

Chapter 22

“The Source of All Good Things”: Hugh Nibley and the Temple

Prefacing his address at FARMS Symposium on Ancient Temples at Brigham Young University on 20 February 1993, Elder Marion D. Hanks joked that, as president of the Salt Lake Temple, he had been asked some questions so deep that only “Hugh Nibley and the Almighty might know how to answer them.” Elder Hanks mentioned his respect and admiration for Hugh’s knowledge of temples, as well as Hugh’s sensitivity in discussing the topic: “I love the freshness and the beauty of [his] labors and utterances.”³ In a later interview, Elder Hanks acknowledged: “Hugh’s awareness, his knowledge, his linguistic and historical strength permitted him to know more about many things than many others of us know or will likely know in this world.” He also expressed his “affection and appreciation and admiration for Hugh’s knowledge of the temple,” which comes not only from Hugh’s understanding of history and languages but also from his “great personal experiences, which you can’t leave out when you try to understand something. He has been a temple goer and observer.”⁴

It is impossible to overemphasize Hugh’s contribution to our understanding of the temple. His research represents the first scholarly comparative analysis on the Mormon temple endowment. Importantly, Hugh has maintained the confidence of General Authorities by writing about the temple in a highly respectful way that also preserves the sacred nature of the subject matter. Hugh’s writings about the temple provide not only new insights and knowledge but also deeper inspiration and motivation. Indeed,

³Marion D. Hanks, “Christ Manifested to His People,” delivered at the FARMS Symposium on Ancient Temples, 20 February 1993, was published in *Temples of the Ancient World*, edited by Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret and FARMS, 1994), 3-28. The introductory remarks (transcript in my possession) were not included in the published version.

⁴Elder Marion D. Hanks, Interviewed by Boyd Petersen, 20 March 1998.