

SUNSTONE

Founded in 1975
SCOTT KENNEY 1975-1978
ALLEN D. ROBERTS 1978-1980
PEGGY FLETCHER 1978-1986

Publisher and President
DANIEL H. RECTOR

Editor
ELBERT EUGENE PECK

Associate Editor Art Director
RON BITTON R. SCOTT PETTITT

Graphic Designer Volunteer Coordinator
ROBYN SMITH-WINCHESTER MELISSA SILLITOE

Advisory Editorial Board
DENNIS CLARK, poetry
PATRICK BAGLEY, JAY S. BYBEE,
CATHY COOK, CONNIE DISNEY, PEGGY FLETCHER STACK

Symposium Chairs
KEDRIC BASSETT, Book of Mormon Lectures
TED IZATT, New York
SARA SCHIMMER, Washington D.C.
LYNNE KANAHEL, WHITESIDES, Salt Lake City

Volunteers
KEDRIC and ERIN BASSETT, MICHELLE DAVIES
REBECCA ENGLAND, PAMELA FOWLER, SHAREE HUGHES,
PAMELA JACKSON, SIDNI JONES, JORDON KIMBALL,
TUESDAY MILIUS, SCOTT THORPE

U.S. Correspondents
IRENE BATES, BONNIE M. BOBET, BELLAMY BROWN
ELIZABETH BURDETT, JOHN COX, EARL P. CRANDALL
GEORGE GIVENS, JEANNE M. GRIFFITHS
MIKE and NANCY HARWARD, JANNA D. HAYNIE, VAL HOLLEY
THOMAS MC AFE, CARRIE MILES, ALICE POTTMEYER
KENT ROBERTS, T. EUGENE SHOEMAKER, SHERMAN SMOOT
LORIE WINDER-STROMBERG, LE RUTH WARD TYAU

International Correspondents
IAN BARBER, New Zealand
TIM BEHREND, PAUL CARPENTER, Australia
WILLIAM P. COLLINS, Israel
WILFRED DECOO, Belgium
SCOTT FAULRING, Turkey
JAMES FEILD, WERNER H. HOCK, Germany
ROGER MORRISON, KAY NIELSON, Canada
JAMES F. REA, ED H. ZWANVELD, Canada
BRETT SCHARFFS, Great Britain

Board of Trustees
MARTHA S. BRADLEY, chair
KENT FROGLEY, EDWARD L. KIMBALL, BRIAN C. MCGAVIN
GLEN LAMBERT, MARYBETH RAYNES, J. BONNER RITCHIE
DANIEL H. RECTOR, ELBERT EUGENE PECK

National Advisory Board
ALAN AKROYD, C. ROSS ANDERSON, MOLLY BENNING
DOUG BRAITHWAITE, ROBERT L. BRINTON, BELLAMY BROWN
TONY and ANN CANNON, RICHARD K. CIRCUIT
DOUGLAS CONDIE, D. JAMES CROFT, SAM HOLMES
REED HUNTER, JERRY KINDRED, FARRELL LINES
ANN and GARY LOBB, PATRICK MC KENZIE, RONALD L. MOLEN
GRANT OSBORN, JOEL and DIANA PETERSON, STUART POELMAN
HARDY REDD, ELLEN RICHARDSON, ANNETTE ROGERS
JON and MARILYN ROSENLOF, GEORGE D. SMITH, JR.
NICK SORENSON, RICHARD SOUTHWICK, ROY W. SPEAR
SAM STEWART, R. JAN STOUT, DON STRINGHAM
DAVID USHIO, NOLA WALLACE, DENNIS YOUKSTETTER

READERS FORUM

CORRECTION

IN THE PREVIOUS issue (SUNSTONE, 12:1), the Readers Forum letter entitled "Priesthood and the Perfecti" was written by Abraham Van Luik of Richland, Washington. We apologize for omitting his name.

THE HIDDEN AGENDA?



IN YOUR LAST issue (SUNSTONE, 12:1), I noted with interest and regret that Michael Quinn is leaving his teaching position at BYU and pursuing other interests elsewhere. As no mention was made of what those pursuits might be, I thought I would share my discovery with you [see above magazine cover].

As one of his students, I know we all wish Mike the greatest of success in all his endeavors.

Janie Fleet
Provo, UT

THE CANON VS. KING FOLLETT

GERRY ENSLEY'S REACTION to my article on prophecy (SUNSTONE 11:6), though obviously supporting my basic contentions, argues several religious positions to which I

have strong objections. He blames the failure of traditional Christian and Mormon expectations about prophecy's fulfillment upon what he sees as an unduly limited and "distorted" Christian canon of the New Testament that teaches a "false gospel" of belief in God's omniscience and omnipotence. He believes that such documents as the Gnostic writings found at Nag Hamadi and Joseph Smith's King Follett discourse can serve to correct such "distortion." I share neither Ensley's enthusiasm for these documents nor his contempt for the growth and consolidation of the early Christian tradition that resulted in the definition of the canon of the New Testament.

The issue addressed in my article was not God's supposed inability to know all things, including what we perceive as the future, but rather the limitations human beings have in sharing such knowledge. I was at pains to take care in the article to avoid committing the error attributed to Korihor in the Book of Mormon, that of denying the power of God. Ensley, together with the early heretical books he praises, is not so careful.

There are abundant reasons for accepting the canon of the New Testament as it has come down to us. As more evidence becomes available, the basic integrity of the New Testament text is affirmed, contrary to expectations raised by the normal "bad transmission or translation" argument common in LDS apologetics. The canon of the New Testament reflects the efforts of the first three centuries of Christianity to define itself. To be sure, in the process elements were defined out of Christianity, but even here, the process is reflected in the books selected (e.g., the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John—see Raymond Brown's *Community of the Beloved Disciple*). Ecumenical concerns alone require us, if we want to call ourselves Christians, to accept the Christian canon of the New Testament. Doing so, of course, does not preclude accepting a broader canon of scripture in general. But it does require that we recognize that the definitive revelation of God to humanity was found in the person of the historical Jesus, and that the most basic source for approaching him is in the documents left in his wake and accepted as inspired by the Christian tradition. The Christ of faith described in this canon somehow mediates and in turn reveals God made man. For the present, Mormons are at least implicitly committed to such a stance, since they accept the Bible—the one defined and put together by the fourth century Catholic Church—as "the word of God" if translated

correctly. The fact that they have other books stemming from their own historical origins as a people and a distinct part of the Christian tradition should not obscure the fact that as Christians they accept the Bible as the word of God—especially when one recognizes the fact that most of the distinctly “Mormon” scriptures are largely derivative from Biblical themes and passages. Some, to be sure, build upon such passages in ways similar to the peripheral elements of early Christianity defined out of the canon. But this in itself is no reason to abandon a firm commitment to the inspiration of the biblical canon. Rather, it ought to encourage us to sort out what is central and significant in our tradition from that which is itself peripheral, regardless of common apologetic claims about how the supposed “unique insights” of Mormonism make it better than the faith of other Christians.

Ensley appeals to the problems of theodicy and free will in order to defend his disbelief in the traditional concept of God and argue rather for belief in a god (one among many) or some kind of Gnostic Demiurge. I believe in the traditional Christian God. The painful human condition, the root problem of theodicy, is not resolved by believing in a god impotent to

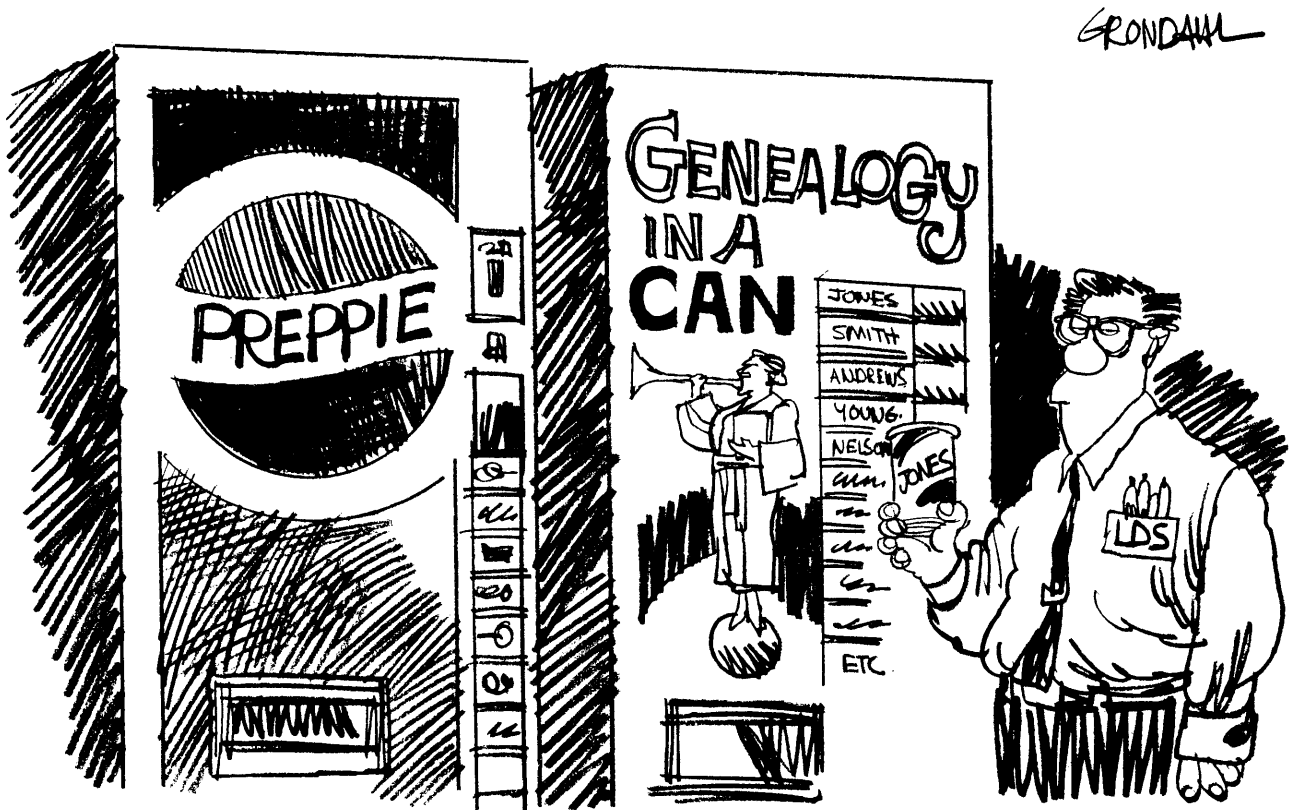
help us out of our pain. Such belief merely provides the emotionally soothing image of a god struggling, perhaps against hope, on our side. But mainstream Christianity, in its doctrine of the Incarnation, provides similar solace without sacrificing belief in a God worthy of worship and trust. The image of a brutally executed Galilean, prophet or not, pales beside the vast panorama of human suffering writ large, bitter and overwhelming. But the panorama dims and shrinks in the stark light of the haunting image of God—not a Gnostic Demiurge or member of a sci-fi LDS Corporation of the Presidency of the Galaxy—of God upon the Cross.

I think Boethius was right in arguing that human free will is not infringed by belief in an omniscient God: as creator of space and time, God’s knowledge of all things is perceived as *fore* knowledge only by creatures bound within time and space. God’s knowledge could as easily and as accurately be described as an all-encompassing knowledge of what we, for want of a better term, could call an ever-present now—ultimately a mystery to creatures bound by time and space.

To be sure, in saying this, I realize I am at odds with Joseph’s King Follett sermon.

Aspects of that sermon’s teachings, when considered in light of larger Christian and Mormon traditions, help accentuate the closeness of human beings to god, who after all, was called “Father” by the earthly Jesus, but as Ensley notes, the sermon has never been canonized even within our own tradition, while the canon of the New Testament, never mind its origins, has been. I personally wonder why anyone would choose to believe in Whitehead’s impotent God, or Joseph Smith’s later metaphysical speculations, instead of the God of the Bible or Joseph’s earlier writing, the Book of Mormon. To be sure, both of these scriptures on occasion create unrealistic expectations if read without context and care, as I pointed out in my article. But in my opinion, reading Nag Hamadi and King Follett out of *their* context and treating them as if they were canon, while perhaps discarding some of the dirty bath water of such unrealistic expectations, ultimately throws out as well any faith that can honestly call itself Christian.

Anthony A. Hutchinson
Hong Kong



THE CHOICE OF A NEW GENERATION.

REMEMBERING HUGH BROWN

THE EXCELLENT ARTICLE by Edwin B. Firmage on his grandfather, President Hugh B. Brown (SUNSTONE, 11:6) deserves wide reading.

Professor Firmage referred to the extreme pressure that was placed on President Brown to sign the statement on the doctrinal basis for denial of the priesthood to blacks (p. 8). I can attest to the reliability of Firmage's account. A few days after this statement was issued, President Brown called me by telephone to tell me that at this point the document did not express his personal conviction and that he had signed it under extreme pressure. He referred to this again in some detail in a later conversation.

*Sterling M. McMurrin
Salt Lake City*

A MYSTICAL JOSEPH SMITH

I WAS TOUCHED and impressed by Richard L. Bushman's article "Treasure-seeking Then and Now" (SUNSTONE 11:5). He presents Joseph as a prophet and yet admits that there is sound evidence that Joseph, in his earlier years, involved himself in treasure seeking. We are faced with the question of how to reconcile our belief that Joseph was a prophet of God if he allowed his spirit to wander after lower desires. I believe that Mr. Bushman's treatment of the subject was sensitive and balanced.

Joseph Smith's spiritual development appears to be shrouded in a great deal of mystery. The three years of teaching by Moroni before he began translating the plates are not recorded in detail nor are many other experiences that helped shaped Joseph's spiritual development. In our desire to discover more about the developing prophet Joseph Smith, may I suggest that future scholars look seriously at Eastern mystical literature. For example, one quote from *Four Chapters on Freedom* by Satyananda Paramahansa:

In yogic practices, the crystal plays a very important part. In South India there is a particular science called anajanam, meaning not known. It consists of different methods of projecting the illuminating superphysical faculty through a crystal. And again on the same page:

When the illuminating faculty is

directed towards a person or an object which is missing, it can be immediately known where that person or thing is. Thus, treasures which are buried underground, or objects which are very distant can be directly observed.

This is not a practice which can be performed by beginning students. Some high degree of aptitude is required. Thus, an Oliver Cowdery would not be capable of using the Urim and Thummin for the same purpose as Joseph Smith. A friend of mine, a local yoga teacher, explained that when the mystic no longer need props like crystals, he or she abandons them. This also seems to be what happened with Joseph.

In his commentary on the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* Vyasa explains that mystics undergo four basic stages of development. First-stage mystics are those who have just begun to experience the light. The second-stage mystic develops powers or siddhis and is tempted by powerful beings of the subtle works to enjoy those recently gained powers. The third-stage mystic has conquered those temptations (pp. 77-78). Many developing mystics are trapped in the second stage by their use of their psychic powers in a magical sort of way. Luckily, Joseph Smith appears to have conquered those desires in his later life.

Joseph Smith's mystical development in later years also appears to have paralleled the Eastern model. For example, in the Kirtland years, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner heard Joseph state,

John the Revelator was caught up to the third heaven, but I know one who was caught up to the seventh heaven and saw and heard things not lawful for me to utter (Hyrum Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet*, pp. 24-25).

In the East, "seventh heaven" would correspond to the seventh level of the astral (telestial?) region where lower desires, appetites and other limitations have been conquered. In eastern literature it is stated that developing mystics are given respectful invitations to visit the higher planes of the astral world.

One characteristic of Joseph Smith that indicates that in an Eastern sense he was a very advanced mystic is that he could also open the inner vision of those with whom he associated. There are a number of referenced which indicate that Joseph Smith enabled friends and Church leaders to "see" the divine from time to time. This is a practice that is not easy for even a very highly developed mystic. Swami Rama, a contemporary mystic, told a friend that to open the inner vision of another takes great energy and can heavily drain the resources of yogi. In the experience that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon both had experiencing Section

76, Joseph didn't even appear drained (*They Knew the Prophet*, p. 68).

While exploration of Eastern literature might appear dangerous to some, I feel that acquaintance with Eastern scriptures and practices would enrich our understanding of the developing Joseph Smith and perhaps give us interesting insights.

*Craig W. Miller
Salt Lake City*

MISSIONS AND CAREER CHOICES

I WOULD LIKE TO make the following observations about the documentary on the missionary program and on the resultant interview with producer Bobbie Birleffi (SUNSTONE 11:3). Both the documentary and the discussants seemed to have missed a significant result of service in a foreign mission. Quite often that service will influence career choices. Any returned missionaries having learned a foreign language and become familiar with a foreign culture and society will select a career based upon their knowledge of that language, culture, and society. They may major in international affairs, international business or law, in academia, or in government service where a knowledge of a foreign language and of the culture and society of another nation is important.

Furthermore, many native missionaries in countries outside the United States may rise to important positions in the economic, social, or cultural world of their society and be in a position to influence national policies relating to the Church. These missionaries also provide an important pool of trained men from which local Church leaders may be selected. The growth of the Church in foreign countries is related to the quality and training of the local leadership. Furthermore, the rise of local brethren into such positions nativizes the Church removing its stigma of being a "foreign church."

*Clark S. Knowlton
Professor of Sociology
University of Utah*

SUNSTONE welcomes correspondence from our readers. Letters for publication should be addressed to "Readers Forum." SUNSTONE edits letters for space, clarity, and tone.