

History of the Church—Part One

Robin Russell

I feel grace descend like whiskey-scented oil poured over me in the upper room on my way to heaven. I dance in the heat of a fire, like ghosts following Sitting Bull to their deaths, pounding the earth as I whirl, feeling the scent move out through my veins, pulled by the dance into my feet and fingers and loins, the beating gyre burning my bones and blood back into the earth. Spinning faster, dizzy with peace and the nearness of understanding. One voice sings like a cry thrown out across the crush of the world, like the weeping question of Enoch, or Adam, or Samuel, and the sun turns to snow whiter than noon-day. And in that glow I rest, healed and glistening, warm fatigue where once arose the aroma of belief and the coryphée of hope. And, then, as it will, in the denouement of grace, the dance winds down, becomes a shuffle, and the twirling scent dissipates in the gnawing whisper that is only wind. And I wonder where have we come to in these many years? And where is here? Is this the place, a desert beyond what is known? Now, do we move without the stillness, caught in the rhythm of our own shouts, unable to hear the song cast across our sight like a fleeing bird or an unanswered child? And in the hammering silence I make out no reply, just a kneeling, drunken man unable to rise, his lolling head turning the world back and forth, his yawping gasp a cry that spins us back and starts the scratching dance anew.