

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

a fresh understanding of a prophet

The interview with Edward Kimball in the Winter 1978 issue of *Dialogue* is the closest I have come to his book, *Spencer W. Kimball*, since it was given to me as a gift a year and a half ago. I liked the movie *Rocky* until it became the inspiration for too many Sunday School talks, and it was for the same reason that I shelved Edward and Andrew Kimball's biography of the prophet. I grew weary of members' repeated astonishment at the fact that President Kimball's feet are anchored on the earth and have shuffled down the same path the rest of us trod. But at least we can now more comfortably relate to a living prophet rather than worship an immortalized one.

Kimball gives an honest assessment of his work, which in turn gives readers and readers-to-be a better understanding of the biography. Because of their authors and subject matter, Bookcraft and Deseret books are often accepted as having been immaculately conceived, but Kimball assures us that *Spencer W. Kimball* is a flesh and blood work that required research, editing and compromise. Kimball is willing to admit the book's faults, and he spells out specific ways the book could be improved. One of his suggestions for improvement is to perhaps be more analytical about his father by evaluating him in the context of his spiritual and secular experiences. Such an approach would certainly be surprising, innovative, unorthodox and definitely worth reading. Kimball claims it would constitute another book. As it is, *Spencer W. Kimball* has invited a fresh understanding of a Mormon prophet, but I certainly would not neglect Kimball's suggested second volume as long as I have his first.

Thane Young
Oakton, Virginia

moving along musically

I appreciated your tribute and articles about Dad in *Dialogue* (Vol. XI, No. 4). Very thoughtful and a touching thing to do. He influenced many thousands of us, including his own family. We continue to miss this kindly giant.

Someone ought to do an article on the Mormon musical, of which there are now many, many. Lex de Azevedo's ("... Warrior," "My Turn . . .," "Diary . . .") are still the best as far as impact, but Salt Lake is full of others every summer when we visit. One of them (plus Lex's), "The Day the Rain Fell Up," traveled through the Northwest last winter and packed the Portland Civic Auditorium with some 3,000 people (often families with four or five children, and at \$4 to \$6 a throw). If that isn't having an impact outside of Salt Lake/Church sponsored circles, I don't know what is. Right now, in my opinion, the musical is having the most lasting impact on the Church membership of any single media effort. And it's surprising how many Saints are writing these things. Not all are good—very few are—but much money and time is being spent on them. And people will pay lots of money to see them.

A. Laurence Lyon
Monmouth, Oregon

the dialogue diet

Enclosed please find a cheque to the amount of \$10.00—student rate to renew my subscription to *Dialogue*. I am currently going into my third year's subscription and want you to know that if I had to, I'd forego roast lamb, mint sauce and even pavlova dessert (all part of the mythical Kiwi national meal) to ensure my regular diet of *Dialogue*, a magazine that has truly helped me in my continuing quest as a faithful Latter-day Saint, to correlate and understand truth as revealed both from heaven and scholarly enquiry.

I am very interested in your current international issue plans. I think it is appropriate that *Dialogue* should at this time devote its energies to this important aspect of the contemporary restored Church. The Mormon scholarly community is growing internationally. Not only are young people in countries around the world filling missions in greater numbers than before, they are also filling univer-

sities and seeking to extend an influence in the academic world. In my own case, I have been a member of the Church since 1973, still the only member in my family, have filled a mission to Australia and am currently in the second year of an anthropology degree. I am proud to be a New Zealand Mormon—a definite minority in the scholarly world!—but my feelings of national pride are subordinate to my concerns for the greater sister- and brotherhood of the Kingdom of God which transcends parochial concerns and national sovereignty.

I continue to pray for your efforts and look forward to many more rich, challenging and enlightening experiences as I ponder and absorb issues to come.

Ian G. Barber
Nelson, New Zealand

dialogue journey

Thanks for your prompt dispatch of my first copy (which must have been fairly soon after you received my subscription)! Assuming the distance from Arlington to Manchester to be circa 3,200 miles, then the fifty-six days the journal took to arrive represents a speed of around fifty-seven miles per day! That is barely an improvement on the average (maximum) daily travel distance of Early Modern Europe (16th and 17th centuries) which was around fifty miles per day; it is far less efficient than the Incas' reputed 150 miles per day *on foot* during the same period. Even a good sea-journey at this time might well compare favourably (given good weather) to the time of the "Dialogue-journey." It is comforting, though, to know that some things really haven't changed that much.

The wait was worth it. Dian Saderup's letter pointed rightly to the gap in Hugh Nibley's brilliant article and enhanced the meaning of *Dialogue*; what does President Kimball do with his tie-cuttings, I wonder? The little insights into his character were "magic" (Scottish term: "Jimmy")! And T. Edgar Lyon seems a giant of a man who few English people (and, no doubt, fewer English "Saints") have ever heard of.

But will the next issue take so long? For me, your deadline for contributions

to the forthcoming international issue passed some 2,052 miles E.N.E. of Washington D.C. (or thirty-six days out of port!). I hope your other "international" subscribers got their copies well in advance of June 30 so that we do indeed get a truly international issue in 1980. Till then, best wishes.

Ross Andrews
Manchester, England

english saints

With regard to the coming international issue, I can only think of those things that interest myself most: the relationship between Church members and the surrounding society, the conceptions and attitudes held by members and "gentiles" toward each other. The topic of the relationship between societal attitudes and those of Church members interests me because of an observed intensity of the feeling of being "persecuted" among English Saints compared with those in the USA. Indeed, in the only survey I know of that has dealt with some of the views of the wider society held by the Saints, a number of interesting differences were demonstrated vis-a-vis other more established religious groups. Personally, I would like to read contributions from interested persons giving their views of their particular societies and what they think those societies think of them. I would have thought some interesting differences might be shown between secular societies (like mainland Britain) and societies where religious affiliation is still important in terms of numbers and broad social values (Italy as an instance).

I think it is of great importance that a forum be established on an international basis to allow a spread of insights beyond the specifically American context to a very diverse set of intellectual perspectives.

Nigel R. Johnson
Manchester, England

Note: *Though our original optimistic deadline has passed, we are still accumulating manuscripts for our international issue. We are especially interested in hearing from citizens of other countries.*