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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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SEARCHING FOR TESTIMONY

AS A CHARTER SUNSTONE SUBSCRIBER, occasional attender and one-time symposium presenter, and committed Latter-day Saint, my response to the "Why We Stay" essays in the October 2003 issue may, I hope, reflect views of other subscribers as well.

I consider SUNSTONE and similar publications and activities as a resource rather than a refuge. I approach any resource by evaluating its contents to determine the extent of its merit. The standard works, *Church News*, general conference talks, Sunday School lessons, Latter-day Saint and other scriptural commentaries, St. Augustine, Plato, *Salt Lake City Messenger*, *Time* magazine, student comments in a class, and all else, come under a similar scrutiny. Of course, the nature of the scrutiny varies with the resource. I do not expect to find fundamental gospel principles in the pages of *Time*, nor do I expect to find current events detailed in the Sunday School manual from which I teach. I expect to encounter an authoritative presentation of Latter-day Saint doctrine in a general conference talk rather than in SUNSTONE. But I have found in SUNSTONE valuable insights into Latter-day Saint doctrine and practices. And while I do not normally cite SUNSTONE (or Plato, for that matter), in Sunday School or any other class I may teach in a Church school, I do not hesitate to use it or any other resource that might be appropriate to enhance understanding of a gospel subject. I have never experienced any restraint in doing so in a Church-related setting or institution.

So I felt some disappointment that none of the five essays include a forthright declaration that "we stay" because we believe that the Church is basically what it claims to be. Perhaps the setting did not seem to lend itself to such a declaration. Tom Rogers came close in his comments on "testimony," but his own testimony is still only implied.

I feel comfortable asserting that I "know" (with some understanding of the philosophical implications that accompany that assertion) that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that which it claims to be. With that testimony, derived through the process consistently enunciated by that Church, I feel free to explore SUNSTONE and any other appropriate resource I may encounter.

Thus I am grateful for SUNSTONE as a resource, not as a refuge. And I am grateful for

those willing to discuss religious issues or to facilitate such discussions.

JOSEPH B. ROMNEY
Rexburg, Idaho

WHO'S YOUR AUDIENCE?

I'VE JUST FINISHED BROWSING THE latest issue of SUNSTONE (Oct. 2003), and I have read some of the articles. I find the series of essays on "Why We Stay" interesting. However, it strikes me, and I may be wrong, that in recent years, SUNSTONE has aimed at convincing "the Brethren" that the magazine is no threat but is, in fact, a "faith-promoting" publication. This article seems in line with that trend. Again, I may be mistaken, but I am struck by the impression that the number of people choosing *not* to stay is growing annually. I am one of those people. I have been a long-time subscriber to SUNSTONE, but I find that it is increasingly less relevant to me, and perhaps to others like me as well.

Mormonism is part of my culture. Toby Pingree describes this as being "intertwined with my DNA." I have often described myself as a "DNA Mormon." For that reason, I had hoped that SUNSTONE would be a useful addition to that part of my culture. Sadly, it is not meeting my expectations. I would hope that you know who your audience is and that you are publishing articles aimed at that audience. I am increasingly less a part of that group. Perhaps an article by people like me, entitled, "Why We Left," might address our concerns and interests. But, of course, that might rankle somebody deep in the bowels of the "Great and Spacious (Church Office) Building," and apparently that is something that you wish to avoid.

PRESTON BISSELL
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

AWAKEN TO THE PLIGHT

I COMMEND THE ARTICLE, "THE Making of Immanuel," by John-Charles Duffy that appears in the October 2003 issue of SUNSTONE. Mormonism seeks to marginalize the fringe that is intent on pursuing the origins of its foundation. My personal take, though, is that the path to progression is not in restoring the past, but in learning from it and moving yet closer to an ideal—for sprinkled amidst the glory of the past are also found heavy mistakes, which if we fail to learn from, we will repeat.

That said, I would like to set the record

straight on a few particulars that Duffy cited in relation to me:

Statement: "Church intervention led to the collapse of his study group."

Correction: The Church did not "intervene," per se. True, it was threatening some participants in the study group to take away their temple recommends or even membership, but neither the Church nor any of its leaders ever issued an edict to discontinue the group itself. That came through a consensus of the group leadership.

Statement: "Allan fled to a remote location in California, convinced that nuclear holocaust was imminent."

Correction: It was in Oregon. And the reason for the trek was with the intent of helping escort a group of people to safety should a nuclear holocaust occur.

Statement: "Allan was excommunicated for his allegiance to teachings of Avraham Gileadi."

Correction: Affinity to Gileadi's work was a factor, but not a heavy factor. The stated reason for excommunication was "for extreme beliefs regarding a Davidic Servant."

Statement: "Allan believed himself to be 'the one mighty and strong.'"

Correction: This should read "one and only . . ." I now believe there are many mighty and strong (e.g. 144,000), of which I am one. Some I consider to be more spiritually advanced or finely honed than myself.

Statement: "Allan has announced . . . that a recently discovered Bible code implores him to run for president in 2004 and predicts that he will win."

Correction: This should read "could win." I never stated that I "would" win, only that my candidacy was being presented to the American people as an opportunity for them to awaken to the plight we are in as a country and seek a mighty change of heart, thereby averting the destructions that otherwise await us as a people.

STERLING D. ALLAN
Manti, Utah

(Letter excerpted from comments on Sterling Allan's website: <www.greaterthings.com>)

CLARIFYING PURPOSE

I AM TRULY SORRY TO LEARN THAT I have disappointed Richard Rands (letter, "No Rationale for Abuse," SUNSTONE, October 2003) with my response to Lavina Fielding Anderson in the July 2003 issue. Richard is a good-hearted soul whom I am especially sorry to disappoint. I think his comments arise mainly from his misconstruing the purport of my earlier comments.

Apparently he took my comments as an attempt to rationalize abuse. What I thought I was doing was broadening the context within which we might understand Lavina's complaints about instances of abuse by Church leaders. I mentioned that the Church is no democracy not as a "defen(se) against [its] imperfections," but only because Lavina had complained about its violations of "due process" and "academic freedom." Similarly, my references to the Church as a normal bureaucracy, or as absorbing influences from the outside, were not offered in any way as an excuse or apology for anything, as Richard apparently assumed.

My purpose in responding to Lavina was a quest for understanding rather than judgment. If we are primarily after judgment, we can easily find places to point the finger, inside the Church and outside, especially when we have only one side of the story. Understanding, however, comes harder but ultimately gets us closer to the truth, rather than just to the facts.

ARMAND L. MAUSS
Irvine, California

DATELINE PASADENA

I'M WRITING CONCERNING YOUR October 2003 SUNSTONE "People" item which read: "DISAPPOINTED. The Primary children of the Pasadena California Stake, after stake leaders decided to cancel their annual Halloween Trick or Treat activity. According to local sources, the stake president finds the activity inappropriate because of its connection to a pagan holiday."

I'm always amused when I see a media re-

port on something I actually know about. Almost invariably the report is inaccurate, and it's often accompanied by even less accurate speculation in an attempt to juice up the story. Reality, however, is usually a lot more mundane. For example: DATELINE PASADENA, sometime in January 2003:

Stake president: "How many stake sponsored activities should we have this year?"

First counselor: "Usually we have two."

Stake president: "I notice we've scheduled three."

First counselor: "Let's stick to two so we don't over-program the members."

Stake president: "Which one do you suggest we eliminate?"

First counselor: "How about the Halloween activity? The wards can have their own if they wish."

Stake president: "Okay."

DATELINE PASADENA, 31 October 2003:

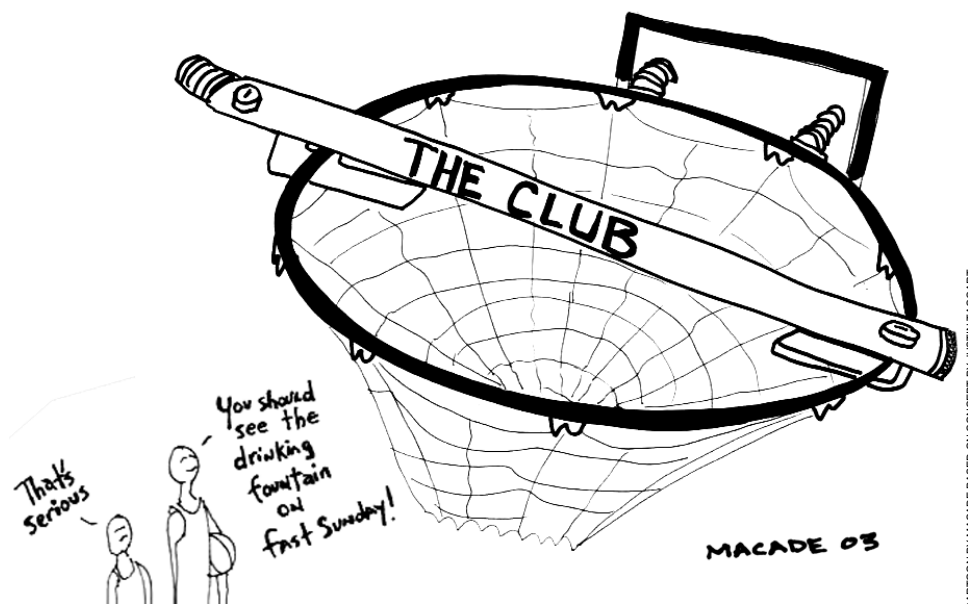
First counselor's wife to their eleven- and six-year-old Primary children: "Hey, kids, South Pasadena and San Marino Wards are having their combined trick-or-treat party tonight. Do you wish our ward had planned one?"

Primary kids: "No! We wanna go out with our friends."

STEVE BRADFORD

First Counselor, Pasadena California Stake

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Upon receipt of this letter, SUNSTONE contacted its source for the report who wrote back with a very detailed account of how this decision—made, no doubt, at the stake level as benignly as described—had been "translated" quite differently, with all the "pagan connection" trappings, at our source's ward council meeting.



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