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Mormon, the Man and the Message

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Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

When the angel Moroni delivered the gold plates to Joseph Smith in 1827, he fulfilled biblical prophecy (see Rev 14:6; Isa 29:11–12). The young prophet translated the unsealed portion of those plates and published that translation to the world for the first time in March 1830 as the Book of Mormon. This book contains an abridgment of the sacred records and writings of several groups of Israelites living in the Western Hemisphere. Mormon was not only the abridger of the plates, but he was a Nephite record-keeper, a general, an apostle and prophet, a father, and he may have also been a prophetic type.

Mormon as Record Keeper and Abridger

Mormon lived at the close of Nephite history (AD 310–385). The Book of Mormon bears his name because he was the major abridger—the writer of the gold plates. Although his principal effort in preparing the plates was as abridger, he also wrote the Words of Mormon, abridged the first seven chapters of his own record, the book of Mormon in the Book of Mormon, and occasionally interpolated comments into the text he was abridging.

The Words of Mormon is a short section placed between the book of Omni and the book of Mosiah. While working on his abridgment of the large plates of Nephi, Mormon discovered the small plates of Nephi, a prophetic personal second record the Lord commanded Nephi to keep (see W of M 1:3; 2 Nephi 5:30–32). Profoundly

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impressed by the messianic prophecies in the small plates of Nephi and also directed by the Spirit, Mormon attached them in their entirety to his own abridgment (see W of M 1:4–6). Of course, the Lord knew already that Joseph Smith would need this record to replace the loss of the 116 manuscript pages, but Mormon did not know it, and explained, “And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will” (v 7). The Words of Mormon connect the small plates to the narrative of the large plates.

Our next opportunity to examine Mormon’s own writings is his abridgment of his own record that he had engraved on the large plates. He calls this abridgment the book of Mormon (see Mormon 2:18; 5:9). It is a remarkable document as it chronicles in a precise and engaging way the disintegration and final demise of Nephite civilization. Mormon’s son, Moroni, lived to complete the record after his father had been killed after the great last Nephite battle. In that record, called the book of Moroni, Moroni brought together loosely related but important items, including one of Mormon’s sermons (Moroni 7), and two of his letters (Moroni 8–9). In addition to these larger examples of Mormon’s own writing, we have significant evidence of his masterful ability of editing sacred writings as he intrudes into the text to include interpretive commentary throughout the compilation.¹ The discovery of Mormon’s usage of several apparently ancient editorial mechanisms demonstrates the magnitude of his work as a Nephite record-keeper and editor. Current academic requirements of source identification and footnoting were of course unknown in the ancient world. Nevertheless, an examination of the editorial devices used by Mormon shows his sincere concern for credibility and editorial honesty, and a sense of humility while undertaking the prophetic task of preparing another witness of Jesus Christ. Mormon continually attempts to present his message in a way that he as messenger does not get in the way. In this way Mormon stands apart from many other ancient editors and historians.

¹ I am indebted to several individuals for some of the insights provided in this paper; see E. Douglas Clark and Robert S. Clark, *Fathers and Sons in the Book of Mormon*; Jeffery R. Holland, “Mormon: The Man and the Book”; and Thomas W. Mackay, “Mormon’s Philosophy of History: Helaman 12 in the Perspective of Mormon’s Editing Procedure.”

Mormon used a range of introductory and inserted notations to guide his readers: such as the names of authors for records, speeches, and epistles that are quoted or abridged—imbedded source indicators; genealogical or other authenticating information about the authors; and brief or extended summaries of contents, including subheadings for complex inserts or documents. Mormon's contribution as editor lies in the fact that he assiduously presents source documents and texts while retaining a unity of narrative flow in his historical account. Thus, even while abridging a record, Mormon would paraphrase or summarize and then return to a first-person quotation. The resultant text is clearly the product of an excellent ancient historian concerned with naming and adhering to his sources while presenting an edited account that exhibits a spiritually motivated understanding of history and purpose.

Mormon's motive for writing and editing the Nephite record seems clear. He regularly sought to draw spiritual lessons from the course of Nephite history. This was remarkable, as he often was forced to draw these lessons from works of darkness from his people's past, and, more difficult still, from his own time.

Mormon often added his own explanatory comment to the narrative. In some of these interpolations he identified himself (see *W of M*; 3 *Nephi* 5:8–26; 26:6–12; 28:24; 4 *Nephi* 1:23), but more often he used signals such as “thus we see,” and “behold,” and “I will show you” in an attempt to stress matters of particular spiritual importance to his readers (see *Alma* 24:19, 27; 50:19–23; *Hel* 3:27–30; 12:1–2).

Mormon the Man

While the focus of the Book of Mormon is not on the man Mormon, the abridgment he compiled does allow us to learn much about him and his times. Certainly he was an unpretentious man and, in many cases, too modest and concise (scarcely twelve printed pages of text deal directly with his own life). His son, Moroni, may have known how unassertive his father was, but wanted the modern reader to know him and to share some of his memories and the heritage his father had left him through two of Mormon's letters and one of his sermons, which reveal his father's doctrinal strength and devotion to God and to his people (see *Moroni* 7–9).

What little information we do have about the man Mormon is impressive, however. He tells us he was a pure descendant of Lehi through Nephi (see 3 Nephi 5:20; Mormon 1:5). He was named after his father, who was named after the land of Mormon (Mormon 1:5; 3 Nephi 5:12). Joseph Smith indicated that Mormon means “more good” (*History of the Church* 5:400; hereafter *HC*). Mormon was recognized by his predecessor Ammaron as being “a sober child” and one “quick to observe” (Mormon 1:2). As a young boy only ten years of age, Mormon received a charge from Ammaron that some 14 years later he should “go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim” and there obtain the ancient and faithfully recorded history of his people (v 3). He loyally fulfilled Ammaron’s charge.

Under the guidance of his father, young Mormon moved to the land of Zarahemla when he was 11 years of age and continued to prepare for his prophetic role. But these were difficult times among the Nephites. After more than two centuries of righteousness and peace introduced on the Western Hemisphere by the Savior himself, the Nephite civilization had now greatly declined. Wickedness continued unchecked upon the whole of the land until even the disciples of Jesus stopped communing with the Nephites. This loss included the curtailment of the gifts of the Spirit among the people. Mormon added, “There were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief” (Mormon 1:13–14).

In spite of the wicked state of affairs among the Nephites, Mormon was able to maintain his beliefs and stand on holy ground—apart from those depraved souls. As a teenager, he was “visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” (Mormon 1:15). Still in his teens, he tried valiantly to preach the gospel of repentance to the Nephites in an effort to turn them from wickedness: “And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but I was forbidden; for behold they had willfully rebelled against their God” (v 16).

Mormon as General

All Mormon tells us about his call to be the commanding general of the Nephite armies is that it came “in my sixteenth year,” and that, like his ancestor Nephi, he was “large in stature” (Mormon 2:1). After saying only this much, Mormon moves to comment on their wars with

the Lamanites, noting that despite a devastating war, internal corruption, and wide acts of savagery, robbery, and evil among the people, the Nephites were unwilling to change their course. To be sure, there was despair at home and abroad, and great sorrow among them. However, Mormon reminded the modern reader,

Their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. . . . The day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually. (Mormon 2:13–15)

Destruction became so enormous and extensive that the bodies of the dead were “heaped up as dung upon the face of the land” (Mormon 2:15). In the midst of this kind of public and personal destruction, Mormon made his way to the hill Shim and obtained the plates of Nephi as he fulfilled Ammaron’s commandment (see v 17).

Nephite history in the fourth century AD was, by any and all standards, a distasteful story to tell. Mormon did not tell everything in his abridgment, however. “And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man” (Mormon 2:18). Yet, Mormon’s task of telling part of the Nephite story was necessary, no matter how distasteful.

As the Nephite general, Mormon tried to maintain what military defense he could. Even as he recorded the inevitable demise of his people, he urged the Nephites to “stand boldly” and defend “their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes” (Mormon 2:23). Although there was an occasional temporary gain, Mormon faced the most hopeless of all military tasks—fighting when “the strength of the Lord was not with us.” He recorded in his history, “Yea, we were left to ourselves, that the Spirit of the Lord did not abide in us; therefore we had become weak like unto our brethren” (v 26).

Yet, in the eleventh and twelfth year of his leadership, Mormon accomplished what must have seemed impossible—two stunning

victories against the larger and stronger Lamanite armies (see Mormon 2:9–26). But when his people “began to boast in their own strength,” and vow vengeance on their enemies, Mormon threw down his weapons of war and “did utterly refuse from this time to be a commander and a leader” (3:9, 11). Though he “had loved them” (v 12), he refused to lead their military forces and, by the Lord’s command, waited “as an idle witness” for total destruction (see v 16).

Yet at such moments of despair and frustration, Mormon’s compassion and charity manifested themselves. He could not abandon his own people. Notwithstanding their ugly wickedness, he once more stood as their general in defense of their very lives, and this in spite of the fact that he knew their ultimate destiny was total annihilation (Mormon 5:1–2). Mormon recorded:

It is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write a perfect description of the horrible scene of the blood and carnage which was among the people, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites; and every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually. And there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel, according to the words of the Lord, as was among this people. (Mormon 4:11–12)

Despite such depraved conditions, Mormon’s indomitable spirit prevailed. He wrote in a letter to Moroni, “And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently . . . for we have a labor to perform” (Moroni 9:6).

Gradually, inevitably, inexorably, the Nephites lost more men, women, children, property, and possessions to the increasingly powerful Lamanites. They “began to be swept off by them even as a dew before the sun,” Mormon noted (Mormon 4:18). And yet Mormon achieved a few victories and temporarily held out against all odds, but the Lamanites moved against him and his people in such force that “they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet” (5:6). Aware of what the eventual outcome of the conflict would be, Mormon requested that the Lamanite leaders let him gather his people and armies in the land of Cumorah to wage one “last struggle” (6:2–6). Here at Cumorah Mormon hid the plates of the Nephites, except the brief, abridged record that he gave to his son, Moroni, and then went to battle. Mormon watched as his army of over 230,000 people was reduced to fewer than 25. Looking over that carnage, he cried in agony:

O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you! . . . O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye fair ones, how is it that ye could have fallen! But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return. (Mormon 6:17, 19–20)

Mormon as Apostle and Prophet

As Mormon arrived at the age of spiritual, physical, and emotional maturity, he embarked upon his sacred errand for his people and for us of abridging their sacred plates. From our perspective today, Mormon's calling as record keeper and abridger was very important. Yet in his own day, he was first and foremost an apostle and prophet among his people. We recognize Mormon as a prophet, but rarely do we say much about his calling as a disciple of Jesus, that is, as an apostle of Jesus.

While abridging the record of the period just before Jesus' appearance to the Nephite nation, Mormon stated:

And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression. And behold, *I am a disciple of Jesus Christ*, the Son of God. *I have been called of him to declare his word among his people*, that they might have everlasting life. (3 Nephi 5:10–13; emphasis added)

What a disciple of Jesus Christ is and what Mormon may have meant by the phrase is revealed a few chapters later. Following the resurrected Savior's appearance among the people, Mormon noted that 12 men were "called," given "power and authority," and instructed (see 3 Nephi 12). They were known as "disciples," a New Testament term used to describe Jesus' followers and also, on occasion, the Twelve Apostles. Mormon notes that he was *called* to declare Christ's word. An apostle is a special witness of Jesus Christ (D&C 107:23).

The Prophet Joseph Smith expanded the meaning of the Book of Mormon term "disciple" when he wrote about their church organization: "They had *Apostles*, Prophets, . . . the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessings, as were enjoyed on the eastern continent" (HC 4:537; emphasis added). It seems apparent that Joseph Smith believed that the 12 disciples chosen by the resurrected Jesus were

apostles. Parley P. Pratt also noted in *The Key to the Science of Theology*, “On the Western Hemisphere, the apostleship, oracles, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit, ceased from among the people in the fourth century.” Later on he said, “Translated men, like Enoch, Elijah, John the Apostle, and three of the *Apostles of the Western Hemisphere*, are in these respects like the angels” (74, 112; emphasis added).

If the same organization operated among the Nephite Church as in the New Testament Church, then we can presume that succession in priesthood office also occurred. This could explain how Mormon could be an apostle hundreds of years following the advent of the Savior among the Nephites. There are other statements in the Book of Mormon itself that tend to support this interpretation. When the original apostles save the three who should tarry reached the age of 72 and had gone to the paradise of God, “there were other disciples ordained in their stead” (4 Nephi 1:14). In the book of Moroni, there are several short chapters which outline policies and procedures for the Church. He preserved for us the words Jesus spoke to the Nephite disciples when he ordained them:

The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them. And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, *for thus do mine apostles*. (Moroni 2:1–2; emphasis added)

Because it appears that Christ makes a parallel between the disciples and the apostles, it therefore seems reasonable to assume that Mormon was not simply a disciple in the classical sense (a follower of a great teacher), but was an apostle and prophet of the Lord among the Nephites.

Viewing Mormon from this new perspective enhances our perception of his prophetic role among the people. Paul himself said that God placed apostles first in the Church, then prophets (see 1 Cor 12:28). As an apostolic witness of the Lord and one sent by the Lord, Mormon added his witness of the Savior in the Book of Mormon. As already noted, he declared: “And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” (Mormon 1:15). It is

obvious that Mormon stands as one who knew the Lord and testified of his reality.

Later, Mormon's son wrote, "And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen" (Ether 12:41). It is natural to think of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles at this point, but Moroni was probably painting a larger picture. While it includes biblical prophets and apostles, it also seems to include the Book of Mormon prophets and apostles, of whom Mormon was one.

The writings to which Moroni referred included the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. In this case, Mormon stands as one of the few apostles who left a written record of Jesus. And when we compare his writings to other apostles' work, he stands out by the amount of material he wrote. Unlike the New Testament disciples, most of Mormon's efforts are directed to the modern reader.

Actually, Mormon had two audiences in mind when he wrote. While it is certain that all scripture was applicable to his current setting, Mormon focused on our day. For certain, he was concerned with those among whom he lived, patiently pleading with them to repent and return to God. Yet, he also spoke to unborn generations. As he concludes his editing of 3 Nephi, he adds an exhortation to the modern reader. In it he sounds like an ancient Israelite prophet: "Hearken, O ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, which he hath commanded me that I should speak concerning you, for, behold he commandeth me that I should write, saying: Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings" (3 Nephi 30:1–2).

As we have shown, Mormon, as the Lord's apostle and prophet, called his people to repentance, but it was his son who preserved some of his apostolic teachings. Mormon's sermon in Moroni chapter 7 focuses on the principles of faith, hope, and charity and includes teachings on how to distinguish between good and evil, the necessity of spiritual gifts, the nature of miracles, and instruction on how to obtain charity, "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47).

In two frank and straightforward letters to his son (Moroni chapters 8–9), Mormon, with authority from God, first condemns infant baptism as "solemn mockery before God" (8:9, 16). He

instructed his son that children are made pure through the atonement of Christ and do not need the cleansing power of baptism until they are old enough to be accountable for their own actions and are capable of repenting of their own sins. Second, he describes the level of depravity to which the Nephites and Lamanites had fallen, offering reasons for their prophesied destruction—“they are without principle, and past feeling” (Moroni 9:20). He concluded this letter by charging his son to remain faithful to Christ in spite of society’s wickedness.

Mormon stands as a bridge between the modern reader and those ancient people. He was a special witness or an apostle and prophet to both as evidenced above.

Mormon as Father

In the midst of devastation and depravity, a loving and intimate portrait of a father and son is revealed in the books of Mormon and Moroni. The glaring contrast between the world in which Mormon and Moroni lived and their own lives and relationship with each other is a fitting end to the Book of Mormon. Of course, it was in the end a team effort that allowed the modern reader to have the sacred record at all. The pattern set by Lehi and Nephi at the beginning of the record is followed and repeated at the end of the book by a righteous son following his father. Mormon and Moroni’s love, respect and tenderness towards each other is made all the more poignant by the fact that they lived in such a brutal and wicked society.

The legacy of this father-and-son relationship is shown by a careful reading of the closing pages of the sacred record they were so instrumental in preserving and preparing to come forth in our day. Upon careful examination of Moroni’s introduction to his own writing found in Mormon 8, we discover a son longing for his father. It should be noted that Moroni was himself already a capable leader, having led an army of 10,000 men into battle. We later learn that he had also already had a ministry in the Church. Moroni was well-seasoned by the time his father died. As one of the last survivors of the Nephite civilization, Moroni took up his father’s record. In summarizing for the modern reader the events that had overtaken his people, he revealed his deep sense of loss for his father and his acute loneliness. In Mormon 8 he tells us twice that his father had been killed and adds additional insights to his relationship with him:

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*. (Mormon 8:1–3; emphasis added)

Mormon and Moroni's combined efforts in preserving and preparing the record for us are no better evidenced than in the Jaredite record. In abridging the entire span of Nephite history up through his own day, Mormon promises that an account of the earlier inhabitants would be "written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account" (Mosiah 28:19). Mormon's death prevented him from fulfilling this promise, but his son faithfully filled in for him and abridged the book of Ether.

Moroni seems to exhibit a deep sense of love and admiration for his father. The inclusion of two letters and a sermon by his father in his own record shows this respect and admiration. He is also fiercely loyal to the charge his father gave him concerning the record, as already noted.

Moroni was also an articulate writer. It is obvious from Ether 12 that he could compose doctrinal discourses, yet, surprisingly, he quotes his father in Moroni 7. I believe Moroni could have written Moroni 7 himself, but chose not to. This is not to say that Moroni was not a great doctrinal writer like his father, it is only to say that he recognized his father's significant contributions.

All in all, the letters provide more evidence of a powerful parental bond between father and son as Mormon honors his son by addressing him, "my beloved son" (see Moroni 8:1, 9). In this letter, Mormon addresses Moroni six times as "my son" (see vv 6, 24, 27–30).

In a second letter, Mormon again addresses Moroni as "my beloved son" three times (Moroni 9:1, 6, 11). In this last letter, he encourages his son to "be faithful in Christ, and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever"

(Moroni 9:25). Mormon's teachings and example inspired his son to be faithful to the end.

Mormon as Prophetic Type

If Mormon was a type, then his life and mission may have represented other prophets' lives and missions, including the life of Jesus Christ. While translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith must have been impressed with the life and mission of Nephi and of Mormon. He may have felt an immediate affinity between himself and these two historical personalities, as he would have had with other Book of Mormon prophets. But these two men seem to have had particular experiences that relate to Joseph Smith.

Both Nephi and Mormon led similar lives. Possibly even Mormon was aware of this pattern and similarity. Both Mormon and Nephi were young when they were visited by the Lord. Both young men were large in stature. Each was entrusted with sacred plates. Each was called by the Lord to be the spiritual and temporal leader of their people. Each wrote important doctrinal and historical pieces themselves and each bore witness of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Young Joseph Smith may have seen this common thread within their lives; a thread he could see being woven into his own life's fabric. We may never know what lessons Joseph was discovering about his own prophetic career while learning about Nephi and Mormon as he worked on the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Both Mormon and Joseph were named after their fathers. Both had a vision of the Lord as teenagers. Both Mormon and Joseph Smith rejected the wickedness of their day. As young men, both Joseph and Mormon were chosen to receive the ancient plates of the Nephites. Both of them wrote of their struggles in proclaiming the word during their ministry among the people. Both were apostles and prophets of the Lord. Whatever parallels the Prophet Joseph noticed during the translation period may have been heightened as the Prophet matured at the close of his ministry in Nauvoo, where he became the temporal leader of the people when he was elected city mayor. He had already been nominated and commissioned a general in the Nauvoo Legion by the Illinois state governor earlier. Like Nephi and Mormon before, Joseph was the spiritual and temporal leader of the people.

The way Joseph Smith's life may have been patterned after Mormon's is seen in one final detail. Dramatically, Joseph's life paralleled Mormon's life even in death. Both died for their religion and in defense of their people's rights; one while imprisoned and the other on the battlefield, yet both as martyrs. This approach doesn't assume, of course, that the younger was a carbon copy of the older man: Mormon had the best education his culture could furnish, whereas Joseph Smith was raised in frontier poverty without training beyond basic skills. But in spite of that personal difference, there are dramatic common denominators. It matters little that one spoke English and the other the language of the Nephites, provided they both spoke as inspired by the Holy Ghost. Ultimately, we can not be sure that these parallels have any significance. We have no evidence to suggest that Joseph Smith noticed them. If these parallels were not coincidental, however, then Mormon's influence may be more significant for Joseph Smith than has otherwise been noted before.²

Conclusion

In reference to the record that Mormon helped to produce, Joseph Smith stated in Nauvoo, "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*HC* 4:461). Who can estimate Mormon's contribution to the salvation of the modern world? As an apostle of the Lord, Mormon is capable of putting the Savior's ministry among the Nephites in proper perspective. He has an intimacy with the resurrected Lord that few have experienced. He stands as a witness of Jesus and therefore is an example of discipleship in the truest sense.

² One secular historian has suggested that some of the stories and personalities found in the Book of Mormon reflected Joseph's own life (see Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*). Joseph, according to this Freudian interpretation, simply projected his own life and experiences into the lives of certain Book of Mormon characters, including Mormon. While Brodie identified a few parallels between Joseph and Mormon, others exist as indicated above. This secular interpretation does not adequately explain all the parallels. How would Joseph Smith know in 1829 (when the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed) that he would become the political and military leader of a people (mayor of Nauvoo and Nauvoo Legion general) as Mormon? How could he know that he would die for his beliefs and in defense of the rights of his people as Mormon? If parallels exist, then all of them must be considered.

As a father, Mormon's efforts are reflected in the life of his son, Moroni—a son whose ultimate mission was seen by John the Revelator. In a most cruel and hostile world filled with all manner of evil and destruction, Mormon and Moroni weld a living and tender link with the teachings of Christ's pure gospel. As a possible prophetic type, Mormon's life may well have brought understanding to Joseph Smith. Mormon's own experiences may have cast a long shadow into the future—the life of Joseph Smith.

As a record keeper, both as Nephite historian and abridger, Mormon's impact may never really be known. The Book of Mormon is a complex record, astutely edited by Mormon. He did not of course have the use of such modern inventions as footnotes, tables of contents, indices, or hypertext links to help the readers. The brilliance and precision of his mind led him to utilize an extensive system of internal source references, while the magnitude of his vision is evident in the scope and composition of the Book of Mormon as a whole. Doctrine and Covenants section 20 states the following regarding this sacred document:

[It] contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also . . . proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true . . . and those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life. (D&C 20:9, 11, 14)

Thus the Book of Mormon stands as a witness to Mormon's prophetic call to complete the record for us today. It stands on its own—an ancient record for a modern world, a record that can bring us closer to God than any other book. Through its pages we meet the man Mormon, whom the Lord chose to create the “marvelous work and wonder.” By reading it, we can learn the message he preserved for us today.

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