

Divine Designs: Tracing the Lord's "Pattern in All Things"

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Our lives are alive with patterns. Think about it: We are surrounded by patterns. In a sense we live our lives in discovering, identifying, tracing, or following patterns. We awaken in the morning to the sun's diurnal pattern; our bodies function and malfunction in patterns suggested by our patterned DNA. Our education consists of learning and testing patterns. Our sciences and mathematics are centered in formulaic patterns, as are our works of art, drama, music, dance, and literature. Our games, from hopscotch and Monopoly to football, are patterned play. And every year, as the pattern of the seasons moves from fall to winter, the BYU Cougars follow a well-worn pattern to the Western Athletic Conference championship—but not without the 10,000 prayers of the Saints who see a clear providential analogy, parallel, or pattern between the Cougars' gridiron triumphs and the triumphant progression of the restored Church.

The poet Wallace Stevens describes as the "blessed rage for order" our inborn human need for orderly, predictable, and stable patterns to offset disorder and uncertainty (Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West," *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, eds. Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair

[New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973], pp. 251–52). In fact, patterns order chaos, lessen our concerns with life's mutability, identify progress, promote social happiness, and clothe our lives with a larger sense of continuity and meaning. Patterns help us to promote and maintain our individual and group values. Indeed, wo, wo be unto those who attempt, willfully or inadvertently, to shortcut, skirt, or flout the vital patterns of our codes of law, our social or moral codes of conduct, or etiquette. Such will pay a penalty. Wo be unto the member of Congress who gets caught ignoring the patterns, to the student who audaciously marries two independent clauses with a comma, to the foolish husband who installs a new roll of toilet paper so it unrolls from behind instead of over; and wo be unto those pattern-shattering fast Sunday visitors who invade my ward six minutes early and capture, occupy, and hold my pew in the center section, back row, right aisle, seats 1 and 2. We are indeed pattern-centered and pattern-driven beings.

Richard H. Cracroft was a BYU professor of English when this devotional address was given on 10 December 1996.

I believe such an abundance of patterns reflects not only a divine ordering of existence but provides mortal pattern-seekers with yet another way in which the power of the Godhead can be present with us. I hope this morning to lift your vision beyond the multitude of mundane patterns that drive our dailinesses to more important spiritual patterns, which, though invisible, often become as surprising, clear, and instructive to the pattern-discerner as was the outstretched finger of the Lord to the brother of Jared. I invite you to become for a few minutes a spiritual pattern-tracer of a few of the many divine patterns that can become Liahonas in helping us to define our mortal errand, remind us of our place in the Lord's plan, and enable us to walk through mortality with increased confidence, a clearer sense of purpose, and with deepening faith in the designs of our Heavenly Father.

Patterns

A pattern is a model, form, format, template, example, overlay, or paradigm of an object, process, or behavior or of acts or character traits that we deem deserving of imitation and that are arranged so as to enable you or me to follow, reproduce, imitate, replicate, trace, copy, or repeat the qualities or the spiritual characteristics of the original or prototype in a way that remains unchanged and unchanging.

Divine patterns, then, are the processes, fundamental laws, principles, and truths that the Lord seems to follow in ordering and organizing his heavenly and earthly realms. In revealing these divine patterns to his mortal children, the Lord reveals his patterns of truth and righteousness, which, if identified, understood, followed, traced, copied, or imitated, will give us additional motivation to cleanse our souls of earth-stain, crack through accumulated earth crust, and retrace the patterns to our heavenly home. The Lord showed the Prophet Joseph Smith, in June 1831, the importance he attaches to divine patterns. After

revealing his pattern in a few things, he says, "I will give unto you a pattern in all things [in *all* things], that ye may not be deceived" (D&C 52:14).

As part of his grand design, you and I are taking our turns on earth. We come to these parentheses in eternity shorn of everything but our customized spiritual DNA, preset to assist us in transforming the human compromise we have become into the men and women of God we formerly were and will yet be. That spirit body within is intuitively analogical; that is, it helps us see similarities or analogies between things around us here on earth and things of the spiritual world—it helps us, in other words, to trace the divine "pattern in all things." The search for divine patterns is grounded in the key pattern, which I will call the All Things Are Spiritual Pattern, for the Lord told the Prophet Joseph, "All things unto me are spiritual" (D&C 29:34). And that same Lord, speaking to Moses as Jehovah, explains not only that "all things . . . are spiritual," but reveals that "all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me . . . ; things . . . above and beneath: all things bear record of me" (Moses 6:63). This world becomes, for the spiritual man and woman, a kind of Urim and Thummim that enables those who allow themselves to be schooled by the Holy Ghost to look at the earth and its inhabitants through spiritual spectacles. Gradually we begin to discern divine patterns everywhere, especially in the holy scriptures—God's great pattern book—and in the words of his contemporary prophets, seers, and revelators—his divine Butterick, Vogue, or McCall's compendium of patterns. It is for us to trace, cut, and test those patterns in the fabric of our own mortal experiences.

The Plan of Salvation: Journey Pattern

Although each of you has had similar experiences with divine patterns, let me share with

you the continuing impact of such a divine pattern on my life. When I was fourteen, I stumbled, one long Sunday afternoon, into my own sacred grove, a mysterious book called the Pearl of Great Price. Intrigued by the delicious promise of the book with its strange hieroglyphs, and able to attach its teaching to the frame I had read not long before in Nephi Anderson's early Mormon novel *Added Upon*, I read all afternoon, engrossed by an illuminating glimpse into the plan of salvation and redemption of humankind as told by the metaphor or pattern of a journey from eternity to eternity. Since that long-ago afternoon, my glimpse has expanded and deepened into a pattern in which I see myself trekking the plains of mortality as a heaven-directed pioneer or as a mariner on a heaven-bound voyage. I'm 61 years out, with a great mate and a fine crew; the sea is often rough, but I'm confident of the charts, certain of the polestar, sure of the location of our home port, and looking forward to seeing an increasing number of my fellow earth-farers who have already reached port.

Last July, as my wife and I visited in Ravensburg, Germany, with a long-on-the-verge-of-baptism friend, I began once more to sketch out for him this Journey Pattern of the plan of salvation. His wife laughed and brought him an envelope containing the felt cutouts we use so often in teaching the plan. She said, "It's this plan that so attracts him to Mormonism; he uses these figures to teach it to all our friends."

Clearly moved, our dryland Mormon friend looked us directly in the eyes and said, "Dieser Plan ist fantastisch!"

I warned him that such faith in the plan would soon bring him into the waters of baptism; and it will. The plan, made so vivid and meaningful when depicted as a Journey Pattern, is simply *fantastisch!*

The Plan of Salvation as a Journey Pattern

HOME

Preparation

Call to Mortality

Veil

Initiation

Experience

Adversity/Trials

Belly of the Whale

Humility

Obedience

Sacrifice

Spiritual Refinement

Increasing Confidence

Accomplishment

Enlightenment

Continuing Trials, Final Tests

Enduring to the End

Veil

HOME

Journey Mentor: Holy Ghost

Reared in a heavenly home by the noblest of parents, we are called to leave our safe place and undertake a potentially dangerous mission to earth, where we will be tried and tested in the school of life to see if we can be, as Brigham Young put it, "righteous in the dark" (Brigham Young's secretary's journal, 28 January 1857 [LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City]). Our spirits confined in a mortal body, the veil drawn across our memories of our earlier life, we are humbled and must place total trust in earthly parents. We undergo growth and development amidst hard-won experience, pain, adversity, and, occasionally, pleasure. We learn, test, and try principles and patterns. We plunge into the belly of the whale, from which most of us emerge only because of a helping hand from the Holy Ghost and from fellow travelers acting in his stead. As we heed the promptings of this divine mentor, we achieve a degree of faith as well as spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. In time, as seasoned

pattern readers and veterans of the journey, we reach a mortal maturity and enjoy a spiritual wisdom commensurate to our effort and to our response to the Holy Spirit. Our vision clearing, though still circumscribed, we become confident in our patterns. Then finals begin—the concluding mortal tests that may involve failing health and most certainly the grand test of enduring to the end. Withstanding the trials and overcoming the flesh, we turn at last into safe port, where we are welcomed as accomplished veterans who have been proven in a journey that has been customized to our capacities. At that reunion, the Lord himself will be the “keeper of the gate,” for “he employeth no servant there” (2 Nephi 9:41). We hope to hear the greeting “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21)—but for me it will suffice if he simply says “*fantastisch!*”

The Awake and Arise Pattern

Just as seeing the pattern of the journey makes the far-reaching plan of salvation very clear and personal for you and me, so the Awake and Arise Pattern shows how God reaches out of eternity to call his prophets to the ministry. Note how this Awake and Arise Pattern, seen so clearly in the life of Joseph Smith, Jr., is wonderfully like the initiating call to the ministry traced out by Jesus of Nazareth some 1900 years earlier, although in a desert instead of a grove.

Awake and Arise Pattern
 His Soul Hungered
 Brokenhearted and Contrite
 “Enter into Thy Closet”
 Prayer of Faith
 Enter Satan
 The Belly of the Whale
 The Cry for Help
 Release from the Dark Powers
 The Theophany
 The Call

In tracing this pattern note how Joseph’s experience may parallel your own experiences and those of the prophets:

1. His soul hungered: Joseph, confused, seeks light and knowledge from the Lord.
 2. Brokenhearted and contrite, he humbly acknowledges his dependency on God and turns to the Holy Bible, where he finds another pattern: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5).
 3. Commanded to “enter into thy closet” (Matthew 6:6), Joseph seeks a solitary place where he can pray.
 4. In the grove he pours out a prayer of faith to his God.
 5. Enter Satan, to tempt and to try: “I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me.”
 6. He is plunged into the belly of the whale and seized by the blackness of the darkness: “It seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.”
 7. Then, from the darkness comes the cry for help and his surrender to the Lord. “Exerting all [his] powers to call upon God to deliver [him],” Joseph reminds us of Alma the Younger’s similar cry from a similar abyss: “Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me” (Alma 36:18).
 8. Then comes the release from the dark powers: “I found myself delivered from the enemy.”
 9. Next is the theophany, the appearance of the Father and the Son, “whose brightness and glory defy all description.” The Son is introduced, according to pattern, with the echoing and familiar words: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” Then comes the call, and with it the flood of light and pure knowledge that will change his life—and ours—forever.
 10. The boy, awakened from his mortal stupor, arises from his knees a man of God. He leaves the shelter of the grove to face the world and begin his ministry. (See JS—H 1:8–20.)
- Hold on, folks! There is more. This Awake and Arise Pattern is a revelator rich with

meaning. Not only does the pattern hold true for the call to prophethood of Jesus of Nazareth and Joseph Smith, but the pattern is almost exactly replicated in the callings of Enoch, the brother of Jared, Abraham, Moses, Enos, Alma the Younger, and Paul. And when we overlay the pattern on what details we can glean about the callings of Adam, Noah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Samuel, Malachi, Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Peter, James, John, and Wilford Woodruff, to name a few, it seems safe to assume they were likewise so called by the Lord to their respective ministries. And, given the responsibility of prophets and apostles to bear *personal* witness of the Lord, I believe we can assume that the prophets, seers, and revelators of all dispensations, including our present apostles and prophets, have traced the Awake and Arise Pattern in their lives.

There is yet another level to this pattern: Look in the mirror and you will realize that you and I and every soul born again to become a witness for Jesus Christ and the restoration of the gospel has been ministered to in our own sacred groves by the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead. Awakening and arising to our own calls to serve, we trace the pattern to find the results much as Alma described them some 75 years before Christ's birth: "Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God[,] . . . their souls . . . illuminated by the light of the everlasting word" (Alma 5:7).

My colleague, Professor Bruce W. Jorgensen, captures in a moving folk ballad called "The Light Come Down" my own joy in the divine order and continuity of the Awake and Arise Pattern as it occurred in Joseph Smith's experience and as it has recurred across the millennia:

*Just a dusty country boy
Praying in the trees,
Knocked out flat and speechless,
Again up on his knees
And the light come down,
Lord, the light come down.*

*Sharper than suns he sweated in,
It slapped that April mud,
It withered the one that threatened him
And stunned him where he stood.
Yes, the light come down,
Lord, it did come down.*

*And he was just fourteen,
Mixed up, and read your book
And took you at your word
and asked—and Lord,
You let the light come down,
O Lord, a comin down.*

*Old Adam had a farmer's son
And Abraham did too—
All made of mud but you made em good
And brought em home to you,
For the light come down,
It always did come down.*

*So Lord look down on country boys
That stink and puzzle and pray,
And strike the light to blind their sight
And make their night your day.
O let the light come down,
Yes, bring the light on down.*

*And bless you, Lord, for country boys,
Each hungry mother's son
Treading the furrow his father plowed
Just like your single son
When you and him come down,
When you the light come down.*

[Bruce W. Jorgensen, "The Light Come Down," in *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*, eds. Eugene England and Dennis Clark (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), pp. 260–61]

An Evening at the Luzern Opera

With you, I have observed the Awake and Arise Pattern followed in the birthing process of those being born again. In fact, most of us have experienced this patterned process ourselves. The mission field is the great delivery room for

the souls of men and women, and the mission field is all around us. When we are able to bring the pattern of our own gifts of the Spirit to the assistance of someone tracing the Born-Again or Awake and Arise Pattern, the convergence is memorable. I participated in such a divinely engineered convergence in the early spring of 1988 at the Luzern Opera House in Switzerland.

The office staff of the Switzerland Zürich Mission had taken the evening off to enjoy a performance of Verdi's *Rigoletto*. We were the guests of LDS baritone Brian Montgomery, who would be singing the role of Rigoletto.

Following the first act, the manager of the theater made his way to our little group chatting in the foyer. Looking at my name tag, he asked if I were the "Herr Präsident of the Mormon Church."

Bemused at my sudden elevation, I affirmed that I was indeed the "Herr Präsident of the Mormon Church's Swiss Mission."

He explained that Herr Montgomery had requested our services and then asked with some urgency that I accompany him, which I did, taking my assistants, Elders Steven McGhie and Scott Smith, with me. As we made our way backstage to the women's dressing room, he explained that Miss Marina Jajic, the soprano playing the role of Gilda, had become seriously ill and would be unable to continue her performance. He had been about to call the house physician but was prevented by "Herr Montgomery, of your faith," he explained, "who insists that the Präsident of the Mormon Church say a prayer over Miss Jajic and make her well—so, if you would be so kind . . ."

Suddenly apprehensive, we followed him into a corner of the dressing room where Miss Jajic—an attractive, heavily made-up, and deathly pale young woman—sat slumped in a corner chair looking like a Gilda who had already fallen victim to the assassin's dagger. I introduced ourselves to her and learned from her labored and whispered responses in broken German that she was from Yugoslavia, spoke

little German but more English, believed in Jesus Christ, and, yes, she knew he could heal her. She slumped back against the chair, and Elder McGhie anointed her head with oil from a key-chain vial.

It was a scenario at once strange yet familiar. Here, in a woman's dressing room in a Swiss opera house, an American LDS mission president from Provo, together with two Mormon elders from Alpine, Utah, and Bettendorf, Iowa, were unexpectedly retracing the Lord's pattern of the laying on of hands to administer to the sick in behalf of a deathly ill Roman Catholic soprano from Yugoslavia who desperately needed to be made well on this important evening of her musical career.

We laid on hands, anointed, and then sealed the anointing according to the ancient pattern, which I had traced several hundred times before. I had come to know my gift and what I might expect. I brought to that moment a confidence in a long-established pattern of blessing the Saints. As I began the sealing portion of the ordinance, I was unsettled by the distracting hubbub of the busy dressing room, for I feared that the Spirit would not come with the power I had been pleading for in the last few minutes. Suddenly someone turned off the hubbub switch, and I felt, moving through my hands and up my arms, a tingling faith flowing from this woman. Simultaneously I felt the old, familiar "Go": the thrill up the spine, the electric flash across the forehead, the chill across my shoulder blades—signs I had known well and often. I knew my role; I stepped back and let the Spirit take command. From some recess in my soul the words welled up to give utterance and translation into English of those clear but ineffable impressions affirmed by the Holy Ghost in behalf of this lovely, talented, and deathly ill woman, who looked like one who ought to be on the way to the hospital and not into the rigors of act 2. Then I heard myself say, "It is the will of God, Marina, that you be healed, at once! Be healed!" And then: "You

will begin to regain strength immediately; you will experience an amazing recovery; and you will not only continue your performance this evening, but you will sing and act magnificently." Then, the words of healing pronounced, I suddenly saw on my internal video the implications of this evening; I saw that all that had happened, including our presence at that theater on that night, was also part of the Awake and Arise Pattern that, unbeknown to Marina, she was even now beginning to trace. The mission president reasserted himself, and I editorialized: "As you reflect later on the miracle of this evening, you will understand that this blessing comes by way of the power of God through his Son, Jesus Christ, whose representatives we are. And you will desire to learn about Christ's purposes for you in mortality and will seek out his Church, which has been restored to earth for the purpose of blessing you and all mankind."

I concluded the administration. Then someone turned the switch and the hubbub, which apparently had never stopped, flowed about us once again. Marina did not take up her bed and walk. Instead, she mumbled her thanks, her eyes still partially closed, her face pallid. As we turned away, the hand-wringing manager asked if I would be offended if he allowed the house doctor to treat her. "No, of course not," I replied, but to myself I thought, still in tune with the Spirit and confident in the well-tried pattern, "She won't need him; she's going to recover—now."

Then, like Peter, my stroll across the water was threatened by the storms of reality, and my spirit collided with my soul. I nearly staggered with the realization of what I—or somebody—had just promised. And the raised eyebrows of my two assistants said, "President, you just promised this woman that she will sing act 2. What have you done?"

As we left the dressing room, I said to them, "Elders, I said only what the Lord told me to say; let's pray he'll make it happen."

We made our way back to our seats, reassured the others in our party, and requested their faith—right now—on Miss Jajic's behalf. I began to pray—hard, intensely, and invoking the priesthood—that the Lord would honor at once the very specific promises I had made in his name and by his promptings. In a few minutes the manager appeared on stage to explain the delay by announcing that Miss Jajic had been taken seriously ill and that he had sent for her second; he requested our patience. I prayed harder, my weak faith warring with my confidence in the Lord's proven gift.

After an interminable five-minute wait, the manager reappeared. "I am pleased to announce," he beamed, "that Miss Jajic has recovered and will be able to continue in her role as Gilda." The curtain went up, and Marina swirled onto the stage as the vivacious Gilda and sang her way into our hearts. I sat all amazed and thanked the Lord for his gracious intervention. As we applauded her performance, I was cheering our Father for his class act in stretching his welcome finger into our little scenario and repeating his patterns. For her part, Marina performed marvelously, as did our Mormon baritone, but I thought she looked a trifle too convincing in her death scene. We learned later that she went home to bed and collapsed for several days.

The encore to that evening was just another everyday miracle of just another child of God tracing the Awake and Arise Pattern. Marina, soon recovered and very much aware of the miracle that had occurred, began to ask Brother Montgomery during rehearsals exactly what had happened that Monday evening. Unwilling at first to attend church, Marina agreed to accompany the Montgomerys to a ward dinner at the Luzern chapel. Impressed by the Latter-day Saints' welcome and by the Montgomerys' deep faith, she continued to ask questions during rehearsals, when there was little time for him to respond. So the next week Brian and Jenny invited Marina to dinner,

where, he promised, “We’ll answer all of your questions about Mormonism.” That Friday at dinnertime, two sister missionaries “just happened by” and were persuaded to stay for dinner and teach Marina the gospel. In June 1988, two months after that very special night at the opera, Marina Jajic awoke and arose to membership in the Church of Jesus Christ.

The One Step into the Dark Pattern

One of the patterns that has guided me in exercising personal faith first smacked me in the right eye as a young missionary. Only later did I understand that the One Step into the Dark Pattern recurs often in the scriptures and in our daily lives. President Harold B. Lee named it best when he taught us to “walk to the edge of the light, and perhaps a few steps into the darkness, and you will find that the light will appear and move ahead of you” (quoted by Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980], p. 184). That step into the dark is the start-up key to an act of faith. Thus the brother of Jared prepared 16 stones and, from the darkness of mortality but with the brightness of faith, asked, “Touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness” (Ether 3:4). And the Lord flooded Mahonri Moriancumer and his people with light. It is a pattern: Faith precedes the miracle, just as it did when Peter forgot himself and stepped out of that ship and into the darkness to walk upon the sea (see Matthew 14:29).

The Contact Lens

So it was, in a much diminished but no less important way for me, when, on a rainy summer afternoon in 1958, I unwittingly traced the One Step into the Dark Pattern while tracting along a gravel road on a hillside above Baden, Switzerland. As we walked from home to home, I was suddenly laid low by a speck of dust in my right eye. I learned, as one who had worn brand-new contact lenses for only five days, that

a mote feels like a beam. I quickly extracted the lens, cleaned it, and prepared to reinsert it. As I held my finger at the ready, a gust of wind swept the lens from my fingertip. My lens was gone with the wind, and I was aghast—and virtually blind, being plunged instantly into 20/600 vision in one eye, which had been miraculously corrected only a week earlier to 20/20.

Elder Neil Reading and I began to search on hands and knees in the wet gravel, sweeping an eight-foot radius about my point of loss; we searched unsuccessfully for twenty minutes. Half-blind and half-despairing, I suggested that while we were already in position, we should pray. I reasoned with the Lord, told him about my need to see; about our need to meet our three investigator families that evening; about my feeling that there was more to be gained by finding the lens than by my learning whatever I was to learn from the loss. As I concluded the prayer and stood up, I received one of those Joseph Smith “flashes of intelligence.” It surprised me, but I reacted at once. Explaining the plan to my startled companion, I stood on my feet in the same place I had stood earlier, squeezed out my left contact lens, and was plunged into the distorted virtual blindness of 20/600 vision. I had begun my step into the dark.

Assured that my companion was on his knees and at the ready, I put my left lens in my mouth, extracted it, and, mounting it on my finger some six inches from my face, I waited—but not for long. A slight breeze caught my left lens, and it was gone: my step into the dark was now complete. I stood stock-still, heart in throat, until Elder Reading said, “I see it. It’s still in the air.”

“Don’t lose it,” I pled.

“It’s still up,” he whispered, now 10 feet away. Then, from even further away, he exclaimed, “It’s starting to fall!”

“Keep your eye on it,” I pled again.

“I see it! I see it!” he said. There was a long pause and then, “Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!”

I braced.

“Oh my gosh,” he said, “it’s landed, and”—
pause . . . pause . . . pause—“it’s landed almost
right on top of the other lens!”

“You see the other lens?” I shouted.

“Yes, it’s right here!”

Unable to see a thing, I crawled over to him. Slowly, he planted in my palm, in order, my left and right lenses—my seer stones. I wet the lenses and, with my back to the wind and sheltered by my companion’s hovering frame, I implanted them: “And there was light, and it was good.” And we knelt, and full of gratitude I thanked our God for tender mercies. We pressed on to the next house, filled with wonder at a God who knows each sparrow’s fall *and* the exact whereabouts in Switzerland of Elder Cracroft’s right contact lens.

The Bread Cast Upon Waters Reverberation Pattern

There is more. (There always is.) The test of a divine pattern is this: An act of divine intervention, when acknowledged as such and testified of, will, like the proverbial bread cast upon the waters, come back after many days to testify, bless, and re-bless, for it witnesses an eternally re-greening and re-blossoming truth. It is a pattern. So Christ becomes alive in us as we bear witness, in any age. So this little contact lens story has reverberated in at least two ways and surprised me both times.

Reverberation One

On the Sunday after the event, I told the contact lens experience to the members of the Wettingen Branch, over which I presided. The Saints, who had witnessed my visual difficulties up close and shared my joy in my newfound vision, reverberated with the larger meanings of the incident and apparently told it to others. In 1986, 28 years later, I returned to Switzerland as mission president. As President Peter Lauener introduced Janice and me to the Bern stake conference, he surprised us: “We all

have known about President Cracroft for many years,” he said. “He it is, brothers and sisters, who as a young missionary here in Switzerland exercised faith and found his lost contact lens.” Many in the congregation nodded in recognition.

I was dumbfounded. He turned to me and said for all to hear, “Over many years, that story has been told and retold in all our meetings as an illustration of the necessary steps to faith.” Suddenly I understood that young Elder Cracroft had unwittingly cast his burden on the Lord by taking an inspired and faith-impelled step into the dark. I wondered if President Cracroft, at 50, still possessed that same simple faith.

Reverberation Two

In January 1994, on the day after our 25-year-old daughter and bride of one short year died suddenly, naturally, and without warning—and my wife and I were plunged into the belly of the whale—I received a letter from a former Swiss-Austrian missionary living in Salt Lake City. He knew nothing of our sorrow, of course. He said he had recently read my name on an article and was writing to inquire if I was the same Elder Cracroft he had known briefly in 1958, at the beginning of his mission and near the end of mine. He said he had been deeply impressed by a story I had told at a missionary conference about losing and recovering a contact lens. He had related the incident often over the years and hoped he had told it accurately. He then repeated the story as he recalled it. Although I had not told it in a long time, I was amazed that he had captured it exactly as I recollected it and as I just told it.

The reverberation resounded in my ears. In his letter I read my own story in tears of joy amidst my tears of grief. His retelling us that story 36 years later, at the darkest moment of our lives, was no coincidence. Janice and I had received a message from the Lord reminding

us that he was there with us at the fall of our dear sparrow, just as he had been there with me on that long-ago hillside. He was reminding us that this was merely another obstacle on our salvation journey; that all things, including our daughter and ourselves, were in his hands; and that we should press on, confident that, as Lehi says, “All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Nephi 2:24). Who knows, perhaps this twice-told tale may take on new life in the soul of someone in this congregation who needs to hear that message.

Conclusion

The few patterns we have traced this morning suggest yet other patterns, for they are to be found everywhere, all related to each other and founded in eternal truth. Recently, while reading 3 Nephi for Gospel Doctrine class, it occurred to me that the coming of the Lord to the Nephite survivors retraces on a larger scale the Awake and Arise Pattern with its trials, Satanic intrusion, and belly of the whale nadir, culminating in the appearance of the Lord. But as I traced this pattern among the Nephites, it occurred to me that the pattern of the Lord’s appearance in the New World foreshadows, clarifies, and orders what we know about the second coming of the Lord as it will occur. Knowing this Appearance Pattern as described by Nephi will strengthen us in the day of Christ’s coming, when we who trace patterns will be able to comfort our families and cry out to our neighbors in the great dark like a television weatherman: “The worst is over, folks! We’re calling for three days of darkness, for voices to begin soon, for the light to return, for our God to introduce his Beloved Son, as he always does—and then the King of Kings will appear and wipe away our tears.” It is all in the Lord’s pattern book.

*The Parallel Pattern:
Christ’s Appearance to the Nephites and
the Second Coming of the Lord*
A Voice of Warning
The Great Sign
Irrefutable Signs Witnessed
The Righteous Minority
Satan Sows Confusion
The Lord Counterattacks
The Bitter Struggle Ensues
The Signs Suddenly Realized
The Voice
Morning Breaks
The Lord Comes to His Temple
The Witnesses
The Ministry of Jesus Christ

Seeking and finding the Lord’s “pattern in all things” can be, then, a rewarding and important spiritual discipline on the way to becoming, as Christ charged us to be, “even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). All other patterns are subordinate to this grand pattern of Jesus Christ. Brigham Young taught that “the greatest mystery a man ever learned, is to know how to . . . bring every faculty and power of the [human mind] in[to] subjection to Jesus Christ” (*JD* 1:46). We learn that discipline by tracing his divine pattern, which he teaches at every opportunity and in every setting, of following and teaching all men and women, everywhere, the intensifying, incremental, and upward-spiraling pattern of faith, repentance, baptism, renewal, and—hand-in-hand with the Holy Spirit—enduring to the end in discovering more and more divine patterns through knowing and following that other grand pattern: “He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (*D&C* 50:24). May he hasten that day for each of us, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.