

Letters to the Editor

dialogue on "the year of decision"

Dear Brother Price,

In view of the message regarding *Dialogue's* possible demise after this year, which we received with our last issue, it seemed appropriate to include some of my feelings along with our renewal. Although our financial situation doesn't allow us to become Dialogue Associates, we are sending a gift subscription and enclosing a token donation.

I care about *Dialogue's* future for selfish reasons: It gives me some belief that there is reason for me to maintain some affiliation with the Church, that perhaps there is still room for me in the Church and room for the Church in me. It was interesting to attend Relief Society and get my copies of *Dialogue* and *Ms.* all in the same day. It was representative of the diversity in my life, that I don't know where it's at for me yet, but only that I can't break totally with the traditional influences on my life nor can I ignore new concerns which typical Sunday School classes are unaware of or summarily dismiss. I find no one in the "Mormon" world with whom I feel I can discuss real concerns or feelings. I feel that for most Mormons I have encountered the safe answers are already given for every issue. Discussion is only a means for arriving at the "right" answers, not for exploring alternatives or ramifications. Whether the issue is education, women's position, blacks, life styles, etc., someone has already written a book published by Deseret Book which is viewed as an authoritative Church viewpoint, not to be argued with. The result for me? I attend Relief Society sporadically, teach my Jr. Sunday School class with enthusiasm for the children but not for all the rules, pay my tithing and keep my temple recommend current, remain quiet in Mormon groups and both envy and resent my husband's position which has moved considerably further from the Church than my own. With non-Mormon friends? I can discuss current issues and try to eliminate the Mormon authoritarian hang-ups from my thoughts, but find it impossible to do and thus I have difficulty getting my head together with that group either.

Somehow *Dialogue* exposes the possibility of a median position, and each time I receive an issue I feel some new hope for me, and a gratitude that there is a medium for dialogue

among Mormons. It would be interesting to me to know of other Dialogue readers in our area and to have an opportunity to meet and discuss issues of interest to readers.

Although this informal note hardly fits into the scientific survey it was said you are conducting to discover the value of *Dialogue* to its readers, it seemed appropriate to express my concern at this renewal time and to let you know that for me *Dialogue* provides sustenance for my spirit, "gut," and head.

Sincerely,

Cheryl D. Fuller
Carmichael, California



Prior to receiving my latest copy of *Dialogue* I was seriously considering letting my subscription expire. However, upon reading the article by Marden J. Clark, I have reconsidered my previous thinking that *Dialogue* had joined what Brother Clark called the "controlled press" of Church literature.

Sincerely,

Hans C. Johansen
Sacramento, California

On April 27, at the open house for *Dialogue* subscribers in Salt Lake City, I was struck by the question, "Has *Dialogue* served its

purpose and outlived its usefulness?" In my mind there is a clear answer to that question: as long as there are Mormons creating scholarly, stimulating, sensitive and artistically sound work, and as long as *Dialogue* is the only religiously uncensored journal in Mormondom, it will never outlive its usefulness.

I cherish my right and the rights of my fellow and sister Mormons to express opinions that are approved by the Church as well as those that are not. Were *Dialogue* to gain Church sanction, it would no longer be free to publish even mildly dissenting voices. I strongly agree with J. S. Mill's statement that ". . . the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race . . ., those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth, if wrong, they lose . . . the clearer perception and livelier perception of truth, produced by its collision with error."

I think *Dialogue* is a vital complement to Church-controlled literature. It publishes work which is on a high level intellectually, spiritually and artistically, and therefore it enriches and enlightens my life and strengthens my testimony in a way which no other publication can. Should *Dialogue* be radically changed or discontinued, I would feel a loss which would be deeply significant to me, and I am prepared to do whatever I can with my time, influence and money to insure that *Dialogue* lives.

Sincerely,

Mary M. Blanchard
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dialogue has been a source of gratification in many ways in our home: it affirms our faith in the efficacy of divergence and the strength of being unafraid to examine ideas. Besides that, you provide the only chance we get to laugh at ourselves in print. We talk you up everywhere. Thank you.

Emma Lou Thayne
Salt Lake City, Utah

There are two items to which I would call your attention relating to *Dialogue's* problem with declining subscriptions.

I have subscribed to *Dialogue* since its beginning and have found each issue most interesting and worthwhile. But it always seems to come late. The "Winter 1972" issue, for instance, arrived in mid-April. Whether or not this is viewed as late by the publish-

ers, it definitely gives a feeling of being late. This, coupled with the unquestionable lateness of a number of earlier issues has been repeatedly frustrating to me as a reader. I expect that a significant number of earlier subscribers have not renewed due to a similar frustration.

Dialogue is needed. It is important that there be a publication about Mormonism which is not censored by "The Brethren" and is open to diverse viewpoints. If there are not enough subscribers to support the publication at its present size and frequency, then I suggest it be reduced in one or both of these aspects to the level at which it can be supported. A semiannual publication of 25 to 50 pages would surely be preferable to a complete termination of publication.

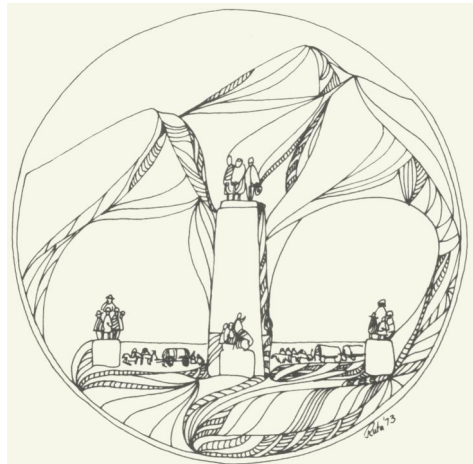
Sincerely,

Bruce S. Romney
Kinnaird, British Columbia

I have been a subscriber to *Dialogue* since its beginning, except for a brief time, and wish words could express my appreciation for this most delightful book. My only hope is that it will not flounder, that we LDS will appreciate its worth and support this worthy literary effort.

Very Sincerely,

Ingrid B. Rees
Omaha, Nebraska



I am confident that the key to all of your financial problems is wider circulation—and this will have to come primarily from Latter-day Saints.

It is my experience that many Mormons feel *Dialogue* is a radical, non-Mormon publication and that by reading it they might en-

counter some material which will be faith shattering.

I have had the experience in my high priest quorum on more than one occasion of having the thought or material denounced because the source given was *Dialogue*. As long as I didn't reveal the source it was acceptable—but *Dialogue*, I soon found out, was not acceptable to many of my friends. These denunciations came from some intelligent and educated individuals who ought to know better.

Somehow *Dialogue* must overcome this attitude toward it before it will be socially acceptable to many LDS readers. Can this be done?

Very truly yours,
David L. Robins
Arvada, Colorado

A very good question—Ed.

As one born and raised in the Church during its "Improvement Era" stage (when the admonitions of the D. & C. Section 88 regarding study and learning were taken seriously), I have found *Dialogue* to be the draught of cool water sustaining me, slacking my intellectual thirst, during the years of wandering in the present intellectual wasteland that our church meetings have become.

Recently I visited another ward—a beautiful and expensive chapel in a wealthy area—because I could not stand the "Junior Sunday School" Gospel Doctrine class of my own ward. The new ward had a High School Superintendent for a teacher, and I had hopes of some real intellectual food instead of the "cotton candy" stuff usually dispensed. Alas, I found them happily ruminating on what *their* reaction would have been if God had suddenly told them to build a 50,000 ton boat—and what would *you* take along if you had a tiny cabin only 6 x 10 feet?

Enclosed is my \$100 donation; soon to follow will be complimentary subscriptions for ten members who have enough honesty and intellect combined to appreciate *Dialogue*. Keep up the good work! Your influence for good is badly needed.

Lew W. Wallace, M.D.
Alhambra, California

Dialogue as a teaching tool

The enclosed contribution is my testimonial to the value of *Dialogue* articles for the past seven years of publication. I have been ad-

ressing MIA classes and Young Adult women recently and find how dependent I am on articles like Harold T. Christensen's "Stress Points in Mormon Family Culture" and on the Women's issue published earlier.

Best wishes for surmounting the cost problems.

Yours truly,
Cherry B. Silver
Santa Maria, California



science in Dialogue

As a subscriber to *Dialogue* from its inception let me add my voice to those in favor of keeping a strong *Dialogue* in operation. As a bishop in a university town I can testify that it is needed.

As a working scientist I would like to see a science section begun. Among the intellectual community of this nation there are probably more members of the Church in science than there are in the humanities. Perhaps one reason for a recent decline in interest is the impression that *Dialogue* is becoming just another humanities journal—even if it does focus on Mormon thought and customs. Is anyone else out there with me?

Sincerely,
Bruce N. Smith
Austin, Texas

A special issue on Science and Religion, edited by Professor James Farmer of BYU, is planned for publication later this year or early in 1974—Ed.

a catholic view

I am a Roman Catholic priest who spent 14 months in Utah back in 1956-57. I am very

interested in your periodical. I am stimulated by your thinking and especially by your urgency that more thought be given to the problems the Mormons face. I would find a lack in my general education, were the periodical to cease to exist.

It is unfortunate that I cannot be as generous in maintaining *Dialogue* as I should wish. The enclosed check, I trust, will ensure you of my good will and perhaps be of some small help in the pursuit of your laudable objectives.

You may in part thank Bishop Joseph L. Federal of Salt Lake City and Msgr. Jerome Stoffel of Logan for helping me come to my decision.

Sincerely yours,
Dr. John P. Weisengoff
Immaculate Conception Rectory
Chicago, Illinois 60632

and a protestant one

I'm a Protestant Campus Minister in an ecumenical setting and I think *Dialogue* is one of the fresh winds blowing in religious circles these days. Many Protestants and Roman Catholics would be interested in your outstanding journal. I'd be glad to talk more with you if you're interested.

Sincerely,
John Dodson
Reno, Nevada

get off my bach!

The review of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* in the Winter 1972 issue of *Dialogue* is as ill-informed as it is ill-tempered and ill-written. Brother Jolley's description of the story of the book's inception ("a seagull. . . appeared to Richard Bach") is just plain false. As Richard Bach tells it, a *voice*, with no visible bodily source, told him the story, which he asserts he could not and would not have produced otherwise. Whoever the voice was, it was not Jonathan, since he is consistently referred to in the third person throughout the book. Personally, I believe Bach's statement—because he has publicly disagreed with some of the major premises of *JLS* (including what is perhaps the major premise: that it's the duty of the individual who has gone to greater worlds to return and help others do the same). But whether he is believed or not, he deserves not to have his version distorted malignantly. Furthermore, Jolley's description of J.S. looking like Heston is idiotic. The seagull looks like a seagull. He is described only in two passages: early in the story, as "all feather and

bone," and later as shining with a white light, in the summer of Gandalf and Moroni.

Brother Jolley's falsest statement is that Jonathan is meant to represent Jesus. Once, when presented with such a view, Richard Bach was quite startled. He had never thought of it. Then he went on to say that even if the interpretation was valid, *JLS* was no more the story of Jesus than the story of Charles Lindbergh, Christopher Columbus, the Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King.

The Messiah is represented allegorically in *JLS* by "the Son of Great Seagull" but Jonathan promptly and firmly denies that he is to be equated with this exalted being. Thus, Jonathan is clearly not Jesus. Who is he then? Consider the story. J.S. is a young, headstrong individual who goes off by himself a lot and drives himself hard in striving for perfection, causing much worry to his goodly parents. Finally, he is expelled from his group because of his unsocial activities. He withdraws, and eventually meets two individuals who shine with a beautiful white light and fly in perfect unison. They lead him on to a higher world. Soon, J.S. discovers there is an infinity of worlds, through which an individual may travel and thereby perfect himself or herself. But he decides to return to his former associates and teach them the way (as noted, Bach disagrees with this decision, but he wrote the story as it was told to him). J.S. organizes a group of disciples, at first only 6 in number, but steadily growing. After much excitement, J.S. departs, leaving behind a good friend who can carry on the work. This is the story, and now you know who J.S. is.

As for seagulls, they are indeed beautiful, and the sight of their flocks gliding above Utah Valley did often fill my heart with gladness. Yet I can also testify that they are very greedy and make clumsy landings. They could use some improvement.

Benjamin Urrutia

Clifton Holt Jolley's view of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* appears to be a quick thirty minute thumb through in order to justify a review that was in all probability written to preconceived notions about Jonathan.

The book seems to say different things to different people. What people have to say about the book perhaps best expresses where they are "at," to put it in the vernacular, than where Jonathan is.

I cannot fault the book for one or two lines that some people deem anti-Christ; after all the author was not enlightened by revelation as we LDS understand the word.

I found, however, some affirmation of principles that LDS cannot lay sole claim to, but, it is to be hoped, think about and attempt to practice.

What can be wrong with a little book that suggests you seek your identity, become a self-actualized person that the flock may not influence you to and fro, seek knowledge and perceptions to enlighten your understanding, remain humble enough to always be teachable, be open to inspiration, always strive to achieve and never think you've "made it," be optimistic, share unselfishly the talents you've developed, become a teacher and a giver to others, that you have a freedom to choose, that you determine your own fate, that you can be in the world but not a part of it?

I think Mr. Jolley and I read the same book. I spent considerably more time than thirty minutes because I felt Jonathan was more than a story about a seagull who was some kind of Jesus to his flock. I would urge all who agree with Mr. Jolley's persuasion to please read Jonathan again and look between the lines at the book's deeper meaning. To me it was a soul-uplifting experience that I shall always treasure.

Gary R. Wight
Lawndale, California

I have been a subscriber since *Dialogue* began and its worth has been so much more than I have ever paid in subscriptions that I feel guilty in contributing so little so late.

I don't always agree with some of your articles but I value the opportunity to read other peoples opinions. Some articles have disturbed me but I realize neither the Church nor my testimony needs to be wrapped in a cocoon to survive.

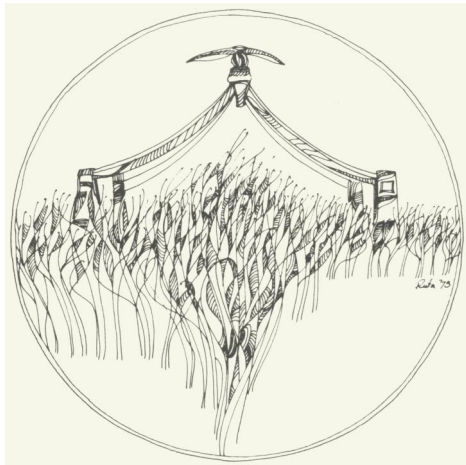
My major criticism is with some of your reviewers. I have the feeling that to prove their superiority they really do a put down on what they review. I think Clifton Jolley's review of Jonathan Livingston Seagull is disgusting. If there is one thing I have tried to do and have tried to teach my children it is not to live by the law of the pack. Just because a lot of people do something doesn't necessarily mean it's right, and that there's more to life and living than being one of the group. I am grateful to J.L. Seagull for pointing out so beautifully that it's possible and right to disagree and to seek after what you know is right.

I am not surprised at the subscription

drop. Having worked on many community and church projects I never cease to be amazed at the overwhelming and continually growing apathy. I think *Dialogue* must stand without official Church support. There are too many members who would be bewildered and overwhelmed by *Dialogue* (that's a sad commentary). I think if there were official support too many people would try to put pressure on the general authorities to bring down the quality by publishing according to *Church News* standards. I enjoy the *Church News* but I realize it's a world away from *Dialogue* (or maybe another level of consciousness—my apologies to Jolley). I don't know if *Dialogue* would survive some of the committees either—see the latest Relief Society Cultural Refinement lessons if you don't understand what I mean.

I love the Church and I love *Dialogue*. I have no doubts about the Church's surviving and I sincerely hope that *Dialogue* will survive, it has added immeasurably to the quality of my life.

Sincerely,
Sylvia F. Jutila
Fontana, California



Joseph Smith and historiography

Marvin S. Hill's review of Fawn Brodie's revised *No Man Knows My History* is a fine piece of work. Particularly impressive are his categorization of the shortcomings of various biographers of Joseph Smith and his analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Mrs. Brodie's work. With this review by Hill, the B.Y.U. has come a long way since

Hugh Nibley's *No Ma'm, That's Not History*. In attempting to catch the spirit of Joseph Smith's times, Hill has discovered Brodie's principal weakness—viewing Joseph Smith through the secular-Freudian climate of opinion of the 1930's and 1940's. Hill has come to realize that the Jacksonian era had a perspective different from our own, and that Joseph Smith's religious perspective was quite in the fashion of his times. This allows Hill to believe that Joseph Smith was a sincere prophet, and not a conscious deceiver (as Mrs. Brodie would type him). But the last (and weakest) part of Hill's review reveals that Hill has not yet shed his particular bias—the assumption that Joseph Smith was what the Church and (especially) his BYU colleagues *presently* claim that he was. If he persists in this assumption when he writes his own biography of Joseph Smith, he will probably write another apology. Resurrecting the spirit of another era is almost impossible to do. Some of us would like to think Perry Miller did it with the 17th century American Puritans; but we know, somehow, that he didn't quite succeed. Nevertheless, we applaud any attempt to recapture the spirit of the past, for the result usually leads us a little closer to the truth.

Sincerely,
Joseph H. Jeppson
Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

personal glimpses of mahonri young

The interesting article on Mahonri Young in your last issue reminded me of my interviews with the famous sculptor at the Utah Centennial Celebration in 1946. As State Historian of Colorado I was given the honor to represent Colorado at the celebration. From my diary I copy:

"The program at 'This is the Place' monument was good. Afterward Ann and I walked around the monument; met and talked a bit with Mahonri Young, sculptor of the figures. It is a wonderful monument and a great credit to Mahroni Young. He says the Donner Party group is his masterpiece, and I agree. It is so full of action and so distinctive. . . .

"July 27th. Yesterday morning I contacted Mahonri Young and we had him and Lee Green Richards to lunch. Both are 70; interesting. Mahonri is sociable and common. Says he has no degrees.

"He did the figures of Joseph and Hyrum on the Temple grounds. They were intended for placement in the temple, instead of on

the grounds. He expects to do heroic size figures of them. We went to the seagull monument which he did in 1913. He said the reliefs were mere portrayals of the life of the pioneers. The woman on the south side is as good a figure as he has done, he says.

"The little piece of sagebrush beside the gulls is to help anchor them. One gull is attached only by this and the wing combined with that of the other gull. He says they gave him his choice of places for the monument and he chose the present location so that on entering the gate one sees the gulls against the clear sky. He is disgusted that many photograph it from the other side, against the temple as a background. Took pictures of him and us beside the monument."

I like *Dialogue* very much and appreciate the good work you folks are doing in producing it.

Cordially,
Le Roy R. Hafen

lesson from a friend

After having lost contact with *Dialogue* somewhere between Tokyo and Manila more than two years ago, my husband and I were happy to respond last winter to your subscription department's letter to former subscribers. We were even happier to receive last week our first issue of *Dialogue* in many months. We have missed it more than we realized.

We are concerned about your fear that continued publication of *Dialogue* is in doubt, and hope that we can recruit a few more subscribers here in the Philippines. In this connection, however, we might urge you to give increased attention to the present multi-national character of the Church, interested though we are in the largely historical and American-oriented current issues material on which *Dialogue* has placed much of its emphasis. With all due respect, *The Friend* has done much more in recent months to acquaint its readers with the Church in other countries than has *Dialogue*. Without intending to impugn the quality of the writing of frequent contributors to *Dialogue*, I also feel that a broader interest in the journal might be created by an active effort to recruit a larger number and wider variety of contributors. As a demonstration of my sincerity, please find some offerings [poems] enclosed.

Sincerely,
Margaret R. Munk
Manila, Philippines

mormons and divinity schools

Russel B. Swensen's "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School" interested me for two reasons. First, my grandfather E. E. Ericksen, under influences similar to those described by Swensen, took his "mission" to study philosophy at Chicago a decade before the Divinity School group. His dissertation, "The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life," was published in 1922. He went on to found the Philosophy Department at the University of Utah and was Dean there for many years. The E. E. Ericksen Chair of Philosophy is currently held by Sterling McMurrin.

Secondly, motivated by beliefs and desires

described by my grandfather and Dr. Swensen, I am currently attending the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley) in Biblical and historical studies. The first year has been an incredibly rigorous one both intellectually and spiritually. I would be interested to know if there are other Latter-day Saints attending Catholic or Protestant seminaries who might like to share struggles and hopes.

Enclosed please find a check for renewal of my subscription to your most stimulating and enjoyable publication.

Sincerely,

Scott G. Kenney
Berkeley, California

