



Type: Magazine Article

A Nation Aroused: Alma 46

Author(s): Ivan J. Barrett

Source: *The Instructor*, Vol. 104, No. 6 (June 1969), pp. 198-199

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: Reviews the story of Captain Moroni (Alma 46) as an example of a righteous leader, student of the scriptures, man of faith, and a "champion of human liberty."



By his passionate appeal to men's duty to God, their love of liberty, and their responsibility to their families, Moroni led to victory . . .

A NATION AROUSED

*by Ivan J. Barrett**



No other character in Nephite history impressed Mormon, the abridger of the record, so profoundly as did Moroni, the young commander-in-chief of the Nephite armed forces.¹ In his "outline of Nephite history" he was so stirred with the valor, nobility, and the superb quality of leadership exhibited by this remarkable young general, patriot, and man of God, that he was to write:

. . . If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men. (Alma 48:17.)

Moroni, one of the greatest Nephite prophets and military commanders, was born in Zarahemla about the year 100 B.C. At the age of 25 he had risen to the supreme command of all the Nephite military forces. He was ingenious in military tactics and strategy. But more important, he was a righteous leader.

The Title of Liberty

After the defeat of a large Lamanite army under a Nephite dissenter named Zarahemnah, on the River

(For Course 12, lessons of June 22 and 29, "A Leader Seeks the Lord" and "A Leader Is a Champion of Liberty"; for Course 14, lesson of July 20, "By Their Fruits"; for Course 28, lesson of July 6, "Free Agency of Man"; and of general interest.)

*Ivan J. Barrett is an associate professor of Religion at Brigham Young University. Born in Mendon, Utah, he holds a B.S. degree from Utah State Agricultural College and an M.S. from BYU, where he was named Favorite Professor in 1956. He filled a mission in the Central States and later served as president of the Northwestern States Mission. He has also been active in a stake presidency and high council and in many Church auxiliaries. He is currently bishop of the BYU 54th Ward, BYU Fourth Stake. His wife is Minnie Rogers; the couple have five daughters and five grandchildren.

¹Mormon named his son, Moroni, who buried the records in the Hill Cumorah, after this earlier great Nephite leader.

Sidon, there was a short period of peace in the land of Zarahemla, which was followed by internal dissensions incited by Amalickiah, a man of "cunning devices" and of "many flattering words," whose design was to destroy the freedom of the people and establish himself as king. Moroni rose to greatness in this hour of peril. By his patriotic appeal he aroused the whole nation to action in defense of their liberty. He ripped his coat apart and on one piece he wrote in bold letters: *In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children.* (Alma 46:12.) He attached it to a pole and called it the "Title of Liberty." Dressed in full uniform, with the "Title of Liberty" in his hand, he knelt in prayer before the Lord and invoked the God of this land "for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should be a band of Christians remain to possess the land." (Alma 46:13.) After pouring out his soul in prayer to God he renamed the land of Zarahemla, "a chosen land, and the land of liberty." (Alma 46:17.)

Holding the "Title of Liberty" high above his head, he strode through the streets of the city crying for the people to rally to the standard of freedom and to covenant that day, in the strength of the Lord, that they would maintain "their rights, and their religion." (Alma 46:20.) His appeal had immediate effect upon the people; they ran to him, dressed in battle attire, rending their clothes and throwing them at the feet of noble Moroni, and asking God to rend them in the same way and throw them at the feet of their enemies should they ever fall into transgression or be errant in defending their liberties.

Stand Fast in the Faith

Being a righteous man and a student of the scriptures containing the prophecies of the prophets before him, Moroni reminded his co-patriots that they were descendants of the great Joseph, governor of Egypt; that their father Jacob had kept a remnant of the coat of his son Joseph, and that after Joseph was found alive in Egypt, Jacob had prophesied:

. . . Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God. . . . (Alma 46:24.)

After quoting the prophecy, Moroni encouraged his people to stand fast in the faith of Christ, that they might fulfill the words of their progenitor and live.

Amalickiah, learning of this tremendous awakening to the cause of liberty, faltered in his purpose;

his followers lost heart, and he decided that retreat was the better part of "valor." By Moroni's vigilance their retreat was cut off, the rebels surrendered, and Amalickiah fled to the Lamanites, as banners bearing Moroni's "Title of Liberty" floated from every tower uninterruptedly from sea to sea and from the northern to the southern borders of the chosen land.

President McKay has said:

*So fundamental in man's eternal progress is his inherent right to choose, that the Lord would defend it even at the price of war. Without freedom of thought, freedom of choice, freedom of action within lawful bounds, man cannot progress. The Lord recognized this and also the fact it would take man thousands of years to make the earth habitable for self-governing individuals. Through the ages advanced souls have yearned for a society in which liberty and justice prevailed. Men have sought for it, fought for it, have died for it. Ancient free men prized it. . . ."*²

The Faith of Moroni

Moroni was foremost of those who prized freedom. He was a righteous man, a man of God. His life we can and should emulate. Civilization and religious character go hand in hand. The Nephite record informs us that Moroni kept the commandments of God and that his people humbled themselves because of his teachings and example. It was during this time that they were free from wars and contentions and prospered abundantly. As the record notes: "There never was a happier time among

the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni." (Alma 50:23.)

What qualities of character go into making a righteous leader? The strength and growth of righteousness depend upon a consistent life, in harmony with lofty ideals. This consistency in living up to high ideals is admirably exemplified by Moroni. Physically he was a strong and mighty man. His understanding of the purpose of life and of his responsibility as a child of God to his Heavenly Father was perfect. His soul was absorbed in the liberty and freedom of his country, and his heart beat with thanksgiving to God for the bounteous blessings bestowed upon his people. Not only was he a champion of human liberty, but he was a man firm in the faith of Christ who had taken an oath to defend his people, his rights, his country, and his religion "even to the loss of his blood." (Alma 48:13.) His life was spent in doing good and serving his people. This ideal, demonstrated in loving service, "was the faith of Moroni." (Alma 48:16.)

This righteous leader lived only 43 years in mortality, but he became immortal through deeds of service and a Christlike life. His brief but valiant life recalls the words of Philip James Bailey:³

*We live in deeds, not years;
In thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on the dial.
We should count time by heart throbs.
He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest,
Acts the best.*

²David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*; an Improvement Era Publication, The Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1953; page 288.

³From "Festus: a County Town," by Philip James Bailey. Library File Reference: BOOK OF MORMON—HISTORY.

GIVE US MEN

Give us men
Strong and stalwart ones;
Men whom highest hope inspires
Men whom purest honor fires.
Men who trample Self beneath them,
Men who made their country wreath them
As her noble sons,
Men who never shame their mothers,
Men who never fail their brothers,
True, however false are others:
Give us men—I say again—
Give us Men!

Give us Men!
Men who, when the tempest gathers,
Grasp the standards of their fathers
In the thickest fight:
Men who strike for home and altar,
(Let the coward cringe and falter)
God defend the right:
True as truth though lorn and lonely
Tender, as the brave are only:
Men who tread where saints have trod,
Men for Country—Home—and God:
Give us Men: I say again—again—
Give us such Men!

—Bishop Exeter.