

"Isaiah Update" Challenged

The issues raised by George D. Smith, Jr., in "Isaiah Updated" (Summer 1983) are very important for the LDS community, yet for the most part, he failed to make explicit many of his assumptions and the resultant implications.

His paper has two major arguments. First, the existence in the Book of Mormon of portions of Isaiah 48-55 (purportedly written after 587 B.C. by "Second Isaiah") represents a major historical anachronism; and second, Mormons have interpreted certain passages in ways which do not coincide with the apparent meaning of the text.

Brother Smith writes that "most biblical scholars now find the evidence persuasive . . ." concerning the multiple authorship of Isaiah, which is quite true. However, not all the "scholars" (an amorphous and ill-defined body indeed) agree with the multiple authorship theory; those who do disagree among themselves about the exact nature of the multiple authorship and scholarly consensus is no proof that their opinions are correct. Scholarly consensus on an issue would indicate that we should give serious thought to their arguments, but it does not mean that we should accept their conclusions as facts. What is much more important than the scholarly consensus are the specific assumptions and arguments which the scholars use to support their position.

One fundamental assumption of many of these scholars is that there is no "real" prophecy: prophets did not and could never truly prophesy concerning the future. Smith seems to share this assumption as far as Isaiah is concerned. For most Latter-day Saints, denial of the prophetic strikes

at some very vital roots. However, if one admits the possibility that Isaiah actually prophesied instead of just writing social commentary in an ancient literary style called "prophecy," then many, if not all, of the arguments against single authorship vanish.

For the sake of argument, let us accept that only chapters 1-39 were written by the "real" Isaiah. Where does that leave the Book of Mormon? Since Nephi could not have quoted from a work not yet written, we must conclude either that Joseph Smith was a fraud or that the Book of Mormon is only an inspired but nonhistorical parable or allegory whose value lies only in its ethical and theological principles. Does Brother Smith wish to maintain either of these positions or does he draw a different conclusion?

There is, however, a third possibility. One can accept most of the scholarly arguments in favor of Deutero-Isaiah, except that of dating. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that Lehi's group did not leave until after King Zedekiah ascended the throne (1 Ne. 1:4) as a Babylonian vassal in 597 B.C. after the first Babylonian invasion of 598-7, and after the first Babylonian Deportation.¹ Lehi and his group left Jerusalem some time after the first year of Zedekiah, sojourned in the wilderness for an undetermined period, then returned

¹ J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 325-28. The chronology in the Book of Mormon footnotes is incorrect, based on the prophecy that Christ will be born 600 years after Lehi's group left Jerusalem (1 Nephi 10:4). The 600-year figure perhaps represents either lunar years (which are shorter than solar years) or a round figure such as "six centuries."

to get the brass plates. It may well have been a year or even two or three before they obtained possession of the brass plates, conceivably as late as 595 or 594 B.C. 1 Nephi 1:4, which provides the Zedekiah date, also states that "there came many prophets prophesying." Was one of these prophets Deutero-Isaiah? If he existed, it is not unreasonable to suppose he began writing his prophecies after the first deportation and continued adding to them for many years. Indeed, we could theorize that Lehi knew Deutero-Isaiah and got copies of his prophecies directly from him.

Thus, if we posit that Deutero-Isaiah began writing as early as 597, 596, or 595 B.C. after the first Babylonian deportation instead of after the second deportation of 587, the problems regarding Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon are greatly diminished.

Brother Smith's second major point is that many Mormon interpretations of passages of Isaiah are not consistent with the apparent meaning of the text in its historical context — another way of saying that Mormon interpretations are different than interpretations given by other religious or scholarly groups. That is, of course, to be expected.

I believe, along with Brother Smith, that we have the responsibility to submit LDS interpretations of scriptures to detailed scrutiny using all the exegetical tools at our disposal, something which, I'm sorry to admit, I feel we often fail to do. But we also have the responsibility to submit the interpretations of other religions or scholars to equally rigorous scrutiny, which I feel Brother Smith has failed to do. In many cases he almost seems to unquestioningly accept scholarly or non-LDS interpretations of Isaiah and then conclude that the LDS interpretations must be incorrect. Of course, if one accepts the assumptions and biases of Jews or Catholics or secular scholars, one will naturally accept their conclusions. Brother Smith points out that many of the passages which Christians often interpret messianically are

not so interpreted by Jewish theologians and secular scholars. That is hardly surprising. If they thought a passage in Isaiah truly referred to Christ they would probably become Christians. What becomes clear from Brother Smith's review of the problem, but which he unfortunately never explicitly states, is that there is no consensus of interpretation for most of the passages discussed. He mentions eleven different interpretations of the "Servant." In view of such disagreement, why should we assume that it is the Mormon/Christian interpretation which is faulty?

Even after one recognizes that approaching a text with different viewpoints will yield different conclusions, Brother Smith still offers arguments which might indicate that some LDS interpretations may not be completely compatible with the apparent meaning of the text. It is important to point out that there is no universally accepted methodological standard by which the correctness of a scriptural/historical interpretation can be judged. A major methodological problem of biblical scholarship is that it thrives on diversity and new interpretations. What graduate student ever got a Ph.D. by studying a problem and concluding that a previous interpretation was correct? Scholarly reputations are built on providing new insights, not on agreeing with what has already been said.

From the large number of useful principles by which scripture can be interpreted, I would like to suggest two which may be useful in the current context. The first could be called "Nephi's Method," in which a prophet will use the writings of a former prophet as a catalyst for revelation and develop phrases or concepts into new theological ideas. For example, Brother Smith criticizes Nephi for misinterpreting Isaiah in 1 Nephi 20–22 = Isaiah 48–49. But in the verses just preceding 1 Nephi 20, Nephi himself announces his plan to do just that: "I did liken all scriptures unto us that it might be for our profit and learning. Wherefore I spake unto them, saying:

Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, . . . hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off." (1 Ne. 19:23-24)

Mormons generally take this passage as a command to rummage through the scriptures searching for items of ethical or didactical use. However, another reading is that Nephi is alerting the readers of exegetical principles which he will use to prophetically reinterpret Isaiah. He recognized, like Brother Smith, that Isaiah wrote "unto all the house of Israel" and not to its "remnant," the Nephites. In a very real sense Nephi is "updating Isaiah," but knowingly, and based on his own prophetic revelation. It is possible that many prophets, both in New Testament times and in the Restoration, have done exactly the same thing, reapplying passages of scripture to form the basis for further revelation. If this interpretation is valid (which it may not be) it would go far in explaining some of the apparent difficulties Brother Smith encountered.

Brother Smith seems to assume that Isaiah's writings would have been preserved only if they spoke to the needs of his own time. I would both agree and disagree. Isaiah's prophecies were preserved because they are capable of speaking to many people in many different ages through what could be called "archetypal prophecy." Thus Isaiah 9:6 discusses the new child to be born, the "wonderful councillor" — Hezekiah to Jewish scholars and Christ to Christians. Viewed as an archetypal prophecy, it could be both. Likewise, the Servant could be seen as Israel, Abraham, David, the Exiles, or Christ, all equally applicable, for Isaiah was speaking of a type or pattern.

I am not here advocating the "substitution of new meaning to be justified as a dual message hidden in Isaiah's original words" which Brother Smith condemns.

Nor is this the *sensus plenior* of our medieval Catholic brethren. God didn't mean one thing and Isaiah another. Nor need we maintain that Isaiah actually prophetically saw somehow in a vision both Christ and Hezekiah when he described the "wonderful councillor" (although of course he may have). He may even have been specifically referring to Hezekiah. But Isaiah saw the world as filled with cosmic patterns, types, cycles, rituals, and repetition.² His prophecies were meant for the people of his own day, but they were also meant to have a cosmic or archetypal dimension. In part, they meant something to the people of his day precisely because they had this universal archetypal quality. We too are beings of our own time, insisting on strict cause and effect and logical relationships between ideas which our prophetic ancestors saw mythically and archetypally.

Thus both Jehovah and Christ can be seen as redeemers — Jehovah redeemed Israel from bondage to Egypt/Babylon, while Christ redeemed man from bondage to Satan. Likewise Isaiah may not have literally seen Professor Anthon in a prophetic vision (although of course he may have) but he clearly saw his "type" — the learned man who reads but fails to understand.

Some people may accuse me of reducing prophecy to the level of a literary motif. That would be unjustified. First, I admit the possibility of specific prophecies foretelling specific events, and I do not claim that all or any passages in Isaiah or any other prophet are archetypal. Second, an archetypal prophecy is no more a simple literary motif than is the LDS temple cere-

² The theory of religious thought upon which this concept is based is most readily found in Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954) and *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1959). Similar ideas can be found in Avraham Gileadi's *The Apocalyptic Key to Isaiah* (Provo, Utah: Hebraist Press, 1982) although I would not necessarily agree with all his conclusions.

mony, the most archetypal element of the Church today. One can look at the temple as a dramatic presentation, just as one can read the Bible as good literature. But to the believer, enlightened by the Spirit, who understands the spiritual truths embedded in the literature, the words are revelation.

Bible scholars, by their relentless search for certain types of truth in the scriptures, have given us exegetical tools which we would be foolish not to utilize. But for most of them, despite their learning—but not necessarily because of it—the scriptures still remain a “sealed book.” Let us not allow them to seal the book for us as well.

William Hamblin
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Smith Responds

In his thoughtful letter, Mr. Hamblin, a student of Mideastern studies at the University of Michigan, recognizes the issues raised in “Isaiah Updated” to be “very important for the LDS community.” Indeed they are, and for three primary reasons:

1. To give Nephi access to the post-exilic writings that he quotes from the book of Isaiah—writings which describe events that took place after Nephi had relocated in the New World—some LDS authors ascribe all the chapters in Isaiah to one early author who must have foretold 240 years of history. In so doing, they must disregard the evidence that the different authors contributing to the book of Isaiah exhibited different writing styles and that the passages commonly attributed to Second Isaiah read like contemporary description rather than the prophecies of the eighth-century B.C. patriarch. Schools of biblical exegesis not tied to a one-author view have long recognized the pervasive evidence of multiple authorship.

2. Even if LDS scholars generally acknowledged the multiple authorship of Isaiah, they would be left to address

Nephi’s unlikely use of unavailable scriptures, such as Malachi (Mal. 4:1–2, c460 B.C.) and quotations appearing in the New Testament that date before the time of Christ. See *Sunstone* 6 (May–June 1981) 3:48. To some, this anomaly tends to locate Book of Mormon authorship in the nineteenth century when all of these scriptural sources were readily available.

3. But if the Book of Mormon is viewed as retroactive rather than ancient history, as inspired allegory rather than a literal record, some Latter-day Saints might question whether the Lord would inspire Joseph Smith to originate a history of ancient American inhabitants, either to fulfill interpretations of biblical prophecy or to convince new converts of the Restoration.

In my article, I merely stated the problem: Mr. Hamblin has proposed an imaginative solution. Along with the *vox ad populum* of modern scholarship, he acknowledges that there was a Second Isaiah and, unlike prior solutions for the Mormon “Isaiah problem,” feels that we can live with the reality of sixth century B.C. authorship. Correcting for the possible erroneous use of “lunar years” or “a round figure,” Mr. Hamblin concludes that Nephi actually did not leave Jerusalem for the New World at the turn of the sixth century B.C. and that Second Isaiah wrote ten years earlier than the main Babylonian invasion which he records from 587 B.C. Although his argument seems somewhat strained, Mr. Hamblin’s acknowledgment of a second Isaiah places Mormonism squarely within the *argumentum ad populum*.

George D. Smith
San Francisco, California

Recommendation: Reviewers Should Read

The last time Gene Sessions wrote a “review” of one of my books I called the editor, then Mary Bradford, and asked Mary how, if Sessions had read the book,

he could avoid any reference whatever to its content.

In your last edition he took a swipe or two not at our book *Teaching Children Responsibility* (indeed he said nothing about the book or its contents) but at my wife and me personally, at our motives and our credentials. Interesting format, I thought, for a "review."

Sessions apparently feels that books (or at least my books) should be judged not on content but on his perceptions of the author's motives or credentials. I question his ability to judge either, particularly since we have never met.

His cynical references to our lack of credentials to write parenting books do present me with an opportunity to make a point that I think many parents need to hear. Parents sometimes feel that they are not qualified to raise their children unless they have degrees in child development and psychology. Many are intimidated by the vast array of parenting "experts" ranging from child psychologists to ministers. Few academic child development experts agree in their techniques or perceptions and they often present "defensive" approaches to parenting, reacting to a child's negative behavior after the fact rather than planning for and encouraging positive behavior.

What Sessions will realize, if and when he reads *Teaching Children Responsibility*, is that it is a unique approach, "parenting by objective," where parents decide precisely what types of responsibility they want to teach their children. The book is a guide and method list for focusing attention on one form of responsibility each month.

In light of Sessions's suggestion that the book's bestseller status results from mothers-in-law who give it as gifts, he might be interested to know that people are not only buying it and reading it, they're using it. A national "parents co-op" of over 10,000 families has sprung up around the books *Teaching Children Joy* and *Teaching Children Responsibility*. All

the parents in the co-op receive a monthly lesson plan and newsletters and all focus on the same *form* of responsibility during that particular month.

I appreciate Sessions calling attention to our book, but I must add that I find no place (particularly in a publication claiming the literary orientation and scholarly intent that DIALOGUE claims) for book reviews that are not really reviews at all but half-baked personal comments about authors.

Richard M. Eyre
McLean, Virginia

The Wrong Stuff

It was refreshing to read in Brief Notices that Gene Sessions has the courage to expose tripe for what it actually is. Merely because a book is published by Deseret Book does not make it particularly palatable, yet too many of our fellow members consider virtually anything published by the Bookcraft/Deseret Book consortium as *de facto* approval by the Church and the Brethren. I am constantly amazed that some writers can be published when others with an edifying and uplifting message cannot get their works in print. I agree that being well-connected with the Church hierarchy must play a significant role in determining what is published.

Are we as a Church membership so gullible as to believe that all literary works by Mormon authors are quality reading and morally correct, while secular works should be avoided, perhaps banned and condemned? Shame on us for being so easily deceived!

John A. Cox
Olympia, Washington

Polarization Resented

Although I'm not convinced either that a satisfactory reconciliation has been (or

can be) made between organic evolution and the gospel, I resent reader Julian R. Durham's attempt (Letters, Autumn 1983) to polarize the issue in such a simplistic manner.

First of all, I cannot accept attempts to argue religious doctrine purely on the basis of the position the holder of a particular belief happened to attain, unless of course he was speaking in an official capacity. As president, Joseph Fielding Smith never issued an official pronouncement on organic evolution. Furthermore, this kind of argument, which has a twisted *ad hominem* aspect to it, could backfire. Could one not argue that because President Smith's term of presidency was one of the shortest in this dispensation that he was least favored by the Lord? Merely the other side of a base coin!

Secondly, from a scientific point of view, Durham is setting up straw men in his comment that, in his opinion, Lyell, Darwin, et al., would have had nothing to do with "adding God to the Lyell-Darwin mechanism as a prime mover . . ." This is probably true, but, then, Eyring (nor, for that matter, even B. H. Roberts or James Talmage) never tried to do that. As all three seem to have had more scientific training than Durham, they knew that the rationalist impulses behind uniformitarianism, which provided the philosophical foundation for Darwinian organic evolution, were separate issues from the consideration of amoral evidences such as the geological record. It is these "amoral evidences" (with or without the "rationalist impulses" which may have led to their uncovering) which also led to the invention of, for example, the television and the computer, without which seerstones the Church, in its current and anticipated millennial manifestations, might well be impossible.

It is with this larger issue of the implications of all knowledge being considered as truth that Eyring, Roberts, and Talmage struggled. It would seem, at least from the representation made on his behalf,

that Joseph Fielding Smith struggled with an entirely different, less profound issue.

Marc A. Schindler
Gloucester, Ontario

Creationism Pseudo-Science

Julian Durham's letter in the last issue is remarkable in its attempt to defend the literalist interpretation of the scriptures dealing with the creation. I thought that Duane Jeffrey's definitive *DIALOGUE* article in 1975, together with other articles that have appeared since then, had laid to rest once and for all the confusion over the Church's stand on this issue. Perhaps Durham has not had the benefit of reading these articles, for otherwise it is hard to see how he could quote from the officially disclaimed book *Man, His Origin and Destiny*. Perhaps also he has been misled by the "scientific creationist" movement into believing that the theories of geologic dating and evolution are now in question. In any event, his claims need to be answered.

First of all, it is simply not true that the scientific community has any doubts about the basic notions of the age of the earth and the evolution of biological organisms. All of the noise to the contrary has been generated by a tiny group of creation "scientists" associated with some fundamentalist Bible colleges. The churches behind this movement, by the way, are militantly anti-Mormon, and they despise Joseph Smith almost as much as Charles Darwin.

Their brand of facts-be-damned rationalizations can hardly be characterized as science. The scientific bankruptcy of this movement has been well exposed elsewhere (see, for example, Godfrey's *Scientists Confront Creationism*, or the article on the subject in the current issue of *The Skeptical Inquirer*). But I cannot resist giving the reader a sample of this pseudo-science. One of their prime arguments that the earth is not as old as geologists claim is this: If it were, the moon would

be covered with up to fifty feet of cosmic dust, since it has no atmosphere to trap and burn this material. Sounds impressive? Unfortunately, their premise is simply false—the rate of accretion of cosmic dust has been precisely and repeatedly measured by spacecraft, and it is less than an inch per billion years, completely in accord with what the astronauts found. The only study to conclude otherwise was retracted many years ago due to errors in estimating certain parameters.

Durham, like many others in the Church, rails that these scientific theories contradict revealed truth in the scriptures. But I feel that another lesson is to be learned. It seems to me that this apparent conflict underscores the limitations of the dogmatically literalist, proof-text approach to the scriptures. It is patently obvious to most unbiased truth-seekers that the biblical passages dealing with the creation, as well as their counterparts in modern scripture, are not technical documents. Their style is symbolic, and their message and meaning are spiritual. For example, even the literalists among the general authorities concede that Eve was not literally cloned from Adam's rib. However, this symbolism is a powerful image of the separate yet equal status of the sexes. Similarly, the scriptures provide a beautiful exposition of the purpose of the creation, although the time scale is hardly correct to the nearest millisecond.

Lastly, I beg to differ with Durham that the atonement of Christ or other such doctrines have anything to do with the technical details of the physical creation. And as for his claim that no evolutionist "worth his salt" seriously believes these doctrines, I have a counterexample: myself.

David H. Bailey
San Jose, California

Compartmentalization Denied

Julian R. Durham's letter (Fall 1983) in response to S. H. Heath's article (Au-

gust 1983), "The Reconciliation of Faith and Science: Henry Eyring's Achievement," states that Henry Eyring "achieved no such reconciliation in his lifetime. He kept his knowledge of the revealed truths of religion and his organic evolutionary views in separate compartments to avoid resolving the obvious conflicts which would otherwise arise, as McConkie has stated."

I became quite well acquainted with Brother Eyring's position on organic evolution and related topics through many discussions with him starting in 1947. I never sensed that he kept science and religion in "separate compartments." His often-stated position was that the gospel required him to accept only truth, that he had no serious difficulty in reconciling the principles of true science with the principles of true religion for both are concerned with the eternal verities of the universe, and that God accomplished his creations and purposes by employing eternal natural laws—the same eternal verities sought and studied by scientists.

Seeming difficulties commonly arise through failure to distinguish between speculation and facts when pertinent facts are missing. The standard works state that man (presumably the physical body of man) was formed "from the dust of the ground" and do not describe in any detail the process by which the physical body of man was created. Eyring considered the facts from several approaches: biological, anthropological, geological, and scriptural. He concluded that organic evolution is a possible means by which God may have created the physical body of man. Those who feel that such a view is incompatible with accepted LDS scriptures depend on their interpretations of statements in the standard works. Dr. Eyring felt that the same scriptural statements could be otherwise interpreted.

Statements by at least two presidents of the Church are germane. In 1957 President David O. McKay, in a letter to William Lee Stokes, states "On the subject of organic evolution, the Church has officially

taken no position" (photocopy in Autumn 1982 issue). President Joseph F. Smith in a 1911 message to youth observed, "The Church itself has no philosophy about the *modus operandi* employed by the Lord in his creation of the world." A 1910 *Improvement Era* "Priesthood Quorum Table" asked "whether the mortal bodies of man evolved in natural processes to present perfection through the direction and power of God" or were otherwise acquired received the response: "not fully answered in the revealed word of God." (See D. E. Jeffrey, "Seers, Savants and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface," Autumn-Winter DIALOGUE, 1974, pp. 41-75.)

Henry Eyring was quite convinced that based on radioactive element dating, the earth was four billion years old or more and that this antiquity was not incompatible with revealed truth. Several Church leaders, including President J. Reuben Clark, have stated that scriptural time periods refer to a spiritual creation, not a temporal creation.

Eyring's views on organic evolution and the antiquity of the earth are essentially the same as those held by many of our most respected General Authorities including John A. Widtsoe, James E. Talmage, and others.

I asked Llewelyn R. McKay about the reference his father David O. McKay made (BYU address, 30 Oct. 1956) to "the millions of years that it took to prepare the physical world." He responded that his father believed that very long periods of time were involved in the creation and, furthermore, that the physical body of man may have been created by a God-directed evolutionary process. The latter is consistent with President McKay's reference to "evolution's beautiful theory of the creation." (BYU address, Oct. 1952)

Eyring firmly believed that when the true meanings of scripture are completely known by study and additional revelation and the pertinent facts of science are available and understood, there will be complete compatibility; that before one reaches

conclusions, one must be sure all prejudices and speculations are set aside and a comparison is being made between the facts of scripture together with the *official position* of the Church and the relevant facts of science.

E. B. Christiansen
Salt Lake City, Utah

Revelation on Earth History

Julian R. Durham (Autumn 1983) states that Henry Eyring did not achieve a reconciliation of faith and science; that he kept his evolutionary views and revealed truths of religion in separate compartments. I strongly disagree. From 1938 to 1943 I was close to Dr. Eyring both in church activities and socially. As pointed out by others, he believed that all truth, no matter what its source, was part of the gospel. He believed as I do and as thousands of member and nonmember scientists believe, that the purpose of science is to find out how God worked and works. He hoped as I do that someday a Church president would be sufficiently interested in the actual process of creation to seek and obtain revelation. Such a revelation would, I feel, align the Church more closely with the vast bulk of evidence of science. Brother Eyring, in a conversation shortly before his death, expressed his pleasure to me in a similar sequence that had culminated in the revelation regarding the priesthood for blacks.

In another letter to the editor, Robert F. Bohn states that a geology professor at BYU gave his students copies of a letter signed by President David O. McKay which stated that the Church did not have an official position regarding the age of the earth and evolution. In the Provo Fourth Ward, in the Church group in New Jersey under the leadership of Henry Eyring, and in Moscow, Idaho, the Church members either thought as I did in this area or accepted my right to my opinion. When I arrived in Riverside, California, I listened to speakers and teachers denouncing igno-

rant scientists who believed the earth was more than 6,000 years old and accepted evolution, announced that all life on the earth except that saved on the Ark was destroyed about 2300 B.C. and quoted Joseph Fielding Smith's writings as "proof" of their views. Of course I objected, stating that this was not official church doctrine.

I was soon released from my several church positions. The bishop told me he fully agreed with me but that a group of influential members had demanded that I be released. This type of activity on the part of some members has driven numerous LDS scientists and talented individuals into inactivity. It almost did the same to me. But Henry Eyring's advice and that of my father was to stay with the church, that it is true, that I should be tolerant and understanding of other members' opinions and views; that they believe the way they do because they were taught that way and interpret the scriptures that way. Also that I should now and then when the opportunity presents itself suggest alternative opinions or views in a positive way.

As have others, I wrote to the president of the Church (late 1940s) about these events. Also I was told that at one time a member of a bishopric had written to the president asking for permission to call me before a special meeting with the local church administrators. I was told that the answer to the member's letter was the same as my answer, namely that the Church did not have an official position in this area.

Another pertinent experience took place in the 1920s. I was present with a small group who were discussing President Joseph Fielding Smith's views regarding scientists and earth history. Joseph F. Merrill, later an apostle, stated that he was very concerned about the anti-science attitude and activity of Elder Smith and some of his supporters. He said that if they were successful in this course of action that no more scientists or anyone known to agree with the scientists regarding earth

history would be approved for membership in the Quorum of Twelve. He also stated that if Elder Smith were successful, the time when the First Presidency might receive revelation to update the church position in this area would be greatly delayed.

It has always been difficult for me to understand why many Mormons accept the opinions of Joseph Fielding Smith in regard to earth history as the word of God but reject statements by other Church leaders including James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, B. H. Roberts, Brigham Young, and even Joseph Smith that either allow or support different views. I also resent the tendency of this same group to brag about the number of LDS scientists to their non-member friends. They fully accept the discoveries of science in most areas, including the development of radio, television, and the placing of men on the moon. But when scientists with equally rigorous minds and equally sophisticated methods tell us that the earth is billions of years old and that life on earth has slowly evolved from more simple to more complex forms, they totally reject their conclusions.

All members of the Church are disturbed by the clumsy and unchristian anti-Mormon activity directed by Ed Decker and others. We should all be careful that we do not engage in a similar type of activity within the ranks.

J. P. Martin
Riverside, California

First Vision Accounts

During the past several months it seems that more and more attention has been directed both within and outside the Church to Joseph Smith and the First Vision. In a recent general conference, at least one General Authority addressed Joseph Smith and the "problems" with his historical accounts, asking us to examine the total picture rather than isolated incidents. At the same time, the anti-Mormon press has been pointing to obvious flaws in

Joseph's accounts of the First Vision, focusing primarily on early claims that Joseph had been visited by *angels*, and not by the Father and the Son. I would like to pose a practical explanation for the discrepancy, one with strong scriptural precedent.

Historians have long wrestled with the statements that Joseph had not been visited by the Father and the Son, but rather by angels. Joseph himself said, "I received the first visitation of angels, which was when I was about fourteen years old. . . ." (*Deseret News*, 29 May 1852). Earlier, Oliver Cowdery had explained, "And in a moment a personage stood before him . . . he heard him declare himself to be a messenger sent by commandment of the Lord . . ." *Messenger and Advocate*, [1 Feb. 1835]: 78-79). In 1855, Brigham Young taught: "But he did send his angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith jun., . . . and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day" (*Journal of Discourses* 2:171). George A. Smith in 1868 said: "The Lord answered his prayers, and revealed to Joseph, by the ministration of angels, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired. . . ." (*Journal of Discourses* 12:333-34). John Taylor said in 1879, "When the Prophet Joseph asked the angel which of the sects was right that he might join it. . . . the angel merely told him to join none of them. . . ." (*Journal of Discourses* 20:167). Heber C. Kimball was even more emphatic: "Do you suppose that God in person called upon Joseph Smith, our Prophet? God called upon him; But God did not come himself and call. . . ." (*Journal of Discourses* 6:29)

While it is possible to argue that these early Church leaders simply misunderstood Joseph's explanation of the First Vision, this explanation somewhat strains credulity.

One must assume that receiving a vision such as Joseph's would be an overwhelming experience. If he had observed the Father and the Son in a blazing shaft of light, possibly accompanied by other

personages and delivering a complex and profound message, how might he be expected to react? A possible answer, I would submit, may be suggested by John 12:28-29 as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Before the assemblage, Jesus implored: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An *angel* spoke to him."

One may argue that it was the unprepared and spiritually less mature who identified the voice as thunder or that of an angel. Certainly it does young Joseph no disservice to acknowledge that he had not yet attained his full stature as a prophet. Could his conflicting reports have originated in the same temporary confusion? Sound biblical precedent exists for the discrepancies found in Joseph's accounts of the First Vision: although God does occasionally work in wondrous ways to get his message across, we may be dealing here — as in John 12 — with a simple case of shock.

Michael J. Barrett
Sterling Park, Virginia

Transformation into a Nonperson

I greatly enjoyed Davis Bitton's essay in the Fall *DIALOGUE*. The story about the missing portrait of Leonard Arrington is touching. I visited the site, and there was indeed no portrait of him. There was a small card with an explanation.

In the Soviet Union, when a leader falls from power, he can become a historical nonperson. For example, when Lavrenty Beria lost the power struggle following the death of Stalin, and his life as well, the *Soviet Encyclopedia* sent all its subscribers a long article on the Bering Sea, which was to be inserted in the place of the pages with the same page numbers containing a laudatory biography of Beria. The offending pages were to be cut out and

burned. Similarly, photos of Mao which contained an image of his wife have been officially retouched to remove her, now that the Gang of Four is in disgrace.

In contrast, in the Great Hall of the Palace of the Doges in Venice, there are portraits of all the men who have ever held that title. Several are covered with black cloth. Those are the ones who were convicted of treason. Their portraits are still there, under the black cloth.

The Venetians believed that they should acknowledge the unpleasant facts of their history. The communists believe that they can erase them. What does Davis Bitton's story about the portrait of Leonard Arrington suggest the Mormon view is?

Noel de Nevers
Salt Lake City, Utah

Fear the Paranoid Fears

I've read just about all of the Fall 1983 issue and in particular enjoyed the gentle essay, Davis Bitton's "Ten Years in Camelot." It is very disturbing to see any leaders, civil or religious, who are afraid of honest histories and regard history only as another tool of the public relations organs of the Church. If the Church is really true, as we say it is, if we are really led by men directly inspired by God, then what have we to fear from honest, searching histories that do not shy away from the tough questions? The truth of the gospel will always shine through if it is true. The only thing we have to fear are the paranoid fears of some of our leaders.

Let me also tell Jess Allen that his cover photograph is wonderful, wonderful work. This may be one of the most attractive covers DIALOGUE has ever used. I'd encourage you to use more photography on your covers.

Kenneth David Driggs
Tallahassee, Florida

The Chevrolet . . .

Recorded there, we saw today
That Jolley sold The Chevrolet.
We found it all in issue three:
The weighty things for you and me,
The poems, doctrine, prosey stuff,
The sour grapes, reviews — enough
To warm the hearts of all astray.
But nothing topped The Chevrolet.

Their axes grind with sparks aspraying,
The serious with their things to say.
They send their words to us below
And pile it on till some say no.
We've read it all and stayed for more
For fifteen years, till eyes were sore
Waiting for the frabjous day.
It came — in Jolley's Chevrolet.

Richard and Janice Keeler
Logan, Utah

Thrombosis Averted

Those of us who comprise the body of Mormon readers for whom DIALOGUE (with surgical precision) probes, dilates, stimulates, and refreshes our intellectual/spiritual circulatory system (on occasion, even preventing a thrombosis) extend our thanks!

Bouquets also to your dedicated staff. As editor of the CSUF General Catalog for eleven years, I have had intimate experience with unreal deadlines, last-second administrative revisions, politically sensitive copy, format changes that looked stunning on the drawing board and ghastly in print, etc., etc. We learn, don't we, to rely heavily on those precious few who come early and stay late.

Ruth B. Thornton
Fresno, California

Gratefully Charter

Recent issues of DIALOGUE have made me sense more fully than before how much I owe the journal for its stimulating con-

tent. Perhaps the sheer number of issues published this past year has affected me in this way. Whatever the reason, I would like to express belated thanks to all of *DIALOGUE*'s editors and authors for their varied and valuable contributions over the years.

Two articles of this past year illustrate my debt to your publication. George Smith's essay summarizes nicely and concisely many of the problems I have encountered in teaching Isaiah to LDS Sunday School classes. The Christian/Mormon tendency to take Isaiah literally and try to apply his views to much later times blinds us to the book's literary beauties and historical insights. But how does one teach Isaiah in the context of *his* time without undermining the faith of latter-day believers who find in the book so many signs of *their* times?

Many more historians may write about the golden decade of Church history that has just ended, but I doubt that any of them will offer us a more poignant account than Davis Bitton has. Certainly the move of Arrington and Company to Provo has created a big void in the Church Office Building. However, their work and influence will continue, if only because they have involved and inspired so many of those now engaged in Mormon studies. Church history should thrive all the more at the Y, with still another group of historians added to its faculty. How ironic that the demise of the Church Historical Department should coincide with the rise of the current Church Historian within the hierarchy!

Ben Bennion
Bayside, California

Waterless Wave of the Future

Although I devoted only one sentence to Max Weber's interpretation of bureaucracy in my article "Battling the Bureaucracy: Building a Mormon Chapel" (Winter 1982) M. P. Marchant challenges my

use of him. Whether Marchant is correct, I will leave to the sociologists. It seems to me that it has little to do with the central theme of the article, namely that bureaucratic problems have impeded the construction of Mormon chapels. Since I was really more interested in Tony Kimball's interpretation than in Weber's, perhaps I could put Marchant in touch with Kimball.

I find Richard Pearson Smith's suggestion that his own ward's third phase has no shower for either women or men for reasons of modesty intriguing. Our stake center is about to go into the ground and likewise will have no shower. It must be the wave of the future. We'd all better get used to long, sweaty drives.

Dennis L. Lythgoe
Abington, Massachusetts

Being Both

I was carefully explaining to the children at dinner last night about Richard Poll's Iron Rod vs. Liahona Mormons. I had just gotten them to understand the distinction and was about to launch into a lengthy peroration on the subject, when Lisa (age six) said simply, "We're both."

That was of course exactly the point. The value of Poll's exercise lies not in labeling ourselves one or the other, but in pointing out both necessary aspects of our gospel life. If we *aren't* both, something is wrong.

Douglass F. Taber
Newark, Delaware

Among the Mormons — at Last

Thank you very much for listing me in "Among the Mormons" after fourteen years of publishing. Enclosed is a list of six items which should have been listed, but were not. "The Joseph Smith Papyri," *DIALOGUE* 4 (1969): 129-32; "El or Yahweh? An Observation of Patai's Comment on Segler's Review," *American Anthropologist*

74 (Dec. 1972); "About El, Asherah, Yahweh and Anath," *American Anthropologist*, 75 (August 1973): 1180-81; "The Structure of Genesis, Chapter One," *DIALOGUE* 8 (1973): 3-4; "Two Notes on Mormon Words," *Conference on the Language of the Mormons*, April 8 1974. Language Research Center, Brigham Young University; and "Lévi-Strauss and Mormonism," *American Anthropologist* 76 (June 1974).

Ben Urrutia
Provo, Utah

P.S. I also renounce and repent of the letter (*DIALOGUE* 7:4) criticizing Clifton Jolley's review of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. In the years since then, I have become disenchanted with Richard Bach and quite enchanted with Brother Jolley's writings, especially his account of Gene England's famous Chevy.

"Fruit" Truth Test

I read Foster's article encouraging LDS members to stop trying to convert other Christians to Mormonism, and to be less authoritarian like the Quakers. If Foster would read the scriptures, he would discover that God encourages his followers to convert others to the truth. In fact, under the doctrine of "by their fruits ye shall know them," one may discern which church is the right one, by comparatively

and scientifically analyzing their respective "fruits."

In the United States we have about 50 million Roman Catholics; their church has been going for about 1,950 years; this means they have 25,641 members to show for each year of their existence. The corresponding LDS number (5 million members divided by 153 years) is a whopping 32,680 members per year. But the Quaker number (140,000 divided by 331 years) is only 423.

Rustin Kaufman
Rexburg, Idaho

Stanley B. Kimball proposes to coordinate a search about the fate of four mummies and an unknown quantity of papyri, sold on 26 May 1856 in Nauvoo to a certain A. Combs, who afterwards resold two mummies and some of the papyri to the St. Louis Museum. (See Kimball's article in the Winter 1983 issue). The initial project is to search every extant issue of every significant United States newspaper from 26 May-December 1856. Tell him what papers and what period you will search at School of Social Sciences, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL, 62026.