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on a quarter-century
of intellectual exploration.*

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FROM THE EDITOR

SOPHOMORICS

By Elbert Eugene Peck

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Note the list on page 5 of hot dealers for out-of-print and hard-to-find LDS books (perfect gifts!). *SUNSTONE* appreciates their support; they'd welcome your patronage.

2. *SUNSTONE* is interviewing for part-time word-processing and desktop publishing help.

TODAY'S SERMONETTE

LONG AGO, my well-meaning friends and I annihilated the James Madison High School Bible Club.

In a now mythical time, scattered Israel in every major U.S. city labored to replicate the entire menu of Church programs designed for a compact, three-square-block, Wasatch Front ward village. Though surrounded by millions of non-Mormons, I was socialized in one such all-consuming suburban Mormon ghetto. Each schoolday morning, the faithful youth of McLean and Vienna Wards emerged from the meetinghouse and fanned out from early-morning Seminary via quite complicated car pools to six Fairfax County, Virginia, high schools. After the great race down Maple Avenue while listening to Harden and Weaver's 7:35 A.M. broadcast of a Souza march, the Mormon contingent at Madison, thirty-five out of two thousand students, clustered for a half hour in the cafeteria to eat donuts, complete homework, plan MIA-Maid/Explorer excursions, and forge parental absence excuses.

I learned about the Bible Club while being a member-missionary in geometry, a teach-each-other-in-small-groups class that afforded much non-supervised, non-math chit-chat. While we plotted parabolas and talked religion, one student trumped my piety by inviting me to join the club, which met in a classroom for twenty minutes prior to the first morning bell.

Mary Cummings and I were the first Mormons to join. We'd skip the cafeteria and go sing Jesus songs, testify of Jesus' love, listen to an inspirational scripture thought, and pray. I still sing the songs, especially, "I've

got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart . . . to stay." On our turns to lead the group, we taught Mormon songs, which they politely learned, such as "I Am a Child of God."

I don't recall any of the club's devotional lessons, but I do remember carefully listening to them, looking for opportunities to insert Mormon truths. For our scripture thoughts, we used Bible verses we had learned in Seminary. Initially, our texts were unobjectionable, such as James's exhortation to works over faith, but they lacked the evangelical flavor of the other club members'.

In a short time, the LDS Bible clubbers increased from two to four to six. The club welcomed the growth, but it meant that the proportion of Mormon devotionals grew, too. I am amazed that we really gave lessons on what Paul meant by "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead if the dead rise not at all . . ." (1 Cor. 15:29), and "for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Thes. 2:3), and Jesus' teaching that "other sheep I have which are not of this fold . . ." (John 10:16). Our Christian colleagues didn't know how to respond, but they correctly sensed that, despite our friendly sharing tone, our hermeneutics somehow attacked their beliefs.

Our presence had changed the nature of the meeting. It was no longer a mutual quest for Christ's spirit to help us be loving disciples through the day; now, we were earnest theologians trying to get the scriptures right. There were no real arguments, but the difference no longer fed the spirits of the club's founders; their numbers began to dwindle as those of the Mormons multiplied.

Then one day, only Mormons showed up. The next day, too. By the third day, we realized we'd lost all the lost sheep we'd been seeking, and since we were already attending early morning Seminary, the continuation of a solely Mormon Bible club seemed superfluous. So we disbanded it, returned to the Mormon cafeteria clique, and resumed eating maple bars, planning super activities, and filling out applications to BYU.

FROM A BOARD MEMBER

MAKING THE DREAM COME TRUE

By Mary Ann Morgan

WHEN I relate this what-fools-these-Mormons-be tale, I tell it with relish and humor. But the story's elements intimate larger issues, too:

- How the LDS call to always be a missionary inhibits intimate Mormon/non-Mormon relationships. Because we focus on creating positive missionary moments, we often forgo real sharing and true friendship, genuine listening and candid spiritual conversation, and unfeigned love and equal regard.
- How the proselyting motive tempts us to condescension, even arrogance, and how the rightness of our purpose blinds us from seeing that. We are oblivious to the truths others possess because we have the essential saving truths that they lack.
- How Mormons are taught to approach scripture categorically, to proof-text isolated verses for theological abstractions, and not to read the Bible large for its pervasive call to a new spiritual life.
- How we can think that we are doing good, doing "service," because we call it that, and not see when we destroy something good.
- How dwelling in a Mormon enclave does sustain a vibrant, protective, nurturing community, but that the higher the ghetto's village wall, the less we act as contributing citizens of the world and the more we act as ambassadors/saviors to a lost world. The different metaphors color how we engage non-Mormons—fellow citizens or lost souls.

This tale is not a Mormon aberration, one of overzealous youth. Our sophomore, one-way service project was clumsier than most adults', but we accurately assimilated the general, condescending Mormon approach to gentiles—friendshipping instead of friendship; converting instead of collaboration, and serving instead of reciprocal care. In our Mormon/non-Mormon relationships, when do we expect to be the receiver as well as the giver? The student instead of the teacher? It is rare for the ghetto Saints I know and love to embrace even one non-LDS friend as a whole, worthy individual whose non-baptized life's journey, wisdom, and grace are acceptable to God—a gentile with whom they feel comradeship in their quests, someone they eagerly engage for *who she is now*, anticipating joy, love, and truth in equal exchange.

More and more, Mormons encounter non-LDS in meaningful ways. Some compensate for eliminated Church programs with community involvement. And now, even our we-take-care-of-our-own Mormon Welfare is less exclusive, and the rise of Mormon humanitarian projects has turned gentiles into allies. The ghetto walls are now lower; perhaps we will engage the world differently. ☒

A SENIOR RELIGION writer for a national news magazine once told SUNSTONE editor Elbert Peck that Sunstone's magazine and symposium are rare and impressive among religions. A large, lay group enthusiastically pursuing historical, psychological, theological, and ethical questions for their enjoyment just doesn't happen in most traditions. When I heard this, I felt proud just to be a member of that community. Proud that I belong to a religion where average members care so about the quality of life in their religion that they create forums to engage scholars to better understand the individual challenges of being a Christian disciple and the institutional ones of becoming a people of God.

For twenty-five years, we have been delighted, challenged, entertained, educated and enlightened through Sunstone. Incredibly, Sunstone enriched our lives all those years while, financially, most of the time it was near death. Those who know the history know how remarkable just reaching this silver anniversary is; many times Sunstone's own doctors predicted its death, but the belief and aid of others kept it alive.

This little Sunstone gem that radiates so much light is precious, but it is easily lost. We must ensure that it doesn't vanish because we take it for granted. The hard fact is that all organizations like Sunstone require ongoing support. Thankfully, over the years thousands have donated hours and dollars to keep this gem shining. And despite limited resources and increasing difficulties in producing the magazine and symposium, Sunstone has not only survived this turbulent quarter-century, it has continually improved! Sunstone shines brighter today because many friends with modest means are devoted to independent, thoughtful exploration and celebration of Mormonism.

In the past, helping Sunstone financially meant paying off old printer's bills. Today, Sunstone's finances are better (it's not in debt, only broke). For those committed to Sunstone's continuing existence, that means we have a rare chance *now* to build a structure to shield Sunstone from the future finan-

cial blasts instead of rescuing it from the ravages of the last one.

This is done by establishing an endowment that will help counter Sunstone's destabilizing financial cycles. An endowment has been the dream of many caring, future-looking souls. But implementing it was always postponed by the immediate cash crisis of raising money to send a ready-to-print issue to press, which would then generate renewal income and restart the cycle. This all-too-frequent budgetary trauma created vicious spirals, and the longer the delay, the deeper the debt. Those nightmares are history, but with Sunstone's hand-to-mouth funding, they could easily return. The best way to prevent that is to raise a fund that will eliminate costly delays by reducing printing costs. The time is ripe to strengthen Sunstone's long-term stability, to ensure that it will be here for its golden anniversary.

To celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday, Sunstone's friends have committed to raise \$100,000 to start the long-dreamed-of Sunstone Endowment. This goal is realistic and exciting—if one hundred people each stretched to give one thousand dollars, we'd be there. (In future years, we hope to increase the total.) Some can be that generous, others cannot. We invite all friends, scholars, and students who want Sunstone to thrive to give what they can. I hope every one who feels they belong to this rare community will stretch and help make this dream come true.

Some preliminary invitations from the board of trustees have already produced some warm and gratifying commitments. We'll be under way by the symposium in July, and we'll continue on throughout the year. Each issue of SUNSTONE will give a progress report.

Dear friends, please make plans now to give. An account has been established; make checks to the Sunstone Endowment.

Thank you. ☒

MARY ANN MORGAN is a member of the Sunstone Foundation board of trustees.