

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

foster responds

The joint review by Louis J. Kern of my book *Religion and Sexuality* and by me of his book *An Ordered Love* raises many of the broader issues that need to be addressed if one is to understand the significance of these two studies. Here I want to set the record straight regarding two minor factual misstatements that Kern makes in responding to my review of his book.

The first anti-Shaker polemic, or course, was Valentine Rathbun's *An Account of the Matter, Form, and Manner of a New and Strange Religion, etc.*, printed in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1781. In his book and in his response to my review, Kern cites later editions of this basic exposé. The basis for Kern's assertion that Ann Lee "underwent eight pregnancies, four of which ended in stillbirths" is more difficult to determine. All printed Shaker sources prior to 1860 and all secondary scholarly accounts with which I am familiar indicate only that Ann Lee had four children, one of whom lived to the age of six. Only the ex-Shaker Thomas Brown and apostate accounts clearly based on him assert that Ann Lee had eight children (not just pregnancies), all of whom died in infancy. Since Brown was in error on many other factual matters such as when Ann Lee was married and when she joined the Shakers, the accuracy of his assertions on the number of children she had is also questionable. To the best of my knowledge, there is no Shaker evidence that *any* of Ann Lee's pregnancies resulted in stillbirths.

These are utterly minor points, yet they are nevertheless distracting. Already two reviews of my own book have made erroneous reference to Ann Lee's alleged "stillbirths," and I confidently expect this error to be perpetuated in feminist writings on the Shakers for the next several decades. Whether such slips are due to typographical mistakes (*An Ordered Love*, for example, has the first Mormons entering Utah in 1848), or to questionable readings of evidence, the book would have been stronger if such statements had been corrected prior to publication. My review only alluded to such problems briefly in a single paragraph and then went on to

devote an additional seven paragraphs to the larger and more significant interpretive framework of *An Ordered Love*. It is on this broader analytical plane that discussion of our two works can most fruitfully be conducted in the future.

Lawrence Foster
Atlanta, Georgia

pharaohs' curse

When I read in the table of contents of the fall 1981 issue the title "The Fading of the Pharaohs' Curse," I shuddered to think of someone treading on such hazardous ground. Then I noted that the article was written by someone I've always admired, indeed, a friend from early *Dialogue* days at WSU, where we met at the LDS Institute as prodigals in a weekly seminar dedicated to exploring some unusual Mormon perspectives. I recall Brother Mauss as always being sensitive and loving as he examined and unraveled some of the sacred skeletons in our Mormon closet. So, with anxiety, and yet with faith in the writer, I ventured on and read the article. My reaction is one of deep gratitude. To realize that Elder Brown, Elder Tanner and others were anxious to change the priesthood policy was a very heartwarming revelation to me. To know there has been a struggle with the Lord and with the membership to bring about the extension of the priesthood rights only affirms my testimony. Indeed, "after much tribulation cometh the blessing." Thank you, Brother Mauss, for your insights. Now I look back on my own "acceptance" of the *status quo* not so much as obedience but as apathy. We should worry less about intellectual pitfalls and more about our hearts waxing cold toward our brethren.

Justin Wilks
Ferndale, Washington

The perceptive essay by Armand Mauss on the process whereby racial discrimination was gradually leached out of Mormon thought and practice was an excellent foray into a still little understood phenomenon—the Latter-day Saint meaning of revelation.

From what Mauss says, however, it seems obvious that the Mormon revelatory process has within it a large measure of what might be termed “grass roots revelation”—small changes initiated at local levels to meet particular pressing problems.

A similar process can be seen in the elimination of institutional racism in American education. For example, *Brown vs. Board of Education* of 1956 was not a sudden reversal of national policy; it was, rather, the culmination of a series of less publicized decisions over a twenty-year period which eroded the legal base of racial discrimination and led to the reversal of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*.

One small unpublicized step in the reversal of the Mormon stance on black males and the priesthood which Mauss does not mention occurred around 1970. A portion of the temple ceremony which referred to the “sectarian” view of Satan as having a “black sin” was eliminated without fanfare after having been a part of the “revealed” temple instructions for probably over a century.

The Chinese proverb that “a journey of ten thousand miles begins with a single step” apparently applies to revelation as well as to Supreme Court “landmark” decisions; both seem to be in the mainstream of social problem solving by gradual evolution rather than sudden revolution. May we always have the luxury of time and patient people on our side.

Frederick S. Buchanan
Salt Lake City, Utah

eyre’s ire

I value good literary criticism. I think we need more of it in the Church, partially because it might influence Mormon readers to read more discerningly and critically.

What worries me (whether it concerns my work or someone else’s) is when a critic becomes personal and cursory to the point that the overall statement sounds more like a gossip column than a legitimate critique.

The three most specific things you say in the spring issue of *Dialogue*, with reference to me and two of my books, are:

1. Eyre’s only qualifications to write about anything seem to be his associations with General Authorities and a three-year stint as the Church’s youngest mission president.
2. *What Manner of Man* tells the readers that they should read the scriptures regularly to discover Christ.
3. *Simplified Husbandship, Simplified Fatherhood* tells the readers that they should emulate Eyre’s example of full-blown patriarchy.

My only comment on the first point is that I wonder how much you know about my qualifications.

My concern on the second two points is that neither has much to do with the central thesis of the books. I’ve never talked to anyone who had read *What Manner of Man* who concluded that its central message was to read the scriptures to discover Christ (good message though that would be). The real point of the book, of course, is the Sacrament and how to make it meaningful by mentally approaching a different aspect of the Savior’s personality each week.

Nor have I encountered anyone who thought *Simplified Husbandship, Simplified Fatherhood* presented a form of patriarchy, full-blown or otherwise. The book is about self-programming and how a husband and father might attempt to condition himself to respond better to the needs of his wife and children.

My question has to be: Have you read the books? Have you really, as you state, “tried to discover anything timely and worthwhile in the books?”

If you have, and if you view your efforts as carrying the objectivity and non-personal tone that good literary criticism demands, then I apologize for my response and will go back to my important work of straining sow milk through my tennis racket.

Richard M. Eyre
Salt Lake City, Utah

all on fire

I’d like to thank you for your interview with Sonia Johnson. I must admit that my reaction was not the anger I had antici-

pated. My social conscience also makes me feel a little guilty that I—rather than my wife—am writing this letter (“the medium is the message” as McLuhan would have said), but this failure notwithstanding, I should like to offer my two cents worth on a subject about which you will surely be deluged by letters.

The Church is a live body and reacts like any of us individually would when hurt. The angry reactions of many church members to Sonia Johnson is surely sad, but I was surprised that she could not see this as an immature manifestation of reaction to injury on the part of individuals only. Sister Johnson’s unfortunate lack of understanding, in my view, mocks her appeal for love and empathy.

It’s so easy to label the Church as a “thing—out there,” consisting of hoary hierarchical male-corporate shadows; attacking a remote institutional object simplifies one’s internal conflicts into an outward-directed thrust. In reality, however, it is the intimate subject she has attacked—of which we are all a part. Anger on our part might be inappropriate, but pain certainly is not. Sister Johnson’s obsession with herself clouds her judgment. She called herself a free thinker. She may be free in the sense that an amputated finger is “free” from the body, but a “thinker”? A free thinker would never let such navel-gazing cloud her reason.

Marc A. Schindler
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

For years Mormon women have lamented the scarcity of realistic female role models within the Church. As you demonstrate ironically in your summer 1981 issue, the two most influential Mormon women of the twentieth century, models of courage and strength, have been disowned by the Church because they have spoken the truth. Sonia Johnson has become a national heroine, deeply loved and admired by American women. As did her pioneer foremothers and Fawn Brodie before her, Sonia has survived her trial by ordeal.

For myself the most disturbing issue raised within the last two years has been

the Church’s deliberate deception of its membership in regard to the nature and extent of its involvement in anti-ERA activities. The pros and cons of the ERA and the Church’s stand against it can be debated endlessly, but the suppression of truth by the church leadership is completely unacceptable to me. We may try to ignore it, but the truth is still out there. Our failure as members to face it results in the gnawing discomfort which accompanies the steady erosion of our integrity. Somewhere between the official denials of the extent of church involvement in anti-ERA activities, later proven false, and the arrogant pronouncement by church leaders that the Church has done more to elevate the status of women than any other entity, I have reached the limit of my capacity for insults to my intelligence and my womanhood.

When I was sixteen years old, I went to the branch library in Sugarhouse to check out a copy of *No Man Knows My History*. According to the card catalog, the book was kept in a locked case behind the librarian’s desk. I surmised that this particular history was too dangerous for such a young and tender mind as mine. Truth is too powerful a commodity to be entrusted to those who have been taught that it is an eternal principle. Sonia Johnson’s “sin” was not in refusing to follow the prophet; it was in the unmasking of the church leadership before its own followers, as Fawn Brodie had already done.

Perhaps the Church follows too closely the situational ethics of Nephi: It is better that the membership be deceived than that male supremacy should dwindle into the recognition that all of us, male and female, are equally God’s children.

Susan W. Howard
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Your issue which featured Sonia Johnson and the ERA battle was fascinating. I heard Sister Johnson on the Phil Donahue show three years ago, and she said something which struck me. Commenting on her post-excommunication feelings, she said, “The first few days were really terrible, really really terrible, and every once in a while there is a wave of just infinite sadness that comes over me.”

I think I know the feeling she referred to. A recounting of the particulars in my own experience is unnecessary. I will just say in retrospect that the feeling wasn't like an abrupt and unexpected weaning; it seems to have been for me like the withdrawal of God's spirit as chastisement. How tragic it is that Sister Johnson did not react appropriately to the signals she received. How sad that she seems to feel so comfortable now outside the Church, in a sense on thin ice.

The gospel of Jesus Christ in all its splendor is true, as anyone who has seriously tried to live it will attest. But the earthly Church, consisting as it does of five million imperfect people, may seem at times badly flawed. However, the eternal blessings of the gospel are available in no other place. Those who fancy themselves intellectuals through enduring to the end have the chance to learn priceless lessons of patience and humility and sensitivity to others' needs.

Frank Riggs
Montgomery, Alabama

Your excellent publication has been on my desk since it arrived in October. I refer to the summer 1981 issue.

I have waited this long to make a comment or two on the Sonia Johnson matter. I am not literate by Sonia Johnson standards, but even at that I feel I have a right to express my thoughts concerning her "difficulties" with her church.

It is tragic that she hasn't come to realize that there are millions of folks who oppose the ERA who are *not* Mormons. Unfortunate also that she isn't aware that for every dollar spent by the Church in opposition to the ERA, proponents are spending unbelievable sums. (If the Church is spending money for that cause.)

After reading that she had been "shocked" to find certain conditions in various parts of the world where she and her family lived, I decided that she is going to be in for many more. Her unaffected simplicity leads me to wonder how she was ever permitted to leave home.

A year ago before the election newspapers were crediting ERA proponents with saying they expected a landslide

where the ERA needed support the most, the contrary was the case. This woman, whether Mormon or not, has been duped by the same propagandists that flock around the fawning sycophants the likes of Ellen Goodman who feel socialism is the answer to all of our problems, while in fact it has two-thirds of the world in near chains or behind the closed doors of Eastern Europe.

Regardless of who becomes involved in the issue, it is still a political one, and political issues are fair game for Sonia Johnson, the Mormon Church, Madalyn Murray O'Hare and Gus Hall, and every American who wishes to express themselves on the matter.

Lastly, if she thinks the Mormon Church is or has been covert in its opposition to the ERA, then she has really exposed herself for what she is—naive. Perhaps she ought to study the extension for ratification of the ERA, and the subsequent move by some states to get it repealed. Couple that with the federal government granting funds for NOW and other organizations, and she will begin to see just what covert means.

Warren S. Pugh
Lynden, Washington

Sonia Johnson's quoted statement that my father, Alma Sonne, "scolded" her when she talked to him about leaving the bank to return to school frankly puzzles me. First of all, if my father ever scolded anybody for desiring a college education, it would be completely out of character for him. It would be inconsistent not only with his heritage but also his lifelong devotion to higher education and basic religious philosophy. For many years he was closely associated with Utah State University and served for more than a decade as chairman of its Board of Trustees, and his religious views on education are well-known.

Furthermore, he was proud of the fact that his father received an excellent education in Denmark through a government scholarship and had encouraged his children, particularly his daughter Nora and my father to attend college. My father in turn urged his own daughter and four sons to complete college and continue on

to graduate school if they so desired. I am also certain there are many women and men who will confirm that he not only encouraged them to gain a college degree but also arranged financing for them.

It is true my father believed the greatest calling for a woman is to be a successful wife and mother, but he never believed those roles were incompatible with a college education. It is also well to note that those of us who knew him well recognized that he was a man with a great sense of humor and an incurable tease. If he did say what Sonia reported—and it is hard for me to believe he did—I wonder if she failed to detect the twinkle in his eye or his habit of wrinkling his nose when amused.

Conway B. Sonne
Palo Alto, California

The summer issue of *Dialogue* is great. The day I received it I read the interviews of Fawn Brodie and Sonia Johnson. I appreciate your giving us these excellent interviews of two women I admire so much. I was pleased to learn that the two met sometime before Brodie's death.

William D. Russell
Lamoni, Iowa

Your interview was beautiful, and I think your decision was exactly right: *Dialogue* is a *forum*, not a *dais*. Not taking a position can also be called *objectivity*. Never, *never*, change *Dialogue* to *Monologue*. That's how it all started isn't it? *Many* voices instead of a *single* voice?

Ronald Wilcox
Dallas, Texas

Thanks for another great issue of *Dialogue*. The Sonia interview and background sketch particularly intrigued me, as did each letter to the editor. I look forward to reading the rest of the issue. It's such a valuable publication. Though some of the articles are hard to digest, floating over my head as they do, I always find plenty to absorb me from one issue to the next.

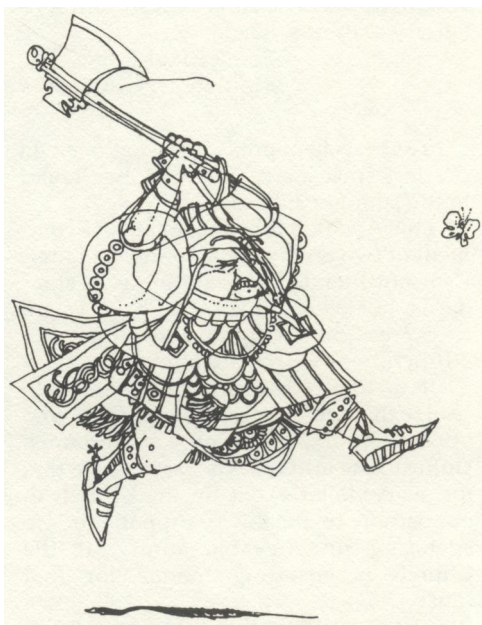
Cherie Pedersen
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania

a change of heart

I have been a *Dialogue* subscriber and devotee for many years. Its articles and comments have provided me with a source of perspective and even strength which I have truly appreciated. After reading your last issue on the Church and politics, however, my feelings toward *Dialogue* have, unfortunately, changed. Absent from that issue was any sense of proportion or balance. The tone of virtually every piece in the issue was condescending and belittling toward the Church.

Anti-Mormon literature and commentary is rife in the world. It galls me that the editors of *Dialogue* apparently now view the publication as a vehicle exclusively for the dissemination of materials bearing this perspective on the Church.

Douglas C. Boyack
Jamestown, California



I have one comment on your recent issues. It seems to me that the articles are a little heavily weighted with opinions by disaffected Mormons. Could you get more by satisfied Mormons? They don't have to stick right by the party line, per official Church publications (which have always avoided certain subjects), but they

could give insights into how those who are happy and "believing" Mormons feel about some of the controversial issues facing the Church and its members.

All in all, though, you are doing a good job.

John Hansen
Choctaw, Oklahoma

back issues

I cannot resist addressing the subject of evolution which Richard Sherlock discussed in his article on the Roberts/Smith/Talmage controversy. Not being a Mormon, I am not always sure that I will approach philosophical and theological questions of Mormonism with as thorough a knowledge as a Mormon would, but I would like to offer some thoughts from my own religious background which might prove fruitful for Mormons trying to come to terms with the overwhelming evidence for evolution, and the scriptural descriptions of creation. The discussion following is based upon philosophical ideas contained in the scriptures of the Baha'i religion, to which I belong, but they may be an inspiration to your own philosophers on the subject of human evolution.

In the womb, the human fetus undergoes transformation over a period of nine months from a single cell to a complex, intelligent organism prepared with all the limbs and organs necessary to function in the physical world. In the course of this fetal transformation, the fetus appears at times with a tail, at another period with gills, at another period with webbed hands and feet. This development or evolution of the fetus might be looked upon as a microcosmic "recapitulation" of the macrocosmic evolution of mankind from a single-celled organism millions of years ago, to a fully developed *Homo sapiens* of today.

That mankind has undergone evolution through a number of shapes or appearances does not *ipso facto* mean that man is descended from the animal. If we accept the scriptural declaration that God created man: that is, that man exists because God willed his creation, then we

can posit what one might call parallel evolution of man and animal. All creatures, man and animal, have undergone evolution, and may even have looked the same at various periods of that evolution. But by accepting the introduction of purpose and will from God, we must accept that at every turn of evolution, that which was to become man was already man, not animal; and that which branched off to become animal, was always animal and not man.

The details of the above philosophy, of course, are something which will require a great deal of space to elaborate. But I hope the outline is there. We now come to the question of Adam.

The acceptance of evolution requires that we accept pre-Adamic man. But we have to ask the question of ourselves: "What makes Adam different from men before him, so that we measure our dispensation, our religious history, from him?" The answer, it seems to me, lies in the very description of his creation given in Genesis: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a *living soul*" (Gen. 2:7). Adam was the first true man, that is, the first to have self-consciousness, self-knowledge. How? By revelation from God; by being made a Prophet. He therefore was also the first man to truly know God, the first to become the instrument of God's revelation to man. When Adam became "a living soul," he received the descent of spiritual knowledge and revelation from God. It was this very nature which he received from God, as the first man with self-knowledge and God-knowledge that led him to make that fateful decision to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The "Fall" was necessary, for without the knowledge of good and evil, all men would have been deprived of the chance to become "living souls." Because of this knowledge of good and evil, death was introduced into the world. But not physical death; that had been around for millions of years. Just as Adam became the first "living soul," the first man capable of knowing himself and knowing God, so also the introduction of this spiritual knowledge made man capa-

ble of spiritual death, of choosing the wrong path.

I think that we all owe a great debt to Adam for taking the step into the higher law of knowledge. I hope one day the Mormon Church will do the same by publishing B. H. Roberts's manuscript on this subject.

Regarding the summer 1981 issue which focuses on Sonia Johnson, may I commend you on dealing so fairly with what must be a fiercely-charged issue for Mormons. The interview with Sonia Johnson shows her to be a frank, highly-principled and courageous woman, even though at times her views were overstated. (What's this about chaining herself to the Seattle Temple gates?) At the same time, I think Lester Bush's article on "Excommunication and Church Courts" should lay to rest any statements that Sonia Johnson's trial was irregular *from the point of view of Mormon practice and guidelines*.

William P. Collins
Haifa, Israel

kudos

Congratulations on your recent issues. They have been outstanding—three of the best in *Dialogue's* history in my estimation. Having had some experience with shoestring periodicals, I am amazed that you have succeeded so long so well.

Scott Kenney
Salt Lake City, Utah

I have greatly enjoyed *Dialogue* and want to thank you for the efforts you and the staff put forth. I suspect you ask yourself sometimes, why? But as you move away from the heat of the moment and reflect, you know there would be a great void if there were no *Dialogue*. Keep up the good work. We all need it.

Lloyd Pendleton
Mapleton, Utah

Here in the Italy Rome mission field there are a few of us who pass around your journal and also the Salt Lake City-based *Sunstone* magazine. As a latecomer to this special circle, I have missed out on some very thought-provoking articles that I have only been able to hear about

and discuss. After obtaining my first *Dialogue* I have not been satisfied with the *Ensign* and the *Church News*. While it is pleasing and reassuring to read about what the Church is doing, I would rather have the growth in doctrinal and historical understanding.

I look forward to returning home in December to initiate a library of well-written books covering the Church and its history and doctrine, in order to gain a better understanding of those things I have been compelled to tell people I *know* to be true. I feel a personal "testimony" is based on knowledge and understanding and not just on "spiritual experiences." I would rather be a Latter-day Saint who *knows* what he is talking about than just a "Mormon" who goes along in the mainstream.

During my mission, in the first few months even, I began to put together a theory that there are two types of members in the Church: those who obey or do because they have an understanding and those who obey or do because they are told or because "that's just the way it is." I feel confident that we are better rewarded for what we understand and do.

Some people might call me an idealist. I like to consider myself a realist. Your journal has helped me appreciate the Church for what it really is and for what it stands for in a more realistic way. I look forward to future issues.

Earl William Hansen
Italy Rome Mission

I have learned much from *Dialogue*. I like the probing, restrained voices of Armand Mauss and Lester Bush in the last issue. My best wishes to you.

Phil L. Snyder
Fullerton, California

run and not be weary . . .

Just fifty years ago (1931) I submitted a master's thesis at the University of Chicago (Divinity School) which was titled, "The Religious Environment in Which Mormonism Arose." My purpose in choosing that subject was to learn what, if anything, Joseph Smith and the early Mormons borrowed from the churches of the day.

One small section of the thesis dealt with the *Word of Wisdom*. I reached much the same conclusion you did—that there was not much, if anything, new in the Joseph Smith revelation. I put it this way, “The Word of Wisdom which was given as a revelation by the Prophet to his people, gave religious sanction to a movement already prominent in America. The use of liquor and tobacco was vigorously opposed by doctors and clergymen before the Mormon opposition to it occurred.”

When I returned to Zion, Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, who was Commissioner of Education at the time, asked me to submit an abstract of my thesis to be printed in the *Deseret News*. When this appeared, there was a small amount of flak as some of the faithful were sure that nothing was known of the harmful effects of liquor or tobacco until 1833 when the revelation was promulgated.

Hope you younger men will have a little more effect on the thinking of the Church than the men of my generation. I am one of the Chicago Three 1930-31—

if that rings a bell. There are quite a number of fine scholars—thousands I hope—who are doing some writing. Keep it up.

George S. Tanner
Salt Lake City, Utah

oops

Thank you for the bioline on my poems in your woman's issue—a stellar issue! and for allowing me one more foray into hyperbole. Working on five books? Five daughters maybe, but five books? Oh well, Why not? 2084 ought to be a great year.

Emma Lou Thayne
Salt Lake City, Utah

call for proposals

The Mormon History Association has issued a call for proposals for papers to be delivered at its 1983 meeting in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The deadline is August 20, 1982. Please send all proposals to Mary L. Bradford, 4012 N. 27th St. Arlington, Va. 22297

Announcing

The First Annual New Messenger & Advocate Writing Awards

To encourage Latter-day Saints to examine and write about contemporary issues, \$500 has been pledged by private contributors for several awards.

The New Messenger & Advocate Award of \$200 will be presented after February 15, 1983, for the best unpublished manuscript on any topic of current affairs.

The remaining \$300 will be awarded to writers to cover research expenses as appropriate proposals are submitted. If adequate proposals are not submitted, the judges may choose to award second place, third place, or honorable mention awards.

The manuscript competition and research grants are open to all Latter-day Saint writers. Proposals for research grants will be accepted or rejected within 30 days of submission until August 15, 1982, or until the funds are exhausted. Manuscripts submitted for the Award competition must be received by October 15, 1982.

The major donor for the awards has stipulated that the grants and prizes must support outward-looking evaluations of public policy or issues, so articles dealing exclusively with Mormons or Mormonism or of interest only to Latter-day Saints are discouraged.

All submissions should conform to accepted standards of newsfeature or magazine journalism. If you would like a copy of the contest rules, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to New Messenger & Advocate Awards, % Kevin G. Barnhurst, Editor, Benson Institute Quarterly, Building B-49, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.