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The mission of The Sunstone Education Foundation is to sponsor open forums of Mormon thought and experience. Under the motto, "Faith Seeking Understanding," we examine and express the rich spiritual, intellectual, social, and artistic qualities of Mormon history and contemporary life. We encourage humanitarian service, honest inquiry, and responsible interchange of ideas that is respectful of all people and what they hold sacred.

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"THIRD" RESTORATION?

I WAS SHOCKED by the April 2001 issue of SUNSTONE. I found the editorial, "The Church Formerly Known As . . ." and the fiction piece, "He Finishes with a Flourish," to be beyond interesting—they were edifying. This is a new experience. When I first subscribed, SUNSTONE followed the law of thirds: one third of the content was inspiring, one third was strange, and one third was apostate. I thought this was fun. Over the years, however, the inspiring content diminished to the point where my wife no longer read SUNSTONE at all—she said most articles were either self-indulgent or boring, and seldom edifying. I have to agree that the magazine's recent fascination with its own brief history has been getting rather tedious, but I loved the bizarre news, obtainable nowhere else. However, the cynical and mocking tone of some articles often prompted what my wife referred to as a "dark, SUNSTONE spirit." She literally could tell when I had been reading it by the spirit I carried with me. So I had decided not to renew my subscription—you were just not good for my soul.

This last issue has changed my mind. Parts of it were inspiring and edifying enough to give me a better and more Christlike spirit than I had before I read it. In your ongoing quest to develop a broader appeal, I suggest this acid test: do people walk away after reading your magazine feeling more spiritual than when they started? When people find even half of your articles to be uplifting, you will not have to fight for acceptance. So I am renewing my subscription for another year, to see if this new editor can help SUNSTONE evolve in this direction. If nothing else, can he at least restore the law of thirds?

ROB PAGE
Cheshire, Connecticut

NAME DISTRACTION

YOUR REPORTING AND the editorial, "The Church Formerly Known As . . ." (SUNSTONE, April 2001) on the Church distancing itself from the name "Mormon" caught my attention. When bureaucrats take over a company, government, or organization, they vow they will "improve" things. When not much improvement occurs, or when things get worse, they invariably change the name of the company, department, or organization to proudly mark their "improvement."

This latest "revelation" that for more than

a century and a half we have used the wrong-sized letters in part of the name of our Church, ignoring the fact that the Prophet Joseph Smith used identical print size (in 1841 as editor of *Times and Seasons*) seems more a distracting boondoggle to obscure the fact that the quality of our worship services and our religious life has deteriorated since the Correlation power grab.

We are adopting the "high Christology" of Saul of Tarsus (who never knew Jesus of Nazareth) and are following the path of many other organizations and churches, with "control" as the watchword. I am not elated.

LEW W. WALLACE
Arimo, Idaho

WE CLAIM THE PRIVILEGE

THE NEWS ARTICLE on California's Proposition 22 (SUNSTONE, April 2001) caused me to reflect again on certain marriage issues. I voted no on the initiative not only for reasons of conscience, but also for personal interests. Some time ago, I entered into an interracial marriage. A few years ago, my non-traditional marriage would have been considered immoral by many churches, including ours, and even illegal in a number of states, including Utah. Even today, at least one current member of the Council of the Twelve has privately expressed disapproval of interracial marriages (for the sake of the children). There is also a large age difference in my marriage. Many Church members have expressed to me their disapproval of such an age difference in a relationship. One Church leader said, "It is just not right," meaning, I guess, it is not natural, not normal, and not traditional.

Non-traditional marriages seem to run in my family. My great- and great-great-grandfathers were both polygamists. Between the two, they had some 18 wives. Perhaps, if Joseph Smith had been more honest and open about polygamy, we might have a fourteenth article of faith something like this: "We claim the privilege of marrying according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them marry how, where, who, or how many they may."

GARY ANDERSON
Pasadena, California

ALASKA, TOO

I WISH TO comment about the news article on California's Proposition 22 in the April

2001 issue of SUNSTONE. I was living in Fairbanks, Alaska, when a statement was read from the pulpit encouraging Latter-day Saints to support an amendment to the Alaska constitution prohibiting marriage status for gays.

Your article claims, "Unlike the campaigns in Hawaii and Alaska, to which Church headquarters made lump-sum contributions of \$600,000 and \$500,000 respectively, the drive to endorse Proposition 22 in California entailed rallying members to raise funds themselves and to volunteer time campaigning." This is not wholly accurate, for members in Alaska were also encouraged to donate funds for the effort.

After hearing this plea, I told my bishop that I had no intention of voting for the constitutional amendment and intended to support those trying to defeat the measure. Soon after, I had a temple recommend interview in which the bishop said he wouldn't sign my recommend until I had met with the stake president. As I did, the president asked me to return for a follow-up interview after I "fasted and prayed" about what I was supposed to do. The message was clear, but unstated, that if I continued to refuse to support the ballot initiative, my recommend was in jeopardy.

At my follow-up interview, and after the election, my stake president relented. Still, I feel angry that these Church leaders felt it was okay to use this tactic to whip members into line on this issue.

THAYNE ANDERSON
Munich, Germany

CORRECTION, PLEASE

ON THE INSIDE back cover of the July 2001 SUNSTONE is an ad for the tapes of the sessions of Sunstone West.

In the ad, my paper is mistitled as "The Development of an Anti-Mormon Gay Theology." The correct title is in fact, "The Development of an Anti-Gay Mormon

Theology." This transposed title first appeared in the preliminary symposium program but was corrected for the final version. Unfortunately, the error reappeared in the ad.

While my paper is critical of some current rhetoric, I stress in the paper that I believe the Church has the absolute right to teach that homosexual behavior is sinful and to discipline members who engage in homosexual behavior. Mindful of the negative connotation of the term "anti-Mormon," I ask that this correction be made.

DAVE COMBE
Ventura, California

BECOMING PILLARS

I ENJOYED CHARLOTTE ENGLAND'S "The Pillars, Posts, and Beams of My Faith" (SUNSTONE, July 2001), especially her comparison of her faith to pillars of the Parthenon still standing above chunks of former roof, friezes, and statues. She notes these pillars are not one solid shaft but built of layers of carefully fitted stones. Probably the faith of most of us is built in sections, subject to distress by storms that blow off protective roofs and throw rocks. Our faith may sometimes need adjustment, even shoring up.

Also inspiring is England's crediting the influence of female relatives, their personalities, advice, and comfort. Often when I face life's obstacles, I feel my mother's presence. I sense the encouragement of other women as well. Memories of their lives give me a clearer idea of my problems and how to tackle them.

I have just read *4 Zinas* by Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward. Everyone should read this book about four generations of women who didn't merely survive their times and trials of faith but became pillars of them.

LYNN SMITHERS
Boulder, Colorado

STANDARDS PLEA

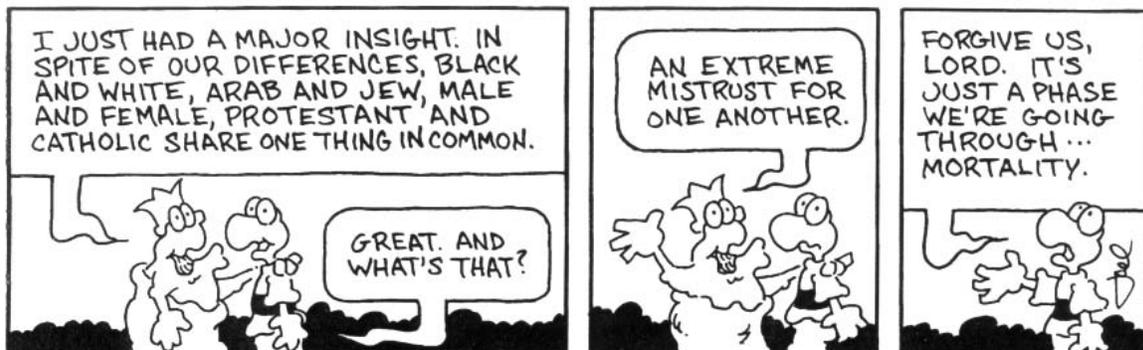
YOUR TWO MOST recent issues of SUNSTONE have been welcome in our home. Dan Wotherspoon has stepped in at a most difficult time and done a champion job. We support the efforts of him and his colleagues in reviving the magazine and opening Sunstone's doors.

I wish I felt the same cheer about the Sunstone Foundation Board of Trustees' editorial, "Open, Independent, Responsible," (SUNSTONE, July 2001). Those three words and ideas ring hollow after the debacle I witnessed at this year's Sunstone West. At the opening plenary session, the board publicly criticized one potential presenter in front of the assembled group and explained why that paper—among all the papers—could not be supported by Sunstone.

This was one of the most inappropriate public displays I've witnessed. This public humiliation seemed designed to ensure that the board was on record as opposing a presentation that the institutional church might find offensive. I recognize that the board has attempted to address this controversy through a subsequent session at the Salt Lake City symposium, in which both board members and the presenter in question participated (Tape #SL01-336). However, cruelty is difficult to undo. If the board's representatives thought the presentation was potentially offensive, they should have straightforwardly excluded it on those grounds. Justifying the paper's exclusion on grounds that it supposedly lacked adequate scholarship was a deceptive excuse.

According to the statement read at the plenary session, the quarantined presentation did not meet Sunstone's standards. I sat there and wondered, since when did Sunstone presentations have scholarly standards? Part of what I've enjoyed about Sunstone events is that the openness of its fo-

Pontius' Puddle





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rum has resulted in the occasional oddball, off-center, and (dare I say) goofy presentation over the years, among many excellent ones.

Not long after the excluded paper was delivered in an unofficial session, a Sunstone “regular” gave a presentation that included negative disclosures about a deceased president of the Church. Although these statements were not the focus of the presentation, why didn’t members of the board question that presenter’s scholarship, even though it appeared to me (as someone whose vocation is research) that the research left significant questions unaddressed? Why did this presenter escape board sanctions, while the other’s paper triggered a finger of shame? Could it possibly be that favored speakers are allowed liberties and latitude others are not? Certain other sessions (as enjoyable as they were) were delivered off-the-cuff, lacked references, were poorly organized, and were non-scholarly, so why was this one paper singled out for public rebuke?

So now I wonder what the Board of Trustees means by “open,” “independent,” and “responsible.” Do they mean that they will be open if the presenter is one of their associates? Do they mean that they will sponsor independence of thought as long as no one is upset by it? When they are “responsible,” to whom will they respond? Will they consider those who look solely to Sunstone to provide some intellectual, social, and emotional contact with their beliefs? For many who no longer participate in the LDS Church, Sunstone remains their one link to the religion that once embodied their beliefs.

Sunstone’s mission statement reads, “We encourage...responsible interchange of ideas that is respectful of all people and what they hold sacred.” I propose that Sunstone formalize this interchange by establishing peer review of proposed presentations. Review of abstracts by multiple peers, who are not members of the board, would not only decentralize Sunstone’s decision-making processes but would enhance the quality of presentations without relying on arbitrary judgments.

JANET BRIGHAM

Mountain View, California

PARTISAN JUSTICE

I DON’T WISH to carry on a perpetual conversation with Jay Baxter in these pages, but two points in his last letter (SUNSTONE, July 2001) deserve comment.

First, Baxter suggests that more Mormons are Republican than Democrat because they

see more truth in that party. I contend that many Republicans are blindly partisan and (as is the case with many Democrats) apply a different standard to their own party. Hence, we never heard an outcry from Mormons about the adulterous affairs of Newt Gingrich and Henry Hyde, Republicans guilty of behavior similar to President Clinton’s.

Second, Baxter believes Democrats could attract more Mormons by supporting Orrin Hatch for Supreme Court Justice. I, for one, think that price is too high to pay. I’m embarrassed Hatch was such an ardent supporter of Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court in the face of allegations that should have been taken much more seriously and fully investigated. Also indefensible was Hatch’s persistence in preventing a large number of President Clinton’s nominations to the federal bench from coming up for confirmation (because he wanted more conservative judges) followed now by his accusations that Democrats are holding up President Bush’s conservative nominees. A similar hypocrisy is seen in Hatch’s call for finding the truth and following the “rule of law” during the Clinton hearings and then refusing to follow the same principles in the hearings for Ted Olsen as Solicitor General. In this and the disputed presidential election, Senator Hatch has acted in arbitrary, capricious, and partisan ways.

While in some ways Hatch would be a kind of funky justice, given his ties to Napster, his song-writing, and his appearance in the film *Traffic*, I worry he would be unable to sever his long and deep Republican Party ties. Many recent split decisions on the court suggest that we cannot afford another justice like Justices Thomas and Scalia.

What the court needs is not a partisan politician, not another conservative (or liberal) ideologue, but a judge with a record of fair and balanced judgment, one steeped in the history and tradition of justices who have exercised Solomonic judgment in times of great need for the nation. It is ironic that Mormons, who believe the priesthood might some day be called to save the Constitution, are so enthusiastic about such a partisan politician as a potential nominee. With Justice Orrin Hatch, the proverbial thin thread by which the Constitution might hang might become even thinner.

ROBERT A. REES

Brookdale, California

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