

Letters to the Editor



adam gump

As a dentist with formal training in forensic odontology I would like to comment on the bite marks exhibited on the cover of the Autumn 1976 issue. If you make a normal bite into an apple, you will notice grooves cut by both maxillary and mandibular teeth, meeting somewhere near the middle of the bite, with the grooves cut by the maxillary teeth larger than those cut by the mandibular. Both marks pictured bear grooves but by only maxillary or mandibular teeth, a rather unusual way of eating an apple. Based on the available evidence, none of the following possibilities concerning origin of the bite marks can be ruled out:

1. Subject No. 1, bearing larger teeth, attacked the apple, hatchet-style, with his maxilla; subject No. 2, with smaller teeth (though not necessarily female), likewise took a bite.
2. Subject No. 1 was responsible for both bites, one caused by the maxilla, one by the mandible.
3. Subjects 1 and 2 took bites from the apple in the traditional fashion, but, having edentulous mandibles, "gummed it."
4. Andy Gump took a bite from the left side of the apple, Dick Tracy, the right.

Gregory A. Prince, D.D.S., Ph.D.
Gaithersburg, Maryland

graphic sexuality

Thanks so much for the pleasure of adding this fine ripe apple to the shelf of *Dialogue*. I confess that when I turned the pages and saw all that fine print complete with graphs, I was dismayed. But the poems, the confession of "Solus," and the beautifully written story about poor "Greg" helped me to understand what you had done and why. You couldn't be accepted without the figures to back up the art, yes? Please tell the author of "Greg" that I feel sure this story is the first chapter of a very good novel; it must be to let us know how Greg made out. . . .

Virginia Sorensen
Tangier, Morocco

fan letter

You really put out a winner! From front to back the recent issue of *Dialogue* pleased us intensely. Such a positive approach to a sensitive subject must have taken many hours of preparation and hard work. Everyone we have talked to found it stimulating and enlightening. "Solus" was poignant and thought provoking. The writer has the spirit of an artist or poet in telling his story so beautifully. Doug Thayer's "Greg" was as excellent as his previous stories. We appreciate his great talent more each time *Dialogue* publishes one of his stories. Thank you for a great and wonderful issue.

Shirley Paxman
Provo, Utah

solus I

. . . The advice given by the psychiatrist: "The only way I could end my male fixation was to experience male sex" was obviously inaccurate and inappropriate. No psychiatrist worth his salt would narrow down such complex dynamics to such absurd simplification. (Perhaps "Solus" misinterpreted his counsel?) I can assure "Solus" that there are much more gospel-oriented solutions to his dilemma. I would urge "Solus" to contact some one more in tune with the underlying significance of such behavior.

Barnett Seymour Salzman,
M.D., FRSH
Escondido, California

solus II

Thank you for Solus. I come from a good family with great love for the best parents I know of. As a teenage convert to the Gospel, I kept the commandments even though most of my relatives and friends were non-members. I was very active and held leadership positions in various Church organizations and priesthood quorums. After my mission, and when I was in college, I became aware of my different sexual interests. . . .

Conflicts and guilt tore my conscience for two years. On one side was my strong testimony and love of the Gospel, and enjoyment in serving the Lord. But on the other side was a strong emotional feeling for my own sex. Why I am gay, I don't know. The explanations offered by psychiatrists don't fit my background. I could not seek counsel from Church leaders because they knew my family too well.

I had to make a most painful choice, become inactive, because I could not live a lie and hypocrisy. Some are active in the Church with the fear of being discovered, especially those that are married with happy families and good business or professional jobs. Some have left the Church. Some, like me, are inactive, but still have a strong testimony of the Gospel.

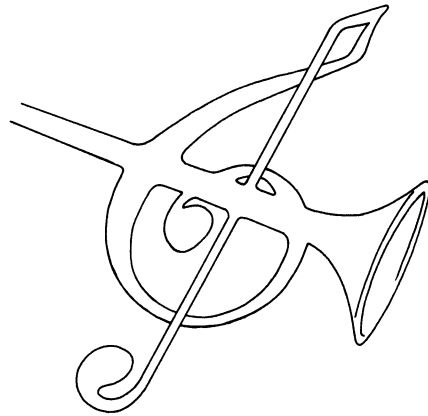
I can only hope and concur with Anonymous's last paragraph.

Anonymous II

silent majority

I really appreciate the new insights I receive in reading *Dialogue*. I enjoyed Lester Bush's article "Birth Control Among the Mormons." I seemed to detect a trace of smug satisfaction (perhaps I read this into the article) in the recorded observation that the membership of the Church, while without the formal opportunity to vote on the "Church doctrine" concerning birth control, have practically registered a silent vote in practicing birth control. Brother Bush suggested that 90% of the members use birth control at some time, and he suggested that the position of Church leaders has been influenced through the years by this "vote". If that is true, it won't be the first time a doctrine has been altered to accommodate the wishes of the saints. The same thing happened when the brother of Jared and Samuel opposed the establishment of monarchy among their peoples. It is interesting to get these indications of just how committed the saints are. I can't help but feel that some of us, with the Jaredites and the children of Israel, "are going to reap disappointment by and by."

Val Larsen
Idaho Falls, Idaho

**art and artifice**

With regard to a possible roundtable or issue devoted to "Art and Artifice," please allow us the following observations. First, many of *Dialogue's* roundtables, and occasionally entire issues, have been dominated by the same names. In recent years, *Dialogue* has increasingly appeared to be an in-group journal in which the same people publish and comment on each others' articles. We in no way wish to minimize anyone's contributions, but merely to observe that the interests of *Dialogue* are best served by including as many voices as possible.

Of a more general sort, our second observation concerns the one-theme-per-issue format *Dialogue* has embraced in recent years. Since *Dialogue* readers reflect much broader interests than those of most scholarly journals, some readers may lose interest in a journal which addresses their particular interests infrequently, and then all at once. Making matters more complicated, often one-theme issues are further circumscribed by emphasizing a particular discipline or approach. For example, the issue on music was written entirely by musicians trained in a classical European tradition. The possibilities of experimental worship involving rock, folk and contemporary idioms, not to mention the musical affinities of non-Western Mormons, were never considered. A similar problem weakens the issue on sex. Sex is one of the great common denominators permeating everyone's existence. Leaving such a subject in the hands of sociologists is like trusting the music issue to piano tuners.

All of which is a long way of saying that a roundtable on "Art and Artifice" is a good idea depending on who rounds the table, and that an entire issue on any particular subject might not be to *Dialogue's* benefit.

Thomas Sant and Nicolas Shumway

yes, bach is a mormon

Robin R. Lyons laments the bias in the special music issue of *Dialogue* toward the "European-based classical mode for church music." He asks why we don't choose "Chinese, Arabian, Polynesian or African music" for our worship services. He wonders if we haven't presumed too much in thinking that God prefers Bach or Handel sung by his heavenly choirs. Lyons' comments remind me of the story of the curator of a European museum who was showing a group of American students a raven sculpted by a Medieval artist. A young co-ed remarked, "That's not my idea of a raven." He stared at her contemptuously and said, "Young woman, that's God's idea of a raven."

Perhaps it is presumptuous to think that celestial beings sing Bach or Handel, but is it anymore so than to think that they read Isaiah or Psalms? What better can we imagine them singing than those musical expressions that are the most spiritual and most artistic known to the western world? The latter point is worth emphasizing, for however grand or eloquent musical expressions in Chinese or Arabic may be, they are not Christ centered. What is so wonderful about Bach is not only that he was one of the most creative geniuses the world has ever known, but he was a devout Christian who wrote his music solely and expressly "to the glory of God." It is, perhaps, the fullest and most sublime expression of praise to the Father and the Son known to the present inhabitants of this world. What is there in any other musical literature that approaches the beauty and profundity of the Atonement, Crucifixion and Resurrection that we find in the *B Minor Mass* or the *Passion According to St. Matthew*? Perhaps the society of Enoch or the Nephites at the spiritual pinnacle of their civilization may have produced musical expressions that would rival those of Bach, Handel and Mozart, but if so, they are lost to us.

We certainly should not be parochial as far as our musical tastes are concerned. There may indeed be higher octaves of musical expression to which we are deaf and tonal systems beyond our imagination. Perhaps one of the surprises of the celestial worlds is that there will be great musical expressions completely foreign to our ears, but it is hard to imagine a celestial world filled with more heavenly strains or deep spiritual joy than one finds in the great Christian music of Western civilization.

Robert A. Rees,
Director of the Arts,
UCLA Extension
Chairman, LA Stake Music Committee

ERA an error?

The recent statement of the First Presidency of the Church opposing the Equal Rights Amendment will in the future, I am convinced be seen as an extremely unfortunate move. In this letter, writing from a male perspective I would like to describe what I see as some of the negative consequences of this move in particular and the increasingly anti-feminist stand of the Church in general.

In their statement, the First Presidency indicated that they believed that passage of the ERA would weaken the family unit. I for one cannot see the connection. What the ERA will do is to give women more options in choosing their life-style. Apparently the Church is worried that some women will find it easier to make what they see as incorrect choices. Somehow the principle of free agency doesn't apply here.

I am afraid that many in the Church have fallen for a new version of the "Big Lie" technique. The opponents of ERA have proclaimed so loudly and at times hysterically that the ERA will "destroy the family" that many in the Church have believed them without asking the simple question "how and why?"

One concern is that women would be subject to the Draft (a move I personally would support in the context of a national service system). We only need to look to Israel which since 1948 has drafted all men and women into the military at age 18. This has definitely not made Israeli women less feminine. Indeed in recent years Israeli women have become more traditional and more accepting of roles as wives and mothers. (See Yael Dayan, daughter of Moshe Dayan in the February 13, 1977, issue of the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*).

The Church's stand against the ERA will lead Church members to look to the Church for opinions on social and political issues, rather than working these things out for themselves. Is this the Church's mission? Doesn't it create intellectual laziness? Instead of presenting only anti-ERA and anti-feminist views, why couldn't the Church publications carry articles both for and against the ERA? Then let members make their own decisions. Haven't we grasped the notion that there can be honest differences on these types of issues among good Church members? In the Church we constantly repeat the slogan about "teaching people correct principles and letting them govern themselves." Are we afraid to put this into practice?

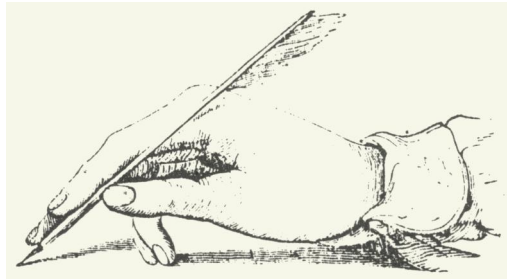
I see the Church's opposition to the ERA as a slap in the face of numerous women who

have both strong testimonies and strong feminist convictions. The Church's stand will only unnecessarily alienate these women from the Church and may push them into inactivity.

How will the Church's anti-feminism affect missionary work? Increasingly the Church is becoming identified with a conservative, anti-feminist perspective (see the article on the Church's support of a move to rescind the ERA in Colorado in the February 23, 1977, issue of *Christian Century*). I believe everyone needs the Gospel, feminists and male chauvinists alike (though the male chauvinists need to repent) . . .

Many in the Church justify opposition to the ERA and an anti-feminist view on scriptural grounds. I myself have yet to be shown

tuted in our society does limit women's potential to develop their intellectual, artistic and practical talents. I am not proposing that both husbands and wives devote themselves exclusively to activities outside the home and leave children to be raised by outside agencies. We must develop ways in which child rearing and vocational roles can be *shared* by men and women. More flexible working schedules, more parttime work, groups of families sharing child care responsibilities are avenues that need to be explored. A fine discussion of possible ways to reach this goal is found in an article by Rosemary Ruether in the February 7, 1977, issue of *Christianity and Crisis*. We need to recognize that child rearing is too important to be left to women alone.



where it clearly states in any of the standard works that women are to be exclusively wives and mothers and men only breadwinners. I also do not believe that any scripture justifies the belief that women have innate qualities which make them better parents than men and thus should confine themselves to roles as wives and mothers. Often we read current attitudes and beliefs into the scriptures. We pick and choose and distort scriptures to justify our own biases and prejudices. If certain scriptures do appear on the surface to justify an anti-feminist stance such as passages in Paul's writings to the Corinthians, I believe these can be shown to reflect sexist attitudes and practices of the culture in which the scriptures were given, not the will of the Lord. I believe that the qualities necessary to be good parents, a loving attitude, patience, tolerance, self sacrifice and other so-called feminine characteristics are equally present in both men and women.

I believe that the family is an eternal unit. It does not, however, follow from this that the traditional American family represents the Divine order of things. We as Mormons have to recognize that the family as presently consti-

Ultimately I believe that the arguments of the anti-ERA and feminist forces rest on this assumption: that keeping women in a subordinate status is the price we must pay to maintain the integrity of the family unit. A family system that rests on such an assumption (as I believe our present system does) needs to be changed. The price that women pay for maintaining this type of system is wasted potential and men pay in keeping the "feminine" side of their character underdeveloped is too high.

I hope that no one will draw the inference from this letter that I do not sustain the First Presidency and other General Authorities as prophets, seers and revelators. I most sincerely do. However, the statement on the ERA was not issued as a revelation and should not be treated as such. Those of us who feel the Church's attitude toward feminism is mistaken must bear witness to this in humility, with love and understanding. We must wait for the time when others can see that feminism does not conflict with the Gospel but strengthens and deepens the Gospel.

John Willis
Arkadelphia, Arkansas

brigham's blunder or brigham's brilliance?

Several months ago I set myself the task of reading up on the history of the American West prior to the arrival of the Mormons. I began with Bernard De Voto's edition of the Journals of Lewis and Clark and followed the development of the fur trade through the efforts of Manuel Lisa, John Jacob Astor, William H. Ashley, their successors and competitors, and continued through the decline of the fur trade and the role of the mountain men just prior to the arrival of the Church in the Great Basin.

Having thus followed many journeys westward in this period, and then having reread and rethought the "Gathering of Zion" that began in 1846, I have come to the uncomfortable conclusion that the Mormon decision to leave Nauvoo on February 4, 1846, can most accurately be described as "Brigham's Blunder." These foolish people (including my own great-great-grandfather) started out for the far West in the dead of winter—months before "grass grows and water runs"—so they were guaranteed to starve their animals; bog down in the spring mud; use up their supplies; weaken literally hundreds of men, women, and especially children, unto death; and in general make absolutely certain that they would end up "prostrate on the prairies."

Why? What could possibly have moved Brigham Young to start west at this ridiculous time? Sam Brannan's rumor that the United States Government was going to send gunboats up the Mississippi to prevent the Mormon move west? That was easily checked, and Brigham Young was too tough-minded to be spooked by such rumors. Fear of the mobs? Surely not with the Nauvoo Legion in town, and when there existed an agreement to move out in the spring. In fact, the cowardly mobs didn't attack even the poor, the sick, and the weak that Brigham Young left behind until the month of September.

Then why? If the Church had left when they agreed to do so—when water runs and grass grows—they would have made it to the mountains in 1846 after the usual journey of a few months, rather than in 1847 after a delay of some eighteen months, untold suffering and hundreds of deaths. I haven't counted to make sure, but it seems that Brigham's Blunder

must have cost more Mormon lives than all of the mob actions of the Gentiles put together: there were 600 Mormon dead buried in Winter Quarters alone, and one-fourth of these were children.

This whole episode which demanded so much of the Mormon people—including far too many lives—could have been a fairly routine trip, as it was for so many non-Mormons who went west in 1846, if only Brigham Young had decided to leave at the usual time.

I trust that someone out there among *Dialogue's* readers will be able to transform Brigham's Blunder into Brigham's Brilliance. That should prove interesting.

Jack Worlton
Los Alamos, New Mexico



A+ for the commercials

"It's Next Week" or "The Family and Other Living Things" or whatever it was finally called would have been an hour of "the pits" if it had not been for the terrific commercials. But the Church has been in the commercial business (*Homefront* series) longer than in the entertainment end. It was a good effort and should be encouraged, but I hope the next nationwide attempt is less like the Stake roadshow.

Julia Johnson Allred
Venus, Texas

from the fence

I stand all amazed that it took a black (of African lineage), Alex Haley, to do more to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and mothers than anything else in this country. Maybe we are being told something.

Mr. Haley praised the Mormons and their cooperation with his genealogical efforts with "Roots" on the Johnny Carson Show.

Hurray for "Roots" and, for once, for TV.

Marie Geoffrey
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



We love your magazine, your spirit and your ability to edit and type, but your ability to keep subscriptions straight isn't up to the former talents. Now the Lord has given us talents and supposedly the more we use them the more these talents will increase. Well folks, you have proven this one wrong.

Now listen, we sent a check in '74 and received one issue for \$20.00 then in '75 we tried it again. This time the percentage went up and we received two for a 100% increase. If you will take the time and explain what this past phenomenon was due to, we will again send you our annual 20 bucks.

We love ya anyways,

R. T. and P. A. Hilby
Evansville, Indiana

Ed. note: If you try again, we guarantee a 200% return.

A quick comment on changes in the last issue. "Among the Mormons" is sorely missed, of course. I hope a replacement can be found for Ralph Hansen. "Personal Voices" also missed. And why leave out "Notes on Staff and Contributors"? I have always enjoyed knowing something about the contributors to *Dialogue*, and I felt slightly cast adrift in the last issue. Please reinstate the custom!

As an organist I was excited with Nick Shumway's review of Norberto Guinaldo's

Advent recording *The Organ on Mormon Temple Hill*. I have since searched high and low for a copy of it and have only uncovered puzzled looks on record shop salespeople's faces, including those in Deseret Books' record department. Any suggestions?

Craig H. Bennion
Bountiful, Utah

Ed. note: Stephen W. Stathis of the Library of Congress will review "Among the Mormons" in our next issue. "Personal Voices" is not so much lost as in hiatus. "Notes on Contributors" was deemed too time and space consuming by our staff, but we are still experimenting.

help

I have been trying very hard to pick up certain issues that were printed before I became a *Dialogue* subscriber. Are there any readers who might be willing to sell me the following issues:

Summer 1966

Vol. I No. 2

Winter 1966

Vol. I No. 4

Michael B. Hoggan

3926 Kentucky Drive, Suite 2
Hollywood, California 90068

Dialogue has meant a great deal to me ever since I first discovered it (the second issue put out), but for a number of years it was my only tangible thread to the Church as I struggled through a period of suspended animation in terms of active membership. I have currently resumed attending meetings, but the probing, wide-ranging, thoughtful articles of *Dialogue* will always fill a special need in my life.

Leona Mattoni
Beverly Hills, CA

Long ago I lost track of the *Dialogue* publication schedule. I had not received an issue for many months and assumed my subscription had lapsed. I was just getting around to renewing when Vol. X, No. 2 showed up in the mail. I have no idea as to the status of my subscription, so here is twenty bucks to cover me

for the next four issues—whenever they might be published.

I empathize with your problems. I hope the move to Washington will help smooth things out. As frustrated as I have been in

recent years over *Dialogue's* spastic production schedule, I could never bring myself to desert you.

Steven Orton
Omaha, Nebraska

