

Letters to the Editors

The sketches in this section are by Linda W. Rasmussen.

Dear Sirs:

... I could not agree more with the comments and views expressed by McMurrin and Bitton (Winter, 1967). I became an ardent admirer of B. H. Roberts from the moment when, as an immigrant lad from Switzerland, I accompanied my father, who later became almost nationally famous as "the Salt Lake Tabernacle pin dropper and prayer whisperer," to hear "Mormonism's greatest pulpit orator."

Most of us L.D.S. students prior to W.W.I. looked upon B. H. Roberts as one of the Church's greatest Olympians, much like the common people of England revered their great parliamentarian and orator Edmund Burke and a later generation of Englishmen the great Prime Minister Gladstone. I liked very much McMurrin's objective and altogether just appraisal of the undeniable intellectual gifts of B. H. Roberts as orator and writer, at the same time acknowledging his faults as theologian and historian. Even so, as most of us students progressed through college and entered upon our respective professional and business careers we often, when brought together socially or otherwise, wondered out loud why this leader that we so admired as the ablest and most striking personality in the Church never came to be numbered "among the Lord's chosen and anointed" in the Quorum of the Twelve. In our opinion, he stood head and shoulders above his ecclesiastical superiors, much like Bishop Bossuet in Seventeenth Century France, Elihu Root, and Oliver Wendell Holmes among this country's lawyers and judges and Webster, Clay, and Calhoun among our so-called statesmen during the last century.

"Naught but a breath of wind is human fame" said Dante. There is of course more truth than poetry in that statement. However, there are some—not too many—who

deserve to be remembered for their sterling qualities of heart and mind and character, and B. H. Roberts is without a doubt one of the most deserving, and not only among his co-religionists but among all Utahns, no matter what their church affiliation.

Joseph Conrad Fehr
Rockville, Maryland

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for Richard Poll's superb article, "What the Church Means to People Like Me." It inspired the following limerick:

I've always had trouble with Noah,
The Ark, and the perils of Jonah!

Now, revered or maligned,

I stand purely defined:

A Latter-day Saint Liahona!

Miriam B. Wadsworth
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Sirs:

In reference to Iron Rods and Liahonas: It's clear that the general problem of approach to the gospel is of significant concern to many. Witness "The Critic in Zion" in the same issue, many earlier articles, and a multitude of letters from both sides. Indeed, the justification for *Dialogue* itself seems to revolve, in large measure, around this whole area. Dr. Poll's petition for understanding also seems highly appropriate in view of the fact home teachers in our stake (and I presume Church-wide) are distributing *A Plea for Unity*, by David O. McKay.

The Iron Rod-Liahona dichotomy has been stated in other related ways: law vs. spirit, authority vs. individual conscience,

immature vs. mature, etc.—while my wife, who is a “Liahrod” or “Ironhona,” reminds me there is a vast middle ground of individual blends between extremes. Nevertheless, another vehicle has implications which may help highlight an aspect of the issue which Dr. Poll only touched on—the notion of risk. The well-known but deservedly maligned “Pascal’s Wager” is outlined below (from Kaufmann’s *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 170-171):

“Either God exists, or he does not exist,” argues Pascal; and neither proposition can be proved. So we must wager: this strange word is Pascal’s own; and with desperate concern, he proceeds to figure out the odds. If we wager that God exists and we are right, we win everything; if we are wrong we lose nothing. If you passed this up, “you would be imprudent.” What more could you ask?

What Pascal overlooked was the hair-raising possibility that God might out-Luther Luther. . . . God might punish those whose faith is prompted by prudence. . . . Perhaps he reserves special rewards for those who deny themselves the comfort of belief. Perhaps the intellectual ascetic will win all, while those who compromised their intellectual integrity lose everything. [Kaufmann believes in people called intellectuals—there is a better sort of integrity.]

. . . Nietzsche might well have applied to Pascal his cutting remark about Kant: when he wagered on God, the great mathematician “became an idiot.”

As indicated, the idea has received rather poor press—being a pathetic attempt by Pascal to hedge his bet. And I suspect the whole process will be held in rather low esteem by all of us. But it doesn’t have to be stated so baldly. In an L.D.S. Church context we often encounter large or little dilemmas, where many of us choose to play safe with Pascal rather than be true to ourselves—often on the side of the latest memo from Salt Lake City. For example, the “Golden Questions” may seem offensive or out of character, but to some they become at least quasi-scriptural. Some of us may become so numb we forget real choices

exist—instead, merely asking “How high?” when we’re told to “jump” by someone in authority. In a recent sacrament meeting a high councilman stated it in its classic form: “Brothers and sisters, the safest thing for most of us is to go along with the admonitions of the General Authorities.” I’m sure that would sound reasonable to Pascal (and most Iron Rods). But is it really satisfactory to “wager” with the Authorities or scripture as a life-style? Somehow, the very word *safe* seems an insult to God and a repudiation of human existence. Yet I know of some, in the extreme effort to play it safe, who purposely attempt to annihilate their human (or God-like) nature, personality and very being in hopes that the remaining, prostrate shell will receive its vigor from some sort of eternal pie-filler. This sophisticated Mormon-mysticism demonstrates that “safe” need not be easy. In any case, I submit that “real life” (trust me to know about “real life,” as Nibley would say) does not lend itself to any form of safe approach. And when we live by authority we play the game as Pascal might have, thereby denying both human and divine dignity.



Life involves difficult choices—the hardest require sorting out positive alternatives (or commandments) where we can be “justified” (as the Book of Mormon puts it) however we choose. This, for me, is the significance of Adam’s dilemma (that Adam was not an automaton) and the choice entailed some risk. Further, his dilemma is a type (suitable for the temple) illustrating

one of the great purposes of existence—constantly sweating-out and resolving life's problems. Which reminds us that Adam *couldn't* receive his problems by appealing to either tradition or authority.

So finally, I suppose I too must side with Socrates (in *aspiring* to a life-style) and what I consider to be the thrust of the Gospel—to wit, search for the *Daimon* within us and be true to it, which is to say, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

John M. Anderson
Oakland, California

Dear Sirs:

... When Romney made the famous "brainwashed" statement, I took it to be a ray of light, hoping that "our" Mormon candidate would not be a "me, too" supporter of the Viet Nam war. Yet, in the *Dialogue* interview, Romney appears to have swallowed the whole tissue of Orwellian double-think by which this nation justifies its denial of true self-determination for the people of Viet Nam, and thereby becomes an accomplice in the dreadful crime. Apparently, to Romney, as to Eisenhower, LBJ, *et al.*, self-determination is fine as long as no people are allowed to determine in favor of Communism, which ought to be their right. Are we not getting close to, in the words of Thomas Alexander (Autumn, 1967), "the philosophy espoused by Lucifer before the pre-creation war in Heaven"? Romney appears to believe the American "destiny" is to be the policeman and savior of all the world (though in admirable moderation), notwithstanding the abundant prophetic warnings regarding the coming bankruptcy of the nation and the various terrible judgments soon to befall us for our arrogance and unrighteousness! Surely one of the most persuasive evidences of our national moral decay is the prevalence of the attitude that good old Uncle Sam can do no wrong!

I love this great nation, endowed from on High, but I am deeply ashamed of the present actions of our country in this hideous war. It seems to me that the eternal principle of repentance must apply as well to nations as to individuals and that we can escape divine wrath only by going back to the principles of the Geneva accords, holding the national plebiscite which was pro-

mised the Viet Nameese, and honoring the result, whatever it may be. By persisting in our arrogant course, we only embitter against us the very people we pretend to be "saving" from their own choice, thereby making our extrication from the situation ever more remote. . . .

Alvin Guy VanAlstyne
Los Angeles, California

Dear Sirs:

First let me say what a superb journal yours is—handsome and tasteful and stimulating, all three. The people downstairs in our library are supposed to send us all the historical journals, but your Winter, 1967, issue was the first I have seen. It is absolutely first rate.

Let me say, too, that "The Tragedy of Vietnam and the Responsibility of Mormons" was, in its low-keyed, measured way, devastatingly good. I find it increasingly difficult to restrain my own anti-Vietnam rhetoric in the face of our government's daily excesses; it was a pleasure and a privilege to read the work of one who clearly can.

Paul H. Hass, Editor
The State Historical Society Press
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Sirs:

Somehow we have got our priorities out of joint. Vietnam is only the most horrible symptom of our malaise. It is siphoning the cream of our manhood to die for all the wrong reasons while the drain on our economy grows and grows. We desire to change the course of Negro life. Good. But the promises are never quite fulfilled, leaving great expectations among our Negro community, expectations which turn into mass movements and violence. We are going to the "Moon in the sixties." This has been likened to the building of the pyramids—perhaps an exaggeration—but no one has ever shown me clearly why the great hurry. Vietnam preoccupies the government officials to the extent that the problems of the rest of the world and our strategic defense and foreign relations degenerate by the hour. There are so many things to do with our individual and collective energy as a people, things which would

build and create spiritual and human values. But we dissipate ourselves building pyramids in Vietnam, Houston, Washington. What about our role in helping the peoples of the world (and Watts, etc.) to learn to live a qualitatively better life? Certainly the same brains and skills necessary to launch Saturn I or to lead patrols in Vietnam are adaptable to the urban crises, disease, poverty, education.

Somehow the Great Society has a Grim Society ring to it nowadays. . . . We need a great leader with right motives and some perspective. We have a fantastic power to do—but we are using that power for perverse ends.

Ralph Pringle
Salt Lake City, Utah

[The following letter, published here by permission, may be of interest to our readers. (Ed.)]

Mr. Eugene England, Jr.
1400 Waverley
Palo Alto, California

Dear Brother England:

Reference is made to your inquiry of President N. Eldon Tanner as to the attitude of the Church regarding conscientious objectors.

I am directed to tell you that membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not make one a conscientious objector. As you are aware, there are thousands of young men of the Church assigned to the various services in the military.

As the brethren understand, the existing law provides that men who have conscientious objection may be excused from combat service. There would seem to be no objection, therefore, to a man availing himself on a personal basis of the exemptions provided by law.

Sincerely yours,
Joseph Anderson,
Secretary to the First Presidency

Dear Sirs:

I was delighted to see that a large section of the Autumn issue of *Dialogue* was devoted to the family, and was looking forward to some enjoyable reading and some inspira-

tion as to raising my family. I had supposed that the articles would be on such matters as family prayer, family home evenings, exhortations to children to honor their parents and to the women in the Church to obey their husbands. I expected to find some inspirational quotes I could use in our own family home evenings and in giving my priesthood lessons. Instead I found articles undermining the role of the priesthood holder in the home, articles on divorce, sex, and L.D.S. girls marrying outside the Church. To say the least, I was shocked. I expected to be uplifted and instead I found a discussion of problems that should not occur in L.D.S. homes. These problems could be avoided if people would just live the gospel.

In searching for the reason for these inappropriate articles I began to check the credentials of the authors. Though the credentials were brief, they were of sufficient length for me to spot the problem. The authors were equipped with the proper academic credentials, having gone to the right schools, receiving their Masters and Ph.D. degrees; a number of them are now teaching as professors and assistant professors. This made me suspect that you had gathered together a bunch of intellectuals. One look at their Church credentials confirmed my suspicions. There wasn't a general authority, former mission president, or stake president in the group; merely teachers in the Sunday School and M.I.A. What right have they to question the Church on its current practices? By what authority do they discuss Church doctrine?

It appears that you selected people to contribute who have succeeded in academic life but have not advanced very rapidly in the Church. Should I not then be skeptical of what they have to say? I suggest that you made the mistake of publishing these inappropriate articles because of your failure to observe the counsel of the more faithful Church members who have written letters to the editor. If you would but heed their advice, *Dialogue* would be a much more acceptable journal. Let me remind you of some of their recommendations. You should avoid contributions from intellectuals because they have never produced a solution to any of society's problems (Winter, 1966). The only exception to this ruling would be intellectuals who pay a full tithe, attend

sacrament meeting, do genealogy work, and live the Word of Wisdom (Spring, 1967). You should avoid contributions from people who swear, or from people without sufficient "Church standing"; from persons who are not "members in good standing"; and even more important, from those who are actually inactive (Autumn, 1967).

If you were to be more carefully selective, excluding contributions from the above listed people, you would not have articles on divorce, sex, and marriage outside of the Church. *Dialogue* would be a much smaller journal and, therefore, of less bother to the Church.

Paul Thompson
Boston, Mass.

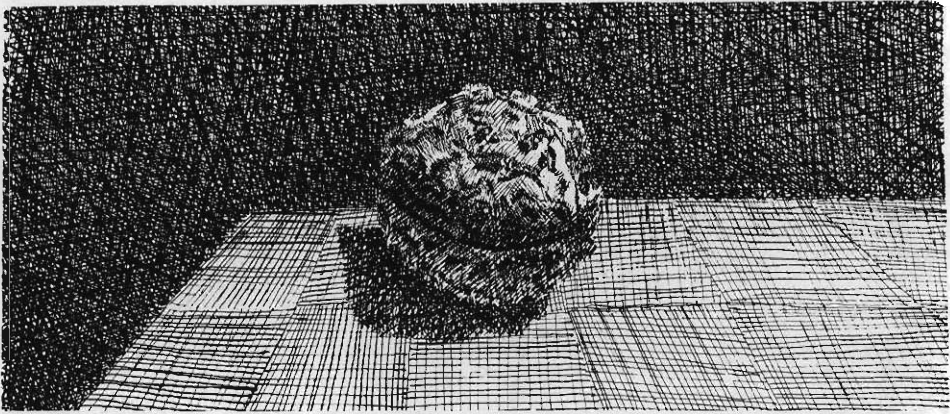
other manuscripts likewise dated from the Kirtland period. A forthcoming article in the *Era* will explain in detail what these maps and drawings represent.

T. Edgar Lyon
Salt Lake City, Utah

[Our apologies to Brother Lyon for the misquotation. (Ed.)]

Dear Sirs:

The Lovejoy Library of Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville (in Greater St. Louis) will present a one day conference on the theme "The Mormons in Illinois" on May 11. Throughout the day eight papers will be presented on various topics of this



Dear Sirs:

An editorial note at the bottom of page fifty-three of the Winter issue of *Dialogue* is very misleading. Someone in an intimate group discussion early in December, 1967, heard part of what I said. It was to the effect that a prominent person who had seen the manuscripts, but who was not conversant with the scope of Mormon history, thought the maps might be part of Nauvoo, as he was unfamiliar with the Ohio period of Mormon history. He further expressed the opinion that if this proved to be true, they might be of more historical worth than the fragments pasted to them, as the fragments were quite common representations from the Book of the Dead. This opinion, without my sanction, was erroneously attributed to me and published in *Dialogue*. In January, when I had an opportunity to examine the photographs of the manuscripts, it was obvious that the two maps were part of Ohio and not Illinois and the drawings on the

phase of mid-nineteenth century American history and the current restoration of old Nauvoo. Inquiries should be addressed to Professor Stanley B. Kimball, General Chairman, Department of History, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025.

Stanley B. Kimball
Edwardsville, Illinois

Dear Sirs:

In reading responses to Stuart Udall's letter in *Dialogue*, Autumn 1967, I was surprised and saddened to note that only three (Lobb, Nelson and Wilcox) out of eight writers attempted to deal with the moral, social or theological implications of denying the Priesthood to the Negro. While most thoughtful readers will appreciate the ideas presented by these three writers, I feel the other five letters deserve comment for two

reasons: they express feelings which seem to be very prevalent in the Church and many of their seemingly orthodox statements run contrary to the spirit and doctrine of the Gospel.



Richards sums up much of the reaction against Udall's statement and those of other "liberals and intellectuals": "The Church is either true or it isn't. If it changes its stand on the strength of the 'great stream of modern religious and social thought' it will be proven untrue." The argument implies that the Church is perfect and any suggestion to the contrary is a threat to its claim to divine authority. Of course, if the Church is perfect it has no need for change; change could only destroy its perfection. But the scriptural, doctrinal, historical and common sense truth is that the Church is not now and never has been perfect in this or any other dispensation. The scriptures and Church history are full of instances in which leaders, and sometimes the whole Church, have resisted God's will out of ignorance, the "evil traditions" of the particular culture, stubbornness or sinfulness. Perhaps, in this context, Richard's attempted parallel between the Restored Church and the Jews is not altogether inappropriate. Though they were God's chosen people, blessed with the Priesthood and prophets for many centuries, they consistently refused to share their blessings and be a "light unto the Gentiles." When Christ came to prepare them to carry the Gospel to "every kindred tongue and people" they were unwilling, and so they

lost the covenant. The restored Church's practices toward the Negro could very well be contrary to God's will without affecting our claim to divine authority—so long as we actively seek His guidance, and then change and grow. We will more likely lose the covenant by claiming perfection and resisting change.

These letters reflect a great deal of resentment against Udall for what is interpreted as an attempt to put pressure on the Church and its leadership. The implied duty of the faithful is to defend against this pressure. Romney, Rudel, and Phillips mount particularly hostile counterattacks using the devices of irony, ridicule, and name-calling. The real irony is that they, and people who feel as they do, are themselves exerting very powerful pressures on the leadership of the Church. Their letters put the brethren on notice that (1) it is widely felt in the Church that the practice of withholding the Priesthood from Negroes is scripturally sound and the result of divine revelation, (2) statements of the current leadership, such as President McKay's (*Home Memories of President David O. McKay*, pp. 226-231) "I know of no scriptural basis for denying the priesthood to Negroes other than one verse in the Book of Abraham" have less weight than statements made by earlier leaders, notably Brigham Young, (3) that the faithful members (as opposed to intellectuals and critics) will view a change in practice or doctrine as capitulation to the enemy, (4) that such a capitulation could only indicate that the Church is untrue. I submit that this kind of thinking is a pressure on the brethren that is much more constraining than any that could come from dissenters or outsiders.

Probably the most disturbing aspect of these letters is their failure to acknowledge the contradictions and ambiguity in the practice of denying the Priesthood to Negroes. It is as if the one obscure passage from the Book of Abraham were sufficient to negate the hundreds of passages throughout all the scriptures which declare the universality of the Gospel and Priesthood blessings. (To cite a few: Acts 17:26; 10:34-35; Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19; Rev. 14:6-7; D&C 84:32-39; 62-64; 74-76.) How can we fulfill God's will as expressed in these passages if we continue to both avoid and alienate such a large segment of the human

family? Sandberg comes close to dealing with this problem, but she concludes that the best we can do is "patiently wait for" the Lord's disposition. While waiting, we are to dedicate ourselves to appreciating the Negro and improving Negro-Mormon relations. This is probably the saddest suggestion of all because of its futility. Such statements can do nothing to overcome the prejudice among Mormons regarding Negro inferiority. How could the members feel otherwise, believing that God considers the Negro unworthy to bear the priesthood? The word "curse" is a strong conditioner of opinion—and it is used unsparingly to justify our current practice. Certainly we couldn't expect large numbers of Negroes to accept membership, or even our friendship. To do so would be to place themselves in a condition which is in many ways a carbon copy of their condition under the beneficent thumb of the "good" Southerners.

But the main problem with Sandberg's statement is the suggestion that the general membership should passively wait for change. Certainly *decisions* come from the Lord through the chain of authority. But earnest inquiries, expressions of concern and opinion, accurate information relating to the problem—all sorts of demonstrations of active moral and social conscience by the general membership should move in the other direction through the chain to reach the General Authorities. Otherwise, we will find ourselves as a people precisely where Vernon Romney would have us: blissfully "cleaning out the chicken coop down at the Stake Farm," conscience and mind at rest.

Samuel N. Henrie, Jr.
Albany, California

Dear Sirs:

Samuel Taylor, in your Winter 1967 "letters" column, implied that the *Saints' Herald* reprinted his "Peculiar People, Positive Thinkers" tirade because of some left-handed support for the Reorganized Church's Josephite anti-polygamy position.

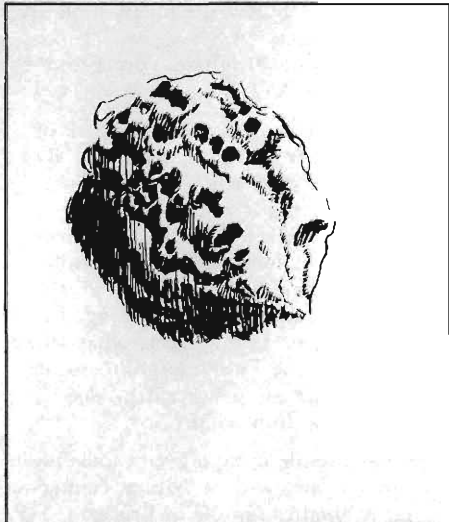
This is altogether too bad. True, many of our readers no doubt enjoyed such apparent support for this apologetic point of view, but this could hardly have been considered the major editorial reason for re-printing the piece.

It may be difficult for Taylor, *et al*, to

understand, but we, too, shudder at the thought of being considered a "kept" press and do everything in our power to maintain a relative degree of editorial independence.

We printed the Taylor piece because we felt that his arguments had application to our particular literary situation—not because we thought this to be an opportunity to widen the Brighamite-Josephite credibility gap. Haven't the Utah people heard? We quit calling ourselves the *True Latter Day Saints Herald* several years ago.

I would also like to underscore one point made by Armand L. Mauss in his article "Mormonism and the Negro," which appeared in the same issue. After discussing at considerable length the Negro-Mormon problem, he concludes "there is no evidence of a carry-over of the Mormon doctrine on the Negro into secular civil life; in fact, there is evidence to the contrary. No matter how much racism you think you see in Utah, you can't be sure it has anything to do with Mormonism. It might be related to the rural and small-town environment in much of the Mountain West (as in other parts of the country), or it might be the sickness of individual Mormon bigots, who would find some *other* way to rationalize their racism, even if the Mormon Church were without its peculiar 'Negro doctrine'" (page 38).



The Reorganized Church has no such proscription concerning Negro membership in the priesthood. As many "saints" are wont to say, "Some of our best elders are Negroes." But as this "tongue-in-cheek"

quotation implies, we do have our share of bigots, racists, and even segregated congregations.

All Christian denominations share with us in this dilemma. Nowhere, as Mauss suggests, does scripture authenticate the consideration of Negroes as second-class citizens. Racism exists, in spite of Christian doctrine, not because of it. You Mormons, however, do have some skimpy theological support in this regard. But as Mauss points out, empirical sociological evidence does not support the assumption that Mormons are any more, or any less, racist because of the Pearl of Great Price pronouncement than their Christian brothers.

The roots of racism must primarily be attributed to the frailty of human beings. It's just too bad that Mormon bigots *can* find a theological tree-trunk to hide behind.

Joseph H. Pearson, News Editor
Saints' Herald
Independence, Missouri

Dear Sirs:

... In reading Preston Nibley's excellent book, *Brigham Young, the Man and His Work*, I came across a quote that may be helpful to brother Grant Syphers (Letter, Winter, 1967) and his fellow members of the Ark Steadier's Society (A.S.S.).

Nibley quotes Brigham Young from the *Millennial Star*, Vol. 26, p. 263:

... a man or woman may ask of God, and get a witness and testimony from God concerning any work or messenger that is sent unto them; but if a person ask for a thing that does not concern him, such as governing the Church, as a member of the Church, inquiring concerning the duty of a presiding elder, what the Prophet or the Twelve ought to do, he will not get an answer; if he does it will not be from God.

What President Young says makes a lot of sense to me, and as Nibley comments, "That is another sample of Brigham's wise and practical advice to the Saints."

It seems to me that one of the distinguishing marks of the true Church is guidance of it by God through his prophets. If someone is looking for a democratic theo-

gy, I presume the Reorganites or Presbyterians would take his application.

Frank Adams
Helena, Montana

Grant Syphers replies:

The basis of any dialogue must be mutual respect. It is difficult to carry on a discussion when one's thoughts and feelings bring a response of name calling.

The Negro Question is manifestly of personal concern to me because it is part of a "double bind." On the one hand, I have followed the traditional Mormon way of learning the truth of a doctrine: I have studied the matter, I have sought the counsel of my leaders, I have fasted and prayed. On the other hand, I am being punished for the beliefs to which this epistemology has led me. Also, when a policy affects at least one-third of all my brothers and sisters on this planet, it is impossible for me to accept the advice not to think about it.

There are ways, Brother Adams, in which you might change my thinking. Perhaps you could supply to me the things I have not been able to find myself. For instance, if you truly believe that God is the author of the Church's Negro policy, you might indicate how this belief has helped you better understand the needs of our Negro brothers. You may have examples of how the policy has facilitated your expression of love to a Negro. Perhaps, in some way I haven't discovered, this policy is, indeed, bringing the Negro to a better understanding of Jesus and his restored gospel.

Just what are the good fruits which this doctrinal tree has borne?

Grant Syphers (Jr.)
San Francisco, California

Dear Sirs:

It is amusing how some letters to the editors of *Dialogue* have tried to brand Stewart L. Udall a "Jack-Mormon" in lieu of criticizing his viewpoint on our Negro problem.

Soon after Mr. Udall had been appointed Secretary of the Interior, the apocryphal story was going the rounds that his bishop walked in on him at a lunch counter and observed that he had a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other hand.

The bishop remarked to him, "Brother Udall, I have always considered you a faithful member of our Church," and Brother Udall is reported as replying, "Bishop, I consider myself to be a faithful member of our Church. I stick to the brands that the Lord's TV station advertises."

Perhaps if Udall's critics would define just what they mean by a "Jack-Mormon" we would be better able to determine if the cap fits, or would it be better to just stick to the issues and not attack the person?

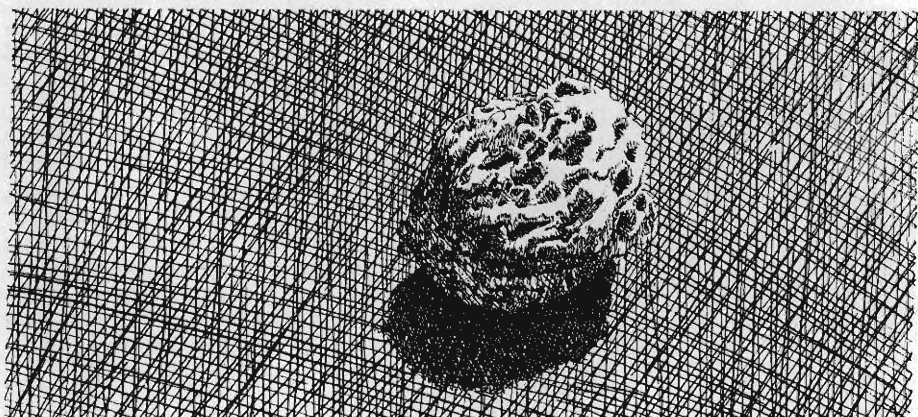
A young Navajo Indian attending the B.Y.U. recently defined a "Jack-Mormon" as being "a sea gull that won't eat crickets." His Caucasian friend countered with, "You're wrong; a 'Jack-Mormon' is a Mormon with a sense of humor." Or could we define a "Jack-Mormon" as "just anyone who happens to disagree with me"?

Raymond Taylor
Provo, Utah

In view of the irrelevance of such arguments to the issues discussed in *Dialogue* we would like to suggest an amendment to your editorial policy. We suggest that the editors of *Dialogue* cease publication of letters which commit the *ad hominem* fallacy or delete *ad hominem* arguments from otherwise publishable letters. Such arguments neither enhance the academic stature of *Dialogue* nor edify its readers. It would be a comfort to contributors of all kinds to know that the published criticisms of their articles and letters will depend upon the logical validity of their arguments and not upon character assassination and innuendo.

Pam and Steve Taggart
Ithaca, N.Y.

[Although we try to edit all AD HOMINEM arguments from our regular features, it seems appropriate to our purposes to allow them to appear in Roundtables and our Letters section, where they can be identified and responded to. (Ed.)]



Dear Sirs:

In reading the Letters to the Editors in the Autumn, 1967, issue of *Dialogue*, we were disturbed to find that the letters of Vernon B. Romney, Paul C. Richards, Gary Lobb, and John Phillips depended either in whole or in part on *ad hominem* arguments. An argument or opinion should be considered logically correct when the premise or premises constitute good grounds for affirming the conclusion, and criticism of a person's character or his interests is not relevant to the validity of his position (e.g., "his years of religious condescension and inactivity"; "lacked the spirit of one who is genuinely interested in or committed to the Church"; [ironically] "coming from such an openly devoted member of the Church. . .").

Dear Sirs:

Carlfrid B. Broderick's article on "Three Philosophies of Sex, Plus One," was very interesting and positive. However, I would like to question his dealing with sexual transgressors, more specifically, the interview of the sixteen-year-old boy with the "problem" of masturbation.

If a boy *must* be asked questions around this area by a bishop, then I certainly would agree with the approach given. But I question Mr. Broderick's defining masturbation as a problem. Masturbation by boys or girls is considered a normal phenomenon of development by professionals in the field of Behavioral Sciences. It is even considered necessary by many of these professionals for a satisfying psychosexual development.

Since masturbation is normal, then it is not a problem and should be off limits as a question asked young men who are being advanced in the priesthood. The Church has the right to ask of its members moral behavior such as no sex relations outside marriage, but is stepping on very questionable ground when asking our young people to stop behavior that is normal. Questioning boys in this area could encourage them to lie to Church leaders, to feel unnecessary guilt, or both.

Some young people become fixated and are compulsive masturbators. This then could be considered a problem, but only symptomatic of underlying problems. This person should have professional help, working on the causes of his compulsive masturbation. A bishop aware of this type of problem should refer the person for professional help unless he himself is professionally trained.

Paul F. Moore
Provo, Utah

Carlfred Broderick replies:

Mr. Moore is quite correct in his observation that many professionals view masturbation as a "normal phenomenon" among adolescent boys. Their view reflects the reaction against the false premises of the nay-sayers of earlier generations. It remains true, however, that science is qualified to speak on the subject of the objective consequences of an act, but not on its *moral* implications. The latter question is outside the realm of science. It would seem to be a legitimate concern of the Church to espouse values—in this case the value of self control in a significant area of life. The true scientist must deal impartially with all of the facts, but he is permitted, in a free society, to choose his values.

Carlfred Broderick
University Park, Illinois

Dear Sirs:

The Lord selected young and vigorous men to organize and develop the Restored Church. With divine guidance these leaders were able to face and solve the religious and social issues facing the Church during their times. Today's Church is lead by much older men. Age brings experience and usually wisdom, but after varying lengths of

time it also brings a slowing of the physical and mental processes. Would not the Church benefit by returning to its earlier pattern of young leadership performing the necessarily strenuous daily work, and by relying on our older leaders for their inspired advice and sage counsel?

The Prophet Joseph Smith organized a "Council of Fifty" on March 11, 1844, a short time before his death. This was the key organization that directed the exodus of the Saints to the West and established the financial and political organization there. It continued to function until the death of President Brigham Young in 1877; then it was revived in the 1880's to combat the polygamy persecutions. In time, it again ceased to function.

The Church is a divine organization guided by revelation to its leaders and by their inspired use of their wisdom and intelligence. Might not they consider and ask of the Lord as to whether reorganization of a "Council of Fifty" (or more), or some such body, might be a useful step in the direction of solving the need for younger leadership which would be more responsive to the needs of the times? Membership in such a body could be drawn from the General Authorities, the Regional Representatives, and other Church leaders, and from the general membership of the Church. This group could be called into session by the President of the Church, the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in case of the death of the President of the Church, or upon request of two thirds of the Council members. It could have a voice in selection of new General Authorities from the general membership of the Church, regardless of positions previously held by them. The proposed Council could be empowered to determine when an officer should be called upon to lay down his active role and be used only for advice. While we are at it, why not let the General Authorities retire, without any stigma attached to such an act, when their health and age prevent them from performing at their best?

These suggestions might be construed by some as an attempt on my part to "steady the ark." I am willing to accept such a charge if it will produce some serious, unselfish thinking and promote open discussion. I have considered myself a loyal member of the Church for over seventy

years, and expect to remain so always. I hope that the nature of this problem will be recognized, that solutions will be suggested, and that the Brethren, acting under our Father's guidance, will implement the best of them. The good done by the gospel should be spread to all mankind as soon as possible. Important steps recently taken in strengthening our organization should be followed by additional ones so that such a goal may be achieved.

Ray J. Davis
Pocatello, Idaho

Dear Sirs:

Since Hyrum Andrus deduces his arguments in support of Richard Vetterli's *The Constitution by a Thread* from his first basic premise, it would be helpful to laymen if Dr. Andrus would prove "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that Joseph Smith did indeed prophesy that the constitution would "hang by a thread."

Melvin T. Smith
St. George, Utah

Dear Sirs:

After reading George Boyd's critique of *Eternal Man* [Autumn, 1967], I wrote the following attempt to give a more positive view (although on successive after-readings of Boyd's review, I am more impressed with the fairness of his evaluation):

The great value of Madsen's *Eternal Man* lies in its appeal to the validity of personal insight as a way of knowing at a time when we tend to regard expertise more than intuition, placing diagrams and debate above our deepest feelings. The inner voice is recognized as a guide truer than the intellect—and in an intellectual discussion. Madsen urges his readers, "Trust yourselves"—an injunction essential to the Mormon concept of personal revelation. He defines the Christian ideal of "childlike" not as "vulnerable readiness to believe others'

voices" but rather as a "soul-unity that prevents disbelief" of one's own.

Eternal Man may be seen as a creative exploration of the claims inherent in Mormon doctrine. "This is the truth about man—what does it mean. . . ?" In his surprising manner of speaking, Madsen translates distinctively gospel insight into a thing to be grasped by the heart and by the imagination. In addition, *Eternal Man* treats the traditional theological snares from an angle which should give atheists their share of intellectual doubts. How can man's free agency be reconciled with God's omniscience? The fullest freedom, freedom to become that which we were divinely intended, *requires* foreknowledge. How can we be assured of God's love in a world of pain? There is a creative potential involved in suffering—God will not lift us from the furnace, but He will lead us through it to our eternal benefit. Although Mormon doctrine has been charged with lessening the image of God by affirming that He is subject to uncreated cosmic law, He becomes even *more* powerful than the traditional Absolute because ultimately He can enable His creatures to become like Himself. In reply to the warnings of the large block of modern Christianity against the dangers of anthropomorphism, Madsen asks bluntly, "Why should we be afraid to ascribe to God what He ascribes to Himself?"

In spite of the apologetic value of bringing revealed religion and contemporary speculation into the same book, *Eternal Man* is most profound when Mormonism is treated as other than the last word in philosophical debate. When Madsen leaves the field of analysis and shifts to "things more noble," his brand of eloquence comes into its own, and *Eternal Man* assumes the impact of a very beautiful sermon. Then, in a powerful way, Madsen shares with his readers his certainty that the *real* reality involves an emphatic "yes" to the universe, arising from a depth which makes the abysmal pessimism of a Freud or a Heidegger seem shallow.

Kathryn Hanson
Salt Lake City, Utah