

Letters to the Editor

is bach a mormon?

After reading the music issue of *Dialogue*, I was disappointed to note the narrow and ethnocentric attitude that permeated the thinking of almost every contributor. I looked in vain for mention of some alternative to the standard European-based classical mode for church music. I think everyone agrees that current music used in worship services is mediocre and dull, but why must the solution lie exclusively in European style music?

We should not judge God, for whom the music is really meant, to be as musically and artistically simple or dull as 18th-century Europeans. To picture heavenly choirs singing Bach or Handel is as ridiculous as to think that all the diverse cultures in other worlds, or even a 24th-century earth culture, would still find European classical music the most suitable for worship.

Perhaps it is too much to ask that Chinese, Arabian, Indian, Polynesian or African music sometimes be chosen, but certainly contemporary American music, sung worshipfully by contemporary Americans, is just as pleasing to God. There is certainly nothing less holy about a syncretized beat. One article disparaged the "over-use of dominant or diminished seventh chords." What does this have to do with worship?

I once mentioned to a friend that it was biased of us *not* to have music in our hymnbooks by Maoris, Japanese, Philipinos. "Oh, but they have Maori songs in the hymnbook" was the answer. Upon further questioning, it became evident that the songs were really the same old 18th Century Methodist and Victorian hymns but with Maori words (and awkward translations at that).

I'm afraid if the attitudes of even *Dialogue* contributors towards music for church services remains conservative, unimaginative and ethnocentric, there is certainly no hope for official changes in the Church. Young people brought up on contemporary music will continue to sing from the church hymnal only because they 1) have a testimony strong enough to tolerate what they sing and hear; 2) equate Sabbath boredom with Sabbath rest; 3) have already been acculturated to the false concept that only conventional music is acceptable to the European-Caucasian image of our Father in Heaven.

Unfortunately, those who do not fit the above categories may seek to worship elsewhere, or we may begin to see heads bobbing on the last row with stereo head phones attached!

Robin R. Lyons
Pearl City, Hawaii

The advantage "folk/rock" has is the mixing of all the styles of the past and of various parts of the world plus the unrestricted use of exotic instruments. . . . Of course, most of youth's music is tasteless! But we can seek virtue in all things. Rejecting the good with the bad shows the same sense as critics of the *Book of Mormon* who refuse to read it.

I find it sad that the young people of the Church are often made to feel that finding inspiration in the music of the counterculture is immoral and satanic. I doubt that the Tabernacle Choir and Moody Blues would ever appear in concert together, but at least we could allow unorthodox musicians through the Pearly Gates when the time comes. I think God may get bored with the same kind of music day in and day out. . . .

Scott S. Smith
Lost Angeles, California

I have been reading *Dialogue* from its inception, and have found it a thoughtful and moderate voice for the exploration of Mormon beliefs and practices. Now and then it has printed a critical comment, but usually within a context of pro and con interaction. But, with the publication of the article "The Organ and Mormon Church Music" I feel for the first time a sense of attack on the Church. Even more, the attack is caustic and obviously exaggerated in its interpretation of that which is being attacked. I am disappointed and left to wonder if we are to expect more of this intemperate expression.

What you have done offends me as follows: You quoted a policy statement said to have been issued by the Church. You then printed eight negative responses and no supportive reactions. This may be construed as deliberate bias on the part of the editor. Following the eight, you printed a short statement by Alexander Schreiner which, by virtue of its position at the end of the eight criticisms, carries the clear tone of an apology to the musical world, with an implied hope for better days.

I regard the reactions as intemperate because for the most part they distort policy statements, e.g., "Are organs . . . to be bought to satisfy the most musically illiterate members of the worshippers?" or "A church with iron bars instead of stained glass. . . ." or "I suppose we will hear electronic chord organs from the Tabernacle next!" This is not the language of a thoughtful discussant, and certainly not of an informed person, nor is this what the policy statement says.

The Church is an institution for the spiritual education of people. As such, it uses many resources, including music, art, drama, science and other forms of inquiry and expression. It does not follow that the Church should therefore have the most professional theatres, or laboratories or kitchens or anything else of

that kind. What it does attempt to have is the most generally effective human development program it can provide to all of its members in light of all of its resources, with the emphasis on Christ-like behavior. Whatever some musicians may think to the contrary, this means that music is a subordinate means. Even so it can be, and usually is, an element of beauty within the total picture.

Asahel D. Woodruff
 Director, Cumorah Mission
 Bureau of Information
 Palmyra, New York

It is sheer folly to argue the pros and cons of pipe organs as long as our chapels are designed so that the (acoustical!) ceilings hit us just above the ears. Any sound sounds about the same!

Marielle Mitchell
 Los Angeles, California

conversation about a conversation

"That's strange, Agnes. The men do the talking and the women chiefly listen in this discussion. Fifty-nine of the speeches are from the men and only fifteen speeches were made by the women."

Judith had picked up my Winter 1974 *Dialogue* and had read "A Conversation About Mormonism" while Sam and I settled the children down for the night. Judith, a non-Mormon, had arrived at our home early for the women's consciousness raising group we recently formed. It had been a long day, beginning with Relief Society in the morning, and I looked forward to the casual evening with Judith and the others.

As I sat down, Judith leaned over and showed me a tally she had penciled:

		Sheila	1
Jerry	13	Cheryl	8
Dick	18	Marilyn	3
Robert	17	Maureen	2
Brent	11	Bonnie	1
	59		15

Looking at her tally, one had to admit that if the article had been a scene from a play, only the male parts would be worth having.

"Is it always this way for you Mormons, too?" Judith asked.

I was about to say "of course not" and defend my tribe, but I hesitated, thinking maybe I'd take up some counting of my own and check out her question.

"Do you always go around counting like this, Judy?" I asked back.

"Sure. Women can learn a lot by counting, Agnes."

Agnes Hume
 Berlin, Germany

dilemma of the mormon intellectual

Since I came to Utah a little less than three years ago to pursue graduate study in anthropology, I have avidly read both recent and past issues of *Dialogue*. Although I am not a Mormon, for some time I have been fascinated by Mormonism—an interest which resulted in my doing fieldwork on the Aaronic Order, a Mormon schismatic group. Many of the original members of the Aaronic Order were disaffected working class Mormons who felt that their Church no longer subscribed to egalitarian and communal ideals.

The dilemma of the Mormon intellectual who often does not take the beliefs of his heritage literally but still perceives desirable traits in his culture is only one of the interesting areas in Mormonism for social scientists to consider. Although I do not wish to categorize all *Dialogue* contributors or readers as being a part of the alienated Mormon intellectual group, I am sure that the journal provides an important avenue by which this group can air opinions that are not welcomed in ward meetings.

On the other hand, I cannot help but feel that many Mormon intellectuals are fighting a "losing battle" in attempting to deal with the fundamentalism, racism and political conservatism of modern Mormonism. Despite my cynicism, I must commend the editors of and the contributors to *Dialogue* for the courage to deal with issues that are often viewed dogmatically or as too sensitive for discussion by many Mormons.

Hans A. Baer
 Salt Lake City, Utah

dialogue in the antipodes

May I express my appreciation for *Dialogue*. I find it a great source of strength and uplift—a challenge. Unfortunately Gospel scholarship is not well advanced in Australia, and if your American readers find the Church over there to be intellectually barren, they don't know how good they have it.

I was grateful for Eugene England's article in the Winter '74 issue. I appreciate somewhat the message he expressed, particularly the need for LDS intellectuals to be faithful in fulfilling their Church callings so that they can be better accepted. It seems so many of those who show an intellectual interest over here immediately fall into inactivity.

Thanks for the effort and the courage.

Gary Sturgess
 Queensland, Australia

Some months ago our home teacher gave me a copy of *Dialogue* to read. I should now like to subscribe. I am looking forward to much enjoyment and enlightenment from your publication.

Almira A. Busch
 Albuquerque, N. Mexico

from a peak in darien

With every new copy of *Dialogue* I am thrilled. My first contact made me feel like Keats upon reading Chapman's Homer. *Dialogue* has been helping me build and maintain my testimony of the Restored Gospel. I will do without food before I will do without *Dialogue*.

Milton MacInnis
Nova Scotia, Canada

a delicate balance

I honestly thought that *Dialogue* was going to fold. Congratulations on your survival. I have always enjoyed the journal. One of the most curious features of your journal is the extremely delicate balance between criticism and promotional themes.

Garr Cutler
Eugene, Oregon

I enjoyed your brochure with the Washington monument in the background. Enclosed find my new subscription as a "Person." Best wishes for this challenging venture. You have my 100 percent support.

Carolyn W. D. Person
Boston, Massachusetts

I love *Dialogue*. I long for the day when the mailman will bring the next issue. Its value to me is immeasurable. The articles it has contained have answered questions that have been troubling me for years. Who knows where I would be today if I had never received a copy. Thank you.

John T. Scott
Christchurch, New Zealand

