
Devery S. Anderson

For nearly thirty-four years, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought has occupied a place, defined by former co-editor Allen Roberts, as the "patriarch (or matriarch)" of independent Mormon scholarship.¹ And notwithstanding an increase of anti-intellectual rhetoric² from the church hierarchy in recent years, the journal has managed not only to survive, but continues to provide nourishment for countless Mormons. Despite the fears from above (and their trickle-down effect), publications such as Exponent II (1974) and Sunstone (1975) followed the founding of Dialogue and have gained similarly loyal followings.³ Even church-sanctioned Brigham Young University Studies, which initiated publication several years prior to Dialogue, came to feel the competition brought on by the new journal and raised its content to higher levels of scholarship.⁴


⁴. Indeed, BYU Studies editor Charles Tate, upon taking over the journal in 1967, stated, "I will freely admit that if I am able to bring Studies 'of age,' it will be because of the impact of Dialogue, which has given the Church a challenge and in that way aided it." Charles D. Tate to Eugene England, 22 August 1967, Dialogue Foundation Collection, ACCN 385, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City. See also comments of Eugene England in "An Interview with Eugene England," The Carpenter 1 (Spring 1970): 15-18.
Although *Dialogue* and other independent publications remain unknown to most Mormons, they are nevertheless an important presence for thousands within the faith. Some attest to the balance the unofficial organs bring to the official ones. For some Latter-day Saints, outlets such as *Dialogue* remain the only contact they have with anything Mormon. Others maintain that these publications have kept them active in the church. Mormon historian Thomas G. Alexander once acknowledged a faith-promoting aspect of *Dialogue* after witnessing an intellectual friend fall away from Mormonism. Stressing that "the church was meant for all people," Alexander believed that this man, "who had so much to give and needed so much from the church," probably would have stayed in the church had he found like minded Mormons to share his experience. For over three decades, *Dialogue* has aided Mormons in that way.

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The idea for *Dialogue* predates the project that came to fruition by nearly a decade. As early as the late 1950s, Eugene England and Wesley Johnson, two of the original founders of the journal, were independently envisioning a publication that would unify and bring together an otherwise scattered group of Mormons. Unknown to each other, they started sharing their ideas with friends. Johnson recalls discussions with colleagues in 1959 as a graduate student at Columbia University. The following year, as a pre-doctoral fellow at UCLA, he made the idea for an independent publication his topic for an LDS sacrament meeting sermon. This talk excited the young Mormons in the audience who agreed that there was a need for more scholarly, thought-provoking essays than what they read in the monthly *Improvement Era*, then the official Mormon magazine for adults. Two years before, while an undergraduate at the University of Utah, Eugene England had discussed the idea with some of his friends in Salt Lake City. The idea had come to him after feeling

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6. G. Wesley Johnson interview, conducted by Devery S. Anderson, 3 August 1996, in Provo, Utah. In January 1971, the *Improvement Era* was revamped and became the *Ensign*, with basically the same content. Other church magazines were also changed and or discontinued at that time.

7. Mary Lythgoe Bradford, "Ten Years with *Dialogue*: A Personal Anniversary," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11(Spring 1978): 10. Bradford had been one of those involved in these early discussions at the University of Utah. She identifies others present as England’s wife, Charlotte, and Karl Keller, who was later teaching English at the State University of New York, Cortland, at the time *Dialogue* was founded. Both Bradford and Keller served the journal from the beginning in editorial positions.
"some uneasiness" about Mormonism's indifference toward people with intellectual gifts.8 "I was critical of Church publications, in a sense, because I didn’t find them very meaningful for me and some others I knew," England recalls.9 The decade ended without any action, however, as England, graduating with a B.A. in 1958, joined the Air Force, and Johnson, in 1961, went to Africa to write a doctoral dissertation on the political history of Senegal.10 By the mid-1960's, however, a publication for Mormon intellectuals became, as England later put it, "an idea whose time had come."11

I. 1965-66: Five Mormons With a Vision

I can tell you of my own experience at Harvard and Columbia, seeing good members of the Church leave the fold because they could not reconcile what they were being taught in class with what they learned in [priesthood] meeting on Sunday . . . Our hope is that our magazine may be a reassuring voice to these people, that they should not alienate themselves from Mormonism.

Wesley Johnson to Harvey L. Taylor, 3 December 1965

I think you state the big problem [for Dialogue] perfectly when you say it is to maintain "a highly developed sense of responsibility to the Church." Doubtless many faithful members will be suspicious no matter what you do . . .

Richard L. Bushman to Wesley Johnson, 8 August 1965

By early summer, 1965, interest in a new Mormon publication was brewing, and people were talking. However, few would ultimately act. The project that finally bore fruit began at Stanford University, where England was now a graduate student in English and Johnson was a young professor of history. England and his wife Charlotte (Hawkins), who together had served a mission in Samoa from 1954-56, now had six young children. Johnson and his wife Marion (Ashby) had two.12

Unknown to each other, both England and Johnson resumed their discussions with friends about starting a Mormon journal, and at least three of them listened. From these conversations, Frances Menlove,

10. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996; Marion Ashby Johnson, telephone interview conducted by Devery S. Anderson on 21 September 1999.
Joseph Jeppson (friends of England), and Paul Salisbury (a friend of Johnson) became excited enough to pledge their talents to this project.

Getting Started at Stanford

England and Johnson had yet to meet, however, but as it happened, they had a mutual friend. Diane Monson, a political science professor at Brigham Young University, occasionally visited Palo Alto, California and attended church meetings in the Stanford ward. England became acquainted with her from these visits; Johnson’s friendship had begun years earlier during his undergraduate days at Harvard. As each excitedly told her about his own ideas, Monson realized that “something was in the air” and encouraged the two, who had only heard of one another, to get together. Remembering these conversations, she refers to her influence as “peripheral yet pivotal.” One day after attending a Sunday school class taught by England, she urged him to get with Johnson and the others she was now hearing about. “So at Diane’s suggestion,” recalls England, “I got the group together at my home and we just talked about these feelings that we had.”

Frances Lee Menlove, a recent Ph.D. graduate in psychology, was now a research associate in the Stanford Psychology Department. She “became caught up with the idea” of starting a Mormon publication after conversations with England and Joe Jeppson. She credits her scientist grandfather for her interests in the Mormon intellectual arena. To him, Mormonism was unique, “because its domain, its scope, encompassed all of truth, no matter from what source or on what subject.” He passed on valuable advice to his granddaughter: “Never be afraid of inquiry. Never be afraid of ideas,” he urged. “The gospel can handle any clash between cultures, or religious faiths or with science.” This project appealed to Menlove because, “I thought the idea of helping to provide a forum for ideas was a service. I believed it was an important, potentially significant service to others.”

Paul G. Salisbury had known Johnson since their experience as missionary companions in Valence, France, a friendship that had continued into college and beyond. Salisbury had also known Menlove since their days as students at Stanford. Salisbury, then an architect living in Salt

13. England, serving in the bishopric of the Stanford student ward, attended church there, while Johnson and his family attended a local ward in Palo Alto. Ashby Johnson interview, 21 September 1999.
17. Frances Lee Menlove to Devery S. Anderson, 1 October 1997.
Lake City, had long recognized the need for an independent Mormon publication, and, like Johnson and England, had been discussing the idea with friends for nearly a decade. While attending Stanford, he and other students had held in-depth discussions on Mormonism during long drives back to Utah during Christmas and spring breaks and had talked of starting a journal focusing on Mormon history. Salisbury remembers these moments as "conversations that . . . remain in my mind as some of the most stimulating of my college days." Johnson later brought up his idea to Salisbury when they visited in 1965. "The idea caught my imagination immediately as something I had thought about and had wanted to do."  

Joseph H. Jeppson, who held degrees in history and law from the University of Utah and Stanford, taught history at the College of San Mateo when the group got together. His friendship with Menlove had begun in childhood when both attended church in the same Salt Lake City LDS ward. His interests in Mormon studies included church history and doctrine, and at Stanford, he had made a thorough study of the Mormon collection in the University library. His research forced him to conclude that official Mormon history often lacked in honesty and accuracy. Jeppson’s idea was to begin a newsletter that would remedy this. Mormon critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner had recently started their publication, the Salt Lake City Messenger, but Jeppson did not share their evangelical anti-Mormon bias and wanted to produce something "a little more literate and more neutrally oriented." As Jeppson shared this with Menlove, she informed him of Salisbury’s similar conversations with her. Jeppson then passed all of this on to England.  

Meetings took place throughout the summer at the England and Menlove homes, as well as in Johnson’s office at Stanford’s history department, and things began to take shape. Remembering the early planning meetings as “upbeat and exciting,” Menlove recalls that after they each suggested various formats, the group “began listening to each other’s ideas and the outcome was Dialogue.”  

England was primarily interested in Mormon theology and literature. Although Jeppson enjoyed theology, he wanted the publication to include Mormon history, as did Johnson and Salisbury. Menlove remembers, “I didn’t have a special agenda or area I wanted emphasized. I was hoping for a forum

18. Paul G. Salisbury to Devery S. Anderson, 17 May 1998; Johnson interview, 3 August 1996. Salisbury identifies one of these friends as Richard O. Cowan, who later joined the Religion Department at Brigham Young University.
where many subjects and issues could be discussed rigorously, respectfully and vigorously."

23 Although the others did have specific interests, they also wanted the journal to promote a variety of fields. More importantly, according to Salisbury, the group was "particularly united in our vision that the resources for such a journal lay in the Mormon intellectual community as found on various campuses across the U.S." The journal would fill a void, as Salisbury explains further:

Early in our discussions we sensed the role of such a journal as helping define or create or bring together such a Mormon intellectual community. We all knew former colleagues, missionary companions, ward members who shared a life of the mind based in Mormonism—for which no forum or outlet or nourishment existed within the church [sic]. BYU Studies was the only such forum—and we all knew it—but it had been so fettered by its relationship with BYU, so subject to control and manipulation that it had been a great disappointment.25

By August, it became apparent that the group had plenty of commitment—but not enough money to proceed. They temporarily remedied this situation by each pledging $25.00, money to be used to print and mail a prospectus to a few hundred friends.26 Written by England and signed by all five of the founders, this simple, mimeographed sheet appealed to Mormon intellectuals:

Many men need some medium in which to consider their historical and religious heritage in relation to contemporary experience and secular learning. Some are excited about the dialogue this encounter provides and the good fruit it bears in their lives. Others find themselves alone in their experience and cut off from such a dialogue—and too often feel forced to choose between their heritage and the larger world.

We are now preparing to publish a journal designed to meet the needs of both these groups. It will be edited by Mormons who value the life of the mind in all its variety and who wish to respond to their Mormon heritage in

23. Menlove to Anderson, 1 October 1997.
25. Salisbury to Anderson, 17 May 1998. Before Dialogue's founding, Johnson acknowledged that the new journal "will be in competition with BYU Studies," but that there was room for both publications. "Most of the articles published in the Studies are written by BYU faculty members, but we think there are hundreds of faculty members who are LDS across the land, plus countless more professional and business people, who would like to contribute to the same kind of journal." Wesley Johnson to John Gardner, 29 August 1965, Dialogue Collection.
the context of human experience as a whole. We believe there are many in
the Mormon community and in other communities of belief or experience
who will find the resulting dialogue interesting and valuable . . . 27

Response to this announcement was immediate and encouraging.
People "started sending checks—even though we hadn't announced a
price," remembers England. 28 One anonymous donor even sent a hun-
dred dollars in cash. People mailed in enough money, recalls England ten
years later, that from that point, "we didn't have to put in any money
ourselves. We were able to finance everything from the money that came,
which as I look back, is amazing." 29 In addition, Johnson wrote his
friends from UCLA who, years earlier, were excited about his ideas and
asked them to help finance the project. 30

Choosing a Name

With plans going forward, a crucial step of course, was naming the
new journal. Salisbury recalls "that the selection of a name involved a lot
of early discussion and negotiation." 31 After considering various titles,
such as "Kairos" (a Greek word meaning "the redeemed time"), England
suggested the name Dialogue ("a rather trendy term of the 60s," remem-
bers Salisbury), which the team accepted. 32 To avoid confusion, they
added the subtitle, *A Journal of Mormon Thought*, to distinguish it from
the Lutheran publication, *Dialog*. 33 In a letter to a BYU professor, Johnson
said that the title was "... of necessity a compromise but nevertheless [it]
conveys much of what we are interested in." 34

Establishing the Editorial Board

Although some supporters worried that *Dialogue* could become a
voice for the disaffected, the founders sought to avoid this possibility
from the beginning. To insure that *Dialogue* would remain a responsible,
scholarly voice, Johnson insisted that the staff establish an editorial
board for critiquing and refereeing manuscripts. 35 They began soliciting
Mormon academics throughout the country for board positions, and of

32. England interview, 8 November 1994; England Oral History, 4; Salisbury to An-
derson, 17 May 1998.
35. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
those they contacted, most accepted the offer. The first board was impressive by any standard. Among the recruits was Dallin H. Oaks, then a professor at the University of Chicago Law School, and a former BYU classmate of Johnson. Oaks would later become more visible in Mormonism as president of Brigham Young University (1971-1980) and in 1984 as a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Oaks, who first feared Dialogue might be “a rather leftish outfit,” became interested when Richard L. Bushman, a history professor at BYU (who would become the book review editor for Dialogue), assured him that “our board was composed solely of active members of the church and that we had no intention of taking potshots.” After further discussions with Johnson, who had approached him originally, Oaks accepted. Reflecting back on his decision to join the board, Oaks recalls:

I had some significant concerns about the direction the journal would take over time. I knew the manuscripts it would attract would include some from persons who were struggling with their testimonies, from some who were disaffected or bitter, and even some from enemies of the church, since there were relatively few publication outlets for such persons and some people have a consuming desire to publish things about the church, for one reason or another. The managing editors and the members of the editorial board would perform a very important function in evaluating manuscripts. I could anticipate that with changes in editors or by gradual drift in criteria the journal could become something with which I would not want to be associated. I remember discussing these concerns with Wes Johnson, and receiving enough assurances that I decided to serve.

Chase Peterson, later the president of the University of Utah, also joined the board, as did Diane Monson. Mormon scholars from Harvard,

38. Oaks to Anderson, 10 August 1999. In his letter to me, Oaks recalls that “I was generally pleased with the content and quality of scholarship that appeared in the journal during my term on the board.” Although Oaks did not communicate his current feelings for Dialogue, it is clear that he has not always been pleased with essays published since his days on the Dialogue board. His April 1989 General Conference sermon, “Alternate Voices,” alluded to David John Buerger’s article (Winter 1987), “The Development of the Mormon Temple Endowment Ceremony,” which Oaks deemed inappropriate to publish. For the text of Oaks’s speech, see Ensign, May 1989, 27-30.

Johnson remembers Oaks’s contribution to Dialogue during these early years. “His reviews were beneficial, wise, well-balanced,” and full of “good insights.” Johnson continues, saying Oaks “was one of the most prompt reviewers and took the job very seriously. He was an excellent board member who shared the vision” (Johnson interview, 3 August 1996). Oaks served three terms on the editorial board. His third term expired in 1969.
Pennsylvania State, the University of Washington, and Stanford joined several others from Utah universities to pioneer this independent effort.39

There were those who elected not to affiliate with the new venture. Church Education employee Kenneth Godfrey, after accepting a position on the editorial board, resigned at the encouragement of his stake president Alma Burton. Burton, referring to the editors as “the modern Godbeites,” told Godfrey to “stay away from them.”40 “I have mixed emotions regarding this decision,” wrote Godfrey of his resignation. “Because I feel that things one feels deeply about should be supported regardless of the consequences. Perhaps this is the real reason for the resignation because of my feeling that one ought to obey counsel.”41

Henry B. Eyring, Jr., then a professor in the Stanford Business School (who would later become an apostle also) was approached, but refused. “I think what you’re doing is marvelous,” he said to England, as the two ate lunch together on a bench near the Stanford LDS chapel. “I think it’s needed by the church and that the Lord probably wants it, but I’ll have nothing to do with it because it would disturb some of the General Authorities,” especially his uncle, Apostle Spencer W. Kimball.42

The journal will forever remain indebted to the men and women who served on the first editorial board. Johnson looks with gratitude, to “those who supplied their names, put their reputation on the line.”43 That Dialogue came to meet their expectations is evident by a 1967 letter from Dallin Oaks to Johnson: “Thank you for the honor of inviting me to serve another year on the Board of Editors of Dialogue. I continue to treasure my association in this worthy project.”44

Motivated by the response to the first flyer, the group used the funds that came in to create a professionally printed brochure, which included a subscription form ($6.00 per year; $4.00 for students and missionaries), aimed at thousands of prospective supporters.45 Most of these names became available to the team through the annual Directory of Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Higher Education and School Administration. Published at the behest of BYU president Earnest L.

42. England Oral History, 20, England to Anderson, 13 September 1999. Eyring spoke similar comments to Jiro Numano, the founder of Mormon Forum, an independent Japanese publication. When Numano asked Eyring for advice in the late 1980s, Eyring referred to his experience when Dialogue was founded, and then concluded that “I cannot encourage or discourage this,” but admonished Numano to “try to be in line with Gene England” (“A Mormon Japanese Reader’s Digest,” Sunstone 19 (December 1996): 58).
43. Johnson Interview, 3 August 1996
Wilkinson since the mid-1950s, it included names of Mormons associated with Universities all over the United States. This list alone gave the team the exposure Dialogue needed.46

Informing the Brethren

Before embarking on a major advertising blitz, however, some of the founders felt they should inform the general authorities of the church about Dialogue. By late summer, England, Johnson, and others had informed a few in the hierarchy of their plans,47 so the leadership was not unaware of the emergence of the journal, but a more formal announcement seemed in order. The question was how to go about making such an announcement, and the approach that was eventually taken was a compromise resulting from weeks of debate.

Richard Bushman, who took responsibility for informing the brethren, wrote to an early supporter that the team would likely give “an outline to President [Hugh B.] Brown, not asking for approval, but merely to keep him informed.”48 This plan was vetoed by the others who were in favor of approaching the general authorities individually. Bushman, however, concluded that this approach would be a mistake, as most of the leaders already knew about the journal. “Dialogue was brought up in the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the BYU, where quite a number of the Brethren were present,” he wrote to Johnson. “[T]he attitude was simply, let’s wait and see.” Stephen R. Covey, then an assistant to BYU’s President Wilkinson, was present at that meeting and “put in a good word for us . . . Chase [Petersen] has had some indication that the journal has been discussed at a Thursday [temple] meeting.”49 Bushman, however, had other concerns about individual interviews:

46. The directory was not published again after 1965, but in a letter to the editor of BYU Studies the previous year, Stanley B. Kimball, a history professor at Southern Illinois University, criticized that publication for its limited scope. Suggesting a format similar to other scholarly magazines, Kimball advocated that BYU Studies make use of the thousands of scholars listed in the directory, that “some group consciousness [be] effected and an ‘order’ for the learned defense of the Mormon faith formed.” As it stood, BYU Studies remained “rather parochial in concept inasmuch as the Editorial board is all at the ‘Y’ and since 84% of the articles in the first eight issues came from Utah, 74% from the ‘Y’ alone, and 37% from individuals at the ‘Y’ under the rank of associate professor.” Kimball’s criticisms, coming over a year before the appearance of Dialogue, seem prophetic in spelling out the aim of the new journal, a further indication that scholars were sensing the need for such a publication. See Stanley B. Kimball, “Mormon Culture: A Letter to the Editor,” BYU Studies 5 (Winter 1964): 125-128.

47. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996; Wesley Johnson to Truman Madsen, 12 August 1965, Dialogue Collection. Unfortunately, Johnson did not identify who these general authorities were.


49. Richard Bushman to Wesley Johnson, 7 November 1965, Dialogue Collection.
If I approached Brother [Mark E.] Petersen personally and told him of our plans I would almost force him to deliver an opinion. If he had once spoken, though he was but one man, and speaking personally, if I disregarded his advice, we would indeed be in trouble. Bob Thomas has suggested that we should not approach any authority whose advice we were not willing to take. At present, precedents being what they are, most of the Brethren will be suspicious, and if by a direct confrontation we put them in a position where they have to say something, if only to be civil, we may force their hand at an inopportune moment.50

Bushman concluded that writing a letter to the First Presidency was the best way to avoid this problem. He had earlier drafted a two page letter on 25 October 1965 and sent a copy to the team at Stanford, England, initially against writing the presidency, conceded in a letter to Bushman on 12 November: “I surrender. With some misgivings but a good spirit. You state your case well . . .” However, feeling the letter was too long, England convinced Bushman to shorten it to one page. “Our feeling here is that a letter should be sent to arrive just before Thanksgiving,” he added. “It should be a warm but fairly formal letter signed perhaps by myself and you.”51 After England suggested a paragraph of loyalty to the church leaders, Bushman responded:

Doug Alder is the son-in-law of [assistant First Presidency secretary] A. Hamer Reiser. Doug says that people are always lobbying the Brethren for one cause or another and invariably they pour on their testimony. The Presidency much prefers that people level with them, say clearly what they want, and end.

Alder also advised Bushman against sending the letter to anyone but the First Presidency. “If we do each one [recipient] will form an opinion, and many of these will be unfavorable.”52 England, however, countered:

We would much prefer that they formed an opinion on the basis of our prospectus and a copy of the letter to the First Presidency than that they form it on the basis of someone’s writing them (probably a crank letter) after seeing one of our ads or a prospectus.53

England’s reasoning, in the end, prevailed. Bushman mailed his edited letter to the First Presidency, dated 20 November 1965 (signed also by England), along with the brochure, to all thirty-seven general authorities. He also sent copies to directors of the various LDS institutes, to

50. Bushman to Johnson, 7 November 1965.
Ernest Wilkinson, Stephen R. Covey, and to Earl C. Crockett, Academic Vice President at BYU.  

England took for granted a positive reaction from church leaders. “I just assumed they would approve. I saw our project as wholly in accord with the church’s mission, and a contribution to it.” He continues:

One of my growing interests as an Institute teacher at Stanford was young people in the church, and their problems and needs as they were faced with intellectual challenges at college. I realized that the official church wasn’t doing much for them—perhaps it shouldn’t—there wasn’t any particular reason—this was a new problem that was developing. In the spirit of the lay church, I felt that people who saw the problem should try to do something about it.

This concern for young people was the focus of the letter to the First Presidency:

Our combined experience in many universities has made us keenly aware of the intellectual pressures on our youth. We believe that to hold them we must speak with many voices. A straightforward testimony by a man of spiritual power is most effective; Institute classes and the church schools help a large number. Unfortunately, these methods do not reach certain ones, including some of the finest students. Often these are overawed by the brilliance of secular culture. By comparison their own beliefs, as they perceive them, seem embarrassingly unsophisticated. They ascribe intellectual superficiality to Latter-day Saints and the Gospel itself and feel compelled to choose reason over faith.

We believe that Dialogue can help reach these young people. Its contributors have the training and the qualities of mind respected in the universities, and its manner will be suitably candid and objective. At the same time it will display the rich intellectual and spiritual resources of the Gospel as mature men have discovered them and how relevant our faith is to contemporary life. The content of the magazine will be proof that a Latter-day Saint need not abandon thought to be a faithful Church member nor his faith to be thoughtful. All of our young people however firm, should benefit from that kind of testimony.

Although church leaders never answered the letter directly, they later published a statement in the church’s quarterly Priesthood Bulletin, in response “to questions from stake and ward leaders and from individual members” about the journal. “. . . Dialogue is an independent maga-

zine, privately owned, operated and edited. It has no connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints either officially or unofficially.” Hence the contents “are never submitted to Church Authorities for approval and therefore are the sole responsibility of the editors.” Avoiding an endorsement or censure, the church elected to remain aloof. “This is exactly what we hoped for and expected,” says England. At least one general authority received an additional letter. Jeppson wrote Apostle Spencer W. Kimball about the journal just two weeks after Kimball would have received his copy of the letter to the First Presidency. Jeppson knew Kimball from their experience together walking across the plains as part of the 1947 centennial celebration of the Mormon trek west. “For such a journal to be profitable and faith building,” responded Kimball, “certainly it will need to be watched with great care for there are people who would be glad to ‘use’ its pages to air their ideas and concepts, some of which would not be in harmony with revealed truth.” The founders of Dialogue certainly welcomed such advice. But with the “wait and see” attitude the leaders had informally adopted, for now, giving advice was a far as they were willing to go.

Spreading the Word

Once they had informed church leaders about Dialogue, the Stanford team began advertising the journal all across Mormondom. “Things are going full steam,” wrote England. “The last two weeks have been D-Day in Utah, where we’ve conducted a big advertising campaign in all the papers and spread our prospectuses all over the campuses.” In all, the team sent out 10,000 brochures. The response was phenomenal, with some supporters hardly able to contain their excitement. “It is the most exciting news to come out of the West in many years,” wrote one Ph.D. candidate to England. For the group at Stanford, this interest seemed incredible. “I think that none of us could have predicted the very great response that we had once we sent out our flyer,” says Johnson.

59. Spencer W. Kimball to Joseph Jeppson, 10 December 1965, copy in my possession. When the first issue of Dialogue appeared in March 1966, Kimball wrote Eugene England a letter of thanks for his complimentary copy. “I have not had opportunity yet to read it, but I will carry it with me to my next long distance assignment and read it” (Spencer W. Kimball to Eugene England, 12 April 1966, Dialogue Collection).
60. England to Crockett, 11 December 1965.
63. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
land agrees: “Subscriptions poured in at such a rate that by the time we went to press with our first issue, we had enough saved to more than pay for the first year’s four issues.”

Some unexpected publicity came from the national media. On 12 December 1965, the New York Times featured an article on the founding of Dialogue. Although several subscriptions came through this exposure, general authorities, as well as members of the Dialogue staff, complained of inaccuracies in the article. England took issue with certain statements, noting that the Times correspondent “was after sensationalism,” that after interviewing Salisbury, the reporter added “a few mis-attributes, and a misleading tone and completely misrepresented us.” England further spoke of his displeasure in a letter to family friend and apostle Mark E. Petersen. England assured Petersen, who also found the article disturbing, that Dialogue had a loyal purpose, “contrary to publicity in the NY Times which misrepresented the church in general as well as our journal.” Petersen responded, “I should be glad to read it [Dialogue] when it comes.”

Two weeks later, the Times publicized Dialogue again, in a lengthy article by correspondent Wallace Turner. Turner, focusing attention on the erstwhile Mormon doctrine of polygamy and the current practice of banning black males from the priesthood, describes liberal Mormons as “hungry as never before for avenues of discussion.” Calling Dialogue their answer, Turner noted the nature of the journal: “It will not be antichurch, nor rebellious. But it will be independent of church control.”

While on a church assignment in San Mateo, California, Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley, sensitive to church coverage in the press, spent a Satur-

64. England, “On Building the Kingdom with Dialogue,” 129. Joseph Jeppson, who was in charge of Dialogue’s finances, insisted that the group keep enough money in the bank to pay back subscribers in case the journal, for whatever reason, folded (England interview, 8 November 1994).
66. Eugene England to Richard Marshall, 14 December 1965, Dialogue Collection. Reading the Times article, several statements would have been disturbing to Mormon leaders and the Dialogue staff, the latter insisting that the journal was born out of loyalty to the church. One quotes Salisbury that, “[w]e will of course be concerned with the church stand against the repeal of 14-(b)–[a section of the Taft-Hartley Law permitting state ‘right-to-work’ laws], the stand of the church against pacifism in the Vietnam War and the position taken by Mormon leaders in relationship to Negroes.” Salisbury was also attributed with a claim that the church stifles free thought. According to the article, eighteen members of the editorial board lived outside of Utah “because it is difficult to hold nonconformist views within the church and prosper in Utah.”
day evening with England. After reading the Times articles, Hinckley had concluded that Dialogue’s aim was to attempt to speak with finality on Mormon issues. England responded to their conversation in a follow-up letter: “I can’t emphasize too strongly that Dialogue is not a theological journal or anything remotely like one; when we talk about a journal of Mormon thought, we are not talking about the Mormon position on any doctrine...” England also assured Hinckley that Salisbury, interviewed for the Times, “...was entirely misrepresented and misquoted from the very first paragraph, which erroneously called him the editor. He is a devoted and orthodox member of the church whose association with Dialogue can only be to our benefit.”

Hinckley seemed relieved in his response to England two days later. “The explanation helps,” he wrote. However, still concerned about bad publicity for the church, he enclosed “a clipping of the kind which creates the image of Dialogue as a journal of dissent.”

To counter the negative image that the Times article may have caused, Salisbury sought publicity in Utah newspapers, but this proved frustrating. According to England, Salisbury became “miffed over the run-around the Salt Lake papers had been giving him for over a week.” The Deseret News, the Church News, and The Salt Lake Tribune, “[are] unwilling to do a straight new[s] story on us for reasons that sound suspiciously like plain fear of anything that even remotely might be controversial.” Paid advertising was not always successful either. Ads that appeared in the Tribune, “easily got lost,” remembers Salisbury. Advertisements appeared in the Utah Daily Chronicle at the University of Utah and, thanks to Bushman, in the Daily Universe at BYU. Later, Salisbury took out full cover ads in the program of the Utah Symphony. The Improvement Era had long advertised items ranging from books to household products. Salisbury submitted ads to that magazine as well, but they were never run (although they were never formally rejected either), even after First Presidency counselor Hugh B. Brown later offered to

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69. Eugene England to Gordon B. Hinckley, 7 March 1966, Dialogue Collection. Hinckley may have reached the conclusion England refers to from a statement, attributed to Salisbury, that “we seek to give voice to a growing intellectual community, to open the door to a variety of viewpoints impossible to express in existing Mormon church journals” (New York Times, 12 December 1965).

70. Gordon B. Hinckley to Eugene England, 9 March 1966, Dialogue Collection. Hinckley did not identify this clipping in his letter, nor was I able to find it among the Dialogue correspondence.

71. England to Marshall, 14 December 1965. According to the New York Times, both Salt Lake City newspapers claimed that “space problems, not the nature of the quarterly,” was the reason for the rejection.

lobby the magazine's editor. The quarterly alumni magazine *BYU Today* did turn them down outright. Salisbury succeeded in advertising on the church owned KSL in Salt Lake City, however, between sessions of the church’s general conference. A short, but enthusiastic article announcing *Dialogue* finally appeared in the *Church News* before the end of the year. Salisbury also promoted the journal on several radio call-in programs.

Response to publicity efforts and the obvious high interest in the forthcoming journal from the scholarly Mormon community clearly indicated the need for such an outlet among Mormon intellectuals. Consequently, quality, in terms of content and aesthetics became a priority from the very beginning. “We wanted something that would be of lasting value and something that would make a statement,” Johnson recalls. Familiar with the professionalism of the *Stanford Law Review*, he suggested that following a similar format would communicate both. With the tremendous response from pre-publication advertising, subscribers were sending the message that they expected as much.

Salisbury’s influence with the design of *Dialogue* cannot be overstated. He describes himself at that time as “fascinated in how journals were put together,” and credits the quarterly *Perspectives USA*, devoted to art and architecture, as having a tremendous influence on him. In their discussions, England remembers Salisbury’s fear that the publication would be misunderstood without the right look: anything in a cheap or newspaper format would resemble the Tanners’ anti-Mormon effort. This reasoning prevailed. “To be acceptable enough not to be dismissed immediately,” says England, “was reason enough, in addition to all the other good reasons, for having a really fine layout.”

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73. Salisbury to Anderson, 17 May 1998; Paul G. Salisbury, “Notes from a Meeting with President Brown,” recorded immediately after an 8:00 a.m. meeting on 29 September 1969 with President Hugh B. Brown in his office, copy in my possession. With regard to placing ads for *Dialogue* in the *Improvement Era*, Brown told Salisbury that “perhaps he could help us. He said he was on good terms with both Elder [Richard L.] Evans and Brother [Doyle] Green and would speak to both of them for us. I told him this would be very important to us, that an ad in the *Era* would help us reach the market we need. He said he would see to it right away.” Whatever attempts Brown made to help *Dialogue* advertise in the *Era*, no ads ever ran. Fifteen months after this conversation, the *Era* was discontinued, and the church no longer permitted advertising in its replacement, the *Ensign*.


78. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.

The Mormon History Association

As news of the project spread, groups from at least six other universities and organizations contacted *Dialogue*, saying that they, too, had planned to start a similar publication. Most, however, were happy now to support the project at Stanford instead. Perhaps the most important of these groups was the newly formed Mormon History Association. Leonard J. Arrington, founder and president, invited Johnson to speak at the first meeting of the organization, held on 28 December 1965 at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco. Assuring the group of *Dialogue*'s commitment to Mormon history, Johnson spoke of plans to publish a theme issue each year, and, according to the official minutes of the meeting, proposed “that the Mormon History Association take over the third issue as the first of these special theme issues. Leonard Arrington was appointed guest editor for such an issue.” “Our historical community needed an outlet for our serious historical articles,” wrote Arrington in his memoirs, “because most historical journals would run articles on Mormon historical topics only rarely.” Consequently, the MHA waited nearly a decade to begin publishing its own *Journal of Mormon History*.

A Volunteer Effort

As a member of the bishopric of the Stanford ward, England knew most of the Latter-day Saint students on campus and recruited a dozen or so of them to help with the necessities: typing the mailing list and subscription forms, answering mail, and readying the manuscripts for publication. This volunteer effort, carried out in various rooms on the Stanford campus, lasted for over a year and a half. “It was really a spiritual experience,” remembers England. These evenings opened with prayer, and the students found the effort gratifying,” for as he explains, “they

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felt that they were aiding the Kingdom.”86 Johnson remembers not only students, but several Stanford faculty members, library personnel, and local business people giving their time. Local Mormons such as Ralph Hanson of the Stanford Library, and Clayne Robinson, an attorney (who went on to teach opera at BYU), were among the volunteers. “People felt they were doing something special,” he recalls.87

Unsolicited feedback from unexpected quarters only served to affirm such a conviction. In a letter to England and Johnson, Diane Monson tells of her visit with a stake high councilman in Boulder, Colorado. “[He] is enthusiastic in promoting Dialogue. He guarantees 25 subscriptions at least, and will circulate brochures, which I will send to him.”88 Another supporter reported talk of the journal in the east: “Dialogue is picking up speed and seems to be on everyone’s lips in these parts,” wrote Mary Bradford from her home in Washington, D.C. “It was even discussed in Priesthood meeting last week.”89

Such enthusiasm could potentially backfire, and England knew where to draw the line, as evidenced in an exchange of letters months later between him and Monson. Monson enthusiastically informed the staff at Stanford that a Mormon salesman “would very much like to promote the sale of Dialogue ‘in every home’ as a special project for the New York Seventies priesthood group.”90 England, however, saw trouble with this approach:

... it is very tempting, but we feel quite unanimously that we neither want to misuse our connection with the church—such as the Birch Mormons have surely done—nor even appear to be doing so. We’ll bend over backwards to avoid that impression.91

In fact, due to such widespread publicity, negative rumors about Dialogue had made their way into the office before the first issue was even off the press. For example, Johnson received a letter from someone who had heard that LDS Institute of Religion directors were being told not to subscribe to the journal. “Yet in the same morning’s mail came a request for several subscriptions to be sent to Institute Headquarters,” he wrote to Dallin Oaks. Having also received other “letters of interest”

87. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
88. Diane Monson to Eugene England and Wesley Johnson, 2 December 1965, Dialogue Collection.
from LDS Institutes, Johnson could only conclude that "the first letter was no more than a reflection of a local rumor." 92

**Staff and Organization**

The five founders all served as part of the first editorial staff: England and Johnson filled the roles as managing editors; Frances Menlove took on the duty as manuscripts editor; the job of publication editor went to Paul Salisbury, and Joseph Jeppson served as "Notes and Comments" editor. In addition, Leonard Arrington, along with Lowell L. Bennion, former director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, accepted positions as advisory editors. Pioneering this kind of publication, England felt that the team "could use some counsel from wiser and older heads both in terms of the scholarly world and the church." 93

The history department at Stanford permitted the staff to house *Dialogue* in a portion of Johnson's office—an arrangement that required no rent or utilities expenses. 94 Stanford also hosted the journal's first post office box. 95

On 11 July 1965, the group held a meeting at Johnson's apartment in Stanford's Escondido Village, and the five founders—now trustees of the proposed *Dialogue* Foundation, "met and unanimously approved" the contents of a list of articles of incorporation and "voted to incorporate a non-profit corporation under the laws of Utah," with Salisbury's home in Salt Lake City designated as the "Principal Office." Jeppson, a licensed attorney, wrote the articles, and he and Salisbury were appointed chairman and secretary respectively. 96 Clyde L. Miller, Secretary of State of Utah, signed a certificate of incorporation on 23 September. 97 Everything was set. From that first official meeting in June 1965, it was to take just about nine months—a normal gestation period—to publish the first issue.

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93. England Oral history, 22. England here acknowledges that the editors used Bennion and Arrington only sporadically. Recalling his experience with *Dialogue*, Bennion said, "I knew it would be a mixed blessing, that it would bring problems and misunderstandings from headquarters ... but ... it's creative, intellectual, and I've never been afraid of exposing the gospel to thinking" (Lowell L. Bennion, Oral History, 141, as cited in Mary L. Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian* (Salt Lake City: *Dialogue* Foundation, 1995), 253). For Arrington's comments about his role with *Dialogue*, see Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 59-62.
94. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996. Johnson recalls with gratitude the support given him by Lewis William Spitz, renowned scholar and professor of reformation history at Stanford. Spitz persuaded the administration to give *Dialogue* free office space. "He told the administration that it [*Dialogue*] was an intellectual exercise stimulated by our Stanford experience" (Johnson interview, 9 August 1999).
II. 1966-1971: EUPHORIC BEGINNINGS

Things are going well. We have more than 1,300 subscriptions; a number of good articles are coming in. Interest is being expressed by people from all over the country. We are on our way.

Phillip C. Smith to Diane Monson, 26 February 1966

... I'm almost up to the last issue, and I am thrilled and proud of your co-horts. You are having an important impact in our area. People are pleased and motivated and reinforced. Good work!

Dallin H. Oaks to Wesley Johnson, 6 January 1967

Shortly before Dialogue appeared in March 1966, the journal already had 1,500 subscribers; by late October it would boast 3,400; by mid-1967, active subscriptions surpassed 7,500 and would eventually peak at around 8,000 during the England-Johnson tenure.98

Dialogue's Debut

The eagerly awaited premier issue of Dialogue (Spring 1966) more than fulfilled the many widespread and growing expectations. Salisbury designed the cover and layout. Johnson and England both wrote introductory editorials explaining their vision for the new journal.99 Leonard J. Arrington provided the lead article with his, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century." This essay, originally delivered at a meeting of the Western History Association in October 1965, included an appendix listing Ph.D. dissertations on Mormonism since the turn of the century. Menlove contributed a thoughtful essay, "The Challenge of Honesty," calling upon Latter-day Saints to be true to themselves and reminding them that an integral part of honesty is to confront doubts and fears, not to suppress them. A further aid to the thinking Mormon was Victor Cline's personal essay, "The Faith of a Psychologist." Cline, a devout Mormon, expounded on why he maintained religious beliefs within a profession where only ten percent claimed any religiosity. Claude Burtenshaw, in "The Student: His University and His Church," examined the college experience of various young Latter-day Saints and their attempts to reconcile their secular experience with religion. R. A. Christmas critiqued the literary contributions of a popular Mormon book with "The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt: Some Liter-


ary, Historical, and Critical Reflections." Christmas, acknowledging grammatical and editorial weaknesses, nevertheless maintained that Pratt makes a contribution to Mormonism by giving insight into frontier life and thought. This issue also saw the only contribution ever to appear by Truman Madsen, then director of the Institute of Mormon Studies at BYU. "Joseph Smith and the Sources of Love" was originally delivered as the Joseph Smith Memorial Sermon at the LDS Institute of Religion at Utah State University in December 1965.

Non-Mormons also entered the dialogue. Catholic scholar Mario S. De Pillis, of the University of Massachusetts, contributed "The Quest for Authority and the Rise of Mormonism," detailing the religious milieu of the 1820s and the rival sects contemporary with Mormonism. Joseph Smith, according to De Pillis, wanted "a sect to end all sects," and hoped to squelch the diverse views and contradictions he [Smith] found so offensive. A Roundtable featured protestant theologian (and Stanford professor) Robert McAfee Brown, along with Mormons Richard L. Anderson and David W. Bennett, debating Mormon philosopher Sterling M. McMurrin's recent book, The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965).

Overall, the first issue of Dialogue boldly declared that Mormonism was both to be taken seriously and to remain subject to scrutiny. And for the most part, responses to the debut were enthusiastic. Declaring the journal "long overdue" and "badly needed," one subscriber wrote that he knew of "scores of young college graduates who have been driven from the church by the narrow minded type of Mormon who seems to be in charge at this time. Perhaps your influence will change all that." Another wrote that "The first Dialogue is tremendously impressive. I had expected fine fare, but the feast that materialized was astonishing." Perhaps a letter to the editor, published in the second issue, best describes the fulfillment of the editors' aim in founding Dialogue:

People often say, "He has lost the glow and enthusiasm he once had as a new convert." I feel that for some of us the excitement of enquiry and discovery gave us part of that "alive" quality . . .

Dialogue is like a refreshing drink of water "in our lovely Deseret." I have properly devoured the first issue and it has revived a near-dead spiritual awareness. The doubts that had gone "underground" and the seeking that

had become self-conscious and stilted are uniting in a responsible spirit of re-investigation. I think that the active membership I have maintained with effort will be much more honest now.\textsuperscript{103}

Not everyone issued a positive critique, however. Ray Chandler Smith, Sr., "Prophet and Seer" of The Center Place in Independence, Missouri, previously having expressed hope that "your new venture will be a veritable success," wrote after examining the first issue, "and throwing it into the waste-paper basket," that he was "thoroughly disgusted!!!"\textsuperscript{104} Explaining himself ten days later, Smith elaborated:

I had expected \textit{Dialogue} would be a lifeline between Jesus Christ and man. But the [i]llusion has been proven inadequate, and undoubtedly the saying is true as far as theology is concerned—"God is dead."\textsuperscript{105}

One reader, perhaps expecting content that would mirror the official church organs, was clearly disappointed and described the first issue as "a real blow." "I think most of the contributors find the gospel interesting," the anonymous writer declared, "but there is no evidence that they believe in it." Especially upset by a short satirical piece written by Jeppson,\textsuperscript{106} the letter predicted doom: "If you don't choose to control the tone of your articles, \textit{Dialogue}'s demise may be slow, and even graceful, but it will go under."\textsuperscript{107}

All of the General Authorities received a complimentary copy of the first issue, sent with a cover letter, of which First Presidency Secretary Joseph Anderson formally acknowledged receipt.\textsuperscript{108} The only member of the hierarchy to voice a response was S. Dilworth Young, a member of the Council of Seventy. Young expressed a fear that "sooner or later you are going to run out of material which will be the solid opinion of the leaders of the church, past or present." Consequently, "the material is bound to become speculative, and that could cause trouble." This "trouble," according to Young, would be from liberals pushing their own particular agendas. "If you do resist [them], they likely will brand you as prejudiced, and with that brand on you, you will likely try to remove the brand by proving you are not." Young concluded with some friendly counsel:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{104} Ray Chandler Smith, Sr., to \textit{Dialogue} staff, 22 February and 8 June 1966, both in \textit{Dialogue Collection}.
\textsuperscript{105} Ray Chandler Smith, Sr., to \textit{Dialogue} staff, 18 June 1966, \textit{Dialogue Collection}.
\textsuperscript{107} Undated letter from "a Ph.D. candidate," \textit{Dialogue Collection}.
\textsuperscript{108} Eugene England and Wesley Johnson to the First Presidency, 29 March 1966; Joseph Anderson to Eugene England, 4 April 1966, both in \textit{Dialogue Collection}.
\end{flushright}
I know you are sincere, but in your sincerity, remember that undeviating loyalty to the church leaders (1st Presidency and the Twelve) is the only standard you can maintain if you want the approbation of the church."\(^{109}\)

Eugene England already shared Young’s concerns. “How much of a risk do we want to take in order to make Dialogue useful when issues are crucial?” he wrote to Bushman two days later. “Perhaps the answer is that we’re still too young to know and had better err on the conservative side.”\(^{110}\)

Young also took issue with England’s editorial, where he had asked Latter-day Saints to consider the possibility that they may be mistaken about many of their long held ideas.\(^{111}\) In a letter to Young, who felt that a true Latter-day Saint should never question fundamentals, England responded that LDS missionaries expect investigators “to question their most cherished beliefs—to consider the possibility that they might be dead wrong about things they have built their lives upon.” With such an approach, England asks, “How can we ask less of ourselves when we (in an indirect proselyting effort like Dialogue) offer to talk with people about our religious heritage?”\(^{112}\)

Also discouraging was a letter from BYU English professor Robert Thomas. Thomas, who was expected to provide a sermon for the second issue, became disillusioned after reading the first. “You mentioned that several general authorities seem to be either favorable or at least non-committed,” Thomas states. “I’m afraid my experience with them in regard to Dialogue is not so encouraging.”\(^{113}\) Thomas, apparently aware of some objections to the journal within the hierarchy, withdrew his support and promised manuscript.\(^{114}\)

The over-all praise the first issue received, however, was rewarding—exhilarating even—to the five founders of the journal, who saw their labors well-rewarded. In fact, the issue sold out within weeks, even though the initial run was for twice the subscription amount.\(^{115}\) More national publicity soon followed, as *Time* magazine featured a short piece

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113. Robert K. Thomas to Eugene England, 14 June 1966, *Dialogue* Collection. Richard Bushman remembers that Thomas’s reaction to *Dialogue* was based on Jeppson’s satirical “Non-Editorial Postlude.” Worried that the editors had crossed the line with this piece, “Bob came into my office and said, ‘Well, it’s all over’” (Richard L. Bushman, telephone interview conducted by Devery S. Anderson, 25 May 1998).

**Labors Behind the Scenes**

It was no easy task, through this totally voluntary effort, to see this and subsequent issues through the final stage of production. Johnson wrote a board member that ". . . getting out this first issue has been nearly a full-time job . . ." Johnson and England, as managing editors, oversaw the entire project. Both had prior experience editing university publications. As an undergraduate, Johnson had edited the satirical *Harvard Lampoon*, and England had edited the literary magazine *Pen* at the University of Utah. "It would be wrong to say that we didn't have differences," says Johnson of his experience working with England. However, the co-editors remember the overriding concern: "We had a vision of what we wanted to achieve, and we were both ready to sacrifice a great deal of our time and energy to achieve that."

As manuscripts editor, Menlove remembers that she "would receive new manuscripts, look them over, figure out [three] people who might be appropriate to review them and send them out." After the board members assigned to the manuscript would return their critique, "we would decide as a staff, whether to accept, accept with modifications or reject. I would then notify the author."

Salisbury, geographically distant from the team at Stanford, conducted his duties from Salt Lake City. As publications editor, he was in charge of "everything that related to getting the journal in print and to the public." Although the other staff members had a say in certain aspects of the design, "the selection of art work, photos and cover design, [and] the composition of pages were all mine for the first few years." Salisbury contracted first with Alphabet Press in Salt Lake City, but they soon went out of business. Salisbury next accepted a bid from Quality Press, also of Salt Lake City (interrupted later by a brief interlude with

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120. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
121. Menlove to Anderson, 1 October 1997.
122. Salisbury to Anderson, 17 May 1998. Johnson praises Salisbury's talent, creativity, and contribution to the journal. Salisbury's associations with the Salt Lake City artistic community also enabled him to bring their work to the pages of *Dialogue* (Johnson interview, 9 August 1999).
Bookcraft).124 His duties required him “to be at the printer’s office at just the right moment” to check last minute details.125

For Jeppson, working on Dialogue became a task that included daily visits to the office, editing manuscripts, and fulfilling his duties editing the “Notes and Comments” column, which featured announcements, news, and short essays on Mormonism. Jeppson, describing himself as representing “the far left of the group,” was also “the extant comedian,” according to the other founders. He saw to it that humor and satire made their way into Dialogue, which he introduced in the first issue with his brief “Non-editorial Postlude.” In three paragraphs, Jeppson criticized “the weighty precepts and lofty thoughts which our editors and writers have thrust upon the Mormon people in this issue,” and argued that a man seeking true guidance, “needs the help of his Home Teacher.”126 Some readers, not recognizing the intended humor, took Jeppson seriously; others were offended.127

Early challenges came to the editors in the form of manuscripts—or lack of good ones. Several of the early submissions had been written years earlier—waiting for the opportunity to be published. Rejecting up to 90% of submitted material, England remembers the early years as a time of “weeding out.”128 “I think by the third year,” recalls Johnson, “we finally . . . had gone through all of the Sacrament Meeting talks that people had sent in.”129

The editors learned early, however, that the best contributions had to be solicited. “You say you are short of manuscripts. I think we will always be short of good ones,” Bushman wrote to England. “I doubt if we can ever sit back and let people come to us.”130 The staff sought these writers through various means. One method was to search through back issues of the Improvement Era and to contact authors who had published

124. The Stanford Press actually wanted to print Dialogue, and the staff had taken bids from them. However, all things considered, it proved more cost effective to print the journal in Salt Lake City.
126. See “Non-Editorial Postlude,” previously cited. Jeppson continued his satirical editorials for several years under the name Rustin Kaufmann. This pseudonym was inspired by the movie The Graduate, starring Dustin Hoffman as a young Jewish man seduced by an older woman. “Kaufmann” reviewed the film in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought (Spring 1969): 111-113. Although this was a tongue in cheek review, at least one Jewish faculty member at Stanford came to Johnson’s office to complain that Dialogue “was anti-Semitic.” “We told him it was a joke,” remembers Jeppson, “but he didn’t smile” (Johnson interview, 3 August 1996; Jeppson to Anderson, 19 May 1998).
129. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
there. Nancy Lund, a volunteer in the office, sent a form letter to well-known Mormon scholars, asking them to contribute.\textsuperscript{131} As Dialogue’s reputation grew, the editors did not have to rely on solicitations exclusively. However, looking back on his own experience, Johnson remembers that “the best manuscripts [were always] commissioned by the editors.”\textsuperscript{132}

Unfortunately, as England explains apologetically, “we perhaps developed a too complex editorial process.” Consequently, “we offended a lot [of writers] by taking so long with the manuscripts.”\textsuperscript{133} Johnson concedes to a point, but maintains that “[w]hile it is true that we [fell] behind in corresponding with some authors, these in almost all cases have been rejects. Authors who were publishable have been given VIP treatment.”\textsuperscript{134} England, however, defends the care given to rejected authors To him, “one of our great services to aspiring Mormon writers was some good feedback their first time. So we took seriously the process of critiquing even articles we turned down, and I think we helped a lot of writers develop in the church.”\textsuperscript{135}

Each issue typically spent six weeks at press. The staff at Stanford would send Salisbury the manuscripts, who took them to the printer, where galley proofs were printed, sent back to Stanford, corrected, then returned to Salt Lake City for the printing of page proofs. At this stage, the authors were given a final chance to make corrections and modifications.\textsuperscript{136} From there the journal would be printed, bound, and mailed to subscribers. The earliest issues were produced through hand set type in hot metal.\textsuperscript{137} Salisbury remembers that, “shrink wrapping didn’t exist when we started and so each issue was [put] in a paper envelope and sealed.”\textsuperscript{138} Salisbury would organize 8-10 people into “stuffing parties,” at his father’s Salt Lake City insurance office.\textsuperscript{139} England remembers that

\textsuperscript{131} See form letter of Nancy Lund, sent to at least fourteen scholars, Dialogue Collection.

\textsuperscript{132} Menlove to Anderson, 1 October 1997; Wesley Johnson to Robert Rees, 14 July 1971, Dialogue Collection.

\textsuperscript{133} England Oral History, 9. England even recalls that the staff lost a manuscript submitted by Mormon historian Juanita Brooks. When England asked her for a replacement copy, she informed him she had not made a duplicate. “I just felt terrible about that for years, and I’m sure she hasn’t forgiven us,” remembered England a decade later (England Oral History, 28).

\textsuperscript{134} Johnson to Rees, 14 July 1971.

\textsuperscript{135} England interview, 8 November 1994.

\textsuperscript{136} Johnson interview, 9 August 1999.

\textsuperscript{137} Paul G. Salisbury, telephone interview conducted by Devery S. Anderson, 9 August 1999.

\textsuperscript{138} Salisbury to Anderson, 17 May 1988.

\textsuperscript{139} Salisbury interview, 9 August 1999. Salisbury remembers U of U and BYU faculty, as well as Chase and Greta Peterson among the volunteers.
his own staff and volunteers in Palo Alto met every Tuesday night. Keeping track of subscriptions was challenging. Since "we didn't then have any computer lists or anything, [we] did everything by hand." With 8000 subscribers eventually, one can appreciate how crucial the volunteers were to Dialogue.

Some Mormon general authorities subscribed to Dialogue from the beginning, and, prompted by a suggestion from an early supporter, all of them began receiving gift subscriptions with the Winter 1967 issue. "We will try it for a year," wrote England. The policy actually lasted into the next editorship. A few in the hierarchy, such as Marion D. Hanks, Paul H. Dunn, and First Presidency Counselor Brown, supported the enterprise. Brown even prevented BYU president Ernest Wilkinson from banning Dialogue from the university bookstore. Bushman had lobbied hard for placement of the journal at BYU, and wrote England that

... they cannot put Dialogue on the stand without Wilkinson's approval (standard procedure for all magazines) and he will not give approval until he speaks with the executive committee which is composed of a half dozen apostles. Lou [Prof. Louis Midgely] is afraid that Wilkinson will present the issue in such a way as to prejudice them against approval and then this decision will be interpreted as general disapproval by the Brethren.

During a meeting of the board of trustees—where Wilkinson argued his case against the journal, Brown countered that if Dialogue was too controversial for BYU, then perhaps books by some of those present should be banned also. "That brought the discussion to an end," says England.

Brown went so far in his support for the journal as to later suggest to England that Dialogue combine with BYU Studies as a church sanctioned

141. Victor Cline to Eugene England, 23 February 1968; England to Cline, 22 March 1968, both in Dialogue Collection.
142. England interview, 8 November 1994. According to England, some general authorities "felt we were trying to counsel them by sending them Dialogue to straighten them out and they resented it" (England Oral History, 16).
145. England Oral History, 18. Paul H. Dunn told the author a similar anecdote, in a conversation following his address at a single adult fireside in Sandy, Utah, six weeks before his death in January 1998. In 1966 Dunn was present in what may have been the same meeting of the Board of Trustees that England refers to above, yet the details vary slightly. As the board discussed Dialogue, one of the general authorities, whom Dunn did not identify, spoke up: "As far as I'm concerned, that book should be burned." Hearing this comment, church president David O. McKay "sat up in his chair and said, 'Now look—in this Church we do not burn books. If we did, I can think of some books by a few of you that I would rather see burned than Dialogue.'
publication for Mormon intellectuals.\textsuperscript{146} Whether Brown felt that church approval would insure a long life for the journal, or that it would reach a larger audience is unknown, but nothing ever came of this suggestion. N. Eldon Tanner, Second Counselor in the First Presidency (and a nephew to Brown), took a different approach. “We have heard since December that President Tanner is also quite encouraging about our journal,” wrote England shortly before the first issue appeared. But the Mormon leader

. . . made the interesting suggestion that the journal should be sure to include articles which attack the Church because that would make it very clear that \textit{Dialogue} is in no way an official Church journal. He would only hope that there be opportunity for rebuttal and of course this is exactly what we want the journal to provide.\textsuperscript{147}

Such feedback from church leaders, positive or negative, was for the most part confined to the England-Johnson years.

\textit{Seeking Balance}

From the beginning, critics accused the editors of having a liberal bias.\textsuperscript{148} Although England concedes that, “the very idea [of a publication like \textit{Dialogue}] is a liberal idea and attracts liberals in a relative sense,” the editors were “genuinely determined to provide material at cross spectrums and actually commissioned articles from a variety of viewpoints . . . .”\textsuperscript{149} Evidence in the \textit{Dialogue} correspondence indicates that the editors did

\textsuperscript{146} England Oral History, 18; England interview, 17 July 1996. In his “Notes from a Meeting with President Brown,” Salisbury writes of Brown’s favorable comments toward the journal:

President Brown said he liked \textit{Dialogue} and felt it was important to the church, but that most of the brethren are afraid of it. He said they are afraid of anything that questions or that they feel challenges their authority and that this is too bad. “It shouldn’t be that way. We teach that truth should be able to stand on its own in the market place.” He elaborated briefly on the gospel belief that truth can withstand any scrutiny and that I said I felt most of the brethren objected to \textit{Dialogue} without reading it and that I didn’t feel this was fair to us. President Brown said, “It’s worse than that, it’s immature, it’s infantile.”


\textsuperscript{148} Indeed, the second issue of \textit{Dialogue} (Summer 1966) contained J. D. Williams, “The Separation of Church and State in Mormon Theory and Practice,” which criticized the conservative views of Apostle Ezra Taft Benson. Williams’s essay so offended some of the brethren that they withdrew a call about to be issued to Leonard Arrington to serve as a mission president in Italy. Apparently it was guilt by association as Arrington had published in the journal and served as an advisory editor. See Arrington, \textit{Adventures of a Church Historian}, 89.

\textsuperscript{149} England interview, 8 November 1994.
seek people who would provide balance. Future apostle Neal A. Maxwell, then Executive Vice President of the University of Utah, responded to an invitation to contribute to Dialogue. “I fully intend to write something” he responded,” although his submission never came. The editors also encouraged Truman Madsen to continue publishing in the journal, but after his piece in the premier issue, he declined any further involvement. According to England, Madsen said he was given “a look” by a general authority which indicated that he “probably shouldn’t write for Dialogue.”

The editors also encouraged general authorities to submit articles. However, Elder Marion D. Hanks, willing to contribute, was denied permission by church president David O. McKay. The only general authority to publish in Dialogue was President Hugh B. Brown. His funeral sermon for retired BYU English professor P. A. Christensen appeared in the spring 1969 issue.

This desired balance also extended to political issues, and the staff sought contributors among Mormon scholars for that purpose. L. Ralph Mecham, assistant to the president for special projects at the University of Utah, responding to such a request from Salisbury, suggested three “moderate-to-conservative Republicans who have good standing in the church and who might be willing to write articles.”

Maintaining balance remained a constant challenge, however. Acknowledging that the majority of articles to appear in Dialogue “could probably be characterized as leaning towards a liberal point of view,” Johnson wrote to board member Victor Cline that he would welcome conservative perspectives on issues, “but this can be made possible only if we can locate people who feel this point of view and will also take the

trouble to sit down and articulate it in an article.”  

England also assured Cline six months later that “the majority of our effort since before publishing our first issue has gone into trying to involve the more conservative and orthodox members of the church in the journal.” However, “we keep running into the same old problem of being misunderstood and badly judged—largely by people who haven’t taken the time to read the journal with any serious attention.” Sometimes, however, the editors inadvertently contributed to the problem.

In retrospect, England insists that he used poor judgment in publishing a letter (Summer 1967) written by church member Stuart Udall, then Secretary of the Interior in the Lyndon Johnson administration. Udall, from a prominent Mormon family in Arizona, had long been an outspoken supporter of civil rights, and now sought to counter accusations that, as a Mormon, he must be racist since his religion denied priesthood office to blacks Thus, Udall decided to openly attack that policy. Because England hoped for “constructive dialogue” on this issue, he first welcomed the Udall piece. Initially he intended to use it as part of a roundtable, but then persuaded Udall to submit his essay as a letter to the editor instead. Udall requested advance copies of the letter, as it would appear in the journal, in order to forewarn Mormon president David O. McKay and other leaders. Criticizing the racial policy, Udall went right to the point: “My fear is that the very character of Mormonism is being distorted and crippled by adherence to a belief and practice that denies the oneness of mankind.” Urging a change in policy, he maintained:

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155. Wesley Johnson to Victor Cline, 3 June 1967, Dialogue Collection. Johnson even met with conservative Mormon writer Cleon Skousen for nearly three hours in Skousen’s home in Provo, Utah, in an attempt to persuade him to publish in Dialogue. Skousen refused (Johnson interview, 9 August 1999).


157. Udall began serving in this post in 1961 under President John F. Kennedy.


159. Eugene England to Stewart L. Udall, 25 April 1967, Dialogue Collection; Johnson interview, 9 August 1999. Ross Peterson, however, cites a 20 December 1966 letter from Hank Berenstein, an aide to Udall, where Berenstein convinced Udall to submit the essay as a letter to the editor. See Peterson, “Do Not Lecture the Brethren,” 279. However, Udall must have ignored this advice, as four months later, England, in the letter cited above, indicates that the eventual format that the essay took is only now being suggested: “[W]e considered using your essay as part of a roundtable, but that would have to wait for our winter issue because of our prior commitments. We therefore would like to print your essay as our lead Letter to the Editors, with an editor’s note specifically inviting response to it.”

160. Udall to England, 28 April 1967, Dialogue Collection; Ross Peterson notes that in addition to McKay, Udall sent the letter to First Presidency counselors Hugh B. Brown, N.
The restriction now imposed on Negro fellowship is a social and institutional practice having no real sanction in essential Mormon thought. It is clearly contradictory to our most cherished spiritual and moral ideals.\textsuperscript{161}

Udall submitted the letter on 24 February 1967. Coincidentally, \textit{Time} and \textit{Newsweek} began criticizing the Mormon position on blacks in March installments of the magazines, predicting that the priesthood policy would hurt Mormon governor George Romney's presidential campaign.\textsuperscript{162} England informed Udall that the \textit{Dialogue} issue containing his letter would be sent to subscribers on May 17. Udall chose that day to release the letter to the Associated Press.\textsuperscript{163}

The national media responded by focusing on Udall's plea to church leaders to remove the priesthood restriction.\textsuperscript{164} Letters to the editor poured into the \textit{Dialogue} office responding to Udall, twelve of which were published in the following two issues.\textsuperscript{165} Among the immediate barrage of letters Udall himself received were hundreds from Arizona Mormons, including apostles Delbert L. Stapley and Spencer W. Kimball, who thought Udall's plea was out of line.\textsuperscript{166} Liberal Mormons applauded Udall's "courage" for speaking out.\textsuperscript{167} Because church leaders had already received death threats over the black issue, England feared that with national publicity, Mormons would assume \textit{Dialogue} supported those threats. Although Johnson maintains that publishing the Udall letter "was a statement we had to make to establish our credibility in a number of quarters," England believes that this move "did us, and prob-

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Eldon Tanner, Arizona apostles Delbert L. Stapley and Spencer W. Kimball, and Governor George Romney. See "Do Not Lecture the Brethren," 279.


\textsuperscript{163} Peterson, "Do Not Lecture the Brethren," 281.


\textsuperscript{166} Peterson, "Do Not Lecture the Brethren," 283-84. Peterson notes the contrast between the Stapley and Kimball letters. Stapley, whose 26 May letter Peterson described as "a theological defense of racism," declared that, "God himself placed the curse...and it is up to him and not to man to lift that curse." Kimball's 25 May letter avoided discussion of any justification of the priesthood ban, but expressed disappointment in Udall's attempt to "command your God" or "to make a demand of the Prophet of God!"

\textsuperscript{167} According to Peterson, Mormons praising Udall included activist Esther Peterson, also serving in the Johnson administration as chair of the President's Committee on Consumer Interests, sociologist Lowery Nelson, Mormon bishop Wayne M. Carl, and former BYU professor W. Grant Ivins. See Peterson, "Do Not Lecture the Brethren," 282-283.
ably the church, significant harm.”¹⁶⁸ Immediate feedback to England seemed to confirm this. “How do you suppose the brethren react[ed] when they read your name and your publication as the vehicle for such a letter with some ominous ramifications?” asked Richard Marshall, England’s former bishop.¹⁶⁹ Ten days later, Marshall wrote again:

While it is true you’ve made yourself some good friends among the brethren, it’s also true that some are saying now to others: “I told you so.”

… Imagine how shocked I was to have one of [the general authorities] say in a meeting in my presence that “Gene England is destroying himself.”¹⁷⁰

D. Arthur Haycock, England’s former mission president, also sent England a letter, “replete with innuendos that the [sic] good proportion of the general authorities were about to cut me off, if not in fact, at least in their hearts.”¹⁷¹ England tried to offset any damage by writing N. Eldon Tanner, explaining how and why Dialogue came to publish the Udall letter. Despite national press which reflected negatively on the church, England assured Tanner that “Dialogue made no effort before or after publication to give the letter publicity.”¹⁷²

Although the Udall letter helped sour some general authorities on Dialogue, it prompted many lay Mormons to speak out on the issue of blacks and the priesthood for the first time. Interestingly, most critical responses avoided justification of the policy, instead, scolding Udall for making a demand of church leaders.¹⁷³ Ironically, two supportive letters to Eugene England came from future general authorities. “The Udall controversy was interesting,” wrote Hugh Pinnock. “I was surprised to find people becoming as explicit as they did with the article.” Pinnock concluded with an admonition:

You must (hopefully) print such opinions—especially when a government official of his stature speaks, whether he be right, wrong or indifferent. Generally speaking people are pleased with your work—pray that too many don’t become satisfied, however, or you will fail in what you can accomplish.¹⁷⁴

Jeffrey R. Holland, then director of the LDS institute in Seattle, asked for two new subscriptions for the institute. “One copy isn’t going to be enough to handle the traffic if the ‘Letters to the Editor’ keep getting national attention.”

_Scholars and the Black Issue_

As a scholarly voice in the Mormon intellectual community, _Dialogue_ could hardly avoid discussion of the sensitive “Negro Doctrine,” however. In the years following the advent of the civil rights movement, the church received intense criticism over the priesthood ban. The winter 1967 issue of _Dialogue_ gave the topic scholarly attention by featuring “Mormonism and the Negro: Faith, Folklore, and Civil Rights” by Mormon sociologist Armand Mauss. Unlike Udall, Mauss did not attack the church’s position, but sought to refute some of the popular explanations as to why the church denied priesthood to members of African descent. Describing as “folklore,” the widely believed views of nineteenth-century Mormon leaders (beliefs echoed by many contemporary writers), Mauss demonstrated as unscriptural the notion that blacks were less valiant or neutral in the “war in heaven,” or were forever cursed or marked because of the actions of biblical figures Cain and Ham. Keeping balance, however, he also rejected as unsubstantiated the more liberal view that the policy was an infringement on Negro civil rights, as proclaimed by Udall, and, earlier, by the NAACP.

Two years later, the issue found its way into _Dialogue_ once again. Stephen G. Taggart, a recent graduate of Cornell University, submitted an essay called “Social and Historical Origins of Mormonism’s Negro

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176. Stanford, which housed the _Dialogue_ offices, refused athletic participation with BYU in 1969 over the black policy, as did other universities. Johnson specifically remembers the Stanford incident originating after the assassination of Martin Luther King when the university set out to increase the black presence on campus. The BYU boycott created tension between Mormon and non-Mormon students and faculty, and England feared “the possibility that [Stanford] would broaden their concern about the church to cut off relationships in all kinds of places.” Johnson recalls the feeling that “Dialogue didn’t have much of a future [at Stanford].” However, the journal remained safe until moving to Los Angeles in 1971 (“An Interview with Eugene England,” 19; Johnson interview, 9 August 1999). See also William F. Reed, “The Other Side of ‘The Y’”, _Sports Illustrated_ (26 January) 1970: 38-39, and Brian Walton, “A University’s Dilemma: BYU and Blacks,” _Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought_ 6 (Spring 1971): 31-36, for an account of this episode.
Policy,” which Dialogue agreed to publish.\textsuperscript{178} Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, in September 1969, Taggert sent copies of his manuscript to President Hugh B. Brown.\textsuperscript{179} Alvin R. Dyer, a special counselor in the presidency, also read the manuscript (Dyer was appointed as an extra counselor in 1967 due to President McKay’s declining health). In a meeting with Salisbury, Brown “stated at the outset that it was a very good manuscript,” but advised against publishing it “for Dialogue’s sake.” According to Salisbury, Brown said that “many of the ‘brethren’ were upset by the article but [Brown] questioned whether they had really read it.” Most upset was Dyer, who, according to Brown, called the piece, “an ‘abominable’ document, ‘full of error from start to finish’.” Dyer promised to supply Brown with a written response to the manuscript, but failed to do so, even after Brown “asked him about it a dozen times . . .”\textsuperscript{180} Dyer finally submitted his ten page review, titled, “An Article,” calling Taggert’s manuscript “one of the most vicious, untrue articles that has ever been written about the church.”\textsuperscript{181} Dyer later called Eugene England and recommended against publishing the Taggart manuscript, although he failed to explain why.\textsuperscript{182}

Brown, “unequivocally” declaring to Salisbury “that the Church’s stand on the Negro question was ‘not a doctrine but a policy,’” certainly would have approved of the Taggart manuscript for its conclusion that “[t]he weight of the evidence suggests that God did not place a curse upon the Negro—that his white children did,” and Taggart’s plea “that the time for correcting the situation is long past due.”\textsuperscript{183} Brown would

\textsuperscript{178} Taggart’s paper had previously received “Honorable Mention” in the 1st Annual Dialogue Prizes for articles submitted in 1968. See Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 4 (Spring 1969), inside back cover.


\textsuperscript{180} Salisbury, “Notes from a Meeting with President Brown.”

\textsuperscript{181} Bush, “Writing ‘Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine’”, 239.

\textsuperscript{182} England Oral History, 17.

\textsuperscript{183} Stephen G. Taggart, Mormonism’s Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1970), 76. Brown was deeply concerned with the church’s position regarding black priesthood denial, and was nearly successful in revoking the policy in 1969. See D. Michael Quinn, The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 13-15, and Edwin B. Firmage, ed., An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999, 2nd ed.), 142. According to Salisbury, “Notes from a Meeting with President Brown”: [Brown] said that there were brethren who believed [the priesthood ban] to be a doctrine (he specifically named Elder Lee and President Joseph Fielding Smith) but that President McKay felt, as did President Brown, that it was only a policy and could be
have felt his views vindicated by Taggart’s inclusion of a letter written by Sterling McMurrin to McKay’s sons, reporting on a 1954 conversation McMurrin had with McKay about the priesthood issue. McMurrin quotes McKay as rejecting any notion of a curse upon blacks, insisting that “there is not now, and there never has been, a doctrine in this church that the Negroes are under a divine curse.”

Dyer, on the other hand, would have opposed the article for the precisely the same assertions. His views on the subject were already a matter of record. In 1961 he addressed missionaries about the priesthood ban, telling them, “what I say is not to be given to your investigators by any manner of means,” and went on to reiterate the correctness of the popular explanation of the day: The “Negro [is] cursed under the cursing of Cain,” said Dyer, because “those spirits rejected the Priesthood of God in the pre-existence.”

Despite the controversy within the hierarchy, however, Dialogue remained determined to publish the Taggart piece, accompanied by a reply from Lester Bush, a young physician whose own thorough research on the history of the black policy had led to some fundamentally different conclusions as to its origin. His comments were to be followed by a rejoinder from Taggart. Taggart’s untimely death prevented this debate from ever taking place, however, and his family withdrew the article and submitted it to the University of Utah Press where it appeared in book form.

All that ultimately appeared in Dialogue was a review by Bush of Taggart’s by-then published book (Winter 1969). Although Taggart, like Mauss, refuted racist doctrines, Bush did take issue with Taggart’s echoing of the “Missouri Thesis” as the origin of the black policy. This idea, formulated by earlier historians, maintains that the ban was initiated by Joseph Smith in 1834 as a way to appease angry pro-slavery Missourians.

In his seventeen page reply, Bush countered that Taggart’s sources for changed. He then said that Lawrence and Luellen McKay had gone to their father about ordaining a Negro to the priesthood who worked at the Hotel Utah. President Brown said that President McKay agreed to do it but “some of the other brethren got wind of it and put a stop to it.” President Brown said he felt this was unfortunate because he said, “It’s important that the policy be changed while President McKay is alive—if it isn’t we’ll be set back several years—as long as Joseph Fielding Smith and Harold B. Lee are in control.”

184. Taggart, Mormonism’s Negro Policy, 74.
185. See Alvin R. Dyer, “For What Purpose?”, address delivered to a missionary conference in Oslo, Norway, 18 March 1961, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
187. As Bush points out, Taggart was echoing the views of earlier historians. See
this view were few and too many years after the fact. Bush's work, a prelude to his lengthy 1973 study also published in Dialogue, argues that the most reliable evidence documents the priesthood restriction as originating with Brigham Young in 1849. Although differing in important aspects, both Taggart and Bush agreed that there was nothing in Mormon scripture that advocated such a policy, and that popular, modern explanations for the ban were based on racist interpretations of what little information was available. Although these conclusions were disturbing to some, for others who had entertained doubts about the necessity of the practice, these scholarly voices were a welcome alternative to the theological explanations then being made abundantly available to members of the church.

Dialogue and the Joseph Smith Papyri

Although the issue of blacks and the priesthood was controversial for public relations reasons, other articles would be controversial for more fundamental ones. On 27 November 1967, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City presented the LDS Church with eleven fragments of Egyptian papyri, once belonging to Joseph Smith. Long assumed destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871, the papyri, which the Metropolitan had possessed since 1947, were "discovered" in the basement of the museum in 1966 by a Dr. Aziz S. Atiya, former director of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah. According to published accounts of the discovery, Atiya happened upon the papyri while doing research for a book. Eighteen months later, after private meetings and negotiations with museum officials, they were donated to the church.

Smith had originally purchased the papyri, along with four Egyptian mummies, from a Michael Chandler who visited Mormon headquarters in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835. Chandler was following rumors that Smith


could translate unknown languages. Smith took an immediate interest in the scrolls and soon announced that two of them contained writings of Old Testament patriarchs Abraham and Joseph. Smith produced what he said was a translation of a portion of the papyri, calling it the Book of Abraham, which the Mormon church in Utah later canonized. Included with the published text of the Book of Abraham were three illustrations from the papyrus, which Smith reproduced as Facsimiles 1, 2, and 3, assigning them Abrahamic themes.

Rumors of the existence of the papyri began leaking out immediately after Atiya claimed to have located them. These rumors did not escape the Dialogue office, and a curious Joseph Jeppson wrote Hugh B. Brown for confirmation six weeks before the church acquired the fragments. "I have no personal information on this subject," Brown responded. "I have heard it rumored that the scrolls are in existence, but as yet we have not been able to make contact. When we do, undoubtedly, Dr. Nibley will have the information." Nibley had previously established himself as the church’s most eminent scholar and defender of the antiquity of Mormon scripture. Jeppson learned more about the existence of the papyri


193. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century criticisms of Smith’s ability to translate Egyptian were based on these published facsimiles, since the papyri were presumed lost. See studies by French Egyptologist M. Theodule Deveria in Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, A Journey to Salt Lake City (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), 2:539-46, and from early twentieth-century scholars in F. S. Spaulding, Joseph Smith, Jr., as a Translator (Salt Lake City: Arrow Press, 1912), and Samuel A. B. Mercer, "Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian," The Utah Survey 1 (September 1913): 4-36.


during a telephone conversation with Dr. Klaus Baer, Professor of Egyptology at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, who had some knowledge of the matter (Baer had been Nibley’s tutor when the latter studied Egyptian). Baer, according to Jeppson, “let it slip that [the papyri] had not burned up in the Chicago fire. But since he had promised Nibley he wouldn’t tell Mormons about it, he clammed up.”

Evidence from Baer and others indicates that Atiya’s “discovery” came with help from some of the staff at the Metropolitan, who wanted the church to become aware of the papyri before the public did. Jeppson also claims that it was his persistence that led the Metropolitan to respond to the rumors. Determined to learn the facts, Jeppson called Wallace Turner, the western correspondent for the New York Times, and relayed his conversation with Baer. According to Jeppson,

[Turner] promised to get “the whole force out looking for [the papyri].” Three days later he told me they had located them in the basement of the Metropolitan in NY. I called [Dr. Henry] Fischer [curator of the Egyptian collection at the Met], and told him we knew they were there. Fischer told me he worried about their safety, and asked me to give him three days to figure out what to do. I did. He arranged to [donate] them to the church. Fischer sent me photocopies of them, in case the church decided to destroy them.

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197. Letters by Baer also confirm that he was among a privileged few who knew the papyri were at the Metropolitan—even before Atiya supposedly located them. In a 13 August 1968 letter (copy in my possession), Baer wrote to Jerald Tanner that:

I saw photographs of them for the first time in 1963. I believe, and was asked at the time, on my honor, not to tell anyone where they were and to keep the whole thing confidential. I am sure that other Egyptologists also knew about them, and [Egyptologist John A.] Wilson’s letter [Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 3 (Winter 1968): 54] pretty well represents what we felt we could say in view of our promise to the Metropolitan. About that time I wrote Nibley that some of the Joseph Smith papyri still existed but that I was not at liberty to say where, and he wrote me about the same time that someone in Utah had located a pile of unpublished Joseph Smith papyri...This is about where things were until the [Metropolitan] Mus. photos were shown to Nibley in 1965 (at which time he did not know where the originals were). Atiya’s story about “discovering” the papyri is obviously mistaken. He “discovered” them because the [Metropolitan] Mus. wanted them “discovered.” It is also pretty clear to me that the [Metropolitan] Mus. didn’t want anyone to find out about the papyri before the Mormon church did, at least not publicly, and that they took their own sweet time about it.

A recent statement from Mormon apologist John Gee confirms that the Atiya story is not accurate. In a footnote to his review of Peterson, The Story of the Book of Abraham, Gee says that, after examining correspondence between Fischer and Atiya, “I find it impossible to believe that Fischer did not know that the Metropolitan owned the papyri, and knew exactly what they had. I find Atiya’s story repeated in Peterson... incredible. I understand Fischer was justifiably furious at Atiya’s story.” See Gee, “Telling the Story of the Joseph Smith Papyri,” Review of Books About the Book of Mormon 8.2 (1996): 59.
198. Jeppson to Anderson, 19 May 1998. According to Fischer, the papyri were “a gift,
Dialogue’s interest in the papyri escalated when Norman Tolk, a member of the editorial board in New York, “through means he chose not to disclose,” also secured photographs of all eleven pieces during the church’s acquisition process. Tolk sent the photos to the Dialogue office and also arranged interviews with Fischer and Atiya for publication in the journal. However, since the church had only published photos of four of the fragments in the Church News, Tolk insisted that England receive permission through First Presidency first counselor Tanner to publish the complete set. England complied, but Tanner responded by denying permission until the church could make a general release to the press. Consequently, Salisbury, in Salt Lake City, held up the winter 1967 issue with the understanding that permission was pending. BYU Studies, which planned an article on the papyrus by Nibley, published a flyer announcing that they too, would soon publish the photographs. Tanner, however, later called Salisbury and told him that the church had reconsidered its earlier decision and had since decided against releasing any additional photographs. Hence, Tanner denied BYU Studies permission and asked that Dialogue refrain from publishing the Tolk photos as well. Disappointed, England nevertheless had Salisbury pull the photographs and reproduced only those that had appeared earlier in the Church News. The issue (Winter 1967) also included interviews with Atiya and Fisher.

In February, when the winter 1968 issue of BYU Studies appeared, the Dialogue staff was stunned to see photographs of all eleven papyrus fragments. Hurt and betrayed, and eager for an explanation, a perplexed England wrote to Tanner for some answers. “Perhaps you can imagine then, the feelings of many of our staff members when they received the copies of the BYU Studies yesterday and saw all of the papyri . . . published there.” Most disillusioned was Salisbury, who had worked hard to delay the press run. “We proceeded on the assurance that no such release was about to be made,” continued England. “If I could just tell [the staff]

of course, but it was made possible through an anonymous donation which covered the cost to the museum” (“An Interview With Dr. Fischer,” under the heading, “The Facsimile Found: The Discovery of Joseph Smith’s Papyrus Manuscripts,” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 2 (Winter 1967): 64).

199. Eugene England to Wesley Johnson, 23 December 1967, Dialogue Collection. Johnson was mid-way through a six-month teaching assignment in Florence, Italy. Aside from some correspondence with the Dialogue staff, Johnson, of necessity, left the majority of the editorial duties to England.


203. See “The Facsimile Found,” 51-64.
what happened, it would help a lot, and so I hope you can take a few
moments to tell me briefly how BYU Studies came to get permission to
go ahead and why permission was not extended to us at the same
time.”  

Tanner’s response is not in the Dialogue correspondence, but Charles
Tate, editor of BYU Studies, sheepishly wrote England a letter of explana-
tion. According to Tate, BYU Studies received last-minute permission be-
cause he had put himself “in a bind,” by promising his readers that pub-
lication of the photographs was forthcoming. To avert embarrassment,
he and Hugh Nibley had made one more attempt, through Tanner, for
permission. Tanner was supportive, but advised Nibley to make a formal
request to the First Presidency. Following through, Nibley recommended
that all the photos be released on February 1, and the presidency com-
plied. However, the Dialogue staff was not informed of this latest re-
versal. Hence, BYU Studies, unbeknownst to Dialogue, published the pho-
tographs within a week, and the church published a full color spread in
the February 1968 Improvement Era. Dialogue, the first to possess pho-
tographs, lost out on what England called, “the scoop of the century.”
However, as England recalls, this case certainly showed that “we fol-
lowed counsel.”

Although losing out to BYU Studies in producing the first papyri
photographs, it was Dialogue that published the first translations of the
papyri by renowned Egyptologists. Jeppson arranged this project by
sending the color Improvement Era photographs to Baer, John A. Wilson,
also of the University of Chicago, and Richard A. Parker of Brown Uni-
versity. These scholars agreed to produce translations for Dialogue with-
out pay. Both Wilson and Parker (Summer 1968) identified the major-
ity of the papyri as chapters of the Egyptian “Book of the Dead,” dating
these particular fragments between 500 and 300 B.C. or later. Wilson of-
fered a translation of six of the papyri pieces, originally forming one
scroll, and all part of the Book of the Dead. Parker translated the frag-
ment labeled the “Sensun” papyrus (meaning “to breathe”) from the

204. Eugene England to N. Eldon Tanner, 7 February 1968, Dialogue Collection.
206. See photographs of the papyri in BYU Studies 8 (Winter 1968): 179-190, and Im-
provement Era 71 (February 1968): 40-41.
207. England Oral History, 16-17. England, recently commenting on this episode, still
remembers the effect it had on him and his staff: “I was mainly upset (still am) that we had
a chance to make a scoop and show genuine, responsible dialogue concerning important
discoveries and issues but were prevented from doing so—and thus from enhancing our
image—by behavior that was at best very unprofessional, even unethical, and at worst du-
plicitous” (England to Anderson, 13 September 1999).
Book of Breathings, a condensed form of the Book of the Dead, dating from Roman times.\(^{209}\)

It is the Sensun papyrus, more particularly, the “Small Sensun” (Papyri Joseph Smith XI), that has proved the most troublesome for the Book of Abraham.\(^{210}\) This is made evident in an essay by Grant Heward, a postal worker and amateur Egyptologist, and Jerald Tanner, a well-known critic of Mormonism, included in this same issue of *Dialogue*. This article demonstrated that in an 1830s Mormon manuscript titled *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, individual characters from the Sensun text had been matched in parallel columns to English passages of the Book of Abraham. This, according to Heward and Tanner, seems clear that Smith believed that the Sensun fragment was the Egyptian text of the Book of Abraham. To complicate things further, according to the authors, each individual character from the Sensun was translated by Smith into dozens of English words—an impossibility in any literal translation.\(^{211}\) Heward and Tanner also discovered problems with Facsimile Two. Having been damaged prior to Smith’s purchase of it, characters from the Sensun text were then used to fill in the missing portions in order to make it more presentable when publishing the Book of Abraham.\(^{212}\) These additions, however, resulted in the combination of both hieroglyphic and hieratic writings, which, in the Egyptian, created a jumbled, nonsensical text.\(^{213}\) Because of Tanner’s reputation as an anti-Mormon writer and publisher and Heward’s recent excommunication from the LDS church for opposing the authenticity of the Book of Abraham, Jeppson “had to push hard” for the staff to agree to publish the article.\(^{214}\) However, the essay was an important contribution to link-


\(^{210}\) The title and numbering of this fragment (and all of the papyri) come from the published photographs in the *Improvement Era*, February 1968.

\(^{211}\) A photographic reprint of this manuscript appears under the title *Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry).

\(^{212}\) The original of Facsimile Two was not part of the recovered papyrus and is still lost. However, that the original was damaged when Smith came into possession of it is indicated by the fact that a replica drawing, included in the *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, indicates that portions were missing.


\(^{214}\) Joseph H. Jeppson, telephone interview conducted by Dever S. Anderson, 23 July 1999. Johnson recalls that he was very much opposed to publishing the Heward-Tanner essay (Johnson interview, 9 August 1999).
ing the papyri—more particularly, the Sensun scroll—with the Book of Abraham.

Baer's own translation of the Sensun text, including the writing that flanked Facsimile One, appeared alone in the fall issue. Baer also translated the individual characters found in parallel columns to the left of the English Book of Abraham text as produced in the *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*. This allowed for a comparison between Baer's translation and what came from Joseph Smith. Needless to say, none of the Egyptologists found any similarities between their translations of these late funerary texts to what Joseph Smith published as the Book of Abraham.

Knowing the controversy the translation of the papyri would create, Jeppson recalls that he "expected the roof to fall in" after the articles appeared. However, a response published by Nibley seemed enough to offset any damage caused by pitting Joseph Smith against the learned. Nibley, replying mainly to Heward and Tanner, was confident that, despite experimentation with the papyri by the prophet and his associates in Kirtland, Ohio, no one, including Smith, could have possibly believed nor intended the text of the Book of Abraham to have come from the few characters found in the small Sensun papyrus. Whatever the connection, it remained a mystery for now. Nibley also insisted that Smith could not have invented the Book of Abraham since it resembled too closely other ancient texts to which he could not possibly have had access.

Naturally, many observing Mormons hoped or even assumed, that studies of the papyri would vindicate Smith's ability to decipher Egyptian as it pertained to the translation of the Book of Abraham. When the scholarly community verified that the papyri were simply funerary texts dating from periods up to the time of Christ, several of the *Dialogue* staff worried about accusations of disloyalty from church leaders for giving the unbelieving a forum. However, there was no response from anyone in the hierarchy. Yet Jeppson sees the papyri episode as a defining moment in Mormonism:

219. England to Anderson, 13 September 1999. England also recalls that he was not particularly worried about the translations of the Egyptologists. Like many informed Latter-day Saints, England took the stand "that the divine 'translation' process, for both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham, involved much more direct revelation than anything like literal translation from an ancient text." The papyri had served more as "a stimulus to a revelation like that we call [the Book of] Moses [also published in the Pearl of"
When we published the scrolls[''] articles, I think we all just sat back and held our breath(s), not knowing what would happen next. Not much did, ostensibly. But I think it changed the scholars of the Church forever, and perhaps the leadership as well. From then on, the Brethren were not nearly so interested in Mormon [d]octrine as in bringing Mormonism on as a "mainstream" religion. ...²²₀

Great Price, so what the Egyptologists made of the actual texts that stimulated Joseph to ask [the] Lord concerning Abraham did not concern me.”

Dialogue and the First Vision

Competition between BYU Studies and Dialogue did not end with the Joseph Smith papyri. Another controversial episode involved Dialogue's attempt to defend the church against one of its critics—an attempt which backfired. Wesley P. Walters, pastor of the United Presbyterian Church in Marissa, Illinois, submitted an article to Dialogue entitled, "New Light on Mormon Origins from the Palmyra Revival." This essay disputed Joseph Smith's claim that a local religious revival near his home in upstate New York prompted his "First Vision" by showing that no such revival appeared in the historical record (thus, according to Walters, Joseph Smith fabricated his vision). The editors sent a copy of Walters's manuscript to Richard Bushman, who showed it to other scholars at BYU. Bushman recalls that the Walters essay "hit like a bombshell, because it took a story we thought was pretty well settled and turned it upside down."221 Mormon historians immediately made preparations to respond to Walters's research. Several of them (including Bushman and Leonard Arrington) formed a committee headed by Truman Madsen, which made plans to spend the summer of 1968 doing research in Palmyra and vicinity. After talking with Madsen, England agreed to postpone the Walters essay until the historians were ready to publish a response—which would appear in the same issue of Dialogue. The New York research resulted in six articles, but at the last minute Madsen decided to publish them in BYU Studies instead.222 "So Dialogue ended up having to publish Walters," a frustrated England remembers. Although Dialogue did include a response by Bushman (based on the research of the Mormon historians), it appeared that BYU Studies (which did not publish Walters—only the responses) was defending the faith, while Dialogue (which did publish Walters) "seemed to be supporting the enemies." England laments this because, "at a few crucial moments like that we could have established a positive image for Dialogue."223 For England, feelings of betrayal, thirty years later, remain. "I think that was a very deliberate and unethical choice by Mormon in-

222. See BYU Studies 9 (Spring 1969).
intellectuals at BYU that betrayed their scholarly as well as Christian responsibilities.”

Paying a Price

With Dialogue’s growing reputation as a liberal, controversial publication, England found that there was a personal cost in editing the journal. Rumors began to circulate that he was both practicing polygamy and guilty of apostasy. While patently untrue, these stories still caused him “pain and disillusionment.” Toward the end of his tenure as editor, he received word that Apostle Boyd K. Packer predicted publicly that England’s children would fall away from Mormonism because of his activities with Dialogue. “We’ve been indoctrinated,” laments England, into thinking “that [Mormon publications are] either official or else they’re anti-Mormon. There’s no middle ground.” The commitment in time required as managing editor had forced him to delay the completion of his graduate studies for two years. Compounding his personal problem was the fact that his association with the journal would temporarily cost him a teaching opportunity at BYU. Apostle Boyd K. Packer denied England the position in 1975, telling him, “We can’t have a former editor of Dialogue teaching at BYU.”

Johnson also paid a price. He devoted thousands of hours to Dialogue over his five-year tenure—time in which he estimates he could have produced more publications related to his field thus enabling him to secure a promotion sooner. “But we had a mission to perform,” he insists, “to announce to the world that Mormons had a viable intellectual community.”

Making a Difference

Dialogue addressed many timely issues during these early years. The journal kept its commitment to the Mormon History Association, and Leonard Arrington guest edited the third issue (Fall 1966) which included several significant articles. Perhaps the most important was “The Significance of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Thought,” a groundbreaking essay by BYU history professor James B. Allen on the evolving use of the story among Mormons. This issue has been highly

227. Ibid.
228. England was hired the following year, however, due to the influence of recently appointed Church Commissioner of Education Jeffrey R. Holland. England interview, 16 July 1996.
praised, and was even endorsed by the LDS Institutes of Religion. In another issue, Dialogue introduced many readers to liberal Mormon Bible scholar Heber C. Snell, in a roundtable with the conservative and prolific Sidney B. Sperry, along with Kent Robson, a Ph.D. candidate from Stanford (Spring 1967). Snell, "counting . . . on having a 'go' at Sperry," chronicled the decline in use of the Bible in modern Mormonism. A timely discussion on Vietnam published later that year featuring England, Ray Hillam, and John Sorenson, offered insights from varying Mormon perspectives on a particularly divisive topic both nationally and within the Mormon community (Winter 1967).

Perhaps the most memorable piece to appear in the early years of Dialogue was Richard D. Poll’s sacrament meeting sermon, "What the Church Means to People Like Me" (Winter 1967). In his speech Poll brought lasting comfort to liberal Mormons through his "Iron Rod"/"Liahona" dichotomy. The only Dialogue article ever quoted (not positively) in an LDS general conference, Poll’s sermon, delivered in Palo Alto, has been reprinted numerous times.

Of the twenty issues published under the first editorship, five were centered around themes. In addition to Leonard Arrington’s issue, Lowell Bennion edited “The Mormon Family in a Modern World,” (Autumn 1967), Mary L. Bradford and Garth Magnum produced an issue on “Mormons in the Secular City,” (Autumn 1968), Robert A. Rees and Karl Keller guest edited “Mormonism and Literature,” (Autumn 1969), and Stanley B. Kimball took over another issue devoted to Mormon history, with “Mormons in Early Illinois,” (Spring 1970). Over the five year period, the editors also published twelve roundtable discussions, and eight sermons. Of the artwork that Salisbury included, five issues featured the talents of guest artists. The winter 1969 issue, behind schedule, con-

230. See Growing Edge, 5 (April 1973), published monthly by the Department of Seminaries and Institutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, copy in Dialogue Collection.


tained moving tributes to President David O. McKay, who died in January 1970. Poetry was included in all but four issues between 1966 and 1971. Fiction, first published in volume two, only appeared in four issues. This genre would become more prominent in later volumes.

This variety attracted a diverse readership. In addition to subscribers, England remembers reports of “shadow readers,” who either could not afford the journal or who were reluctant to have their names on the subscription list. In several cases, the editors received word that eight to ten people were reading a single copy. Dialogue study groups were also formed in several locales, and Johnson, England, and Salisbury were often invited to speak at these and at firesides throughout the church.234 On 30 September 1966, England spoke at the LDS Institute at the University of Utah about the founding of the journal, and took questions from the audience.235 This interest in so many quarters assured the editors once again that Dialogue was meeting a need.

From the beginning Dialogue also had its critics. Yet England and Johnson both maintain that most criticisms came from people who had never even read the journal.236 A second-hand report by Apostle Boyd K. Packer to England in 1975 claimed that Dialogue had caused two young men within the same stake to leave the church. Reports such as these, however, never reached the editors directly. In fact, England and Johnson both witnessed the journal having an opposite effect: not only did readers report that Dialogue gave them reason to stay in the church, some credited it for their conversion, or re-conversion to Mormonism.237 Students at Stanford and elsewhere reported to England then and in later years that Dialogue helped them reconcile their faith with their intellectual lives.238 All of this confirmed again and again that there was a place in the Mormon community for the forum that Dialogue provided.

Growing Pains

By 1970, Dialogue’s growth forced the editors to consider full-time paid help. A Mrs. Pat Bacon had been hired to work part-time in the Stanford office, and a few others held part-time positions handling sub-

scriptions and taking care of other necessities, but this was not enough. "Dialogue needs to have a full-time business or office manager in Palo Alto in addition to Mrs. Bacon," declared an assessment in 1970. "This would greatly relieve pressure on voluntary members of the staff, executive committee, and board and allow them to concentrate on planning and editing."239 Despite this pressing need, however, it would be several years before funds would allow Dialogue the benefit of full-time paid personnel.240

That same year, the staff established a board of trustees who would oversee the economic health of the journal. Changes in the editorial board and the formation of a student board of associate editors brought "new blood" to the publication in an effort both to keep the enterprise from faltering, and to attract more student subscribers.241

This growth, however, occurred with bad timing, and the journal subsequently suffered. In 1970 England accepted a teaching position at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, leaving Johnson as the sole managing editor of the journal. Although England retained some affiliation with Dialogue as planning editor, this did little to relieve Johnson of the "incredible work loads" that came his way.242 This, and some new problems with printing and production resulted in more late issues (for example, the fall and winter 1970 issues did not appear until April and July 1971 respectively).243 "We are at a point of no return on these late issues," Johnson wrote a board member in early 1971.244 Robert A. Rees, having served on the editorial board since 1969, came to the rescue as issue editor in 1970.245 But even the addition of Rees, other new members

241. Unsent letter of Wesley Johnson to Stanley B. Kimball, 27 July 1971, Dialogue Collection; "An Interview with Eugene England," 19. The names of the Board of Associate Editors were added to the masthead of Dialogue beginning with the autumn 1969 issue, and discontinued in 1971. Although, as England indicated above, there was early interest in the journal by students, especially at Stanford, Dialogue was read mainly by academics and other professionals. According to Johnson, the student board was able to do little in attracting their peers to Dialogue (Johnson interview, 9 August 1999). Thirty years later, England now sits on the Board of Trustees of Dialogue "precisely to answer that question [regarding current lack of interest in the journal by young people] and do something appropriate in response" (England to Anderson, 13 September 1999, Dialogue Collection).
242. Johnson to Kimball, 27 July 1971, Dialogue Collection. Salisbury adds that England possessed a charisma that aided him in recruiting students and other volunteers, a quality that others on the staff (despite their numerous other talents and abilities) lacked (Salisbury interview, 9 August 1999).
243. Salisbury interview, 9 August 1999. Salisbury remembers that Quality Press was often understaffed or overbooked.
244. Wesley Johnson to Garth Magnum, 17 March 1971, Dialogue Collection.
of the editorial board, and a new board of trustees failed to offset many of the problems that had materialized.

Late issues began to effect subscriptions dramatically. Peaking at 8000 early, and holding at around 7000 by early 1970, subscriptions fell to 5000 eighteen months later. There may have been other factors. Letters from supporters criticized what they saw as Johnson’s attempt to publish material more pleasing to the Mormon hierarchy. This criticism, coming from Joseph Jeppson, maintained that Johnson “was more interested in the survival of the magazine than in the novelty of its content.” Karl Keller, a supporter from the beginning, made similar comments. “Several of my friends have voiced serious reservations about the last few issues of Dialogue, and since I join in their view, I want to write to mention the problem.” For Keller, “Dialogue was becoming exceedingly thin. By thin, I mean insubstantial and inconsequential.” Worried about the direction of the journal, Keller elaborates:

... Dialogue has always been and continues to be head-and-shoulders above the [Improvement] Era. Yet the last few issues suggest that it is moving in the direction of that unfortunate publication in that it seems now much more interested in being doggedly pro-church rather than simply honest, that it now covers topics covered adequately by church publications already rather than exploring areas tabooed and forgotten by them, that its writing is blander rather than bolder, that it is doing exactly what church publications do, avoiding the issues. ... Dialogue’s success will be, it seems to me, in simply being open and honest and bold and carefree. That means that it will be intellectual, liberal, personal, offensive, eccentric, etc. It will please only the liberal fringe of the church—but it will be founded on positions well argued.

Johnson views these criticisms as being without merit. “Had we taken the journal in the direction [some people] wanted it, Dialogue would have been put out of business.” First and foremost, Johnson felt committed to publishing the best scholarship available. He denies a conscious effort to please the authorities, and insists that the vast majority of readers remained happy with the content through the end of his term.

Leaving Stanford

Other impending changes were about to effect the journal also. Johnson, due to leave for a year’s sabbatical in Africa, would of necessity step

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247. Karl Keller to Wesley Johnson, 15 September 1970, Dialogue Collection. Keller does not say specifically which issues he refers to as “doggedly pro-church,” but at the time of his writing, the most recent issues included one focusing on the death of President David O. McKay (Winter 1969), a theme issue on “The Mormons in Early Illinois” (Spring 1970), and a general issue (Summer 1970) with articles such as “Cache Valley Landscape: A Photographic Essay,” “When Does an Intellectually Impaired Child Become Accountable?” and “Art, Beauty & Country Life in Utah.”
down as managing editor on 1 September 1971. With his departure, Dialogue would no longer have access to donated office space at Stanford. Thus, finding a new editor and establishing a new era for Dialogue were issues now at the forefront.

The staff knew from the beginning that an eventual change in editorial teams was inevitable. Johnson remembers that he “envisioned a rhythm of changing editors and boards about every five or six years.” He emphasizes “that we [the original founders] were building for the future, and we were not going to make the mistake of hanging on to [the editorship].”249 England remembers a consensus that “for Dialogue to achieve its ideals, the editors should always be in their thirties.”250 Of the original founders, Frances Menlove left her position first. After less than a year as manuscripts editor, she moved with her husband to Germany, and Edward Geary, a graduate student at Stanford, took over her duties.251 In 1970, England moved to Minnesota, and Jeppson, returning to Berkeley to work on his Ph.D., left his position as “Notes and Comments” editor to BYU Political Science Professor Louis Midgley.252 Salisbury was also ready to leave, although he stayed on through 1972 as an advisory editor.253 Menlove joined the editorial board and remained there until 1970.254

Before departing Palo Alto, Johnson had to appoint a new editor to take his place. Robert Rees, working hard as issue editor since England’s departure, and “because of his significant editorial talents and enthusiasm for Dialogue,” seemed the best candidate.255 Rees, an English professor at UCLA accepted the offer and began making arrangements to move the editorial offices to Los Angeles. Rees officially took charge of the journal in September 1971.

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After five years, Dialogue had become an important voice in Mormonism by successfully addressing issues that were clamoring for a forum. In the process, the editors helped develop the talent of writers,

249. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
250. This policy was short lived and ended with the editorship of Mary Bradford in 1976. All subsequent editors have been in their forties and fifties.
251. Edward Geary to Douglas Bunker, 17 September 1966, Dialogue Collection. Johnson’s wife, Marion, eventually took over as manuscripts manager (as the position was later called) in 1969.
254. This information is derived from the mast-head of issues of Dialogue through the Johnson-England tenure.
artists, and poets. "You have to approach people, you nurture people, you nurture writers, you convince people that they can do something," insists Johnson. "And I think that is what we did. I think that was one of the functions that Dialogue served very well." In the years to come, both Dialogue and the writers it encouraged would continue to benefit from their association with one another. Johnson’s most gratifying moments were seeing Dialogue recognized by the larger scholarly community. "Cited in books by the Oxford Press, or the Harvard Press . . . to me as a scholar, [meant that] we’d arrived. And that meant that we were being taken seriously."257

The creation in the mid-1960s of Dialogue or something very much like it may have been inevitable, given the climate created by voices in the larger society. The America of the 1950s, with its self-image of post-war affluence, reflected best in the baby boom and the emergence of modern suburbia, often overlooked growing racial tensions and poverty that were the plight of many Americans. The sixties generation, embracing diversity and coupled with energy, began to "expose issues and created demonstrations that provoked deep emotions."258

Yet the founders of Dialogue did not see themselves as rebels. Mary Bradford recalls that, although "Mormon thinkers were responding to the excitement of the sixties," they nevertheless "created a constructive new outlet for individual expression."259 For the founders of Dialogue, true dialogue meant placing Mormonism before the scrutiny of Mormons, non-Mormons, believers, and skeptics alike. Having faith that their religion would hold up, the founders believed that they were aiding the cause. Those who failed to understand the legitimacy of this approach saw the editors as troublemakers, as rebellious, and even apostate. After all, Dialogue’s enemies were watching the protests of the sixties, too. For others, just the fact of its existence was enough to provoke deep suspicions.

In a church increasing in respectability, maintaining that respect meant that many issues were not only ignored, but had to remain taboo.260 Dialogue tried to break down many of those taboos, sometimes

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256. Johnson interview, 3 August 1996.
257. Ibid.
260. See discussions in Gordon and Gary Shepherd, A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), and Armand
countering the Mormon slogan that "all is well" in the process. Yet des-

pite this boldness and independence, an undergirding loyalty to the in-
stitutional church and the gospel meant that Dialogue itself was intent on
securing the respect and approval of the church hierarchy. Ten years after
the founding of the journal, England acknowledged that ". . . if the First
Presidency had said to me, 'Kill the magazine,' I'd have done it."261 In
Dialogue's infancy, this seems understandable. But to remain truly in-
dependent, that approval would inevitably become less important, and
even less desirable. With the end of the England-Johnson tenure, com-
munication between the editors and general authorities would, for the
most part, cease. And as in many relationships, when communication
ends, suspicion and fear take its place. In the years to come, future edi-
tors would experience both the joy and pain of these severed ties.262

To Be Continued

L. Mauss, The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Response to Assimilation (Urbana: Univer-


262. Thirty-four years after their first meetings at Stanford, where are the founders
now? Eugene England and Wesley Johnson have both retired after long careers at BYU, and
both remain in Provo, Utah. England teaches part-time at Utah Valley State College, cur-
rently sits on the board of trustees for Dialogue and Sunstone, and still writes for both; Salisbury
lives in San Francisco where he works as an architect; Menlove, who lives on the Ore-
gon coast, is currently a full-time student, studying theology and early Christianity at the
Pacific School of Religion at the Graduate Theological School in Berkeley, California; Jepp-
son lives in Woodside, California and teaches history at Canada College. He still writes an
occasional letter to the editor, but no longer under the pseudonym "Rustin Kaufmann." All
but Salisbury still subscribe to Dialogue.
Dialogue will present voices of Mormon thought and culture. Voices from a tradition that encourages men to relate their faith to all dimensions of their lives. A tradition that claims unique openess to continual revelation of truth from all sources. Thus, diverse voices. Voices of assurance and inquiring voices. Calm voices and voices of concern. Voices that ask faith to ground itself in reason and voices that challenge reason to transcend itself in faith. Voices that are not uniform but are united by a common heritage or deep concern for it. By a willingness to talk with care and grace and to listen with respect. A willingness to enter into dialogue.

Dialogue is not a journal of liberal opinion. Nor of conservative opinion. Nor an evangelical journal. Not an official publication of any organization. It is a forum for discussion of all points of view on the encounter of faith and reason, on the relation of religious values to contemporary experience and learning. The editorial position of the journal is merely that a dialogue on these matters is possible and valuable. That men can talk to each other about their faith and experience in a way that can bring some pleasure and some truth to all involved. That men need not relinquish their faith to be intellectually respectable nor their intelligence to be faithful. But rather, that they can refine and deepen their faith through intelligent examination and can bring their faith and its moral power into a mutually rewarding dialogue with the secular world.

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