

Letters to the Editor

narrowing the gap

Thank you for your notification of the need to renew my subscription to *Dialogue*. Over the years I have enjoyed the opportunity to keep some sort of contact, however tenuous, with the Mormon academic/intellectual community. My work with the Foreign Service of the United States takes me to many farflung areas where I do not have the benefit of daily, stimulating contact with others of similar background and training. To be sure, in the countries where I have served—Japan, Viet Nam, and Brazil—there are many dedicated members of the Church, without whose companionship life abroad would be dreary indeed. I quite frankly miss the companionship and intellectual support afforded by a Mormon academic community, no matter how small it may be at a particular institution (there were not many at Yale but the quality made up for the lack of quantity). *Dialogue* helps fill the gap in my life and prevents it from becoming an ever-widening chasm. I only wish that my responsibilities to my job, my family and my ward would leave me sufficient time to contribute to the journal.

Kirby L. Smith
Washington D.C.

in the wake of watergate

Eugene England tells us that there are some "special questions" which we Mormons should ask ourselves in the wake of Watergate.

The first is, "Were we (and are we) guilty of greater reverence for authority than for truth?" I should hope so! Where would we be as a people if we allowed a well-intentioned compromise or two to distract us?

England asks another question: "Given our great faith in Constitutional government and our natural optimism, why have we been willing to fall into the cynicism of other Americans following the Watergate exposures?" Some Church members became cynical, no doubt. But not those of us in tune enough to see the larger picture—the scheming of Nelson Rockefeller and the World Trade Center; the insidious, undermining efforts of a demonic press to brain-wash us all. The truth is that Richard Nixon is *innocent*. His daughter Julie swears it. And President Ford, after looking into all the facts, gave President Nixon a full pardon. If we don't accept that pardon with all our hearts, then we're guilty of disrespect for law, authority, and the Constitution. It's as simple as that.

Rustin Kaufmann
Rexburg, Idaho

In his article on Mormons and Watergate, Eugene England argues that Mormons as a group "have always been quite taken with Nixon." It seems that England's friends considered even the mention of McGovern's name to be "an irreligious act." Even when the Senate Watergate Hearings progressed, England "found Mormons generally sticking with the President." Finally, when Mormons had to face the facts, they rationalized its importance—"even if Nixon was guilty, what he did was not very serious" or was only "what every president and politician has done." Of course, England presents no evidence that "Mormons generally" felt this way. Could it be that his Utah or Mormon friends represent a very limited view? My own experience is quite different. Some of my friends and relatives in Utah whom I had considered conservative Republicans actually came down harder on Nixon than I did. And they had no trouble believing the facts as they unfolded. Moreover, political polls published by Salt Lake City newspapers indicated very early that Utahns were overwhelmingly disgusted and disturbed at both Watergate and Nixon. In short, England has not viewed the problem in a scholarly way at all. Therefore, I cannot accept his argument that Mormons must share responsibility for Watergate. ("But we are ALL involved, at least potentially, in this failure.") Unhappily, I find his article filled with hyperbole and without sound evidence. If an issue devoted to Watergate was necessary, why didn't the editors seek out someone who knew whereof he spoke, such as Wayne Owens? Owens' experience as a member of the House Judiciary Committee at a crucial time would have been valuable from a Mormon perspective.

Dennis L. Lythgoe
Abington, Mass.

Thank you for the timely issue of *Dialogue* on Mormons and Watergate. One of the most difficult and complex issues facing those of us who try to relate our religion to our secular lives is the question of the role, if any, of religious morality in politics and public life. Many of us watched in awful fascination as the revelations of Watergate revealed the labyrinth of lies and deception constructed by one who piously intoned all the virtues of religion and morality. It was almost enough to give religion a bad name!

While the restored gospel does not supply us true answers to the public policy questions raised by our complex life in America in the second half of the twentieth century, it hopefully provides us a context and a network of values

against which we can measure our responses to these questions. *Dialogue* has once again focused attention on this *process* and in doing so has performed its essential service.

Robert Maxwell
Las Vegas, Nevada

hanging by a thread

I wonder about the use of the Orson Hyde quote at the beginning of Eugene England's Watergate essay: "It is said that brother Joseph in his lifetime declared that the Elders of this Church should step forth at a particular time when the Constitution should be in danger, and rescue it, and save it."

England ends the quote there, but Brother Hyde continued, "This may be so; but I do not recollect that he said exactly so. I believe he said something like this—that the time would come when the Constitution and the country would be in danger of an overthrow; and said he, If the Constitution be saved at all, it will be by the Elders of this Church. I believe this is about the language, as nearly as I can recollect it" (*JD*, 6:152).

Brother Hyde's memory *may* have been unduly influenced by the approach of 2,000 federal troops dispatched to put down "the Mormon rebellion." Nevertheless, it seems unfair to use the first sentence as a proof-text for a popular notion when Brother Hyde was, at the time, firmly convinced that the constitution "has served and fulfilled its purpose . . . The Almighty looks down from heaven and sees it impossible to save the Constitution, to perpetuate it, and cleanse and purify it; for the wickedness of the people is determined to sweep it out of the way" (*ibid*, p. 153).

Like ancient Israel, we are so easily lulled into the bondage of the oblivious by "guarantor" statements—authentic or supposed—like "Save the Constitution," "Never be led astray," "the only true church," "God's chosen people," etc. I hope as both Saints and Americans, Mormons have not entirely lost the sense of corporate responsibility for the tragedies of the past ten years. And for all its enriching, may *Dialogue* never lose sight of priestly and prophetic functions—especially, in this case, the awareness of prophetic judgment omitted in the Orson Hyde quote.

Scott Kenney
Berkeley, California

b. h. roberts and politics

I was pleased to read D. Craig Mikkelsen's account of the political career of Elder B. H. Roberts. Roberts' independence in the face of political and Church pressure is refreshing, especially to those of us who occasionally find ourselves being pressured by local Church authorities to support a particular candidate or

piece of legislation that we cannot in good conscience support. The only thing more impressive than Roberts' independence was his willingness to submit to the authority of the Church even though he felt he had done no wrong. Some might interpret his action as cowardice, but to someone convinced of the ultimate destiny of the Kingdom of God, there was no alternative. It is only unfortunate that some are forced to make a decision between loyalty to conscience and loyalty to Church.

Mortimer Crosby
San Jose, California

The article on B. H. Roberts shows the extent to which some politicians will go to use the Church to achieve their ends, and the extent to which some Church leaders will go to use politics for the same purpose. Religion and politics make strange bedfellows, especially in a Church where one finds so many rightwing conservatives.

Recently in our ward the Bishop attempted to coerce ward members into supporting an ill-conceived piece of legislation that would have removed all news racks from the city of Los Angeles. The hidden object of the legislation was to prevent the purveyors of pornography from using the news vending machines. In their enthusiasm to abolish pornographic tabloids certain Mormons would have removed all news stands, thereby instituting a kind of censorship that was far more dangerous to my mind than the possible ill effects of pornography. It took considerable courage to resist these efforts, especially since many considered such resistance tantamount to endorsing pornography. It is encouraging to have a model in B. H. Roberts.

John J. Flanders
Los Angeles, California

uttered or unexpressed

In the spring of 1975, after the State of Utah (where free agency is basic doctrine) defeated the Equal Rights Amendment, a thoughtful and troubled Mormon woman completed her preparatory meditation and knelt privately to pray.

In the Mormon tradition of intimate prayer, the woman soon fervently called out for the first time, "Mother in Heaven. I believe you may exist. Are you there? We know the Father and the Son, but why have you not revealed yourself?"

And a wondrous voice clearly answered, "Good daughter. Until this time, no one asked. The men have not thought to ask."

And from a steadily increasing, brilliant light, the approaching voice went on, "Listen closely, choice daughter. There is much to learn."

Teddie Wood Porter
Riverside, California

I was shocked to read Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's short piece in the most recent issue of *Dialogue*. She states that the priesthood is "blatantly and intransigently sexist" and that therefore the priesthood gives her no pain. She says she feels no urge to struggle to attain it. But the entire tone of her note suggests she is yearning to have the power which the priesthood represents and resents the fact that she cannot get it in spite of being perhaps better qualified in terms of "spiritual gifts" than many males who have it.

While I do not question Sister Ulrich's spiritual gifts, she seems to have missed a point fundamental to the order of the Kingdom. The male has the right by blood to preside over the female in righteous dominion. It is the female's and uphold the male who presides in righteousness. The sooner Sister Ulrich and other sisters in the Church come to accept this fundamental principle, the happier they will be.

Betty Norton
Sunnyvale, California

leap of faith

I found Carlos Whiting's article on "A Rational Approach to Mormonism" very interesting since I too followed the rational approach in coming to terms with Mormonism. Like Whiting I found such an approach helpful, though ultimately wanting, because as close as a rational approach can bring one to ultimate truth, it cannot help one make the leap of faith. Whiting demonstrates what I believe: that we must use our minds and our hearts in finding religious truth.

Samuel S. Georges
Seattle, Washington