

B. H. Roberts - BOM
STUDY

REPLY TO JOHN W. WELCH AND TRUMAN G. MADSEN

by
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and
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A reply to "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" by John W. Welch and Truman G. Madsen, published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Provo, Utah, 1985, \$4.00

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B. H. ROBERTS: STUDIES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

When my colleagues, Sterling M. McMurrin and Everett L. Cooley, and I agreed to edit the documents concerned with a 1920s study of the origins of the Book of Mormon by B. H. Roberts, we had no intention of appearing in public to defend or explain our part in the publication of the Roberts papers. But since we have come under severe criticism by two members of the faculty at Brigham Young University, John W. Welch of the Law School and Truman G. Madsen, Professor of Philosophy, we have decided to accept this opportunity to discuss the Roberts book. Having spent much of my life as an administrator in the varied fields of the military, a construction business, as a Washington bureaucrat and a university official and a long-time historian, I should have remembered that the in-fighting which goes on in such areas of endeavor can never compare with that which takes place in the world of religion. When one begins to tinker with a people's beliefs in their everlasting salvation and even though serving only as a messenger or an editor, one should be prepared to risk burning at the stake. It doesn't appear possible to discuss B. H. Roberts and his study in a non-adversarial manner. I regret this but shall, nevertheless, proceed with my part in the program with what I hope will be good humor and restraint.

Let me first explain how the University of Utah obtained the Roberts papers and how I became involved in editing them. In the Preface to the book, Everett L. Cooley, former Director of Special Collections at Marriott Library, explains in detail how the Library received copies of the documents as gifts from two separate divisions of the Roberts family with permission to publish them. After reading the material, Dr. Cooley recognized its importance and asked the editor of the University of Illinois Press, Mr. Richard

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Wentworth, if he would be interested in publishing the Roberts study. The Illinois Press Board agreed to undertake the publication as part of its Mormon series which includes such significant recent works as Jan Shipps' Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition and Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism. It is not necessary to add that the University of Illinois Press is one of the leading university publishing houses with an international reputation. A contract to produce the book was negotiated between the Press and the University of Utah Research Foundation with any royalties from the sale of the book to go to the Research Foundation and then to Marriott Library. Professor McMurrin and I both wrote letters to the University of Utah indicating that we did not wish to participate in any way in gaining any financial reward from distribution of the book.

Because of my life-long admiration for B. H. Roberts as an honest, industrious and conscientious historian and scholar and because the timing was right for me, I volunteered to be considered as the editor of the documents. After a very careful scrutiny by the University of Illinois Press, I was selected for the job because of my record of publication in western history, my acquaintance with L.D.S. archives, and the conviction on the part of the editorial staff that I had not been involved in research as a specifically "Mormon" historian and could therefore bring a fresh and impartial approach to this obviously sensitive subject. The reviews of my various books which all include information from Mormon sources have been mostly favorable with the exception of one vitriolic essay which accused me of having a pro-Mormon bias, in part, I suspect, because my first name is Brigham. On the other hand, I must acknowledge that the fact that my name is Brigham does not seem to have helped me with Professor John Welch.

At this point, it seems necessary to explain the editorial method which Mr. Welch either does not understand or deliberately refuses to acknowledge, either of which I hesitate to ascribe to him. The job of an editor is to prepare another's work for publication. He or she usually writes an introduction to place the subject in proper historical perspective, adds explanatory notes, and, in this case, provides a bibliographic essay describing the books used by the author. The editor is not obligated to insert his own conclusions about the work and should not attempt to slant the book in any way to prejudice the reader's mind. The reader should be left to draw his own conclusions from the author's presentation. Therefore, in the work of B. H. Roberts, I have had no intention either to prove or disprove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon or to decide whether Roberts retained or did not retain his belief in the book. Furthermore, it could not be my purpose as editor to review and analyze all of the archaeological and other evidence for or against the Book of Mormon which has accumulated over the years since Roberts completed his study. That is another book or perhaps several. My purpose had to be to present Roberts' study to his readers and let them agree or disagree with his findings. To ensure that I would not inadvertently prejudice the reader's mind, six different readers, knowledgeable in the field, read the manuscript carefully for any evidence of slanting and that group included, of course, some of the editorial staff of the University of Illinois Press. Mr. Welch, on the other hand, seems to ascribe to me an intention to attack the Book of Mormon in presenting the Roberts material.

Welch has questioned the manner in which we have presented the Roberts material. Where Roberts used a carat to insert handwritten words or phrases in the three studies or crossed out phrases during his final editing of the manuscripts, Professor Welch insists we should have used the antiquarian

method of exactly reproducing carats, handwritten words above the line of type, and phrases with lines drawn through them, a very awkward reproduction which would only add to a reader's difficulty. We chose to place Roberts' handwritten insertions in the flow of the sentences, and we eliminated those phrases which Roberts had crossed out. The reader, thus, has access to the copy of the studies as revised finally by Roberts himself. This was obviously the way to go since it conforms to the present method of publishing historic documents.

There is even a rumor afloat on the Brigham Young University campus that I, as editor, did not use the original manuscripts in the Roberts collection at the University of Utah but relied, instead, on the production, Roberts' Manuscripts Revealed, published in 1980 by the Modern Microfilm Company of Salt Lake City, the firm headed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This is sheer nonsense. One of the difficulties with this preposterous yarn is that about thirty pages of the Roberts manuscript are missing from the Tanner book. I should not like to think that John Welch would launch such an unwarranted rumor.

Perhaps we should now examine his motivation for the serious attack he has made in questioning my honesty as a scholar. He is the President of the Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies or F.A.R.M.S., located in Provo, Utah, apparently well-financed and devoted to the examination of any material which will prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. It is understandable why a lawyer who spends much of his energy in this pursuit and in compiling such articles as one titled, "Benjamin's Speech as an Early Jewish Festival," and in supporting efforts to locate Zarahemla and other Book of Mormon cities in Central America, would feel threatened by the forthright conclusions of doubt expressed by B. H. Roberts in his studies.

Mr. Welch, with the assistance of Professor Truman Madsen, has written

a 100-page attack on the credibility of the editors of the Roberts' book which, in a slightly revised version, but still just as long, is now being advertised for sale at \$4.00 per copy by the F.A.R.M.S. organization. One may also purchase at \$3.50 a 59-page "Answers to B. H. Roberts' Questions," authored by John Welch. And, of course, there appeared a one-page abbreviated attack on the editors of the Roberts work--it can't be called a review--in the Church Section of the Deseret News, December 15, 1985. The article was not featured in the book review section of the newspaper but in the Church News where it belonged.

Despite attempts to discourage its publication and perhaps to persuade people not to read it, the book seems to be selling well. The first edition of 1500 copies sold out in about five weeks, and the Press has issued a second and larger printing. Two days after the appearance of Mr. Welch's Deseret News article, I was told by a sales representative at the downtown Deseret Book store that there had been a heavy "run" on the book, some of the patrons saying, "If the book is that bad, I surely want to read it." There may be some judicious and balanced reviews of the book on the way. The Press has sent out 52 copies for review.

Now, for the information of those in the audience who have not read Roberts' Studies of the Book of Mormon, let me briefly review the contents which Professor Welch could not do in detail in his Deseret News article because he was forced to spend so much time in exposing the editorial shortcomings of the editors. In my Introduction, I described Roberts' career as a Mormon historian and especially his "wrestling" over the years with problems of the Book of Mormon. His major defense of the book came in 1909 when he published his two-volume work, New Witnesses for God, a well-reasoned analysis of the then current archaeological and other evidence which seemed to support the book. These volumes remained the standard

reference defense of the Book of Mormon until the fall and winter of 1921-22 when Roberts was asked once again to investigate some queries about the book. A Mr. Couch of Washington, D.C., an investigator of Mormonism, propounded five questions about the Book of Mormon which Roberts was asked, by the presiding authorities of his church, to attempt to answer. The questions were:

1. How could there be such a great diversity of Indian languages in the western hemisphere when Lehi and his followers were only here for the short period of about 2700 years?
2. Why were there no horses in America upon the arrival of the Spaniards when the followers of Lehi had such animals?
3. Nephi had a bow of steel when history records that the Jews had no knowledge of steel in 600 B.C.
4. The words "swords and scimeters" appear in the Book of Mormon and yet the word "scimeter" does not appear in literature until well after the Christian era.
5. The Nephites possessed an abundance of silk when apparently silk was not known in America.

There are eleven letters in the Roberts collection describing the process by which Roberts finally attempted to answer Couch and to study further the Book of Mormon. The correspondence is, of course, also included in our published work. Roberts was apparently able to satisfy himself about four of the questions from Couch but very carefully omitted any reference to the absence of the horse in America before the conquest, writing in his longer study that "nowhere has the evidence for the existence of the horse in America within historic times been found." (p: 107) Not satisfied with

his brief answers to the Couch questions, he prepared a more detailed analysis of 141 typed pages which he submitted to President Heber J. Grant and counsellors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and his own Council of Seventy in January of 1922. This document, entitled "Book of Mormon Difficulties: A Study," is the first of the three documents presented in our book.

In three days of meetings with the General Authorities of his church, January 4, 5, and 26, Roberts was allowed to present his "Difficulties" paper to them with a full discussion of the problems he had encountered with the historicity of the Book of Mormon. He wrote to President Heber J. Grant that his hope was that "from the collective wisdom of all the brethren addressed, or from the inspiration of the Lord . . . , we might find a solution of the problems presented. . ." After the first two days, he was so disappointed with the results of his meeting with church leaders that he wrote Grant again, "There was so much said that was utterly irrelevant, and so little said, if anything at all, that was helpful in the matters at issue that I came away from the conference quite disappointed." The third day of meetings granted Roberts by President Grant, on January 26, evidently was just as dissatisfying in providing answers.

We get a more detailed picture of what transpired in these three days of special meetings from an entry in the personal diary of Wesley P. Lloyd who had a three and a half hour very frank interview with B. H. Roberts about seven weeks before Roberts' death. Lloyd had been a missionary under Roberts and later in his life became Dean of the Graduate School at Brigham Young University. Lloyd recorded Roberts' remembrance of the reaction of the church leaders to his presentation, "In answer, they merely one by one stood up and bore testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. George Albert Smith in tears testified that his faith in the Book had not

been shaken by the question." After describing the further studies by Roberts of the Book of Mormon, Lloyd reported that Roberts "swings 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 Thummin were not objective." As one reads Roberts' conclusions in his second document, "A Book of Mormon Study," it is evident that Lloyd accurately recorded Roberts' convictions in the matter.

John Welch attempts to discredit the Lloyd diary entry by pointing out a few minor discrepancies in the account and then declaring that Lloyd was not "reliable as a reporter." As every historian knows, one of the more accurate sources of historical information is a journal entry written immediately after the incident reported. The essential and central Roberts' conclusion as reported by Lloyd that the gold plates were not objective was an accurate statement by a competent scholar, trained to be careful about such important conversational exchanges. Furthermore, the faculty and administration of Brigham Young University later considered Wesley P. Lloyd "reliable" enough to entrust him with the top academic post in any university, Dean of the Graduate School. And as one who knew Dean Lloyd personally and his high sense of integrity and honesty, he and Brigham Young University deserve better from one of that institution's present faculty members.

Now, to turn to a serious accusation against me by Professor Welch who apparently attempts to discredit Roberts by discrediting the editor of the Roberts documents. In Part I of his original paper entitled, "Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon? Comments on Brigham Madsen's

History," Mr. Welch writes, "In a day when some historians are crying 'foul' and 'cover-up,' a careless and apparently biased case shows up in the hands of professors who claim to be in favor of objectivity and sincerity."

Because I don't particularly appreciate being charged with being a dishonest scholar who engaged in a "foul cover-up," I challenged Professor Welch on this matter in a four-hour meeting to discuss the Roberts book before a small group of interested people. As a result, I can now report that those offensive words have been eliminated in the new Welch article now for sale by the F.A.R.M.S. organization. The claim of error is still there, however, and was repeated in the Welch Deseret News report. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the facts in the case.

Mr. Welch charges that I contend that Roberts wrote the second document featured in our book, "A Book of Mormon Study," while he served as Mission President in the Eastern States from 1922 to 1927. I, of course, do no such thing and rely on the reader's attentiveness to read Roberts' letter to President Grant, of March 15 [1922], in which he wrote, "it was my intention to go on with the consideration to the last analysis. Accordingly, since the matter was already so far under my hand, I continued my studies, and submit herewith the record of them. . . . This report herewith submitted is what it purports to be, namely a 'study of Book of Mormon origins,' . . ." These statements are plain enough that Roberts wrote his second paper, "A Book of Mormon Study," during the period of late January to mid-March in the spring of 1922 after his meetings with the General Authorities. There can be no other interpretation. As an editor of the Deseret News of April 14, 1858, once wrote in pointing out a quite obvious fact in his editorial, "It is not a difficult matter, for a good arithmetician to count the toes upon a naked foot, when it is put out."

I do insist that B. H. Roberts continued his work on the "Study" while he was Mission President, strengthening it and making a few revisions. Professor Welch considers this to be the second part of my giant "cover-up." Let us examine the record. First, to turn to a document that I was not aware of until Truman Madsen divulged it in his comments on my editorship. Dr. Madsen cited "a memo to President Heber J. Grant dated May of 1922 in which he says he will take his 'manuscript,' which he had 'carried to the last analysis' to the Mission field. There he hopes to look for answers to the difficulties and queries posed in the Study, . . ." (p. 5) My Introduction then points out that on June 7, 1922 (just nine days after he was set apart for his mission in Salt Lake City), Roberts was in Rochester, New York where he noted in his papers about the early book by Jedediah Morse, Geography Made Easy (1796), "above book in Municipal Museum of Rochester, copied by B. H. Roberts, June 7, 1922." He also recorded copying, apparently later, parts or all of four other works including that of Ethan Smith, View of the Hebrews, which he reported, "Copied by B. H. Roberts from copy in 1st Edition, New York City Library." Then again, courtesy of Truman Madsen's paper, the notation appeared that there is among the Roberts' papers, "a memo listing the eighteen numbered segments of 'the Parallels? This is an organized memo which Roberts hand-wrote in the New York Public Library in 1922." (p. 5) This paper is the third document included in our book.

Finally, to conclude this examination of Roberts' scholarly activities on the Book of Mormon during his mission, let us turn for further information to his letter to Apostle Richard R. Lyman, October 24, 1927, written at the end of his five-year mission:

"And the other day I told you, if you remember, that I had continued my investigations and had drawn up a somewhat lengthy report for the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. Then came my call to the Eastern States and the matter was dropped, but my report was drawn up nevertheless together with a letter that I had intended should accompany it, but in the hurry of getting away and the impossibility at that time of having my report considered, I dropped the matter, and have not yet decided whether I shall present the report to the First Presidency or not. But since I mentioned this matter to you the other day, and also because you took considerable interest on the former occasion of more than five years ago and wrote letters to Professor Chamberlain and Dr. Middleton and others about the subject, I thought I would submit in sort of tabloid form a few pages of matter pointing out a possible theory of the Origin of the Book of Mormon that is quite unique and never seems to have occurred to anyone to employ, largely on account of the obscurity of the material on which it might be based, but which in the hands of skillful opponents could be made in my judgment, very embarrassing.

"I submit it in the form of a Parallel between some main outline facts pertaining to the Book of Mormon and matter that was published in Ethan Smith's 'View of the Hebrews' which preceded the Book of Mormon, the first edition by eight years, and the second edition by five years, 1823-5 respectively.

[And he continued:] "Necessarily the matter presented is rather large in volume, but I hope its interest will excuse its length, will ask you to consider it from this view point. . . . Let me say also that the Parallel that I send to you is not one fourth part of what can be presented in this form, and the unrepresented part is quite as striking as this that I submit."

These excerpts from Roberts' correspondence demonstrate some additional research and writing about the Book of Mormon during his five-year mission stint in New York. They also indicate a continued question in his "A Book of Mormon Study" which contained the "embarrassing" theory, namely, the similarity between the Book of Mormon and Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews, and thereby advanced the possibility that the latter could have served as a "ground plan" for Joseph Smith in his writing of the Book of Mormon. He had already indicated that during his work on New Witnesses for God in 1909 that "this work of Priest's was unknown to me" as was also the work by Ethan

Smith, View of the Hebrews--except by report of it, and as being in my hands but a few minutes." Roberts seems to have overlooked the fact that he had mentioned it in his New Witnesses for God.

But with his new copy of the Ethan Smith 1825 edition of View of the Hebrews and occasional Saturdays away from his mission duties, Roberts now had the opportunity to take a second look at "A Book of Mormon Study" during his time in the East.

As further evidence that Roberts spent time in New York in working on his original 1922 version of "A Book of Mormon Study," note the different tone of his letter of March 15, 1922 to President Grant compared to his final judgment concerning the authorship of the Book of Mormon. To Grant he wrote in 1922, "I continued my studies, and submit herewith the record of them. I do not say my conclusions, for they are undrawn. . . . I am taking the position that our faith is not only unshaken but unshakable in the Book of Mormon." On the other hand, by the end of his mission to the Eastern States in 1927, Robert had not only come to some conclusions, but the conclusions he now drew expressed an unsettling concern about the Book of Mormon as authentic history. For example, describing the Nephite and Jaredite wars of extinction, Roberts wrote in his final edited copy of "A Book of Mormon Study" (p. 283):

Is all this sober history inspired written and true, representing things that actually happened? Or is it a wonder-tale of an immature mind, unconscious of what a test he is laying on human credulity when asking men to accept his narrative as solemn history?

The evidence is, therefore, clear that B. H. Roberts continued research in the problems of the origin of the Book of Mormon during his mission presidency using the eastern libraries available to him. A reader might well ask why Welch is so desperately involved in an examination of the time during which Roberts wrote his "A Book of Mormon Study," when the important thing is what Roberts discovered and concluded about the origins of the book. Could it be that this great exploration into time is a smoke screen designed to divert the reader from Roberts' observations? There is an old adage about a trial lawyer that when the facts are on his side he uses those facts to present his case; when the evidence is not on his side, he hollers a lot. I submit that in this instance, Professor Welch is hollering a lot.

In his 59-page paper, "Finding Answers to B. H. Roberts' Questions and 'An Unparallel,'" Welch does attempt to answer the questions about the Book of Mormon posed by Roberts by discussing (1) Indian Origins, (2) Archaeology, (3) Absurdities, and (4) A Parallel. As for the central issue of whether or not Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews served as a structural basis for Joseph Smith to write the Book of Mormon, Welch concludes in his treatise, "It is not hard to believe that what little resemblance we have here between VH and the Book of Mormon is a matter of coincidence. . . . In fact, the differences far outweigh the similarities, and most of the similarities dissolve upon simply exploration." (p. 59).

There are four main sections in Roberts' "A Book of Mormon Study": (1) a consideration that Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews, published in a first edition in 1823 could have served as the structural basis or ground

plan for Joseph Smith to enable him to write the Book of Mormon, (2) evidence that the imaginative mind of Joseph Smith gave him the ability to write such a book, (3) internal evidence that the Book of Mormon is of human origin, and (4) the similarity of conversions in the different periods of Book of Mormon history and the likeness to the Christian conversions of the period when and where the Book of Mormon was "translated" and published. The third Roberts document included in this book is a comparison in side-by-side columns on each page of eighteen "Parallels" between the Book of Mormon and the View of the Hebrews.

The main question about the Roberts book may be whether or not there is any evidence that Roberts, during the last years of his life, might have lost his belief in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Professors Welch and Madsen have reproduced a myriad of excerpts from Roberts' sermons and public statements of his later years to prove that at least, publicly, he continued to affirm his belief in the book. As the editor of the work, I recognized this fact by stating, "In his public statements he was still the defender of the faith." And to continue in my role as objective editor, I conclude my Introduction by saying:

Whether or not Roberts retained his belief in the Book of Mormon may never be determined. In his last conference address of April 1933 he referred to the Book of Mormon as "one of the most valuable books that has ever been preserved, even as holy scripture." But in his "A Book of Mormon Study," Roberts presents an intense and probing evaluation of the possibility that Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews furnished a partial framework for

Joseph Smith's written composition, that the Mormon prophet had the intellectual capacity and imagination necessary to conceive and write the Book of Mormon, and that internal contradictions and other defects added further evidence that it might not be of divine origin.

In order to understand Roberts' profound belief in the inescapable significance of the Book of Mormon to his church and faith, it is instructive to refer to a paragraph in the Preface to volume 2 of his New Witnesses for God. He wrote:

While the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is but an incident in God's great work of the last days, . . . still the incident of its coming forth and the book are facts of such importance that the whole work of God may be said in a manner to stand or fall with them. That is to say, if the origin of the Book of Mormon could be proved to be other than that set forth by Joseph Smith; if the book itself could be proved to be other than it claims to be, . . . then the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and its message and doctrines, which, in some respects, may be said to have arisen out of the Book of Mormon, must fall; for if that book is other than it claims to be; if its origin is other than that ascribed to it by Joseph Smith, then Joseph Smith says that which is untrue; he is a false prophet of false prophets; and all he taught and all his claims to inspiration and divine authority, are not only vain but wicked; and all that he did as a religious teacher is not only useless, but mischievous beyond human comprehending.

Then, couple this with the following statement from his "A Book of Mormon Study" concerned with the various anti-Christ's in the work, in order to arrive at his convictions based on his final study of the book: "they [anti-Christ's] are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are products of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral race of the red man of America."

That is the charge by B. H. Roberts against Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon which Professor Welch has ducked by the diversion of attempting to discredit the editor of the Roberts manuscripts. In his recent article in the March 1986 Ensign magazine, "B. H. Roberts: Seeker After Truth," Welch tries to prove that Roberts did not mean what he said in his "A Book of Mormon Study," when the record is crystal clear that Roberts did, indeed, mean what he said, "The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator."

Brigham D. Madsen

A REPLY TO TRUMAN G. MADSEN AND JOHN W. WELCH

by Sterling M. McMurrin

March 5, 1986

1. Late in 1985 the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies located in Provo, Utah, published a document described as a "Preliminary Report" entitled Did B. H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon? This paper, which is 59 pages in length and is advertised and sold for \$4 and has been widely disseminated, was written in separate sections by Truman G. Madsen, Professor of Philosophy at the Brigham Young University, and John W. Welch, Associate Professor of Law at that University and President of F.A.R.M.S., the publisher. It is a response to the volume Studies of the Book of Mormon by the Mormon historian and theologian B. H. Roberts, published late in 1985, which was edited by Brigham D. Madsen with a biographical essay on Roberts by Sterling M. McMurrin. Madsen and McMurrin are professors in the University of Utah.

2. The F.A.R.M.S. document is essentially an ad hominem attack on Brigham Madsen and me for our treatment of the Roberts material, an attack not only on our competence but also on our honesty and integrity of purpose. When we first encountered it, we were annoyed and somewhat amused that a piece of this kind should come from two university professors. We had earlier declined an informal proposal by the B. H. Roberts Society of Salt Lake City that they sponsor a lecture evening with us on

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the Roberts book because we have had no interest in advertising or even drawing attention to the book or our connection with it. We had no intentions of replying to Truman Madsen and John Welch. But when we learned that their material was being advertised and sold, and also encountered a full-page article by Welch in the December 15, 1985, Church Section of the Deseret News entitled "New B. H. Roberts Book Lacks Insight of His Testimony," Brigham Madsen and I decided that perhaps we should draft responses. We have written separate statements, giving attention especially to the critiques which were directed against us individually. But we have compared our drafts and have intentionally permitted some overlapping and repetition.

3. Dr. Everett L. Cooley, formerly Director of Special Collections of the University of Utah Library and Emeritus Professor of History, handled all affairs relating to the publication of the Roberts volume, and his preface to the book is a brief account of the events associated with its publication. But perhaps a few words on that matter would be useful here. In 1979 and 1981 separate members of the Roberts family made generous gifts of Roberts papers to the Marriott Library of the University of Utah, papers which included the manuscripts and letters pertaining to the Book of Mormon which are published in the present volume. The donors were interested not only in the preservation of the manuscripts and in making them available to the public for study but also in their publication. They

provided the University with authorization for that publication. After much consideration, the decision was made by the University to publish the Roberts Book of Mormon manuscripts together with the appropriate correspondence in the possession of the Library, and a contract for this was made with the University of Illinois Press, one of the nation's leading scholarly publishers. The copyright is held by the University of Utah Research Foundation. All royalties from the book will be transferred by the Foundation to the University Library. Neither Dr. Cooley, Brigham Madsen, nor I have received or will receive any monetary compensation whatsoever for our work on this book. Cooley was in charge. He and I convinced Madsen that he should edit the Roberts material, and he and Madsen drafted me to write a brief biographical essay on Roberts. A major factor in the enterprise was George D. Smith, without whose urging and support the volume might not have been published.

4. Truman Madsen and Professor Welch have quite consistently in their published statements written as if I were one of the editors of the volume. It is true that all three of us, with Smith and the Illinois Press editors, conferred on general policy, and since Brigham Madsen has done such a masterful editorial job, involving thousands of unpaid hours, I wish I could claim some of the credit for his work. But I cannot. He was the editor, a point which the BYU antagonists persist in overlooking.

5. But to get at a few general observations on the Madsen-Welch statements, and then some specifics. (Because I am involved in referring to two Madsens, no relation, I will avoid confusion by referring to Brigham Madsen simply as "Brig," the name to which he answers among his friends. "Madsen," with no "Brig," will designate Truman Madsen, a friend of mine over the past 35 or 36 years.)

6. In the first place, Madsen and Welch seem to have completely missed the point of the book. The purpose of the publication was simply to make available to those who might be interested several documents in the literary remains of B. H. Roberts that had theretofore been not only unpublished but, for the general reading public, unknown. We were well aware, of course, that Roberts apparently did not write these manuscripts for purposes of publication or even general distribution, but since he was the most celebrated intellectual figure in the development of Mormonism, a General Authority of the Church, and its chief analyst, exponent, and defender of the Book of Mormon, it seemed wise to put this material where it could be read.

7. But Madsen and Welch seem to think that if such a book were to be published, it should be in some way designed as an argument supporting the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. I have the impression that they think we should have written what they might have written if they had been in our place. Brig and I want to make it very clear that in this book we are not

concerned with the issue of whether or not the Book of Mormon is authentic. Nor do we care one way or the other whether B. H. Roberts regarded it as authentic or fraudulent. Our interest has been simply to make his manuscripts available and let him speak for himself. Both of us have the greatest admiration for Roberts and are interested in his views on the Book of Mormon, but we want it known that his views make not the slightest difference to us in matters relating to our religious beliefs or religious faith, our estimate of the Book of Mormon, or our attitude toward the Church.

8. In their published statements, however, Madsen and Welch seem to be nothing short of desperate in their attempts to discredit us as a way of assuring any misguided readers of the book that, notwithstanding anything that may be encountered between the covers, the Book of Mormon is true. Perhaps I should say here that Professor Welch and one of his BYU colleagues in Book of Mormon research made serious overtures to the University of Illinois Press obviously intended to dissuade them from publishing the Roberts volume. Welch went so far as to insist that if the book were published, it should include a rejoinder from him. No doubt this was as amusing to the Press staff as it was to Cooley, Madsen, and me. Strange behavior for university research scholars allegedly dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

9. As Brig has pointed out, neither Welch nor Madsen seems

to understand the proper function of an editor, but there is no need for me to say more on that issue. Certainly both of them completely ignore the obvious purpose of my biographical essay on Roberts, almost as if they hadn't bothered to read either the title page of the book or the title of the essay. They seem to suppose that I should have written a piece to prove the Book of Mormon's authenticity, or at least to answer questions on that book raised in the Roberts manuscripts and letters. Madsen even goes so far as to complain that I didn't even mention John Sorenson, a professor at the BYU, and failed to deal with Hugh Nibley's work. I am attaching to this statement some correspondence with Professors Nibley and Madsen relating to this matter.

10. I am calling this to your attention simply as one evidence among many that Madsen has strange notions about what should go into a brief essay on Roberts, an essay that was never intended to be centered on the Roberts Book of Mormon manuscripts. To discuss the manuscripts was Brig's task, and he executed it in a superb fashion. Yet in his extensive authorized biography of Roberts, which was many years in preparation, Madsen failed to even mention the manuscripts which are the substance of the instant book, or the important controversy among the General Authorities which they generated. And this despite the fact that earlier he had dealt with them in an article published in the Brigham Young University Studies, Vol. 19, No. 4, Summer, 1979.

11. Please understand that neither Brig nor I object to critical reviews of the Roberts volume, reviews that not only analyze Roberts but as well are critical of our handling of the subject. What we object to is the simple ad hominem attack on us personally in the guise of a discussion of the book. The highly respected American logicians Morris Cohen and Ernest Nagel have given a brief definition of this technique in their volume An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method: "The fallacy of the argumentum ad hominem, a very ancient but still popular device to deny the logical force of an argument (and thus to seem to prove the opposite), is to abuse the one who advances the argument." (p. 380) Actually, neither Brig nor I have made any argument on the Book of Mormon. I honestly believe that Welch and Madsen are so severely disturbed by what Roberts has written in these manuscripts that, in addition to insisting that he was simply a devil's advocate and really didn't mean what he said, they attempted to discredit Brig and me, expecting that this would either dissuade a person from reading the book or convince the reader that he should not take what he reads very seriously. But enough of this for the present.

12. I will conclude these preliminary observations simply by saying that if the Madsen-Welch document had not been offered for sale and dispersed widely over the Church, I personally would pay little attention to it. I am frankly accustomed to

being misquoted, misrepresented, and maligned in the Church, and after a few years of this sort of thing, you become somewhat indifferent to it. But Brig is a well-respected scholar of the highest order in both talent and integrity, the author of numerous historical books that would be a great credit to any author. He deserves better treatment from university colleagues than to have his integrity as a scholar impugned. And I strenuously object to the statement by Welch that Wesley P. Lloyd is not reliable as a reporter. Wesley Lloyd, formerly Dean of the Graduate School of the Brigham Young University, was as honest and competent a person as ever graced a university faculty.

13. To get to some specifics, I will comment on Professor Welch's essay on me entitled "Comments on Sterling McMurrin's Biographical Essay." Welch comments through an unnamed and, I presume, fictitious editor of the Oxford University Press who doesn't like my Roberts paper and decides against publishing it. There is a slight irony here because for the past several weeks I have been in correspondence with Mr. Andrew Schuller, an editor of the Oxford University Press in Oxford, England, concerning his publication of some material which I edit, and not only is he publishing it, he seems to be a rather nice person. I have not encountered any snide remarks about me on the order of those made by Welch's fictitious editor.

14. I will ignore many of Welch's comments (through his editor) because they seem to be little more than tasteless

attempts at humor, such as: "This sounds like something only a moral philosopher would say. What is McMurrin's background anyway?" (p. 1)

15. Welch complains that I mention the Book of Mormon now and then, "but not often." "Roberts' Book of Mormon studies," he says, "do not seem to be the primary concern on his mind." (p. 1) Quite right. Welch seems unaware that the title page, preface, and essay title all indicate that my task was to write on Roberts, not the Book of Mormon or Roberts's Study of the Book of Mormon. I have the impression that Welch can't get the Book of Mormon off his mind. Welch wants me to characterize Roberts as essentially either irresponsible or incompetent in his Book of Mormon study (see page 2) because I described him as a passionate orator with a forceful pen, impetuous speech, argumentative, and polemical, etc., etc. In view of such descriptions, Welch says, "How deeply felt were these arguments which Roberts is presenting against his own Book of Mormon?" and in the same paragraph, "maybe Roberts is just having fun with us here." (p. 2) In view of this kind of talk, I find it difficult to take Welch very seriously. I knew B. H. Roberts personally, had several conversations with him not long before he died, was present for some of his arguments and quite a few of his lectures and sermons. In my essay I gave what I regard as a fair description of him. Welch wants to turn Roberts's argumentative nature against him and insist that he is not to be

taken seriously in his Book of Mormon Study. Madsen has done the same kind of thing in arguing that Roberts was simply playing the "devil's advocate." The readers of the Roberts essays will have to make up their own minds about this. But they should read the essays before making the judgment. It is interesting that elsewhere in his statement on me (p. 4), Madsen says, "But here, as elsewhere, Roberts says what he really means and means what he really says."

16. But back to Welch. I will pass over Welch's charge that I have a "hidden agenda" and his objections to virtually everything I have to say about Mormonism and the Church as these were affected by the loss of Roberts in its leadership. (pp. 2-3) These comments are simply efforts to discredit me because I am not lined up with his own not so hidden "hidden agenda," which is to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon by hook or crook. Where he is afraid that Roberts isn't saying what he wants him to have said, he finds ways of discrediting him. Because I praised Roberts's honesty and sincerity, he has his Oxford editor say, referring to my essay,

I read into this a not-too-subtle and possibly unfair implication that McMurrin is accusing other Mormon writers of not being so open and honest. Yet, for a person so eager to praise openness and sincerity, McMurrin is less than candid about his own agenda and motives. I don't think we as a reputable press would want to get caught printing something as two-faced as this. (p. 3)

17. Welch's editor accuses me of "foreclos(ing) others from pursuing avenues which might be well worth studying." Someday I

would like to ask that editor what avenues I have foreclosed or attempted to foreclose. If Welch's editor is as smart as an Oxford editor should be, I think he should have recognized that Welch's desperation and near hysteria on this matter have resulted from his fear that B. H. Roberts has possibly put a nail in the coffin of Welch's own avenue of research. What is he afraid of? I am always astounded that so many men of great faith are so fearful of the possible loss of their faith.

18. Welch (or his editor) says, "I wonder if this McMurrin fellow has ever had a course in logic." When I taught logic back in the fifties for the University of Utah Law School, I had a law student who made an impassioned defense of the principle of argumentum ad hominem when we were considering material fallacies. He insisted that sometimes when the evidence is lacking, the only way to win the case is to abandon both evidence and logic and attack the person. I suppose that that student has been loose on the public practicing law for the past thirty years. Welch is a law professor, and I'm sure he would not tolerate that sort of thing in one of his students. Or would he?

19. Welch wonders why Brig and I don't propose publishing Roberts's unpublished manuscript "The Way, the Truth, the Life," and Madsen objects that we did not use it in treating the Book of Mormon Study. The University of Utah Library possesses only a portion of that manuscript, but Brig and I wanted very much to

read the entire thing in the preparation of our essays for the present book, but the Church historical library would not permit us to read it. I should say that after they refused to let Brig, a respected historian, read it, I decided against even requesting access to it as I didn't intend to be insulted in that way. We then made a special trip together to the BYU library, fully expecting to gain access to the manuscript, but were advised that the BYU does not have a copy. So we settled for the incomplete manuscript in the University of Utah library. Welch also wonders why we omitted Roberts's letter to Elizabeth Skolfield, an important letter, from the book. The answer to that is simply that we did not have the letter or it would have been included. As it was, the crucial passage was referred to in Cooley's preface on the basis of a secondary source. After commenting on the omission of the Skolfield letter, Welch comments, "This is beginning to smell rather bad." (p. 5) Welch winds up his essay on me by referring to my essay as involved in "ax grinding and blatantly biased writing." Here I can only say in response that he should be a good judge of this sort of thing.

20. But in the meantime, Welch gets down to what I regard as his most important point--that I refer to conclusions made by Roberts even though by Roberts's own testimony in his letters he arrived at no conclusions. This matter deserves some attention. It appears also in Welch's Deseret News Church Section article

where he says that Sterling McMurrin "writes repeatedly of Roberts' 'conclusions' in these Book of Mormon studies," whereas Roberts made it clear elsewhere that his conclusions were 'undrawn.' I'm not sure what Welch means by "repeatedly." I mentioned conclusion twice in the text of my essay and once in the notes. Welch crossed himself up later in the same Church Section piece when he said, referring to Roberts, "Rarely, however, does he state a specific conclusion. Never does he draw a general conclusion." I assume that what Welch means by general conclusion is a statement by Roberts that the Book of Mormon is not authentic. That goes without saying. Both Brig and I reminded the readers in our essays that in reading Roberts's material they should not fail to pay attention to the letters published in the book in which he affirmed his belief in the Book of Mormon's authenticity. Both Welch and Madsen have managed to carefully overlook this fact as well as the fact that nowhere in the book do either of us say or even intimate that in our opinion Roberts abandoned his earlier belief in the Book of Mormon. Yet their entire tirade is geared to their taking it for granted that that is exactly what we were saying. Madsen's paper begins: "The secret is out. B. H. Roberts, honest historian and man of integrity that he was, gave up, or almost gave up, on the Book of Mormon at the end of his life." These are Truman Madsen's words. Nothing like this can be found in the essays by Brig Madsen and me. We were concerned, as was

Everett Cooley and the editors at the University of Illinois Press, to carefully avoid expressing any view on this matter. We were genuinely conscientious in our effort to present Roberts's manuscripts without prejudicing the reader's opinion. The problem which Welch and Madsen have faced is that there is virtually nothing in the three manuscripts of Roberts, covering 281 pages, which indicates a positive attitude on his part favoring the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Nor, incidentally, is there any suggestion of devil's advocacy. The entire study, comprising the three separate documents, has a strong negative tone. I think this has made life a little difficult for them.

21. Now I want to make it clear that it doesn't make an iota of difference to me whether B. H. Roberts died believing or not believing in the Book of Mormon. It would be interesting to know, but it wouldn't make any difference. Apparently it makes a vital difference to Welch and Madsen, enough to cause them among others things, to seriously distort and misrepresent Roberts, insisting on Madsen's "devil's advocate" theory which appeared in his article in the Ensign in December, 1983, as well as in the BYU Studies piece. But nowhere has Madsen been willing to let his readers know what Roberts said in these manuscripts. Always it is an effort to establish that he didn't mean what he said.

22. But now let me call attention to a few of what I would

call conclusions made by Roberts in the major document, Book of Mormon Study. There are so many statements of this kind that I will simply pick and choose a few of them. These, I am sure, are what Welch calls "specific conclusions." They are for the most part conclusions coming at the end of chapters and, of course, though negative in character, they are not in themselves indices to Roberts's general views on the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, and certainly they do not necessarily represent Roberts's final views on the matters considered. Welch argues that where Roberts asks questions, as he frequently does, the questions cannot be regarded as statements. That, of course, is nonsense. It all depends on the nature of the question, the context, etc. If Welch were to ask, for instance, "Have not Madsen and McMurrin done irreparable harm to the Church by publishing this book?" could he insist that he had not made a statement through the effective technique of questioning?

23. But here are a few items, Roberts's specific conclusions, or whatever else one may want to call them:

Page 155, referring to Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews:

And even if that were not so, as to this particular book--if the Smiths never owned the book, never read it, or saw it, still its contents--the materials of which it was composed--would be, under all the circumstances, matter of "common knowledge" throughout the whole region where the Smiths lived from the birth of Joseph Smith in 1805, to the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1829-30.

Page 173:

Even the Christ when referring to the Old Testament quotes chiefly from Isaiah. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, quotes almost complete chapters 48, 49, 50 and 51. Is there

no significance in this preponderance of references to, and lavish quotations from Isaiah, when the Nephite writers had just as easy access to the other divisions of the Hebrew national literature as to Isaiah--is there no significance between this fact and the fact that Ethan Smith had a like preference for Isaiah, and quoted him in about the same proportion of preponderance as the author of the Book of Mormon does? And many passages quoted by Ethan Smith are identical with passages from Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon.

Page 188, referring to View of the Hebrews:

One acquainted with Book of Mormon historical events will recognize in all this an outline of Book of Mormon "history," what else there is would be merely detail. The account of this matter is so important to our inquiry that it deserves to be given in full from Mr. Smith's work, and accordingly it is quoted here at length:

Page 192, again on View of the Hebrews:

Could an investigator of the Book of Mormon be much blamed if he were to decide that Ethan Smith's book with its suggestion as to the division of his Israelites into two peoples; with its suggestion of "tremendous wars between them"; and of the savages overcoming the civilized division led to the fashioning of chiefly these same things in the Book of Mormon?

Page 207, referring to the use of "Reformed Egyptian," rather than Hebrew:

All this leads one to the reflection, that if the purpose of the author of the Book of Mormon--let him be whom he may--was to place beyond the reach of modern knowledge the ancient language in which this book is said to have been written, and thereby place its translation beyond ordinary means of translation known to men; or when translated by the extraordinary means by which it is said to have been translated, beyond the possibility of criticism, or detection of fraud, then no more adroit scheme could have been invented by the wit of man, than the scheme disclosed in the passages considered above. It takes all beyond their depth, and the learned man is as helpless as the ignorant one in trying to solve this very sphinx of language problems.

Page 214, again on View of the Hebrews:

There is more to the same effect, but is not this sufficient? Can it be that it is mere coincidence that these special virtues of Jacob's Lamanites, and Ethan Smith's Indians should run so closely parallel in such a

relationship? Might not Ethan Smith's Delaware Chief easily have suggested the Nephite Jacob's reproof of unauthorized polygamy and its attendant whoredoms among his people; and Ethan Smith's recounted Indian virtues be ascribed to the Lamanites by the author of the Book of Mormon in the antithesis drawn?

Page 235, again on View of the Hebrews:

As to the first consideration, in this case, priority of production of Ethan Smith's book, and priority of sufficient duration for it to become generally known in the vicinity where both books were produced, there is absolute certainty. For Ethan Smith's book ran through two editions in New England before the Book of Mormon was published. As to the second consideration, in this case, the likelihood of Joseph Smith coming in contact with Ethan Smith's book is not only very great, but amounts to a very close certainty. For being published in an adjoining county to the one which their home had been for so long, and the interest in the subject being very general, not only in New England but in New York also, it would be little short of miraculous if they did not know of Ethan Smith's book.

Page 236, in commenting on passages in View of the Hebrews:

. . . --all this, I submit, supplies subject matter overwhelmingly sufficient to suggest the visit of the Christ to the Book of Mormon people and his career among them.

Page 240, View of the Hebrews:

But now to return from this momentary divergence to the main theme of this writing--viz., did Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews furnish structural material for Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or a half dozen, but many; and it is this fact of many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes them so serious a menace to Joseph Smith's story of the Book of Mormon's origin. . . .

The material in Ethan Smith's book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the Book of Mormon:

Page 242, View of the Hebrews:

Can such numerous and startling points of resemblance and suggestive contact be merely coincidence?

Page 250, on Joseph Smith's capacity to write the Book of Mormon:

In the light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the "common knowledge" of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is.

Page 258:

And under all the circumstances is it much to be wondered at if intelligent people to whom the Book of Mormon is presented for consideration, should ask: "Do we have here a great historical document, or only a wonder tale, told by an undeveloped mind, living in a period and in an environment where the miraculous in 'history' is accepted without limitations and is supposed to account for all inconsistencies and lapses that challenge human credulity in the thought and in the easy philosophy that all things are possible with God?"

Page 271:

There were other Anti-Christ's among the Nephites, but they were more military leaders than religious innovators, yet much of the same kidney in spirit with these dissenters here passed in review; but I shall hold that what is here presented illustrates sufficiently the matter taken in hand by referring to them, namely that they are all of one breed and brand; so nearly alike that one mind is the author of them, and that a young and undeveloped, but piously inclined mind. The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator. It is difficult to believe that they are the product of history, that they come upon the scene separated by long periods of time, and among a race which was the ancestral (sic) race of the red man of America.

Note again the sentence "The evidence I sorrowfully submit, points to Joseph Smith as their creator." Devil's advocate indeed.

Page 283:

And now, I doubt not, at the conclusion of this review of the Nephite and Jaredite wars of extinction, some will be led to exclaim--and I will set it down for them--"Is all this sober history inspired written and true, representing things that actually happened? Or is it a wonder-tale of an immature mind, unconscious of what a test he is laying on

human credulity when asking men to accept his narrative as solemn history?"

Page 308:

The question is, did his knowledge of these things lead to their introduction into the Book of Mormon narrative? I think it cannot be questioned but where there is sufficient resemblance between the Book of Mormon instances of religious emotionalism and those cited in the foregoing quotations from the works of Edwards et al. to justify the thought that the latter might well have suggested and indeed become the source of the former.

24. Now I want to make it clear that I do not necessarily agree with the statements that I have read, and numerous others of a similar nature that I have passed over, though I certainly agree with some of them. Certainly I don't agree with Roberts's apparent view, which of course he may have abandoned, that Joseph Smith had the ability to write the Book of Mormon. But whether Brig and I agree or disagree with Roberts in these matters is all beside the point. It would have been inappropriate for us to have made such judgments when our purpose was simply to present Roberts and his studies.

25. Now I turn to Madsen's essay which deals mainly with me and my errors. Right at the outset Madsen reveals his strange misunderstanding of the purposes of a book of this kind, and his own strong biases, by the following (p. 1):

What can we expect of this lavishly introduced and bibliographed publication from editors like Sterling McMurrin and Brigham Madsen? A review of the problems Roberts raised based on the present state of research? A serious analysis of the literary structure of the Book of Mormon in light of Roberts' queries? An appraisal of the relevance of the Ethan Smith parallels (historical, archaeological, anthropological)? A competent account of the nineteenth century context of the publication of the Book of Mormon? To this multiple choice question the answer can only be "none of the above."

26. Madsen's complaint is that we didn't produce the kind of book that he would have produced--not a presentation of B. H. Roberts's work but rather a book showing how wrong Roberts was in what he wrote. He makes the point that my essay is an update of one written twenty years ago, with only four new pages added on Roberts's "Study." That I drew on materials that received a limited publication some years ago was acknowledged in the essay's notes, and here as elsewhere Madsen doesn't seem to get the simple point that my assignment was to concentrate on Roberts, not on his Book of Mormon Study. That was Brig's territory. Even at that my four pages were four more pages than Madsen devoted to the "Study" in his book-length biography of Roberts, a biography that carefully plowed around the entire matter and thereby ignored an important element in Roberts's life and work. Incidentally, in his essay Madsen refers several times to the "editors" and is sometimes careless in assigning responsibility for a statement to Brig or to me. He ascribes statements to the "editors" that are to be found nowhere in the book. He charges, for instance, on page 3, that the editors label Roberts's Study a "statement of faith." Nothing of the kind appears in the book. He complains that the editors (plural again) "speak, incredibly, of his 'conclusions,' and his 'findings.'" (p. 3) If I weren't better informed on Madsen's work, I would be inclined to think that he has never read the Roberts manuscripts, to deny that Roberts had findings or came

to conclusions. Madsen quotes me (p. 2) as saying that "without question," Roberts "continued to profess his belief in the Book of Mormon," but his entire essay seems to be intended to convey the idea that in my paper I hold that Roberts did not continue to believe its authenticity.

27. A part of the charm of Truman Madsen's description of me is the easy way in which he is able to make statements that are completely erroneous, give quotations of things that were never said, and make issues of matters that are entirely irrelevant. Here is an example: Madsen quotes me, in quotation marks, as saying, "There are no such things as angels." (p. 7) Now I don't know where he could have located that statement. I said once in an interview for the Seventh East Press that I have never seen an angel and also that in my opinion we don't get books from angels. But accuracy in quotation simply isn't one of Madsen's virtues. Moreover, he says, B. H. Roberts did see an angel, that he had "a direct and revelatory encounter with an angelic personage." But even if I had said that there are no angels, how is this relevant to my essay on Roberts, where there is no discussion of angels? Madsen quotes me as saying that "The statements of the Three Witnesses are worthless." Where did I say or write this? Also, "But there is no objectivity to the plates." What I said in the source which apparently he has in mind, the Seventh East Press, was that I didn't believe there were any gold plates. To say that there is no objectivity to

the plates seems to suggest that I meant they were at least subjective. As far as I am concerned, they were neither objective nor subjective. And "But there is no such thing as a translation aided by a Urim and Thummim," but Roberts, Madsen says, handled the Seer Stone. I have been aware for many years that one or more seer stones actually exist today. But to all of this I can only reply--"So what?" Quite apart from my views on these matters, which have nothing to do with my essay on Roberts, where do these quotes from me come from? If Truman did not intend them explicitly as my statements, he should clean up his writing style--at least get rid of the quotation marks.

(pp. 7-8)

28. It is a little difficult to determine at times whether Truman Madsen is lecturing me on my religious faith, exposing me as a heretic (something that was hardly necessary), instructing me on Mormon philosophy, or defending B. H. Roberts against me. The main thing is that he certainly is not concentrating on reviewing the Roberts volume. He says, for instance, on page 8, "How can Roberts have assumed the role of a belligerent and caustic critic and still have been sincere in accounting the book a 'sacred treasure in the Gospel?'" Now where does he get that language, "belligerent and caustic critic"? This is not language from Brig or me. That in these studies Roberts was "belligerent and caustic" is an absolutely outrageous judgment. There is not the slightest justification in Roberts's

manuscripts or our essays for Madsen to make such a charge. I must confess that at times I have serious difficulty in understanding Madsen. Or maybe I do understand him.

29. On page 13 Madsen says, "Both editors imply that if one dealt with Roberts' post-'Book of Mormon Study' sources, a radically different Roberts would emerge." He refers to page xvii of my essay. I have read and reread that page several times and I simply can't figure out what Madsen is talking about. He goes on to point out at considerable length that Roberts retained his faith in the Book of Mormon during this post period. F.A.R.M.S. has published a documentary account of Roberts's affirmations. All this is to the good, and I for one have purchased the document. But it was not necessary for Madsen to reiterate this several times for the benefit of Brig and me. We have been aware all along that Roberts continued his affirmations of faith, and we made this fact explicit in our essays.

30. Another example of Truman Madsen's failure to read properly: On page 15 of his essay he attributes to me, as an axiom, that "belief in the truthfulness of the Church turns on belief in the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon." He refers the reader to page xv of my piece. But there I make it clear that "This is the position in which the Church has, by its own official pronouncements, voluntarily placed itself. It has tied its faith to its own history and to the authenticity of its

distinctive scripture, the Book of Mormon." This view was held by Roberts, but certainly not by me, as Madsen seems to suppose. I personally think it is a major mistake for the Church to take this position. The Church should make its case on religion, not history. Madsen seems to accuse me, on his page 15, of holding that Roberts was (Madsen's words) "smitten with or by the lure of scientism." What nonsense. I simply said, p. xx, that Roberts struggled "against the anti-scientific bias of some of his ecclesiastical colleagues." That this is true is well known to Madsen, Roberts's biographer.

31. In view of my great respect for Roberts's intellectual contributions to his Church and people, I resent Madsen's report that I regard Roberts's work as a historian as superficial simply because I described his weaknesses as well as praised his strengths as a historian. (Madsen, p. 17; McMurrin, pp. xxii-xxv) But this gave Madsen an opening to let his readers know that I am ignorant of the history of the Book of Mormon. This may well be true, but it is not clear to me how he knows that it is true.

32. Madsen's confused writing gets him into some interesting difficulties which he apparently fails to recognize. On pages 17-18, for instance, where he calls me a "benevolent naturalist," whatever that is, and mentions that I reject much Judaeo-Christian history as myth and legend, he adds also that I never believed "many Mormon myths and legends." It's comforting

to know that Madsen believes these myths and legends, his language, as they should be kept alive and well. He says that I have "announced over and over that there is no evidence for the Book of Mormon and a good deal of evidence against" it, and that in neither case have I seriously studied the evidence. I don't know how many times "over and over" is. This is a little like Welch's "repeatedly." I certainly have made this statement once, in answer to questions from Blake Ostler who interviewed me for the Seventh East Press. As for studying the evidence, I also have made no serious study of the evidence that Noah's ark is on the slopes of Mt. Ararat.

33. Page 18 of Madsen's paper is a delightful mixture of truth, error, and invective. It is true that I have said that the Bible is a sufficient literary witness for Christ, false that I have said that the Book of Mormon is a "betrayal" of Mormonism. This is nonsense. Mormonism is in part a product of the Book of Mormon. It is the Mosiah statement that Madsen quotes, that the natural man is an enemy of God, that is a betrayal of the fundamental character of Mormonism. But this is mild compared to much that is found in the epistles of Paul. Madsen shouldn't forget that Brigham Young blasted Paul for saying the same thing Mosiah said. And where does he get the idea that I would "like to see the whole book and its historical claims jettisoned"? This is more nonsense. What I hold is that the Church should make its case on the quality of its religion

and what it does for the moral, intellectual, and spiritual life of its people rather than paint itself into a corner with its claims on its own history and the book. But I have said in the source from which Madsen misquotes more often than he quotes, the Seventh East Press, that "the Mormon Church has been strengthened in its institutional life and in the faith of its people by the Book of Mormon," though I added that it is the "existence of the book rather than what is in it that has made the big difference." And I added also a statement of the kind that Madsen carefully overlooks, that I recognize that the Book of Mormon is "a very remarkable book and I respect it in a way that I respect any religious literature--even more, of course, because it is the sacred literature of my own people. . . ."

34. Madsen describes me as a "cultural Mormon," a designation to which I do not object if I am allowed my own definition of "cultural," but it seems to me that he delivered a rather low blow when he wrote that I did not need Roberts's "Study" to reinforce my "negative faith." I'm not sure just what negative faith is, but I don't think it is very nice. I brought that faith, Madsen says, to the treatment of Roberts and "made no changes on the basis of Roberts' substance." He is quite right that my faith was not affected by Roberts's "Study." I suppose it was already so negative that Roberts could not make it more negative. I fail to see how his "Study" could make anyone's faith in the Book of Mormon more positive,

but if religious faith is tied to intelligence and honesty, that "Study" might well have a positive effect on one's religion.

35. Finally, Madsen apparently attributes to Brig and me the judgment, in his words, that Roberts had a "privately-held, contemptuous or skeptical position on the Book of Mormon and, therefore, in his last eleven years, lived a flagrant and foolish lie." (p. 19) If, as appears to be the case, he believes that Brig and I hold this view, he is guilty at least of a mean insinuation. But Madsen closes his diatribe by granting us the high compliment that in our "methodology and approach" we are "a cut above the average work from the microfilm anti-Mormon press," though I'm not sure that Gerald and Sandra Tanner would appreciate the comparison.

36. To become involved in this discussion has proved to be a genuine embarrassment for me. I am opposed constitutionally and in principle to arguing about matters pertaining to religion, and this whole affair has made me feel rather unclean. If Welch and Madsen had written a critical review of the Roberts book, as Welch has now published in the recent Ensign, and if their criticism of Brig Madsen and me, however vigorous and devastating, had been kept within the bounds of scholarly decency, we would have seen their work as both proper and useful. Even their ad hominem attack on us would have elicited no response from us if it had not been published, advertised, and sold. As I have already said, it was this that

prompted us to make some kind of public reply. After purchasing their papers and learning that they have been widely disseminated and read, we advised the B. H. Roberts Society that we were reversing our earlier decision and would be willing to discuss the matter at a meeting under their sponsorship, provided Welch and Madsen were included in the program and given equal time. That proposal was made to Welch and Madsen several weeks ago by the Society, but at this writing they have continued to refuse the invitation to meet with us on such a public occasion.

37. I believe I can understand the motives of Welch and Madsen. Apparently they believe that the religious faith of some persons will be injured by reading the Roberts volume. Yet Welch told me recently that he considered it a good thing to publish the Roberts material. I suppose Madsen may not agree with that, because, to repeat what I have already said, he completely ignored that material in his biography of Roberts, a good book that deserves to be read; and in his two published articles dealing with the Roberts manuscripts, as well as in his essay on Brig Madsen and me, he has written not a single sentence that lets his readers know what Roberts had to say in those manuscripts. I can only assume that Madsen belongs to that intellectual elite who believe that the average person's intelligence can't be trusted. Or that the faith of the Mormons is so fragile that it cannot stand up to a serious examination of Mormon literature.

(Attachment: Correspondence with Hugh Nibley and Truman Madsen)

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF UTAH

DEPARTMENT
OF HISTORY
316 CARLSON HALL
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84112
801-561-6121

January 30, 1986

Professor Hugh Nibley
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602

Dear Hugh:

I have recently read a document by John W. Welch and Truman Madsen of the Brigham Young University entitled "Did Brigham H. Roberts Lose Faith in the Book of Mormon?" I obtained this document by purchase from F.A.R.M.S. in Provo. This paper was written in response to the editorial material written by Brigham Madsen and a biographical essay on B. H. Roberts written by me, both of which are included in the recently published volume Studies of the Book of Mormon by B. H. Roberts published by the University of Illinois Press, 1985. Brigham Madsen edited the volume with an introduction and a bibliographical essay, and I contributed the paper on Roberts entitled "Brigham H. Roberts: A Biographical Essay."

On page 16 of Part III of the Welch-Madsen document, a section written by Truman G. Madsen, the following paragraph appears:

In this volume Hugh Nibley gets one footnote (p. 388). John L. Sorenson is ignored. There is no mention of Lehi in the Desert or Since Cumorah. McMurrin has announced that he does not and will not read Nibley because (a) Nibley is "playing games," and it is unfortunate for people to take him seriously, (b) Nibley is "an enemy of the Church" on the order of Tertullian, (c) Nibley's preoccupation with ancient languages is an aberration. So much for an open mind on Nibley. But what of Nibley's sources?

As we both well know, you and I have had and no doubt still have very basic differences with respect to our approach to religion in general and certainly Mormonism in particular. But it is unthinkable to me that I would ever have referred to you in any context whatsoever as "an enemy of the Church." I have been critical of you at the point of what I regard as your nonrational treatment of the foundations of religion and your great influence in effecting a kind of philologizing of Mormonism, but for me to have labeled you as an enemy of the Church is utterly preposterous.

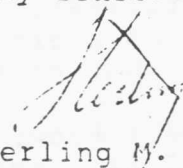
Professor Hugh Nibley
January 30, 1986
Page 2

I am not sure where Madsen gained his information that I have announced that I do not and will not read your writings, because in fact I have read a great deal that you have published. His "playing games" reference, of course, is to a statement which you yourself made back in the fifties in the Spencer Hall Auditorium when addressing an evening audience on the subject of theology and the theologians. You will recall on that occasion you were exceedingly critical of Islamic, Christian, and finally Mormon theologians. During the question period I asked about your own published work that was either theological or had theological implications. You mentioned your Improvement Era articles on "Lehi in the Desert" and said, "That is just a game." When I objected, before the audience, that this work of yours might be just a game to you, but it is not a game to many of your readers, you replied again, "It is nothing but a game." You may recall that I referred to this "game" matter in my rather lengthy letter to you dated November 1, 1960.

Madsen's statement that I regard your "preoccupation with ancient languages" as "an aberration" is typical of the irresponsible character of his entire essay. As if anyone would regard it an aberration that a scholar in a particular field is preoccupied with an interest in that field.

I am sure that you are aware that despite our very basic differences I have always had great admiration for you, not only for your superb intellectual talents and scholarly attainments but as well for the high degree of independence of thought and action which you have always exhibited in your professional life. Please accept my warmest personal regards and best wishes.

Very sincerely,


Sterling M. McMurrin

cc: Professor Truman G. Madsen
Professor John W. Welch



Brigham Young University

Department of Philosophy

February 14, 1986

Professor Sterling McMurrin
Department of History
316 Carlson Hall
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Dear Professor McMurrin:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your note to Hugh Nibley. It was gracious and thoughtful.

Your letter to Hugh emphasizes again something on which most of us are clear: Your great admiration for his intellectual talents, scholarly attainments, and high degree of independence. In light of that admiration, it may seem puzzling to some, however, that neither you nor your colleague, Brigham Madsen, give any attention at all to Nibley's work on the Book of Mormon, not even listing his books and articles in your bibliography. The thrust of my paragraph is mainly to point this out, not to imply any animosity or disrespect between you and Hugh.

Roberts has been gone for fifty-three years. The problems and difficulties he treats in his manuscript have been re-examined and commented upon by a variety of persons. Some of the most competent are Hugh Nibley and John Sorenson. But it seems to me to leave all that out of your manuscript, and to imply thereby that there is no point in looking at the material, is a disservice.

The origins of my apparently inept paragraph in the "Preliminary Report" are enclosed. I would appreciate your explanation of these items, if you feel I have misunderstood your point reflected in the enclosed statements. Your clarifying letter does not say what you think of books like Lehi in the Desert or Since Cumorah, both of which touch on many of the problems of B. H. Roberts' manuscript and indirectly on all of them. I would still be interested to know.

As you say, the word "game" is not yours nor mine. It is Nibley's. What it means to him, however, I believe is different than what it means to you. Perhaps I did not make that difference clear. For Nibley, it is a statement on the limits of the intellectual enterprise, not a label of levity as I have understood you to be saying.

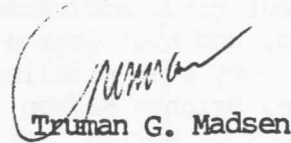
Professor McMurrin
February 14, 1986
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The word "preliminary" on FARMS reports is serious. We are in the process of revising and correcting all such reports. Your comments are gratefully appreciated in this process. We will be happy to remove or revise any instances of inaccurate or misleading material in our rough drafts.

I hope this is helpful.

Your closing paragraph on your admiration of Nibley applies mutatis mutandis to mine for you. And that has not diminished over the years.

Most sincerely,



Truman G. Madsen

Enclosure

cc: Hugh Nibley
John Welch

THE
UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT
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316 CARLSON HALL
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February 21, 1986

Professor Truman Madsen
Department of Philosophy
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602

Dear Truman:

I very much appreciate your letter of February 14 occasioned by my letter to Hugh Nibley. It was thoughtful of you to reply. I am sorry that we seem to be running afoul of each other on the Roberts book as I would not want it to affect our long-standing friendship.

Let me reply first to your comments on my letter to Hugh. I must say that I am surprised that you do not see the basic difference between the statements which you have quoted from my letter of November 1, 1960, and the statements in the right hand column which you have attributed to me. All of the latter, of course, are in error. Your statements from my 1960 letter to Hugh are accurate. I made these statements to Hugh 26 years ago and would be entirely willing to say the same thing today if there were occasion to do so. Perhaps I should call your attention to the fact that I wrote my 1960 letter to Hugh in response to his outrageous attack upon the Brigham Young University and its faculty. I presumed to get into the act because in passing he referred to me as an example of what is basically wrong in the universities in relation to religion. This was my excuse for responding to him but my purpose was to defend the faculty of the BYU.

To take your items in reverse order. Do you not see the difference between my saying, "It seems to me you exhibit here the strangest aberration that has ever afflicted Mormonism, or could possibly afflict any living religion--the belief that the chief access to religious truth and value is a mastery of the antiquated languages," and your quoting me as saying, "Nibley's preoccupation with ancient languages is an aberration"? I am surprised that you do not see the difference here. Pre-occupation with ancient languages certainly is not an aberration. Hugh is an accomplished scholar in the field of ancient languages, a perfectly respectable academic pursuit. But to make ancient languages the access to religious truth in

McMurrin's Letter of November 1, 1960

McMurrin

Madsen

"It is no wonder that you have referred to some of your own historical writing as nothing but a "game." The unfortunate thing is that some of your Church readers have taken some of your stuff seriously." (Sheet #11)

"Nibley is playing games and it is unfortunate for people to take him seriously."

"I, like so many others, regard much of your work as undermining religion and as definitely detrimental to the health of Mormonism." (Sheet #11)

"Your selection from him [C. S. Lewis] which you present with evident approval, is an excellent expression of the kind of irresponsible irrationalism that those who believe in the possibility of the reasonableness of religion have had to contend with ever since Tertullian and that has been on the increase since Kierkegaard and Nietzsche." (Sheet #3)

"Nibley is an enemy of the Church on the order of Tertullian."

"I hold no particular brief for the Mormon theologians. Even the best of them have been undisciplined in their thinking and not one of them has fully understood his religion in its historical and cultural setting or adequately assessed its potential intellectual strength. But as a group the more competent have contributed to that strength and, which is most important, have fortified the faith against irrationalists like you." (Sheet #4)

" . . . In recent years this anti-intellectualism has done great damage to both the intellectual and moral quality of European and American Protestantism. It is saddening to see it making inroads upon our own Church." (Sheet #3)

"But to return to the language issue, which plays such a central role in your essay. It seems to me you exhibit here the strangest aberration that has ever afflicted Mormonism, or could possibly afflict any living religion—the belief that the chief access to religious truth and value is a mastery of the antiquated languages. What wierd superstition has cast its spell over a segment of your University and led you and some others to believe that the meaning of Mormonism is to be found through such an avenue?" (Sheet #9)

"Nibley's preoccupation with ancient languages is an aberration."

Professor Truman G. Madsen
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the case of a living religion such as Mormonism is the aberration. If you don't see this difference, there is no point in my dwelling on it.

Then there is the matter of my saying, as quoted by you, "Nibley is an enemy of the Church on the order of Tertullian." This, of course, does not appear in any of the four statements that you have given from my 1960 letter, nor is it anywhere else in the letter. I did not even call Tertullian an enemy of the church. That Nibley fits the Tertullian pattern is, it seems to me, quite obvious. Both of them are irrationalists arguing against the possibility of arriving at religious truth through the processes of reasoning. But that certainly isn't to say that they are enemies of the Church. I have never questioned Hugh Nibley's motives with respect to the Church. As far as I am concerned, his motives are of the highest order, and to be an enemy of the Church would, of course, involve negative motives. I do honestly believe that much of Nibley's work has been detrimental to the health of Mormonism, not so much because of what he has written as because of what some of the sycophants around him have said and written. But this is a far cry from my branding him as an enemy of the Church as you have indicated.

You quoted me as saying, "Nibley is playing games and it is unfortunate for people to take him seriously." As you have admitted in your letter, Nibley is the one who said he was involved in games, not I. There is no point in your trying to excuse Hugh on this matter. He made the statement in front of a public audience in the Spencer Hall Auditorium at the University of Utah on the occasion of his giving a lecture on religion and the theologians. He went through the history of occidental theology rather rapidly and vigorously criticized major representatives of Islam and Christianity, insisting that there was nothing to be learned from the theologians. I was the chairman of the occasion, and when it came time for the discussion, I raised the question with him as to whether he would say the same thing in principle of Mormon theologians that he had said of Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant theologians-- that there is nothing to be learned from them. His reply was, "You mean people like Talmage and Widtsoe?" When I said yes, he said in effect that they were no different from the rest of the theologians. I then asked him what about some of his own writings, if not works of theology at least having an important bearing on theology. He asked whether I meant his writings that had been coming out in the Improvement Era, such as "Lehi in the Desert." When I replied yes, he simply said, "That is nothing but a game." This wasn't a statement made in a philosophy seminar where he was dealing with "game theory" or something of the kind. His statement was before a public audience attending a popular evening lecture. When I replied that the people who read his articles did not regard his writings as a game, he

Professor Truman G. Madsen
February 21, 1986
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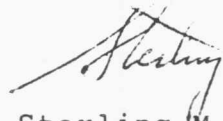
and Professor Welch have been unwilling to accept the invitation from the B. H. Roberts Society to confront us in person. We hear strange but interesting noises from the BYU as to your reasons for declining this invitation.

I was a little surprised in your published document that you made no reply to my mentioning in my essay on Roberts that while you had treated the B. H. Roberts manuscripts in your published articles both before and after the publication of your biography of Roberts, you completely ignored them in the biography. I must confess that I have suspected, perhaps wrongly, that the official censorship of your work on Roberts had something to do with the Church's fear that you would expose Roberts's real position set forth in these documents. You will recall that I wrote to you earlier about the censorship, but you avoided any mention of it in your response. I am enclosing copies of two apparently authentic documents from President Wilkinson's office simply as evidence to you that I am fully aware that you were in fact ordered to discontinue work on the Roberts book. As I have told you before, I regard it as a very worthwhile book, and you did a good thing in publishing it. It is my honest opinion that after he died some Church leaders wanted to forget that Roberts had ever lived. You made him live again.

Let me say again that I hope our collision on this Roberts stuff will not affect our friendship.

With best wishes,

Very sincerely,



Sterling M. McMurrin

Encs.

P.S. Incidentally, in your letter of February 14, you say that "neither you nor your colleague, Brigham Madsen, give any attention at all to Nibley's work on the Book of Mormon, not even listing his books and articles in your bibliography." I'm afraid that you should go back to the book. In discussing various treatments of Roberts's parallel of Ethan Smith and the Book of Mormon, on page 356 Brigham Madsen has written the following:

Hugh Nibley, in perhaps the most sophisticated analysis, argued in his No, Ma'am, That's Not History, "The fact that two theories or books present parallelism, no matter how striking, may imply a common source, but it

Professor Truman G. Madsen
February 21, 1986
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certainly does not prove that the one is derived from the other." Nibley continued this theme in two articles entitled "The Comparative Method," published in two issues of the Improvement Era, October and November 1959--"In every case where the Book of Mormon might have borrowed from him [Ethan Smith], it might much more easily have borrowed from the Bible or prevailing popular beliefs."

On page 363 the Bibliography has eleven lines under "Nibley, Hugh." How can you miss things like this and so casually misrepresent another author in a published document which is up for sale? And why should you suppose that I should have dealt with Sorenson and Nibley in a brief essay on B. H. Roberts? Nibley was, I am sure, a college student when Roberts died, and I suppose Sorenson wasn't even born. Moreover, Sorenson's recent book on the geography of the Book of Mormon wasn't out when our Roberts book was being printed.