

Readers' Forum

Praiseworthy

With great gusto I applaud the concept, course, and creativity of *Sunstone*. While shedding most of the scholarly trappings and profundities of *Dialogue* and *BYU Studies*, your magazine has nevertheless retained the same spirit of openness and thought-provoking inquiry.

Features such as Update and One Fold and the generally high quality of graphics (oh, but what a garishly red All-Seeing Eye in your fall issue!) widen your appeal past the scholar to the educated and intelligent layman. All in all you serve as a kind of middlebrow-highbrow LDS *Atlantic Monthly* that seeks to inform and instruct as well as to entertain. What you have done in the past bodes well for the future.

James L. Kimball Jr.
Salt Lake City, Utah

Saint Speaks Back

E. B. White, in the introduction to his collected essays, quotes Dr. Johnson's comment that the essay is "an irregular and undigested piece." While Orson Scott Card's essay on "Saintspeak" offers some funny examples of language, his analysis is still much too irregular. Aside from some minor matters (wards, both the name and the ecclesiastical divisions, began in Nauvoo, not in Salt Lake City), what is most disappointing is his failure to distinguish between the few creative uses of language in the church and the majority of examples which reflect only our succumbing to the general decline of the English language. One assumes that it is only writer's irony when Card says that learning Saintspeak, for the new convert, "is more difficult than all the new callings and all the new commandments put together"; the near-absence of serious language teaching in schools (including universities) these days makes misuse of the language very easy, almost second nature, for old and new Mormons.

The first group of examples in the essay is existing English words to which Mormons give special meanings. Unfortunately, we are sometimes surprisingly inept at choosing the words on which to bestow our new meanings, and sometimes we should leave old words well enough alone. In what one guesses is

another use of irony, Card says that we "magically upgraded" the good old ward recreation hall into a "cultural hall." The fact is that we still use the hall mostly as a gym, as we always have. Some would suggest that upgrading the name for the gym is an attempt to make up for the fact that we have downgraded the building — neither the names nor the architecture are as honest as they once were.

Another terrible example is "investigator," a word we will probably have with us until the millenium. But couldn't some well-read English teacher among us have thought of a better word to call non-members, especially when we so often use the word to their face — missionaries introducing members to "our new investigator," Sunday School superintendents telling them that they will "go to the investigator's class." Maybe part of the problem is with words that are thought up in Salt Lake City, which wasn't officially part of the mission field until recently. Now we are on the verge of adding "name extractor" to our lexicon. Horrors! That sounds more like a science fiction creature than the good German couple across the street called to read microfilm for evenings on end. Since the work they will do is hard enough, couldn't we have found for them a more congenial name? "Researcher" or "genealogy missionary" — almost anything would be better.

The next two categories in the essay are coined words and allusions. Surely calling an innocent little kid a "CTR" is not "a creative expression of Mormon culture." The widespread dislike among Mormons of FDR (note the initials) and his WPA, NRA, and all those other initialed agencies should have saved us from "CTR." And some of the examples of allusion, the third category, are just not allusions. While a Sunday School teacher may allude to Joseph Smith by talking repeatedly of "Joseph," it is not an allusion when someone says "Eliza R. Snow" — that is her name. The new member's problem is not the too frequent use of allusion but his ignorance of church history. Fortunately the solution to that problem — learning the history — is easier than overcoming the first two.

Certainly the last thing to show any creative use of culture is the language

patterns that Card finds to uniquely Mormon. In fact, if he had looked at books like Edwin Newman's *Plain Speaking* or *A Civil Tongue*, he would have found that most of his examples are just plain old cliches. Again, the reason they may seem to be uniquely Mormon is that many of us spend so little time among non-Mormons we don't really know what is unique about ourselves.

A great collection of essays which illustrate the decline of the language is Dwight Macdonald's *Against the American Grain*. In "Updating the Bible," a criticism of the New English translation, he says that he

knew all the great passages would be bulldozed flat, but still it was a shock to go from: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly . . ." to: "When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things. Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror." Like finding a parking lot where a great church once stood. But what I was not prepared for was the opposite — the inflation of simple Anglo-Saxon into academes . . . The Camford-style Sermon on the Mount might be pastiched, using only phrases that appear in this translation:

When he realized how things stood, Jesus held a meeting to look into the matter. It was no hole in the corner business. He went up the hill and began:

'And now, not to take up too much of your time, I crave indulgence for a brief statement of our case. How blest are those that know that they are poor. You are light for all the world. If a man wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. I also might make bold to say that you cannot serve God and Money. Do not feed your pearls to pigs, and be ready for action, with belts fastened and lamps alight. Thank you for giving me a hearing.

He then went to lunch with some distinguished persons."

Is this all too critical? For a people that still read to each other from the King James Bible, Macdonald's closing comment in "The Decline and Fall of English" should sound right to us: "English, like other languages, is an aesthetic as well as a practical means of communication. It is compounded of tradition and

beauty and style and experience and not simply of what happens when two individuals meet in a barroom, or a classroom. 'We must write for the people in the language of kings.' "

Karl Haglund
Salt Lake City, Utah

Temple Discussion

Richard Poll mentioned in his recent article in the *Journal of Mormon History* about Nauvoo that there has not been an adequate treatment of the Mormon temple experience written yet. Leone's article is at least an attempt to fill the vacuum. Because the nature of the temple secrecy prevents many from sharing ideas regarding temple worship, even when a kosher class on temple worship is offered to college students, as was recently the case in Ogden, those who are fearful of telling too much make it difficult to have enlightening discussions. Because the sacred focus of the temple causes most of us to honor the appeal to guard our discussion of sacred things outside the temple perhaps we need a session from time

to time, in the temple, to share things we have learned and raise queries to things we need to know.

I personally believe we should create a deeper meaning in temple worship by talking about it more, rather than less.

Ronald O. Barney
Kaysville, Utah

Equus—See the Play

One matter unmentioned in Bitton's review of *Equus* precludes my seeing the movie on ethical grounds—something that, I think, should be a consideration when money is to be spent. In this case national humane societies urge a boycott because the intentional blinding of horses was involved in making the movie. Since members have been enjoined to be reverent towards all life by all the prophets, condoning cruelty by financially supporting such an enterprise would not seem consistent—yet another reason to see the play.

Scott S. Smith
Thousand Oaks, California

The annual awards banquet will be held in Los Angeles on 11 May. Nominations are now being accepted by ALMA members for the "most positive use of the media in the building of the Lord's kingdom." Last year's awards were given to the Tabernacle Choir, Heber Wolsey, and Lex de Azevedo.

For further information contact ALMA, P.O. Box 3732, Hollywood, CA 90028, Gordon Jump in Los Angeles (246-3779), Mike Helmantoler in Washington, D.C. (588-4683), or Robert Starling in Salt Lake City (363-2040).

LDSF

LDSF is the title of an anthology of original science fiction, supernatural fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction directed at Mormon audiences and offering a creative outlet for Latter-day Saint writers. Deadline for submitting short stories for the first volume is a postmark of August 1, 1979. Each story accepted for publication will learn the author \$100; there is no limit to the number that may be submitted. Stories must fit into the general "SF" category and have some element unique to Mormons or Mormonism—characters, message, setting, etc. There is no particular limit on the number of words other than the designation "short story." Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced and the title of the story, the author's name and address should appear at the top of the first page. Send manuscripts to "LDSF," 2455 Calle Roble, Thousand Oaks, California 91360.

MHA

The 1979 annual meeting of the Mormon History Association will be held on the Graceland College campus in Lamoni, Iowa, 25-27 May. Papers will be presented on the Mormons in Iowa, the RLDS experience, Mormon millennialism, early Mormon personalities, Mormons in the twentieth century, and Mormon journalism.

Buses will leave Thursday, 24 May, from Salt Lake City and will follow the Mormon trail east to Lamoni, a city 100 years old this year. Cost will be about \$100. Housing will be available in the dorms. Buses will return to Salt Lake City via some of the historic sights in northern Missouri, arriving Tuesday, 29 May, after an over night stay in Independence.

All interested in Mormon history and the opportunity to get acquainted will RLDS groups and other groups such as the Hedrickites are invited. For registration materials write Jeff Johnson, 729 Third Ave., Salt Lake City, Utah 84103 (801-531-2277).

A Mormon Associations

AMCAP

The Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists will hold its first semiannual meeting Friday morning, March 30, 1979—the first held in conjunction with April conference. There will be an address by a General Authority, followed by a breakfast and discussion groups. Discussion groups, which will be kept small and informal, will last officially until noon and will focus on ways of integrating gospel principles with professional practices. The meetings will be held in the south chapel of the LDS Institute at the University of Utah. Final details will be available after 1 March. They may be obtained from Burton C. Kelly, Ph.D., C-273 ASB, BYU, Provo, Utah 84602.

ALMA

A reception for all members as well as those interested in joining the Associated Latter-day Media Artists will be held March 31 between the Saturday afternoon and Priesthood sessions of April Conference at the Salt Lake Seventeenth Ward.

Tentatively scheduled for the middle of April, ALMA is also sponsoring Media

Arts Seminars in both Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. Open to the public as well as members, some thirty different classes will be taught by top professionals in the various fields.

