

LETTERS

The Cruellest of Paradoxes

I was disappointed that R. Jan Stout's essay on homosexuality (Summer 1987) evoked so little serious commentary from *DIALOGUE* subscribers. Eugene England's response (Fall 1987) and Kurtis Kearn's emotional attack on Stout and *DIALOGUE* (Winter 1987) were both disappointing. At least the Spring 1988 issue provided additional perspectives, both heart-rending and insensitive.

Stout and *DIALOGUE* deserve credit and appreciation for publishing a long overdue essay. This is a core issue, one which demands resolution — for upon this issue, and in the balance, hangs the coherence of either God's or the Church's dealings with humans. As *DIALOGUE*'s resident essayist *honoris causa*, England would have done well to suggest what he and the Church suppose God's intentions are in having created (whether through natural cause or divine will) so painful a paradox.

England's letter, characteristically reflective and sensitive, expresses the simplistic and naive views of the medically and biologically ill-informed. Unfortunately, England's position on homosexuality (and, presumably, psycho-sexual pathology in general) simply reflects the Church's uncompromising stand, which promotes a brutal confrontation between religious absolutism and the reality of biologically determined sexual behavior. Unresolved is the question of why so many humans are flawed with religiously nihilistic sexual behavior, which is unsusceptible to personal will or professional therapy.

Carlfred B. Broderick, for example, is a respected psychosexual therapist who sug-

gests in his book *One Flesh, One Heart* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986) that homosexual behavior may be amenable only to "a series of miracles" (p. 80). Although his anecdotal cases include no precise diagnosis and cannot be objectively verified or used in followup studies, Broderick's position lends support to the virtual certainty, supported by the ongoing mass of research and clinical studies, that the vast majority of such genetically/hormonally/biochemically directed behavior is beyond any voluntary governance. This presents homosexuals, the Church, and religion in general with the cruelest of paradoxes.

England's certainty on this issue is not enough. It never has and never will be enough to the thoughtful, inquiring, seeking minds that have expressed themselves in hundreds of letters to *DIALOGUE* in the past twenty years, searching for a reasonable understanding of who God is and what he is about. With homosexuality so extensively documented in the scientific literature as being uninfluenced by personal will, therapy, or even (in my view) miracles and prayer, I sense a regrettable distortion of reality in England's letter.

And yet, seldom has a writer's personal influence and sensitivity penetrated to my heart and innermost being as has Eugene England's, in his eloquent reflections on life, our religion, and the cosmos. From the first issue of *DIALOGUE* I have sensed a mutual understanding and personal relationship with him through his writing. But at the same time, he should not escape some accountability for what I see as occasional misconceptions of documented reality or unfortunate, idiosyncratic lapses into irrationality (not the least of which was

“Blessing the Chevrolet” [Autumn 1974], with its unconscionable presumption of the priorities of petitionary prayer).

Any comment on Adam Shayne’s letter (Spring 1988) would detract from its tragic beauty and explication of the reality of homosexual Mormons. The Church and religion in general bear a heavy burden in terms of their dealings with homosexuality, masturbation, and other sexual “sins.”

Wilford Smith’s sensitive but, in my opinion, wishful letter uses “biological reductionism,” situational homosexuality, and “a few rare cases” to support, again, a naive belief that homosexuality is a voluntary psychosocial disorder justifying divine censure. “Rustin Kaufman” (a.k.a. Joseph Jeppson) has occasionally “made” the letters section for me, but I was saddened that Rustin chose flip spoofery to comment on an essentially tragic human/deity issue. In my opinion, both of them would have done better to remain silent.

R. Forrest Allred
Fresno, California

Failure to Cooperate

My first issue of the newest decade’s DIALOGUE (Spring 1988) came yesterday afternoon. I started reading it immediately, working around and between fixing and eating dinner. I had to put the issue down to go oversee my three Cambodian seminary classes but picked it up again the minute I got home. I settled down into my spa and didn’t get out until after twelve. My skin was wrinkled, but my mind was filled. You’ve made a great beginning.

I must share an endorsement, unintended as it may have been, with you. Six weeks ago our Gospel Doctrine teacher came “unglued” and burst into tears during class because her weekly lecture was continually interrupted by class members asking questions. She finally regained control but lost some of her class, permanently, I fear.

Afterwards, one of the young men who had grown up in the ward and had recently returned with a bride after law school and a mission took me aside and told me that Gospel Doctrine classes were not the place to discuss “deep” subjects. I had only wanted to know if each of us should work toward and prepare for a theophany as Nephi had. When I pressed him about what we were supposed to do, he whispered that anyone who wanted depth could read DIALOGUE.

I’m not sure he intended a compliment, but he pinpointed what many of us have to do who can’t stand lectures. I realize why attendance at Sunday School in our stake is more than 25 percent less than sacrament meeting, but I’m not sure that solo study of “strange” magazines is the solution. It would be too easy, without the give and take and correction of wise heads, for error to creep into our theology if we had *only* DIALOGUE for stimulation, but life would be very dull if we had to give it up.

May I add a footnote to Paul James Toscano’s excellent essay, “Beyond Tyranny, Beyond Arrogance,” in the same issue? He notes the high council which excommunicated for “intent” (p. 63). Even less well known is the council which excommunicated for “failure to cooperate.” George P[erses] Stiles, a seventy and the same Judge Stiles Michael Homer refers to in his article (“The Judiciary and the Common Law in Utah Territory, 1850–61,” pp. 103–4), was accused of and excommunicated for adultery (CHC 4:199). I was curious why the Manuscript History would devote eleven pages to such an event and asked William Lund for permission to review the history. He, naturally, declined but did agree to review it himself and tell me its substance. He reported to me in September 1966 when I visited his office that Stiles was excommunicated for failure to cooperate with his ecclesiastical superiors. Since Stiles was friendly and supportive of the Church in his early days and apparently also in the first portion of his

term, I wonder if the trial would have ever happened if he had not voted against the interests of the Church in the matter of jurisdiction of the probate courts.

I was eventually able to make a hurried review of those same eleven pages. My notes, now over twenty years old, report that several brethren, including Porter Rockwell and Wilford Woodruff, testified against Stiles. Rockwell reported that a lady of the night had approached him "outside the Tabernacle" and asked: "Did you know that Judge Stiles has been sleeping with me?" Woodruff testified that a girl told him she had seen Stiles and a woman having sexual relations.

At the trial after these recitations, Stiles was asked how he pleaded. Being a lawyer of sorts and a judge, he knew enough to demand a confrontation by the accusing witnesses. They were never named or produced, and Stiles refused to enter a plea. Several long speeches followed, each assuming the verdict, and each carefully transcribed in a beautiful round hand. Several of the council members and some of the Twelve vented their spleens at the unwelcome judge and at judges in general who associated with loose and easy women. Last came the verdict: excommunication for failure to cooperate!

Both Wilford Woodruff's journal for that date and the account of Hosea Stout have since proved helpful. Stout's review shows that A. P. Rockwood, one of the presidents of the Seventies, took part in the trial. Perhaps, in my hurried perusal of the trial record, I confused Rockwell and Rockwood.

The gentiles' oft-repeated but never proven charge that Brigham Young kept or allowed prostitutes to practice in Salt Lake City, in exchange for their cooperation as informants on the activities of their guests seems supported by the events of the trial. It seems plausible that Rockwell could have been involved, for he seems admirably suited to act as controller for such informants. Why such "ladies" would openly approach and discuss their trade

with church leaders and notables seems inexplicable unless such duties were in exchange for the freedom to practice their trade in the city. They were not produced at the trial, most likely because their testimony to any one act or series of acts was otherwise unsupported and they were, by their profession, subject to easy impeachment.

William L. Knecht
Moraga, California

Cultural Imperialism

Having read the excellent article, "Refugee Converts: One Stake's Experience," by Robert and Sharyn Larsen (Fall 1987), I would like to comment on my own experiences as a branch president in charge of a bilingual Spanish-speaking and English-speaking branch in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

In the fall of 1958 I accepted a faculty position in sociology at the New Mexico Highlands University, attracted by its location in the heart of Spanish-speaking northern New Mexico. Having served a mission in Argentina, I had long wanted to relocate in the American Southwest to study the culture, history, and socio-economic conditions among the diverse Mexican-American groups in the region.

In the late 1950s the Las Vegas Branch had around 300 members—a few more Spanish-Americans than Anglo-Americans. The branch was a fusion of a Spanish-speaking branch belonging to the old Spanish-American mission and an English-speaking branch under the jurisdiction of the former Western States Mission. The two branches were joined when the Albuquerque Stake was organized. The Spanish-speaking members, many of whom spoke no English, were promised that half of all meetings would be in Spanish—a promise never kept. As a concession to the Spanish-American members, a single Gospel Doctrine class was conducted in Spanish.

In the fall of 1959 I was called to be branch president. I might add that most

of the Anglo members were immigrants into the region, while virtually all of the Spanish-Americans were local converts. As many Spanish-American members were becoming inactive because they did not understand English and because they were treated insensitively by Anglo-American members, I organized a series of Spanish language cottage meetings in the homes of many Spanish-speaking members who often invited their Spanish-American friends. Conversations among the Spanish-Americans increased, and the work in Spanish flourished.

Shortly after I became branch president (it may have been in the spring of 1960) I was notified by President Wilson of the Albuquerque Stake that all Spanish language church meetings would be discontinued upon orders from Church authorities in Salt Lake City. I protested, pointing out that many of our Spanish-American members did not speak English and many who did were not comfortable in the presence of more articulate English-speaking members. My strong protests were ignored. President Wilson, sensing my emotional resistance to his orders, visited our branch quite often to see that we were complying. I was forced to shut down the Spanish language Sunday School class but continued cottage meetings in Spanish on the underground. When I left Las Vegas in 1962 the new branch president, though sincere and dedicated, spoke no Spanish and had little understanding of Spanish-American attitudes and values.

My research in northern New Mexico brought me back to Las Vegas every two years or so. Within four or five years I noted sadly that many Spanish-American members had become inactive while others had moved to cities where Spanish-speaking branches and wards still existed. Some even joined Spanish-speaking Pentecostal congregations. My last visit to the Las Vegas branch was in 1981. I noted that only one Spanish-American was in attendance. I was depressed to find out that the members of the branch presidency did not even know

the names of inactive Spanish-American members.

The all-English Church policy in the Southwest thus destroyed a once promising Spanish-speaking branch. The Church also acquired a reputation of being prejudiced against Spanish-Americans — a reputation it has not quite overcome. Even though the incredible policy of closing out Spanish-speaking wards and branches in the United States has now been reversed, the Las Vegas branch never recovered from the earlier Church policy.

Clark S. Knowlton
Salt Lake City, Utah

One of the Great Ones

After reading the articles about Hugh B. Brown in the Summer 1988 issue of *DIALOGUE*, I should like to add a bit to the story of President Brown, one of the great men of his time, and make a correction to his memoirs edited by Edwin Brown Firmage.

I first met Hugh B. Brown when he was mission president in London during World War II and I was an Air Force correspondent. Mission headquarters was at an old red brick mansion far west out Nightingale Lane. When I had a free Sunday I'd visit the mission headquarters, where Hugh Brown conducted services for military personnel of all ranks and both sexes.

At this time I'd written an article, "Fifty Thousand Amateur Chaplains," about LDS servicemen who had all the spiritual qualifications of a chaplain but no commission. Hugh B. Brown was kind enough to read the piece and make suggestions.

After the war, when I wrote *Family Kingdom* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1951), the story of my father, John W. Taylor, and his six wives and thirty-six children, Hugh Brown was on the BYU faculty. He most generously consented to

read the manuscript, and his suggestions were invaluable.

I again met with Hugh B. Brown, when he was a member of the First Presidency, at an annual meeting of Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., at Nauvoo. We were at the same table during breakfast, and as he left I said, "It's bad policy to talk about a man behind his back, but there goes one of the great ones."

In the spring of 1965 Hugh B. Brown did an enormous service for the John W. Taylor family. I had written him, asking his advice on the steps to be taken to reinstate my father, a former apostle, who had been excommunicated. He lost his Church membership during the troubled times of the Smoot Investigation, when his later polygamous marriages became public knowledge, and a sacrifice was needed so that Reed Smoot could retain his seat in the U.S. Senate.

In response to my inquiry, Hugh B. Brown arranged for me to meet with the First Presidency, who subsequently approved my request to reinstate John W. Taylor. On 21 May 1965 my brother Raymond stood proxy while President Joseph Fielding Smith performed the ordinance to restore my father's priesthood, office, and blessings.

Thus it is an error to say that my father "apostatized." He never did. He accepted the role of scapegoat for the welfare of the Church, as his reinstatement certifies. And as further evidence, my mother, his third wife, continued to receive her share of his salary as an apostle each month for the remainder of her life. I took the check to the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Provo, with strict orders to deliver it to Brother Olson and nobody else.

I do think a footnote stating that my father was reinstated might have been included in Brother Firmage's article. And, incidentally, Sam Weller's 1974 Western Epics edition of *Family Kingdom* gives a detailed account of the restoration hearing.

Sam Taylor
Redwood City, California

P.S. As an example of Hugh B. Brown's advanced philosophy, he time and again advocated giving the priesthood to blacks. But the time for that hadn't arrived, and on each occasion he repented, stating that he had been "misquoted."

Coming Home

When I was visiting my daughter recently, she showed me a copy of *DIALOGUE*, and I read it. It was like coming home. I have a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and the Book of Mormon, but I also have many questions and rarely find someone with whom I can discuss them. Most members seem to view my attempts at open discussion as a lack of or weakening of my testimony, certainly not the case. To me it is just a healthy, intelligent curiosity. Someone once told me that I wasn't like any Mormon they had known before. I took that as a compliment.

Chris King
Calgary, Alberta

Questioning the Jensen Thesis

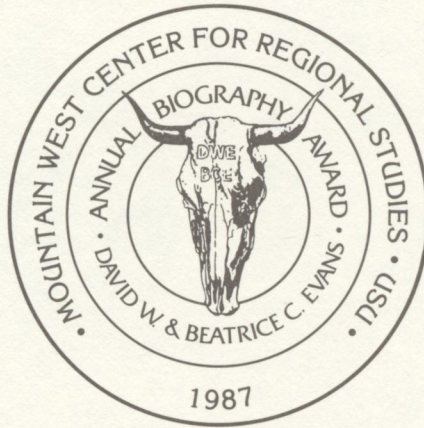
Vernon H. Jensen spent two pages criticizing my *Political Deliverance* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986) in the Summer 1988 *DIALOGUE*. He claimed that the primary factor in the controversy about statehood for Utah was the Gentile reaction to the prevailing Mormon control of the economic system and implied not only self-deception and negligence on my part, but gullibility on the part of the book's reviewers for not recognizing such omissions. Jensen mentioned the Godbeite movement and the Kingdom of God and otherwise indicated his preoccupation with a Utah some twenty years before the period on which my study is focused.

My only comment on all this is that Jensen really cites no evidence to bolster his critique and frankly, in examining the vast primary source material I studied for

the book, I saw none that would have helped his cause. As an afterthought, if mining were the largest single item in the Utah economy at the time and the Gentiles controlled nine-tenths of that and virtually

all of the smelting industry, how could the Jensen thesis hold true?

E. Leo Lyman
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