

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### *Post-Manifesto Marriages*

In *Dialogue*'s "Letters to the Editor" (40, no. 4 [Winter 2007]: v), David Timmins is the most recent example of authors and reviewers who misrepresent what they claim to have found or not found in one of my publications. Timmins writes: "Neither [Frank J.] Cannon nor his book *Under the Prophet in Utah* (1909; rpt. Boston: C. M. Clark Co., 1911), are cited in either Quinn's or Savages's articles."

The article in question is my "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," (*Dialogue*, 18, no. 1 [Spring 1985]: 9-105), which Timmins cites as the first sentence of his letter. The text of my article, page 40, referred to "George Q. Cannon, [and] his son Frank . . ." Associated with that reference was footnote 136, page 40, whose fourth line began: "Frank J. Cannon wrote . . ." (citing Cannon's book and its co-author Harvey J. O'Higgins). This footnote 136 then devoted fifteen lines to discussing what Cannon said and his accuracy.

I don't know whether Timmins is an example of reading only part of my publication he criticizes, or of carelessly skimming every page of it, or of willfully making misstatements, but the result is the same: a distortion of my published text.

Timmins claims: "Frank J. Cannon . . . wrote all anyone ever needed to know about the Church's continued practice of plural marriage, not only in Canada and Mexico, but here in the United States" (v). His letter also accepts

Frank J. "Cannon's assertion that it was Joseph F. Smith and his Smith kin who insisted on reinterpreting the Woodruff Manifesto as not affecting continued, underground plural marriages" (vi).

If Timmins *actually reads* my full article, especially its discussion of George Q. Cannon on pages 75-82, he will find the documentation for my statements: "From 1892 until President Snow stopped sending U.S. residents to Mexico for polygamous ceremonies in 1898, George Q. Cannon signed most of these letters" of authorization (76); that Counselor Cannon signed a recommend for a plural marriage to be performed in the Logan Temple in 1894 (77); that Frank J. Cannon himself unsuccessfully asked his father for permission to marry polygamously in 1894, which his mother Sarah Jenne opposed, asking instead that Abraham H. Cannon marry the new wife, the fiancée of Abraham's deceased brother (77-78); that in 1898 Counselor Cannon "commissioned Apostle Matthias F. Cowley to perform plural marriages in the United States for upper echelons of Church leadership without special recommends" (80); that, "until his death, Cannon continued sending prominent Church leaders to Cowley for polygamous marriages" (81)—which included two of his sons and two of his nephews (Angus J., Hugh J., George M. and Lewis M. Cannon—all married to post-Manifesto plural wives by Cowley). Moreover, to President Lorenzo Snow and the apostles in the Salt Lake Temple in 1900, Counselor Cannon expressed his intention of marrying a new polygamous wife so that he could

father a child by her (82). None of these facts were provided by Frank J. Cannon, who was shielding his father, mother, brothers, and cousins from the complicity he instead dumped solely on “Joseph F. Smith and his Smith kin.” Despite all evidence to the contrary, Timmins prefers to recommend Frank J.’s dishonest “history” of post-Manifesto plural marriage to readers in 2007!

I’ve often thought of writing an essay with a title like “Why I Don’t Recognize My Publications As Described by Their Critics.” If I ever write such an article, the above example of David Timmins will be in it.

*D. Michael Quinn  
Rancho Cucamonga, California*

### *Scriptural Rebuttal to Muhlestein*

I would like to make several comments regarding a small segment of Randolph G. Muhlestein’s erudite and well-researched article (“The Case against Same Sex Marriage,” 40, no. 3 [Fall 2007]: 1–39), followed by some personal observations. Many aspects of his studies, theories, reports, and “arguments” (constitutional, scriptural, and sociological) could be discussed, but at this time I would like to focus on his premise (or scriptural argument) of God’s loathing (one of the dictionary definitions of “abomination”) of homosexuality. Muhlestein states in the third part of his argument that “for Christians who interpret the Bible literally” (5) God has declared it to be an “abomination” (6). He then goes on to quote various scriptures to support this determinant factor. Among these are Leviticus 18:22: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with woman-

kind: it is an abomination”: Leviticus 20:13: “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them”; and Galatians 6:7: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (referring to sins of the flesh). These scriptures are used by many LDS people to disparage and judge our homosexual brothers and sisters.

I would like to move forward to the Book of Mormon where God also chastised the Nephites severely for their “crimes” (Jac. 2:9); “many hearts died pierced with deep wounds” (Jac. 2:35); “filthy before God” (Jac. 3:3); “fornication and lasciviousness” (Jac. 3:12); and “breaking the tender hearts of their wives” (Jac. 2:35). To Him this behavior was an “abomination.” In fact, that very word is used three times in Jacob 2 and 3. Webster’s definition of “abomination” is: “disgust; loathing.” These strong admonitions were given to the Nephites in regard to their adultery and polygamy: “they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them” (Jac. 3:5); “Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which was abominable [disgusting and loathsome] before me, saith the Lord” (Jac. 2:24).

The transitional phrase is the following: “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; *otherwise* they shall hearken unto these things” (Jac. 2:30; emphasis mine).

Jumping from there to Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we

learn this former “abomination” is no longer disgusting and loathsome but a commandment! Polygamy is no longer sinful, but a prerequisite of eternal life: “For behold I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide *not* that covenant then ye are *damned*” (D&C 132:4; emphasis mine). In Doctrine and Covenants 132:8, God also states: “David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants from the beginning of creation until this time, and *in nothing did they sin* save in those things which they received not of me” (emphasis mine).

We see from the above that the Lord can and does change His mind (if He needs seed raised unto Him) on what is abominable and what isn’t, thus overriding scriptural prohibitions with new revelation. As an aside, it’s interesting to note that many wives living in polygamy did not bear children. Therefore to “prove” that homosexuality is a “sin” based on scriptures is controversial at best when we consider the history of polygamy.

We can discuss the various theories, studies, etc., of why a male or female is homosexual at length; but until we ourselves experience the agony, terror, shame, and humiliation of a loved one who is living in denial, detachment, self-delusion, and repression, we can never truly *know* the darkness of his or her despair. There are *no* words discovered or spoken that can describe these feelings, for they are deep within the cellular make-up of the body and cannot readily be retrieved and brought into the open so they can be weighed, judged, and analyzed in a religious or scientific

forum. These choice, intuitive, loving, and empathic people are so tender that they often cannot withstand the inner turmoil and daily battles. They often develop various addictions (to numb their feelings) and can even become so desperate that they take their own lives.

Many of them cannot accept or own their homosexuality, so they continue to dissociate from that part and live in denial—a life of facade, inauthenticity, and self-blame. How can their supposedly flawed, disregarded, and disgusting selves ever be integrated into one incredible whole human being? This can only occur through unconditional love, acceptance, and Christ-centered compassion. And, no, they did not choose this! Why would one deliberately put such an albatross around one’s neck? Are they paranoid enough that they enjoy the taunts, the name-calling, the physical, psychological, and spiritual abuse? Why would they “split” from these parts, if they were so pleasurable?

It is time *now* (if not now, when?), that we as parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends stand up for the “tender mercies” of our Savior when he said: “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:1–2). 2 Nephi 26:33 states: “He inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of this goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and gentile.”

Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of

*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, has written an endorsement statement that appears on the cover of Carol Lynn Pearson's new book of homosexual case studies, *No More Goodbyes* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Pivot Point Books, 2007): "Thank you, Carol Lynn Pearson, for reminding us that the task of any religion is to teach us whom we're required to love, not whom we're entitled to hate."

Christine Burton  
Holladay, Utah

### *The Only Reason to Marry?*

In the discussion about same-sex marriage in the Fall 2007 issue of *Dialogue* (Randolph Muhlestein, "The Case against Same-Sex Marriage," 40, no. 3 [Fall 2007]: 1–39), I felt that one really obvious argument was lacking. Muhlestein begins his case by quoting the First Presidency position against same-sex marriage and their insistence that it is acceptable for a gay person to experience "great loneliness" and remain isolated and celibate his whole life because the alternative of same-sex marriage would preclude heterosexual marriage and the procreation of children. The abundantly clear point to be made is that celibacy also precludes heterosexual marriage and the procreation of children, so how is it any more "essential to the Creator's plan"? Obviously, someone who is celibate is not pursuing a heterosexual marriage and is certainly not procreating.

The supposed lack of procreation seems like a red herring in any case. Wouldn't adoption be as viable an option for same-sex couples as it is currently for infertile couples? Don't we believe that sealing in the temple makes

these children as legitimately ours as if we had borne them personally? It seems to me that the entire argument against same-sex marriage is based on a priori assumptions and double standards. Those involved in honest discussions of the subject need to be bigger than that.

Johnny Townsend  
Seattle, Washington

### *Left Me Baffled*

The logic used by Randolph Muhlestein in his article, "The Case against Same-Sex Marriage" (40, no. 3 [Fall 2007]: 1–39), left me baffled. Heterosexuals, based on his statistics, avoid marriage at an alarming rate, opting for the single life that society offers homosexuals. And homosexuals, he points out, are reaching for the married life reserved for heterosexuals. Then Muhlestein insisted that untold thousands of heterosexuals would become homosexuals if society mistakenly allowed homosexuals the opportunity to marry. But Muhlestein convinced me through all those studies and statistics that it's *heterosexuals* who clearly want less and less to do with marriage. So why would they go to the trouble of becoming homosexuals to get what they don't want?

The only explanation is that men want less and less to be married because their only option for partners is females. And why do women avoid marriage? Well, again, it's because they have such a narrow option for a partner. It must be a guy. Based on that logic, we can reach Muhlestein's goal of increasing interest in marriage by let-

ting men marry men and women marry women. Or did I miss something?

One other unrelated point: Muhlestein divided children into legitimate and illegitimate varieties. All children are legitimate. Last Sunday I held a baby on my lap whose parents were not married. And a grandmother bottle-fed another baby whose parents were unwed. Both of those children seemed as truly legitimate as the other children in church. We should avoid labeling any child, especially when that label refers to parental activity and/or is derogatory.

Gary Rummler  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### *What Is Dialogue's Mission?*

I appreciated reading Richard Ward's "Dialogue Reconsidered" letter (*Dialogue* 40, No. 3 [Fall 2007]: v–vi). My guess is that the sentiments Ward expresses are shared by a number of former *Dialogue* readers. Certainly, they are similar to those expressed to me when I was *Dialogue*'s editor and in subsequent years as I have had occasion to talk to former subscribers.

What has surprised me with the majority of such expressions is that they seem not to understand the mission of *Dialogue* even though it has been stated clearly in every issue since the second number of volume 1 (Summer 1966): "Dialogue is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic

and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage." Honestly and openly fulfilling this mission invariably means publishing articles and essays (as well as fiction and poetry) that at times are controversial and even potentially disturbing to some readers, not because an editor deliberately chooses this outcome but because he or she cannot avoid it.

Ward makes a distinction between those articles that are acceptable and those that are not by whether they are "friendly" (a term he borrows from the Redd-Peterson solicitation letter). He uses this word five times in his short letter. By "friendly" I assume Ward means affirming, reinforcing, validating, or, as he puts it, "uplifting and supportive of the cornerstones of my faith," which he then goes on to identify as the foundational principles of the Restored Church. The problem that I faced as editor of *Dialogue*, and which I assume has faced all previous and subsequent editors, is that what one person finds "friendly" may in fact be perceived as "unfriendly" by others.

Undoubtedly, some readers of the special issue on blacks and the priesthood (*Dialogue* 8, no. 1) found Lester Bush's profoundly important article "unfriendly" because it challenged long and deeply held beliefs about the inferiority of blacks and about the worthiness of black men to hold the priesthood. Others, who had experienced deep anguish in attempting to reconcile the Church's teaching with what they understood of the teachings of Jesus, may have experienced the article as the first "friendly" article they had read on the subject. Choosing an example

closer to the present, the fall 2007 issue had articles on same-sex marriage with diametrically opposing points of view. Undoubtedly, some readers who found Randolph G. Muhlestein's article on this subject convincing found Wayne Schow's "unfriendly" or even disturbing, and vice versa. Any article may, in fact, be a Rorschach test of each reader's faith and reason.

Reviewing forty years of *Dialogue*, I find it hard to see how the journal (or any scholarly journal for that matter) could make editorial decisions based on the principle of friendliness, knowing that many of the issues facing any religious community are complex, ambiguous, and even divisive. That is why *dialogue* itself is so essential. It is in the give and take, the sifting and winnowing, the speaking and listening, the pondering and praying that we both seek and, hopefully, find the truth, even if our finding is at times temporary and tenuous.

Ward wants articles that are "enlightening," but it is the very process, even more than the end product, that some find most enlightening. It is what, I believe, God intends when he invites us, "Come, let us reason together." I have found some of the articles that I disagreed with to be among the most enlightening and some of those that challenged my faith to be among the ones that most strengthened my faith—not because I accepted their arguments but precisely because they caused me to be more introspective and more thoughtful about my own beliefs. As C. S. Lewis states, "If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort, you will get neither comfort nor truth."

I appreciate the open, honest, and

thoughtful spirit of Ward's letter and welcome him back into the fold. I hope he, as well as other previously disaffected readers, keep an open mind and heart about *Dialogue* and support the vital role it is playing in our religion and culture.

Robert A. Rees  
Brookdale, California

### Patrick Mason Regretfully Resigns

*Editor's note: This former board member has stated the purposes of Dialogue so eloquently in his letter of resignation that we have asked his permission to publish it.*

With great regret I am announcing my resignation from the board of directors of Dialogue Foundation. When I accepted my current job at the American University in Cairo, I knew that my travel back to the United States would be limited, which would thus hamper my ability to attend most *Dialogue* board meetings. I was hoping that I could continue to function in my position, but it has become increasingly apparent to me that some things are very difficult to do transcontinentally, despite the wonders of modern technology. Being an active member on a working board for an organization that deserves genuine commitment is one of them. It is precisely because I value *Dialogue* and the work of the board so much that I feel I should pass the torch to someone who can be more active in the role.

I was honored to be asked to serve on the board and very much enjoyed the collegiality of our correspondence and gatherings. I often left our board

meetings inspired, sometimes by the substance of our discussions but always by the quality of the people around the table. I also have come to appreciate in a fuller way the historical significance and continuing importance that *Dialogue* plays for Mormon studies and for many thousands of people trying to live lives of thoughtful faith in the modern world. In an era in which religion is oftentimes either pilloried by the skeptical or manipulated by the overzealous, it is essential to have people, institutions, and forums in which religion can be critically examined but also treated with respectful and faithful understanding.

In my mind, *Dialogue* plays just such a role, and it has been my privilege to be formally associated with it these past couple of years. I will continue to support the journal and the foundation in whatever way I can.

Patrick Q. Mason  
Cairo, Egypt

### Dialogue in Milan

I am writing from Milan, Italy, where I have lived all my life. I appreciate *Dialogue* very much indeed. I am forty-four years old and have been a member of the LDS Church since 1995. I am a university graduate with two emphases, modern literature and philosophy. I like to read a lot on all topics but especially on sociology, anthropology, theology, and comparative religion.

What I like about your journal is its modern style of discussion and the issues that you confront in it. Here in Italy, according to my long experience and observation, Mormonism is still very traditional and conservative. For

lack of anything better, we are forced to read and study the same old books published many years ago. I am not referring, of course, to our holy scriptures; they are in the canon and we find pleasure in reading, praying, studying, and thinking about them because they are the principles and words of our Heavenly Father, Jesus, and the prophets. But for other kinds of reading about our faith, we are disenfranchised from participating in the stimulating debates you have in the United States, as I have discovered in *Dialogue*. This is a contradiction, because the peculiarity of our religion is its belief in ongoing revelation. But here in Italy, it seems to have stopped many years ago. It is as if we are considered like little children still in school.

In Italy we do not have any Mormon journals or magazines except *The Liahona*. That's why I read *Dialogue* with so much pleasure. Please accept my thanks for your great work and your wonderful journal, which I sometimes share with my brothers and sisters during family home evening or during the Sunday lessons.

Thank you very much again and a long life to *Dialogue*!

Paolo Farina  
Milan, Italy

### Praise

The spring issue (*Dialogue*, 41, no. 1 [Spring 2008]) is a keeper—from the astonishing art to the provocative poetry and satisfying fiction to the challenging academic explorations to my favorites—Todd Compton's interview with one of my most admired friends, dramatist



Tom Rogers, and the wonderful personal voices—all of them inspiring and uplifting as well as mentally involving. These could have appeared in the women's issue as a reminder of the things that matter most—and call to action.

Even the letters are gems.

I hope all our readers will devour and digest all of it.

Mary L. Bradford  
Leesburg, Virginia

*Notice:* Due to press deadlines, we did not have complete caption information

for the fine oil portrait of President Hinckley that accompanied the tribute in the summer issue (frontispiece and p. 1). That information is: William Ferrin Whitaker Jr., *Gordon B. Hinckley*, 1995, 40" x 32," oil on canvas. Copyright Intellectual Reserve.

*Erratum:* The name of Anthony Bentley erroneously appears in an essay by B. Carmon Hardy in the summer 2008 issue. The correct name is Joseph T. Bentley. ("Polygamy, Mormonism, and Me," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 87.)