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# I Saw Another Angel Fly

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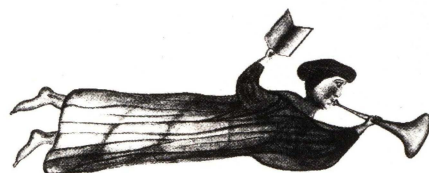
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# "I Saw Another Angel Fly"

By J. Michael Hunter



For many Latter-day Saints, the statues of the angel Moroni atop our temples symbolize the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days. They represent the angel in John's vision in the New Testament: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 14:6).

It is appropriate that Moroni would embody that heraldic figure—for it was he who directed the

Prophet Joseph Smith to the golden plates of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

Of the 70 temples operating as of February 2000, 55 are adorned with statues of the angel Moroni.<sup>1</sup> The following is a brief history of the use of these statues. (In addition to these temple statues, another important angel Moroni statue graces the top of the Hill Cumorah in New York; see inside back cover of this issue.)

## 1. THE NAUVOO TEMPLE ANGEL, BY UNKNOWN CRAFTSMAN (ABOVE AND LEFT)

The Nauvoo Temple, dedicated in 1846, was the first Latter-day Saint temple to be topped by a "gilded angel." When Colonel Thomas L. Kane, a friend and advocate of the Church, visited the Nauvoo Temple site in 1846, he observed the Saints who stayed behind to finish the temple after the rest of the Saints had fled west to escape persecution: "They had completed even the

gilding of the angel and trumpet on the summit of its lofty spire," he said.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. THE SALT LAKE TEMPLE ANGEL, BY CYRUS DALLIN (RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT)

The Salt Lake Temple, dedicated in 1893, was the first temple topped with an angel formally identified as Moroni. When Church President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) asked non-LDS artist Cyrus Dallin to create a statue, Dallin declined. Knowing that Dallin's parents had once been active Latter-day Saints, President Woodruff encouraged him to consult with his mother.

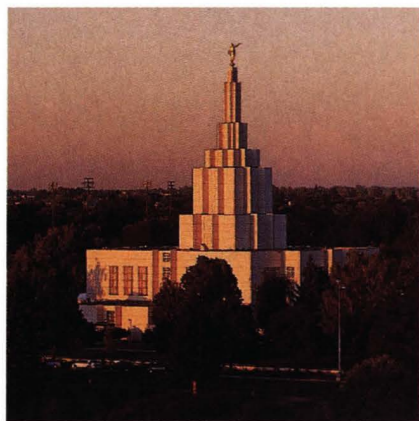
Dallin's mother felt he should accept the commission. When he said he did not believe in angels, his mother asked, "Why do you say that? . . . You call me your 'angel mother.'"<sup>3</sup> She encouraged him to study Latter-day Saint scriptures for inspiration, which he did. His design was a dignified, neoclassical angel in robe and cap, standing upright with

Cyrus Dallin was born in Springville, Utah, on 22 November 1861. His family had joined the Church in England and immigrated to Utah in 1851. Once there, however, Dallin's parents joined the Presbyterian Church. As a child, Cyrus loved sketching and modeling with clay. Eventually he studied art in Boston, Massachusetts. "I considered that my 'Angel Moroni' brought me nearer to God than anything I ever did," he said. "It seemed to me that I came to know what it means to commune with angels from heaven."<sup>4</sup>

LEFT: NAUVOO TEMPLE, BY C. C. A. CHRISTENSEN; RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH OF SALT LAKE TEMPLE BY CRAIG DIMOND; FAR RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH BY ELDON K. UNSCHOTEN







PHOTOGRAPH OF IDAHO FALLS IDAHO TEMPLE  
BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN

a trumpet in hand. The original one-meter plaster model was completed by 4 October 1891, and a full-size model was sent to Salem, Ohio, where the statue was hammered out of copper and covered with 22-karat gold leaf. The 3.8-meter statue stands on a stone ball on the 64-meter central spire on the east side.

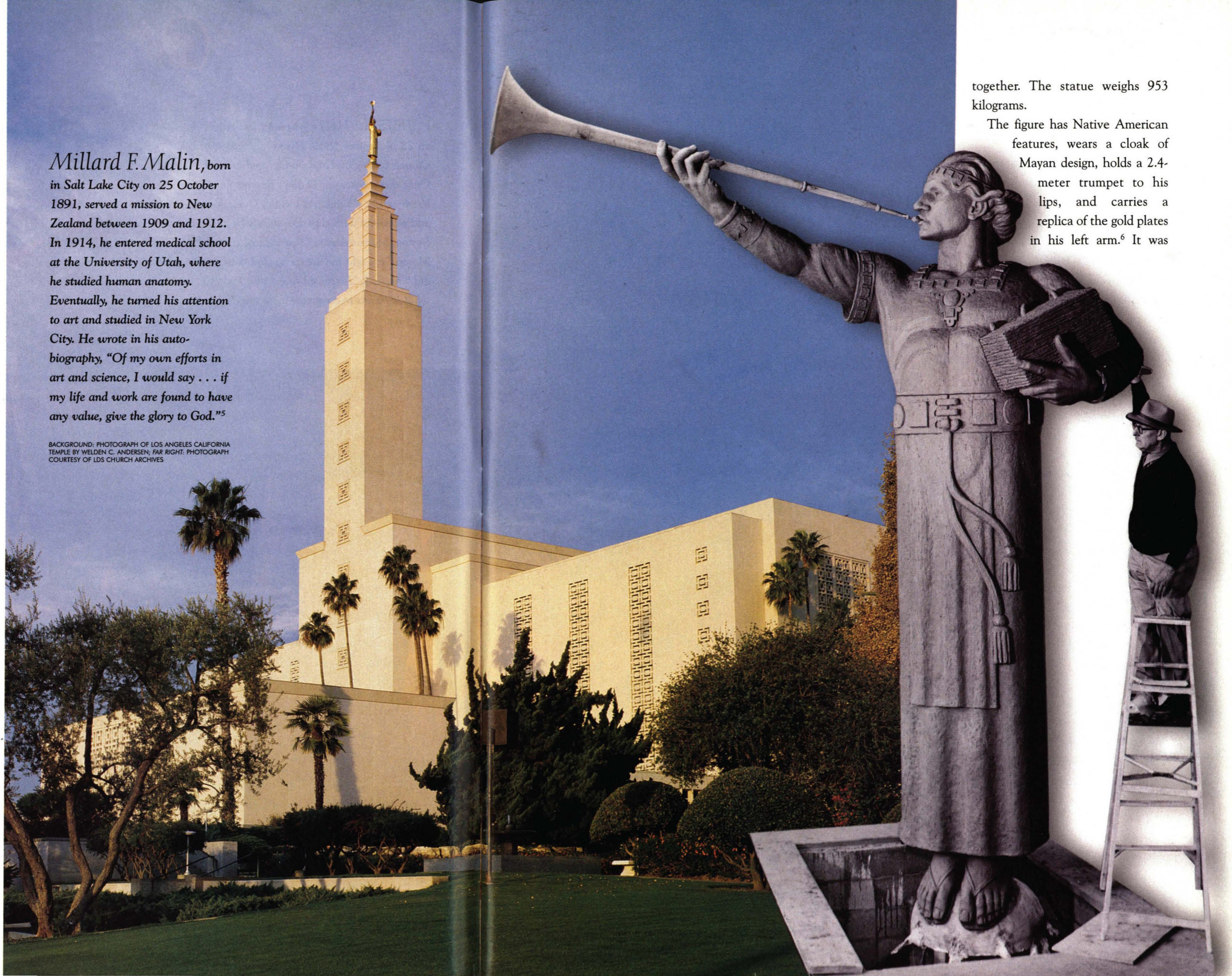
Replicas of the statue, fashioned in the 1930s by Torlief Knaphus and later cast by LaVar Wallgren, can be found on the Atlanta Georgia Temple and the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple (above).

**3. THE LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA TEMPLE ANGEL, BY MILLARD F. MALIN (RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT)**

The Los Angeles California Temple, dedicated in 1956, was the second temple to have an angel Moroni statue. Millard F. Malin made the plaster casts of his 4.7-meter statue in Salt Lake City. These casts were sent in five pieces to New York City, where they were cast in aluminum and welded

*Millard F. Malin, born in Salt Lake City on 25 October 1891, served a mission to New Zealand between 1909 and 1912. In 1914, he entered medical school at the University of Utah, where he studied human anatomy. Eventually, he turned his attention to art and studied in New York City. He wrote in his autobiography, "Of my own efforts in art and science, I would say . . . if my life and work are found to have any value, give the glory to God."*<sup>5</sup>

BACKGROUND: PHOTOGRAPH OF LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA TEMPLE BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN; FAR RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LDS CHURCH ARCHIVES



together. The statue weighs 953 kilograms.

The figure has Native American features, wears a cloak of Mayan design, holds a 2.4-meter trumpet to his lips, and carries a replica of the gold plates in his left arm.<sup>6</sup> It was



placed on the 81-meter tower of the Los Angeles California Temple on 10 October 1953.

**4. THE WASHINGTON D.C. TEMPLE  
ANGEL, BY AVARD FAIRBANKS  
(RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT)**

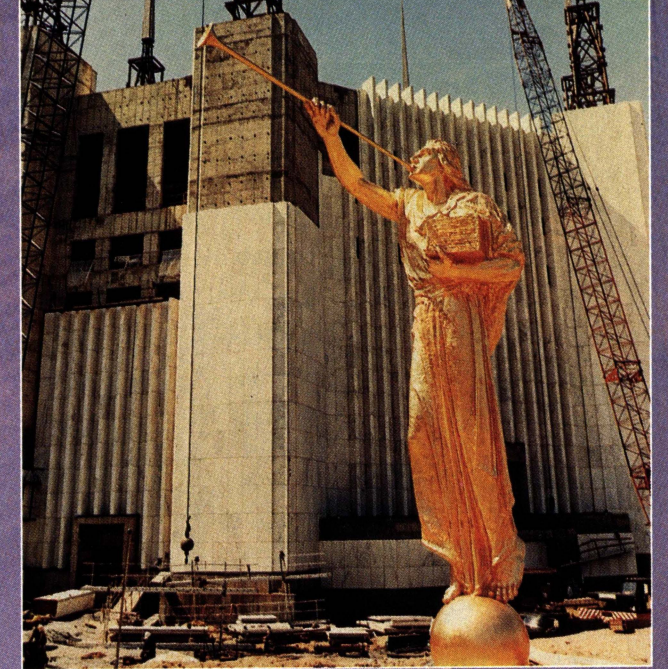
The third temple to be topped with an angel Moroni statue was the Washington D.C. Temple, dedicated in 1974. Avard Fairbanks sculpted a graceful angel holding a trumpet to his lips and a replica of the gold plates in his left arm. Brother Fairbanks's one-meter model was taken to Italy, enlarged, cast in bronze, and covered with gold leaf.

When the clay enlargement was finished, Brother Fairbanks invited the temple architects to Italy to see it. One of the architects, Keith W. Wilcox (who later became a member of the Seventy), mentioned that the angel looked as though he were drinking from the horn rather than blowing it. Brother Wilcox demonstrated how a trombone player "buzzes" with his or her lips to make a tone. With Brother Wilcox posing, Brother Fairbanks changed the angel's mouth.<sup>7</sup>

The finished 5.5-meter statue weighs approximately two tonnes and now stands 88 meters above ground on the temple's highest spire. The Seattle Washington Temple, Jordan River Utah Temple, and

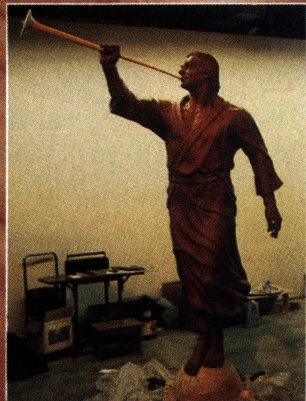
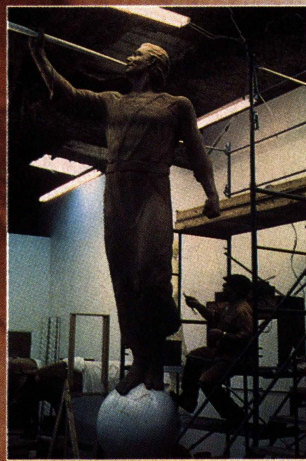


*Avard Fairbanks was born into a family of artists in Provo, Utah, on 2 March 1897. As a boy of 12, Avard sculpted a model of his pet rabbit for the state fair and won first prize. When the judge discovered it was the work of a child and refused to award the prize, young Avard resolved to become an accomplished sculptor to prove his work. Of his work on the angel Moroni statue, he said: "I wanted the statue to conform to the spirit and architecture of the temple, that of aspiring upward. I wanted the feeling of that upward reach accomplished by the stress of vertical lines."<sup>8</sup>*



BACKGROUND: PHOTOGRAPH © 1994 MARK EDWARD ATKINSON; ABOVE: PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAM FERBER





ABOVE: PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF KARL A. QUILTER; BACKGROUND: PHOTOGRAPH OF ST. LOUIS MISSOURI TEMPLE BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN

*Karl A. Quilter, born in Castle Gate, Utah, on 27 April 1929, studied sculpture under Avarð*

*Fairbanks at the University of Utah. Between 1949 and 1951, he served in the Northern States Mission. He recalled: "I remember a classmate asking, 'What do you really want to do after graduation?' I said, 'I would be more honored than anything if I could sculpt an angel Moroni for the temple.'"*

*LaVar Wallgren, born on 13 August 1932 in Midvale, Utah, is a highly skilled craftsman who specializes in the casting of fiberglass. He has cast most of the Karl Quilter angel Moroni statues in his Kearns, Utah, studio.*

México City D.F. México Temple each have 4.6-meter bronze castings of this statue.

**5. ANGEL MORONI STATUES, BY KARL A. QUILTER (LEFT AND TOP INSET)**

In 1978 the Church commissioned Karl A. Quilter to fashion a new angel Moroni statue. With LaVar Wallgren, he developed a process of casting fiberglass that made it possible to create lightweight statues less expensively.

Brother Quilter and Brother Wallgren constructed two original molds, one for a 3-meter statue and the other for a 2.13-meter statue. Each mold can be used for casting 100 statues. The resulting statues weigh about 159 kilograms and have been placed on many temples.

**6. ANGEL MORONI STATUES FOR SMALL TEMPLES, BY KARL A. QUILTER (FAR LEFT AND BOTTOM INSET)**

In 1998 the Church again commissioned Karl A. Quilter to design an angel Moroni statue—this one for use on the smaller temples. It is 2.08 meters in height and covered with gold leaf. The angel is similar to the other Quilter statues, but it has a more massive build, it is turned

slightly to show action, and the left hand is more relaxed. The new design is based on a 60-centimeter fiberglass statue Brother Quilter designed as a memento for those of his grandchildren who read the standard works within one year. □

**NOTES**

1. Occasionally building codes, possible cultural misconceptions, or architectural designs preclude the use of an angel Moroni statue. The following 15 temples do not have a statue: St. George Utah, Logan Utah, Manti Utah, Laie Hawaii, Cardston Alberta, Mesa Arizona, Bern Switzerland, Hamilton New Zealand, London England, Oakland California, Ogden Utah, Provo Utah, São Paulo Brazil, Tokyo Japan, and Freiberg Germany.

2. Thomas L. Kane, *The Mormons. A Discourse Delivered Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, 26 March 1850 (1850), 20.

3. Quoted in Rell G. Francis, *Cyrus E. Dallin: Let Justice Be Done* (1976), 66.

4. Levi Edgar Young, "The Angel Moroni and Cyrus Dallin," *Improvement Era*, April 1953, 234.

5. Millard F. Malin autobiographical sketch, 1966, Historical Department, Archives Division of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

6. Edward O. Anderson, "The Los Angeles Temple," *Improvement Era*, November 1955, 804, 806.

7. Keith W. Wilcox, *A Personal Testimony Concerning the Washington Temple*, 5th printing (1995), 31.

8. "Angel Moroni Statue Chosen for Temple," *Church News*, 10 July 1971, 5.

9. "Karl Quilter: Glory Be!" *Salt Lake City*, November/December 1996, 28.