

LETTERS

An Act of Courage

I want to commend you for publishing the excellent short story "And" by N. E. Houston in your Summer 1990 issue. The story is written with skill and sensitivity, and with great understanding and empathy on the part of the writer. I would like to see many more pieces of well-written and perceptive fiction in future issues.

Being a writer myself (*Light of the Morning*, a novel currently being handled by Herald House, Independence, Mo.), I appreciate the struggle and courage it takes to create good fiction like "And." My congratulations and best wishes to the writer, and to DIALOGUE for publishing it.

Elaine Stienon
Glendale, California

Surviving the Nineties

Thank you, thank you, thank you! With the help of DIALOGUE we will survive the nineties still "active" members of the Church.

Patricia Skeen
Eugene, Oregon

Afflicting the Comfortable

What a great book *Personal Voices* is. So much of what is in it tends to afflict the comfortable, the comfortable being me. I need the awakening these personal essays bring. I'm for putting together another collection!

Rick Pike
Salt Lake City, Utah

Concerned About Polygamy

During the hundredth anniversary of the Manifesto, fundamentalists made it their goal to get polygamy legalized and force the Church to resume this practice. They even enlisted support for their goal from the American Civil Liberties Union.

After reading Martha S. Bradley's article, "The Women of Fundamentalism: Shortcreek, 1953" (Summer 1990) and sensing her support for this lifestyle, I feel it is time to express some of my concerns.

As a Mormon woman whose great-grandfather died in prison because of this principle and as a psychologist with an inquiring mind, I have read widely and struggled with this doctrine for many years. I include here a list of my concerns.

1. There is a constant birthrate worldwide of 105 baby boys to every 100 baby girls. Where will all the extra women come from?

2. Polygamy means multiple mates. If polygamy is legalized, won't women also be able to have more than one husband? Won't this further erode the status of the family?

3. With all the concerns about overpopulation, isn't it a little irresponsible to be fathering numerous children, even if a man thinks he is for some reason more "worthy"? And who or what is to decide his worthiness? His position in the Church?

4. Men have trouble supporting and nurturing even one family, let alone several. Is it only their genes that are important? If so, couldn't artificial insemination take care of that with a lot less trouble?

5. In the LeBaron colony, the shortage of women was acute. Rena Chyno-

weth, the thirteenth wife of Ervil and the one who shot Rulon Allred, wrote in her book *Blood Covenant* (Austin, Texas: Diamond Books, 1990) about twelve-year-old girls being bargained for among the leaders. The younger men didn't stand a chance.

6. The Book of Mormon says,

But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.

Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; . . .

For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. (Jacob 2:23-31)

These are strong words. Are we to believe they no longer apply?

7. History pretty well documents Joseph Smith's weakness for women. Are prophets infallible? Isn't it just barely possible that D&C 132 was a product of his own difficulties? Are we to accept all revelation unquestioningly, or is there some criteria by which it can be judged? I am concerned that since women do not

hold the priesthood and have no voice in the decisions of the Church leaders, our concerns might not be considered in this matter.

These are my thoughts on this painful and controversial subject. Polygamy is incompatible with democracy and free agency. If the Church should ever decide to allow it again, I know I would have to leave. My heart would be broken. It makes no sense to me at all to want to work for the privilege of entering the celestial kingdom if polygamy is to be the order of the day there.

While I recognize that the Short Creek raids may not have accomplished any purpose and may seem to some to be inhumane, I believe they were an honest effort to deal with a lingering problem.

Virginia Bourgeois
Syracuse, Utah

One-Sided Treatment

Equity between the sexes is unquestionably an issue of importance, but one might reasonably ask if it is the only issue. The Fall 1990 issue of *DIALOGUE* was devoted almost entirely to this issue, as was a major part of the Winter issue.

Perhaps instead you could have devoted some space to addressing the completely one-sided treatment of this topic in *DIALOGUE*. Surely the word "dialogue" does not mean that those holding one point of view should spend their time and energy reinforcing one another's prejudices.

Is *DIALOGUE* going to treat a wide range of issues in an intellectually honest manner, or become merely a propaganda machine under the control of persons with only one point of view?

Richard H. Hart
Waldport, Oregon

Antiquated Pronouns

Lavina Fielding Anderson's marvelous article on "The Grammar of Inequity"

(Winter 1990) awoke in me the same longings to abandon the stiff, formal, and antiquated prayer pronouns advocated by the Church.

I served a mission in Germany, have a B.A. in German, and have spent nearly five years in that country. To Anderson's example of French, which continues to use two different forms of address for the second person, I would like to add German and nine more modern languages:

Danish
Dutch
Finnish
Italian
Norwegian
Portuguese
Russian
Spanish
Swedish

In these languages generally and in German particularly, the two forms of address are "familiar" and "polite." The familiar form is used among family members; intimate friends; adults speaking to children; small children addressing adults; among equals—especially blue-collar workers, laborers, soldiers, and athletes; with animals; and in prayers. Polite address is for strangers and outsiders and, as Anderson points out, uses the plural form of the verb as in English. Using the opposite form from the one expected is an insult or shows disrespect. In other words, using familiar pronouns with a stranger is an outrage, and addressing a friend with polite forms communicates cold rejection. Polite speech is formal, distant, cool, remote, detached. It is unthinkable to say *Sie* (the formal, polite, "you") to a father, heavenly or otherwise.

Two anecdotes will illustrate further.

My wife was born in Denmark but raised in the United States in a Danish household. Shortly after we became engaged and began praying together regularly, she asked if I'd mind if she offered her prayers in Danish. She explained that it felt much more comfortable. Prayers in English put God too far away. In Danish she could talk to her Heavenly Father in

the same intimate terms she used when speaking with her parents and family members. She always says her private prayers in her native tongue. She is fluent in English and has no trouble vocalizing a sincere public prayer in the language of her adopted country and in the forms preferred in the Church. Rather than flout convention and revert to the more intimate second person pronoun "you," she prefers to use the legitimate forms of Danish. Even now, after twenty-four years, she continues to use Danish when we say prayers between the two of us alone, even at meals.

A friend in Germany came across a seminary home study lesson on prayer which urged members to use the traditional prayer language in English. Though he understood the concepts, he was frustrated because he could not apply the lesson in any of the non-English languages he supervised in the European office of the Church Education System (the nine listed above, less Russian, plus French and German). Furthermore, he lamented to me, he now realized that his native German was lacking, that it did not have a special language for prayer like English. I explained that, in fact, the opposite was true. English was lacking because it did not have the same intimate way to speak to God that was reserved for close, affectionate family relationships in German.

If our heavenly parents or the Savior were to speak to me using human language, I wonder which forms they would use.

The "thee, thou, thy" forms are holdovers from the King James Version. The J. B. Phillips New Testament Version cited by Anderson is an excellent example of how much warmer and accessible the scriptures can become when thoughtfully couched in modern speech. The William Barclay version (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1976) might be even better. Not every so-called modern English version is so agreeable. The Church neither uses nor acknowledges these modern versions in English. How-

ever, in Germany, the Church has replaced the Luther version of the Bible with the German equivalent of the New International Version (also an excellent modern version), called *Die Einheitsübersetzung* (The Unity Translation, 1980). I bought my copy at the Salt Lake Distribution Center four years ago.

At times the Church seems to be troubled with the same “foolish traditions of the fathers” so often decried in the scriptures. I see evidence of linguistic discrimination. Though we publicly claim to be aware of our international status, we contradict that claim when we don’t sensitively consider the nuances of non-English languages in our published materials. If the projections are accurate, English will be a minority language in the Church within the next decade. How will we justify the overbearing English bias then?

Richard C. Russell
Salt Lake City, Utah

Late Night Thoughts at the End of a War

I keep thinking of the soldier, somewhere in the desert, being interviewed on TV just as the ground war was to begin. I think of his earnest face and voice: “I want to do this now, so we won’t have to come back and do it five years from now, so my son won’t have to do it.” I hope he is one of those now being welcomed by his wife and son. I rejoice in his safety and thank God that there were only a hundred or so Americans killed. I wonder what to say to God about the 100,000 or so Iraqis killed.

And I wonder if that soldier has heard the diplomats already talking about the problems that remain, the storm clouds gathering again: Iran and Syria jockeying for position to fill the vacuum left by Iraq, Middle East countries lining up to buy our new weapons that proved so terribly effective (\$38 billion in orders already). I wonder if he hears expert witnesses saying that the Middle East is more

unstable now than it was *before* the war, that the long-range problems that helped produce Saddam Hussein—the Arab-Israeli conflict and the gulf between oil-rich sheiks and the Arab masses—are not solved, perhaps made worse.

I want to be one to help keep that soldier’s sons—and daughters—from war, so late at night I think about what we can do differently next time. And this is what I think: I believe Christ and the modern prophets when they claim that peace can be created, but neither through violence nor through passivity: “Resist not evil, but . . . love your enemies” (Matt. 5:39–44). “Be not afraid of your enemies. . . . Renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:14, 16). “To all who seek a resolution to . . . an international difficulty among nations, we commend the counsel of the Prince of Peace, ‘Love your enemies’” (First Presidency Christmas Message, 1981). “Our assignment is affirmative . . . to take the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, June 1976).

Clearly the only way to do away with wars is to do away with enemies—not by killing them (because the chaos and suffering and injustices of war simply cause more enemies to rise up, even when we “win”), but by *changing* them through the power of active Christian love. We must “take the gospel” to them—through loving service, intelligent aid, morally consistent and peaceful efforts to heal differences and settle grievances, and personal examples of patience and nonviolence—in preparation to preach the specifics of the restored gospel.

Our nation hasn’t done that in the past: We supported or acquiesced in the imperialist and then oil-hungry injustices by France and England that created ongoing inequities and grievances in the Middle East but have not consistently used our wealth, our oil-buying power, or our influence to find peaceful resolutions. We have supported the Jews’ quest for a homeland, with money and weapons, but not

the equally morally demanding Palestinian quest for a homeland. I believe God would have blessed us in positive, consistent purposes, and thus we could have built a solid foundation for peace in the Middle East. Instead we have sold billions of dollars of weapons to all sides in the quarrels, pitting one against the other and constantly changing sides—for advantage, not principle.

I think of that soldier, and I wonder what we will do if we fail as a nation to use the Christ-like means for peace and then are faced again with an aggressive dictator like Saddam Hussein, “another Hitler.” Can we avoid sending that soldier to war again? The scriptures and prophets suggest that there *are* conditions that justify going to war. For instance, President David O. McKay called World War II a just war, and he cited as one “possible” condition, “defense of a weak nation . . . being unjustly crushed” (April Conference, 1942). But there are *other* conditions that the prophets and scriptures have set: using every peaceful means possible first, including genuine negotiation; not engaging in revenge or punishment, and *never*, as President McKay insisted, attempting “to establish a new order of government . . . no matter how better the government.”

Our war with Iraq met the first condition, but I do not believe it met the second, and it is right now failing the others. We have *never* offered to negotiate (which means *some* compromise) with Saddam. We simply stated what we called our “unconditional” (non-negotiable) demands. When Saddam *tried* to negotiate on August 12—including offering to leave Kuwait—we made no response, and President Bush simply dismissed as “outrageous” the efforts, just before the ground war began and during its last few days, of Jordan, Russia, and finally Iraq to negotiate. He did so, I believe, because he had decided to go beyond the UN resolutions and the implied mandate of Congress (which was simply to free Kuwait) and to destroy Saddam’s army and gov-

ernment and, if possible, Saddam himself. The result was the destruction of roads and bridges and water supplies all over Iraq and finally the killing of tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers as they were retreating along the highways north out of Kuwait. Iraq is left in chaos, with rebellions and disease continuing to kill thousands, a nation likely to remain, like Lebanon or Cambodia, politically unstable and constantly violent.

I think about that soldier and how to keep his sons and daughters at peace, and I believe we can do so by thinking about how we could have avoided sending him to war *this* time. The responsibility is *ours*, not that soldier’s, who did and risked what we asked—and is rightly welcomed home as a patriot. *We* can think about being willing to patiently negotiate, to use nonlethal, economic and moral sanctions in the face of aggression, and to avoid the spirit of war euphoria, of revenge, even blood-thirstiness, that the scriptures warn is a constant danger, even in a just war—a spirit that always plants the seeds of future conflict and causes the spirit of God to withdraw (see Mormon 3). Jordan’s King Hussein has testified that in his efforts to negotiate Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait immediately after the August 2 invasion, he became convinced that Saddam originally meant only a show of power to force Kuwait to take seriously his grievances (border incursions, including taking his oil, and desire for a port on the Gulf). But when Egypt and Saudi Arabia joined the U.S. in a coalition against Saddam, he responded to force with force—annexed and brutalized Kuwait and escalated his own rhetoric and intentions. Whether or not this is true, we will perhaps never know, but it doesn’t matter because we refused to negotiate and eventually went to war.

Why *should* we be more patient next time, at the risk of a Hitler later causing a much greater war? Because, as President Hugh B. Brown of the British Mission wrote in 1937, in the very face of Hitler’s increasing aggression, “War never

settles anything satisfactorily. . . . No one could with consistency maintain that [Christ], in any sense, favoured the resort to arms" (*Millennial Star*, 4 Nov.). The next year he unreservedly praised the Lord for blessing Chamberlain in his "courageous" application of "Christian" principles in dealing with Hitler at Munich (*Millennial Star*, 6 Oct., 1938). President Brown never changed his judgment about Chamberlain's actions in trying every possible means to avoid war, even though they ultimately failed.

Richard Bushman has written, in an essay on President Brown, "Whatever was lost by [Chamberlain's] compromise in 1938 was regained many times over after war broke out by our virtually unanimous sense that we had done all in our power to prevent hostilities. . . . The partisans of Christian love, though slow to fight back, are more likely to enjoy the strength of moral unity [and, I would add, the hope for God's blessings] when they come at last to battle" (*DIALOGUE*, Summer 1988, p. 59).

The time to have stopped Hitler, *without war*, was at the end of the First World War, when the Allies punished Germany, demanded reparations (as President Bush is now demanding of Iraq), and isolated it in a long depression that produced the chaos and resentments that sustained Hitler's rise to power. A Marshall Plan

then, rather than *after* WWII, could, I believe, have prevented that terrible war. And economic aid, backing up serious negotiations and continuing nonviolent sanctions until they succeed, is our only chance for peace in the Middle East.

We have used over \$70 billion in the Gulf War, much more than it would have taken to meet *all* of Hussein's legitimate grievances and also to *pay* for a Palestinian homeland. Now, when we have won a great victory, our greatest danger is the pride President Benson warned about two years ago and our greatest need the mercy President Hinckley pled for last year.

Late at night, thinking about that soldier, I read and reread a passage from the Book of Mormon, which was written to *us* about *our* sins, not to Saddam Hussein about his: "Man shall not smite, neither shall he judge; for judgment is mine, saith the Lord. . . . Why do ye . . . suffer the hungry, and the needy . . . to pass by you, and notice them not? Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn . . . and the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground?" (Mor. 8:20, 39-40).

Eugene England
Provo, Utah

*Utah State University's Mountain West Center
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