

Chapter 3

“Speaking in a Prophetic Vein”: Hugh Nibley as Social Critic

Eugene England called Hugh Nibley “the finest lay (as opposed to officially called) prophet of the Latter-day Saint people” and has argued that Nibley “most perceptively describes our sins, most courageously and persistently calls us to repentance, and most accurately predicts our future if we will not repent.”² England may be guilty of hyperbole, but most would agree that Hugh does indeed have a gift for sizing up the spiritual state of the Mormon community and calling us to repentance.

In essays like “Beyond Politics” and “In the Party But Not of the Party,”³ Hugh has admonished us not to put partisan politics above the interests of God’s kingdom; in essays like “Zeal Without Knowledge” and “Educating the Saints,”⁴ he has warned us not to allow mindless zeal to substitute for genuine knowledge of the gospel; and in essays like “Brigham Young As a Leader” and his renowned BYU commencement address, “Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift,”⁵ he has reproached us for placing the image of management over the substance of leadership.

²Eugene England, “Hugh Nibley as Cassandra,” *BYU Studies* 30 (Fall 1990): 104. I read an earlier version of this chapter at the Sunstone Symposium, on 1 August 1998 in Salt Lake City.

³“Zeal Without Knowledge,” in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Study Center, 1978), 279-305; “In the Party But Not of the Party,” in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, edited by Don E. Norton and Shirley S. Ricks, Vol. 13 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1994), 105-37.

⁴“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *Approaching Zion*, edited by Don E. Norton, Vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1989), 63-84; “Educating the Saints,” in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, 306-45.

⁵“Brigham Young As a Leader” and “Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift,” in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, 449-90 and 491-508.