

Chapter 19

Fighting Academic Battles and Gaining the Brethren's Trust, 1959-69

As Hugh Nibley's 1959-60 sabbatical began, the Nibley family arrived in Berkeley in September and settled into a large, four-story home which "backed up against a deserted quarry where the sun never appeared before eleven a.m."² The Bay Area offered a great adventure for the Nibley children. Four of the six children—twelve-year-old Paul, ten-year-old Christina, nine-year-old Tom, and six-year-old Michael—would be adjusting to new schools in California. Shuttling her children back and forth to their various after-school activities, Phyllis would be learning the roads of the quaint but sometimes maddening college town where the large hills and deep valleys can make access to a relatively close destination a complicated process. For her own part, Phyllis brought her cello with her, took lessons from Margaret Rowell, a very prominent musician, and joined the faculty wives at their socials. At home she cared for three-year-old Charles Alexander and one-year-old Becky.

Hugh had to make adjustments of his own. Not only would he be teaching a subject he had never taught before—classical rhetoric in the Speech Department—to students quite different from those at BYU, but he would also experience life from the other side of the desk, as a student. Hugh had accepted the appointment at Berkeley, not for the nostalgia of returning to his alma mater, but for the express purpose of resuming "the study of Egyptian, even if it had to be with old Lutz." Henry L. F. Lutz had been professor of semitics at Berkeley when Hugh was a graduate student. Hugh didn't have a lot of respect for Lutz's scholarship, and he also got the

²Hugh Nibley, Letter to Paul Springer, 12 December 1960.