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Title Moroni the Lonely: The Story of the Writing of the Title Page to the Book of Mormon

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Abstract Moroni wandered alone for sixteen years before adding to the abridged record of his father. When he did make his additions, he also wrote the title page of the Book of Mormon, but in two stages, each stage necessitating a return to the Hill Cumorah. The second paragraph clearly follows his decision to abridge the book of Ether.

Moroni the Lonely

The Story of the Writing of the Title Page to the Book of Mormon

Abstract: Moroni wandered alone for sixteen years before adding to the abridged record of his father. When he did make his additions, he also wrote the title page of the Book of Mormon, but in two stages, each stage necessitating a return to the Hill Cumorah. The second paragraph clearly follows his decision to abridge the book of Ether.

A dramatic but tragic story lies behind the writing of the title page to the Book of Mormon which has apparently been missed by most of our people. Before the last great battle ensued between the Nephite and Lamanite armies at Cumorah in the year A.D. 385, Mormon entrusted the plates containing his abridgment of the plates of Nephi to his son, Moroni (Mormon 6:6). Nevertheless, after the battle—in which he was wounded—Mormon again obtained the plates and added some final words found in Mormon 6–7. All of the other records of his people he had previously hid up in the Hill Cumorah (Mormon 6:6).

It seems almost incredible, but the apparent fact remains that Moroni wandered alone over the face of this land for *sixteen years*

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(Mormon 8:6; cf. Mormon 6:5)¹ before adding anything to the abridged record as commanded by his father. Let the plates tell their own story:

Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father.

And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed.

And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not.

Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not.

Behold, my father hath made this record and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not.

Behold, four hundred years have passed away since the coming of our Lord and Savior. (Mormon 8:1-6)

What was Moroni doing those sixteen years alone? Where did he go? What adventures befell him in enemy country? These and a host of other questions we may ask ourselves, but all to no avail. The record is silent. But what would we not give for a day-by-day account from the pen of Moroni himself! At any rate, it was probably the memory of his father's command that led him to retrace his steps to Cumorah, there to write a "few things" and "hide up the records in the earth" (Mormon 8:1, 4). And "few

¹ From the date of the last great battle until A.D. 401, when Moroni began to write, there elapsed a total of sixteen years.

things" he did write at that time, for as we read along to Mormon 8:12-13, he suddenly breaks off his account by recording:

Behold, I am Moroni; and were it possible, I would make all things known unto you.

Behold, I make an end of speaking concerning this people. I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi.

In my opinion this statement was Moroni's original farewell.² A careful study of what precedes and what follows these words must lead one to realize the possibility of this being so. Mormon 8:13 is a logical point for a chapter division.

It is quite likely that at this point Moroni wrote the first paragraph (as we now have it) of the title page of the Book of Mormon:

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

He did not write the second paragraph of the title page at this time for the very good and sufficient reason that he had not yet abridged the book of Ether which is mentioned therein.

Having finished the first paragraph of the title page, it is not unreasonable to presume that Moroni hid up the plates entrusted to him in the side of the Hill Cumorah, in the stone box built for the purpose. He then departed, feeling that his work was finished,

² Note the similar farewells of Amaleki (Omni 1:30) and Zeniff (Mosiah 10:22) in relation to making "an end of speaking." The formality of Moroni's farewell is especially noticeable.

his father's commands having been carried out. How long Moroni wandered over the face of the land—whether to be reckoned in years, months, or days—we do not know. But sometime between the years A.D. 401 and 421, he again saw fit to come back to the Hill Cumorah (Mormon 8:6; cf. Moroni 10:1). Taking up the sacred record from its resting place in the stone box, he began to write at the point he had formally left off.

And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord.

Thus begins Mormon 8:14. It is quite natural for Moroni to identify himself again though we already know (Mormon 8:4) that he was going to hide up the record. He writes steadily and in a somewhat different mood from what we have already observed in Mormon 8:1–13. Thus he continues until he finishes the book that is now known to us as Mormon. He ends it prayerfully and formally:

And may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. (Mormon 9:37)

There may be those who will prefer to believe that this is the point at which Moroni wrote the first paragraph of the title page, rather than at Mormon 8:13 as I have advocated. But no matter—Moroni finds that he still has space left on the plates upon which he may write something of value. He ponders the matter and finally decides on making an abridgment of the book of Ether for the benefit of future generations.

And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether. (Ether 1:2)

If we take this statement literally, that is, if Moroni determined to get at the gold originals rather than use Mosiah's translation (Mosiah 28:17) of them (a copy of which could have been in his possession), it would be necessary for him to tunnel into the library of records hidden in the Hill Cumorah by his father. How

Moroni accomplished this without being detected by the Lamanites must of course be left to our imaginations.

Having finished his task of abridgment (if he had used the original "twenty and four plates" he would first have had the great task of translating them by means of the Urim and Thummim), Moroni then proceeded to add another paragraph to his title page. This was a logical necessity. Thus we read:

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Having done this Moroni makes a statement that is throbbing with human interest and pathos:

Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me. (Moroni 1:1)

There is a note of grim humor in the statement, "I have not as yet perished." So he continued to write, we may presume, at various times and occasions as he felt inspired to return to the hill. It is passing strange that he did not add a third paragraph to the title page of the Book of Mormon after finishing the final statements found in Moroni 10. By the time that chapter was written, Moroni had wandered alone some *thirty-six years* (from A.D. 385 to 421). And therein lies an epic for some clever novelist or dramatist to exploit.