contemporary Latter-day Saints may prefer Ostler's very creative interpretation of the relation of God and humanity.

There is a significant absence in this book that should not have been left for the later volumes, even though the major purpose is to engage non-Mormon analytic philosophers of religion. There is no mention of the Mother in heaven. While it is true this is a mystery insufficiently revealed, Ostler has speculated boldly in the best philosophical sense of the term. Why not say something? This could be done in relation to the Old Testament feminine holy wisdom that is also found in Mosiah, to the 1909 First Presidency statement on the "Origin of Man," or, most famously, to Eliza R. Snow's poem and hymn. There is enough material in the canon that this important doctrine should be included in a book on the attributes of God. As it is, Ostler's account of the social trinity sounds like a boy's club. Hopefully this discussion is to come in the later volumes of what promises to be the most significant contribution to LDS philosophy in a long time.

Hugh Nibley

Hugh Nibley: "A Consecrated Life," by Boyd Jay Petersen (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2002), 480pp.

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This authorized biography of one of Mormonism's greatest minds and most prolific scholars is a wonderfully accessible entry point to the life and work of Hugh Nibley. Boyd Jay Petersen, married to Nibley's youngest daughter, Zina, resolved to document Nibley's life when he realized no one else was doing the job. As an in-law, Petersen has an insider's view without the complex baggage of having grown up in the shadow of this Mormon celebrity. He does not claim objectivity but he is balanced. Although he handles Nibley's shortcomings and inconsistencies gently and sensitively, he does not sweep them under the rug either. This is a respectful, honest biography, not a hagiography. Petersen used interviews with Nibley and many who knew him, as well as Nibley's scholarship and correspondence as source material and invited his wife to write the foreword: a brief and personable collection of memories about growing up with Hugh Nibley as a father.

The earlier chapters on Nibley's forebears and childhood are a little slow-moving but the book soon becomes a page-turner sprinkled with generous portions of Nibley's self-effacing wit and elegant turns of phrase. Petersen alternates his chapters between chronological biography (childhood, mission to Germany, military service in World War II, and so on) and topical themes in Nibley's life (social criticism, faith, scholarship, Book of Mormon, temples, and so on). The weakness of this approach is the occa-

sional repetition of information, but it also makes the book easy to read as a collection of stand-alone essays.

Dubbed by Eugene England as "our finest lay prophet" (p. 46), Nibley is well known for his social criticism. Petersen writes that three themes have dominated Nibley's work: "the corrupting influence of wealth, which prevents us from fulfilling our covenant to live the Law of Consecration; the destructive attitudes we have toward the environment, which blind us to the Lord's commandment to exercise responsible stewardship over the earth; and the total depravity of war, which frustrates our mission to proclaim peace" (p. 32).

The life experiences described in this biography make it clear that Nibley knew of what he spoke. He was born to a wealthy family, the grandson of a highly successful capitalist entrepreneur, Charles Nibley. Hugh was deeply affected to learn at his grandfather's deathbed that the man was racked with guilt from a lifetime of business dealings and feared to meet an angel. Nibley also watched his own parents lose their wealth toward the end of the Great Depression and saw his father struggle, often pathetically and unethically, to regain his former standard of living. Hugh's own utter lack of interest in material comforts is legendary. It is said that on his mission he once donated generously to a collection taken up in a small branch to buy a new coat for one of the elders only to discover later that he was the intended recipient. The only furniture the Nibleys had their first two years of marriage was a mattress on the floor and two orange crates as a table. The Nibleys have lived in the same small home in Provo since 1953 and Hugh famously drove a 1976 Datsun for decades until he gave up driving himself in 2002.

Hugh Nibley was also a die-hard naturist—as comfortable in deep wilderness as he was in library archives. At age sixteen, he spent six weeks alone hiking the backwoods of Oregon equipped with little more than a bedroll and a bag of wheat and raisins. He emerged exhilarated in spite of suffering a wolf bite, not to mention wearing out his shoes and walking the last forty miles barefoot. Later he often sought solace in the Scottish highlands (during the war) and the canyons of Zion National Park and frequently took his family on hiking expeditions up and down the Wasatch Front. Given this evidence of Nibley's abiding passion for nature, it is hardly surprising that he was one of the first to articulate "a Mormon theological foundation for environmental stewardship" (p. 80).

Some of the most compelling chapters of the book tell of Nibley's experiences in World War II. Though he was old enough, at age 31, to be deferred from the draft, he enlisted in the Army in 1942. His considerable intellectual and linguistic abilities were put to work in military intelligence, giving him a bird's-eye view of the war, but he also witnessed plenty of combat. He drove one of the first jeeps onto Utah Beach during the Normandy invasion and flew behind enemy lines into Holland with glider teams. He emerged deeply disillusioned with the posturing and deceit he saw at high levels of command and with a new ap-

preciation for the wars described in the Book of Mormon. Nibley preached often against the waste and evil of war in the ensuing years and protested the Vietnam War when it was extremely unpopular to do so at BYU.

Nibley's steadfast faith is put in context by his near-death experience as a young man during an appendectomy. What he saw and felt answered his nagging questions about the existence of an after-life and "permanently reoriented" his life (p. 121). No amount of scientific evidence has shaken his belief in the restored church.

In spite of this devotion for the Gospel and its defense, his sense of humor is also legendary. In fact, he saw no conflict between the two: "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" (p. 98). He could mock his own penchant for footnotes (see p. 102) and was handy at writing playful roasts of the academic community, an example of which is included as an appendix to the book.

Other particularly appealing parts of the book are the insights into Nibley's insatiable thirst for knowledge and his astounding capacity to acquire it. From cutting off his eyelashes as a child so he could see better through his telescope, to systematically scouring the University of California library while in graduate school at Berkeley, to spending his military pay on rare books, to surviving the airborne invasion of Holland with nothing but an Arabic Koran and a Gogol novel in Russian in his pockets, to smuggling notes out of the church archives by coding them in Spanish using the Greek alphabet, Nibley's headlong immersion in a rich life of the mind is evident. He learned languages by rotating the language of the texts he read each week and by befriending or moving in with immigrants from all over the world to absorb their speech. In a typically playful letter to his mother during the war, he declared that his only regret at the time was his sore neglect of Hieroglyphic and Cuneiform (p. 196).

His biography as well as his scholarship reveal a man marching to his own drum—a political liberal who loved the church even though he was also Mormon (and American) culture's sharpest critic with strong words of condemnation for seminary, BYU, and Disneyland (among other phenomena). He associated with Church general authorities and Sunstoners, with secular scholars and faith-seeking students, and found an audience among them all. Petersen doesn't ignore the less than perfect pieces of Nibley's life: the tensions between him and his parents, his rampant neglect of nutrition and health as a young man, his apocalyptic predictions which didn't always come true (although, on the other hand, some of them did), the critics who accused him of overzealous parallelism in his research (pointing out similarities between texts "without regard to the date, provenance, or applicability of the documents" [p. 163]), and especially his complex (and often absent) role as a father to his own children. Still, by the end readers will be inclined to count these shortcomings as a small piece of

an impressive life.

This graceful biography is a solid contribution to LDS history. Nibley critics can find a new appreciation for the man behind the scholarship, Nibley fans will enjoy a satisfying overview of his life's work, and a new generation will be introduced to Nibley's work, fourteen volumes of which have been published by FARMS since 1986.