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Moroni Addresses the Future

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Abstract: This article discusses Moroni's abridgment of the gold plates, his wanderings, his address concerning the future, the war at Cumorah, and how to gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon (Moroni 10:4).

MORONI

Addresses the Future

By LELAND H. MONSON

OF THE GENERAL BOARD, DESERET SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

PINNACLED in silent majesty, he stands aloft the highest elevation of the Salt Lake Temple. With trumpet in hand, he is announcing to the world the coming forth of a new volume of scripture confirming the divinity of Jesus Christ. He glistens in the noonday sun as he illuminates the hearts of hundreds of thousands who see in him a representation of the angelic messenger whom John the Revelator, on the Isle of Patmos, saw flying in the midst of heaven in the last days, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them who dwell upon the earth.

This angelic messenger is none other than Moroni, an ancient Nephite prophet, who had final custody of the record from which the Book of Mormon was translated. He buried the plates in Hill Cumorah about 421 A.D., and first showed them to Joseph Smith in 1823.

After the battle of Cumorah, fought in 385 A.D., in which he led ten thousand troops, he was one of twenty-four survivors, including his father, Mormon. By 400 A.D. all but him had been ferreted out by the Lamanites and killed. For at least twenty years, Moroni roamed the wilderness and the plains as the last sad remnant of a once mighty people. He was a wayfarer, living a lonesome and a forlorn life; a hunted man, for he knew that the Lamanites would kill him if they found him. The manner of his death will remain a mystery.

Subsequent to the tragedy around Cumorah, Moroni received from his father many sacred records: the brass plates, the twenty-four gold plates, the large plates of Nephi, and the plates of Mormon, including the small plates of Nephi. These records were highly prized by his father, who charged Moroni with the sacred responsibility of preserving them.

In his loneliness, Moroni studied the records. He familiarized himself with the prophecies foretelling the untimely destruction of his people and with the religious philosophy of the Nephites and the Jaredites. The twenty-four gold plates fascinated him. He read and reread this history of the Jaredites. Impressed with its message, he determined to engrave an abridgment of it on his father's record.

Before doing so, however, he wrote two chapters in his father's book, the "Book of Mormon." He recorded the death of his father, commented on the

condition of the Lamanites and the robbers, referred to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, depicted latter-day conditions, and testified concerning the divinity of Christ.

The "Book of Ether," which represents Moroni's abridgment of the twenty-four gold plates, is not an extensive treatise. Although it covers sixteen hundred years of history, it comprises only thirty-two pages of our present edition, not all of which are devoted to Jaredite history. It is a mere sketch of a great race that suffered extinction because the people built up secret combinations to get power and gain,¹ and because they refused to serve the God of this land.²

Moroni did not hesitate to present his own ideas in this abridgment. In chapter five he instructed the future translator of his writings, telling him that he should be privileged to show the plates to those who would assist in bringing forth the work, and informing him that three witnesses should be shown the plates by the power of God.

In chapter four, Moroni interpolated many verses in which he wrote that God would punish anyone who contended against the word of the Lord, developed the idea that the spirit of the Lord persuades men to do good, and appealed to the house of Israel and the Gentiles of the last days to come unto Christ.

Again, in chapter twelve, he stopped the flow of his narrative to give us an exposition on faith, point out his weakness in writing,³ recommend charity for his weakness to the Gentiles of the last days, and bid farewell to them until he should meet them before the judgment seat of Christ.

COMPLETING his abridgment of the history of the Jaredites, Moroni decided to engrave additional material on the plates of Mormon. He created a new chapter for that purpose and called it the "Book of Moroni."

There was no doubt in Moroni's mind that the plates of Mormon would come forth to another civilization. He wrote:

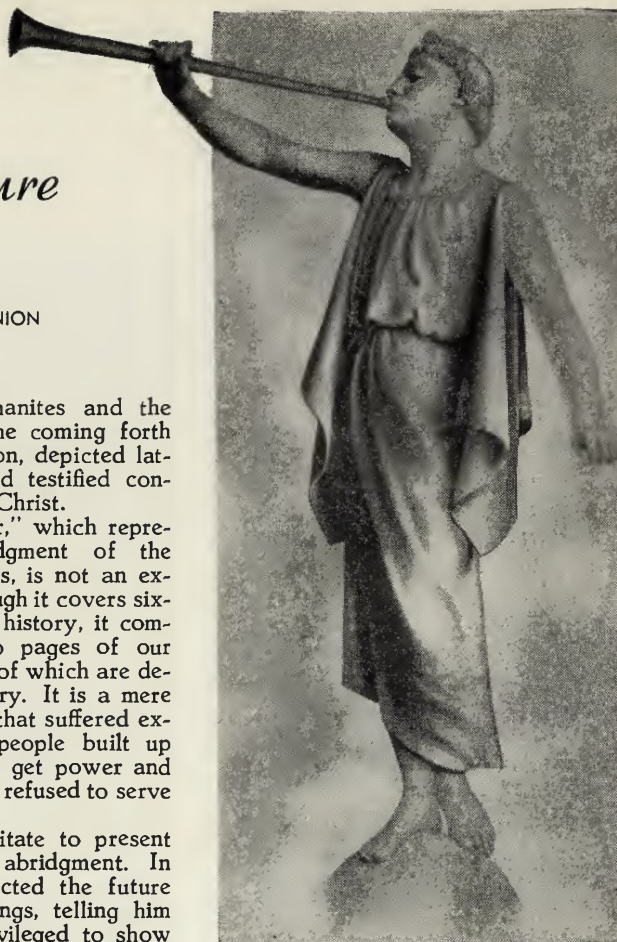
And no one need say they shall come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it. . . .⁴

¹Ether 8:18-21

²Ether 2:8

³Ether 12:24, 40

⁴Mormon 8:26



So convinced was Moroni that his record would come forth that he gave specific instructions to the future translator of the work. He even pointed out that the plates would be valueless, save only to him whom the Lord should direct to translate the record.

Moroni's selection of material for inclusion in his book was governed almost exclusively by what he felt would be most worth while to the people of the latter days. In vision he had seen that the record would come forth at a time "when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth,"⁵ when society would be honeycombed with murderers, robbers, liars, deceivers, and whoremongers. The Gentiles, he wrote, would walk in the pride of their hearts and would be subject to envyings, strifes, malice, and persecutions. They would be a people who loved fine apparel and richly adorned churches more than they loved the poor and the needy.

The Lamanites, he knew from prophecies in the record, would be a dark and a loathsome people, full of all kinds of abominations. He had seen their progenitors, his contemporaries, in action as an unbelieving, a malicious, and a bloodthirsty people. He knew that many of their descendants would tread the same path.

From many letters which his father had written him, he selected two, in

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⁵Mormon 8:31

more than four years without taking a single drink. Their membership in Alcoholics Anonymous keeps them sober. As one of them recently said to me: "One of the most effective means for staying sober myself is to help other drunks stay sober." This method of doing a job as a group, which each could not do for himself, is no doubt one of the secrets of the success of Alcoholics Anonymous in pulling men aboard the raft of sobriety. In this personal contact and relationship of men afflicted with a common ailment, courage and encouragement is given to and received from each of them; they pool their strength and go forward together.

That which medicine, hospitals, and religion have failed to do with these alcoholics as individuals has been accomplished by group effort.

* * *

It is recommended that any of our own people who are suffering from alcoholism and who need the help of other alcoholics to restore them to sobriety communicate with either of the Salt Lake groups of Alcoholics Anonymous: Group 1 at P. O. Box 1862, or Group 2 at Box 1414, Salt Lake City.

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my opinion, to record as chapters eight and nine of the "Book of Moroni," letters which he felt would be most appropriate for these latter-day Lamanites and Gentiles. The one letter condemns the practice of infant baptism; the other portrays the degenerated condition of the Nephites and Lamanites. Both letters seem well adapted to Moroni's purpose.

He also included his father's address on the subject "Faith, Hope, and Charity." Mormon told his audience that the way they could "lay hold of every good gift" was by exercising faith in Christ. Hope he considered one step in the attainment of faith. And charity he defined as "the pure love of Christ."

And then Moroni chose to give the people living in the latter days a crystal-clear explanation of the forms of important ordinances within the church. Coming to a people who had lost the true conception of the simple ordinances of the gospel, this explanation would be invaluable.

MORONI reserved his instructions on how to get a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon until the last chapter, where, so far as emphasis is concerned, it would occupy the most important place in the book. Certainly, this was wisdom on Moroni's part. He wrote:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall

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ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁶

With this significant message, Moroni closed his book, save for a brief discussion of spiritual gifts and a short farewell message.

Moroni's selection of material was discriminating. Moroni was an exponent of religious wisdom, not to the Lamanites of his day, but to the Lamanites and Gentiles of future ages.

Moroni was in a position to write as one having authority, for he had seen Jesus.⁷ He knew that Jesus Christ was the Redeemer of the world. No amount of persecution from the Lamanites could have induced him to renounce his faith. That is why his message rings with sincerity.

Happiness must have made Moroni's face beam when he finished his message to the Lamanites and Gentiles of the latter days, for he could now bury the record for which he was accountable. In my imagination, I can see him carrying his plates along a moonlit, tortuous path to Hill Cumorah, where he had been commanded to deposit them.

Realizing that he must live on without the joy of friendly, human voices, he, with heavy feet and an aching heart, would retrace his steps along the winding moonlit path. Not knowing when or where his sands of life would run out, and certainly not realizing that as a messenger from God he should one day deliver the plates of Mormon to Joseph Smith, he would prepare his mind for his glorious rendezvous with death.

⁶Moroni 10:4
⁷Ether 12:39

Legend of the Tribe of Very Much Wind

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Strongheart's answer to tribal roll call was an invitation to his wedding reception, eloquent of his latest adventure.

As for Gray Owl, he was giving valuable service as a quartermaster staff sergeant, at an army supply base, first at Honolulu, and later at Saipan.

White Eagle, a major in the army air forces, wrote from an air base in Italy. He was a weather officer for one of the fighter groups, and had been in the North African and Italian campaigns. Most characteristic of the talented boy we used to know was the rest of his letter:

In order to fill my spare time here, I have organized a glee club and some math classes. The glee club sang carols at Christmas; we have sung for church services,

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