

Letters to the Editor



new dialogue logo

Our erstwhile conversationalists are now ten years old and in need of a rest.

Dialogue invites graphic artists from throughout the Church to submit new mark and logo designs for our tenth anniversary issue. The design selected by a distinguished panel of graphic artists and designers will become the official mark and logo on future issues and on *Dialogue* letterhead and promotional material. Contest deadline September 1, 1976. For details, write to:

Dialogue Design Contest
c/o Mary Bradford
P.O. Box 1387
Arlington, VA 22210

conversation piece

We need more pieces like "A Conversation About Mormonism," but the participants, both skeptics and apologists, struck me as naive, or at least avoiding the heart of the matter. Several comment that Mormons and the Mormon Church represent a social force that is virtually unequalled in terms of its constructiveness and in producing happiness. Frankly, I think this view reflects limited understanding of other movements. I've seen more ecstatic people among the Hare Krishnas and Sufis, more constructive and "together" people among Scientologists and est graduates, more ideal communities at Arica and Gaskin's The Farm. Spiritual experiences confirming "the truth" are more frequent and dramatic among virtually all the groups covered by Theodore Roszak in *Unfinished Animal*, from Bubba Free John's commune to residents of Findhorn. I think the

average born-in-Utah Mormon needs to get out and mix with the world—including the spiritual world—in order to set his/her faith on a firm foundation. Right now it is generally the product of incubation—just like staying in the spirit world: no test.

On the other hand, the skeptics avoid the real deciding factor about the Gospel—simply, is it true? I mean either Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith were who they said they were, or they were not . . . and that is not something to take lightly or simply intellectually. Ecumenists are doing just as much harm as the prejudiced when they espouse the idea that one can have one's cosmic cake and eat it too—that reincarnation and resurrection can easily coexist, that it is all in the mind, etc. I think there are some strong objective proofs of the Gospel—whether one wants to take the dramatic spiritual experiences of general authorities or Nibley's scholarship. The reason the Book of Mormon is so important is that it reconfirms those truths with more evidence, with more substance to build our faith on. The question isn't so much whether the Gospel matches our ethical predilections but is it an accurate description of the universe, more so than other theologies? That should be the quest of everyone who doesn't know that the gospel is true.

Quite simply, both the naive apologists and the aspiritual skeptics need more direct contact with God—need a more spiritual life every day. We've become too worldly—whether measured by our melting into the middle class or the academic community—and we need to get back into a personal spiritual consciousness—the unending prayer—that will give us spiritual light so we can see the path. To attack what we can't see or what we choose not to understand is a fool's self-righteousness. The intellect thinks spirituality is a state of self-hypnosis, and so dismisses it as significant; the orthodox and average Mormon thinks he/she has already become spiritual, so becomes blind to the serious ethical/social problems the intellectuals see. . . . Both should let God show them the way.

Scott S. Smith
Los Angeles, California

I enjoyed your "Conversation About Mormonism" in the last issue. It was a great discussion, truly dialogue. Dick's complaint of willingness to be active only so long as he could be accepted as he presently is (honestly questioning and striving) emphasizes the traditional dilemma of "intellectual" Mormons (cf. Frances

Menlove's "The Challenge of Honesty" [*Dialogue*, Spring, 1966], Richard Poll's "What the Church Means to People Like Me" [*Dialogue*, Winter, 1967], and Hugh Nibley's "Open Mind" [*The World and the Prophets*]). The simple fact is that intellectual commitment is nearly if not equally as important as spiritual commitment. Both reflect a person's existential honesty and determine more than anything else what that person's character will be. Without intellectual examination a person may be deluding himself spiritually.

Gerry L. Ensley
Los Alamitos, California

Dialogue continues to strengthen my testimony of the gospel. It bothers me to know that many LDS cannot seem to engage in free exchange of ideas without emotions and prejudices. I appreciated "A Conversation About Mormonism." The insights reflected concerns I and other university educated Mormons have experienced.

I enjoyed very much Robert Rees's editorial reiterating of the purposes of *Dialogue*. I hope our readers and critics keep in mind these purposes and not take some viewpoints too literally.

Edward K. C. Wong
Honolulu, Hawaii

I previously enjoyed "Letters of Belief" and it was easy to identify with much of what was said in "A Conversation About Mormonism." There must be many in the Church like Dick Fuller who are members of record and are living the gospel as they personally understand it, but are unable to actively participate in Church activities because they "do not find friends" and "do not find people [they] can talk to." Frequently if one does not adhere to the guidelines set forth by Church leaders, in a manner of blind and unquestioning faith, he is considered too "liberal" for many and in a very indirect but real manner is socially ostracized from the group for his thinking. My wife and I have lived in only one ward where we felt this didn't take place to someone at sometime, the Alexandria, Virginia, Ward from 1969-71. Members of that Ward, many of whom are *Dialogue* readers I'm sure, remember Jack and Renee Carlson's Gospel Doctrine II (or was it "too") Class where everyone was allowed and encouraged to express his or her interpretation of any given topic under discussion without fear of losing friendship or face. The Church needs more wards and classes like that one.

In "A Conversation . . ." Bob Rees makes two strong but very meaningful statements: "I have felt that there were people in the Church whose definition of Mormonism did not include me, but I refuse to let them define Mormonism for me," and, "You have to accept the premise

that the Gospel can change; otherwise, it has no meaning." Those statements sum up the feelings of many of us in the Church today, and *Dialogue* helps keep us together.

Continue the good work. Enclosed is my check for another year's subscription.

Robert N. Thiess
San Juan, Puerto Rico

an extravagant necessity

Being students and new parents, it has taken us awhile to put enough together to subscribe to *Dialogue*, although after reading several borrowed copies, we have come to think of it as one of those extravagant necessities we need in our home.

We appreciate the insight *Dialogue* has given us into some problem areas. We have found it to be a valuable reference as well as the source of many stimulating conversations.

Bruce and Nancy Jensen
Salt Lake City, Utah

I am grateful to *Dialogue* for those articles in which members in varying stages of belief—some entering, some holding, some leaving—share their feelings openly. Every member can see himself somewhere in these professions of faith. And never underestimate the value of that fact, for there is great pain in religious alienation.

Your publication allows those of us with hefty doubts to touch minds with those more tolerant of our skepticism. The "cultural" Mormon meets with few arched eyebrows in your pages. Thanks for that.

Monte J. Ogden
Ogden, Utah

publishing mormon sacred music

Out of deep concern over the quality and function of music in LDS worship, and out of a conviction that matters will not likely improve until some Church members begin doing that which they wish to see done, I propose the formation of an enterprise to discover and publish religious music of the highest order specifically for use by musicians of this Church. Surely many more musically knowledgeable heads than mine have hit upon this idea before and, perhaps, hit *against* the problem repeatedly without producing any movement. But I believe it is time for us concerned non-musicians to join the battle as well, if we really care. Among the readership of this journal I am sure there are concerned people who are knowledgeable and experienced in publishing, in music research, and in fund raising. Could we get together and make something happen?

I propose that such an enterprise could begin very informally by pooling contributions to commission one or more cantatas from the pens of some of our best Church composers. These compositions would be specifically crafted for use by ward and stake choirs with orchestration flexible enough to satisfy the resources and ambitions of a wide range of congregations. Then, as funds for publication became available, this enterprise could go on to publish not only these new works but also the best of the world religious literature in editions specifically suited to LDS choirs. It could make available the cantatas and motets, magnificats and masses of the Baroque and Renaissance masters with new texts that would not be just "acceptable" but deeply moving, full of the latter-day gospel, drawn from the great passages of the Standard Works. With deep immersion in these masterpieces our developing young artists could not avoid being moved to heights of new composition previously unknown in the Church.

I am personally committed to expending every possible effort towards the development of such a publication enterprise within the next two or three years, but I suggest that today is not too early to join in commissioning some good new works.

Those interested in this proposal are invited to correspond with me at the following address:

Dr. David L. Egli
1381 Green Street
Salt Lake City 84105

a note from down under

I'm writing to let you know that I will soon be leaving the mission field and returning home. I've thoroughly enjoyed every issue of *Dialogue*. At times it has brought the needed intellectual stimulation so often needed in the mission field to strengthen one's testimony. *Dialogue* at times presents things that I think are a bit way out, but this is what makes it stimulating.

My mission has been very successful in spreading the gospel and very rewarding intellectually. Keep up the good work in showing the strengths of the gospel and indications where we each must improve.

A brother in the gospel,
Elder James E. Taylor
New Zealand Wellington Mission

mormon literati unite!

An Association for Mormon Letters is forming and interested persons are invited to affiliate. The organization meeting will accompany a symposium to be held in Salt Lake City immediately following the October 1976 General Conference of the Church.

The symposium itself will hear papers on Mormon literature followed by comments and discussion on their contents. Papers are invited from students and scholars of the literature. Abstracts may be sent to arrive before July 15, 1976, and complete manuscripts will be considered no later than August 15th. A reading committee will select those papers to be read at the symposium.

Plans for the symposium and the initial prospectus for the Association grew out of a one-day discussion of personal literature held at the Historical Department of the Church on April 20, 1976. The group assembled there selected Neal Lambert, Clifton Holt Jolley, Lavina Fielding, Steven Sondrup and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher as a steering committee to see the organization through its initial stages.

Interested persons may send abstracts or suggestions, and requests for inclusion on the mailing list to:

Association for Mormon Letters
1346 South 18th East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84108



byu writers' convention

The second annual Rocky Mountain Writers' convention will be held at BYU July 28-30. Discussions and workshops will focus on a broad range of writing: scholarly, personal history, television, motion picture, fiction, poetry and popular magazine. The program will provide a climate for interaction between professionals as well as an encouraging setting for the novice.

Featured instructors are Dr. William Stafford, National Book Award winner, and Le Roi Smith, Editorial Director of Challenge Publications. For more information write:

Rocky Mountain Writers' Convention
242 HRCB
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah 84682

de-mormonizing mormon literature

Some of the excellent comments in the Roundtable on Mormon Literature (Winter 1975) sparked the thought that we might be trying too hard to write *Mormon* fiction. In our attempts to consciously insert LDS doctrine and values into our fiction we seem to have piled up a great deal of awkward, clumsy, and even dishonest writings. If Mormon writers concentrated more on the basics of life which all people have in common instead of exploring ways of preaching Mormonism through fiction, their appeal might be broadened. According to the psychological theory of projection, a writer automatically reveals his value system, conflicts, obsessions, and personality in his work. Perhaps Mormon fiction writers should experiment with de-Mormonized works and attempt to publish them in places where they would receive wider attention. Such works would necessarily have the Mormon stamp on them, but they would be more authentic for they would reveal not only the writer's world-view, beliefs, and values, but also his doubts and unresolved conflicts. We are not perfect, yet we expect Mormon literature to present a favorable image to the world. If our de-Mormonized works were to reveal a few flaws in the character of the Mormon writer, so much the better. Such efforts would help the world to know us better and possibly motivate us to resolve the conflicts we tend to ignore.

Tod Sloan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

mormonizing mormon literature

I was very interested in Karl Keller's article on Mormon literature. I remember years ago at the Utah Historical Society a speaker saying that Mormon literature could never catch the grandeur of Joseph Smith's vision—a non-believer makes it ridiculous, a believer makes it unbelievable!

But visions can be captured, just as could the voices of Joan of Arc. George Bernard Shaw has Joan saying as she faces death, "If you burn me at the stake I will enter their hearts and live forever."

The material is there, both plausible and grand. Of all the graves of the pioneers who trekked westward to Zion, my great-grandmother's is the only marked grave west of Winter Quarters. Someone had the strength to etch her name and dates in a wagon wheel rim, and half-bury it in the ground.

My husband's grandmother found some ripe berries, two days out of Laramie, Wyoming. They were so hungry for something fresh. She put a few berries in a cup for her little son, and went off to fill her pail. They never saw her again. Tragic? yes. Dramatic? certainly.

My grandmother's story was a happy one. The weather was good, the prairie was in bloom,

and she fell in love. She was married on the plains. Grandfather always said the most becoming headdress a woman could wear was a sun-bonnet.

These are only the examples from one family. Every third-generation Mormon has others that are similar.

I have read every issue of *Dialogue* since it began. I agree with your idea about questioning. Where would we all be if Joseph Smith hadn't asked a question?

Elsie Brockbank
Provo, Utah

obedience and authority

I would like to respond to Victor B. Cline's review of Stanley Milgram's study on obedience in your "Watergate" issue.

Cline abortively underestimates the applicability of the Milgram Study to religion generally and to Mormonism specifically. This response will be in three parts: 1) Milgram's study summarized, 2) Cline's response summarized, and 3) My comments.

1. The question raised by Milgram is, "When perceived legitimate authority is in direct conflict with conscience will the person under consideration be obedient to the directions of conscience or perceived legitimate authority?" Naive subjects were commanded by an experimenter to shock a learner with increasingly higher levels of electrical shock when the learner failed to learn properly. Milgram found over half of his subjects obeyed the experimenter and later admitted that they strongly disapproved of the shocks they had given the learner even though they did obey the experimenter.

Milgram demonstrates the apprehension portrayed by a participant in the study when he begins to fear he has administered a fatal shock to the learner. Prozi, the naive subject, frustratingly follows the experimenter's commands yet he says, "I think something's happened to that fellow in there. . . . What if he's dead in there? (Gestures toward the room with the electric chair.) I mean, he told me he can't stand the shock, sir. I don't mean to be rude, but I think you should look in on him. All you have to do is look in on him. All you have to do is look in the door, I don't get no answer, no noise. Something might have happened to the gentleman in there, sir." Experimenter: "We must continue. Go on, please." Obediently, Prozi continued to administer increasingly higher levels of shock.

Sixty percent of Yale undergraduates were fully obedient. That is they administered the highest level of shock possible on the board, 450 volts. Milgram says, "Moreover, when the experiments were repeated in Princeton, Munich, Rome, South Africa, and Australia, the level of obedience was invariably somewhat *higher* than found in the investigation reported in this article. Thus, one scientist in Munich found 85 per-

cent of his subjects obedient." (Milgram, "The Perils of Obedience," *Harper's*, December, 1973.)

2. Cline's review is summarized in his statement, "I could see the spectre which Milgram raises as more appropriate to political and military organizations than most religious sects." In preparatory statements to this conclusion, Cline says small groups, such as the soldiers at My Lai, a lynch mob, and the participants at Mountain Meadows can become corrupted. Further, he says it is possible for individuals such as King David, Judas, and Oliver Cowdry to "fall." Nations can also fall, as evidenced by Nazi Germany. Also, apparently, institutions like churches can fall, for he says, "Admittedly there have been historical apostasies of the major church organizations. This, however, has always been a slow corroding process." Cline suggests this slow corroding process occurs in the collective conscience of the group, institution, or nation. In reference to this threat in the Mormon Church, Cline says, "I do not believe that it would be possible for the entire Council of the Twelve to fall from grace at one fell swoop, even though individuals on the Council might fall."

Thus, Cline feels the dangers of over-obedience (where one's conscience is subordinated to a perceived legitimate authority with one acting in a grossly inhumane manner to the point of administering extreme pain and possible death to another person) is more likely to occur in a military or political situation than a religious one.

3. I disagree with Cline's conclusion that such a change could happen to other churches, but not to Mormonism. Cline's central mistake is to drastically underestimate the applicability of the Milgram effect to religion. Recall that the question raised by Milgram is: When perceived legitimate authority is in direct conflict with conscience will the person under consideration be obedient to the directions of conscience or perceived legitimate authority?" Milgram found the answer to be that in a majority of cases persons will be obedient to perceived legitimate authority in direct violation of their own conscience. In terms of the application of this phenomenon to religion, we simply ask two questions: Are there instances in religion where perceived legitimate authority issues directives which are in direct violation of individual conscience? and, Do the persons receiving the orders obey perceived legitimate authority or their own conscience? In Mormonism, some examples where perceived legitimate authority may be in conflict with conscience are polygamy, the Abraham-Isaac story, the Black-priesthood problem, birth control, support of the Vietnam War, and the Mountain Meadow Massacre.

The Mountain Meadow Massacre is a case where obedience to authority parallels that of the SS Officer's obedience to the leaders of the Third Reich. Mormons killed other people in a careful-

ly calculated way that was at least as intentional as participation in the Milgram study. The significant difference in the Milgram study is the subjects thought they had killed the learners, but at Mountain Meadows the Mormons knew they had killed their subjects. The very best available evidence suggests that there were a substantial number of Mormons whose conscience dictated to them that it was grossly inhumane to shoot down unarmed men, women, and children even though some men bragged they had participated in the mob which killed Joseph Smith. History clearly records that Mormons demonstrated meticulous obedience to perceived legitimate authority in direct violation of their conscience and killed in excess of one hundred persons after the wagon train members had turned themselves over to the Mormons for protection and safe escort to Cedar City.

A more pervasive example is the apparent behavioral implications found in the popular interpretation of the Abraham-Isaac story. This case could be seen as a doctrinal portayal of the Milgram study. A naive subject is to be stabbed to death by his father under the directives of a perceived legitimate authority when the act in the absence of perceived legitimate authority is apparently in total violation of the father's own conscience. The *traditional* interpretation of this story is that it is a test of Abraham's faith, a test of whether he will be totally submissive to a perceived legitimate authority. There is a Jewish tradition which suggests that Abraham's sense of justice was being tested more than his obedience and faith. While he passed the test of obedience, he failed the test of justice. He failed to ask, "Why?" "Why should I commit this act?" This view suggests that God was hoping Abraham would demonstrate that he understood that justice was more important than obedience.

These cases indicate the Milgram study has extensive and powerful implications for religion and therefore for Mormonism.

James L. Christensen
Assoc. Prof. Sociology
Boise State University

a green hill near at hand

The idea of a Hebrew hymnal was first suggested to me by Sister Spencer as we were driving through the Hills of Ephraim, the ancestral homeland of most Latter-day Saints. She said there were two hymns she wanted written—one on the coming together of Judah and Ephraim, and one on the Resurrection of the Savior. I volunteered for the task. Upon returning to my kibbutz, I prayed for guidance, took paper and pencil in hand, and eventually produced two poems, in the classic Hebrew language, on the suggested themes. Copies were sent to Sister Spencer and to the Church Music Department.

It soon dawned on me that if these poems became hymns, they could become the first of a

Hebrew LDS hymnbook. Such a work would require not only new writings, but also translations, and traditional Hebrew hymns, as well as other songs and poems, original and translated, that would be worthy of a place in our hymnbook.

Attempts at translation have produced mixed results. "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *exemplia gratia*, hebraicized beautifully and with amazing ease. On the other hand, "Come, Come, Ye Saints" stubbornly refused to yield.

In Israel, we sing "There is a Green Hill Near at Hand" instead of "There is a Green Hill Far Away," for obvious reasons. This necessary change has been kept in the translation: "Yesh Har Yarók Uehár Karóv." Similarly, "Far Far Away on Judea's Plains" has become "Károv be Hárei Yehúda, Karóv" ("Nearby on the Hills of Judea, Nearby"). Besides the fact of proximity, Bethlehem is situated on the hills, not the plains, of the Land of Judah.

The third category, that of traditional Hebrew songs, will doubtlessly provide a substantial portion, perhaps even the bulk, of the Hymnbook. Unlike the case of hymns borrowed from Gentile Christianity, doctrinal barriers are minimal or non-existent in Hebrew songs and prayers.

Schubert's *Ave Maria* cannot be performed, because of doctrinal incompatibility, by Latter-day Saints, unless the words have been completely changed, as in the Tabernacle Choir's version, *Heavenly Father*. (This juxtaposition of feminine religious music with words addressed to a masculine deity is too incongruent to work, at least to my ears.) Similarly, Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* had to be purged of the Lutheran identification of the Father and the Son as one and the same, before it could gain admittance to the LDS hymnbook.

But the Jewish people pray only to our Father in Heaven, as Latter-day Saints do, and theological stumbling blocks, as found in Catholic and Protestant hymns, will not be a serious problem in the compilation of the sacred songs that we plan.

The main object of this letter is a request for help. If the readers know of poems or hymns in Hebrew, of a religious nature—old and new, original and translated—please send them to the Church Music Department. You will be acting in a very good cause.

Benjamin Urrutia
Jerusalem

renewal reverberations

The following responses were among those received in response to our most recent renewal notice.

Your concern for my welfare is too much!
Your last renewal letter broke me down com-

pletely! Through my tears and with trembling words I say—Go ahead—reinstate me—please do—don't delay—hurry—it must be done at once—I cannot stand this waiting.

Since you were so kind as to not say anything about money or the cost in your letter, I now have forgotten what it used to be. I was thinking it might be more, and I hated to mention it at such an emotional moment!

Just send me the bill, and I'll pay it even before I pay the rent! Please send me the bill before this emotional experience cools off!

H. M. S. Richards
Glendale, California

If I could find the \$\$\$ in my tight budget for *Dialogue* as well as #1 son on mission, #2 son at university, #3 daughter to Europe with gymnastic team, #4 & #5 daughters costing an ungodly fortune as cheerleaders, one ailing shetland sheepdog in arthritic collapse, one neurotic cat who could benefit from psychiatry, 1 set of in-laws needing care, the Lord getting his tenth, Uncle Sam taking his share—I would love to renew my subscription—

Alas—it would be wrong to plead "extreme hardship" living in our lovely home complete with pool and aging cars numbering 3—

Feeling so depressed about the loss of your interesting magazine—I promptly went out and bought Sylvia Plath's book of poems—in paperback—

Maybe next year—

Who knows the stock market may go up!

JoAnn Sloan Rogers
Los Angeles, California

Yes. Renew my subscription. I haven't missed an issue since you first went to press in 1966. Some day I'll be one of your benefactors. Keep the faith.

Steven K. Bullock
Laguna Hills, California

Thank you for the constant reminder. Supporting *Dialogue* is high on my list of priorities, but it somehow falls behind water, gas and dentist bills. I am drowning in a sea of Cache Valley Mormon conservatism and a periodic dose of *Dialogue* inflates me for a respite of somewhat rational religious practice.

Michael DeBloomis
Logan, Utah