

# Letters to the Editors

*The Sketches of San Francisco in this section are by Paul Ellingson.*

Dear Sirs:

Re: Secretary Udall's letter  
The Lord has not spoken,  
The Prophet is silent,  
And so am I.

Alexander T. Stecker  
Belmont, Massachusetts

Dear Sirs:

You wanted a Dialogue—so now you have a dialogue; almost an avalanche. And I think it's the best thing that has happened since zippers.

I don't want to enter into a defense of Mr. Udall's right to speak, even if he doesn't have his 100% attendance awards, although it seems to me that everyone has that right to speak (even as a Mormon, if he has *any* claim to being one) no matter how irregular his Church attendance. After all, we have all kinds of Mormons, even if you only count those who have "earned" their awards.

And I don't want to enter into the problems of simple, lowly, uninformed members and their rights, duties and/or responsibilities to discuss current problems with their (our) leaders, although I don't know of any of our leaders who do not welcome (some even solicit) such discussions. I must add that I have long wondered why I have never seen a solicitation in a teacher's supplement asking the user to forward his comments to the general board.

All that by way of introduction: there is an aspect of the discussion of race and Church provoked by Mr. Udall's letter, that I think deserves discussion. I boil and seethe when some members of my quorum refuse to accept home teaching assignments to the homes of our colored (Negro) members of record! And when Church members translate whatever sanction a black skin imposes within the Church into their daily lives and will not (for instance) sell a home to a man because he has a dark skin ("You've got to protect the neighborhood"), I conclude that something is amiss.



I understood President Joseph Fielding Smith to say that we—the Church—believe in *full* civil rights for every man. I firmly and emphatically believe that that pronouncement means not merely the minimum of rights that we can by referendum specify (or specify against); I believe it means the full complement of rights which I expect for myself, living in this land as the descendant of those who first came in 1630 and who fought in every war (including the short lived one in the Carthage jail) in which our people have been engaged.

There is a great day coming and there is going to be some blood spilled. I don't

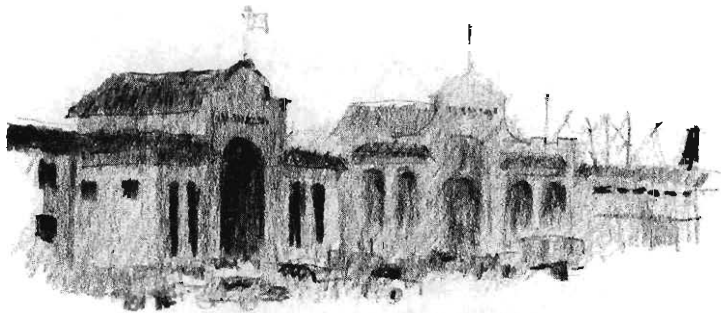
believe that that fight will be because the Church forbids the (African) Negro the priesthood, but will be rather because this Church member and that Church member (along with a lot of his neighbors who so "admire" the Church) so infringe and limit the inherent personal liberty and freedom belonging to another human being that revolution is inevitable.

And in sum, if I were dark-skinned, I'd belong to the Black Muslims. After all, they teach abstinence from tobacco and liquor; these are the important things, aren't they?

William L. Knecht  
Oakland, California

are able to be in the temple when the first Negroes come for endowments."

At the time my wife and I were sealed in the Los Angeles Temple, I was also serving in the U.S. Navy. The exquisite beauty of the temple ceremony and the thoughts of my many Negro shipmates worked together in my mind to pose several questions. I wrote to Joseph Fielding Smith and later to David O. McKay in an honest attempt to understand the Church's relation to Negroes. The only reply was a very brief note from Pres. McKay's secretary stating that Negroes could not hold the priesthood.



Dear Sirs:

A combination of factors is currently focusing attention on the dissent within the Mormon Church regarding the Church's attitude toward Negroes. Indeed, the Mormon sociologist Armand L. Mauss has indicated that perhaps as many as one-third of the Church's members openly express doubts about the present Negro "doctrine" (*Pacific Sociological Review*, Fall 1966, p. 95). Recently the bishop of the San Francisco Ward has made an interesting, and perhaps significant, ruling affecting members who express doubts.

To indicate just what personal significance this ruling has had to me, I might first mention that I grew up having very little contact with Negroes. While the issue was never a pressing one to me, I remember being taught that the Church's stand was a practice, but certainly not a doctrine revealed by God. My parents both hoped that changes were just in the offing. Neither one viewed the acceptance of the Church's stand as necessary for full participation in Church activities. My mother told me several times, "I hope your father and I

I continued my study of the question and, in prayer and fasting, sought the "burning feeling." In all humility I must say that God has not inspired me to feel good about the Church's practices regarding Negroes. In fact, I have come to feel very strongly that the practices are not right and that they are a powerful hindrance to the accepting of the gospel by the Negro people.

As a result of my belief, when my wife and I went to San Francisco Ward's bishop to renew our temple recommends, he told us that anyone who could not accept the Church's stand on Negroes as divine doctrine was not supporting the General Authorities and could not go to the temple. Later, in an interview with the stake president we were told the same thing: if you express doubts about the divinity of this "doctrine" you cannot go to the temple.

At first, my wife and I were both surprised and hurt. Since then, however—while disappointed at not being able to go to the temple—we have realized that our bishop's ruling is not yet a common

one in the Church. Were a general pronouncement to this effect to be made I would worry about the fate of the Mormons who honestly feel the practice should be changed; I strongly believe that it is their dissent which will provide us with a Christian answer to the Negro Question.

Grant Syphers (Jr.)  
San Francisco, California

Dear Sirs:

It is unfortunate that Vernon B. Romney and some others in their letters last issue aimed to discredit Mr. Udall as an individual rather than addressing their comments to the points he raised. This is typical of the evasiveness one often encounters from active members regarding the Church's Negro policy, along with its formidable implications (some of which were clearly brought out by Mr. Nelson and Mr. Lobb in their letters).

One cannot overlook or lightly dismiss the fact that the Church was grappling with a problem of similar magnitude toward the end of the last century. Some of the most influential leaders in that day considered the doctrine of plural marriage to be of such fundamental importance as to be irrevocable. Apostle Lorenzo Snow, in 1886, stated that the doctrine of plural marriage would not be changed, regardless of the consequences (*Historical Record*, Vol. 5, pp. 143-4). In 1884, Apostle George Teasdale stated:

"I believe in plural marriage as a part of the Gospel, just as much as I believe in baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. The same Being who taught me baptism for the remission of sins taught me plural marriage, and its necessity and glory. Can I afford to give up a single principle? I can not. If I had to give up one principle I would have to give up my religion. If I gave up the first principle of the revelations of the Lord, I would prove before my brethren, before the angels, before God the Eternal Father, that I was unworthy the exaltation that He has promised me. I do not know how you feel; but I do not fear the face of man as I fear the face of God. I fear lest when I go behind the veil and have to meet my progenitors that I should meet them as a traitor, as a man who had not the backbone to stand by the principles of

righteousness for fear of my life; or for fear of some calamity that might come upon me. How would they look upon me? How we would be condemned if we dared suggest such a thing as to say that we would give up the first principle of eternal truth! I bear my testimony that plural marriage is as true as any principle that has been revealed from the heavens. I bear my testimony that it is a necessity, and that the Church of Christ in its fullness never existed without it. Where you have the eternity of marriage you are bound to have plural marriage; bound to; and it is one of the marks of the Church of Jesus Christ in its sealing ordinances." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 25, p. 21.)

Yet, when the intolerable implications of the continued practice of plural marriage were made sufficiently clear, the doctrinal change followed. Hopefully the possibility of such an adjustment still exists in our day.

Bruce S. Romney  
Kinnaird, British Columbia

Dear Sirs:

I enclose the following poem in the spirit of *Dialogue's* recent interest in sex in literature.

*Birdwatchers*

With abruptest possible apologies to Ginsberg, Cummings,  
And their ilk, and all the unsol- and ill-  
icited

Punk and expunc-tuated (!) psst—  
[sic] SEX and old etceteras—  
Plus, of course,  
Innuendoes—

It seems to me that any silly jack or jill  
Who's been around a bit and, really,  
Married for, say, twenty  
Years or so,  
Knows

A nested bird in hand is worth any number of twitterings about in the bush.

Richard Ellsworth  
Brigham Young University

Dear Sirs:

. . . I was quite pleased to know that there were some Mormons over thirty interested in our activities.

As to who we are, it is very difficult to explain in a few words.

I was born the son of a share cropper and union organizer. Most of my youth was spent following the Air Force as my father was an expert on building runways. So I really have no one place to call home. I was born in Illinois in 1932, but I adopted Utah as my home when I became a Mormon in 1952.

Though I've only lived here off and on the total of three years, I have spent an equal amount of time, off and on, in Mexico and Cuba. I'm as attached to them as any place in the world.

In 1956, I enlisted in the Green Berets along with two other Mormon boys. Soon thereafter I became involved in the Cuban Revolution. My main duties were gathering medical supplies and funds and turning them over to Jose Alvarez, Commander of the 26th of JULY-Ebor City Brigade in Ebor City, Florida. [We] then helped smuggle them over to the brigade of Americans and Canadians under the command of Major William Alexander Morgan.

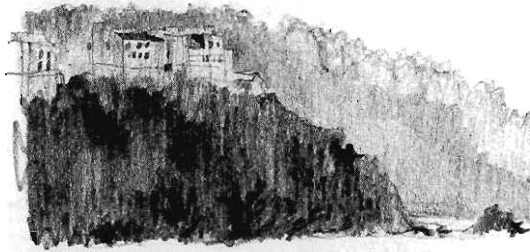
The next six years of my life are mixed with many other events. For instance, I was at one time chairman of the Housing Committee for Racial Equality in Florida. In 1958, I was charged with bigamy. The charge was brought against me by Roy Baden, Sheriff of Manatee County in Florida and head of the Ku Klux Klan of South Florida. There ensued, during the next five years, a dramatic game of tag between the Right Wing of Florida and myself. Each time they caught me I would fight my way back out with a typewriter. They caught me three times during a period of 6 years and I served a total of 38 months altogether.

While in prison I became one of the founders of the Human Bond. During the period that I was an officer in it, we freed a total of 1800 prisoners outright in Florida and brought about the freedom of another 3000 indirectly throughout the South and reduced the sentences of another 6000 in the South in general.

The most famous of these was the Clarence E. Gideon case (*Gideon's Trumpet*, Random House), in which Gideon claims more for the victory than he deserves. The man who at least deserves half the credit is Al House. When the Right Wing learned of his role in the Gideon Case, Al was placed in total isolation for the re-

maining 8 years of his sentence. His age at that time (1964) was 72 years. This man deserves more credit for what happened than any other. Though he has freed many men he has nothing for himself.

As a young bandit, he robbed the Hava-Tampa Cigar Co. so many times (and shot the warden in an escape) that the Cigar Co. and the State of Florida built a special prison for him, notoriously known as the Flat Top, within the prison. They welded the door shut on him and left him there for ten years. Some time during the second year a Jehovah's Witness, feeling sorry for him, got him a Bible and some law books. How many times he must have read these I do not know, but he became a terrific lawyer. Belli and other lawyers have done no more for their fellow man. The last time I heard of Al House, he was seriously ill with pneumonia. I doubt that he will ever see free light again.



I write the above because I feel that many events in history are never known except in the circles in which they take place. And therefore whenever there is a chance to leave a record somewhere it should be taken advantage of.

Getting back to my own life: in 1963 I became the only effective commander of what was left of the 26th of JULY Brigade in Florida. Many officers of the brigade felt that we ought to become more involved in radical American politics.

I wrote to a former roommate, Steve Martinot, who was then a leading member of the up and coming Progressive Labor Movement and one of the chief organizers of the trips to Cuba in 1960, '63 and '64. In reply Steve sent Jacob Rosen, first student leader of an unauthorized group trip to China of over 100 Americans in 1958, and Eddy Lamanski, head of the Freedom House of Monroe, North Carolina, and leader of the group of students who went to Cuba in '64 to see me, and between all

of us we established the Progressive Labor Movement of Florida. I was elected Chairman of the Movement, so as you can see I was quite busy at this period insomuch as I was still on parole and had to keep somewhat undercover.

The Alpha 66 and Artemis Revolutionary Recovery groups were making serious raids on the North Cuban coast from Florida bases, so at this time the Florida Brigade had to make some military maneuvers in International waters. At the same time, as the Progressive Labor Movement, we engaged in political dialogue with the Right Wing forces of Florida and the Cuban Exile Community, whose leadership was heavily led by fascists of the Franco variety (the minutemen of post-Castro days).

As you can see by the above, I could write a book and not have everything included.

My wife was born Ceres Munoz in 1941 in Havana, Cuba. She has lived off and on in the United States and Cuba and received the greatest portion of her education in Key West. I met her briefly when she was an eleven-year-old tomboy. At 15, she was naturalized a citizen. When she was 16 she married Hector Diaz, playboy turned revolutionary. Her husband left her when she was 17 to serve in the Revolution; she stayed home to pack bandages. After it was obvious that he was not coming back, she began to seek solace in religion and finally became a Mormon when she was 20. At 23 she became Secretary to the Progressive Labor Party of Florida, with the military rank of Captain in the 26th of JULY Movement. We were married at this time and she now pronounces her name Kiris (Latin) instead of Ceres (Greek).

We both separated from the P.L.P. in the spring of 1966 as did many of our comrades in the 26th when it plunged into a hard Marxist line, since many of us were of a variety of religions and philosophies and considered Marxism important only as an historical study of economics.

Of course, this is hard to explain to four-square meal, book-bred revolutionaries in the United States, let alone liberals and conservatives.

As to what we are now doing—we are drawing up on our experiences and edu-

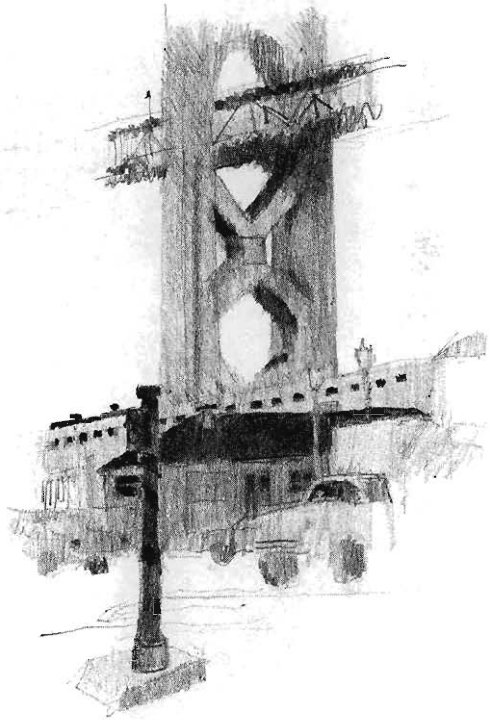
cation to try and build a hard progressive movement.

The Free Mormon Brigade will become, I hope, a hard core for future moves such as organizing a trip to Cuba for Utahns in the near future (hopefully this summer [1967]).

By this time next year we will probably have organized the American Democratic Party in Utah. It will be left of the liberal Democrats of Utah, Anti-Viet war, pro-Civil Rights, pro-Medi-Care for everyone, in short, hold up the banner of the vanguard for progress and try to keep the dialogue two sided even if we never win an election.

I hope this answers most of your questions as to who we are, why we are here and what we are going to do.

Jack and Kiris Freeman  
Murray, Utah



Dear Sirs:

... It comes as a disappointment to me that my essay ["Morality or Empathy," Spring, 1967] should provoke no more in Brother Gwynn's mind than a Pavlovian response to swear words [Letters to the Editors, Autumn, 1967].

I am sorry I violated Brother Gwynn's innocence. I have often wished I could live in his ideal world of black and white, but I cannot. My world is one of continually changing shades of gray.

*Dialogue* offers me the opportunity of viewing Mormonism from many angles, as well as expressing my own disquieting viewpoints. For this I am grateful.

Ronald Wilcox  
Dallas, Texas

Dear Sirs:

I, too, have been concerned about the L.D.S. girls who marry outside the Church as well as about those who do not marry at all, but the reasons I have observed were only incidentally alluded to by Deon and Ken Price. [Autumn, 1967].

I have known pretty girls who want nothing more than to date and marry young men of their own faith, but the simple fact is that they have never been asked.

While glamour is played down in the average Church girl's upbringing, it would appear to be increasingly more appealing to the average young L.D.S. man, far more so, it would often seem, than a sweet, pleasant disposition or the more enduring "home traits" the Church works to foster.

And so often failing in his own ward, or even in his own Church, to find that eye-appealing, style-appealing allure which he knows is elsewhere, our young man goes elsewhere, and then proceeds to convert his "find" to his own faith, something which statistics show is easier for a man than a woman in a similar position to do.

Perhaps it would be more appropriate, and more profitable for the girls, at least, if a research article were prepared and published discussing why so many L.D.S. boys marry outside the Church.

Ann Fletcher  
Reno, Nevada

Dear Sirs:

I chanced to read a copy of your Autumn, 1966, issue and was rather impressed with Eugene England's sermon, "That They Might Not Suffer."

I am wondering if you might send me a copy of this sermon, and if you would permit me to reproduce this on Xerox for use in classroom to illustrate what appears

to me to be representative of some of the best thought-out apologetic on behalf of Mormonism which I, to this date, have encountered.

Also, if you have someone in this area to represent this spirit and scholarship representative of *Dialogue*, I should appreciate your sending me his name and address, for I should like to discuss with him the possibility of his visit to our campus to speak in our chapel and/or classroom.

Richard H. Petersen, Chaplain  
Pfeiffer College, North Carolina

Dear Sirs:

For a writer, "Mormon" or otherwise, to claim for himself such talent, such insight, such wisdom and such all-knowledge as does Samuel W. Taylor in his "Peculiar People, Positive Thinkers," and then resort to glib and unauthoritative charges and conclusions assuming to speak for "his" church, is surely not worthy of a good writer. If "Sam" has an axe to grind, I'm sure his elders will indulge him. Most, if not all, of the censure Brother Taylor alludes to is borne in the minds of self-styled writers and critics within the church. Anyone who doesn't see God, revelation and church government—and history—as they see it is immediately imperious, dictatorial or archaic. So often these members (for they make a point of loudly claiming for all to see and hear that they are members) see, with the help of their God-given right of free agency, the present day failings of "their" church and "their" church leadership while remaining, by some inexplicable miracle, completely objective, rational and authoritative themselves.

I have read, seemingly, from the beginning of *Dialogue* several authors berating the L.D.S. Church for continually apologizing for its embarrassing history and heritage, as well as its current stand on most world issues. However, it should not be concluded that much apologizing has been done, or is being done relative to this church and its stand on spiritual matters. Specific areas of this church's history deal with controversial matters. But let it be understood that private interpretation of what was and/or has been doctrinal parts and practices of this church is of no great importance. What is important is to under-

stand, in true perspective, these principles as God gave them and intended them. Plural marriage was required of those who were taught its meaning and place, and if Brother Taylor will trouble himself to obtain the facts, a true and abiding percentage participation figure may be had. And contrary to his loose supply of information, it has not been altered with time. . . .

One does not have to research far to find many human failings in the administration of God's affairs. However, it should again be pointed out that the way of life, the plan of life outlined in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is perfect. And what man is capable of judging the things of God, well? God has said, *any understanding of God will come of God.*

Brother Taylor would, I am sure, love to be one—first or not—to write, produce, direct and possibly act in a smash Broadway production involving some earthy involvement of "Mormon" Church history. Judging from what, seemingly, Broadway requires for success, something of profanity, obscenity, filth and human misery could be moulded into a hit, if for no other reason than that many Broadway goers would relish some "Mormon" dirt dished up by a "Mormon."

In the finale of his article, Brother Taylor fortifies his abuse of the forthrightness of the leadership of "his" Church by stating his stand for truth. Brother Taylor, you are so right, truth needs no defending. And here is why you and your kind will never bait the honorable men you so glibly malign into response. They won't come down to you, Sam, you'll have to hope to get up to them.

J. Maurice Clayton  
Salt Lake City, Utah

*The following poem was written in response to Samuel Taylor's article in the Spring DIALOGUE on positive thinkers in the Church. [Ed.]*

SPECTRAL

Our ontology is the valley of death and the  
cactus flower,  
The fern of the highlands and the condor  
winging.  
We must get beyond the sleight and decor-  
um  
Of repartee, and among the evanescent  
shades

Exhume the variety of insight that devised  
belief.

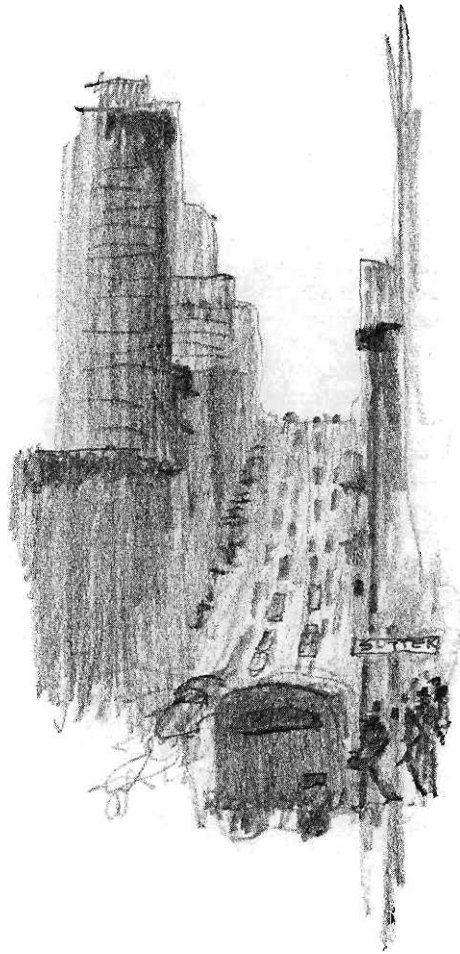
Belief extends into the valley of death, where  
the sun

Spurts the flame that dips as if reaching,  
Where the deep lakes fail in the platinum  
light

That lies over the salt and rock, searing the  
day—

Beyond Phoenix, where in the east the  
mountains

Round like a condor brooding.



Out of these  
We have seen the shades rising, green as the  
fern  
Or shimmering thin as the coloratura flame  
of a flower.

Can we know them?

Only as they are, revealed,  
Husking the orders of tedium. Those who  
have seen  
The viable sky know the hand of God that  
must sear  
Our estimates of good for our final day.  
And when,  
In the censures of mind, can we teach them  
sequences  
Of behavior to make them rational and  
easy  
For our convenience?

The licking flame of the sun  
In the valley of death smelts them purer  
still  
As they breathe dogma like the furnace of  
light  
When our day began.

They writhe in the purity of light  
So hungering for sapience that they deny  
the world  
Of our variety to defend their style: inci-  
pient baroque,  
Heaven's reality, if you will. They polarize  
their being  
With light: Messier 81, the Pleiades, the  
Spiral Galaxy.  
And what, we may say, can be done for  
them, these hardly  
Practical and livid with virtue?

Their disciples of anathema  
Repine in the dregs of God, wishing for  
better,  
Doctrine or catechism, something against  
the boxed pabulum  
Of this, our everyday. And they do not get  
it,  
Except in forays of lyrical hate.

So what can be kept  
But our ritual patience?

Nothing, for the shades invest  
The convolutions of human defection to  
flush them of disease,  
Withal as if to please.

My irony, live in the heat of the sun:  
It is pure! Seek its excellence! And those  
who intone  
The litanies of this, our world, devise the  
beetles of our past  
Languishing torpidly in nooks:

Naturalisme, realisme,  
Existentialisme, chancre, q.v. These, our  
food.

These, our summary.

But our image, the shades maintain,

Is fire, the spectacle of diamond light under  
the hammers  
Of tungsten carbide flaking their violence.  
All this,  
And more.

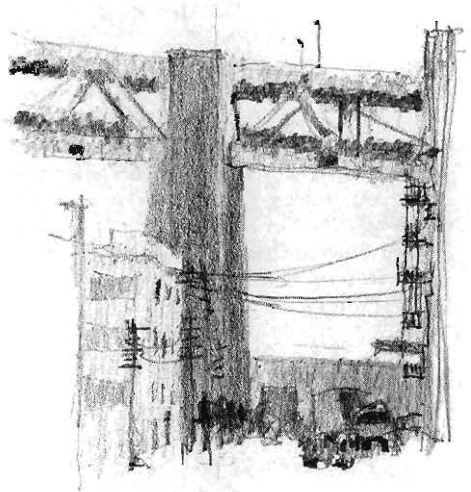
We have to admire such persistence too,  
Amid disciples, in lieu of accuracy, and  
somewhat  
Neo-Platonistic, blue.

Oh, such eclectic good!  
Enough to dazzle us with pain!

And now the law of God,  
Awkward in their singing Rubaiyat, invests  
us like a seminar  
And pleads a case of love, enduring to the  
end,  
The primum mobile, a folksong wheezing  
like the bagpipes  
Of our minds.

They keep the ivory and gold, the goldleaf,  
By our ears, the whitest light, and *try*.  
Try as they will  
God's will,  
Now.

Clinton F. Larson  
Brigham Young University



Dear Sirs:

I have just finished reading Samuel W. Taylor's article, "Peculiar People, Positive Thinkers," reprinted by courtesy of *Dialogue* in the October 1st issue of *The Saints' Herald*. Could you let me know what the subscription rate is for *Dialogue* as I would very much like to be able to read it regularly. I can assure you that my request is not in order to subscribe just to



be able to say to my Mormon friends, "See what your people say about you." You will probably guess that when I mention reading Samuel Taylor's article in *The Saints' Herald* that I am a member of the Reorganized Church. I'm interested in studying all I can about the Mormon heritage that both churches share. I would like to say that it is a wonderful thing to have a journal published outside of the sponsorship of both churches and we can really get an honest to goodness appraisal of L.D.S. history.

Mr. J. B. Stacey  
Auckland, New Zealand

*Samuel Taylor Replies:*

It was surprising to find that critics of my little tirade in *Dialogue* ("Positive Thinkers") told me not to go to hell—as I would have told *them*—but, rather, to go to the Lord. Such a Christian reaction has been indeed humbling, a reminder that even the most positive-thinking organization man among us is essentially a good and gentle soul, of rare and precious qualities of character, which is a point I might not have mentioned, or emphasized, in building my thesis. So perhaps I should add now, if nothing else, that the Peculiar People are my people, for better or worse; if I did not care enormously for them, and for all that is involved in Mormon doctrine and culture, then I would not have become so passionately aroused.

The essential difference between me and my critics, it appears, is that they maintain that everything is perfect as it stands, or at least as ideal as humans can make it, while I say that it is a crying shame that some things aren't done a great deal better. But what we both seek is perfection; so we are in the same ball field.

I feel it necessary to mention that I cannot engage in a wrangle of personalities with those who, instead of meeting my argument, attack my character. I will readily concede that I am not nearly so truthful, devout, active or zealous as my critics, nor can I match their Church records or tithing receipts; however, this is not the point at issue. As the major thesis of my article I deplored the smothering of our creative writing talent and lamented the house-organ level of our internal liter-

ature. To refute this, my critics need only list a dozen or so of the great literary talents nurtured and brought to flower within our culture, and mention the many, many examples of brilliant literature pouring from our kept press. If I am so dreadfully wrong, that is the way to prove it, isn't it? Don't just call me a liar, demonstrate it, document it, name names. . . .

Of course, I realized, while preparing my piece, that there would be some carping over the fact that I did not in all cases name names. However, I did not set out to harpoon a handful of individuals who are not personally responsible for conditions I deplore but are only typical examples in the smothering weight of the great mass of positive-thinkers who press us into happy conformity.

I might have yielded to the impulse to give the death of the thousand cuts to some of our internal writers for publishing deliberate distortion (for example, by quoting only a portion of a primary source to prove a point, when the complete quotation would have proved exactly the opposite meaning). However, these writers are not to blame; they are simply meeting their market, as every writer must. If a managed press requires distorted myths, they must either conform or quit writing. But certainly my critics would find it enlightening to sit in on shop-talk among Mormon writers, as I have, while they frankly discussed the truth which they never would dream of putting into their works.

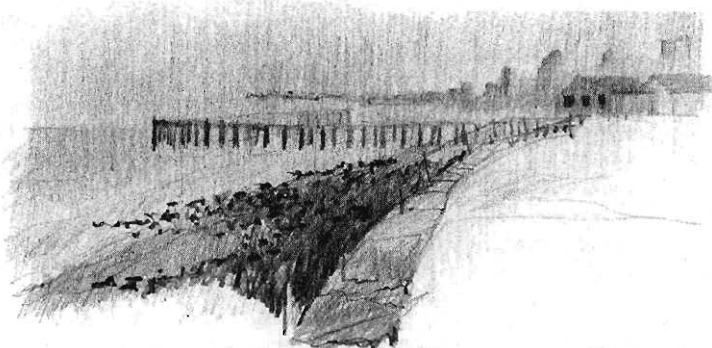
A most interesting commentary on my piece is that it was reprinted in the *Saints' Herald*, the magazine of the Reorganized Church, possibly used there because I pointed out that our embarrassment regarding the historical facts about polygamy had led us straight into Josephite doctrine. Regarding this, I will say that recently two of our own missionaries (whose names I will not mention) told me in all sincerity that Joseph Smith had nothing to do with polygamy—it was all started by Brigham Young. If these two elders are representative, if this is what they are taught, if this is what they preach, then certainly the ironic culmination of our policy of distortion and suppression would be that we should send some 18,000 missionaries into the field to preach Josephite doctrine, to make converts for the Reorganized Church

any time it wishes to ask them, "What do you believe?"

Samuel W. Taylor  
Redwood City, California

Dear Sirs:

I have read Eileen Osmond Savdié's essay, comparing French and American politics, with dismay. Mrs. Savdié complains that the Republican and Democratic political philosophies have largely lost their meaning. I think she is wrong in implying that they ever had any, and wrong in the belief that they should.



Perhaps Mrs. Savdié is reading American political platforms too seriously. . . . She is not taking account of the historic pattern of politics in the United States made up of two major parties composed of a congeries of political alliances representing highly diverse political views. . . . For candidates often stand for something different from the platform of their party.

It is plain enough that Mrs. Savdié wants the United States to have a political system which gives great prominence to ideological or philosophical positions, and she is entitled to that view. However, I think that she should at least get straight what the situation is in the political system which she is condemning, the United States, and in the system which she prefers, the French. She is highly inaccurate about both. It is not true, as she claims, that the United States has two political machines but no political parties. Her judgment that the fault of American politics lies in the failure of the electorate to force candidates to take a stand is a meaningless oversimplification of a complex and important problem.

Perhaps her worst distortion of American politics is Mrs. Savdié's five-fold categorization of it. She says that the political right is status quo oriented anti-Communism, and documents her statement by quoting from the Truman Doctrine. Evidently Mrs. Savdié needs to be reminded that the Truman Doctrine was pronounced at the very time that the Truman Administration was planning to plunge the United States deeply into the economic reconstruction of Europe. The status quo-minded phrases of the statement were an attempt to keep the military-oriented action of the Greek-Turkish Aid Program

of 1947 in perspective so that the main effort, the economic one, would go forward as anticipated.

The political right, Mrs. Savdié says, is for maintaining "natural monopolies." When did she last read the literature of American politics? I hope it is since this term was abandoned as meaningless or inaccurate. There are other antiquarian and inappropriate references. "Trusts and monopolies" is turn of the century. "Maintaining Capitalist institutions" and "whether to nationalize industry" refer to an earlier, idiosyncratic, critical literature on American and European political economy. It is now passé in Europe as well as in the United States. Perhaps Mrs. Savdié needs to be informed that nationalizing industry has become something of an embarrassment as a traditional component in the party programs of European Socialists and Social Democrats.

Mrs. Savdié's fifth category is the Communists. She thinks it "particularly important" that they be "recognized." I could not disagree with her more.

The Communist party here, as in

Great Britain, is now an insignificant component of the far left. There is a radical Left in the United States, a rather interesting and quite energetic Left. It is not the Communist party. The fact that Mrs. Savdié writes this way again raises the question: when did she last inform herself about American politics? She uses a standard rich man-poor man interpretation of American politics which does not even have the flavor of recent Leftist criticism in this country.

I do not recognize the American political system which Mrs. Savdié describes, except in the left-wing expectations of the thirties or in a narrow segment of the European press. Neither do I recognize France in her description. France, for her, is a stable political system with a radical right nicely counter-balanced by the radical left, and with the Communist Party responsible for the government's commitment to major public welfare expenditures. It is a country in which all political views and political actions that grow in the indigenous climate are substantially accepted. She is wrong about the role of the Right and the Left in France, and about the origin of public welfare; and wrong about political freedom in the Fifth Republic. There are, to be sure, glimmerings of the France I would recognize in two references, one to what I will call the French voters' sense of low political efficacy, the other to the bipolar politics which De Gaulle has produced in France. Mrs. Savdié dismisses voter alienation as exceptional. She is wrong, again. Reliable surveys show that France suffers from voter alienation more than most other developed countries do and more than does the United States.

Mrs. Savdié dismisses the sharp division of French politics into two camps as "right now," and in any case, not a situation which destroys the identity of the political parties. In contrast, she says that "in the American political party there are no segments who feel and operate together, there are only individuals with widely varying feelings and philosophies." Nothing could be further from the truth than to deny in this way the highly developed role of groups in American politics. To miss the group basis of American politics is to distort just about everything

in the system, and to leave one ill-prepared to compare political systems. Moreover, it is difficult to miss this fact. Studies about group politics were pioneered in the United States. As early as 1945 one could not be considered politically literate who was unacquainted with the published writing on this subject.



The primary function of a political system is to govern. For many of the postwar years, to say nothing of earlier periods, France has not been governed by her political parties. De Gaulle has governed it, but only by transforming the multi-party system, and at costs not inconsiderable to political expression, civil rights, and the relevancy of ideologically oriented political parties. Before De Gaulle, France was governed largely by her bureaucracy.

Mrs. Savdié is entitled to her preferences about ideological factors in politics. If she wants politics to meet philosophical standards of clarity and consistency, that is her affair. However, she cannot escape the requirement that her factual statements about ideology, or anything else, be accurate. When she tells us that France is nicely balanced between Right and Left, whereas the United States is overbalanced to the Right, I am more disturbed about the accuracy of her characterization of France than of the United States. Is she unaware of the partisan imbalances which De Gaulle brought to France? Perhaps she

is looking ahead, or backward, beyond De Gaulle.

It is particularly unfortunate that with her comparative vantage point, Mrs. Savdié identifies so few of the important problems of American politics. We have many of ominous magnitude—maybe a great many more than the French do. They are not the ones of which she speaks.

Paul Y. Hammond  
Santa Monica, Calif.

*Eileen Savdié replies:*

... I will start by admitting that my categorization of the political positions was ill advised. I tried to qualify it, being certainly aware that a Communist might read it and say, "That's not true. I'm for supporting *any* uncorrupt government in the world," and a conservative might say, "I'm as much in favor of civil rights as the liberals." I hoped that it would be taken loosely as an indication, and I knew that it was easily attackable.

... The point is made that the Republican and Democratic parties have never had, and should not have, meaningful political philosophies. In other words, they should be the tools of the people who run them, and they have no obligations to their members. In this most unjust state of affairs, where do their political platforms come from? The fact is they do pretend to certain philosophies, ... which they do not really have.

The fact that things have been a certain way for a long time, historically, to borrow Mr. Hammond's term, does not make that way necessarily desirable. People had polio for a long time. If a candidate is in disagreement with his party, he is at a disadvantage. A political "group" can hardly be expected to give him the kind of organized support he needs to promote his ideas and win his cause. But what I find much more damaging is the fact that the thousands of scattered people who feel strongly about certain issues have no means for aligning themselves with others who feel the same way, and presenting candidates who will fulfill their obligations to their party, and thus their promises to the people. ...

I see no reason to take Truman's remarks in short-term context when they have formed the basis of American foreign policy ever

since. (See *History of the Cold War*, Vol. I, by André Fontaine, to be published in English in March, 1968 by Pantheon Books. See also *The Warfare State* by Fred J. Cook, Collier Books, 1964.) I'm delighted with Mr. Hammond's objection to my unstylish vocabulary. Can it be true that the new generation can't understand anything that isn't written in its own clichés? If it is, and I beg leave to doubt it, then I hope I was able to inspire enough curiosity in a few of them to go and find out what a natural monopoly was. And still is.

My reason for desiring that Communists be recognized is so that we can drag them out into the open and see them for what they are: people, for heaven's sake, and not dragons. When I told an old Salt Laker friend that I had friends in Europe who were Communists, his immediate assumption was that these friends were fiends and villains, and I was a fool who had allowed them to dupe me into thinking they weren't criminal and dangerous. I think he also assumed that *all* my friends were Communists. I could never convince him that I might like these people for their wit, their good humor, their intellectual integrity, their niceness. As a matter of cold, objective fact, I am as much a capitalist as he is, but he considers me a subversive. If recognizing the Communists as people with whom we can agree or disagree can improve our understanding of them, and increase the freedom of opinion in our social climate, why *not* bestow human dignity on them? Mr. Hammond is horrified at the thought. But why?

I did not say I preferred the French system to ours (I said there were certain conditions here that I would consider improvements in our political life), and I did not say the French system was stable. By "a stable political *climate*" I meant tolerance of a much wider scope of opinion among the people. I also did not say that all public welfare was the result of the work of the Communist party. I mentioned three social advances that were the direct result of their work. And I tried very hard to make it clear that I was talking about the freedom accorded to the individual by the people among whom he lives, and not that accorded by governments. I did not claim that the Fifth Republic accorded political freedom.

Certainly there are grave problems

affecting America today, and we are not solving them as fast as a nation of our wealth and efficiency ought to. When such "groups" as Americans for Democratic Action, say, reach the dimensions of political parties, and when there are enough of these parties presenting candidates so that every voter has a choice at the elections; when each person is soberly but good-naturedly respected whatever his opinions may be; when each of us has an organization through which he can direct his efforts toward the improvement of his country, then we might more quickly and effectively work together to solve our nation's problems.

Eileen Osmond Savdié  
Paris, France

*As the following recently-received telegram will verify, sometimes an author's response to*

*editorial criticism rises to the level of sheer poetry. [Ed.]*

THE MOVING HAND REWRITES  
AND, HAVING RE-WRIT, MOVES ON  
TO POST OFFICE TONIGHT. YOU  
SHOULD RECEIVE TOMORROW  
SATURDAY AIRMAIL. HOPE DEAD-  
LINE ALIVE ANOTHER DAY.

MY RE-WRITE MIGHT BE LESS  
PICTORIAL,  
BUT HEWS TO YOUR VIEWS  
EDITORIAL,  
WHICH VIEWS, I MIGHT ADD,  
ARE REALLY NOT BAD.  
IN FACT, THEY DESERVE  
MEMORIAL.

Stanford Gwilliam  
Orangeburg, New York

