

FORUM

Hugh Nibley

May 21, 1974

Well, that was a short introduction. What do you think of long introductions?

They're depressing. The Lord said, "How can they believe who receive honor from one another." Remember he talks about the Pharisees who love the greetings in the market place and the high seats at the banquets and the Rabbi this, Rabbi that and so forth. Cicero puts it "Madam Lavette" One hand rubs the other; You pat my back, I'll pat yours." This is not good.

This is everything you wanted to know about and from Hugh Nibley, but were afraid to ask, or couldn't get answered when you asked it.

Well, you have a reputation for being a hard man to question. Now my observation is that most questions go unanswered because they are poor questions. I hope I don't have that problem today. Or you don't want to answer them. Now I think Brother Nibley has been preparing for this over a life time. He has the answers. My job is to find the right questions. Fortunately, I think the answers will come whether I have the questions or not.

For a number of cultural Mormons have told me over--and some not-cultural Mormons-- have told me over a number of years something like this: Hugh Nibley isn't serious about the gospel; he's just playing a game. Is this true?

Well, you seem to be playing a game if you are serious about the gospel. Joseph Smith is a good example of that. He spoke with angels, he saw the Father and the Son. Well, after that how could he take the visiting firemen seriously. They always referred to him as the married prophet and sometimes even offended them. And you know he tells us that this was the one thing of which he was guilty in his youth. He was too light-minded. He was prone, he said, to laugh and joke about things and it offended lots of people that thought they should be taken more seriously. And people visiting the prophet were sometimes rather upset. So I say, if you had seen a vision of the eternities--I haven't--how would you, can you take these other people seriously. No, it's man's situation, and my situation is much too serious to be joked about. I'd like to be all fun and games and certain questions must be answered first. Like a person who goes to the doctor to have a checkup. It turns out he has a terminal disease, which is going to terminate very soon. Well, it's how that question is answered you see. But once you have that answer and it's a good one, then you are free to rejoice, let down your hair and have some fun. And the saints did anciently because they felt the important questions were solved. The terror that faces us--all of us, the questions the world can't answer--while those remain unanswered our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught our sweetest songs are those that tell us that is thought and so forth. This is the theme of literature but men betimes are sober. They think by fits and starts and when they think they fasten their hands upon their hearts. We think about it. But we don't have to do that, so we can be rather relaxed and gay about things once we know the answer; once we have our testimonies that's so. So to these people, I say "my, you don't take these things with sufficient seriousness. Oh I'm being serious all right."

There is a very interesting passage in the Clementine Recognitions, where Peter is arguing with Simon Magus. Simon Magus is the great brain of the time; and Simon says something and Peter can not help--he has been trying to keep from laughing--and finally he bursts out laughing he just can not help it and Simon Magus becomes furious. He says, "you are not taking me seriously. And Peter says, "No, I'm not taking myself seriously either. I take the gospel seriously, you take yourself seriously, and that makes the difference. I can't take you seriously or myself." And this is so. If you take yourself seriously, you won't take the gospel seriously and the other way around. If you take the gospel seriously, then you will say, now I know that man is nothing (nor was Moses or Nephi). Man is a nothing. Oh, the nothingness of man. We can joke about ourselves once we take the gospel seriously and once we know its blessings and promises. Then we can relax and breathe easily and have some fun, which I don't do enough of.

Why all the busy activities you are engaged in--books, essays, lectures, sermons? Who are you trying to impress?

I'm trying to impress my Heavenly Father. And it is not easy, I've discovered. I'm much too old to try to impress anybody else. I'm not going anywhere. Promoted to what, for heaven sake--Dog catcher? No, the only person you try to impress is your Heavenly Father, and it is awfully hard because he can't be fooled--not for a minute. I have always felt driven in this way. The gospel is so wonderful. There is so much to find out. It opens the doors to so many things. It is sort of an obsession, a sort of personal thing. As long as you are going to be doing something, why not be doing something that hasn't been done before. There's a lot to be done, and all this stuff has to be turned over. It's very exciting, I mean the stuff that lies before us that's untouched. This is it, we have not begun to touch the possibilities of the gospel. That reminds me of something here. Just some random stuff-- But a great authority on the brain recently said this, his name is S. Cohen. This writer says I must agree with Cohen that the extent of man's potentialities is awe inspiring. We seem to have acquired abilities so far beyond even our present dramatic needs that we look top-heavy. (He's talking about evolution--doesn't explain the fact that we have ten thousand times the intelligence we need to survive. Stupid creatures have a better chance of surviving actually.) Well, he goes on--nature has gone to some trouble to equip us with an enormous cerebral cortex of seemingly unlimited capacity. What was the hurry? We could have got on with much less. At the moment we are like a small family of squatters who have taken over a vast palace but find no need to move beyond the comfortable service apartment in one corner of the basement. We haven't begun to use our potentialities. And this is what we're all guilty of. And so let's try to get out of the broom closet and see what's there while we have a little time here. Because the Lord requires that of us. He has given us these capabilities. Sure, Hamlet says "he who made us with such large discourse looking before and after gave us not such capability and God-like reason to fust it us unused." Of course, we don't use it. As a man says here, "We don't begin to use anything, so it's a great game, let's find out what's there before it's too late."

Well, I have heard it said that if we have the gospel we don't really need to think. Do you agree with that?

You know perfectly well that Brigham Young's concept. He was always after that. Well, Joseph Smith uses that expression "the expanding mind." We must expand our minds constantly. This is what the gospel does. All eternity open before us and we start here. The Lord wants the bridge head design to begin here with us

on a modest scale, but we must look and move in that direction; and that's what we're working on here. And we are not limited to anything here; we're supposed to seek after these things, but we don't need to quote the well-known passages about seeking wisdom in all the best books and so forth. No, we're stuck with that.

I have frequently said, quoting someone else--and I believe it--that the gospel is one of the best kept secrets in the Church. Could you tell us what the gospel means to you. Give us some principles.

Yes, it's very clear here--The gospel is one long shout of hallelujah as far as that goes. As Joseph tells his son in the Book of Mormon "Remember O my son, these things are real." It was Alfred North Whitehead on his death bed, who was a great scientist and mathematician as you know, he said "there are only two things that survive--one is the Bible and one is Plato. And he said, "it's because of the sense of possibilities that's there" and then he said, "and these possibilities are real. All sorts of marvelous things are possible and these possibilities are real. We must not coop down and bind ourselves in with our saucy doubts and fears in order to defend ourselves against facing the great things beyond. We must not surround ourselves with everyday busy work, which really doesn't need to be done." So, the gospel is our being here. The Egyptians have a saying "Man, thy existence is a miracle compared with which all other existences is nothing." Last night I was reading a brand new book, it is only a month old on astronomy--it's the new angle. It's on the dark holes and the pulsars and all that sort of thing. And the things that impressed me so much about that was that there was no place in this system for us to be here--there was no place for us. The same thing in the biological system. Let me quote a biologist on that, I just happen to have the right quotations you know because these things happen to be interesting here, where he tells us: "Yes, left with self (these are basic rules you see, we will come back to the gospel in a second) everything tends to become more and more disorderly until the final and natural state of things is a complete random distribution of matter. (Of course, that's your second law and so forth--your heat death, entropy.) Any kind of order is unnatural and happens only by chance encounters that reverse the general trend. These events are statistically unlikely and further combinations of molecules into anything as highly organized as a living organism is wildly improbable. Life is a rare and unreasonable thing." See from the point of view of the biologist, just as from the point of view of the astronomer, we have no business being here. Here he says, "life occurs by chance and the probability of its occurring and continuing is infinitesimal." Over a million living forms of life on earth to believe that this took place only by chance places a great strain on the credulity of even the most mechanistic biologist. But the cosmos itself is patternless being a jumble of random and disordered events--we have no business being here as the biologist Waldof Harvard said. It's not just against probability--it's wildly improbable. It's absurd, yet here we are. Now the fact that we are here is quite a marvelous thing. There is no place in the universe for us, but here we are and we are participating in a drama--in a play, and the play is not going to make any sense unless you know how it begins or ends. If you go into a movie late, you know, even if you are three minutes late, you say, well what goes on here. Or if you are called away early, you ask your friend the next day. He says, "How did you like the play?" "I don't know. I didn't see how it ended." You must know how it ends and you must know how it begins otherwise the play is going to be meaningless. Well, you are in the play. You come in the beginning of the play. It's been going on for thousands of years before you get here and even before you get to find out what it's about, you have to leave the theatre. So you stand on the stage and say "well, what's going on? What am I supposed to do?" And the person next to you says "I don't know. I haven't been here much

longer than you have." But the worst of it is you are in the play. You have to take some meaningful part here. Well, what am I supposed to do. This is what they call a prologogy--how the thing began; and eschatology--how it's going to end. This is what makes the play. And prologogy is being used now by C.M. Dahl, the Danish scholar, and others. So much of the early Christian documents deal with this. The vast majority of material coming out now deals with pre-existence and post-existence. Without this the play makes no sense. The gospel supplies us with this knowledge and only the gospel does. Without this, it is a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing and so forth. The gospel tells us how the story begins and how it ends; and without that you are helpless. You're distracted. Nothing means anything, so here we are. And Joseph Smith started out telling us about the pre-existence and you know Brigham Young said "that offended more Latter-day Saints than any other teaching." More poeple were tested and tried and left the church because of the doctrine of pre-existence than any other teaching, including polygamy or anything else. Any today we take it in it's stride. The world says now in the view of what's coming out, what could be more natural. You have got to have that part of the picture. But you see this is it. I find myself on the stage, but what am I supposed to be doing. The gospel is the only chance of getting an answer. It will give meaning to what we do and without it there will be no meaning I assure you and you can quote plenty of poets, philosophers, and etc. Let me quote one right here. I am looking at it. Bertrand Russell--this is given the example of where you are without the gospel. Here was a very devout, a very profound searching man, and so forth. "All the labors of the ages, that all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of the universe ruin, all of these things if not quite beyond dispute are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand." Shakespeare's last play remember "These actors are all spirits and have vanished into air--into thin air--and like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, ~~the great globe itself, yea, all that~~ is inherit shall dissolve. And like this unsubstantial pageant faded leave not a rack behind." Shakespeare's last words were: "It's all going away. It's all just a play and it won't even leave a wisp of cloud to show that it was ever there." See without the gospel where you stand. The greatest philosopher of them all--Shakespeare--all come to the same conclusion. It's too tragic for words.

What book or books have influenced you the most?

Well, actually the scriptures. And to do like Shakespeare, things like the Odyssey and so forth. All those sorts of books you can go on naming them. The one I happen to be reading, of course, is the important one. Right now it is some Egyptian writing that show amazing insight into things.

You seem to have a feeling of a special calling or vocation.

Well, we all have that, of course. Coming into this world, it's our privilege to have that. This was the chance of a lifetime. The chance to have a lifetime. In coming in here, we all have our vocation as the Prophet Joseph said. And we were ordained for that office before we came here. The office and callings openings should be ready and willing to grab it when you come here. Again your time will not be wasted if you do that. But we all have our vocation here in the gospel, not only as fathers of the children of our Heavenly Father. But you see how all this comes together in the temple. Here you get the prologogy, you get the eschatology, you get how the play begins, how it ends, why we are here, the different phases we have to go through, etc. And the calling that each one of us has, which is a very important one. We all have this.

You have written about the prophetic warnings in the Book of Mormon and you have spoken about something called the "Nephite disease." Is that a threat to the Saints now?

Well, no. It always is. Brigham Young said "Nobody ever heard me say I was saved. I don't know whether I am or not. As long as I am in the flesh I am capable of committing all sorts of sins. I don't know whether I will be true and faithful to the end. You won't ever catch me saying that because that is the point of the test here. You don't reach the point where you are beyond falling because that is the value of our being tested here." We fall into that sort of thing, the vanities of this world and so forth. We are in constant danger and constant threat of it, being over-taken by the things of this world. And as a matter of fact, the further we go the more sorely we're tempted. Look at the case of Peter. And this is another thing Brigham said, you should pray that you would never have a vision or revelation because the test is so much more severe after that you can't imagine what it would be like. No it was Joseph Smith in the discourses that said that, yes. Don't ask for a lot of visions and revelations because then you will be in real trouble. Had you noticed what happened to the apostles? Notice what happened to those who were around Joseph Smith in Kirtland and so forth. They were the ones who were tested, and all but four of them fell. They turned against him every one of them at one time or another. They were subjected to much severer tests than other people. And we have to watch out for that.

What about race? Is the Church racist?

No. You know, of course, it isn't racist. We have our various privileges and callings as far as that goes. And our various offices to fulfill. And nothing is being denied anybody as far as that goes. ~~They are not being held responsible for things.~~ Well, I myself never held any office in the Church as far as that goes. And what about being denied the priesthood. What does Joseph Smith call the priesthood? He says it is an onerous burden. It's a hard thing. Very few people can carry it rightly and if they fail then we run a much greater risk. It would be a great blessing--far greater blessing to join the women and children in not to have that responsibility. And how many of us do take advantage of our priesthood and do not bring condemnation upon us. Remember he tells us that: "Many are called but few are chosen." (He means called to the priesthood) "And why are they not chosen, because their hearts are too much upon the things of the world." So if you combine the priesthood, it is better not to have it. You won't lose anything if you don't. Because it is only a task--an onerous burden. Things that have to be done. You get no glory out of it here, because only your Heavenly Father knows if you have earned it and what that glory is. And as soon as you start--remember the Lord tells us this--as soon as you start taking credit for it amen. Joseph Smith says, "amen to the priesthood and authority of that man." Remember as soon as we start taking credit and glory to ourselves for anything we do, "amen to the priesthood of that man." We can't abuse it. It has to be exercised with humility and nobody knows who gets the real prize.

Some of your friends and enemies have labeled you a devout conservative. I've always thought of you as quite liberal. Am I right? Second question. What do you think of such labels?

Well, you are liberal in one thing and conservative in another as far as that goes. (want to conserve things). No, I think the question is if you want to be liberal about such things. Why not? Let's pass that question.

Are you a party man?

No, I am not a party man. I am constantly reprimanded for splitting tickets and doing things like that.

What do you think of the identification of the gospel with political ideologies?

Let me see there was a statement of Joseph Smith here. I knew being a political scientist you would bring something like that up. Joseph says here, "Man departed from the first teachings or instructions he received from heaven in the first stage and refused by his disobedience to be governed by them. Consequently, he formed such laws as best suited to his own mind. And God said 'well we'll make the best of that then. We'll have to do'. But it's not the laws he wants to give us. See this is the point. Though man would not admit the influence of a power superior to his own, yet God has instructed man to form wise and wholesome laws. It is a second best--doing the best you can. This is the Prophet Joseph talking, "And since he has departed from him and refused to be governed by those laws, God has given him his own voice from on high. But that man was not able himself to erect a system or plan with power sufficient to free man from a destruction which awaited from him is evident from the fact that God has before remarked, prepared to sacrifice his son, and so forth. They aren't the same thing at all. Now where he says here, "A moment's candid reflection upon the principles of these systems is sufficient for every candid man to draw his own conclusion in his own mind whether this is the order of heaven or not. We deem it a just principle that all men are created equal and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves on all matters relative to conscience. Consequently then, we are not disposed had we the power to deprive anyone of the exercising of that free independence of mind which heaven so has so graciously bestowed upon the human family as one of its choicest gifts." But this is I mean you only have to look about you to realize that the gospel is one thing and this is another. It is reasonable to suppose that man departed from the first teachings and instructions and refused by his disobedience to be governed by them. He formed laws as best suited to his own mind. And though man won't admit that, it is a second best--it's a poor second best.

Do you think the gospel gives answers to questions such as "should there be a graduated federal income tax, or should we have public education or social security, or partisan questions like that?"

Yes, it answers them by saying if you have a celestial order those questions would be answered. You wouldn't bother about them--they wouldn't exist; but as things are at present, it's a case of making do with the second best as far as that goes. But that's not the gospel, and the Lord has told us these things are--well as we just read from the Prophet Joseph--because man refused to be governed by God. Well, I'll give you the best I can, being our kind Heavenly Father--help you along the best way you can and as you are able to adapt yourselves to better things we'll do that. But we are never going to achieve it through earthly governments, I am sure of that. Joseph had some remarkable things to say on that. "A moment's candid reflection upon the principles of these systems is sufficient for every candid man to draw his own conclusion in his own mind whether this is the order of heaven or not. We deem it a just principle that all men are created equal and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves on all matters relative to conscience. Consequently then, we are not disposed had we the power to deprive anyone of the exercising of that free independence of mind which heaven so has so graciously bestowed upon the human family as one of its choicest gifts." So he gives us the two you see--he gives us his plan and he gives us--men depart from that. He says

right as our kind Heavenly Father he says all right do the best you can and I try to help you there. But it's not the plan he's given us. Of course, it's a different thing entirely.

it our lot to do or die, but never ask why. Or in the Church should we ask and expect to receive an answer?

1, we ask that of our Heavenly Father. You have a perfect right to do that anytime you want. You go to him. The church is very large now, people can't be coming up to President Kimball all the time, with millions of people in the Church. It's out of the question. Well, what do you do? Well every man has to receive revelation for himself, and this is very important. This is one of the grandest principles of the gospel is that every man receives his own revelation. There's the good quotations from Joseph Smith on that.

the doubts or questions wrong?

you take every instance in which people ask the questions and they are the ones who are particularly blessed. Like the brother of Jared or Moses or Abraham. And Moses, remember and he says in the Book of Moses "I will refuse to be comforted". He breaks down, he just doesn't understand it. And Abraham the same way. They really question. And the Lord blesses them for that. He blesses them and then he shows them the way. But you do find these cases in which the man almost rebels but the Lord always welcomes that and the same thing with Abraham too.

cultural Mormons are sometimes embarrassed by or anxious about the temple. The endowment, they say, is an affront to intelligence--a relic of a primitive past, copy of a social club initiation, and so on. Is the temple relevant or real?

I don't know where you got that stuff. Well, that's of course, the book that is coming out now on the temple. It's a long book--it's 800 pages or so. And it deals with Joseph Smith, papyri, and things like that. No, the temple, of course, is the great thing. This is really something and it's being discovered too. I mean this temple is being discovered by outsiders. It's one of the most marvelous things there is. Don't want to get started on that though.

The cultural Mormon has accused you of manifesting one of the strongest plank ideas ever held by Mormons. That is that truths can be found by reading old books and by concerning oneself with the past. What would you say in reply to that?

That's an interesting thing. The only way we have of capturing the past is in the writings that way. Of course, the Lord has given us these documents. The writing is quite...

But they insist that this is a false notion to think that something really important is to be found by reading Egyptian documents. What could have Egyptians known anyway that is important?

You have to read them and then you will find out what they know that's important. And it is very important here to realize that this is so. No, a great deal is being discovered right now. The whole thing is being completely revolutionized today. The whole picture of what they had and so forth. It really is quite a marvelous thing. Now the prophet Joseph is right in there. You'll have to read the book that's coming out. It's a long one, but it's going to be good.

method do you use in doing historical research?

I always follow the same. Every since I was a little kid. You follow a cycle, is something you see. There are certain cultural areas that have to be covered. Finally it was from classical, you see, then early European, Anglo-Saxon, and European literature and then modern. And then, of course, I had to add the Oriental, I was in college. And you read in these cycles and so forth. And you have follow a regular system. I have followed that system for years and years.

you read randomly?

no. Right now, you have to do is a two-day system now. You have to go in a cycle because otherwise you get one it would be so fascinating you would get stuck on one and then you would just stay with it. But you read in a cycle. I take it in a two-day cycle now. Two days of Egyptian and two days, Babylonian; two days, Greek; and then you go right on the cycle and then you come back again so you cover things and keep sort of a balance. But that's sort of a crank way of doing it. But you have to keep these things all in mind at once. You become a specialist in one area and the picture changes. It is very important to do this.

are you interested in patterns in history?

because everything falls into these patterns. This is the interesting thing now, you see. We didn't think that before; but beginning with Thomas Henry Buckle back in the middle of the last century, he began to show that history does fall into definite patterns. We have these patterns to follow, too.

is having a bias an intellectual sin?

you can't escape that. You have to have it. We all have that. Of course, we could develop that idea.

but don't we end up proving what we want to prove and neglecting everything else?

no, you don't not if you have checked enough from outside. Now you see if I were to confine my attention to my classes or things like that. But if you have to, you will stick your neck out and go out and talk to other people about it too, you see. I run in with the boys from the U. of U. all the time. Well, you have to do that, if there is going to be any balance. Sure, you don't just carry on your own show.

what do you think of so-called experts or authorities? Is there such a thing as an expert?

No, there isn't. But a person who has read alot about certain things and deals with certain things, you might call him an expert. I'm no expert. That's why I have to keep quoting documents all the time and let them speak for me, because I don't know any of this stuff.

Missionaries go out and return and enter into sales careers--insurance and like-- or they turn to business, the stock market, they become ambitious, they become successful and we applaud them. Do you?

Why sure. They succeed in their particular line.



What do you think of the gospel of success?

I guess there is nothing wrong with it as far as that goes. You talk about the ancient patriarchs--Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and so forth--they are measured in terms of success. But, of course, all this is as the Prophet Joseph Smith says "all this is as nothing--not a drop in the bucket--compared with the eternities."

Is the gospel intended to somehow equip us to do the things the world wants to do better than it can?

Among other things, sure. We have to if we are to establish Zion. That's what we have to do. We do these things very well.

How does the gospel relate to our contemporary middle-class culture or value system?

Oh, boy... No, the gospel is to bring again the kingdom of God is what it's to do. And this is a very different thing. We could get warmed up on that question, but I'm not going to.

Many of the saints are concerned about the wickedness of others. For example, they are angry at the Communists or some political party or the bankers or the blacks. What do you think of such a policy?

Well, the gospel has set this all for us. We have the scriptures to follow and that will give you the answer to everything as far as that goes. Those that are blessed are blessed and they enjoy the blessings and the promises and we must do righteously to fulfill our parts and receive our blessings.

Is our concern with the wickedness of others a sign of anything in our own spiritual life?

Why sure it's bound to be.

What do you think of the future Church education or BYU?

Well, I think the Lord has great plans in mind. I think he has great things for us here. Many revelations are going to come forth and means are going to be opened and we're going to have knowledge given to us that we've never had before. I think these things are going to be available. The keys are being supplied now. And personnel is being formed, you might say, is being drafted or volunteered.

Is every opinion of a General Authority a revelation?

Well, not necessarily. They can have their own opinions as the Prophet Joseph says and the same thing with Brigham Young.

How do you know when it is?

Well, you know for yourself. It is given for every man to know for himself. And that's why we have the gospel. "Man shall know for himself," is the formula.

There seem to be obstacles in the way of the testimony of many young Latter-Day Saints. They are put off by what they see or at least they sometimes tell me the triviality of the things we do or by stupidity or by our ignorance or by sometimes wicked and dishonest men. Can a testimony survive that?

Of course, it can. It has nothing to do with that. A testimony comes direct to you from your Heavenly Father. None of that makes the slightest bit of difference. If the clock doesn't tell the right time, it doesn't weaken my testimony at all.

Are you concerned with the leadership of the Church?

Nope, not a bit. I certainly am not. The leadership of the Church is Jesus Christ, and He knows what He's doing. Don't worry.

I'm tempted to ask if you would sustain Judas?

Of course I would sustain Judas. He was one of the apostles.

But he was a devil.

Remember what the Lord said. "I have chosen you and one of you has a devil." But he chose him. The Lord has his purposes in these things. If we sustained only perfect people, we wouldn't sustain anybody. The Lord has his purposes in these things.

Then you are not turned off by the Church by seeing the falsehoods of its members?

Oh, heavens no. That would strengthen your testimony if anything. We have plenty of scripture. We have the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price shows us how the struggles and tribulations people have had in the past. They haven't been angels by any means in the Church.

What is the threat to the Church in days of prosperity?

The Church has always been the same. Of course that's what the Book of Mormon is written about. The Book of Mormon is the threat to the Church in the days of prosperity. And that we forget the Lord, which is very easy. But I don't think we will forget him now. We are too dependent on him. We are skating too close to the edge here.

Can our enemies prove the gospel false?

Can we prove it true?

No, not if they don't want to hear it. As the scripture says, "though an angel from heaven told them, they would not believe." So they don't have to believe. They are under no obligation to. If they do, it's because they are lead by the Spirit. It's because they received the testimony too. There's no scheme or plan or trick by which we can force people to believe the gospel, otherwise it wouldn't be the gospel of salvation.

Should we be trying to establish arguments for the gospel?

Sure, there's nothing wrong with that. Use arguments for the gospel. "Bring forth your strong reasons", the Lord has said. And we are supposed to invite the world to bring forth their strong reasons. And the Lord brings forth evidence from day to day. These things build up, of course, because it's all building to an end. It's all building up to his millennial reign upon the earth. Things

have a motion and a direction here. And we are supposed to acquire and build and preserve what we can. And bring forth our strong reasons and let the world bring forth theirs. That's what the Lord has invited us to do.

What is man's dominion? You wrote recently about that.

George, I should remember that. Do I remember, I don't even remember what was. Boy--I'm pretty far gone.

Let me ask you a question about chronology. These are questions that sometimes trouble Latter-Day Saints--young Latter-Day Saints. You agree with the Bishop Usher's chronology. Was the creation 4004 B.C.?

That wasn't so, but the chronology is full of surprises. This is the point. Everything's changing here all the time. And it works both ways too. Some things are much newer than we think, some things are much older than we think. But of course all time is present before the Lord, as far as that goes. And he has divided our history up into dispensations. We live in our own box, so to speak, and what is going on in the other boxes is sometimes something we can't even imagine what it would be like to live in Egypt. But we have a vast accumulation of documents today. Still, we are tested by our own standards, we have come to this world in this dispensation to be tested by questions and situations which are totally alien to other times and places. Even the time of the Prophet Joseph.

How long did it take God to create the world?

Come on. He has all the time in the world. And remember, time is only measured by man, the Lord tells us, as far as that goes. Of course, it's a very interesting question. Time being relative and so forth. But remember we believe that the gospel and these things come from eternity to eternity. We're dealing with the eternities here. This is no business of checking it very carefully on the calendar. Though, some things are much briefer than we think, and some expand much more widely than we think. The chronology is a relative sort of thing. Time is a state of mind. You know that if you have taken any bugs.

Take it that you don't feel that such questions are central to the gospel or really crucial to one's testimony.

Are they relevant?

Relevant, but not crucial.

Do you have your own testimony?

Do you don't care then about the age of the earth and those questions ultimately?

Well, those things are still in suspension. We haven't answered them yet. And it interests me very much as far as that goes, but again we are dealing with a relative situation. If you had been on the earth at a particular time in the past, for example, what would you have seen? What would your state of mind be? What would it be like? Well, how can you reconstruct that. You bring together a lot of evidence carefully as you can and then you don't have the vaguest idea. Well, for example--imagine what it would be like to say in Bali today or in Newfoundland, places some people have been--you haven't--you go there and it isn't like that at all. You are completely wrong about the whole thing. So you can't reconstruct the whole picture and be dogmatic about it.

you reject biological evolution?

Well, that's an interesting question, isn't it. Well, it depends on how we define it here. All creatures exist in their own particular spheres, you know, as far as that goes. And we do feel a kinship with the animals and we should. And we are going to live with them in the eternities; we should love the critters. And they learn to love us.

That's what he was writing about in Man's Dominion.

and ...  
remembers now.

es, but then you have to go into all sorts of things defining your evolution process. What school you are going to represent, and so forth, as far as that goes.

ould you say something about the religious hobbies of sectarian Mormons?

ou mean they're not worth commenting on? Some of the presidents of the Church have warned us about religious hobbyism?

es, I may be guilty of it myself as far as that goes. Everybody specializes on certain points. But it depends on what he means by religious hobbyism. That is you get on one particular thing and everybody gets on a particular kick at a particular time. So you are writing a paper about something and that's what you are thinking about all the time. It then becomes an obsession with you as far as that goes. And before you know it, you are a religious hobbyist. And I could be accused of that. Everybody else could.

Is the spirit the intelligence of man's self-existent? Is it self-conscious and unique? That's an important question incidently? You mentioned the pre-existence, how much an affront that was in Joseph Smith's day.

It was.

Well right, how would you answer that question?

Well, in the affirmative. We don't realize, of course, what we are or anything else. So man if you knew what you were. And we come from the eternities and pass into the eternities as far as that goes. And this is the whole thing with the gospel, it deals with the eternities.

Was there a time when we weren't self-conscious?

I don't know. At that time I wouldn't remember. Was there ever a time you were completely unconscious? Recount what you experienced.

Does the 8th chapter of Mormon apply to us now?

A few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts. Yes, this is a prophesy for our own time. But it's the human animal anyway--it's human nature anyway as far as that goes. You're always going to get this.

ed this is what we have to fight. We are living in two worlds at once here--  
our good world that we know we should belong to and the world of our vanity that  
we are always subsiding and sliding down into--the easier way. Yes, we are  
trying to walk on two tracks at once. We keep slipping all the time. It's a  
difficult thing.

It says that we have polluted the Church because of the pride of our hearts and  
because we seek the praise of the world and we suffer the needy and the hungry  
and the poor and the naked to pass by and don't even notice them.

That is Mormon speaking of our times. We've been guilty of that at times. Well,  
we all are. We are not sufficiently aware of what other people are, what they  
think, what they do, or anything else. We have enough trouble with our own  
thinking as far as that goes. But this does apply. What the gospel does is  
expands our minds. The expanding gospel and the expanding mind.

Brother Nibley told me that he wanted this to be faith promoting and edifying,  
and I believe it has been. I consider this an historic occasion, and I hope  
you have paid close attention. Well, you might pay attention to the silences  
or the gestures as well as the words.