

# The Home Dance: Hugh Nibley among the Hopi

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HUGH NIBLEY LIVES IN A WORLD OF SERENDIPITY. As his son-in-law and intended biographer, I have discovered that, time and time again, he has miraculously avoided some catastrophe or dropped in on some fortunate eventuality. Call it happenstance, fate, or divine will, but these moments of pleasant coincidence have followed him throughout his life. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck believes that these “miracles of serendipity,” as he calls them, are “amazingly commonplace” and usually “in some way beneficial” to the recipient.<sup>1</sup> Those who don’t experience them, he argues, are simply not aware of them—“serendipitous events occur to all of us, but frequently we fail to recognize their serendipitous nature; we consider such events quite unremarkable, and consequently we fail to take full advantage of them.”<sup>2</sup> While this may be true, I have never known anyone who experiences these moments of serendipity to the degree Hugh Nibley does. More importantly, not only do they *happen* to him, but he makes himself *aware* of them.

Though Hugh would not dismiss the significance of any good fortune, to me the most thrilling instances are the times during World War II when, through fortunate synchronicity, he avoided tragedy: On D-Day, he was originally ordered to fly in a glider to Normandy, but his seat was taken at the last moment by a general and Hugh was ordered to drive a Jeep ashore. All the occupants of the glider were killed when it crashed. On another transport, a glider headed to Holland, he happened to put a scrap of armor under his seat just as it absorbed three machine gun bullets while a fourth went between his feet. Once while he was sitting in his tent, a 16-inch shell landed in the mud a few yards away from him and slid along until it stopped, without exploding, its nose touching his tent.

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1. M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), 255.

2. *Ibid.*, 257.

Before the Battle of the Bulge, as he was climbing into a Jeep headed for the Ardennes, he was pulled out and sent to Le Vesinet—all the Jeep's occupants were killed. His fellow soldiers began to say that "everything happens to Nibley and nothing ever happens to him."

There are less dramatic, but no less important, instances of providence. For example, there are hundreds of incidents when he has just "happened" upon an important source exactly when he needed it in his research and writing. What is surprising to me is that despite his gratitude and delight at the happenstances of his life, he never seems shocked in the least but attributes such good fortune to his having paid his tithing, done his home teaching, or some other modest act of righteousness. As Hugh wrote in a letter to his friend and teacher Klaus Baer, "A hundred times a week I ask myself in amazement: What am I doing here? Well, if that's the way the Lord wants it—he knows what he's doing; it's a cinch I don't. But that's what makes it interesting."<sup>3</sup> Hugh wrote to a prospective graduate student who had asked for advice about what career to pursue that, "In all of this, there is only one rule to follow, and that is, 'Let the Spirit guide.'"<sup>4</sup> I believe that Hugh takes that rule farther and more seriously than most of us dare.

Knowing of Hugh's encounters with serendipity, I haven't been terribly surprised when these same types of coincidences have accompanied my efforts to chronicle his life; it's been difficult not to notice them. For example, while my family and I were living in Maryland, Hugh and his wife, Phyllis, visited us in 1990 to be there for the wedding of their son, Michael, who also lives in Maryland. The day before the wedding, my wife, Zina, asked me to take her father sightseeing while everyone else worked on pre-wedding preparations. I knew Hugh would rather see something off the beaten path, so I decided to take him to visit one of my favorite sites: Antietam battlefield. On the way there I learned that Hugh had spent many hours conducting maneuvers at Antietam battlefield during World War II while he was stationed at Camp Ritchie for military intelligence training. That day I was treated to a dizzying account of his adventures during World War II and of parallels drawn from ancient history, the Civil War, and the then-current Gulf War. The day we spent at that battlefield was also, "coincidentally," the anniversary of the battle of Antietam.

On another occasion, when I called the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute to gain access to Klaus Baer's papers, the curator just about dropped the phone. He said he couldn't believe that I had called on the very day he had finished cataloguing Baer's papers—everything was in

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3. Hugh Nibley to Klaus Baer, 12 Feb. 1968, Klaus Baer Collection, Archives, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

4. Hugh Nibley to Gary B. Keeley, 15 Mar. 1982, copy in my possession.

order, available, and fresh on his mind. More recently, while searching in the presidential papers in the BYU archives, I came across a letter to Hugh from President Jeffrey Holland. The letter was responding to a letter Hugh had written, but the letter from Hugh was not there. I searched every logical place in the vast collection and couldn't find it. Just before I left for the day, on a whim I pulled an unmarked box off the shelf. The first letter in the first folder in that box was the missing letter.

After moving back to Utah, I wanted some way to explore Hugh's fascination with the Hopis of northeastern Arizona. I knew he used to travel there with his sons, and I enviously thought how interesting it must have been to visit the Hopi with Hugh. I yearned to be able to learn first-hand what had captivated him so about their culture and lifestyle. A few days after I first considered it, my brother-in-law, Paul Nibley, called up and said that a man he knew had mentioned Hugh on one of his own visits to the Hopi mesas. Paul reported that the Hopi said they remembered Hugh, wanted to visit with him, and invited him to stay in the village. So Paul and his contact, Bill Muse, arranged the details while I worked on the logistics of getting us to Hotevilla.

The serendipity continued—the Hopi invited us to visit during their annual "Home Dance." It was singularly appropriate that we would take Hugh Nibley back to visit the Hopi during the Home Dance, or the *Niman Kachina*. The Home Dance is held at the time of the summer solstice to honor the *kachinas*, the spirits who represent the invisible forces of life, who have been on earth since the winter solstice ensuring the success of the creation process. Now that the harvest is in full-bloom, the *kachinas* can return to their home in the San Francisco mountains and this dance is their send-off. It is a dance, like many of their ritual dances, completely concerned with cosmology—with the four forces of creation: germination, heat, moisture, and air—and with "the harvesting of the winter's prayers and planning."<sup>5</sup> But the going home of the *kachinas* is also pregnant with deeper cosmological meaning: for where the *kachinas* go to abide is where the Hopi believe all the righteous go when they die—what the *kachinas* are, the Hopi people can become.

Naturally the cosmological nature of this dance was ideal for Hugh's return to Hopiland, since he has always been preoccupied with cosmology, whether Mormon, Egyptian, or Hopi. Yet this was also a homecoming of sorts for him. Hugh first visited the Hopi soon after being hired at Brigham Young University:

When I first came to Provo shortly after World War II, I was approached by Brother Virgil Bushman, who had been called to revive the mission to the

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5. Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi* (New York: Penguin, 1963), 198.

Hopi Indians after it had languished during the war. He urged me to go with him and promised me that I would see an ancient world probably much like the kind I would like to have found in the ancient Near East. I eagerly complied, and on a cold, bleak morning in March we approached the Third Mesa from the west.<sup>6</sup>

What he found there was a culture both ancient and timeless. But it was the ritual dances of the *kachina* that really caught his attention:

Here, on a high, bleak rock, surrounded by nothing but what we would call total desolation in all directions, was a full-scale drama in progress in the grand manner of the Ancients. ... I told Brother Bushman that there should be fifty-two dancers, and that is exactly what there were. Fifty-two was not only the sacred number of the Asiatics and the Aztecs, but it was also the set number of dancers in the archaic Greek chorus. The dancing place was the bare plot which the Greeks called the *konistra*, the sand patch where this world came in contact with the other, at the crucial periods of the year. That was the time when the *orcus mundi* was open—*mundus patet*; that is, when the mouth of the other world was open and the spirits of the ancestors attended the rites. By the altar, of course, was the *sipapuni*, the mouth of the lower world, the *orcus mundi*, at which the spirits from above and below could meet with their relatives upon the earth. This was the essential year-rite, found throughout the world from the earliest times. On either side of the altar was a small evergreen, adorned like a Christmas tree with prayer feathers, for as in countless ancient societies these dramas were sacred. ... Suffice it to say, it was a miracle of survival, commonly recognized as the only surviving instance of the fully celebrated year-cycle.<sup>7</sup>

In a letter to his friend and Egyptian teacher, Klaus Baer, Hugh emphasized why he thought these rites preserved by the Hopi were so important:

But I cannot get it out of my system that we have here in these people who dance all day in animal masks, feathers, paint, and fox-skin aprons something that is a) fundamental in the world's experience, and which is b) all but extinct in most parts of the world today. This is the sort of people that the old Libyans or the 'Amu might have been—I feel relaxed and happy with them.<sup>8</sup>

In sum Hugh writes: "By the latest count, the Hopis are the only people in the world who still preserve a full annual cycle of full-dress protological, eschatological and cosmological ceremonies."<sup>9</sup>

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6. Hugh Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 13 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 76.

7. *Ibid.*, 77-78.

8. Hugh Nibley to Klaus Baer, 1 June 1964, Baer Collection.

9. Hugh Nibley to Klaus Baer, 12 Aug. 1968, Baer Collection.

The reason Hugh felt so comfortable among the Hopi was not simply the fact that they have preserved ancient patterns of culture of which he studies, but also their lifestyle. "Since I toured the Hopi mission last week nothing can bring me back to this world," he writes in a letter to his friend Paul Springer after one of his early visits. For the Hopi, as Hugh states,

success means simply survival—they are so glad just to be alive that life is a perpetual holiday with them. Something should be done to make them more rank-conscious, but how can you teach people to get ahead in life if their whole life is confined to five acres on the top of a rocky mesa? They are where they want to be, and those who have been in the army and seen the world prefer the top of the mesa to anything else they have seen; they put on gorgeous but not too strenuous dances at which everybody has all kinds of fun, they refuse vehemently to be photographed or to allow anything of theirs to be photographed, they grind their corn and make their peekee fresh every morning, but they just will not enter into the spirit of our modern, progressive, competitive society. They have poisoned my little mind.<sup>10</sup>

On another occasion Hugh wrote that, "Sitting with the missionaries and sharing the gospel with a group of Hopis you will find them to begin to loosen up very late at night, sharing what they really believe because they know that you really believe it."<sup>11</sup> Summing up his visits to the Hopi mesas, Hugh wrote, "My own connections with the Hopi ... are exhilarating, puzzling, and faith-promoting."<sup>12</sup>

Initially the Hopis weren't comfortable around Hugh, however. "The second time I visited the Hopis with Brother Virgil Bushman they apologized profusely to me for their coolness and aloofness on my first visit: 'forgive us,' they said, 'we thought you were an anthropologist.'"<sup>13</sup> With a wry smile, Hugh is fond of noting how the Hopis have often misled anthropologists who saw the Hopis merely as subjects for publication rather than as people. The Hopis "will not tell [anthropologists] a thing, except to lead them down the garden path." As Hugh has reported, the Indians of the Southwest say they "always know Spring is here ... when we see the beetles and the anthropologists come out."<sup>14</sup>

Hugh returned many times to visit the Hopi people, to compare their culture to those he was studying from the ancient Near East, and to experience the dramas of the dances. But it was the Hopi vision of life that made him feel so relaxed. This trip was no different. Even the heavens

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10. Hugh Nibley to Paul Springer, 29 Apr. 1957, copy in my possession.

11. Hugh Nibley to Steven Epperson, 11 Mar. 1982, copy in my possession.

12. Hugh Nibley to Fay Campbell, 22 June 1982, copy in my possession.

13. Nibley to Epperson.

14. Nibley to Baer, 1 June 1964.

seemed prepared for our arrival. For as we approached the third mesa on 25 July 1996, we saw a short rainbow directly over the village of Hotevilla. Seeing this through native eyes would be a sign—for “Short Rainbow links the sky and earth, having power over the atmosphere when the sun is shining and power over the earth when rain falls upon it.”<sup>15</sup> With such a connection between the earth and the heavens, we were confident that our experience would indeed be significant.

During our visit Hugh discussed with our hosts the parallels between their dances and those of the ancient Greeks and Egyptians. He read from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and quoted Greek epic poetry to illustrate. He cited the common similarities in apparel among the different ritual dramas: the two eagle feathers on the headdress, the foxtail hanging down from the waist in back, the masks which both conceal and create identities, the bandoleer over the shoulder, the apron, and the sash. He noted the cosmic importance of the turtle shell (which the Hopi use as a rattle strapped to their right calf). He also noted the parallels in staging these drama dances: the symbolic significance of the number of dancers, of the two spruce trees decorated with prayer feathers, of the all-male cast being dressed as both male and female dancers, and of the orientation of the dancers with the four directions.

These comparisons were not lost on the Hopi. They believe that they are the keepers of ancient traditions and Hugh’s words bore out their beliefs. Just as most of us, they were amazed by Hugh’s ability to read these ancient documents and to understand their relevance, but they were more impressed by his vision—both his ability to understand the deep religious significance of their traditions and his ability to see the sacredness of the world around him.

Of course, what amazed us were the parallels between Mormons and the Hopi. In addition to those Hugh showed us were those shown us by BYU professor Bob Bennion, who accompanied us. Bob served his mission among the Hopi and Navajo, and has been a longtime friend of the Nibley family. He told us about how he once witnessed the initiation ritual of a young woman in which the Hopi priest touched each of her sense organs with a feather dipped in corn meal and blessed them that they would function properly. And one can find parallels with the language of the Mormon temple ceremony in the Hopi myths of origin which are found in Frank Waters’s *Book of the Hopi*. Responding to someone who asked about similarities between the Mormon temple endowment and the Masonic ceremony, Nibley wrote that the parallels between the Mormon endowment and the rites of the Hopi “come closest of all as far as I have been able to discover—and where did they get theirs?”<sup>16</sup>

15. Waters, *Book of the Hopi*, 59.

16. Hugh Nibley to Howard S. Rhodes, 4 Mar. 1980, copy in my possession.

Like Mormons, the Hopi are a covenant people. They believe that the Great Spirit Maasaw met them at Oraibi some 800 years ago and gave them three things: warnings, prophecies, and instructions on how they were to live.<sup>17</sup> All of this is recorded for them on four stone tablets.<sup>18</sup> For a covenant people like believing Mormons, to study the Hopi is to see further circumstantial evidence that Joseph Smith did in fact restore ordinances and scriptures that were had previously in their purity but which, in time, were diluted, lost, or corrupted.

The fact that Hugh was twice given the opportunity to view the sacred Hopi tablets is also significant,<sup>19</sup> for the Hopi believe that at some future time a white man will come who can read these stones and he will be their leader. Clearly the Hopi viewed Hugh with high esteem, but they also recognized that he was not the one they were to follow.

The poignancy of the theme of “going home” was further emphasized by the fact that most of the people Hugh had known on the mesas had themselves returned home. There were none of the old people he remembered. There was in the village of Moenkopi one man, a thirty-something Hopi named Leroy Ned Shingowitewa, who remembered Hugh staying with his family on one of his visits in 1964. Also the man we stayed with, Silas Hoyungowa, had a vague recollection of Hugh visiting the village. However, none of the Hopi whom Hugh remembered as friends were there. On the morning of our first full day in Hotevilla, Hugh and I walked around the old city and he seemed somewhat confused. He recalled buildings where they were no longer standing and remarked on how few of the people he had known were still alive. They had returned home, just as the *kachinas* would return home after the dance.

Yet on that walk Hugh also noted how many things had not changed—how timeless the village was. Life in the village of Hotevilla goes on in much the same way it has for hundreds of years. He called my attention to the similarities between the sacred city of the Hopi and the ancient cities of the Middle East. He was right. The houses looked very similar to those I saw in the old city of Jerusalem when I visited Israel two years ago. He also mentioned that the scent of burning cedar, which is so evident in Hotevilla, is recalled in much Greek poetry.

Hugh also noted the two main differences between the Hopi city and other ancient cities: Among the Hopi there are neither palaces nor large assembly halls. Hugh explained that the Hopi are such democratic people that they don't build palaces for their kings—they don't even have kings—they simply look to their wisest men as their leaders. And in a

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17. Thomas E. Mails and Dan Evehema, *Hotevilla: Hopi Shrine of the Covenant, Microcosm of the World* (New York: Marlowe, 1995), 85.

18. See Waters, *Book of the Hopi*, 31-36.

19. See Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, 82-84.

manner that recalls the rule of King Benjamin, the Hopi leader works alongside his followers and has everything in common with them. As for assembly halls, the Hopi have their *kivas*, which are underground ceremonial chambers that symbolically represent the Earth Mother—the small hole in the floor (the *sipapuni*) is symbolic of the womb, the ladder leading out through the roof is the umbilical cord. Another parallel can be drawn between the Hopi *kiva* and the diagram of the Labyrinth of Daedalus which appeared on early Cretan coins.<sup>20</sup>

I had been prepared to expect very primitive conditions; however, when we arrived at the house of our host, Silas Hoyungowa, he was watching the Olympics on television. Silas is among the very last and most conservative of the “traditional” Hopi. His son, Manuel, is the leader and spokesperson for many of the traditionals at Hotevilla and some from the other mesas.<sup>21</sup> There has been a long history of division between the “progressives”—those who would like to accommodate the white people (or *Pahanas*) and accept our technology—and the “hostiles” or “traditionals”—those who want to hang on to the traditional way of life. Many have adopted the ways of white people and see the conveniences of in-door plumbing and electricity as particularly appropriate for their aging elders. While many of his neighbors now have electric lines, telephone lines, and water lines hooked up to their houses, Silas Hoyungowa uses solar panels to gather energy to run his television, refrigerator, and electric lights. Water is trucked in and stored in private tanks to supply drinking and bath water to the house. And the outhouse is still a fact of life on the mesas, even in more progressive villages.

It is evident that the contact between our culture and theirs is causing the Hopi culture to disappear. The traditionals see this in apocalyptic terms. The water lines and power lines that are now coming onto the mesa are viewed by the traditionals as not only destroying their way of life, but as desecrating the sacred lands of their heritage. As Manuel Hoyungowa has stated:

We know that these [water pipelines, electric lines, and phone lines] cannot come into our sacred village. Hotevilla, the last traditional stronghold, in prophecy is connected to the four directions. We have always rejected these conveniences and in this, the final phase, we must remain Traditional and Strong. If we fulfill our prophecy and our village of Hotevilla, allow these conveniences to come in, then we face sudden destruction and purification in this world.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Waters, *Book of the Hopi*, 24.

21. Mails and Evehema, *Hotevilla*, 12.

22. Manuel Hoyungowa, [No title,] in *Prophecy Message and Statement Delivered and Submitted to “Cry of the Earth” General Assembly, United Nations*, 23 Nov. 1993, copy in my possession.



Part of this apocalyptic fear comes from the belief that the bulldozers that would bring these conveniences onto Hotevilla would destroy shrines, cut across sacred pathways, and injure the earth. But the traditionals have an even greater fear. At the founding of Hotevilla a sacred object was buried after the manner of consecrating cities in ancient times. It is believed that disturbing that object will bring the end of Hotevilla, the punishment of its desecrators, and the final stages of the end of the world.<sup>23</sup> Again this belief has an ancient parallel. As Mircea Eliade has shown (and as Hugh noted six years prior to Eliade in his article "The Heterocentric State"<sup>24</sup>), the ancient city was consecrated around a sacred center. "For the pole to be broken denotes catastrophe; it is like 'the end of the world,' reversion to chaos."<sup>25</sup>

One thing is certain: the traditional Hopi world is ending. Today much of their food is bought at the grocery store and most of the families must seek employment in Flagstaff to survive. To further complicate this picture, very recently the Hopi experienced a truly devastating drought which prompted many Hopi to forego planting crops. The draught took a tremendous toll on the Hopi lifestyle and gave the traditionals further evidence that the world is ending. It is the harvest of the Hopi corn that allows the Home Dance to take place. Without a traditional Hopi harvest, there can be no dance. The rituals cannot be continued in the same ways without the existence of the traditional culture. And it is the rituals, the Hopi believe, that hold the world together.

Nevertheless, last summer the dance went on. After four days of fasting, the village men who become the *kachinas* emerged from the *kivas* early in the morning and gathered just below the Hoyungowa residence. Stirring us from our beds was the sound of their singing, starting out at a low monotonous chant, then swelling with the sounds of the turtle shell rattles. It was eerie. When we walked down to the plaza where the dance was to take place, the entire village was assembled—some sitting on chairs and benches, some standing, and some on the rooftops of the pueblo houses.

Then the *kachinas* entered the plaza. I had seen pictures of the *kachinas*, but nothing prepared me for the sight of the real thing. For the Home Dance there are some thirty *hemis kachinas* and eight or more *kachinamanas*. The *hemis kachinas* are the male *kachinas* ("*hemis*" means "far away"—they have come from far away and must now return). Their bodies are painted black with white symbols on the breast and back, and

23. Mails and Evehema, *Hotevilla*, 21.

24. Hugh Nibley, *The Ancient State*, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 10 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 99-147.

25. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 33.

tufts of spruce branches are tucked in their blue arm bands, in the belts at their waist, and in a wreath around their necks. They wear beautifully hand-woven multicolored aprons and sashes, and black-and-white bandoleers are tied over their right shoulders. Each *kachina* has a turtle shell rattle strapped onto his right calf. In the right hand is another rattle, while the left hand holds a twig of spruce and a downy feather. But the most overwhelming sight is their headdress. The face mask is yellow or red on one side and blue on the other. A brightly decorated blue *tablita* rises above the face mask on which is painted a frog or butterfly in the middle of a red rainbow. The *tablita* has three terraces which are topped with downy feathers and tufts of wild wheat; two eagle tail feathers and two parrot feathers adorn the top terrace. Jutting out from the sides are still more feathers. The dress of the *kachina manas*, the female *kachinas*, is more subdued. They wear an orange face mask and their hair, after the fashion of unmarried Hopi women, whirls into a bun on the sides representing the fertility symbol of the squash blossom.

When entering the plaza, the *kachinas* carry armloads of corn stalks, cattails, piki bread, gourds, melons, toy bows and arrows, and *kachina* dolls which will all be distributed as gifts at the mid-day dance. As they arrive, they make a cooing noise like a dove, only more unearthly. When assembled, the chief sprinkles each *kachina* with cornmeal and blows smoke at them from a pipe. Then he speaks to them, as if welcoming them and encouraging them to dance. The leader of the *kachinas* begins to shake his rattle and the dance begins. Each of the *kachinas* stomps his right leg and shakes the rattle in his right hand in time to the very monotonous chant of the song. Meanwhile the *kachina manas* kneel on blankets and place large gourds in front of them which resonate when they rub a bone over a notched stick placed on the gourd. The sound produced by the resonating gourds also defies description, but it somehow resembles the grunting of pigs. The entire spectacle is completely other-worldly.

The dance itself doesn't seem terribly demanding—it is very simple in form and involves stomping the right foot, shaking the rattles, and turning from one direction to another. Yet it is quite complex in meaning. Embodying the patterns of the Hopi cosmology, the dance is oriented with the four directions and each section represents a reenactment of the Four Worlds of Hopi mythology. For each Home Dance a new song is composed and it too mirrors the Hopi belief system. The dance is performed throughout the entire day, in three separate performances—at dawn, after noon, and the final performance which goes until after sunset. The Hopi believe that these rituals help to preserve order in this Fourth World where we currently reside, and they have performed them for thousands of years with only minor variations.

Yet despite the continuity of this ritual, we witnessed at the dance a further sign of the disintegration of the Hopi way: Two eagles should have been tethered to a post at the center of the plaza, and must be sacrificed immediately following the dance. No eagles were found last year and the ritual could not be completed. There are those at Hotevilla who believe this will be the final Home Dance; they believe the world is ending. The world is out of balance, *koyaanisqatsi*, and will continue to spiral downward to chaos unless there is a substantive change in human hearts. The words of the Hopi traditionals are too similar in both style and content to the words of Mormon prophets for a Mormon to dismiss them lightly. In language reminiscent of Doctrine and Covenants 87, Martin Gashweseoma warned the world in his message to the United Nations that when corruption has covered the earth:

Then the wars will come about like powerful winds, and will spread from country to country and bring Purification or Destruction to this world. The more we turn away from the instructions of the Great Spirit, Massau'u, the more signs we see in the form of earthquakes, floods, drought, fires, tornadoes, as Nature makes ready her revenge.<sup>26</sup>

At that same meeting Manuel Hoyungowa used similarly apocalyptic language to declare:

[The] Great Spirit, Massau'u, who we firmly believe is here with us, listening to us and watching over us, long ago gave to all races of people a good Life Plan to follow. His commandment to all was, "Be faithful always for I am the First and I will be the Last." Then in very clear and simple words told us to love one another, to be kind to all people, animal and plant life on this Mother Earth. ... But what happens today? Mankind is doing exactly the things the Great Spirit told us not to. For material gains many people have killed, lied, stolen, robbed their neighbors' property and heaped falsehood upon their fellow beings. There is hardly any true love, only hatred in the hearts of men today. ... The more we turn away from the Great Spirit, the more He will punish us either with earthquakes, floods, lightning, great winds or all kinds of sickness or drought.<sup>27</sup>

The Hopi elders see things as either being Hopi or Ka-Hopi. The word Hopi not only means "peace" as it is commonly translated, but also "to obey and have faith in the instructions of the Great Spirit, and not to distort any of his teachings for influence or power."<sup>28</sup>

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26. Martin Gashweseoma, [No title,] in *Prophecy Message and Statement Delivered and Submitted to "Cry of the Earth" General Assembly, United Nations.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. Mails and Evehema, *Hotevilla*, 48.

Similar to the teachings of the Hopi elders, Hugh Nibley has repeatedly discussed the ancient doctrine of the Two Ways—the way of the Lord and the way of Satan. He has also urged us to learn from people like the Hopi how to establish the Zion for which we yearn. Referring to the Book of Mormon, he writes, “Throughout these explicit prophecies it is the Gentiles who join ‘the Lamanites and those who have become Lamanites,’ not the other way around. If we are to be saved, we must move in their direction.”<sup>29</sup> But to move in their direction means learning to see from a completely new perspective.

I believe Hugh Nibley represents a model of one who has moved in their direction. For not only does he take their world seriously, he sees our world in the same way they do. While he is not the least bit sanctimonious, everything about him is deeply religious, and he sees all things as spiritual. With this perspective, he has an awareness and an openness to miracles of serendipity—this form of grace which, Scott Peck argues, is available to all, but which only a few notice and take advantage of. In this Hugh Nibley is very much like the Hopi. Both Hugh and the Hopi see meaning in the seemingly meaningless and the extraordinary in the seemingly ordinary.

A few weeks after my stay with the Hopi, I was canoeing on Tibble Fork Lake in American Fork Canyon. With the influence of my visit to Hotevilla still fresh in my mind, I was more aware of my surroundings than ever. The morning air was brisk; the sunlight sparkled on the water; and the gentle breeze smelled of campfires. The only sounds were those of my paddle as it pushed the water gently at the side of the boat, and of a fisherman’s fly line as it settled onto the smooth water. As I quietly paddled, I watched the fisherman; the grace and rhythm of the fly line was spell-binding. Then, gently and quietly, two deer sauntered into the clearing, their gait a delicate ballet. They stopped directly behind and only a few feet away from the fisherman where they drank from the stream that feeds into the lake. I watched them for several minutes, though it seemed timeless. The hypnotic beauty of the fisherman’s casting and the delicate but stately deer rendered the moment somehow holy. Then the deer returned to the cover of the foliage, the fisherman never aware of their presence. Even though his casting created a rhythm that beautifully accompanied the movements of the deer, he was completely unaware of his role in the ritual dance. The incident made me ponder how little intent I give to my actions, and of the small miracles that go unnoticed because I don’t make the effort to become aware.

To be aware is the Hopi way: To recognize one’s place in the world and one’s relationship with the creation. It is also a quality seriously ab-

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29. Nibley, *Brother Brigham*, 100-101.

sent in our modern world, and that absence is at the root, I believe, of the violence, crime, and cruelty that are destroying us. But awareness is something that can be learned. And as Scott Peck argues, "[W]ith this capacity, we will find that our journey of spiritual growth is guided by the invisible hand and unimaginable wisdom of God with infinitely greater accuracy than that of which our unaided conscious will is capable."<sup>30</sup> The key to our own survival may well be found on the humble, arid, and desolate mesas of Arizona's Hopi reservation.

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30. Peck, *The Road Less Travelled*, 309.