

TEACHING HISTORY

James L. Clayton
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November 19, 1981

Elder Boyd K. Packer
Church of Jesus Christ of
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47 East South Temple
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Dear Elder Packer:

I have just read your address entitled, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect," which you recently delivered to institute and seminary instructors at B.Y.U. Since I am an historian by profession and have occasionally written in the field of Mormon history, and since I am also an active member of the Church and an instructor in my High Priest's Quorum, I found your address especially interesting, provocative, and relevant to a wider audience than only those who had the opportunity to hear you.

Having attended an eastern, secular graduate school I can personally identify with many of the issues you so thoughtfully raise. To cite just one example, the week I arrived on campus I was introduced to a well-known political scientist who had recently won a Pulitzer Prize. He asked, "Where are you from?" I replied, "Utah." Then he said, with considerable sarcasm, "Well, then you must believe that God has hair on his back," and walked away.

Because I share your religious concerns, admire your frankness, and agree with many of your insights, I hope that you will be willing to consider some observations about some of the major points you make in your interesting address. These observations are offered in a spirit of friendship and commitment. Because your "cautions" to those of us who teach history are weighty ones, and since you invite your readers to come forward and help in the cause, I have taken you at your word and offer the following thoughts for your further reflection.

I

The young man's statement that "the mantle is far, far greater than the intellect" is an attempt, I think, to rank things that cannot fairly be ranked. The mantle, as I understand it, is the authority that emanates from the spirit of God and is rooted in revelation. The intellect is understanding based on reason and empirical evidence. The spirit and intellect have fundamentally different roles. To say that the mantle (spirit) is greater than the intellect is like saying the heart is greater than the mind or the hand is greater than the foot. Allow me to explain why this comparison can be misleading.

Elder Boyd K. Packer
November 19, 1981
Page two

The intellect is paramount in the material world where problems are most easily approached by critical, empirical analysis, where data or tested theory are at hand, and where replication is possible. The essence of this approach is inductive, relative, and tentative. The intellect deals more in questions than answers, and helps us to be tolerant of diversity and discord—both of which are important aspects of all human life. As Bacon said, the intellect "hangs us with weights" to keep us from "leaping and flying about" excessively. The intellect is our contact with the material and the secular.

The intellect assists us in moving beyond the simplistic and sterile categories of hero vs. villain, defense vs. attack, and member vs. nonmember so prominent in the writing of Mormon history in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It allows us considerably greater freedom and accuracy in dealing with the more secular aspects of our past. It encourages a healthy corporate introspection. The great achievement of the intellect is a massive body of reliable knowledge commanding near universal agreement in the scientific and secular world which is largely responsible for our rising standard of living.

The spirit, as you know better than I, serves us equally well but in a radically different way. If the intellect supplies us with weights, the spirit gives us wings—to soar above our mundane selves, to extend our reach, to inspire. It helps to establish ultimate values, political unity, and discourages narcissism and anomie. It is our crucial contact with God and the sacred.

The spirit gives us a meaningful place in the universe, roots us in a power larger than self, and makes possible the full development of the human personality. It ties us with both past and future generations. Without the spirit we are, as T. S. Eliot so well said, "hollow" men living in a "waste land."

Clearly, both the spirit and the intellect serve very different but equally useful purposes. The spirit gives us certainty, but it cannot be examined empirically. The intellect reminds us to question—even that which seems certain. The intellect and the spirit are our two eyes. Either used alone is lacking in depth perception. But like the placement of our eyes on our faces, the spirit and the intellect function best side-by-side, not one over the other.

II

Your call for a better balance between the intellect and the spirit among those of us who teach Church history is well placed, I believe, but when you quote those who suggest that we should see "in every hour and in every moment" the hand of God, you ask of history something that vehicle is unable to carry. Let me explain. Any serious attempt to see God's hand in every single act, policy, or pronouncement of every Church prophet contradicts, it seems to me, Joseph Smith's statement that a prophet is not always a prophet,

Elder Boyd K. Packer
November 19, 1981
Page three

and requires us to defend things that need not and cannot be defended. Mistakes have been made by our leaders and are freely admitted as such. Joseph admitted he was wrong to try to sell the copyright for the Book of Mormon in Canada. John Taylor, when he became president, thought Brigham Young's united order an unwise "experiment." David O. McKay and Joseph Fielding Smith disagreed on evolution. Brigham Young and others modified Joseph Smith's history, and so on. To require our teachers to say all of this was inspired, to try to make consistent that which is inconsistent, is to create rather than diminish doubt. A good person does not have to be completely perfect to be acceptable to God. Should an organization be any different?

Many things in our history are exceedingly difficult to explain. Exactly who was to succeed Joseph Smith as Church president is surely unclear, no matter how hard we try to understand it. Some changes in doctrine are influenced by governmental action, as for example the Supreme Court's decision outlawing the practice of polygamy. Surely that tribunal had some influence on President Woodruff's decision to end the practice of polygamy. To say that the Manifesto was not influenced by governmental action is simply to raise other, harder questions. Such as, why did God wait until 1890 to cease the practice? Why not 1879 when the Reynolds decision was handed down? Or, if the timing was just right, why then did a majority of the Twelve take additional wives after the Manifesto?

Many statements by Church leaders were made in the heat of battle and some prophecies were demonstrably wrong, e.g., Brigham Young "prophesied" a week before Appomattox that the Civil War would last another year. Life is complex and so is history. Natural forces, like gravity, play their role, too. And why not? Once we recognize no one is infallible, that there is a secular as well as a sacred side to our history, we don't have to defend everything. Less certitude now may produce greater certainty in the long run.

You suggest that apostles are human. Certainly professors are. We should allow the same latitude to our collective efforts we call Church history. By trying to make our history, our policies, and our leaders too perfect we set up our students for potential disaster. All the opposition has to do is to show, by our own documents, a few of our warts to cause doubt. Some have had a field day demonstrating, from our historical records, inconsistencies, changes and so forth. Their impact has been substantial because many of our members have been taught that our leaders never make mistakes and that our doctrines never change. Consequently, many expect too much and hence their faith is easily shaken.

The statement that God directs everything in every moment implies that everything is of equal importance. It equates every minor eccentricity with the divine will, every church policy with ultimate, enduring truth. It implies that the Church leadership is infallible and that any criticism of policy is heresy. It makes it nearly impossible to learn from our mistakes and makes needed changes hard and slow. By promising less will we not accomplish more?

III

On page six you state that "there is a war going on," that we should be "belligerents," and hence we must be "one-sided" in teaching our history. This approach could alienate many of those who have gained respect for the Church and come to our defense in recent years. In my experience, non-Mormon scholars are far more sympathetic to the Church today than at any time in our history. Your call to do battle with them may offend them as the one-sided attack on Mormons in the nineteenth century offended us. Historians cannot be divided into those who fight for God and those who battle for the Devil. All of us, both inside and outside the Church, are limited in our ability to reconstruct the past, each seeks understanding according to his own abilities, and none has a corner on the truth. Being deliberately "one-sided" could destroy our credibility with our non-Mormon friends, tarnish our good name, invite counter attacks, and diminish the possibility of fruitful dialogue with other Christians facing similar problems.

Taking a "one-sided" approach to our history could also undermine the credibility of our teachers with our own members. Our students will soon recognize that they are being spoon-fed and discount our lessons accordingly. Many will see this approach as a form of censorship to present the spread of ideas thought to be dangerous and will resist it openly. Others will turn to non- and anti-Mormon sources to "get the real story." In essence this approach treats our members as if they were children, unprepared to face the realities of life and too immature to be trusted with the family car.

Taking a one-sided, faith-promoting approach to our history is basically as limiting as taking a one-sided, faith-destroying approach to our history. It tells only the "good" side, only that which promotes faith according to the teacher's or writer's point of view of what is good for us to know. Many of us find our faith enlarged by having the whole picture and not just the "smiling aspects of life" set before us. Let me again illustrate. I know of no one who has lost his faith because he read carefully Juanita Brook's, The Mountain Meadows Massacre. When the whole story is told, in all its pathos and tragedy, understanding and sympathy for both sides usually is the result. Nor do I know anyone whose testimony was strengthened through ignorance—at least in the long run.

Your second "caution" that history teachers should not "tell everything," your third that they should not give "equal time to the adversary," and your fourth that they should avoid discussing some things already "in print," convey a strong impression to this reader that you seem to be afraid of our past, that you think there must be a lot of disturbing things in the archives, and that many of us could be spiritually contaminated if we get too close to these records. My impression is buttressed by your further comments that we should not purchase or read anything from apostates, that their work is like a "disease." By implication, one should not, I suppose, read non-Mormon authors who are critical of some of our doctrines. Is this really how you feel? Or have I misread your speech?

Elder Boyd K. Packer
November 19, 1981
Page five

I think your apparent fear of our past and our historians who try to be objective and fair is unjustified and overly sensitive. Most of the historians I know who have delved most thoroughly into our past are still faithful and active. Certainly our forebears who created the history you seem to fear were faithful. Nor did our early leaders only tell the Saints what was uplifting. That is what makes them so interesting.

I do know many, as I am sure you do, who have lost their faith by having had a naive, saccharine understanding of our history and then who have been exposed to our actual historical documents, some of which are less than faith promoting, without being able to turn to a knowledgeable and understanding teacher for assistance. By instructing our institute and seminary teachers to be "one-sided" and informed only about the "good" side of religion, you are, it seems to me, denying thousands of members the opportunity to turn to knowledgeable people within the institution who can help them with their spiritual difficulties.

You seem to be arguing that ignorance is the best defense against the challenge of secularism. This impression is based on your comment that "some things are to be taught selectively" and only to those "who are worthy," that historians know things that others should not hear, that we cannot "safely" be neutral, and so on. It seems to me that such an approach is like building a house without a roof to protect us against bad weather. The rain will fall whether we like it or not. Our job is to be prepared when it does. We need to strengthen the ability of the Church membership to face contradictions, controversy, and the underside of the Church like they face the underside of life generally. The great historians in our Church have always done this, particularly B. H. Roberts. We cannot escape the challenge by our past by ignoring it, postponing it, or dealing with it selectively. Why not face it early on, head on, and all out like Roberts did? Knowledge was his defense, and it was a very noble one. Can ours be any less noble?

A "belligerent" and "one-sided" approach to history is by its very nature placing the study and writing of history in the same category as hard-sell salesmanship and publicity—it promises much and delivers little. We the teachers are being told to become publicity agents of the faith rather than objective and scholarly advocates of the truth. This approach places penalties on expressed doubt; gospel messages tend to be "packaged" in pleasing colors and sometimes deceptive containers; image is everything! "Selling" the gospel in this fashion downgrades our most cherished values to the same level as toothpaste, soap powders, and deodorants. It turns our missionaries and scholars into corporate sales-reps. Its emphasis, so far as potential converts are concerned, is on credulity rather than faith, and certitude more than certainty.

Your suggestion that there is "a war going on" and that we should be "belligerent" and "one-sided" in defense of the Church encourages a siege mentality with little room for any middle ground. It encourages denunciations of those who respect objectivity and discourages scholarship generally.

Elder Boyd K. Packer
November 19, 1981
Page six

By saying that teachers who do not always "build faith" are "a traitor to the cause" (p. 8), you place all the blame on the messenger and put no responsibility on the recipient of the message. Does not the membership have some obligation to prepare themselves to receive all truth as scripture suggests? Should the messenger always carry the full blame for the "bad" news he sometimes brings? After all, historians did not create the past, they are merely trying to understand it.

IV

The alleged conflict between the intellect and the spirit is usually most intense on university campuses, at least that has been my experience. There are a lot of deeply committed, tough-minded Latter-day Saints on our campuses, people who are well informed and faithful too. They have been toughened by exposure to disturbing facts and conflicting points of view. They have been broadened by contact with the world. Most important of all, their faith has been deepened because it has been tested, which after all is why we are here.

People, like Gods other creations, are made stronger by exposure to the elements. Hot-house plants may be more beautiful than plants in their natural setting, but they are also more fragile. Membership in the Kingdom is for the long haul and for those who can endure. Can we endure without being tested? Of course some will fail the test, but is that not better than having a congregation of hot-house Mormons, Mormons ignorant of their own traditions, Mormons cowering in their chapels and afraid to go to the library because they might read something disturbing?

What some find threatening others find stimulating. Our job as teachers should be to assist our students in going the whole way, not in halting their spiritual growth before the challenge even begins because we, their teachers, assume they are unequal to the task.

Finally, allow me to raise for your consideration a point I think is often overlooked. An effective way to survive the "shocks" of learning the underside of our history is to examine the underside of secularism as well. Once the weaknesses of the secular approach are well-perceived and digested, the choice between informed commitment and inactivity or apostacy is not all that troublesome. Once the limitations of the intellect are fully understood, the limitations of faith do not loom so large. Once the "culture of narcissism" is as fully appreciated for its weaknesses, the value of religion looms larger.

V

Both spirituality and intellectuality have suffered immeasurably when one or the other has been raised to a position of predominance. When one pits the eternal and the temporal, spirit and matter, passion and reason, mind and heart against each other, each comes away the loser. Indeed, to attack one set of values in the name of the other is to threaten both. What we need is

Elder Boyd K. Packer
November 19, 1981
Page seven

not a rejection of one or the other but an integration of both, a reaffirmation of their joint dependency and usefulness. Placing faith and reason at odds with each other puts us at war with ourselves; placed in harmony together we are in both intellectual and spiritual repose.

You have "cautioned" historians on the need for greater spiritual insights—and rightfully so. All of us in the profession need to be required to rethink and at times modify our assumptions, methods, and goals. My modest effort here is to the same purpose: to raise some cautions for you to consider. If I have spoken frankly it is out of respect for your office and a desire not to patronize. If my ideas are offensive in any way, please be assured that they are directed at your ideas, not at you. If even one of these considerations causes you to reflect further and positively on this most important subject I shall be grateful.

Respectfully your brother,

James L. Clayton

cc: President Gordon B. Hinckley

Surplus Is a Raw Deal In Gamble of Farming

By John Serfustini
Tribune Staff Writer

"The difference between farming and Las Vegas," says Riverton farmer Stan Dimond, "is that in Las Vegas you know where you stand after a half hour. You have to wait a year in farming."

The observation may be new but the situation isn't. Every food and fiber producer knows agriculture is a risky business. There's the weather to worry about, and pests and pestilence. Those are bad cards to draw.

But there's another bad card that may turn up in

First of a Series

every farmer's hand — surplus. If it turns up this year as it has in the past, it means the prices paid to farmers will be depressed again.

It means that farmers — in a nation where overweight is epidemic — will have to tighten their belts another notch.

Mr. Dimond himself has watched the price he gets for barley steadily decline. It's already \$1.50 less per hundred pounds than it was last year.

Grains in general are selling at the lowest prices since the 1950s. But the things farmers must buy — fuel, machinery, labor — are at 1982 prices. So the farmers produce more to make ends meet.

Turkey growers in Utah did that last year. What happened to the price of turkey is a classic example of surplus economics. The birds were selling for less than 40 cents a pound. Smart consumers stocked their freezers with the cheap meat.

Guess What Happened

Now it stands to reason that a freezer stocked with turkey is a freezer that is not stocked with beef. Guess what happened to the prices cattlemen got for their stock.

"Every pound we produce gets sold," says North Salt Lake rancher David Hinckley. "But if I go to auction with two cows and there's only enough demand for one, I sell two cows for the price of one."

"Every pound we produce gets sold," says North Salt Lake rancher David Hinckley. "But if I go to auction with two cows and there's only enough demand for one, I sell two cows for the price of one."

The alternative to selling is to borrow money to keep the herd going until prices recover — if they recover. How much to borrow? Figure \$1.50 per head per day.

It's hard to say how many ranchers and farmers are having trouble paying back those loans, says Utah State University's extension agent for Box Elder County, Harold Lindsay. Maybe dozens.

Reluctant to Foreclose

But what's to be done with a farmer who can't meet the loan payments? Lenders are reluctant to foreclose, Mr. Lindsay says, because the lenders aren't sure that the foreclosed property could be sold.

A case in point was a spread that was for sale for \$1.4 million. The prospective buyer calculated that just to break even the land would have to produce 40 bushels of wheat per acre per year. That's about the limit on the best of years, so the buyer was looking at a zero return on investment — at best.

No sale.

Agricultural experts say there are several causes

for the squeeze Utah farmers and ranchers are in. First on the list is the awesome productivity of American agriculture. This nation has harnessed science to pull more from the land than any other country on earth.

Forces Prices Down

Only a widespread and catastrophic crop failure could dent the supply of food. That excess supply forces prices down.

A second cause is the computerized sophistication of commodities trading. Traders dealing in megaton contracts know where to get the most of any product for the lowest price, and that price sets the market. Utah's crops and livestock, which contribute only half a percent of the nation's production, have an insignificant effect on prices.

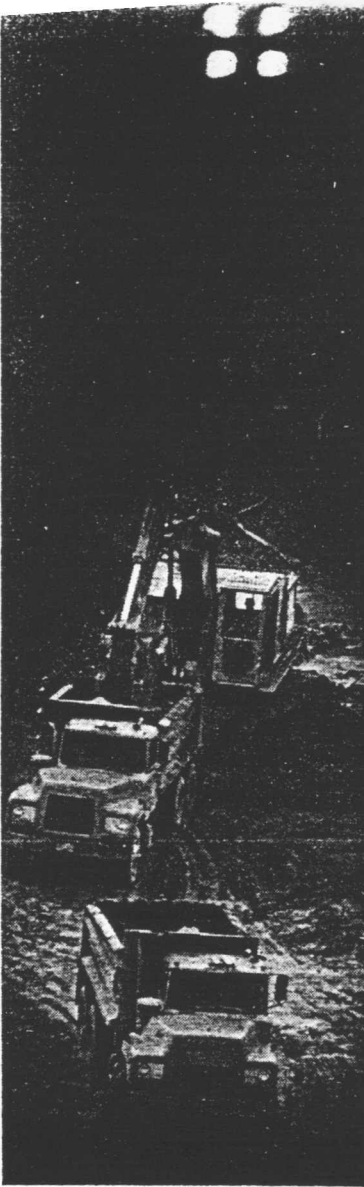
Given the state of the art in trading and transportation, the supply and demand situation in any given area isn't that important. As Mr. Lindsay says, "It's a world market now."

And other nations are learning to produce and market food. International production and international relations — let's call them "politics" for short — are the third factor in farm prices.

Canada, Venezuela

Koze L. Hallows, program specialist for the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, explains that Canada and Venezuela in particular are putting more grain and meat into the world market. This comes at a time when the United States is withholding grain shipments to Russia as an instrument of policy.

Also, would-be American exporters are running into protectionism overseas. Nations are concerned that a flood of low-cost American farm products would devastate their farming industries, much the same way Detroit is concerned about imported Japanese cars.



—Tribune Staff Photo by Paul Fraughton

Night Rider

Salt Lake City crews work at night to excavate ground for a \$2.2 million, 12 million gallon reservoir on a Victory Road behind Utah State Capitol. It will ultimately provide water to downtown, the city's west end, plus Northwest Quadrant area. Reservoir, to be 230 feet in diameter and 23 feet deep, will connect to the Central Utah Project at 3800 South. Work on reservoir, connecting pipeline, will continue throughout the summer.

Lake
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Obituaries
Page B-15

Morning
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Page One

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Home, Garden Festival

Horticulturalist Predicts 'Phenomenal' Changes

By Ben Ling
Tribune Staff Writer

"Phenomenal" developments are expected in home gardening within the next 10 years, according to an internationally-known horticulturalist visiting Salt Lake City.

The developments may range from disease and insect resistant plants to "cast iron flowers" that bloom all summer long, said James Wilson, executive secretary for the National Garden Bureau, Inc., and head of the All-America Selections.

Mr. Wilson is one of the featured speakers at the Tribune's annual Spring Home and Garden Festival in the Salt Palace. This year's festival is the largest ever, with more than a thousand flower displays and numerous booths and

demonstration stands, according to festival organizers.

Mr. Wilson, 57, started in the seed business 34 years ago. "Back then, for every 10 packets of seeds being sold, seven were flowers and the other three were vegetables," he said.

"Now it's reversed. Seven out of every 10 packets are now vegetables. It's not because of survival gardening. Times haven't gotten that bad. More and more there's emphasis on having fun at gardening."

Research in hybrid plants is rapidly improving the vegetables in home gardens, as well as commercial markets.

"The breeders are coming out with new plant varieties faster than the seed catalog can sell them. We are overloading the market," he said.

Thanks to a recently developed method of genetic splicing, plants can be cross bred, combining the favorable characteristics of each. Breeders' current problem is preserving the flavor of vegetables after cross-breeding.

Researchers are returning to wild



Mr. Wilson



alt Lake City Parks | Home and Garden Festival at the Salt Palace. The Tribune's Spring Organizers say attendance is up over last year.

HISTORIC Debate 'Formal

Faith-Promoti Or Objective?

By George Raine
Tribune Staff Writer

Intellectuals and historians, influential members of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints, for 3 months have had a vigorous but dispute with influential church le who criticized so-called obj church history which includes human dimensions.

The debate is now formal, as cated in a speech last week University of Utah historian Jam Clayton. He characterized " promoting" history, as advocated least two LDS general authorities "intellectually and morally irris sible."

Moreover, the debate has been fountain of rumors within the Mor community which appear to be o statements. It was rumored, for ex ple, that church archivists are barr access to diaries, journals and ot private materials of church lead back to the 1830s and that this v illustrative of a narrowing chu attitude toward Mormonism's past. l the church responded that these h been withdrawn temporarily for rec classification and reevaluation, and th are still available with permission fr the managing director of the chur historical department.

Members Vulnerable

Both sides of the debate over hist say the point of view of the other ca lead to the undermining of faith, th church members can be made vulner ble. It is a disagreement church watchers are following closely, unce tain how it will affect the Mormo educational system, in particular which, like the church is growing rapidly.

While the talk by Dr. Clayton, dean of the Graduate School of the University of Utah, was the most recent round, the debate gained its momentum last August from Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church.

He gave a talk at Brigham Young University in which he said that in an effort to be objective, impartial, and scholarly, a writer or a teacher may unwittingly be giving equal time to the adversary.

Recalls Benson Message

His message was not unlike one given in 1976 by Ezra Taft Benson, president of the Council of Twelve Apostles and very likely the next president of the church. The two are among the leadership of the side which, in Elder Packer's words, finds fault with historians and others "who may have placed higher value on intellect than upon the mantle."

Indeed, Elder Packer entitled his talk, at an LDS Church Educational System Religious Educators' Symposium, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect."

Elder Packer and others emphasize the promotion of faith in teaching and writing, within the church, so that it follows one "sees the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the church from its beginnings till now."

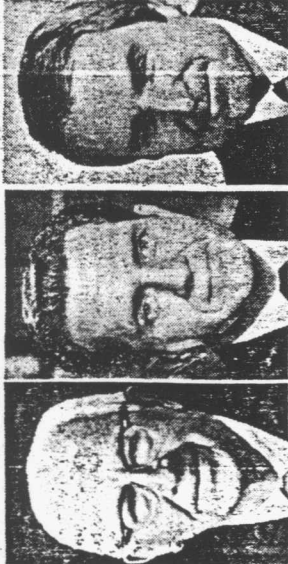
Due Careful Weight

"These are top general authorities (President Benson and Elder Packer) and their statements should be given careful weight," said church spokesman Don LeFevre. However, he said, there is no written policy on how church history is to be taught. Mr. LeFevre said he believes the attention given to what would appear to be a division has been blown out of proportion. "I don't see it as one side against another," he said.

However, a standing-room-only audience gathered last week at the University of Utah's Behavioral Sciences Auditorium to hear Dr. Clayton on "Does History Undermine Faith?" He spoke at a program sponsored by the B.H. Roberts Society, named after an early Mormon thinker and general authority who at times was at odds with other church leaders around the turn of the century.

"The basic problem of teaching only what is uplifting is that this approach leaves people unprepared to face the realities of life," said Dr. Clayton. "It is like building a house without a roof. The

See Page B-3, Column 2



Ezra Taft Benson, Boyd K. Packer, James L. Clayton. Spiritual Qualities, 'Spiritual Powers', 'Face Realities'.

Horticulturalist Predicts Phenomenal Changes

Continued From Page B-1

species of plants to try breeding hardiness into hybrids.

Characteristics of the tenary bean, for example, from the southwest United States may someday help vegetables combat numerous diseases and resist drought.

As head of All-America Selections, Mr. Wilson oversees 80 volunteer "trial grounds" around the nation, where seeds are planted next to already established standard vegetables on taste, disease resistance and rate of production.

The purpose of the group is to focus attention on the best seeds currently available in gardening.

One of the biggest success stories in the All-America Selections is the sugar snap pea of 1978. In the two years since the new "hybrid" was awarded the All-America Selections rating, growers have sold two million cases of seeds.

The organization is based in Sycamore, Ill. In the same office as the National Garden Bureau, Inc., which maintains gardens for photographers and garden writers. The gardens display new methods of growing vegetables.

Mr. Wilson, 57, was reared on a vegetable farm in Mississippi. "After I got out of high school, I went into the Air Force and I swore I would never grow another vegetable. But when I left the Air Force, I went right back to the market garden."

Today's Flower Show Events

Special programs in the southwest corner of the Salt Palace Exhibition Hall are a part of the Salt Lake Tribune's Spring Home and Garden Festival. Here is a list of Sunday's events:

— 1 p.m.: Microwave surprise food. A cooking demonstration by Susan Thomas, home energy adviser, Utah Power & Light Co. Recipes and food to be given away.

— 2 p.m.: Flower arrangement demonstration. The festival, "Where East Meets West," by Julie Sears Eyre of Julie's Candlelight Florist in ZCMI Mall. A family demonstration using fresh flowers, silk flowers and dried materials. She will show flowers for all occasions.

— 3 p.m.: Fashions by Castletons. Sandy Webster, fashion director, assisted by Gloria Peterson of Castletons; Mrs. H.K. Bullen, show chairman; and

Mrs. Wayne Self, co-chairman, Models from Castletons and the Utah Associated Garden Clubs.

— 4:15 p.m.: Vegetable gardening. Guest speaker will be James Wilson, Sycamore, Ill. Others on the panel are Gene Christianson, Porter-Watson Seed Co.; Alvin Hamson, vegetable specialist at Utah State University; and Frank Williams, Brigham Young University. Robert Morris, Utah State University extension services, will be moderator.

Topic: "Vegetable gardening with a purpose." Seed packets for an exhibit garden will be given away.

6:15 p.m. Warming entries in the festival photo contest. A panel will discuss aspects of winning photographs, give pointers on flower and garden photography and answer questions.

— 6:15 p.m.: Awards program. Presentation to show winners and special awards.

Debate Seeks Best History Tactics

Continued From Page B-1

rain will fall whether we like it or not. We should be prepared when it does. Religious instructors need to strengthen the ability of the religious membership to face the underside of life, not to hide from it. The better historians of Mormonism have always done this, particularly B.H. Roberts."

Dr. Clayton, in an interview, said the current debate has caused feelings to run high particularly among Mormon historians on both sides, so he said his intention was to defuse personal aspects. He did not refer by name to those with whom he disagrees.

Last fall, D. Michael Quinn, a Yale-educated historian on the Brigham Young University faculty, did the unusual in naming President Benson and Elder Packer when, before a group of history majors at BYU, he gave a talk he called "On Being a Mormon Historian."

"Personally, I am not willing to simply say that 'the hand of the Lord' is a sufficient explanation for all the events and developments in the Mormon past," Dr. Quinn told the students. "Mormon experience which never did precede for believing willing to consider pluralistic explanations for even the more crucial events in Mormon history."

Response to Address

In part, he was responding to the address by Elder Packer, published last summer in Brigham Young University Studies, a scholarly periodical, and in a pamphlet by the LDS Church Educational System.

"Church history can be so interesting, and so inspiring for building faith, powerful tool for building faith," said Elder Packer. "If not properly written or properly taught, it may be a faith destroyer."

In addition to warning that one bent on objectivity may unwittingly be giving equal time to the adversary, Elder Packer issued these other cautions:

Stresses Spiritual Powers

"There is no such thing as an accurate, objective history of the church without consideration of the spiritual powers that attend this work."

"There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not."

"The final caution concerns the idea that so long as something is already in print, so long as it is available from another source, there is nothing out of order in using it in writing or speaking or teaching."

It was President Joseph Fielding Smith, he said, who observed that "it would be a foolish general who would give access to all of his intelligence to his enemy. It is neither expedient nor necessary for us to accommodate those who seek to retrieve references from

our sources, distort them and use them against us."

It is avoidance of much of the temporal side of the LDS Church story to which Elder Packer is alluding, which is giving Dr. Quinn, Dr. Clayton and others pause.

"Selecting only those topics and historians that are comfortable in order to lead the membership more easily into the promised land is, in my view, a responsibility from the historians' point of view," said Dr. Clayton.

Dr. Quinn, in an interview, said there is an understandable desire on the part of religious leaders to protect new members of the church or members of the church they see as vulnerable.

People Vulnerable

"On the other hand, there is a recognition that I and others feel that if in an effort to protect we exclude the negative of the past of the Mormon experience, then that makes the people we are trying to protect vulnerable because they are perceiving an unrealistic view of the Mormon experience, or they have a view of the Mormon experience which never did exist — a view without controversy without error."

"To avoid an open presentation of the controversy as well as the inspirations of the Mormon past would be to undermine, ultimately, the faith," he said. He felt strongly that to present a view of Mormonism which eliminates the human dimensions is to eliminate reality, "and that is actually making members of the church vulnerable."

Dr. Clayton, in an interview, said, "They (meaning those who fear faith is threatened by exposure to that church history) have a profoundly narrow but combative point of view."

Can Be Proud

He said he thinks Mormon tradition, "seen honestly and openly, is a tradition that believing people can base their faith on. The record is not perfect — no record is — but I think it is a record one can be proud of and that one does not have to hide or worry about or scurry around about."

Dr. Clayton said he did not believe President Benson's and Elder Packer's point of view is widespread, even among the general authorities of the LDS Church, "but a number of people in high positions have expressed anti-intellectual and anti-historical ideas and someone should offer an alternative point of view or defend history."

There is no such thing as an accurate or objective history of the church which ignores "the Spirit," Elder Packer told the educators. "If we are not careful, very careful, and if we are not wise, we will leave out of our professional study the things of the Spirit. The next step soon follows: we leave the spiritual things out of our lives."

He added: "That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith — particularly one within the church, and more particularly one who places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities."

Historians, said Dr. Clayton, cannot be divided into those who fight for God and those who battle for the Devil. "All historians, both those inside and those outside the faith, are limited in their ability to reconstruct the past. Each seeks understanding according to his or her abilities and none has a corner on the truth."

"Being deliberately one-sided undermines our credibility with nonbelievers, tarnishes the good name of those who engage in such practices, invites counter-attacks and diminishes the possibility of fruitful dialogue with other Christians facing similar problems," he said.

Points Out Conflict

Historians and advocates of a particular religion clash when the historian perceives the advocate as not being loyal to historical as opposed to religious truth, when the religious advocate does not have a high degree of intellectual honesty or lacks a sense of "balance, proportion, and common sense." He added, "This kind of conflict can occur when someone suggests that we should see the hand of the God operating in every aspect of our lives."

President Benson has entered the debate in part by attacking attempts to bring humanistic philosophy into church history. He said in his 1976 speech, "The emphasis is to underplay revelation (the process, Mormons believe, by which God speaks to church leaders) and God's intervention in significant events, and to inordinately humanize the prophets of God so that their human frailties become more evident than their spiritual qualities."

President Benson, said Dr. Clayton in an interview, is far more suspicious of history than others in the current church leadership.

New Direction

"This fear of history has not occurred (demonstrably among church leaders) at least in my lifetime," said Dr. Clayton. "It is a new direction in 20th Century Mormonism and one of my hopes is that it will not be successful because I can't see any value to the combative approach, the one-sided history, no value for people in or outside the church."

Asked what kind of scenario he imagined if a so-called anti-intellectual and anti-history trend were to continue within the LDS Church, Dr. Clayton replied:

"There is great concern that archives will be closed, that some books will not be assignable in institutes, that some

books would not be available in libraries and so forth.

"In other words, there is concern among historians that there is a growing anti-history attitude and there is nothing produced in this kind of approach, no kind of dialogue. That I think would take us back to the 18th Century when both Mormons and non-Mormons were hurling epithets at each other and there wasn't much good history being written by either side."

Very Special Light

He said that if President Benson does become the church president, as it is assumed he will, "then that puts him and his pronouncements in a very special light and I think there are very few people who from within will criticize general authorities or criticize the church president in any of its positions."

In commenting on the positions of President Benson and Elder Packer, Dr. Quinn of BYU stands alone.

"If a historian writes about any subject unrelated to religion, and he purposely fails to make reference to pertinent information of which he has knowledge, he is justifiably liable to be criticized for dishonesty," Dr. Quinn said in this talk at BYU.

Disservice to Cause

"It does disservice to the cause of the church, for Latter-day Saint historians to render themselves and the church itself subject to justified criticism because they have ignored available and previously published materials in the writing of Mormon history," he said.

Dr. Quinn has separated himself from the institutional forces who make up the environmental explanation of the background of purposes for "revelations" and developments in LDS Church history.

If a Latter-day Saint historian discusses the revelation to Joseph Smith about abstinence from tobacco, strong drinks and hot drinks, and then fails to note that during the 1830s religious reformers and social reformers were involved nationally in urging abstinence from these identical things, any reader has cause to criticize the historian's accuracy, to question his motives and to doubt any affirmation the historian might give to the revelation's truth," said Dr. Quinn.

Need Environmental Influence

"Without environmental influences or surrounding circumstances of significance to the prophet, there would be no revelations from God to the prophet," he added.

"A so-called faith-promoting church history which conceals controversies and difficulties of the Mormon past actually undermines the faith of Latter-day Saints who eventually learn about the problems from other sources," said Dr. Quinn.

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