

THE GENES OF THE MARTYRS

People who elect martyrdom over renunciation live life beyond the moment. They look forward a hundred or even a thousand years as they view their place in life as being neither just here and now nor theirs alone but one tied to cohorts, followers, and descendants through generations. Within the Mormon community, willing-if-necessary martyrs think of their unborn descendants, which follows the principles in the sixth lecture on faith delivered at the School of the Prophets at Kirtland, Ohio.¹ In this sixth lecture, it was taught that no sacrifice is too much or oblation too demanding if one lives by faith. However, it does produce a question: How would the martyrs' lives affect their descendants even to the end of time? This matter was probably front and center with Rafael Monroy and Vicente Morales, however unarticulated in their minds, as they knelt in prayer moments before their execution, asking the Lord to watch over their loved ones and those yet to be born. Mormons do not seek martyrdom. However, as historical accounts show us, some will choose it on their own terms if required.

VICENTE MORALES

Vicente Morales's only potentially living child was still in utero but successfully saw the light of day nine weeks after the firing squad had killed Morales.² As a single mother, Eulalia raised her daughter, Raquel, in San Marcos within the supporting social fabric of the community of Mormons, who banded together to overcome their discord and work on their substantial personal failings as they continued to face the onslaught of community contempt. With this help, mother and daughter got through the rest of the civil war and beyond as they enjoyed the blessings of the Church, which carried on (however fitfully) under a succession of new branch presidents.

While growing up, Raquel reveled in the stories of her father. She loved to hear about him joining the Church in Cuautla and about his missionary service when full-time missionaries were withdrawn from the country. She liked to hear of her father's work as a bricklayer and a ranch hand for Rafael Monroy and of his service as a counselor in the San Marcos Branch presidency. She loved the story of his steadfast refusal to renounce his faith even potentially to save his life. This family story has since entered the consciousness of six generations of descendants of Vicente Morales. In each one, the faithful service of many individuals has been exemplary.

Vicente's genes and his legacy to the Church thus lived on in his daughter, Raquel, who lived most of her forty-nine years in San Marcos. Raquel served a two-year mission (1937–39) in Monterrey and then spent an additional six months in service to members in Ozumba at a time when the branch there was undergoing great stress from Margarito Bautista's apostate group. In Ozumba, Raquel further fortified her commitments to the Church.

Joined in union with Antonio Roberto Saunders barely a month prior to his own baptism, Raquel and Antonio had three children: two boys and one girl. Through the girl, Ruth Josefina Saunders Morales, not only did Vicente's genes pass to a sixth generation as of this writing, but so did his fidelity in the Church. With Ruth's marriage to Benito Villalobos Vásquez—from another of the great families from San Marcos—genes, culture, and religious conviction combined to create scores of faithfully committed descendants. These, with others of his posterity, had produced by 2012 twenty-four missionaries, two Area Seventies, one mission president, one stake president, four Relief Society presidents, ten Young Women and Primary presidents at stake and ward levels, and numerous

others invested in the religious, humanitarian, and educational foundations of the faith.³ In figurative response to the townspeople's previous comments to Eulalia in 1915 ("See, that is what you get for being a Mormon"), someone could now say on Vicente's and Eulalia's behalf, "See, this is what we have given you."

As Morales faced his executioners with his convictions unbowed and his testimony resolute, one wonders if his hopes for his family's future might have embodied the following aphorism derived from 3 John 1:4: "My greatest blessings are to see my children walk uprightly before the Lord."⁴ If so, he is not disappointed.

RAFAEL MONROY

In unpredictable ways, Rafael's genes have moved down through the ages. Aside from his union with Maclovia Flores Pérez, which led to the birth of a daughter and a son, and his marriage to Guadalupe Hernández, which gave him a daughter, Rafael had a "sentimental union" with Alejandra Cornejo, which produced two daughters; however, both died in infancy.⁵

Rafael's legitimate daughter, Concepción (Conchita) Monroy, did not marry until late in life and did not have children.⁶ Accordingly, Monroy's only possibility of having descendants was through his common-law union (prior to his marriage to Guadalupe Hernández) with Maclovia Flores. They had a three-year love affair that created the two children who survived to pass on Rafael's genes.

What happened to Maclovia and her children? Following Rafael's marriage to Guadalupe Hernández in 1909, Maclovia worked at the hacienda El Cedó for a while but then fled to her ancestral village and a hoped-for warm parental and extended family embrace there. She took her children with her. Although Rafael seemingly reflected about his son, Luis, and daughter Gerarda,⁷ he apparently made no effort to contact them. The record does not disclose if he sent their mother any support. In due course, probably in part out of economic necessity, Maclovia entered a common-law union with Santos Ortiz, with whom she had two more children.⁸ Thus the years passed until September 1915.

Symptomatic of the nonfunctioning of intervillage communication during wartime, Maclovia did not hear of Rafael's July 1915 execution until September, around two months later. Shocked and saddened beyond recovery, she quickly fell gravely ill from an undetermined malady that within ten months took her

life. She was twenty-seven. Her death left Rafael's Luis and Gerarda not only motherless but, in a practical sense, orphans.⁹ Luis was eleven, Gerarda nine.

Stepfather Santos Ortiz did not want to keep Luis and Gerarda.¹⁰ Aside from not being his children, he perhaps felt he could not care for someone else's progeny amidst the unremitting and grinding poverty that characterized his life. He had the two young daughters that Maclovia had borne him, and they would be a sufficient challenge for him to support. At least, they were all he wanted to sustain.

Blood ties were powerful in rural Mexico, where people generally viewed children as a precious gift from God. Accordingly, Maclovia's maternal aunts immediately stepped in to retrieve the children their niece had borne when she was living with Rafael Monroy. Oddly, however, an uncle ended up with the children. Guadalupe Pérez, one of Maclovia's half brothers who lived alone and had no children of his own, took Maclovia's Luis and Gerarda to his home.

Although sundry maternal aunts would alternately give attention to Luis and Gerarda, it was natural that Maclovia's half brother Guadalupe Pérez should take the lead. He had always had a close relationship with her. Indeed, he had brought her the news of Rafael's execution and on numerous other visits had apparently brought some little gift to ease her deprivations and to cheer up her youngsters. Of all Maclovia's relatives, her children knew their uncle Guadalupe best. Thus, when the widower Santos Ortiz said, "Take them," the children had no reluctance in hoping to find sustenance and love in Guadalupe Pérez's home. We do not know if Maclovia's two daughters by Ortiz would also have left had their impoverished father given them the opportunity, though in time, one of them, Alfonsa, did go to live with Jesusita.

Guadalupe's economic condition was probably similar to Santos Ortiz's. However, without a wife, partner, or children of his own, he had fewer places for his scarce resources to reach. He was happy to share what he had with his niece and nephew. In retrospect, it was not much. One of Luis's grandsons remarked that the children "had a life of suffering and poverty at his side."¹¹

The arrangements with Guadalupe Pérez worked well for the children for a couple of years. However, by the time Gerarda was eleven, not even the single Guadalupe—who spent a significant portion of his modest resources on Maclovia's children—could make ends meet, in part because he could see that the bright and aspiring Gerarda needed more opportunities, especially educational

ones, than he could provide. Perhaps there were other reasons, too, like how to deal with a budding female teenager. In any event, he must have put out a call for help, which surfaced among Gerarda's aunts, who began to look for options. One was to place Gerarda with a family in Tula, where she could further her education beyond simple primary school.¹² Before this idea got much traction, a market event intervened that changed the lives of many people.

Several of Gerarda and Luis's maternal aunts made their living following the Mexican *tianguis* tradition of traveling from village to village and selling their wares, comestibles, clothing, artifacts, services, or whatever conceivably would bring in currency. They would sell these from portable street stands or booths that, one day a week, could line a village street for about a quarter mile. One village on their 1917 circuit was San Marcos, Hidalgo.

Selling in Mexico's rural villages in the early twentieth century was not only a transaction but also a scene of conversational art. Commentary, gossip, and informational chats were in some areas the principal ways people got their news and perhaps even validated their lives, at least at the household level. On one occasion, the aunts were chatting with a customer when the subject of Rafael Monroy came up, with the aunts no doubt adding that their family had two of his children under its care. Was their listener a Monroy sympathizer or antagonist, perhaps with the raw feelings of the civil war—which had not yet ended—still front and center in her life? Either way, it did not matter. As the conversation unfolded, the aunts learned that the Monroys still had two ranches, a store, and an ample home, and except for their psychological despair, they were in every other way relatively well-off despite the repeated Zapatista sackings.

Eventually returning to their homes to prepare for another round of selling on their market circuit, the aunts reported their findings to Guadalupe Pérez. Would the Monroys be willing to accept Gerarda into their home? The children's uncle must have quickly grasped the implication of this because nearly immediately he made arrangements to take the eleven-year-old girl to San Marcos to meet her paternal grandmother, Jesusita, and aunts Jovita, Guadalupe, and Natalia.¹³

The meeting must have gone well. The Monroys not only accepted Gerarda into their home as one of their own but they also would have taken Luis had

his uncle Guadalupe been willing. Later, Jesusita took in Alfonsa Ortiz, one of Gerarda's two half sisters, also treating her as a daughter.

Through Maclovia's daughters, the Monroys developed a strong relationship with Maclovia's son, Luis, who never joined the Church but who was always supportive of and sympathetic to the Mormons. In fact, he raised his five children within the social fabric of Mormon life. His daughter Cresencia Maclovia (still alive in 2014 and named after her grandmother) was Rafael's first descendant to serve a mission.¹⁴ The children's uncle Guadalupe Pérez, who never faltered in his attention to Gerarda even though she was living in the Monroy household, ultimately joined the Church.¹⁵

Grandmother Jesusita's first official act was to change Gerarda's name to Amalia.¹⁶ Three generations later, many members of the Church in San Marcos continued to remember Amalia Monroy with affection. One of the reasons was that through her (and her brother, Luis) Rafael's genes continued to course the veins of descendants, scores of whom have not only been faithful members of the Church but also rendered powerful service among the Saints throughout Mexico and even the world, including occupying positions in some of the Church's regional and general councils.

In December of 2006, a posterity gathering took place in Salt Lake City, Utah, among descendants of Rafael Monroy and the missionary W. Ernest Young. The organizers had hoped that representatives of the Vicente Morales family would also be able to attend. Financial considerations worked against them, but they sent their warm regards and thanks for the invitation. President James E. Faust of the Church's First Presidency sent a congratulatory letter (Elder Faust had used the execution story in one of his general conference talks). Most of those in attendance were descendants of Luis Monroy, although two grandsons of Amalia through her son Benjamín Parra were also there (David Parra and Hugo Parra).

A grand gathering of thirty-four souls congregated to not only celebrate their forebears but also reflect in gratitude about the circumstances that had brought them to that moment. A great-grandson of Rafael's, José Luis Montoya Monroy, read the names of the families descended from Rafael and commented that more than two hundred of Rafael's posterity were then working in the Church in one or more capacities. Many on the list were either then serving or had served missions.

Among them was Hugo Montoya Monroy, one of Rafael Monroy's great-grandsons (through his mother) and a great-grandson (through his father) of another of the founding families in San Marcos. On 4 April 2015, at age fifty-five, Montoya Monroy was sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, one of the general councils of the Church.

Montoya Monroy came to his new calling with impeccable credentials, which for years had set a standard for members of his extended Monroy and Montoya families. Most recently, he had been serving as an Area Seventy in Mexico and as the Church's area auditor for Mexico. In this latter position, an observer who had watched his work over a number of years remarked:

[Hugo] did a superb job of improving the integrity of the handling of Church finances throughout Mexico. As you probably know, this is particularly important in areas where the lay leaders are not used to handling money, and where it can be a temptation. It was amazing to me to see how he improved the audits and was able to quickly identify and focus on those areas of most concern. . . . I would venture to say that no volunteer in the Church did as much to professionalize the systems and upgrade the oversight of the financial affairs of the Church in Mexico as did Elder Montoya. His attention to detail and his understanding of how all this fit in the Lord's purposes were really impressive.¹⁷

Moments before his execution, Rafael Monroy knelt in prayer—not to petition the Lord to save his life but to ask for blessings for his posterity, even until the end of time. So far, it is doubtful that he would be disappointed.

NOTES

1. N. B. Lundwall, comp., *A Compilation Containing the Lectures on Faith as Delivered at the School of the Prophets at Kirtland, Ohio* (Salt Lake City: N. B. Lundwall, 1943). At least sixteen versions of this volume are held in BYU's Harold B. Lee Library.
2. Raquel Morales Mera was born on 27 September 1915. Monroy Mera, "Como llegó el evangelio," 33.
3. LaMond Tullis to Elder Daniel L. Johnson, 4 November 2012.
4. The scripture reads, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."
5. Hugo Montoya Monroy to LaMond Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.

6. María Concepción Monroy de Villalobos, oral history interview by Gordon Irving, 1974, typescript, James Moyle Oral History Program, Church History Library. At a postchildbearing age, Concepción married Benito Villalobos.
7. Rafael's family was very opposed to the union, which occurred when he was twenty-six and Maclovia was fifteen. The family reports fragmentary evidence that, occasionally, he affectionately mentioned the children he had with Maclovia. Hugo Montoya Monroy to LaMond Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
8. Maclovia began living with Santos Ortiz, by whom she gave birth to two daughters, Juliana and Alfonsa. Interestingly, Alfonsa was later raised with the Monroy family, who changed her name to Dolores. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
9. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014. Maclovia died on 26 August 1916 at age twenty-seven. Guadalupe Pérez, Maclovia's half brother, gave her the news about Rafael's execution. Guadalupe Pérez looked after the children for a time and later also joined the Church.
10. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
11. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
12. "Historia de Rafael Monroy."
13. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
14. Minutes of a meeting of descendants of Rafael Monroy with descendants of W. Ernest Young held in Salt Lake City, Utah, 28 December 2006, 5.
15. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
16. Montoya Monroy to Tullis, email, 3 March 2014.
17. Richard Thomas to LaMond Tullis, email, 30 August 2014. At the time, Thomas was serving as the executive secretary to the Church's Area President for Mexico, Daniel L. Johnson.