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EDITORIAL PREFACE

G. Wesley Johnson

Mormons have long remained isolated from their neighbors by choice and by necessity. Today is not the past, however, and most Mormons live outside of Utah. Los Angeles and New York are as important subsidiary centers of Mormon culture now as St. George and Nephi were fifty years ago. Today it is not unusual to see Mormon Congressmen in Washington, Mormon business executives in Chicago, Mormon professors at Harvard, or Mormon space scientists at Houston. Mormons are participating freely in the social, economic, and cultural currents of change sweeping twentieth century America.

But Mormons do remain apart from greater American society. Their experience, heritage, and tradition of years in isolation remain an integral part of Mormon belief; Mormon doctrine reinforces individual withdrawal and defiance of conformity in the face of modern convention. This new era of life in the secular world, far from the cloisters of a Rocky Mountain Zion, has created a host of dilemmas for the individual who seeks to reconcile faith and reason.

A new generation of Mormons has arisen in this process of spreading about the land. Its members are curious, well-trained, and in some cases affluent; they are reflective, energetic, and in most cases committed to Church activity. They form study groups and discussion clubs to examine their religion and its relevance for contemporary society and culture. They seek to relate religious ideals to issues of everyday secular life. They share the faith of their elders but also possess a restrained skepticism born of the university,

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the office, and the laboratory. They display an inquiring attitude which favors open discussion with members inside the Mormon community and pleads for greater communication with those outside of it. They have talked of the possibility of a written dialogue, an independent journal of opinion, to capture some of this expression and concern. Indeed, such a possibility has been discussed in many quarters by young Mormons for the past decade.

In early summer of 1965, Frances Menlove, Eugene England, Paul Salisbury, Joseph Jeppson, and I met at Stanford University and talked informally about starting a journal of Mormon thought and culture which might fulfill a need we and others had long felt. We decided to issue a preliminary prospectus which announced

Many men need some medium in which to consider their historical and religious heritage in relation to contemporary experience and 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.

Response was overwhelmingly in favor of the project. We sent out a call for manuscripts and created two publication groups to provide the collective responsibility necessary for such an undertaking. The Editorial and Business Staff was established at Stanford University to handle circulation, finance, copy, and general editorial direction. Then a national Board of Editors was appointed to review and evaluate all articles submitted. Both groups were composed of qualified young Mormon professional, academic, and business people who could furnish the variety of skills and interests requisite for a national review. By September *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* was launched, bids were sent to printers, and a campaign for subscriptions and financial contributions was initiated. Today *Dialogue* is a reality thanks to the generous and voluntary efforts of many people.

We have chosen a traditional academic format for the magazine, with articles, reviews, and notes and comments, to emphasize our concern for serious writing and scholarly endeavor. This is balanced by special departments, columns, poetry, fiction, and art work to provide the interest and creativity of a feature magazine for the general reader. *Dialogue* does not seek a particular editorial viewpoint. It attempts to serve as a forum for the encounter of diverse opinions, not as a platform for the promulgation of one kind of opinion. Thus, we conceive of *Dialogue* as a fresh idea in reli-

gious journalism — flexible, probing, and responsive to the needs of a variety of readers. Special theme issues will be published from time to time: Leonard Arrington and the Mormon History Association have agreed to edit a special number on Mormon history for Fall, 1966. Others are being considered on morality in government, religion in higher education, and the role of women in the Church today.

There are certain sections in the journal which we hope will foster a spirited exchange of views. The *Roundtable* section offers criticism and comment by selected individuals on a contemporary problem or event; *Letters to the Editors* provides a place for unsolicited and challenging views of readers; the *Reviews* section attempts to bring thoughtful criticism to bear on important books, articles, films, records, and artistic events of interest to Mormons; *Among the Mormons* furnishes the discerning reader with a critical survey of current literature on Mormon themes and subjects.

Some of the more general purposes of *Dialogue* are: to stimulate excellence in writing and the visual arts throughout the Mormon community; to present fresh talent and to offer established authors a new vehicle of thought; to sustain a serious standard of objectivity, candor, and imagination in dealing with Mormon culture; to give students and thoughtful persons across the land a journal directly concerned with their quest for rational faith and faith-promoting knowledge; to provide professional people from a variety of disciplines a place to publish findings on Mormon topics which are of interest to the general public; to help Mormons and their neighbors develop understanding and concern for each other through an exchange of ideas; and perhaps most important of all, to help Mormons develop their identity, uniqueness, and sense of purpose by expressing their spiritual heritage and moral vision to the community of man.