

LETTERS

A Place Among the Sisters

I just finished reading the Fall 1990 *DIALOGUE*. As someone who aspires to write, I feel I should be better able to express how important this issue was to me.

I have struggled for a long time with almost every issue discussed in this volume of your magazine. More than once I have been tempted to leave the Church but know that I cannot. Denying my heritage and beliefs is as destructive to the wholeness I seek as denying the feminist and artist within me. Now I no longer feel so isolated in my search for a "place" among the sisters. I finally see a bit of blue among some very dark clouds.

Lori Brummer
North Platte, Nebraska

Words of Appreciation

It has taken me all this time, since you published Karen Rosenbaum's tribute to Meg, to find the fortitude to say "thank you." Her father and I wept together over the essay, and our own memories came flooding back.

We finally (after two failures) have persuaded a lovely maple tree to grow by her grave. It will turn brilliant red in the fall, and she will love it.

Again—thank you for publishing the article.

Lucybeth Rampton
Salt Lake City, Utah

Good Thoughts to Chew On

I would like to offer a few notes of appreciation to the editors and staff of *DIALOGUE* for your labor of love with the journal. It has helped create breathing room in the Church and has helped, I'm

sure, any number of people to direct their inquiries into more fruitful paths than they might have followed otherwise.

I look forward to reading the next issue. With any luck at all, it will give me plenty of good thoughts to chew on. Not to mention a handsome cover to spark my curiosity, evidence of careful editorial review, proofreading, and composition. In short, another cause for celebration!

J. H. Bryan
Newark, California

The Cause of Peace

I enjoyed reading Eugene England's letter, "Late Night Thoughts at the End of a War" (Summer 1991), but I must take mild exception to the impression left that President Hugh B. Brown was a pacifist.

I knew President Brown fairly well. He was my father's cousin and friend and our long-time acquaintance. He was, in fact, my boyhood hero, a man that I thoroughly admired. It is a well-known fact that he raised a cavalry squadron from among Southern Alberta's young men to support Canada's war effort against Germany at the beginning of World War I. He carried out this recruiting assignment very successfully, much to the dismay and consternation of many of the parents of the recruits. Unfortunately, many of these young men were gassed while serving in France, and some did not return home. This experience may well have turned President Brown's heart against war.

Eugene England noted that if Germany had been allowed a fairer Versailles Treaty in 1919, we likely would not have had the Adolf Hitler problem and World War II. I agree. I would go so far as to speculate that if the Kaiser had been allowed to win World War I, we may not

have had any of the subsequent wars. We would have had “Deutschland Ueber Alles.”

I understand President Brown’s hope and prayers while serving as president of the British Mission that Chamberlain’s 1938 visit to Hitler would prevent a world conflagration. I was serving a West German mission at the time and felt the same way, although it was quite obvious to those of us who were there that war was inevitable.

Upon returning home, I established a close friendship with Hugh C. Brown, President Brown’s elder son. When England and France declared war against Germany in September 1939, Hugh was attending BYU. Although his home was in Salt Lake City, he had strong patriotic feelings towards Canada, the land of his birth, and joined the Canadian Air Force. I was invited to a family farewell dinner for him at the Saltair resort, and I could sense his family’s bittersweet feelings of love and sorrow. However, there was never any question of how proud they were to have such a son. Tragically, he was later lost in a combat patrol over the English Channel.

I have learned that there is no such thing as making the world safe for our sons and daughters through waging war. That can be accomplished only with the help of our Lord, and in that good cause I am in complete agreement with Brother Eugene.

Anthony DeVoe Woolf
Auburn, California

Rustin’s Theological Breakthrough

Scientists seem so smart to me (up to a point). For example, Cambridge University’s Stephen Hawking, in his *Brief History of Time* (Bantam Books, 1988) left me awe-struck with his revelations about black holes and about a synthesis between quantum mechanics and relativity. But then—then—he suddenly tells us that although he understands *how* the universe was formed, he still doesn’t understand *why*! *Why*? I wrote to Stephen and told

him that this sentence proves to me that he spent too long at that conference of astronomers at the Vatican. I got back a postcard from his department, which said that his physical condition (he suffers from Lou Gehrig’s disease) prevented him from personally responding to my letter.

In the Summer 1991 issue of *DIALOGUE* appeared a delicious “note” by Erich Robert Paul titled “Science: ‘Forever Tentative?’” This too dazzled my mind. Paul says: “As far as I can tell, we can only ascertain the ontological status of a scientific or religious idea if that idea comes from God—directly by revelation” (p. 121). In defense of Paul, I must say that what he said thereafter modified this bald-faced apology (he said that *interpreting* revelation can be a pretty relative thing).

But now let me tell you what’s wrong with the sentence quoted above: God got where he is by eternal progression as a heavenly engineer. And as such, God holds his own scientific theories, as *tentative* to him as are the hypotheses of modern human scientists to them. Many Latter-day Saints take God’s scientific theories to be absolutes, just because his theories are more advanced than those of temporal engineers. Worse than that, they think that about his ethics as well. What they fail to realize is that *all* engineers (temporal or extra-terrestrial) have ethics which lag far behind their math acumens.

When God changed his ethic from “eye for eye” to “love thy neighbor,” it was because, in the meridian of time, he suddenly switched to a new code. You see, it *wasn’t* that former peoples of the earth were more barbaric, and therefore needed a law more suited to their barbarism. This concept of God’s ethics goes a long way to explaining nineteenth-century Mormon polygamy and our delay in giving the priesthood to blacks. Now we realize also why Gene England’s higher ethics are out of step with the divine timetable.

Joseph Jeppson
(his “Rustin Kaufman” voice)
Woodside, California

The Language of Prayer

As a non-Mormon, I found Richard C. Russell's letter in the Summer 1991 issue interesting. Perhaps others in non-Mormon circles can identify with his problem, but I cannot.

When I first learned to pray as a Christian, I learned that prayer is communication with God. With that understanding, I could never have submitted to a special "prayer language" form of English. That is not the way I communicate. I speak to God in the most natural way I can, for although I regard him with immense awe and reverence, he is still my Father. Moreover, I want to be understood, and while God has the capacity to understand my heart regardless of what my mouth says (otherwise hypocrisy would be undetected and unpunished), it does me no good to pray if in trying to conform to a certain "pattern of prayer," I must concentrate on *how* I'm speaking to the exclusion of *what* I'm speaking.

Prayer is supposed to come from the heart. The mind is not totally disengaged, of course, for I must clearly and accurately state my deepest desires in prayer, and that requires mental function. Nevertheless, prayer is less an intellectual exercise than a pouring out of the heart and soul; and unless I am greatly mistaken, few people, if any, naturally express their deepest feelings and desires in terms of thee and thou.

It might be beneficial for the members of the LDS church to read and reread Orson Scott Card's definition of "Prayer-speak" (*Saintspeak: The Mormon Dictionary*, Salt Lake City: Orion Books, 1981), reminding themselves that surely Jesus meant what he said when he commanded his disciples not to pray as the heathens do (Matt. 6:7). The pagans of his day, and of ours, believed that unless God was approached in a formal, ritualistic manner, he would not hear. The true God, by contrast, never provided either Israel or the church with a set form of prayer; the so-called "Lord's Prayer" was not intended to be recited.

I approach very closely to my God when I pray. I don't need to carefully formulate my sentences into the proper shape and include all the correct words of a "prayer language" that is totally foreign to me. Rather, I simply come to my Father as his child, knowing that, just as I hear my children even if they mangle their mother tongue, so he will hear me even if I don't measure up to some ecclesiastical format.

Robert McKay
Rush Springs, Oklahoma

A Difficult Trial

I am amazed at Virginia Bourgeois's total lack of understanding of Mormon doctrine and history (Letters, Summer 1991). I would like to respond to the seven items she listed in her concerns over plural marriage.

First, while there is a constant birth-rate of 105 baby boys to every 100 baby girls, it is also well known that more male infants die each year than do female infants. Nature itself helps even out the number of males and females, as do those of both sexes who decide to never marry.

Second, while polygamy means multiple mates, polygyny means more than one wife. It was polygyny which was practiced by the Church and is still practiced by fundamentalist groups. While those outside of the Church might be inclined to practice polyandry if polygamy were legalized, I don't think it would erode the status of the family any faster than is already occurring. Because of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, our society has already experienced a significant increase in the practice of multiple sexual partners. I doubt that the legalization of polygamy would really make that much of a difference. Whether the ACLU succeeds in legalizing polygamy or not, multiple "spouses" already exist among many in our country.

Third, the United States is not facing a problem of over-population. For that matter, there would probably not be a problem in most of the world if the natu-

ral resources were better used and the political problems did not encroach upon the economic survival of various peoples.

Fourth, another purpose of plural marriage appears to have been testing and growth. Ideally the men and women who practiced plural marriage learned and grew through the complexities and self-sacrifice the lifestyle inevitably required. Artificial insemination would not encourage the interaction that is necessary for personal and spiritual growth.

Fifth, since it is highly doubtful that the Church will ever re-institute plural marriage, I don't think we need to worry about enough women to go around.

Sixth, I find it very interesting that when using the Book of Mormon to condemn plural marriage Bourgeois skipped Jacob 2:30. A number of writers have also fallen into this same mistake. Verse 30 states, "For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things." Those who are quick to use the Book of Mormon to condemn plural marriage should reread this verse.

Finally, it is up to every individual to decide whether or not a prophet is infallible when giving revelation. When determining if Joseph Smith had a weakness for women, we only have documents (many of which are inconclusive) to go on. As good as historians are, they have not yet figured out how to read the mind of a dead person.

Plural marriage was a difficult trial for both men and women, though undoubtedly women carried most of the burden. It was not, however, easy for the men either. Many found it a difficult and painful commandment to live. I fear that too many Mormons today are accepting the worn-out stereotyped images of lascivious old men fulfilling their sexual fantasies with young, innocent women who had no say in the matter. Mormon plural marriage was anything but a sexual romp in the seraglio! Polygynous households experienced both joy and pain, heaven and hell, and a lot in between.

Who are we to really judge? We cannot get into the hearts and minds of the early Mormons who chose to live the principle. Nor can we truly understand those today who choose this way of life. I personally am glad that I do not have to make that choice.

Craig L. Foster
Provo, Utah

No Medal of Honor

I enjoyed reading my everloving wife Gay's piece, "Why Am I Here?" (Summer 1991), but I hasten to correct the dear girl's lack of military knowledge. I was NOT—repeat, NOT—awarded the Medal of Honor, which is given for exceptional valor, of which I have none.

I received a high award, yes, but it was a noncombat medal, the Legion of Merit, given for services "above and beyond the call of duty." I also was awarded three battle stars, but I was in the battle zones after a story, not after the enemy. I was required to wear a Colt .45 at such times, but I didn't have the faintest idea how to use it.

Thinking back, I believe I might have received the Legion of Merit for eating doughnuts. I went to Italy on a big story, and what with travel, gathering documents, interviewing people and making notes, I simply couldn't meet the chow line schedule at the mess halls; so I lived on what was available at the Red Cross canteen, coffee and doughnuts. During the third week, I was chewing on a doughnut and I simply couldn't swallow it, nor have I been able to since.

On returning to London I needed a new jacket. When I put on one at the supply room, the sergeant grabbed a handful of loose fabric and said, "Who's going to be in there with you, Mac?" I replied, "I'm a growing boy; I'll fill it out."

Anyhow, it *was* the Legion of Merit, and as we used to say, with it and sixpence I could buy a cup of Bovril.

Samuel Taylor
Redwood City, California

A British Perspective

As a British Latter-day Saint, I have found *DIALOGUE* to be of inestimable value in understanding the history of the Church and interpreting historic events. Many of my questions during the twenty-eight years I have belonged to the Church have been answered or placed in the correct context in the pages of *DIALOGUE*. A writer whose insights I have come to respect over the years has been Eugene England. However, his latest letter to the editor (Summer 1991) disturbs me.

England's anti-war rhetoric is admirable but unconvincing. While Christ did not advocate war, neither did he advocate negotiating with Satan (Matt. 4:1-10), and many scriptures suggest more than passivity. Many thoughtful citizens feel uneasy about going to war yet recognize that unfortunately "Christian" ideals will only be respected by leaders who wish to respect them. Hitler had no intention of respecting "Christian" ideals and, indeed, imprisoned, tortured, and killed many who tried to oppose him on Christian grounds.

Similarly, Saddam Hussein is not prepared to listen to Christian idealists. We have all seen what Muslim fundamentalists think of Christian principles; they continue to hold hostage Terry Waite, who was on a very Christian mission, and others whose only crime was to be British or American.

Like Hitler, Hussein uses whatever causes suit his purposes. He ended a war against a fellow Muslim state to pursue what, to him, was a much more profitable aggression—overrunning Kuwait. True, Kuwait was not noted for its democracy. Nevertheless, to have ignored the invasion would have been perilous in the extreme. Eugene England makes much of Neville Chamberlain's diplomacy but totally ignores the cost of those no-war-at-any-cost Christian ideals—Czechoslovakia and Danzig. Even before this, Britain, America, and most of the League of Nations ignored the atrocities being enacted in

Abyssinia. Had they acted against the Italians, Hitler would not have received the signals he did.

The West's hesitancy to deal with Hussein similarly gave him the signals on which to act. His total disregard for Christian principles is apparent in his double-dealing over the Kurds, the Shi'ite population, and the promises he made at the end of the Gulf conflict. It is most unfortunate that the Iraqi ruler was not removed from power before the Allied forces left Kuwait. To have left Hitler and the Nazi party in power at the end of World War II would have left evil there to regrow in the same way that bindweed or convolvulose sends out new shoots to strangle garden vegetable and flowers.

Eugene England blames the rise of Hitler on the excessive reparations demanded from Germany following World War I. These demands were a factor, but so was the worldwide Great Depression, which also provided a breeding ground for another evil dictator who rejected Christian principles—Josef Stalin. Hitler and Stalin believed "negotiation" meant giving in to their demands, which led to death or the loss of freedom for millions of innocent people. "Negotiations" at Tehran in 1944 and Yalta in 1945, when President Roosevelt gave in to Stalin, led to the separation and repression of Eastern Europe.

I feel strongly about the period 1939-41, when Britain stood alone against the might of Germany, Hitler's forces having swept all opposition aside. At this time, America as a nation was not ready to stand up against Hitler militarily and kept aloof from a European war. Fortunately there were some who saw the need to fight evil and volunteered to fight alongside the British. Many of us in Britain believe that we survived, against all rational argument, against all that was obvious, because the Lord recognized the evilness of Hitler, an anti-Christ, and knew he had to be removed. Until the USA was forced into the war by Pearl Harbor, God was our only refuge. This awareness

welded the nation together, giving it a morale that was really the turning point of the war. I know because I was there. I can deplore Dresden and Hiroshima but know why and how they had to happen. To condemn them out of hand is to be completely naive.

"We supported or acquiesced in the imperialist and then oil-hungry injustices by France and England that created ongoing inequities and grievances in the Middle East," says England about the recent conflict. Yes, there are glaring injustices in the Middle East, some of them the legacy of British and French involvement there. But again, England is being selective. Many Middle East states, including Iraq and Jordan, received their freedom from the Ottoman Empire as a result of World War I. The king England quotes as support for appeasement is from a line of rulers placed there by the British as a result of British blood being spilt in the Middle East. Also, had Iraq remained the kingdom created, again by the British, after 1921, it is unlikely this discussion would be taking place.

We must learn from the past. Negotiation is imperative, as England says, but both sides must be prepared to meet on

common ground. Iraq was not prepared for constructive talk. Those who watched television news before the armed hostilities would have seen Iraqi-style negotiation—seizing British hostages and parading them on Iraqi television, Hussein forcing his "friendly" attentions on a bewildered British child, an Iraqi diplomat saying that these people were not "hostages" but "guests" held for their own safety. Negotiation *was* tried and failed. The reparations demanded from the Iraqis in no way proximate those demanded of Germany after 1918. Our teaching of "repentance" (a good Christian principle) includes the restitution of things acquired by the sinful act. We ask Hussein for no more than this. Repentance also requires a promise not to repeat the transgression. Disposing of chemical and nuclear weapons would be just such a promise. We expect Hussein to give freedom to minorities and to opposition leaders to allow democracy to grow in Iraq. It is patently obvious that he is not prepared to do these things without sanctions which include the possibility of force.

Alan Webster
Oxford, England