

# MORONI

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Book of Mormon | VOLUME: 2013 | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

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## OVERVIEW

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The Book of Moroni serves as the concluding appendix to the Book of Mormon, purportedly written by the solitary survivor of the Nephite genocide, Moroni, son of Mormon. Writing around A.D. 400-421, Moroni compiles final instructions for the future Lamanites. The text establishes the administrative framework of the church, detailing the specific prayers for the sacrament (Communion), the mode of ordination for priesthood offices, and the requirements for baptism. It includes two epistles from his father, Mormon: one sharply condemning the practice of infant baptism based on the innocence of children, and another detailing the horrific depravity of the Nephite-Lamanite wars, including cannibalism and torture. The book concludes with the famous 'Moroni's Promise' (10:3-5), establishing a subjective epistemological test for truth, and a final soteriological formula (10:32) that conditions the sufficiency of God's grace upon the believer's ability to deny themselves of 'all ungodliness.'

## KEY FIGURES

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Moroni, Mormon, Jesus Christ, The Lamanites, The Nephites

## DOCTRINES ANALYZED

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### 1. CONDITIONAL GRACE

**Assertion:** Divine grace becomes sufficient only after the individual has denied 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 'unmerited favor' given to the ungodly to justify them (Romans 4:5). Moroni 10:32 inverts this order, presenting an 'If/Then' proposition: IF the believer denies all ungodliness and loves God perfectly, THEN grace is sufficient. This suggests that Christ's grace makes up the difference after all human effort is expended, rather than Christ's righteousness being the sole ground of acceptance. This creates a 'covenant of works' framework disguised as a covenant of grace.

### 2. INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN (DENIAL OF ORIGINAL SIN)

**Assertion:** Little children are morally whole, incapable of sin, and do not possess a sin nature derived from Adam.

*"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 Evangelical Baptists and the Book of Moroni both reject infant baptism, their theological foundations differ radically. Evangelicals believe children are born with a sin nature (Original Sin) but are often viewed as covered by God's mercy before the age of accountability. Moroni 8 goes further, asserting that children are 'whole' and the 'curse of Adam' is entirely removed, effectively denying the transmission of a fallen nature. This Pelagian-leaning view suggests humans are born spiritually neutral or good.

### 3. SUBJECTIVE EPISTEMOLOGY

**Assertion:** Truth is verified through prayer and a spiritual manifestation/feeling rather than objective testing of content.

*"ask God... 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:** Moroni 10:4 establishes the primary method of knowing truth in Mormonism: a subjective spiritual experience in response to prayer. Evangelical epistemology, while valuing the illumination of the Spirit, subordinates subjective experience to the objective standard of the Canon (Sola Scriptura). Evangelicals test spirits (1 John 4:1) by comparing their teaching to the Bible, whereas Moroni asks the reader to test the text by their feelings.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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### Divergence Status: Yes

**Theological Gap:** The fundamental gap lies in the order of salvation (Ordo Salutis). Moroni 10:32 creates a structure where human effort ('deny yourselves of all ungodliness') is the prerequisite for the sufficiency of grace. This is essentially semi-Pelagianism. Evangelicalism teaches that the denial of ungodliness is a fruit of grace, not a prerequisite for it (Titus 2:11-12). Furthermore, the text's ecclesiology establishes a necessary priesthood hierarchy for salvation, violating the Universal Priesthood of the believer.

### Shared Values:

Rejection of Infant Baptism (shared with Baptistic Evangelicals); Emphasis on Charity (Love); Belief in the necessity of the Holy Ghost; Moral living and repentance

### Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide – Salvation/Perfection is contingent on the believer's successful denial of all ungodliness (Moroni 10:32).
2. [Critical] Sola Gratia – Grace is presented as the final capstone to human effort rather than the foundation of it.
3. [Major] Theology Proper (Anthropology) – Denies Original Sin, asserting humans are born 'whole' and without the curse of Adam (Moroni 8:8).
4. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Establishes subjective feelings as a higher authority than the closed Canon for determining truth.

### Semantic Warnings:

#### "Grace"

**In Text:** An enabling power that becomes sufficient only after the believer denies all ungodliness (10:32).

**Evangelical:** Unmerited favor bestowed upon the unworthy, justifying them apart from works (Romans 3:24).

**Example:** *In Moroni, you perfect yourself to access grace; in the Bible, grace is given to perfect you.*

#### "Perfect"

**In Text:** A state of sinlessness achieved through human effort ('deny yourselves') combined with grace.

**Evangelical:** Often refers to maturity or completeness; regarding justification, it is the imputed perfection of Christ.

**Example:** *Moroni 10:32 commands the reader to 'be perfect in Christ' by first loving God with all might, mind, and strength.*

## SOTERIOLOGY

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**Salvation Defined:** Being 'perfect in Christ,' 'sanctified,' and 'saved in the kingdom of God.'

**How Attained:** Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Reception of the Holy Ghost, and 'Enduring to the End' (denying ungodliness).

**Basis of Assurance:** Subjective spiritual witness and personal adherence to the 'If/Then' covenant of Moroni 10:32.

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** Explicitly rejects Sola Fide by adding the condition of 'denying yourselves of all ungodliness' before grace is sufficient. Compare with Romans 4:5: 'to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.'

## MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

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### Explicit Commands:

1. Ask God the Eternal Father if the book is true (10:4)
2. Deny yourselves of all ungodliness (10:32)
3. Ordain priests and teachers by the laying on of hands (3:1-4)
4. Administer the sacrament using specific set prayers (4:1-5:2)
5. Refuse baptism to little children (8:10)

#### **Implicit Obligations:**

1. Maintain strict worthiness to avoid having one's name 'blotted out' (6:7)
2. Participate in weekly sacramental renewal of covenants
3. Seek spiritual gifts

#### **Ritual Requirements:**

1. Baptism by immersion for the accountable
2. Weekly administration of bread and wine (water in modern practice) with exact liturgical formulas
3. Confirmation/Gift of the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands

## **EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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#### **Discovery Questions:**

1. In Moroni 10:32, it says 'if' we deny ourselves of \*all\* ungodliness, 'then' grace is sufficient. Have you successfully denied yourself of \*all\* ungodliness?
2. If grace only kicks in after you have loved God with all your might, mind, and strength, how can it save you when you are weak?
3. Moroni 8 says children are 'whole' and don't need baptism. How does that fit with Romans 5:12 which says death passed upon all men because all have sinned?
4. When you pray about the Book of Mormon, are you testing the book by the Bible, or testing the Bible by your feelings?

#### **Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The Despair of Human Depravity – Mormon's description of total depravity illustrates that humanity cannot save itself or 'deny ungodliness' on its own. We are as desperate as the Nephites without a Savior who intervenes \*before\* we are righteous. [Romans 5:6-8 ('While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us')]
2. The Need for a Mediator – Christ as Advocate is a shared truth. The Gospel clarifies that He advocates based on His blood, not our 'denying of ungodliness.' [1 John 2:1-2]

#### **Spiritual Weight:**

1. Perfectionism / Impossible Standard [Severe] – The command to 'deny yourselves of ALL ungodliness' as a prerequisite for sufficient grace places a crushing burden on the believer. They are left feeling that Christ's help is always just out of reach, waiting for them to try harder.
2. Epistemological Anxiety [Moderate] – Basing one's eternal security on a subjective feeling ('manifestation of the Spirit') creates anxiety. If the feeling fades, or if one doesn't receive it, they question their salvation or worthiness, rather than resting on the objective promises of God.

## **EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Subjective Revelation / Pneumatic Confirmation

**Verification Method:** The 'Moroni Challenge': Read, ponder, and pray with real intent to receive a manifestation of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 10:3-5).

**Evangelical Contrast:** Biblical epistemology involves the illumination of the Spirit to understand revealed Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:12-13), not a subjective feeling to validate new revelation that contradicts or adds to the Canon (Galatians 1:8).

## **TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

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**Dating:** Internal date: A.D. 400-421. Published: 1830.

**Authorship:** Attributed to Moroni; Critical consensus is Joseph Smith.

**Textual Issues:** Moroni 7 contains a sermon on Faith, Hope, and Charity that bears striking resemblance to 1 Corinthians 13 (KJV), despite purportedly being written on gold plates in pre-Columbian America.