for materialism is a genuine appreciation, love, and gratitude for worldly goods. Too often materialism is a flight from the world of plainness, the world of ordinary joys. We incredibly rich and largely spoiled North Americans need to turn to finite and material things, rather than flee from them, for this may be the character of our continuing and eternal existence. Does not God say that his greatness and glory are due more to his ongoing work in the mess and muck of finitude than his detached glory above-it-all? (Moses 1:39.) Does not true godliness consist partly in the taming of one's longings for the lofty and infinite long enough to do what one can to bring about the salvation and exaltation of particular people? Is not this world of material things and embodied spirits designed as an education in the things of eternity? Maybe an attitude adjustment of the rich would be one step in the right direction toward the more serious issue: how to care for the poor of the earth.10

NOTES

4. Thanks to Barbara Day Lockhart for this insight, and to her, Jay Bybee, Peggy Fletcher Stack, and Tom Griffith for useful comments.
5. For just one example, see John A. Widtsoe, A Rational Theology (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1937).
10. For stimulating suggestions, see essays by Garth Jones, James Lucas, and Warner Woodworth.