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Introduction

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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): xi-xxxviii



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Introduction

John W. Welch

Welcome to *The Truth, The Way, The Life*. This work of study and faith invites the modern reader to step back several decades in time, take out the scriptures, think about the world and the gospel of Jesus Christ, ask the age-old questions about the purposes of life, and pay close attention as Elder B. H. Roberts unfolds the crisscrossing paths of his most cherished doctrinal truths and most treasured philosophical thoughts.

The Truth, The Way, The Life (TWL) has grown on me as *BYU Studies* has prepared this work for publication from its three drafts held in the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. Although *TWL*'s style and content are in some respects seriously dated, the work as a whole is engaging, imaginative, energetic, and interesting in many ways. Roberts is right on many points, wrong on some,¹ and obsolete on others. *TWL* is to Roberts's lifework on doctrinal topics what his *Comprehensive History of the Church* is to his historical studies.

In these introductory pages, I offer a few general comments about *TWL*, its contents, character, historical settings, and sources, as well as a description of the editorial procedures used in producing this volume. The subsequent analytic essays by Davis Bitton, Gary Hatch, Doris Dant, Truman Madsen, David Paulsen, William Evenson, William Hamblin, David Seely, Andrew Skinner, Richard Roberts, Michael Rhodes, and James Allen discuss further specific features of this work and its history.² The topics of some of these essays warranted extended discussion; others required only brief mention. Several of these scholars have also provided annotations to the chapters of *TWL* treated in their essays, with Terry Ball supplying a number of footnotes dealing with scientific subjects.

General Contents and Character

TWL is Roberts's personal effort to summarize the plan of salvation from beginning to end. Building upon scriptural authority, contemporary

scientific theory and evidence, and his own prior works on Church history and doctrine, Roberts systematically articulates a coherent view of God's great plan of life. Usually orthodox, but at times idiosyncratic and speculative, this book is a singular effort to express basic Latter-day Saint doctrines in a style reminiscent of certain theological treatises that circulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

TWL was written mainly in 1927 and 1928³ toward the end of the author's very distinguished lifetime of Church service (Roberts served as one of the seven Presidents of the Seventy from 1888 until his death in 1933). Elder Roberts was a prolific writer. Intending this book to synthesize his main doctrinal writings and teachings, Roberts covers a wide range of topics in *TWL*'s introduction and fifty-five chapters. Topics include philosophy, cosmology, astronomy, natural law, metaphysics, intelligence, pluralism, intergalactic communication, ethics, theology, revelation, prophecies about Jesus Christ, world religions, ancient civilizations, the Creation, paleontology, prehistoric man, the origin of Adam and Eve, the Fall, biblical history, the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, baptism, the sacrament, the Sermon on the Mount, and the commandments of God. This work is significant as a formative effort to synthesize into one coherent whole all that Roberts considered to be main Latter-day Saint gospel doctrines, together with related implications drawn from anything else that was known about the cosmos, where we came from, why we are here, how God reveals truth to people on this earth, how people have fallen away from God's light, and how the atonement of Jesus offers the way back to eternal life and exaltation.

In 1993, Elder Boyd K. Packer encouraged all members of the Church to seek greater understanding of God's great plan of happiness. Speaking especially to Church teachers, Elder Packer assigned each instructor to prepare a personal synopsis or overview of the plan of salvation setting forth the eternal principles that give meaning to life on this earth. He cautioned: "At first you may think that a simple assignment. I assure you, it is not. Brevity and simplicity are remarkably difficult to achieve. At first you will be tempted to include too much. The plan in its fullness encompasses every gospel truth."⁴ In the final analysis, *TWL* is Elder Roberts's attempt to give just such a synopsis; it was an ambitious undertaking. This tome is tangible proof that brevity and simplicity are difficult to achieve when trying to circumscribe into one great whole the entire plan of existence, as Elder Packer rightly stated.

Many verses of scripture speak of God's "way" in terms of "truth" and "life."⁵ Roberts adapted the title of this work from one such verse,

where Jesus declares: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). While several chapters in *TWL* focus strongly and specifically on Christ as the emanating essence of all truth and life throughout the cosmos, Roberts also understands these terms *truth*, *way*, and *life* very broadly: *Truth* is all knowledge of things past, present, and future, particularly knowledge of the eternal plan that frames the gospel of Jesus Christ; the *Way* is that plan, embracing the Fall, the mortal existence, and the redemption of God’s children through the atonement of Jesus Christ; the *Life* means several things, including obedience to all the commandments of the gospel, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and life eternal with God and like God in celestial exaltation. The high degree of overlap between these definitions of truth, way, and life, together with their convergence in Jesus Christ, accounts for the extensive overlapping and repetition of themes throughout *TWL*.

Church leaders thoroughly considered *TWL* for possible use as a Melchizedek Priesthood manual, briefly as an adult Sunday School text, and later as an MIA study guide. After a careful one-year review by a committee of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1929, whose comments are included below in footnotes to the text,⁶ the work was found unsuited for official Church uses. This decision, which Roberts accepted with disappointment, was due mainly to a few speculative assertions in this work that proved insufficiently persuasive. The detailed essay by James Allen (681–720) presents for the first time the historical details of this particular review, which was similar to earlier reviews given by the Church to works of Widtsoe, Talmage, and others.⁷

One problem encountered in *TWL* by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve was Roberts’s belief that a huge cataclysm totally destroyed all plant, animal, and humanlike life on this planet before the coming of Adam and Eve, who opened a new dispensation. This destruction of all life supposedly explained why Adam and Eve were commanded to “replenish” the earth.⁸ Roberts also suggested that Adam and Eve were translated beings brought here from another world. Although Roberts and his brethren were in complete agreement on virtually all other significant points in *TWL*, and although Roberts’s views about the creation of Adam and Eve were not entirely novel, in these areas Roberts went farther than he or any of his predecessors had gone before, and that move overstepped the limits of secure scriptural knowledge.

Specifically, Roberts pushed too far when he postulated that a great pre-Adamic cataclysm had occurred on *this* earth. Nineteenth-century LDS writers (including Roberts himself) had commonly suggested before 1929 that this earth was created from pieces of *other*

worlds recycled by God in organizing this planet. Under that theory, evidence in the rock record of prehistoric life did not imply that death had occurred on this sphere before the fall of Adam and Eve. But by asserting that death occurred on this planet before the Fall and by arguing that Adam and Eve, as imported beings from other worlds, were not immortal before the Fall, Roberts appeared to contradict certain scriptures, especially 2 Nephi 2:22: "If Adam had not transgressed, . . . all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created." Rather than change his manuscript to remove all the traces and ramifications of his theory, the seventy-five-year-old Roberts preferred to have the work remain unpublished.

Readers today might wonder why Roberts was unwilling to eliminate a few offensive points in order to preserve what he and others thought to be some of his best work, a volume to which he had devoted substantial time and effort. Perhaps the reason was just stubbornness, but actually Roberts made a few changes in response to the requests of the committee. In at least eleven cases, the manuscripts show some evidence that Roberts revised his text, presumably anticipating or responding to concerns of the committee. For example, the committee questioned Roberts's claim in chapter 1 for the superiority of Joseph Smith's definition of truth; Draft 3 includes a handwritten elaboration by Roberts strengthening his claim of that definition's uniqueness. Apparently in response to the committee's comment in chapter 16, Roberts deleted his claim that the seeds of life, in addition to the seeds of death, were found in the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (158). Perhaps attempting to clarify his thinking about intelligence and spirit in chapter 27, Roberts inserted "intelligences as spirits" into one sentence (261); and where the committee found the use of the terms *mind*, *spirit*, and *soul* confusing in that same chapter, Roberts wrote by hand on Draft 3, "these terms are often used interchangeably in the scriptures" (267). Where the committee called for support regarding Roberts's theory of pre-Adamites, he added a list of corroborative sources and an addendum to Draft 2, which he read at a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve on January 7, 1931 (318-22). Thus, although Roberts was sometimes agitated and stood his ground on most of his points (many of which have been proven by subsequent scholarship to be suspect or erroneous), one should not think that Roberts was unresponsive to criticism or that the committee was unreasonable or unjustified in their concerns. But in the final analysis, Roberts undoubtedly felt that eliminating the major points in controversy would destroy the genius of the entire work and that

altering the manuscript would be very difficult, given the extensive interdependence of its many logically interrelated parts. Indeed, readers should look for the extensive internal coherence of this interwoven volume in order to understand why Roberts felt that the entire argument was an integrated whole. Removing chapter 31 from the work, for example, could not be accomplished without disrupting many other parts of the text.

The interconnectedness of *TWL*, and hence this potential for disrupting the text, can be illustrated in several ways. In the opening chapters of *TWL* Roberts argues for communication and continuity between this world and other worlds in the cosmos. The motivation behind this argument is not apparent to the reader until later, when Roberts uses the idea of continuity to support the possibility that Adam and Eve and other life forms were brought to this earth from other worlds. In chapter 3, Roberts establishes the principle of the reign of law throughout the universe. This concept later becomes a fundamental element in Roberts's explanation of the Atonement in chapters 40–45, which chapters are heavily oriented toward a legalistic explanation of the Atonement's satisfaction of the demands of justice through a merciful sacrifice. The theme of replenishing the earth, which figures so prominently in the Creation account in this work, reappears in chapter 55, which deals with the importance of marriage in the Adamic race down to the present day. Even polygamy is explained in terms of evolutionary principles: the inspiring motive for polygamy was a "divinely ordered species of eugenics" (557). Echoes and repetitions come almost to the point of redundancy in certain cases, reappearing and reverberating throughout this manuscript. The challenge of trying to remove even one or two of the pivotal concepts from this work would have presented Roberts with a formidable challenge, a time-consuming task, and in many ways would have destroyed the character of the work. Roberts's reluctance to modify the document in any substantial respect, therefore, should not come as a surprise.

In the end, the issue of pre-Adamic humanlike life and death on this earth was not resolved one way or the other by the Church. On April 5, 1931, the First Presidency stated, "Neither side of the controversy has been accepted as a doctrine at all." Regarding pre-Adamic death in the plant and animal kingdoms, Talmage delivered a speech in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on August 9, 1931, that assumed as much. But Talmage remained less definite than Roberts. Talmage considered the question as to when this world began "unanswerable," and he went only so far as to say that "animals . . . lived and died, age after age, while the earth was unfit for human habitation."⁹ All else, he said, constituted theories that

“come, endure for a season and go, like the fungi of the night,” and thus we should “not try to wrest the scriptures in an attempt to explain away what we cannot explain.”¹⁰ His speech was published in the LDS Church News section of the *Deseret News* on November 21, 1931, and in pamphlet form by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints soon afterwards, with approval by the First Presidency.¹¹

While several questions about the Creation have not been answered as doctrines of the Church, the amount of controversy among the General Authorities of the Church surrounding the pre-Adamite issue and the review of Roberts’s volume has probably been exaggerated in the literature. As James Allen’s historical essay demonstrates, the memos and correspondence concerning these differences of opinion show that Roberts and all the other General Authorities affirmed their love toward one another and assured the absence of hard feelings as they vigorously and responsibly wrestled with the puzzles of cosmology and cosmogony. Essentially, statements of the First Presidency on the beginnings of the universe have looked away from the unknowns and have focused attention on affirming God’s primary role in the creation of this earth and the eternal origin of human beings as sons and daughters of God.¹²

Readers will undoubtedly find the coverage of some topics in *TWL* to be superficial. In spite of the length of the book, it is so inclusive that it can cover many subjects only very briefly. Roberts intended this book to be a comprehensive overview. Of topics that he had covered in previous publications (see pages 735–42 below), he often gives here only a synopsis or précis. In this regard, *TWL* tells readers important things about Elder Roberts. Here readers may find the points he considered most significant, the driving purposes behind the prior works, and the connections that logically link his concepts together.

To a considerable degree, Roberts produced an encyclopedia in *TWL*; many sections could serve as an encyclopedia entry. Modern readers may be interested to compare numerous entries in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* with Roberts’s treatment of the same or similar topics.¹³ Although many of its themes could certainly be developed further, *TWL* is probably the most encyclopedic doctrinal effort by a Latter-day Saint before Bruce R. McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* (1st ed., 1958).

Intellectual Historical Settings

TWL is an interesting artifact in the intellectual history of the Church. In many ways, it reflects the spirit of the times that produced it.

It is both a monument to the theological life's work of Elder B. H. Roberts and a window into the intellectual history of a stage in the history of the Church when the Church's highest councils emerged from the pioneer era to countenance modernity. There is much to ponder here. Roberts mixes powerful chapters solidly grounded in responsible interpretation of LDS scripture with sections spruced with speculation, inferences, and selective argumentation in order to present data and to arrange ideas to fit into an overall doctrinal construct.

Readers should contemplate the background of *TWL* from many angles of intellectual history. In the religious history of America, the decade of the 1920s has been described as “ten restless years roaring from jubilation to despair amid international and domestic dislocation, . . . a tragic display of obscurantism, superficiality, complacency, and futile conflict.”¹⁴ For example, Roberts wrote in the late 1920s surrounded by a shell of protective optimism. World War I had been a success as far as Roberts was concerned. He himself had served as a chaplain in France and appears to have come away from the atrocities of Verdun and the Maginot Line unscathed by the pessimism and existential despair that would soon rack Europe. He wrote most of this work before the October 1929 crash of Wall Street. In 1927 in Brooklyn, where Roberts worked, the world was booming, and the idea of progress was thriving, almost raging, out of control. Books like Bury's *The Idea of Progress* held out the invincibly attractive prospect that human civilization was destined for almost Utopian perfection.¹⁵ For example, in words that Roberts would have applauded, Bury boldly asserted: “The idea of human Progress then is a theory which involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future. It is based on an interpretation of history which regards man as slowly advancing—*pedetentim progredientes*—in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely.”¹⁶ The idea of progress was seen as an optimistic theory, not only in biological quarters, but also in politics, sociology, and ethics, largely due to the works of Spencer (who is frequently quoted by Roberts), the most conspicuous interpreter of evolution as an optimistic and universal principle. While recognizing that the final articulation of the laws of progress remained for future thinkers to accomplish, Bury was confident that in “nearly every civilised country, . . . indefinite progress is generally assumed as an axiom,” even to the point that it was considered to be “a current creed.”¹⁷ The idealistic politics of national socialism in Germany and communism in Russia had not yet deteriorated into the atrocious totalitarianism that soon would arise under Hitler and Stalin. The Great Depression had not yet taken its toll, while

recent advances in communications and transportation had given Roberts and his world the exuberant confidence that little or nothing could not be known about the world and conquered by humanity.

Roberts clearly saw many reasons for optimism within a Latter-day Saint context. A spirit of unbridled optimism and unending hope permeates *TWL*. The benevolence of God, an optimistic and purposeful universe, the divine potential of human beings to progress to become as the gods, and the continuity that Roberts saw between this world and the eternal worlds made it possible for Roberts to argue that we can know what the eternal worlds are like by extrapolating from what we know about things as they appear to us in this world.

At the same time, Mormonism had emerged only a few decades earlier from its pioneer isolation. Utah became a state in 1896, and most Utahns wanted to become recognized and accepted members of the religious and intellectual world. In light of Roberts's political career, his involvement with the military, and his mission presidency in New York (1922–27), Roberts felt this public pressure as much or more than anyone else in the Church. His efforts to use the scholarly sources of his day and his desire to cast Mormonism in a mold that would be familiar to the thinkers of his day, that would ring similar to their scholarly modes of discourse, can be understood as part of a larger desire among some members of the Church at the time to achieve recognition from the world, at least to the extent of being able to carry on intelligent and well-grounded conversations with others, especially on religious topics.

Writing and reading works on “natural theology” was popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the books in the library of B. H. Roberts was Paley's *Natural Theology*. Scanning the table of contents to Paley's book sheds light on the coverage of *TWL*. (Roberts subtitled his work “An Elementary Treatise on Theology,” but modern readers will find that only a small portion of *TWL* deals with God or current theological subjects as such.) Paley's respectable treatise on natural theology covers such topics as evolution, plants, animals, gross anatomy, animal instincts, chemical elements, astronomy, and many other features of the natural world before it finally, in the concluding chapters, employs these natural phenomena to develop theological propositions about the attributes, unity, and goodness of God. It is evident that *TWL* attempts to produce a similar theological synthesis, only it begins with a limited set of natural phenomena, namely truths which Roberts took to be irrefutable, and then derives from them theological propositions consistent with Mormon doctrines about the universe, the eternal nature of matter-energy, natural law,

creation as a process of organization, the premortal existence of human intelligences and spirits, and on into the full plan of salvation and the salvation history of the world. The doctrinal ends are different for Paley and Roberts, but their basic strategies and methodologies are similar.

The foregoing examples are offered only by way of illustration. Many other approaches to various parts of *TWL* can be imagined and should be explored. The essay by Davis Bitton (561–57) contributes several further ideas, not only about the intellectual contexts of *TWL*, but also personal dimensions of Roberts as an individual thinker and Church leader. Truman Madsen’s essay (595–617) explains Roberts’s philosophical background, his logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. David Paulsen’s essay (619–32) analyzes his theology, his doctrines of eternalism, creation, Godhead, and godhood. William Evenson’s analysis (633–53) explores *TWL* with respect to science and religion, the physical universe, theories of creation, and evolution. Each of these studies places Roberts into the broad context of various intellectual disciplines.

Audiences

Another important part of understanding *TWL* is identifying its audience. The essays by Gary Hatch (569–77) and Doris Dant (579–94) give insights into the rhetoric and language of this work and grapple with the question of audience. Roberts’s intended audience in this book is unclear: was it an adult LDS audience, Mormon youth, readers outside the Church, or simply himself? Probably it was all of the above. Determining from chapter to chapter whom Roberts is addressing is not always easy. Once the work was completed, Roberts felt that it would be a great boon to all audiences within the Church; the book, however, would not appeal to many young readers, and presumably, it would have been heavy reading for many adults.

Sometimes Roberts appears to be addressing audiences outside the Church, explaining to them what Latter-day Saints believe. Similarly, although he usually cites the scriptures without any qualification as to their authoritativeness and absolute truth, he sometimes introduces them so as to be inoffensive to a person who did not have strong faith in the scriptures. Roberts does this especially in the early chapters of the book. He referred to Genesis 1 as containing “alleged revelations,” although he crossed out the word *alleged* in his proofreading (73). He speaks of “alleged descent to and appearances of God to men,” even in a section that he titles as actual visitations (115). He speaks of a revelation to Lehi as being “represented as” such (259). In most of the work,

however, he assumes that his readers believe that the four standard works are all authoritative and reliable, and he quotes them implicitly without any qualifications. In chapter 27, he extends this rhetorical style of appearing to accommodate an unpersuaded audience even by stating that innocence is only “impliedly unproductive of ‘joy’” (266). Roberts is willing to entertain and advance ideas in a cautious mode, at least on some occasions. Throughout most of the work, however, Roberts approaches his audience firmly, logically, and unhesitatingly.

Today, several audiences may be attracted to this book. To be sure, it will be of greatest interest to people interested in the life and thought of Elder B. H. Roberts. *TWL* is important in understanding what was being written and discussed in the Church in the early years of the twentieth century. But several of Roberts’s lines of reasoning are not likely to be quoted as authoritative propositions today, either for their scientific theories or for their doctrinal expositions. Some LDS readers are not likely to be overly impressed with a number of Roberts’s personal opinions, which he readily admitted were not “absolutely accurate or beyond fault. . . . My books are all down on the human plane and likely to be faulty. I proclaim them as such. They are only of value and useful as they may be in harmony with God’s revealed word; and as such I have always held them to be.”¹⁸ Other LDS readers are not likely to agree with other parts of this work, for its approach is often extremely literal, relying heavily and primarily on long quotations from the scriptures and augmenting them with selected materials from certain writings of the day. Those who might have hoped that this work would reveal a new side of Elder Roberts that championed organic evolution will be let down to find that he continued to reject, to the end of his life, all scientific or naturalistic varieties of evolution (239). Those who wished to see Roberts as a friend of abortion because he claims that the spirit does not enter the body until birth should note not only his limited scriptural authority for this proposition, as mentioned in the committee’s comments (246–47), but also Roberts’s abhorrence toward abortion expressed twice in his chapter on marriage and family (548, 553).

Those readers who will likely be most excited by this publication are scholars or students particularly interested in the intellectual history of the Church. For them, this work is a gold mine. Detecting the real issues that Roberts is addressing (his problems are not always our problems, and his problems are not always readily apparent), sorting out the internal coherence and extensive interrelatedness of his arguments, hearing the cadence of his rhetoric (often this work must be

read aloud to be understood—it is oratory on paper), noticing the limits of his logic (his frequent assertion of things that are “undoubtedly true,” and his fluid shifts from logic into emotion), and discovering many other fascinating exercises in analysis and appreciation will challenge even the most astute reader of this work.

Many readers will especially identify with Roberts’s impassioned description of the concept of joy:

The “joy” contemplated herein is to arise out of a man’s knowledge of evil, of sin; through knowing misery, sorrow, pain, and suffering; through seeing good and evil locked in awful conflict; through a consciousness of having chosen in that conflict the better part, the good (which will include the true and the beautiful); and not only in having chosen it, but in having wedded it by eternal compact; . . . from experiencing all the emotions of which mind is susceptible; from testing all the qualities and strength of the intellect. A “joy” that will come to man from a contemplation of the universe, and a consciousness that he is an heir to all that is, a joint heir with Jesus Christ and God the Father; from knowing that he is an essential part of all that is. It is a “joy” that will be born of the consciousness of existence itself, that will revel in existence, in thoughts of realization of existence’s limitless possibilities. (266)

This being his definition of *joy*, Roberts must have derived deep enjoyment from his writing of *TWL*. It is a sincere expression of deep-felt spiritual and intellectual love and appreciation for the panorama provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ on the full spectrum of purposeful existence. He would hope that all readers would find similar joy by contemplating and experiencing all that he sets forth in *TWL*.

Roberts’s Use of Sources

TWL gives prominence both to science and revelation, but for Roberts the latter takes priority both logically and spiritually. Examining Roberts’s scholarly sources, most of which are of course severely dated, yields a number of insights into his education, methodologies, and opinions. All references cited by Roberts anywhere in this volume have been gathered into the bibliography at the end of this edition (743–52). They comprise an interesting and eclectic library.

In preparing this volume for publication, all sources and quotes have been located and checked as far as practicable. Many of the books and articles listed on the bibliography are held in the B. H. Roberts Memorial Library, a rare-book collection in the LDS Church Archives.

We appreciate the valuable, expert assistance of the staff of the Historical Department in identifying these materials. The remaining sources were usually to be found in local university libraries or through interlibrary loan, but sometimes Roberts left insufficient data for all of his sources to be found.

Because Roberts cites a significant number of scholarly works in *TWL*, some readers may assume that Roberts is trying to harmonize or reconcile science and religion in this work. Readers will need to form their own opinions about the mind of B. H. Roberts on the relationship between revelation and science. On most occasions, however, it seems that Roberts is interested in scientific ideas only to the extent that they corroborate revealed truths. Roberts was uncomfortable even with the word “reconciliation.” In chapter 31, for example, in editing the work, Roberts crossed out the word “reconciliation” and inserted “adjustment” in discussing relations “between man’s discoveries and the records of scripture” (317).

Roberts read his sources selectively. Where he found support for concepts in the then-prevailing views of science, astronomy, history, theology, philosophy, psychology, or other disciplines, he readily latched on to helpful passages. Comments Roberts left in the margins of his books register strong reactions, sometimes favorable but other times hostile, toward claims made by the authors. These marginal notes show that he resoundingly rejected assertions in these sources whenever they conflicted with his views of the gospel and its revealed scriptures.

At the beginning of each chapter, Roberts recommended selected scriptures and other works as general background readings. He called all of these introductions a “scripture lesson reading.” Many of the references, however, direct the reader to nonscriptural sources. Most of the suggested references merely repeat the sources cited in the chapter’s footnotes, but occasionally, especially in the early chapters, additional items are recommended. In the bibliography below, all such works are identified with the codes R1, R2, etc., indicating the chapters for which each source is recommended as background reading.

Roberts’s comments in *TWL* about his sources yield some interesting insights into the nature and intended purpose of this work. Roberts hoped that *TWL* would encourage readers to become better educated by examining for themselves the latest scientific evidences and scholarly theories. But in recommending certain works, Roberts cautioned readers to consult these references with discernment and to study them critically: “with discrimination; not accepting either all the premises laid down, or the conclusions reached” (37).

He disclaimed accepting these references “as conclusive authorities (except as to citations to the scriptures)” (69).

One must wonder, however, to what extent Roberts actually expected his readers to consult these sources. In many cases, the sources would have been very hard for an average reader to find, and in some chapters the proposed reading assignments are unreasonably broad. For example, for chapter 3, Roberts suggests that the reading of “any general work on psychology” (29) would be good preparation for the study of that chapter. Evidently Roberts gave the general audience a great deal of credit, both in terms of diligence in seeking out these materials and in the ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of arguments. In many of the early chapters, one senses that a rather specialized, religiously neutral audience was intended; in many of the later chapters, however, Roberts seems to be addressing a very general, but primarily LDS audience. As he moves farther into the work, he gives fewer and fewer references, and in some chapters none at all besides general scripture assignments.

Roberts’s Use of Scriptures

By far, the most important sources Roberts used are the four LDS standard works. *TWL* explicitly accepts the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price as having “equal authority, all of them dependable sources of knowledge” (276). Although other sources “can be consulted sometimes with profit,” they do not sustain Roberts’s conclusions which, he says, are “so largely influenced by the ‘new knowledge’ brought to light by the Prophet of the New Dispensation, Joseph Smith” (351).

A glance at the scripture index below (753–64) shows that nearly twelve hundred scriptures are cited, and some of them are quoted extensively. They come from the four standard works in approximately the following percentages:

Old Testament	21.0%
New Testament	48.0%
Book of Mormon	9.4%
Doctrine & Covenants	12.2%
Pearl of Great Price	9.4%

Roberts draws most heavily upon Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, the Gospels of John and Matthew, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the letters of John, 2 Nephi, Doctrine and Covenants sections 88 and 93, and the books of Abraham and Moses.

Roberts usually quoted the scriptures accurately, but he sometimes modernized the King James language and blended his quotes into the flow of his own rhetoric. His scriptural interpretations were sometimes tendentious and self-serving, but usually his readings were very literal and tight. The notes and essays below by William Hamblin (652–53), David Seely (654–62), Andrew Skinner (663–70), Richard Roberts (671–76), and Michael Rhodes (677–79) explain specific aspects of Roberts’s use and view of the scriptures, especially in regard to the history of religions, revelation, apostasy, the Old Testament, the Atonement, the New Testament, and the New Dispensation of the gospel.

In general, Roberts did not accept or practice the higher criticism of the Bible current in his day. He makes no use of higher critical methods in *TWL*. One might be tempted to think that if Roberts had only known more about higher criticism he would have somehow embraced the theory; but ample evidence proves that Roberts knew and essentially rejected higher criticism of the Old and New Testaments, especially when it was enlisted in an attempt to discredit the Book of Mormon.

In 1911 Roberts published an article in the *Improvement Era* entitled “Higher Criticism and the Book of Mormon.”¹⁹ His views, as manifested in *TWL*, do not differ from the position he took in 1911. In that article, while acknowledging that higher criticism had some good to offer, Roberts began by affirming the reality of prophecy as “history reversed,” realizing that practitioners of critical studies would already be “smiling at such a statement.”²⁰ He willingly renewed his claim that “the Book of Mormon must submit to every test, literary criticism with the rest. Indeed, it must submit to every analysis and examination. It must submit to historical tests, to the tests of archaeological research and also to the higher criticism.”²¹ Roberts exhorted believers to “carry themselves in a spirit of patience and of courage,” and testified that through stress and struggle in studying the Book of Mormon he had arrived at “an absolute conviction of its truth.”²²

Roberts addressed and rejected the arguments of higher criticism. First, he objected that “heavy weights are hung upon very slender threads! The methods, then, of higher criticism we recognize as proper; but we must disagree as to the correctness of many of the conclusions arrived at by that method.”²³ Second, he argued that the Book of Mormon should be used as evidence for dating Isaiah, not vice versa. Third, he pointed out that “the science, so called, of chronology is quite uncertain in its conclusions, and I think I shall be able to satisfy you upon that point; and that this supposed disagreement between higher criticism and the Book of Mormon, as to chronology, is not a point of sufficient moment on which to attempt to overthrow the integrity or

truth of an ancient volume of scripture.”²⁴ Roberts examined alleged chronological discrepancies between the findings of higher critics and the Book of Mormon dating for the reign of Zedekiah and for the birth of Jesus but found the problems to be inconsequential. Fourth, he addressed the problem of Deutero-Isaiah: “Now, here is a real difficulty,” he begins.²⁵ After quoting Driver’s basic conclusions, Roberts told his audience that if they would “read the arguments at length, I promise you that the effect upon your mind of the detailed consideration of the arguments will be to dissipate this strength, it will not appear as strong as it does in these brief and general statements.”²⁶

Why were the critics’ arguments weak? Basically, Roberts argued, because the theory assumes the impossibility of miracles: “Higher critics, as a rule, insist that the miraculous does not happen, that wherever the miraculous appears, there you must halt, and dismiss the miraculous parts of narratives, since they suggest fraud on the one hand and credulity upon the other.”²⁷

After retorting that no candidate to replace Isaiah as the author of Deutero-Isaiah had been proposed by the critics, Roberts rejected the claim of the higher critics “that there is a sharp transition as to matter and style between the 39th chapter and the 40th chapter [of Isaiah]. I modestly beg leave to differ from that conclusion,” and he gave illustrations that show that the second is “in good sequence to the first.”²⁸ In addition, Roberts credited as historical certain statements by Josephus and Jesus affirming Isaiah’s authorship of the latter chapters of the book of Isaiah, and Roberts extolled the vision and literary genius of that great prophet.

Roberts then related a story:

In conversation with one of our young men who recently returned from an eastern college, where he had come in contact with higher criticism, he remarked to me, “Yes, higher criticism shoots to pieces the Book of Mormon.” “Pardon me, my brother,” I answered, “you have misstated the matter; you mean that the Book of Mormon shoots holes into higher criticism!” And that is true. The Book of Mormon establishes the integrity and unity of authorship for the whole book of Isaiah.²⁹

After discussing the adverse effects of higher criticism on faith in Jesus Christ as preached in the New Testament, Roberts closed by predicting that advocates of the Book of Mormon would probably be the most tenacious proponents of

the integrity of the whole book of Isaiah as it now stands in the Bible, the product of the prophet of that name, the Messianic prophet *par excellence*, . . . and [they will contend] not only for

that, but for all the great historical facts concerning Messiah, and concerning the gospel of salvation through faith in and acceptance of the atonement of the Christ and obedience to His laws, since those facts were revealed to the ancient prophets upon these American continents.³⁰

Such was Roberts's view of the assumptions or applications of the prevailing theories of biblical criticism in 1911. These assertions continued to typify Roberts's faithful and vigorous approach to scripture when he wrote *TWL* and until the end of his life.

In *TWL*, Roberts goes out of his way to identify the Book of Mormon as an ancient record written by prophets who lived long ago. He repeatedly reaffirms its divine origin and antiquity, but occasionally he misses opportunities to use Book of Mormon passages that would strongly reinforce his thought. For example, Roberts makes no use of 2 Nephi 31–33, containing some of the most explicit statements in all of scripture about the plan of salvation; and he makes only isolated references to Alma 42, the most extensive scriptural passage on God's mercy and justice—even though these are salient themes in *TWL*.

Indeed, not knowing what we as editors would encounter in the manuscripts of *TWL*, I was surprised to find that *TWL* pointedly and repeatedly asserts the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. While such affirmative statements may seem unremarkable, it is precisely their routine orthodoxy that makes them so notable. Coming from one of the great intellects of the Church, whose views about the Book of Mormon supposedly became more intellectually sophisticated in his last years, these unequivocal statements will disappoint anyone who has imagined Roberts as a closet doubter or late-in-life skeptic.

TWL especially reveals how Roberts felt about the Book of Mormon after he wrote his “Book of Mormon Study” in 1922. That work identified several Book of Mormon problems and called urgently for further study.³¹ Some have seen “Book of Mormon Study” as evidence that Roberts had changed his views on the historicity of the Book of Mormon,³² but readers can now determine that Roberts did not waver in his belief because of that study.

In *TWL*, Roberts describes the miraculous coming forth of the Book of Mormon in strong, straightforward, traditional terms. For example, he says:

Three years after this first revelation an angel of God named Moroni was sent to the prophet to reveal the existence of an ancient volume of scripture known as the Book of Mormon, a book which gives an account of the hand-dealings of God with the people whom he brought to the continents of America from what we now call the “Old World.” (469)

In addition Roberts affirms that “Joseph Smith was commanded to translate, and was given the power and means by which he could translate the unknown language of these ancient American peoples” (470).

TWL contains several statements that necessarily assume the antiquity and literal truthfulness of this ancient American scripture. For example, Roberts speaks literally of the words that the resurrected Jesus spoke “to the assembled Nephites to whom he appeared on the Western Continent” (482–83; compare 388, 389). Indeed, Roberts believed that “no incident in the gospel history is more emphatically proven than this great truth, the resurrection of the Son of God” (395), and he used as his key witness the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the Nephites (395).

TWL often identifies Book of Mormon prophets by the centuries in which they lived. Lehi, Roberts says, lived “before the birth of Christ, early in the fifth [*sic*] century, B.C.” (401). Roberts identifies a prophecy in the book of Alma as “one written near the close of the second century B.C.” (401). Moreover, Roberts goes out of his way to describe the book’s authors as “ancient.” He calls Lehi “an ancient American Prophet” (75). He cites “revelations of God to the ancient inhabitants of America” (275). He calls the book “the American volume of Scripture,” written by “the old prophets of the ancient American race” (259; see also 21, 152, 263, 275, 427, 445). He also treats many Book of Mormon passages as the unique, authoritative source of revealed knowledge on important topics. He takes joy in drawing attention to doctrines “derived almost wholly from the teachings of the Book of Mormon” (444). He extols it as a masterful work. Of a Book of Mormon reading he exclaims, “how beautifully clear this principle of purity in thought is set forth” (501).

In a handwritten note on his third draft of *TWL*, Roberts penned the following note: “add ‘other sheep I have’—Christ mission to Western continents. St. John. 10 ch.” (179). This note was added as Roberts went through the manuscript one of the last times. There can be little doubt that the man who wrote such words about the Book of Mormon believed it to be what it claims to be. If Roberts had harbored any doubts, he would not have repeatedly written such words in this work, a work which he considered his magnum opus. Surely this final treatise from the prolific career of B. H. Roberts should also be the final word on his belief in the truth of this “ancient volume of scripture known as the Book of Mormon.”

Roberts was similarly emphatic about the truth and value of the teachings of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. He praises section 93 for its superior comprehension of the definition

of truth and its incomparable disclosures about eternal intelligences. He extols the divine origins of the books of Abraham and Moses, speaking quaintly of the latter as a “Mosaic fragment.”

Use of LDS Sources

Roberts relies very little on LDS sources outside of the scriptures. He quotes a few statements from Joseph Smith, mostly from the King Follett Discourse, and weaves in the words from a few hymns. Beyond very general references to a handful of LDS works—namely, Orson Pratt’s “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” *Works on the Doctrines of the Gospel*, and “Remarkable Visions”; Parley P. Pratt’s *Key to the Science of Theology*; Franklin D. Richards’s *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel*; James E. Talmage’s *The Articles of Faith* and *The Great Apostasy*; John Taylor’s *Government of God*; and Osborne Widtsoe’s (John A. Widtsoe’s brother) *The Restoration of the Gospel*—no other LDS authors are mentioned. Most conspicuously absent are James E. Talmage’s *Jesus the Christ* (1915) and Joseph F. Smith’s *Gospel Doctrine* (1919).

TWL stands out in sharp relief in comparison with these other works. Unlike the broad approach taken in *TWL* to a wide range of subjects and to several avenues of revelation, Pratt’s *Key to the Science of Theology* focuses primarily on direct communication between God, angels, spirits, and men. Nevertheless, certain similarities between these two works exist: Pratt’s chapter 16 extols the progress of locomotion as evidence of intercommunication between distant planets, as does *TWL* 12; and Pratt’s final chapter 17 ends his treatise with the “Laws of Marriage and Procreation,” as does *TWL* 55. Unlike the theological approach taken in *TWL* to the divinity and atonement of the Christ, Talmage’s *Jesus the Christ* utilizes primarily a biographical and historical framework to present the doctrines of Christ’s life and mission—although Talmage’s chapter 17 and *TWL* 50–51 approach the Sermon on the Mount similarly, and Talmage’s chapter 41 finds parallels in *TWL* 47 on the visions of the Restoration. *Gospel Doctrine* is a compilation of excerpted sayings and writings; its topics include truth, revelation, God and man, and free agency, but otherwise this collection bears little resemblance to the systematic *TWL*.

By a landslide, the favorite author cited by Roberts was Roberts himself. He refers often to many of his prior publications. Although *TWL* did not see publication during Roberts’s lifetime, many chapters were either drawn extensively from or were used substantially in other books, articles, or talks that Roberts published or delivered

before his death. Thus, much here is not new to scholars who have read widely in the works of Roberts. Students of B. H. Roberts will readily recognize many points of contact between the various chapters of *TWL* and his other doctrinal works. Some chapters follow—point for point, even word for word, and footnote for footnote—Roberts’s treatment of the same topic elsewhere, whether in articles in Church magazines, in lessons outlined in priesthood manuals, or in sections of his books or talks.

Without attempting to exhaust the vast project of cross-referencing and interrelating the words and logic of *TWL* to Roberts’s other doctrinal publications, we have surveyed twenty-four of his main doctrinal titles and produced the table that appears as Appendix II below (735–42). Organized by subjects, it shows numerous points of contact between many sections of Roberts’s doctrinal expositions and substantial portions of *TWL*. These connections show a remarkable persistence and consistency in Roberts’s thought. These links to Roberts’s prior works also show that the contents of *TWL*, for the most part, were not new or surprising; they are tangible evidence of Roberts’s desire that *TWL* present a synoptic synthesis of his entire life’s theological work. Strong connections exist, for example, especially between *TWL* and Roberts’s *The Gospel and Man’s Relationship to Deity* and his five-year *Seventy’s Course in Theology*. Both of these works circulated widely throughout the Church in the early twentieth century and deserve careful examination in connection with *TWL*.

In 1888, Roberts published the first edition of *The Gospel*, which was addressed to the youth of the Church.³³ In *The Gospel*, Roberts described conversion as “an intellectual assent to [the gospel] as a grand system of truth, but also imbued with its spirit.”³⁴ This statement describes well Roberts’s overall view of the gospel in *TWL*, where the gospel is approached as the grandest of all systems in the cosmos, rich with intellectual attraction but also permeated with the spirit of God.

In *The Gospel*, Roberts quoted from the Bible, from the Lectures on Faith, and most explicitly from the testimony of the Book of Mormon. His technique—using long quotes from scripture stitched together by a few lines of general summation—is the same as in *TWL*. Many of the same themes are addressed in *The Gospel*, including opposition,³⁵ the idea of atonement being found in pagan religions,³⁶ the atonement of Christ satisfying the claims of justice,³⁷ the grand view of general salvation coupled with the elements of individual salvation, evidence of truth about God’s existence from tradition,³⁸ evidence of truth from revelation,³⁹ the character of God, his existence and attributes,⁴⁰

astronomy,⁴¹ and the premortal existence.⁴² The main topics of *The Gospel* are faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—treatments not rehearsed again in *TWL*. Perhaps Roberts viewed these as the first principles of the gospel and his magnum opus as a treatment of the second principles of the gospel, such as loving God, loving one's neighbor, and living the laws of the New Dispensation.

Several sources Roberts used in *TWL* are also used in *The Gospel*,⁴³ which he wrote in Liverpool, England, amid the busy routines of missionary life. Undoubtedly, Roberts viewed *TWL* as a sequel to *The Gospel*, *The Gospel* being “a simple, primary treatise on the subject of its title” written expressly “to the youth of The Church.”⁴⁴ Although Roberts was pleased at the widespread use of *The Gospel* and saw its fifth edition on April 6, 1924, he was still aware “of its limitations as an exposition of the first principles of the gospel, the theme of which is so large that if all things pertaining to it were treated in written thought—everyone [*sic*]—‘I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’”⁴⁵

In the second edition of *The Gospel*, Roberts included an article he had written for the *Contributor* entitled “Man’s Relationship to Deity.”⁴⁶ The article dealt with evolution, embryonic development, variation in species, natural selection, and other topics in a manner critical of the general theories of evolution. Specifically, Roberts pointed to the absence of intermediate transitional forms in the geological record, to the problem of sterility of hybrid species, and “to the revelations of God.”⁴⁷ He rejected even the so-called “Christian evolutionists”⁴⁸ who attempt to harmonize Christianity with the philosophy of evolution. He also explained that the six creative days were not six periods of twenty-four hours⁴⁹ and elaborated on the two creation accounts given in Genesis 1–2.⁵⁰

Rather than advocating evolution, Roberts argued that the Earth was created from fragments of another planet and that pre-Adamic races “were inhabitants of that world which was destroyed, but the evidence of their existence as well as the evidence of the existence of animals and vegetation was preserved in the re-creation of that planet to form this earth.”⁵¹ Already Roberts had embraced the ideas that Adam, a son of God, was brought to this earth and that this stage of the Creation is described in the second creation account found in Genesis 2, which begins by placing man upon the earth.⁵² Eve was then brought to Adam: “In this nothing is hinted at about man being made from the dust, and woman manufactured from a rib.”⁵³ Roberts continued by asserting that all forms of life were brought to the earth “not by the process of evolution, but by the various species suitable to the condition of the earth’s development being brought from some other and older sphere.”⁵⁴

Roberts then concluded his essay by expounding on the premortal existence of humanity, the spirit relationship between God and man, and the noble intentions of mankind. The main difference between *The Gospel's* assertions and the views in *TWL* is that the latter are more specific in locating the great cataclysm on this earth. Perhaps the earlier exposition was not theologically problematical because it entailed no death on this planet after its formation and before the fall of Adam. The latter position, however, places life and death on this earth prior to the fall of Adam. In that event, 2 Nephi 2:22 should be understood either as referring only, as Roberts argues, to life and death during the dispensation of Adam (319), or, it might also be suggested, as referring only to the mortality of Adam and Eve and their posterity, not to life and death of plants and animals in general.

From 1907 to 1911, Roberts produced *The Seventy's Course in Theology*. Extensive parallels between this work and *TWL* are noted or discussed below, especially in the essays by Madsen, Paulsen, Hamblin, Seely, and Skinner. One major difference between *Seventy's Course* and *TWL* is that the former gives essentially a skeletal outline supplemented with raw source materials, while *TWL* offers a continuous and more explanatory discourse. Thus, in many respects, Roberts's ideas—even some of those that eventually prove to be the most problematic for *TWL*—had long been in print and had widely circulated well before Roberts composed his final doctrinal treatise.

Prior Treatments of *TWL*

Shortly after Roberts's death in 1933, the Roberts family donated his library to the Church and acknowledged that *TWL* belonged to the Church. Until 1994, this massive work has remained unpublished, although portions of its final third draft have circulated without Church authorization.⁵⁵ As part of the long-standing efforts of *BYU Studies* to publish primary sources of interest to Latter-day Saint scholars, the work is now published by permission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but it is not an official publication of the Church.

As long as the full text of *TWL* remained unpublished, it spawned much intrigue and speculation that sensationalized some of its contents, and only a few scholarly publications commented on the actual manuscript. Commentators have mostly fashioned views of Roberts after their own images and likings; usually they have focused, primarily out of personal preferences, only on selected portions of *TWL* or on the rather singular exchange of interpretations that it engendered. While several of these studies have made valuable contributions, none has captured the totality of this expansive work as a whole.

For example, the first article to mention *TWL* was written in 1973 by an LDS scientist, Duane Jeffery; it discusses the Creation, the age of the earth, the fixity of species, the special creation of humans, and evolution.⁵⁶ Because Jeffery desired to promote the coexistence of science and statements made over the years by Presidents of the Church regarding creation issues, he emphasized comments by Church leaders that feature ambiguity or indeterminacy.⁵⁷ He used *TWL* essentially to argue that the Church takes no official doctrinal position on evolution, that “these matters do not directly relate to ‘salvation,’” and that this “gives Mormonism a basis for synthesis that exists in few if any other Western religions.”⁵⁸ Roberts, however, saw *TWL* as an integrated whole having much to do with salvation and all other eternal truths. While Roberts used many scientific sources, he hoped to forge a synthesis that took what is known from revealed scripture and then extended those axiomatic truths by corollaries drawn from “what we know” through logic and experience with the world. This appears to be a more complete synthesis than Jeffery had in mind.

In 1975, Truman Madsen published an article in *BYU Studies* summarizing *TWL*. Interested in the philosophy of religion, Madsen stresses the manuscript’s theological content and praises its expansive genius for “honest academic open-field running.”⁵⁹ Madsen characterized Roberts’s project particularly as an effort to comprehend Christ. But, while the doctrine of the Atonement is prominent in several chapters of *TWL*, Madsen’s orientation overemphasizes the role of Christ in other parts of the document itself. Madsen creates subheadings not used by Roberts, such as “Christ and the Cosmos” and “God, Christ, and Man,” and in many of Roberts’s chapters, one must look hard to find the bedrock of Christ beneath the superstructures of logic and texts that Roberts has constructed. Again, one seeks a more complete understanding of this massive work.

In 1978 an article by Richard Sherlock argued that “the response of Mormons to the challenge of evolutionary thought was as diverse as anything found outside of Mormondom.”⁶⁰ Above all, Sherlock sought to resist finding “unity where the story was otherwise,”⁶¹ and *TWL* allegedly supplied a prime example of confrontation and rift. While Sherlock’s point is valid that historians should not create unity where it did not exist, the opposite point is also important: historians should not exaggerate diversity beyond that which existed. In *TWL* Sherlock saw worlds in collision over “the paleontological record of life and death that supported the evolutionary superstructure of modern biology.”⁶² Furthermore, he saw the matter largely as a contest between the “scriptural literalism” of Joseph Fielding Smith and an elaborate

dispensationalist argument by B. H. Roberts. But now readers will discern the rather obvious unities that prevailed between Roberts and his brethren on most subjects and methods—unities that overrode their grappling with the one or two questions Sherlock emphasizes.

In 1985, Sterling McMurrin commented briefly on *TWL*. Viewing Roberts as a rational intellectual who was usually a writer of “uncommon good sense, determined to distinguish fact from fiction,” McMurrin described the crux of chapter 32 of *TWL* as one of Roberts’s “serious lapses,” calling his view about life forms coming to this planet from other worlds a “piece of fantasy” and an “aberration.”⁶³ While it is true that *TWL* contains some speculative and outdated ideas, it was not an isolated venture but an epitome of Roberts’s intellectual and doctrinal life’s work, including his long-held views on pre-Adamites, as Appendix II below shows (735–42, esp. 741).

In 1994 *BYU Studies* published its first edition of this work, together with a three-volume facsimile edition of its three manuscripts (these original manuscripts are discussed further on page xlv below and in the Foreword to the facsimile edition, pages iii–ix). Although general readers will not likely take great interest in consulting the original typescripts of this treatise, *BYU Studies* found that the best way to present the totality of the textual history of *TWL* was to publish a complete photocopied set of the three original drafts themselves. Historians who enjoy working extensively with primary manuscripts will find certain value in some of the pages of these drafts.

In preparing this second edition, *BYU Studies* has introduced a few new items but has tried to minimize the number of differences between this new and enlarged edition and the first edition. In this second edition, occasional typographical errors have been corrected, chapter numbers have been added to the running heads, and various comments, footnotes, and bibliographic data have been improved. A new appendix has been added (721–34), affording ready access to some additional paragraphs from the facsimile edition of Drafts 1 and 2 of *TWL*, as well as providing a summary of the 56-page memorandum that was written by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith in response to Roberts in January 1931. Finally, most of the introductory essays, which appeared as Roman-numeraled front matter in the first edition, have been moved toward the back of this volume as analytic essays, allowing the Arabic renumbering of these pages. Only in rare instances was it necessary to change any of the page layout or pagination in the body of the text of *TWL* itself.

In the future, now that the entire work can be studied more widely and readers may judge its qualities and contents for themselves, greater emphasis should be placed on the full range of main contents and

themes of this work, including revelation and truth, dispensations and apostasies, God's plan, the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement, and obedience to the commandments of God. Readers should be cautious not to judge Elder Roberts simply on the basis of their personal response to one part of this work. *TWL* is a composite. One should not mistake any single piece for the essence of the whole.

The introductory chapters in this volume strive to set this extensive and complex work into its interesting historical, intellectual, and religious contexts. Their writers have tried to anticipate questions that readers might ask as they study this book and strive to understand it:

What does Roberts mean by "the truth, the way, the life"?⁶⁴

What are his basic methods and assumptions?

What kind of logic or rhetoric does he use?

What of his use of gender discourse?

What does this book tell us about B. H. Roberts?

What are his basic views about God?

What does he believe?

Have his beliefs changed from his previous works?

How does he value revelation?

What are his basic views about science and creation?

How much speculation was he willing to entertain?

How does he use scholarly and popular sources?

How does he appraise other religions or world views?

How do his views compare with those of other LDS writers?

How does he understand the atonement of Jesus Christ?

How literally does he interpret scripture?

What are his favorite scriptures?

Why is this book historically significant?

What does this book teach us today?

What does Roberts value most, personally and for society?

Why was this book not published in 1930?

These and many other questions should be asked as readers explore with Roberts the contours and boundaries of many of the profound imponderables of God's eternal truths and marvelous creations.

While much more could be said by way of introduction, we hope that the following essays open the curtain and spotlight the key subjects that are presented by Roberts on the stage of this expansive *magnum opus*.

NOTES

¹For example, Roberts's views on physical science were not always up to date, even for the 1920s. Also, he accepted the Piltdown Man as genuine. As the case of Mark Hofmann has shown again in the 1980s, clever forgeries have misled other scholars, too.

²Davis Bitton is Professor of History at the University of Utah, and Richard Roberts (a grandson of B. H. Roberts) is Professor of History at Weber State University. All others are professors at Brigham Young University.

³Roberts began writing *TWL* in 1927 in New York, after he completed five years as president of the Eastern States Mission. Footnotes in *TWL* prove that he was still adding sources dated as late as November 1930, and the second draft of chapter 31 was modified and used as his fifty-page presentation to the Quorum of the Twelve in January 1931. Correspondence shows that he was still working on that chapter in 1932.

⁴CES Religious Educators' Symposium (August 1993).

⁵For example, Ps. 86:11; 119:30; Prov. 6:23; 10:17; 12:28; 15:24; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:14; 2 Ne. 10:23; Ether 4:12.

⁶The committee's comments come from an undated document entitled "Doctrinal points questioned by the Committee which read the Manuscript of Elder B. H. Roberts, entitled—The Truth, The Way, The Life." A copy of this memorandum was given to Roberts. In addition, George Albert Smith submitted a report to the Quorum of the Twelve on October 10, 1929, paraphrasing the objections and stating them more tactfully. Also, a one-page "List of Points on Doctrine in Question by the Committee in Relation to B. H. Robert's Ms." was prepared and transmitted to the First Presidency on May 15, 1930. The comments from these documents are found below, pages 22, 43–44, 51, 52, 158, 246–47, 261, 263, 267, 278, 292, 297, 325, 326, 340, 343, 353, 355, 356, 364, 378, 383, 384, 406, 409, 410, 418, 457, 472, 502.

⁷Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 279–81.

⁸In his January 14, 1931, report, Joseph Fielding Smith rightly showed, with regret, that Orson Hyde (whom Roberts follows) had been wrong about this point on several grounds, including the meaning of the underlying Hebrew, which means *fill*, not *refill*. See page 294 below.

⁹James E. Talmage, "Earth and Man," *Millennial Star* 93 (December 31, 1931): 849, 850.

¹⁰Talmage, "Earth and Man," 858, 852. See also 859: "As to how were formed the bodies of the first human beings to take tabernacles, the revealed word gives no details while science has practically nothing to offer by way of explanation"; and 863, "Science has nothing to say" on such matters as man being the child of God and of this earth becoming celestialized; "it can neither refute nor prove."

¹¹The *Deseret News* article indicated that "this address may be obtained in pamphlet form from the office of the LDS Church." The First Presidency reviewed the speech on November 16 and 17, 1931, making slight changes and authorizing its publication; see James E. Talmage's journal and Heber J. Grant's diary. In addition to its further publication in *Millennial Star* mentioned above, the speech was also reprinted in *Instructor* 100 (December 1965): 474–77 and 101 (January 1966): 9–11, 15.

¹²First Presidency Minutes, April 5, 1931. See also “Evolution and the Origin of Man,” packet approved for use at Brigham Young University by BYU Board of Trustees, June 1992.

¹³For example, Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), contains entries on Abraham, Adam, agency, anti-polygamy legislation, apostasy, archeology, astronomy, atonement of Jesus Christ, authority, beatitudes, Bible, birth control, blacks, Book of Abraham, Book of Mormon, Cain, commandments, Creation, creeds, dispensation of the fullness of times, dispensations of the gospel, Doctrine and Covenants, earth, Enoch, eternal progression, ethics, Eve, evil, evolution, exaltation, Fall of Adam, foreknowledge of God, Garden of Eden, God, intelligence, intelligences, Israel, Jesus Christ, justice and mercy, knowledge, law, marriage, matter, Melchizedek, metaphysics, miracles, omnipotent God, opposition, original sin, origin of man, orthodoxy, Peter, philosophy, plan of salvation, premarital sex, premortal life, priesthood, prophecy, purpose of earth life, reason and revelation, restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, resurrection, sacrament prayers, salvation of the dead, Sermon on the Mount, spirit, spiritual death, spirit world, Word of Wisdom, and world religions, all of which are also discussed in *TWL*.

¹⁴Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Image, 1975), 2:380.

¹⁵J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (New York: Macmillan, 1932).

¹⁶Bury, *Idea of Progress*, 5.

¹⁷Bury, *Idea of Progress*, 348.

¹⁸Roberts to George Albert Smith, April 28, 1930.

¹⁹A discourse delivered in the tabernacle, Logan, Utah, Sunday evening, April 2, 1911, published in *Improvement Era* 14 (June 1911): 665–77; (July 1911): 774–86.

²⁰Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 666.

²¹Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 667.

²²Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 667.

²³Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 668.

²⁴Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 671.

²⁵Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 675.

²⁶Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 677.

²⁷Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 774.

²⁸Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 777–78.

²⁹Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 781.

³⁰Roberts, “Higher Criticism,” 785.

³¹B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen and Sterling McMurrin (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); for further discussion, see John W. Welch, “Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?” (Provo: F.A.R.M.S., 1985), and “B. H. Roberts: Seeker after Truth,” *Ensign* 16 (March 1986): 56–62. See also pages 687–91 below.

³²See Brigham D. Madsen, “B. H. Roberts’s Studies of the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue* 26 (Fall 1993): 77–86.

³³B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Contributor, 1888), iii.

³⁴Roberts, *Gospel*, iv.

³⁵Roberts, *Gospel*, 10.

³⁶Roberts, *Gospel*, 11.

³⁷Roberts, *Gospel*, 19.

³⁸Roberts, *Gospel*, 89.

³⁹Roberts, *Gospel*, 95.

⁴⁰Roberts, *Gospel*, 107.

⁴¹Roberts, *Gospel*, 211.

⁴²Roberts, *Gospel*, 239.

⁴³For example, Roberts quotes Josephus on the history of the Old Testament, Paley on evidences of Christianity, Lightfoot's unidentified article in the *Quarterly Review*, Crabb's *Mythology*, Mosheim, and other works that provide a constant intellectual background for the thinking of Roberts. Looking back on *The Gospel*, Roberts would have considered it a basic and introductory work.

⁴⁴Roberts, *The Gospel*, 3d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1924), vi.

⁴⁵Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), vi.

⁴⁶Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), iv, 251-94.

⁴⁷Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 266.

⁴⁸Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 267.

⁴⁹Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 271.

⁵⁰Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 274; compare *TWL* ch. 30.

⁵¹Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 283.

⁵²Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 280; compare *TWL* ch. 32.

⁵³Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 279.

⁵⁴Roberts, *Gospel* (1924), 280.

⁵⁵For example, Brian H. Stuy, *Excerpts from The Truth, The Way, The Life* (n.p., 1985). See also Stan Larson, ed., *The Truth, The Way, The Life: The Masterwork of B. H. Roberts* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), containing a full version of Draft 3.

⁵⁶Duane E. Jeffery, "Seers, Savants, and Evolution: The Uncomfortable Interface," *Dialogue* 8 (Autumn-Winter 1973): 41-75, especially pages 63-65 and accompanying footnotes.

⁵⁷For example, Jeffery characterizes some statements by Church Presidents as "private views," and he draws attention to statements to the effect that "the Church itself has no philosophy about the *modus operandi* employed by the Lord in His creation of the world." Jeffery, "Seers, Savants, and Evolution," 62.

⁵⁸Jeffery, "Seers, Savants, and Evolution," 68.

⁵⁹Truman G. Madsen, "The Meaning of Christ—The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Analysis of B. H. Roberts' Unpublished Masterwork," *BYU Studies* 15 (Spring 1975): 261.

⁶⁰Richard Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum: Mormon Reactions to the Darwinist Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 33-59, quote on 58; see also Richard Sherlock and Jeffrey E. Keller, "The B. H. Roberts/Joseph Fielding Smith/James E. Talmage Affair," in *The Search for Harmony: Essays on Science and Mormonism*, ed. Gene A. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 93-115. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, also speaks of "immediate controversy" (286) and "ill will" (288) created by *TWL*, but he rightly sees the Church as allowing "the matter to rest" (288) and places this development in the broader context of a thirty-year examination of "questions of scientific naturalism, Darwinism, the relationship between science and religion" and other issues (273).

⁶¹Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum," 58.

⁶²Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum," 34.

⁶³Sterling McMurrin, "Brigham H. Roberts: A Biographical Essay," in *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, xxviii, and xxxi n. 15.

⁶⁴On September 17, 1928, in a letter to President Rudger Clawson, *TWL* collection, note 31, page 718 below, Roberts summarized the headlines of *TWL* as it stood at that time:

About one-half of the book is taken up with the first division of the subject: THE TRUTH, and occupies 29 Chapters of the 53. This part of the work deals with great fundamentals of the existence of things, what we know about the universe, the solar system, our own earth, with a treatise on creation, with man's advent to the earth, the preparation for man's life upon the earth, with the institution of the gospel in the council of God, the possibility and probability and the absolute assurance, at the last, of revelation and what revelation has brought forth as the Gospel.

The second part: THE WAY, is the development of the everlasting Gospel, in which a brief resume of the different dispensations of it are treated, and in this part the atonement of Jesus Christ is worked out under the scriptures and philosophy, as far as philosophy can be made to apply to it. Six chapters are devoted to that one theme alone. Then comes a chapter on the departure from THE WAY and another chapter closing this middle section on the Restoration of THE WAY.

The third part: THE LIFE, is a development of about six chapters of the perfect life of the Christ as the ideal of the Gospel.