LETTERS

Passing the Baton

It's with selfish sorrow that I note that Ross and Mary Kay Peterson will be passing the editors' baton. I've read DIALOGUE from the beginning and know that the Petersons follow in the tradition of good people who have shared their interests and talents with and for the benefit of all of us. I'd like to commend them for the general quality of the materials that have appeared but say that I particularly enjoyed the Winter 1991 issue. It was provocative and satisfying, and those two do not always go together.

Bill Knecht
Moraga, California

Spirited Stories

Amen! to paper shuffler Neal Chandler's assessment of Abish, Ammon, and Lamoni. He puts flesh and blood as well as spirit in the Book or Mormon stories. My three favorite scripture stories are the Sermon on the Mount, Song of Songs (Solomon), and David and Jonathan. Each has a glimmer of heaven on earth. But what would you expect from someone who gets as much out of a thirty-minute soak at a mineral hot spring as out of three hours in church?

Howard W. Johnson
Thatcher, Arizona

Feeling Conservative

I struggle as I wonder whether I am liberal or conservative. In secular circles, I do my best to battle the abortionists, stop government's frivolous spending, and keep Planned Parenthood from teaching sex to my children in school. I also try to further missionary work and be a decent example of a Latter-day Saint. However, in Church circles, I lean toward unorthodox ideas: in addition to King James, I study from the NIV and NAS versions of the Bible; I listen to "Christian" radio stations; and I even promote DIALOGUE sometimes.

After reading Neal Chandler's article, "Book of Mormon Stories That My Teachers Kept from Me," I find myself feeling very conservative. I hesitated to write this letter when I realized the purpose of this article was to promote letters to the editor (I thought I could hear editors, "We need a good scandal to keep interest up"). After all, the "Letters" section has begun to be monotonous with all those "I'm-so-thankful-for-DIALOGUE-because-it-has-rescued-me" letters. From his first paragraph, we see that Chandler expected a scandal (or was that artistic tongue-in-cheek?).

We've seen great things come out of DIALOGUE. Whether or not my conclusion was correct about the purpose of printing this article, Editors, please use more discrimination in the future. How does this piece "foster artistic and scholarly achievement" (from the DIALOGUE mission statement on the first page)?

What was the purpose? I waited for Chandler to give us a constructive conclusion, but after all his criticism, I am left wondering what he would have us do. Are we to petition the Lord to reveal another scripture prepared with divine aid by a different people since this one doesn't read like a Robert Ludlum novel?

I just reread Chandler's article to make sure I didn't miss something. If I did, I missed it again. Somebody tell me if the article isn't just a skeptical portrayal in pejorative, albeit clever terms (the brother of Jared's "Tupperware boats") of what most LDS people consider holy.

Chandler's skill with words is unquestioned, but I can think of pictures that should never be painted, even if with great

skill. Artistic merit cannot redeem an objectionable subject. Writers and artists are free to produce what they wish, but we do not have to publish it.

Please Editors, I know DIALOGUE's agenda is not the same as the *Ensign's*, which is fine, but do we need to print works that only complain and deride?

Kevin Bergen
Lomita, California

Constructive Deconstruction

I fear I'm a little flattered at having been branded—sort of—the Robert Maplethorpe of Mormon letters, even if this suggestion only demonstrates that real Mormons can make scandal out of warm milk and muffins. Brother Bergen imagines "pictures that should never be painted": buggery, I suppose, chainsaw mayhem, child pornography, and, apparently, ennui in 2nd Nephi. My own imagination and my index librorum prohibitorum are grantedly thinner here. My purpose in writing the essay was to confront, to think through and try to explain, at least to myself, an unhappy circumstance in my own reading. I had, in fact, thought I was being constructive, upbeat, making the best of an awkward situation. And it seems to me even—or perhaps precisely—in light of Brother Bergen's objections that my purported offense lies not in misrepresentation, but rather in having said something out loud which in our eyebrow arching culture goes carefully and almost universally without saying.

More than one person has approached me to express relief that someone else, someone finally vocal and incautious, has also experienced a stupor of attraction to the Book of Mormon and, moreover, that he may have identified reasons not automatically reducible to personal sin. We have most of us long since been conditioned to believe that if the speaker be deadly, his victim is at fault. And this, as history and regular sacrament meeting attendance will attest, is an enlightenment sure to produce both bad speakers and bad listeners. I do not expect the heavens to retract and rewrite the Book of Mormon. But I wonder if acknowledging its shortcomings as well as its certified perfection might not make it more accessible, more approachable, richer with possibility. Imperfection, in fact, demands more: more energy, more creativity, more honesty and critical attention of the reader. Someone feeling a little less conservative than Kevin Bergin wrote to say that he had read my essay several times and was "both delighted and dismayed at its content." I cannot imagine a better tagline for the Book of Mormon.

Neal Chandler
Cleveland, Ohio

"Kicking Against the Pricks"

After reading "The Grammar of Inequity" by Lavina Fielding Anderson (Winter 1990) and subsequent letters to the editor (Richard C. Russell, Summer 1991, and Robert McKay, Winter 1991), I feel compelled at last to comment.

In considering the language of prayer, Anderson acknowledges that the singular pronouns "thou" and "thee" were the intimate pronouns of seventeenth-century England; that "ye" and "you" were the formal, proper, courteous plurals; and that "the attachment of any special reverence or respect to 'thee' and 'thou' is based on historical ignorance, a reading backward into perfectly ordinary grammatical construction of a magical meaning" (p. 90). But then, despite this "historical ignorance," Anderson persists in ascribing the word "formal" to "thee" and "thou."

Granted, many define these old, singular pronouns as "formal," "exalted," and "special," because they are now used almost exclusively in addressing Deity, but they are, in reality, intimate forms that have become uncommon in modern English—abandoned in favor of the formal, polite "you."

Anderson quotes a grammarian who considers this polite substitution to be of

questionable value, for "our language has thus lost whatever advantage it had gained by having a polite as well as a familiar form of address; and unfortunately the form that has survived is ambiguous. . . . The English language is, in respect of clearness, decidedly the worse for the change" (pp. 91–92).

The surviving, ambiguous form is "you"—ambiguous, because in assuming the several functions of singular/intimate and plural/polite, "you" has become incapable of referencing any of them—intimacy, formality, politeness, or number.

Thus, modern English is truly lacking. Our intimate form is unfamiliar to us, and our common form is ambiguous. Yet, it is this ambiguous form that Anderson recommends for seeking intimacy (and gender inclusion). She writes, "I suggest that we start praying privately in our own normal speech, using 'you' and 'your.' It will make these prayers more intimate, more natural, and more loving" (p. 88).

If there is logic in this conclusion, I do not follow it. How can a pronoun of ambiguous usage be more intimate or loving? It would seem rather that in ambiguity and universality, "you" has lost all value save as a verbal pointer, while "thee" and "thou" yet retain strong underpinnings of original intimacy. It is still possible (though unusual) to use "thee" in speaking to a friend, but to use "thee" with a stranger or enemy would be unthinkable.

If we are to achieve a true understanding of modern pronoun usage, we have to be consistent and accurate when discussing origins, meanings, and ascriptions. Intimate words do not become formal words by confining them to a narrower range of original, intimate usage; nor does a formal, polite word become intimate by expanding its usage.

I do not deny that the narrowed application of words can make their use less natural and comfortable. It was partly for this that I, too, continued to pray in my mission language (Italian) for a long time, because it offered me what English did not. When I address God, it is with strivings toward intimacy— often in the agony of not understanding the course and pain of things. "Thee" and "thou" were the most intimate pronouns I had until the Italian "ti" and "tu" introduced me to a deeper intimacy. I soon realized that "ti ringrazio," "ti prego," and "t'amo" had no adequate English rendition. The English translations, "I thank thee," "I ask thee," "I love thee" do not convey for me the intimacy of the Italian forms: first, because "ti" has a contemporary usage which "thee" had lost; and second, because the English pronoun "I" precedes and interferes. In Italian, the verb identifies me in its conjugation placing the one I address foremost, thus making communication most personal and compelling.

English, however, is the mother tongue of many, and if some, like Anderson, cannot find intimacy in the narrowed usage of "thee" and "thou," perhaps alternate usage is a matter left to them and God, though let us not confuse matters further by accusing the Church of inconsistency when the intimate "thee" and "thou" and possessives "thy" and "thine" are the preferred, counseled forms, whatever attributions some make of formal or special prayer language. "Thee" and "thou" were never formal pronouns and should we review Church translation work, we would find the corresponding, intimate, second person singular in place of "thee" and "thou" every time.

It may not be easy to learn uncommon forms, but millions do it—mastering their own and new languages and seemingly endless verbal conjugations. Communication takes effort. It is to use words and meanings which the one addressed understands—not the ones we insist they understand—and though God understands all language, perhaps there is preference for the intimate forms, despite their lack of modernness. And if prophets counsel such use, whether founded in custom or revelation, and whether it would make any real difference to God, perhaps the difference it does make is, in a sense,

"Adamic" and "Abrahamic." Why do we do these things? We know not (we would not), save the Lord directs us.

This speaks as well to Anderson's greater concern of gender inequity. I am convinced that in time the Gods will reveal themselves concerning female inclusion. I have long desired an immediate cure for this world's inequities and for a myriad of other painful things, even though I know that much of what we endure (what the Gods allow) has parallel in the Jewish legend account of Israel in Egypt. Slavery, too, is morally wrong, yet Israel was left to endure the injustices until the time for liberation was right. Those who determined to leave according to their own timetable perished, and those who waited for the appointed time were led, both by day and by night.

This does not mean we err to feel great anguish or to plead for change. God certainly knows my feelings and frustrations. I feel accepted until I begin to take things into my own hands. In my own "kicking against the pricks," it has become evident that there are countless, unseen considerations in establishing timetables for justice and change; and that every time I push beyond my stewardship, I am giving the wrong answer to that eternal question: whose will and timing in this matter shall govern?

Susan Mariah Smith
Cardston, Alberta

Non-Mormon Contributor

Having read and enjoyed Marc Schindler's lively and thoughtful review of *The Mormon Presence in Canada* (Winter 1991), I must point to certain errors. While three of the volume's editors are "well-known LDS academics in Canada," a fourth has been tentatively described by one of his fellows as "a former Mormon or ethnic Mormon, not . . . a practicing one," and a fifth is not Mormon. I too am a non-Mormon—one of three contributors of articles who are not in any sense "LDS academics." Still, let me say that your reviewer's misapprehension in this regard strikes me as a compliment!

Keith Parry
Lethbridge, Canada

The Utah Gambler

Please thank the Utah Gambler for me (Summer 1991). His article stirred memories and made me want to write some reminiscences. Good writing does that. It makes you think. It makes you feel. It makes you want to do something good yourself.

Larry Day
Pensacola, Florida

Easier Asserted Than Achieved

May I respond to the concluding point of Marjorie Newton's "Australian Viewpoint" regarding Mormonism becoming mainstream (Winter 1991). Newton apparently objects to a "middle class" proselyting emphasis in contrast to an "all-class" emphasis.

Our nineteen-year-old son, born and reared in the wide-open freedom of southern Utah, spent two years preparing for and proselyting in Sao Paulo, Brazil, frequently in the *favelas*, primitive housing areas, usually on hills. His mission instructions were, "Don't go in the *favelas* unless you have a referral, but if you do have a referral, follow it up." Mormon missionaries are extremely conspicuous in the *favelas*, where the only white shirts are worn by "rich Americanos" or the hated *policia*.

Our son, despite the "low profile" provided by his Brazilian companions, was spat upon and robbed at gunpoint. One companion's life was threatened by a drugged-out contact, and while serving as a zone leader, our son was intimately and inadvertently involved in a double homicide which occurred at his feet in the Praca da Republica. While the Republica is not a *favela*, time spent with the *favelados* was consistently high risk, low return. Meanwhile, for three months, we

received consecutive letters and certificates of achievement from his mission president, acknowledging our son's proselyting success among people in middle-class areas of Sao Paulo. He made and retains many friends among these people.

So if we are to go beyond baptizing just Newton's "middle-class nationals," if we can indeed find out how to help the prostitutes and drug addicts, and I don't question that it needs to be done, let this proselyting be done by someone else's children, not mine.

My point, of course, is that no one wants to send their loved and vulnerable young people into these situations. This being the case, how should we reach out? How should we reach out when a European mission call is cause for rejoicing and a South American mission call is cause for commiseration and sympathy? I know this happens because we have sent sons both places. "Pure religion" is easier written on paper than performed.

Gwen Sandberg
Cedar City, Utah

In Support of Fathers, Husbands, Brothers, and Sons

I particularly enjoyed Lola Van Wagenen's "In Their Own Behalf: The Politicization of Mormon Women and the 1870 Franchise" in the Winter 1991 issue. Van Wagenen is to be commended for her writing and for her research.

Her article was of particular interest to me because I dealt with similar information while researching a history I was writing. Material I quoted was perhaps a little more pithy than what Van Wagenen shared.

"Indignation" meetings in response to the Cullom Act cropped up throughout the Territory, and "In support of fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons" seemed to be the battle cry. Such a mass meeting of the ladies was held in the tiny settlement of Mona, Juab County, Utah, settled in 1860. The meeting was reported in the *Deseret Evening News* of 1 February 1870 and taken from the Documentary History as follows:

> The ladies of Mona, Juab County, ventilated their respect for Messrs. Cullom and Cragin in a mass meeting held on the 26th of January. . . .
>
> Speeches strongly condemning the Cullom Bill were made, and a string of resolutions expressive of the indignant feelings of the ladies in regard to all such interference passed. The resolutions condemned the measures proposed to Congress as unworthy of the consideration of American statesmen; and the ladies expressed their determination to support their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons in discharging the sacred duties which devolve upon them.

On Monday, 1 August 1870, the newly enfranchised women participated in their first territorial election—to elect a delegate to Congress. The *Salt Lake Herald* of that date (recorded in the Documentary History) commented:

> Brief visits to the polling places gave us to understand that a large number of ladies were exercising the lately granted right of the franchise. And although there was considerable good humored chaffing, the utmost respect was shown by all to the ladies for whom a separate entrance to the place of voting was provided.
>
> This election will be memorable in the history of the Territory as the first Territorial election at which women exercised the franchise. There have been municipal elections in different places, since Hon. S A. Mann attached his signature to the Act conferring the suffrage upon them; but this is the first time the women of Utah have had an opportunity to express by their ballots their sentiments on a leading public question—whether they, the parties most deeply concerned, would sustain polygamy or repudiate it; for this question has been logged into the election and forced upon the voters by a few who believed in a fight, no matter how great the fizzle they would make. The result of the polling when known, will show that the women emphatically sustain their husbands, fathers, and brothers, their domestic institutions[,] their hearths and homes every time before a few dissension breeding "carpet baggers." Hur-

rah for the women of Utah and their choice for Delegates, the people's choice, Hon. Wm. H. Hooper.

The settlement of Mona cast 109 votes. All of these without exception went to the people's choice, delegate Hooper, and by association supported polygamy.

If that is surprising, then so are the following votes, all in support of the people's choice: in Nephi, 267; Levan, 133; St. George, 311; Beaver, 281; Fillmore, 197; Payson, 483; Spanish Fork, 365; Lehi, 353. In Springville one vote out of 340 and in Provo 25 out of 612 opposed Hooper.

M. Clark Newell
Mona, Utah

Cure for Loneliness

I love reading DIALOGUE and am very thankful that you have survived all these years. When I feel lonely with my thoughts, because I cannot talk about them in my ward, I turn to your journal and find relief in the conviction that I am not alone with my ideas.

Rolf Maichel
Pinneberg, Germany

Well Done

Once again, thank you, thank you, thank you. Just one of your essays is worth the entire year's subscription cost.

We hope the new editor will continue in your "visionary" footsteps.

Patricia Skeen
Eugene, Oregon

Christ's Way

In response to the essays by the Vandagriffs, Tolk, and Schindler, and the letter by Webster (Winter 1991), all on the Gulf War: President McKay's 1942 address has been cited often by Mormon defenders of the Gulf War, but if read carefully in entirety, it provides much more support for condemning the Gulf war than for justifying it. President McKay reviews the general gospel principles of opposition to war and concludes, unequivocally, that "war is incompatible with Christ's teachings" and that "it is vain to attempt to reconcile war with true Christianity" (*Improvement Era*, May 1942, p. 276). He then very cautiously defends the Church's support of the Allies at the beginning of World War II under the unique "conditions" that existed then, including the criterion cited by David Vandagriff, "*possibly* . . . defense of a weak nation that is being unjustly crushed." But even this equivocal support for the Gulf War is removed when we read President McKay's strong statements about when war is *not* justified—especially when it is "an attempt to enforce a new order of government . . . however better the government" (p. 340).

As Tolk's essay shows in detail, that was precisely our main purpose in the Gulf War, a purpose that, entirely apart from and even *after* the liberation of Kuwait, produced enormous destruction and suffering to civilians and tens of thousands of deaths. That same purpose, as the Vandagriffs seem to understand, made Vietnam wrong. Have they changed their opposition to such wars, simply because we won the Gulf War—or because so few Americans were killed in what was still an enormous slaughter and environmental destruction? Does might make right?

Three other false ideas seem to sustain Mormon support for this recent war: (1) That our government will not lie to or manipulate us (as we now know it did in Vietnam). This time it followed "proper constitutional norms" (Vandagriff quoting Walter Shapiro); (2) That negotiation was tried and failed (Webster [p. 9]); and (3) That pacifism means passivism; to oppose war means to favor doing nothing or, conversely, the only way to oppose evil is through violence. These errors can be corrected with a study of historical facts and clear scriptural teachings:

(1) *None* of the wars we have fought in the past forty-five years has followed the clear Constitutional demand that Con-

gress, after unlimited debate with full access to the facts and options, make the terrible decision to go to war. In August and September 1990, without Congressional approval, President Bush committed hundreds of thousands of troops to Desert Shield, claiming the force was only for the purpose of defending Saudi Arabia. About 15 October 1990, as Bush talked of going on the offensive and public demand for Congressional debate was growing, Henry Kissinger, former secretary of state under Nixon, claimed that now that President Bush had deployed over 200,000 American troops in the Gulf, there should be no public or Congressional debate. That huge presence was a concrete reality, he argued, and it must be used to forcibly extract Hussein if he would not back down—or else our credibility with Middle Eastern nations and our allies world-wide will be irreparably damaged.

Bill Orton, new Congressman from Utah, spoke for the first time on the House floor during the debate about whether to support Bush's ultimatum of 30 November. "In the final analysis," he said, "the success of the President's diplomatic strategy requires the credible threat of force. I will give President Bush my trust and my vote and my prayers" (*Deseret News*, 12 Jan. 1991, A-1). I respect Orton's decision, which clearly was made after deep soul-searching, to support the best chance he could see for peace. But he never should have been put in that position, one which amounted to Presidential blackmail: Bush, on his own, created the huge build-up in the Gulf and set the deadline and nonnegotiable ultimatum intended to force Hussein to back down.

Congress was not asked to debate the advisability of declaring war, of sacrificing American lives, freedoms, and resources to achieve ends that were clearly understood and that were "just" because all other options had been exhausted. They were merely asked whether they would support decisions already made; not to do so, supporters claimed, would have undermined the last chance for peace—that is, a unified show of force. Even so, the vote was close; many said they supported Bush mainly to send such a "clear message to Hussein." Clearly he didn't get the message, because he didn't back down from our threats, and we fought a war, unconstitutionally begun by the president rather than Congress, instead of seriously attempting available nonviolent efforts.

(2) On 12 August 1990, Saddam Hussein broadcast a speech, (published in the 13 August *New York Times*, p. A-8), in which he offered to withdraw from Kuwait. His conditions: Recognition of his need to resolve certain grievances with Kuwait and resolution of "all cases of occupation . . . simultaneously and on the same principles and basis that should be laid down by the Security Council"—in other words, that Syria, Israel, and Iran meet Security Council resolutions for withdrawal from lands they had occupied by force. Though this proposal certainly has flaws and may even have been cynically made, it is rationally and morally defensible as a beginning point for negotiation. However, our government made absolutely no response and, as Tolk shows, refused ever to even consider such "linkage" (what others might call moral consistency) between the various evils of the Middle East. There was *never* any negotiation (which implies recognition of others' grievances and creatively suggesting options). There were simply unconditional demands on our part, which even escalated so that when Saddam finally, after the air assault, offered to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait, even that was not enough. As Tolk shows, by then Bush had become intent on destroying Hussein's army and government.

(3) Webster characterizes my position as "passivity" and warns that "to have ignored the invasion would have been perilous" (p. 8). "Ignoring" is not what I would want, and it is not the only alternative to war. Christ did not say, "Ignore your enemies," but rather, "*Love* your

enemies"—a very active process that includes "doing good," "showing mercy," and many other positive, nonviolent actions included in what President Kimball called "taking the gospel to our enemies that they may no longer *be* our enemies" (*Ensign*, June 1976, p. 6, my emphasis). Christ did not say, "Ignore evil," but rather, "Resist not evil" (Matt. 5:29), or as Paul amplified this idea, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Our policies in the Middle East have long been based on evil means—on pitting people against each other, on power and force rather than good. We have acted without justice, shifting support to and away from Iraq, the Kurds, Saddam himself, continually tilting toward Israel, allowing it to commit raids and invasions we have condemned—and violently punishing similar acts by Arabs. Why can't we use our enormous resources to support nonviolent efforts to resolve boundary disputes, to establish a Palestinian homeland, and to achieve equitable use of oil resources—the "doing good" that Christ has said would bring peace?

We do not partly because we persist in believing that certain people are too evil to respond to good, but Christ has never given us that excuse. He did not say love and negotiate with your good, reasonable enemies or use Christian ideals only on those who "respect" (Webster, p. 8) such ideals.

Christ's commands are absolute, and he has promised us that he would provide a way for us to obey his commands—if we were willing. But first we must stop demonizing others. I believe that the greatest delusion the devil creates is *not* in convincing people he doesn't exist, but in convincing some that he exists in the tangible form of a certain person or group—which we then can declare war on and destroy without any restraint of Christian teachings. The gospel constantly reminds us that evil and good are in all of us and that the same principles apply to all—including the command to do good to all and to never use evil means to try to combat evil. Whenever we think we must "fight to resist evil" or engage in "war for peace on earth," as the Vandagriffs put it, we have disobeyed Christ and have already begun to do evil to destroy peace. It is true that evil triumphs when "good men do nothing" (Vandagriff, p. 140), but evil simply triumphs immediately when good men do evil to fight evil.

Eugene England
Provo, Utah