

The faith I hold fast impels me to speak and to listen; it impels me to express honestly and fully and as gracefully as possible the convictions that shape my life, to try to demonstrate the things I find as I think and do research and experience the holy — it impels me to listen carefully and always. My faith as a Mormon encourages by specific doctrines my feeling that each man is eternally unique and god-like in potential, that each man deserves a hearing and that we have something important to learn from each man if we can hear him — if he can speak and we can listen well. Dialogue is possible to those who can. Such a dialogue will not solve all of our intellectual and spiritual problems — and it will not save us; but it can bring us joy and new vision and help us toward that dialogue with our deepest selves and with our God which can save us.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

These letters are responsive to the editors' announcement of their intention to publish a new journal. The editors now welcome letters responding to the contents of this and subsequent issues.

Dear Sirs:

. . . . The genius of your plan lies in the title, for I think that at present many of us are engaged in a dialogue. Perhaps when we have better defined our position we will be capable of commentary, but for the present our task is more to discover where we stand and to search for our own identity. During the hundred or so years of isolation in the West, we developed something that is precious beyond words, and so far as I am concerned is worthy of all sacrifices. But the doctrine of gathering has been suspended and our job now is to live in the world. While we may know well enough who we are in testimony meetings and Ward Council and General Conference, the new context of

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Harvard or Columbia or Africa requires a new definition. I think that is one reason why we have lost many of our young people in eastern schools, or at the University of Utah for that matter. They are overpowered by a secular culture that dazzles them with its splendors and seemingly puts Mormon parochialism in the shade. If we know better what we have to say to the questions the world asks and how better to pick and choose, fewer of our young people would suffer from their provincialism when they went away to school. Not that the journal should merely protect the young: I use them only as a dramatic example of the plight of many of us.

Richard L. Bushman
Brigham Young University
August 8, 1965

Dear Sirs:

. . . . It's hard to say too much about *Dialogue* till we've seen it, but, judging only by the roster of editors and potential contributors, I am confident we will not be disappointed. The Church already has its sensitive, articulate critics, *per se* . . . , and these have managed to get themselves heard. But we have yet to provide an honest intellectual forum for those, perhaps most of them of a more recent generation, who are essentially reconciled to and in faith with the Church, yet discontent with our general failure to relate the Gospel, boldly and imaginatively, to the intellectual life of our contemporary world. The great hope about *Dialogue* is its concern with synthesis . . . its intent appears to be the enrichment of our L.D.S. heritage, not its disputation . . . to the extent that *Dialogue* persists in serving, in the broadest, most objective sense, the cause of Mormon idealism, *rather than supplanting it* — to this extent it will bless the Church and deserves our enthusiastic support and attention.

Thomas F. Rogers
Howard University
December 24, 1965

Dear Sirs:

I am changing my policy of subscribing only to one magazine, namely MAD. Please send me *Dialogue* for one year.

Kjell Nilsen
Salt Lake City, Utah
December 11, 1965

Dear Sirs:

. . . . Even the name is ideal. I have reproached my Mormon friends on occasion with their failure to make any significant effort to expand the current and universally recognized Protestant-Catholic-jewish dialogue into a four-way interchange. I sensed that the objection to such communication would have been a fear of the dilution of doctrine or hesitancy to let good fellowship breed concessions.

I have also questioned a disinclination on the part of the most well-educated Mormons to approach theology from a philosophical point of view, that is, to accept a "natural theology" or to apply reason alone to the data of revelation. Here a conviction of the strict adequacy of revelation seems to make such scientific study of religion irrelevant or impertinent. Sterling McMurrin's *The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology* is, of course, an effort to do precisely this, and is an admirable piece of work. I was disappointed to find, however, that this book was not generally well looked upon by Mormons. At any rate, I was not able to get a copy of it in Provo.

The Mormon experience is so important for a knowledge of the evolution of the American character, if for nothing else, that it is a shame to see it kept the property of the believers, as it were. In a typical eastern academic situation such as I find myself in, there is more knowledge of Jansenism, Lollardy and Hinduism than of our own native phenomenon of Mormonism — well, that's an exaggeration but not too much of a one. I think that academic people often feel that they are going to encounter nothing but proselytization if they approach Mormons and consequently never try to engage Mormons in academic discussions. Fortunately my own experience has been different for I have had many Mormon friends in academic circles and have always been able to communicate intelligently with them. I have wished that my own experience could be projected on a larger scale.

. . . . I have the vague hope that I may be able to write up something about *Dialogue* for some appropriate Catholic publication — I am especially interested in bringing Mormonism to the attention of Catholics because of certain similarities in the experience of the two religions in their adaptation of a strict unequivocal revelation to contemporary civilisation and to American civilisation in particular.

Thomas F. Heffernan
Adelphi University, New York
December 17, 1965

Dear Sirs:

Mormons have always had a religious commitment to world-wide evangelism. Yet as a result of historical circumstances they have been in a measure physically and culturally isolated from the world they seek to evangelize. Thus a paradox exists in which the many voices of Mormonism are heard, but are too seldom understood. There has been little real communication between Mormons as Mormons, and everybody else.

This is unfortunate for many reasons. Simplistic and stereotyped notions of Mormon religion, history, and society remain. Unique contributions of Mormon experience and understanding to the body of Christian thought have not been made. And Latter-day Saints themselves suffer the parochial consequences which accrue in any movement whose adherents communicate mostly with one another, and in such a way as to avoid much disagreement or diversity of opinion.

Dialogue will improve the quality of Mormon communication with the many individuals and publics who have a sincere interest in Latter-day Saint culture, as Mormons in its pages analyze their movement publicly in greater breadth and depth than has perhaps ever been the case before. As Mormons

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identify Mormonism with clarity and precision in its relation to the larger world, to the past, and to the future, Mormonism will be more comprehensible and better comprehended.

I hope that in *Dialogue* there will be dialogue as we have come to understand the word in our generation.

Robert Flanders
Graceland College of the
Reorganized Church of Jesus
Christ of Latter-day Saints
Lamoni, Iowa
January 18, 1966

Dear Sirs:

. . . . As director of Interreligious Cooperation for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, your magazine will be of great interest to me. For understandable reasons, I believe that linkages between the Mormon and Jewish communities ought to expand on the basis of common concerns, and I believe your publication will be a step in the right direction.

Rabbi Solomon S. Bernards
New York
December 22, 1965

