The Meaning of Christ— The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Analysis of B. H. Roberts' Unpublished Masterwork*

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"My latest and greatest work." "The most important work that I have yet contributed to the Church, the six-volumed *Comprehensive History* of the Church not omitted." So B. H. Roberts wrote to his friend and leader, President Heber J. Grant, and to a returned missionary in January and February

*The full title is "The Truth The Way The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology." Shortly after the completion of the manuscript in 1928, a committee chaired by Elder David O. McKay reviewed it as a manual for study in the MIA. The committee offered several critical suggestions and corrections, but recommended its use provided the speculative thesis—the idea of "Pre-Adamites"—be omitted. Roberts replied, "I will not change it if it has to sleep."

Nearly three years later in March 1931, to bring the issue to the attention of all the Presiding Brethren, Roberts challenged some remarks of Joseph Fielding Smith (See "Faith Leads to a Fulness of Truth and Righteousness," in *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* [October 1930]) which hold that there was no death on this earth before Adam. Roberts himself had earlier concluded that "Adam was the progenitor of all the races of men whose remains have yet been found" (See his *Gospel and Man's Relationship to Deity* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1924], pp. 283-84).

In his pre-Adamite thesis Roberts does not argue that mankind emerged from non-human lower forms, but that whole races of men may have come and gone from this earth prior to the advent of Adam. He was here making room for his own kind of "catastrophism," a position that Louis Agassiz and other scientists of the late nineteenth century advocated against Darwin and "uniformitarianism." In this view man's body is not a product of "uniform" natural selection from simple to complex. Instead, they argued, fossils and geological formations evidence sudden catastrophic interventions, both destructive and creative. Many took these to be the initiative of God. The Bible account of Genesis was often interpreted by catastrophists as an account of the period after the most recent great catastrophe. The word "replenish" in the charge to Adam was taken to mean "fill up again."

Roberts defended this interpretation of "replenish" and speculated further that Adam was "transplanted" to this earth, both as a spirit and body, and was, using his own definition of the term, "translated."

Lengthy discussion of the pre-Adamite question before the Twelve, with Elders Smith and Roberts presenting their materials, resulted in a decision of

1931.[1] These generous self-appraisals are the more remarkable since Brigham Henry Roberts[2] had by then authored thirty-two books, manuals, and study courses, and had published more than 300 articles and reviews in periodicals.

He was describing "The Truth, The Way, The Life," a 747-page, 55-chapter, three-volume, typewritten manuscript that he had more or less finished in 1928.

He intended the book to be the climax of his doctrinal writing as the *Comprehensive History* was the climax of a half-century of historical writing—"crystallizing practically all my thought, research and studies in the doctrinal line of the church." President Grant had given him a six-month commission after his release as president of the Eastern States Mission to remain in New York City and pull together all the strands of the project. In an apartment at 308 Riverside Drive, he worked at the book feverishly, defying age (he was 71), disease (he suffered all the debilitating effects of diabetes), loneliness (during his five-year mission he had lost his wife, Louisa, and his wife, Margaret), and the writhings that always attend serious writing.

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the First Presidency (President Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, and Charles W. Nibley). The Church, they wrote in a letter to the Twelve, could not endorse as a doctrine either that there were or that there were not pre-Adamites. Since, they said, the question at issue did not bear on the salvation of men, they recommended against further discussion which would only lead to confusion, division, and misunderstanding. Elder James E. Talmage, a geologist and a member of the Council of the Twelve, was encouraged to show that "the Church does not refuse to recognize the discoveries and demonstrations of science." In an address delivered 9 August 1931 under the title "The Earth and Man," he fulfilled this charge. (See Journals of James E. Talmage, 9 August 1931.) Their letter concluded with a statement from an earlier First Presidency (President Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund) "on which we should all be able to agree," namely, that "Adam was the primal parent of our race."

It is not clear how, as Roberts apparently continued to believe, the pre-Adamite thesis is important or even directly related to the theme of "The Truth, The Way, The Life," except as symbolic of scientific possibilities. President Heber J. Grant reiterated in personal discussion with Roberts the view of the Presidency that Roberts' prominence as President of the First Council of Seventy would give this view, if it were published, an unwarranted official sanction. Heavily pressured by other projects, Roberts chose not to revise the manuscript and later letters show that he did not expect the book to be published in his lifetime. He died in October 1933.

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[1]B.H. Roberts to Heber J. Grant, 9 February 1931, in the Heber J. Grant collection, Church Historical Department. Letter to Elizabeth Skolfield, 26 January 1931, now in possession of the author.

[2]He preferred "B. H. Roberts," due apparently to a dislike of the name "Henry" and a great reverence for the name "Brigham."

The title, "The Truth, The Way, The Life,"[3] was chosen because through a lifetime of reflection he saw that the great system of "truth" that "gives unity to all history and proper relationship to all existing things; that fills life with a real meaning and makes existence desirable,"[4] centers and is embodied in Jesus the Christ.

Although he was given time off as a General Authority to finish the work, he had actually been compiling it for fifty years. He was peculiarly qualified by his unique experience, which was the epitome of the unsheltered life, which in retrospect he sometimes called "a nightmare and a tragedy." It was a life of hand-to-hand combat with all the major world views, often in arenas of intense opposition—the pulpit, the platform, and national and international debate. Roberts was referred to as a Paul facing his own Gamaliels, Agrippas, and men of Mars Hill.

This last book was his deliberate effort to build bridges rather than walls both within and beyond the Church. In one of his rare intimate letters to missionaries, he spoke of the book as important because "it will affect the young and educated and the intellectual members of the Church and the standing of the Church before the world—shall we resolve ourselves into a narrow, encrusted sect of no moment, or shall we remain what we were intended to be—that is, Mormonism—a world movement."[5]

Some contemporary scholars esteem Roberts the outstanding Mormon intellectual of his time[6] in preparation, in discipline, and in honest academic open-field running. However we rank him, his work was perceptive, adventurous, impressive as he tried to integrate all worlds. The essence of his genius and

great fact about him," William James had written. Roberts noted in the margin of his copy of James,[7] "Apply Joseph Smith." He might have written, "Apply B. H. Roberts."

In his final doctrinal work, Roberts' motives were simply to communicate the distinctions of Mormonism from common ground. "What can we reason but from what we know?"[8] he asks at the outset, and the antecedent of "we" is everyone—every citizen of planet earth. Repeatedly as he approaches his three main categories for the comprehension of Christ as (Vol. I) The Truth, (Vol. II) The Way, and (Vol. III) The Life, he moves from possibility to probability to assurance. All three volumes invoke analogies—the similarity of the present to the past and future; the similarity of what we know to what, by implication, we wish to know; the similarity of the discoverable in ancient religion to the core of truth in modern revelation—all in a compelling appeal to the whole man. "Let us not have the heart breathing defiance to the intellect!" he says. This is an attempt—bold, sometimes unwieldy, and at the end somewhat exhausted—to say, "I know that I can believe—I believe that I can know."

VOLUME I, CHRIST, THE TRUTH

Chapter I is titled a "Dissertation on Truth." Roberts begins with the question that Pilate raised, "What is truth?" and the answer that in the most profound ways Christ himself not only possesses, but *is* the truth. He analyzes anew the definition of D&C Section 93: "Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come." In his classic little volume, *Joseph Smith Prophet-Teacher,*[9] he had shown how this definition can be interpreted to include "relative truth, absolute truth, and truth unfolding or becoming."[10] And he placed a premium on the word "knowledge." Sometimes the word "truth" functions simply as a synonym for reality, but it can also function as the name for our Christ-illumined judgments *about* reality. For Roberts, all compre-

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[7]In his own copy of James' *A Pluralistic Universe,* p. 20. B. H. Roberts Collection, Church Historical Department. Hereafter cited as BHRC.

[8]The quotation is from Pope (*The Essay on Man,* l. 18), who, Roberts believed, borrowed it from John Locke.

[9]B. H. Roberts, *Joseph Smith Prophet-Teacher* (1908; reprint ed., Princeton, New Jersey: Deseret Club, 1967), pp. 30-39.

[10]Ibid., p. 33. He saw a kernel of this definition in Jacob 4:13.

hension centers in Christ, in the sense that Christ is the light of truth, and in the sense that man's intelligence and spirit are, as Roberts puts it, "native to truth," and intuitively "leap toward it," as flame leaps to unite with flame. Thus, as Joseph Smith states,

> Every word that proceedeth from the mouth of Jehovah has such an influence over the human mind—the logical mind—that it is convincing without other testimony. Faith cometh by hearing.[11]

Faith in Christ, then, is not a leap in the dark. It is, instead, "trust in what the spirit learned aeons ago"; and religious recognition is just that—re-cognition, a re-knowing. Thus it is, as a Mormon hymn has it, "the sum of existence." Man's authentic response to truth requires a truthful—truth-full—nature: ". . . intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; . . . truth embraceth truth; . . . light cleaveth unto light" (D&C 88:40). If we thwart or suppress that instinctive response, we are responsible, and, to a degree, we condemn ourselves. We knew Christ before this life, we know him here, and we will know him hereafter. His sheep do indeed know his voice. And thus the impact of truth on man is a test of man as well as of truth.

CHRIST AND THE COSMOS

The next ten chapters of the first volume are the unfolding of his lifetime reflection on the cosmos and world systems. The audacity as well as the humility of this enterprise arises from Roberts' recognition that greater men than he had "wrecked their thought" on the consideration of Christ and the cosmos, but also from his recognition that in their efforts to clarify they were often simply multiplying mirrors and studying angles without increasing the light. The New Dispensation had brought a flood of light that did not simply replace the darkness but illumined elements and principles—and their relationships—that heretofore had been dimly perceived.

Using this "new light" of modern revelation, Roberts challenges and replaces many long-standing creedal assumptions about the substance and organization of the universe, and the nature and relationship of man and God, all in the frame-

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[11]Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:526.

work of what Roberts called "eternalism," the concept of universal coexistence.

Repeatedly he denies what has been said in many classical views, that only one reality in the universe is self-existent, namely God. He interprets Joseph Smith to mean that all reality, all the fundamental realities in this "multiverse" are self-existent. Man's intelligence, therefore, coexists with non-intelligence. In a handwritten note added to his manuscript, Roberts states:

> Our prophet [Joseph Smith] also taught that "intelligence is the light of truth" or the power by which truth is cognized and absorbed; and which he holds forth as eternal, uncreated and uncreatable, therefore eternal as truth itself—a parallel existence with truth: intelligence—truth! [knowledge] the existence—truth; [reality] and the light which discerns it—intelligence.

All things else are likewise in their rudimental existence uncreate and eternal: space, time, matter, force, law. And on this point Roberts saw Mormonism paralleled in major world religions. His historical researches taught him that among rival world views, only darkened Christianity teaches creation from nothing or from God's will alone. "And welcome to the absurdity," he wrote in one of his notebooks.[12] Eternal identity and eternal becoming are for him inescapable realities. He sided neither with those "process philosophers" who deny any abiding reality nor again with the Platonic view that the "really real" is a static absolute beyond space and time. Time or duration and space or extension are infinite. Eternity is not non-temporality, but endless time. In no way can anyone, even God, transcend these.

Similar reflections apply to matter. Roberts' analysis makes the "materialism" of the new dispensation all-pervasive. There is no such thing as immaterial *substance.* (This is more than saying there is no such thing as immaterial matter, which is a tautology.) He wants to insist that everything that really *is,* is material. Subtler realities such as "thought," "love," "grace," are actually materiate, though of a finer quality than we can perceive with our five senses.

In his last years, Roberts clarified this extended position

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[12]Roberts utilizes several of the popularizing scientists of his day: Einstein, Eddington, Jeans, Millikan. But in his notes he deals also with the major philosophers and theologians.

to include "radiant energy" and, partly through the work of Orson and Parley P. Pratt and John A. Widtsoe, compiled much data to support the thesis that mind as a form of matter is indeed the master power of the universe. Many of the confusions in Western thought that arise from the assumed radical separation of thought and matter—the so-called "mind-body problem"—are dissolved by Roberts summary statement, "Intelligence is material. But it is also conscious. Matter is not. This is the ultimate dualism."[13]

Astronomical Splendor. Roberts then dwells on the vastness of the cosmos. From his boyhood he was dazzled by the incredible extent, the awesome grandeur of the heavens. He collected and probed a shelf full of books on astronomy and anticipated much that is now in scientific vogue. He rejoiced in the sacred secret of the Abrahamic record (Abraham 3) that the firmament is without beginning or end. Christ is, as Doctrine and Covenants 88:7-10 tells us, the creative power of the suns, the moons, the stars, "even all the earths in the heavens so broad"—beyond man's power to number. The double implication was breathtaking for Roberts: When man measures himself against the infinity of the cosmos he is almost *nothing,* "hardly a mote in the sunbeam."[14] But when he measures himself against Christ, who overmasters all of these worlds and world systems, and realizes his kinship to Christ, all diminutives become superlatives.[15] The more man comprehends the vastness of the universe, the more he recognizes his own dignity and worth. The cosmos is God's temple. But man is his offspring—a living temple, given dominion over the rest.[16]

Thus Roberts arrived at the religious-scientific-poetic conclusion that one who grasps any fragment of living-reality is on the way to grasping all of it, that when it says in the book of Moses, "All things bear record of me," it really means *all things.* And he took it to mean, even more, that "all things

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[13]See, for example, his own notebooks on Spinoza, BHRC.

[14]See his comments in the *Deseret News,* 29 August 1901.

[15]If quantitatively man is nothing—qualitatively he is everything. Man may become an "avatar" of God.

[16]Preoccupied with the question of life on other worlds, Roberts found clues to it in Anaximander, Pythagoras, and Voltaire, as well as in a contemporary book by Maynard Shipley. But the strongest assurance came from the books of Moses and Abraham and D&C 76: ". . . The inhabitants thereof are sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24).

bear record of *all* of me." Once again, Christ is the truth of the cosmos, "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God . . ." (D&C 88:13).

Law and Change. Next Roberts considers eternal law. Modern revelation confirmed in him the view of many scientists that there are "laws beyond laws"; that is, that law itself, however we presently define it, is controlled or limited by still other laws. "To every law there are certain bounds and conditions."[17] And because of Christ's mastery of eternal law, he initiates his own laws, not in an arbitrary, but in a lawful way.

Did the universe come into existence, and does it continue to operate by chance? "Inconceivable," Roberts answers. He reiterates his point that life and order do not require one life-source or Orderer, as many vitalists and theists claim. Instead, both order and orderers self-exist and coexist with disorder and disorderers, just as the processes of anabolism and catabolism can both be found in all organic beings. Life and non-life have existed side by side forever. Always there have been both. Creation, then, can only consist of certain lawful events or changes within and among existences.[18]

But religionists have supposed that such a position on law is incompatible with several cherished postulates of Christian religion: with the concept of a "one and one only" necessary being or absolute on which, they claim, all else absolutely depends, and with various notions of consciousness, freedom, miracle, and providence. So much the worse, Roberts says, for these misdefined postulates, for they too often reflect man's preference for shortcuts and magic rather than for truth. The conscious spiritual and ethical worlds are no less lawful than the realms of atoms, molecules and nucleic acids. And man's freedom is preserved, not violated, by law (D&C 88:34). Law does not compel action—it simply prescribes the inevitable results of free action. Man can forever oppose or cooperate with God. But nothing predates man's conscious freedom and therefore nothing totally controls him.[19]

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[17]See D&C 88:36-47.

[18]Roberts cites many of the philosophers of nature of his time—Andrew D. White, John Fiske, John Draper—in support of the "reign of law."

[19]Because of the Aristotelian preoccupation with "First Cause" or "Unmoved Mover" and also because of the tremendous influence (and sometimes distortion) of the Darwinian thesis of simple to complex, many minds find the self-existence of man "unthinkable." For Roberts it is the opposite that

Does it then make sense to speak of the beginning or end of the universe or of man? Roberts again replies, "Inconceivable." There are worlds, galaxies, and local universes *ad infinitum,* systems within and beyond systems, and intelligences coexistent with these systems. If we shrink from this idea because it is mind-boggling, we must probe more deeply. The idea, he maintains, "is not as difficult as it is to form a conception of its [the universe's] having a beginning or of reaching an end." Here Roberts directly opposes the traditional arguments for the existence and nature of God and also the idea of a "dying universe." He finds them a form of intellectual idolatry, often circular and sometimes vacuous. Of the "First Cause" argument he says:

> "First cause" implies a time[20] when there was no cause; when there was absolute inaction or absence of causation; but as the universe is eternal and includes in that eternal existence the existence of force and mind as well as of matter, there can be no "first." But there may be eternal cause.[21]

If any existent thing can be "self-existent," a rational mind asks, why not others?

Roberts offers similar objections to the traditional argument from "Design." "Doubtless if the designer of or the creator of man could be found he would yet be more wonderful than the man, and clamor more loudly than the man for an accounting for; and so on ad infinitum."[22] He is not saying with Aquinas, stop the infinite regress with a Designer-God, nor does he join Hume in saying, stop it with man. He is saying, start with both in corelationship; abandon the idea of absolute beginnings and endings. A designing mind does not precede a structured reality any more than reality or mechanical matter-in-motion precede mind. Both are in coexistent and

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is unthinkable. In his notes he acknowledges "one criticism of the doctrine of intelligence is that I represent the ego as too complexly and highly advanced mind—consider!" Consider he did. Only to return to a conclusion he insisted was inescapable: In actuality all the elemental realities, including intelligences, have existed forever.

It should be said here that not all of the official writers of the Church take this view of intelligence. And recently it has been urged that we exercise care in ascribing to intelligence more than the revelations themselves.

[20]More precisely for its advocates it implies a non-temporal condition.

[21]"The Truth, the Way, the Life," Chapter VII, "Nature Of The Universe," p. 4. Hereafter cited as TWL.

[22]TWL, Chapter VII, p. 7.

in eternal relationship. For Roberts this is another necessary truth; its denial leads sooner or later to contradiction.

Aware that he was twisting the nose of Dame Orthodoxy, he moves toward a plurality of worlds and Gods. Just as the greatest achievements of man occur not by singular builders, but by a kind of community-mind or group-harmonized intelligences, so also with the universe. Creation, innovation and construction of infinite extent and duration require more than one Intelligence.[23] "Mormonism rises to meet the grandeur of God's universe." Every noun in the religious vocabulary should have an "s" added to it: Gods, creators, worlds, eternities, lives, etc. Through all the eternities the Gods have been involved in organizing earths and earth systems with other coexistent, united and purposive intelligences. And Roberts clearly teaches that there are levels of infinity, levels of unfolding, ever beyond perfected Intelligences. God himself was not always God—nor were those before or after him in an infinite series. "Becoming" is a fundamental category of reality and of selfhood in a universe that is really a multiverse.

Returning to common ground, Roberts proceeds to further questions that move from possibilities to probabilities. "Are the fixed stars centers of solar systems?" Many astronomers say yes. "Is there life on other worlds than our own?" A high probability is widely acknowledged. "Is life in other worlds climaxed with the equivalent of human life?" Again, astronomers offer a tentative yes.[24] "Are there worlds and world systems older and more advanced than our own?" Likely. And now Roberts asks the questions that lead into the meaning and mission of Christ:

> Have these higher intelligences of the stellar universe and planetary systems so developed in themselves the quality of love that makes it possible to think of them as being willing to sacrifice themselves—to empty themselves in sacrifice—to bring to pass the welfare of others whom they may esteem to be the undeveloped intelligences of the universe and may they not be capable of giving the last full measure of sacrifice to bring to pass the higher development of the "lowly" when no other means of uplift can be serviceable? Is the great truth operative among these untold millions of Intelligences that greater love hath no Intelligence for another than this,

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[23]TWL, Chapter IX, "Nature of the Universe: Monistic or Pluralistic."
[24]Less tentative among astronomers today.

> that he would give his life in the service of kindred intelligences when no other means of helpfulness is possible?[25]

A REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

Next, Roberts thoroughly reviews classical religion. His conclusions are novel, sometimes based on assumptions which, only fifty years later, are somewhat obsolete. The prevailing theme of these chapters holds up, however, and that is that no matter how diverse and disjointed religions now are, one can see everywhere, even in the most incredible distortions and inversions, hints and traces of what may well have been an original source. Roberts refuses to yield to such reductive arguments as that all religions are at root the projection of man's fears or insecurities.

With almost reckless confidence he probes books and artifacts that define remote and primitive religions. Against Frazer, Freud, and cultural relativists, he saw through this unwieldy mass of data on comparative religion to a dispensation pattern or what, more recently, would be called "apocalyptic." He saw religious movements as revolutionary and devolutionary, not just evolutionary. "Natural religions" might well be the splinter remains of pristine revelations which, unless enlivened by continuing revelation, tended to grow dimmer and dimmer. Far from being disquieted by these ancient pre-Christian, non-Christian, and even anti-Christian fragments, he saw in them a hint of a single source.[26] The varieties of nature worship, of cosmic mysteries, ancient rites, brotherhoods and myths of transformation inspired him. In his increasingly erudite imagination, Roberts could walk into every shrine and temple of the ancient or the modern world and find traces of the great Christ-drama that is the key to the riddles of life. Even those religions which explicitly deny and replace the savior-redeemer patterns are, by their allegiance to substitutes, doing what Jesus said they would do, "bearing record of him."

Roberts tries to be resolute against the temptation to easy generalization, and also to claim for any dispensation total originality. For him there is nothing so false in the history of man's worship but that a sparkle of truth remains in it. He became sophisticated—more than his critics suppose—in his

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[25]TWL, Chapter X, "Of Knowledge: To the Point of Moral Certainty," pp. 10-11.

[26]TWL, Chapter XII, "Seekers after God: Revelation."

analysis of influences. He notes, for example, that Plato (contrary to many interpreters) held that both God and matter existed in some form from all eternity, and wonders whether Plato's highest conception was not of Static Ideas or Pure Forms but of the active soul. And though Philo is often viewed as the one who introduced Greek ideas into Christian theology (and Roberts berates him for betraying his mission as a Jew who should have stood unflinchingly for the God of Abraham), he notes that Philo was interested in Orientalism as well as in Platonism and Judaism, and suggests that the merging of these three may have shown up in the different forms of gnosticism. "May it not be," he wrote of certain striking resemblances in the triple deities of Oriental and Egyptian vintage, "that this order of things may have been the distorted remains of the ancient gospel from Egypt or the false priesthood and gospel of Egypt."[27]

Overall it seemed to him significant that types, structures, and recurrent root symbols permeate religion no matter how primitive or how recent.[28] Behind all these Roberts saw "broken rays of light, from some noble sun of truth."[29] He cherished the dream of a great university that would build on such a conception.

But historical conclusions about religious tradition are at best probable. What about present direct revelation? Again arguing by analogy from significant gains in interhuman communication, Roberts asks why there should not be communication among the higher intelligences. Is it not "very probable?" True to his heritage he insists that in the fullest sense "only God can reveal God." But he offers a careful rationale both for the need of continual revelation and for degrees of, and limitations on, that revelation. The capacity and growth of the seeker are at the center of divine concern. Deep reaches to deep. Hence, to a mind and soul content with little, little is manifest. Since man must be helped to self-awareness and Divine awareness without being hindered, "the present order of things as to revelation and other things has been devised in the wisdom of higher intelligences to impart to man a self-

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[27]See his own notebook, BHRC.

[28]See TWL, Chapter XII, pp. 12-13. All this is elaborated in Chapter XIII, "A Review of Ancient Religions I," through Chapter XXIII, "Revelation: Abrahamic Fragment."

[29]TWL, Chapters XIII-XVI, "A Review of Ancient Religions."

culture and development that has been planned in the highest wisdom—planned in the wisdom of those who have more extensive knowledge than we can fathom by our partial vision of things."[30]

> Development of intelligences—which may be called education—results not so much from acquiring a mere knowledge of things, as from the development within the mind of powers to seek, and find things each for himself.[31]

"Success to you" he says to every method and approach to truth and truth-seeking. But revelation crowns all other efforts—and revelation must be sought in the manner of seers and prophets.

MODES OF CREATION

In his most controversial chapters[32] Roberts follows the analogy of intercontinental transportation to the possibility of interplanetary travel. From that premise he conjectures that life or life forms may have been brought[33] from other worlds to ours. (His private opinion was that this world is only one of many previous worlds inhabited by myriads of forms of life and controlled by superior intelligences and that whole races may have come and gone in these earlier stages from the elements that comprise these earths.)[34] His was a "migration theory," and the question "When did life begin on this earth?" seems, in his view, extremely local, myopic, and insignificant. After the bringing of "a few forms of life" to this earth came development of a greater variety. Such development, Roberts believes is real, but only within certain limits. Clearly recognizing that this is contrary to many views of evolution, he insists on "orders, families, genera, classes."[35] He calls his own posture "the development theory" and opposes it to mechanical, agnostic, and theistic evolution.[36]

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[30]TWL, Chapter XII, p. 5.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Chapters XXIV and XXV, "Creation: The Time and Manner of the Earth's Creation, I and II."

[33]Note that he says "brought," not "sent."

[34]He was following the suggestion in Joseph Smith's writings that this earth was made out of fragments of other earths. And one may ask what about them, in turn?

[35]This was a slight revision of his earlier defense of a "fixity of species." See B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel,* 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1913), pp. 282-83.

[36]Roberts carefully studied Darwin, Spencer, Fiske, Haeckel, Lord Kelvin, J. Arthur Thomson and other geologists and biologists. Spencer had been the

He denies, then, that everything began with "an homogenous substance or protoplasm which was then differentiated." Revelation, he insists, requires us to affirm the eternity of life and the life-force and of *some* life forms. The embryos of these are transplantable to newly created worlds to be developed "each after its kind" to its highest possibilities. He finds clues to this in Genesis —creation both by propagation and by development-process. He allows the possibilitiy that the dust of the earth[37] may, even if it were strictly nonliving, have given rise to certain elemental living things. But as for man, he was "no doubt transplanted from some of the older and more highly developed worlds."[38] Of all life forms, he goes on to say, "Man's unquestionably is the most excellent in all things; most beautiful, most convenient, most noble. He is 'the crowning glory of the creation'—because he is begotten after *his* kind—a son of God!"[39] Christ is once more "the truth," the undergirding prototype for the creation of man.[40]

GOD, CHRIST, AND MAN

The God in Christ. And now we reach the heart of Roberts' treatise—that Christ is more than the light of the cosmos—he is the light and revelation of the ultimate nature of both God and man. The ill-willed stereotype had haunted him for a lifetime: Mormons do not believe in Jesus Christ. Keenly he felt the irony! In his last work he wanted to testify once and for all that not only do Mormons affirm the divinity, the worthiness, the worshipability of Jesus Christ, but they insist, quite alone, on his Deity—not only that he is one manifestation of the Godhead, but that he became the full, complete, super-

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first to systematize evolutionary ideas in biology that had a wide popularity in the late nineteenth century. But Roberts considered Alfred North Whitehead, Samuel Alexander, and Henri Bergson greater in their interpretive scope than any of the scientists.

[37]The distinction between life and nonlife is blurred in modern revelation. In some senses the earth itself is alive and filling the measure of its creation (D&C 88). Some astronomers are now saying, contrary to earlier theory, that space is filled with organic matter.

[38]TWL, Chapter XXV, p. 10. Cf. Chapter XXVI, "Man: Pre-Existence of Spirits, Eternal Existence of Intelligence."

[39]TWL, Chapter XXV, p. 13.

[40]Here Roberts broadens the definition of "intelligence" to provide a foundation for understanding the Holy Ghost. Either intelligence exists as individual persons, or proceeds from such persons as a power or force such as the Spirit of God when it "moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). But this spirit of God is never separated from its source any more than the rays of light are separated from the sun. Each is indispensible to the other.

lative revelation—the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—of the nature and attributes of God, the Father.

> Henceforth when men shall dispute about the "being" and "nature" of God, it shall be a perfect answer to uphold Jesus Christ as the complete and perfect revelation and manifestation of God; and through all the ages it shall be so—eternally so. For there shall be no excuse for men saying that they know not God, for all may know Him from the least to the greatest, so tangible, so real a revelation has God given of himself in the person, character, and attributes of Jesus Christ. . . .[41]
>
> This is not the revelation of God ridiculed by those who have a scorn of anthropomorphic notions of God, and who they claim is represented as "an old man with a gray beard" and whom they scornfully reject as God. But the revelation of God presented here is the immortal and eternal, youthful Christ; resurrected at the age of thirty-three years; the height of gloriously developed manhood, and caught at that age and made eternal, by a union of a perfect body with a perfect spirit in eternal youth and youthfulness. God as perfected man, and manifested in the flesh for all time as the God-type of the universe, God blessed forever more![42]

Roberts was thoroughly aware of how this witness clashed with certain Greek, Patristic, and Latin creeds, with trinitarianism and the paradoxes of incarnation. He had confronted them in public debate.[43] But Roberts became more not less steeped in the sublimity of Christ. Christ is not only an anthropomorphic being. He is anthropopathic and anthropocentric—one who feels all and more than man can feel and who cares more than the sons of men can care. Mormon writers, he felt, invite misunderstanding by saying, "God is like man." The truth is more glorious. God is like Christ, like the Christ who *became* the express image of his glory and person.

In his discussion of this insight, Roberts anticipated and answered four classic criticisms. First, that the Mormon view

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[41]TWL, Chapter XIX, "The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ," pp. 8-10.
[42]TWL, Chapter XX, "Departure of the Church from the True Doctrine of God," p. 1.
[43]With Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox conceptions through a competent Jesuit in the "Roberts Van der Donckt Discussion," later supplemented and published as *Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1903). With Protestant authorities in his four-hour answer to the Ministerial Association, published in *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912). (Actual newspaper coverage began 4 June 1907.) And with Jewish scholars in *Rasha the Jew* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1932), published in New York, November 1925, in *The Redeemed Hebrew*, monthly, and then in tract form.

betrays Jewish-Christian monotheism—leading to tri-theism instead of trinitarianism. Roberts replies that the revelation of God in Christ is the only genuine monotheism—namely, that there is only one *kind* of being who deserves the full title, "God."[44] When Christ said "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), he was not affirming a metaphysical identity, he was saying that two persons, the Father and the Son, are exactly alike, and that there is no kind of being "higher" than that.

The second objection is that the Mormon view is a proud and blasphemous rejection of the "mystery" of God—that a God understood is a God dethroned. Roberts answers that the actual blasphemy is the refusal to let God reveal himself as he is (as Christ is) and to prefer the death-dealing abstractions of the philosophers.

The third charge is that the Mormon view is "primitive" and "materialistic." Roberts replies that the Mormon view is at once the oldest and newest understanding of God in the world. Various forms of pantheism—depersonalized gods in all their variations—have attracted theologies from the beginning. But it is only superstition that they are more intellectual. And as to the charge of materialism, there is here no more nor less than the resurrection requires—for Christ and therefore for man also, "the highest development of the spiritual is in its connection with the physical."[45] Spirit and element combined "make one music as before, but vaster." The body is a step up, a giant step up, in progress towards spiritual perfection.

The God in Man. But there is more: As Christ is the truth about and the truth of God, he is also the truth of man. It was Roberts' joy to testify that man is not simply heir to a spark of the divine—he is potentially the full scintillating flame. Having reenthroned among the names of God *fieri* (becoming) with *esse* (being), he could lead all Christians to the staggering implication: "If God be made man—Jesus Christ; may not man be made God?"[46]

Jesus himself, who "knew what was in man"—the worst and the best—was bitterly assailed for so teaching. But is it

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[44]Hence the Holy Ghost is not fully God, though a member of the Godhead.

[45]TWL, Chapter XXV, p. 13.

[46]See his notes in the *Hibbert Journal,* 20 no. 3 (April 1922):410.

B. H. Roberts (1857-1933)

blasphemy to hope to become like God? Roberts cites Christ's reply in John 10:33-36:

> . . . thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Roberts wrote, "God's glory does not consist in his being solely intelligent [or solely anything else]—but in disseminating it—sharing it with others—the more he gives no less he has."[47] It is a blasphemous humility and a specious reverence that insists that God the Eternal Father wants less for his children! He found veins of gold on this theme in some of the ancient fathers. For example in Hippolytus 1.184:

> For whatever hardships thou hast to suffer when a man, he gave them to thee because thou wast a man; but that which is proper to God, what pertains to God's state and condition, God has declared he will give thee when thou shalt be deified, being born again an immortal.

Roberts wrote in a marginal note, "This Mormonism among the fathers."[48]

Christ, then, is the revelation of man's destiny. Nothing can be said about his present nature, attributes, and powers that cannot be said about man's potential. We, through Christ, are to receive, like Christ, grace for grace until we receive a fullness of the glory of the Father.

Roberts concludes this section with a chapter on joy, the purpose of earth life. It is a joy, he teaches, that can only arise from raw rudimental struggles and contrasts—with the living experience of mortality—of bitter and of sweet. He considers concepts of joy or well-being as taught by the ancient Epicureans, the Hedonists, and others down through the centuries, and distinguishes the inclusive joy promised in Christ from mere sensualism or from the joy of innocence "a negative sort of virtue, a virtue that is colorless, never quite sure of itself."[49] In a word, he describes joy as encompassing all the

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[47]See notations in his own Bible, BHRC.

[48]See his copy of William G. T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 255, BHRC.

[49]Modern revelation breaks the confining and paradoxical tradition that Christ was both fully human and fully divine. If Jesus was utterly divine,

levels of awareness in Christ,[50] "all heights and all depths" a joy in every way comparable to the joy of the Father, a joy that is itself a fullness.

VOLUME II, CHRIST, THE WAY

The second volume of Roberts' treatise centers in the atonement—Christ, the Way. The way, of course, may be described at its most inclusive as "at-one-ment"—the closing of the gaps that separate man from God the Father, from himself, and from others of the children of God. Through all his mature years Roberts had responded to the atonement through the ordinances of the sacrament and the temple, and felt in them great assurance. But then came patient, careful inquiry into the doctrine, especially Book of Mormon accounts of divine justice and mercy, and he wrote:

> By deeper delving into the subject, my intellect [now] gives its full and complete assent to the soundness of the philosophy and absolute necessity for the atonement of Jesus Christ, that this atonement, the method and manner of it, is the only way by which there could be brought to pass an at-one-ment, a reuniting of soul of man with soul of God. I account it for myself a new conversion, an intellectual conversion, to the atonement of Jesus Christ and I have been rejoicing in it of late exceedingly.[51]

In his *Seventy's Yearbook,* Volume 4, Roberts printed the results of his studies of "the difficult doctrine of atonement," not, he taught, to be avoided because hard and challenging. "Truth," he repeated from Byron, "is a gem that loves the deep." "Mormonism is for thinkers!" Roberts added. Even though this yearbook is in outline form, there is not in Mormon literature a more sustained and interrelated presentation on the subject.[52]

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man cannot identify with him for he is unreachable and austere and such religion is bitter and cold. On the other hand, if Jesus was utterly man—no more in his inheritance than other men—then it follows that any man, without Jesus, can "self-actualize to the same degree." In either case the power of Christianity, which is to say of Christ himself, is vitiated. The truth revealed is that Christ became what he became by the same processes that, through him, we must follow. He "received not of the fullness of the Father" at first. He became what he became until the fullness was given. So, in his likeness and for his likeness, must we.

[50]TWL, Chapter XXVII, "Purpose of God in the Earth Life of Man."

[51]*Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* April 1911, p. 59.

[52]To him it was almost reward enough that Heber J. Grant, his confidant and admirer wrote, "B. H. Roberts, in his line, is doing as great a work as any

He saw that most of the imponderables that arise in considering the mission of Christ result from faulty and foreign assumptions alien to "The Truth." Much of the mischief arises from the acceptance of the traditional "omni's"—the hard and fast Aristotelian definitions of God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnibenevolence. So defined, they lead to hopeless puzzles. Roberts saw the following contradictions arising from those stated definitions:

"The atonement was the divine response to man's need." But in the creedal view God created out of nothing all of man and all of his environment and therefore created the need!

"The atonement is God's reconciliation to man's abuse of his freedom in and after the fall of Adam." But in the creedal view God created all the circumstances that led to, and therefore required the Fall.

"It was God's way of tempering justice with mercy." But God supposedly created and defined the laws of justice and the limits of mercy. Could he not, then, reorder or abandon these demands?

"The atonement was Christ's voluntary rescue or ransom effort." But in the creedal view God could have forgiven man (Is he not omnipotent?) and dispensed his grace without requiring the awful sacrifice of his Son.

"It was God's setting a moving example through his Son." But might not that example have been set without innocent, not to say infinite, suffering?

"It was God's conquering death." But is God not able to transmit life without the suffering of his "Most Beloved" Son?

"It was God's thwarting the influence of the Devil's powers of darkness." But the creeds say God created the Devil and all his hosts. Had he no alternative?

All in all, would not Christ himself have wondered why the Father did not in his infinite wisdom plan a better, or prevent this worst, alternative? One is led back to the very "why?" of creation. Why did God permit the knots to be tied that only Christ could untie? Roberts fundamental response is that there is something eternal and inexorable about

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man among us" (Heber J. Grant to Mathias Cowley, 18 January 1895, Grant Letterbook, Church Archives), and stood in the Assembly Hall, his face covered with tears, and said, "This is the most beautiful statement on the atonement I have ever read."

law. If God made all laws, he can surely revoke them. But if there are some laws which even God did not originate, then he cannot. He can only find ways to master their consequences. On the other hand, mercy that is born of genuine caring and love cannot obliterate law, but may somehow lawfully transform the effects of law. Christ's power is founded on this balance between justice and mercy.

Thus, Roberts returns to a discussion of the coeternality of God, man, and law. In his view, the "noble doctrine" of the eternal nature of individuality and freedom "affects in a very vital way" every other question about the meaning of Christ as "The Way."

> Under the conception of the existence of independent, uncreated, self-existent intelligences, who by the inherent nature of them are of various degrees of intelligence, and moral quality, differing from each other in many ways, yet alike in their eternity and their freedom—how stands it under this conception of things?[53]

He answers:

> [It] relieves God of the responsibility for the nature and status of intelligences in all stages of their development [because] their inherent nature and their volition make them primarily what they are. . . . The only way God affects these self-existent beings is favorably; he creates not their inherent nature; he is not responsible for the use they make of their freedom to choose good or evil—their free moral agency; nor is he the author of their sufferings when they fall into sin.[54]

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

This fundamental insight not only resolves the mystery of the suffering of Christ, but the mysteries of all suffering. "Men have to suffer that they may come upon Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens," Joseph Smith had said.[55] Is that "have to" eternal? Roberts answers with Lehi's "There must needs be opposition in all things" and recognizes evil as among "the eternal things." He finds it a necessary truth that even the existence of God is interrelated with the existence of things in duality, that is, in opposition:

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[53]TWL, Chapter XXVI, pp. 17-18.
[54]Ibid, p. 18.
[55]Joseph Fielding Smith, compiler, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Desert Book, 1973), p. 323.

> Evil is not a created quality. It has always existed as the background of good. It is as eternal as goodness; it is as eternal as law; it is as eternal as the agency of intelligences. Sin, which is evil active, is transgression of law, and so long as the agency of intelligences and law have existed [i.e., forever], the possibility of the transgression of law has existed.[56]

Evil-disposed persons tend to embody evil. Hence for Roberts "there is no more mystery about the existence of devils, than there is about the existence of evil men."[57]

This then becomes the answer to the haunting dilemma of the ages: Since there is evil and suffering God must be impotent or malevolent, for if he cannot prevent evil he is not all-powerful and if he does not, though able, he is not all-good. Robert replies:

> God is not able to prevent evil and destroy the source of it, but he is not impotent, for he guides intelligences, notwithstanding evil, to kingdoms of peace and security. Evil is a means of progress, for progress is overcoming evil.
>
> On the other hand God is not able, nor willing if he were able, to prevent [all] evil, and yet he is not malevolent. For knowing that evil exists in the whole scheme of things as the necessary antithesis of good, and that one may not be destroyed without destroying both, why wreck the universe in order to prevent evil? This [the utter destruction of evil] would be the greatest of evils, since all things else would go with it.[58]

Why, then, is there evil?

> The answer is, that it is a necessary and eternal part of "the dramatic whole" and the kingdom of righteousness wherein dwelleth peace—the beatific vision and hope of the faithful—is the kingdom to be won by the conquest over evil; and which never may be realized but by that conquest.[59]

THE AFFAIR IN EDEN

All this is background to Roberts' analysis of the heroic descent of Adam and Eve, the Fall, the resultant penalties,

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[56]TWL, Chapter XXVI, p. 6.

[57]"All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it . . . as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence" (D&C 93:30). To Roberts this means there is no place and never was or will be where these conditions do not obtain. The freedom of man ranges within certain limits but it is not destructible; not even under the power of God.

[58]TWL, Chapter XXXIII, "The Problem of Evil."

[59]TWL, Chapter XXVI, p. 14.

the divine decrees, the veil of forgetfulness, the world under the curse, the meaning of the law of sacrifice, the first revelations, and the rejoicing.

Four implications challenge negative and "original sin" theologies:

1. The penalties imposed on Adam and Eve were not "vindictive cruelties" but announced consequences, designed in the wisdom of God "for thy sake."
2. The veil of forgetfulness was not quite complete, "shutting out most but not all." Adam "perhaps remembered some little of the glory and splendor of the Lord God."[60]
3. Two deaths were resultant: (a.) the broken union with God, and (b.) the eventual inevitable separation of spirit and body. Adam was to realize both in his experience.
4. Sacrifice was introduced as the herald of Christ.[61]

When "the morning broke," Adam and Eve were commanded to worship the Lord their God by sacrifice without explanation of why. But revelation brought renewal of contact and therefore of life, the new beginning of the way. Adam learned that he should do all that he did in the name of the Son of God (Moses 5:8) and that thus *he* could become a son of God. Filled with enlightenment and rejoicing, he prophesied concerning his life and posterity. And thus, "The gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost."[62] This is the definitive answer to those who suppose that the knowledge of the gospel came first into the world in the meridian of time.[63]

All this leads up[64] to Roberts' crucial recognition of certain inexorable conditions:

1. The growth of man's soul requires (as it required even

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[60]Ibid., p. 3.

[61]Though Roberts shows that there is no direct biblical evidence that the command to sacrifice was given by God.

[62]See Moses 5:6.

[63]TWL, Chapter XXIX, "The Way of Eternal Life—the Everlasting Gospel"; Chapter XXX, "The Earth—Life of Man Opened"; Chapter XXXI, "An Adamic Dispensation."

[64]There are five intervening and preparatory chapters that are primarily historical. Chapters XXXV to XXXIX on the First Dispensation, the Adamic Era, The Patriarchal Ages, the Post-Diluvian Dispensations, and the Meridian Dispensation.

for Christ) exposure to the contrasts—the law of opposite existences in mortality.

2. Experience is indispensable to that growth and there are no heights without depths.

3. Joy comes in its fullest intensity only to those who care about—who sacrificially love—others.

4. Love cannot be forced; it can only be appealed to, matched, elicited.

5. To "bring about" the "bowels of mercy which overpowereth justice" Christ had to suffer and we through that suffering may be "lifted up." Christ will draw (not force) all men unto him.

These insights permeate Roberts' analysis of the attributes of God and of man, of the council (and war!) in heaven, of Christ's premortal voluntary acceptance of the role of "the Lamb," of the initial developments of life on this planet, of the Old Testament messiah-redeemer prototypes ranging from the Paschal Lamb to the temple sacrifice, and of the successive dispensations and the coming of Christ in the flesh.

So seriously does Roberts take these interrelationships that he notes that all his six chapters on the atonement should be read together or not at all.[65] Here again, he lamented the fact that because of our mortal limitations "we can only preach the gospel in fragments." But if we can hold in our consciousness the revealed attributes of God and the "givens" that surround him and us, all else falls into place. Thus the atonement of Christ "makes sense"—it makes reason—it makes power. It is no longer only *a* way—but THE way.

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

But for Roberts mysteries remain. Why so *much* suffering? So much for Christ? And even after renewal through him, so much for man? How in the light of the agonies that surround and sometimes swallow us, can we be reconciled to an overall meaning and purpose?

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[65]TWL, Chapter XL, "The Atonement I: The Revealed Fact of the Atonement," p. 1. "Knowledge of the whole, I am sure, will be necessary to the complete understanding of the parts." These six chapters are: "The Atonement as Revealed," "As Harmonic with the Reign of Law," "As Related to the Attributes of God," "As Indispensible," "As of Broader Scope Than Satisfaction for Adam's Sin," and "As Efficacious Though Vicarious." TWL, Volume II, Chapters XL through XLV.

Here, instead of beginning with God, Roberts begins with man—with introspective, intimate experience. We suffer in many ways: in ourselves and in our minds no less than in our bodies. Because of our involvement in each other's lives, he points out, we suffer. Even in our efforts to serve we are wounded and scarred. The flagrantly prodigal child pulls at the heartstrings of the parents. We suffer also *with each other,* even with those who are virtually beyond our immediate care, bound to us only by distant kinship. We suffer with them through the reaches of human sympathy and empathy. And finally we suffer—and willingly—*for each other,* as David yearned to suffer for his son Absalom. "Would to God I had died for thee." All this, Roberts writes, "is the chief glory of the human race."

But if it is our chief glory, what an infinite pity if there should be no means among the divine intelligences for a like—and even greater—expression of self-sacrificing love.[66] If on our level love and suffering are inextricable, how inconsistent to deny the power of voluntary—and even involuntary—sacrificial suffering to God and his Christ. Here Roberts is elated with divine intimations and imitations. As John the Beloved wrote, "We love him because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). Even after all this, Roberts acknowledges that both our human weakness and our nobility shrink, as Christ himself shrank, and we may cry out under the awful burden—No! Let this cup pass! The atonement is too severe! To this Roberts replies at three levels:

First, it is inconceivable that either God's justice or his mercy would require more suffering in the sensitive soul of the Redeemer—or of the redeemed—than was absolutely necessary to accomplish the glorious end envisioned. However we may recoil from it, all of it is required. And surely we may apprehend in experience one clear reason: suffering is one of the few things we cannot ignore. Through suffering and pain men are most powerfully moved and influenced. Christ yielded himself to his mission with full awareness of this. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Crowns of roses fade; crowns of thorns endure.

[66]Roberts honored as a masterpiece of thought and composition Browning's story of David's love for Saul (Robert Browning, "Saul" 1845, 1855). "Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!" (He says one must read it at least six times to grasp its richness.)

And so the reaching power of the atonement endures when all other attempts at motivation fail.

Second, as Alma puts it, out of Christ's "suffering according to the flesh" came "bowels filled with mercy" (Alma 7: 12-13). But out of both came, and will yet come, Christ's capacity for and realization of infinite joy. Likewise we, in lesser degree, as we experience grief in his name at its deeper levels, are made more capable for more inclusive, intense joy, gratitude, and love. If Christ himself could have known the fullness of the joy of the Father in an easier way, that might well have been provided. The same is true of us. And in the contemplation of his life, if we are not moved profoundly, if the mercy in us does not have compassion on the mercy in him, if we will not respond, then one day we too will have to suffer even as he. And once again the phrase is "have to." Only thus may we become capable of coming to his likeness and his quality of life.

But third, we have a glimpse of what an unmeasurable premium all this places upon the envisioned end. If by suffering, power came to Christ to achieve this end—and if no one could do more—then, says Roberts boldly, shame on God and his Christ if they did not undertake it. And, if we do not respond to such a matchless sacrifice, shame on us.

> If it be true that men value things in proportion to what they cost how dear to them must be the atonement, since it cost the Christ so much in suffering that he may be said to have been baptized by bloodsweat in Gethsemane, before he reached the climax of his passion on Calvary.[67]

One who comprehends, even if only vaguely, all that Christ went through must be led inevitably to ask, "Was it worth it?" And Roberts witnesses that in light of the incredibly glorious outcome, it was and indeed is worth it. The achievement is to be more than man's renewal, more than a bright example, more than salvation from physical and spiritual death for all living things, more than the vindication of all the attributes of God. Beyond all these it is a perpetual union and reunion of the soul of man with the soul of God, the making of divine men, the bringing of man to life like unto God's, fullness of life. For all those who will (and both the Father and the Son are help-

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[67]TWL, Chapter XLIII, "The Atonement IV: Could Other Means Than the Atonement Have Brought to Pass Man's Salvation?"

less in uplifting those who will not), it is the glorious infinite becoming unto godliness.[68]

VOLUME III, CHRIST, THE LIFE

Roberts' culminating volume is Christ, the Life. In these chapters the question becomes—What is the source of life? the quantity, the quality, the intensity of life? How is it that we cannot speak of any creative act in the universe without in the end saying that Christ is the undergirding of that creation? Such were Roberts' final preoccupations and at this point he was really at his best. Yet because of declining health, and his advancing age, he was tired, and his book is less coherent here than elsewhere. Nevertheless, one can grasp and appreciate the essence of his message.

LIFE AND LOVE

To begin with, he tends to identify life and love. For many, he says, love is defined as an evanescent and changing phenomenon, that makes it one of the *least* reliable things in life. His testimony is that because of Christ, love is the *most* reliable thing in life. Christ is the actual connecting tissue of life and love.

> [Love] is immanent and . . . is an indestructible presence. It is because love reigns in harmony with law that we mortals can be so sure of it; and rest so secure in it. Whereas it was not born of caprice, so, too, it will not depart from the world nor from individuals on caprice; but will endure as space itself endures—from the very nature of it; as truth abides; as law itself subsists; as God lives; for it is of the Eternal Things—the things that do not pass away.[69]

In his fifth *Seventy's Yearbook,* "Divine Immanence and the Holy Ghost,"[70] Roberts had developed the claim that authentic Christianity alone is in the fullest sense a religion of life, life-affirmation, life-enhancement, life-transmission. Stimulated by the work of Henry Drummond, Roberts expanded the idea of "biogenesis," the theme of "Life from Life—Spiritual Life from Spirit," and traced its roots, both in ancient and

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[68]Two more historical chapters are placed here at the end of Volume II which recapitulate Roberts' book, *The Falling Away* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1931). They are, Chapter XLVI, "Departure From 'The Way'," and Chapter XLVII, "Renewal of 'The Way'."

[69]TWL, Chapter XXVII, "Purpose of God in Earth Life of Man," p. 10.

[70]*Seventy's Course in Theology,* "Divine Immanence and the Holy Ghost," vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), chapter 20.

modern scripture. Thus, he insists, improvement in action and conduct is not enough to bring into man the fullness of Christ's powers. Instead, there must be an infusion, a new—and continual—creation from above.[71] "The difference between a spiritual man and a natural man is not a difference of development, but of generation," Drummond had written.[72] This law which has analogues throughout the biological and social worlds is, so far as can be known, exceptionless. "He that has not spiritually been born of Christ," Roberts summarizes, "is not spiritually alive."[73] But as we have seen, he takes the type farther. Man is not simply to be regenerated in a delimited sphere and element to a partial wholeness or holiness or salvation. He is to unfold into the exact likeness of his Redeemer. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. . ." (Romans 8:29).[74]

As Roberts seasoned in continued study, he saw ever deeper implications in these ideas. What is life? How is Christ the life? What is it to beget? What is the vital union with Christ that brings to pass "eternal lives"? The more he pursued these questions the more he became convinced that Christ is the power that attends and undergirds all life, all life-giving, all love, all love-giving. Man is not—not yet—a creator of life. He is an instrument for its transmission, an agent through whom creative living power descends, and, as it were, distills, bringing about birth and growth.[75] Hence when Christ said "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18), that included the power of life. Hence we have the modern statements of Christ that "he is the light which giveth life to all things" (D&C 88:13), that "quickeneth all things" and "maketh alive all things" (Moses 6:61).

THE ROLE OF ORDINANCES

Further Roberts was intrigued with the accumulating evidence that the action of mind on the physical body depends,

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[71]Roberts did not live to read the more technical efforts of Teilhard de Chardin who tried to combine paleontology and Catholic theology conceiving the whole universe as an upthrust toward the making of Christ-like beings.

[72]Quoted by Roberts in *Seventy's Course in Theology,* 5:101.

[73]Ibid., 5:102.

[74]See also 2 Corinthians 3:18.

[75]TWL, Chapter XLVIII, "The Life, Manifested in the Christ." ("Manifested in the Christ" is written in pencil in Roberts' handwriting.)

without exception, on some material intervention. He rejoiced in this evidence for it pointed to that union of spirit and element, that mutual interdependence that provides an eternal foundation to the need for channels of life-transmission, that is, ordinances. "Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances."[76] So Joseph Smith had testified to the Twelve. Then the influx to us of those more-fully-alive worlds is the extension through material conductors of life power.[77] Ordinances bring us in touch with this life power, conveying it into man's very cells and soul. All the fundamental life processes have an exact parallel in Christian life. Hence the richness of meaning in baptism—water, blood, and spirit recapitulating the elements of birth—and the sacrament. Hence, also, the indispensability of the higher ordinances of the temple sanctuary. These all vindicate the expression of Christ, "I am the vine; ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). As John has said, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12). And Christ gives us a modern assurance: "Otherwise ye could not abound" (D&C 88:50). In participating in the sacrament, we do literally partake not only of emanating powers, but of what Peter calls "the divine nature," by inviting into our systems through the tokens or emblems of broken bread and water or wine, the elements of higher life, higher spirit, higher power—the powers of godliness[78]—which by his own life-victory Christ now embodies and diffuses.

In other vivifying ways Christ is the "life." Many Christian interpreters, Roberts observed, tend to condemn and mortify the virile qualities of human nature and to commend instead servility and even cowardice. They recognize in Christ a certain mellow forgiveness and compassion but ignore his masterfulness and his involvement in the whole spectrum of earth experience. Likewise some conceive the Christian enterprise

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[76]Smith, *Teachings,* p. 162.

[77]See his notes on Haldane and Huxley, BHRC.

[78]Those who suppose that love and joy and peaces emerge in man by fiat or happenstance or even by "grace" as traditionally defined, or that a "good life" self-conceived assures them salvation, are missing this vital thread. Life power comes down to and into and up through our natures as through a fruit tree. And seeds must precede stem, trunk and branches, and blossoms must precede fruit, and we must be planted "in a goodly land, by a pure stream . . ." (D&C 97:9).

as the attempt to escape from or "live above" the earth rather than to transform it. Roberts wrote with rare penetration that if religion is worth anything it must take account of and work through the whole life, and with the needs of this earth, not by secularizing the sacred but by sanctifying the secular—for this very planet is to become heaven. To those who ignored the pressing tangible problems of civilization, Roberts responded, "A holy man is a citizen of the here and now."

On the other hand, if the New Dispensation contributed nothing else it claimed the indispensability of Christ in this wider concern, a mode of living that does not arise from teaching alone, but from his glorifying life. Man is as dependent upon divine nourishment as he is upon air. That makes religion more than an ethical, political, or social scheme.

> Religion is more than mere morality; it is a new birth, a spiritual power, it is conformity to his will, and a careful performance of all that he has ordained as necessary to the completion of "the life." Let no one therefore attempt to displace God's gospel plan by a substitution of humanitarianism, by which is here meant a system of morals based upon what is recognized as contributing to human welfare, the basis merely of social relations and individual well-being. Truly the gospel is expressed in a Life. But it is a life in harmony with God's purposes, with fellowship, and with complete union with God established through spiritual birth and consciousness of a one-ness with God's life.[79]

LIFE, LIGHT, SPIRIT POWER

Here Roberts holds up the key to the ancient either-or controversy: God's personal transcendence or God's immanence. Classical and contemporary theologians often obscure or eliminate personality from their concept of God in order to make way for "a universal spirit." Assuming the "everywhereness of God," they are led to assume that in the end they must deny him particularized personality, physical resurrection, even spatial-temporal location.[80] To this Roberts answers with "one of the sweetest messages of God unto man,"[81] Doctrine and

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[79]TWL, Chapter XLVIII, p. 13.

[80]See Roberts' discussion of this problem in *The Seventy's Course in Theology,* vol. 5, Part I, "Divine Immanence," pp. 1-35.

[81]Conference address delivered in April 1916, *Conference Report,* pp. 134-39.

Covenants 88, which affirms, clarifies and personalizes what Roberts called "divine immanence."[82]

His elaboration of the doctrine must be read in the context of his entire book, and each term must be defined not in the traditional sense, but in the New Dispensation sense.

> This Light then, the Light of Truth and named for us men "the Light of Christ"—"which proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space,"—is also God, even the Spirit of God, or of the Gods, for it proceeds forth or vibrates, or radiates from all the Gods—from all who have partaken of the One Divine Nature—hence "the God of all other Gods"—mentioned by our Prophet of the New Dispensation (Doc. and Cov. sec. cxxi) "the God of Gods," "the Lord of Lords," proceeding from MANY yet ONE! Incarnated in all personal Deities, yet proceeding forth from them, to extend the one God into all space that He might be in and through all things; bearing all the powers in earth and sun and stars; world-sustaining power and guiding force. Bearing all the mind and spiritual attributes of God into the immensity of space, becoming God everywhere present—omni-present; and everywhere present with power—omni-potent; extending everywhere the power of God; also All-Knowing; All-Seeing; All-Hearing—Omniscient! Bearing forth in fact all the attributes of Deity: Knowledge, Wisdom, Judgment, Truth, Holiness, Mercy—every characteristic or quality of all Divine Intelligences—since they are one; and this Divine Essence of spirit becoming "the Light which is in all things, *that giveth life to all things* which is the law by which all things are governed, even the POWER of God, who sitteth upon His throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things." United in this Divine Essence, or Spirit is the mind of all Gods; and all the Gods being incarnations of this Spirit, become God in unity; and by the incarnation of this Spirit in Divine Personages, they become the Divine Brotherhood of the Universe, the ONE GOD, though made of many.[83]

Christ's life may envelope all of man's life. And thus all of man's life, even its most secular details, may be sacramental.

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[82]For Roberts this had much to do with prayer. He penned in a notebook, "Prayer is not a mechanical function. One may not always pray when one chooses. Something more than words are needed. Prayer is soul of man communing with soul of God—the infinite in man reaching upward to touch the infinite of God. God must be a party to the blending of souls, else there is no prayer."

He spoke of this during his last year (1933) as his "greatest personal treasure in the gospel"—the sense of the nearness of Christ—more than the spirit or light of Christ, Christ himself.

[83]B. H. Roberts, *Last Seven Discourses of B. H. Roberts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1947), pp. 99-100.

What difference follows such awareness? Roberts answers: Consult the Sermon on the Mount. As the Master taught the Sermon on the Mount, he *was* that Sermon. Two chapters compare the accounts of the Sermon in the Gospels and in 3 Nephi (which Roberts called the "Fifth Gospel") and interlace them with certain insights of the prophets.[84] Again the hallmark of Roberts' analysis is inclusive harmony. He sees that the prime Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity, must be combined with wisdom, courage, temperance, and others. He sees that when Christianity denies the expressive beauties of art, the gains of scientific control, the manifestations of culture, the lyrical and refined joys of marriage and family—when it shows contempt for any phase of man or woman or of any phase of life—it is false to itself and gone astray. But to be beneficial all elements of life must not only be used properly, but *infused* properly.

Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is enveloped in life-affirming symbols.[85] The Beatitudes are more than a list of independent virtues to be willed and aspired to; they are the outcome of the coming in of Christ, the description of the fruit of rebirth. Roberts deals with the commandments regarding anger, hatred, and lust, performance without oaths, almsgiving, and prayer ("the Christian's vital breath"). He teaches the 3 Nephi clarification that the way to cope with temptation is, like the Master, to take up our cross in the vision of righteous fulfillment. He corrects Matthew's "Lead us not into temptation," with "Suffer us not to be led into temptation," and advocates fasting as spiritual feasting and the eye-single service as transcending the "two masters."

In a related chapter he analyses the epistles of Peter on the spirit of the Christian ministry and the Christian virtues, supplementing them with Paul. The result is the familiar outline of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and patience in Peter, and Paul's masterful discourse on the crucial need of charity.[86]

Roberts saw the New Dispensation, the downward dispensing of truth, the way, and the life as the amplification,

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[84]TWL, Chapters L and LI, "The Life: The Sermon on the Mount, I and II."

[85]Not just, as much commentary suggests, instruction in a "social Gospel." (See Roberts' notes on Rausehenbusch and his allies, BHRC.)

[86]TWL, Chapters LII and LIII, "The Christian Character: The Teachings of the Apostles, I and II."

the expansion, and intensification of all former commands. He taught that the "healing power of Christ" relates to every sin and sickness of mind and heart and body.[87] He touches on the great social implications of the gospel, its provisions for the poor, its Law of Consecration and stewardship, its foundation for the kingdom that is statesmanship more than politics.[88] He says in summary:

> This dispensation is characterized by a fullness of the law of righteousness, as it is by a fullness of ordinances, of authority from God, or priesthood, of a fullness of events that will restore all things to the order that God has decreed for them, completing both the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth itself to the status of a celestial world, a habitat of immortal and glorified Intelligences.[89]

THE RESURRECTION

He concludes his book with a chapter on resurrection, teaching without qualification that Christ's resurrection "is a proto-type of the resurrection of all men, the actual, physical resurrection of the body of all men," the restoration and re-awakening of all life—all life-power—all lives. This he calls the "covenant of eternal life" made before the foundation of the world.[90]

> We shall be like Him—conformed to the divine image. That is the end, then, for the spiritually born man—he will be conformed into the image of God—conformed to the type of the Spirit-life that has taken up his abode in him. How long shall it take? Who knows? And what shall it matter? The important thing is that it shall be done. The important thing for us men is that the spirit-birth takes place; that union with God be formed; the ages may wait upon a man, longer to make Super-man; but the eternal years are his who is born of the Spirit; and again I say the important thing for us men is to have that Spirit-birth and then are we sons of God; and while it doth not appear what we shall be, for the height and glory of that is beyond our human vision, ultimately we shall be like him, and see him as he is, and be conformed to the Christ image, that is to say, to the divine nature—unless one shall sin against the Holy Ghost.[91]

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[87]These all—and more—are interrelated with the whole, healthy person who is Christ. "I am the law and the light. Look unto me . . ." (3 Nephi 15:9).

[88]TWL, Chapter LIV, "The Ethic of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times."

[89]Ibid, p. 15.

[90]See Titus 1:2.

[91]This is his final quotation in the *Seventy's Course in Theology,* 5:109.

Of B. H. Roberts' role in the New Dispensation, opposite appraisals are often urged. One, that he was an original, independent, and audacious innovator who tried everyone's patience, including those closest to him. At the other end, it is claimed that he was delimited by discipleship, so intertwined with the modern revelation of Jesus Christ that he did not create his own individuality or his own meaning. If there is perspective in either judgment, there is deeper insight in both, and they become the burden and also the glory of his life.

His teaching and writing were centered in the consuming desire to breathe all he could of the fresh air of Christ's New Dispensation. Of course, he had to measure and magnify the Master, as we all have to, through his own raw experience and his own gifts. But what he was and what he saw and felt required him to ponder and pray on a grand scale—to stretch "as high as the utmost heavens and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity."[92] In that, as no one knew better than he, he was reaching for the ever-receding whole, for what is both ancient and modern, for what is eternal. In that term "eternalism"—his own word for the uniqueness of the New Dispensation—he discovered and recovered the Temple of God, which is also the temple of man.

Called often to make war in defense of the gospel of peace he was, in the image of his Master, deprived, denied, despised, and afflicted, but likewise blessed with resilient joy and a sense of life stronger than death. In his own life Roberts was tormented actually—as Christ could only be tormented vicariously—with giant frailties, more, not less visible, because they were the frailties of a giant. Because of all that, rather than in spite of it, he made The Truth his truth. Christ became his one Way, and in the final reckoning, his one Life. And one thing will ever be said of him: He kept the Vision.

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[92]From Joseph Smith's "Epistle to the Church," written from Liberty Jail, 25 March 1839, in Smith, *Teachings*, p. 137.