

CHAPTERS 1-10

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: The Book of Moroni | VOLUME: 1830 | AUTHOR: Moroni (attributed); Joseph Smith (translator/author)

OVERVIEW

The Book of Moroni serves as the concluding appendix to the Book of Mormon narrative. Written by Moroni, the last surviving Nephite, it shifts from historical narrative to ecclesiastical handbook and theological treatise. Chapters 1-6 provide specific liturgical instructions for the conferring of the Holy Ghost, ordination of priesthood offices (priests and teachers), and the administration of the sacrament (bread and wine), alongside requirements for baptism and church discipline. Chapters 7-9 contain sermons and epistles from Moroni's father, Mormon. These texts address the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, defining charity as the 'pure love of Christ.' They also include a fierce theological polemic against infant baptism, arguing that children are 'alive in Christ' and need no repentance. Chapter 9 details the horrific depravity and eventual destruction of the Nephite civilization. The book concludes in Chapter 10 with Moroni's farewell, offering a specific epistemological challenge ('Moroni's Promise') for readers to ask God for a spiritual manifestation of the book's truth, and a final soteriological formula that conditions the sufficiency of God's grace upon the believer's ability to 'deny yourselves of all ungodliness.'

KEY FIGURES

Moroni, Mormon, Jesus Christ, The Twelve Nephite Disciples

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL GRACE

Assertion: God's grace becomes sufficient only after the individual denies themselves of all ungodliness.

"if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you (Moroni 10:32)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, grace is the unmerited favor of God that precedes and enables sanctification (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 11:6). Moroni 10:32 inverts this order by establishing a conditional 'if/then' clause: 'IF ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness... THEN is his grace sufficient.' This suggests that the sufficiency of Christ's grace is contingent upon the believer's prior successful abandonment of sin, creating a semi-Pelagian framework where human effort is a prerequisite for the efficacy of the Atonement.

2. SUBJECTIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

Assertion: Truth is determined by asking God for a personal spiritual manifestation (revelation) rather than testing against established canon.

"ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true... he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 10:4)"

Evangelical Comparison: Evangelical Christianity teaches that the heart is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9) and that spiritual experiences must be tested against the objective standard of God's written Word (2 Timothy 3:16). Moroni 10:4 establishes a subjective test where internal spiritual experience ('manifestation') validates the text. This bypasses the objective historical and theological testing required by the Bible, effectively placing personal revelation on par with or above the closed canon of Scripture.

3. INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN

Assertion: Little children are 'alive in Christ' and incapable of sin; baptism for them is mockery.

"little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me (Moroni 8:8)"

Evangelical Comparison: While many Evangelicals agree with the rejection of infant baptism, the theological rationale in Moroni 8 differs. Moroni asserts that the 'curse of Adam is taken from them' and they are 'whole' and 'incapable of committing sin.' Traditional Evangelical theology (following Romans 5) teaches that all are born with a sin nature (Original Sin), even if they are not held accountable before the age of reason. Moroni's

text suggests an inherent purity in children that negates the need for regeneration until the age of accountability.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of justification. Moroni 10:32 presents a 'covenant of works' framework disguised as grace: the believer must first 'deny yourselves of all ungodliness'—a standard of perfection—before grace becomes sufficient. Evangelical theology asserts that Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6) and justifies the wicked by faith (Romans 4:5). Furthermore, the text re-establishes a Levitical-style priesthood (priests/teachers) and ritualistic requirements (specific prayers) that the Epistle to the Hebrews argues were fulfilled and rendered obsolete by Christ's high priesthood.

Shared Values:

Importance of Faith, Hope, and Charity; Rejection of Infant Baptism (shared with Baptists/Evangelicals); Belief in the Atonement of Christ; Necessity of Repentance

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Adds new scripture and establishes subjective prayer as the test for truth rather than the Bible.
- 2. [Critical] Sola Fide / Sola Gratia – Conditions grace upon the believer's ability to deny all ungodliness (works/merit).
- 3. [Major] Theology Proper (Anthropology) – Denies the effects of the Fall on children (Original Sin), claiming they are 'whole' and 'alive' naturally.

Semantic Warnings:

"Grace"

In Text: An enabling power made sufficient *after* the believer denies all ungodliness (Moroni 10:32).
Evangelical: Unmerited favor given to the undeserving, independent of works (Romans 11:6).
Example: *In Moroni, grace is the capstone of a life of striving; in the Bible, grace is the foundation of the Christian life.*

"Charity"

In Text: A requisite virtue one must 'cleave unto' to be saved; the 'pure love of Christ' which the believer must possess.
Evangelical: A fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) flowing from regeneration, not a prerequisite condition for justification.
Example: *Moroni 10:21 says 'except ye have charity ye can in no wise be saved,' making a virtue the condition of salvation.*

"Perfect"

In Text: To be 'perfect in Christ' is linked to the condition: 'if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness.'
Evangelical: Often refers to maturity (teleios) or the imputed righteousness of Christ, not sinless behavior by the believer.
Example: *Moroni implies a behavioral perfectionism is necessary to access grace.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Exaltation/Perfection in Christ, requiring the remission of sins through ordinances and the acquisition of virtues (Charity).

How Attained: Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Reception of the Holy Ghost, and 'enduring to the end' (which includes denying all ungodliness).

Basis of Assurance: Subjective spiritual confirmation and personal assessment of one's adherence to commandments.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Moroni 10:32 explicitly contradicts Sola Fide by placing the condition of 'denying all ungodliness' before the sufficiency of grace. Romans 4:5 states God 'justifies the ungodly,' whereas Moroni implies God justifies those who have ceased to be ungodly.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Ask God if the record is true (Moroni 10:4)
2. Deny yourselves of all ungodliness (Moroni 10:32)
3. Love God with all might, mind, and strength (Moroni 10:32)
4. Ordain priests and teachers according to specific prayers (Moroni 3)
5. Administer sacrament using specific set prayers (Moroni 4-5)
6. Conduct meetings by the power of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 6:9)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Maintain personal worthiness to avoid having one's name 'blotted out' (Moroni 6:7)
2. Participate in the specific ecclesiastical hierarchy described
3. Seek spiritual gifts

Ritual Requirements:

1. Baptism by immersion for the accountable
2. Weekly administration of bread and wine (Sacrament)
3. Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost
4. Ordination to priesthood offices

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In Moroni 10:32, it says grace is sufficient 'if' we deny ourselves of 'all' ungodliness. How much ungodliness have you successfully denied today?
2. If grace only kicks in *after* you have denied all ungodliness, who helps you with the ungodliness you are struggling with right now?
3. Moroni 10:4 asks us to pray to know if the book is true. How does that compare to the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true?
4. Do you feel that your love is 'pure' enough to meet the requirement of Charity in Moroni 7:47, or do you need a Savior who loves you even when your love is imperfect?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Pure Love of Christ (Charity) – The text frames this as a virtue we must possess. The Gospel reframes this as the love Christ has FOR us. We cannot manufacture this love; we can only receive it. [1 John 4:10 - 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us...']
2. The Horror of Depravity – This illustrates the total depravity of man when left to himself, proving that education and civilization are not enough. We need a new nature, not just new laws. [Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-12]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Impossible Perfectionism [Severe] – The requirement to 'deny yourselves of ALL ungodliness' before grace is sufficient creates a crushing burden. The believer is left feeling that Christ's help is always just out of reach, waiting for them to be 'good enough' to merit help.
2. Epistemological Anxiety [Moderate] – By basing truth on internal feelings (Moroni 10:4), the believer is constantly vulnerable to doubt. If they don't feel the 'burning,' they assume they are unworthy or lacking faith, rather than questioning the text.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Personal Revelation / Pneumatic Confirmation

Verification Method: Prayer with 'real intent' leading to a manifestation by the power of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 10:3-5).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the objective Word of God as the lamp to one's feet (Psalm 119:105). While the Spirit illuminates the Word, the Spirit does not testify of truths contradictory to the Word. Moroni's method relies on subjective internal feeling ('burning in the bosom' implied in context of Mormon theology) rather than objective scriptural alignment.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1830 (Publication); Narrative setting approx. 400-421 AD.

Authorship: Joseph Smith (Critical view); Moroni (Traditional view).

Textual Issues: Moroni 7 contains extensive KJV New Testament quotations (1 Cor 13) purportedly written by a pre-Columbian prophet who had no access to Paul's writings.