Fig. 1. *First Vision,* by Tiffany and Company. Leaded stained glass, 145" x 54", 1892. Located in the Salt Lake Temple. Photograph courtesy LDS Church Archives.

Realizing that the Tiffany artists would depict the First Vision using traditional iconography unless otherwise instructed, architect Joseph Don Carlos Young carefully spelled out the visual details. The resulting art piece set the precedent for stained-glass windows depicting the First Vision.

"Ye Shall See the Heavens Open": Portrayal of the Divine and the Angelic in Latter-day Saint Art

An art historian offers a tour of several LDS images of the divine and the angelic that stand in sharp contrast to much of the previous fifteen hundred years of Western religious art.

Richard G. Oman

Most art expresses religious themes. One need only look at African masks, Hopi kachinas, the Sistine Chapel frescos, paintings in the tombs of Egypt, sculpture from the Parthenon of Athens, the windows of the Cathedral of Chartres, and virtually all of the sculpture of India to see the reality of this claim. A people's art traditions tell us much about their religious faith and something of the gods they worship and their relationship with those gods—their visions and epiphanies. The selection of iconography used in artistic renditions of epiphanies can tell us a great deal about the core beliefs of a people.

The Latter-day Saint faith is based on revelation—especially on contacts between heavenly beings and early LDS leaders. These epiphanies or visions were concentrated in the life of Mormonism's first modern prophet, Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844), between his fourteenth and thirty-first birthdays. During these years, Joseph received visitations from God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ; an ancient American prophet named Moroni; John the Baptist; three of Christ's early Apostles, Peter, James, and John; as well as several other heavenly beings, including those who appeared to him in the Kirtland Temple (see plate 1; see also p. 29). Because of the significance of these visions to the Mormon faith, they are reflected in Latter-day Saint art. This article looks at some of the art

Fig. 2. *Inception of Mormonism—Joseph Smith's First Vision,* etching in T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873). Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University. This is probably the first depiction of the First Vision.

that depicts the heavenly beings seen in these visions, particularly God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the angel Moroni.

The First Vision

The major theophany of the LDS tradition is the appearance of God the Father and his son Jesus Christ to the fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. The vision occurred in a grove of trees, probably the family woodlot, on the Smith family farm near Palmyra, New York. This seminal experience shaped the Mormon understanding of the nature of the Godhead. The First Vision, as it is called, also set in motion a series of epiphanic events that led to the translation of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, and the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Over time the First Vision has become a favorite theme in Mormon art. It has not been treated as a dream or a metaphor. Instead, the vision has been depicted as a real event with specific participants, location, and time. Joseph Smith is shown as a boy. God the Father and Jesus Christ are shown as physically embodied beings[1] standing in the air, usually surrounded with light.

One of the first published visual representations of Joseph Smith's first vision was not produced by a Mormon. It is a small print published in T. B. H. Stenhouse's rather uncomplimentary 1873 history of the Mormons. The print, titled *Inception of Mormonism—Joseph Smith's First Vision* (see fig. 2),[2] is one of several depicting Joseph's visions.[3] Their inclusion indicates the author's understanding of the importance of these epiphanies to the faith to which he had previously adhered,[4] although the prints themselves are aesthetically and technically very modest works.

The first known painting of Joseph's first vision is by the Danish immigrant artist Carl Christian Anton Christensen (1831–1912).[5] In 1878 he began work on his *Mormon Panorama*,[6] which depicted Mormon history from 1820 to 1847. Each of the twenty-three paintings in the *Panorama* was over six feet high and almost ten feet wide. They were stitched together and rolled like a scroll. Christensen displayed the paintings around the Mormon West and accompanied the display with a lecture on Church history.

The first painting in the series (now lost) was *The First Vision,* depicting the Father and the Son appearing to the young Joseph Smith. George Manwaring (1854–1889), a poet who wrote early LDS hymn lyrics, was so taken by the painting that after seeing it he wrote the lyrics for the famous LDS hymn "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."[7]

One of the most significant early depictions of the First Vision is a magnificent Tiffany art-glass window in the Salt Lake Temple (see fig. 1). Because the Tiffany studio artists were not Latter-day Saints, Joseph Don Carlos Young, the architect for the Salt Lake Temple,[8] wrote them a letter carefully spelling out the iconographical elements for the commissioned window. This is perhaps the earliest authoritative instruction to artists on how this most significant of all Mormon epiphanies should be depicted. Because of its specificity and rarity, it is published here in full.

Salt Lake City, Utah
Sept. 20th 1892

Tiffany and Co
Art Glass Manufacturers:
Gentlemen: —

When your Mr. Coulson was here a few months ago, the committee appointed to determine the character and extent of ornamental and artistic work to be done in the Temple, had not arrived at any decision as to whether art glass would be employed or not. Since that time the matter has been reconsidered. It is now descided to have some of your work to adorne the interior of this magestic Edifice and a subject has been selected for your artist to sketch out, and submit for approval. The subject is the first vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith. This vision was recieved early in the spring of 1820 in Manchester, Wayne Co New York when he was in the 15th year of his age. The scene which this remarkable vision opened before the youthful "Seeker after God" I will proceed to describe as graphically as I can. And to do this it will be necessary to narrate briefly the more salient points leading to the divine manifestation which he on this ever memorable occasion recieved.

It was on the morning of a beautiful clear day that this young man retired to the woods near his father's house, to a spot of ground which he had previously selected to offer up in fervent prayer his desires, that God would make known to him which of the many Christian Churches was the right so that he might become a member of that Church. As the distractions and confusion arising out of a revival held in the neighborhood had very much disturbed and unsettled his mind. Upon reaching the place he had chosen, he

looked around and saw that he was alone. he knelt down and commenced to call upon God in great earnestness to grant him the knowledge he needed: believing fully that it would be given to him. He had but just commenced when he was seized by a power that brought with it the moste dreadful apprehension of sudden destruction. He struggled to appeal for deliverance, and when he felt that he was about to be engulfed in darkness and dispair, a sudden change was wrought within him, and an indescribable calm swept over his whole being. Simultaneously with this change of feeling he opened his eyes and saw a pillar of light exceeding the brightness of the sun descending immediately over his head. This pillar of light descended so low that he became enveloped by it. And in this pillar of light he saw two heavenly personages whose brightness and glory defy all description standing standing [*sic*] above him in the air, in such close proximity as to hear one of them speak to him, calling him by name and pointing with his finger to the other personage, saying "This is my beloved Son hear him" One of the personages unfolded in this vision the benighted condition of the whole Christian world and imparted to Joseph such information as to fully answer all his enquiries of the Lord in prayer.

With this brief recital of the circumstances that brought about this marvelous event. It will now be propper to group together some of these circumstances and some particulars relating to the youthful Prophet and the heavenly beings who visited him, as elements of which to make the picture

The Scene is in a wood. The foliage of which would indicate the time of early spring of the year 1820. The first object to distinguish is a boy in the 15th year of his age clad in the ordinary garb of a farmer's son kneeling in the attitude of prayer similar to young Samuel of old. His position in the picture should be such as would express earnestness and deep humility. The facial expression should also be modestly turned upward: not a daring but in an imploring manner. To produce this effect, the head and face should also pose at such an agle to the observer that these expressions can be seen. The features of his face may be conceived approximately correct from a study of accompanying likiness which was taken in later years. The color of his hair was brown. He had a full blue eyes and at that period (15 years old) of his life he would be light complexioned. His general appearance would suggest that he was a healthy boy of good habits and of a thoughtful turn of mine destined for future greatness in the world.

The next part of the heavenly vision to be described are the two personages which will form the crowning work of the artists in this inspiring and heavenly Scene. As previously stated. There were two Personages who descended in the Pillar of Light: The brilliancy of which exceeded the brightness of the Sun. And the Halo of glory which immediately surrounded them defy all description. They stood above him some distance in the air, but in such close proximity that

every feature of their countenances were seen. They were clothed in robes of exquisite whiteness, reaching to the ankles, and the arms were covered nearly to the lower parts of the wrists. The feet were also covered with a sort of shoe apparantly of the same kind of material as the garments.[9] The hair was of snowy whiteness and worne more after the early oriental style. It is not said that the heads were covered therefore they will appear uncovered. The faces of both these Celestial Beings were adorned with full grown Beards, also, of pure white color. One very remarkable circumstance connected with these two personages was, that they were the exact likeness of each other and the express image of one another, so much in that they could not be distinguished the one from the other, excepting in one perticular only, and that was: this: the countenance of the one indicated that He was older than the other, as the countenance of a father is distinquished from that of a son and this impression was confirmed. When the older pointed with his finger to the other, saying "This is my beloved son hear him." These personages stood beside each other facing the supplicant. The Son being on the right hand of the Father, but elevated above him (Joseph) with their heads bowed sufficiently forward to enable the Boy to behold their countenances in full. and both were <u>without wings.</u>[10]

It is desirable as far as possible to human skill and the inspiration of art to do it, that the <u>bearing</u> and characteristics of these two Personages be so pronounced as to awaken reverence in the minds of observers such as we could conceive it to be propper to sence, of the presence of omnipotence, concealed by the radiance of infinite condescension and love. Of course it is understood that such perfection of <u>design</u> and <u>execution</u> is expected only within the limits of artistic knowledge and mechanical possibilities. You will fill out the picture with so much foliage as will become the space allowed you, bearing in mind that it is to be the foliage of early spring in the state of New York upwards of 70 years ago. I enclose you a <u>tracing</u> of a sketch of the opening where this picture is to go. I trust that I have clothed the conceptions of this heavenly vision in such language as will enable your artists to grasp the Scope of the subject. If you discover any defects in the description here given, you will kindly make such corrections as are necessary to make the picture in glass as perfect a piece of work as can be done. We will be pleased to get a sketch of this design at your earliest convenience. With this sketch please send an approximate cost of such a piece of work.

Also please return the sketches you have as there are other parties who wish to see them, as they intend donating some of this kind of work to embellish our Temple.

Respectfully
Jos. D. C. Young Architect
per G. G. Bywater
Supt Machinery
Temple Block[11]

This letter is very precise about contextual and narrative details. Young mentions the age of the forest, the season, and the state in which the vision occurred. He carefully describes the faces, beards, hair color, and costume of the Deities. He specifies Joseph Smith's age and the type of clothing he might have been wearing. Young clearly describes the sequence of events and the physical position of each of the figures in the narrative.

Tiffany's completed window was placed in the most sacred part of the Salt Lake Temple. The window's placement expresses the centrality of Joseph Smith's youthful theophany to the foundational history and faith of the Latter-day Saints.

Depicting Glory and Immanence

Some artistic renditions of these early sacred visions of the Latter-day Saints have been more successful than others. The artistic challenge revolves around visually expressing the sublime exaltation as well as the close presence of Deity. Because written descriptions of the visions and of their significance in the development of LDS doctrine preceded any visual representations by many years, many of the details of the visual expression are predetermined.[12] A tight narrative has a tendency to produce a tight naturalistic image. Little artistic license exists to generate further symbolism that communicates the power of the Almighty. Art styles come and go (see pp. 40, 54, and 80), but Young's letter makes it comprehensible why LDS art dealing with sacred epiphanies remains mostly narrative. The context of these LDS epiphanies is historical. Narrative art is the traditional vehicle of history. That is not to say that simplification of style and visual elements is not possible. Most LDS folk art of this subject does just that. But it does mean that all the key elements must be depicted. A good example of this constraint is the First Vision batik by Pranoto reproduced on the back cover. The artist has depicted the Father, the Son, and young Joseph. But the Sacred Grove has been reduced to one flamelike bit of foliage, which is there because the setting for the vision was a grove of trees.

In LDS theology, light is the most consistent symbol of the glory of God (see fig. 3). Nowhere is this symbolism better articulated

Fig. 3. *The First Vision,* by Paul Forster (1925–). Acrylic on panel, 14½" x 14½", 1980. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

This is the only painting of the First Vision that I am aware of that depicts the departure of the evil spirit upon the arrival of the Father and the Son. The faces of God the Father and Christ are heavily stylized. The artist uses light and dark to communicate good and evil. He contrasts the brightness of the defined physical forms of the Father and the Son with the ambiguity and darkness of the cloud-like form representing the evil spirit. This contrast emphasizes the LDS theological idea that corporeality is ultimately positive.

than in section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The omnipresence and revelatory aspect of Christ are expressed as light, "that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ" (D&C 88:6–7). Light expresses power, life, and sacred law—all these things emanate from God through the medium of light:

> Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:12–13)

The first thing that Joseph Smith described about the appearance of the Father and the Son was the quality of the light that surrounds them. Light has been a consistent aspect in the descriptions of all early Mormon visions. Because creating and communicating with light is the essence of stained glass, among the most successful depictions of the First Vision, in my opinion, are those done in this medium. It is illuminating (literally) that the first major art commission of the First Vision by the Church was the Tiffany stained-glass window. The First Vision windows in the chapels of the Salt Lake Seventeenth Ward, the Salt Lake Second Ward (see front cover), and the Brigham City Third Ward (see plate 2); continue this tradition (see also p. 6). Stained-glass windows depicting the First Vision seem to me a perfect wedding of sacred history, theology, and artistic medium. There is a gentle, poetic consistency in using real light filtered through the medium of colored glass to try to communicate the glorious and loving radiance of Deity.

Communicating the majesty of God through art has sometimes also been achieved with sculpture. One of the more successful examples used by the Church is a replica of the *Christus* (see fig. 4)—a sculpture by the great neoclassical Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768–1844), who was not LDS.[13] The *Christus* is not a sentimental Christ. This is the commanding, triumphal Christ of the Resurrection. The muscular, outstretched arms and the strong masculinity of the figure give the sculpture power. The neoclassical style slightly simplifies the form, in an effort to make the image timeless and heroic. This piece speaks of Christ's power and majesty.

Fig. 4. *Christus,* by Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768–1844). Carrara marble, 11'1" high, ca. 1965, replica of 1821 original, 3.36 m. Located in the North Visitors' Center, Temple Square, Salt Lake City. The placement and size of this statue lead the viewer to contemplate Christ's role in the world and the universe. This experiential context plus the muscular masculinity of the figure impart a timeless, heroic power to the figure.

The Church has placed copies of this marble statue in many of its visitors' centers to communicate the centrality of Latter-day Saint belief in Christ. Some of the placements of the sculpture work better than do others. By far the most successful placement is in the rotunda of the North Visitors' Center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. This *Christus* powerfully communicates the exalted nature of the Savior for a number of reasons. The eleven-foot sculpture, set on a massive base at the top of a circular ramp and weighing several tons, is genuinely imposing. The medium is white Carrara marble. This lends a sense of quality and classical permanence to the image that substitute materials cannot match. The setting of the figure is crucial. The statue has been placed in a large, round room capped with a dome. The curved wall behind the figure and the dome

above are painted with the cosmos.[14] The height of the sculpture on its base forces the viewer to look upward. It is impossible to look up at the sculpture without also seeing the painting of the heavens. One wall of the room is glass looking out onto the manicured grounds of Temple Square. The painting and the outside view link the image of Christ with the world and the universe.

Another challenge facing an artist in creating a work of art depicting Deity is communicating immanence. Depicting the nearness and presence of God the Father or Jesus Christ is always very difficult. Each person has had different experiences with God and Christ and has different visions of them—not only as omnipotent Creator of the universe, but also as loving Father and as personal Savior. We somehow expect each work of art to express all our personal experiences and expectations at once. Ultimately the transcendence belongs to God, but the immanence comes from our own experience.

Rembrandt's depictions of Christ are, for me, some of the most successful at communicating immanence. He did this by means of light. He put the face of Christ, especially the eyes and corners of the mouth, in shadow. Since these are the most illuminating features in a portrait, obscuring them causes the viewer to fill the features in, subconsciously expressing his or her personal feelings about the Lord. This is one reason why Rembrandt's portraits of Christ seem so psychologically and spiritually penetrating—he allows the viewer to be part of the creation, to see his or her own relationship with the Savior.

Many LDS paintings depict the Savior. A painting familiar to many Latter-day Saints is *The Lord Jesus Christ* by Del Parson (b. 1948). Prints of this painting are regularly seen in Church offices and in Mormon homes. The painting is a very straight illustration that attempts to tread a middle ground between exalted glory and immanence. The image of Christ is parallel to the picture plane. He is definitely masculine. Both these elements give some visual strength. The close-up image of Christ (he is depicted from the chest up) creates some physical intimacy, but the tight handling of the face leaves little latitude for personal involvement by the viewer in the creation of the painting. Parson's painting illustrates some of the artistic challenges in attempting to create tight portrait-type images of the Lord.

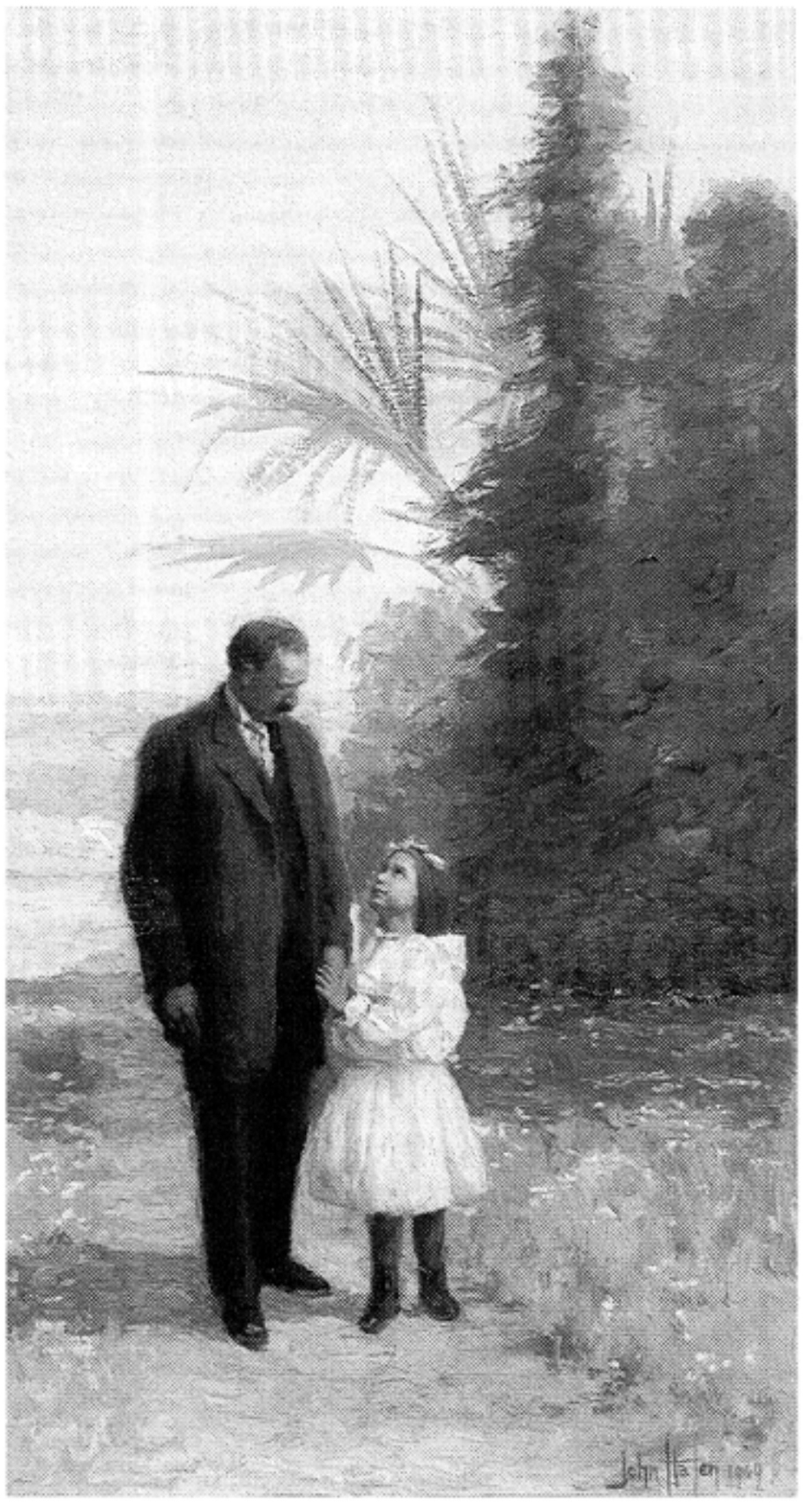

Fig. 5. *In Thy Holy Habitation, Did My Spirit Once Reside; in My First Primeval Childhood, Was I Nurtured near Thy Side?* by John Hafen (1856–1910). Oil on paper, site size 19⅛" x 10¾", 1909. Courtesy Museum of Art, Brigham Young University. Hafen symbolically represents the nearness and love of God by depicting a grandfather looking down at his little granddaughter and holding her hand.

A work of art by Latter-day Saint artist John Hafen (1856–1910) expresses a spiritual immanence that strikes me as very compelling. It has seldom been seen publicly, and I doubt that many Latter-day Saints know of its existence. It is part of a series of paintings Hafen created to illustrate what is perhaps Mormonism's best loved theological hymn, "O My Father."[15] This painting (see fig. 5) depicts our Father in Heaven as a kind and loving father, dressed in a black Edwardian suit and lovingly leading a child. This is not a painting about physical appearances. No Mormon that I have ever talked to believes that God walks around heaven wearing a black suit. Rather, this is a symbolic painting about how a real relationship with our loving Father feels. The work by Hafen expresses the warmth, comfort, protection, and intimacy that comes from narrowing the distance between man and God.

More recently, artists schooled in non-European traditions have also created a collection of LDS epiphanic art, some of which springs from traditional folk art (see plate 3, and back cover). Using traditional folk mediums, techniques, and styles, artists have maintained the integrity of the narrative of the vision but have sometimes modified landscape and costume to express their own native traditions, narrowing the distance between the historical experience and their own lives and culture (1 Ne. 19:23).

Angelic Visits and the Depiction of Angels

The second painting in C.C.A. Christensen's *Mormon Panorama* (see plate 4) depicts the young Joseph Smith receiving from the angel Moroni the gold plates from which he later translated the Book of Mormon. This vision occurred in 1827 and was one of a number of visitations by Moroni to the young prophet. While Christensen's artistic depiction of the angel Moroni is rather primitive, it radiates mature masculine power. Moroni is shown as a grandfatherly figure with white hair and a full white beard, not as an angelic child.[16] Sanctification is communicated by brilliant, unstylized light radiating from Moroni, who is standing in the air. This approach in depicting the appearance of Moroni to Joseph became the norm for portraying angels in Mormon art.

Christensen's painting is a major departure from the conventions governing the depiction of angels in European art. Over the centuries, the European tradition had developed some fairly consistent iconography for angels. They usually had wings. They almost always had halos. They sometimes wore white robes. But they were invariably young and rather androgynous. This angelic androgyny is quite consistent. I am unaware of any Christian visual images of angels with beards outside of the Latter-day Saint art tradition. Neither do mature male and female faces and bodies seem to be part of angelic iconography in the European art tradition.

The tradition of angelic androgyny in European art becomes apparent in depictions of Gabriel's appearance to Mary at the Annunciation. Gabriel is clearly identified as an adult male in the scriptures.[17] Yet the depictions of Gabriel in European art are not very masculine (see fig. 6 and 7). The Gabriel figures are very slender, without broad shoulders or beards. If the artist's intention is to depict a male figure, its age appears to be about fourteen or fifteen. If the figure is a female, it is prepubescent. The hair styles of these European angels tend to be more feminine. The faces appear feminine. An androgynous image for "the man Gabriel" (Dan. 9:21) seems rather consistent in the European tradition of depicting angels.[18] Obviously, the separation of the spiritual from the physical had consequences for the perception of gender. The physical came to be seen as unworthy and "fallen" despite the centrality of

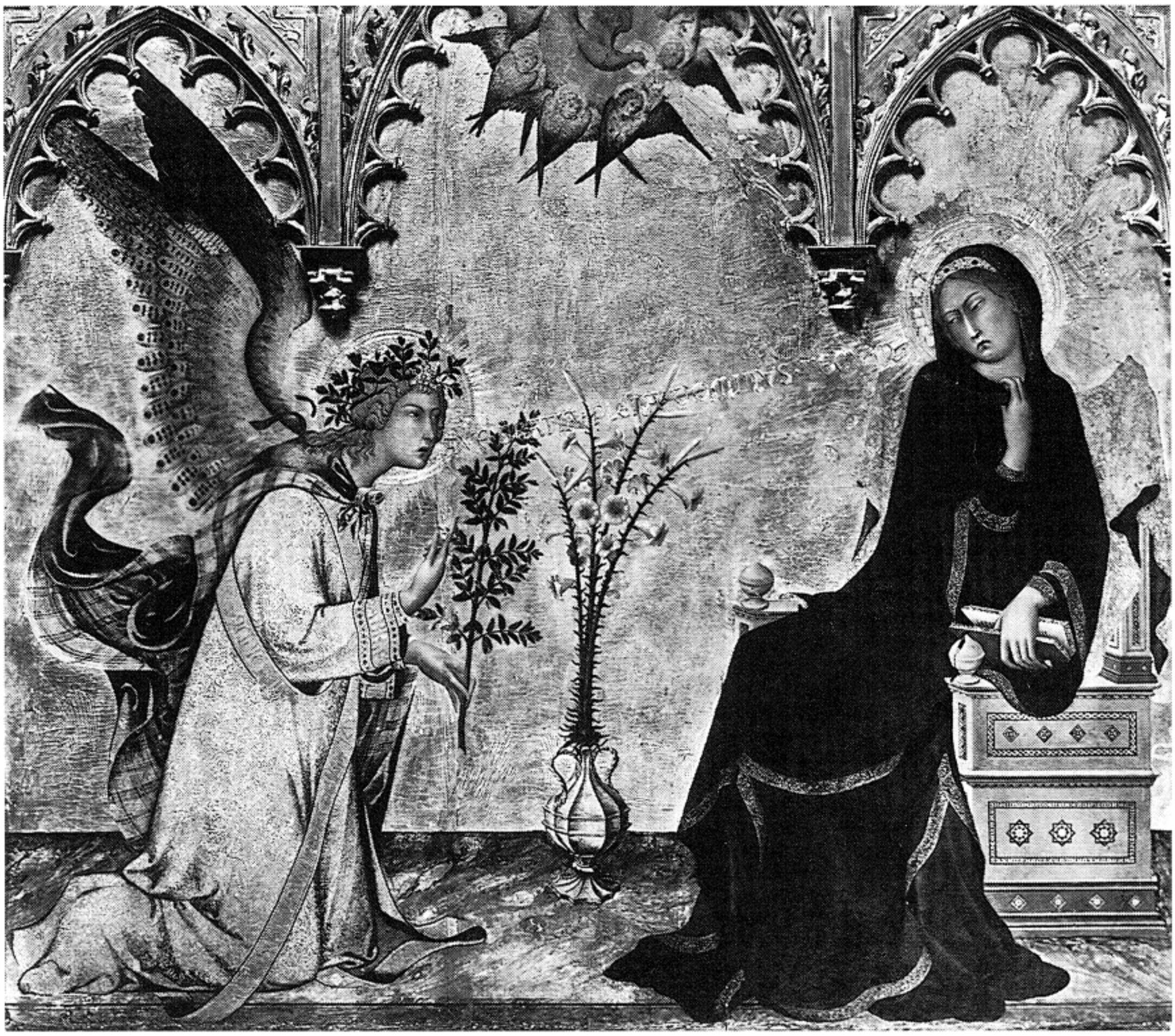

Fig. 6. *The Annunciation,* by Simone Martini (active from 1315–1344). Panel, 10' x 8'9", 1333. Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy. Courtesy Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

The angel Gabriel holds an olive branch, the symbol of peace. Lilies symbolize Mary's purity. The beardless angel has long, curly hair and a feminine face in contrast to other paintings by this artist (for example the *Way to Calvary,* c. 1340), where men are depicted with beards and short hair. This late medieval Italian work was originally created as an altarpiece for the Sienna Cathedral. It is one of the finest examples of fourteenth-century Italian art.

Fig. 7. *The Annunciation,* Jan van Eyck (active from 1422–1441). Panel transferred to oil on canvas, 36½" x 14 7/16", 1434/36. Andrew W. Mellon Collection, ©Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The young angel is dressed in robes advertising the cloth weavers of Flanders. The immanence of the event for the original viewers is enhanced by setting the scene in the local cathedral. The femininity of the angel is in marked contrast to some of the male figures on the Ghent Altarpiece done by Jan and his brother.

the physical resurrection of Christ to Christian faith. This theological shift yields depictions in European art of the angel Gabriel that are quite different from the Gabriel described in holy writ.[19]

The LDS depiction of Gabriel is quite different from the European tradition (see plate 5). The Mormon Gabriel follows the biblical description quite literally (Dan. 9:21). He is a male angel. His masculinity and maturity are communicated with the white hair and beard. A monumental painting of the Annunciation hangs in the North Visitors' Center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. While not painted by a Latter-day Saint artist, it was directly commissioned and approved by Church leaders. Gabriel is a broad-shouldered, wingless, bearded angel in a glowing white robe. This painting of an angel is clearly within the LDS painting tradition begun by C.C.A. Christensen almost a hundred years before.

In LDS art, angels look very corporeal. They appear to have real bodies. They do not have wings. They often glow with light—a frequent and literal expression of the heavenly presence. This light has not been symbolically reduced to a halo resembling a small round metallic hoop.

Portrayed epiphanies are geographically anchored in specific locations. For example, in Christensen's painting of Moroni delivering the gold plates to Joseph Smith, it is clear that this event took place on a hill. The hill is almost reduced to a visual symbol in its simplicity. Specific location is important because Moroni had placed the gold plates in a box which he had buried in the Hill Cumorah. Since the narrative of the event had a specific geographical context, Christensen felt obliged to depict it. "Where" mattered as well as "who" and "what" because this was a historical event, not a dream, a metaphor, or a feeling.

Most LDS art about angels focuses on the angelic visitations of the early years of this dispensation. These visits include those of Moroni (see plates 6 and 7), who revealed the record of the Book of Mormon, and John the Baptist, who appeared as a resurrected being to restore the Aaronic Priesthood. Likewise Peter, James, and John returned to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood (see plates 8 and 9; see also pp. 162, 169, 174, and 187). Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared as angels to bring back respectively the keys of the gathering of Israel, the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, and the

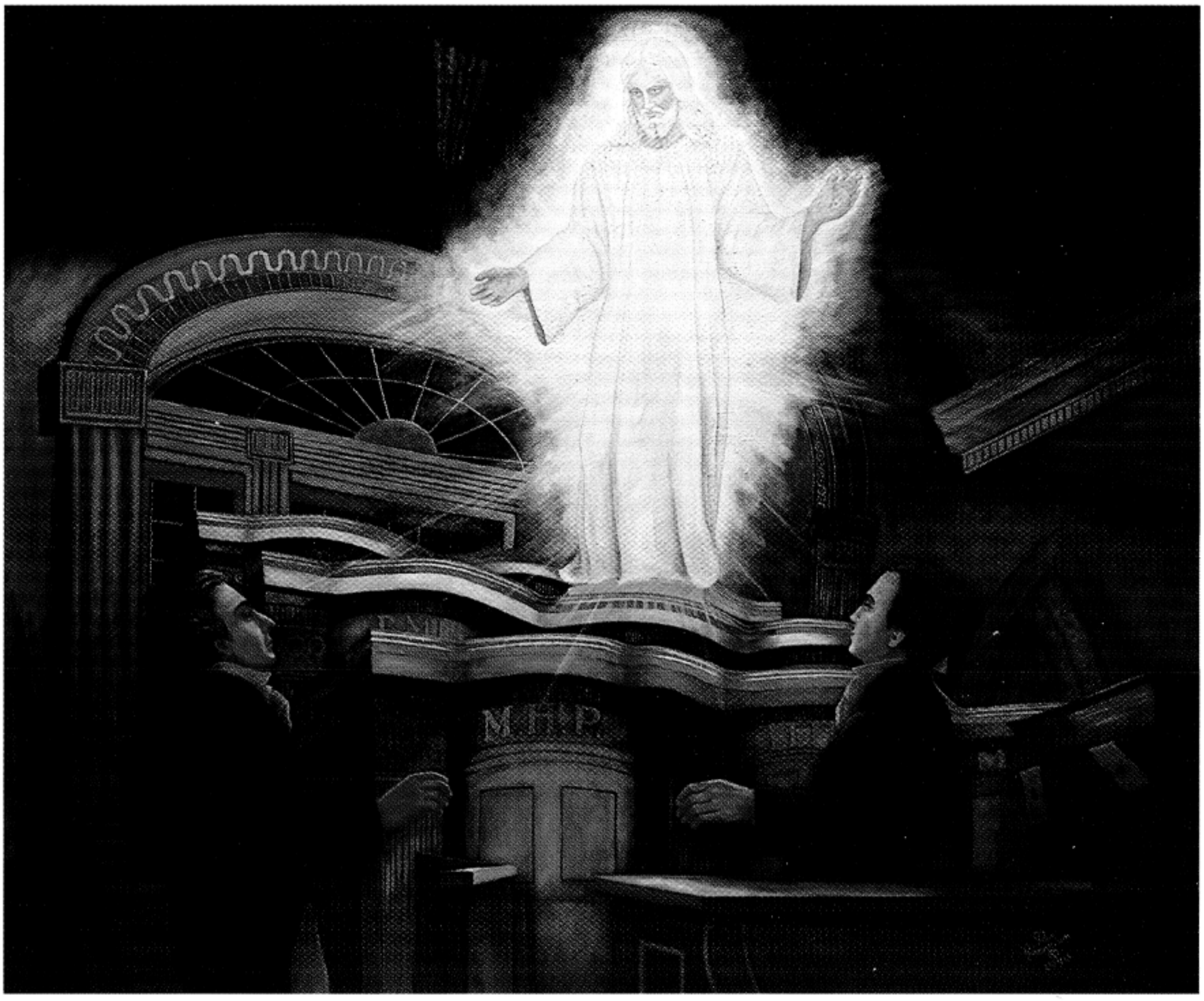

Plate 1. *Christ's Appearance in the Kirtland Temple,* by Reid Parkinson (1914–). Oil on canvas, 4'5" x 3'10", 1990. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

During the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the Savior appeared, standing on the breastwork of the pulpits. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery witnessed this theophany. Joseph described the location of the Lord thus: "We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber" (D&C 110:2).

Plate 2. *The First Vision,* by Henry F. Kimball, J. Fred Brown, and Bennett Paint and Glass Company. Leaded stained glass, approximately 12' x 8', ca. 1911. Located in the Brigham City Third Ward Chapel, 200 North 210 West, Brigham City, Utah. Photograph courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

Billowing clouds enhance the sense of light in this window. The scene is almost entirely hand painted and fired rather than being fashioned of individual pieces of colored glass.

Plate 3. *The First Vision,* by Joni Susanto (1961–). Batik, 28½" x 36", 1990. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

The artist, like more than half of all Latter-day Saints, lives outside the United States of America. A branch president in Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia, Susanto learned the art of batik from his father-in-law, Hadi Pranoto. Indonesian art embellishes that which is most important in a work of art. That is why the figures in the scene have such elaborate surface patterns. Also, like most non-Western artists from around the world, Susanto stresses continuity and community roots. Thus this piece is similar to a painting of the same subject by Ted Henninger.

Plate 4. *The Hill Cumorah,* by C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912). Tempera on canvas, 6'6" x 9'9", 1878. © Courtesy Museum of Art, Brigham Young University. Diminution of the figures increases the setting's dramatic impact. The steep wooded slope makes this epiphany location specific.

Plate 5. *The Annunciation,* by John Scott. Oil on canvas, 7' x 11', 1975. Located in the North Visitors' Center, Temple Square, Salt Lake City, Utah. Note that Gabriel and Mary are both mature adults.

Plate 6. *Joseph Smith Receives the Golden Plates,* by Máximo Rezler (date unknown). Marquetry, 24" x 21¾", 1973. Gift of the artist to President Harold B. Lee. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

The artist is from Curitiba, Brazil. His family originally emigrated from Europe, where marquetry reached its highest levels of development in the eighteenth century. Marquetry is a technique that employs veneers of various woods to make patterns and pictures. The artist used ten different unstained Brazilian woods, primarily from the state of Paraná, to create this work of art reflecting his faith, culture, and nation.

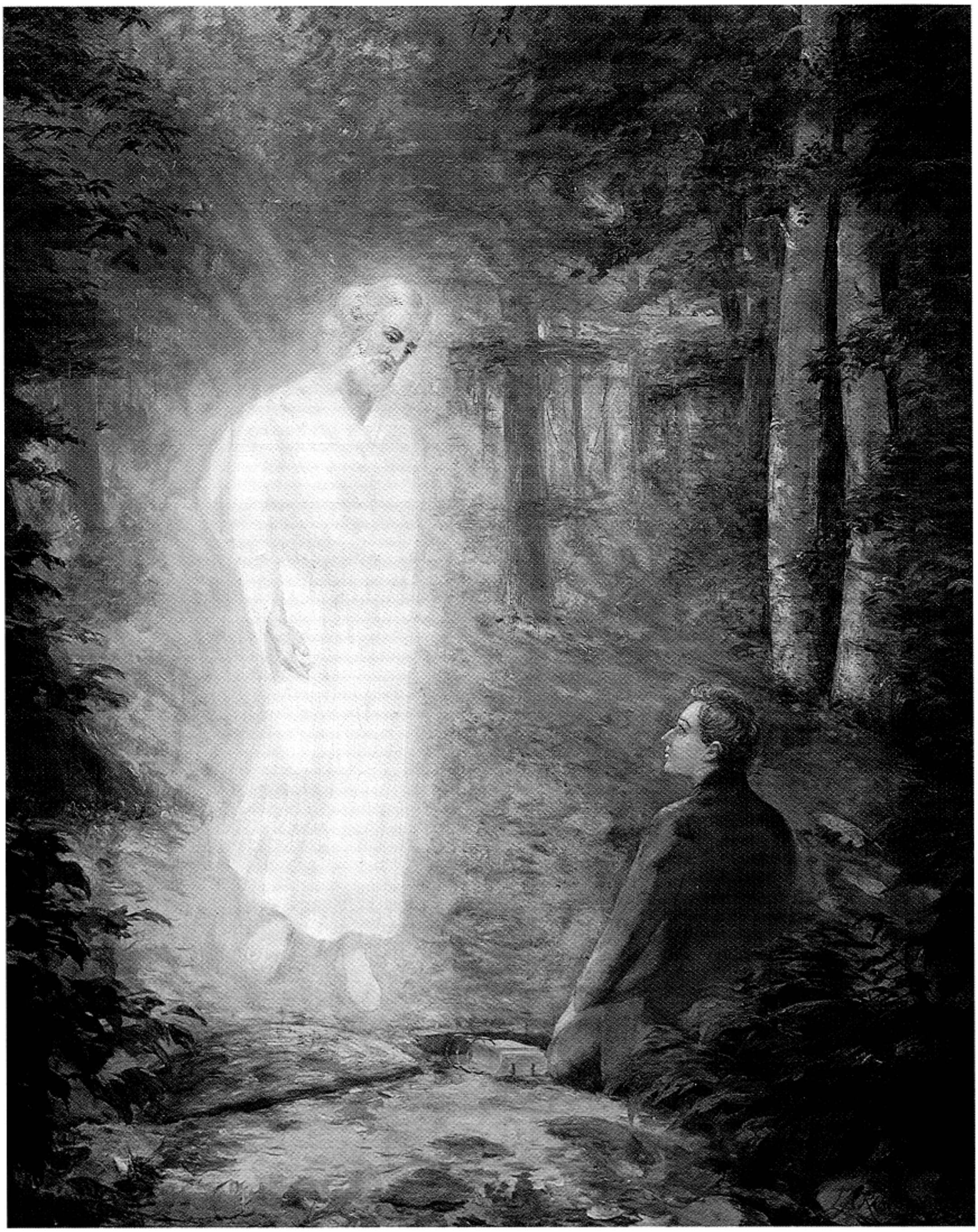

Plate 7. Detail from *Angel Moroni Delivers the Gold Plates to Joseph Smith on Hill Cumorah,* by Lewis Ramsey (1875–1941). Oil, 65" x 41", 1923. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

Joseph described Moroni as wearing a brilliant white robe and being surrounded by a brightness like the noonday sun. Impressionism, the essence of which is to capture the effects of light, allowed Ramsey to give the light surrounding and emanating from Moroni artistic form. By depicting Moroni and Joseph in the darkened woodland of the Hill Cumorah, Ramsey was able to show a brilliant light about the angel without overpowering the quiet contemplative nature of the scene.

Plate 8. *The Moment After,* by Trevor Southey (1940–). Bronze, 26¾" x 27⅓" x 27⅜", 1980. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

The artist has depicted the resurrected apostles Peter, James, and John the moment after they have ordained Joseph Smith to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Peter and James stand above the Prophet, their hands still outstretched from the ordination. John reaches down to touch Joseph assuringly, and their gazes meet. Oliver kneels, awaiting his turn to be ordained. The style, the composition, and Southey's expression of the immanence of the epiphany make this one of the great works of Latter-day Saint sculpture. It was commissioned by the Museum of Church History and Art.

Plate 9. *Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.* Made on the island of Carti Tupili, San Blas Islands, Panama. Mola, 16" x 13", 1983. Courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

Even though the Cuna Indians from the San Blas Islands of Panama, may seem far removed from Salt Lake City, the composition of this mola is similar to that of the other images of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood featured in this issue. Folk artists are very conservative. They tend to repeat forms and images from within their culture. Thus this mola shows the identification of the artist with the Church. Molas are textile panels that use reverse applique. The panels are made by Cuna women to decorate the fronts and backs of their blouses.

sealing powers to unite the human family. These angels returned to earth as heavenly messengers to restore specific religious knowledge and divine authority to act in the name of God.[20]

Each of the angels in these epiphanies had previously lived rich full lives as mortal men on earth. They returned to the earth as resurrected or translated beings to pass on specific religious authority that they held as the result of their earlier earthly commissions from the Lord. They had received their keys and authorities when they were adults. Hence these angelic visitors have always been portrayed as adult males. That is not to say that there are no female angels. It is to say that the central visions in early Mormon history have involved only male angels, and, as a result, male angels have dominated angelic depictions in LDS art. The most obvious way to depict mature maleness is with a full beard. This iconographical symbol springs easily from the historical experience.

There are some exceptions to the LDS depiction of a strong, masculine Moroni. A stained-glass window in the Salt Lake Temple depicts a beardless, long-haired Moroni dressed in robes resembling those in paintings of angels during the European Baroque period. This window was also done by Tiffany and Company in New York City. I have never found any specific instructions from the Church architect to Tiffany and Company like Young's letter of instructions for the *First Vision*. This might explain some of the window's lack of continuity with the LDS art tradition. Another departure is a painting by Minerva Teichert (see fig. 8). Teichert's angel looks as if it were modeled after Tiffany's angel. At least one other painting (*Moroni Appearing to Joseph Smith in His Bedroom* by Tom Lovell), commissioned by the Church but not done by an LDS painter, also depicts Moroni as beardless, but he is clearly a masculine figure.

Another iconographical element is costume. The visions have occurred to specific people at specific times. Since the earthly participants wore costumes appropriate to their age, location, and historical period, angels dressed in white robes were easily distinguishable. Nineteenth-century formal and work clothing did not look like the loose-fitting, white robes of the angels. Because the epiphanies were almost always depicted in a narrative context,

Fig. 8. *Moroni Delivers the Gold Plates to Joseph Smith,* by Minerva Teichert (1889–1976). Oil, 60" x 48", 1947. Located in the Randolph Utah Tabernacle. Photograph courtesy Museum of Church History and Art.

This is one of the rare depictions of a beardless Moroni in Latter-day Saint art. Teichert was possibly influenced by the Tiffany window of the same subject in the Salt Lake Temple. The artist was raised in Idaho, where she "proved up" on a homestead. She studied art in San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City. Minerva and her husband built a cattle ranch in Wyoming, but she continued painting each evening after the chores were done. Virtually all of her paintings celebrate the pioneers, the West, and her religious faith.

clothing styles flowed naturally into the art, reinforcing the narrative and the contrast between heaven and earth.[21]

Latter-day Saint theology narrows the distance between God and mortals.[22] Latter-day Saints acknowledge God as our Father and each of us as his children. They acknowledge the reality of visions in our time as well as the physicalness of God the Father and Jesus Christ and their angelic messengers. Art depicting modern-day contacts between heaven and earth is part of the visual expression of faith and proximity to the sacred that Latter-day Saints feel. These historical epiphanies of our time, not philosophical speculation, are the beginnings of Latter-day Saint understanding of heavenly beings. As a result, LDS portrayal of these heavenly beings stands in sharp contrast to much of the previous fifteen hundred years of Western religious art and has produced a new Christian-art tradition.

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NOTES

[1]Latter-day Saint theology does not pejoratively separate the physical from the spiritual. Joseph Smith taught that the soul is made up of the union of the spirit and the body (D&C 88:15–17). God has sent modern revelations regarding physical health (D&C 89). Latter-day Saints are commanded not to defile their bodies through adultery or fornication. The goal is to exalt the body through sanctification. Gender is not to be avoided, but is given divine purpose. Joseph taught that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also" (D&C 130:22). These teachings, combined with Joseph's visions, created a theological foundation for the sanctification of corporeality and gender. LDS works of art depicting epiphanies reflect this theology.

[2]Thomas Brown Holmes Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints: A Full and Complete History of the Mormons* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), facing page 1.

[3]Stenhouse also includes a small print entitled *Discovery of the Gold Plates* depicting Moroni delivering the gold plates to Joseph Smith. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints,* 19. The third epiphany print in Stenhouse is *The First Mormon Baptism,* showing Joseph Smith baptizing Oliver Cowdery in the Susquehanna River. In the background is a bearded John the Baptist in long white robes surrounded by a mandala of light. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints,* 29.

[4]Stenhouse, an English convert to Mormonism, had been involved in missionary work to the English and French people before emigrating to Utah. After he emigrated to the Salt Lake Valley, he became disillusioned and eventually

apostatized from the Church. He wrote *Rocky Mountain Saints* after his separation from the Church.

[5]Richard L. Jensen and Richard G. Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen, 1831-1912: Mormon Immigrant Artist* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984).

[6]These paintings are part of the collection of the Museum of Art, Brigham Young University.

[7]Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 18.

[8]Joseph Don Carlos Young, the son of Brigham Young, was the first formally trained architect in Utah. He succeeded Truman O. Angell as Church architect in 1887. Allen Kent Powell, ed., *Utah History Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 21.

[9]This detail was not followed by the Tiffany artists.

[10]Young's emphasis.

[11]Joseph Don Carlos Young, Letterpress Copybook, 1888–1893, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, published with permission.

[12]For example, thirty years before Stenhouse's book was published, Orson Pratt published *An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (New York: Joseph W. Harrison, 1842).

[13]Luise Sheridan, "Bertel Thorvaldsen: Creator of *Christus,*" *Improvement Era* 67 (April 1964): 272–75, 307. The original statue is in the Cathedral Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, Denmark. Thorvaldsen is one of Scandinavia's most prominent sculptors. In Copenhagen there is a museum devoted to his work. See also Florence S. Jacobsen, "Christus Statue," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:273–74.

[14]Painted by Sidney E. King, about 1965.

[15]The *"O My Father"* series of paintings is part of the collection of the Museum of Art, Brigham Young University. The entire series will be published in a forthcoming issue of *BYU Studies.*

[16] Jensen and Oman, *C. C. A. Christensen,* 92.

[17]In Daniel's vision, Gabriel is mentioned by name and referred to as "he" (Dan. 8:15–17). In Luke 1:26, "the angel Gabriel was sent from God" to Mary. In Luke 1:29, Mary says that when "she saw him, she was troubled at his saying."

[18]Many paintings of the Annunciation are among the greatest artistic masterpieces of Western Civilization. As such they are part of our collective artistic patrimony. But theologically these images are somewhat flawed. Perhaps this is part of the price paid for the Neoplatonist philosophical take-over of Christian theology that happened even before Constantine took organizational and political control of the Christian church.

[19]Philosophical and theological ideas that eventually took over the Christian church also carried over into the art depicting the Nativity. Mary is usually shown as a very young, almost prepubescent girl. Joseph is usually depicted as an elderly grandfather. Thus the historicity of the marriage could be acknowledged while insuring that there was never even a hint of the possibility of a later conjugal relationship between husband and wife. This iconographic depiction exists despite the clear listing of the brothers of Jesus in the New Testament. "Is not

this . . . the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3); "then came to him his mother and his brethren" (Luke 8:19); "he went down to Capernaum, he [Jesus], and his mother, and his brethren" (John 2:12).

[20]Oscar W. McConkie, "Angels," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 1:40–42.

[21]Other than the individual paintings mentioned earlier, the one major exception to the strongly male depiction of Moroni is the more contextually abstracted figure of the angel that adorns the spire of the Salt Lake Temple. The iconography of Angel Moroni statues on temples is a large enough topic for another paper.

[22]One of the more precise early LDS expressions of man's relationship to God is a discourse given by Joseph Smith at the funeral of King Follett, a man who was killed during a construction accident on the Nauvoo Temple. Joseph Smith, *The Prophet Joseph Smith's King Follett Discourse: A Six Column Comparison of Original Notes and Amalgamations with an Introduction and Commentary,* eds. Donald Q. Cannon and Larry E. Dahl (Provo, Utah: BYU Printing Service, 1983).