

# Letters to the Editors

*The pen and ink sketches of Lake Alexander, Utah, are by Ralph Reynolds, a Salt Lake City graphic designer.*

Dear Sirs:

Boycotts at BYU have reached our ears here. Considering the official and unofficial discrimination at the "Y" in the past it is not unexpected. (Actually one boycott leader was from a black LDS family in Oakland).

Satan wants more than anything to get the good people out of the Church and the bigoted inside — this same type of thing happened several times in the Book of Mormon.

The brotherly members of the Church need to unite in prayer for help at this time. There is little, beyond that, that the average member can do. Because of various myths our relation of blacks and Priesthood is misunderstood by many members, who really think blacks are inferior mentally, spiritually, etc. The publications of members on this subject reflect glaring logical and theological holes. Most members are unable to empathize with blacks and want to tolerate only "Uncle Toms."

I would recommend reading Jacob 3:9 and "The Racial Revolution" by G. Homer Durham in the October, 1968, *Improvement Era* in reconsidering racial attitudes. The "moral evil" of discrimination, as President Brown called it, is not only civil but mental. Fortunately, things may be changing. A black choir in San Diego sings Mormon hymns. The new Queen at the Church College of Hawaii is an Indian-Negro.

Let our fruits be good. Let us be a light of brotherhood — and let us unite in prayer for greater understanding.

Scott S. Smith  
Dusseldorf, West Germany

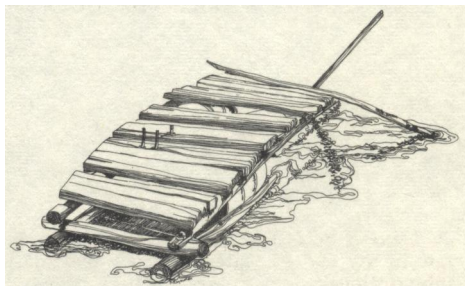
Dear Sirs:

Along with several other University of Utah students, I am trying to acquire factual information of cases where people of Negroid descent have been ordained to the priesthood in the "Mormon" Church. We are interested in any first-hand account of such cases in our times, or documented accounts of such events in the past, or any information that can be well documented. This is part of a study concerning the history of the "Mormon" Church's dealings with the Negro race. Persons with desired information (and any and all replies will be greatly valued) can contact me by writing:

Thor O. Nilsen  
1238 Colorado Street  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

Dear Sirs:

"Vardis Fisher and the Mormons" by Joseph M. Flora (Autumn 1969) prompted me to read Fisher's *Children of God*. I must confess that uncomplimentary rumors had



forestalled my reading it before. It is an impressive work, and my original conclusions

pertaining to those who practiced polygyny were reinforced — it took exceptional people to truly live the principle. Vardis Fisher obviously had great literary talent and, in my opinion, a soul more generous, free, and Christian than his critics are generally willing to concede to him.

I also enjoyed Kenneth B. Hunsaker's review on Mid-Century Mormon novels, especially his comments regarding Maureen Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*; this novel was a particularly inspiring experience for me. Hunsaker also reviewed Richard Scowcroft's *Children of the Covenant*, a work with which I was previously unfamiliar. I can understand why he said that it is catalogued in the Church Historian's library as an anti-Mormon novel, but I cannot understand why Hunsaker himself labeled it definitely anti-Mormon. His comments about the book were mainly positive. His one negative statement was that the novel lacked universality. A qualified statement that it was anti-Church establishment, not anti-Mormon, would have been more accurate. Scowcroft is opposed to the way Mormonism is being lived, and he asked the soul-searching questions in Chapter 16: "Where's the brotherhood, the sharing, the interdependence, the love, the cooperation?" The author realizes that our religion is "a way of life" here and hereafter and he is weary of the pretense, nepotism, gossip, and shallowness prevalent in his Ogden community. I live a few valleys south, but Scowcroft is my kind of Mormon, and I am grateful that he had the talent, patience, and motivation to write such a story. Saint Réal said, "A novel is a mirror passing down a road"; is it possible we as Mormons did not like what we saw in Scowcroft's mirror?

I consider myself a good Mormon, I am not offended, and I regret that Hunsaker felt it necessary to consign to obscurity what was for me a significant Mormon novel.

Loneta M. Murphy  
Provo, Utah

Dear Sirs:

When *Dialogue* was first published I had high hopes, often sustained during those sweet days, that the journal would provide an avenue of discussion for those of us who have found serious flaws in the Church func-

tioning and gospel doctrine. I had hoped it would provide an arena in which these problems could be resolved and a new consensus built which would strengthen our devotion to our religion and energize our participation.

What would I like to see discussed? Let me list a few very general areas you might consider (and if you do use them, please let me know so I can resubscribe):

1. The discussions on the Mormon's attitude toward modern experiences like over-



population, pollution, the "War," racism, etc. have been touched upon, and I think rather well, but this avenue has barely been opened up, certainly not exhausted.

2. It is well known in the social sciences that the institutionalization of a social movement has certain consequences for the group, including, in our country, the eventual domination of the movement by bureaucratic organization. Social scientists have also indicated that there are certain consequences of bureaucratization which can usually be expected, including the turning away of the organization from the goals which it was organized to attain. It is absolutely imperative that we examine our Church to see if in the process of institutionalization and bureaucratization from the 1830's to the present our Church has turned away from the goals for which it was organized. I would contend that it has.

3. If history is your delight, how about comparing the gospel doctrine to the revolutionary ideas of Joseph Smith's time, especially the ideas so vividly pronounced

throughout the French Revolution. It is interesting to me that Smith emphasized progress when the idea of "Progress" was a major guiding principle for many philosophers, revolutionaries, and scientists. It is interesting that he emphasized "eternal laws" at a time when "Natural Laws" were loudly proclaimed. . . . With Sterling McMurrin and others *Dialogue* could publish a lively and "enlightening" discussion on this topic.

4. With all the eulogizing of David O. McKay, how about a serious discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of our patriarchal gerontocracy. Where is the scriptural evidence indicating that the Prophet, Seer and Revelator must always be selected according to age, seniority in the Church Bureaucracy, etc.?

5. And speaking of revelation, let us examine objectively the evidence that revelation has continued to the 1970's. I suspect there isn't much.

It is with considerable despair that I write this note. Perhaps it will not fall upon deaf ears or pious necks.

Gordon E. Moss  
State University of  
New York at Buffalo

Dear Sirs:

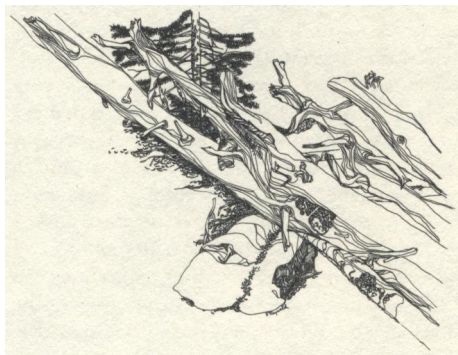
I must be one of hundreds, probably thousands, of Mormons who hover about the edges of the Church but who are immersed in the culture, history and essential myths of Mormonism, to whom *Dialogue* offers a periodic reconstitution of soul. The journal is very important to me and to my wife. Something essential would go out of our lives if *Dialogue* were to fold.

We send along our widow's mite, our pledge to proselyte among our friends (the only kind of proselyting I am amenable to these days), and a pledge of any kind of support that you could use.

I think your literature issue a very good one. The many fine personal statements in this issue have been provocative, indicative of a need to reenergize our essential poetic myths. My pen has hardly been stationary this week. Two areas that are of vital interest to me are the relationships between Mormonism and theatre and between Mormonism and film. Theatre suffers even more than literature in the church. A writer can,

as Wayne Carver suggests, simply go off and write. A theatre needs some sort of specific audience and financial institutional support. And the annual BYU awards for the most innocuous film of the year merely gives form to the sterility of our dramatic imagination. I suspect that there is a great mine of untapped imagistic wealth in Mormonism. Perhaps we are ultimately wealthier in our ability to see than to hear. Perhaps the great embodiments of Mormon myth will be cinematic. Are there cinema buffs — makers of film — out there?

Gary Stewart  
Amherst, Mass.



Dear Sirs:

I would be deeply distressed should you be obliged to discontinue publication. The Journal has begun to fill a long standing need for a broad spectrum of Mormon thought. It has given me great comfort to feel that perhaps there is more room for difference of opinion within the Church than I have been led to believe.

I welcome some change in the nature of the Journal content. I believe it will have a much broader appeal if there is perhaps less space given to the historical and academic aspects of Mormonism and more on the Church in today's world. It would be very interesting, and I believe very healthy, if there could be some scientific and thoroughly responsible polls of the opinions of the "murmuring majority" of Church members.

My thanks to all those who contribute their time and ability to *Dialogue*.

Florence McCune  
Los Angeles, California