

# Readers' Forum

## Better Copy Editing

Your September-October 1978 issue—along with new reduced rates for students—convinces me to renew my lapsed subscription. I appreciate seeing *Sunstone* begin to realize what seems to me its purpose: the creation of a forum in which Mormon experience may be responsibly addressed from a variety of perspectives and through a variety of authors, both "unseasoned" and professional. I particularly enjoyed Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton's article, "Henry Ward Beecher and the Mormons," and Lavina Fielding Anderson's paper on L.D.S. missionary fiction.

I was disappointed to note, however, that the quality of your copy editing has not yet equalled the quality of content. I found myself distracted by graphic and editorial inconsistencies in a number of places (closing credits in the "Reviews" section is only one minor example), not to mention typos and entire line deletions. *Sunstone* and the authors it has attracted deserve a much higher level of professionalism, particularly since other "markets" for publication exist for several of the articles in this issue.

Thank you for your efforts. I have enjoyed watching this magazine evolve and hope to see its professionalism match the integrity of the manuscripts you have solicited.

Bonnie M. Bobet  
Berkeley, California

## Response to Politics

When *Sunstone* was in its infancy, I was happy to give moral and financial support to the cause because I sensed a need for a radical critique of certain aspects of Mormon society and (how did I ever dare!) doctrine. After a couple of years, I sensed that my hopes would not be fulfilled, that such a critique was not going to be accepted, and that *Sunstone* had failed its radical potential in efforts to gain the necessary circulation. I should have been more patient. The most recent issue (Jan-Feb 1979, why does it arrive in June?) contained several pieces which came quite close to my original vision. The article most on target was the review of *Patriarchs and Politics*. Linda Sillitoe's remarks on sexism in the Church were so

refreshing! Her frank comments on recent "events" reflecting shifts in attitudes, policies, and doctrines concerning the woman's roles in the Church should be complemented by future articles of this sort.

*Sunstone* has the potential to develop the radical consciousness of individuals in the Church who are frustrated, thwarted, stifled, and generally revolted by the authoritarian patriarchy of the Church. These aspects of the Church have been simply and naturally absorbed from its historical and cultural context and do not have to remain there. If feminism and Mormonism are diametrically opposed, as Warenski asserts, some change is inevitable. Feminism is not going to go away and feminist Mormons will gradually choose to cut off their affiliation with the Church (as did my wife and I). It is really the only alternative open to individuals of conscience who have tired of being ostracized for bringing up these issues in Sunday School classes. It may be convenient to let men run things in the Church, but over the decades, these policies stunt the fulfillment that women can experience and deprive men of the chance to learn to view women as equals and to admire the full range of qualities they display when living in an open social and institutional structure.

Tod Sloan  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

## Response to Peterson

Although it's completely out of character on my part, allow me to congratulate you on the Jan-Feb issue, just rec'd. *Sunstone* finally and at last lives up to what it was meant to be.

However, I hope you won't be dismayed if I find one small fly in the ointment. Levi S. Peterson's review of Vardis Fisher's *Children of God* certainly will win him Brownie points, but it qualifies more as a bearing of testimony than a book review. How easy it is to damn the book because its portrayal of the Mormon prophet "falls far short of what Joseph Smith had to be." It took no courage to say this; however, it is beside the point. As a reviewer, Brother Peterson should evaluate the book not on its faith-promoting qualities but in comparison with what else has been

published in the field. The first 300 pages of *Children of God* constitute the finest novel of Joseph Smith ever written. What can stand beside it? Nothing. So, until a better novel comes along, it has to be number one.

It also is hardly cricket to use the *ad hominem* attack on Fisher—yes, he was baptized a Mormon; yes, he was instrumental in converting his parents; yes, he lived among the Saints all his life; but he really didn't know the Mormons because he didn't have a temple recommend or obey the word of wisdom. So his book falls short. This, I must stay, is really shabby stuff.

Of course Fisher was bitter about the reception of his book. Of course he was anti-establishment. But the last time I saw him he made a point of telling of his cordial relations with his bishop. Okay, he didn't want a Mormon funeral, but for the same reason that one of my father's brothers insisted on being buried in a business suit rather than temple robes—he didn't like what the establishment had done to him. Right or wrong, Vardis Fisher had his integrity. I don't find this in the review.

Samuel W. Taylor  
Redwood City, California

## Poking at Church

Please send me no more *Sunstone* magazines. The writers of the articles and reviews all try to sophisticated and to get attention in any way possible. It is a very ridiculous magazine.

It's funny to me that people would spend so much time poking, poking, poking at the Church of Jesus Christ. . .

Helen C. Broadbent  
Rancho Palos Verdes, Ca.



## Improvement Noted

Enclosed is our renewal for one year of *Sunstone*. Frankly, we had been less than impressed with some of the issues, but the latest one was very good. The collection of articles covered a wide range and several were very interesting and thought-provoking.

We hope that the quality of content of *Sunstone* continues to increase—hence our renewal.

Donna K. Lyon  
New York, N.Y.