

# Alma 43–52: Captain Moroni

Monte F. Shelley

## Quotes

- When looking for a home in California, if you find a fault, don't dwell on it.
- Any marriage, if you concentrate on the negative, has grounds for divorce. [Spencer W. Kimball]
- When legislators decide what is bought and sold, the first things to be bought and sold are legislators.
- Some days it feels like life is one great big party... and I'm the piñata.
- A ship in the harbor is safe... but that's not what ships were made for.

## 1. Lucky "Guesses"

- <sup>24</sup> Jacob, before his death, ... saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said—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, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment. (46:24)
- <sup>40</sup> There were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent in the land—but not so much so with fevers, because of the *excellent qualities of the many plants and roots* which God had prepared to *remove the cause of diseases*, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate— (46:40)
- <sup>4</sup> The Lamanites could not cast their stones and their arrows at them. ... <sup>19</sup> The Nephites ... [defended] the fort ... by casting over stones and arrows at them. ... <sup>22</sup> The stones and arrows which were thrown at them. (49:4, 19, 22)

## 2. Why did Mormon include so many war details?

## 3. Relevance of Book of Mormon

**Gordon B. Hinckley:** The Book of Mormon narrative is a chronicle of nations long since gone. But in its descriptions of the problems of today's society, it is as current as the morning newspaper and much more definitive, inspired, and inspiring concerning the solutions of those problems.

I know of no other writing which sets forth with such clarity the tragic consequences to societies that follow courses contrary to the commandments of God. Its pages trace the stories of two distinct civilizations that flourished on the Western Hemisphere. Each began as a small nation, its people walking in the fear of the Lord. But with prosperity came growing evils. The people succumbed to the wiles of ambitious and scheming leaders who oppressed them with burdensome taxes, who lulled them with hollow promises, who countenanced and even encouraged loose and lascivious living. These evil schemers led the people into terrible wars that resulted in the death of millions and the final and total extinction of two great civilizations in two different eras. ("A Testimony Vibrant and True," Ensign, Aug. 2005, 3)

## 4. Who were the "enemies"?

**Tribes of "Lehi":** descendants of Laman, Lemuel, Nephi, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, Zoram, Ishmael, Mulek

## Dissenters:

- Leaders: Zarahemnah (43–44), Amalickiah (46–51), Ammoron (52–58), kingmen in Zarahemla (51, 59–62)
- People: Lamanites, Amulonites, Amalickites, priests-of-Noah-ites, Nehorites (21:4), Zoramites, (dissenters)

<sup>13</sup> The Lamanites ... were a compound of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, and all those who had dissented from the Nephites, who were Amalekites and Zoramites, and the descendants of the priests of Noah. <sup>14</sup> Now those descendants <sup>OM dissenters</sup> were as numerous, nearly, as were the Nephites; and thus the Nephites were *obliged to contend* with their brethren, even unto bloodshed. (43:13–14)

<sup>30</sup> Thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things. (24:30)

**Alma's prophecy to Helaman:** (45:10–14) AD 400, Nephites will be destroyed because of wickedness. Those who remain "shall be numbered among the Lamanites, and shall become like unto them."

## 5. When is war justified?

<sup>46</sup> They were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God; for the Lord had said ...: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies. <sup>47</sup> And ...: Ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed. Therefore for this cause were the Nephites contending with the Lamanites, to defend themselves, and their families, and their lands, their country, and their rights, and their religion. (43:46–47)

<sup>14</sup> The Nephites were taught to defend themselves against their enemies, even to the shedding of blood if ... necessary; yea, and they were also taught never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives. (48:14)

**David O. McKay:** There are ... two conditions which may justify a truly Christian man to enter—mind you, I say *enter*, *not begin*—a war: (1) An attempt to dominate and to deprive another of his free agency, and, (2) Loyalty to his country. Possibly there is a third, [namely], Defense of a weak nation that is being unjustly crushed by a strong, ruthless one (Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 72).

## 6. Path to power (control or command over others, taxes)

**"Buy" votes:** (natural man: fame, gain, power, lusts of flesh)

## Deception:

## Stir up to anger and hatred:

<sup>6</sup> Zarahemnah appointed *chief captains* over the Lamanites, and they were all *Amalekites and Zoramites*. <sup>7</sup> Now this he did that he might *preserve their hatred* towards the Nephites, that he might bring them <sup>Lamanites</sup> into subjection to the accomplishment of his designs. <sup>8</sup> For behold, his designs were to *stir up the Lamanites to anger against the Nephites*; this he did that he might *usurp great power over them* <sup>Lamanites</sup>, and also that he might *gain power over the Nephites* by bringing them into bondage. (43:6–8)

- Purpose:
- Leaders:
- Methods:

"These revolutionists are using a technique that is as old as the human race,—a fervid but false solicitude for the unfortunate over whom they thus gain mastery, and then enslave them. They suit their approaches to the particular group they seek to deceive." (First presidency, Apr. 1942, after Pearl Harbor)

## 7. A “heart of war” or a “heart of peace”?

### a. Preparation:

- Enemies: stir up to anger and hatred
- Moroni (25): prepared people to be faithful, and to defend life, liberty and property

<sup>9</sup> The design of the Nephites was to support their *lands*, [<sup>26</sup> *country*.] ... *houses*, ... wives, and ... children, that they might preserve them from the hands of their enemies; and also that they might preserve their *rights* and their privileges, yea, and also their *liberty*, that they might worship God according to their desires. (43:9, 26)

<sup>4</sup> Never will the Lord suffer that we shall be destroyed except we should fall into *transgression* and deny our faith. (44:4)

**Title of Liberty:** <sup>20</sup> Whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and ... religion, that the Lord God may bless them.

<sup>21</sup> And ... the people came ... with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that ... if they should transgress the commandments of God, ... and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments. (46:20–21)

### b. Purpose:

- Enemies: attack, conquer, plunder.  
<sup>29</sup> Their intention to *destroy* their brethren, or to *subject* them and bring them into *bondage* that they might establish a *kingdom unto themselves* over all the land. (43:29)
- Moroni: defend the life, liberty, and property of his people

### c. Methods:

- Enemies: blood thirsty (drink blood), killed unarmed, copied Nephite methods, e.g., “armor,” get guards drunk.
- Moroni: (not blood thirsty) fight, strategy, not hate, gave back sword

<sup>21</sup> They were *compelled reluctantly to contend* with their brethren, the Lamanites. ... <sup>23</sup> Now, they were *sorry to take up arms* against the Lamanites, because they *did not delight in the shedding of blood*; yea, ... they were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren ... into an eternal world, unprepared to meet their God. (48:21, 23)

<sup>54</sup> Moroni, when he saw their terror, commanded his men that they should stop shedding their blood. (43:54)

<sup>6</sup> We will spare your lives, if ye will go your way and come not again to war against us. (44:6)

### d. Conditions for peace:

- Enemies: submit to our rule, join our “religion”
- Moroni: (1) oath of peace and leave, (2) die, (3) prisoner

### e. Behavior after victory:

- Lamanites: boast, get drunk, plunder, ...
- Nephites: <sup>1</sup> The people of Nephi ... rejoiced, because the Lord had again delivered them out of the hands of their enemies; therefore they gave thanks unto the Lord their God; yea, and they did fast much and pray much, and they did worship God with exceedingly great joy. (45:1)

### f. Concern for his people

- Amalickiah “did care not for the blood of his people.”
- Moroni “did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people” and tried to free POWs (48:12).

## g. Treatment of traitors:

- Lamanites killed their traitors
- <sup>34</sup> Moroni ... was appointed by the chief judges and the voice of the people, therefore he had power <sup>OM to do</sup> according to his will with the armies of the Nephites, to establish and to exercise authority over them. <sup>35</sup> ... The Amalickiahites that would not enter into a covenant to support the cause of freedom, that they might maintain a free government, he caused to be put to death; and there were but few who denied the covenant of freedom. (46:34+)
- <sup>36</sup> Thus were the people of Morianton brought back. And upon their covenanting to keep the peace they were restored to the land of Morianton. (50:36)
- <sup>13</sup> The king-men ... were glad ...; and they refused to take up arms. ... Moroni commanded that his army should go against those king-men, to pull down their pride and their nobility and level them with the earth, or they should take up arms and support the cause of liberty. (51:13)

## 8. War tactics

### Nephites tactics for defense

<sup>15</sup> If they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger; <sup>16</sup> And also, that God would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies, and ... the Lord would deliver them; and this was the faith of Moroni, and his heart did glory in it; not in the shedding of blood but in doing good, in preserving his people, yea, in keeping the commandments of God, yea, and resisting iniquity. (48:15–16)

- Armor:
- Weapons: swords, cimeters
- Asked prophet Alma were to go to defend
- Spies (43:30)
- Defense: forts, heaps of earth, towers,

<sup>1</sup> Moroni did not stop making preparations for war, or to defend his people (50:1)

### Lamanites

- Apostate leaders: Satan uses dissenters to lead attack.
- Seek and attack weakest areas first.
- Copy Nephite tactics: armor, get guards drunk.

## 9. Causes of War

### • Nephite pride and wickedness (covenant breaking)

<sup>23</sup> There arose a dissension among them, and they would not give heed to the words of Helaman ...; <sup>24</sup> But they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceedingly great riches; therefore they ... would not give heed to their words, to walk uprightly before God. (45:23–24)

<sup>8</sup> Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord ...; yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one. <sup>9</sup> Yea, and we also see the great wickedness one very wicked man [Amalickiah] can cause to take place among the children of men. (46:8–9)

<sup>21</sup> And we see that these promises have been verified to the people of Nephi; for it has been their quarrelings and their contentions, yea, their murderings, and their plunderings, their idolatry, their whoredoms, and their abominations, which were among themselves, which brought upon them their wars and their destructions. (50:21)

- Lamanite leaders were power-hungry and hated Nephites

## 10. Men of God

<sup>11</sup> Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery; <sup>12</sup> Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people. <sup>13</sup> Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood. ... <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Behold, he was a man like unto Ammon, ... and also Alma and his sons, for they were all men of God. <sup>19</sup> Now ... Helaman and his brethren [Corianton (49:30)] were no less serviceable unto the people than was Moroni ... <sup>20</sup> The people did humble themselves because of their words, insomuch that they were highly favored of the Lord, and thus they were free from wars and contentions among themselves, yea, even for the space of four years. (48:11–20)

In times of war or peace, Captain Moroni had a “heart at peace,” but Amalikhiah had a “heart at war.” During the crusades about AD 1100, a Muslim leader called Saladin had a heart at peace like Captain Moroni. It is interesting to see how such men treated their enemies while seeking peace. If we follow their examples, we can have peace instead of conflict in our daily lives. “Not all weapons are aimed at the flesh. ... Home and workplace casualties are everywhere. Bitterness, envy, indifference, resentment—these are hallmarks of the hot and cold wars that fester in the hearts of family members, neighbors, colleagues, and former friends the world over. If we can’t find the way to peace in these relationships, what hope have we for finding it between nations at war?” (The Arbing Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict*, xviii)

## 11. Our Responsibility

In the war between good and evil, we are invited to “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11). Satan and his servants seek to destroy us spiritually. “Not only do these [war] chapters give us insights to prepare us for life’s never-ending spiritual battles, but they also warn us to beware of the stratagems of the adversary, whose ultimate goal is to bring us into bondage and destruction” (John Bytheway, *Righteous Warriors*, Introduction).

“The Lord has not left us defenseless against Satan’s powerful forces. Nevertheless, we must search out and obey the counsel he has given us. As Moroni wrote to Pahoran, ‘Do ye suppose that the Lord will still deliver us, while we sit upon our thrones and do not make use of the means which the Lord has provided for us?’ (Alma 60:21)” (Kathleen S. McConkie, “Defending against Evil,” *Ensign*, Jan 1992, 19)

## 12. Questions

- Could a 23 year old man have written the Book of Mormon?
- How do these things apply to me now in my circumstances?
- Are these things true? (read, remember, ponder, ask sincerely)
- As I read these chapters, how do I feel?
- Do they invite and entice me to love God, believe in Christ, and do good?

## Quotes from Prophets on War

**Spencer W. Kimball:** “We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel-ships, planes, missiles, fortifications-and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan’s counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior’s teaching:

‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.’ (Matt. 5:44-45.)

“We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas—or he will fight our battles for us.... What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.” (“The False Gods We Worship,” *Ensign*, Jun 1976, 3)

**David O. McKay:** (talk given in the first conference after Pearl Harbor was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941)

“War is basically selfish. Its roots feed in the soil of envy, hatred, desire for domination. Its fruit, therefore, is always bitter. They who cultivate and propagate it spread death and destruction, and are enemies of the human race.

War originates in the hearts of men who seek to despoil, to conquer, or to destroy other individuals or groups of individuals. Self exaltation is a motivating factor; force, the means of attainment. War is rebellious action against moral order. ...

War impels you to hate your enemies. The Prince of Peace says, Love your enemies. War says, Curse them that curse you. The Prince of Peace says, Pray for them that curse you. War says, Injure and kill them that hate you. The Risen Lord says, Do good to them that hate you.

Thus we see that war is incompatible with Christ’s teachings. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of peace. War is its antithesis, and produces hate. It is vain to attempt to reconcile war with true Christianity. ...

Notwithstanding all this, ... there are ... two conditions which may justify a truly Christian man to enter—mind you, I say *enter*, *not begin*—a war: (1) An attempt to dominate and to deprive another of his free agency, and, (2) Loyalty to his country. Possibly there is a third, [namely], Defense of a weak nation that is being unjustly crushed by a strong, ruthless one.

Many of you before entering upon your military duties were authorized messengers of peace. Others of you also hold the Priesthood. To all we say, in your personal habits let the same ideals guide you as soldiers in the army as they guided you as missionaries. ... Keep yourselves morally clean. Being soldiers or sailors is not justification for indulgence in vulgarity, intemperance, or immorality. Others may be impelled to do these things because of the beastliness of war, but you who hold the Priesthood cannot so indulge with impunity. For your own sweet lives, and for others who trust you, keep yourselves unpolluted. Your loved ones believe in you, your comrades will respect you your officers will admire you.” (Conference Report, Apr. 1942)

**First Presidency, Apr. 1942:** “We again warn our people in America of the constantly increasing threat against our inspired Constitution and our free institutions set up under it. The same political tenets and philosophies that have brought war and terror in other parts of the world are at work amongst us in America. The proponents thereof are seeking to undermine our own form of government and to set up instead one of the forms of dictatorships now flourishing in other lands. These revolutionists are using a technique that is as old as the human race,—a fervid but false solicitude for the unfortunate over whom they thus gain mastery, and then enslave them.

They suit their approaches to the particular group they seek to deceive. Among the Latter-day Saints they speak of their philosophy and their plans under it, as an ushering in of the United Order. Communism and all other similar isms bear no relationship whatever to the United Order. They are merely the clumsy counterfeits which Satan always devises of the gospel plan. Communism debases the individual and makes him the enslaved tool of the state to whom he must look for sustenance and religion; the United Order exalts the individual, leaves him his property, “according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs,” (D&C 51:3) and provides a system by which he helps care for his less fortunate brethren; the United Order leaves every man free to choose his own religion as his conscience directs. Communism destroys man’s God-given free agency: the United Order glorifies it. Latter-day Saints cannot be true to their faith and lend aid, encouragement, or sympathy to any of these false philosophies. They will prove snares to their feet.

**First Presidency, Oct. 1942:** “Infidelity, atheism, unchastity, intemperance, civil corruption, greed, avarice, ambition—personal, political, national—are more powerful today than at any other time in the lives of us now living. They are pulling and thrusting us almost at will into new fields of action, new lines of thought. They are shaking the faith, undermining the morals, polluting the lives of the people. They have thrown many so far off balance in all of their activities, economic, social, political, and religious, that they stand in real danger of falling. Satan is making war against all the wisdom that has come to men through their ages of experience. *He is seeking to overturn and destroy the very foundations upon which society, government, and religion rest. He aims to have men adopt theories and practices which he induced their forefathers, over the ages, to adopt and try, only to be discarded by them when found unsound, impractical, and ruinous. He plans to destroy liberty and freedom—economic, political, and religious, and to set up in place thereof the greatest, most widespread, and most complete tyranny that has ever oppressed men. He is working under such perfect disguise that many do not recognize either him or his methods.* There is no crime he would not commit, no debauchery he would not set up, no plague he would not send, no heart he would not break, no life he would not take, no soul he would not destroy. He comes as a thief in the night; he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Without their knowing it, the people are being urged down paths that lead only to destruction. Satan never before had so firm a grip on this generation as he has now.

In the midst of this welter of lying and deception, of woe and misery, of death and destruction, of violent disorder and threatening chaos, the only saving forces on earth are the eternal principles of the everlasting gospel of Christ and the rights and powers of the Priesthood of Almighty God.

**Gordon B. Hinckley, “War and Peace,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 78**

We have no quarrel with the Muslim people or with those of any other faith. We recognize and teach that all the people of the earth are of the family of God. And as He is our Father, so are we brothers and sisters with family obligations one to another.

But as citizens we are all under the direction of our respective national leaders. ... “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” (A of F 1:12).

But modern revelation states that we are to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16).

In a democracy we can renounce war and proclaim peace. There is opportunity for dissent. Many have been speaking out and doing so emphatically. That is their privilege. That is their right, so long as they do so legally.

However, we all must also be mindful of another overriding responsibility. ... It is clear from these and other writings that there are times and circumstances when nations are justified, in fact have an obligation, to fight for family, for liberty, and against tyranny, threat, and oppression.

When all is said and done, we of this Church are people of peace. We are followers of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Prince of Peace. ... This places us in the position of those who long for peace, who teach peace, who work for peace, but who also are citizens of nations and are subject to the laws of our governments. Furthermore, we are a freedom-loving people, committed to the defense of liberty wherever it is in jeopardy. I believe that God will not hold men and women in uniform responsible as agents of their government in carrying forward that which they are legally obligated to do. It may even be that He will hold us responsible if we try to impede or hedge up the way of those who are involved in a contest with forces of evil and repression.

Now, there is much that we can and must do in these perilous times. We can give our opinions on the merits of the situation as we see it, but ... *political differences never justify hatred or ill will. I hope that the Lord’s people may be at peace one with another during times of trouble, regardless of what loyalties they may have to different governments or parties.*

Let us pray for those who are called upon to bear arms by their respective governments and plead for the protection of heaven upon them that they may return to their loved ones in safety. ...

We call upon the Lord, whose strength is mighty and whose powers are infinite, to bring an end to the conflict, an end that will result in a better life for all concerned. ... We can hope and pray for that glorious day foretold by the prophet Isaiah when men “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4).