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READERS' FORUM

NO LIGHTMINDEDNESS . . .

I WAS BOTHERED by the tone of your humor column, "Books for the 1989 Christmas Season" (SUNSTONE 13:5). Satire is a difficult and subtle art, the more so when the subject is religious. The use of scripture in satire is particularly perilous. I, for one, do not like to see scriptures which have a deep sacred import used in frivolous or humorous ways. Thus, I don't think it is ever appropriate to turn "We speak of Christ, we rejoice in Christ" (II Nephi 25:26) or "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10) into jokes. I also think that jokes about general authorities are difficult to pull off. There are good jokes about general authorities that most people, including general authorities themselves, enjoy, but I was bothered by several of your satirical titles. President Hinckley may have been taken in by Mark Hofmann, but then so was almost everyone else and I think your attempt at humor at President Hinckley's expense misses the mark. The same could be said for your titles "Latter-day Prophets Sleep" and "Why the Prophet is as True as the Church."

Jonathan Swift, perhaps the greatest English satirist, in speaking about himself, said:

Yet malice never was his aim;
he lash'd the vice but spar'd the name.
No individual could resent,
Where thousands equally were meant.
His satire points at no defect
But what all mortals may correct;
For he abhor'd that senseless tribe
Who call it humor when they gibe.

("Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift")

I value SUNSTONE and appreciate the thought, imagination, and labor that go into it. I want its pages to be taken seriously, even those that contain humor. I don't want you as the editors to make it easy for people to dismiss SUNSTONE or to think of you as anti-Church (or pro-Church either, for that matter). Keeping the balance and finding the right tone is always a challenge.

ROBERT A. REES
Los Angeles, CA

WHERE IS ZION? A MIDWEST VIEW

I HAVE ACCESS to a few acres of undeveloped land in the Missouri Ozarks. The time is right to start a rural, living/learning center with a Mormon focus on human ecology and the understanding of what Zion means. The specifics of such a center has yet to be drafted by those participating in its creation. Some of the guideposts could be: (1) What does the concept of "Zion" mean in a political, psychological, and sociological sense? (2) What does a Zion society look like? How is it organized? How does it function? (3) How do I live a Zion lifestyle in today's world? A lot of academic work needs to be done. Have people in the past, present, and future tried to create a Zion Society? What was their experience? Can we learn from them? (4) Can we relate the concepts of voluntary simplicity to building a Zion Society? How about self-reliant lifestyles? Can we use the results of current research like at BYU's Benson Institute to create low technology, simple, ecologic lifestyles? (5) What is a theological basis for a Zion society?

These are just a few of the possible study themes at such a center. I arranged for the land. I cannot do more. I seek assistance in this project. Inquiries sent to the address below will be handled in strict confidence.

ROBERT R. HUBBLE
861 Featherstone fflA
Red Wing, MN

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY

READING DAVID KNOWLTON'S thoughtful article, "Missionaries and Terror: The Assassination of Two Elders in Bolivia" (SUNSTONE 13:4), I was struck by the analogy between modern persecution of the Church in Latin America and similar persecution in the American South, from the Missouri era of the Church through the 1930s. In both cases, indigenous people apparently felt so threatened by what they perceived to be "Yankee" inroads into their society that many felt justified in acting out murderous brutality

against innocent victims, including LDS missionaries and Church members.

Unfortunately, I believe this analogy extends to the facts that at least part of the reason that Mormons were and are targeted for attack is that this persecution has been supported or condoned by advocates of competing churches. About two years ago, I read a wire service interview with a U.S. citizen and protestant minister who was a bureaucrat in Daniel Ortega's Sandinista government in Nicaragua. He proudly described the actions of the Nicaraguan communists in forcibly closing down Mormon and Jehovah's Witness congregations and appropriating their buildings. He felt that such "non-Christian" sects were receiving their just desserts. Such blatant religious discrimination has not harmed Ortega's administration in the eyes of many protestant congregations who enthusiastically send money to support that regime.

Anti-Mormon terrorism in both the American South and South America has existed in cultures where "mobocracy" and "vigilante" violence had been widely accepted as a legitimate expression of popular will. White American southerners were reacting against an "oppressive" legal regime, first

threatened by pre-war abolitionists and eventually imposed on the South by a conquering "Yankee" army which overturned the traditional antebellum relationship between whites and blacks. Their rationale for the murder of Mormons was given its clearest expression by Thomas Sharp in defending the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith:

There is an uncontrollable impulse in the human bosom, which prompted every man to prefer his own safety and property before the law of the land. . . . True he violates the law of the land by so doing; but nature teaches every one that he commits no crime by preferring his own safety to its provisions. (Quoted in Dallin Oaks and Marvin Hill's *Carthage Conspiracy*, 210.)

It is worthwhile to obtain insight into the reasoning of our persecutors. However, I sincerely doubt that anything we can do, short of denouncing the fundamental doctrines and organization of the Church, will ever satisfy those who justify murder in the cause of advancing their version of society. I fear that we will only look devious if we enter into a one-sided negotiation with the assassins, attempting to assuage their paranoid antipathy

toward us through "lowering our profile" in Latin America.

RAYMOND TAKASHI SWENSON
Concord, CA

LOVE AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH

IN RICHARD MAX ANDREWS' letter (SUNSTONE 13:4) he chose freedom of speech as the first and great weapon of choice for clubbing Scott Card's view of the Rushdie affair. Khomeini chose Rushdie's freedom of speech as the first and great weapon of choice for eradicating the moderates in Iran, who with far greater courage than Rushdie and as poor a sense of timing, criticized the excesses and mistakes of the Iran-Iraqi war. If either the moderates or Rushdie had had the sense to wait for Khomeini to die before publishing, all the trouble, death, and repression could have been avoided. Treating the Rushdie affair without discussing the political context of Khomeini's action, as both Card and Andrews do, distorts the meaning of the episode.



Freedom of speech is a point, but not *the* point. Speech without sensibility is no virtue, and honest conviction without grace is a dubious virtue. Love is *the* point. Love is the first and great commandment because ultimately all of our acts and lives are interconnected. No perception, whether correct or not, can ever escape that context.

Andrews used his freedom of speech to not only attack Card's views of the Rushdie affair, but also to slight Card's character and taste in literature. Scott Card, a censor? I know that Card reads Gore Vidal, and I'd wager my autographed copy of *Songmaster* that he's read Vardis Fisher. Say what you want, of course, but don't pretend you can evade responsibility for having said it. Love honors freedom, but freedom doesn't always return the favor.

KEVIN CHRISTENSEN
San Jose, CA

SOLDIERS AND WAR

I WAS EXTREMELY distressed to read the news story "Apostle Blames Vietnam

Defeat on Immorality" SUNSTONE (13:3).

Recently I visited the Vietnam memorial in Washington D.C. to see four names of young men I knew personally. I didn't know what my reaction would be. It was a quiet day. When I looked over that huge expanse of names etched on the shiny black wall, I felt a swelling anger. I did not weep; I felt anger, anger, *anger!* I thought of all the mothers whose sons' names were on that black wall. I have a close relationship with three of these women. I was lucky, my son returned from Vietnam.

Elder Boyd K. Packer says the United States suffered defeat because of the soldiers' immorality! He says they "could not conquer." What a disastrous suggestion. Is that what America went to Vietnam for? I can suggest several books about the deceit and the lies we were told by our government. One book, *A Bright Shining Lie* by Neil Sheehan, should be on his reading list.

MARY B. HARRIS
Salt Lake City

PREJUDICE IN THE CHURCH

AS A NON-MORMON, I read with interest the article by Kate L. Kirkham entitled "Can Whites 'Do' Integration?" (SUNSTONE 13:5). Prejudice unfortunately exists everywhere. I'm glad to see the LDS community addressing it in a serious manner. Unfortunately, Kirkham did not specifically address racism within the Mormon church. In 1989 the doctrines that were publicly preached before the so-called "priesthood revelation" have been forgotten by many. However, in announcing that the priesthood and its attendant blessings would be available to all worthy male members without regard to race the general authorities said nothing about the doctrines behind the original ban.

Although these doctrines were never officially sustained by an assembled general conference, they were declared with apparent authority by recognized Mormon theologians. President Brigham Young, President Joseph Fielding Smith, and Elder Bruce R. McConkie are three of the propounders of black inferiority.

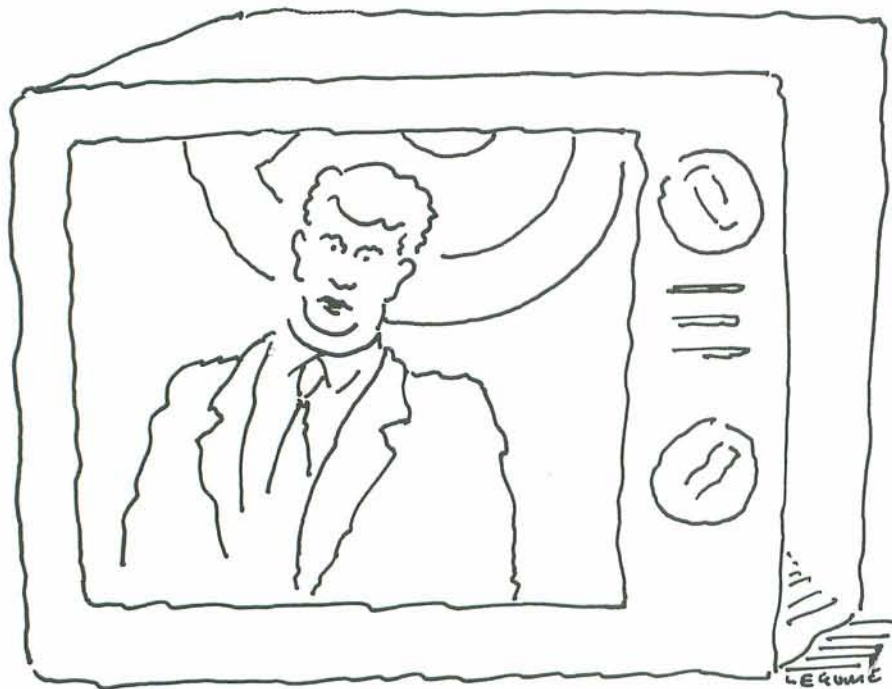
Attitudes of a lifetime are not changed overnight. After being told for years that blacks are black because they were "less valiant" in the pre-existence, can Mormons suddenly cast aside the attitudes engendered by such teaching? After hearing for years that the color of one's skin is lighter or darker as direct result of one's worthiness and spiritual advancement in the pre-existence, can Mormons suddenly switch their thinking to a method of personal assessment based on character rather than color?

First, the Church needs to state its position on the question of why blacks (and other dark-skinned people) have the color they do.

Second, and this is applicable to Saints and gentiles alike, the heart of the bigot must be changed. Anti-discrimination laws are good but they do not and cannot address the inward prejudice that leads to outward acts of discrimination. The heart of man must be changed, renewed. Jesus called it the new birth, Paul called it being made a new creature, Alma the Younger called it receiving the image of God in one's countenance. By whatever name, this change must occur before the bigot will abandon his prejudice.

I sincerely hope that more and more Mormons will tackle the issue of prejudice. Until such things happen, however, we need people like Kate Kirkham to continue speaking out.

ROBERT MCKAY
Marlow, OK



"Today the Mormon church expelled from the Church Office Building two men who had been attending meetings of the Quorum of the Seventy for a half year under false pretenses. Said one leading member about the impostors, 'We just assumed they were new Seventies we didn't know.'"

SEPARATE BUT EQUAL?

I SEE MANY articles in SUNSTONE that seem intended to appease feminist leaning individuals who would attempt to give women the male advantage. Have these women and some men not come to realize that women also have advantages that must be considered in the equation? Women have distinct and definite advantages in sexual and familial things that men can never obtain. And yes, men have the economic and authoritarian advantage. Underlying all of the rhetoric I sense an understanding of the part of all that men are and will remain in charge of human activity on this earth and if pushed too far will re-emphasize that control with whatever force is necessary. Women should be grateful for that control and most undoubtedly are grateful.

Desires on the part of either sex to assume the advantages of the other are motivated by selfishness and can only bring frustration, division, and unhappiness. There is an obvious lack of understanding on the part of feminists of what women must give up to gain their demands.

Men and women are simply equal and yet how grateful we should be for the comforting differences. The happiest people are those who have graciously and humbly given to others their positions of advantage while trying not to flaunt their own advantage.

HAL PIERCE
Norman, OK

THE VEIL

Sheared away from the thinning cloud in my hand.
They fall to my lap like ragged fragments of snow—
Holy marks of creation and redemption sewn
Into the fabric of the veil I've borne upon my body.

The veil is a raiment adorned with cardinal points and lines,
A firmament incised with celestial lights
The weave scarred by the sacred arithmetic of bearings
Hand-stitched by God when he drove our parents from the garden
To shelter and to cover their glory and their sorrow,
And to bring them home.

I received this garment whole, white without blemish,
An unmarked page waiting for the imprint of a tale
Tarnished now, unravelling, darned at the crotch, worn smooth,
The years of wandering, worship and work
Have burnished in this vestment a recitation,
A chronicle in stains and stitches
An off-white text in limp cloth:

Sweat stained by gestures of labor and loving
Ink stained by the traces of errant scrivener
Ragged welts of thread, mends in the rent fabric
Of this holy, earthly veil,
A priestly mantle a winding shroud.

The weave of revelation
Concealing
Like the veils of Moses and Muhammed;
Revealing,
Not only in marks of orientation,
But shed eternally for the glory of conjoined intimacy.

The earthly texts gather around
The primordial, sacred embroidery of signs
Until the gossamer threads of the whole cloth
Can no longer carry the burden, the blessing
Of our tales and the signs that bid them on.

So the marks drop from the diaphanous firmament
Like old stars,
And now the veil is a rag—
Holey, wholly, holy.

We then take up another garment
Whole, without blemish,
An unmarked page expectant . . .

We dare even dream
To take the worn and hallowed threads
Of our many veils
And stitch a mantle

For the naked shoulders of our mother earth
And with her ascend
The ladder of the firmaments.

—STEVEN EPPERSON

Does Easter mean beans to your kids?

If you agree that Easter should do more for your children than raise their blood sugar level,
we invite you and your family to experience the true miracle of Easter in The Episcopal Church.
The Episcopal Church

