

Much to Applaud

In the Guggenheim or in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I have been awed at Picasso and others. I can, with appreciation, imagine the works of Trevor Southey being acclaimed there. He is, indeed, an artist. I remember back thirty year ago, in New York's Lincoln Center when I was enthralled by the New York Ballet's rendition of "The Prodigal," as expressed in the choreography of George Balanchine. The grace and beauty of the seduction was an experience charged with emotion. I was grateful for the ballet as a vehicle of human sensitivity.

Now, I think of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and ask: why do the editors choose twelve pages of nudes to dominate the spring 1993 issue? It seems as inappropriate to me as putting King Benjamin's speech to his people from the tower in *Playboy* magazine. This one person, the writer of this letter, has to ask if *Dialogue's* "accurate scholarship and responsible judgment" identity is being overruled by a motive of reform and crusade.

You have so much in *Dialogue* that I applaud. I have been happy to have it on our coffee table when the home teachers or others visit. Now, I shall probably put this issue "in the closet" when they are expected. In reading your excellent statement, "Editor's Introduction: The Times—They Are A'

Changin'," I turned the front cover flap over to hold my place on the page. But I had to turn it back; the "laid out" male nude was too distracting.

Paul W. Hodson
Salt Lake City, Utah

A Great Mitzvah

Just a brief note for the moment . . . I want to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for your efforts. I do this with full knowledge that in all probability with the spring and summer issues this year that you have received some negative comments, or am I wrong? Rest assured what you are doing is a great mitzvah (a good deed) and especially now is badly needed.

Just one question though—with articles like D. Michael Quinn's on Ezra Taft Benson in the summer issue (a superb, but nonetheless very disturbing piece)—do you have any suggestions on how best to introduce *Dialogue* to a population that is repeatedly told to be wary of dissent (and hence apostasy)?

P.S. How about this on a bumper sticker: "*Dialogue: The Antidote to Theological Correctness*"!

Orin L. Ryssman
Westminster, California

Courageous and Inspirational

Thank you for the outstanding spring 1993 issue. I have subscribed to *Dialogue* from issue number one and the spring 1993 was one the most courageous, thought-provoking, and inspirational issues to date.

Thank you for the beautiful art work on the cover and illustrations throughout. Trevor Southey is a great artist whose work I have always admired; I am delighted he was able to supply the issue with such splendid examples of his art.

I wish you well with further issues and hope you will continue to challenge us more with fine writing and art.

Michael Ensign
Toluca Lake, California

Matching Donations

A friend gave me a copy of your spring 1993 issue featuring the reproduction of Trevor Southey's figures. A courageous issue!

The same friend sent me a letter to you critical of the very art I admired. Please don't retreat because of such criticisms. Society has paid too high a price with too many lives, too many times for bigotry in general and homophobia in particular for these vices to be indirectly supported by overly cautious treatment in literature.

An artist myself, I scrape by, unable to afford a luxury like *Dialogue* very often. But this occasion, your vital issue, the visual art, the fear letter, calls for a personal response. Enclosed is \$30 for the DIALOGUE Foundation. I am matching that by sending a check for \$30 to Mr. Southey. I invite your readers to

rise to this occasion in support of both your works.

Helaman Ferguson
Laurel, Maryland

Radical Fringes

I am very happy with the summer issue. The articles are all first rate and really contribute to *Dialogue's* image as a pathbreaking scholarly journal. My only wish is that Michael Quinn would have discussed how the Ezra Taft Benson-J. Reuben Clark political ideology won in the Mormon United States. Even though the radical fringes were denounced in the fall of 1992, the ultra-conservatism prevailed. And I enjoyed the Ernest L. Wilkinson article by Gary Bergera. There are some ironic twists when it is put next to Quinn's article. The footnotes in both articles are fantastic because they document that twentieth-century material can be found.

I enjoyed the spring issue as well, except for the art. Keep up the good work.

F. Ross Peterson
Logan, Utah

Thinking and Open Minded

First of all I would like to thank you for your fine work in publishing *Dialogue*. The articles keep me thinking and help me to be open-minded. Some articles also motivate me to be a better Christian. So it's good to read how others have acted under special circumstances.

Though I don't agree always with everything (because of my own experi-

ences) it helps me to be tolerant. *Dialogue* keeps me also informed about problems, changes, and doings of members in much larger communities of Latter-day Saints.

Joachim M. Enger
Bad Vilbel, Germany

Love Lessens Fears

In the summer of 1966 while Bro. Reed Benson and his apostle father were fighting for freedom I was humbly yet gladly serving among rural Mississippi black folk in efforts to expand both freedom and brotherly love. Fighting for freedom does not lessen fears. Love does. If man is a divine "animal" it is wise and well to appeal to this divinity. The gospel of Jesus Christ enables freedom to the degree that each of us utilizes our light and love and shares that with our brothers and sisters.

I greatly appreciate the D. Michael Quinn *Dialogue* report in the summer 1993 issue. In my view Quinn's message is for *each* Saint to find ways to help Jesus, in love and freedom, build the Kingdom.

Howard W. Johnson
Lake George, Colorado

Two Questions

I enjoyed the spring 1993 issue of *Dialogue*. In particular I enjoyed the essays by Lavina Fielding Anderson and Paul Toscano. However, as I read these two essays I kept asking myself two questions: "Why do they stay?" and "Why did they join in the first place?" Sister Anderson and Brother Toscano,

indeed all Mormon "intellectuals," remind me of people whose spouses were abusive before they married them and continue to be abusive but (a) they still married them, knowing they were abusive, (b) wish to change the abusive spouse when they knew what they were getting into, and (c) continue to take the abuse rather than mustering the courage to leave.

Mormonism is not like other religions. Mormonism claims to have a direct link to God. Either you believe that it does and follow the prophet without question or you don't believe it, in which case you should leave. People who join the Mormon church do so not because of its commitment of free thinking and intellectual honesty but because it offers answers to questions about which humanity feels generally insecure. They do not wish to have "intellectuals" raising questions about these answers or about the men who have claimed to have received these answers from the Almighty himself.

The entire foundation of Mormonism rests on the credibility of its prophet. If the prophet is not right on matters of doctrine, social matters, etc., then Mormonism is in no way a unique religion but simply another conglomerate of men's opinions. This is Mormonism. I'm not sure what people expect from this religion. They want divine authority and a man to speak to God. Then they want to be able to disagree with God's decrees and remain in good standing. Either he speaks for God or he doesn't. It really is that simple.

Don't get me wrong. I agree with Sister Anderson and Brother Toscano. They as well as others have been abused. But the abuse is not an aberration, it is simply the logical progression of doctrine. When people believe that they are God's mouthpieces this is the way they

behave. Mormonism is by definition authoritarian and to a large extent totalitarian. If you don't like it, leave! I did.

Brian K. Dalton
Downey, California

A Little Confused

After reading D. Michael Quinn's excellent article on Mormon political conflicts in the summer 1993 issue, I'm still a little confused. Perhaps it's the labels "conservative" and "liberal" I don't understand. I had always thought of Spencer W. Kimball and David O. McKay as the two most liberal presidents of the LDS church since I joined in 1959. Joseph Fielding Smith and Harold B. Lee were, until Ezra Taft Benson, the most conservative presidents, I had thought. Maybe David O. McKay's liberalism was in allowing all voices, even untraconservatives, to freely express their thoughts. I am also surprised that Boyd K. Packer is a Democrat. He seems among the most conservative of the current twelve apostles.

I am also somewhat surprised that Mark E. Petersen was opposed to ultraconservative views. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in geography, I was called to serve a mission in the area of my first choice: Tahiti (French Polynesia). Before leaving, I wrote to Mark E. Petersen to question statements he had made about the origin of the Polynesians. He wrote back telling me that this issue was of no relevance to my mission, and so I put it out of my mind for the next two and a half years. However, toward the end of my mission, an assistant to the mission president confided to me that they had received letter from

Elder Petersen warning them to keep an eye on me. When I asked why they didn't inform me of this, he said my missionary performance was satisfactory and there was no need to discuss it. Lavina Fielding Anderson's essay in the spring 1993 issue was thus of personal interest to me as well.

By the way, for your readers' information, the Social Credit Part of Canada, despite its name, is not a socialist party. My parents (non-LDS) were active in the Social Credit Party and personal acquaintances of N. Eldon Tanner, Solon Low, and other LDS church members who were leaders in the Social Credit movement. Most Canadians would consider the Social Credit Party right of center, and perhaps even right of the Progressive Conservative Party.

Robin R. Lyons
Mililani, Hawaii

This Great Endeavor

As one of the original and continuous subscribers to *Dialogue*, I have quite often felt the urge to write a note and to communicate with you. However, I have learned that if I postpone the matter long enough, my need to communicate with you subsides and I save the job of writing. However, I enjoyed your last edition (summer 1993) so very much that I thought that I should tell you about it. I surely respect you folks who spend so much time and energy in this great endeavor.

Carwin H. Linford
Afton, Wyoming