

LETTERS

SUBMISSIONS POLICY

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Letters to the editor must be double-spaced. If documentation is required, it should follow the author-date citation style of the essays.

Remembering Elder Christensen

I knew him as Elder Christensen in Melbourne, Australia, in 1975. Melbourne, strangely enough, has one of the largest populations of Italians outside of Rome, but few were joining the Church. Steven F. Christensen was one of the first of a wave of foreign-speaking missionaries to arrive in Australia. I was his ward mission leader.

Though there were eighteen full-time missionaries in our Fairfield Ward, including the mission president and his staff, Elder Christensen soon became my favorite. He was suave, unusually calm and mature for a nineteen-year-old from Bountiful, Utah. And he loved to talk about Church doctrine and history.

My wife and I had him to dinner at least once a week. When encouraged he would tell stories of knowing General Authorities and selling them his dad's "Mr. Mac" suits out of the back of a van. We

laughed: the entrepreneur was easy to recognize in Steve.

Though we never heard the story from him, rumor had it that when Spencer W. Kimball bought suits from "Mr. Mac's," Steven's dad refused to take any payment. President Kimball reciprocated by sending Elder Christensen money on his mission. If it was true — and my source was pretty reliable — he never mentioned it.

Besides his scriptures, he always carried a small tattered binder, tabbed from A to Z, which contained quotes of such a unique dimension that I spent a solid month copying its contents. It was an interesting volume, full of wisdom, rare quotes, and interesting doctrines from thinkers that included General Authorities, Euripides, Seneca, Montague, and Tennyson. Its entries were as diverse as the Apollo 11 commander's personal thoughts on walking on the moon and as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. I thought to myself, "This

is a young man who is seeking very unique answers to common questions." He seemed to be building his own personal resource book, a traveling library of sorts.

No one, including the adult leaders in the stake, knew as much as Elder Christensen about the "whys" of Mormonism and its early founders. I could tell he loved early Church leaders, especially Brigham Young. He also held Alvin R. Dyer in high regard.

His sacrament meeting talks and casual dinner conversations were flavored with words from lesser-known Church leaders. As I watched Steve, I felt as if I were witnessing a young B. H. Roberts. (Years later he told me that Roberts was indeed his silent mentor.)

During my twelve years in various missionary positions, I never met a missionary who taught me more about the gospel. In that far-off corner of the globe, some 8,000 miles from Church headquarters, Steven F. Christensen taught me a principle that few in the Church have discovered. The primary goal of a full-time missionary must be to gain the trust of the members. Not only did he understand that principle, but he was so focused on that activity that I failed at first to see the end result. In some beautiful way, he was not using the members to get referrals, but he was using his referrals to get closer to the members. Then, acting as their facilitator, he was able to get even closer to the members, gain their trust further, and reinforce them when they did missionary work. Members felt totally confident that this missionary knew what he was doing. I admired his integrity, his sincerity. He did the job right, and referrals came openly and frequently.

Even more amazing was his intuitive understanding of Australians, a people known for being frank and hardheaded. He knew which foods to compliment, remembered the names of children, and could converse intelligently on virtually any subject. His Italian investigators were even fascinated with the way he spoke their

language. When someone showed an interest in a particular subject, he would often return days later suggesting a book to read. He loved to find the sources of quotations he heard from the pulpit. Later he would provide the speakers with background information without causing offense and without resembling the American know-it-all style that Aussies despised.

I lost touch with Steve for awhile after his mission. He may have never known that the Deninos, Aquilinas, and Tuccis are still active members of the Church. There is now an Italian ward in Reservoir, Australia, and its bishop is one of his converts.

I saw him again in Bountiful just before his marriage. He said he planned to attend J. Reuben Clark Law School. At the time I expressed interest in his copy of a reproduction of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. He presented it to me as a gift when I left. When I ran for city council in Napa, California, he surprised me with a large package that contained three new suits, complete with fine French shirts. How he knew my precise size and sleeve length I'll never know.

It was only after his death, reading newspaper reports, that I learned how he became a bishop when he was only twenty-seven, and what his ward members remembered. He had run barefoot through the snow to tell one couple that their adoption papers had been approved. Aged widows and single women in his Centerville 13th Ward fondly remember how each Christmas he took them out to dinner at a local restaurant. He shoveled snow from neighbors' sidewalks and he retained his special touch with children.

His last public address, "Pillars of My Faith," at the August Sunstone Symposium, was typical. While nearly 1,000 people in the Westin Hotel Utah's ballroom waited to hear about the controversial "White Salamander" letter which he had purchased from Mark Hofmann and presented to the Church, he didn't even mention it. Instead he brought thunderous laughter with his tales about life as bishop.

The last time I saw his face was on the 10 P.M. news in Denver, Colorado, 15 October 1985. Stunned, all I heard was ". . . Steven F. Christensen . . . bombing death . . ."

Now, a year from his death, I reflect back to this entry in his quotebook: "Death is the liberator of him whom freedom cannot release; the physician of him whom medicine cannot cure; the comforter of him whom time cannot console" (Charles Caleb Coltin).

Len Austin
Laramie, Wyoming

Sex and Spirituality

Reading "Mormon Polyandry in Nauvoo" by Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Woman's Response to Plural Marriage" by Kahlile Mehr (Fall 1985), and "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904" by D. Michael Quinn (Spring 1985) has set me thinking about "the principle" and its founding revelation.

These three articles reconfirmed that there was a revelatory base supporting "the principle." Revelation spans a continuum from self-delusion to theophany. At both ends of this continuum, it seems to me, it is difficult to separate feelings of sexual ecstasy from feelings of spiritual ecstasy. It is, perhaps, the confusion of sexual and spiritual feelings that led to the restoration of "the principle" and its attendant problems.

Just before his death, John Taylor married a woman fifty-one years his junior. His motive was obviously not the comfort of companionship for him in his last days on earth, for he had other wives. His grandson Samuel W. Taylor records that he offered the young woman "a seat among the Gods," and this vision:

In robes of bright seraphic light; and
With thy God, eternal—onward goest, a
Priestess and a Queen — reigning and
ruling in
The realm of light . . .

Josephine, the cup's within thy reach;
drink thou
The vital balm and live (*The Kingdom
or Nothing* [New York: Macmillan,
1976], p. 375).

Taylor here illustrates what I consider to be a spiritual crime: a man's placing himself between a woman and her God. Her total obedience to him becomes her only hope of true salvation, which consists of her becoming a priestess and queen to him, her God. I wonder how often this promise-threat of exaltation was used as persuasion?

This unrighteous dominion is based on D&C 132:63: "But if one or either of the ten virgins, after she is espoused, shall be with another man, she has committed adultery, and shall be destroyed; for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified." This revelation defies justice on a number of points, not the least of which is the notion that man is God's follower; woman is his tool.

How could such notions come from men whose spiritual credentials were unassailable? A look at the experiences of others who have had equally profound and, to my mind, equally genuine contacts with the Divine may give valuable clues. First, the mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg, who was shown "heavenly things" by God, describes the experience of her soul at the Court of God in these words: "My body is in long torment, my soul in high delight, for she has seen and embraced her Beloved. Through Him, alas for her! she suffers in torment. As He draws her to himself, she gives herself to him. She cannot hold back and so He takes her to Himself. . . . She is engulfed in glorious Trinity in high union. He gives her a brief respite that she may long for Him. . . . He looks at her and

draws her to Him with a greeting the body may not know" (quoted by Frances and Joseph Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages* [New York: Barnes and Noble, 1980], pp. 86-87).

Another more symbolic account is that of St. Teresa of Avila, who saw "an angel in bodily form, . . . very beautiful In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated my entrails. When he pulled it out, I felt that he took them with it, and left me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one's soul content then with anything but God" (Quoted by Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* [New York: Pocket Books, 1976], pp. 299-300).

R. C. Zaehner, professor of Eastern religions and ethics at the University of Oxford, observed that the "raptures of the theistic mystic are closely akin to the transports of sexual union. . . . The close parallel between the sexual act and the mystical union with God may seem blasphemous today. Yet the blasphemy is not in the comparison, but in the degrading of the one act of which man is capable that makes him like God both in the intensity of his union with his partner and in the fact that by this union he is a co-creator with God" (quoted by Geoffrey Parrinder, *Sex in the World's Religions* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980], p. 218).

As I see it, Joseph Smith's spiritual experiences led him to enthrone the sex act as a point of similarity, not difference, between God and human beings. Aided by his visionary experiences, he instituted a marriage rite that celebrates the eternity and holiness of the sex act: those who endure to the end will be gods and thus enjoy the sexual privilege forever and ever.

It is difficult for me to see polygamy, however, as reflecting any view of women

but that of the ancient nomadic tribes that are the source of the early Old Testament's patriarchal myths. The synthesis of that ancient tribal view, accepted at face value as God's word, and Joseph's understanding of the eternity of sexual union, created the paradox of polygamy: what was unacceptable to his cultural values was, nevertheless, from God and hence must be accepted.

As St. Teresa could not admit experiencing sexual union in the presence of God except as symbolized by an angel and a spear, so Joseph found himself confronted by an angel with a sword. He reluctantly obeyed at first but he seems to have pursued this "obedience" with increasing zeal and passion as time went on. One must wonder what effect the ever-expanding circle of sexual unions he experienced had on his spiritual life. These unions were clearly part of his pursuit of godliness, his sincere imitation of God as he perceived God to be, based on his interpretations of his own spiritual experiences and his literal acceptance of Old Testament themes and texts.

He probably also felt, as a god in embryo, that he was exalting all the women to whom he was "sealed." Just as John Taylor sincerely offered exaltation to his Josephine, so many others may have felt inspired to offer exaltation to the women who awakened their desires. I have no doubt that they really felt that the Spirit was moving them and that they spoke as prophet to their households, even when the object of their desire may have been their stepdaughters. But the core spiritual experience had an erotic origin. I question whether this core was ever adequately recognized, even though the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 122:61 plainly suggests that "desire" and not revelation is the basis upon which the selection of a multiple wife is legitimately based ("if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another. . .").

It is my belief that polygamy represents a misreading of true spiritual experience and revelation. Its origin lies in a

mixture of doctrines and feelings of males (the Old Testament is itself such a mixture) with the things of heaven as revealed by God. Its continuance was fueled by the mixing of desire, however motivated, with awe for the revealed word of God and genuine mystic experience. It is difficult not to see such a system as victimizing women as a group.

The eternal marriage revelation is a fine representation of a fundamental truth revealed by the experience of unity with God. By contrast, even allowing that nineteenth-century expectations of marriage may differ from twentieth-century expectations, plural marriage seems remarkably suited to damage or destroy the very depth of unity and intimacy that simulates what is felt while in the holy presence. If the thrill of total union with another being, a type of the mystical experience of godliness, cannot readily be replicated, the substitute thrill of unions with a number of other beings may seem appealing, even though it cannot possibly have the same result.

How many modern Latter-day Saints have a burning testimony of "the principle"? Most probably stop at 132:20 in their reading of D&C 132, as did the Sunday school lesson manual this past year. Reading the remainder of D&C 132 may result in at least the possibility that men could again learn to view women and children as property whose numbers determine the extent of his wealth or status, as in ancient times. The modern version of this view, of course, is that multiple wives and many children would determine the extent of a man's dominions in the eternities.

I am led to conclude that Joseph was not a false prophet — he just made a terrible, but honest, mistake and put all his human strength into living up to, and teaching others to live up to, what he fiercely believed was his origin and destiny: divine polygamy. We need not throw out Joseph. We need not throw out all his revelatory and inspired writings. We only need to search the Spirit as Joseph did,

throwing out (continually) that which does not reflect truth as more light and knowledge comes to us. As a Church and as individuals, we will slowly but surely approach the divine nature. The worship of ancient and nineteenth-century ideas and ideals disguised as revealed truth is a hindrance and a stumbling block to the spiritual progress of the Saints.

Polygyny and women's spiritual equality are not reconcilable. Many of us feel the Spirit saying that sexism is not of God, Mother is just as much God as Father, and in time that fact will be reflected in the structure of the Church.

Abraham Van Luik
Richland, Washington

Artistic Achievements

In "Prometheus Hobbled: The Intellectual in Mormondom" (Spring 1985), Stanley B. Kimball urges intellectuals to be more active in carrying out Spencer W. Kimball's earlier call (prod?) (*Ensign* 7 [July 1977]: 5) for Mormons working in the arts to develop a superior culture. The charge by both Kimballs is to use our own intellect and talents to the fullest in glorifying God. Stan Kimball asks, "Why has the Church officially failed to carry out President Kimball's challenge?" He also asks why our culture so willingly accepts mediocrity.

I have shared this viewpoint in the past as an active Church member, musician, and composer. While I'm reluctant to wear the mantle of an intellectual, I would like to add a few comments from my perspective.

First, from the standpoint of someone who has done a fair amount of composing on assignment for the Church, I've come to the conclusion that it is not the Church's business as an organization to provide artists in the Church with money and direct support. Even the Tabernacle Choir must pay its own way from recordings and other media revenues. I find that most Church-

commissioned works of art are for functional purposes such as paintings and illustrations for its magazines, paintings and murals for its buildings, statues for its temples, and music for special occasions. If the commission turns out to be a fine work of art, all the better.

In 1978–79, Lloyd Hanson, my principal lyric writer and librettist, and I received a substantial cash commission from the Church, along with nine or so other writing teams, to create a musical for the Church's 1980 sesquicentennial celebration. The parameters for the commission were quite clear. The work had to be performable both by large stakes in high-density Mormon population areas and by the smallest of branches in the far-flung corners of the Church. One work from those ten or more created would be selected. The work finally chosen, *Within These Walls*, was selected as much for its flexibility as for its artistic merits. The screening committee, the Council of the Twelve and First Presidency, reviewed each script and heard the recording of the songs. The nine musicals not selected, ours among them, were returned to us for our own use, no strings attached.

Speaking of musicals, the Church-owned Promised Valley Playhouse recently sponsored a Church-wide search for a quality musical on par with *Fiddler On the Roof*, with a substantial subsidy promised for its production. I received the impression that Playhouse personnel intended to see a Broadway-quality musical that met Church standards all the way to New York as a means of promoting the Church and its artistic efforts. No entries were awarded the prize. So they're still looking, and so is Broadway, as witness the dearth of successful new musicals, except for those by the British team of Rice and Webber and the forward-looking musical plays of Stephen Sondheim.

Fine, well-written musicals are as much the result of luck, accident, and timing as finding the highly specialized talents needed to write and rewrite them. Even Broadway

notables like Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, and Leonard Bernstein, to mention only a few, have bombs among their hits. Rodgers and Hammerstein spent virtually their entire adult lives writing Broadway musicals. Imagine how high their output would have been had they been bishops or stake presidents as well!

A second fact of life regarding Church-commissioned art is the frequent policy of commissioning nonmembers rather than members. I have heard anecdotes and second-hand reports that nonmembers are more detached from the work and, hence, more responsive if the official committee decides to alter or not use a given piece of work. In contrast, so go the anecdotes, some Church members who have been commissioned to create an artistic piece get "bent out of shape" over changes, and become bitter or critical. When I did some writing for the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus, one of my arrangements just didn't work out and remains still unperformed. I'm sorry about that, but I'll find another use for it or rewrite it so it will be better suited for performance. Any institution must reserve the right to use or not use works it commissions. The Church is no different. Perhaps the difficulty lies in confusing a business transaction with an inspired process. Inspiration may or may not occur for the artist in carrying out the commission. It may or may not occur for the members of the review committee. If it does, in either case, fine, but inspiration is a private process. The process of the commission itself is a public one.

The brightest star on the financial horizon for musicians in the Church is the recently established million-(plus) dollar Barlow Trust, administered by the BYU Music Department. The Barlow Foundation has already given hundreds of thousands of dollars to both Church composers and to non-member composers and orchestras. If the Barlow Foundation works as intended, this funding source seems to me to be one answer, and a major one at that, to the question of funding artistic ventures,

supporting those who are developing their skills, and funding performances and recordings of works composed under its sponsorship. Then there's the matter of talent.

One can commission all the music, paintings, literature, poetry, statuary one wants, but there's no way to legislate or order masterpieces. Look at the history of Western music. Broadly speaking, the Germans and Austrians dominated serious music writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the Bach family, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, etc. The Polish-born Chopin, a few Russians (notably Tchaikovsky) and some opera-writing Italians like Verdi are welcome exceptions. England went three centuries—from Henry Purcell in the seventeenth century to the twentieth century's Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughn-Williams, Benjamin Britten, and William Walton—between major composers. A curse? Not eating the right foods? Too many people digging coal? I don't know. But talent is not manufactured like a tweed coat. Financial encouragement can make the expression of talent possible but it cannot create it.

What about the frequent charge of mediocrity? Mediocrity, like the poor, will always be with us. But only because Church members allow it. I think the popularity of the recently created Nauvoo statues for the Women's Pavillion in Nauvoo, with their clarity and life-like nature, shows that people appreciate art they can understand. I do not consider these statues to be mediocre just because they are popular. It has been my experience that if real excellence is present in artistic works and presentations, people are moved and respond to that work of art.

But if these artistic creations aren't available or are not well-presented, then people look elsewhere. The current trend in some sacrament services to present thinly-veiled popular music with a quasi-religious text is very strong. Many members seem to understand and relate to this music. I maintain that if the serious musi-

cians and lyricists of the Church will make the finest music they can, that trend could be reversed. Left to no choice other than that of secular-like music, the vote goes to the lone candidate for office. I fault the serious musicians in the Church for often putting their energies elsewhere. They are "at the top of the wrong ladder," as Elder Boyd K. Packer so aptly put it ("The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord," *Ensign* 6 (Aug. 1976): 60–65).

I do not condemn pop music. It's just pop music's mental and almost physical association with secularism that I object to. A current Salt Lake radio station that plays essentially LDS-composed pop tunes is doing a real service to Church popular song composers. That's where such songs belong for the mass media market. More power to them. But even these songs need to improve in quality and variety if such a station is to survive. One major complaint of listeners and disc jockeys at this station is the sameness of the songs.

I appreciate Stan Kimball's position, but I think he blames the wrong people. Fostering "pure" art is not the function of the administrative Church, in my view. Members of the Church will usually recognize excellence, praise it, and seek after it when it appears in their midst. I *do* blame the artistic community, myself included. We need to be a little more humble about our artistic capabilities and creations. I think we should ask ourselves, "How can I learn to be better?" "How can I learn to serve the Church and its people in a more excellent way?" We need to be more willing to inspire with excellence and simplicity. We need the craft and the training, *as well as the Spirit*. We need to have faith that the good, given time, will invariably drive out the mediocre. If we are unable to create that good, we deserve mediocrity and should stop complaining.

In some ways, I see the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, with its directors and organists, as a model. This group is unequaled for its repertoire and high level of achievement, yet it is essentially a service

group for hundreds of national and world gatherings in Salt Lake City and elsewhere. Jerold Ottley and his associates have premiered new works, mostly by LDS composers, on their weekly broadcasts for eleven years. An LDS hymn is featured in every broadcast, even though its doctrinal implications may be unfamiliar to some members of its national audience. I'm proud of the fine work done by the Tabernacle Choir, the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus, various choral and instrumental groups at Church schools, and my LDS composer colleagues. If we are successful in creating "Mormon art" in any way, it will be because some have the talent and gift to write, the training and background skills to go with the talent, and the worthiness to claim inspiration from the Spirit in their work.

A. Laurence Lyon
Monmouth, Oregon

P.S. Since writing this letter, a new calling has been added to those of ward choir director and stake high councilor: a call to serve on the General Church Music Committee. My assignment, interestingly enough, is to head the Compositional Projects subcommittee for the Church. In consultation with Michael Moody, Church Music Division head, I am responsible to assign projects needed for priesthood, auxiliary, and world Church needs. As we've just made our first batch of assignments, I find that we are calling upon writers of lyrics and composers of music who are:

1. Active, dedicated members of the Church, who, through previous Church service in the arts, have demonstrated a consistent and reliable talent for writing music or song lyrics of a caliber that elevate and communicate with most Church members;

2. Writers who have in one way or another developed their talents to a high level in special ways, usually through ex-

tensive formal training or practical experience in their chosen areas of expertise;

3. Humble enough to allow their works to pass the close scrutiny of the various Church committees that must approve such writings, even if this means possible change or alteration.

I'm impressed with the abundance of fine artistic talent in the Church now. Many long-lasting, worthwhile projects are under way through Church sponsorship as well as through the LDS commercial church music industry. And we shall create our share of artistic works, given time — works that will mute the critics of the Church effort in the arts, works that will be a lasting legacy for many throughout the world, both inside and outside the Church.

Smith's Scholarship

In my opinion, the letter of George D. Smith (Summer 1985) reflects a lack of understanding of the Book of Mormon.

Smith attempts to criticize John Sorenson's "limited region" theory that the vast majority of Book of Mormon events most likely transpired in Mesoamerica. Smith suggests that Book of Mormon events include all of North and South America.

In support of his arguments, Smith states that Sorenson's "theory violates Book of Mormon characterizations of Hebrew migrations into a land 'where there never had man been' (Eth. 2:5)." There are at least two errors in this claim. First, the Jaredites were probably not Hebrews, although they were possibly Semitic. Abraham appears to have been the first Hebrew (Gen. 14:13). Second, Smith has misread Ether 2:5. This verse states the Jaredites (while in the valley of Nimrod in the Old World) were commanded to continue their journey "into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where there never had man been." Considering the probable setting of these events, it is highly likely the Jaredites indeed passed through uninhabited territories while in the "wilderness." Ether 2:7 makes

it clear, however, that the Lord would eventually lead the people out of the wilderness and "that they should come forth even unto the land of promise."

Incidentally, Smith's interpretation of Ether 2:5 is also inconsistent with LDS beliefs that the Garden of Eden and Adamondi-Ahman were actually located in North America — "the cradle of nations" (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964, p. 474.)

Another of Smith's arguments is that "Lehite populations" eventually covered "the whole face of the land (Hel. 11:20)." Again Smith interpreted this verse to mean that Nephites-Lamanites covered the entire American continent, even though the verse only mentions the Nephites. A careful reading of the Book of Mormon does not support this view.

Helaman 11:20 mentions that Nephites covered "the whole face of the land both on the northward and on the southward." Alma 22:27-33 establishes that the "land on the northward was called Desolation, and the land on the southward was called Bountiful" and that these were rather limited geographical areas. Desolation had been earlier peopled by the Jaredites. Descriptions of Desolation refer to a specific region, "a land which was covered with dry bones; yea, a land which had been peopled and which had been destroyed; and they [a small band sent by King Limhi to find the land of Zarahemla], having supposed it to be the land of Zarahemla, returned to the land of Nephi" (Mosiah 21:26; 8:8-11).

These verses indicate that the land northward — Desolation — was mistaken for the land of Zarahemla; and that the search party later returned to the Land of Nephi. The Book of Mormon almost always uses the phrase, "land of," to refer to a specific country or region as in Ether 15:14 which states that just prior to the final Jaredite battles, four years were spent "gathering together the people, that they might get all who were upon the face of

the land." This passage could not possibly mean all of America because these battles took place after the Nephite-Lamanites and "Mulekites" had already settled in Mesoamerica (Omni 15-21; Mosiah 25; Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Chronology*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970, pp. 23, 27). Yet Ether's account of gathering all "who were upon the face of the land" fails to mention the existence of these other settlers. This fact further suggests at least the possibility of other groups in the Americas before, during, and after, Book of Mormon times. Book of Mormon "land of . . ." is consistent with that found in other Israelite records (Exod. 1:7 and El Amarna Letters #287 and 290).

Smith's claim that North and South American Indians are descendants of Mongol nomads who crossed the Bering Strait ignores the fact that most scholars now accept this theory as only a partial explanation for the origin of the Indians. Archeologist Nigel Davies, for instance, states that "American man is not a typical Mongol, and his skin is coppery rather than yellow; clearly his ancestors included men of other races, also present in east Asia; some of these were dark-skinned Negroids, while others were the fairer and more hairy Caucasoids" (*The Ancient Kingdoms of Mexico*, New York: Penguin Books, 1983, p. 13). The history of America includes a mixing of many nationalities, which may help to explain how the blood of Israel was spread among the American Indians by the Nephite-Lamanite-Mulekite civilizations (or remnant thereof) during a period of approximately 2400 years prior to publication of the Book of Mormon.

A further weakness in Smith's scholarship appeared in his previous essay in *DIALOGUE* (Summer 1984). His statement that "cimeters" were "Persian sabres from the 16-18th centuries A.D." (p. 96) is incorrect, since it is well recognized among military historians that cimeters were in use much earlier than Smith claims. For example, the Moslem cimenter became famous

during A.D. 1100–1300. However, even in this case, the significance of the Moslem cimeter lay more in the quality of metal-lurgy involved, than in any radical change of design (Trevor Dupuy, *The Evolution of Weapons and Warfare*, New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1980, p. 65). My studies reveal that cimeter-type swords have probably existed since at least 2000 B.C. (A. Brent Merrill, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” unpublished, April 1985, pp. 6–7).

A. Brent Merrill
Woodbridge, Virginia

Not Terribly Meaningful

Included in Robert’s assessment of the film, *The Godmakers* (Summer 1985), is a phrase popular among my LDS friends: “A prophet is a prophet only when he is acting as such.” Now the obvious question would seem to be this: How is it demonstrated that Joseph Smith was acting as a prophet when he made this statement itself?

On the one hand, if the statement is accepted as unqualifiedly prophetic, then it must be explained why the entire source from which it is taken is not also completely inspired. Since the entire seven-volume *History of the Church* is not generally considered to be prophetic, then why is the one statement to which Roberts appeals lifted out and enshrined? Embarrassing statements attributed to Church prophets are found throughout the unofficial works which relate to the history of the Church, such as those dealing with the Adam-God doctrine, or with Quakeroids inhabiting the moon, for that matter. Yet these are dismissed as “unofficial” and thus lacking prophetic authority.

By what double standard is the slogan in question cited so authoritatively, when it also is taken from an admittedly unofficial and not unqualifiedly prophetic document? Therefore, if the statement is

true, it at once falsifies itself (because it is not itself officially prophetic) and is thus self-defeating.

On the other hand, if the prophet was not acting as a prophet when he uttered the statement to which Roberts appeals, then it is at best mere speculation, and at worst just plain false. (Of course, even if it were somehow shown to be authoritatively true, it is conceivable that a future revelation might void it in any case, if monogamous Mormons and black priesthood holders are any indication.) I submit, therefore, that the oft-cited slogan suffers from an incurable case of self-referential incoherence, and so is not terribly meaningful.

Ron McCamy
Calabasas, California

Corruption in Culture

I was impressed by W. L. Williamson’s declaration in his letter (Winter 1985) that if Joseph Smith’s first vision did not really happen and if Joseph Smith did not in actual fact translate the Book of Mormon from Nephite plates, then Mormonism was just another human-made religion among myriads of others.

It is true that much in Mormonism, as in other religions, has evolved in the minds of human beings. The patterns of garments and the hours of church meetings are examples. However, I agree with Williamson that if the First Vision and the Book of Mormon are human inventions, it is futile to delude ourselves further. A human-made religion may give mortal comfort to its dupes, but it cannot manufacture eternal salvation or exaltation.

May I comment also on the articles pertaining to Mormons and Indians. None of them mentioned the fact that Mormon doctrine has always eschewed racism. 2 Nephi 26:33 was not added to the Book of Mormon in 1978. It has always said that God, “denieth none that come unto

him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”

A case can be made from scriptures that certain people have been “chosen” from time to time, but clearly such choosing was based on goodness rather than on race, even as condemnation is based on conduct rather than blood. (See 1 Ne. 17:35; 2 Ne. 9:21; Jac. 2:21; Mosiah 23:7; Alma 3:19, 26:37)

The fear that we are destroying ancient cultures by intruding American ways into the gospel and attempting to lead people away from the beauty and strength of ancestral anchors is, in my opinion, somewhat overstated. Much of what passes for ancient culture and tradition opposes the standards of Christianity. After living eight years in the Pacific, I gave vent to my frustration with perversities embedded in island cultures and others after pondering D&C 93:36–40:

The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one.

Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.

And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the traditions of their fathers. But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth.

TRADITION, THE DEVIL'S WAY

Tradition, they say, gives a land power,
And all men should honor glory's past hour;
Ashes of fathers, altars of gods,
Obedient dull daughters, sons, shallow
clods;
Suttee in India, “Hail Mary” in Spain,
Tribe wars in New Guinea (no thought for
the pain),
Cheeks pierced and dreary in the Hindu
plan,
Blind hara kiri, banzai, in Japan;

Samoan tattooing, yagona in Fiji,
Soccer fans booing in old Italy;
Respect for the “queer,” prostitution is fine;
Getting drunk on New Year, a tradition
enshrined;
Hiding behind veils, self beating with
chains;
Where ignorance prevails, men insult their
brains;
Self-tortured with smoke and misused
drugs,
They slither and poke like senseless sea
slugs;
Child brides in Tulagi, beating wives in
Cebu,
Minds addled and foggy, men try to “be
true”;
In glee Satan laughs; the world's at his
feet;
In well-beaten paths, like sheep people
bleat;
“Christians” too must obey, the blinder the
better,
Despite divine plea to scorn the letter,
To think, and to use the eternal mind,
To avoid all abuse, not follow the blind;
Man's guide on life's road remains to obey,
But to obey God, not tradition's way;
With strong faith, strike out; dare bravely
to think,
Knowing what you're about, not fearing to
sink;
If grandpa did it, what was his intent?
Was he in a pit, or by custom bent?
A blow for freedom is a blow for truth,
But blind tradition is the Devil's booth;
His twin booth is license, or absence of
shame
(Freedom and license are never the same);
Tradition is shoddy, a known road for
slaves;
License is bawdy; it exploits and depraves;
Both are evil guides, destroyers of man,
The pathways of fools who fear thought
and plan;
God's word is intact; His people are free,
To think and to act, to strive, and to be.
Wilford E. Smith
Provo, Utah

Painful Truth

I truly appreciate your efforts to publish on a regular consistent schedule. *DIALOGUE* articles are generally interesting and usually thought provoking.

The past few years have produced some tremendous research finds, breakthroughs and related insights into the creation of Mormon culture and myths. Surely such works do not come about without causing their authors personal anguish.

It hurts me to read some of these historical writings and analyses. I am unable to fit the pieces of the puzzle neatly together. I wonder what has happened and why. I wonder why some authorities silence good works and good people (whom I presume to be honestly interested in promoting greater understanding). I am sometimes able to reason out their intentions, but often they seem to lack validity.

Like so many others, I want the truth regardless of how it hurts. We are told that the truth shall set us free, but we are not always prepared for what it sets us free from.

Don Stout
Sacramento, California

Not Anti-Mormon

Michael Quinn's article on Mormon polygamy (Spring 1985) was one of the finest pieces of Mormon history writing ever to grace a journal. The letters to the editor, approving or critical, treated it as anti-Mormon. I'm glad *DIALOGUE* chose it for the 1984 Grand Prize.

It is one of the three most important pieces of Mormon history reinterpretation to appear in *DIALOGUE*—the other two being Klaus J. Hansen's essay on the kingdom of God (Summer–Autumn, 1968) and the Joseph Smith papyri materials (Autumn 1966). Hansen told us that Mormons were trying to set up their own country out west. The scrolls articles convinced us that Joseph Smith could not read Egyptian characters. And Quinn proved that Poly-

amous marriages continued to be approved by the Church for more than a decade after the Manifesto.

These positions are not anti-Mormon. They are now Mormon history.

But this is only the beginning of Mormon history revisionism. The three examples above were forced upon us by the discovery (or rediscovery) of new hard data, inconsistent with our prior positions. More significant will be the studies which come forth after we stop trying to read the present into the past—after we come to appreciate the differing climates of opinion of our past. For example, seventeenth-century New England Puritans were allowed to become members of the churches only *after* having first vision experiences similar to that of Joseph Smith's. I would suggest that the reason no completely satisfactory historical essay on the First Vision has yet appeared is that no author has taken cognizance of that fact.

Joseph H. Jeppson
Woodside, California

"I Am a Lamanite . . ."

I was impressed by your native American issue (Winter 1985). The Navajo blanket as a cover was clever, dignified, and meaningful. The articles on President Kimball were very relevant to his untiring effort to bless the Lamanites. England's piece inspired as he related his parents' devotion to the same cause. Whittaker's overview of the bibliographical field was excellent. Coate's contribution was informative though perhaps unnecessarily defensive. Birch's short history of the beginnings of Indian Placement was beautifully personal and dramatically simple.

Chief Dan George's plea for pluralism is sad, for he explicitly acknowledges the lack of an institutional base for Indian culture yet thinks that cultural survival is possible. His is the confused cry of the marginal man who, honest in his wishes, wants to build where there is no founda-

tion. Lacey Harris's voice, likewise, is the painful lament of those who can't, or won't, use the proven power of Mormonism to overcome cultural dislocation.

Hafen's painstaking musical *ex post facto* analysis of LDS hymns has the accuracy of hindsight. She judges song writers by taking them outside their context. What other culture or attitude can people manifest in their thinking or their writing except the one their own time-space permits? We know ox carts are slow but only because we know about airplanes. Hafen also protests that minorities are "defined by the dominant majority" (page 141). Hasn't this always been the case in pluralistic societies where, by definition, minorities lack social power to the extent that they reject assimilation?

However, though the quality of the articles was generally impressive, I felt some concern as several of the writers—without paternalism—suggested some ways to ameliorate the Lamanite tragedy. Whitaker's plea for cultural pluralism ignores the social fact that pluralism has always brought only conflict, confusion, and ambivalence and, in all known historical cases including Hawaii, has developed into either separatism or assimilation. No two social systems that come together ever enjoy equal social power. Eventually one is always rejected or absorbed by the other. Pluralism appears to be a cruel myth.

England, I believe with the best of intentions, suggests that no *racial* meaning be attached to the term Lamanite. It is true that the Book of Mormon's use of the term never had a racial connotation, for the concept is no older than about three hundred years. England is also correct in pointing out that the term *Lamanite* was simply a label for those who rebelled against Nephite society and culture, regardless of genealogy. During the time of transition there were good and evil Lamanites just as there are good and evil Americans now.

American, Jew, Roman, Lamanite, etc., do not, by themselves, endow a person with any type of character, dignity, or moral

status. I am a Lamanite. I have never resented, nor do I now resent, the term. Those who do resent the label seem to be so few that nobody else should give it a second thought. Of the approximately 300 million Lamanites in the world (mostly south of the United States border) about 800 thousand know about the term but are so busy learning essential aspects of the Good News, that they aren't concerned with semantic explanations.

Moroni, a brother or cousin of some of my ancestors, said that the book he hid and later gave to Joseph Smith was written for me. He said that it was also for the Jews and Gentiles.

If I were a Jew or a Gentile I would feel grateful for that book. But as a Lamanite who could be descended from Sam, Jacob, Nephi, Lemuel, Mulek, or one of the sons of Ishmael, I feel not only very grateful, but highly honored, humbled, and often flabbergasted to realize that the Lord would keep for me a book that brings back to me the most important knowledge my fathers lost. Thus, the most important meaning *Lamanite* has for me is that it identifies me as one for whom the most perfect book in the world was written. The content of the book is far too important to my spiritual health for me to worry about an incidental and temporary aspect of my body.

My book tells me all I need to know to live a busy, productive, and abundant life. It tells me that I am a free agent, responsible for what happens to me, that there must be opposition in all things, that Adam fell that I might be and that I am so that I may have joy. My book also tells me that the work of the Savior and the work of Adam cannot be understood separately as the two events are parts of the same plan and these writings are to be a second witness of the mission of the Redeemer. My book gives me so much knowledge, hope, and understanding, that no other book gets me closer to God. It satisfies my soul and goes to the core of human needs.

If I were not a Lamanite, I could not call this my book. Being a Lamanite does not tell me that I am superior to others, nor, for that matter, that I am inferior. It simply tells me that I am a child of God and that Christ's redemptive mission was performed for me as for them. If I myself chose to come to earth as a Lamanite — which I think is likely — then I also knew I would face challenges that would temper my soul in my eternal quest.

All this I get from my book, and much more. There is so much there about the danger of pride, the beauty of repentance, the power of prayer, the certainty of eternity, and the unproductivity of evil that if anyone should ask me to consider the biological, psychological, anthropological, sociological, economic or political significance of the term Lamanite, I would probably say: Who cares?

Arturo De Hoyos
Provo, Utah

Former Editor Comments

[Robert A. Rees was editor of *DIALOGUE* from 1971 to 1976.]

While I applaud your effort to have a special issue of *DIALOGUE* devoted to native Americans (Winter 1985), I am somewhat disappointed in the results. When my staff and I first began planning such an issue nearly ten years ago, a paramount concern was to have it written and edited primarily by native Americans. In your issue, only three essays (George, Hafen, and Harris) are by native Americans, and George's was developed ten years ago. Only Lacey A. Harris's "To Be Native American — and Mormon" touches on the life of contemporary Mormon native Americans. As valuable as David Whittaker's historical and bibliographic introduction is, I question devoting thirty-four pages to it, as well as space to such subjects as captivity narratives, ghost dances, and Welsh Indians, when so many vital issues were left untouched.

When I first began exploring the idea of doing an issue on this subject, the native Americans with whom I spoke asked two things: that they be given the opportunity to speak for themselves and that *DIALOGUE* be willing to let them speak about the real issues. I will never forget what one of them said to me: "The whites are always speaking for us, and, because of that, many of us lack the confidence to speak for ourselves. I have yet to meet one of my Indian brothers or sisters who didn't feel inadequate when it came to expressing his or her feelings in writing."

There are many native Americans in the Church who still suffer from the effects of racism, who are affected by the misconception of the "Lamanite curse." Their pain is partly our responsibility. Our attempts to enculturate and assimilate them may be sincere but are often misguided. Generally we show little respect for the spiritual values of their native traditions.

Some years ago I had an Arapaho in my Cub Scout troop. A participant in the Placement Program, he seemed to be terribly *displaced*. The streets of Los Angeles were strange and threatening to one who had spent his first nine years at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. He was not doing particularly well in school. One day when some of the other Scouts were teasing him about his ignorance of some anglo practice, I said, "Richard may not know as much about this as you do; but if I had to take a long trip through a wilderness area, Richard is the one I would ask to go with me, because he knows more about survival than all of us put together." At this point it occurred to me that if we were to have a Placement Program at all, it ought at least to be reciprocal: I considered that we should be sending our young people to the reservations where they could learn some of the values of native traditions, including a respect for nature and a sense of the sacredness of the earth that we have all but lost.

I remember another conversation in which a beautiful native American woman told of her despair at being confronted

with sentiment that someday she would become "white and delightful." She said, "I like the way I look; I don't want to become white."

I was deeply touched by Gene England's personal essay "Lamanites and the Spirit of the Lord," and especially by his parents' consecration in relation to the descendants of Lehi. As he usually does, Gene cuts to the center of the issue, revealing truth and challenging our Christianity. We need to catch what he calls "the Spirit of Lehi" and in so doing to show abundant love to our native American brothers and sisters, to help bear their burdens so that they may be light.

I think *DIALOGUE* could play a special role in this work by publishing articles, essays, poems, interviews, and other expressions by native Americans and by continuing to explore the many issues, both historic and contemporary, of what it means to be native American and Mormon.

Robert A. Rees
Los Angeles, California

Unfair to Thatcher?

Recently a friend of mine sent me a copy of the article "The Alienation of an Apostle from His Quorum: The Moses Thatcher Case" which appeared in *DIALOGUE* (Summer 1985).

Moses Thatcher was a younger brother of my grandfather John B. Thatcher, Sr., so I read Edward Leo Lyman's article about him with interest (Summer 1985). Some of the events and information were new.

I was disturbed, however, by inaccuracies. In the second sentence he refers to a race for the U.S. Senate. Senators were elected by legislatures, not by popular vote, until after the seventeenth amendment was ratified and added to the U.S. Constitution in April 1913. True, they sought the endorsement of members of the state legislatures, but that was quite a different process from "running" in the modern sense.

Another careless statement on the first page has Thatcher, after his 1879 ordination, enjoying the confidence of Brigham Young, who had died in 1877.

Undocumented subjective statements, even more serious, in my view, will be evident to any careful reader. An additional criticism is that the bibliography contains no titles written by Moses Thatcher, though several are available. Does this selectiveness reveal an author's bias?

Certainly the Bullion Beck mining stock dispute influenced Moses Thatcher's low opinion of George Q. Cannon and several of Cannon's close associates, and rightly so. Uncle Moses had documented evidence convincing his associates, members of his extended family, and many others that Cannon had cheated him. Lyman makes that point admirably clear. I doubt very much that the monetary loss disturbed Moses Thatcher, a very wealthy man, as much as the principle involved.

I am personally convinced that the principle causes of the alienation were different political philosophies about the role a church should play in politics. My conviction derives from many discussions with my mother, who was born in 1871 and who followed the controversy closely, and with some of my Thatcher relatives, as well as my reading of various publications, including articles by Moses Thatcher and this of Lyman's.

I applaud Lyman's documentation of the double standard of the Mormon hierarchy in encouraging one apostle (John Henry Smith) to take an active role in Republican partisan politics but silencing Thatcher. Is it any wonder that Thatcher protested? Is it any wonder I, and many others who were raised in the LDS Church, also protest when we see evidence of the same double standard today?

Lyman omits a significant reference on page 88 in discussing this bias. Thatcher had the endorsement for the U.S. Senate of a majority of the legislators before voting was scheduled to take place. This majority included both Republicans and

Democrats. When the First Presidency became aware of this fact, it urged Brigham Young, Jr., Heber J. Grant, and other "loyalists" to step up their lobbying efforts. I heard repeatedly over the years from my mother and her brother, Gilbert, that with pleas, threats, and outright coercion, they brought about the defeat by a mere three votes (32 to 29) of Moses Thatcher simply because he was a Democrat.

If Moses Thatcher was indeed alienated from his quorum, was it not for good cause?

John B. Edlefsen
Seattle, Washington

Lyman Responds

I am pleased to respond to the two letters commenting on my Moses Thatcher article (Summer 1985)—that by John Edlefsen in this issue and that of Maxwell Miller in the Summer 1986 issue. The 1895 Utah elections were unique: at least the Democratic convention, conforming to requests of several county conventions, did specify candidates for the U.S. Senate in case its party gained a majority in the first state legislature. Moses Thatcher and Joseph L. Rawlins campaigned actively, virtually as senatorial candidates, and despite the absence of the seventeenth amendment, voters understood the matter clearly.

Edlefsen's criticism of my statement concerning Thatcher and Brigham Young is absolutely correct. Earlier drafts of the paper detail instances when Moses Thatcher worked closely with President Young before he became an apostle. Unfortunately, this was overlooked as the paper was condensed for publication. Also eliminated were more extensive bibliography and footnote entries, including some of Thatcher's diaries, letters and scrapbooks, which did not focus on the crucial years my paper dealt with. Tragically, Thatcher's apparently excellent journals for this era were burned, reportedly by a family member. For this reason, not the bias of historians,

Moses Thatcher's side of the story may never be accurately reconstructed.

This brings me to an important point concerning both letters. The purpose of my article, as the title clearly stated, was to detail the process through which a notably popular apostle alienated himself from his associates among the Church hierarchy over a long period of time. The wealth of documentary material available concerning the associates' perceptions and reactions to Thatcher's actions made such a study entirely feasible. Miller correctly states that "identification of fault seems largely beside the point. Perception of fault is much more crucial." The other General Authorities' changing attitudes toward Thatcher and the reasons for those changes were the focus of the study. Nothing more was possible.

Both Edlefsen and Miller criticize me for not writing what it was never my purpose to attempt. Admittedly, there is ample material available to write on the period after the alienation. But, except to briefly sketch activities after the final break with the quorum, that was not my purpose. I would agree with hindsight that more should have been said of the so-called "Political Manifesto," including its complete text, but the main point, properly made, was that by that time the alienation was complete, it really did not matter to the other brethren what Thatcher did to try to patch things up thereafter.

Fortunately, the long list of subjects I am accused of neglecting are not slighted in my book, just off the press, entitled *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1986). The *Times* interview is discussed on pages 169–71; the Gardo House meeting (including the favorable reaction of such loyal Democrats and Thatcher supporters as James H. Moyle), on pages 164–65. An entire chapter (pp. 150–81) discusses the division of Church members among the national parties, the disharmony of Roberts and Penrose on pp. 208, 220, 261–63; and President Joseph

F. Smith's conference remarks, their background and results on pp. 269-72, 282-83.

In criticizing me for not letting Thatcher speak for himself, Miller raised the possibility that some journal entries from the Church brethren may have been self-justifying or revisionist when they were written. Long experience with primary source material has made me acutely aware of the self-serving nature of some documents. Ironically, such self-service is, in my opinion, most evident in the letters Thatcher wrote to Lorenzo Snow late in 1896, later released by Thatcher to be published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The patient and impressively fair-minded Snow, among others, quickly recognized that Thatcher was "playing to the gallery" to arouse public sympathy or support rather than sincerely attempting reconciliation with the Quorum of the Twelve. In many instances, Thatcher's recollection of events does not fit with the contemporary accounts of such observers as Heber J. Grant and Abraham H. Cannon, whose objectivity and accuracy have been clearly established. Thus, I would not have used Thatcher's statements from 1896 in his own defense even if that had been my purpose.

There is no question that, for whatever reasons, Thatcher was an outstanding advocate of separation of Church and state; and I probably should have given more attention to this. However, Miller's statement that Thatcher was influential in securing this provision in the Utah Constitution is untenable: he was absent all but one day of the two weeks when that portion of the state Bill of Rights was being discussed on the floor. Perhaps retaining the unfortunate story of Joseph F. Smith chastising Thatcher's bishop for praying for the dissident apostle's health would have shown in the extreme the hostility and unfairness toward him. As for the drug addiction, it is heavily documented as are admissions of such from friends and family, including Moses, Jr. — regardless of what he said later about fairness of his father's treatment by the Church leaders.

A large proportion of Edlefsen's and Miller's objections are more to the Church leaders of the time, their policies, decisions and practices than to my attempts to recount those instances in the context of the Thatcher case. The admittedly sad but important story needed further relevant sources brought forward and discussed to balance and supplement what Stanley Ivins and Calvin Reasoner had written. These new materials came mainly from within the Church hierarchy. Yet it was never my intention to defend the Church leaders nor to totally blame Thatcher. As I stated clearly enough, there was an abundance of poor judgment on all sides.

I set out to demonstrate that the Moses Thatcher conflict involved far more than simple politics. I also hoped to convey a considerable measure of the patience and compassion the General Authorities demonstrated toward Thatcher over the long term. Hopefully some of us can learn from the episode and from the dialogue/discussion it was bound to raise.

Edward Leo Lyman
Victorville, California

First Collection

Eugene England stated (Winter 1985, p. 197) that *Greening Wheat* in 1983 was the "first collection ever" of short Mormon fiction. However, *LDSF, Science Fiction by and for Mormons*, edited by Scott and Vicki Smith, was published in 1982.

Benjamin Urrutia
Pasadena, California

Unnecessary Polarization

Although I'm not sure I'd necessarily disagree with reader Richard D. Terry's view of Kent Robson (Winter 1984) as a Soviet apologist, I do have to wonder if the appropriate response was Terry's chauvinistic polarized response (Fall 1985). First, Terry makes a number of errors of fact:

1. “[Robson wrongly] leaves the impression that it is the United States . . . which is most likely to initiate a first strike.” However, the United States government is on record (per Alexander Haig) as not having ruled out a “limited tactical nuclear response” to a conventional attack by Warsaw Pact forces in Western Europe.

2. “Historically, the U.S. has never attacked or started a war by surprise.” This is not true; and in any case, most U.S. acts of aggression have been done without much advance warning. It’s hard to keep the list short, but it includes the Indian wars of the nineteenth century; the invasion of Canada (Sandwich and Queenston Heights, Upper Canada), 1812; the invasion of Mexico, 1846; the overthrow of Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani, 1893; sending the *Maine* to Havana, which started the Spanish-American War; the invasion of the Philippines, 1898; the creation of Panama by force in 1903, at the expense of Colombia; the military occupation of Nicaragua, 1912–34; the invasion of Cuba, 1961 (“the Bay of Pigs”); the invasion of the Dominican Republic, 1965; and the invasion of Grenada, 1983.

3. Terry attacks Robson’s citation of the Swedish World Health Organization study predicting 1.1 billion deaths in a nuclear exchange by implying that there aren’t that many people in the Northern Hemisphere. He is forgetting about the People’s Republic of China, which occupies roughly the same latitudinal zone as the United States.

4. Terry calls the Afghanistan War an offensive action by the USSR, and while I think most readers would probably agree with that, would he be willing to have the same standards applied to Grenada? Let’s not forget that the Afghan government of the day invited the Soviets into Afghanistan, too.

Second, I think we should resist such attempts to polarize us unnecessarily. The role of the United States is obviously central to LDS theology concerning political issues — it was the cradle of the restora-

tion, the seat of Church government, and the primary example of liberal democratic government during the Enlightenment.

That the vast majority of Latter-day Saints disassociate themselves from the militarism and expansionism of the USSR goes without question, I should think; but I also think there’s a point at which U.S. members of the Church must also feel morally obligated to exert a moderating influence on the tendency prevalent in their own country towards unwarranted aggressive militarism, as President Kimball did when he spoke out against the MX missiles.

As *non-U.S.* Americans, most Canadians do not feel this pressure to see the world in “Us vs. Them” terms. I daresay most Europeans, Asians, and residents of the southern hemisphere feel the same way. We see no contradiction between this attitude and a willingness to ally ourselves politically with the United States, in many cases. If there is at least one United States academic who has the courage to admit, in effect, that maybe the United States is straying from the spirit of the promise made to the latter-day inhabitants of the western hemisphere in Ether 2:9, and D&C 10:50–64, etc., it should be a sign of hope to all of us, not a target of contempt.

Marc Schindler
Gloucester, Ontario
Canada

Priesthood Confusion

I enjoyed the articles by Melodie Moench Charles, Linda King Newell, and Meg Wheatley-Pesci on the role of women in the Church and the question of women and priesthood (Fall 1985). The incidents of women exercising spiritual gifts, particularly by giving health blessings to both males and females who were sick are very interesting. But I chuckle a little as these writers bemoan the limits on women’s ability to *do* things in the Church because of the lack of ordained female priesthood holders.

Certainly women feel constrained by the priesthood hierarchy, but so do men. And women could or should be priestesses and prophetesses in this life, here and now. They probably already are. But though the formal conferring of priesthood may give women more proper recognition, I challenge the idea that it would make women less constrained in what they can *do*.

Is it not intriguing that I, as a male, am required to have the priesthood to perform the following functions which women do with no priesthood requirement?

1. Represent the church in foreign lands as a missionary.
2. Preach and teach the gospel.
3. Receive temple endowments and administer temple ordinances.
4. Visit the homes of members, exhorting and admonishing them.
5. Heal the sick.

If those functions truly require priesthood, then the women of the Church have always had the priesthood; it's just that nobody bothered to say so.

In my opinion, women have more "freedom to do" than male priesthood bearers. They seem better able to do it for no other reason than the superiority of their ward organization and perhaps the motivation of status through achievement rather than titles.

Women have one organization in the ward responsible to one head who is responsible to the bishop. They form classes and committees drawn from the general pool of women in the ward. In contrast, men have three organizations in the ward—the high priests, seventies, and elders quorums—responsible to the stake, not the ward. Men are divided into quorums, not on the basis of the needs and resources of the ward, but on the basis of priesthood titles that may have been conferred many years ago for functions they have long ceased to fill. They form the same committees as the women, but they need three workers in each function for which the women provide one. Like pawns on a chess board, the men can never move backwards

(from high priest to seventy to elder). The women, like the queen, can cycle freely in and out of groups according to the needs of the task.

I am confident that we barely know what the priesthood is. As a seventy and then as a high priest, I did considerable study into my callings and discovered that there has always been a wide divergence of opinion at all levels in the Church on what these offices mean. Efforts by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to clarify priesthood roles seem to have established confusion which has persisted up to today.

Our affirmation of priesthood as a central feature of the restored church, combined with our limited understanding of it, has produced a general insecurity regarding its status and role. We have tried to enhance its prestige by overstating its role and exclusivity. We have been jealous of things that do not have central priesthood direction with immediate, hands-on control. We worry if the priesthood does not get the credit. We have the "priesthood scouting program," and the "priesthood athletic program," etc. For a time, only the deacons' president could be the senior patrol leader in Scouts, and only priesthood bearers could offer prayers in sacrament meetings. Wives may not accompany husbands on home-teaching visits because home teaching is a "priesthood function." "Men" seldom do anything in the Church; it's usually the "priesthood." Attempts to make the priesthood more important through unnecessary exclusiveness, centralization of somewhat trivial decisions, and over-use of the word demean it. If it is really so vulnerable, then it can't be very powerful.

If we look to the Lord as the ultimate model, we see a very different way of doing things. He does not treat us like puppets on strings, controlling our every move. For that we honor him as a God of liberty, personal agency, and unlimited individual potential. Attempts to confine the Lord's priesthood within a highly centralized, closely monitored, top-down bureaucratic

structure contributes to confusion regarding the function and role of priesthood and heightens women's anxiety about being left out of it. But until the Lord gives us a better understanding of priesthood, women of the Church may do well to avoid closer entanglements with a structure which would assuredly be more confining and restrictive than that which they now enjoy (or endure, as the case may be).

In contrast, if women are interested in titles and if it is important to them, there ought to be a way to include women. Certainly the Fall *DIALOGUE* suggests some basis, or perhaps even precedence, for doing so. But it would have a price. The titles and the roles don't always fit the circumstances, yet we must live by them. Once they become part of the priesthood structure they become almost irrevocable ("God is the same, yesterday, today. . ."). Structure and proscription nudge out innovation and charity. Positions that seem full of power are agonizingly devoid of meaningful latitude, due not only to the highly bureaucratic nature of the hierarchy, but also the long-held traditions, and independent character of the people themselves — whether they hold priesthood or not.

Wheatley-Pesci expressed concern that the inclusion of women in the priesthood might lead to diminished status for priesthood. Diminished status, at least the kind we sometimes nurture, might be healthy. A few years ago, our ward was hurting for

manpower. Someone proposed that the high priests, seventies, and elders meet together and consolidate resources. A number of the high priests were very receptive, but some were offended and indicated such action would decrease their activity. I subsequently dropped that suggestion in two or three other gatherings of high priests and observed a similar reaction. If this kind of divisive status were to decline with the ordaining of women to priesthood office, there may arise a more real and meaningful status that would bring us all closer to the kingdom.

The idea of a reawakening and reasserting of priesthood power among women of the Church is fascinating. Artificial restrictions and false exclusivity may have to be removed so that the women's vision of service is complete. But it is doubtful that adopting male organizational structure and titles as presently understood would be a positive move in that direction. No one, man or woman, with eyes fixed on titles, status, and the power to regulate other people's lives, can accomplish much in the Lord's *true* kingdom. Rather than advocating more priesthood for women, it might be healthier if we advocated less priesthood for all — that is, less priesthood as a restrictive, exclusive, controlling hierarchy. But priesthood as an enabling, loving, serving, blessing power should know no limits.

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AN INVITATION TO OUR READERS

DIALOGUE begins publishing its twentieth volume with the spring 1987 issue. No longer an adolescent periodical, *DIALOGUE* marks the accession to adulthood by inviting readers to reflect upon and interpret that past. Whether you've been a subscriber for the whole twenty years or for the past twenty months, what part has *DIALOGUE* played in your life? How has it made things easier? Harder? What do you see as *DIALOGUE*'s future? Whether you have slaved away on the staff or been the only subscriber in your city, what memories do you cherish most?

Submissions may be a paragraph, a page, or an essay long—typed and double-spaced. They should reach us no later than 1 December 1986. We plan to publish selections throughout the entire year of 1987.