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The Newsletter of
the Foundation for
Ancient Research
and Mormon Studies

INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

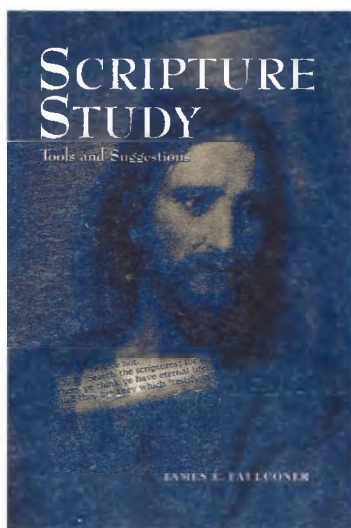
May 1999

"by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118)

New FARMS Book Offers Scripture Study Tips

A profound love for the scriptures has led James E. Faulconer, dean of General Education and Honors and professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University, to assemble the scripture study plan set forth in his book *Scripture Study: Tools and Suggestions*, recently published by FARMS. In this book Faulconer shares the study techniques he has refined through personal study and developed during his many years of teaching the scriptures to students at BYU.

This study aid offers pointers that will familiarize beginning students of the scriptures with the many resources available to them, as well as help more experi-



enced students improve the overall effectiveness of their scripture study.

In the introductory chapter, Faulconer discusses how our scripture study relates to the medieval alchemist's motto: "Read, read, read, work, pray, and reread." He notes, "Though it did not help the alchemists turn lead into gold, it may help us turn leaden scripture study into gold." He emphasizes the importance of reading slowly and paying careful attention to each detail of the scriptures in order to gain a deeper understanding of and love for these sacred books.

Faulconer also explains the purpose of outlining, plus an in-depth method of cross-referencing.

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Nibley Address Climaxes Lecture Series on Abraham

On 6 April 1999 revered scholar Dr. Hugh W. Nibley concluded the Book of Abraham Lecture Series by addressing the topic "Abraham's Creation Drama." Speaking to a capacity crowd in Brigham Young University's Joseph Smith Building auditorium and to hundreds of other people gathered in overflow rooms, Nibley highlighted intriguing connections between truths revealed in the Book of Abraham and worship practices in temples both ancient and modern.

Nibley began by noting that the Pearl of Great Price is rightly named because "it contains enormous value in a very small scope," filling in "those enormous gaps in our history which science has filled with speculation." For example, it contains

key passages from the scriptural records associated with the seven great prophets of the known gospel dispensations: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith. Nibley pointed out that Abraham occupies a central position in that list: "All things zero in on him. He has been called 'the most pivotal and strategic figure in all of human history.' In his position he binds all things together and gives meaning and perspective to everything that happened." Although Abraham held no office and worked no miracles and is "the essential Everyman," Nibley said, he was also extraordinary. Because of Abraham's exceptional goodness, God visited him and taught him astronomy.

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The Foundation for
Ancient Research
and Mormon Studies

FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 126

Why Nephi Wrote the Small Plates: The Political Dimension

To conclude our reflections on when, where, and why Nephi wrote his final small plates account, we can now turn attention to three political dimensions of those plates. Once again, the real-life situations of Nephi and his people supply important contexts that bring interesting things to light.

1. *A post-fallout document.* The small plates were clearly written after Nephi's group left the land of first inheritance to escape the antagonisms of Laman and Lemuel and their sympathizers. The large plates probably contained expressions of great feelings of gratitude for the party's deliverance from perils. Accordingly, because the large plates had been started immediately after the group's arrival in the New World, that record may have been overly optimistic and conciliatory if not euphoric. There, in a spirit of hope and joy, Nephi may have given Laman and Lemuel credit at least for working on board ship (as all hands must have done) and for staying with the party (despite their desire to return to Jerusalem). Writing during something of a honeymoon period, Nephi may have expressed himself cautiously, uncritically, even hesi-

tantly. The bold declarations of Nephi's preeminence and Laman and Lemuel's stiffneckedness later found in the small plates, however, would have offended Laman and Lemuel implacably and ruined any small chance of family harmony that existed upon the group's arrival in the New World.

2. *A selective, thematic presentation.* As Noel B. Reynolds has shown, Nephi's small plates served important political purposes for several centuries.¹ Knowing that this account was written shortly after, if not as part of, Nephi's coronation strengthens the thesis that this record was influenced by political needs from its inception. For example, the following incidents in 1 Nephi have clear political overtones: Nephi's obtaining the plates of brass, being designated a ruler and a teacher over his brethren (1 Nephi 2:22), possessing the only usable bow in camp (leadership implications), supplanting "elder brethren" (1 Nephi 16:37), succeeding in building the ship when the others could not, refusing to be worshipped (1 Nephi 17:55), and being rejected as ruler (1 Nephi 18:10).

3. *A separator of religious and political power.* Finally, at the time

he began writing the small plates, Nephi knew that a division of power should exist in his new city. Kings would rule in the palace, but priests would control the temple (2 Nephi 5:18, 26). If the kings held the only copy of the law, they could prevent the priests from carrying out their functions. So Nephi gave the large plates to the kings, for that record would contain "an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions" of the people; whereas the small plates, devoted to "the more part of the ministry" and for other divine purposes, were given to the priestly lineage of Jacob (1 Nephi 9:4). In addition, Nephi assured a balance between the royal and priestly leaders in his city by entrusting to the kings the brass plates (containing the temple laws of sacrifice that the priests would need) and entrusting to the priests the small plates (containing the narratives that were necessary to legitimize the kings).

NOTE

1. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27/4 (1987): 15-37.

By John W. Welch

*Staff notes***FARMS Welcomes New Director of Development**

This fall will mark FARMS's 20th anniversary—a time not only for celebrating the Foundation's past achievements but also for making plans for the future. Just as the generosity of donors has been critical to the Foundation's research efforts during the past two decades, it will continue to play a key role in determining how many worthwhile projects will be undertaken in coming years.

Although part of Brigham Young University, FARMS still must rely on membership fees, donations, and sales to support ongoing research. To facilitate this process, the university has assigned Orrin J. Olsen as director of development for FARMS. In this new capacity, Olsen will help interested donors explore a wide variety of options for financially supporting the Foundation.

Originally from Logan, Utah, Olsen was a star athlete in football, track, and wrestling, and he played two seasons of profes-



sional football. He graduated from BYU's Marriott School of Management in 1976 and later worked as a sales manager in private industry for seven years

before joining the BYU development team in 1985.

Daniel Oswald, executive director of FARMS, sees Olsen's appointment as a sensible tactical move that indicates BYU's commitment to the work of FARMS and augurs well for future success. "We need to increase our efforts so that the many wonderful projects we have already planned will come to fruition through the generosity of donors," he said. "Orrin will assist us in developing a sound strategy that will enable us to reach our development goals."

In contemplating his new assignment, Olsen looks forward to playing a role in the future success of FARMS. "I am excited to be associated with FARMS," he said, "and I am anxious to assist donors who want to contribute to the success of scripture research."

*Housekeeping***Improved Archive Room for CPART**

The FARMS Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART) has recently set up an on-site climate-controlled room to house and help preserve important data and artifacts. This remodeled room is also designed to provide convenient access and retrieval of archived materials.

CPART staff ensure that storage paraphernalia such as ink, glue, tape, paper, boxes, and containers are of archival quality. They also monitor the temperature and humidity in the room. To meet the requirements for

cool and dry storage, the room is kept at or below 62 degrees Fahrenheit and between 30 and 35 percent humidity. These optimal conditions increase the longevity of electronic data stored on CDs and diskettes and minimize the deterioration of slides, negatives, microfilm, photographs, and fragile artifacts.

Among CPART's archives are photographs, slides, and electronic data from its Dead Sea Scrolls, Syriac, Bonampak, and Petra projects. Additional holdings include the recent donations

to FARMS of a 16th-century abridgment of the Hadith (a compilation of the Islamic prophet Muhammad's official statements on Islamic beliefs and practices) and three well-preserved Tibetan scriptural texts called *sutras*.

CPART director Daniel C. Peterson sees the refurbished room as much more than a storage area. "The climate-controlled room is integral to CPART's mission to preserve ancient religious writings and make them available through electronic and other media," he said.

New FARMS publications

Chart on New Testament Gospels Available

How many distinct events, episodes, parables, or sayings of Jesus are reported in the four New Testament Gospels? Where in the scriptures are they found? Which are unique to one of the Gospels, and which are not?

A new chart available from FARMS identifies 290 such units, providing a helpful overview of Christ's mortal ministry and teachings as recorded by the four evangelists. The chart is particularly useful as a reference point for those who wish to analyze the contents of each Gospel and compare its coverage and nuances with the other three. For example, readers can readily locate the parable of the laborers and note that it appears only in the book of Matthew, whereas accounts of Jesus' baptism and later arrest appear in all four Gospels and

reflect slightly different perspectives. In addition, students of the scriptures can test their knowledge as they use the chart to see how many of the 290 units they recognize or might need to reread.

The LDS Bible Dictionary contains a similar chart titled "Harmony of the Gospels," and it is highly recommended for information on the known or presumed location of each episode cataloged therein, as well as for selected parallels in the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and other latter-day revelation.

The new chart (see the enclosed order form), produced by the FARMS staff, offers advantages of simplicity, clarity, and convenience that many students of the New Testament will find very helpful.

From other publishers

Latest Research on Book of Mormon in 20th Century, Parable of Good Samaritan

Two articles in the latest issue of *BYU Studies* (volume 38, number 2) will be of great interest to FARMS readers. By special arrangement, the Foundation is making that issue available to its subscribers.

The first article, "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century," by past FARMS president Noel B. Reynolds, is a paper he presented at a FARMS conference in 1997. Looking back on the past century, he documents the dramatic emergence of the Book of Mormon from earlier obscurity. Few people are aware of this remarkable story.

Despite the warning in D&C 84:57 to "remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon," and later, periodic admonitions by church leaders to the same effect, the Book of Mormon was "largely overlooked throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," writes Reynolds. He cites studies showing that early Latter-day Saint sermons and writings greatly favored biblical citations. Another indication that the Book of Mormon was underutilized until recent decades was its marginalized role in missionary work (again, the Bible was emphasized) and church education. Regarding

the latter, Reynolds notes that not until the 1940s were Book of Mormon classes regularly taught at BYU, and not until the 1960s did they become a graduation requirement. He attributes the earlier resistance to those classes on the part of influential BYU administrators and faculty to their acceptance of prevailing scientific and philosophical views that discounted the historical reality of scripture and nurtured the skepticism of "untestimonied" cultural Mormons.

The study also presents interesting data documenting the Book of Mormon's rise to prominence in recent decades. Reflecting this steady trend are sharp increases in publications on the Book of Mormon (both critical and apologetic) and in citations from it in general conference addresses. Reynolds discusses key factors behind this change, including the church's correlation efforts begun in the early 1970s and President Ezra Taft Benson's clarion emphasis on the Book of Mormon. He then turns attention to scholarly studies of the Book of Mormon as a "final indicator of the strong maturation of knowledge about the Book of Mormon" during this

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Latest Research (continued from page 4)

during this century. Reynolds concludes that "the last few decades have produced a significant revolution in the LDS community in terms of the increased understanding and competent appreciation for the Book of Mormon as an inspired work of ancient scripture. . . . Increasingly, non-LDS scholars are also willing to take a more serious look at the Book of Mormon in light of LDS scholarship."

This article will give readers a better understanding of the intellectual history surrounding the Book of Mormon, the social forces that impeded its full utilization earlier in this century, and reasons for its robust, expanding influence in recent decades.

The second article, "The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation," by John W. Welch, is an insightful analysis of that well-known parable. Welch's research shows that since the early days of Christianity, the parable of the Good Samaritan was understood as an extensive allegory: the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers represents mankind's fall from paradise into a world of sin. The Good Samaritan represents the Savior, who rescues the man left for dead by washing his wounds of sin away with wine, anointing him with oil, and taking him to an inn (the church), where he promises to reward the faithful innkeeper upon his return.

Welch documents the surprisingly extensive history and strength of that early Christian reading. He argues that the parable is best understood in light of the plan of salvation as understood by Latter-day Saints. After all, Welch reasons, Jesus gave this powerful parable not only to answer the lawyer's second question, "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29), but also to explain on a deeper level (for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear) the plan of salvation in response to the lawyer's first and primary question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25).

Viewing the complex parable as a typological allegory, Welch notes that "each point included by Jesus in the story helps to place the Samaritan's act of saving mercy in the broader context of the plan of salvation that was established from the foundation of the world and made possible through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The story is not simply a moralistic fable or generic ethical hypothetical, but a thoroughly Christian contextualization of the perils of mortality and the deeds of saving goodness in

an eternal setting of God's redeeming love and compassion."

Welch's step-by-step analysis of the parable brings together insights from early Christian commentators such as Irenaeus and Origen and shows how LDS teachings can enrich those readings. For example, rather than assume that the victim fell among robbers as the result of sin (an early Christian view), or suffered great misfortune through no fault of his own (a modern secular view), Welch points out that the "LDS framework of the plan of salvation offers a felicitous middle ground, allowing one to see the plight of the victim when he falls among the robbers as an expected, necessary, and valuable part of the fallen experiences of mortality without overemphasizing the negative aspects of entering into the mortal condition and becoming vulnerable to sin."

After developing several intriguing implications of his study, Welch concludes that "seeing the parable of the Good Samaritan as an allegory of the plan of salvation offers a powerful, spiritual avenue for recognizing that the same truths were taught by the Lord Jesus Christ during his mortal ministry as were restored in this dispensation by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Knowledge of God's eternal plan of redemption indelibly transforms and enriches the meaning of this quintessential Christian text."

This issue of *BYU Studies* may be ordered directly from FARMS using the enclosed order form or from BYU Studies by contacting that office at 403 CB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

Nibley (continued from page 1)

Nibley discussed Abraham's relationship to the temple and then focused on likening temple worship to an interactive drama that teaches participants the things of eternity. He described the ancient temple as a scale model of the universe, a school and theater where patrons received instruction in heavenly things by precept and example and took their bearings in eternity. According to Nibley, Abraham "gives us the creation story and the plan of salvation in a privileged personal showing" by employing the "common resources of the ancients—the song, dance, and recitation."

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Scripture Study (continued from page 1)

He talks about what he calls "glancing back": reviewing scriptures written before the passage being studied to see how previous prophets applied specific words and ideas.

A main focus of *Scripture Study: Tools and Suggestions* is asking questions. Faulconer gives tips on how to ask cogent and thought-provoking questions, providing helpful examples of the types of questions that can help students of the scriptures learn the most from their reading.

Faulconer devotes several chapters to the reference tools available in the LDS edition of the scriptures and as a supplement to it. He discusses such aids as footnotes, alternative translations, historical dictionaries, and concordances, noting how each can improve the quality of scripture study and the depth of understanding gained from it.

In addition, a discussion of parsing explains how to use sentence diagramming techniques to see how words and ideas in the scripture relate to each other, and a chapter on rhetoric defines a number of ancient literary forms and gives examples to show how such studies can yield helpful insights and perspectives when applied to scripture.

Faulconer combines all of his recommended study techniques in a sample set of notes on a chapter in the book of Moroni. These notes show how the various tools and suggestions can promote meaningful scripture study. This book can be ordered using the enclosed order form.

Nibley (continued from page 5)

Nibley showed how those elements of ancient drama are found in temple worship and have parallels in the Book of Abraham.

For example, chapter 3 of the Book of Abraham contains a superb example of the factual recitation, "a statement of principles and doctrines that answer the ultimate mysteries of our existence" with astonishing brevity. Nibley then discussed the verses that answer the "terrible questions," such as "Where do I come from?" "Why am I here?" and "How did it all begin, and how will it all end?"

Turning attention to the "pragmatic part" of temple worship, Nibley observed: "These are the laws you must observe. This is the behavior you must follow, if you want to live together in eternity." He concluded by touching on qualities exemplified by Abraham that will "keep [us] on the forward track forever": obedience, sacrifice, decorous conduct, self-control, and generosity.

This lecture can be ordered from FARMS as a transcript or as an audiotope with an exceptionally clear sound track (see the order form).

INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

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The Purpose of FARMS

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and other ancient scriptures. It also works to preserve ancient religious documents.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation affiliated with Brigham Young University. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

The Foundation works to make interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these publications, including most royalties, are used to support further research and publications on the scriptures. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.



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Insights

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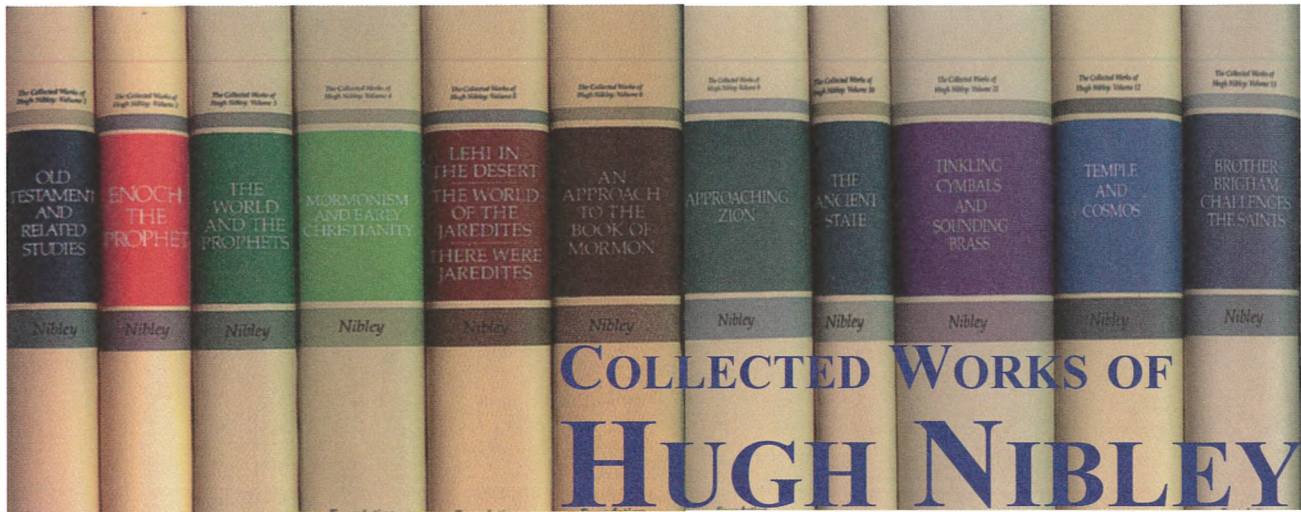
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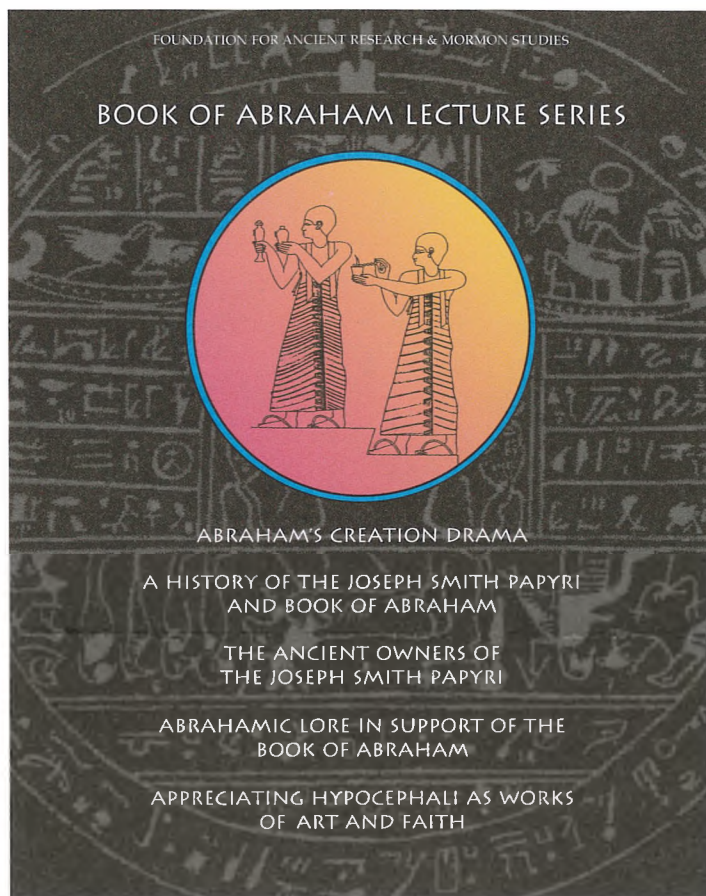
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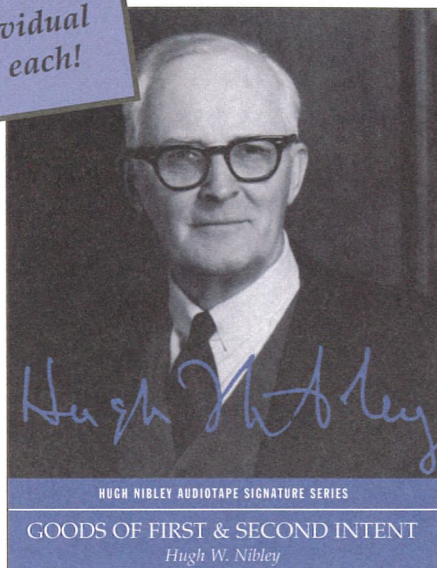
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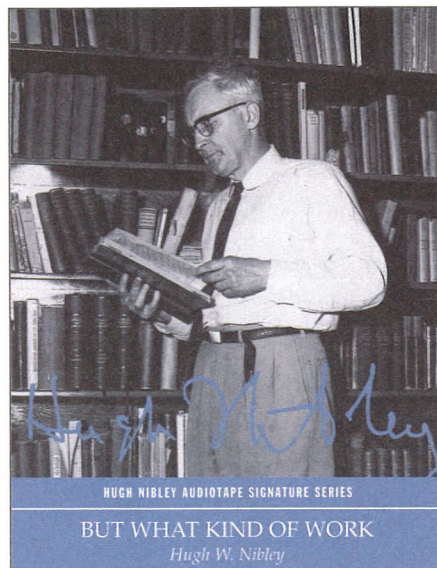
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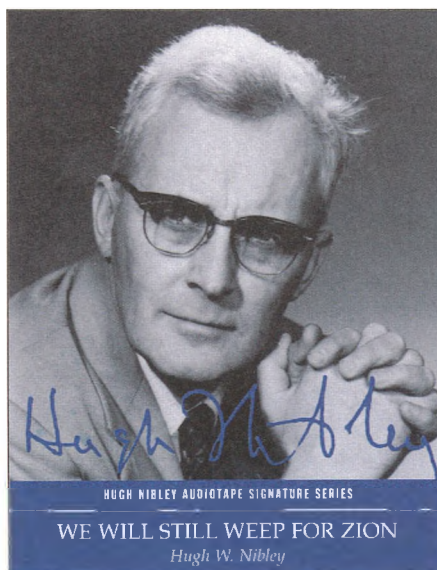
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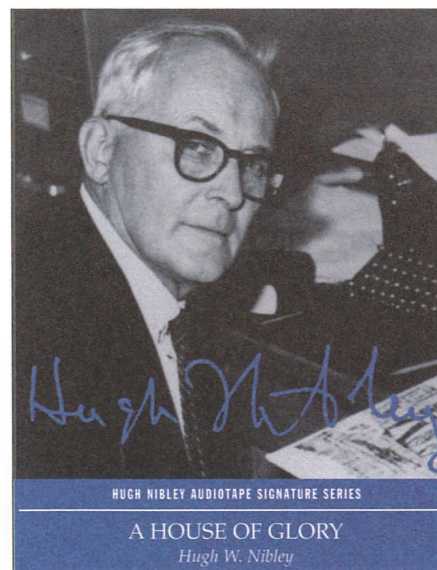
"We all stand in need of constant nourishment for both body and spirit. The trouble is that we are not allowed to forget the hunger of the body; it will always remind you that you are in need of nourishment. . . . We think the hunger of the mind can wait, but if we separate the mind and body, we nourish neither" (*Approaching Zion*, p. 530).



Where can we find clues as to what we should be doing while here on earth? "In this life we have too many options. There are thousands of good things any of us could be doing at this time but will never be allowed to do, because of the shortness of time and the peculiar need we have to focus on just one thing at a time" (*Approaching Zion*, p. 266).



The Lord expects Latter-day Saints to make a clean break from the "world's economy" and consecrate themselves fully to his cause. Hugh W. Nibley follows the progression in early church history of the Lord's warnings and chastening and the difficulty the Saints had in living the law of consecration. Nibley also discusses how President Spencer W. Kimball taught the Saints not to follow the false gods of worldliness.



This audiobook is a brief commentary on Doctrine and Covenants 109, the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple. Hugh Nibley describes the temple as a meeting place that is set off from the world. It is a location where we are invited to enjoy clear, receptive intellects and heightened spirituality. We experience an atmosphere of purity in contrast to the pollution of the world.



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