

The name of Hugh Nibley has become a byword within the Church in the past two decades, primarily as a result of his writings published in the pages of The Improvement Era for 21 years. Since 1948, only six volumes of the Era have been published without the by-line of Hugh Nibley, which is usually part of an extended series of articles. His brilliant, incisive mind, fortified on one hand by fluency in some ten languages and strengthened on the other by his strong faith in the gospel's message, has blessed countless readers. But it is his zest for knowledge, his joy in discovery, his thrill at uncovering old things for us to view anew that have endeared him to all who have read his works. In this respect, Brother Nibley represents a symbol of the person hungering and thirsting after knowledge, an ideal that most individuals could well adapt for the betterment and fulfillment of their own personal lives. In this spirit, as his current series is concluded, the Era is pleased to feature Brother Nibley as a fitting symbol of one who has truly found many adventures in learning.



Hugh Nibley: The Portrait of a Leader

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● Hugh Nibley quite adequately exemplifies the Latter-day Saint ideal of the learned man with deep devotion to God's kingdom. For him the quest for knowledge is not some half-real, dimly discerned, vaguely tangible ideal to which mere lip service is given; his is a genuine commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Dr. Nibley's passion for learning does not depend solely upon the potential survival value of knowledge, but upon an abiding curiosity or what the ancients called wonder, the beginning of wisdom. His own rather impressive contributions to Mormon intellectual life, and especially his defense of the faith and the Saints, stem directly from a radical curiosity about this world, a feeling of astonishment

at the mysteries of life, and an openness to the possibility that there is more to be said about some issues than has already been said. Where others are either disinterested or have already made up their minds, Hugh Nibley is busy opening the door for another look at the evidence.

Dr. Nibley has set a good example by coupling his own rather considerable natural intellectual abilities, vivid imagination, and sometimes impish wit with personal discipline sufficient to permit him to acquire the tools of an outstanding historian, and he has thereby become a really creative scholar. His interests are vast. In general, he investigates those areas of human experience covered by the terms history, politics.



and religion. He is not interested in the commonplace, the well-known, the trite or trivial; instead, he pursues the unknown, the difficult, the profound, the important. He works in virgin territory and is obsessed with the necessity of being original. The fruits of Dr. Nibley's scholarship are well-known. His commitment to learning and the gospel is total. He has not yielded to the blandishments of worldly success now common in our universities. He has steadfastly avoided becoming involved in any kind of administrative claptrap, preferring instead to tend to his studies. He has a deep, intense, joyous devotion to scholarship. His interests reach beyond the confines of the traditional disciplines; yet his work manifests painstaking

labor on tiny details, and he is enormously productive. His work is richly illustrated, elaborately structured, cohesive, and yet always new and dynamically alive. His work is always fresh because he moves on the boundary between the known and the unknown. This is dangerous territory where the timid seldom go.

One can conceive of man's knowledge as a sphere whose outer edge reaches the unknown. The sphere of knowledge may be infinitely enlarged, but it always encounters the unknown. In fact, the actual awareness of the unknown should be greater with the more learned than with the unlearned. Therefore, the worst offense is not in having a wrong opinion—we all do that much of the time—but, rather, in thinking