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The Name Moroni

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Abstract: This article argues that the appellation “Moroni” shows up in Asia, the Americas, and even in Paul’s exclamation “maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22).

THE NAME MORONI

BY J. M. SJODAHL

Students of the Bible are greatly strengthened in their faith in the authenticity and particularly the historic accuracy of the sacred volume, by the fact that many proper names which appear in it are found among the people of Bible lands to this day. Some are, therefore, inclined to ask, why are not Book of Mormon names similarly found among the Indians all over America?

In answer to that question, it is necessary first to remember that the history of Bible lands has never been a completely closed book to the world, but it has been an open book from the beginning. Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan tradition has been interested in keeping the record in public view and preserving the knowledge about sacred places. But even so, the names of many ancient cities and locations are now forgotten, and in many cases, new names have been given to the old places. For instance, Jerusalem is now known among the Mohammedans as El Khudz, Jericho as Eriha, Shechem as Nablus, Hebron as El Khalil and Emmaus as El Kubeiyeh. The "Waters of Merom" has become Bahr el Huleh, and the Sea of Chinnereth, of the Old Testament, and "Gennesareth" of the New, is now Bahr Tubariyeh, and so on. Now, if we suppose there had been an interruption of history and Palestine and surrounding countries had become unknown to the world for more than a thousand years, and that then someone had found a copy of the Old and New Testament; suppose, further, that he had gone into Palestine to identify such names as those quoted above from the names known to the natives; if he had, erroneously, supposed that the names the natives used were the original, he might have concluded that the books he had found were fakes, because its proper names were all wrong. That would be a false conclusion, but it would be exactly what some Book of Mormon critics think is good logic as regards this volume. American written history was interrupted for a thousand years before the arrival of the Spaniards. The people here, during wars and strife, migrations and struggle for existence, forgot what the fathers had recorded, and new situations, new locations, different customs and moral standards necessarily demanded and received a new vocabulary, different from that known by the authors of the Book of Mormon.

But, in the second place, it is a fact that Book of Mormon names, and variations of names do occur in astonishingly large numbers, everything considered. Such names as Mormon, Moroni, Lehi, Laman, Nephi, Anti, Manti, Amalickiah, and many others do occur all over America.

Let us consider, at this time, the name *Moroni*.

In a letter from Elder J. Oscar Anderson, who is in the Philippine Islands, addressed to Elder Melvin J. Ballard, of the Council of Apostles, attention is called to an article in the February number of *Asia* in which the author mentions a river named "Moroni." This is correct. The river in question has its source in the Tumakurak range. It forms the frontier line between the French and Dutch Guiana, and after a course of about 380 miles reaches the Atlantic.

Moroni, is, as is well known, the name of the last of the Book of Mormon prophets, who finished the records of his father, Mormon, added his own abridgment of the plates of the Jaredites, and deposited the complete volume in the hill Cumorah, about 421, A. D. (Mormon 8:14; Moroni 10:2), in the same hill, where Mormon had deposited the original plates entrusted to his care, from which he had compiled his briefer history. (Mormon 6:6.)

Moroni was also the name of the great Nephite general who was the first to proclaim the American continents the *Land of Liberty*, or, as we should say, "The Land of the Free." (Alma 46:11-17.)

There was a city of Moroni on the East Sea, "on the south by the line of the possessions of the Lamanites" (Alma 50:13); and a land of Moroni, "on the borders by the sea shore." (Alma 51:22; 62:25.)

The word is Semitic. At the beginning of our era it had found its way into the Syriac spoken in Palestine, and was so generally understood that Paul used it in his first letter to the Corinthians (16:22), though that document was written in Greek, when he says: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha."

This name, Marana, or Moroni, has been preserved in the name *Maranon*, which is the name by which the mighty Amazon river is known when it first begins its course towards the ocean. (The chain of the eastern Andes is penetrated by five great rivers, which unite to form the mighty Orellana. The first is Maranon, and, being the most western and distant in its source in the Andean lake of Lauricocha, is considered to be the source of the Amazon."—Sir Clements Markham, *The Incas of Peru*, p. 193.) In the valley of the Maranon remains of cyclopean buildings have been found, proving that the region was inhabited in prehistoric times. In 1840 a remarkable sculptured stone was found there, now known as the Chavin stone, from the locality where it was discovered. It is 25 feet long by 2 feet 4 inches, and represents either some mighty ruler or some divine personage, standing under a number of rays, each ending in a serpent head, reminding one of an Egyptian pharaoh under the so-called aten rays.

Dr. Brinton gives the name of a Morona tribe of Indians among the Zaparo linguistic stock, in the upper Amazon valley. (*The American Race*, p. 282.)

The name Moroni is found even in Peruvian literature. The Peruvians had a drama, called *Apu Allantay*, composed about the year

1470, long before the arrival of the Spaniards, (the Pizarros entered Caxamarca in the year 1532) and first committed to writing in 1770. Sir Clements Markham has published an elegant translation of it. Von Tschudi, in his work on the Quichua language, gives it in full.

The first act is supposed to depict something that happened at the end of the 14th century of our era. The other two acts cover the first ten or twelve years of the 15th century. The hero is the great chief Ollanta, and the story is about his love for Cusi Coyllur, a daughter of the proud Inca Pachacutec at a time when such a venture might have cost the lives of both. The first scene of the third act of this drama is laid in a street in Cuzco called *Pampa Moroni*. (Markham, *The Incas of Peru*, p. 379. The spelling on this page is, letter for letter, as in the Book of Mormon. On page 337 the spelling is, *Maroni*. But even so, the word cannot be mistaken.)

I know not how far back this name as a street name in Cuzco goes. Montesinos (*Antiguas Historiales del Peru*, Trans. published by the Hakluyt Soc., London, 1920, p. 29.) says the fifth king, Inti Capac Yupanqui, divided Cuzco into two districts, Upper and Lower, and divided the first into streets to which he gave names. If it was this Inca who gave the street or square referred to, the name of Moroni, that name must have been so well known in Indian tradition, in the first half of the fifth century, A. D., as to suggest the propriety of naming a public place in the "holy city" of the Peruvians in his honor.

"Mormon" Missionary is Different

BY JOSEPH S. PEERY.

A tourist asked, "What is it that makes your missionaries different from any one else? I can tell a 'Mormon' missionary wherever I see him."

F. G. Eyri, who ably conducts the L. D. S. seminary work in Hinkley and Delta, answers: "Because the holy Ghost is shining out of their faces. Its effect is pure intelligence. It aids in the development of all fine attributes—love, sympathy. By it they quickly catch the truth and give the truth."

Yes, the Holy Ghost causes the distinction of this people from other people. It shines out in the faces of our enthusiastic workers and makes them doers, helpers, dispensers of joy. It is conferred upon us after baptism, and, if we live right, will be our constant companion.

It is "a lamp to our feet, a light to our path," more precious than wealth. It gives higher, greater knowledge, brings added power, leads us into all truth, and back to our heavenly Father,