

ENOUGH!

BY SEDLEY PARKINSON

We had endured their taunts every day. What would happen when we finally faced them?

My companion's patience had come to an end. He decided to finally confront the motley band of punk rockers. "Who said 'Mormoner?'" he firmly asked.

I could hear my heartbeat during that eternal, silent pause.

Then he confidently said, "Do you really want to know who we are and what we do?"

I was the brand-new missionary given to Elder Leavitt, who had only arrived in Sweden two months earlier. My eight weeks in the MTC had only partially prepared me for the culture transition I was experiencing. My language skills were still, you could say, developing, and my senior companion's were not much more progressed. We had learned several door approaches and discussions by heart, but this memorized speaking was the easy part. Understanding what the people said and then responding correctly was the hard part.

Every day, as we left our apartment, we would ride our bicycles past a school where there was a group of loitering youth. Being from the farmlands in Idaho, I had only heard about "punk rockers," their elaborate clothing, and their unpredictably wild lifestyles. There in Sweden, I was given the opportunity to gain a real firsthand experience. School was out for the summer, and a group of 10 to 15 of these punkers would gather every day and do nothing except harass the passers-by. Guess who stood out as prime targets in our white shirts and ties? Day after day, they yelled "Mormoner" (Mormons), followed by words which had not been included in our MTC Swedish vocabulary lists. I could tell that we were becoming a prime source of entertainment as we cycled past. Over my first week in the field, these foul incomprehensible phrases

had become an afflicting plague, growing in length, volume, and intensity.

Being a new missionary, I thought my whole two years would follow this pattern. I was ready to resign myself to bowing down and suffering in silence. One day we were approaching the group again, and Elder Leavitt and I began again to pedal faster to help limit our exposure to the embarrassing harassment. A new set of phrases spewed forth as we rapidly passed. I, of course, did not understand what was verbally hurled, but my senior companion apparently did. We rode 30 or 40 meters farther while he hesitated and thought. "Enough!" was his response.

Elder Leavitt jumped on his brakes, abruptly slamming to a sharp stop. I swiftly swerved to keep from crashing into his bike and halted on the other side. Gathering myself, I looked over my shoulder. My companion had turned back and was heading straight for that motley band as fast as he could pedal! Only a few seconds had passed, but visions of poor Elder Leavitt being slugged, kicked, clubbed, and knifed flew threw my mind. I had to get over there to save him. I turned back and pumped furiously on my bike to catch up.

Missionaries diligently offer prayers each morning for help in bringing souls to Christ. We too prayed to be given teaching opportunities. We prayed to be led to those who



Later that summer, the same group still gathered outside the school, and they still called out to us, “Mormoner!” But then they added phrases such as “How are you doing?” “Where are you going today?” or “Please come over here. We have another question.”



were spiritually suffering, those who were searching for the light of the gospel. We prayed for humility and for the ability to hear the Spirit’s promptings. Up to that point, however, I had never thought about praying for safety. Perhaps our mothers’ prayers would be answered.

A line of black rubber was left behind Elder Leavitt’s back tire as he skidded his bike sideways right up to the center of the bewildered cluster. With wide eyes, they had fallen silent as he confidently placed his kickstand and stepped off toward them. I was right behind.

Elder Leavitt firmly stood, peered around, and said in English, “Who said ‘Mormoner?’”

I could hear my heartbeat during that eternal, silent pause. It was like the eye of a hurricane. One of them pointed his finger at one of the others, and a different one pointed to another, saying, “He did.” And yet another pointed at someone else.

“Do you really know who we are and what we do?” Elder Leavitt said with confidence, again in English.

We got various responses from these

youths. The winds of the hurricane had indeed shifted; we had taken control. The mood quickly changed from aggressive to friendly as we began to answer questions about the Church, about Mormons, and especially about us and why we had come so far to their country.

We left with smiles and our traditional handshakes.

The few days remaining of that summer found the same kids still gathering at the school.

“Mormoner!” they would still call out, but they added phrases (which I did understand) such as “How are you doing?” “Where are you going today?” “Please come over here. We have another question.”

In a not-so-subtle way our prayers had been answered. Through those teens, we had been given teaching opportunities; we were bringing light to those who were searching; we were indeed being ambassadors of Christ’s Church by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. I will always thank my first companion as he helped set the stage for the remainder of my mission. **NE**