

Letters to the Editors

Dear Friends of and at *Dialogue*:

It strikes me as monumental poor taste to put *Dialogue* or *Dialogue* readers in a clan with *Playboy* or readers of same.* And if this is an example of humor or someone's attempt to jar lazy *Dialogue* subscribers into putting their reading preferences in order, it comes off badly. Shades of Rustin Kaufman. *Playboy* has fine articles. But its sexual philosophy is destructive and crass. *Dialogue* should be constructive and spiritual. Warm regards in any case,

Chas N. Peterson
Dean of Admissions and
Financial Aids,
Harvard College

*The author refers to the subscription renewal form which read: "Too bad you missed the special issue on Nauvoo, the section on repentance, the article on the Manifesto and the poetry of David Wright." "I didn't miss them. I just borrow a friend's. It's too expensive. I can't afford *Dialogue* and *Playboy* too!"—Ed.
nostra culpa! —Ed.

Dear Sirs:

I enjoyed the article by William Mulder in the Autumn 1970 issue very much, as it described the problem of the intellectual in the Mormon Church extremely well. Unfortunately, it also described the attitude of many natural scientists in the Church very accurately, and Professor Mulder is probably justified in separating them from the intellectual community on that basis.

It should not be so. The natural scientist as well as the humanist should not compartmentalize his thinking so as to avoid confrontation between observed fact,

human decency and received dogma. The scientist, too, has a responsibility to deny contrary-to-fact notions, whether they are only slightly nonsensical, such as anti-evolutionism or beliefs that American Indians are descendant from a couple of families who were cursed with a dark skin, or whether they are pernicious and immoral, such as the belief that a non-white skin constitutes a curse.

The scientist's livelihood is allegedly based on a search for truth, founded on observed fact. Where observed fact contradicts dogma, the scientist as well as the humanist knows and should state plainly that it is the dogma which should show cause why it should not be discarded. Scientists, of all people, should know that the truth, not dogma, shall make men free.

I have, in the past, enjoyed the lively and controversial articles which have appeared in *Dialogue*, and which have contributed to the liberation of fact from dogma. It is with deep regret that I have observed a change in the tone and type of article in the later issues, to something more bland, less critical, and less searching. I hope that this condition is only temporary.

J.F.T. Spencer
Saskatoon, Canada

Dear Sirs:

I have often enjoyed interesting dialogue with advocates of liberalism in government, but the article by David S. King did not do justice to the liberal position. I feel that the true intellectual liberal should be the one most offended by the article, and therefore leave a complete rebuttal to one of them, but feel moved to make a few comments about the scholarship exhibited.

After protesting at length that good Mor-

mons ought to "check their politics at the door" before they enter a church to worship, Mr. King proceeds to attempt support for liberalism in government by, among other things, quoting scriptures and leaning on "good Christian principles." He never addresses himself at all to the fundamental question of where the liberals presume to have the right (perhaps from God?) to expropriate the earnings of anyone other than themselves for any cause whatever beyond protection of an individual's freedom and property. To teach me to be a better Christian toward my brethren in need is one ideal (the one chosen by Christ), but to simply steal the fruits of my labor for purposes which someone else holds to be virtuous is quite another concept — though Mr. King apparently makes no differentiation. Robin Hood's use of the plunder he stole did not reduce his crime. I could just as well suggest that we ought to take Mr. King's income for my personal needs, since he lives better than I, and even if I should have a majority vote in my favor to do just that, it would still not be morally right (though it would perhaps be "twentieth century" liberal morality).

Mr. King's writing techniques are certainly not in keeping with the usual quality of *Dialogue*, for they include such things as irresponsible anti-logic ("It seems to me that the only persons entitled to protest these [liberal] governmental programs would be those pitifully few who receive no benefits from them at all."), name calling ("Many ultraconservatives appear to have finally reached a compromise with the twentieth century . . ."), fear of popular disfavor ("This entirely false image [of Congressmen toward the Church] was bound to impede the progress of the Church . . ." [!]), and quoting out of context (see his use of D&C 134:9).

In short, I was exceedingly disappointed that *Dialogue* would print such a poor rendition of the liberal political position. Is it because of Mr. King's name only? It is obviously not because he has the scholarly qualities of sound reasoning and intellect one ought to be able to expect in a magazine of this calibre. In the future I would suggest articles of this scholarship and ability be relegated to *Ladies Home Journal*, and that the editors of *Dialogue* concentrate on articles by perhaps lesser-known authors, but ones whose scholarship is equal to the ideals of the magazine.

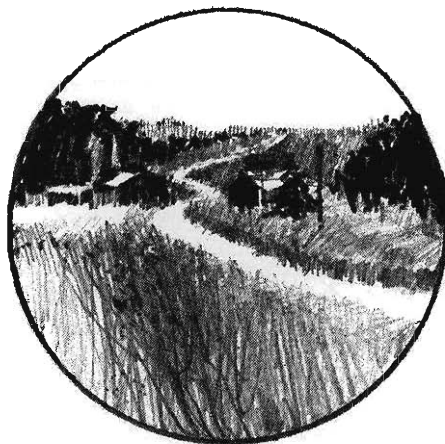
Or do we have to look forward to future articles like "Ecology and Environment" by Ladybird Johnson, and "The Political Foundations of Democracy" by Benjamin Spock?

E. Ray Martin
Los Alamos, New Mexico

David S. King replies:

Mr. Martin's contribution highlights my previous conclusion that trying to reach a consensus on how to use political agencies for humane purposes is an exercise in total futility.

Of his several statements, largely *ad hominem*, only one, in my opinion, deserves comment. Mr. Martin finds it singular that,



having first requested Latter-day Saints to check their politics at the meeting house door, I should then attempt to give doctrinal support to my own political views.

I am surprised that Mr. Martin failed to grasp the distinction between personal opinion and official attribution. The citations in the original article from the Prophet Joseph Smith and from the First Presidency show an unmistakable awareness of this distinction. It is because of it, and only because of it, that the doctrine of the separation of Church and State can accommodate itself to the demands of individual freedom of speech.

For a Latter-day Saint, acting in his individual capacity, to invoke Mormon doctrine to support his own political views, is one thing; but for him to falsely ascribe to his personal political views the official sanction of the Church, is quite another. It is the latter, and only the latter, to which I took exception.

Consistent with the above, a member would have the theoretical right to express controversial political views, even within the chapel precincts, if the circumstances made it clear that he was speaking unofficially, and without attribution. However, in my opinion even this practice would be censurable for reasons of poor taste. Latter-day Saints attend church to worship, and the spirit of worship is the spirit of unity. There are many satisfactory media, including *Dialogue*, through which Latter-day Saints can more properly express their personal political differences.

Dear Sirs:

I find it remarkable that Stephen Taggart's essay *Mormonism's Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins* (U. of Utah Press, 1969), should have called forth such a verbal flood as Lester Bush's "Commentary" (*Dialogue*, Vol. IV, No. 4). "Remarkable" it is, to me at least, that the thesis of historical-circumstantial origin of the Negro policy would inspire such a monumental research effort as Mr. Bush has put forth. Many, if not most, of us who have concerned ourselves with this policy over the past two decades, and openly voiced our dissent with it, have simply assumed this thesis without any serious attempt to document it. It seemed self-evident. But the late lamented Stephen Taggart made the effort, and in my view, the effort is quite adequate.

One may ask, "What other explanations are there?" The scriptural evidence does not exist. Bush himself notes that "A careful reading of the Mormon Scriptures reveals a most confused picture . . ." Also, in what may be called a considerable understatement, he further notes, "The question of the historicity of the Books of Abraham and Moses needs further analysis especially as it concerns the Negro and the priesthood." Of course where the Scripture is inadequate to validate the policy, mythology can be supplied as a substitute. So, the Negro "sat on the fence," etc. The Biblical accounts of sundry "curses" say nothing of black skin.

Moreover, the policy is morally incongruous with basic Mormon as well as Christian ethics. How, in the light of the accepted principle of the Fatherhood of God of all men, can one justify singling out a specific race as under a "divine curse?" I venture to say that had the Church orig-

inated in Scandinavia or some other country devoid of Negroes — even other countries of Europe — no such policy would have been thought of. But the Church originated in America; slavery was here; the slaves were black. The policy of priesthood denial is based on racism which assigns to another race a position of inferiority. It is this presumed inferiority which inspired the prejudices among Mormons as well as other "white and delightful" people. It is these prejudices in which the policy is imbedded. How can it be denied?

I am not sure just what purpose Mr. Bush had in mind in his "Commentary." It seems to accept the general thesis, but feels Taggart didn't do as good a job as he could have done. The young scholar is not here to defend his work, but I am sure that, like any scholar, he would be glad for the relevant references supplied in various places by Mr. Bush. But these seem to supplement and certainly, in my view, do not vitiate the basic argument.

Mr. Bush doubts that the policy originated with Joseph Smith; rather that it came with successors, especially Brigham Young. This is a minor point since these men had their prejudices formed, not in Utah, but in New England, Ohio, Illinois, and especially Missouri. They were not socio-psychological creatures of the Great Salt Lake Valley.

Of course, nothing is going to be settled on the issue. The "will to believe" is a bulwark against attitudinal change. The tendency is to defend what is. The Thomists will prevail until someone in authority with sufficient moral courage will correct the evil.

Lowry Nelson
Coral Gables, Florida

Dear Sirs:

I just received the Summer 1970 issue of *Dialogue*. I found the articles by Marden Clark and Edward Hart most interesting, but wish most of all to thank you for publishing David Wright's "The Conscience of the Village." Have plans been made to publish *River Saints* in full — assuming the remainder is as good as this sampling?

Thanks for your efforts towards helping make our secular life relevant to our religion — and not the reverse.

Robert J. Christensen
Taipei, Taiwan

Dear Sirs:

I am gratified to learn that my friend Dr. Carl J. Christensen (*Dialogue*, [Winter 1970] 9) agrees completely with my view (*Dialogue*, [Spring 1967], 5) of the eternal individuality of the essence or will of man, though he does err in stating that my quotation, indicating some possible official Church sanction of the opposite view, was not in the Teachers Supplement to the Gospel Doctrine Course, *The Gospel in the Service of Man*.

The complete objective statement from p. 6 reads as follows (italics mine):

The elements are eternal. (D&C 93:33). "All spirit is matter." (D&C 131:7). Spirit element, called also "intelligence," has always existed, indeed it "was not created or made, neither indeed can be." (D&C 93:29). However, spirit children whose bodies were made of spirit element were born in pre-existence as the offspring of God, which is the same as saying that *the eternal intelligence was organized into "intelligences," into "souls" as "spirits"* (Abraham 3:22, 23). God's plan is to enable His spirit children to become like Him.

Dr. Christensen's "thought" (about a similar statement elsewhere in the supplement) that his "original statement was adversely edited by one of the echelon of editors who scrutinized the manuscript before it went to press," leads me to fear that the view expressed in the above excerpt may have fairly wide currency in the Church.

The only scripture we have that explicitly affirms the eternal individuality of man and his eternal likeness to or "coequality" (Joseph Smith's term) with God is Abraham 3:18-19. If we add to this remarkable scripture verses 21 and 22, in which the Lord is speaking of the works of His hands, we see that these individual "spirits" have been "organized" into intelligences, man's "first estate" (verses 26 and 28) and subsequently into men, his "second estate" (Abraham was one of them — verse 23). This can be understood only if the organizing of "spirits" into "intelligences" is interpreted as the bringing of the individual "spirits" into a relationship with matter and with each other in the same sense that God created man by bringing his spirit (what was referred to as "intelligence" in Abraham 3:21) into a relationship with the physical matter of this earth — "the dust of the ground" — as described in Moses 3:7.

These scriptures do not lend themselves to the interpretation quoted above from the Teachers Supplement.

Abraham 3:18-28 was likely the basis for Joseph Smith's earth-shaking King Follet sermon. Here the view of the *eternal individuality* of man, together with his god-like nature, is further developed and this view has been widely affirmed by presidents of the Church since Joseph Smith's time. This concept gives Mormonism much of its distinctive character. It is the basis for the concept of eternal progression, and without it the idea that man is a child of God with god-like potential would be nonsense.

The Mormon concept of the eternal individuality of man makes man a free moral agent by *necessity* and not by choice, either God's or his own. This provides a philosophically satisfactory solution to man's most troubling problem — that of the agony of suffering and pain in the earth. The only other adequate solution to this problem that I know of is Darwin's theory of evolution in which God is remote or non-existent. Though this theory is profoundly effective in ordering and explaining much of what we observe, it is inadequate to my inmost needs and convictions because it is incomplete. On the other hand, the Mormon explanation is deeply satisfying.

I am thoroughly convinced that those who subscribe to the view that intelligences were formed by God from eternal intelligence or spirit element stray far from the truth.

John H. Gardner
Provo, Utah

AS MAN IS

Mormon sermons din
On the Sabbath shopping sin,
But a Sunday store
With an open door
The Saints go marching in.

Gwen A. Sandberg
Cedar City, Utah

Dear Sirs:

Help!

I would like to establish a dialogue with members of the Church who have had experience with the problems of the emotionally ill. Specifically the neurotic who is active in the Church.

In my case after three years of group therapy and a year of individual analysis with a psychiatrist, the symptoms generally

are latent but still the neurosis is there. The unhappiness arises due to the fact that the neurosis manifests itself as behaviour that is antisocial, hostile, and antagonistic. Such behaviour is totally unacceptable in a closely-knit social group such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints where earthly happiness and ultimately eternal progression is dependent upon harmonious interpersonal relationships.

To complicate the matter, having Church leaders who for the most part are untrained in working with individuals who are emotionally unstable it seems that a member of the Church who is neurotic finds that there are very few with his religious background to whom he can go for help. Furthermore, fasting and prayer to overcome a personal problem can be a rewarding experience for some but also can be an outlandish nightmare fraught with despair, frustration, and unfathomable guilt for others.

What is the hope for the neurotic both now and in the hereafter? How can the hostile neurotic be active in the Church



without alienating the members whose love and friendship he needs so desperately? How can the neurotic work out the problems of life and still function in the Church, having the confidence of the leaders who can call him to organizational positions in order that he can magnify his priesthood and gain for himself and his family its blessings?

I feel that these questions are not unique to me but must have been encountered by many Latter-day Saints both knowing and unknowing. *Dialogue* presents a forum place from which experiences can be gathered on

a Church-wide basis which otherwise would be unavailable. I am hoping that there will be response to this inquiry and that possibly I can help as well as be helped.

Name withheld

Dear Sirs:

Recognizing a need for dialogue among L.D.S. visual artists living in California, a group of artists in the Los Angeles area is sponsoring a fine arts exhibit of Mormon artists to be held in April 1972.

Entries are not restricted to Mormon themes.

Those wishing to contribute their works, ideas and/or suggestions can contact the planning committee at the following address:

Sally Rogers
2477 Sawtelle
Los Angeles, Calif. 90064

Dear Editors:

One of the articles in the Roundtable on the Coalville Tabernacle predicted that the Ogden Pioneer Tabernacle would be the next historic Mormon building to fall before the wrecker's ball. This prediction has proven true; the Ogden building has been demolished.

The old Ogden Tabernacle was of less intrinsic value than the Coalville Tabernacle, but it was a highly distinctive example of pioneer architecture, and as the oldest public building in Ogden it had great historic value. Even more distressing than the fact that a valuable and irreplaceable building was destroyed, however, is the disingenuous way the matter was handled by Church officials. The leadership at Coalville did at least conform to the procedural requirements we have come to expect in Church government. The same cannot be said of Ogden. Local Church members were given no opportunity whatsoever to vote or otherwise express their will in the matter. The decision was made by the stake presidents of the region at a closed meeting. After the meeting, Church officials persistently refused to deal candidly with inquiries as to their plans for the building, and public announcement of the decision was made only after demolition was under way. Apparently, the principle of common consent is no longer operative in Church government. The era of the bulldozer has arrived in more ways than one.

The official reason given for tearing down the Ogden Tabernacle was that its design did not harmonize with that of the new temple under construction on the same block. There is no denying the truth of that statement. The old tabernacle was a building of character and dignity. It looked like a house of worship, whereas the new temple resembles nothing so much as a giant Hot Shoppes restaurant or a casino transplanted from the Las Vegas strip. With the Church building program in the hands of people so imperceptive as to admire the casino-modern style and to reject as of no value the Coalville and Ogden Tabernacles, the future of historic Mormon buildings looks very bleak indeed.

Sincerely,
Robert B. Angell

Dear Sirs:

Brother Kenneth K. Godfrey's essay, "The Coming of the Manifesto" (Autumn 1970), was most interesting. Concerning the alleged revelation given to John Taylor on 27 September 1886 and the comment made in footnote 10, page 15, that "Dean Jesse concluded in his study ["A Comparative Study and Evaluation of the Latter-day Saint and the Fundamentalist Views Pertaining to the Practice of Plural Marriage," Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1959, p. 101] that it is highly probable that such a revelation does exist," the following should be noted.

On 17 June 1933, the First Presidency made the following statement in a letter to the "Presidents of Stakes and Counselors":

It is alleged that on September 26-27, 1886, President John Taylor received a revelation from the Lord . . . As to this pretended revelation it should be said that the archives of the Church contain no such revelation; the archives contain no record of any such revelation, nor any evidence justifying a belief that any such revelation was ever given. From the personal knowledge of some of us, from the uniform and common recollection of the presiding quorums of the Church, from the absence in the Church archives of any evidence whatsoever justifying any belief that such a revelation was given, we are justified in affirming that no such revelation exists.

Furthermore, so far as the authorities of the Church are concerned and so far as the members of the Church are con-

cerned, since this pretended revelation, if ever given, was never presented to and adopted by the Church or by any council of the Church, and since to the contrary, and inspired rule of action, the Manifesto, was (subsequently to the pretended revelation) presented to and adopted by the Church, which inspired rule in its terms, purport, and effect was directly opposite to the interpretation given to the pretended revelation, the said pretended revelation could have no validity and no binding effect and force upon Church members, and action under it would be unauthorized, illegal, and void.

Heber J. Grant,
Anthony W. Ivins,
J. Reuben Clark, Jr.,
First Presidency.

(*Messages of the First Presidency*, compiled by Jesse R. Clark, Bookcraft Inc., vol. V, p. 327)

Talking of the supposed two-day committee meeting of President John Taylor, George Q. Cannon, L. John Nuttal, Samuel Bateman, Charles W. Wilkins, Charles Birrell, Daniel R. Bateman, Bishop Samuel Sedden, George Earl, Lorin Woolley, his father, John W. Woolley, his mother, Julia E. Woolley, and his sister, Amy Woolley, in which the alleged revelation was presented, President Joseph Fielding Smith, in a letter to Walter L. Whipple on 24 April 1956 said:

. . . No such meeting ever took place.
. . . I knew President George Q. Cannon, Samuel Bateman, and Charles W. Wilkins, and they were true men and they were true to President Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and to President Joseph F. Smith. Lorin Woolley's stories are afterthoughts uttered when all these men are dead and cannot speak for themselves.

In the diary of Samuel Bateman it states that he was at the Woolley's home at this time. But was he in council with a prophet of God? No, he says that he was playing quoits all day on at least one of these two days.

I will let the reader draw his own conclusions whether or not this meeting ever took place or if the revelation referred to was ever given; personally, from the prayerful study I've done, I don't believe they did.

E. Jay Bell
Ridgecrest, California