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The Susquehanna

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The Susquehanna

Upon you my fellow servants,
in the name of Messiah I confer
the Priesthood of Aaron.
—Doctrine and Covenants 13

This river makes a fine memorial.
John, who specialized in rivers,
Must have loved it.
He must have marveled
At the greenness of it all.

He would have walked the island first
To let his bones record
The mutual straightening of the river and the land.
He would have faced the island's wake
To feel the weight of water at his left,
The island's brown integrity
Extended by the central stream.
As he moved through water to the shore,
He'd see his toes, his white robe carried West.

His gift ionized the air around his hands;
The covenant relaxed commitment to the flesh.

Afterwards, the light would make it hard
To concentrate on water.
It never settles in one place
But breathes across a surface
Cupped to catch the words.

—Kathryn Ashworth