

Letters



I just finished reading the first issue of *Sunstone* magazine and I have to say that I am very pleased with its first fruits. I sent my subscription early in the summer and I didn't know what to expect. For a time I wondered if *Sunstone* would get off the drawing board but the wait made the taste sweeter.

I enjoyed the entire issue and the stories of two men who wrestled with doubt and won. I myself had been an intellectual convert to the Church for much of my Church life. I've been a member since January 28, 1973, but my spiritual conversion didn't begin until January 1, 1975. Now I have the spiritual testimony which is the greater testimony.

Conversion and testimony are never complete in mortality.

This issue has shown me so clearly that love is the key to bridging the gap between intellect and faith. Real and noble love for others and of others humbles the intellect sufficiently for the Holy Spirit to touch the mind and spirit of the doubter. I can truthfully and accurately say that my spiritual conversion was a labor of love; by the Godhead, my friends, and my family.

The first issue of *Sunstone* is a success. A standard of excellence is set and hopefully it will be equalled and surpassed in the future. It's too bad that such a few people of the Church will gain the depth and richness of this facet of life and gospel. Hopefully more people will get the opportunity to read this fine magazine. I would urge the subscribers to share their copies with friends, family, and all the water spiders skimming across the surface of life and the gospel. My only criticism of

the magazine is that it is a quarterly and not a monthly — see if you can't expand the magazine.

May all of us defeat doubt and pride of mind.

Peter M. Bowman
Reading, Pennsylvania

Thank you so much for the copy of *Sunstone*. I am sorry to say that I wasn't even aware that such a magazine was in existence and how grateful I am that you have called it to my attention. I wish to congratulate you and the rest who are responsible for what is a beautiful, beautiful, long overdue magazine. Of course, I am particularly thankful for the fact that *Fires of the Mind* by Robert Elliott has finally been published. It is perhaps our finest Mormon play, certainly a play that asks many questions and that, in and of itself, is important today. I was particularly pleased also with John Kessler's personal experience "Facing Spiritual Reality."

Best of Luck

Charles Whitman
Provo, Utah

Really have to say you folks have done a beautiful job with your journal. Everyone that I have shown it to is very impressed with the layout and content. Keep up your excellent work. Now that I have seen exactly what it is, I can at least guess at the need it is designed to fill, and believe me there is a need. The need I have in mind is that of insuring some of the intellectuals

and young turks of Mormondom that they are needed in the Church.

Enclosed is a gift order for my father-in-law, Dr. Smith; he is one of those disenfranchised intellectuals, of sorts. He was impressed by the story of the young Salt Lake lawyer when he read it at our home Thanksgiving Day. Thus, we decided to rush him off his own subscription. More articles of accomplished individuals who have become humble and found their way back into the fold would certainly provide a buttressment to our efforts.

Once again let me say that I think there is great value in what you're attempting to do. Please keep up your fine efforts. God Bless You.

Peace:
Gregory A. Daneke
Visiting Assistant Professor
Stillwater, Oklahoma

Mr. Kenney asked that *Sunstone* "bear the witness worthy of a living faith that is both intellectually vigorous and spiritually discerning." With the printing of "Facing Spiritual Reality" by John T. Kesler this wish is, in my mind, fulfilled. Mr. Kesler's story of conversion is one of real inspiration, not sterile intellectualism or modeled sentimentality. Wanting to avoid, as he says, "self-deluding leaps of faith," he does make the final leap, well-timed and perfectly executed, across a much smaller chasm than originally thought. Though one hesitates to comment on something as intensely personal as one man's conversion, I do wish to extend my gratitude to Mr. Kesler for sharing his experience.

In his latest book, Chaim Potok observes that "all beginnings are hard." Certainly the real truth of this seemingly simple statement is apparent to the staff of this journal. In my opinion, the challenge of this beginning has been met and I look forward to the next issues of *Sunstone*.

Craig L. Fineshriber
Salt Lake City, Utah

The first issue of *Sunstone* showed excellence in a brilliant form. I thrilled at reading Robert Elliott's play, "Fires of the Mind." I was challenged by his attention to subtle details and the exquisite ending. Thanks for presenting it.

I was stimulated by the articles of Norman and Kesler. The elasticity of the articles allows the individual to deepen his awareness of self. May the same detail and careful planning go into succeeding issues of *Sunstone*.

Madeline Free
Salt Lake City

Editor:

The first issue of *Sunstone* arrived a few days ago and I wanted to thank you for it and convey to you my impressions. To begin with it is very handsome; the design and the layout are first rate. You can take a good deal of pride in its appearance.

My main criticism of the first issue, if I can be honest with you, is that it's difficult to know where you stand. There is no declaration of purpose that seems clear cut nor is there any focus or indication as to the direction the journal will go. As a teacher I've always believed that it was important to nail my thesis to the door the first day of class to let students know what they could expect of me and what not to expect, to tell them what I believed in and where I stood, just to clarify things and to make communication easier. In spite of your editorial, I don't find that declaration or focus in the first issue.

I know the problem you have in publishing a journal among a people who suspect your motives and intent before you begin and I would not by any means encourage you to be rash or radical, but I do think that you have to address yourself to issues and concerns that are of vital moment to young people in the Church if *Sunstone* is to succeed. When giving some advice to a novice editor and publisher over a hundred years ago, William Gilmore Simms, one of the South's most important writers, said this, "Remember what Spenser writes over all the doors but

one — 'be bold, be bold, be bold!' Over only one door he writes — 'be not too bold.' " It's the same advice I would give you from my perspective of five years as the editor of *Dialogue*. To be bold does not mean to be irresponsible but it does mean that you will have to face honestly and squarely the problems that concern young people in the Church today. If you do this and do it responsibly I believe *Sunstone* will thrive and will make a significant contribution to the lives of those who read it.

As before, I extend encouragement and offer our best wishes for your continued success as you strive to mold the journal into what it should be. *Sunstone* has great potential. Like the stones on the Nauvoo Temple it can help set a foundation for those who need stability and direction. It can be illuminating and it can be solid. May it be both as you desire it.

Best wishes,

Robert A. Rees
Editor, *Dialogue*

Your comments are welcome and well taken. I shall try to be more precise: Sunstone is a journal of Mormon experience, scholarship, issues, and art. Written, produced and promoted by young Latter-day Saints, it is independent of official Church direction, but not of Church teachings. From the beginning it has been our aim to provide a responsible forum for the questions, the discussions, the witnesses, and the achievements of Mormon youth.

We resist the temptation to "take a stand" favoring any ideological faction or special interest. Sunstone will not be used as a vehicle for dissidents who wish to remake the Church in their own image or for intellectual marshmallows who would turn it into an organ of religious propaganda. Dialogue serves liberal intellectuals well; as does Exponent II, Mormon women; the Journal of Mormon History, Church history buffs; and BYU Studies, quasi-official Church scholars. The Ensign remains indispensable for all Latter-day Saints who wish to keep posted on Church developments and official policies. Sunstone has chosen the difficult road of the generalist,

oriented toward a challenging and inspiring generation of students and young adults.

*I am instinctively distrustful of admonitions repeated three times, especially when followed by exclamation marks. When I read, "Be bold! Be bold! Be bold!" I think of the boldness of the editors of the Nauvoo Expositor, and the boldness of those who suppressed them. And I think there must be a better way. Boldness may not necessarily imply irresponsibility, but in my mind it is too often associated with defiance to be *Sunstone*'s watchword. Honesty, straightforwardness, creativity, innovation, constructiveness, and, for all its over-use, relevance I would claim for *Sunstone*. Boldness I shall be happy to leave for other publications.*

*As to the criticism that we have failed to show our colors, I think most who read the articles found a clear and comprehensive picture of what *Sunstone* stands for. Bob Elliott's exceptional play *Fires of the Mind* focuses on the spiritual struggles of a missionary who doubts he has a testimony — a theme that troubles many Latter-day Saints. His honest realism concludes with a soul-provoking ending that challenges both those who see themselves as Church pillars and those who sometimes feel more like sagging roofs or squeaking doors. John Kesler's conversion story, on the other hand, manifests a wholly different approach that can be strengthening for many questioning youth. An informative look at early Christian teachings about the exaltation of man, a stimulating review of Erickson's classic *Mormon Group Life*, background material on Mormon art-glass windows, and an amusing view of games Mormons play helped, I think, complete the broad appeal of the first issue.*

*In the current issue Peggy Fletcher has succeeded in selecting a wide array of articles that reflect *Sunstone*'s commitment to treat "honestly and squarely the problems that face young people in the Church today." But being a Latter-day Saint is more than facing problems. It is also hopeful, joyful, inspiring — and sometimes downright funny. *Sunstone* will continue to address itself to all these aspects of Mormon life, and to that end invites the suggestions and criticisms of our readers.*

Scott Kenney