

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

plaudits

I am a ten-year devotee of *Dialogue*, and though I have not always subscribed, I have begged, borrowed and bought enough second hand copies to keep up. I have been delighted this year in my English graduate studies at CSU to share *Dialogue* with a classmate who holds two doctoral degrees and an educated prejudice against Mormons as nonintellectual cultists. His concept mellowed considerably.

I have a tremendous interest in "Mormon Literature" and its development into an art worthy of its source. May I commend you for your part in its nurture. For those of us who are experiencing the care and nurture of children also, the commendation takes on special significance.

Carol Clark Ottesen
Los Angeles, California

I have just received the Summer 1978 issue of *Dialogue* and found it delightful since I have read most of the books discussed. Again, congratulations—the current *Dialogue* is more like the ones we read in its beginning years.

Beth Greenhalgh
San Mateo, California

I have enjoyed *Dialogue* since its first publication and would not like to be without it. It has filled a great need, a religious need, the need to approach problems in a prayerful, religious and intellectual manner instead of the blind obedience attitude. It is nice to know that scattered throughout the country there are other kindred souls who feel as I do.

Fawn Burt
Salt Lake City, Utah

10-year index

Your timing was perfect. I had scheduled myself to spend the entire evening looking through old *Dialogues* trying to find the references to more than a dozen articles that I had mentioned in a paper I had just finished, and that very afternoon the ten-year index arrived. Oh, what joy and rejoicing. Not only did it save me much time and trouble, but with its help, I discovered many articles which over ten busy years I had

missed. The value of my *Dialogue* collection has been greatly increased. The index is comprehensive and the introduction to it is delightful. Gary Gillum is to be thanked and congratulated, as is the *Dialogue* staff.

Marvin Rytting
Columbus, Indiana

I have enjoyed receiving *Dialogue*, and I am a satisfied customer. I do, however, have one complaint, and it concerns the index issue. While I recognize the value of such an issue to a library or to someone with a complete set of *Dialogue*, it was, for me, a waste. The only library with a complete set, that I am aware of, is BYU. The local ward, stake, and seminaries don't have them, and in checking around I have been unable to discover anyone with a complete set.

For this reason I object to my subscription being used on indexes. I propose the indexes be compiled, and offered as an extra issue for those requesting it, but not given out as a general issue to subscribers who have no way of using such an issue.

Daryl J. Turner
Santa Cruz, California

Note: *The index was in fact issued as an extra issue, not supplanting any number of vol. XI. It was sent to our subscribers as a bonus, and we apologize for any misunderstanding.*

As a harried librarian I wish to commend *Dialogue* for its professional index to volumes I-X. It makes an already heavily used periodical even more usable. Not only is the index well done, but it was also out on time. Keep up the precedent.

Russ Clement
Laie, Hawaii

daniel's stone?

Dialogue is now an important part of my life. I enjoy receiving and reading each and every issue although I became a subscriber rather recently. And what a big surprise, joy and thrill to find my name and the title of my Master's thesis in "A Survey of Current Literature" in the latest issue. It encouraged me very much.

Jiro Numano
Hyogo, Japan

more IWY

Dixie Snow Heufner's article on "Church and Politics at the IWY Conference" in the Spring 1978 issue of *Dialogue*, and Elizabeth B. Ricks' letter to the editor in the Summer 1978 issue nicely point out the horns of the dilemma the Church faces in dealing with contemporary social issues. If the Church encourages participation by its members, but does not give them clear guidelines, those participating may not be able to fill the vacuum with their own thinking. Yet if the Church takes a strong position, many members may not feel free to explore the issue or to express differing viewpoints.

The IWY Conferences point out several aspects of this dilemma:

First, there is the problem of misrepresentation, where there is a lack of distinction between those who are officially representing the Church and other members who are representing themselves. Such misrepresentation borders on dishonesty.

Second, the general lack of knowledge of most church members is appalling. This is accompanied by a lack of sophistication and appreciation of the role of discussion and debate in exploring such issues. I believe this is tied to the tendency on the part of many to expect to be told what to think and what to do. If the Church itself doesn't give explicit instructions, then the next best course for most is to follow the direction of others, whose solutions may be oversimplified. Social issues are viewed by many as simple matters of right and wrong, black or white—just like the religious issues we are taught in Sunday School. Certainly some church members desire to explore on their own the pros and cons of a social issue but feel threatened by doing so and need to conform to someone else's official position.

Finally, the tendency of the radical right is to step in and tell us that their position is really that of the Church.

I believe that there are ways that the Church can confront social and political issues while avoiding some of the above problems.

If the Church, after adequate exploration, study and prayer, elects to assume a particular position, it should not only provide rational argument supporting its stand but also should affirm the right of individuals to disagree.

On the other hand, the Church may elect not to take a definite stand but instead encourage the membership to get involved, with the following precautions: (a) explore both sides of the issue, and (b) participate as individual citizens and do not purport to represent the Church by action or statements.

In either case, it is evident that church members will find themselves facing each other on opposite sides of an issue, often diametrically opposed. Condemnation and passing judgment should be avoided, and each should continue to accept the other as "fellow citizens with the Saints." It is also likely that members may incorrectly represent their positions as being official policy of the Church. Such allegations should be challenged, again with the spirit of brotherhood.

An important lesson in practical politics is that there are usually many sides to any question and often no overriding right or wrong answers but rather varying degrees of truth and falsehood in each position. The task of those involved is to sort out shades of rightness and wrongness as best as possible to arrive at a personal position.

These options need much study and discussion. They are offered as a starting point and alternative to some of the problems encountered by Huefner, Ricks and others at the IWY Conferences. How do we begin? I would like to hear of other experiences of church members who may have avoided the problems encountered at the IWY.

Stanton L. Hovey
Tempe, Arizona

Ms. Ricks' ethical system (Letters, Vol. XI, No. 2) seems quite at ease with the Mormon precept of the end justifying the means (see I Nephi 4:13). She was quite willing by misrepresentation (the "borrowed license") to participate and vote in the IWY Conference. I find it strangely logical that she should choose not to question the clandestine nature of the Mormon involvement in the conference, but only whether these unethical activities should be directed by the Priesthood or the Relief Society. Nephi would be proud.

Ellen Morris

audiences

Edward Geary's article (*Dialogue*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 1978) was most welcome. I think he is absolutely right about our opinionated generation; but this was part of the necessity to explain what we were talking about for an audience we hoped to find *outside* of Zion, never for a moment expecting to find one within. My idea was always that I needed every kind of character—believers, nonbelievers, lukewarmers, apostates—whose relationships might make the Mormon world more clear and understandable.

At dinner with my first publisher, Alfred Knopf, in New York a year or so ago, he told me about his disappointment to find that there was no way to interest the *natural* Mormon audience in books like mine. This audience he considered unfortunately captive. I have no reason to think he did not know.

Interesting that another dinner about the same time with Isaac Bashevis Singer should also have given me a thought for Mr. Geary. I told Singer what I have told Catholic writers like Graham Greene—I am envious of them because everybody who reads at all knows the folkways and day-to-day problems of Catholics and Jews. Their natural audience is universal—no need to “interrupt . . . stories to explain.” Singer agreed about the audience he could command but said *he* was also jealous of me—I understood children in America better than he did and so got the Newbery Medal when one of his books was “only a runner-up.”

Virginia Sorensen Waugh
Tangier, Morocco

knowledge without charity

I am writing in response to Hugh Nibley's “Zeal Without Knowledge” (*Dialogue* Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 1978) which well deserves the label of “classic.” I am grateful to the heart for this man's gifts: creative and inspired thought, relentless devotion to study and scholarship, and the ability to accurately communicate. However, as I read Brother Nibley's essay, I felt not only nourished and uplifted but increasingly uncomfortable: as evil is most often the distortion or misuse of goodness and truth, so I recognized in “Zeal Without Knowledge” a potential not only for edification but also for great destruction as well.

During the past year as I have associated with various individuals at BYU and elsewhere, I've come to realize that intellectual snobbery does exist—indeed seems to flourish—within the Church. Within certain circles I have sensed feelings other than intellectual ones. The prevailing attitude often seems to be that Saints who *know* less are somehow less than Saints, or *if* Saints, then inferior ones at best. I have heard such persons claim B. H. Roberts' statement, “Simple faith taken at its highest value . . . is not equal to intelligent faith,” as a sort of motto, then seen it used as a rationale for prejudice, false pride and less than Christ-like feelings. I believe that much of “Zeal Without Knowledge” could likewise be misused to foster and support such destructive attitudes. Brilliant in conception and execution, for many of us, “Zeal Without Knowledge” could easily become a latter-day Rameumptom.

I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's beautiful analogy which likens the church to a body in need of every member:

The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which we think to be more feeble, are necessary: *Add those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we (should) bestow more abundant honour. . . . That there should be no schism in the body: but that the members should have the same care one for another.* (I Corinthians 12:17-25, emphasis added)

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord further emphasized this important principle (D&C 47:11-12).

Within these scriptures I find no justification for intellectual conceit, but rather a plea for mutual love and unity. Gifts of the mind are to be earnestly sought for and developed. Yet we can be overzealous in our quests for knowledge if those quests lead us to make knowledge our god or education a generator of factions within the body of Christ.

If knowledge is the key to salvation, as the Prophet Joseph Smith declared and Brother Nibley has asserted, then we must examine the nature of knowledge itself. Too often the scope of knowledge is underesti-

mated, its meaning limited to the assimilation of facts, be they "secular" or "spiritual." Could it be that knowledge is not merely a matter of what we *think* but of what we *are*? If such is the case, are there not many things that those who have been blessed with intellectual gifts can learn from our brothers and sisters whose gifts may appear "more feeble," whose talents "less honorable?"

The church exists, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "for the perfecting of the Saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we *all* come to a unity of the faith. . . ." Our purpose is not to judge or condemn, but to teach and be taught, to lift and be lifted, to love and be loved. I hope we can remember that intelligence is not something we acquire, but something we become, that we each start in different places, with varied handicaps and strengths, in our efforts to embrace it.

Dian Saderup
Provo, Utah

mormon letters

What a perfectly absurd idea (and an absolutely Mormon one)—an Association for Mormon Letters! The creation of great literature is a solitary act, an independent and a thoroughly honest one: three qualities anathema to Mormondom. So in defense we organize to hold meetings to cooperatively document the mediocrity of what's been written so far.

The only encouraging thought is that we must still instinctively sense our real

literary task or we wouldn't bury ourselves so massively in meetings and busy-work to cover the guilt we feel at not having the nerve to pursue that solitary, independent and honest obligation.

(illegible signature)
New York City

revise the hymnal?

The broadening of church membership should make us also broaden the range of church music. Spirituals will certainly have to be accepted, perhaps with slight modifications:

Who's that yonder, dressed in red?
(Let my people go)
Must be the people that Nephi led. . . .

However, the doctrine in these songs is for the most part sound and no major changes will be needed.

Benjamin Urrutia
New York City

notice

The *Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life* was recently organized at the American Sociological Association convention in San Francisco. Anyone interested in participating or knowing of others similarly interested should contact:

Professor Glen Vernon
Sociology Department
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

Corrigenda

The gremlin in charge of typographical sabotage worked overtime last issue on biographical notes. Clinton F. Larson's biographical note appeared beneath Arthur Henry King's poem; whereas notes on Dr. King, Clifton Jolley and Kristie Williams Guynn did not appear at all. Dr. King is a professor of classical studies at BYU; Dr. Jolley teaches English at BYU; and Ms. Guynn, a recent graduate of BYU, is working on an M. A. at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. Our sincere apologies to these fine writers.

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