

# SUNSTONE

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## READERS FORUM

### HOPEFUL LEE

RECENTLY, I READ of the installation of Rex E. Lee as the new president of Brigham Young University. It reminded me of an incident in my father's life.

At the time I was born (1933) my father was teaching in the Church's seminary system in Richmond, Utah. Shortly thereafter he began a Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago sponsored in part by the Church. Sometime before completing his doctorate in the humanities he paid a visit to Elder John A. Widtsoe, then the apostle in charge of the Church's education program. My father explained that he would soon complete his studies and wanted to know what job opportunities would be available in the seminary program. While waiting outside Elder Widtsoe's office afterwards, he was soon informed by an aide that he had no future in the Church's education program. The reasons given were (1) he was from convert parents, (2) he was graduating from a university teaching liberal religious philosophies, and (3) he married a descendent of John D. Lee in 1937.

Rex Lee is a great, great-grandson of John D. Lee. Dr. Lee's installation represents a positive evolution in the Church's attitude toward its membership.

PAUL A. FURR  
*Friendswood, Texas*

### RUSHDIE DEFENDED

IT DOES NOT surprise me that Orson Scott Card thinks the "*Satanic Verses* is a despicable book," that Salman Rushdie "is a bad guy," and that "Rushdie is an unworthy champion" of freedom of speech (SUNSTONE 13:2). After all, Rushdie is a critic not only of Muslims, but of Hindus and Christians. Card is just plain wrong about Rushdie writing to a Muslim audience. Rushdie writes to a secular or atheist audience. *Satanic Verses* was written as an innovative educational tool to make it easy for those who do not have a background in Eastern religions to gain an introduction and start to understand the religions of India. The use of humor, satire, fiction, and a fast moving plot are devices to get free thinkers to read about religions without falling asleep.

Many thanks go to Khomeini for promoting the *Satanic Verses* and helping a great book to get the publicity to sell 750,000 copies instead of 50,000. Banned books have always been best sellers.

When a Mormon like Card sides with the Ayatollah, he is envious of Muslims. Mormons cannot use an absence of separation of church and state to censor what they consider blasphemy, but Khomeini can. Freedom of speech is the point and Card does not miss the point, he would just like to get around it. *Satanic Verses* is well written and worth reading. It was not written for people like Card, but neither were the books of Vardis Fisher or Gore Vidal.

RICHARD MAX ANDREWS  
*Salt Lake City, Utah*

### ZION? HONESTLY!

THANKS FOR publishing Hugh Nibley's "What is Zion: A Distant View" (SUNSTONE 13:2). Nibley strikes forcefully to a matter I have often pondered ever since my mission in the Southern States, intensively in my graduate-student days at Berkeley, as a colleague of Nibley during the Great Depression, as well as teaching economic history, labor economics, and labor relations for years at Cornell, all alongside my abiding interest in Church history.

What has happened to the concepts of the "Kingdom of God" and "Zion"? Nibley's clear, refreshing and challenging presentation should alert members to the prominent theme and objective sought during the first fifty years in Utah. One should not be too hopeful, however. For example, I loaned my copy of SUNSTONE to an economic conservative Church member here who eagerly said, "I always liked Nibley." Yet, his only comment a week later was, "I've read only half, but I don't understand it." I said, "You had better read it again," but to myself I thought, "You do not want to understand it."

We often hear that we are building the "Kingdom of God," and, likewise, we talk about "Zion," but both terms long since have had their meanings altered. Nibley portrays "a distant view" of them as they were and, I believe, as still they should be understood.

We have a society, especially an economic society, that is antithetical to the meaningful

concept of "Zion." Our society whose economic organization, in the words of John Maynard Keynes, "is absolutely irreligious, without union, without much public spirit, often, though not always, a mere congeries of possessors and pursuers." To this the eminent economic historian, Melvin M. Knight, one of my major professors at Berkeley, explained, borrowing in part from Richard Tawney's characterization, that the pervading spirit of our economic society was born "when Calvinism changed the medieval sin of covetousness into the modern economic principle of snatching to hoard and hoarding to snatch."

In seminars discussing ethics and moral principles with representatives of management, I ask what morals, if any, are *inherent* in our economic system. I think there are none *inherent* in it. The only morals of consequence are carried over from religious and church teachings. (I concede, however, that there is *one*—the necessity to be honest if one desires continuous relationships.) In researching the history of labor relations on the waterfront in the Port of New York, and in reading about gangsters and the underworlds, I find that honesty among them is also precisely at the center of their relationships. Dishonest

individuals are soon liquidated. They exercise the same moral that prevails in business.

VERNON H. JENSEN  
Ithaca, New York

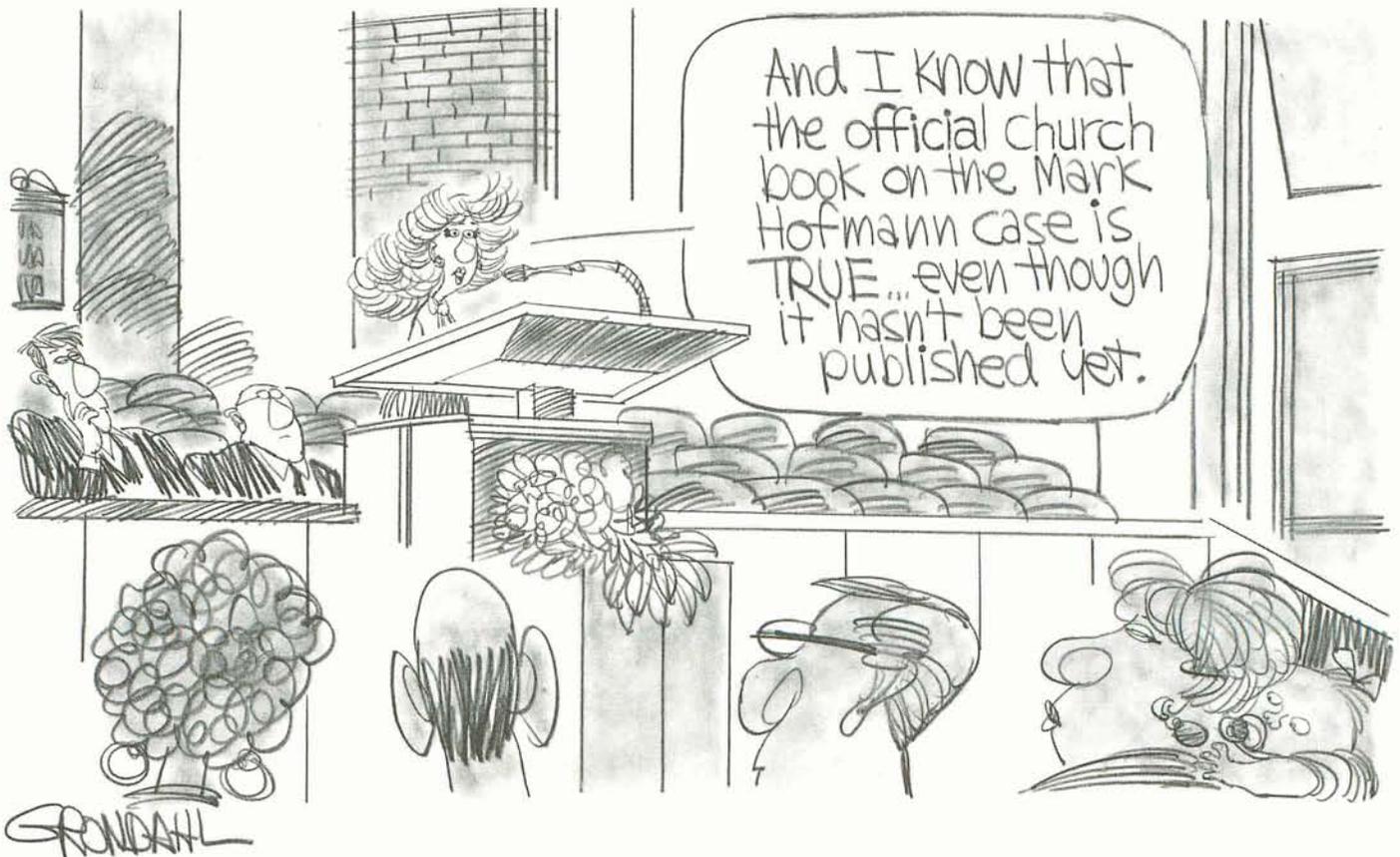
## ADRIFT AT SEA

I FEEL SORRY for Scott Kenny (STONE 13:3). I make a distinction between liberals and intellectuals—it is possible to be an intellectual without being a liberal. An intellectual is someone who enjoys thinking about ideas and issues of real importance. One need not be incessantly creative to do this. All can identify, to a degree, with Kenny's spiritual quest. All have some doubts and perplexities regarding the Church, its doctrines and practices. I am convinced that the Church has what most honest seekers are looking for. We know what we know by the Holy Ghost, and all the world's vaunted wisdom and clever sophistry cannot change that.

I was surprised by his willingness to throw off key doctrines like the atonement of Christ and vicarious work for the dead because he does not understand them as fully as he thinks necessary. Even prophets and apostles

do not understand the Atonement fully. As to vicarious work for the dead, there is no better proof of God's love for each of his children than this. It may seem like a prodigious waste of time and resources to Kenny and other liberals to do temple work for the dead instead of spending the same time and resources doing good for the living, but we are the only people on earth doing temple work for the legions of the lost whereas other churches and organizations are devoting time and money to the problems of the living. The Church is doing a pretty good job of dealing with the problems of the living as well.

I was also troubled by Kenny's willingness to substitute Protestant and Catholic theologians for living prophets as his file leaders. While I agree that there is a tendency in the Church today to narrow the practice of the gospel to reading the scriptures, praying morning and night, holding family home evening, doing home and visiting teaching, doing a modicum of genealogy and temple work, and doing some good turns daily, perhaps Kenny would agree that this is about all the average member can be expected to do. The intellectual must recognize that he or she is an anomaly in a religion that is adapted to



"the weak and the weakest of those who are or can be called saints" (D&C 89:3). Mormonism, if it appealed only to intellectuals, would not be able to draw into the gospel net the "worker bees" who do the bulk of the work of the kingdom. If we dwell on unanswered questions and doubts, the vitality and drive it takes to do the positive works of the kingdom are lost.

I think Larry Young discerned the crux of the problem when he pointed out the dilemma between doing what is best for the commonwealth and doing what one feels one must to maintain one's intellectual integrity. Kenney is being honest by sharing his spiritual journey with us, but this public sharing has the potential to destroy the faith of others. Doubts are inevitable, but people should be careful about broadcasting them. A testimony can be regained through humility and patience.

Scott Kenny has great sensitivity and honesty; I hate to see him waste it on a lesser cause than the building up of the kingdom of God on earth.

CHARLES SELLERS  
Knoxville, Tennessee

## SEARCHING THE SEEKERS

I APPRECIATE THE general praise Mark Thomas gave my book in his recent review (SUNSTONE 13:3) but I was perplexed by some of his critical comments. I would like to respond to each of his criticisms.

First, Thomas's claim that I "occasionally overstate my thesis" is unsupported. For an example of this tendency, he refers to my argument that early Mormonism included the Puritan-Seeker concept of the visible (earthly) and invisible (heavenly) church (131-34). This argument is imbedded in a larger one which attempts to show that the Mormon church was initially organized along the Puritan-Congregational concept of church governance, which included the tenets of closed communion, excommunication, tests of faith, and common consent. This form of church discipline, for both Puritans and Mormons, was essentially a quest to create a pure church governance on earth—one which closely resembled the heavenly church

(129-58). It was to be a pure church of gathered saints prepared to meet Jesus at his return (181-213).

That Mormonism included the notion of the earthly and heavenly churches cannot be denied (D&C 10:52-69; 76:54, 67; 107:19). Thomas never addresses the subject of the visible/invisible church as a whole, but rather focuses his argument exclusively on the Book of Mormon. However, Thomas's accusation that I exaggerate or overstate my case is unfair since I clearly offered the interpretation as suggestive and was not dogmatic about it. Thus I introduced my discussion of the Book of Mormon with the words: "Those reading the Book of Mormon from a Seeker position could easily have interpreted the book as an endorsement of the idea that although the visible church was in the wilderness of apostasy, the invisible church, though few in number, remained" (133; see also 1 Nephi 13; 2 Nephi 28:14). Thomas ends by saying nearly the same thing when he admits that the concept is not "antagonistic to Book of Mormon theology."

Before leaving this subject, I would like to clear up another of Thomas's misrepresentations. My discussion of the visible and invisible church is misread and confused by Thomas with the notion of a spiritualized church on earth. At no time did I ever describe early Mormonism as adopting a spiritualized notion of the earthly church, as Thomas suggests. The invisible church is in heaven, consisting of both dead and living saints, as I explained (130). When I suggested that the physical church was lost in the apostasy but that the invisible church remained, I clearly did not intend a spiritualized version of church governance (like the Quakers, for example). Rather I clearly intended it to be taken in the Puritan-Seeker sense that during times of extreme apostasy there remained on earth some "invisible saints" who were members of the heavenly church.

Further, I described two types of Seekers: one awaited the restoration of a spiritualized church (many of whom became Quakers) while the other awaited the return of a physical church (10-22). I suggested that Mormonism fulfilled the expectations of the latter type of Seeker. Thus Thomas seems to have missed one of the major points in my book.

Second, Thomas believes my treatment of Calvinism and Arminianism is an example of my "historical and logical errors." He spends four paragraphs quibbling about what he calls "a few mistakes." Again, Thomas ignores the larger issues and focuses on the Book of Mor-



*"Well, thanks and good night.*

*It's nice every so often to feel like a sister missionary again."*

mon. However, I completely disagree with him on this matter.

Thomas faults me because I seem to describe Calvinism as a unitary movement. True, I did limit my discussion of Calvinism and Arminianism to classical definitions. It would have been entirely beyond my purpose to give details about variations in either theological position. Moreover, my purpose was to describe the tendency of post-Revolutionary American religion (Seekers and Mormons included) to pull away from Puritan Calvinism, so my discussion of Calvinism naturally focused on the Puritan version. To make mention of the moderate Hopkinsian version, as Thomas suggests, would have hardly been enlightening to my readers. Again, Thomas seems to have missed a major point in my book.

Thomas criticizes me for siding with Marvin Hill that there are "remnants of Calvinism" that show up in some passages in the Book of Mormon. Ether 3:2, for example, says that "because of the fall our natures have become evil continually" (see also Mosiah 3:19; Helaman 12:4, 7). This is clearly Calvinistic. Thomas, on the other hand, agrees with Catholic sociologist Thomas O'Dea's assessment that the Book of Mormon is "completely Arminian" and that the book "consistently opposes all forms of Calvinism." Thomas never adequately addresses these passages. For Thomas to refer to some "Arminians" who also held, either by design or by ignorance, some Calvinist views does not make the Book of Mormon's Calvinism any less Calvinistic.

I agree with Hill that O'Dea (and Thomas can be included) "exaggerated in concluding that the Book of Mormon is Arminian throughout" (*Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism*, 22). I further agree with Hill that the goal of the Book of Mormon and other matters is "mediatory." I quoted the statement of early Mormon convert Eli Gilbert that Mormonism was somewhere between "mungrel calvinism and crippled arminianism" (71). Joseph Smith himself, when commenting on the views of Presbyterians and Methodists regarding the doctrine of election, said, "they are both wrong. Truth takes a road between them both" (216).

In fairness to Thomas and O'Dea, however, I must add that although I agree with Hill that the Book of Mormon is mediatory, the balance is clearly heavier on the Arminian side (see my discussion, 69-72). Later, as Mormon theology developed, the nature of mankind becomes more exalted and transcendental, at least for the Saints (167-70; see Hill, 48-49).

Finally, Thomas complains that I seem to end my historical discussions where he would like to begin them. He gives what he thinks are two examples of this tendency. First, he rather incorrectly claims that I simply compare Seekerism and Mormonism and that I do not attempt to push my discussion beyond that task. On the contrary, I not only compare Seekerism and Mormonism but I spend a great deal of time discussing how Joseph Smith responded to the challenges of other Seekers and the instability of charismatic authority and how the concepts of authority, apostasy, restoration, church administration, doctrine, and the Millennium were developed during Mormonism's formative years within the Seeker tradition. Pat Spillman noted this aspect of my book in his review (*Saints' Herald*, July 1989, 18). For Thomas to have missed it is most puzzling.

Second, Thomas also unjustly complains that I do not attempt to resolve the "obvious historical issues" concerning the angelic ordinations of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. He seems to want to drag me into the unresolvable Mormon/anti-Mormon debate over whether the visions actually occurred, or whether the visions had subjective or objective reality. Most historians, I'm sure, would blanch at the naiveté of this request. The metaphysical aspects of religion can be neither proved nor disproved by historical means.

However, I did not entirely skirt the issue as Thomas suggests. I included in my book a lengthy discussion of the evolution of the Mormon concept of authority as well as the

introduction of lineal priesthood and the angelic ordination stories (97-128). In my conclusion, I clearly state:

"Whitmer's and McLellan's claims that angelic ordinations were late additions to Mormonism are supported by considerable circumstantial evidence. The early emphasis on charisma, the lack of a clear priesthood restoration concept in the Book of Mormon and in the 'Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ,' the additions made to the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants concerning angelic ordinations, and statements of early leaders all demonstrate the shift to accommodate evolving notions of authority and governance (218)."

As much as can be said about the angelic ordinations, I believe I did say. I therefore believe that I ended my discussions precisely where historical discussions should end, although it might be tempting to go beyond the data. Rather than being a criticism of the book I think it is really a strength.

I hope SUNSTONE readers will not be distracted by Thomas's pseudo-criticisms but instead follow his advice to "become familiar with this book" because "it deserves careful study."

DAN VOGLE  
Westminster, California

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## PSALM

### A PSALM

At Heaven's throne, I cry for wisdom.  
O Father, give me your instructions,  
O Mother, teach me of your laws.  
Let me know You, that I may know myself.  
If you are silent, then I am bereft.  
Have I denied you, Mother, unaware?  
Have you stretched out your hand, and I not seen?  
Have you cried vainly at the gates and I not heard?  
Or have I heard, and yet not known your voice?  
O Mother, give me your instructions,  
O Father, teach me of your laws:  
that I may follow, whole of heart.

—NOLA WALLACE