

Discovering Dialogue

Dear Editors: I ran across the Autumn-Winter 1971 issue of *Dialogue* and was unable to put it down until I had read it from cover to cover—and some articles three or four times. I hope that the journal is still in existence, so I can become a subscriber.

Joe J. Potect
El Paso, Texas
from Vol. 8, No. 2 (1973)

Riding Herd (Excerpt from a Letter)

My statement regarding my father's idea of "riding herd " is, like most analogies, subject to question because any analogy is bound to be faulty in some respects. But for whatever it is worth, here it is:

My father early recognized my tendency to question, to disagree, to refuse to take many of the Old Testament stories at face value. I could not admire Jacob's ethics in stealing his brother's birthright; I did not believe that the wind from tin horns would blow down the walls of Jericho, but insisted that they "fell" figuratively when the guards panicked and ran; if bears came out and devoured the children who called Elijah "old bald-pate," I didn't think God sent them, etc., etc.

One day Dad said to me, "My girl, if you follow this tendency to criticize, I'm afraid you will talk yourself out of the church. I'd hate to see you do that. I'm a cowboy who rides the edge of the herd, who sings and calls and makes himself heard, who helps direct the course. Happy sounds are generally better than cursing, but there are times when he must maybe swear a little and swing a whip or lariat to round in a stray or turn the leaders. So don't lose yourself, and don't ride away and desert the outfit. Ride the edge of the herd and be alert, but know your directions, and call out loud and clear. Chances are, you won't make any difference, but on the other hand, you just might."

Juanita Brooks
from Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 1966)

Being Both

I was carefully explaining to the children at dinner last night about Richard Poll's Iron Rod vs. Liahona Mormons. I had just gotten them to understand the distinction and was about to launch into a lengthy peroration on the subject, when Lisa (age six) said simply, "We're both."

That was of course exactly the point. The value of Poll's exercise lies not in labeling ourselves one or the other, but in pointing out both necessary aspects of our gospel life. If we *aren't* both, something is wrong.

Douglass F. Taber
Newark, Delaware
from Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 1984)

Vielen Dank

Dialogue is a great source of information for me which shows me more about the American society the church mainly is involved with. It's good to get a magazine which is not one-sided like the four major church periodicals, which are actually good, but not enough for my widespread interest. (In Germany we nickname the *Church News* "Mormon Pravda"—we Europeans are pretty liberal.) Especially the volume 14, number 2 issue was interesting, because we don't get that information in Germany by official sources in such full details. I would like to encourage *Dialogue* to continue its efforts to clarify the complexities of Mormonism, and it has got my support already. *Mit Freudlichen Grüßen geduldig verbleibend.*

Peter C. Nadig
Duisburg, West Germany
from Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 1982)

Those of us who comprise the body of Mormon readers for whom *Dialogue* (with surgical precision) probes, dilates, stimulates, and refreshes our intellectual/spiritual circulatory system (on occasion, even preventing a thrombosis) extend our thanks!

Bouquets also to your dedicated staff. As editor of the *CSUF* General Catalog for eleven years, I have had intimate experience with unreal deadlines, last-second administrative revisions, politically sensitive copy, format changes that looked stunning on the drawing board and ghastly in the print, etc., etc. We learn, don't we, to rely heavily on those precious few who come early and stay late.

Ruth B. Thornton
Fresno, California.
from Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 1984)

I would like you to know that I am very impressed with *Dialogue*. I am now living and quietly going crazy in Laie, Hawaii, which, as you probably know, is a predominantly Mormon community. Your journal is very much appreciated here, not only by me but by many faculty members at the Church College of Hawaii where I am teaching. Yours is an intelligent voice many of us are eager to listen and respond to. Let nothing silence that voice.

Steven Goldsberry
Laie, Hawaii
from Vol 8, No. 3/4 (1973)

Seasons

The relentless flow of time has brought me to the point where I must terminate my long and pleasant association with *Dialogue*. At age 89, I suddenly find myself a widower. My reading is limited mainly to the headlines, and I am deaf. Of course, as friends are aware, reading, writing, research, and teaching have been my career. Well, as Jimmie Durante used to say, "That is the condition that prevails."

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought has served and is serving a highly important and constructive purpose. There was an urgent need for a medium through which Mormon scholars and writers could find an outlet for penetrating study of Mormonism. The official organs of the Church are mainly concerned with indoctrination and organizational information. They are closed to articles of intellectual depth.

But *Dialogue* has opened many windows on the broader aspects and significance of Mormonism. May it continue.

Lowry Nelson
Provo, Utah
From Vol. 15, No.2 (Summer 1982)

As a new reader of *Dialogue*, I would like to thank you for the wonderful articles, poems, and art you publish. I have recently been reactivated into the church, and I struggled with giving up my intellectual endeavors (however young they may be) in my new life. *Dialogue* helped me reconcile this, and my life is more full.

Now serving a mission for the church, I always look forward to each issue as an alternative source of refreshment and relaxation. Some articles have helped me in preparing talks for district and zone meetings. My mission president has even borrowed a couple of issues for his own personal study. My knowledge has been deepened and my spirit fed. Thank you.

Dallas B. Robbins
Indiana Indianapolis Mission
from Vol. 24, No. 3 (Fall 1991)

The Trouble?

When I first subscribed to *Dialogue* nearly a year ago, I was enthralled by the content and the attitude; I eagerly ordered all the cut-rate back issues available and read them over the next several months. My enthusiasm has been dampened, however, by a gradual realization: the dichotomy between “iron rods” and “liahonas” is not simply a difference of stance—whom we rely on to discern truth.

A dialogue-oriented person believes that the purest source of truth is the Holy Spirit speaking peace and logic to the soul. Such individuals therefore give the highest credibility to those truths personally known through testimony; all else has yet to be proved and is fair game for inquiry.

Latter-day Saint doctrine, however, ultimately requires a belief that the highest source of truth is those in authority. The only proper objects of inquiry, then, are things produced outside their purview. From this perspective, all of our dialogue, unfortunately, is perceived as “counseling the Brethren” or “steading the ark.”

Of course, most of us believe this dichotomy is not fundamental, merely stylistic, and that in time we will all grow toward a unity of the faith. Our hope springs (nearly) eternal on that point, in fact. Of late, however, I have begun to fear that the difference will not be reconciled, only minimized. I may never feel true unity with the body of the Saints.

Craig B. Wilson
Coalinga, California
from Vol. 24, No.3 (Fall 1991)

Mormonism is not like other religions. Mormonism claims to have a direct link to God. Either you believe that it does and follow the prophet without question or you don't believe it, in which case you should leave. People who join the Mormon church do so not because of its commitment to free thinking and intellectual honesty but because it offers answers to questions about which humanity feels generally insecure. They do not wish to have “intellectuals” raising questions about these answers or about the men who have claimed to have received these answers from the Almighty himself.

The entire foundation of Mormonism rests on the credibility of its prophet. If the prophet is not right on matters of doctrine, social matters, etc., then Mormonism is in no way a unique religion but simply another conglomerate of men's opinions. This is Mormonism. I'm not sure what people expect from this religion. They want divine authority and a man to speak to God. Then they want to be able to disagree with God's decrees and remain in good standing. Either he speaks for God or he doesn't. It really is that simple.

Don't get me wrong. I agree with [authors who point out that] they as well as others have been abused. But the abuse is not an aberration; it is simply the logical progression of doctrine. When people believe that they are God's mouthpieces, this is the way they behave. Mormonism is by definition authoritarian and to a large extent totalitarian. If you don't like it, leave! I did.

Brian K. Dalton
Downey, California
from Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall 1993)

The Only True Note Form

Among the many delights of spring this year was the discovery that *Dialogue* had, as part of the “restorations of all things,” returned to the true *footnote* rather than the endnote format. Though its “apostate” interlude was understandably financial, it is inspiring to see that faith is once again found on the earth. May it be nurtured by our works, *i.e.* \$\$ donations.

Grant Underwood
Los Angeles, California
from Vol. 16, No. 4 (Winter 1983)

Mormonism's Negro Doctrine

I can't resist the latest flier on current subject matter (the Spring 1973 issue), so am saving grocery money and will enclose a money order for a subscription whenever I reach the \$10 mark. I can rationalize the Book of Mormon's rather 19th century Presbyterian language to my non-member friends and myself, but never have come to a way to even *discuss* the Negro issue. I'm off to another macaroni casserole.

Mrs. Douglas H. Fraser
Sierra Madre, California
from Vol. 8, No. 2 (1973)

What a sneaky way to push me into subscribing again to *Dialogue*! I am glad, though, for I have missed it, and have meant to subscribe again. Besides missing it, I would feel terrible if the magazine did not survive, and I had not done my small share in supporting it. . . .

Some time ago, while I was still working, a customer found out that I was a Mormon, and asked about the attitude of the Mormons on the Negro question. When I tried to explain, I found myself in tears. I was embarrassed at the time, but have decided, in retrospect, that evidence that a Mormon really cared about this problem to some extent changed this person's attitude about Mormons themselves.

Please send the most recent issue as soon as possible. I will look forward to having *Dialogue* again.

Rebecca J. Welker
Estacada, Oregon
From Vol. 8, No. 2 (1973)

Lester E. Bush's article, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," is excellent. It seems to me that the Negro Doctrine is the most difficult problem facing the church today. Dr. Bush's article should help us understand how the problem has developed.

Members of the Reorganized Church like to point out that there are black men in its priesthood. However, we Reorganites tend to overlook that we deny a much larger segment of the human race the opportunity to hold the priesthood. I see no difference between denying the priesthood to women and denying it to blacks. Both practices seem absurd today.

William D. Russell
Lamoni, Iowa
from Vol. 8, No. 2 (1973)

Women's Issues

Thank you for another superb issue of *Dialogue* (Vol.14, No. 4). I laughed all the way through Furr's "Honor Thy Mother," only to have the end punctuated by a telephone call from one of the Sunday School presidency asking me to be the "Young Mother," sandwiched between "Love at Home" and "What My Mother Means to Me by a Teenager." Sitting through a Mother's Day program is one thing, but aiding and abetting? Then inspiration struck and, armed with the pink and red issues of *Dialogue*, I gave a talk that brought tears and laughter, knowing nods, and sighs of satisfaction. Once again, thank you for a job well done.

Linda J. Bailey
San Jose, California
from Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn 1982)

I have read many provocative articles in *Dialogue* but never felt so overwhelmed by anything as I did on reading "Matricidal Patriarchy: Some Thoughts toward Understanding the Devaluation of Women in the Church," by Erin R. Silva, in the summer 1994 issue. I was so moved by the obviously clear understanding of the very depth of a woman's soul. I felt every fiber of my being laid bare by Silva's work. It wasn't until I reached the end of the article that I understood the force of his words. Erin R. Silva is a man. I had been so certain this was written by a woman that I found myself discounting so many areas of his abilities. I now realize that even women discount other women. If Erin R. Silva, a male, can reach such profound depths of emotion to truly understand the devaluation of women in the church, there is hope for us all. I have never felt such a powerful explosion of truthfulness as he has exhibited with such eloquence. If I have jeopardized my position in the church by taking this position, I will ask my husband and children to understand and keep loving me. This time I can't help but speak.

Thank you so much for publishing these wonderful works.

Shari Taylor
Los Osos, CA
from Vol 28, No. 2 (Summer 1995)

I have been an avid reader of *Dialogue* for many long years now—practically a charter member, although I was myself only thirteen when *Dialogue* was born and made its sure way into the book rack in my parental home—and I am often renewed, educated, strengthened, incensed, and moved by its pages. I am even now discussing with my husband certain of the articles in the Winter 1990 issue with fervor, concern, and pleasure. And yet, my experience with the Fall 1990 issue was of such a transcendental nature that it somehow went beyond all of my previous experiences. Is it, I am moved to wonder, because of the sense of shared sisterhood that accompanied me on my journey through its pages? A sense of shared truth, grief, knowledge, power, and commitment? Whatever the reality of my experience may be, each moment of oneness with the worlds therein spoke to me with a directness and raw urgency that was at once sweet and almost too inexpressibly painful to bear. Thank you.

Kimberlee Staking
Bourron-Marlotte, France
from Vol. 29, No. 3 (Fall 1991)

Joseph Jeppson a.k.a. Rustin Kaufman a.k.a. Joseph Jeppson

For well over twenty years Rustin Kaufman, channeled by Joseph Jeppson (or Jeppson by Kaufman), provided Dialogue with heartfelt LDS commentary on things cultural to theological. We reprint a sampling:

The Graduate (early movie review)

This is a very disturbing film. Members of the church ought to be warned to avoid it and to keep their children away from it. Its philosophy is "loaded." It assumes that the immoral is acceptable and that proven American values are not worth observing. I cannot help but wonder what our Father in heaven must think of the people who produced this film, let alone the curious L.D.S. people who flock to see it.

The film is about what appears to be a Jewish family in Los Angeles whose son has just returned from four years of college. The son looks Jewish, anyway. No mention is made as to whether or not the family is orthodox in their Jewish faith. I consider this to be one of the major flaws of the film. Another incomprehensible thing to me is that singers Simon and Garfunkel (also Jewish) expanded their "Mrs. Robinson" song to include lines about Jesus, in whom Jewish people do not even believe. They have the gall to sing "Jesus loves you more than you will know. . . ."

Anyway, the story opens with a homecoming party for Benjamin, the "hero" of the film. Everyone there is perfectly nice to him, but he stalks off to his room and sulks. Nobody can figure out why, including the audience. I talked to at least fifty people in Rexburg who saw the film the same night I did, and none of us knows why he stalked off to his room.

While he's in his room, a woman old enough to be his mother-in-law lures him out into her car, over to her house, and up to her room where she disrobes and stands naked before him. "Jesus Christ!" he shouts as though he believes in Jesus. The lady's husband comes home and the boy runs downstairs to the bar. Supposedly the husband doesn't know what's been going on, but I think he did know because when the boy asks for bourbon, the husband pours him scotch. The husband is no dummy: he is a successful lawyer.

Then follows what is perhaps the most disgusting part of the film: the boy phones up the older woman and invites her over to a hotel room (because he is "bored," he explains later). The moviemakers actually show them in bed together! To try to make the scene palatable to the audience, the writers try to show that Benjamin is a respectful boy by having him call the older woman "Mrs. Robinson" even in the midst of their most intimate moments. But the writers could not pull it off, for the audience suspects that when Benjamin calls her "Mrs. Robinson," he is cynical about it, and therefore is not genuinely sincere about being respectful.

The boy's father and mother try to get him to take out Mrs. Robinson's daughter Elaine, but Mrs. Robinson is against it. However, he does take her out anyway because his parents insist. Cruelly, Benjamin makes Elaine cry by chal-

lenging her to try to duplicate the act of a bump and grind dancer who can twirl propellers positioned in vulgar places. Anyway, Benjamin kisses Elaine, and they begin to fall in love.

Elaine finds out that Benjamin has been having an affair with *somebody*. But she doesn't seem very concerned about it (probably because she has been going to school at the University of California at Berkeley). In other words, the message that comes across to the young people watching the film is that it is acceptable for young men to have affairs.

Of course, when Elaine finds out that the object of Benjamin's attentions has been her own mother, this turns out to be too much even for a Berkeley student. She returns to school, and Benjamin follows her north. He finds himself competing for her affection with a nice-looking, neat, blond-haired, blue-eyed medical student. By contrast, Benjamin is slovenly, footloose, and a college dropout. What she sees in Benjamin is almost beyond the comprehension of the audience. Perhaps the real secret is that Benjamin looks Jewish and the medical student looks Nordic, and the Hollywood producers (many of whom are also Jewish) want to show that a Jewish hippie is more attractive than the finest example of traditional American young manhood. Maybe this goes over big in New York City, but not in Zion where most people are of Ephraim not of Judah.

With all the cunning of the Adversary, Benjamin woos Elaine and nearly persuades her to marry him when, suddenly, her father arrives to talk some sense into her head. Elaine leaves Benjamin a note of regret, and her parents arrange a secret wedding for their daughter and the medical student in Santa Barbara. But by stealth and cunning, Benjamin discovers the location of the wedding by misrepresenting himself to the fraternity brothers of the medical student. Benjamin rushes down the coast in his sports car.

Now follows the most blasphemous part of the film. When Benjamin arrives, the essentials of the wedding ceremony are almost completed. Elaine is legally married to the medical student. Finding himself up above and to the rear in a glassed-in balcony, Benjamin commences to bang on the window, his arms extended outward, shouting, "Elaine! Elaine! Elaine!" almost as though he were Jesus crying "Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani?" Rather than raising a sponge filled with vinegar to his lips, the wedding party lifts its curses to Benjamin. Yet Elaine calls out for him. This sets in motion the rescue tumult that rocks the church, as though "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." Somehow Benjamin manages to find Elaine's hand and pull her out the front doors, jamming them with a large cross, which he has been swinging to ward off attackers. In other words, the cross of Jesus is used to prevent the decent and civilized and law-abiding wedding attenders from stopping the anarchistic Benjamin from running off with another man's wife.

Benjamin and Elaine board a bus and ride away. He has triumphed. There he sits with his dazed catch, lovely in her wedding dress. Benjamin, smiling and reminiscing, looks like a hippie. If the play were *Faust* rather than *The Graduate*, we would be at the point where Mephistopheles is belly laughing at seeing Marguerite surrender to the devilish whiles of Faust. In *Faust*, Marguerite leaves the

“hero” and repents and is saved. No such hope is offered for the heroine in *The Graduate*.

Rustin Kaufman
Rexburg, Idaho
from Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1969)

Letters from Jeppson/Kaufman's Later Period

Inspired by Marvin Hill's article (Summer 1982), I did a little reading in a book called *Varieties*. . .by someone named William James and found that in 1820, at the age of fourteen, one Stephen H. Bradley “saw the Saviour, by faith, in human shape: and another young man named David Brainerd said: One morning while I was walking in a solitary place. . .attempting to pray. . .I thought that the Spirit of God had quite left me. . .but as I was walking in a thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to the apprehension of my soul. . .I had no particular apprehension of any one person in the Trinity, either Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost.”

The point of all this is twofold: God apparently appeared to several young men in those days, which should give us Mormons confidence that he probably appeared to young Joseph as well. And secondly if David Brainerd couldn't tell if there were one, two, or three gods in *his* grove, why should anyone think it odd that Joseph couldn't remember either?

Rustin Kaufman
Rexburg, Idaho
from Vol 18, No.1 (Spring 1983)

In the winter 1987 issue, I have just read Eugene England's piece which says that there may not be plural marriage in the celestial kingdom after all. Monogamy is on a higher plane than polygamy, says Brother England.

I've been sitting here thinking about it for a whole two hours. What *is* the real nature of relationships in the heavens? Suddenly, like a bolt, I saw the truth of it. Think about visitors from God's realm. Have any *women* appeared to the prophets? No way. Only *men*! Why? '*Cause they're the only ones up there; that's why!* Among the heavenly visitors have been God and Jesus and the Holy Ghost. There have been Moroni and Alvin and Michael the Archangel. Also the male angel who wrestled with Jacob, the three (male) Nephites, together with John and Elijah. *All men!*

When the General Authorities finally get it all worked out, I'll bet potatoes to chokecherries that polygamy will be goin' on in only the telesstial kingdom, monogamy in the terrestrial, and the celestial will be reserved for priesthood holders only.

In celestial, are people single?
No. The thought makes reason stare.
Something tells me—
Something tells me

I've a loving brother there.

I realize that after what I wrote about homosexuals in the earlier letter, I'm now going to have to eat crow!

Don't you see? Just as the temple ceremony moves from kingdom to kingdom, so too does our liaison training in earth life: In the nineteenth century we were introduced to polygamy; in the twentieth century we were told to practice monogamy; and in the twenty-first century we will adopt "brotherly love" as a presentment to celestial inhabitation. (Church visitors' centers in the twenty-first century will have display windows showing medieval monasteries as forerunners of the new posture.) The reason the church presently asks members not to be polygamists or homosexuals is that we are still in the twentieth century, and those postures are not appropriate for our era.

With the help of this theological breakthrough, one can now discern a wisdom more than human in the *modus operandi* of the Gods: Patiently the Almighty brings the collective body of mankind along from one stage to the next, until the human race has experienced the lower realms on the way to higher ones, as symbolized in the temple ceremony.

"Just as we move from polygamy to monogamy to brotherly love in the area of personal relationships, we can see the same pattern in so many other facets of earth life. For example, there is the idea that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" (or vice versa), which means that the stages through which an embryo goes parallel the stages of evolutionary development of species. Evolution appears to be God's way of creating mankind.

"Anyway, to get a better perspective of the future—what we're all in for in the twenty-first century—I'm thinking of pulling up stakes and moving from Rexburg to San Francisco."

Joseph H. Jeppson
Woodside, California
from Vol 21, No.2 (Summer 1988)

I read Foster's article encouraging LDS members to stop trying to convert other Christians to Mormonism, and to be less authoritarian like the Quakers. If Foster would read the scriptures, he would discover that God encourages his followers to convert others to the truth. In fact, under the doctrine of "by their fruits ye shall know them," one may discern which *church* is the right one, by comparatively and scientifically analyzing their respective "fruits."

In the United States we have about 50 million Roman Catholics; their church has been going for about 1,950 years; this means they have 25,641 members to show for each year of their existence. The corresponding LDS number (5 million members divided by 153 years) is a whopping 32,680 members per year. But the Quaker number (140,000 divided by 331 years) is only 423.

Rustin Kaufman
Rexbug, Idaho
from Vol 17, No.1 (Spring 1984)