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The Story of *The Truth, The Way, The Life*

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Source: *The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology (2nd Edition)*

Editor(s): John W. Welch

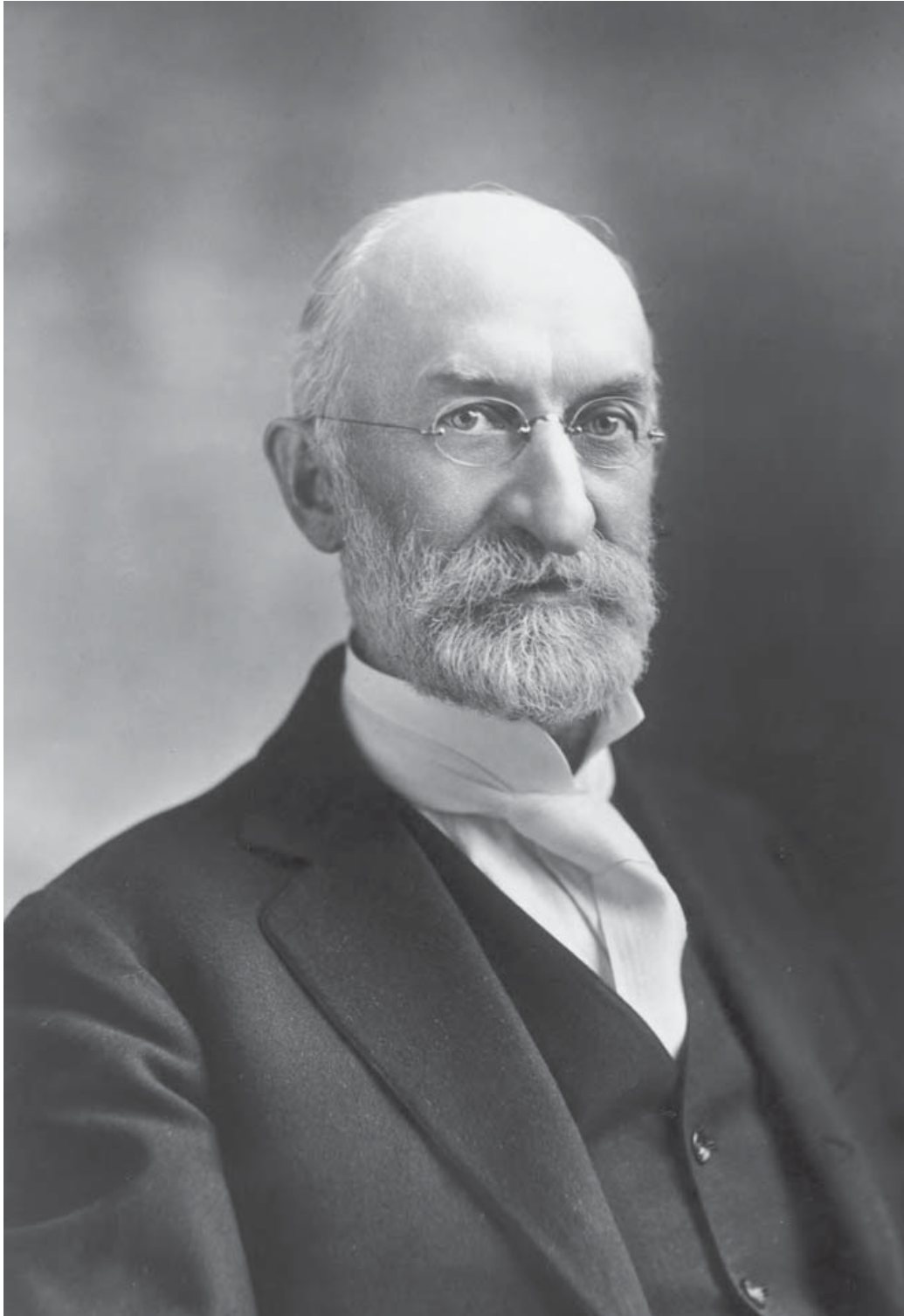
Published: Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1996

Page(s): 680–720



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Heber J. Grant. President Grant and his counselors authorized Roberts's stay in New York and provided him a stenographer. Because *The Truth, The Way, The Life* was considered an excellent work in many respects, President Grant sorrowed that Roberts insisted on including in it "some things that I think [are] problematical and cannot be demonstrated." LDS Church Archives.

The Story of *The Truth, The Way, The Life*

James B. Allen

B. H. Roberts was a highly complex person, impossible to characterize fully in any simple terms.¹ With respect to his mental capacity and scholarly activities, however, he has frequently been identified as perhaps the most eminent intellectual in the history of the Church.² Roberts himself probably would not have flaunted such a distinction,³ but it is one he may have appreciated hearing. As a young, illiterate British immigrant to Utah, he was bright, eager to learn, and anxious to master all the knowledge he could. He attended Deseret University (predecessor to the University of Utah), where he learned something from John R. Park about the value of independent thought. He also graduated at the top of his class. Mainly, however, he was self-taught, reading everything he could get his hands on and eventually becoming one of the most learned men in Utah. As a scholar, writer, and Church leader, he showed all the characteristics of one who loved the life of the mind, thirsted for both secular and spiritual knowledge, and was willing to discuss all the implications of anything he learned. His personal library, now housed in the LDS Church Archives, comprised 1,385 books, a substantial portion of which dealt with some aspect of theology, history (including Christian history and American antiquities), and philosophy.⁴

Roberts was the epitome of what one might call the “faithful intellectual.” He believed that the quest for knowledge involved both the life of the mind and the life of the spirit—that intellectuality and faith must go hand-in-hand in their search for truth. As his leading biographer has written:

He loved simple faith if simple meant uncluttered and strong. But he was troubled that the phrase is sometimes used as a synonym for “simpering acquiescence.” And he could find nothing in the scriptures, ancient or modern, to excuse anyone from brain sweat and from the arduous lifetime burden of seeking “revelation upon revelation,



John R. Park. As head of the Deseret University and as Roberts's language and literature instructor, Park impressed upon Roberts the value of independent thought. Photographed by Fox and Symons. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

knowledge upon knowledge,” the expansion of truth and light until one is “glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”⁵

During his lifetime, Roberts produced a library of books and articles on history, theology, and defenses of the faith that outstrips, in sheer volume, anything produced by any other General Authority of the Church: over thirty books, three hundred articles, numerous tracts and pamphlets, and over a thousand sermons and discourses (many of which were published in newspapers and magazines).⁶ His forensic talents, moreover, fully matched his intellectual prowess, a fact which helps explain why he was frequently called upon to represent the Church in highly visible public appearances.

Sometime early in his career, Roberts began to read the works of John Fiske. Indeed, Roberts quoted extensively from two of these works in *The Truth, The Way, The Life*.⁷ Fiske, a philosopher and historian, was a popular lecturer and writer who became known as the United States’ chief proponent of the theory of evolution. Though it is apparent from *TWL* that Roberts did not accept evolution as the explanation for the origin of Adam and his descendants, Roberts nevertheless admired Fiske and his way of thinking. No doubt because of this admiration and his own proclivities toward intellectualism, Roberts was profoundly impressed by the characterization of religious discipleship in Josiah Royce’s introduction to Fiske’s *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*. The use Roberts later made of Royce’s words suggest that they epitomize as well as anything could how Roberts viewed his own role in promoting the truths of Mormonism. There are, said Royce, two sorts of religious disciples:

There are, first, the disciples pure and simple,—people who fall under the spell of a person or of a doctrine, and whose whole intellectual life thenceforth consists in their partisanship. They expound, and defend, and ward off foes, and live and die faithful to the one formula. Such disciples may be indispensable at first in helping a new teaching to get a popular hearing, but in the long run they rather hinder than help the wholesome growth of the very ideas that they defend: for great ideas live by growing, and a doctrine that has merely to be preached, over and over, in the same terms, cannot possibly be the whole truth. No man ought to be merely a faithful disciple of any other man. Yes, no man ought to be a mere disciple even of himself. We live spiritually by outliving our formulas, and by thus enriching our sense of their deeper meaning. Now the disciples of the first sort do not live in this larger and more spiritual sense. They repeat. And true life is never mere repetition.⁸

In one sense Roberts may have been this “first sort” of disciple. No one can read his sermons or his life story without seeing him

repeat, time and time again, his faith in what he considered the essentials of the gospel. These included the “first principles” defined in the fourth Article of Faith, the atonement of Christ, the restoration of the priesthood through Joseph Smith, and the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. His great personal goal, expressed repeatedly throughout his life, was to be a powerful witness of these things. On the other hand, he hardly kept himself tethered to a single formula or angle in presenting those truths or exploring their depths. Many of his theological writings were examples of his willingness to explore new ways to present old truths, casting them in imaginative new formulas. *TWL* was, in large part, a summary of much of what he had done before—his synthesis of his life’s study and his effort to cast the truths he felt so deeply in new, more advanced, and more well-integrated formulas. In that sense, he was much more like Royce’s disciples of a “second sort.” Such disciples, said Royce,

are men who have been attracted to a new doctrine by the fact that it gave expression, in a novel way, to some large and deep interest which had already grown up in themselves, and which had already come, more or less independently, to their own consciousness. They thus bring to the new teaching, from the first, their own personal contribution. The truth that they gain is changed as it enters their souls. The seed that the sower strews upon their fields springs up in their soil, and bears fruit,—thirty, sixty, an hundred fold. They return to their master his own with usury. Such men are the disciples that it is worth while for a master to have. Disciples of the first sort often become, as Schopenhauer said, mere magnifying mirrors wherein one sees enlarged, all the defects of a doctrine. Disciples of the second sort co-operate in the works of the Spirit; and even if they always remain rather disciples than originators, they help to lead the thought that they accept to a truer expression. They force it beyond its earlier and cruder stages of development.⁹

In 1906, paraphrasing much of what Royce had to say about such disciples, Roberts seemed to spell out what he hoped would be his own intellectual and spiritual contributions to Mormonism:

I believe “Mormonism” affords opportunity for disciples of the second sort; nay, that its crying need is for such disciples. It calls for thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of its truths but will develop its truths; and enlarge it by that development. Not half—not one-hundredth part—not a thousandth part of that which Joseph Smith revealed to the Church has yet been unfolded, either to the Church or to the world. . . . The Prophet planted by teaching the germ-truths of the great dispensation of the fulness of times. The watering and the weeding is going on, and God is giving the increase, and will give it more abundantly in the future as more

intelligent discipleship shall obtain. The disciples of "Mormonism," growing discontented with the necessarily primitive methods which have hitherto prevailed in sustaining the doctrine, will yet take profounder and broader views of the great doctrines committed to the Church; and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas; co-operating in the works of the Spirit, until they help to give to the truths received a more forceful expression, and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of its development.¹⁰

The intellectual milieu of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided the broad historical backdrop for the work that Roberts would consider his *magnum opus*. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., has depicted the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when Roberts was in the midst of his early studies, as a "critical" period in American religion.¹¹ Orthodox American Christianity faced crucial challenges both to its fundamental system of thought and to its social programs. Perhaps most serious was the challenge of biological evolution, which most scientists solidly supported by the 1870s and to which many of the "thoughtful public" had been converted by such intellectual lights as Herbert Spencer, Thomas H. Huxley, and John Fiske. The famous 1925 Scopes trial in Tennessee was only one manifestation of a long-time tension that, in some way, affected nearly all church-going Americans.

Another bone of contention in the ongoing contest over religious modernism was higher criticism of the Bible, for such scholarly activity seemed to call into question the very divinity of the sacred work itself. Likewise, the growing study of comparative religion became a scholarly preoccupation that also seemed to threaten Christian orthodoxy as scholars looked at all religions, finding similar patterns from the standpoint of mythology, folklore, psychology, and anthropology. Schlesinger observes that these intellectual movements may not have affected the "average mind," but "they deeply affected the thinking of more intelligent readers."¹²

The practically inevitable result of all this scholarly activity was internal dissent and schism in American religions. Some ministers embraced the new scientific dogma, believing they could find a way to reconcile it with the essentials of Christianity. Others entrenched themselves against the dogma even more tenaciously than earlier, while churches sometimes split and professors at schools controlled by various denominations were dismissed for espousing the new, seemingly more rational, theological ideology. Modernism also affected the social and political programs of many churches.

The theological tensions created by these issues in other churches in the latter nineteenth century reached their peak a bit later within Mormonism. At Brigham Young University, for example, three professors were dismissed in 1911, not because they believed in evolution, but because they defiantly persisted in advocating it in the classroom along with personal dicta not compatible with Church teachings.¹³ At the same time, some Church leaders recognized that religion teachers needed greater intellectual training and more awareness of modern scholarship. A few of those teachers were assigned by the Church to study at the University of Chicago under some of the most important biblical scholars and higher critics in the country. In addition, during two summers in the early 1930s, schools for religion teachers were held at BYU's Aspen Grove camp. Edgar J. Goodspeed of the University of Chicago was invited to provide some of the instruction.

Between 1920 and the time of his death in 1933, Roberts met his greatest intellectual and spiritual challenges and prepared for publication the two items that he believed would become his most important contributions to the literature of the Church: *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, published in 1930, and *TWL*. When judged by the standards of its time, the *Comprehensive History* comes off well. Roberts wrote with the eye of faith, but he was willing to discuss important weaknesses and failings when he saw them. Compared with other LDS Church histories of the time, it was a model of balance. Davis Bitton wrote in 1978 that it was still "far superior to any history of Mormonism which has yet appeared; even today it is a work which no serious student of the subject can afford to ignore."¹⁴ Though considerable subsequent scholarship has provided new insight into many aspects of Mormon history, the *Comprehensive History* remains essential for students of the Mormon past, and much of the material is far from outdated.

TWL, on the other hand, even if it had been published during Roberts's lifetime, might have suffered a different fate. Whatever Church history *TWL* contained was cursory in nature, for the major focus was on philosophy, the universe, and theological understanding. Though it represented the culmination of Roberts's thinking about theological matters, some of its theology was not acceptable to his colleagues among the General Authorities and probably would be no more acceptable today. It is doubtful that *TWL* would have had a life anything like that of the *Comprehensive History* or remained in the collective memory of the Saints any longer than Roberts's other theological works, most of which are remembered only by scholars and other highly committed students of Church history.

For understanding Roberts himself, however, *TWL* is of prime importance. There he attempted to present to the Church the most important conclusions from his lifetime of study. But he also made a statement, in one way or another, on most of the major theological issues that were causing so much friction within other churches. He considered biological evolution, for example, and did not specifically reject it within “kinds” (239), but he rejected all three of the usually recognized varieties of evolution and proposed a “developmental theory” that started with “the eternity of life” to explain the ultimate development of life on earth, “save as to man” (240). He did not accept evolution as the way in which Adam and his descendants came into being. Rather, Roberts believed that God brought Adam from another world after a monstrous cataclysm had destroyed all pre-Adamic life on the earth. Roberts also demonstrated his awareness of higher criticism, even though he rejected most of its methodology. His fundamental acceptance of the Bible as authentic history and revelation was clear. He showed his acquaintanceship with the study of comparative religions. He did much of that in the first part of *TWL* but in such a way that the comparisons fit into the grand scheme of things that he saw being worked out by Deity. *TWL* was Roberts’s ultimate statement of his own beliefs.

The Book of Mormon and Its Relationship to *TWL*

Clearly, the scientific, theological, and philosophical currents of his day helped form the intellectual backdrop for *TWL* and for many of B. H. Roberts’s other writings. This was true of his works on the Book of Mormon, including three manuscripts compiled in 1921, 1922, and 1927 that were not intended for publication but represented his continuing efforts to recognize and seek responses to the challenges presented by some forms of higher criticism. Despite whatever questions he may have considered, he retained his faith in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and he let it guide much of what he said in *TWL*, which he completed after those three manuscripts. He also concluded his final testimony to the world, given in his last discourse in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, by reminding his listeners that God gave to Joseph Smith “power from on high to translate the Book of Mormon, and thence followed all which brought forth the New and Last Dispensation.” He listed the translation of the Book of Mormon among the many events “and numerous revelations to the Prophet which brought forth a development of the truth, that surpasses all revealed truth of former dispensations.”¹⁵

On the morning of August 7, 1933, less than two months before his death, Roberts received a visit from Wesley P. Lloyd, a seminary teacher and one of Roberts's former New England States missionaries. During the conversation, Roberts said some things that seemed surprising to Lloyd, who recorded them in his journal. Partly on the basis of that journal entry, Roberts's continuing faith in the Book of Mormon has sometimes been questioned. This issue has been thoroughly examined elsewhere,¹⁶ but because the Book of Mormon is so important to the spiritual and intellectual integrity of *TWL* itself, it seems essential to comment briefly here about Roberts's lifelong work on the Book of Mormon as part of the story of *TWL*.

Long before he began work on *TWL*, Roberts was pursuing all the intellectual problems relating to the origins of the Book of Mormon. He began his intensive studies as early as the 1880s, partly in response to the numerous challenges to that volume's authenticity based on secular scholarship and higher criticism. The result was his *New Witnesses for God*, largely a defense of the Book of Mormon, published in 1903. Later (1909–11) it appeared as a three-volume work. In August 1921, Elder James E. Talmage of the Council of the Twelve received a letter from William E. Riter, who asked some very searching questions about a few of the apparent inconsistencies and anachronisms in the Book of Mormon. Elder Talmage, in turn, asked Elder Roberts to prepare a response.

Roberts's work on this assignment raised issues he had not considered before. By the end of December, he had put together a 141-page manuscript entitled "Book of Mormon Difficulties: A Study." He asked for an opportunity to present his findings at a meeting of all the General Authorities, hoping that through their collective wisdom and the inspiration of the Lord they could find solutions that would "maintain the reasonableness for the faith of all in the Nephite scriptures."¹⁷ He was given that opportunity in two long days of meetings, January 4–5, 1922. At the end of the manuscript he expressed his major concern: "how shall we answer the questions that arise from these considerations of American archeology?" Silence, he pleaded, was not the answer, for it would be an acknowledgment of defeat. "Most humbly," he said, "but also most anxiously, I await the further development of knowledge that will make it possible for us to give a reasonable answer to those who question us concerning the matters herein discussed."¹⁸

The Brethren did not think it was time to pursue the matter further, even though they allowed Roberts another meeting on January 26 and formed a short-lived committee to pursue the matter with him. In that connection, Roberts completed a 450-page manuscript, "A Book of

Mormon Study,” which he also planned to present to the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. In the cover letter he intended to send with it he made a significant comment:

Let me say once [and] for all, so as to avoid what might otherwise call for repeated explanation, that what is herein set forth does not represent any conclusions of mine. This report . . . is what it purports to be, namely a “study of Book of Mormon origins,” for the information of those who ought to know everything about it *pro et con*, as well [as] that which has been produced against it, and that which may be produced against it. I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon, and therefore we can look without fear upon all that can be said against it.¹⁹

In April 1922, however, Roberts was called to be a mission president. Given the choice as to where in the United States he wanted to go, he chose the Eastern States Mission, which encompassed all the area relating to the origin of the Book of Mormon and the Church. He was set apart on May 29 and promptly dropped the matter of the manuscript.²⁰

Roberts was an ardent, hard-working mission president. Despite the still-not-answered intellectual questions relating to its origins, he had complete faith in the Book of Mormon and used it as his most important missionary tool. “It has survived all the ridicule and mockery of those who have scorned it,” he wrote to his missionaries. “Its voice is testimony of the Christ as Eternal God.”²¹ He also spent a little time in 1922 in libraries doing some additional research on how much was known about American antiquity prior to the time the Book of Mormon was published. This research eventually resulted in a few changes, minor in nature, in the 450-page manuscript he had prepared before he left on his mission.²²

After his five-year mission, Roberts made another attempt to bring about a discussion among the General Authorities of the problems relating to the Book of Mormon. He never delivered “A Study of the Book of Mormon,” but in October 1927 he sent to Elder Richard R. Lyman an eighteen-part “Parallel” between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews*. He wrote to his daughter in 1932 that he had made “one feeble effort” to get the larger manuscript considered. He called it an “‘awful’ book” but said it contained facts the General Authorities ought to know.²³

Roberts had thus produced three manuscripts,²⁴ none of which were intended for publication. He hoped, rather, that they would be the means of helping prepare the Church to address the problems he believed defenders of the faith eventually would face as scholars examined the Book of Mormon more critically. As he wrote to Richard R.

Lyman in 1927, “Such a question as that [that is, whether Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* might have provided a structural outline for the Book of Mormon] may possibly arise some day, and if it does, it would be greatly to the advantage of our future Defenders of the Faith, if they had in hand a thorough digest of the subject matter.”²⁵

The teachings of the Book of Mormon were still central to Roberts’s theological understanding and remained so throughout his writing of *TWL*. Nevertheless, his determination to leave no stone unturned in his quest for truth allowed him to raise the kinds of questions he did and to seek solutions for the problems. He realized that the Book of Mormon could not be held up to the world as the “strongest evidence we have of Church Divinity.” Instead, he told Wesley P. Lloyd in 1933, it was “the one which needs the most bolstering.”²⁶ This statement hardly meant that he had lost faith in the book. Rather, his scholarly proclivities suggest that he meant exactly what he said: the Book of Mormon needed more “bolstering,” more scholarly efforts to answer the questions he or others raised. Roberts also told Lloyd that “his greatest claim for the divinity of the Prophet Joseph lies in the Doctrine and Covenants.” If that is true, then there is just that much more evidence for the Book of Mormon itself, for the Doctrine and Covenants is replete with affirmations of the Book of Mormon.²⁷

That Roberts maintained his faith in the Book of Mormon, even while exploring in depth all the possible problems, is consistent with his personality.²⁸ He was firmly convinced of the truth of all the principles of the restored Church, especially as he presented them in *TWL*, his *magnum opus*. There he frequently and unequivocally referred to the Book of Mormon in terms such as an “ancient” volume of American scripture (21, 152, 259) or as a book that “contains the revelations of God to the ancient inhabitants of America” (275). At the same time, Roberts’s deeply ingrained commitment to scholarship made him a “disciple of the second sort” who was always open to new information and willing at least to entertain new ideas and suggestions. This did not mean that Book of Mormon “problems” convinced him that the book was not what Joseph Smith said it was. It only meant that he was willing to look at every possible challenge while maintaining his long-time convictions.

The statements recorded by Lloyd can easily be interpreted as reflecting Roberts-as-intellectual, raising questions and recognizing the hard realities of scholarly studies. Clearly, some of the statements in Lloyd’s journal do not portray the events of the 1920s quite accurately, though one cannot know whether this was the result of Roberts’s memory being unclear or Lloyd’s misunderstanding of what was said.²⁹

Nevertheless, it is the nature of people like Roberts to maintain faith even while being willing to seriously investigate questions that could alter some implications of that faith. Roberts's greatest disappointment was in the fact that he could not get his brethren to take his concerns more seriously, a fate that would also befall some of his doctrinal expositions in *TWL*.

The Manuscript of *TWL* and the Disagreement: An Interpretive Chronology³⁰

Roberts's disappointment over not getting his brethren to consider Book of Mormon problems was minor compared with his frustration over not getting his last manuscript published. Following is a chronological narrative concerning the events that related more directly to the production and review of *TWL*. I will attempt here to sort out the available facts relating to that effort, although I will not deal in detail with the doctrinal differences that arose as a result.³¹ Those differences are analyzed elsewhere.³²

Roberts's term as mission president lasted from May 1922 to April 1927. During that time—in 1924—he became the senior member of the First Council of the Seventy. Also during that time, Roberts began thinking about *TWL*. His “second sort” discipleship was compelling him to begin to crystalize and condense his lifetime of study into one grand, comprehensive statement of belief. As his mission drew to a close, he concluded that it was essential for him to remain in New York to begin this work.

On Friday, April 8, 1927, Roberts contacted President Heber J. Grant and asked permission to stay in New York to write a book.³³ The First Presidency approved Roberts's request and authorized his hiring a stenographer. Roberts planned at first to devote his time to “evidences regarding the authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” but soon his attention broadened, and the excitement of writing *TWL* became vastly more fulfilling. As he wrote to President Rudger Clawson of the Council of the Twelve on September 17, 1928, “I have been working [on it] definitely for over one year, and I might say for many years.”

Living alone in an apartment overlooking the Hudson River, Roberts worked tirelessly for the six-month leave of absence he had been granted. He collected notes, made outlines, and dictated, often for four hours at a time, to his secretary, Elsie Cook. In some ways, perhaps, these were the most spiritually exhilarating months of Roberts's life. He was working on his crowning achievement—the work he hoped would have the most important impact on the Saints of anything he

had written. Often, his biographer observes, he engaged in “faithful vigils of the night,” kneeling in prayer, analyzing the scriptures, and conducting deep personal introspection. Such vigils sometimes lasted for as long as three hours.³⁴ His intellectual methodology, if you will, combined ardent study of history, science, and philosophy with intensive scripture study, fervent prayer, and deep introspection. He wanted his *magnum opus* to combine all important knowledge into one orderly system, thus carrying the exposition of Mormonism a step beyond anything his predecessors had done.

But he had interruptions. Diabetes plagued him, and its complications sometimes kept him in bed. He also had other responsibilities. At the end of May 1927, for example, he went back to Salt Lake City to dedicate the new Mormon Battalion monument. Nevertheless, he could report to President Grant in a letter of June 15 that he had been making favorable progress and that about four chapters were in rough draft. He finished dictating a draft by the time he left New York in the fall; he revised and rewrote it in the summer of 1928.

Roberts initially anticipated fifty-three chapters. By mid-September 1928, he had forty-three chapters ready to go to press. At that point, he saw a golden opportunity to have them published. As yet, no course of study had been approved for the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums for 1929. In his September 17, 1928, letter to Rudger Clawson, Roberts observed that the First Council of the Seventy had received many inquiries from seventies quorums around the Church about their course

Elsie Cook ca. 1924. Cook served as Roberts’s secretary not only in transcribing *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, but also in preparing his *Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* and his autobiography. At the time the group photograph was taken from which this image was enlarged, Cook was a missionary serving under Roberts. Courtesy Truman G. Madsen.



of study for the coming year but that the requests could not be answered because no decision had been made. In view of that indecision, Roberts enclosed two chapter outlines and asked permission to submit his manuscript for consideration. He had designed it from the beginning to be a course of study for the seventies quorums, but it would be suitable also for the high priests and the elders. It might even provide study material for two or three years. He then reiterated what the work meant to him: "I hope to incorporate within its pages a full harvest of all that I have thought, and felt and written through the nearly fifty years of my ministry, that is, on the theme of the title."

Roberts considered this work to be something that the seventies, especially, should have. Twenty-one years earlier, from 1907 to 1911, he had published his five-volume *Seventy's Course in Theology*. The outline approach to the material used in that work was adopted and expanded in *TWL*. The First Council of the Seventy, he said, believed that this method would be "as successful as in our former experience." He then told Elder Clawson that *TWL* was "an offering on the part of the First Council of the Seventy for a course of study . . . and we feel that in this book we are following a line of subject-matter that will give to them [all Melchizedek Priesthood quorums] the proper comprehensive outline upon the Gospel as a whole and prepare them for presenting more intelligently the simple, specific message that we have to offer the world." This, indeed, was an ambitious goal.

Roberts was also ambitious, and probably unrealistic, in his plans for quick publication. He told Elder Clawson that he could put the forty-three completed chapters in the hands of the printer immediately and that the remaining chapters would be rewritten and ready for the press by the middle of October 1928. The Deseret News Book Printing Department, he said, had informed him that they could produce the book within four or five weeks after the manuscript was in their hands. By the middle of November, the book could be off the press.

By modern publication standards, at least, it is difficult to believe that an 847-page manuscript could be turned over to the printer and be ready for distribution within thirty days. More interesting, however, is the question of whether Roberts was realistic in his expectation that the Council of the Twelve could approve a book like this in such a short time. He must have sensed that it would evoke some disagreement, and one wonders how he expected a committee of extremely busy General Authorities to read, discuss, and approve such a momentous manuscript in thirty days. On the other hand, perhaps Roberts was so confident of the soundness of his doctrine and the persuasiveness of his reasoning that he really expected little difficulty.

In any case, the President of the Council of the Twelve appointed a committee, chaired by Elder George Albert Smith, to consider Elder Roberts's suggestions, though not necessarily to read and evaluate the manuscript. On September 26, 1928, Elder David O. McKay, a member of that committee, wrote to Elder Smith and his committee and expressed reservations about the procedure. Although Elder McKay had seen nothing of the book, not even its prospectus, he had no doubt that *TWL* would "deserve a meritorious place in the library of the Church." There were several reasons, however, why he did not believe it practical to consider adopting the book as a text for 1929. First, he said, *TWL* was not even completed and had not been approved. Next, he cautioned that the committee appointed to review the book should take time enough to do its work thoroughly. He did not see how this review plus the revision could possibly be done before November; hence, publication "with all its attendant difficulties" must come after November. This publication difficulty precluded *TWL* from consideration because a post-November publication would not provide time for January lessons to be in the hands of teachers. Elder McKay then noted that the 1929 Melchizedek Priesthood course of study was already prescribed, and lessons for January were already prepared. For all these reasons, Elder McKay believed that using *TWL* as a text in 1929 was "wholly inadvisable," though it might be considered for 1930.

The committee adopted Elder McKay's reasoning *in toto*. The next day, George Albert Smith wrote a letter to Rudger Clawson on behalf of the committee, listing exactly the same concerns as Elder McKay in almost exactly the same words. Smith added the committee's recommendation that another committee be appointed "to read carefully Elder B. H. Roberts' manuscript and make report of their findings."

At that point, the Sunday School became a more realistic outlet for the manuscript. In his letter, George Albert Smith raised the possibility that this new committee might recommend to the First Presidency that the manuscript be published for use in the Sunday School as a Gospel Doctrine manual. That suggestion may have come from David O. McKay, who was General Superintendent of the Church's Sunday Schools. On October 2, 1928, at the quarterly meeting of the Council of the Twelve, Rudger Clawson reported that the First Presidency had suggested that the manuscript be submitted to a committee of the Twelve, who should read it carefully with the thought in mind that if it were found suitable it should be used as a text, "presumably in the gospel doctrine department of the Sunday School." There was hardly time, he said, to get a proper reaction from the priesthood quorums in connection with the plans already in operation.

Committee Assigned to Review *The Truth, The Way, The Life*



George Albert Smith—Chair



Joseph Fielding Smith



David O. McKay



Stephen L. Richards



Melvin J. Ballard

Individual photographs courtesy LDS Church Archives.

Roberts, meanwhile, was becoming impatient. On October 18, Elder Clawson reported to the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve that Roberts had come to his office wanting to know if the book was being adopted as a priesthood course of study in 1929. Clawson explained to him that a committee had been appointed to “properly consider” the manuscript, but there had not been time to go over the book and if it were to be used at all it would not be before 1930. In that event, Roberts answered, he would have the work published privately and then, if it were found suitable, it could be adopted as a priesthood text. The First Presidency and the Twelve asked Elder Clawson to inform Roberts of their desire that he not publish it until it had been studied by a committee appointed by the Twelve and permission given for its publication. There was no hint that anyone, as yet, had serious objections. There was, however, a clear consensus that nothing of this nature should go out as an official Church text until it had been fully approved by the leading authorities.

Roberts nevertheless continued to press for quick action. On October 20, he wrote a note to the committee saying again that he had been assured by Deseret News Publishers that the book could be printed and bound within thirty days after the manuscript was in their hands. He added that the manuscript was now “perfected.” On October 25, Elder Clawson informed the Council of the First Presidency and the Twelve that he had notified Roberts of their desire that the manuscript not be published without approval by the committee, and Roberts, in turn, handed it to Elder Clawson. President Grant, apparently trying to smooth Roberts’s impatience, asked that it be considered as soon as possible.

The committee appointed to read the manuscript consisted of George Albert Smith, chair, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Stephen L. Richards, and Melvin J. Ballard. They took their time because they were extremely busy and they were determined to do a thorough job. Perhaps Roberts should have realized that five members of the Quorum of the Twelve did not have the luxury of a great deal of time to spend just reading his manuscript. On February 26, 1929, George Albert Smith wrote to Elder John A. Widtsoe, who was living in London and presiding over the European Mission. Elder Smith’s letter reflected some of the time-consuming work in which the Twelve were involved. In addition to all their regular duties, which included ten to twelve stake conferences every week, there were several committees functioning. Interestingly, the three committees he mentioned all involved works of Roberts. One committee was studying the matter of celebrating the Church’s centennial in 1930. Another was reading the

historical material Roberts had previously published in *Americana*, with a view toward having it updated and published by the Church during the centennial. Another, Elder George Albert Smith's committee, was reading *TWL*. Elder Smith was impressed with what he had read so far. *TWL* "will be the most comprehensive treatise of the Gospel that has yet been published," he reported to Elder Widtsoe. Elder Smith also gave some indication of how methodically the committee was proceeding. They had been reading it together twice a week, two hours at a time, for two months. They were hoping to be finished by the end of the month.

On the same day, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith also wrote to Elder Widtsoe. Like George Albert Smith, he commented on how extremely busy the Twelve were, noting that "it has fallen to my lot to draw a place on most of the committees." He also commented on Roberts's "very voluminous manuscript," hinting at a bit of concern for the author's ambitious desire to publish it "as a text book for the Priesthood, Church Schools and everybody in general." He also suggested that the committee was beginning to have some apprehension, for, he said, the manuscript "contains many very excellent things, but also has in it some things which cause us considerable worry." He did not say what those things were, or who was worried about them.

Meanwhile, Roberts's own patience was wearing thin. With hindsight, one can see that the Twelve were acting responsibly, and probably as rapidly as could be expected. But one can also understand what was happening to Roberts, and why, at least in private, he was growing restless and not a little gruff. He was having increasingly serious health problems connected with the diabetes that had begun to afflict him while on his mission; he was deeply involved in various administrative duties connected with his position as President of the First Quorum of the Seventy; he was on the committee planning the Church's centennial; and he was beginning to pull together his *Americana* material for what would become, the following year, his six-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church*. In addition, he was deeply annoyed that his career-long struggle to more clearly define the role of the seventies was getting nowhere, and he was becoming increasingly discouraged at what he considered an all-too-slow process of approving his life's greatest work. The death of a beloved grandson in a violent automobile accident early in January 1929 only added to his despondency.

The foregoing challenges explain the gloom he shared privately with his friend, Howard R. Driggs, in a letter of January 8, 1929. They may also explain why, during the next few years, Roberts sometimes seemed so stubborn and crotchety. His manuscript, he told Driggs, had

been in the hands of the committee for nearly three months and they were only halfway through it. “Oh the slowness of large bodies!” he complained. He had no idea what the committee was thinking, though individual members had given him private words of commendation. But, he complained,

this long wait for a reading is taking all the joy out of the initiative and spontaneity that I hoped to impart to the work, and I find myself a good deal depressed over our cumbersome and slow methods, much of which I have found in the past to be so unimportant—I am tired of it and I feel myself growing a bit restive under the formalities and waiting one upon another.

Then, after a complaint about his dissatisfaction in connection with his efforts to more clearly define the role of the seventies, he commented on his own apparent petulance: “Grouchy! Well, maybe a little. The effect of old age! Perhaps. What will come of it? I don’t know You will see I am a bit depressed.”³⁵

It is important to observe here that in this and most other available documents, Roberts did not castigate or demean individuals among his brethren. His concern was more with the *process*, which he considered too cumbersome to allow things to happen as quickly as he desired.

By March 9, Roberts was more optimistic. He reported in a letter to F. T. Pomeroy, editor of the *Genealogical and Historical Magazine of the Arizona Temple District*, that the committee had finished reading his manuscript and was preparing its report. He hoped that the book would now be published very soon.³⁶

Again, Roberts was too optimistic. He may not have been aware, at this point, of Joseph Fielding Smith’s concerns, but Elder Smith had serious reservations over a few particular points of doctrine. On April 1, Elder Smith prepared an eleven-page document explaining and supporting with scriptures his views that humans were the last of God’s creations, that Adam was the “first man of all men on the earth,” that Adam was not a translated being brought to the earth from some other world, and that Adam was not subject to death before the Fall. Elder Smith did not specifically mention either Roberts or the manuscript, but his document is clearly a direct refutation of the points that bothered him most as a member of the committee reading *TWL*. Presumably, Elder Smith’s document was read, at least by the committee.

Apparently, members of the Twelve began working with Roberts at about this time, attempting to persuade him either to change his views or to eliminate the controversial pre-Adamite material. But Roberts was not about to cut away a theory that he had arrived at so painstakingly and that, he believed, helped reconcile the conflicts

between the biblical account of the Creation—which seemed to place Adam on the earth around 4000 B.C.—and evidence that was, to him, incontrovertible that human and numerous other forms of life lived and died on this earth for eons prior to the appearance of Adam. According to Roberts, the pre-Adamites, along with all other life, had been wiped off the earth in a great cataclysm, after which Adam, a “translated being,” was brought from another world and told to “replenish” (“refill,” as Roberts interpreted the word) the earth.

Such doctrine flew in the face of Joseph Fielding Smith’s interpretation of scripture, and the two views as stated were simply irreconcilable. The reader of *TWL* should find Roberts’s reasoning interesting. While Roberts did not use *TWL* to support the theory of evolution with respect to humans, he skirted close to evolution of plants and animals with his “development theory” (see ch. 25). Thus, *TWL* could have raised further alarms in the mind of Elder Smith, who was determined, above all, to protect what he perceived as the traditional truths of the gospel from any corruption by modernism.³⁷

In May 1929, Roberts expressed his unyielding attitude on the matter when he wrote that “some learned men don’t see some of its chapters so I am letting it ride until I have more time. Will not change it if it has to sleep.”³⁸

Clearly, the Twelve were unable to make a favorable publication decision until Roberts was willing to eliminate the sections to which Elder Smith objected, or until Elder Smith was willing to let *TWL* be published anyway. Neither was very likely. An impasse was in the making, and it caused problems in connection with plans for course material in 1930. In a quarterly meeting of the Council of the Twelve on July 2, 1929, Elder Smith noted David O. McKay’s concerns over what the Sunday School was going to use as a gospel doctrine manual. The Sunday School had hoped to use Roberts’s manuscript, Elder McKay said, but unless Brother Roberts would consent to eliminate “some of the personal opinions which do not conform to the revelations of the Lord,” *TWL* could not be used as a manual.

At a similar meeting three months later on October 1, Elder McKay’s recommendation that the Sunday School study Church history the following year was approved. At the same meeting, the Roberts manuscript was again discussed, and again it was reported that Roberts had refused to eliminate the “objectionable teachings.” There were several objections, but none so serious as the “pre-Adamite” theory and the interpretation of Adam as a “translated being subject to death.”

Members of the committee, meanwhile, worked with Elder Roberts, but failed to persuade him to eliminate these “objectionable features.”

Finally, on October 10, 1929, the committee sent their report to the Council of the Twelve. In a cover letter of that date, George Albert Smith graciously affirmed the committee's feeling that for the most part Roberts's work was "very worthy" in its treatment of the mission of Jesus Christ and gospel principles, though "the manuscript could be greatly reduced without injury to the thoughts expressed." There were, however, objectionable doctrines of a "speculative nature" that, the committee said, "appear to be out of harmony with the revelations of the Lord and the fundamental teachings of the Church." A three-page discussion of twenty-seven points questioned by the committee was given to Roberts, apparently in preparation for this meeting, but he was both dismayed and irritated—not just at the year-long ordeal of waiting, but also at some of the objections. His personal copy of the list is covered with his underlining and handwritten reactions to nearly every point. Already he was preparing his thoughts for the more extensive discussions that would come in January 1930.³⁹ Indeed, Roberts had informed them that if he could not obtain their approval he would, perhaps, publish it on his own at some future time. This, of course, was only a reiteration of what he had said a year earlier. The committee then recommended "that in its present form, the manuscript not be published."

Several events over the next few months suggest that the differences were about to become more intense and more public, even as most of the actors in this interesting drama wanted to maintain a harmonious spirit despite their differences of opinion. Elder Roberts, perhaps unwisely, became more bold and began preaching his theories in various Church meetings and on the air. Alarmed, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith reported at the November 26 meeting of the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve that Roberts had been doing this for months, "thereby causing a great deal of commotion among our young people." He thought Roberts should be enjoined from such preaching. He also reported that in a meeting of the Twelve that morning, Elder Roberts said that he would gladly review his manuscript and make modifications if he could find his way clear to do so. Failing that, Roberts would publish it on his own.

In a meeting of the Twelve held approximately one month later (January 7, 1930), Elder Smith expressed his dismay at the "dangers lurking in modern thought." James E. Talmage voiced his concern that any literature sent out by the Church should be "accurate," saying that his experience in reading manuscripts convinced him that many people are careless in what they say and in how it appears in print. The minutes do not suggest that these statements were aimed directly at

Roberts, but given the climate of the time and the fact that the issue clearly was coming to a head, the Roberts manuscript could not have been far back in the minds of the apostles. Elder Rudger Clawson, who found the spirit of the meeting attractive, noted what must have been the sense of unity they all were striving for: “We are all different,” he said, “but have the same spirit and testimony.”

Four months later, however, Joseph Fielding Smith felt it was his responsibility to bring his own understanding of the doctrines in question more clearly to the attention of the public. On Saturday, April 5, 1930, he gave an address at a conference of the Genealogical Society of Utah. There, without mentioning Elder Roberts or his manuscript by name, Smith addressed directly the doctrines in *TWL* that he objected to, which doctrines were apparently being taught by Roberts in some of the wards and stakes. “I denounce as absolutely false the opinions of some,” he said, “that this earth was peopled with a race before Adam.” Smith also complained that this and other doctrines were being preached by “elders” in an attempt to reconcile some of the beliefs of the Church with those of some scientists.⁴⁰ The address was reported briefly in that evening’s edition of the *Deseret News*, but Roberts’s immediate reaction is not available.

Roberts, meanwhile, was finding enough time in his busy schedule to follow through on the request of the committee that he go over the chapters in question and report by May 1 on the likelihood of changing them so they could be used as a priesthood text for 1930–31. In a letter dated April 28, 1930, he reported to Elder George Albert Smith and the committee. “[I] have again come to my former conclusion (and more firmly),” Roberts declared, “that it cannot be changed or given up without destroying the very genius and purpose of my work.” Even minor concessions, Roberts felt, would undermine the whole. The impasse was clear: the uncertain doctrines were simply too central to Elder Roberts’s thinking to be abandoned; Elder Smith’s opposing views were the same for him.

Roberts tried, however, to show that he was not intransigent. “I do not put forth my work as absolutely accurate or beyond fault,” he wrote, “that can only be said of the scriptures.” He was still willing to be shown where his book was wrong or at variance with the scriptures, but, he said, “I cannot convince myself in this case that I am wrong.” He also noted (as he had with respect to his Book of Mormon studies) that one of his main concerns was with the youth of the Church. He hoped his text would be helpful to many of them in “solving their intellectual problems.” That was a high expectation, but it suggests how devoutly Roberts believed he had reconciled the major scientific problems of the day with the scriptures.

Roberts concluded his letter by conceding the right of the committee to examine his work as to its fitness for a priesthood text and to decide against it. Therefore, he said, "I withdraw it from further consideration by your Committee for such uses." However, he declared his continuing independence when he said that he did not concede the right of the committee to determine what he should write or say personally, on his own responsibility, "not of text book standard, but as a contribution to Mormon literature dealing with doctrine and other subjects." Clearly, he was still thinking of private publication.

On May 15, Elder Clawson reported Roberts's response at a meeting of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. He also gave to the First Presidency a copy of Roberts's April 28 letter, along with a one-page summary of the points in question. A week later, Elder Roberts had a lengthy interview with the First Presidency in which the contents of the book were discussed. After being told again that the First Presidency and the Twelve could not approve some parts, Roberts reiterated his determination to make no changes.

President Grant later reflected in his journal his sorrow that Elder Roberts was determined to include "some things that I think problematical and cannot be demonstrated." But, he noted, the Church had furnished Elder Roberts a stenographer, both in New York and since his return to Salt Lake City, for the purpose of completing the book. President Grant clearly felt the Church therefore had the right to determine what went in it, if it were to be used as a Church manual. He thought that before publication they must come to an understanding on its content, "and we object emphatically to his putting anything in it that the Presidency and the Apostles cannot approve."

The matter was not closed. Joseph Fielding Smith continued to be troubled over the "worldly philosophies" and "theories of men" that were "creeping in among the Latter-day Saints" and, he believed, injuring their faith. He urged repentance and more humility among the people. He also saw too many "modernistic tendencies" among the instructors in the priesthood and other organizations. These were "a grave danger" to the Church, and something should be done to remedy the situation.⁴¹ Then, in October, he allowed his April 5 speech to be published in the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*.⁴² There he sketched the plan of salvation and declared that the doctrine of "pre-Adamites" was not a doctrine of the Church and that there was no death on the earth before the fall of Adam. He stressed the incompleteness of our knowledge about the Creation, the need for faith, and the importance of patiently placing more confidence in the work of God and less in the passing theories of men. This publication

became the catalyst for a chain of events that led to a series of crucial discussions in the meetings of the Council of the Twelve. These discussions also constituted a major element in the saga of *TWL*.⁴³

Elder Roberts was beside himself at the publication of Elder Smith's speech, but he did not make a public reply or show any public rancor toward Elder Smith or any of the General Authorities. Privately, however, this was the one time in the history of *TWL* that Roberts came close to criticizing one of his colleagues personally.

With hindsight, one can view the unique *TWL* story as one of the major historic conflicts of perspective among honest, dedicated Church leaders who were unified in their commitment to the essentials but disagreed on things that the Church had not officially defined. On the one hand, Elder Roberts believed that one must accept the findings of modern science and find a way to reconcile them with the scriptures. On the other, Elder Smith feared such methodology as the path toward undermining the scriptural foundations of faith in the Lord. These views were at an impasse. The most significant thing about the eventual outcome, however, was the fact that in the end, the leaders of the Church officially declared that neither view was the doctrine of the Church. The final answer was not essential to salvation. It was therefore better, in the long run, for ambiguity to remain than for a mistake to be enshrined.

On December 15, 1930, Roberts wrote to the First Presidency about Elder Smith's Genealogical Society address. Roberts wanted to know if the address had been submitted to and approved by the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve before it was published. Was the address an official declaration or merely "the unofficial and personal declaration" of the opinions of Elder Smith? If it was unofficial, Roberts said, that fact should have been made clear in the discourse. It is understandable, of course, after the seemingly interminable reading of the *TWL* manuscript and its final rejection, that Roberts should have been upset when the opposite view got into print with no review at all (even if in an unofficial journal). One wonders, however, if Roberts would have been willing to state clearly in his own book that it reflected merely his own opinions and not the doctrine of the Church. Perhaps, if he had published it on his own, he would have made this qualification. Nothing in the documents, however, suggests that this occurred to anyone as a possible solution.

Roberts went further in his letter. He objected to the "dogmatic" spirit of the speech and its "finality," as if "speaking with final authority." He also challenged Elder Smith's "competence," if the address was his own and not an official pronouncement, to speak with authority on



Rudger Clawson. Elder Clawson served as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles during the time *The Truth, The Way, The Life* was being considered by the Twelve as a possible lesson manual. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

such subjects. He also declared that Elder Smith's views were in conflict with a statement by an "earlier Apostle" that had been endorsed by none other than Brigham Young, a statement that therefore carried more weight than the "dictum" of Elder Smith.

At the same time, on December 16, Elder Smith felt greater concern and anxiety than ever before about certain books that were being published on the Bible for use in Church schools. Those publications appeared to have Church approval, but they had not been reviewed by any of the Brethren.

The First Presidency gave Elder Smith's article and Elder Roberts's letter to the Council of the Twelve, asking them to investigate the matter and try to reconcile the differences of opinion. On December 30, in a telephone conversation, Rudger Clawson asked Elder Roberts for a more definite statement regarding his objections to Elder Smith's treatise. Roberts wrote to Clawson the next day, stating his position in practically the same terms as before. He also added a statement of belief that Elder Smith's remarks were contrary to the scriptures and would tend "to reduce the Church of the New Dispensation to the character of a narrow, bigoted sect." He also asked for an opportunity to defend his statements, a request that he repeated in person in an extemporaneous address at the meeting of the Council of the Twelve on January 2, 1931.

Elder Roberts was granted his request. On January 7, 1931, he appeared before the Council of the Twelve (with Elder Smith present), armed with Draft 2 of chapter 31 of *TWL*, constituting a fifty-page statement of his position (318-22). He quoted extensively from leading scientists, and in support of his position that the earth was peopled before Adam and that Adam was commanded to "replenish" (refill) it, Roberts quoted a sermon by Orson Hyde of October 9, 1854, which, Roberts said, had been endorsed by Brigham Young. On January 16, Elder Clawson told the First Presidency of the discussion but did not give a full report. Rather, the Presidency decided that the Twelve should hear the entire case before reporting to them; since Elder Roberts had stated his position before the Twelve, it was only fair that Elder Smith be given the same opportunity.

On January 21, Joseph Fielding Smith had his turn. He appeared before the Council, with Elder Roberts also present, carrying a fifty-eight-page paper.⁴⁴ He answered all of Roberts's arguments with obvious mastery of both the scriptures and the sermons of earlier leaders of the Church. In this meeting, as well as in the meeting two weeks earlier, there was little discussion. In both instances, the Apostles simply listened as the brethren read their papers.⁴⁵

While it is hardly fair to judge who “got the best” of these proceedings, it is interesting to note that Elder Smith seemed to be on somewhat firmer ground than Roberts as to Roberts’s assertion that Brigham Young had endorsed Orson Hyde’s doctrine of pre-Adamic men. Elder Smith observed that in the sermon in question Orson Hyde was not really preaching on pre-Adamites. Rather, Hyde was preaching about marriage and referred to pre-Adamites only incidentally. Indeed, he noted, President Young never at any time talked about pre-Adamites. When President Young said, “We have had a splendid address from brother Hyde, for which I am grateful,” he was not necessarily endorsing the pre-Adamite theory.⁴⁶ Elder Smith was also on more solid ground concerning the Hebrew behind the word *replenish* in Genesis 1:28.

Between these two meetings, Elder James E. Talmage, who was clearly aware of the opposing viewpoints, delivered a Sunday sermon from the Tabernacle. This January 18 address was reported in the *Deseret News*. He spoke of revelation as “the source of all true knowledge and genuine wisdom.” Retracing many themes in *TWL*, he covered spirit life before mortal birth, “the Adamic Dispensation,” and the subsequent dispensations of the gospel; he used science and scriptures to demonstrate the orderliness of God’s ways, the purposefulness of earth life, and the directive intelligence behind all phenomena of nature. He affirmed that he had found nothing in the gospel “contrary to reason and common sense,” and he cast aspersions on “higher critics” who did not accept the simple scriptural account. Prescient of the eventual outcome of the discussions about *TWL*, Talmage struck a middle ground and ventured no opinion on the areas in controversy.

Three days later, on January 21, 1931, Rudger Clawson, on behalf of the Council of the Twelve, sent a report to the First Presidency about the presentations of Roberts and Smith. Elder Clawson briefly reviewed the arguments, then indicated that Elder Roberts’s language about Elder Smith’s competence was “very offensive” because it failed to show brotherly deference to one of higher priesthood rank. However, at the close of the meeting, Clawson said, the two brethren had affirmed “*that they entertained no ill feeling, one toward the other.*”⁴⁷ This point should be emphasized, for it reflects the fact that both men, despite their deep differences, respected each other as fellow servants in the Kingdom. In the end, the Council of the Twelve made no recommendation; they simply awaited instructions from the First Presidency, who wanted all of the General Authorities to be present when the matter was discussed “so that all might become united.”

Meanwhile, the discussion was expanding, for other General Authorities were also concerned about the implications of modern science and their views were sought. On January 13, Elder Melvin J. Ballard wrote to Elder John A. Widtsoe (who was still on assignment in England). Ballard mentioned that the General Authorities were giving “great attention” to important doctrinal matters, and particularly the question of pre-Adamites that had been suggested in Elder Roberts’s book. “If you have any views on the subject,” he wrote, “I am sure the brethren would be glad to hear from you.” Elder Widtsoe’s reply, written on January 27, provides a very important statement about his own attempt to find the kind of balance that would not fly in the face of either well-documented scientific fact or revealed religious truth. The wisest plan, Widtsoe thought, was to do what they had been doing for years:

Accept all well-established and authenticated facts; and refuse to base our faith on theories whether scientific or theological. One may be led into all manner of absurdities if he clings strictly to the changing theories of science; and one may quite as easily find himself in mistaken notions if he attempts the interpretation of the scriptures without getting a full perspective of the subject and adequate knowledge of human events that led to the giving of the scriptures, including origins and translations.

He did not comment directly on pre-Adamites, but his attitude toward science and religion was clearly akin to that of Roberts.⁴⁸ He appealed to “reasonable wisdom in guiding the [new] generation brought up under the domination of new ideas, modern ideas.”

One of the impressive realities that pervades this entire story is the seriousness, concern, and goodwill toward the participants demonstrated by the First Presidency and the Twelve in these discussions. Few people understood or appreciated how hard these leaders worked on the task. The General Authorities were deeply concerned to avoid making statements or endorsing positions that were not clearly in accord with revealed truth. None seemed to lean as far one way or the other as either Elder Roberts or Elder Smith, but there is no evidence that anyone criticized either of them for their positions. The General Authorities were searching for truth, but they also knew that whatever public statement they authorized would be accepted by the Saints as final truth. They wanted to be sure that no private opinion was so dignified.

After receiving the Twelve’s report about Roberts and Smith, the First Presidency took the matter under advisement and began to read all the relevant documents themselves. On Sunday, January 25, 1931, President Grant spent the morning in the office with his first counselor,

Anthony W. Ivins, reading the material. At noon they decided that since President Ivins had read all the material the day before, President Grant should finish it at home. They would not make a decision, however, until the other counselor, Charles W. Nibley (who was out of town) had also seen the documents. President Grant spent part of the afternoon and evening finishing his reading. He later recorded in his journal a marvelously well-balanced statement that set the tone for the final disposition of the case. "After reading the articles by Brothers Roberts and Smith," he wrote,

I feel that sermons such as Brother Joseph preached and criticisms such as Brother Roberts makes of the sermon are the finest kind of things to let alone entirely. I think no good can be accomplished by dealing in mysteries, and that is what I feel in my heart of hearts these brethren are both doing.

Roberts, meanwhile, brooded about the possible outcome of the hearings and finally, on February 9, wrote a letter to the First Presidency. The letter brought the issue right back to the matter of his book. He complained again about what he considered the weaknesses of Elder Smith's arguments, then declared, perhaps intemperately, that it was on the basis of "such pabulum" that the publication of *TWL* was suspended. The book, he declared again, "is the most important work that I have yet contributed to the Church, the six-volumed Comprehensive History of the Church not omitted." He asked for a chance to respond to Elder Smith's reply to his paper before a final decision was made, for he now had much more to present. If he could have the chance, he believed, the principal cause of suspending his work would be removed. Elder Roberts got a second chance on February 25, when he met for over two hours with the First Presidency.

The First Presidency was fully aware of and undoubtedly impressed by the fact that both James E. Talmage and John A. Widtsoe were finding a common middle ground of agreement and belief.⁴⁹ They also continued prayerfully to consider the matter. Finally, sometime before April 5, the First Presidency reached a decision. It was incorporated into an eight-page report (dated April 5) that was addressed to the Council of the Twelve, the First Council of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. The report thoroughly and thoughtfully reviewed the entire matter, beginning with Elder Smith's address to the Genealogical and Historical Society a year earlier. Then, on April 7, in a four-hour meeting of all the General Authorities, who were happy finally to be all together, the First Presidency announced and discussed in detail their decision. "After prayerful consideration," they said, they had

“decided that nothing would be gained by a continuation of the discussion of the subject under consideration.”

The First Presidency included in their report several statements that should have special importance to Latter-day Saints, for these statements are powerful cautions against doctrinal extremes. Speaking specifically to the issues in the controversy, the First Presidency declared: “The statement made by Elder Smith that the existence of pre-Adamites is not a doctrine of the Church is true. It is just as true that the statement: ‘There were not pre-Adamites upon the earth,’ is not a doctrine of the Church. Neither side of the controversy has been accepted as a doctrine at all.”

Later in the document, the First Presidency quoted from Joseph Smith, who on April 8, 1843, declared:

Oh ye Elders of Israel, harken to my voice; and when you are sent into the world to preach, tell those things you are sent to tell; preach and cry aloud, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel.” Declare the first principles, and let mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown. . . . Elder Brown, when you go to Palmyra, say nothing about the four beasts, but preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.⁵⁰

Interestingly, this quotation is from the same sermon in which Joseph Smith made his oft-quoted statement that he did not like the fact that Pelatiah Brown had been called before the High Council for “erring in doctrine.” Nor did he like “creeds,” Joseph said, but, rather, wanted “the liberty of thinking and believing” as he pleased. Furthermore, “it does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.”⁵¹ These words should not be construed as pleading for “freedom of thought” in the sense of teaching false doctrine after being cautioned by Church leaders not to do so. The Prophet was pleading with Elder Brown (who was going on a mission) and others to preach first principles, not the mysteries. This was indeed an appropriate background for using the quotation in the setting of the 1931 deliberations. “We believe,” said the First Presidency, “this admonition to be as applicable to us as to those to whom the Prophet addressed it.” The First Presidency continued by suggesting how all could be agreed:

Upon the fundamental doctrines of the Church we are all agreed. Our mission is to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave Geology, Biology, Archeology and Anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church.

They then reaffirmed that “we can see no advantage to be gained by a continuation of the discussion to which reference is here made, but on the contrary are certain that it would lead to confusion, division and misunderstanding if carried further.” They ended with one doctrinal pronouncement upon which they felt all must agree. It came from a 1909 statement by the First Presidency: “Adam is the primal parent of our race.” Anything more or less than that was not official Church doctrine.

The First Presidency’s decision was neither a refutation nor an affirmation of Roberts’s position, but the decision meant that his speculative work could not be published by the Church nor could Elder Smith’s heartfelt responses be preached as official doctrine. James E. Talmage recorded in his journal (April 7) his satisfaction with the decision: “I think the decision of the First Presidency is a wise one in the premises. This is one of the many things upon which we cannot preach with assurance and dogmatic assertions on either side are likely to do harm rather than good.”⁵²

The leaders of the Church could have let the matter drop at that point, but they were too deeply concerned about the feelings of Elder Roberts and too impressed with the noncontroversial parts of his manuscript not to make another attempt at reconciliation. In a meeting of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve on April 9, Elder Stephen L. Richards proposed that it would be a “splendid thing” if the First Presidency would once more refer to the Twelve the matter of considering *TWL*⁵³ so that “a further attempt might be made to effect some reconciliation with Brother Roberts which would make possible the publication of his book.” President Grant called the suggestion commendable, a motion was made and approved, and the matter went back to the Twelve. The following day the same people who had served on the initial committee were appointed by Rudger Clawson to serve on a new one. They were to call on Roberts, making an “earnest effort to compose matters and induce him, if possible, to consent to the elimination from his manuscript of any illusion [*sic*] to the theory of a pre-Adamic race or races,” as well as other minor objections. In the letter of appointment, Elder Clawson again affirmed the general feeling that this was an “excellent work” that should not be lost to the Church by going unpublished. Unless Roberts made the changes, however, *TWL* could not be used by the priesthood quorums.

There is no record of what happened with this committee, but it is apparent that Elder Roberts still declined to make the changes. Meanwhile, he sought some comfort in what certain other General Authorities, particularly Elder James E. Talmage, were doing.

On August 9, 1931, at the request of the First Presidency, Elder Talmage delivered an address entitled “The Earth and Man” that was soon made available by the Church in pamphlet form and published in several periodicals.⁵⁴ In his address, Elder Talmage recognized not only that the earth was extremely ancient, but also that life and death occurred on the earth long before the advent of humans. This teaching was clearly contrary to what Joseph Fielding Smith believed. The address included more, but the most significant thing in connection with this discussion is Elder Talmage’s explanation as to why he gave the talk.

The conclusion of the hearings and discussions in relation to the disagreement between Elders Roberts and Smith did not bring to an end the need for Church leaders to consider the issues related to modern scientific knowledge. In his lengthy journal entry for November 21, 1931, Elder Talmage briefly reviewed all the recent discussions, then noted that many LDS students had inferred from Elder Smith’s 1930 address that the Church refused to recognize the findings of science if there was even a seeming conflict with scripture and that therefore the policy of the Church was opposed to scientific research. In other words, because Elder Smith’s statement had been published and Elder Roberts’s had not, Elder Smith’s view was catching on among the youth of the Church. Elder Talmage knew that the April 7, 1931, decision meant that General Authorities were not supposed to discuss such things in public any more. He had also been present at a later discussion, however, in which the First Presidency had commented favorably on the suggestion that “sometime, somewhere, something should be said by one or more of us to make plain that the Church does not refuse to recognize the discoveries and demonstrations of science, especially in relation to the subject at issue.”

Talmage noted that President Anthony W. Ivins presided and three other members of the Council of the Twelve, including Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, had been present at his August 9 address. He also observed that Elder Smith and all the others recognized that his address was “in some important respects opposed to [Elder Smith’s] published remarks,” but the other brethren nevertheless expressed their “tentative approval” of what he said. Then, in a tender expression of his deep concern for harmonious relationships even in the midst of some difference of opinion, he expressed his gratitude that on November 16 his address had been very thoroughly considered by the First Presidency, who approved its publication, with slight changes. It appeared in the Church Section of the *Deseret News* on November 17. Talmage’s journal entry concludes:

The discussions throughout . . . have been forceful but in every respect friendly, and the majority of the Twelve have been in favor of the publication of the address. . . . I have hoped and fervently prayed that the brethren would be rightly guided in reaching a decision, and, as the Lord knows my heart, I have no personal desire for a triumph or victory in the matter, but have hoped that the address would be published or suppressed as would do for the best. The issue is now closed; the address is in print.

One result of the publication of “The Earth and Man” was another brief discussion about the possibility of publishing *TWL*. The impact of the address on Roberts must have been exhilarating, for here, at last, was a public statement by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve that opened a door for some of Roberts’s own most cherished attitudes. Talmage had not really clarified the question of pre-Adamic man, but he had said enough that Roberts was led to renew his request to the First Presidency to have his book reconsidered. As Elder Talmage wrote to John A. Widtsoe on February 5, 1932, Roberts’s request was based on his claim that Talmage’s address went “beyond what he [Roberts] had ventured to say in his book concerning our recognition of the facts in science relating to the age of the earth and of the human race thereon.” On March 18, Elder Roberts sent a chapter from his manuscript (probably chapter 31) to Elder Talmage. After it had been returned from the Twelve, Roberts wrote, he had added a few more pages of evidence relating to the antiquity of humanity. He emphasized that “the spirit and facts of the chapter, however, are in no way changed, but the evidence has been a little increased.” He did not want it copied by anyone.

Less than a week later, on March 24, President Grant reported to the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve that the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Associations had requested permission to use *TWL* in their adult classes the following year. Roberts himself was no doubt one of the instigators of this request, for he was the first assistant to George Albert Smith, the president of the Young Men’s association. The leaders discussed the matter at length, some emphasizing again their belief that *TWL* was the best work Roberts had ever written and that the material was “very timely and will appeal to young people.” But the First Presidency and the Twelve were also convinced that chapters 30 and 31 would lead to contention and “no end of trouble.” As in the case of all the earlier discussions, the leaders agreed again that *TWL* should not be published without the recommended modifications nor should it be used as a course of study in the Mutual Improvement Associations.

President Grant agreed to inform Elder Roberts of the council's decision. He did not do so immediately, however, but waited until after the forthcoming general conference. Again, President Grant waited because he wanted to hold a meeting of all the General Authorities and explain the attitude of the First Presidency and the Twelve toward matters of this kind, so there could be "perfect harmony" among them. This was apparently the last time the issue was taken up during Roberts's lifetime.

The final decision grated on Roberts as deeply as had each of the others. Roberts continued in his tireless, steadfast way to carry out his ministry as a Church leader, and he did all he could, publicly, to bear witness of the divinity of the restored gospel. Privately, however, he was sometimes discouraged and despondent, showing signs of impatience and, perhaps, depression. One reason for this depression was connected with his failure to achieve all he hoped for with respect to the organization of the seventies. Another was the dashing of his hopes for *TWL*. His despondency must also be seen in terms of all the other things that were happening in his personal life.

During his last few years, Roberts recognized that his health was going fast, and he was not sure how long he would remain alive. In May 1931, he was released from the hospital, where he had had part of a foot removed as a result of circulatory problems related to diabetes. According to his biographer, Roberts was beginning to shift his priorities in order to end his life exercising "my duty as a special witness for the Lord Jesus Christ." But he also longed to lay the doctrines of *TWL* before the Saints and continued to present themes from *TWL* in his sermons.⁵⁵ His *magnum opus*, which was also one of his most eloquent testimonies of Christ, was very much on his mind as part of what he wanted to leave as his religious heritage.

Sometime in January 1931, about the time Roberts and Elder Joseph Fielding Smith were making their presentations before the Council of the Twelve, Roberts wrote: "I have been passing through the severest mental and spiritual strain of my life during the past two months—Doctrinal questions before the Twelve and the First Presidency in connection with my book *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, respecting which there seems to be little prospect of settlement."⁵⁶ In his February 9, 1931, letter to President Heber J. Grant he again showed his anxiety: "Life at my years and with an incurable ailment is very precarious, and I should dislike very much to pass on without completing and publishing this work." Sometime in 1932, after the final rejection of his manuscript, he wrote with resignation to President Grant: "That book may not likely be printed in my lifetime. Comment will not be necessary."⁵⁷

Elder Roberts died on September 27, 1933, of complications related to diabetes.

Two months after Roberts's death, Elsie Cook looked back on the time she spent working with Elder Roberts. "He was inspiring in everything he did," she wrote, "in his speaking as well as in his dictating the several volumes [10] of books I helped him with." Cook's work included *TWL*. She remembered that her patriarchal blessing promised her that she would find "hidden treasures." "What I have learned from this wonderfully intellectual, and spiritually powerful [man], President, are the 'hidden treasures,' which perhaps I could not have had otherwise."⁵⁸ Roberts himself could have asked for no better tribute. It was his dream that *TWL* would provide such spiritual strength for all the Saints.

Modern scholars may say that *TWL* fell short of Roberts's dream,⁵⁹ but it nevertheless represented Roberts's long-held aspiration to be a "disciple of the second sort." Most of his theological discussion was not unique to this manuscript—much, indeed, was taken from earlier works. But that is just the point. He considered all he had done previously to be only a prelude to this work. "I am trying to summarize and reconcile all truth—all truth," he told a former missionary after his return from New York. "But it is so hard. So hard!"⁶⁰ This, too, was part of both his life as a faithful intellectual and his effort to become a disciple of the second sort.

The question remained as to what to do with the manuscript of *TWL*. On October 12, 1933, just sixteen days after Elder Roberts's death, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve discussed it once again. Rudger Clawson said that the Twelve were anxious to use it as a course of study for the priesthood the coming year, after making whatever changes the Council approved. An important question, of course, was whether the Church had the right to make such changes, now that Roberts was dead. President Grant, however, had been in contact with the family, who "acknowledged that the manuscript belongs to the Church." The only thing family members wanted was the right to file their protest if they did not agree with whatever changes were made. It was noted, too, that the seventies had furnished over five hundred dollars to assist in the cost of preparing the work. All this was sufficient to insure that the Church owned the manuscript and could do with it as it wished. In the end, however, the Council decided not to publish *TWL* at that time. Perhaps their continuing high esteem of Roberts made them hesitant to make the changes they knew he would so much oppose. In any case, it is propitious for modern readers, especially those who are anxious to explore more deeply the mind of this dynamic LDS

scholar and Church leader, that such a decision was made. Otherwise, little incentive would likely have existed to make *TWL* available today in its uncut form.

In the years since 1933, the question of publication has periodically reappeared. In the mid-1970s, for example, Assistant Church Historian Davis Bitton was asked to evaluate the manuscript for possible publication. His recommendation was that it should not be published by the Church, but that it should be made available for study at the archives. As late as 1982, another committee was formed to consider *TWL* again, but the committee was soon dissolved. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve had reviewed the 1931 decision and were impressed with the wisdom of the admonition given then that the Church's mission was "to bear the message of the restored gospel to the people of the world. Leave Geology, Biology, Archeology and Anthropology, no one of which has to do with the salvation of the souls of mankind, to scientific research, while we magnify our calling in the realm of the Church."

The publication of *TWL*, therefore, is by no means an official publication of the Church. Nevertheless, for those admirers of B. H. Roberts and for others who are interested in the rich intellectual and spiritual history of the Church, *TWL* should be a valuable addition to their libraries. Roberts did not succeed in having *TWL* published during his lifetime; those of us who have been involved in this project are pleased to now make it available, along with commentary on its historical standing and intellectual contexts.

NOTES

¹The leading biography of Roberts is Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980). See his epilogue for some apt and interesting characterizations.

²See Leonard J. Arrington, "The Intellectual Tradition of the Latter-day Saints," *Dialogue* 4 (Spring 1969): 13-26; and Stan Larson, "Intellectuals in Mormon History: An Update," *Dialogue* 26 (Fall 1993): 187-89.

³Roberts was, in fact, reluctant even to consider publishing an autobiography. In 1928, he declined an invitation to write a biographical sketch for the *National Encyclopedia* because, he said, "my biography is of such little consequence, my station in life so unimportant and my obscurity so complete." He also wrote to a former missionary in 1933 that "my life is not of sufficient importance for biography." T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 438 n. 25; 376.

⁴See Brigham H. Madsen, "Introduction," in B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham H. Madsen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 20.

⁵T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 387.

⁶See a list of some of his most important publications in T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 441–43.

⁷Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874) and *Studies in Religion* (1902).

⁸As quoted in B. H. Roberts, “The Book of Mormon Translated,” *Improvement Era* 9 (April 1906): 712. The quoted passage may be found in Josiah Royce’s “Introduction” to John Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (c. 1874; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1902), xxxvi–xxxviii.

⁹Roberts, “Book of Mormon Translated,” 712–13; and Royce, “Introduction,” xxxviii–xliv.

¹⁰Roberts, “The Book of Mormon Translated,” 713.

¹¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., *A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875–1900*, ed. Richard C. Wolf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

¹²Schlesinger, *Critical Period in American Religion*, 7.

¹³See Ernest L. Wilkinson and Cleon W. Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 200–212.

¹⁴Davis Bitton, “B. H. Roberts as Historian,” *Dialogue* 3 (Winter 1968): 25.

¹⁵B. H. Roberts, *Discourses of B. H. Roberts*, comp. Elsie Cook (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 104–5.

¹⁶Roberts’s continuing faith in the Book of Mormon is questioned by B. Madsen, “Introduction,” 1–34; and Brigham H. Madsen, “B. H. Roberts’s Studies of the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue* 26 (Fall 1993): 77–86. That view is rejected in John W. Welch, “B. H. Roberts: Seeker After Truth,” *Ensign* 16 (March 1986): 56–62; Truman G. Madsen and John W. Welch, “Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?” Preliminary Report, Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, c. 1985, rev. 1986; and Truman G. Madsen, “B. H. Roberts and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 19 (Summer 1979): 427–45.

¹⁷B. H. Roberts to Heber J. Grant and Counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the First Council of the Seventy, Salt Lake City, December 29, 1921, in Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 46.

¹⁸Roberts, “Book of Mormon Difficulties: A Study,” in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 142–43. For more recent developments that offer reasonable solutions, see John W. Welch, “Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts’ Questions,” Preliminary Report, Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1985.

¹⁹B. H. Roberts to President Heber J. Grant, Council, and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, dated March 15, 1923, in Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 57–58. This typewritten letter was not originally dated but later Roberts added a handwritten date, “March, 15th 1923.” Truman Madsen and John Welch argue that Roberts typed the letter hurriedly just before he left Salt Lake City in 1922, then took it and the manuscript with him to New York. The following year he considered again the possibility of submitting the manuscript, at which time he wrote the date on the letter. In the end, however, he never submitted either the letter or the manuscript. In a letter to his daughter Elizabeth, dated March 14, 1932, Roberts clarifies that the letter above was written before he left on his mission. He also says that he had “made one feeble effort to get it before them since returning home, but they are not in a studious mood.” Letter is Exhibit 8 in T. Madsen and Welch, “Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?”

²⁰B. H. Roberts to Richard R. Lyman, October 24, 1927, in Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 59.

²¹Massachusetts Conference of the Eastern States Mission, President's records, as cited in B. Madsen, "Introduction" to Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 25.

²²T. Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" discusses the changes, when they were made, and why.

²³B. H. Roberts to Elizabeth, March 14, 1932, copy included in T. Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?"

²⁴For reproductions of those manuscripts, see Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*.

²⁵Roberts to Richard R. Lyman, October 24, 1927, in Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 60.

²⁶Wesley P. Lloyd, personal journal, August 7, 1933, copy in Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Lloyd dictated his lengthy report of that meeting to his wife, who wrote it in his journal.

²⁷See, for example, D&C 1:29; 3:17-20; 10:38-48; 19:26-27; 20:8; 24:1; 27:5; 33:16; 38:39; 42:12; 84:57; 98:32; 128:20; 135:1, 3, 4, 6.

²⁸Many statements from Roberts illustrating the fact that even to the end of his life he bore witness of the Book of Mormon are compiled in T. Madsen, "B. H. Roberts and the Book of Mormon"; and T. Madsen and Welch, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?"

²⁹The most glaring mistake in Lloyd's entry is in the statement that the study was commenced while Roberts was president of the Eastern States Mission. Actually, it was finished (except for a few minor changes) before he ever left on his mission. Lloyd says that Roberts sent the "400 type written pages thesis" (it was actually 450 pages) to President Grant. There is no evidence that he ever did so. Lloyd indicates that Roberts called his manuscript "a contribution to assist in explaining Mormonism." When he prepared it for submission in 1922, Roberts wrote that it "does not represent any conclusions of mine," but was presented "for the information of those who ought to know everything about it *pro et con*, as well that which was produced against it, and that which may be produced against it." In addition, he said, he wrote it "for those who should be its students and know on what ground the Book of Mormon may be questioned, as well as that which supports its authenticity and its truth." (Roberts to Grant, et. al., March 15, 1923 [1922].) Lloyd's journal says that Roberts turned to "a psychological explanation of the Book of Mormon and shows that the plates were not objective but subjective with Joseph Smith, that his exceptional imagination qualified him psychologically for the experience which he had in presenting to the world the Book of Mormon and that the plates with the Urim and Thummim were not objective." Whether this is an accurate reflection of what Roberts said in 1933 is not clear, but if it is intended as a reflection of what Roberts put in his 1922 manuscript it is a distortion. The ninth section of Part I discusses the possibility that Joseph Smith got the idea of the Urim and Thummim from Ethan Smith, but does not propose this as a final explanation. The fourteenth section discusses the imaginative mind of Joseph Smith, and concludes that it was, indeed, *possible* for Joseph Smith to have written a manuscript, but it does not say that this is a valid alternative to Joseph Smith's own story. The idea that the plates were subjective rather than objective is not there, except, perhaps, by inference. It is certainly possible, however, that Roberts saw the implications of what he had written and spelled them out more clearly to Lloyd in 1933. But that is still not evidence that he accepted such conclusions.

³⁰Several previous articles have dealt with this controversy. The most detailed is Richard Sherlock, “‘We Can See No Advantage To a Continuation of the Discussion’: The Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair,” *Dialogue* 13 (Fall 1980): 63–78. Sherlock’s well-researched article covers much of the material contained in the rest of the present essay. I have been pleased, however, with the opportunity to examine the relevant documents and gain some significant new understandings of the period. See also Truman G. Madsen, “The Truth, the Way, the Life,” in *Defender of the Faith*, 338–45. Other articles dealing directly with this matter but also going beyond it include Jeffrey E. Keller, “Discussion Continued: The Sequel to the Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair,” *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 79–98; and Richard Sherlock, “A Turbulent Spectrum: Mormon Reactions to the Darwinist Legacy,” *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 33–59. Thomas G. Alexander puts the controversy in its larger theological setting in *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), chapter 14, “Definition and Explication of Church Doctrine.”

³¹Many of the sources for what follows are generally restricted. They include extracts from the minutes of the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve; excerpts from the minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve; the journal of President Heber J. Grant; B. H. Roberts papers; committee reports of the Council of the Twelve; miscellaneous correspondence in the papers of the First Presidency; and the Rudger Clawson collection. With the permission and cooperation of the LDS Church Archives and its advisors in the Quorum of the Twelve who recognized the unusual need for accuracy in writing this history, *BYU Studies* had special access to these restricted documents. They are simply identified as “*TWL* collection.” It contains about sixty records, letters, minutes, memoranda, or journal entries. Unless otherwise noted, anything cited below derives from these sources. I gratefully acknowledge the collaboration of John W. Welch in this research.

³²For detailed comments on these doctrinal discussions, see the foregoing essays and several of the secondary sources cited in the notes to this article.

³³On Friday, April 1, 1927, Roberts was in Salt Lake City, where he wrote a letter to his wife Celia. He was leaving on Saturday, he said, to go back to New York, and he had been excused from attending the forthcoming general conference. See T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 332. Whether he meant Saturday, April 2, or the following Saturday is not clear. President Grant’s personal journal simply states that Roberts “called.” This phrasing could mean either that Roberts had telephoned or that he had not yet left Salt Lake City and actually called at President’s Grant’s office.

³⁴T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 340.

³⁵Roberts to Howard R. Driggs, January 8, 1929, *TWL* collection.

³⁶Pomeroy had written to Roberts questioning his views on the “eternity of intelligent entities.” Roberts answered emphatically that his convictions had undergone no change in late years, and that the eternity of uncreated intelligence was the noblest thing connected with humanity, as several of his publications demonstrated. He expressed impatience with people who “hold to partial truths and seek to demonstrate them to no good purpose on earth.”

³⁷For a fully developed exposition of Elder Smith’s views on creation, evolution, the Fall, and related points, see his *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954). This volume was used as a text in the 1954 summer school at BYU for all the Church’s seminary and institute teachers.

³⁸Roberts to Elizabeth Hinckley, May 1929, as quoted in T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 343–44.

³⁹Though the most serious objections centered around Roberts's treatment of the creation, pre-Adamites, and the nature of Adam, there were several others. For the committee's points and Roberts's reactions written on the list of objections, see page xiv and the references in note 6, page xxxv above. The committee, for example, raised questions about Roberts's interpretation of "intelligence." Roberts wrote "misapprehension" (i.e., "misunderstanding") in the column, scribbled a note of explanation, then wrote "clarify" at the end of the paragraph. He was evidently willing to make clarifications in the manuscript. The committee said that his use of the phrase "mind, spirit, and soul" appeared confusing. Again Roberts wrote "clarify." On other points, Roberts apparently questioned the reasoning of the committee and just wrote "meaningless" in the margin.

⁴⁰Deseret News, April 5, 1930, 8. Interestingly enough, these statements did not appear in the published version of Elder Smith's talk.

⁴¹He made such remarks, for example, at the quarterly meetings of the Council of the Twelve Apostles on June 24, 1930, and September 30, 1930. Later, in a meeting on December 16, he warned his brethren that the "great danger" confronting the Church was "the fact that we have wolves in sheep's clothing within the fold wounding and destroying some of the flock." He referred more pointedly to "certain textbooks" published for use in Church schools that, he believed, carried such dangers.

⁴²"Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 21 (October 1930): 145–58. Joseph Fielding Smith was vice president of the Utah Genealogical and Historical Society at this time.

⁴³The following events are well summarized in a manner eminently fair to both sides in a communication from the First Presidency to the Council of the Twelve, the First Council of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric, dated April 7, 1931.

⁴⁴Elder Smith's paper, dated January 14, is extant. Elder Roberts's comments are found in Draft 2 of chapter 31 of *TWL* above, and a summary of Elder Roberts's presentation is in the April 7 report of the First Presidency, *TWL* collection.

⁴⁵Roberts to President Heber J. Grant and Counselors, February 9, 1931, *TWL* collection.

⁴⁶For Orson Hyde's sermon, see *Journal of Discourses* 2:75–87. For Brigham Young's, see *Journal of Discourses* 2:88–90.

⁴⁷*TWL* collection; italics added.

⁴⁸Significantly, several years later Elder Widtsoe wrote his own answer to the question of pre-Adamites, concluding that there were "human like beings" before Adam but recognizing that he was unable to explain either them or the creation of Adam. John A. Widtsoe, "Were There Pre-Adamites?" *Improvement Era* 51 (May 1948): 305.

⁴⁹Talmage's January 18 speech was published at this time in England, where Elder Widtsoe was serving as mission president and editor of the *Millennial Star*. James E. Talmage, "The Divine Purpose," *Millennial Star* 13 (March 26, 1931): 193–205. Widtsoe returned to Utah for meetings at the end of March and early April.

⁵⁰This quotation is found in Joseph Smith, Jr., *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 5:344. The spelling and punctuation above conform to this source rather than to the minor differences in the First Presidency's report.

⁵¹Smith, *History of the Church* 5:340.

⁵²Personal Journal of James Edward Talmage, April 7, 1931, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁵³In the minutes, the name was transposed to “The Way, The Truth, The Life,” which was probably a common mistake since the phrase appears that way in the New Testament.

⁵⁴See notes 9–11, page xxxv above. Over 10,000 copies of the pamphlet were sent out before February 1932.

⁵⁵T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 373.

⁵⁶As quoted in T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 344.

⁵⁷As quoted in T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 345.

⁵⁸Elsie Cook to President Heber J. Grant, November 23, 1933, *TWL* collection.

⁵⁹For comments on this conclusion, see T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 342.

⁶⁰As quoted in T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, 342.