

## LETTERS

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### *No Way to Build Bridges*

In response to Gerald Bradford's "The Case for the New Mormon History" (Winter 1988), I refuse to enter into a discussion with Bradford on this question for a number of reasons. First, I have no interest in further defending myself or my colleagues either from the assertion or the assumption that the New Mormon History or the way it is written affects — presumably undermining — "the faith of believers" (p. 143). In this connection, I am unwilling to discuss the matter with anyone who assumes that the New Mormon Historians deny the sacred character of authentic religious experiences. I would characterize my feelings as profoundly disappointed rather than "mad as hell" (p. 143) over this, and although I cannot stop Bradford and the "gang of four" (p. 146) from continuing to operate on such assumptions, I do not have to participate in such a demeaning discussion.

Second, in order to enter into a discussion of historical methodology, a participant needs to show that he or she understands the literature of the historiography that underpins a particular point of view. Bradford's essay makes it abundantly clear that he has little understanding of modern historiography.

Third, a discussant needs to show an understanding of the clear use of terms. Contrary to Bradford's assertions, Gilbert Ryle gives four examples of category mistakes that all result from an unfamiliarity with the subject matter. In each example, Ryle shows how the uninitiated observer is unable to relate the concrete constituent part to the abstract concept that characterizes the whole: for example, colleges,

libraries, museums, etc. to a *university*; battalions, batteries, squadrons to a *division*; bowlers, batsmen, and fielders to *team-spirit*; and "the connections between the Church of England, the Home Office and the [abstract concept of the] British Constitution" (*The Concept of Mind*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1949, pp. 16–18). (These are, incidentally, the pages I cited in my essay. Unfortunately, a typographical error placed a quotation mark at the end of the last sentence which was, in fact, intended to generalize over Ryle's examples. The other phrases are quoted from Ryle.)

I suppose that the bottom line is that no self-respecting human being can build bridges with critics who continually formulate their arguments in terms like: "When are you going to stop beating your wife?"

Thomas G. Alexander  
Provo, Utah

### *Don't Label Me*

While I generally admire Marvin Hill's scholarship, I do not believe his recent *DIALOGUE* article, "The 'New Mormon History' Reassessed in Light of Recent Books on Joseph Smith and Mormon Origins" (Fall 1988), accurately describes the present state of Mormon historiography. Moreover, his attempt to place various historical works into one of three categories — conservative, moderate, and liberal — tends to oversimplify and distort the real situation. This tendency is particularly noticeable in Hill's treatment of works from the left. His inability to distinguish the varying motives and contributions of those on the left be-

comes evident in his treatment of my 1986 *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*.

Hill defines the conservative right as those who defend Mormonism "against any negative views expressed by non-Mormons, . . . proclaim empirical proofs for Mormonism, and generally ignore contrary scholarly opinion," while those on the left concentrate "exclusively on the truth or untruth of Mormon religious claims" (pp. 116, 117). Those in the center or "middle ground," those who produce the so-called "New Mormon History," according to Hill, are existentialists who believe "Mormonism can be neither proved nor *disproved* by historical means" (p. 125). Thus Hill attempts to disassociate the New Mormon History from the concerns of both the right and the left.

While I do not consider my work part of the New Mormon History, it also does not deal with the truth claims of the Mormon religion and therefore does not fit Hill's "far left" category. Moreover, my purpose was not, as Hill asserts, to trace "the actual historical background of the Book of Mormon" (p. 124). Rather, I explored the possible ways the first readers perceived the Book of Mormon, specifically how it seemed to solve many of the theological problems dealing with Indian origins in the New World which troubled them but no longer concern us. My book concerns the nineteenth-century world view and how that world view changed. I explicitly stated at the outset the modest goals of my work:

In my own study of the Book of Mormon I have not been primarily concerned with discovering the "sources" of Joseph Smith's thought. Nor have I been interested in tracing links between Joseph Smith and those books he may have read or been exposed to. Rather I have chosen to shift the emphasis of the discussion somewhat, to outline the broad contours of public discussion about the ancient inhabitants of America which had taken place or was taking place by 1830 when the Book of Mormon first appeared. What was the focus

and thrust of that discussion? What complex of questions and problems motivated and concerned Joseph Smith's contemporaries? What kinds of responses were displayed by the books and articles written at the time? Finally, I have tried to determine the extent to which the Book of Mormon may have been part of that discussion (1986, 5).

Hill should have thus distinguished my work from that of earlier researchers such as Fawn Brodie. Wayne Ham, for one, noted the distinction in his review of the book in the May 1987 *Saints' Herald*.

Only in the conclusion do I explore the possible implications of my research on the historicity of the Book of Mormon. While I agree with the New Mormon Historians that the metaphysical aspects of religion cannot be tested by historical means, artifacts, such as books, and events are completely different matters. But even when discussing the historicity issue, I separated the question of the book's historicity from truth claims of the Mormon religion, pointing out that "for various reasons an increasing number of faithful Mormons are suggesting that it may be possible to question the Book of Mormon's historicity and yet maintain a belief in its sacred and inspired nature" (1986, 71). Thus to question the Book of Mormon's historicity is not necessarily an attack on the Mormon religion. But, again, the Book of Mormon's historicity was not the major focus of my work. Hill is therefore incorrect to place my work in a category which focuses on the "truth and untruth of Mormon religious claims."

Hill also attempts to link my work with the "far left" by asserting that at "key points" I tend to "depend heavily" on the work of the Reverend Wesley P. Walters, a well-known opponent of Mormonism (p. 124). Hill's guilt by association argument is not only fallacious but also greatly exaggerated. Walters' work is referred to in my book only in footnotes, and then only secondarily (pp. 77-78, 84, 99). Thus, a year before D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mor-*

*monism and the Magic World View*, I referred readers to Walters' work not as an "impeachable source to tell us what happened" but for "a discussion of the *documentation* on the 1826 trial" (p. 78, emphasis added) — trusting that my readers could glean important insights from Walters' discussion of the documents while not necessarily agreeing with all his interpretations and conclusions. I might have also referred to Hill's own treatment of the subject (1972), but Walters' is far more detailed and analytical. Hill does not mention that I also refer to the work of such "conservatives" as Richard L. Anderson, Lyndon W. Cook, Dean Jessee, Francis W. Kirkham, Hugh Nibley, Sidney B. Sperry, Larry C. Porter, and B. H. Roberts (pp. 75–102). While I do not necessarily agree with the interpretations of either a Milton V. Backman or a Wesley P. Walters, I try to glean what I can from their research and fairly assess their contributions to Mormon historiography. Thus, I believe, Hill unfairly labels my book by taking advantage of the existing prejudice in many Mormon minds towards their evangelical opponents.

Hill's statement that I "tend at times to be dogmatic, a characteristic of many of the far left opponents of Mormonism" (p. 124) might leave *DIALOGUE* readers with the impression that my work is an unreasoned, bombastic anti-Mormon attack. However, Wayne Ham found the book written "dispassionately, without rancor or stridency, and in an even-handed manner" (1987, 24), while Robert Mesle of the RLDS's Graceland College said that the subject matter of the book is presented "so calmly and undemandingly that neither conservative nor liberal readers are likely to feel that they are reading 'evidence' in a debate." Concerning particularly money-digging and the 1826 trial, Mesle notes that the subject is treated "directly but not judgmentally" (1987, 74). Thus, I believe, Hill unfairly tries to give my work a "far left" or "anti-Mormon" label. *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* is not an

anti-Mormon tract but a serious study of one aspect of Mormon origins.

While some New Mormon Historians have attempted to move Mormon historiography more to the middle, I wonder if Hill has not retained the old belief that everyone to the left of himself is an enemy of Mormonism seeking to destroy the faith. Perhaps the distortion is due to Hill's desire to assure those on the right that the New Mormon Historians are not in league with anti-Mormons or secretly trying to undermine the faith that causes him to misrepresent the left by piling them all into one indistinguishable heap. He also seems to share with the right the attitude that nothing of value can come from the left. Thus he praises the "number of solid works which have come from the right and center . . . [as] a monument to a people seeking truth about their past and facing that past with courage and with faith" (p. 124). Despite Hill's failure to recognize the various distinctive views of those on the left, there are others, perhaps just left of center, who are similarly trying to face the past with courage and with faith.

Perhaps Hill did not understand the approach my book takes because it is neither typically anti-Mormon nor New Mormon History. While I do not view the present state of Mormon historiography as Hill does, under his own definitions he should have placed my work in the middle or perhaps just left of middle since it does not deal with truth claims of the Mormon religion. However, since Hill admits that distinctions between the right and the center "blur at times" (p. 121), he should have allowed the same latitude for those on the left. Moreover, just as the New Mormon Historians wish to distinguish their work from the conservative defenders of Mormonism, I would like to have my work distinguished from the far left opponents of Mormonism.

I believe Hill has unnecessarily politicized the situation and further entrenched the various parties. I suggest that we discard the party labels and learn to fairly

assess the contributions of various scholars and researchers regardless of their "pro" or "anti" bias.

Dan Vogel  
Westminster, California

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#### *Only Wishful Thinking*

Melodie Charles's plea for a new Mormon heaven (Fall 1988) was so chock-full of personal opinions and typical feminist attitudes that I found it insulting as a scholarly treatise.

Her ridicule of the prophets is inexcusable. For her to assert that "Joseph Smith's desires rather than God's inspiration prompted the only unambiguous scriptural promises of kingdoms" (p. 76) is heretical to those who believe Joseph to be a true prophet. She relegates the source of Brigham Young's teaching of polygamy to the "sexist and patriarchal" nineteenth-century American culture (p. 80), hereby spurning the keystone doctrine of latter-day revelation; such an indictment brands the polygamous prophets as adulterers. Her protest to today's General Authorities for teaching "stay-at-home mothering" exposes an untenable mockery of contemporary seers and revelators.

Her concerns for the relative status of Mother in Heaven are without base. Certainly, there are endless concepts and notions of heaven about which we know nothing because nothing has been revealed. Ascribing the scriptures or any Church doctrines to the "prejudices" or "needs" of the prophets is irreverent, irresponsible, and near-blasphemous. Such arguments for a new heaven are reminiscent of the Councils of Trent and Nicea when mere mortals attempted to actually invent the nature and character of God.

The sum total of Charles's wishful thinking will not alter even one whit the reality of Mormon heaven.

D. Gordon Wilson  
Gresham, Oregon

#### *A Clear View*

I want to express my thanks for Melodie Moench Charles's "The Need for a New Mormon Heaven" (Fall 1988). She has given voice and form to the questions and problems I am dealing with as I seriously contemplate going to the temple for the first time.

As Charles herself acknowledges, she hasn't given an authoritative answer to any of my questions. However, her clear view of the limits our theology places on women (which, as I understand it, are manifest in the temple ceremony) helps me forge on with my own ponderings. I have often found that I can analyze these problem areas just so much, and then I have to take a plunge on faith. However, I *can't* take the matter on faith until I have thoroughly studied and examined it. Thank you, Sister Charles, for aiding me in that process.

May I offer also this tribute to your fine journal: I couldn't have made it through the last twenty-one years without *DIALOGUE* on my reading list! Long may you live!

Leona Mattoni  
Beverly Hills, California

### *Teaching About "It"*

I have been reading your journal off and on when my studies have permitted me the luxury. However, a friend and colleague loaned me his copy of your twentieth anniversary issue (Winter 1987). I read it cover to cover and thoroughly enjoyed myself.

As a psychologist, I find some of the prevailing Mormon attitudes toward human sexuality disturbing. Imagine my delight with B. W. Jorgensen's article "Groping the Mormon Eros." A "flannel nightgown" approach to sex seems to be all too pervasive in Mormonism; it seems we cannot even say the word "sex" without blushing. My wife once attended a Relief Society lesson in Provo, when we were BYU students, entitled "How to Teach Your Children about Sex." However, the lesson should have been entitled "How to Teach Your Children about 'It.'" The instructor said over and over again, "'It' is very special" and "'It' is very sacred." My wife finally asked, "What's 'It'?"

I remember as a missionary trying to explain to a young Italian the law of chastity as the discussions at that time explained it. "We shouldn't touch ourselves in an unnatural or experimental manner," I told him, using numerous other vague and euphemistic concepts. He looked at me as if I had taught him in a foreign language. At that point I felt it necessary to alter the official discussions and added some straightforward language which explained clearly that the Lord is not pleased when we masturbate. My companion was shocked to hear me use the "M" word, but my task as a missionary was to teach, not to confuse.

In learning to see ourselves as sexual creatures, we must form correct views about sex and sexuality, views that are congruent with both biology and sociology. We cannot afford to retain a self-flagellating ideology, which we then pass on to our youth. We too often teach them, directly or indirectly, to be ashamed of their sexual

urges, when we should teach them instead that passions need to be "bridled, that [they] may be filled with love" (Alma 38:12), as taught by a wise father, Alma, who had been there before.

Darren S. Bush  
Rochester, New York

### *A Remarkable Woman*

I wept when I read Mary Bradford's tribute to Margaret Rampton Munk as she reviewed Margaret's poetry in the Summer 1988 issue of *DIALOGUE*. I did not know Margaret, though I know her parents well, and now that I have "heard her voice" through her writing in *DIALOGUE* and have read Bradford's thoughtful appraisal of her work, I feel a sense of acquaintance with this remarkable woman. She was stunningly beautiful — an individual whose sensitive spirituality was tempered by high intellect. I wish that I had come to know her personally.

Thank you, *DIALOGUE*, for publishing her work and Bradford's review.

Alice Chase  
Logan, Utah

### *Confessions of an Unscholar*

I must confess: At times when I read *DIALOGUE* I feel as though someone has scattered the tiny pieces of a jigsaw puzzle across my mind. As I struggle to sort and connect ideas to make them part of the undeveloped structure of my intellect, I ask myself, "Why do I enjoy reading this journal?" As one who graduated from college twelve years ago and has been busy since with the tasks of motherhood, I don't fit my own mental image of a *DIALOGUE* reader.

Perhaps I read the journal because I like the idea of feeling like a scholar. But I could get that same feeling just seeing it on my nightstand. Could it be that I would

really like to increase my scholarship? I doubt it — otherwise I would read it with dictionary in hand to look up at least a few of the many words I usually skip over.

If I am not a scholar, then perhaps I am a skeptic. Aren't *DIALOGUE* readers supposed to be liberal and rebellious, after all? Again I don't qualify, for since my conversion to the Church I have felt basically at ease with what was expected of me. Occasionally something may cause me to bristle, but I haven't experienced the kind of frustrations that would lead me to seek out a publication because of its reputation for skepticism. So why do I enjoy a journal that I thought required either scholarship or skepticism from its readers? Is there a place for me in the *DIALOGUE* audience?

Although I may be missing a lot, I am willing to suffer the exhaustion of reading above my level to experience an exchange of ideas. I don't always understand or agree with what I read, but I find the exchange stimulating. I feel like the groundling watching a performance of *Hamlet*. Sometimes I am inclined to throw a tomato in your direction, but often I want to stand and shout, "Bravo!" at the soliloquies of writers like Eugene England. I approach each issue searching for truth that speaks to me. I am a scavenger of thought, searching for the pieces of a puzzle that will enlarge my understanding of myself and God.

When I joined the Church I learned the value of something that I think transcends scholarship or skepticism but has much to do with being a saint. It is what I think our Dialogue-ing is all about — meeting the challenge to "prove all things *and* hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21; emphasis added).

As an investigator, I was exhilarated by the challenge to "prove all things." I delighted in the divergence of thought spawned by the expanding Mormon doctrines. Had my only requirement for a testimony been to feel good about certain doctrines, mine would have been an easily

won faith. The challenge came in realizing that it wasn't enough to feel wonderful about certain aspects of the gospel. In order to hold fast to that which is good, I had to accept the Church and gospel in its entirety. By choosing to be baptized I set into place the corners of a puzzle with many pieces that seemed strange and foreign to me. It was those pieces that required an investment of faith and ultimately provided me with the kind of witness that comes only "after a trial of one's faith" (Ether 12:6) — a witness sufficient to base the rest of my life on.

Each of us faces different trials, and the witness may come in different ways, depending on whether we are more a creature of the mind or heart. I see *DIALOGUE* as a place to examine the nature of these trials and witnesses — an opportunity to "prove all things" and by so doing, render us all more capable of "holding fast to that which is good."

Of course there are risks for both the scholar and unscholar. *DIALOGUE* sometimes makes these risks more obvious. Scholars may lose faith, becoming so intrigued with their elaborate pieces of spiritual truth that they lose interest in the picture. In their desire to "prove all things" they may forget to hold fast to that which is good. Unscholars risk frustration in proving the faith and may become afraid or suspicious of evidence that does not fit our picture of truth. We may find that the only thing we are holding fast to is our own ignorance. In either case, neither scholar nor unscholar will experience the richness of testimony that comes from exploring the complex spiritual whole or the deep faith in realizing that it may take a long time to place many pieces of the puzzle.

Sometimes *DIALOGUE* exposes me to an idea that I struggle to fit with my basic beliefs. But in the very act of examining its different angles, I often find a place for other ideas that didn't previously seem to fit. As Obi-Wan Kenobi tells Luke Skywalker in *The Return of the Jedi*, "We may find that some of the truths that we

so desperately cling to are dependent on our point of view." The Church's point of view has changed through past dispensations and I believe will continue to change. And with these changes our perceptions of many truths are modified. But the principles — the foundations for our behavior and our relationship to God — remain the same.

There are risks for both the scholar and unscholar and lessons we can learn from each other. If the scholar helps us understand how the pieces fit together, perhaps the unscholar's leaps of ignorance and faith help us envision the final picture we shall never have the time or genius to complete. For me the purpose of *DIALOGUE* is to reconcile not only the scholar, skeptic, and saint within the Church, but the saint, skeptic, and scholar within each of us. I hope that as *DIALOGUE* continues to question and prove, it will always maintain this desire to reconcile our doubts with our faith, the truth with the facts, and scholars to unscholars through patience and love. By so doing, I believe the final picture revealed to us will be of a people who not only rejoice in their association with one another but with the one who paid the price that we might ultimately all be reconciled to him.

Bianca Palmieri Lisonbee  
Orem, Utah

### *A Word of Caution*

As a Roman Catholic with a developing interest in the LDS religion, I enjoyed John Quiring's essay on Mormon Christianity from a "Christian pluralist" perspective (Fall 1988).

I would caution the Saints, however, against any undue eagerness to humble their theology "into coherence with the sciences, ecology, logic, critical world history, women's experience, and the experience of primal, Third World, and underclass peoples" (p. 155). While all of these concerns may have their place, the enth-

siasm for them, or for the appearance of them, in mainline Protestantism and in some segments of the American Catholic Church has led to a *de facto* embrace of the very "irreligion and decadence" which Quiring so rightly deploras.

Tom Riley  
Lockport, New York

### *No More Naps*

Tell Levi Peterson to take heart! No more boring speakers, no more sleep-inducing sacrament meetings on high council Sundays. He can take *DIALOGUE* with him to church as we have done for years!

In the last line of "A Tribute to *DIALOGUE*" (Summer 1988), Levi offers his greatest tribute to your journal: "I can read *DIALOGUE* without falling asleep." He missed the greatest tribute of all, however: Now we all can, with *DIALOGUE* in hand, sit through sacrament meeting without falling asleep!

Thanks, *DIALOGUE*!

Karen Sowby Mittleman  
Downey, California

### *Remembering Mr. Harvey*

I was most interested in "The Trial of the French Mission" by Kahlile Mehr in the Fall 1988 issue of *DIALOGUE*. Thirty years ago I was a missionary in Texas when I first heard news of this apostasy. I was surprised that Mehr's article verified many of the rumors I remember hearing at that time. Curiously, though the French Mission incident was in many ways a great disaster, I found Mehr's article uplifting. Perhaps that was because many of those excommunicated or disillusioned found their way back into the Church. I was especially impressed with the love shown by Apostle Hugh B. Brown and thought of I Corinthians 13:2: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though

I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

My wife had a high school friend who served in the French Mission during this period. When he wrote home asking his parents to send him old-style garments because his companion said that is what he should be wearing, his parents wrote back that he was not following the General Authorities, who had approved a more modern style of garment. This instruction from his parents changed his thinking and in a sense saved him.

About 1964, I took a French reading course at the University of Utah and learned that my instructor, Mr. Harvey, had been one of the missionaries sent home from the French Mission. I was too shy at the time to find out anything more, and weeks later he told me how excited he was to be going to Hawaii to teach French. I assume this is the same Loftin Harvey in your article and wish him well in whatever he is now doing. I enjoyed his class twenty-five years ago and still remember his kind spirit.

J. Taylor Hollist  
Oneonta, New York

### *One Offer of Hope*

I silently wept as I read Lee Copeland's sensitive "From Calcutta to Kaysville: Is Righteousness Color-coded?" (Fall 1988). I admired his presentation on antiquated Mormon beliefs and his plea that we abandon our prejudices and delight in our human diversities. By assigning people to lower social orders because of their place of birth, parental circumstances, or skin color, we justify poverty and misfortune. This is utter nonsense.

I do not know why in this world some have so much and others so little. I do know that millions of our beleaguered brothers and sisters need love, comfort, and compassion translated into hope.

I've spent a considerable part of my professional life in the Bengal region of the Indian subcontinent struggling with humanitarian up-lift activities: designing malaria eradication efforts, implementing population control and family planning programs and village aid projects, and organizing and managing small-scale irrigation endeavors. If there is a hell on earth, it is the Bengal region — a place of abject poverty, where millions of people daily suffer hunger and disease.

Apparently, the Copeland family has rescued one small soul from this cauldron of human tragedy. If only more Latter-day Saint families could do the same, just maybe the gospel would have true universal meaning.

Garth N. Jones  
Anchorage, Alaska

### *The Ultimate Authority*

In his "Plea for Help" (Fall 1988), David Brighton Timmins is clearly putting us on! How can he admit to real struggle after putting his finger smack on *the* institutional issue — that the ultimate authority can only ever be the still small voice within. Is he really responding to not-so-subtle suggestions to the contrary from some of the Brethren (including the Prophet Joseph)? Or is he reinterpreting our friend Eugene England's institutional apologetics by inferring a sophist idolatry called "celestial guidance"?

I couldn't help thinking of Boris Pasternak, who wrote in *Doctor Zhivago*:

If the beast who sleeps in man could be held down by threats — any kind of threat, whether of jail or of retribution after death — then the highest emblem of humanity would be the lion tamer in the circus with his whip, not the prophet who sacrificed himself. But don't you see, this is just the point — what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel but an inward music: the irresistible power of unarmed truth, the powerful attraction of its example.



Or Arnold Toynbee, who said in his 1967 University of Utah commencement address in Salt Lake City:

If one supports one's country [or anything or anyone else] "right or wrong" one is making one's country into one's God Number One, and is demoting to the rank of God Number Two the God who commands us to do what is right and not to do what is wrong in any circumstances whatsoever. . . . The commandment itself is universal and is absolute. Dare you disobey it?

Or a Samuel-the-Lamanite-like poet, Aryol Littel, who wrote at Mt. Herman in 1965:

The ultimate decision for individual action rests only with the individual, never with an institution or some other individual. A lack of respect for this principle has been central whenever there have been contentions among humankind, whether individuals or nations.

Or my Catholic friend, Gil Bailie, who said recently:

If we define religion as membership in an institution which membership we maintain by following its rules, then read the New Testament and see what Jesus said about that. . . . While institutional religion has a very important place, it is beyond question that Jesus reserved his harshest condemnation for the institutional religionist, the maintenance men, who came to regard their religious tradition as an end instead of a means.

No, I must have misunderstood Timmins about England and the Brethren. I'd better go back and read them all again. I have no quarrel with Jack Newell.

Eugene Kovalenko  
Long Beach, California

### *Kicking Against the Pricks*

While rereading Mark S. Gustavson's skillfully argued essay "Scriptural Horror and the Divine Will" (Spring 1988), particularly where he defined the relation between the ethical content of scripture and our concept of God, I was overcome by

the terrible realization that I was—like Paul—"kicking against the pricks" and while perhaps fighting valiantly, I was definitely fighting foolishly. Gustavson's list of "guides in developing a holistic theory of ethical beliefs and behavior from which we may then fashion a complementary theology" (p. 81) has imbedded in it the revolutionary suggestion that group ethics define God. I'd always assumed it to be the other way around, but I recognized the truth of what Gustavson was saying immediately and powerfully. I agonized over this recognition for days because it created a crisis for me.

I have been anxiously engaged in trying to expose the ethical questions implied by the acceptance of the doctrine of temporal and eternal polygamy. I consider polygamy to be morally reprehensible because it institutionalizes and puts God's stamp of approval on the reification and accompanying marginalization of women now and forever. But now, recognizing the truthfulness of Gustavson's assertion, I fear that the approach I have been taking is not the approach most likely to succeed.

The great majority of Mormon women that I know or have come in contact with in my radical state strongly disapprove of my trench warfare against polygamy and against its corollary—the secondary, or auxiliary, status of women now and forever. Two of my more eloquent female critics urged me to stop dredging up material from the last century because, for all practical purposes, it had been overcome and was no longer relevant to a woman's current experience in the Church. I tried to rebut that D&C 132 is from that period and still perplexes and dismays almost everyone who first encounters it. I believe many converts feel, at least temporarily, that they've been "had" when, after baptism, sooner or later they attend a Sunday School class where someone says we still believe this section to be the word of God. But my powerful insights notwithstanding, these two women reinforced their message to me: D&C 132's polygamy provisions

have nothing to do with the daily experience of Mormonism among most of the faithful. They are able to ignore it and bury it, and carping about it only makes putting it behind us more difficult. Other critics are fond of pointing out that I am not a woman and assorted other basic truths that add up to: "butt out."

In my turn I have had little regard for the women who wrote books and articles praising the Church and defending its sexist practices against feminist critics. I was aghast that some of them promulgated the doctrinally unsound but bold assertion that Mother in Heaven was also God, and that this Goddess was a role model for the daughters of God on earth. Some even suggested Mother could be addressed in prayer.

But Gustavson's insight, that the way to change the definition of God, or the theology that describes God, is to change the ethical outlook of the community of believers, showed me that these pious women are the true revolutionaries, and I'm just getting in their way. Their strategy seems to be to appear to uphold current power structures, thereby ensuring their support and endorsement. With that support and endorsement, their writings are made widely available to and are accepted by the community of believers. In turn, that community of believers learns the appealing doctrines of female spiritual equality in this life and deification to Godhood, with a capital "G," in the next. Now that I've read Gustavson I see that as soon as a majority of the community begins to actively believe in this liberating doctrine, the theology will change to reflect this belief, and my going around saying "No ma'm, that's *not* Mormon doctrine" is counterproductive, to say the least.

I am in a quandary. Unlike Paul, I haven't the power within me to turn myself around. Come to think of it, I've always had an unreasoned admiration for Don Quixote, not for Paul. I seem to recall a vision of myself alone on a vast, empty plain, clinging to a ragged saddle

strapped precariously to an unsteady steed in full gallop, muttering to myself while pointing threateningly over the horizon: "Hold still, you cowardly windmill, your fate is sealed! . . . Charge!" But I forget now whose vision that was. Perhaps the windmill's?

Abraham Van Luik  
Chantilly, Virginia

### *Cruel Evolution*

In the Summer 1988 issue of *DIALOGUE*, David Bailey challenged the scientific validity of creationism; in particular, he mentioned our scientific research institute, the Institute for Creation Research. I would like to point out that some of his information is incorrect; more important, however, his conclusions regarding scientific creationism need to be challenged.

First, not all creationists are fundamentalist Christians. Orthodox Jews, Muslims, and many Christians who do not call themselves fundamentalists embrace creationism. Bailey also suggests that creationists are anti-Mormon (p. 69). Speaking for ICR, I know of no books or tapes produced by ICR that even hint of anti-Mormon sentiment. Indeed, many letters of support come to ICR from members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many Church members have toured our Creation Museum in San Diego.

It should also be noted that ICR is not a division of Christian Heritage College but has been a separate organization since 1980. Furthermore, I, for one, did not have to sign a statement of belief when I joined ICR, although I acknowledge that ICR knew of my commitment to the historical and scientific accuracy of the Bible, especially Genesis.

Bailey declared that we have no biologists or geologists on our staff. His source of information must be outdated; although not a large institute (eight Ph.D. scientists and support staff), ICR has had on its staff

for many years biologist Kenneth Cumming (Ph.D., Harvard University) and two geologists, John Morris (Ph.D., University of Oklahoma) and Steven A. Austin (Ph.D., Penn State University).

Bailey also stated that creation scientists have not produced "valid scientific studies" (p. 70). I suggest that most of the great scientists over the past five centuries have been Bible-believing Christians, and almost all of them have been creationists. The names Newton, Maxwell, Mendel, Pasteur, and Kelvin quickly come to mind. Today, creation scientists are the minority, but thousands of them are engaged in serious research in major universities and institutes around the world.

Bailey takes exception to our use of the second law of thermodynamics to defend the creationist position. Briefly stated, this law of science declares that the order and complexity within an isolated system can never increase; a system, therefore, must inexorably move from order to disorder. If this is true the universe could not have created itself. Bailey argues that the second law does not apply because the earth is not an isolated system but is open to the sun's energy. But the universal natural tendency towards increasing disorder applies to all systems, open or isolated. To overcome the tendency towards disorder, certain conditions must exist. The system must contain a mechanism to convert destructive energy into something that can be used by the system; in other words, there must be a system to operate and control the machinery.

Bailey says that snowflakes, which are highly ordered structures, contradict our view of the second law; but snowflakes are already "programmed" to be ordered, and they do not have the type of complexity associated with biological molecules. And what happens when the sun — the source of energy (according to the evolutionist) which made the origin of life possible billions of years ago — strikes the snowflake? It melts, of course, going from order to disorder. The raw energy from the sun "would have been no more capable of generating complex systems on the earth than a bull in a china shop," to quote Duane Gish (Ph.D., Berkeley) of ICR.

I would invite readers of *DIALOGUE* to find out for themselves which is the better scientific model of origins — creation or evolution. Creationists simply ask for a fair hearing in an educational establishment heavily influenced by evolutionary dogma. As a former evolutionist, I can state unequivocally that the scientific evidence overwhelmingly supports the idea that God created the heavens and the earth, and that he did not have to use the cruel and wasteful process of evolution to bring about high forms of life. The research conducted by ICR has caused many like myself to abandon entirely the bankrupt theory of evolution.

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