

Letters to the Editor

Dear Dialogue:

With the current debate on women's liberation it amazes me that the traditional "Dear Sirs" is retained in your "Letters to the Editor" column. It is bemusing to see the use of "Ms." when we have a term ("sister") that would cover the same thing and is also "in" and could be used for non-members as well.

Scott S. Smith
Thousand Oaks, California

Right on! Brother Smith—Eds. (male and female)



Dear Dialogue:

Congratulations on the Autumn 1972 issue! It is clearly one of the most exciting issues you've published. The cover alone is worth the cost of a year's subscription. Kim Whitesides has succeeded in portraying marvelous ambiguity, not only in the look on Christ's face, but in the symbolism of the dove and the cage as well. At first I thought Christ had taken the dove (peace) out of its cage and repaired its wing so it could fly; then it occurred to me that He might be putting it back in the cage to protect it from unpeaceful people. The ambiguity in Christ's face is a reflection of the contrast between his two hands, the one soft and gentle, the other militant. He seems to be saying to us (how the eyes penetrate!), "How could you have done this?" The cover and your editorial on "A Christian Peace" made my Christmas a more thoughtful — and prayerful — one.

Angela Roberts
Chicago, Illinois

A Personal Voice Among the Mormons

"THEY're out to get us."

"Who?"

"You know . . . THEY! That whole DIALOGUE organization. They're out to get us!"

"How do you know that?"

"Good heavens! It's quite obvious! I paid them perfectly good money and they haven't sent me anything! Except for a renewal notice. Ten dollars is a lot of money to pay for a renewal notice. You can't use it for a darn thing except to send something to DIALOGUE. They have it figured out."

"Why don't you send them a complaint letter?"

"A complaint letter? Not on your life! We sent them one just last month when we were living in Boston and it didn't do a bit of good. We still didn't get anything!"

"You used to live in Boston?"

"Only for a month after we moved from Tampa and before we moved here."

"Did you ever tell DIALOGUE that you moved?"

"Of course not! We sent them the money a long time before we moved. The move had nothing to do with it."

"Oh. When did you send them the money?"

"In June. We sent it in June of 1972. I even still have the cancelled check."

"Wouldn't your subscription have run out by now? They published seven issues last year, you know. Doesn't a subscription mean that you get four issues?"

"Now what kind of a magazine would not give you a year's subscription for a year's time? My subscription doesn't run out until June, 1973!"

"Even though you have four issues?"

"That is irrelevant. A year's subscription should run for a year. Why would they want to publish seven issues in a year for anyway? I don't get a chance to read what I have now."

"I think that they were trying to close their gap in publication. It used to be quite a problem, you know."

"Yes, wasn't that disgusting? If there was anything that made me mad it was getting my Autumn/Winter 1971 magazine in the late summer of 1972. And now, to top it all, they say that my subscription has expired."

"I thought that you said that you hadn't received anything."

"Well, we did get their combined issue after we had finally settled here. At least the Post Office is on the ball. But it was in such dreadful condition! How would they dare send out anything like that! It was so ragged and dirty!"

"Maybe that happened in transit."

"You would dare blame this on the United States Government?"

"No, I suppose that you're right. You ever had this problem before?"

"Oh yes, we used to subscribe to LIFE. They used to be as bad as DIALOGUE, always asking for subscriber codes and labels and bothersome things like that. We don't have that problem anymore, though."

"No, I guess not."

Dear Editor,

Sorry I cannot renew my subscription. DIALOGUE is very interesting reading — but I am 84 years old. It is much too heavy to hold. It cannot be carried in my handbag so I can sit in Washington Park and read, and it costs more than I can afford. I will read it at the house of a friend.

Lillian O. Richards

The only good excuse we have heard for not renewing! — Eds.

The Following Letters were written in response to a Letter in the Summer 1972 issue from Teddi Wood Porter about Eve, a young Latter-day Saint woman who is having difficulty reconciling her devotion to the Gospel with what she sees as racism and sexism in the Church.

Dear Sister Eve,

I began to write you counsel and find that instead I am only really offering you sympathetic company. I am a woman who grew up as an equal to my father — who talked with him about intellectual things and was taught by him that I had great potential. I have had spiritual experiences and have been blessed with some Christian talents that not everybody possesses. Yet I have never given a closing prayer in Sacrament meeting or even in Sunday School.

I am getting a masters degree in African history and am therefore aware of the folly of the Sambo Stereotype. In other words, it is ludicrous to class every black as a simple-minded doting creature with wide eyes who trembles as Scarlet O'Hara delivers a baby. Just as dangerous is what might be called the Good Sister Stereotype. One of the best things

about the Church is its diversity, yet all too often women are subject to guilt feelings if they don't totally relate to the happy homemaker image. I am always a bit depressed when the lone woman speaker in a Stake Conference talks about how the Relief Society quilting bee helped a poor family in the ward. Not that this isn't important — service is one of Christ's highest ideals — but it supports the idea that a woman's place is in Relief Society alone and that she can not really understand nor testify of the Gospel because she doesn't hold the priesthood. I reject that idea.



So where do we go? The Gospel is true. To leave the truth because of persecution is less than admirable. For many women the role of the Good Sister is the best, and to criticize them shows lack of toleration. The best path to me seems to be that of a soft but steady protestor. I have no real desire at this point to revolutionize the Church, but I don't fit well into the Good Sister mold nor do I think it is right for me to try and do so. My mind is a gift to be cultivated, not something to be hidden while I try to master the art of making bread.

You must not become bitter about the fact that there are unwarranted indignities, for that will destroy your effectiveness. On the other hand, you must not lower your goals, for that is contrary to the whole idea of the Gospel. Most importantly, you must not feel that you are an abnormality, for there are others of us who are experiencing similar problems. Because of that I honestly feel that "this too will pass."

Carolyn Postma
Los Angeles

Dear Editors:

Teddy Wood Porter asked for comments on her letter expressing the frustrations of everywoman "Eve" printed in the Summer 1972 issue.

It should be obvious to anyone who knows much about the Mormon Church and has thought seriously about it that the institutions of Mormonism will deeply disappoint anyone who believes in equality among races and sexes. Now it may be true, as Sister Porter points out, that there are lots of nice things about the Mormon Church. For some Eves these may even be sufficient to induce them to keep participating in the Church's activities and to support it through volunteer work and financial contributions.

However, a necessary condition for continued participation for women (and men) with highly developed Christian values, like Eve, often is the ability to adapt themselves to the Church's frustrating features. There are three ways to make this reconciliation:

1. *Repent from seditious yearnings and mutinous expectations and learn to accept mandates given through the Lord's spokesmen.* The Eves of the Church usually have got themselves so far removed from patterns of thought and life necessary to do this that it really isn't a viable option. You can't go home again very often.

2. *Hope for change.* This one is often used, but it is based on a near total absence of evidence that change will occur. Thus it requires such an irrational leap of faith that Eve might as well choose alternative 1, which if accomplished would make her happier.

3. *Deflate expectations.* The level of frustration is affected not only by the actual state of affairs, but by one's expectations. Thus, frustrations can be removed by improvements in the state of affairs or by reduced expectations. Since the former is not likely (see number 2 above) my advice to Eve would be to work on the latter.

This advice should help Eve. She is most likely not to be completely happy with other institutions she has to cope with either—such as schools, governments, health care, delivery systems, and so on. What does she expect of the Church, perfection? Eve may even be able to reduce her expectations to a level permitting her to remain active in the Church. John Barth's statement about another venerable (and vulnerable) institution has some application to Eve's dilemma over Mormonism:

"A wart on Miss University were nonetheless a wart, and if I will not call it a beauty-mark, neither would I turn her out of bed on its account."

P. Royal Shipp
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Eve,

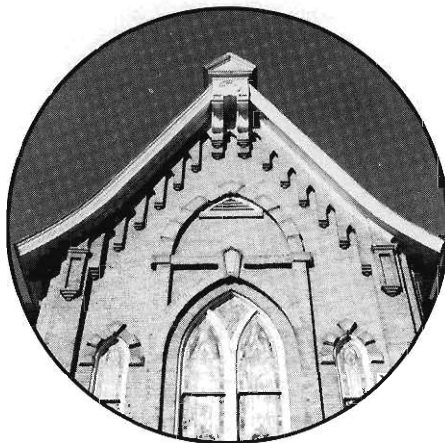
It is possible, although difficult and challenging, to remain in any institution with which one's beliefs are at times at variance. It is the nature of institutions, even the Restored Church, to lag behind the spiritual growth of some individuals, and it is the nature of individuals to lose sight of the purpose of institutions. The racism and sexism you see in the Church are not a reflection of the Gospel of Christ, but of His children's inability to live His Gospel, and those children must be loved and taught—even by people like you. But if you can't stand them or the Church how are you going to teach them? If you love the Gospel of Christ as you say you do then you know you are going to have to endure a great deal of frustration and pain in order to help strengthen the institution the Lord has selected to promulgate His Gospel. If you find life in the Church intolerable then your leaving will simply make it less tolerable for others who may need the strength of your faith and courage.

If you have a conviction of the Church's divinity and a conviction of the Gospel's truth then you must strive to reconcile them. You should not abandon your Christian instincts, but neither should you abandon the Church. Remember, if Christ can love the Church with all its imperfection, so can you—without sacrificing your personal dignity or ideals.

I realize that such advice is not easy to follow and that it sometimes makes for a rather lonely life in the Church, but the true Christian's life has usually been difficult and lonely. Your dilemma is not new to Christians—male or female.

You have to believe that your voice can help eradicate racism and sexism if you learn how to make it heard. You must learn to love those who are sexist and racist so you can teach them. You may find in so doing that they have some things to teach you as well.

— Adam



Dear Editors:

Armand Mauss's measurement of secular influence on Mormons (Spring 1972) raises several important questions.

A. Are Mormons now being influenced more by their secular surroundings than by their Church? While Mauss asked about discrimination, he didn't ask about miscegenation. And to ask a Mormon, "How would you like your daughter to marry a Negro?" is to also ask whether one takes seriously the idea of celestial marriage.

B. Is the Church losing influence because it is failing to keep up with contemporary science? Discrimination against blacks had some (erroneous) scientific support when it was developing as a doctrine during the mid-nineteenth century. It has none today, Shockley and Jensen notwithstanding.

C. What about the persons who not only do not believe, but are actually urged out of the Church because of their inability to accept certain dogmas? Is the Mormon Church losing a disproportionately larger number of college educated members than other churches? Since only Church members were surveyed by Mauss, there is a selective sampling only of those still willing to remain active. What is the nature of loss to the Church due to falling away of thoughtful apostates?

Any good research, should always uncover more questions than it answers. Mauss has given evidence of performing good research.

Yours very truly,
O. Boyd Mathias
Stockton, California

Dear Editors:

I applaud your efforts in attempting an examination of 20th-Century Mormonism. However, the article by Armaud L. Mauss, about the political and social positions of modern urban Mormons, leaves the reader with more confusion than enlightenment. Especially troublesome were the conclusions that were drawn from the data used.

Mauss, himself, indicates throughout his study the weaknesses of the research methods he uses, and the editors rightfully point out that "... a survey of two cities is hardly sufficient to make generalizations about the entire Church." (I would add that the data is also insufficient to make generalizations about urban Mormons, and would even be questionable in my mind in comparing "SLC Mormons" with "CC Mormons.") For this recognition of weakness, the author and editors are to be commended. However, with this kind of introduction, when one anticipates only conclusions about the ten SLC wards and the three CC wards which *might* indicate some

interesting insights, this reader was horror-stricken to read the very generalizations the author stated at the outset could not be made from his data; i.e., "... it would probably not be accurate to characterize Mormons as especially conservative in domestic political affairs, but again, rather, as moderates"; or "... a change in the Church policy on Negroes would either be welcomed or accepted by a large majority of the Latter-day Saints in and outside of Utah." Whether you agree with the statements or not, the data certainly is not sufficient to justify the generalizations.

Aside from the poor research and potential for distortion of fact, another thing that disturbs me is that future researchers will refer to this study to base their findings and conclusions and forget the weaknesses the author himself points out in the research methods and that are inherent in the study.

I do not disparage the effort and the intention, but, I am fearful of the dangers from incomplete and weak data from which generalizations, often accepted as fact, are drawn.

Sincerely yours,
Lee H. Burke
Washington, D.C.

Professor Mauss responds:

I am grateful to Readers Matthias and Burke for taking the trouble to respond to my modest status-report on Mormon political and social attitudes; I had not thought that I had revealed anything particularly startling, as I indicated in my conclusion. I did, however, think that our discussions of such topics, which go on all over the Church, could benefit by having some kind of hard data base, rather than the mere speculation that most conversations rely on.

To Matthias I will say only that his questions are well taken and often asked. On the question of miscegenation, most surveys that I have seen indicate a strong hesitancy among Whites generally (and even more than one might think among Blacks, as well), whether Mormon or not. On other questions of sustaining Church influence in the face of higher education and other secularizing forces, the analysis of my own data is not complete, nor have I heard of any other data addressing such questions directly. My data does indicate, however, that defection from the Church is more common among the *less* educated than among the more educated, and that apostasy for intellectual reasons is by no means the most common kind of apostasy. While I cannot know really how many ex-Mormons have been

lost from Church records and are "out there" in the population, my sample did include large numbers of respondents of both the active and inactive types. The differences between them in *belief* ("orthodoxy") are really not very great. Most people who leave the Church apparently do so for other reasons. Among the respondents in my samples, the levels of orthodoxy (e.g., belief in the literal divinity of Jesus) have been running at around 75% of the *college graduates*, and even higher among the sample in general. Finally, all the evidence I have seen on research on *various* denominations indicates that defections and membership losses are much *higher* among the "liberal" churches than among the (doctrinally) "conservative" ones. The intellectuals don't much bother with either kind, and the rest of the people want *doctrine*, however archaic it may be.

Burke's dissatisfaction with my work seems to boil down to a complaint that I did not survey every member of the Church, so as to be able *definitely* to say what Mormons *really* believe. Perhaps he is not aware that most *national* polls (e.g., Roper and Gallup) involve samples of only around 1500 cases. The key is in the sampling procedures, and if they are sound, the researcher is entitled to a high level of confidence about generalizing his findings to the whole population. My sampling system was not as sound as those used by national pollsters, but then neither is my population universe (American Mormons) so diffused and heterogeneous as theirs. My system was, however, very sound by expert standards. Rather than speak of the "weaknesses" of my data-gathering and analysis, a more accurate term would be "limitations," and these are simply characteristic of any kind of large-scale survey research. Perhaps Burke is not acquainted with the lore of survey sampling and research enough to realize the extent to which surveys of this kind *can* be generalized to whole populations, *given* the limitations of which he seems well aware. In any case, if one is to gainsay my findings and my claims to generalizability, it is incumbent upon him to offer alternative grounds or evidence, rather than merely gripe about the weaknesses in what I have done. The generalizations which Burke quoted, and which left him so "horror-stricken," were both carefully developed and properly qualified in the context from which they were excerpted, as were all other generalizations which I made.

Finally, in response to Burke's two closing comments, let me say that I would regard the research that I have presented, even with its limitations, as providing far more valid grounds for the "conclusions" of "future researchers" than are now provided by the constant speculations of Mormons and non-Mormons, or by the grudging gainsayings of critics who can only criticize.

Dear Editor:

In my article "The Manifesto Was A Victory!" (*Dialogue*, Spring, 1971) I carelessly employed the phrase "plural marriage" rather than "unlawful cohabitation" in the parenthetical remark on page 43 "(plural marriage was never classed as a felony)." I stand corrected.

Gordon C. Thomasson
Santa Barbara, Calif.



Dear Editors:

Richard D. Poll sees no philosophy of history in our Church, even though he admits that certain "idealized episodes from the past" are "venerated," such as "the first visions, the martyrdom of the Prophet, [and] the crossing of the plains."

I think Professor Poll is wrong. The Latter-day Saints are almost following the philosophy of history prescribed by Carl N. Degler, a recent Pulitzer Prize winner. In the preface to his textbook, *Out of Our Past*, Degler says, "The multitudinous events of the . . . past are here seen through the lens of the present." After saying this, Degler examines the roots of our present concerns. We Mormons do almost the same thing: we determine those roots. This miniscule deviation from Degler's method gives us a more optimistic and consistent way of viewing our history. The *essentials* in our Church history become those strains we can discover in the past which support and reinforce our present positions. The lesson we learn about history is that, retrospectively, the present repeats itself.

A little thought about this superior philosophy of history should convince any thinking person that it is one of the most consistent and perfect philosophies in the world. "But

nobody can learn from such a history," you say. Agreed. But we all know that Voltaire was right when he said, "History is a pack of tricks we play on the dead." And our L.D.S. tradition has been to learn from God, not from historians. Our legacy of "continuous revelation" is meant to work like repentance. Alma the Younger could not even remember his sins, once he had repented. And we cannot remember certain inconsistencies in our history because, by "continuous revelation," the old has been fulfilled in the new. The new cleanses the old by turning itself back upon the old, and purifying it. How do you think we got rid of the Law of Moses?

Arthur M. Kissinger, Jr.
New York City

Dear Editors:

Professor Russell B. Swenson is to be congratulated upon his article "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School, a Personal Reminiscence" (Summer 1972). I learned a great deal from it because I, too, was a student at the University of Chicago during part of the time about which he writes.

I was not a Mormon at that time nor a student in the Divinity School. I was a student in the Department of Psychology on the west side of the campus. My mother, however, was studying with Professors Ames and Foster and broadening her understanding of the great spiritual teachings of all religions. While she was delighting in the rigorousness of the thinking of these men in the field of religion, I was delighting in the rigorousness of the thinking of the men in the biological and social fields.

It was while studying American History that I was privileged to meet a man who was responsible for an interest in Mormon History that continues even today. He asked his class to write term papers on events, persons or movements in the period being studied and he stressed that originality not length was to be the governing factor in the acceptance of the paper. He cautioned that the mere massing of footnotes was not what he wanted but evidence of an understanding of the reasons for what happened. Perplexed I sought my mother's help. She urged me to write on the movement of the Mormons from Kirtland, Ohio, to Missouri and back to Nauvoo, Illinois. "Your gr. gr. grandfather made that trek," she said, "and I do not believe there is much in the history text books about it."

With this as a starting point, I searched the literature but found very little that was valid. Almost in despair, I sought Dr. Craven's help. Before seeing him I prepared a brief outline of what I had found. After reading it he told me to write up what I had. When I

got my paper back I found a note urging me to expand it into a major research project and to search for additional evidence. It was not until I was in Salt Lake City taking a course in the History of Utah at the University of Utah under Professor David E. Miller that I found the supporting evidence I was seeking (some 30 years later).

With President Brigham H. Roberts, I, too, deplore the fact that so many Mormons with whom I have come into contact are largely ignorant of L.D.S. history. This lack of interest in L.D.S. history, as well as any other form of history, is surprising in view of the emphasis of the Church upon work in genealogy.

I agree with Dr. Swenson when he quotes Wesley Lloyd as saying that he found this training as a rugged basic and thrilling academic experience in which he found increasing evidence that intensity of feeling is no substitute for a reasoned faith in the Gospel. A mind that is free may tend to lose its fears but not its faith live by.

I found that the men who were teaching in my fields of interest were not only brilliant scholars and great teachers (none of this business of canceling classes to go lead a social reform movement or lowering of academic standards to please some pressure group) but very practical and very humble men. They demonstrated that true scholarship leads to unfeigned humility.

It is men in the Church who have been exposed to the type of rugged basic and thrilling academic experience that Lloyd described who are its (the Church's) guarantee that it will remain a world wide church.

I am proud to have been exposed to the tradition of the University of Chicago and grateful to Dr. Swenson for giving us a glimpse of a small part of it.

Ralph Martin McGrath
Mesa, Arizona

Dear Editors:

I couldn't agree more with many of the sentiments expressed by Dee F. Green in his book review, "Recent Scholarship on New World Archaeology" (Spring 1972). Yet it is chronic in me to quibble about details, and there are two such details I would like to present my views on, with Dr. Green's permission.

Quetzalcoatl. — The statements made by Basil C. Hedrick and by Dr. Green apply only to the Toltec priest known as Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl. Ce Acatl in his name means "One Reed" and refers to having been born in this date, supposed in his particular case to have been the year 843, (Anno Domini). (The date recurs once every 52 years in the Mesoamerican Calendar cycle — it recurred

in 1519 AD, the year of the European invasion of Mexico, it recurred last in 1935 and shall recur again in 1987). However, the myth of the Feathered Serpent is much greater than just the personality of this one man, who was not the only individual to bear the name. Gods and warriors (including a Toltec conqueror who invaded Yucatan in the 11th century) also bore the appellation of "Feathered Serpent." Laurette Sejourné, in her book *El Universo de Quetzalcoatl* presents evidence for the name existing as early as the second century. There are representations of feathered serpents in Mesoamerica dating back even to the Pre-classic period.

Euphrates, Phrat and Parah. — I'm afraid Dr. Green has misinterpreted Dr. Gordon on this matter. It should be clear to everyone that the prefix *Eu* and the suffix *es* are purely Greek additions, the original Semitic form being just plain *Phrat*. This is the way it appears in my Hebrew Bible, Genesis (Breshith) 2:14. Since *p* and *ph* are allophones in Hebrew, and *h* and *t* are interchangeable (e.g. *malkah-malkat*), the original form of this word could easily have been *parah*. This could have been the form of the word when the Phoenicians were presumably exploring the Atlantic seaboard of South America around 600 B.C.

As for the origin of the river-names Paraiba, Parana, Paranaiba, Paranapanema, Paragua, Paraguay, you may take it from a life-long speaker of Spanish that these names are completely meaningless in Spanish or any related dialect. To suggest the names could be Spanish because of the initial syllable *par* is akin to suggesting *Mississippi* could be of Anglo-Saxon origin because of the first syllable *Miss*.

On another point, I do not disagree with Dr. Green at all, but it does seem to me that he does not have all the facts. He's correct in stating that Dr. Gordon presents little evidence for assertions made in the chapter concerning anthropomorphic ceramics — but Dr. Green, just like every other reviewer of Dr. Gordon's book, has overlooked the fact that this chapter is just a small sampling from Dr. Alexander von Wuthenau's *The Art of Terracotta Pottery in Precolumbian Central and South America* (a translation of his *Altamerikanische Tonplastik*), which does contain plenty of evidence. To quote all of it in another book by another author would be nothing short of plagiarism.

Benjamin Urrutia
Department of Anthropology
University of California, San Diego

