

Editing Hugh Nibley: From Manuscript to Book

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My personal experience of working with Hugh Nibley's books and manuscripts began in the late 1980s when there was a big push to get several books out in time for the upcoming year when the Book of Mormon would be taught in Gospel Doctrine classes.

Our family had spent the 1987–88 year in Jerusalem, so other than working on cleaning up a bibliography for Nibley's dissertation in Ireland (where we spent a couple of summer months on our way home), I probably didn't do a great deal on Nibley projects until our return to the States. It was around this time that I became more fully engaged in working on the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley.

The focus at this time was on source checking the multitudinous notes for these early volumes. My husband, Stephen Ricks, was, in my opinion, a Nibley source checker supreme. Not only did he know the exact location for most of the sources and could go directly to them, but he could also rattle off call numbers for many of them. He was very persistent in solving note problems. In any event, he often led me to many of the sources or instructed me on how to solve a particular source checking mystery. John Gee in this period spent much of his time working on the foreign language sources that were—for most of the student workers—still foreign. I extract here many quotations and ideas from a recent review I wrote of Ron Huggins's critique of Nibley's footnotes.¹

Since checking Nibley's notes has been a matter of considerable interest to friend and foe alike, let me explain some of the background and circumstances involved. One charge that has been leveled at Nibley's footnotes—namely, that of sloppy, botched, or incomplete citations—actually has merit. Anyone who has source checked Nibley's footnotes will grant that there is some truth to this claim. Nibley made

¹ See Shirley S. Ricks, "A Sure Foundation," *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 253–91, a review of Ronald V. Huggins, "Hugh Nibley's Footnotes," *Salt Lake City Messenger* 110 (May 2008): 9–21.

just about every kind of error possible in those citations: wrong page numbers,² wrong years, even wrong authors, incomplete information, lack of article titles, and so forth, but, more often than not, when a particularly intractable source was finally located, Nibley's citation made some sense, with typographical errors often bearing some blame.

In a review of volume ** in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley—Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*—Jeff Needle, a non-Mormon, acknowledges:

I am not unaware of the criticisms that have been hurled at Dr. Nibley, both before and after his death. . . .

And I know that some have questioned the quality of Nibley's scholarship. Did he tend to be sloppy in his research? Were his footnotes a nightmare to verify? Did he make stuff up out of whole cloth? All of these charges have been hurled at him. His defenders ignore the charges. His detractors thrill at the thought of bringing down this most prominent of Mormon scholars.³

One indication that the issue of the accuracy of Nibley's footnotes has been around for some time is the fact that the following question has been posed and responded to on a FAIR Web site: "I've heard that Hugh Nibley really just faked or distorted most of his footnotes. Is there any truth to this?" A thoughtful response follows,⁴ which shows that Needle's claim that "his defenders ignore the charges" is not true.

The Functions of Footnotes

Authors are expected to give information in their footnotes that is complete, clear, and relevant so a future reader or researcher can find the original sources and thereby validate (or question) the author's claims and perhaps build upon that research in advancing scholarship or improving knowledge.

² "I found a few more answers to my questions and was particularly pleased to find the quoted phrase from the 1938 *Revue du Caire* that Nibley had cited Mayassis as citing from Drioton—it was just on a different page." Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 6 June 2005.

³ Jeffrey Needle, review of *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*, www.ldsbooklovers.com/bookreview.asp?rid=199&bid=2298&pid=0 (accessed 26 August 2008).

⁴ See "Hugh Nibley/Footnotes," at en.fairmormon.org/Hugh_Nibley:Footnotes (accessed 8 September 2008).

Accuracy of Footnotes in General

Generally speaking, authors retain ultimate responsibility for their citations. Regarding footnote accuracy, I find such statements as “Please check every footnote to ensure substantive and technical accuracy. Any statement of fact or law should have a footnote.”⁵ “Confirm that the list of references has been checked carefully for accuracy and that each of the references has been read by at least one of the authors.”⁶ And even the Maxwell Institute style guide for the *FARMS Review* asks the author to sign the following statement: “I have verified the accuracy of all quotations from other sources (including scriptures) that I have cited in my review.”

Clearly, these statements placing the responsibility with the authors reflect the ideal world. Anyone who has even briefly checked the notes of submitted papers has usually muttered (or worse) about authors who can’t seem to get it right. As an editor myself, I identify with the sentiments of this copyeditor:

Anyone who has spent any time copyediting scholarly manuscripts . . . would not be surprised at all by this information about the high rate of incorrect citation. At first, as a beginning editor, I was appalled to find so many mistakes in the footnotes of senior scholars. . . . Who knows how many scholars have been spared from embarrassment by their copyeditors working quietly behind the scenes to repair their flawed writings?⁷

Accuracy of Nibley’s Notes

What we need to examine to is the accuracy of Nibley’s notes on two levels: the botched, incomplete citations and the possible misrepresentations. Perhaps here would be an appropriate place to review the

⁵ See www.usfca.edu/org/mlj/submissions/index.html for *Maritime Law Journal* submissions (accessed 8 September 2008).

⁶ Andy Guess, “Cite Check.”

⁷ Sandy Thatcher, director, Penn State University Press, 8 July 2008, at www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/07/08/citation (accessed 8 September 2008).

source-checking process that has been used in attempting to verify Nibley's notes.⁸ According to John W. Welch, general editor of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley:

We assigned editors to begin working on each of the first ten volumes. One of the most important functions was to source check all of Nibley's quotes and footnotes. To do this, each editor made use of a large team of source checkers, who became known as the "Collected Workers of Hugh Nibley," wearing a t-shirt with that name.⁹ [Image **; although my work on the volumes at this point was fairly minor, I at least earned the privilege of owning such a t-shirt. Pictured here are the remnants of Janet Carpenter Hovorka's shirt and Tyler Moulton's sweatshirt.] Many of the source checkers were volunteers, but the mainstay of the source-checking effort were people who were hired as BYU students or friends of FARMS. . . . We were able to move expeditiously to put together a large temporary team, and between 1984 and 1989 we brought out nine volumes of the Collected Works, an unprecedented publishing feat.¹⁰

In 1988, Fran Clark joined the project to assist in transcribing, organizing, and managing the electronic versions of the materials, a massive task. Clark also worked closely with Nibley himself as he made dictations for the long-awaited *One Eternal Round* (which was to see the light of day 22 years later). As one of Clark's 1988 journal entries reveals, Nibley wasn't always the easiest person to work with:

In time, I learned that if I wanted to make a change (one I knew would later need to be fixed), I would do it without consulting him. If it were one he needed to correct—like sentence form or a

⁸ See the appendix to this article, pp. **—**, to review what various introductions to individual volumes in the Collected Works have said on the matter of source checking and note accuracy.

⁹ I hesitate to begin naming names, for surely some will be left out, but some of the Collected Workers were Glen Cooper, James Fleugel (now deceased), John Gee, Fran Clark (Hafen), Andrew Hedges, Gary Keeley, Jill Keeley, Darrell Matthews, Daniel McKinlay, Janet McNeely, Brent McNeely, Tyler Moulton, Shirley Ricks, Stephen Ricks, Matthew Roper, Morgan Tanner, James Tredway, and John Welch. I should also mention here that Phyllis Nibley, Hugh's wife, always reads the manuscripts and makes excellent suggestions before they are published.

¹⁰ John W. Welch, e-mail correspondence, 11 August 2008.

necessary footnote—I'd say, "I think *we* need a reference here," or "I think *I've* made a mistake." That way, he was still in charge, which he had to make clear to me from day one. After that was settled, he relaxed and we worked well together.¹¹

About this time Jim Tredway was asked to track the progress of each volume and keep the project moving along.¹² He relates in remarkable detail some of his experiences in source checking Nibley materials, which recollections also reveal interesting insights into Nibley the man:

On [one] occasion when Matt Roper and I were sourcing his four *Ensign* articles on the atonement, . . . we came across an essential quote that neither of us could find, so with some fear and trepidation we proceeded to Nibley's little green house. I knocked on the door, and he answered. I asked him where that quote was from, and he said, "Any fool knows where that quote is from!" Taken aback a bit by his abrasiveness and not knowing what else to say, I said, "Well I must not be a fool 'cause I can't find it." That stopped him dead in his tracks, and he grabbed the manuscript and went back into the house in a huff.

We stood there for what seemed like an eternity while we could hear papers rattling and books coming out of his bedside library tossed here and there, and there was a continuous angry mumbling that played in the background like a cello. Finally, he returned to the door more sheepishly than I had ever seen him and said he couldn't find it and would have to get back to us. Matt and I were biting our lips by then. I reminded Nibley that we needed it by the weekend. Before the weekend was upon us, the manuscript appeared with the new citation inserted. Matt and I rushed to the stacks to check, and sure enough, it was exact. We were flabbergasted, thinking that he would not be able to find such a quote, but he did.¹³

This experience demonstrates a couple of facts: When Nibley was alive, source checkers used every avenue possible to solve a citation problem by themselves, but if they still couldn't resolve the issues, they did approach Nibley, who begrudgingly (because it took him away from whatever he was concentrating on at the moment) directed them to the source. Phyllis Nibley reports that her husband

¹¹ Fran Clark (Hafen), journal entry, 7 August 1988, 1.

¹² According to Glen Cooper, personal communication, 8 October 2008, 3, "James Tredway played a key role as the coordinating editor for a number of volumes for several years. The work would never have been finished without his bull-headed dedication to the project and his cantankerous determination."

¹³ James V. Tredway, personal communication, 11 August 2008, 6–7.

worried a lot about his notes and was quite meticulous in formulating them.¹⁴ Janet Carpenter, one of the team of source checkers, recalled that “Nibley’s accuracy was amazing. When we couldn’t find something, it was always our fault or a typist’s problem in the original manuscript.”¹⁵

Mistakes, however, were not always attributable to Nibley, the typists, or the source checkers. Sometimes editors or publishers seemed to introduce errors in the notes, as well as in the text. Tredway continues:¹⁶

When we got to doing *Tinkling Symbols and Sounding Brass*, it turned out to be very problematic as many of the citations appeared to be wrong. So Matt and I went to Church headquarters and xeroxed every anti-Mormon book that Nibley cited. We brought that mass of manuscripts home and began the daunting task of searching through all those books for every single quote, going page by page. . . . Thanks to Matt’s incredible patience and industry, we were able to locate every single quote and in doing so we discovered that all the citations were actually

¹⁴ Phyllis Nibley, personal conversation with Shirley Ricks, 11 September 2008.

¹⁵ Janet Carpenter (Hovorka), e-mail correspondence, 16 October 2008. She goes on to say: “You have to remember the amazing part of this is that it was pre-internet and pre-database. I remember Tyler Moulton and Andrew Hedges slogging for months through the *Journal of Discourses* for *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*. It wasn’t very long before you could just type a search on that into a database. But back then you couldn’t. And of course when Nibley wrote it, you couldn’t do anything of the sort. That is what is so amazing. Brother Nibley amassed and congealed the research. We had a tough time just following it.”

¹⁶ John Gee relates two amusing stories about the mistakes that editors have made with Nibley’s materials. “The first was the editors at the *Ensign* who, in dealing with Nibley’s piece ‘A Strange Thing in the Land,’ ran across reference to the book of *1 Jeu* and changed it to *1 Jew*. The other one is a typist who accidentally changed a word that she was unfamiliar with. Nibley stated that ‘there is no eschatology without protology,’ which was changed by the typist to ‘there is no eschatology without proctology’; this was amusingly corrupted further as ‘there is no scatology without proctology.’” Gee, personal communication, 3 October 2008.

there, but they were jumbled.¹⁷ Apparently the editor had mixed them all up somehow, and when the galleys came I guess Hugh never checked to see if they were kept intact, but rather focused only on the text. I also learned pretty quickly that Hugh did not like editors at all. They were forever making little changes that altered his point without realizing what they had done.¹⁸

I can vouch for that point: Nibley really was not fond of editors. In this inscription on the flyleaf of Stephen's copy of *Enoch the Prophet*, of which Stephen was the editor, Nibley wrote "Hail to Stephen Ricks, the Editor does it all! From Hugh Nibley who rambles amid the brambles." (Image **) Stephen reports that Nibley was fussing about some of the minor editorial changes that had been made while preparing the book for publication.

Additionally, in some of Nibley's works, few or no references were given. Source checkers, if they were unable to find the quotations, would sometimes take off the quotation marks and supply a reference that seemed to cover the same territory.¹⁹ These manufactured notes may have been inadequate compared to what Nibley himself might have provided (had he been persuaded to revisit an earlier project).²⁰

¹⁷ According to Matthew Roper, "When I started checking the footnotes for *Mythmakers* and *Sounding Brass* it seemed that about half of the references were incorrect. Upon investigating, however, I found that in most cases the footnotes had either the correct page number with the wrong title or the correct title with the wrong page number. Before the updated volume was published, we had been able to correct all but about 2 percent of the references. This exercise, which I enjoyed very much, suggested to me that Nibley had read through the sources but had been in somewhat of a hurry. Having spent a lot of time reading and rereading and scouring the words of Ann Eliza, I gained a better appreciation for Nibley's wit and humor as well as the patience of Brigham Young."

¹⁸ Tredway, personal communication, 11 August 2008, 7–8.

¹⁹ Cooper discusses one of the rules the source checkers developed: "If we searched for a note or quotation and could not find it after a reasonable length of time, we agreed to give up and simply remove the quotation marks and the footnote. But in my experience this was rare. . . . With a bit of sleuthing, the correct reference could be found." Cooper, personal communication, 8 October 2008, 2, 1.

²⁰ Thanks to James Tredway for reminding me of this issue.

In the following comment, Tredway mentions the (in)famous Nibley pencil marks in books that source checkers were always delighted to find (that meant they had found the very book Nibley had used, which made it easier to locate and verify the quotations). Nibley often penciled little notations in the margins to emphasize a point (his notes could be pictures, shorthand symbols, or words and phrases in any number of languages)—library patrons would be in big trouble today if they indulged in this habit. Tredway relates:

I was amazed at the accuracy of his transcriptions as we checked the sources against them. . . . I can't imagine how he read so widely because there were Nibley tracks (notations) in so many books in the Harold B. Lee Library that it seemed no one could have read that much, and that was only one library. When I went to Berkeley to find some of his sources, I found Nibley tracks scattered all over there too. It had been rumored that he started on the first floor and went through every book of interest to him all the way to the top floor of the library, which was many floors (maybe as many as nine).²¹ And we got books through Interlibrary Loan from Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and a bunch of other universities with those same tracks. To think that he typed each quote by hand on a card with that old manual typewriter and indexed them without any computer was mind boggling.²²

Here we have one clue why some of Nibley's citations may have been inaccurate—he read extremely widely and took notes on three-by-five-inch index cards without the benefit of modern computers or copy machines. Anyone making that volume of notes by hand is bound to make some mistakes. Tyler Moulton, one of the Collected Workers, reports on his experience in source checking Nibley footnotes:

Having spent hundreds of hours poring over thousands of Nibley's footnotes, I will agree that Nibley was at times sloppy. His legendary methodology of keeping his research notes on 3 x 5 cards in shoeboxes did not always lend itself to absolute accuracy—either in context or reference. In *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, for example, Nibley made frequent use of the *Journal of Discourses*, among other sources. Andy Hedges and I were tasked with tracking down as many of the remaining “mystery footnotes” from this volume as we could. Our methodology was to

²¹ See Hugh Nibley's description of this phenomenon in “An Intellectual Autobiography,” in *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2008), 12.

²² Tredway, personal communication, 11 August 2008, 8–9.

work through every variation of the given footnote numbers until we stumbled upon the source, and in almost every instance we eventually found the correct combination. Far from being an example of fabricating sources, the frequent transposition of numbers caused me to occasionally joke about Nibley's apparent dyslexia.²³

Tredway relates that when he was having difficulty locating some of the sources for "Paths That Stray,"²⁴ he went in desperation to Nibley's house, where he was taken upstairs and shown a huge cardboard box filled with scraps of articles. He found "in that box every single quote and every single citation for the entire manuscript. Not a single one of them was misquoted, out of context, or inappropriately cited."²⁵

Charge of Fabricated Notes

Those of us who have spent hours tracking down Nibley sources have become firmly convinced that nothing was made up or fabricated. Even if we were ultimately unable to find a quotation, we always knew it existed somewhere. Sometimes we serendipitously ran across something that solved a different problem than the one we were researching. Gee recalls:

I think all the source checkers have stories like this. Some of the problems were not Nibley's fault. I remember discovering a recalcitrant source that was cited dozens of times but which we could not find in the library (Urk. VI). I was looking for another book in the stacks when a book caught my eye. Pulling it out and looking at it, I discovered that it was the long-lost source. The library had rebound the book and mislabeled it on the cover and the spine. Nibley had dutifully written the correct bibliography in pencil inside the cover.

No, Nibley did not fabricate his notes! According to Welch,

Many people also continued to parrot mindlessly the unfounded criticism that Nibley's footnotes were all made up or were not reliable. Our source checkers, quite to the contrary, found Nibley's

²³ Tyler Moulton, personal communication, 25 September 2008, 1. The difficulty in locating these sources would have been circumvented with current Internet technology.

²⁴ Hugh Nibley, "Paths That Stray: Some Notes on Sophic and Mantic," in *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 380–478.

²⁵ Tredway, personal communication, 11 August 2008, 9–10.

sources were, for the most part, very insightfully interpreted and accurately reflected. Many of the footnotes were cryptic and incomplete and so a lot of work was required to make them clear, but to an informed, intelligent reader even the early citations should have been comprehensible and seen as credible.²⁶

Moulton makes a good point that “some of the blame for inadequate or misleading references must fall to us—the compilers, editors, and source checkers—since it was well known at the time that in a great many cases Nibley agreed only grudgingly and after serious protestation to the publication of much of this work”—in other words, he hadn’t written it with publication in mind. Perhaps “what we prepared for general scholarly consumption was, in more than a few instances, originally intended only as his latest musings for informal gatherings. Our insistence on making as much as possible of Nibley’s work available has perhaps brought on the unintended consequence of weakening the perception of his scholarship.”²⁷

For example, Nibley never intended for the book *Approaching Zion* to be published.²⁸ Tredway gathered up the various articles and proposed it as a book to Stephen, who subsequently sold Welch on the idea. Nibley was not fond of that book when it came out because it was a collection of talks and not as scholarly as some of his writing—he apparently told his Book of Mormon students not to buy it. However, it subsequently became a bestseller. A book that he never wanted published has reportedly changed the lives of countless individuals, while no one seems to have made that claim about his scholarly work in the *Ancient State*.

In one recent volume of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, we were faced with the situation of adapting Nibley’s class notes from the fifties into a book form. We published *Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity* in 2005 with over seventy notes saying tersely, “Source unidentified.” However,

²⁶ Welch, e-mail correspondence, 11 August 2008.

²⁷ Moulton, personal communication, 25 September 2008, 2. Cooper, personal communication, 8 October 2008, 2, corroborates this view: “I heard Hugh many times complain that FARMS had published something of his that embarrassed him because it represented an earlier perspective that he had surpassed in his scholarly growth.”

²⁸ Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989).

Douglas F. Salmon, working on his own initiative, has located over 60 percent of those sources.²⁹ To reiterate, Nibley does not fake his sources.

Charge of Misrepresentation

The grievance that Nibley misrepresented his sources or took things out of context must be examined.³⁰ Because of Nibley's wide background reading, I believe that he grasped the big picture and could interpret things in ways that unsettled some of his readers who may have been unaware of the context in which he wrote. Again, Tredway renders an opinion:

It seems a bit ironic to me that they would accuse Nibley of taking things out of context when in many cases such a context did not even exist when he wrote them. Conversely, having said that, I am also not so sure that those so-called scraps of ideas that seem to be found all over the world are in fact not related. I think it remains to be seen just how related they turn out to be. We are constantly finding new connections that we did not know existed yesterday and if Nibley had any gift at all it was an uncanny ability to see connections or trends where most saw nothing but chaos.³¹

²⁹ Douglas F. Salmon, letters to John W. Welch, 22 March 2005 and 15 January 2008.

³⁰ Nibley seems to be in good company here. Regarding his translation of the Bible into German, Martin Luther was "charged by the enemies of truth that the text has been modified and even falsified in many places." In response, Luther wrote an open letter on translation in which he makes such statements as "If I, Dr. Luther, had expected that all the papists together were capable of translating even one chapter of Scripture correctly and well into German, I would have gathered up enough humility to ask for their aid and assistance. . . . However, because I knew . . . that not one of them knows how to translate or speak German, I spared them and myself the trouble. . . . I know quite well how much skill, hard work, sense and brains are needed for a good translation." Martin Luther, "Ein Sendbrief D. M. Luthers. Von Dolmetschen und Fürbit der Heiligenn," in *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Böhlhaus, 1909), 30.2.632–46, available online at www.bible-researcher.com/luther01.html (accessed 7 October 2008).

³¹ Tredway, personal communication, 11 August 2008, 10–11.

(Mis)translations

The issue of whether Nibley manipulated translations to his own needs finds sympathetic company from Martin Luther, who defended himself and his translation of the Bible:

Yet why should I be concerned about their ranting and raving? I will not stop them from translating as they want. But I too shall translate, not as they please but as I please. And whoever does not like it can just ignore it and keep his criticism to himself, for I will neither look at nor listen to it. They do not have to answer for my translation or bear any responsibility for it.³²

Obviously, Nibley's style of translation is not necessarily literal.³³ Here is his own description of the process of translation:

You translate with the book closed. You decide exactly what the original writer had in mind. Unless you know, don't leave his text; stay with him until you decide you know what he means. Then close the book—never translate with it open—and put down in your *own* words what you think the author had in mind, what you have gotten from the text. No two people are going to get the same thing.³⁴

In this same article, he also says that “the translation is a commentary—what the translator thinks the writer had in mind.” Nibley explains that “every word is a password. Not only is the text loaded, every word is loaded, and every translation is an interpretation. It is a paradox.”³⁵ So whatever the explanation

³² Luther, “Ein Sendbrief D. M. Luthers.” He continues: “I have learned by experience what an art and what a task translating is, so I will not tolerate some papal donkey or mule acting as my judge or critic. They have not tried it. If anyone does not like my translations, he can ignore it. . . . If it needs to be criticized, I will do it myself. If I do not do it, then let them leave my translations in peace. Each of them can do a translation for himself that suits him—what do I care?” I have a feeling Luther and Nibley would get along well together.

³³ Cooper, personal communication, 8 October 2008, 1, admits that “occasionally he would read a source in an idiosyncratic way, but that’s the scholar’s prerogative.”

³⁴ Hugh Nibley, “Translation,” notes from a presentation, 11 February 1975, Salt Lake City, Utah, 3.4. In this particular passage, he was referring to translating poetry.

³⁵ Nibley, “Translation,” 3.3–4.

for the differences in translation between Nibley and the commentators, did his “mistranslations” send Nibley’s arguments and conclusions so far afield that they lost all validity? How has his work stood the test of time?

Scholars have recognized that Nibley was unique in his preparation and his knowledge. Carl Mosser and Paul Owen call him the “father of Mormon scholarly apologetics,” as they describe his “seemingly endless stream of books and articles covering a vast array of subject matter. Whether writing on Patristics, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha, the culture of the Ancient Near East, or Mormonism, he demonstrates an impressive command of the original languages, primary texts, and secondary literature.”³⁶ They go on to recommend that those who would dismiss his writings should pay heed to Truman Madsen’s warning: “Ill wishing critics have suspected over the years that Nibley is wrenching his sources, hiding behind his footnotes, and reading into antique languages what no responsible scholar would ever read out. Unfortunately, few have the tools to do the checking.”³⁷

Enough of Nibley footnotes for now. I will now share some of my Nibley stories and experiences over the years we have worked with Hugh and Phyllis to complete the Collected Works.

Speaking Engagement

It was in November of 1988 that Stephen and I had the opportunity to take Hugh and Phyllis Nibley to Salt Lake City for one of a series of lectures he was giving there. When Stephen talked with Phyllis to arrange a time to leave Provo, she sounded a little uncertain when he suggested a good, early time. Later Hugh called and talked to me and said that the last thing he wanted was to be there early. We had to chuckle and decided to leave later. Hugh spoke for about one and a half hours on the atonement,

³⁶ See Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?” *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 19/2 (1998): “Mormon Scholarship,” 183. My thanks to Tredway for reminding me of this source.

³⁷ Mosser and Owen, “Mormon Scholarship,” 183, quoting Truman G. Madsen, foreword to *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), xiv.

something he had been preparing for the last month. It was a marvelous compilation of thoughts and insights. . . . Nibley was much more expansive on the way home as he was able to relax.³⁸

Nibley Festschrift

The year 1990, when Nibley turned 80, marked the completion of the two-volume festschrift in his honor. (Image**) John Lundquist and Stephen Ricks were the scholarly editors of these volumes. In September a dinner was held to commemorate the completion of the volumes:

Perhaps two-thirds of the contributors were in attendance as well as several administrators and Neal Maxwell. The first humorous moment of the evening came when Daniel was giving the opening prayer and the blessing on the food. As he was going back to his seat, Brother Nibley muttered, "You didn't bless the food." So, in great embarrassment, Daniel (who claimed he had) returned to the podium to say a few words and bless the food.

³⁸ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 10 November 1988. Stephen and I also had the opportunity to attend other lectures, presentations, and dinners by or in honor of Hugh Nibley: Nibley's fifth lecture on "One Eternal Round" (1 August 1990); dinner in honor of Nibley's 80th birthday as well as the completion of the Festschrift volumes (already mentioned above, 7 September 1990); last Nibley lecture on "One Eternal Round" (26 September 1990); Nibley awarded the Orton Award for LDS Literature (and the associated \$5000 check) at the FARMS house (24 August 1995); (dinner at the Provo Park Hotel in conjunction with the International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls (16 July 1996); open house honoring Phyllis and Hugh Nibley on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary (18 August 1996); lecture in the Assembly Hall in Salt Lake City (28 October 1999); presentation at BYU by Nibley on temples everywhere (Nibley left before the lunch, 4 December 1999); dinner party in the Skyroom of the Wilkinson Center for Hugh Nibley's upcoming 90th birthday (he was a bit late because he had to go home to get his teeth so he could enjoy the dinner) (23 March 2000); open house for Hugh Nibley at the Women's Council Center put on by Nibley's family (25 March 2000); dinner and program in the president's dining room followed by a brief ceremony and ribbon cutting at the library for the Hugh Nibley Ancient Studies room (14 November 2001); and funeral at the Provo Tabernacle, also attended by Elders Dallin Oaks, Jeffrey Holland, Merrill Bateman, and Cecil Samuelson (2 March 2005). **Deseret Book awards night*before 1992

After a lovely dinner . . . , Stephen made introductions for those in attendance. His mistake there consisted of forgetting to mention Daniel as one of the contributors, so he made a joke out of it by saying that if Daniel could forget to bless the food then he could forget to mention Daniel.

Then John Lundquist made some very appropriate comments about all those who had been influenced by Nibley and how honored ** Gordon and Raphael Patai were to have been asked to contribute something toward the festschrift. John stressed that the festschrift was in the nature of a gift to Nibley for all he has done for others. . . .

Hugh then had a chance to respond, which he did in a typical rambling fashion. He related some hilarious experiences about a granddaughter who tried to go into a dorms cafeteria with long pants on, but was turned away. When she returned in the shortest skirt she could find, there was no question about letting her in.

Nibley also lost his faculty card. He went to the Lost and Found to try to retrieve it. Although he was there in person, they wanted further ID before they would return it to him.

And the one which seemed the funniest to me was when Phyllis was in the Bookstore trying to cash a check. She didn't have her driver license with her and asked if they would accept her temple recommend for identification. A few minutes later, the person returned and said, "I'm sorry, Sister Nibley, but we can't accept your recommend. It expired a week ago."

Woven into Nibley's words was his overpowering testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon and the importance of the gospel in his life. It was really very touching and beautiful.³⁹

What is evident to me from the number of individuals who contributed to this festschrift is that Nibley was widely admired in scholarly circles.

Volume 10: The Ancient State

Let's turn to volume 10 of the Collected Works: *The Ancient State*. It was our custom to give galleys of an upcoming book to Hugh for his final approval. We weren't always sure how carefully he looked at them, but, when he did, he made sure we knew about it. When Hugh was ready to return the galleys for this book, Stephen reported that

Hugh wanted to trash half the book, including the Sophic and Mantic portion and the book reviews. Stephen relented on the book reviews and "Genesis of the Written Word" [which

³⁹ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 7 September 1990.

eventually found their way into subsequent volumes]⁴⁰ but convinced him to keep the Sophic and Mantic materials. He wanted the “Paths That Stray” part to be an addendum so people didn’t think it was a serious writing effort. He wanted them to recognize it for what it is—a bunch of notecards flung in the reader’s face.⁴¹

Hugh often complained to us that no one would want to read his books that we were so insistent on publishing.

Nibley and Book Titles

Whenever it was time to come up with a title for the various volumes, Nibley was creative and came up with numerous possibilities. Early titles for *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass* included *Defending the Kingdom* and *The Gossip Mill*.

Sometimes Nibley cared very much about a title. Truman Madsen relates a telling story about the title of a book published by the BYU Religious Studies Center:

This is the title that we ultimately came up with for this book (Image ** *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*), but have you heard the story on what the original title was? I thought it would please him. It was going to be called *The Nibley Legacy*. And I had it all mocked up, and I invited him to my house. I had it on the coffee table. And he comes up with Phyllis, and I say, “There’s the book!” And I thought it was like announcing it with trumpets and he would jump for joy, and he just said, “Oh no, you can’t do that! I don’t like it! It won’t do!” I said, “Well, why not?” “Well, for one thing it sounds like I’m dead and gone, and I’m not, and for another thing, *Legacy, Legacy*, what does that mean?” So I finally said, “Well, I’ll call you tomorrow and maybe we can brainstorm.” In the meantime, I checked, and when I called him I thought I had him. I said, “Hugh, it’s on the spine, it’s on the cover, it’s on the jacket, and it’s on every page of the galleys. And if we change it now it will cost eleven hundred dollars.” I thought he’d say, “Okay, go ahead.” You know what he said? It’s typical Nibley: “Change it and take it out of my royalties.”

⁴⁰ The book reviews appeared in *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2008), 93–107; and “Genesis of the Written Word” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS), 450–90.

⁴¹ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 26 October 1990.

Then I gasped, and I said, “Hugh, do you care that much about a title?” He said, “No, I care that little about royalties!”⁴²

After Nibley’s death we sometimes struggled to come up with just the right title for some volumes, specifically for volume **. Nibley was no longer around to shower an embarrassment of riches on us. Proposals from both our office and Deseret Book included: (Image**) **get earlier email *A Guided Tour of the Book of Abraham*, *The Book of Abraham—the Big Picture* (which was temporarily the top title), *Preliminary Studies of the Book of Abraham* (again), and *Taking the Book of Abraham Seriously*. The next round went to *The Book of Abraham: Getting Ready to Begin* then *An Approach to the Book of Abraham: Getting Ready to Begin*. You guessed it—the final title was simply *An Approach to the Book of Abraham*. (Image **)

Fortunately for us, volume 19 had long and appropriately been known and anticipated as *One Eternal Round*, so that decision was simple.

Volume 12: Temple and Cosmos

I took a copy of galleys for *Temple and Cosmos* (Image **) “to the Nibleys and enjoyed a few pleasant moments with them. While we were talking, Phyllis turned to Hugh and noticed the dreadful tie he was wearing—narrow and almost chewed up at the end—and said, ‘Why are you wearing that tie? I thought I threw it out a long time ago.’ ‘I found it this morning [in the DIs bag]. Since I knew I wasn’t going to be seeing anyone, I didn’t want to waste one of my good ties.’ We had a good chuckle about that.”⁴³ We always enjoyed our visits with Hugh and Phyllis and tried not to overstay our welcome.

Hugh actually approved most of the contents for *Temple and Cosmos* with the exception of one article, “Notes on Ancient Ordinances.” I was actually pleased about that because I felt that it wasn’t a finished piece either.⁴⁴

⁴² Hugh Nibley, “The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley,” in *Eloquent Witness*, 154–55.

⁴³ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 26 September 1991.

⁴⁴ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 10 October 1991.

Illustrations by Michael P. Lyon

Perhaps this is a good point at which to share some memories of working on the illustrations for the Collected Works volumes with my good friend, Michael Lyon. Michael is, in my mind, the best religious iconographer in the Church. Michael's first brush with the genius of Nibley came in his high school years (although Michael and I both attended Provo High, we were barely acquainted) when he skipped classes to go up to BYU to sit in on some Nibley lectures.

His direction of the illustrations for the Collected Works, which meant that he literally researched and drew most of them and composed their captions, began with *The Ancient State*. By the time we got to *Temple and Cosmos*, Michael had really warmed up and was flooded with ideas for images that would clarify and elucidate Nibley's text. He began by carefully reading the manuscript for a given volume and making notes for possible illustrations. My task was to sit down with him and craft a list of proposed illustrations and to say no as gently as I could when I felt the number of illustrations was excessive and might delay a book indefinitely. His ambition seemed to know no bounds.

Perhaps typical of someone with an artistic temperament, Michael let several deadlines come and go. At times it seemed to us that no progress was being made, but Michael was extremely meticulous in his research. At times he showed genuine excitement when he "serendipitously" came up with the very illustration that Nibley was describing in the text. Finally, when the push was really on, the illustrations began to dribble in. Occasionally he drafted other individuals, such as Tyler Moulton, to help with the illustrations, but mostly he wanted to honor Nibley by doing the work himself. Michael would visit the Nibleys and present his suggestions—he was always relieved when Nibley approved the figures.

If a given illustration called for perspective of a building or some other object, Michael would often build a model, take pictures of it, and proceed from there. (Images **) He was a perfectionist—even when something looked adequate to our eyes, he would redo something until he was satisfied.

When we neared the end of a project, Michael and I would sit down to compose the figure captions. We worked on them, often rewriting them until Michael was satisfied that all the pertinent details had been mentioned and until I was satisfied that they were as concise and succinct as possible.

And what never ceased to amaze me was when Michael would enhance later volumes by identifying earlier illustrations that were applicable so we could add a reference to that in a note. I hope you join with me in extending my thanks to Michael Lyon for greatly improving the value of the Collected Works through his illustrations and insights.

Volumes 14 and 16: *Abraham in Egypt* and *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*

It took a bit of convincing for Nibley to give us permission to republish some of his early Egyptian books. We felt that by preparing newer, better editions of *Abraham in Egypt* (Image **) and *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* that they would lead into his ultimate Egyptian work, *One Eternal Round*. In 1993 we did finally receive his approval to republish *Abraham in Egypt*, which was an exciting step forward. By the time we finished, however, he had added quite a bit of new material from his “New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” *Improvement Era* series, and it was really a new edition.

Completing the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley

As I worked on various volumes in the Collected Works, it was not unusual for me, often with Stephen, to visit the Nibleys every month or so to ask him to give a lecture or write a paper, to pass on galleys or contracts, to pick up proofs, etc. At one point,

I called the Nibleys . . . to see if I could visit them to talk about the new mini-series we were planning to do. Brother Nibley answered the telephone. I said, “This is Shirley Ricks, and I would like to know if I could visit with you and Phyllis.” He replied, “No, I’m busy. I don’t think I’ll have time.” I said, “Oh, are you working against a deadline?” And he said, “Yes.” “And what are you working on?” “Oh, the Abraham book.” “Oh, yes, Brother Nibley, I’ve heard of that. We’re looking forward to getting that from you. Well, if today won’t work, would tomorrow be a possibility?” “No, every day is worse than the last. Just talk to Phyllis. You can visit with Phyllis. I’m late; I’ve got to get to the office.” I could tell a brush-off when I got one. However, about an hour later, Pat Ward from the Ancient Studies office called and said Brother Nibley would like to talk with me. He basically apologized and said he thought I was Judy Ricks or someone else. Because he gets so many calls from people wanting to speak with him (5 or 6 a day), he just has to shut them off. At some point after our earlier conversation he must have realized it was I who

had called, so he sheepishly said, “Of course, you can visit with me and Phyllis. What time would you like to come?” I was very amused and just rocked with laughter after I hung up the phone.⁴⁵

In the spring of 2000, Jerry Bradford, Jack Welch, Stephen, and I met to move forward on the remaining Collected Works. We needed to determine what was not yet published that should be and how the material should be organized into volumes.⁴⁶ This was the beginning of the last big push to get the series completed. Around this time, we also worked on creating a mini-series with Nibley favorites—the only volume that actually came out in this series was *When the Lights Went Out: Three Studies on the Ancient Apostasy*. (Image **). Again in 2006 we met to reevaluate the remaining materials.⁴⁷ Our goal became the completion of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley by the hundredth anniversary of his birth on 27 March 2010.

Volume 19: One Eternal Round

As early as October 1991, Nibley gave us some materials from his forthcoming book, *One Eternal Round*. We just filed them, as we figured he was still working on them. Again in 1999, he said that he wanted to put his book out piecemeal as separate papers.⁴⁸ Our fear, of course, was that he wouldn’t be able to give up chapters and really be through with them.

In 2001, in the spring, Brother Nibley came to visit me in my office and indicated that his book [*One Eternal Round*] was in three parts—historical and literary, geometrical, and the world of Abraham. Again he assured me that he would like us to start working on the geometry materials to get that ready to publish.⁴⁹ The problem was that his ideas hadn’t yet been fully committed to paper. He had tinkered with numerous geometric analyses of Facsimile 2, but he hadn’t yet written a lot of text to support it.

⁴⁵ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 13 December 2000.

⁴⁶ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 3 May 2000.

⁴⁷ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 22 November 2006.

⁴⁸ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 8 December 1999.

⁴⁹ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 9 May 2001.

I also had a chat with Pat Ward, the secretary in the Ancient Studies office, and we tried to concoct a plan to get his book away from him in a piecemeal fashion.⁵⁰ We were rather reluctant to insist that he turn over the entire manuscript because we were convinced that work on this volume was keeping him alive. Pat, who was calm and peaceful and took Nibley's eccentricities in stride, prepared computer files from Nibley's dictation. She faithfully made every change Nibley requested and saved backups of all the old files. In an attempt to get him to commit to one version, she would gently suggest that she would print all the current files out on green paper (or salmon, blue, or pink). (Images **) The idea was for him to ignore every other scrap of paper. However, Nibley couldn't bring himself to do that and would often come in with a different color of paper and tell her this part simply must be reinstated or deleted or changed. Pat's patience with Nibley deserves a medal.

It was during this period that serious work on a new edition of *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* was going on.⁵¹ Without a doubt, this was the most challenging volume I have ever edited in terms of scope, content, format, and number of notes (it had over 4,000 footnotes). John Gee's source-checking experience on earlier Collected Works volumes was invaluable—he too knew the sources inside and out and had many of them in his office.

In 2002, Nibley instituted some visits in his home from some of us to work on his book. Occasionally he wanted us to record what he said, or he just talked. He was becoming pretty rambling by then. On one of my visits to the Nibley home, Hugh turned over some folders to me.

For some reason, he decided it was time to give me a tour of the inner sanctum (Image **)—the four upstairs bedrooms. We passed through the kitchen, through a storage room, and up the back stairs to the bedrooms. He had piles of papers in every conceivable location—the beds, the tables, the floors, etc. This is going to be some task to try to get them put into a book! I gently asked him

⁵⁰ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 18 May 2001.

⁵¹ I also listened to recordings of Nibley lectures made by Lloyd Newell at this time to check their accuracy. Occasionally I got to go to the studio and work with him on rerecording some parts, including some German words. We were some of the last individuals to ever grace the sound studio of the basement of the Smith Family Living Center before it was torn down.

if it would be helpful if we sent someone to help file his papers. He quickly shook his head and declined, saying, “No, I don’t think so.” I took that to mean that he didn’t want anyone meddling with his “filing system,” whatever that may be.⁵²

About three months later, Brent Hall, John Gee, Michael Rhodes, Pat Ward, Vanessa **, and I were in the Nibley home by his invitation. He started rattling off ideas about the geometry of Facsimile 2 and explained how various shapes can be superimposed on the hypocephalus. I asked him if he had written down this information, and he replied “Not all of it. That’s why you are here.” I’m not sure how it came about, but somehow we were headed upstairs to take the material from his four bedrooms. (Images **)

Sometime during our conversation, Brother Nibley said he didn’t sleep a wink last night and that he knew where he was going and what the purpose of everything was. Brent ventured to ask, “So, Brother Nibley, can you share with us what that purpose is?” He paused, and replied, “Joy.” He then went on to explain that the glory of God is intelligence, that we have great intelligence when we pass on, that intelligence allows us to solve problems, which, in turn, brings us joy. He told us not to worry a minute about what was going to happen after this life. He is actually looking forward to it. He said at one point, “I could go this evening, or even tomorrow.” He sounded very pleased with the prospect.

So I guess whatever happened to him last night is softening his heart to allow us to take this book (or what will eventually become a book) from his house and his hands. We worked methodically through the four bedrooms to put the piles of papers in folders and boxes in an organized fashion. We also took dozens of shoeboxes filled with note cards. There was so much dust around that several of us started sneezing. We pretty much cleaned things out. . . .

I am very concerned, however, that it will be months and years before we can make heads or tails of the material he has given us. It will require someone’s careful attention and time to sort through to find the kernels. I don’t have any time to devote to this project this year, but we don’t know how much time Brother Nibley has left to advise us on what he really wants.⁵³

In 2003 and 2004, Nibley became increasingly confined to his home and eventually to a hospital bed in his living room, but we continued our visits. On the afternoon of 23 February 2005, John Gee, Jack Welch, Michael Rhodes, Brad Kramer, Tom Nibley, Boyd Petersen, Phyllis Nibley, and I met in the

⁵² Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 31 May 2002.

⁵³ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 19 August 2002.

living room of the Nibley home. Nibley was present in body, although he dozed the entire time. We discussed the status and lack of progress on *One Eternal Round*. I think we were all overwhelmed at the magnitude of the project. We finally concluded that we needed an outline of the numerous versions of the existing electronic files and that only a coauthor could pull this volume together.⁵⁴

Michael Rhodes spent an agonizing night until he finally knew he had to complete this book for Hugh. He called me the next morning to let me know of his decision. Shortly thereafter we learned that Hugh had passed away that morning—perhaps he knew he could relax and let go of his book and that it would get completed and published.⁵⁵

From that time, Mike took charge of the numerous electronic files and spent months and years to bring the approximately 1600 pages down to a manageable 600. It fell to Mike to reduce duplicate material and select the best versions. He organized and ordered the chapters and prepared a table of contents. In early 2009, Mike turned over his files for *One Eternal Round* to me.⁵⁶ The biggest treat for me as an editor was that most of the source checking had been done by Mike and a team of source checkers. In comparison to early source checking efforts, the availability of electronic sources greatly simplified the process.

I then went over the manuscripts to format them and create a uniform style throughout. I still found some duplication that needed to be removed, and Michael Lyon and I worked and reworked a list of illustrations to enhance the book. Often, when I would regretfully tell him we couldn't use one more picture, Michael would reply, "Well, it will be in my copy." So if you are interested in the fully illustrated editions of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, you'll have to speak with Michael.

Nearing the end, Michael, Mike, and I met together to consult on that elusive geometry chapter. (Image **) We finally had to delete some sections that weren't clear or illustrative of a point Nibley was

⁵⁴ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 23 February 2005.

⁵⁵ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 24 February 2005.

⁵⁶ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 5 February 2009.

trying to make.⁵⁷ When the chapters were fully edited and proofread, I passed them on for typesetting, which was capably handled by Jacob Rawlins and Alison Coutts. Usually at this stage, we would pass on a copy of the manuscript to Phyllis for her to read through, for she always found little things that would improve the book. She enjoyed performing that task. However, for this volume, she was recovering from surgery and couldn't concentrate much on the text. We were sorry not to fully involve her on Hugh's magnum opus.

After the typeset text was proofread and cleaned up, the next step was to insert the illustrations and captions (assuming Michael and I had finished writing them) to get a final pagination. And then the indexing process began in earnest. After spending several long days, Alison and I had marked the indexing terms, run the indexes, cleaned them up, and passed the electronic files of the volume to Deseret Book by early November 2009. However, the process stalled for a while in Salt Lake and wasn't ready to be sent off for printing until 21 January 2010. Just the day before that deadline, I experienced a tender mercy. I had asked an intern

to work over the Nibley bibliography, especially adding the recent books that had not yet been included. She returned the file with the additions, and I thought I would just take a quick glance. As I did, I noticed that she had put John Gee's name as the editor on *One Eternal Round*. I thought that was a bit strange and sent back an e-mail message to her to tell her that he was not the editor but Michael Rhodes was the coauthor. (Image **) She eventually wrote back to let me know that John Gee's name was listed on the title page. I sat bolt upright in my office chair, went over to the final proofs, and checked the title page. Sure enough, his name was listed! I headed immediately to Alison's office, and we knew we had to get to Deseret Book right away. I checked the file I had sent up for the front matter, and my file was correct, so I surmise that the typesetter for the front matter had just used the title page for the previous book and made a couple of changes without paying attention to my text. Talk about getting in under the wire—the book goes to be printed tomorrow.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 28 August 2009.

⁵⁸ Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 20 January 2010.

In the last few weeks, we also had to finalize the cover design and text. Of course you know the striped design itself was determined by precedence, but did you know that the covers of the volumes of the Collected Works are coded by color? (Image **) Early on in the process Jack Welch had worked out with Deseret Book the following color scheme:***

We were all grateful that *One Eternal Round*, volume 19 of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, was out in time for his birthday anniversary on 27 March 2010. (Image **) For several of the earlier volumes, we had gathered for a celebratory party when a book came off the press—those who had worked on the book would have pizza and root beer, ask Hugh to autograph their copies of the book, and otherwise enjoy an evening together.⁵⁹ In honor of this last book in the series coming, out several of us gathered at our home to celebrate. (Image**)

On Testimony

I conclude here with words from the grand master himself. After all, why did he write so voluminously?

I have a testimony of the gospel which I wish to bear. Again, as Brigham Young says, because I say it's true doesn't make it true, does it? But I know it is, and I would recommend you to pursue a way of finding out. And there are ways in which you can come to a knowledge of the truth.

When is a thing proven? When you personally think it's so, and that's all you can do. . . . Then you have your testimony, and all you can do is bear your testimony and point to the evidence. That's *all* you can do. But you can't impose your testimony on another. And you can't make the other person see the evidence as you do. Things that just thrill me through and through in the Book of Mormon leave another person completely cold. And the other way around, too. So we can't use evidence, and we can't say, I know this is true, therefore you'd better know it is true. But I know it is true, and I pray our Heavenly Father that we may all come to a knowledge of the truth, each in his own way.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See, for example, Shirley S. Ricks, journal entry, 11 June 1992.

⁶⁰ Mormon Scholars Testify Web site.