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THE
Truman G. Madsen

STORY

A Life of Study and Faith

BARNARD N. MADSEN



SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

To Mom and Dad



“And he shall plant in the hearts of the children
the promises made to the fathers,
and the hearts of the children
shall turn to their fathers.”

—D&C 2:2

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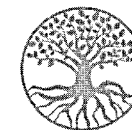
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Defender of the faith. Truman also explained how he became involved in a controversy about whether Roberts failed in his faith in the Book of Mormon near the end of his life. Some critics speculated that Truman's biography took so long to complete because it had to make it through Church "censorship" and the Book of Mormon material was removed. "This is simply not true," Truman wrote. "Since I am the only one who really knows all the facts in this matter, let me suggest that it would be unfortunate [for others] to create or perpetuate a myth. Nothing whatever was said to me 'officially' or 'unofficially' about what I included or excluded of B. H. Roberts' Book of Mormon material."²⁶

Speaking of considering sources and living witnesses, Truman further wrote of the controversy:

F. C. S. Schiller observes that there is a "curious etiquette" that prevents philosophers from asking questions of living thinkers. They wait until they are dead. The result is a spawning of hundreds of needless controversies.

Here we are sifting through the documents on B. H. Roberts' life and trying to answer the question, "What did he really think?"

But what if there were a living witness? What if there were someone who not only lived through the same period but lived next to him during the crucial Book of Mormon study years? What if the person was privileged to observe on a daily his public and private ministry? What if this person became as, apparently as few did in Roberts' lifetime, a confidant who enjoyed his complete trust; and one who encouraged him to both speak and write his concerns including his doubts and misgivings?

There was such a person. Her name was Elizabeth Schofield Hinckley.

She came to the Eastern States Mission as a "bird of paradise." Missionaries heard Roberts later say she had the most brilliant mind he had ever encountered in a woman. She became a surrogate mission president's counselor and the Relief Society president for the Eastern States. She befriended Roberts' other lady missionary who became his personal secretary, Elsie Cook. She enjoyed personal correspondence with both B. H. Roberts and Elsie up to the time of Roberts' death.

It was Elizabeth Schofield Hinckley who became one of the three anchor teachers, and with her husband, one of the stabilizing families in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for thirty years. She taught the Relief Society scripture lessons. So penetrating, articulate, and fervent was her vision of the Book of Mormon that more than one—my wife and Chase Peterson's wife included—were inclined to say of her "She does not have a testimony, she has a Robertsmony." Her own magnificent vision of the book was a direct outcome of her association with Roberts from about 1924–26, and from letters of which I have only cited select ones in my biography.

She is the one who said to me in 1954 or thereabouts, "Someone must do the life of B. H. Roberts. If you do it, it will raise our standards."

The difference between her insight and the distant analysis now going on [1985] is comparable to the day B. H. Roberts gave a conference discourse replying with circumstantial evidence to the charge of I. Woodbridge Riley that Joseph Smith was an epileptic. After presenting all the reasons it could not be, Roberts sat down and President Joseph F. Smith arose. He said, simply, in effect,

"I knew Joseph Smith. He was not an epileptic. Our closing prayer will be . . ."

That's what Betty Hinckley said to me when I raised the question shortly before her death as to whether Roberts wavered on the book in his final years. "I knew him. He did not."

Too bad we have to spend our time excavating for prehistoric materials to argue at this remove about a witnessed certainty.²⁷

After confiding in a former New England missionary, "I have become a focal point of a controversy," Truman made his own conclusion and conviction clear: "Suffice it to say that after ten years of scouring the sources I am convinced Roberts was intertwined with the Book of Mormon to his last breath and that he did not, contrary to anti-Mormon propaganda, ever 'give up' on it. His last book, which was for fifty years unpublished (*The Truth, The Way, and The Life*), refers to the Book of Mormon on almost every page. That was in manuscript form at his death in 1933."²⁸



In due time. Truman noted in 1971 that Harper & Row wanted his B. H. Roberts manuscript "before Christmas."²⁹ It was not to be. Five years later, he wrote his missionary son, "Nancy, in Washington, typed the first 300 pages of my Roberts manuscript and then caved in because of five church jobs. My new secretary, Denece, is faithfully hammering out the remainder. It does look as if, at long last, I may have a book finished. Arthur Henry King has offered to look it over and then it goes to a couple of New York publishers. Don't cross your fingers. It will have an appropriate publication in due time. That is my faith."³⁰ It took another four years before the

book was finally published by Bookcraft Publishers, having been edited by Sheri Dew.



Maybe there is hope for me. "The real inspiration about B. H. Roberts' story," one reader said, "is not the fact that he was one of the two or three premiere Church intellects in his age. It was also the fact that he suffered personally, so terribly, so well, because of his own inner demons. And yet, he endured. What's wrong with that message? It's what we're all struggling to do. It seems to me so much of what Truman has written is about that sense, that deeper sense of Christlike compassion that comes with people who suffer terribly, but who endure, who hang on."³¹

Having "lived with the man," another friend and scholar wrote, Truman was "uniquely equipped, having something of his kind of mind and his kind of background, [to present] him in a way that is fully authentic. No one else could have."³²

"Spencer Condie called me," Truman wrote a couple of years after the biography was published. "A young missionary, he called to tell me, had been struggling for some months in Italy and finally came home. Spencer sent him to the temple and told him to think things through and then asked him to read *Defender of the Faith*. 'He just left,' Condie said, 'resolved to return to



B. H. Roberts

his mission and make it work.' He said the young man reported that 'in many moments as I read this book . . . the Spirit touched my soul.' 'Bless you brother,' Condie said. 'Bless you, brother,' I replied. And bless B. H. Roberts."³³

"Over the years," Truman wrote, "I have received letters and comments on Roberts. Many, in fact, the majority, have said in substance, 'If a man with such a childhood and youth—and with such obstacles—could emerge as a contributing and powerful and loving leader, maybe there is hope for me.

"As I was writing the book that same theme sank into my heart also."³⁴

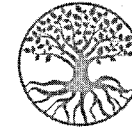


Not Brandeis, back to BYU. After the year in Wellesley Hills, Ann and Tru again considered staying in New England, this time to be affiliated with Jewish-sponsored Brandeis University. It is notable that priesthood counsel, again, persuaded Truman to return to BYU. This time, his old friend Elder Marion D. ("Duff") Hanks, who had offered a kind of dedicatory prayer at the beginning of his sabbatical, told Truman at the end of that year that it was time to come home.³⁵ Truman again obeyed.



Truman once asked Elder Hugh B. Brown, "In your experience, who was the most powerful personality in the pulpit?" Elder Brown's answer, "B. H. Roberts."³⁶ Truman shared some of that power in the pulpit, and Roberts's compassion, for some of the same reasons.

"My Brothers and Sisters"



*And that same sociality which exists among
us here will exist among us there.*

—D&C 130:2

Truman often recounted the story of Hugh B. Brown walking down 3rd Avenue in Salt Lake City one day "and seeing a man approach. He seemed to recognize him. As they drew closer the impression was stronger. And when they were side-by-side, it was, he says, 'like an electric shock.' Both walked a few steps further, stopped, turned around and stared. Then they walked on. President Brown later learned that this was Orson F. Whitney, who became a member of the Council of Twelve. 'I am as certain as I live,' he said to me, "that I had known him in the pre-mortal world."¹

Speaking at the baptism of a former minister, Truman taught:

Somewhere Parley P. Pratt says that one of the effects of the Holy Spirit is that persons who are complete strangers, on only three to five minutes of encounter, trust each other as if from a brother to a brother. Trusting holds in some ways the spirit of prophecy, for "to trust"

Sea Scrolls scholar, and, at Truman's invitation, a participant and contributor at the "Temple in Antiquity" symposium at BYU. The final paragraphs of one of Cross's letters to Truman demonstrate the sweetness of their friendship:

Tonight I finished *Defender of the Faith*. It is a magnificent biography. I am not sure one should forgive Truman for describing Roberts's boyhood as a twist on the Oliver story. The narrative moves between critical distance and penetrating appreciation which presents a man of flesh and blood who is yet a hero of his faith.

I am not sure how I should have responded to B. H. Roberts had I known him. His intensity and heroic capacity for work combined with a certain solitariness, reminds me much of my teacher [William F.] Albright [the founding father of biblical archeology]. . . .

My grandfather was Cumberland [Synod], and this is why my Alabama family were "Northern" Presbyterians. I have reason to believe, in fact, that my grandfather Cross was in attendance at Lebanon [New Hampshire] (where he attended both college and seminary) when B. H. Roberts was conducting his mission. What if he had converted my grandfather? Perhaps I should have been a BYU professor inviting T. G. Madsen of Harvard's Philosophy Department to come out to lecture at our Forum.

Betty Anne joins me in sending love to you both.

As ever,

Frank³⁸

Fellow seekers. In connection with friendships made during his Evans Chair activities, Truman wrote: "I have had an absorbing academic but also sympathetic role: to study and interrelate world religions and philosophies and to lecture

and write about them." As a result, he was "often in academic settings with students and faculties of diverse outlooks and philosophies. . . . Linguists, scientists, philosophers, and advocates of all the world religions participated [in symposia and inter-discipline exchanges]. In the spirit of fellowship they have welcomed cross-examination of their own views.

Whatever their stance on the way or ways of knowing, I take their religion to be what they live by. It is more apparent than they realize. Some do not live down to their disbeliefs. Many perform and decide and even risk everything by "yeas" and "nays" that use data they officially tone down or repudiate in the academy. Some will never give a straight answer on religious matters, but are striving sentimentalists. All live, as bookish people do, lives of quiet perspiration.

I have learned that as hopes and fears may get in the way of truth, they may also lead to it. I have no illusions about how in the very moment of calculated discounting of religious impulses some may be haunted with doubts about their doubts and become seekers. Then their inquiries may be both more objective (will this rope break?) and subjective (it is a long fall from this cliff!) than they have ever been about their professional studies or the conduct of their lives."³⁹

Roots and branches. When his two Madsen grandsons were called on missions to Germany, Axel Madsen told Truman, "We've been fighting the 'Hun' [the Germans] for three generations in this family [the Danish Madsens]. Now they are going to go preach the gospel to them?!" Axel ultimately warmed to the idea. But Truman's Evans Chair labors helped fulfill one of his father's patriarchal blessings about spreading the gospel in his homeland.

33. Sterling Van Wagenen WIT, 10 September 2008.
34. Sheri Dew WIT, 10 September 2008.

CHAPTER 25: SABBATICAL

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. TGM letter to Milo Baughman, 2 November 1969.
7. Milo Ray Baughman, Jr., Obituary, *Deseret News*, 30 July 2003.
8. Ann N. Madsen journal, 9 July 1970.
9. Ibid.
10. TGM letter to Milo and Carolyn Baughman, 3 October 1969.
11. Ibid.
12. Ann N. Madsen journal, 9 July 1970.
13. Ibid.
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15. TGM, *The Presidents of the Church* (2004), 312.
16. Ibid., 390–91.
17. Ibid., 312, 341.
18. Ann N. Madsen journal, 9 July 1970.
19. N. Eldon Tanner letter to TGM, 29 April 1970; Journal 1970.
20. TGM, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (1980), xiii.
21. B. H. Roberts, 1905 statement, as quoted in a B.H. Roberts Society flyer presenting a lecture by TGM, 21 August 1980; Journal 1980.
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23. Ibid.
24. TGM, *Defender of the Faith*, 387.
25. TGM Journal Notes, 29 August 1986.
26. TGM "rough draft" of letter to Sterling McMurrin, 18 March 1986; Journal 1986.
27. TGM, "Ian Cumming Banquet, December 5, 1985"; Journal 1985.
28. TGM letter to Elder and Sister Bird, 1997.
29. TGM interview with Clayton Carlson, 12 November 1971; Journal 1971.
30. TGM letter to Barnard N. Madsen, 26 May 1976.
31. Sterling Van Wagenen WIT, 10 September 2008.
32. TGM, "Don Norton on *Defender of the Faith*"; Journal 1984.
33. TGM Journal, 6 September 1983.

34. TGM letter to Jeannine Davis, 12 April 2004; Journal 2004.
35. TGM notes on "The Chair," 15 September 1972; Journal 1972.
36. Hugh B. Brown comment to TGM; Journal, 25 September 1971.

CHAPTER 26: "MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS"

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2. TGM remarks at the baptism of Roger Keller, Mesa, AZ, 9 June 1986; Journal 1986.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 316, 174; *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (1932–1951), 5:517.
4. William L. Fillmore letter to TGM, 13 December 1996.
5. "Truman Madsen: On His Education," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen* (2002).
6. Even though he put this in quotation marks, this is a paraphrase of Mosiah 2:17.
7. TGM journal, numbered notecards joined at top left.
8. TGM, "Speech Reading Outlines & Notes."
9. Ibid.
10. TGM, "Random Memories of Speaking Engagements from my return from the Mission Field," September 1948; Journal Harvard.
11. TGM Life Sketch.
12. TGM Journal, 1–8 February 1981.
13. TGM, "Family Meeting Agenda dated January 7, 2001, Fast Sunday."
14. Psalm 121:1.
15. TGM, "Planning Session—January 1984 book projects"; Journal 1984.
16. TGM Journal, 6 December 1981.
17. TGM letter to Barnard N. Madsen, 4 June 1974.
18. TGM letter to Ellis Craig, 16 October 1968; Journal 1968.
19. TGM Journal 1967.
20. Ibid.
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23. D&C 50:21–22.
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25. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *American Notebooks* [bookmark from the Old Mansel]; Journal 2000.
26. Dan Cogswell note to TGM, 9 August 1988; Journal 1988.
27. TGM I note (undated); Journal 1980.

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30. TGM letter to S. Richard Hazelett, 22 January 1985; Journal 1985.
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32. [Name withheld] letter to TGM, 27 February 1992; Journal 1992.
33. TGM letter to [Name withheld], 2 July 1992; Journal 1992.
34. TGM letter to [Name withheld], 7 July 1976; Journal 1976.
35. D&C 3:15.
36. "History of Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, no. 11 (1 April 1842): 749.
37. D&C 20:5.
38. Ibid.
39. See D&C 110:5.
40. See D&C 135:4.
41. TGM letter to [Name withheld], 1 May 1976; Journal 1976.
42. TGM letter to [Name withheld], 24 January 1980; Journal 1980.
43. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:108.
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CHAPTER 27: EMISSARY OF THE GOSPEL

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7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Richard L. Evans Chair press release, 7 November 1972; Journal 1972.
11. TGM WIT, 8 September 2008.
12. Ibid.
13. TGM Life Sketch.
14. TGM, Lucinda A. Barnhurst manuscript for *BYU Today*, 1 November 1981; Journal 1981.

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25. TGM on Presbyterian Convocation in Salt Lake City; Journal 1979.
26. Dallin H. Oaks letter to TGM, 4 January 2005; Journal 2005.
27. Gary McLaughlin (philosophy student at a Catholic seminary) clipping from 1962(?); "Bufs and Rebufs" from "Era of Youth," July [year?] attached to S. Suman letter to TGM, 21 January 1988.
28. The participants were Robert N. Bellah, Ernst W. Benz, James H. Charlesworth, Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier, W. D. Davies, John Dillenberger, Jane Dillenberger, David Noel Freedman, Abraham Kaplan, Jacob Milgrom, Krister Stendahl, and David Winston.
29. W. D. Davies, quoted on the front flyleaf of *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaic-Christian Parallels* (1979).
30. *Reflections on Mormonism*, ix.
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