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Mormon II

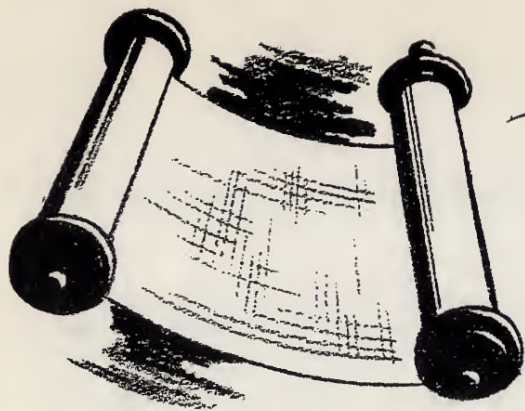
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Abstract: In this two-part series, the author writes concerning the conditions of the people and era when Mormon grew up and the manner in which Mormon's family influenced him for good. The second part discusses Mormon as a teacher and warrior.



PART II—CONCLUSION

MORMON was more than a record-keeper. He worked among a people who had departed from the ways of Christ, and he spent his life calling them to repentance. The power of the evil one was everywhere present in the land. Sorceries, witchcraft, and magic engaged the attention of the people, rather than faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of the true and living God.

So horrible was this condition to the eyes of Mormon that he said: "O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization . . . expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?" Lamenting further he continued: "Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face!"¹ In a letter to Moroni, he wrote: ". . . they thirst after blood and revenge continually."² Man's inhumanity to man had reached a low stage among the Nephites and Lamanites of the fourth century.

With a superb background, Mormon approached his task of civilizing these people. He had an abiding faith in Jesus Christ, for he had beheld the resurrected Redeemer of the world.³ He knew firsthand of Christ's goodness and mercy. Moreover, Mormon had been ministered to by the three Nephites. Communication with these Nephites and with Jesus Christ gave him a personal testimony of great strength and power.⁴

His educative background was strong, since he was well-read in the traditions of the Nephites and Lamanites, and he had traveled extensively among the people.

A comprehensive knowledge of the gospel, a firm testimony of its divinity, and a strong educative background helped him to penetrate the hardened hearts of these degraded people. But he could not stay their fall. Their sorrowing for sin was not sincere. The gospel, to them, was as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Despite this, Mormon continued to give them his constructive philosophy of life, rooted deeply in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The burden of his message concerned repentance. He taught his people that "blessings vanish when

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man from God has strayed."⁵ "The Spirit of the Lord," he wrote, "did not abide in us; therefore we had become weak like unto our brethren."⁶ Their great weakness, he felt, was that they lacked the sustaining power of faith.

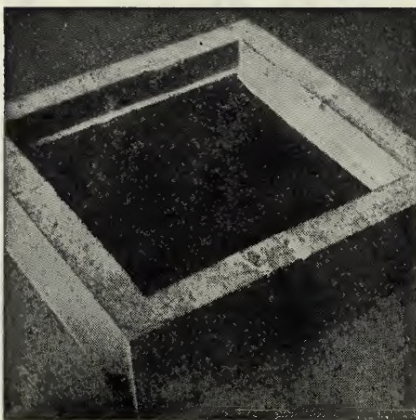
Loss of the spirit of God through wickedness deprived these Nephites, as Mormon told them, of many choice blessings. ". . . the Lord did take away his beloved disciples," he wrote, "and the work of miracles and healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people. And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief."⁷

Mormon went further than this with his philosophy. He taught that the destruction which came to the Nephites was a just retribution for their wickedness. Mormon was a believer in divine justice.

Above and beyond the philosophy that a just God is directing the affairs of this world, Mormon taught that the

⁵Brigham H. Roberts, *Improvement Era*, "Christ in the Book of Mormon," XXVII, 191
⁶Mormon 2:26
⁷*Ibid.*, 1:13:14

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supreme purpose of earth-life was to conquer the enemy of all righteousness. To do this required strict adherence to a high moral code. Violation of the law of chastity was a heinous sin to the eyes of Mormon. He considered chastity as most precious above all things.

He taught the three cardinal principles of Christianity to his people: faith, hope, and charity. By faith, he told them that they could "lay hold of every good thing."⁸ Hope, he considered a prerequisite to faith. He emphasized charity, which he defined as "the pure love of Christ."⁹ "If a man be meek and lowly of heart," he wrote, "and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing. . . ." ¹⁰ He admonished the people to cleave unto charity because it was the greatest gift of God to man.

He believed in and taught the doctrine of a personal resurrection. He castigated the doctrine of infant baptism declaring that "it is solemn mockery before God"; that "all little children are alive in Christ."¹¹ He admonished the Lamanites, the Jews, and the Gentiles of our day to repent and to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world.

In every deed he was a great teacher of righteousness. One must classify him as a moral and doctrinal preacher. He gave to his people a stimulating and powerful philosophy of life. Because of his sincerity, his knowledge, his diligence, and his application to the cause of Christ, he will long be remembered as one of the great Nephite defenders of the faith.

As a warrior, Mormon was a great leader. He was an active, virile man. When he was only sixteen he was appointed by the Nephites to be their commander-in-chief.¹² In 327 A.D., when Mormon received his appointment, the Nephites were afraid of the Lamanite armies and retreated under his leadership to the north countries. There they fortified the city of Angola, which they were soon forced to relinquish to the Lamanites. The Lamanites also drove

(Continued on page 612)

¹Moroni 9:11-15
²*Ibid.*, 9:5
³Mormon 1:15
⁴*Ibid.*, 8:11

⁸Moroni 7:21
⁹*Ibid.*, 7:47
¹⁰*Ibid.*, 7:44
¹¹*Ibid.*, 8:9, 22
¹²Mormon 2:1, 2

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MOTHER JOINS THE FORCE

(Concluded from page 611)

Mrs. Johnson explained what steps John should take next. "I guess," she said, "that you won't be selling Bibles alone now."

"I'd like to go on a real mission like your son when I learn more so I can teach. I guess I'll write to Dr. Hanson and tell him he'll have to replace me; there ought to be work around here I can do. I was raised on a farm." He fingered the brim of his hat and shuffled one shoe nervously while the woman considered the problem.

"Go down to Larsen's store. I'll phone and tell them you're coming. I think they might need someone to handle their farm machinery."

His head in the clouds, John thanked her and left. Mrs. Johnson telephoned her brother, Albert Larsen, and explained what she had done. The store could use the boy until summer anyway, he told her, if he had what it takes.

Mrs. Johnson sat down and wrote to Frank:

Dear Son:

I have just a minute. Thought I'd tell you how things are at home. We are all busy and up to our necks in little things, but we are never too busy to think of you and your work. You might even say we are on a mission with you lately. Your victory is ours, and your problems are ours. And then, there are lots of missionary jobs yet to do at home. . . .

MORMON

(Continued from page 576)

them from the land of David. Because of the Gadianon robbers and the Lamanites there was revolution in all the land. Nevertheless, Mormon gathered 42,000 soldiers together and defeated a Lamanite army of 44,000.¹⁸

At this time the Nephites partially repented of their wickedness, and Mormon rejoiced. His gladness was temporary however, for he soon discovered that the sorrow of the Nephites was not unto repentance, but rather the sorrow of the damned because the Lord would not grant them happiness in sin.

In 346 A.D., the Lamanites began making their incursions against the Nephites.¹⁴ With force and cogency, Mormon encouraged his people to fight for their wives, and their children, and their homes. The effect of his message is evidenced in the fact that with an army of 30,000, he defeated 50,000 Lamanites. With this initial success he gathered momentum enough to win a series of battles and regain the lands of their inheritance. In 350 A.D., he completed a treaty of peace with the Lamanites and the Gadianon robbers in which the Nephites were given the land northward even to the narrow passage which led into the land southward, and the Lamanites were assigned the land southward.¹⁵

Mormon used a ten-year interim of peace to prepare for another struggle.¹⁶ In 360 A.D., he received a letter from the Lamanite king stating that he was coming to battle against the Nephites. Mormon gathered his people together in the land Desolation by the narrow pass which led into the land southward. In the city of Desolation, Mormon defeated the Lamanites in 361 A.D. and drove them back into their own lands.¹⁷

The Nephites rejoiced over their victory. They became so self-opinionated that they began to boast of their strength and to swear that they would avenge

the blood of their comrades who had been slain. Mormon called them to repentance, but his call found only deaf ears.

So intense did their hatred become that they swore by the heavens and by the throne of God, "that they would go up to battle against their enemies and would cut them off from the face of the land."¹⁸

Because of their wickedness and abomination, Mormon wrote: "I, Mormon, did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people."¹⁹

For a period of twelve or fourteen years the Nephites and Lamanites struggled against each other. Under tremendous pressure the Nephites lost much territory.

Mormon, aware that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the Nephites, again accepted the position of commander-in-chief of Nephite forces. He knew however, that their cause was without hope, for he felt that God would not protect them in their wickedness. Mormon, like Carlyle, Lincoln, and Shakespeare, felt that justice for a recalcitrant nation might be delayed a day or two, but that punishment for wickedness was inevitable.²⁰

Finally, Mormon arranged with the king of the Lamanites for sufficient time to gather all his people together in the land of Cumorah. By 385 A.D., this had been accomplished, and the two armies were ready for battle. They fought with the sword, the bow and arrow, the ax, and all kinds of weapons of war.²¹ About 230,000 Nephites lost their lives in this battle of extinction. Only twenty-four Nephites survived, including Mormon and Moroni. Mormon was hunted and killed by the Lamanites between 385 A.D. and 400 A.D.²²

The evidence we have in the record would indicate that Mormon could not be classed with such a military com-

¹⁸Ibid., 2:9

¹⁴Ibid., 2:22

¹⁵Ibid., 2:29

¹⁶Ibid., 3:1-4

¹⁷Ibid., 3:7

¹⁸Ibid., 3:10

¹⁹Ibid., 3:11

²⁰Ibid., 3:12

²¹Ibid., 6:9

²²Ibid., 8:5, 6

Mormon

mander as Moroni, the great Nephite commander who fought successfully against Zerahemnah, Ammonihah, and Ammaron less than a century before the Savior visited the American continent. At least there is no record of his having used the many kinds of strategy which Moroni successfully employed. Mormon fought a losing battle which he attributed to the wickedness of the Nephites. He seems to have lacked, however, the resourcefulness of Moroni in conducting his campaigns.

Though his people went down to destruction before his eyes, Mormon was recognized by them as the greatest military commander of his time.

Mormon left an imprint on his civilization as an historian, a religious leader, and a military commander. Fifteen centuries later his influence is being felt by hundreds of thousands.

A Mormon Wife

(Continued from page 575)

had always shown, he declared both in public and private, that the Manifesto was no idle gesture on the part of the Mormon people. It was a solemn declaration to the world from which there was no retracting.

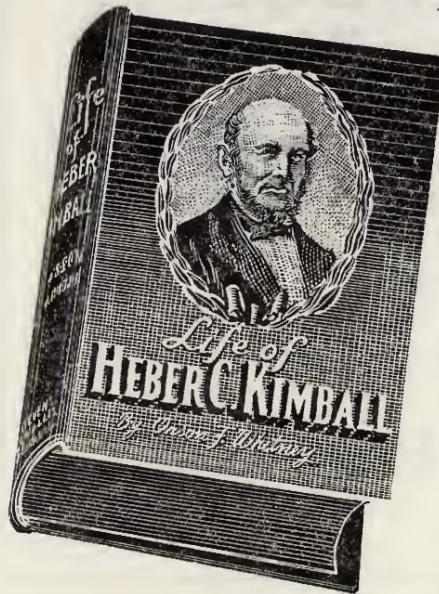
I SHALL hurry over the next two years of my mother's life which, because of my father's consideration, passed more pleasantly for her than she had imagined they would. But her course still appeared to her as an uncharted one, and life seemed meaningless. "What is the object of my life, and where lies my future destiny?" she asked herself over and over again. If only she could be needed! She did not know that the trials through which she was passing were definitely preparing her for a future sphere in which her role was to be as important as it now seemed futile.

She continued to live most of the time with her parents at Pleasant Grove, where life went on with its usual joys and sorrow. She experienced a detached feeling as though she were a lone spectator viewing a drama in which she had no part.

"Is this really my home?" she asked herself. "Are these the old familiar surroundings, or am I still in New York City viewing a play like *The Old Homestead*?" Though the drama being enacted before her eyes was of simple folk, in everyday surroundings, grim tragedy walked side by side with light-some comedy. Recording some of these contradictory events, she wrote in the spring of 1892: "The saddest thing I have to record is the death of little Rintha, one of Manie's twins. The darling babies were born only a few months ago. And the saddest part of all was that Manie's husband was away on his mission and could not get home in time for the funeral and had never

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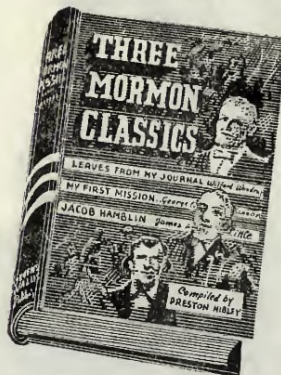
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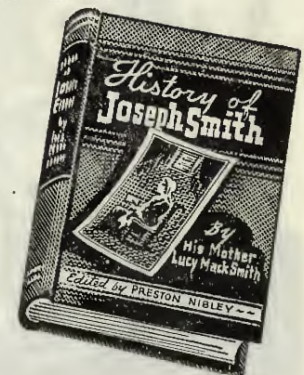
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