

Letters to the Editors

Dear Sirs:

I have just finished reading the First Presidency's statement in the April *Era* against pornography and obscenity. As a widow with three young boys to raise I am concerned about the possible dangers that lie ahead of them and certainly don't advocate a diet of hardcore pornography. As a librarian, however, I am also concerned about the dangers of censorship. In September I shall start a new job as a high school librarian, and in my book buying I shall follow certain recognized criteria of selection, e.g., the overall purpose of the book, its timeliness, accuracy and objectivity, readability, and literary value. What I am concerned about are those people who suspiciously look in every book for obscenity or frankness in dealing with sexual matters. Are we to exclude *Catcher in the Rye* or *Brave New World* or *Go Tell It on the Mountain* because of certain passages that might offend a puritanical soul? The freedom to read is too precious to be bound by censors. In one school library in Marin County, a timid librarian removed E. B. White's great book *Charlotte's Web* from the shelf because some parents complained about the use of the word "manure." There is just as much danger, I feel, in a steady diet of the easy-to-read, clean and pure "Junior Nov-

el" that presents a false and distorted view of life: the characters and plots are stereotypes and there is frequently an overemphasis on popularity, material possessions, and the happy ending with no problems. . . . Is there a possibility of an article about pornography and censorship in a future issue of *Dialogue*. . . .

(Mrs.) Mary W. Wallmann
Albany, California

A Roundtable on pornography and censorship is planned for an issue in the near future. [Ed.]

Dear Sirs:

People often say, "He has lost the glow and enthusiasm he once had as a new convert." I feel that for some of us the excitement of inquiry and discovery gave us part of that "alive" quality. As membership wears on and any real inquiry is stifled, the new convert becomes discouraged and some of the light dims. This has been my personal experience.

Dialogue is like a refreshing drink of water "in our lovely Deseret." I have properly devoured the first issue and it has revived a near dead spiritual awareness. The doubts that had gone "underground" and the seeking

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that had become self-conscious and stilted are uniting in a responsible spirit of re-investigation. I think that the active membership I have maintained with effort will be much more honest now.

(Mrs.) Lucretia A. Petersen
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Sirs:

I was interested in Dr. Burtenshaw's article, "The Student: His University and His Church" (Spring, 1966). Although he described four methods which students used to approach conflicts between their church and university experience, I had difficulty feeling that many students would fit consistently into any one category.

In fact, I'm wondering if the most appropriate approach to one's religion and university experience may not be found in a wholesome amalgamation of at least the four methods he describes. Would there not be times when almost any active, struggling Latter-day Saint student would find it wise to place the Church in a superior role with sincere trust and confidence being placed in the scriptures and the Lord's prophets? The same individual may find other times when a candid recognition of the different roles the university and Church play in his life could be most constructive.

Even the third category (which appeared to me to be the weakest approach), wherein the human and non-supernatural were emphasized in religion, may be helpful. It's my opinion that a testimony of the validity of the Book of Mormon, the Welfare Plan, or the Word of Wisdom which is based on external evidence (whether archeological, sociological, or medical) is a poor second choice for a foundation. Nevertheless, almost anyone's

spiritual, intuitive testimony can be reinforced by human and empirical evidence.

Finally, one of the most important tools to help solve the dilemma of conflict situations is the capacity in certain areas to question evidence in both the university and church settings and — where all the facts are not in — a "tolerance for ambiguity."

When this happy amalgamation occurs, I'm convinced that thoughtful students can move successfully through their university experience and grow intellectually as well as spiritually without feeling the effects of excessively painful conflict.

Joe J. Christensen
Director, Institute of Religion
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Sirs:

It was indeed heartening to read Robert Christmas's report of the lecture series on the Watts riots, sponsored by the L.D.S. Institute of Religion at the University of Southern California. Hopefully, such concern for social and racial issues will in time spread beyond the confines of the "Mormon intellectual community."

At present, however, it appears that the "national misunderstanding on this issue" (the Mormon attitude towards the Negro), to which Bishop Kent Lloyd reportedly referred, is more wishful thinking than reality. Although Mormon scriptures clearly enjoin Latter-day Saints to treat Negroes with the same Christian love as their own church members, practice falls discouragingly short of this ideal. Having lived in several urban centers with heavy Negro populations, we have found an embarrassingly large number of our church members unprejudiced against Negroes only as

long as the latter attended different schools and did not move into white neighborhoods.

We believe that if there were, indeed, a serious misunderstanding of the Mormon position, at least as *practiced* by those who claim membership in the Church, it would be a sign of tremendous encouragement. We are afraid, however, that our actions — or perhaps lack of involvement — speak so loud the nation cannot hear our apologies. For every George Romney there are ten “Latter-day Saints” who believe that Negroes are their brothers only as long as they “stay in their place.”

Joan and Klaus Hansen
Anne and Blythe Ahlstrom
Logan, Utah

Dear Sirs:

I should like to enter into dialogue with R. A. Christmas regarding his condescending attitude toward what he calls “the pure remove of fiction.” Though I can certainly agree with him, and with Bernard De Voto, who said God had already written the Mormon story better than any novelist could, I must point out some basic fallacies in Mr. Christmas’s thinking.

I too feel that nothing has quite surpassed Pratt’s autobiography and admire it for the strong work it is. But, though Mormon fiction has not yet come into its own, there is something unfair about comparing fiction to autobiography. Mr. Christmas seems confused as to truth and fiction, as if the two were grossly different, a mistake often made (but not usually by English majors). He seems to imply that facts are more important than the kind of truth to be found in fiction. I wish to assert that fiction *can* and the best *does* pertain to those things which are most deeply true in human nature; and the novelist is successful because he more deeply *sees* into

truths that the common person misses. To expect the truths of Parley Pratt’s journal to be the same as the truths of fiction is not quite straight thinking. Though aims may often overlap, the fictional artist sees things differently. The artist of fiction, like other artists, works from different premises than the biographer or the historian. Although their tools can and often may be the same, the artist must have some “remove” from his material, must let it pass through him and his sensitivity into a form which is, finally, outside himself and his immediate experience. He creates, and the result is a “thing” which has a separate being from the artist himself. For this reason the creative work of art does have an objectivity and a “remove” from the everyday lives of most of us, even when our experiences are exciting ones. One does not choose to read a piece of history over a piece of fiction (though many think they must). They are two different things. Samuel Taylor should not be compared to Pratt, either, since *Family Kingdom* is not an autobiography but a memoir, which has its own rules.

I also resent Mr. Christmas’s facetiousness in choosing what he considers “by no means the worst” of Mormon fiction to compare with the best of Mormon journals. Though Mormon fiction has a long way to go, many admirable things have appeared, such as the works of Virginia Sorensen, Maureen Whipple, Frank Robertson, etc.

(Mrs.) Mary L. Bradford
Alexandria, Virginia

The following is quoted from a personal letter to Frances Lee Menlove.
[Ed.]

Dear Mrs. Menlove:

I wanted to tell you not only how much I have admired and profited

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from the first issue of *Dialogue* (to which I regret I could not contribute) but to say especially that your own essay, "The Challenge of Honesty," seemed to me a wonderfully fine and moving discourse. I liked what you said about both religious liberals and religious conservatives, and what their attitudes might hide. . . .

David Riesman
Harvard University

Dear Sirs:

Congratulations on the first issue of *Dialogue*. It is all I expected and more. Such a journal has been sorely needed by students and others seeking to reconcile their religion with secular life. . . .

Deana Astle
Pembroke College
Providence, Rhode Island

Dear Sirs:

During the weeks since my copy of Vol. 1 No. 1 arrived, I've had an opportunity to read or skim most of what it contains. There is sufficient diversity to make a general evaluation rather difficult. Several articles I thoroughly appreciated, such as Arington's bibliographical study — a valuable contribution indeed — and Cline's declaration of faith. The inclusion of others in what you identify as a "Journal of Mormon Thought" I found rather puzzling, particularly De Pillis's essay. I even failed to see in this instance what "useful insight" members of the Church might hope to gain from it, unless it be one into the kind of tendentious historical writing that has been characteristic of so many of those outside the Church. . . .

Another feature that surprised me was the Roundtable discussion of Sterling McMurrin's book, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*. I was nonplussed that you

would have taken the work seriously enough to give it such an elaborate treatment. It obviously rests on a false premise to begin with, since the religion of the Latter-day Saints does not have its foundations in theology in the traditional sense in which McMurrin treats it, but in revelation, as he should very well know. There's surely something ironical, if not comical, in the stance he takes in taxing present-day Mormon "theology" with being "timid and academic," as he then attempts to tug and pull at gospel principles until they somehow fit into the tired and worn terminology of traditional philosophy. The feeling seems to be, if I have correctly understood the reviewers, that a work of this kind will make L.D.S. theology accessible, and maybe even acceptable, to the trained theological minds of other faiths. And in fact, Mr. Brown views it as the "beginning of a new direction." I, for one, sincerely hope that this is not the case, because the direction is far from new and is one which has proved to be fraught with insuperable dangers. The Gospel of Jesus Christ had an encounter with philosophy already once in the past, beginning in the first centuries of the Christian era, and was completely transformed in the process. Hopefully, the lesson of history will serve us here. Members of the Church with intellectual interests, particularly if those interests lie in the field of philosophy, should recognize that the epistemology of the Gospel is vastly different from that utilized by traditional philosophy and her theological stepchild; for the latter, dialectic or logic is the key, but for the former it is revelation, the epistemology of the spirit. Obviously the academically-trained mind is not very comfortable with the Gospel's way of knowing because it eludes analysis, cannot be controlled, and has its source in the su-

pernatural. There is no need for the philosopher's tools of dialectic — or rhetoric, as the case may be — for the precept is preceded by the overriding authority of the statement, "thus saith the Lord." I submit this is the kind of thing that does not readily lend itself to a "dialogue," at least not one of the kind for which Mr. Brown seems to hope on the basis of McMurrin's book. . . .

What disturbed me most about the first issue, as well as the announcements about its appearance, was the reflection of some of the ingrown attitudes of Utah Mormons which I feel to be parochial and short-sighted. Perhaps the most annoying of all these is the over-weening pride in what is vaguely referred to as "Mormon culture." This appears to be based on the notion that such a thing exists, and that it is a fairly standardized and homogeneous commodity, created and given the highest polish in the Mountain West. Such a point of view denotes a lack of humility that is sadly out of keeping with our religious principles, since it fails to take cognizance of the fact that aside from the revealed religion and its social concomitants, "Mormon culture" is almost entirely derivative. What could be more pretentious than to assert that today "Los Angeles and New York are as important subsidiary centers of Mormon culture . . . as St. George and Nephi were fifty years ago"? That these cities are centers of culture, no one will deny, that there are Mormons there participating in, even contributing to that culture is likewise true, but that said culture is specifically Mormon is a patent exaggeration to say the least.

Members of the Church born in the western part of the U.S.A. do have an historical tradition of which they can be justly proud, that of the pioneers, and that tradition is intimately

connected to their Church and their faith. There is even a detectable tendency to identify with that faith certain political institutions — and parties — and to make a heady blend of religious loyalty and patriotism. To do so is natural, but not entirely excusable. The logical conclusion to such a viewpoint is that the Church is an American organization which can function properly only within the framework of American society and government, and the remarks of many, including, unfortunately, General Authorities of the Church speaking in General Conference, would lead one to believe that such a conclusion had already been reached. Yet we proudly preach that the Church is universal in its scope, that the Gospel will be carried to "every nation. . . ." It's perhaps time we recognized that members of the Church in Europe and elsewhere have cultural and historical traditions which are not necessarily those of the Mountain West, but which are every bit as valid. They too are part of the total picture of "Mormon culture," and they may not care a fig for the pioneers or the Constitution of the U.S. Somehow their point of view, their political aspirations, and their historical traditions ought to be considered with the same respect that we accord our own. Maybe a little dialogue between those in the center stakes of Zion and some of the outposts of the Church community would prove at least as fruitful as a courtship of the American intellectual community.

Leeman L. Perkins
Yale University

Dear Sirs:

. . . *Dialogue* is encouraging. The best alternative to abject cynicism that some of us have had is our hope for meaningful exchange with older, more experienced Church members —

virtuous and sensitive — who have confronted and are confronting, with faith as well as honesty, the intellectual issues of Mormon life. Too often our hope has been disappointed as such dialogue has been impeded by 1) our reluctance to reveal to people apparently committed to a much simpler definition of “testimony” than our own our concern with fundamental doubts, 2) the spiritual inaccessibility of many of those who outwardly give indication of perhaps having “arrived,” and 3) lack of confidence in many of Mormondom’s liberal college professors, who have often seemed to know less about Christian theology in general and Mormon doctrine in particular than the students to whom they would presume to give orientation. Your publication makes an effort to remove the above mentioned impediments. Herein lies its greatest contribution. . . .

Elder G. Benson Whittle
Curitiba, Parana
Brazil

Dear Sirs:

In the hope that Dr. Victor Cline’s article, “The Faith of a Psychologist: A Personal Document,” does not enjoy editorial immunity from criticism due to the author’s expressed reticence to publicly air his private views, I submit a few critical comments.

Cline introduces his first point by indicating that psychologists tend to be a godless lot, typically given either to apathy toward religion or to rebellion against authority and religion, substituting the pseudo-religion of behaviorism or psychoanalysis for the faith of their childhood. Cline then laments that psychology, “as a field,” carefully avoids religion. “The silence was deafening,” he stated.

That many psychologists are agnostic is freely granted. That religion has no monopoly on zealots and dog-

matists is also admitted. However, the claim that psychology, “as a field,” carefully avoids and is indifferent to religion is preposterous. Among the fathers of modern psychology, William James, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung all made important contributions to the development of a psychological view of religion. George Kelly, D. P. Ausubel, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm, and O. H. Mowrer are but a few of numerous current psychological theorists who have produced impressive commentaries on psychology and religion or closely related topics such as the origin of guilt.

Piaget’s *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, *The Open and Closed Mind* by M. Rokeach, *When Prophecy Fails* by Festinger, Rieken and Schachter, and the Peck and Havinghurst volume, *The Psychology of Character Development*, all contain a wealth of implications for religion. Even John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner could hardly be classified as indifferent toward religion — unsympathetic, perhaps, but not apathetic.

While casting about for an explanation of the deafening silence reported by Dr. Cline, it occurred to me that placing one’s index fingers securely in one’s ears can result in a deafening silence of sorts. Indeed, some of the most serious problems which psychology poses for Mormonism were not even mentioned by Cline, e.g., naturalistic explanations of *conscience* and *testimony*.

Not succumbing to the temptation to comment in detail on other points made by Dr. Cline, I conclude with a few observations concerning the approach toward science and religion which Cline seems to be advocating.

It is my impression that a major consideration governing Dr. Cline’s *attempt* at reconciliation is the search for subjective certainty. After hav-

ing pointed up the tentativeness of science, he concluded, "Science proves nothing absolutely; something more is needed," implying an uneasiness with tentative conclusions. This "something more," which provides Mr. Cline with his absolute is, of course, the Mormon religion, the validity of which he has ascertained through positive affective experiences and an act of faith. Now this is a legitimate approach and a legitimate conclusion; however, for the benefit of those who may have believed that Dr. Cline had reconciled psychology with religion, I would like to stress that when one juxtaposes an absolute system and a tentative one, subordination is the upshot, not reconciliation. One accepts the tentative system only insofar as it is congruent with the absolute system; the elements of the tentative system which are incongruent with the absolutes are rejected. When seeming inconsistencies arise within the absolute system, they are, like Dr. Cline's scriptural inconsistencies, ". . . sometimes painful to face," and are frequently shelved, pending evidence which would justify the definite classification of the problem as an *apparent* contradiction; thus the system and its underlying premises are preserved intact. *Reconciliation* of two systems whose domains overlap, such as psychology and religion, is possible only if both are viewed as being tentative, open systems, allowing for rejection of components of *either* system if the evidence indicates that it is warranted. With this approach, incongruities within the religious system may be resolved by tentatively concluding that one incongruous element is incorrect.

Glenn M. White
Department of Psychology
(Graduate student)
Princeton University

Dr. Cline replies:

With regard to Mr. White's first point (that my statement about psychology being indifferent to religion is "preposterous") let me respond as follows: first, if he will carefully re-read what I wrote again, he will note that my statement referred only to my experiences while I was a graduate student (in the early '50's); and second — to let the reader know that my perception is shared by others — I cite Dr. Gordon Allport (professor of psychology at Harvard and former president of the American Psychological Association), who in 1950 wrote at the beginning of *The Individual and His Religion*, "The subject of religion seems to have gone into hiding . . . and the persistence of religion in the modern world appears an embarrassment to the scholars of today." Glock and Stark in the introduction to their *Religion and Society in Tension* have recently commented, "The study of religion from the point of view of social science was a major concern of scholars in the 19th century. The most seminal figures in the development of psychology, sociology, and anthropology are closely identified with the study of religion. . . . But for a variety of reasons, scholarly interest in religion all but vanished in the 20th Century." F. H. Page, in 1951, surveyed the previous fifty years of the study of the psychology of religion in an article in *The Canadian Journal of Psychology* (Vol. V, pp. 60-67); he wrote, "Today it would not perhaps be untrue to say that the subject is regarded by many psychologists with almost complete indifference and by some with positive suspicion and even disfavor. Thus one studies tribal ceremonies of primitive cultures, religious delusions of psychotics, conversion experiences of adolescents, but not the religious behavior of normal adults of our own culture."

A department of psychology which today offers even a single course in the psychology of religion is an extreme rarity. If a person attends regional or national meetings of the American Psychological Association, he is lucky to find even a single symposium dealing with religion, and individual papers dealing with the subject are quite rare. There is an occasional individual (as Mr. White's letter suggests) who has an interest in this area and writes about it and, as Glock and Stark point out, "during the past decade there has been increasing research activity into the social sources and consequences of religion." But psychology as a field pays little attention to religion.

With regard to Mr. White's comment that many issues were not discussed in my paper — alas, I'm afraid this is most true. Since I wrote just a brief essay, not a book, I had to take the author's prerogative of choosing just a few of the issues which were for me important.

I liked the way Mr. White delineated the problems involved in reconciling an absolute system (religion) with a tentative one (psychology/science). However, I must insist that the way I perceive the Mormon faith, I think it an injustice to label it as an "absolute." At least in my experience, it is growing and evolving in a quite dynamic way and it is indeed an "open system," which means that it continually has to meet tests of logic and reason as well as faith.

Both my profession and my religion have a major common concern, the freedom, dignity, and welfare of men, as well as a common interest in searching out truth. With these kinds of common goals I find it not too difficult to endure a lot of poor sermons as well as to tolerate the continuing dissonances of conflicting research re-

sults — and even a murky lecture or two by some of my colleagues.

Victor Cline
University of Utah

Dear Sirs:

In his "Reflections on the Writing of Mormon History," which appeared in the first issue of *Dialogue*, Klaus J. Hansen expressed "hope" that there would be discussion and even vigorous disagreement with his ideas. Common courtesy demands that the university community hosting Professor Hansen this year avoid offense to him. Therefore, as a member of that community I join issue out of duty.

Professor Hansen suggests that Mormon historians too often "have tried to assume the role of priest and prophet," that they may have done this under the aegis of Carl Becker, Charles A. Beard, and James Harvey Robinson, and that the result is propaganda, not history. If Mormon historians have attempted to play "priest and prophet" (Whitney may qualify; it is doubtful if Roberts would, and certainly Arrington and Brooks do not), it has not been under the aegis of the "New History" school, "presentism," "historical relativism," "progressive historiography," or any other appellation attaching to the innovations of Becker, Beard, and Robinson. First, it is doubtful if this triumvirate has had any influence on the writing of Mormon history. Second, allowing that there might have been some influence, it should not have had the unwholesome effect claimed by Professor Hansen. As Cushing Strout has thoughtfully demonstrated, Becker and Beard were not propagandists — Samuel Eliot Morison, Professor Hansen (by implication), and other critics to the contrary notwithstanding. They also had a more sophisticated conception of their craft than Morton

White and Robert E. Brown are willing to allow.

More directly, Mr. Hansen is guilty of an implicit but very serious mixing of metaphors. In the first few paragraphs of his "Reflections" he admonishes Mormon historians to "relax a little and take themselves and their investigations less seriously," to be less defensive about their commitments, in short, to write with more *tongue in cheek*. Yet, in his remaining remarks he implies that the Mormon historian should get his tongue out of his cheek and his *teeth on the bit* and assume the role of moral critic. The tenor of his later remarks is precisely that of John Higham in his article "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as a Moral Critic" in *The American Historical Review* (April, 1962). Whether Hansen realizes it or not, what he is asking for is what Higham pleaded for — not less commitment but a greater degree of it, not that historians should take "their investigations less seriously" but more seriously.

No one, I think, can quarrel with Professor Hansen about the historian's need to view himself with buoyant perspective. But when he challenges Mormon historians to arrogate to themselves the role of moral critics, he demands of them a seriousness about their investigations that will be sobering indeed if the challenge is accepted. They must face among other manifold problems those of causal analysis and the criteria to be used by the critic in his evaluations. As Higham views it, ". . . the historian commits to moral criticism all the resources of his human condition. He derives from moral criticism an enlarged and disciplined sensitivity to what men ought to have done, what they might have done, and what they achieved. His history becomes an intensive, concrete reflection upon life, freed from academic primness, and

offering itself as one of the noblest, if also one of the most difficult and imperfect, of the arts." If historians can "relax" in the face of that responsibility then they misread the role of a historian.

Stanford Cazier
Department of History
Utah State University

Dear Sirs:

I was fascinated by the initial *Dialogue* and read rapaciously Johnson through Jeppson while my family endured frozen pizza and canned soup. It is well-written, well-edited, and thoroughly interesting. But alas, . . . is a communication among that small coterie of tenaciously "believing" Ph.D's . . . who can see the problems within their own disciplines and are therefore compelled to write back and forth to each other for comfort and reinforcement. . . .

(Mrs.) Barbara Williams
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Sirs:

It is about time that we as a people produced a satisfactory quarterly — something more scholarly than the *Improvement Era* and less parochial than *Brigham Young University Studies*, something along the lines of *The Hibbert Journal*, *Judaism*, *Blackfriars*, or the *Baptist, Lutheran, and Friends' Quarterlies*. Why this has never been done before is difficult to understand considering the fact that from the beginning we, as a people, have established all kinds of journals and newspapers to propagandize the world, to explain our doctrine, and to communicate among ourselves.

It is also about time that some group consciousness was effected and some *esprit de corps* developed among general church membership, especially among our scholars and artists,

for the learned defense, propagation, fostering, and improving of the Mormon faith and culture, which would not only benefit the Mormon Church and society, but also lead to a better public image of us as a people. Many more members of the Church could then be more anxiously and effectively engaged in a good cause, could become a force to be reckoned with in and out of the Mormon imperium, and become a more dynamic contributing power. . . .

There are some in the Church who are embarrassed by the fact that, collectively, Mormon intellectuals have made no particular impression upon themselves or upon others, that there is no recognized cadre of Mormon intellectuals. That such a situation will change, that group consciousness will be effected, that Mormons interested in the arts and in scholarship will ever more completely fulfill the measure of their creation or ever more effectively lend their talents to the furthering of truth and the betterment of the Lord's Vineyard, or that the intellectual force of the Mormon faith will be better organized and utilized without a good journal is unlikely.

Since at least the eighteenth century every significant group wishing to unite, to express itself, to foster certain goals and ideals, and to communicate has founded journals and newspapers. More than a dozen, for example, were founded by members of the Church during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, and during the first century the Church founded more than fifty journals and newspapers to propagate its message. But today, in spite of the scores of church and church related publications by and about Mormons, there has been no adequate journal of Mormon thought, no organ to provide Mormons with book reviews, bibliographies, notes, lists of periodical literature, and other

such features regularly found in scholarly journals, or to provide a channel through which Mormons may better communicate with each other and exchange ideas.

Now that *Dialogue* exists, its pages ought to carry the best possible reviews, not only of books about and by Mormons, but of all major creative activity about and by Mormons. Such a service properly provided would tend to restrain writers, publishers, and artists of all kinds from prematurely rushing into print and production. It would also result in better works by and through which the non-Mormon world could judge us.

Dialogue can and should assume the role of critic of our society. As I have said before ("Mormon Culture: A Letter to the Editor," *Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter, 1964), one of the greatest intellectual lacuna in our society is (still is) the fact that Mormon *culture* has no effective and comprehensive judge, jury, or police system, no journal to point out the frequent disparity between the idea, the dream, the concept, and the realization, the production and the result. The best and worst of Mormon writers and artists face no Mormon critic of their work. The most unqualified amateur with scissors and paste can throw together a poorly conceived, half researched, carelessly written, and popularized book, find a publisher, and be acclaimed throughout Mormonism as an authority. . . .

There are still other dimensions to *Dialogue*. One of its greatest contributions would be to encourage — Mormon intellectuals in our society suffer as much from lack of encouragement as they do from complacency — to encourage and help support more Mormon scholars and artists to create more and better things based on Mormon themes for use within and without the Church. Our creative

writers, for example, could be encouraged, even commissioned, to exploit properly the dramatic potential of the Book of Mormon and early church history for distribution through the mass media of press, radio, stage, television, and cinema. . . .

I am not preparing a brief for secularization, nor a plea for the lowering of any religious principles or standards. Rather the contrary. This is an argument for us as a people to produce the finest culture possible, one commensurate with the import of the Restoration. We are a chosen people; we bear the restored gospel and have been commissioned to take it to the world. Can we not do it better by

more properly marshaling the forces of culture, the talents of artist and scholar?

Mormon culture is potentially strong. The talent is available and faithful men stand by. What is lacking is a climate, an atmosphere in which the intellectual becomes as necessary and as useful as the pioneer of the past and the administrator of the present. . . . The time has come to create a climate wherein Mormon intellectuals may more fully serve, may be more fully engaged in a good cause, and may more effectively build up Zion and glorify God.

Stanley B. Kimball
Southern Illinois University

