

# SUNSTONE

Founded in 1974  
SCOTT KENNEY 1975-1978  
ALLEN D. ROBERTS 1978-1980  
PEGGY FLETCHER 1978-1986  
DANIEL RECTOR 1986-1991

Editor and Publisher  
ELBERT EUGENE PECK

Managing Editor  
BRIAN FAGEL  
Associate Editors  
GREG CAMPBELL  
BRYAN WATERMAN  
Volunteer Extraordinaire  
TERESA WHITING

Office Manager  
CAROL QUIST  
Production Manager  
MARK J. MALCOLM  
Renewals  
GREGORY A. KEMP

Section Editors  
MARNI ASPLUND CAMPBELL, Cornucopia  
LARA CANDLAND ASPLUND, fiction  
DENNIS CLARK, poetry reviews  
ERIC JONES, fiction contest  
STEVE MAYFIELD, librarian  
DIXIE PARTRIDGE, poetry  
WILL QUIST, new books

Editorial Assistants  
BEVERLY HOPPE, JANE MOMBERGER  
LISA SURBER RUST, ERIC SINGLETON  
JOHNNY TOWNSEND, Wm. WILLIAMS  
LYN WORTHEN

Advisory Editorial Board  
PAT BAGLEY, BRIAN BEAN, T. E. BEHREND  
JAY S. BYBEE, CONNIE DISNEY  
MICHAEL HARWARD, LYNNE KANAVAL WHITESIDES

Contributing Columnists  
ORSON SCOTT CARD, COURTNEY CAMPBELL  
DORICE WILLIAMS ELLIOTT, MICHAEL HICKS  
TONY HUTCHINSON, DAVID KNOWLTON, TON LEFLER  
MARYBETH RAYNES, PETER SORENSEN  
STEPHEN THOMPSON, DAVID P. WRIGHT

Correspondents  
JOANNA BROOKS, NEAL & REBECCA CHANDLER  
KARL SANDBERG, JONATHAN & COLLEEN THOMAS

Cartoonists  
PAT BAGLEY, CALVIN GRONDAHL  
KIRK ANDERSON, MAIT CHATTERLY, CHRIS CHECKETTS  
KENT CHRISTENSEN, SAM DAY, STEVE KROPP  
CARL MCBRAYER, ROBERT MURRAY  
BRUCE READE, BRAD VELEY, RYAN S. WAYMENT

Volunteers  
ANN BENSON, VIRGINIA BOURGEOIS  
JIM DYKMAN, VICTOR GENER, ROSS HAMMOND  
BARBARA HAUGSOEN, JAY LARSEN, PHYLLIS BAKER  
WENDY SILVER, JEANNE WINDER, JIM WOOD

## THE SUNSTONE FOUNDATION

Board of Trustees  
KENT FROGLEY, vice chair; STAN CHRISTENSEN  
ROBYN KNIBBE DAVIS, JAMES N. KIMBALL, GLEN LAMBERT  
MARY ANN MORGAN, LOUIS MOENCH, MARGARET REISER  
ELBERT EUGENE PECK

Executive Director  
ELBERT EUGENE PECK

Symposium Chairs  
MOLLY BENNION, Northwest  
ANN STONE & SUSAN PAXMAN HATCH, Chicago  
BARBARA RONNOW-BUNKER, Washington, D.C.  
REBECCA LINFORD, Dearborne

Art Auction Chairs  
BARBARA HAUGSOEN

National Advisory Board  
ALAN ACKROYD, IRENE BATES, IAN BARBER  
MOLLY BENNION, KATHERINE BOSWELL  
CARLAN BRADSHAW, BELLAMY BROWN  
TONY & ANN CANNON, COLE CAPENER  
RENEE CARLSON, BLAINE CARLTON, PAUL CARPENTER  
STEPHEN C. CLARK, DOUGLAS CONDIE, JOHN COX  
D. JAMES CROFT, WILFRIED DECOO, JAMES FIELD  
ROBERT FILLERUP, SHELDON GREAVES  
MARK GUSTAVSON, LIONEL GRADY  
JEFFREY R. HARDYMAN, NANCY HARWARD  
DIETRICH KEMPSKI, MILES SPENCER KIMBALL  
SHUNICHI KUWAHATA, GREG KOFFORD  
FARRELL LINES, BRIAN C. McGAVIN  
PATRICK MCKENZIE, CARRIE MILES  
RONALD L. MOLEN, MARJORIE NEWTON  
GRANT OSBORN, ALICE ALLRED POTTMYER  
DANIEL H. RECTOR, CHRIS SEXTON  
RICHARD SHERLOCK, GEORGE D. SMITH JR.  
NICHOLAS SMITH, RICHARD SOUTHWICK  
MARSHA S. STEWART, LORIE WINDER STROMBERG  
JOHN & JANET TARJAN, NOLA W. WALLACE  
HARTMUT WEISSMANN, MARK J. WILLIAMS

## READERS' FORUM

### A FABRICATION

**I** NOTE that in a recent news story, reference was made to a document allegedly written by Elder Mark E. Peterson, who was a member of the Church's Council of Twelve Apostles and is now deceased ("Elder Peterson's Masturbation Guide Sees Wide Circulation [in *Details* magazine]," *SUNSTONE*, Mar. 1996).

While Elder Peterson was alive, this document came to his attention. He totally disavowed any connection with it, since it misrepresents his position and counsel which he has given on matters of this kind. Anyone who knew Elder Peterson would know that he would not produce a document with that title, misspell his name, and place the title "Council of 12 Apostles" (with the Arabic numeral) under his name. The document from which you quote is a fabrication. It did not come from Elder Peterson.

DON LEFEVER  
LDS Public Affairs



### SSSSS TO SUNSTONE

**A** PARENTLY EVEN you men don't "get it"—the idea of solving differences in ways other than war. Your cover illustration takes a whack at the reasoning of author Carol Lynn Pearson ("Could Feminism Have Saved the Nephites?" *SUNSTONE*, March 1996). The only redeeming figures are the two puzzled men at the bottom right-hand corner, obviously your editors. Compare this cover with the one for Peggy Fletcher Stack's "Tales of a True Believer" (April 1995): contrast Brigham Young's scowl behind one woman's back (by Calvin Grondahl) with the circle of swords at the other woman's front (Pat Bagley) and guess which cartoonist dislikes women. Why print a point of view and pan it at the same time? I sob for sister and brother readers everywhere.

TORY CORSER  
Murray, UT

### COULD FEMINISM HAVE SAVED SUNSTONE?

**Y**OUR COVER illustration for "Could Feminism Have Saved the Nephites?" is a perfect example of the double-bind experienced by Mormon feminists: if they don't speak out they're never heard, but if they do speak out they're misunderstood. Your cover double-binds feminism by promoting Carol Lynn's article while reversing and ridiculing its message, which is that feminism *discourages* militarism—rather than uses it to conquer, as your illustration suggests.

The Sunstone Foundation subjects feminism to the double-bind in other ways: by advertising a dire need for feminist symposium proposals, then rejecting excellent feminist work as "unsuitable" or "not of interest" and by including enough feminism to keep Sunstone going while limiting and controlling feminist expression. Like the Church, Sunstone double-binds feminism by simultaneously exploiting and repressing it.

Feminism didn't save the Nephites, but it has saved Sunstone so far. However, like the Nephites, ultimately nothing can save any group from fatal flaws—not even feminism.

MAXINE HANKS  
Salt Lake City

Editor's response:

It was a cartoon, laugh.

We honored both Peggy Fletcher Stack and Carol Lynn Pearson by making them coverwomen and by inviting a prominent Mormon cartoonist to illustrate each article. When we invited the creator of Norman the Nephite to illustrate Carol Lynn's article, we gave him free reign; the interpretations of his work vary dramatically. Many who despise the homogenized thought control of the *Ensign*, ironically, want a similar regulation in *SUNSTONE*. I feel as disinclined to tell Pat or Cal what to draw as I do to tell Carol Lynn or Peggy what to write. I am proud to have all these voices in *SUNSTONE*.

In each of the ten years I have planned symposiums, the sessions we accepted on women's issues have numbered more than one per time period—around 20 percent of the total sessions. That's hardly squeaking by with a minimum quota. We don't accept all proposals—that's judgment, not censorship.

Feminism is a crucial part of the Sunstone formula. So are history, news, theology, and, yes, cartoons. Not all collaborations fit jointly together. What really saves Sunstone is volunteerism, good will, and, of course, money.

## EDITORIAL DISCRETION

THERE ARE TIMES when the magazine is delightfully fun and informative, even brilliant: Oliver Alden's "My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?: Meditations of a Gay Mormon on the 22nd Psalm" (SUNSTONE, Aug. 1995) touches heart-strings. Other articles appear to be veiled diatribes against the Church. In the August 1995 issue, I had the following impressions.

1. You feature the best Mormon humor in your cartoons. To really have *arrived*, all denominations need to laugh at themselves.

2. You publish news about the Church, warts and all—especially helpful to us in the hinterlands. You expose people such as Janice Allred ("Mormon Feminist Disciplined," SUNSTONE, Apr. 1995) for the free-thinkers they are, which is fine in academia or politics but wrong-headed in the Church.

3. Lavina Fielding Anderson showed a love for the gospel ("'Come Back'—Major Addresses of Howard W. Hunter, 1959–94.") We sense her hurt, but it seems not to have damaged her testimony. We need her back.

4. In Wayne Booth's "Pride Cometh Before the Fall: Mormonism and the Seven Deadly Sins," I was offended at: "And I'm afraid that since we now know just how feeble President [Ezra Taft] Benson was by 1986, one may doubt that he himself actually wrote the speech."

At that point, I stopped reading. President Benson's speech was a masterpiece. This was no feeble prophet. The talk was the most powerful, inspired, God-given in my memory. And Booth suggests a ghostwriter?! Please, exercise more editorial discretion.

5. To balance articles on alleged censorship at BYU, how about an article on the extreme prejudice found at the University of Utah, where an educated Mormon has little chance of being hired due to an overriding anti-Mormon bias? I find the latter form of faculty-hiring bias far more dangerous than the problems some faculty complain of at BYU, where the boundaries are known.

A. LAURENCE LYON  
Monmouth, OR

Editor's reply:

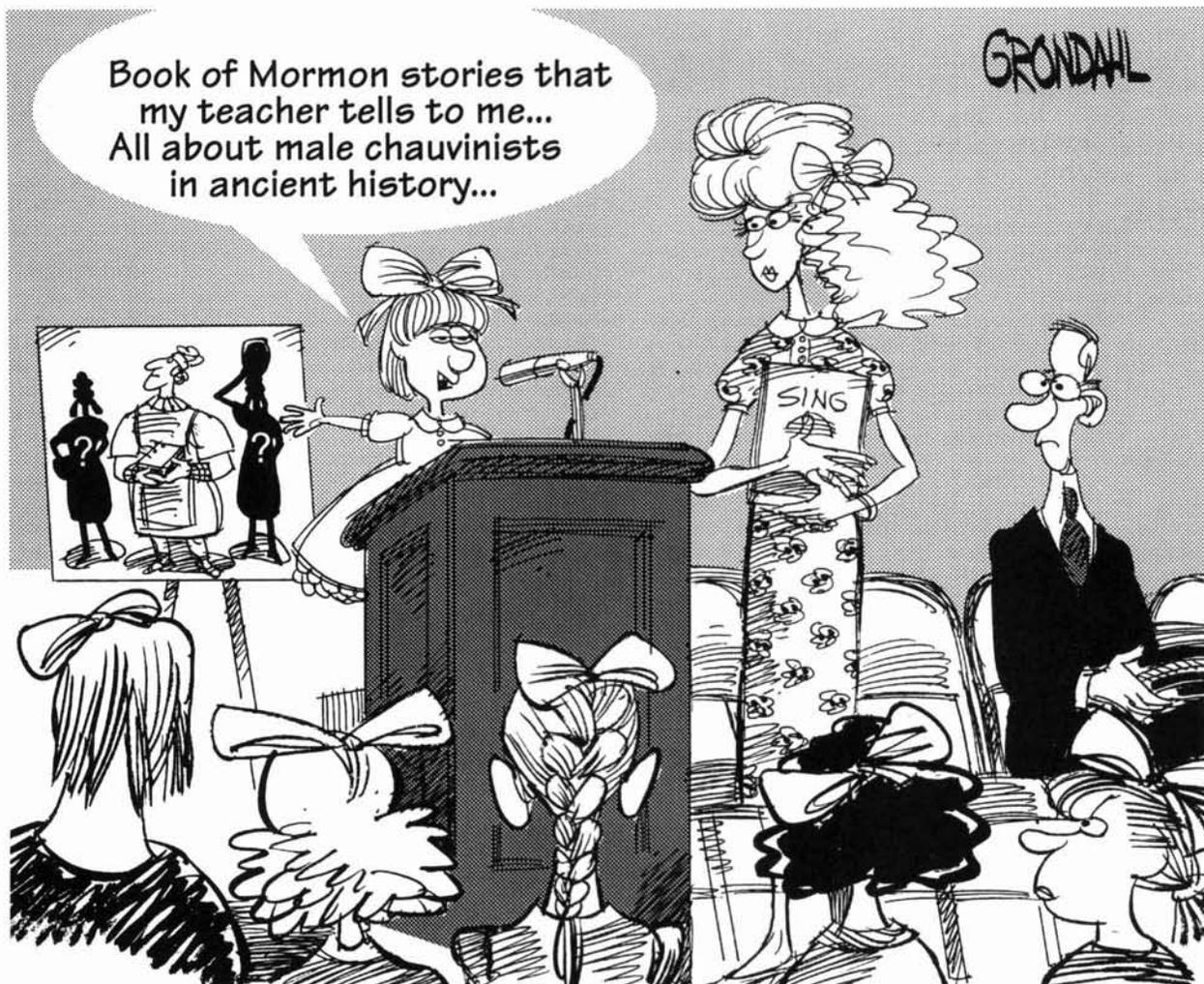
I stand by the editing of Wayne Booth's

piece. His years of practicing distinguished literary criticism give him the right to share his opinions, and his instincts were correct. President Benson may have commissioned his speech on pride, but family members say a son wrote it. Even President Spencer W. Kimball used speech writers. Once such a talk is given, the speaker owns the words.

## O CANADA!

I ENJOYED Lowell C. "Ben" Bennion's, "The Geographic Dynamics of Mormondom, 1965–95" (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995). The heading on page 23 reads, "Church Growth in non-U.S. Areas of the World," yet one non-U.S. area is missing. Herewith is what Bennion might well have written for that missing area:

*Canada.* Larger than the U.S. but with a population roughly the size of Texas or New York, spread out primarily in a belt 200 km thin. Canada's LDS demographics and history is diverse. Site of the very first unit of the Church outside of the United States; all converts in the nineteenth century were made in



the central and eastern areas of the country (Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritime Colonies), and most of these moved to Illinois or Missouri.

Continuous LDS presence, however, dates to the founding of the Cardston colony in 1887, and, until the late 1950s, Mormondom in Canada meant, for all practi-

cal intents and purposes, "Mormon Country," an arc-shaped pale stretching from Waterton National Park north and east to the southern boundaries of the city of Lethbridge and extending east to Raymond and Taber. Since the era of David O. McKay, growth in Church membership has been good but stable in Alberta and more dramatic outside of

Alberta as members moved to the cities and mission activity extended to the rest of the country. In 1965, there were only three stakes outside Alberta compared to six in Alberta. Today, there are eighteen stakes in Alberta but twenty stakes outside.

According to Canada's census figures, which, unlike LDS membership records, de-



## SUNSTONE IS SOLD AT THESE LOCATIONS

Pick up extra copies for your friends.  
Move them from the back row of the magazine display rack to the front.  
Call ahead to make sure they have a copy in stock.

**NEW LOCATIONS:** **ALASKA** Anchorage: Borders. **ARKANSAS** Fayetteville: Barnes & Noble. **CALIFORNIA** Los Angeles: Borders; Rancho Cucamonga: Barnes & Noble. **ILLINOIS** Bourbonnais: Barnes & Noble; Joliet: Barnes & Noble. **LOUISIANA** Lafayette: Barnes & Noble. **MASSACHUSETTS** Boston: Borders; Saugus: Barnes & Noble. **MICHIGAN** Dearborn: Borders; Farmington Hills: Borders. **MINNESOTA** Maple Grove: Barnes & Noble. **MISSOURI** Joplin: Hastings. **NEW YORK** Huntington Station: Barnes & Noble; Levittown: Borders; Rochester: Barnes & Noble. **NORTH CAROLINA** Greensboro: Borders. **OHIO** Columbus: Borders; Fairlawn: Borders; Ontario: Barnes & Noble. **TEXAS** Greenville: Hastings; San Angelo: Hastings; San Marcos: Hastings. **WASHINGTON** Spokane: Hastings. **WISCONSIN** Madison: Barnes & Noble.

**STORES:** **CANADA** Edmonton, Alberta: Hub Cigar & Newsstand; Greenwood, Nova Scotia: The Inside Story; Ste. Foy Quebec: Les Magazine Lecto. **ALABAMA** Hoover: Barnes & Noble. **ARIZONA** Bullhead City: Hastings; Kingman: Hastings; Mesa: Bookstar; Phoenix: Borders; Sierra Vista: Hastings; Tucson: Bookstar. **ARKANSAS** Fayetteville: Hastings; Jonesboro: Hastings. **CALIFORNIA** Arcadia: Arcadia Newsstand; Berkeley: Barnes & Noble; Burbank: Barnes & Noble; Culver City: Bookstar; Los Angeles: Seagull Book & Tape; Northridge: Barnes & Noble; Oakland: DeLauer's News Agency; Pleasant Hills: Barnes & Noble; San Carlos: A Time for Books; San Diego: Barnes & Noble, Deseret Book, News Etc.; Santa Rosa: Barnes & Noble; Sherman Oaks: Sherman Oaks Newsstand; Stockton: Bookstar, Harding Way News; Torrance: Bookstar; Ventura: Barnes & Noble; Woodland Hills: Bookstar. **COLORADO** Aurora: Aurora Newsland, Bookstar; Colorado Springs: LDS Chapter & Verse; Denver: Barnes & Noble, Deseret Book, South Monaco Newsland; Greenwood Village: Bookstar; Lakewood: Lakewood Newsland; Littleton: Barnes & Noble, Deseret Book; Pueblo: Hastings; Westminster: Westminster Newsland. **CONNECTICUT** Danbury: Barnes & Noble; Enfield: Barnes & Noble; New Haven: News Haven; North Haven: Barnes & Noble; Norwalk: Barnes & Noble; West Hartford: Barnes & Noble. **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA** Borders, News Express, Newsworld. **FLORIDA** Boynton Beach: Barnes & Noble; Brandon: Barnes & Noble; Daytona Beach: Atlantic News; Gainesville: Barnes & Noble; Hollywood: Barnes & Noble; Jacksonville: Barnes & Noble; North Palm Beach Gardens: Barnes & Noble; Orlando: Barnes & Noble, Orange Avenue News; St. Petersburg: Bookstop; Tallahassee: Black Cat News; Tampa: Barnes & Noble. **GEORGIA** Alpharetta: Barnes & Noble; Atlanta: Barnes & Noble, Borders. **HAWAII** Honolulu: Borders. **IDAHO** Idaho Falls: Hastings; Nampa: Store Front News; Twin Falls: Hastings. **ILLINOIS** Bloomington: Barnes & Noble; Champaign: Barnes & Noble; Chicago: City News, Univ. of Chicago Bookstore; Downers Grove: Barnes & Noble; Evanston: Barnes & Noble; Lisle: The Book Nook; Oakbrook Terrace: Barnes & Noble; Schaumburg: Barnes & Noble; Skokie: Barnes & Noble; Springfield: Borders; Vernon Hills: Barnes & Noble. **INDIANA** Bloomington: Barnes & Noble; Evansville: Barnes & Noble; Fort Wayne: Little Professor Book; Hobart: Barnes & Noble; Indianapolis: Barnes & Noble; Mishawaka: Barnes & Noble. **IOWA**

**Cedar Rapids:** Barnes & Noble. **KENTUCKY** Florence: Barnes & Noble; Louisville: Barnes & Noble. **MAINE** Augusta: Barnes & Noble. **MARYLAND** Annapolis: Barnes & Noble. **MASSACHUSETTS** Braintree: Barnes & Noble; Framingham: Barnes & Noble; Hyannis: Barnes & Noble; Pittsfield: Barnes & Noble. **MICHIGAN** Ann Arbor: Main Street News. Bloomfield Hills: Barnes & Noble; Grosse Pointe: Barnes & Noble; Kalamazoo: Barnes & Noble; Port Huron: Barnes & Noble; Rochester Hills: Barnes & Noble; West Bloomfield: Barnes & Noble. **MINNESOTA** Burnsville: Barnes & Noble; Duluth: Barnes & Noble; Edina: Barnes & Noble; Minneapolis: Dinkytown News; Minnetonka: Barnes & Noble; St. Cloud: Dugout Sports Cards & Newsstand; St. Paul: Barnes & Noble. **MISSOURI** Kansas City: Barnes & Noble; St. Louis: Barnes & Noble; Springfield: Barnes & Noble. **MONTANA** Missoula: Hastings. **NEBRASKA** Norfolk: Hastings. **NEVADA** Las Vegas: Borders, Beehive Book, Deseret Book. **NEW HAMPSHIRE** Nashua: Barnes & Noble. **NEW JERSEY** Cape Girardeau: Hastings; Freehold: Barnes & Noble; Marlton: Barnes & Noble; Hoboken: Barnes & Noble; Livingston: Barnes & Noble; Princeton: Barnes & Noble; West Paterson: Barnes & Noble. **NEW MEXICO** Albuquerque: Hastings, Sunrise LDS Bookstore; Santa Fe: Hastings. **NEW YORK** Blasdell: Village Green Bookstore; Colonie: Barnes & Noble; Commack: Barnes & Noble; DeWitt: Barnes & Noble; Forest Hills: Barnes & Noble; Great Neck: Fredericks; Manhasset: Barnes & Noble; Massapequa Park: Barnes & Noble; New York City: Barnes & Noble; Poughkeepsie: Barnes & Noble; Vestal: Barnes & Noble; White Plains: Barnes & Noble. **NORTH CAROLINA** Cary: Barnes & Noble; Pineville: Barnes & Noble; Raleigh: Barnes & Noble. **NORTH DAKOTA** Fargo: Barnes & Noble. **OHIO** Cincinnati: Barnes & Noble; Columbus: Barnes & Noble; Pataskala: Barnes & Noble; Toledo: Barnes & Noble; Westlake: Borders; Whitehall: Barnes & Noble; Youngstown: Barnes & Noble, Plaza Book & Smoke Shop. **OKLAHOMA** Ardmore: Hastings; Tulsa: Barnes & Noble. **OREGON** Eugene: Barnes & Noble; Lake Oswego: Deseret Book; Portland: Barnes & Noble, Deseret Book, Sixth & Washington News; Tigard: Barnes & Noble. **PENNSYLVANIA** Abington: Barnes & Noble; Allentown: Barnes & Noble; Lancaster: Borders; Philadelphia: Borders, Village Green Book Shop; Pittsburgh: Barnes & Noble. **RHODE ISLAND** Warwick: Barnes & Noble. **SOUTH DAKOTA** Sioux Falls: Barnes & Noble. **TENNESSEE** Memphis: B. Dalton Bookseller; Nashville: Bookstar. **TEXAS** Amarillo: Hastings; Arlington: Barnes & Noble; Austin: Barnes & Noble, Bookstop, B.R. News/Entertainment Service Group Inc.; College Station: Hastings; Dallas: Seagull Book & Tape, Valley News Bookstore; El Paso: Barnes & Noble; Houston: Barnes & Noble, BDL News, Bookstop; Lewisville: Barnes & Noble; Lubbock: Barnes & Noble, Hastings; Midland: Hastings; North Richland Hills: Barnes & Noble; Plano: Barnes & Noble; San Antonio: Bookstop; Sugarland: Bookstop; Tyler: Hastings; Waco: Hastings; Webster: Bookstop; Wichita Falls: Hastings. **UTAH** Bountiful: Barnes & Noble; Kaysville: Beehive Book; Layton: Beehive Book, Hastings; Logan: The Book Table, Deseret Book, Hastings, USU Bookstore; Midvale: Barnes & Noble, Deseret Book; Murray: Barnes & Noble; Ogden: Hastings; Orem: Barnes & Noble; Riverdale: Hastings; Provo: BYU Bookstore, Grandin Book, Valley Book Center; Salt Lake City: Benchmark Books, Deseret Book (ZCMI Mall, Cottonwood Mall), Frost's Books, Hayat's Magazine & Gifts, Sam Weller's Zion Bookstore, Waking Owl; St. George: Deseret Book, Dixie College Bookstore; Sugar House: Barnes & Noble, Deseret Book. **VERMONT** South Burlington: Barnes & Noble. **VIRGINIA** Midlothian: Barnes & Noble; Richmond: Barnes & Noble; Virginia Beach: Barnes & Noble. **WASHINGTON** Seattle: Barnes & Noble; Silverdale: Barnes & Noble. **WISCONSIN** Appleton: Barnes & Noble; Cudahy: Cudahy News & Hobby Center; Glendale: Barnes & Noble; LaCrosse: Barnes & Noble. **WYOMING** Laramie: Hastings.

pend upon self-reporting to indicate members, Alberta's LDS population increased from 42,185 (out of a total population of 2,213,630), for a total LDS relative population of 1.906 percent in 1981 to 45,830 (out of 2,519,180) for a total LDS relative population of 1.819 percent in 1991, which means the LDS population has actually slipped slightly behind the province's overall growth.

Other provinces have shown slightly more dramatic growth, especially the most populous provinces: Ontario and Québec. Québec still has a fraction of the LDS population of Ontario, but its growth rate has been more dramatic as the province throws off its Catholicism.

MARC A. SCHINDLER  
*Spruce Grove, Alberta, Canada*

*Ben Bennion responds:*

I PLEAD GUILTY to Marc Schindler's gentle charge of not separating Canada from the United States in my treatment of North America. My conscience bothered me enough that in a sequel to the SUNSTONE article, which appeared in the spring 1996 *Dialogue*, I kept the two countries apart and even broke Canada down into provinces on a revised version of Figure 2. I thank Schindler for sending me detailed data on LDS membership in Canada and a map of Alberta's "Mormon Country." If and when I expand my SUNSTONE/*Dialogue* articles into a book (before the 2002 Winter Olympics?), I shall incorporate Schindler's table and map to give Canada its deserved due.

## TO THE MORAL LITERATI

P ERHAPS I don't understand the subtleties of poetic construction in the late twentieth century, but Susan Howe's poem "To The Violent Literati," whether safely buried within the sanctimonious confines of an article or not, looks, reads and resonates suspiciously like poetry to me (a point she herself readily admits; see "The Moral Imagination" by Susan Howe, SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995). And, if I follow the complex world of publishing correctly, she has just had "Literati" reproduced as "a poem" alongside one of my morally "alarming" plays. Interestingly, if SUNSTONE's publisher has his facts straight (and I have a feeling that Elbert Peck is dead on about this—see point 41 in "Potluck," SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995), there is a far greater chance that her poem will be read, fantasized about, and (perhaps) acted upon by some "naive" Mormon out there (no doubt white, male, and seething with pent-up rage at everyone who doesn't meet his—

or His—standards) before anyone even cracks open a paragraph of my work. Mormon drama doesn't even register on the Peck Scale of Who Reads What (point 35).

Conversely, I think that a worthy description of "naive" might be a person who actually believes human nature is incapable of assaulting "someone you recognize as a human being with qualities of goodness, dignity and worth." I have repeatedly found that our complex selves are quite capable of sitting in the middle of a sacrament meeting while whispering brutalities into the ear of a loved one or acquaintance, secretly shared vivisections of other members' haircuts, clothes, lifestyles, etc., and all *because* we recognize them as human beings with those very qualities. Specific human beings—members of any number of various specific groups—whom we agree have good hearts, sweet spirits, and lousy taste in suits and dresses. And then after closing prayer, we smile and shake hands all around without blinking an eye. Or losing any sleep. "Goodness," of course, is capable of breeding intense contempt and often becomes a favored target.

But let Ms. Howe have her say . . . let her argue that she just wanted to make a point with her "Literati." Let her sniff that it was only intended to justify her theories on a moral imagination. Let her plead that it was in the spirit of . . . go ahead. The point is, instead of merely acknowledging this "offen-

sive" poem she had written, Ms. Howe couldn't help letting us see it. Letting those images spill over us. Haunt us. Indeed, even her "quickie" modern reworking of the parable of the Good Samaritan lingers on the hapless man being "stripped" and "shot in the neck" rather than simply mentioning his attack in passing. But Ms. Howe is a writer, so I understand—in both cases, it was impossible for her to miss the opportunity, as Brecht pointed out (much like the Elizabethans and Greeks before him), to teach *and* entertain. As well she shouldn't have. I understand, I do. Ms. Howe wrote a fine poem and couldn't bear to condemn it to a desk drawer without just one public peek—it's always easier to ask forgiveness than to remain silent. Ms. Howe should be proud rather than apologetic (as I am of her and my own work). For my money, these are the finest fifty-five lines she has ever produced.

The British dramatist Howard Barker most moves me on this topic; in the prologues to his monumental, frightening history play *The Bite of the Night*, Barker writes of a woman brought to the theatre to witness difficult, unflinching drama. Although initially hesitant, in the end, she returns again and again, each time armed with friends and saying, "Because I found it hard I was honoured." I believe a truly moral imagination *must* encompass both the beautiful and the profane; we have been instructed time and



"But enough of my personal history, tell me about  
your personal history."

1 9 9 6  
**SUNSTONE**  
**SYMPOSIUM**  
 MORMON EXPERIENCE  
 SCHOLARSHIP  
 ISSUES & ART



**FAITH  
 SEEKING  
 UNDERSTANDING**

14-17 AUGUST  
 SALT LAKE HILTON  
 SUNSTONE RATE: \$80  
 1-801/532-3344

**PROPOSALS**  
 ALL TOPICS AND DISCIPLINES  
 PAPERS, PANELS, PERFORMANCES  
 INTERVIEWS, WORKSHOPS, ETC.

**SPECIAL FOCUSES**  
 THE LEGACY OF LOWELL BENNING  
 THE CHURCH OUTSIDE THE U.S.  
 STERLING MCMURRIN

**PRIZES (\$200 EACH)**  
 BEST FIRST-TIME PRESENTATION  
 BEST OVERALL PRESENTATION  
 BEST STUDENT PAPER

**STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS**

**PRELIMINARY PROGRAM**  
 CALL FOR FREE COPY

**ART AUCTION**  
 DONATIONS NEEDED

**VOLUNTEERS**  
 GET FREE PASSES, TAPES

**SUNSTONE FOUNDATION**  
 331 RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 206  
 SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84101  
 801/355-5926

again to turn for answers toward a set of scriptures—as my home teacher, whose insight I deeply value, pointed out recently—that is literally soaked in the sins of the fathers, drenched in the ways of the world so as to be juxtaposed more clearly against the divine . . . occasionally, one really must be cruel to be kind. And to make a point. It is the individual lessons that are carried away which ultimately tell the truth and map our moral landscapes . . . who are we to dictate or second guess those outcomes? Who are we to predict where a reader might focus their interest, what passage may move them to good or evil? Epiphanies manifest themselves in the strangest ways. . . . That is why I am honored by the brave writings of Brian Evenson and Dave Veloz, and by this new-found honesty in Susan Howe, as well . . . because they are hard. Through them, I find new strength.

NEIL LABUTE  
*Ft. Wayne, IN*

### MORMONS IN ANGELS

**I** WISH TO respond briefly to Brian Kagel's reading of Kushner's *Angels in America* (SUNSTONE, "Saints in America," Dec. 1995). I might agree that "Kushner doesn't know Mormons," but then, who does? Any outsider's view of another culture or religion will have its limitations. Kushner is not writing about "Mormons" or "Mormonism." His play contains a few characters who are LDS; must we insist that these characters somehow reflect the *essence* of our culture?

I disagree further with Kagel's views (supporting Michael Evenden, ["Angels in a Mormon Gaze," SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994]) that "Kushner accepts Mormons so long as they agree to leave their religion behind," and that *Perestroika* "ends with all the play's Mormon characters either crazy, rejected and out of the picture, or decidedly New Yorker secular." It is indeed the case that Joe Pitt (the gay Mormon male) disappears rather abruptly from the play, but he remains a complex character in a state of transformation. In what sense he is "rejected" would re-

quire a more elaborate discussion. To suggest that Harper Pitt is insane as the play ends is simply a weak reading, however. In her final scene, we see her flying off to San Francisco to start a new life. She has overcome her Valium addiction and its attendant hallucinations, overcome her agoraphobia, and found the strength to leave her homosexual husband, even though her own future is uncertain. She is the character who makes the play's central discovery, that life is characterized by "painful progress." Her final vision is a "dream," no longer an hallucination, and it is a dream full of hope and courage. I have taught this play in literature courses a number of times to students who are all non-Mormon (except for one), and they nearly all find Harper the most positive figure in it. As for Hannah Pitt and her "New Yorker" secularism, this is entirely Kagel's own imaginative reading. All the stage directions say: "Hannah is noticeably different—she looks like a New Yorker, and she is reading the *New York Times*." She has been living in New York City for four years; we might expect that she would look somewhat more cosmopolitan. That she has not given up her religion, however, seems indicated by the belief she expresses in the coming Millennium, with a "capital M." Her views have, however, changed in that she is now able to find friendship with homosexuals. In the play's terms, she has "migrated." The point of the play's perhaps utopian conclusion is that we might be able to live with each other despite our differences: gay, straight, Christian, Jew, black, white. Kagel's reading appears to assume that, for a Mormon, openness to difference assumes the loss of faith. I hope this isn't true.

WILLIAM S. DAVIS  
*Colorado Springs, CO*

**A** DDRESS LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION TO "READERS' FORUM" (FAX: 801/355-4043). WE EDIT LETTERS FOR CLARITY AND TONE AND CUT THEM FOR SPACE, DUPLICATION, AND VERBOSITY. LETTERS ADDRESSED TO AUTHORS WILL BE FORWARDED, UNOPENED, TO THEM. ☐

### Pontius' Puddle



## OF GOOD REPORT

## INTEGRATING THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

*Why physical objects, sometimes of questionable taste, are crucial to the religious life*

THE CASE STUDIES presented in this book reject the popular assumption that the material dimension of Christianity results from ignorance, superficial commercialism, status competition, and the desire of institutional churches and "The Culture Industry" to manipulate people. When we look carefully at the interaction between people and religious artifacts, architecture, and environments we see that the practice of Christianity is a subtle mixture of traditional beliefs and personal improvisations. . . .

Artifacts become particularly important in the lives of average Christians because objects can be exchanged, gifted, reinterpreted, and manipulated. People need objects to help establish and maintain relationships with supernatural characters, family, and friends. Christians use goods and create religious landscapes to tell themselves and the world around them who they are. While some Christians accomplish the same thing through the exchange of ideas, many prefer to interact with visual and sensual symbols. Religious meaning is not merely inherited or simply accessed through the intellect. Orthodox statements of belief and formal rituals are only one part of the complicated structure of religion. Religious meaning must be constructed and reconstructed over and over. Amid the external practice of religion—a practice that utilizes artifacts, art, architecture, and landscapes—comes the inner experience of religion. We can no longer accept that the "appearance" of religion is inconsequential to the "experience" of religion. The sensual elements of Christianity are not merely decorations that mask serious belief; it is through the visible world that the invisible world becomes known and felt.

Religious goods and landscapes can tell Christians that they belong to a particular community or family, but material culture can also be used symbolically to exclude the "unworthy." When Mary Lee Bland Ewell converted to Mormonism, for instance, not only was her name erased from the family's Bible, her portrait was relegated to the attic. . . . Laurel Hill Cemetery excluded from burial African American Philadelphians, and beggars were illustrated as sitting barely inside the grounds. Admission to Latter-day Saint temples is limited to Mormons with "temple recommends". . . . Laurel Hill Cemetery and Latter-day Saint temples teach not only the importance of inclusion but the reality of exclusion. When the Catholic church began revising its liturgy, parish priests removed certain ecclesiastical ornaments because the art supposedly distracted congregants from the centrality of the mass. The removal of statues of the saints was a visual statement that certain devotions were now "unworthy" of public attention. To embrace one style of art or theological orientation is often to reject or disparage others. We need to be aware of what the rules are of inclusion and exclusion but also of how a variety of Christians respond to them. . . .

The material dimension of religion helps us see how faith, fashion, and family are woven closely together. . . . When John McSorley imported Lourdes water for Fathers Sorin and Granger, he wrote that he also participated in the devotion to Our Lady. McSorley not only took the priests' payment for his import services, he asked them to pray for his wayward children.

Consequently, we should not be surprised when Atlanta bookseller Jim Reimann understands his million-dollar retail business to be a Christian ministry. To assert that these people are participating in a false or unauthentic Christianity is to deny that they integrate material and spiritual elements in their lives. The practice of Christianity brings together the disparate elements of life that possess meaning; everything from our sense of style and social status to our trust in God. Sacred words become transformed into images. Physical feelings are objectified into religious language. The distinct categories of sacred and profane are inadequate to capture the complexity of Christian Practice.

We must reject the facile assumption that Protestants (and Mormons) do not have a Christian material culture but that all Catholics do. Once we shift our attention from the church and seminary to the workplace, home, cemetery, and Sunday school, another side of Protestantism appears. In the nineteenth century, Methodists displayed statues of Wesley and Protestants in Philadelphia placed sculptures of angels at the graves of their loved ones. Children in contemporary Sunday schools bring home pencils printed with "I can't Bear to be without Jesus." Mormons may give prints of temples as wedding gifts and wear Angel Moroni tie-clasps. At times, denominational commitments are asserted through display and exchange of goods. At other times, the boundaries between one Christian group and another are deliberately weakened. An Evangelical Baptist might not let her children play with Book of Mormon paper dolls but both she and her Latter-day Saint neighbor might cherish their Warner Sallman *Head of Christ* prints.

We must be aware of how differences in taste limit our ability to understand how images and objects function. As we have seen, the dualism set up between mass-produced kitsch and autonomous art has as much to do with gender and class issues as with theology and aesthetics. We need to take seriously Roland Marchand's quip regarding the need for advertisers to know their audience: "It isn't the taste of the angler that determines the kind of bait to be used, but the taste of the fish." We already know the "taste of the angler" regarding appropriate art and religion; it is now time to understand the "taste of the fish." Bright colors, realism, duplication, and sentimentality in Christian art may hold no spiritual appeal for those schooled to appreciate subtle shades, abstraction, singularity, and emotional distance. Those who define art (like religion) as something that challenges and provokes the spirit may find it difficult to understand those Christians who find comfort and reassurance in the familiar. If we define having a personal relationship with an image or object as superstitious anthropocentrism, then we will never understand how these things function in the religious lives of Christians. ☐

COLLEEN MCDANNELL

in *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*  
Yale University Press, 1995, 271–274; Reprinted by permission

*Sunstone welcomes submissions for this section.*