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The Foundation for
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INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1994, No. 3

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

May

Nibley Teams up with Brigham Young to Look at Politics, Education, Leadership, and the Environment

As those who have read much Brigham Young know, the combination of this pioneer prophet's insight, articulateness, and candor is little short of stunning. Nibley calls him a "monumental figure," perhaps (after Joseph Smith), the most prominent mind of his century:

All his days he strove to communicate his inmost feelings, . . . in a vigorous and forthright prose that was the purest antirhetoric. . . . [And] there never was a man more undeviatingly consistent and rational in thought and utterance.

Those words come from the newest volume in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*. Volume 13, entitled *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, contains Nibley's reflections on the thoughts of Brigham Young on the topics of politics, education, leadership, and the environment.

The Brigham Young that emerges from his discourses certainly challenges the common, shortsighted image of Brigham as primarily a practical man of affairs. His discourses reveal him in many ways to be very impractical, at times an avid advocate of less work (though his accomplishments are impressive), caring not a whit for

wealth, having willingly left, no fewer than five times, all his possessions except the clothes on his back.

That a university should carry Brigham's name is entirely appropriate in Nibley's view: "No one ever thought harder than Brigham Young" or was more an advocate of general improvement of the mind and tastes—this despite only eleven days of formal education. "Yet what mastery of language! What vigorous and powerful prose! He knew exactly what he wanted to say, and he knew how to say it."

There is good reason to reread Brigham Young regularly. The timeliness of his counsel on currently live topics will quickly become apparent to readers: "Brigham never gets stale," is how Nibley puts it. Nibley himself adds insights of his own which put Brigham in perspective.

In "Man's Dominion, or Subduing the Earth," Nibley explores two opposing concepts of dominion—God's versus Satan's. God's command to have dominion over every living thing is a call to service, a test of responsibility, in contrast to Satan's use of force for the sake of getting gain. "Brigham Young on the Environment" discusses man's

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Sperry Symposium Papers on Old Testament Published

Papers from the 22nd annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium at BYU have been published by Deseret Book. A baker's dozen of articles explore the richness of the Old Testament and its history, prophecies, doctrine, and the beauty and symbolism of its language. This collection should prove a useful supplement to your study of the Old Testament this year.

The table of contents shows the diversity of interesting topics covered:

- "Our Heritage from Joseph of Israel," Robert J. Matthews
- "Isaiah's Imagery of Plants and Planting," Terry Ball
- "Melchizedek: Seeking after the Zion of Enoch," Frank F. Judd, Jr.
- "The Lord Will Redeem His People: 'Adoptive' Covenant and Redemption in the Old Testament," Jennifer Clark Lane
- "Elijah's Mission: His Keys, Powers, and Blessings from the Old Testament to the Latter Days," E. Dale LeBaron
- "'The Spirit of Prophecy Is the Testimony of Jesus,'" D. Kelly Ogden
- "Symbolic Action as Prophecy in the Old Testament," Donald W. Parry

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F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

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Evidence for Tents in the Book of Mormon

ONE OF THE MINOR POINTS MADE in recent criticisms of the Book of Mormon is the claim that there is no evidence of a tent-making or tent-using tradition in Mesoamerica and no available material for making the tents that the Book of Mormon mentions. Actually, Mesoamericanist literature makes it clear that tents were in regular use by Aztec armies at the time of the Spanish conquest, and there is good reason to suppose that they were used by other peoples and in earlier times (including Nephite times) in Mesoamerica.

When the Spaniards saw the Aztec tents, they immediately labelled them *tiendas*, "tents." Ross Hassig, the authority on Aztec warfare, notes, "The [Aztec military] camp itself was constructed of tents and huts [*xahcalli*] made of woven grass mats."¹ Durán, whose *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España* is a fundamental source on Aztec war customs, also reports tents. Durán arrived in New Spain in 1542, only twenty-one years after the Conquest. He reports, for example, that the combined armies of the Mexicans prepared for an expedition against the city of Tepeaca by getting their encampment set up, "pitching their tents and huts [*armando sus tiendas y jacales*]"—that is what they call their war tents—very nicely ordered and arranged."²

"And one day's journey before they arrived [at their destination], they sent ahead those charged with logistics to the place where they were going to set up the camp, and they

pitched the tents [*tiendas*] and erected the huts [*chozas*]."³

In preparation for war, Montezuma ordered surrounding cities to furnish stores of food and "sleeping mats [*petates*] to make tents [*tiendas*] . . . in which they would dwell [while] in the field."⁴

Bernal Diaz mentions that the Aztec soldiers "erected their huts" in the field,⁵ and John Sorenson distinguishes at least five types of field military shelters from the literature, several of them labelled *tiendas* "tents" by the Spaniards.⁶

Such military housing should not surprise us. After all, every army in the world has had to find culturally and ecologically effective ways to cope with the problem of shelter in the field. As long as there are armies, there must be cross-cultural equivalents of "tents." The only questions in relation to a specific culture have to do with form, materials, and names.

For an added witness we can look in the Motul dictionary, a classic sixteenth-century work that scholars automatically turn to for supplementary light on pre-Spanish Yucatec Maya language and culture. The definition for the Maya word *pazel* is "*choza o tienda en el campo, o casilla pequeña de paja*" (hut or tent for use in the field, or small straw booth).⁷

Mesoamerican farmers have long and widely used a similar type of hut. For example, the Zoques of Santa Maria Chimalapa in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec still construct "very small chozas of palm fronds and grass, almost level with the ground, where they sleep during the days

when they work in the fields" away from home.⁸

There is no archaeological evidence for tents among the Aztecs—just accounts in historical documents. What archaeological evidence one could expect that would establish the presence of overnight *tiendas*, *chozas*, or *jacales*, even among the Aztecs less than five centuries ago, is not at all clear. Then what hope has an archaeologist of finding the still slimmer traces of a temporary encampment dated two thousand years before that, the time of the Nephites? Until archaeologists come up with an operational solution to this dilemma, it seems sensible to accept the Book of Mormon as documentary evidence of the use of tents in the first century B.C. on a par with Durán's testimony for the sixteenth century A.D.

NOTES

1 Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 73.

2 Fr. Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme* (Tomo II, Biblioteca Porrúa 37, ed. Angel Ma. Garibay K. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1967), 2:157. The translations are Sorenson's; pages refer to the Porrúa edition.

3 *Ibid.*, 2:180.

4 *Ibid.*, 2:156.

5 Cited in Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985), 161.

6 See *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (Spring 1994): 333–34.

7 *Diccionario de Motul. Maya, Español*, atribuido a Fray Antonio de Ciudad Real . . . Parte 2, ed. Juan Martínez Hernández (Mérida: Tipográfica Yucateca, 1929), 732.

8 Carlos Muñoz M., *Crónica de Santa Maria Chimalapa: en las selvas del Istmo de Tehuantepec* (San Luis Potosí: Molina, 1977), 14.

Based on research by John L. Sorenson.

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Nibley and Brigham Challenge the Saints

responsibility to beautify the earth, to eradicate the influences of harmful substances, and to use restraint, that the earth may return to its paradisiacal glory. In "Stewardship of the Air," Nibley reminds us of the interdependence of the temporal and the spiritual—if one is corrupted, it corrupts the other. In "Promised Lands," Nibley questions the assumption that American Indians should welcome modern knowledge and technology.

In the section on politics, Nibley describes the combat between good and evil. He delineates our personal responsibility to be involved in political activity, but admonishes us to keep politics in its proper perspective—legitimate concerns can "too easily [degenerate] into a sordid partisan competition of economic interest that can stifle the spirit of the gospel with deadly efficiency." The true enemy or adversary is Satan, who promises "power and gain, backed up by trickery, violence, deception, and intimidation" and who exploits the two great weaknesses: covetousness and self-righteousness.

Nibley's plea, backed by Brigham, is to renounce war as futile, to substitute trust and love for the overpowering temptation to fight, "to understand men and women as they are and not understand them as you are" (JD 8:37), to secede "not from the Constitution of the United States or the institutions of our country but from sin and the practice thereof" (JD 10:111), and to advance the work of salvation for the living and the

dead. "In the end the most desperate military situation imaginable is still to be met with the spirit of peace and love."

Both Nibley and Brigham exhibit strong feelings about what is appropriately labeled "education." Both expect that all people should be experts where the gospel is concerned. Brigham was concerned with the improvement of the individual mind (in every field imaginable), for the benefit of all Saints. He thought it impossible to separate intelligence, revelation, and hard work—"if the spirit may help in earthly learning, the mind is required to operate in celestial matters."

Nibley decries the "education-for-success" philosophy rampant today. He sees it as a great loss that students "have chosen business-oriented, career-minded, degree-seeking programs in preference to the strenuous, critical, liberal, mind-stretching exercises that Brigham Young recommended." In "Mediocre Meditations on the Media," Nibley discusses the *fulness* of knowledge—"the *fulness* is not that infinity of knowledge stretching into the eternities which we envisage in the eternities, but the *fulness* of what one is capable of receiving." Nibley and Brigham challenge us to become educated in order to fulfill the Lord's purposes and prepare for his kingdom.

Nibley spoke in the late 1970s on Brigham Young as a leader and continued to explore concepts of leadership in his now-famous "Leaders to Managers" (a BYU commencement address in 1983), his remarks on "Criticizing the Brethren" in 1989, and his "Exemplary Manhood" keynote address at BYU in 1991. Clearly not sympathetic to criticism of the Church and its leaders, Nibley recommends in response the challenges given by Joseph Smith and

Brigham Young to seek personal knowledge of the truth. In Brigham's words: "I have uniformly exhorted the people to obtain this living witness each for themselves; then no man on earth can lead them astray" (JD 6:100).

Nibley explores Alma's struggle with dissenters—"the same shall ye not receive into my church" (Mosiah 26:28)—and further explains: "Excommunication was the limit of their authority and is the only power to punish which the Church has ever had. It is not the same power of excommunication claimed by the Roman church, where excommunication means the same as damnation. It is for God alone to judge and pronounce a sentence of eternal salvation or damnation."

According to Brigham, leadership consists of invitation, of correcting one's own faults, and in gaining power over one's self rather than of compulsion and force. Leaders are movers, shakers, original, inventive, unpredictable, imaginative, and have a passion for equality and a desire to escape from mediocrity, while managers are safe, conservative, predictable, conforming, dedicated to the establishment, seeking promotion, perks, privilege, power, and rank.

This latest installment in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* will amuse, provoke, and challenge—and, above all, educate.

A second printing has already been ordered for *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*. This significant collection of essays demonstrates that intense examination of one chapter of scripture can pay great dividends, both spiritual and intellectual. Get your copy today, using the enclosed order form.

New Paper Examines Facsimile 2

Facsimile 2 of the Pearl of Great Price is perhaps the most enigmatic aspect of the revelations and translations of Joseph Smith. In a paper recently delivered at the F.A.R.M.S. brown bag seminar (available on the order form), Michael D. Rhodes discussed numerous advances over the last two decades in our understanding of Egyptian materials that shed light on Facsimile 2, the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus. The paper contains a transcription, a transliteration, and a translation of the text, plus background on the nature and significance of hypocephali in ancient Egypt and a commentary on specific details of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus.

Rhodes discusses interesting aspects of the relationship between Abraham and the Egyptians, showing that other documents roughly contemporaneous with the hypocephalus relate the same things about Abraham that Joseph Smith said are found in Facsimile 2 and

the other Egyptian papyri. He concludes that "the text as well as the figures and illustrations of the Joseph Smith Hypocephalus all point toward the Egyptians' hope in a resurrection and life after death as a divine being. Although to our modern way of thinking, this message is conveyed by a strange assortment of gods, animals, and other bizarre figures, it is important to remember that to the Egyptians, who always tried to express abstract ideas with concrete representation, these were all aspects of the One God who manifested himself in many forms."

In addition to shedding light on this message and the "bizarre figures" used to convey it, Rhodes points out that Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimile reflect scholarly understandings unavailable in Joseph's day, which "only reaffirms what every honest person can learn in earnest prayer, that Joseph Smith received these things from God, even as he claimed."

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Sperry Papers Examine the Old Testament

- "Seals and Sealing among Ancient and Latter-day Israelites," Dana M. Pike
- "Aaron's Consecration: Its Nature, Purpose, and Meaning," J. Lyman Redd
- "Jacob in the Presence of God," Andrew C. Skinner
- "The Wife/Sister Experience: Pharoah's Introduction to Jehovah," Gaye Strathearn
- "The Provocation in the Wilderness and the Rejection of Grace," M. Catherine Thomas
- "The Exodus: Prophetic Type and the Plan of Redemption," Thomas R. Valletta

As editor Paul Y. Hoskisson says in his introduction, "The essays in this volume are a fitting tribute to Sidney B. Sperry because, like Brother Sperry himself, they display a wide range of interest and scholarship as they view the Old Testament through the lens of the restored gospel. Because it is not always apparent how the Old Testament bears witness of Jesus Christ and his redeeming work, these essays discuss several ways in which that sacred volume speaks of the gospel of Christ both in ancient times and in the latter days."

INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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The Foundation works to make interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed both in 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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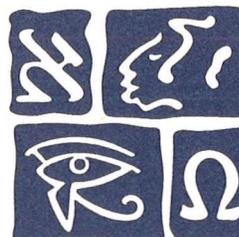
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