

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

the greatest

Hugh Nibley is *the* great scholar of our time. How blessed we are to have him use his scholarship in the service of the Lord. His article in *Dialogue* (Vol. XII, 4) struck a note we could all consider in the present age of affluence—the law of consecration that too few of us live.

Nibley is especially dear to me. He made the Book of Mormon the most exciting treasure trove in print. His endearing humility and the complete absence of puff and pomposity in anything he says or writes make him the greatest teacher I know. I hope he will consent to write often for *Dialogue*.

Continue to struggle: We all need to think as well as pray.

Mary D. Nelson
Fairfax, Virginia

marginal note

Marvin Rytting's personal struggle ("Living with Opposition in All Things," Vol XII, 4) saddened me. Not that I haven't faced similar paradoxes, but for Rytting: "The result of these paradoxes is that today I find myself in a bind. I am perceived by myself and by others as a marginal Mormon." This from someone who appears to care deeply about the Church and his place in it, whose life seems to have been influenced by his reflections on the Church's teachings, who says he manages sufficient conformity to the Church's social demands to hold a temple recommend. This fellow is *so* Mormon he even appears to accept the popular Mormon tyranny that defines all "really active" Mormons as General-Authority or Relief-Society-president types (other types are "marginal"—including Rytting).

There is something terribly wrong when intelligent Mormons—who, from all outward appearances, are Mormons as "true-blue, through and through" as they come (such as Rytting, to judge from his essay)—can believe they are on the fringes. When he and other Mormon scholars and artists rationalize or define

themselves *outside* of the mainstream, they leave me and my children without models of the intellectual Mormon *insider*.

So it makes me sad to find Rytting saying, "I am . . . a marginal Mormon." Well, you're not marginal to me, brother!

Kevin G. Barnhurst
Salt Lake City, Utah

a blank check

Susan Taylor Hansen's essay on the ERA (Vol. XII, No. 2) deserves a reply because she cleverly but grossly misstates the case against it. Primarily she fails to address the invitation to judicial tyranny created by this open-ended proposal.

The truth is that neither she nor anyone else has any idea how the amendment will be interpreted in fifty years in the context of the prejudices of the federal courts. She seems to say that we can be assured on this matter by the vast amount of pre-passage discussion that has surrounded the amendment. This is false and any attorney ought to know it. It is really not that difficult to find out many of the views of the founding fathers or the drafters of the fourteenth amendment. Yet, as even she admits, the fourteenth amendment has been perverted from its original intent to such an extent that it is doubtful the drafters would recognize it and it is certain that they would not endorse it. The courts have even created new rights such as "privacy" that are simply not in the constitution and would never have been endorsed by the framers.

Take an example that is close to Mormon hearts—religion and the schools. There is not a shred of evidence to support the contention that the founders would have ever endorsed the interpretation put on this matter by the courts in recent decades (e.g., read the works of Walter Berns and Leonard Levy on this). The founders were friendly to religion, and the most literate and astute of them

believed religion essential to the preservation of that public virtue necessary in a republic. Whether they were right on this may be debated. But their belief would have supported state aid for religious schools, school prayer, etc. That we have none of these things today, even though a majority of people would support school prayer, is due directly to the enforced prejudices of the federal courts—nothing more.

Why then should this studied rejection of the intentions of the founders not take place with ERA? For example, what is to prevent the meaning of "sex" being expanded to "sex preference" and opening the way for coverage of homosexuality? (Privacy was "created" on much less). Coverage of homosexuality would never be enacted by any legislature because the American people overwhelmingly reject it. Yet we simply do not know what the courts might do. Anyone who claims he or she does know has not studied constitutional history or the political philosophy of the founders. With this amendment we will be handing another blank check to the most undemocratic tyranny left in the country: one which owes no allegiance to popular will or founding intentions but only to the "light of their own conceit". (Remember the example of raw judicial power in the abortion cases.) If we cannot reverse all of these mistakes, we may at least reduce the opportunities for their repetition in the future.

Richard Sherlock
Memphis, Tennessee

try it, you'll like it

Dr. Don H. Nelson's review of *Is Any Sick Among You?* and *No Side Effects* (Vol. XII, No. 3) seemed to me to be his all-encompassing generalization that herbs have no medicinal value. Did he read the books? Has he read the "large number of similar publications from our own Mormon culture?" Has he studied the medicinal value and tried herbs himself? It seems to me that Dr. Nelson is no better off than those "dreamers or self-styled healers" who have not "through hard

work" received "the inspiration which comes to those who have applied themselves to the knowledge that has already been given us."

I feel sorry for Dr. Nelson and others in this category.

H. Scott Washburn
Orem, Utah

hypocritical oath

Most people are slow to absorb the insights of the avant garde or remember the wisdom of the out-of-fashion and rarely challenge orthodoxy. The latter cloaks itself in the term "responsible expertise" while dismissing dissent as "quackery." This is particularly true in the health field, and the Fall 1979 (Vol. XII, No. 3) issue could have benefited from some opposing views. Instead, it has been used as part of the campaign to crush medical dissent in the Church.

Most readers are unaware of the reprehensible oppression that has been held at bay by Apostle Benson and the National Health Federation (led by a Mormon attorney). The formula to instill prejudice has been followed in this issue: consign those advocating unorthodox medicine to the ranks of freedom extremists, the dangerously unscientific, the potentially apostate; ascribe early Mormon attitudes to naivete and the deficiencies of nineteenth century medicine while showing the wisdom of leaders who rely on the "experts" today. The problem with this picture is that while there is truth in it, it is a serious distortion.

Mormon adherence to medical orthodoxy is the result of increasing secularization. Ironically, it has taken gentle researchers to show the soundness of the Word of Wisdom and some of our earlier attitudes. Just as the conservative medical establishment fiercely resisted innovative health concepts like acupuncture and nutrition, the decline of allopathic dominance in the Church will mean greater polarization and attempts to discredit all naturopathic concepts by lumping the irresponsible (and there are many) with the responsible. The fact is, however, that a fair number of LDS physicians of my ac-

quaintance (and hundreds outside the Church) have discovered by study, experience and even prayer, that the shrill warnings of orthodoxy are largely hypocritical and hollow (see, for example, Illich's *Medical Nemesis*).

The case for alternative health views is quite strong—whether the subject is fluoridation, cancer, vaccination or whatever—and also quite ignored by the medical majority. I speak as one who is informed—and I know that the LDS medical establishment is not. Hindsight has ever been the greatest teacher and the trend of contemporary medical history is apparent and hopeful.

Scott S. Smith
Thousand Oaks, California

not so mild herbalist

I was, quite frankly, sent into a state of mental shock after reading Dr. Smith's blind sermon entitled "Herbal Remedies: God's Medicine?" (Vol. XII, No. 3). Dr. Smith has laid a fine historical background of the use of herbs in the Church, but in his limited exposure, he has *missed the point!!!*

First of all, I do use a competent M.D. and I take herbs as a mild, natural form of medication. I am currently interviewing several medical doctors and their patients for a book soon to be released.

The overwhelming majority of medical patients interviewed are of the opinion that their medical doctor is "ripping them off." They complain of impersonal, rude and abrasive examinations. Prescriptions are given with little or no explanation. Their doctors never speak of proper nutrition as a means of preventative medicine. And why should they? Medical doctors are not exposed to preventative medicine in school or practice. They leave the patient bewildered and confused.

Brother Smith fails to admit that it is his attitude and those of his colleagues that have turned people away from his most sacred profession. His ostrich-like approach is the very reason his patients are asking questions. Or could it be, possibly, the failure of the medical profession

that has brought this all about? Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote ". . .they have tried their talents at one or at the other, and have failed; therefore they turn critics."

For Dr. Smith to infer that apostasy is the next step after using herbs is like saying that a person who possesses a gun is certainly going to murder someone. Some gun-owners do murder. Some people who use herbs are apostates. Some herb users are fundamentalists and/or Birchers. Some herb users are medical doctors.

The patient's position today is clear. Medical doctors who use ecclesiastical or austere professional influence to promulgate or suppress unproven methods should be put on notice that their standing as that patient's doctor is jeopardized. (At least one medical doctor has lost patients for channeling them into unorthodox practices using "profit-ic" counsel.) This injunction may seem severe until one realizes that the basic premise of modern medicine's arguments is precisely what has led to patient apostasy in the past.

The origin of the apostate patients is this issue: an inflexible adherence by medical doctors to tradition despite new trends of knowledge and self-preservation found among reliable and responsible individuals today. Antiherbalists fit this mold.

David Lisonbee

more is better

I very much enjoyed your recent issue on medicine and Mormonism (Vol. XII, No. 3), especially since it touched on my academic specialty, the history of medicine. I do, however, feel that the "Historical Perspective" provided by Robert T. Divett was both too brief and in some ways misleading. The richness of nineteenth-century medical thought cannot be appreciated if medical practice is dismissed as Galenic. Certainly, mentioning only Thomsonianism as a source of popular medical thought, in spite of its special relevance to Mormonism, distorts the picture of the medical ideas that influenced the American public. I would like

to briefly describe certain elements which I feel are important to understanding early nineteenth-century medicine, before the germ theory revolutionized medical thought.

Because medicine is a highly cumulative discipline, any point in the past seems markedly inferior to the present. This is especially true of the nineteenth century before Pasteur and Lister. Nineteenth-century physicians were, however, no less presentistic than we are. They believed that their medicine was better and more rational than that of the past. The early nineteenth-century French physician Cabanis believed that "analysis" and "observation" were the proper foundation of the new medicine. He and his colleagues looked to Hippocrates for inspiration but were well aware of their distance from the past. No one then would have described medicine as Galenic. Since Paracelsus in the sixteenth century, the pharmacopoeia had become increasingly chemical in its remedies. Antimony, mercurials like calomel and numerous opiates unknown to Galen were introduced. Vesalius, Harvey, Willis, Bartholin, von Haller, Bell, Bichat and innumerable other anatomists had revolutionized anatomy and physiology. Civil instruction was developed at Leyden and at the Paris Hospital.

Although traditional therapy called for "puking," "purging" and bloodletting, the physiological and diagnostic basis of such treatments were very different than in Galen's day. That diseases were "treated alike" is not to say that "there was little concept of differential diagnosis." Diagnosis made real progress in the nineteenth century. Laennec's *Treatise on the Diseases of the Chest* and first published in France in 1819. It went through six English editions before 1830, two of which were printed in America. Dr. James J. Walsh wrote: "To Laennec more than any other is due all the data which enable the physician of the twentieth century to make the diagnosis of tuberculosis." Laennec's researches were of nearly equal value in diagnosing pneumonia, bronchitis and various heart conditions. Laennec and his stethoscope

were becoming well known in the late 1820s, especially among European-trained American physicians.

Perhaps sanitation and public health were the areas in which nineteenth-century medicine made the most spectacular advances. In fact, they account for a much larger drop in the mortality rate than modern therapy. Vaccination was becoming more reliable and accepted in England and elsewhere, yet, as Lester Bush notes, there was considerable resistance to it by some groups. The miasmatic theory of disease led Southwood Smith, James Kay, Jeremy Bentham and Edwin Chadwick to force the British Government to improve urban sanitary conditions. The result was a dramatic decrease in mortality in Britain from the 1840's on. The miasmatic theory was well represented in John Eberle's *Practice of Medicine*, a book which had gone through three editions by 1835. Eberle also accurately discussed the diagnosis of smallpox, scarlet fever, gout, hepatitis and other well known disorders. The builders of Nauvoo had no need of the miasmatic theory to warn them of the dangers of swamps and other places where decay led to a corruption of the air.

Orthodox medical men realized that their influence was limited in rural areas, and they published tracts to educate the public in self-care. These tracts both supplied common people with medical knowledge and created a further market for unorthodox schools and texts. One of the most popular orthodox tracts was *Domestic Medicine*. It was written by William Buchan, M.D., of Edinburgh but edited for American consumption by Samuel Griffitts of Philadelphia. It recommends a wholesome diet as a prophylaxis and purgatives like Glauber's (a seventeenth-century German chemist) purge and rhubarb for sickness. The emetic ipecac as well as calomel, a mercuric preparation, were also praised. In 1826, Anthony Benezet published a popular tract, *The Family Physician*. He recommends the traditional emetics and laxatives but limits the medical amateur by suggesting when physicians should be called. Works like Buchan's and Benezet's

were as important to popular medical care as those of the unorthodox herbalists.

Heroic treatments were not so foolish as they seemed. Unlike Galen, who believed in letting nature heal, most orthodox physicians believed that if a little therapy was good, more was better, and they had reason to believe they were right. P.C.A. Louis undertook an investigation of the efficacy of bloodletting in the 1830s in France. This was one of the first statistical studies done in medicine. He demonstrated that bloodletting helped in acute diseases like pneumonia; needless to say, his methods were faulty. James Jackson published the results in English in 1836. Such hard "scientific" proof served to vindicate traditional therapeutic practices. It was not until the wonder drugs of the 1930s and 1940s that internal medicine had really effective treatments. In 1920, the mortality rate for pneumonia among the hospitalized was still around 80%.

To sum up what I hope my few examples have shown, medical thought and medical care in early nineteenth century American were complex, despite the redundant therapeutic practices. Diagnosis and health theory were much further advanced than treatment. Home medical advisers written by orthodox practitioners were important sources of self-treatment for many Americans. Heroic therapy was supported not only by tradition but by data. Even with a heightened awareness of the complex medical background of the early Church, most of us would agree with Gert Brieger, a noted historian of American medicine, that in the nineteenth century one was safer with homoeopaths, who taught that small doses of drugs were more powerful than large ones, than with M.D.'s, who knew more of diagnosis and anatomy.

Michael T. Walton
Salt Lake City, Utah

progressing to prophecy

All the comments I have seen on the revelation to confer the priesthood on all worthy males have been curiously monocultural. It is to Latin America in

general and Brazil in particular that one must look to see worthwhile elements of the Lord's revelation on the priesthood.

Brazil in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a slave-supported economy similar to the southern United States. However, the Brazilians accomplished manumission without a civil war. Intermingling of the races was commonplace and accepted. The Brazilians, indeed, say there is no racial distinction in Brazil. Unofficially and realistically it exists, but not to the extent found in many other countries.

I think the Church moved toward this revelation in three ways. First, was the decision to open the country of Brazil to the preaching of the gospel. These early missionaries were instructed to teach only the German-speaking people in Brazil. Then, after World War II, the gospel was taught in Portuguese. Lastly, in 1975 at the Sao Paulo area conference when President Kimball announced the decision to build a temple, many people felt then that the Negro was going to get the priesthood before the temple was dedicated.

Mary Jane Heatherington
Lawrence, Kansas

policy ad absurdum

I would like to respond to Daryl Turner's letter (Vol. XII No. 4) concerning the Church's former racial policy. One would certainly hope that the Church's reversal of the policy has quelled a lot of "doctrinal" justifications for denying the priesthood to blacks. But why must we have "rational excuse"? Is there any just reason for assuming that the policy ever came from God in the first place?

Some have seen the insufficiency of the justifications for barring blacks from the priesthood as a sort of Kierkegaardian proof (via the absurd) that the policy really was divine: if it made no sense, it must have come from God. But such rationalizations ignore the policy's history so fittingly pointed out by Lester Bush—that in the context of nineteenth-century America (both in and out of the Church), such a policy made only too much sense. Only as we as a nation have grown more

civilized about racism have we as a church begun to face the insufficiency of our reasons for our racial policy, until at last President Kimball, in prayerful concern, ended the policy itself.

Dale Thompson
Amherst, Massachusetts

infallible?

The reactions presented by readers in *Dialogue's* letters column to the change in the Church's black-priesthood policy were interesting. Some wriggled around one doctrine, others around another. There seemed to be reticence to face the real issue involved, which is the infallibility of the church presidents.

Since the announcement of President Kimball's policy change (we have yet to read the actual revelation) the fundamentalist groups have had a field day with the Church. It would seem to them that the Church has fulfilled prophecy by extending the priesthood to our black brothers.

In 1963 Norman C. Pierce privately printed his *The 3% Years* and added an addendum foretelling the eventual policy change. He quoted from George Q. Cannon, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph Smith, Orson Hyde, Brigham Young and others, concluding with a scripture found in Zechariah 14:21, prophesying that when the Lord would come to the New Jerusalem Temple, that "in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." The reasoning was that when Christ came he would have to take the priesthood away from the blacks who were given it by mistake by the Church. At the time Mr. Pierce wrote the book, most members of the Church were convinced that the priesthood would not be given to the blacks in this generation, but possibly after the millennium.

Is the president infallible?, they ask. Joseph Smith hounded the Lord to have Martin Harris take the manuscript, and finally the Lord relented and 116 pages were lost. The Lord, they say, gives unto men "according to their desires whether it be unto death or life. . ." (Alma 29:4). He will even "send strong delusion" if men want something bad enough (2

Thess. 2:11-12). If Joseph Smith could make that kind of a mistake because of his heart's desires, couldn't President Kimball want this enough for the blacks that he could err, they ask?

Then, quoting former prophets, they cite Brigham Young and others as allowing the possibility of priesthood ordination to the blacks only *after* the resurrection of all of Abel's projected offspring. (See J.D. 2:142-143.) They argue that the Church has taken upon itself the curse of Cain (See Brigham Young's statement as Governor of Utah to the Legislature on February 5, 1852).

It seems to me that the Church must answer these questions openly and doctrinally. Many Saints question the veracity of the Book of Abraham, for no new doctrinal explanations have come forth to explain the contradictions born of the new policy. If the blacks are that color because of pre-existent events and there is a law of lineage and right of the priesthood through lineage, how does this all work out? Certainly much is needed in the way of doctrinal defense for the Church's stand and the best theologians should be at work in this matter to settle the minds of those in and out of the Church on these points so that fundamentalists steal not the thunder of the Church.

The infallibility doctrine must be discussed with reference to when presidents are infallible. If President Kimball is now, why was Brigham Young *not* when he made all of those statements years ago. Wriggle as we do, we must ask these questions of ourselves, or doctrinal stability and credibility will suffer, and we will be scripturally, intellectually and spiritually dishonest to boot.

Merle H. Graffam
Palm Desert, California

gentlemen first

There are interesting historical parallels in three areas where women have been denied the full privileges held by men: suffrage, equal rights and the priesthood.

For almost a century, only white males could vote in the United States.

Black males were enfranchised after the Civil War, but black and white females obtained this privilege much later. Females in Utah were given voting rights in 1870. These rights were withdrawn in 1887 with the passage of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, but the Utah State Constitution, adopted in 1896, restored them. Most other women in the United States waited until 1920 for voting rights, with the adoption of the nineteenth amendment. Thus, a pattern was set in American and Mormon history: first, a privilege was held exclusively by white males; second, this privilege was extended to black males; and finally, the privilege was given to black and white females.

This pattern also seems to be at work in equal rights and the priesthood. White males held full civil rights from the adoption of the United States Constitution, but it was not until the 1960's that full civil rights were extended to minority males. Even now, females are not accorded the full protection of the law, and both the Equal Rights Amendment and specific legislative acts are being pursued as remedies. The same order in which individuals were accorded voting rights can be observed in full civil rights: first the white males, second the black males, and finally the black and white females.

Two of these three steps have been taken with respect to the priesthood. For a very long time, only white males could hold the priesthood, but recently black males were included in the list of those so qualified. And it may be, by some inexorable working of history, that the pattern followed for both suffrage and equal rights will be repeated with respect to the priesthood. We may ever be surprised that the Church, the family, and the home will be as uncorrupted by women having the priesthood as they have been by women having voting rights.

Dr. Jean Bickmore White points out an interesting parallel to the current controversy over equal rights in her article, "Women's Place is in the Constitution: The Struggle for Equal Rights in Utah in

1895" (*Utah Historical Quarterly*, Fall 1974, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 344-369).

Jack Worlton
Los Alamos, New Mexico

attention 12- to 15-year-olds!

The gospel is "all truth." *Dialogue* seems to be becoming increasingly narrow in its scope. Has it become a captive of the establishment?

I think the men and/or women with the intelligence and education we would like to hear from think, "What is the use?" The bulk of our population is at the twelve- to fifteen-year-old intellectual level, many with restricted reading capacities. The Church is a cross section of the population of which it is a part. The best minds of the Church who do not attain "two-headed monster" status get distilled off. Those who are employees of the Church or its educational system may be afraid to write, but I think that they have been conditioned not to give to their religion the same critical analysis they would insist be given to their career or specialty.

I think those who doubt, and then work mightily to resolve that doubt, soon recognize that prayer has been a part of all religions in all cultures that have existed in our six thousand years of recorded history. And the evidence is accumulating that all people in all cultures regardless of who or what they pray to receive answers about the same. So then the question becomes, "What is the common denominator of all this praying?" If a devout LDS member praying to the Mormon god gets the same answers with the same frequency as the Australian aborigines then, "What is the value of prayer?" Apparently it is not important who or what is prayed to. What does this do to the god concept? I'm not suggesting that we should destroy the god concept. It has been important in the lives of too many people throughout history who are within the twelve- to fifteen-year intellectual level, but those who are above that

intellectual level would look at the matter analytically and see it somewhat differently. I think it best that people come to these realizations on their own. Once accomplished, what is the point in writing about it to another who already has arrived at this realization? The priests of every religion are aware of the realities of their religion and differentiate between those realities and the public ceremonies, except for the "two-headed monsters."

I don't believe revelation will stand up under critically analytical and objective reasoning. But, like prayer, "What is the use?" Political necessity calls forth revelation.

Then there is the lip service to eternal progression, the constantly growing in knowledge, wisdom and inward capacity to perform, that is recognized by few but can't be handled by the twelve- to fifteen-year-old people who are the bulk of the Church. So the Church which is unable to get revelation and guide its people in the today and tomorrow reverts back repetitiously to the same restricted words and phrases of our two- to four-thousand-year-old biased history. All history is necessarily biased.

I don't think it's because of fear that people don't write. I think perhaps futility may apply—and regard for the twelve- to fifteen-year-old intellectual level of the membership who desperately need to believe.

William J. Tanner
Hayward, California

diversion day

I really enjoy your journal—it makes for a fascinating diversion in gospel study. The work is going fine in Michigan, and the Lord blesses us when we deserve it and even when we don't. May he bless you in your "Fireball of Mormonism."

Elder John W. Quist, Jr.
East Lansing, Michigan

loan finds a friend

After reading several borrowed issues from friends I have found that your publication has become "a must" in our household.

Terry and Illona Kolodzik
Eagle River, Alaska