

SUNSTONE

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

Publisher and Foundation President
DANIEL H. RECTOR

Editor
ELBERT EUGENE PECK

Associate Editor Production Manager
RON BITTON HINCKLEY JONES

Graphic Designer Administrative Assistant
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
MOLLY BENNION, Seattle
TED IZATT, New York

DAN MARYON, Doctrine and Covenants Lectures
SARA SCHIMMER, Washington, DC
LORIE WINDER STROMBERG & KIM McCALL, San Francisco
LYNNE KANAVAL WHITESIDES, Salt Lake City

Volunteers
KEDRIC and ERIN BASSETT, MICHELLE DAVIES
REBECCA ENGLAND, SHAREE HUGHES, SIDNI JONES
JORDAN 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 McAFEE, CARRIE MILES, ALICE POITMEYER
KENT ROBERTS, T. EUGENE SHOEMAKER, SHERMAN SMOOT
LORIE WINDER STROMBERG, LE RUTH WARD TYAU

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

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 ACKROYD, C. ROSS ANDERSON, MOLLY BENNION
DOUG BRAITHWAITE, ROBERT L. BRINTON, BELLAMY BROWN
TONY and ANN CANNON, RICHARD K. CIRCUIT
DOUGLAS CONDIE, D. JAMES CROFT, JEFFREY R. HARDYMAN
SAM HOLMES, REED HUNTER, JERRY KINDRED
FARRELL LINES, ANN and GARY LOBB, PATRICK MCKENZIE
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 SORENSEN, RICHARD SOUTHWICK
ROY W. SPEAR, SAM STEWART, R. JAN STOUT
DAVID USHIO, NOLA W. WALLACE, DENNIS YOURKSTETTER

READERS FORUM

THOMAS S. FERGUSON LETTERS

I AM WRITING a biography of Thomas Stuart Ferguson, who was a Book of Mormon archaeologist and founder of the New World Archaeological Foundation. Additional letters from Tom Ferguson are needed to document his views on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Mormon religion, etc. If any reader has a Ferguson letter written to him or her during the period 1968-83, I would very much appreciate receiving a copy of it.

Stan Larson
9109 Elmhurst Drive
West Jordan, UT 84088-8823

GETTING AND SPENDING

AFTER READING Hugh Nibley's "Last Call" (SUNSTONE, 12:1), I'm not sure how, or if, the Book of Mormon theme of retreating to the wilderness should be applied today. Certainly we do not have the ability to physically retreat. Our world is too interconnected for any person or group to find an island of isolation. However, members of the Church do a pretty good job of retreating to the womb of the Church. The Church is a fairly comfortable place for most members. We take care of our hungry and homeless. It is an easy place to make friends for life. The sick and aged are attended. We can fill up any time outside of home and work with church work or church-related activities. But does this suffice for fulfilling the admonition of the Book of Mormon and New Testament to take care of the needy and poor and to abolish inequality? Nibley's article and the Book of Mormon present many questions.

What should our responsibility be to the poor? Should we sell all that we have and give it to the poor? If not all, how about selling part? At what point do we exceed the standard of equality? Is a comfortable home, or a second home, inappropriate when others have no home at all? Couldn't many of us live on less income and share the rest with the needy? Should any Church leader or member have a Mercedes, a BMW, or a large, fancy home? Isn't this the equivalent of "fancy apparel" as described in the Book of Mormon? Should we

worry about military adequacy when we have millions living in poverty?

If the Book of Mormon suggests an economic system that equalizes all people (consecration), why does capitalism seem to be almost a doctrine of the Church? Capitalism doesn't do a great job of taking care of the poor and needy and certainly creates a class system. Even socialism seems more in keeping with the message of the Book of Mormon.

I have no answers to the above. Despite my concerns about those less fortunate than I, I'm not sure selling my home or televisions will make much of a contribution. Retreating to the wilderness (by thinking the problem is far greater than what I can solve) or retreating to the Church (I pay my fast offerings and volunteer for cannery assignments, what better way can I contribute?) doesn't eliminate the problem. Rather than retreating, one answer may be to become more involved politically. The poor and needy in our society are too numerous for one person, even one church, to eliminate. Is it out of line to demand from our political candidates that they address the problem of the poor and needy? Since most of the poor are women—often single women with children—it may be important for us to reexamine our position on such issues as health benefits, family/parental leave, low income housing, the Equal Rights Amendment, civil rights, the minimum wage, food stamps, child care, educational assistance, and pay equity.

Given the fact that most women are one man away from poverty and welfare, it might be wise to make sure our daughters are educated and end up with a skill that will serve them well under any circumstances. We might look at the ideas we have about poverty and welfare. Do we cling to myths about poverty, such as "welfare is an attractive alternative to working" or "people could get out of poverty if they worked harder"? It might be worthwhile to rethink our attitude on taxation. Is it asking too much for people who are gifted in making over \$150,000 a year to contribute more taxes when nearly half of all children in young families are now poor, and when the median income for a woman in poverty who was maintaining a family alone and working full time, year round, was \$7,056 in 1986?

I don't think there are any sure answers. Poverty and inequality have been around for thousands of years. These conditions certainly didn't end, or get any better, with Christ's

message. In fact, people have used the Bible to justify poverty, slavery, suffering and inequality. Something in me, though, says that I want to see a different world, which I'm sure is the case with most of us. I hope all of us will be constantly sensitive to these issues and act appropriately.

*Carlan Youkstetter
San Marino, CA*

THE SPECIAL INTERESTS OF SINGLES

I APPRECIATED THE article about the single adult wards in the Church (SUNSTONE 12:1). For one thing, it is good to hear about general Church-wide trends as well as individual stories; for another, as a single adult myself I was interested in the topic and want to share my own experience.

First of all, I am not disturbed by different wards and stakes having different policies towards singles' wards. I believe that the local leaders are supposed to receive inspiration about how to implement general Church policies and principles in their particular circum-

stances. I doubt that all leaders are equally inspired, but even if they all were I doubt that all local programs would end up being the same. I am concerned about the lack of coordination between neighboring stakes. You make a good point in showing that if there isn't a good cooperation in areas of concentrated LDS units, we get confusion and the loss of members who neither benefit from nor contribute to the full extent of Church programs.

From August 1981 to February 1988 I was a member of the Champaign, Illinois Second Ward. It was a student ward consisting of singles, childless couples, and couples with children aged eight or under; the biggest portion of them were like myself, graduate students at the U of Illinois (with their families), though there were also undergraduates, community college students, and student-age working singles. Since my first Sunday there—when after a week of the disorientation and insecurity of new surroundings, I was uplifted by the youth, intelligence, commitment and liveliness of the ward—I have loved my membership in it. It was a full-fledged ward in our stake except for a lower budget assessment. Much stake leadership was filled by our ward members. Both because of the transitory nature of the mem-

bership and the bishop's conscious policy, callings lasted about a year, and I had the chance to serve in a good variety of positions. More, I have been blessed by a large number of dear friends, both single and married, who have enriched my life. It would not have been as full an experience if it had been a singles-only ward.

This past February the old Champaign 2nd Ward was merged with the First Ward, which was then split geographically. Two weeks later, the former bishop (who had been released in August) passed away. I feel like a golden age in my life has come to an end. Nevertheless, I was and am able to sustain that change. I agree with the general trend away from special-purpose wards. If the singles (or students or whoever are in a ward by themselves, then their needs can be focussed on, but then they do not get the benefit of working and interacting with people outside their circumstances. At least as important, the rest of the membership will not learn how to work with *them*—how to be aware of their needs, how to feel comfortable with and understand them, how to integrate them into the full Church program and give them meaningful callings.

The ultimate solution to meeting the needs



of single adults, I believe, is not to isolate them but to teach all the membership, leaders and followers, to be aware of the diverse needs that we all have, and to rejoice in and use our differences as well as our similarities, to make a stronger harmony in the Church. This is harder than having special-purpose wards, admittedly.

On a related note, I greatly appreciated the approach President Benson took in his recent General Conference sermon to single adult men. He did not state or imply that one's love and service to the Lord was meaningless if one wasn't married; instead he began with a lengthy section describing the general scope of religious commitment that applies to everyone, and only after that foundation was laid did he address the issue of marriage. He did not come out with a condemnation of those who are still single, but instead he expressed his love and asked us to remember the importance of this covenant and to reconsider the priority it has in our lives. I hope all our leaders can follow this humble example.

*W. Bryan Stout
Champaign, IL*

OUT OF THE BEST BOOKS

MALCOMB R. THORP'S discussion of "James E. Talmage and the Tradition of Victorian Lives of Jesus" (SUNSTONE 12:1) provides one more discussion on how a person should examine the Bible, or more specifically, the Four Gospels.

The Victorian outlook and the official Mormon position tell us that our knowledge is based upon a world that was both crafted and set into a clocklike motion by a masterful creator. This essentially Newtonian worldview fueled the Industrial Revolution. An alternative and less predictable viewpoint emerged from nineteenth-century German philosophy and led to Einstein's theory of relativity and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. The nature of modern knowledge has consequently been redefined and now stresses relative awareness and perpetual uncertainty.

Thorp apparently endorses this modernistic viewpoint because he tells us that (1) Talmage was trained as a geologist and educator, but "lacked the formal skills" of a biblical scholar, and (2) even with formal training we can never know the "exact intention of any document." Still, there is no need to either trap our thought processes within "procrustean beds of past generations" or resign ourselves to perpetual uncertainty.

Examining the Four Gospels is a simple matter, despite Thorp's argument to the contrary. The problem with understanding the gospel story does not stem from a lack of information, but that we have too much information. Ever since the apostasy all the king's horses and all the king's men have failed to fit the many pieces into a harmonious whole. No astronomer has identified Matthew's Star of Bethlehem; no historian has verified a Roman census in Judaea prior to the year 7 A.D.; and no gospel commentator can prove that Jesus ever reached a full thirty years of age. An impartial investigator dealing with so many questionable pieces of information might even try to throw something out.

One approach might discard Matthew's Nativity and suggest that Jesus was born at a time when Judaea was ruled as a Roman province, as stated by Luke. This would allow for a heavenly proclamation of good news when Jupiter and Venus were in conjunction in Aries, Saturn in Virgo and in opposition to the sun, and an "infant" Mars at a point of rest in the constellation of the manger. Furthermore, by counting years of age in the same manner as the Gospel authors, one might realize that Jesus could still be several years younger than commonly assumed. One might even attempt to correlate the first and second cleansings of the temple with the fourth and seventh years of a seven-year cycle when it was entirely lawful according to Jewish oral tradition to declare the Law of Removal on the day before Passover. One might go further and interpret the "Acceptable Year of the Lord" according to the Jewish liturgical custom which associates this annual period with a sabbatical year when non-agricultural trade was carried out in some unusual manner such as "finding" a coin in the mouth of a fish.

We do not really need a linguist or another school of scholars to tell us what is contained within the Four Gospels, but it might be useful to examine the primary source material for ourselves. The prejudice of previous generations never impedes our progress as effectively as the prejudice ingrained into our current generation, which promotes overspecialization, contemporary chauvinism, and an attitude of perpetual uncertainty. The Bible, historical material, recorded Jewish tradition, and astronomical tables can be examined first hand by referring directly to those sources that have been available for many centuries. As Joseph Smith discovered, there still is no substitute for going straight to the source, whether one lives in a Victorian world or in a modernistic world.

*Ray Soller
Duluth, Georgia*

REMEMBERING HUGH BROWN

MY SINCERE THANKS to Edwin Brown Firmage for his heartwarming "final chapter" on the life of Hugh B. Brown. Tears came to my eyes as I read again about the life and mission of this beautiful apostle of the Lord.

As a teenager growing up in Southern California we received the Sunday morning sessions of General Conference via local television. I remember one conference when it seemed that an apostle got up and condemned both the American labor union movement and the United Nations as promoters of worldwide communism, only to be followed two or three speakers later by Apostle Brown who stood up and publicly praised labor unions in the Americas for helping the working man and woman, and lauded the United Nations as a vital instrument in achieving world peace. His words and courageous example have sustained me through difficult times and have strengthened my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

None of Hugh B. Brown's periods of service could be considered "negative service." He spoke honestly from his heart and took seriously his calling to be an apostle of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. For this I am eternally grateful.

*R. Tom Tucker
Fort Washington, PA*

SUNSTONE WELCOMES CORRESPONDENCE. LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO "READERS FORUM." WE EDIT FOR SPACE, CLARITY, AND TONE.