

LETTERS

Choking in the Dust

The very interesting articles by Delmont Oswald and Lawrence Young (Spring 1990) touched a sensitive nerve in me and again brought to mind my own reaction to President Benson's 1988 address to single men. Both articles alluded to a growing and persistent problem for which Church leaders and members continue to demonstrate fear, insensitivity, and great ignorance: homosexuality.

In the spring of 1988, I was just beginning to admit to and come to terms with my own homosexuality. At the time, I was experiencing a great deal of anguish and psychological pain. The address added even more guilt to the tremendous load I already carried. Not only was I past the critical age of twenty-seven, I was gay besides. President Benson's talk was a slap in the face, not just for the condemning and insulting tone directed toward single men, but because it never acknowledged the legitimate reasons why men might choose to remain single and gave no reassurance to those who would not or could not marry.

A commonly held attitude reflected by the talk is that if a man marries, he cannot be homosexual. Therefore, if we can manage by any means to marry off all our single men, we will not have to deal with homosexuality and can continue to deny its existence as a real problem of good Church members. President Benson's failure to acknowledge homosexuality as a factor preventing some men from marrying was virtually another effort at denying this very persistent and difficult issue.

I was raised in the Church, served an honorable mission, and have held a vari-

ety of positions in the wards I have lived in since my mission. I am an active, temple-going member, with a great love for the gospel and a conviction of the utility and necessity of the Church organization. I feel great pain that the Church I love so much and have devoted my life to offers me only no-win options. If I remain single, I will be discriminated against, as positions of significant responsibility and leadership are filled by married men. I will be hounded relentlessly to get married, and (according to Mormon myth) I will be denied exaltation and condemned to spend eternity serving my married brothers as a ministering angel, whatever that is. And I will be lonely, presumably for eternity. If I marry, I run the risk of making myself and at least one other person miserable for many years, with the almost certain risk of divorce. I also have the option of living with a male companion and either leaving the Church because of an overload of guilt, or being forced out by excommunication. At the moment, I am having difficulty deciding which of these options I want most.

I have found no reassurance, advice, or comfort from Church leaders as I face my dilemma. Instead, I hear silence at best; at worst, rabid condemnation. I am a virtual outcast simply by nature of my single status, not to mention my sexual orientation, which, by the way, I will never be foolish enough to divulge to my bishop.

I look forward to the day when the Church has the strength and self-confidence to at least acknowledge homosexuals, and homosexuality as a human condition. I never expect, nor do I desire, the Church to condone homosexual practices or any other kind of intimate sexual

behavior outside of marriage. But I do expect the Church to be nonjudgmental about my sexual orientation, to acknowledge my value as a worthy priesthood holder and son of God, and to extend to me the same opportunities for service and leadership accorded to my heterosexual, married counterparts. Until that day, I am forced by the Church to live, choking, in the dust.

Name Withheld
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dialogue Generations

During my eight-month-old son David's romp with me on our large bed after his afternoon nap, he rolled and squirmed deftly over to our Summer 1990 DIALOGUE, left there from my rest time. He picked it up, leafed through the pages, and showed great interest. I removed it from his hands when it approached the mouth (I do not consider it disposable), and he whimpered, an accurate replication of his father's response when I wrestle it away at dinner time, or when it is my turn to read. I was pleased that David's interest marked the true beginning of a third generation of DIALOGUE enthusiasts, a fact that was sure to overjoy both his grandmas, Mary Lythgoe Bradford and Mary Ellen MacArthur. I am confident DIALOGUE will be around to entertain and inspire David's future offspring also and am grateful for the courage my children's forbearers had in creating this unique form of Mormon communication. As David once again zeroed in on the DIALOGUE, I realized with mild dismay that his interest in the cover, ironically purple (the Bradford signature color), had been inherited along with his beautiful Lythgoe looks. He certainly has a heritage both strong and rich, with giant shoes for him to fill.

Jane MacArthur Bradford
South Pasadena, California

Disappointing Issue

Until the Summer issue of DIALOGUE, the contents, for the most part, have been provocative and stimulating reading. However, the two articles on the polygamists of Short Creek and their leader are so hackneyed, paraded before us *ad nauseum* in newspapers, magazines, and on television, that I resent paying money to read about them again.

The other two subjects, baptism for the dead and interfaith vows, do not have the scholarship or interest of previous articles. I hope you can improve on the contents before the next issue. One of the writers on interfaith vows is mistaken about marriages not allowed to be performed in LDS chapels. We have had several in our ward.

To sum up this issue, its articles are out-of-date, have no impact, and are of little relevance to today's reader.

Gwen Millet
Castro Valley, California

A Broader View

The excellent panel presentation on the "Impact of Interfaith Vows" (Summer 1990) brought to mind D. H. Lawrence's thoughtful essay on the marriage relationship in his book *Sex, Literature and Censorship* (Irvington Press, 1953). Lawrence expressed the following affirmation of marriage vows that endure beyond death:

And the church created marriage by making it a sacrament, a sacrament of man and woman united in the sex communion, and never to be separated, except by death. *And even when separated by death, still not freed from the marriage. Marriage, as far as the individual went, eternal.* Marriage, making one complete body out of two incomplete ones, and providing for the complex development of the man's soul and the woman's soul in unison, throughout a life-time. Marriage, sacred and inviolable, the great way of earthly fulfillment for man and woman in unison, under the spiritual rule of the Church. (pp. 106-7, italics added)

Later on Lawrence expressed his belief that his marriage partnership would endure through the eternities because of the deep love he and his wife shared. For him, the eternal nature of marriage did not hinge on ritual or vows, but on the loving concern and commitment of marriage partners to each other and to the relationship.

This is very close to what Joseph Campbell said in his television documentary "Love and the Goddess": The degree of commitment each partner brings to the other partner and to the marriage covenant determines the durability of the marriage in this life, and in the hereafter.

I think it is helpful for Latter-day Saints to be aware that other people have understood the importance and sanctity of marriage as a permanent, enduring covenant and partnership.

Thank you for another excellent issue of *DIALOGUE*.

Shirley B. Paxman
Provo, Utah

Memorable Fiction

What a rare pleasure: to encounter a piece of contemporary short fiction as brilliant, memorable, and relevant as the story "And" by N. E. Houston (a pseudonym, perhaps?) in your Summer 1990 issue. Although it has been quite a few years since my husband and I struggled through the "baby makes three" phase of marriage, the story stirred powerful chords of recognition—conscious and subconscious. I assume the author is male from the point of view chosen, but I greatly admire his capturing the feelings of both sexes. I *liked* this couple, and I hurt for them. And like a fine piece of poetry, the story heightens its subject matter with its skillfully crafted verbal pyrotechnics. Bravo, N. E.!

How remarkable that contemporary literature in general, and especially Mormon literature, so seldom deals with this nearly universal human experience. In a milieu that so highly values marital success, we often struggle on alone, think-

ing our problems are unique to ourselves. By publishing a story like "And," *DIALOGUE* continues to prove the need for its existence, for where else would the story find its audience? Now if we could only find a way to honor its author with the rewards, financial and critical, that such an effort deserves! In any case, thank you, *DIALOGUE*, for continuing to support new as well as established voices in the Mormon literary and academic community.

Mary Ellen Mac Arthur
Eugene, Oregon

A Final Rejection

As an addendum to my article, "An Ambivalent Rejection: Baptism for the Dead and the Reorganized Church Experience" (Summer 1990), it might be worthwhile to note that the April 1990 World Conference of the Reorganized Church took another important step which signals rejection of baptism for the dead. The mass meeting of the elders brought forward a resolution for consideration by the conferees deleting the historical appendix in the Doctrine and Covenants, where the sections on baptism for the dead had been moved at the 1970 World Conference. The resolution said:

Whereas, Certain rites and practices cited in the Appendix of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants are not presently practiced in the church; and

Whereas, Some uninformed persons do not know how to make the distinction between the body of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and the Appendix, but take certain sections of the Appendix to denigrate, accuse, or indict the doctrines of the church; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the World Conference authorize the removal of the historical Appendix of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants from all future publications of the book. (The Appendix will find its place in the historical manuals of the church.) (*World Conference Bulletin*, 6 April 1990, p. 359)

Though not specified, it was clear that the "certain rites and practices" referred to baptism for the dead. The temple ritual had become too embarrassing for the church to allow the mandate for its practice to remain a part of the Doctrine and Covenants, even as a historical appendix.

On 7 April 1990, the delegate hearing committee published its report about the removal of the historical appendix and further explained: "The sponsor expressed concern that certain parts of the Appendix were causing problems for the Saints in Africa and in other parts of the world. Detractors were using these statements against the church and its doctrines." The report stated that most delegates at the hearing sympathized with those advocating deletion of the appendix, but that the hierarchy's representative "stated that removing the appendix to the historical manuals of the church would not remove the problem, but could cause difficulty later" (*World Conference Bulletin*, 7 April 1990, p. 380). The representative, however, did not vigorously defend the maintenance of the appendix as a part of the Doctrine and Covenants. More important, what statements were made in defense of the appendix had nothing to do with the viability of baptism for the dead but only with administrative procedures. A series of pro and cons were distributed about evenly between each side; again, however, none dealt with the specific issue of baptism for the dead. No one tried to salvage the doctrine.

On Saturday, 7 April 1990, the resolution came up for discussion and vote by the main body of the World Conference. There was some discussion about repercussions over the passage of this resolution, but no one apparently questioned the logic of removing the appendix. The resolution passed easily. The conference chair did not even see the need for a division of the house, indicating that it was a lopsided vote in favor of the resolution. With this action, all future editions of the Reorganized Church's Doctrine and Covenants will have no historical appendix and all

reference to baptism for the dead will be expunged from the record of revelation to the church (*World Conference Bulletin*, 8 April 1990, pp. 391, 399). For good or ill, this action probably represents the final rejection of the doctrine of baptism for the dead by the Reorganization.

Roger D. Launius
New Baden, Illinois

New Light

My article on the sermons of fundamentalist Mormon leader Leroy S. Johnson (Summer 1990) left an interesting question unanswered which I'm now able to shed more light on. Several of Johnson's sermons expressed disapproval at what he saw as an attempt by the LDS Church to replace the Doctrine and Covenants with an abridged volume. This volume supposedly removed the 132nd section dealing with plural marriage as well as several other important sections. Johnson remembered that it was called *Revelations of a More Enduring Value* and that it was largely the work of James E. Talmage. For instance, in 1978 Johnson said in a Christmas Eve sermon:

I have a little book in my possession that is called *Revelations of a More Enduring Value*. It was supposed to take the place of the Doctrine and Covenants that we have at the present time. Some of the revelations that we have in the Doctrine and Covenants today were torn to pieces and certain words taken out of them. This little book was framed by James E. Talmage, one of the most learned, I guess, of any of the apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He attempted to take the present edition of the Doctrine and Covenants off the market and put this little book called *Revelations of a More Enduring Value* in its place. But there was only one edition made. There was a time when you could not buy the present Doctrine and Covenants that we have. I bought one of those little books. I sure put a great value on the old Doctrine and Covenants that I had. (*The L. S. Johnson Sermons*. 6 vols. Hildale, Utah: Twin Cities Courier Press, 1983-84, 4:1681)

At the time I wrote the article, I was unable to locate or verify any such publication. By sheer chance, I recently came across a volume in the Wisconsin Historical Society collection which fits Johnson's description. *Latter-day Revelation: Selections from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, published by the Church in 1930, contains forty-one sections, some of them incomplete. The 132nd section is not included. No author or editor is listed. The sensitive nature of such an abridgment was hinted at in the last paragraph of the book's forward: "The complete Doctrine and Covenants is a current publication, accessible to all, so that comparison between that volume and this is a simple undertaking. Every omission from the full text is indicated in these pages—by asterisks where parts of Sections are left out and by the absence of some Sections in their entirety."

I cannot say for certain that this publication was the one Johnson found offensive, but it is likely at least a successor to it. I am not in a position to verify Johnson's interpretation of why such a publication was produced. The Church's view of the need for such a volume would

likely differ from Johnson's, and my pointing out its existence should not be interpreted as agreement or disagreement with his analysis.

I would like to make a second minor point having to do with the capitalization of Johnson's first name, "LeRoy" or "Leroy." Most news accounts of the period use "LeRoy," but Colorado City community leaders have told me he always signed his name "Leroy," the version I used. Any readers who chanced upon my article "After the Manifesto: Modern Polygamy and Fundamentalist Mormon" (*Journal of Church and State* 32 [Spring 1990]: 367-89) will find I used "LeRoy" but have since been corrected on that point. Fortunately my endlessly patient editors at DIALOGUE were kind enough to make the correction in my manuscript at what was surely the last possible minute.

One final point is a compliment to DIALOGUE's art editor. The last few covers have been very attractive. The art is striking and a really nice choice for a quality publication.

Ken Driggs
Tallahassee, Florida