

# SUNSTONE

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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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## MEANINGFUL BRIDGE

I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE ARTICLE IN the June 2007 SUNSTONE, "The Yoga of Christ." Brother McLemore's insights into Eastern views of Christian principles are refreshing to say the least.

I first took up yoga as a way to strengthen my back following the first of two surgeries. However, as I got more involved in my practice, it became much more important than simply a tool for physical therapy. I soon realized that there is an intelligence and spirituality in the body that we normally don't access in our Western or Christian view of spirituality. This intelligence is different from that of the spirit housed in our bodies, which we normally discuss in church. When I do *asanas* (physical yoga postures) in the right frame of mind using breath control, my body seems to have a conversation with my spirit. I almost feel as if I'm an observer watching a dialogue in a play. It seems to grow more intense the deeper into my meditation I get and as I quiet my mind. It's as if there are three pieces of me: my body, my spirit, and my mind. My mind generally chatters away all the time, but as I quiet it, I am also able to "hear" the divine conversations my body has with the spirit.

When I try to describe these kinds of yoga experiences to other LDS people, it usually sounds quite strange to them. Because we are so attuned to Western instead of Eastern paradigms, Church members have difficulty understanding what I mean, so I now rarely discuss my experiences with fellow Church members.

When I was recovering from my first back surgery in late 2005, I had a lot of time to evaluate my life and what I was doing. I realized that I had not really been very fulfilled over the last ten years. The lessons and teachings I received in church, although important, did not seem to help me cope with the stresses and questions of my life. Something was missing. Once I started yoga and meditation, I realized there was another avenue of spirituality that I hadn't explored yet—that there are different types of deep spiritual experience outside what we normally associate with church and the temple.

Shortly after I started doing yoga, I had a faith crisis. I began to question some aspects of my faith. I also had difficulty relating what I was feeling and learning on the mat in my yoga practice to what I normally experienced in church. Over time, I have come to terms

with most of these problems; however, I have found few meaningful texts that bridge the chasm between our LDS/Western view and Eastern teachings regarding religious experience. This article is one of the first things I've read which does so reliably. I want to thank SUNSTONE for including it and encourage the editors to include other such articles in the future.

SCOTT MOBERLY  
Yorba Linda, California

## FAITHLESS SEEKING CHANGE

I HAVE READ SUNSTONE FOR MANY years and have applauded the changes in the magazine since the last major restructuring; but in my opinion, the June 2007 cover article entitled "Are Boys More Important Than Girls?" by Margaret Merrill Toscano has clearly crossed the line. If it is true that the motto of "Faith Seeking Understanding" is the litmus test for articles appearing in SUNSTONE, I must sadly confess that I found nothing in her article that remotely resembles a faithful attempt to give readers greater understanding regarding gender and equality issues in the church. To the contrary, the article would more appropriately fall in the category of "Faithless Seeking Change," since it included numerous criticisms of Church policies and statements by President Hinckley, as well as the promotion of her own audacious hopes that someday the Church leadership will hearken to her uninspired opinions.

I am left wondering about the criteria SUNSTONE uses to select its cover story articles. I find it most curious that an article critical of the Church and its prophet and written by an excommunicated Mormon is given such preeminence in a magazine dedicated to increasing the faith and understanding of its readership. If SUNSTONE wants to provide space for the opinions of ex-Mormons, it should create another section of its magazine entitled, "Beyond the Borderlands," where people such as Toscano can express their views without subjecting the entire readership to a cover story article that builds neither faith nor understanding.

No, I am not going to cancel my subscription, but I hope SUNSTONE uses more editorial discretion in the future.

DAVID RICHARDSON  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

## GOING DEEPER

AS MY WIFE BIRGITTA AND I HAD breakfast recently, I read aloud to her Dan Wotherspoon's June 2007 *SUNSTONE* editorial, "Namaste." This is a word I have known for many years to mean "the divine in me bows to the divine in you." Its appearance in *SUNSTONE* sparked a stimulating conversation, and I want to capture some of its highlights for the record.

First, hearing the opening poem by Rilke set a wonderfully appropriate mood. I had quickly and silently read the editorial the day before, when the magazine first came, but great poems are meant to be heard. Thus, hearing it now was a revelation to both of us, a great beginning to this remarkable essay.

Perhaps the greatest insight for me, however, came when reading aloud the essay's third to last paragraph:

One piece of prevailing wisdom says that once we've moved past a difficult challenge, we should put it in our rearview mirror and drive away from it with all speed. As [Rachael Naomi] Remen writes of this path, "Life might be easier then but far less genuine" No, we must go deeper into those things we struggle with, not away from them. We must learn to love even those parts of ourselves that frustrate us. They are the points of vulnerability through which we are able to truly come to ourselves; they are the ground as well as counterbalance to those places and ways in which we soar.

Birgitta asked me to read this paragraph three times. As I did, it occurred to me in an all-new way why I had returned to the institutional church back in 1975, after a traumatic, excommunicated absence of the previous ten years. I'd had to "go deeper into those things" I struggled with, not away from them! And although I was excommunicated yet again seventeen years later, I did not experience the same traumatic result. The second time was liberating and empowering. Nevertheless, here I am still going back to the institutional church via *Sunstone* forums, with the need to "go deeper into those things we struggle with."

This editorial also gives me new direction for reconnecting with the local stake president, who cannot understand why I don't leave the Church alone. He does not seem to understand my love for the tradition of my youth and maternal heritage, despite my outspoken and often critical observations of its

present-day behavior. When I think of this particular stake president, I often think of a remark attributed to Abraham Lincoln: "There's a man I don't like. I'd better get to know him." That is not an easy task.

When we got to the last paragraph of the editorial, Birgitta remembered an incident years ago in Sweden. She now takes over the rest of this letter:

[Birgitta writing] It was wintertime in Stockholm. I lived as a single mother with my two teenaged children on the fifth floor of an apartment building in a respectable part of the city. Arising early for work one morning, I smelled something awful. Searching for its source, I discovered a homeless, long-haired, bearded, disheveled man of indeterminate middle age, reeking and sprawled against the wall a few feet from my front door. Spread around him was debris of all sorts: smoking paraphernalia, chewed chicken bones, and other disgusting trash. I was shocked.

The words of Jesus came immediately to my mind: *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* I said to the man: "What are you doing here?" He mumbled incoherently. As I

wrestled with my conflicted feelings of disgust and Christian principles, I closed the door and stood inside wondering what to do. I called the police. The problem was solved externally but not internally. I felt guilty. How could I have done differently in the name of Jesus? That dilemma has affected my choices in various difficult situations since. It's easier to think that we live out the love of Christ in our sanitized society than to actually behave as Jesus did among the rejected of his time.

Dan, your message in the essay is beautifully, poetically, and cogently written. I was moved deeply and filled with joy. You have given voice to much of my own heretofore unexpressed experience. Thank you.

EUGENE AND BIRGITTA KOVALENKO  
Los Alamos, New Mexico



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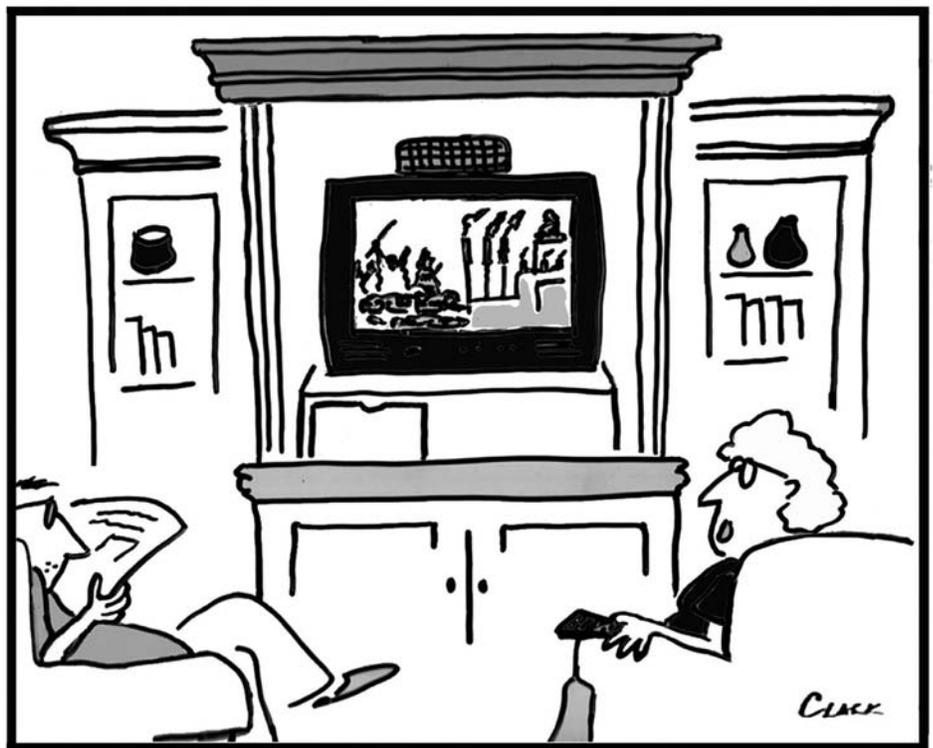
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## HONEST JON by Jonathan David Clark



"Unbelievable! Honey, did you know that in some cultures people spend one third of their lives in front of shrines?"