

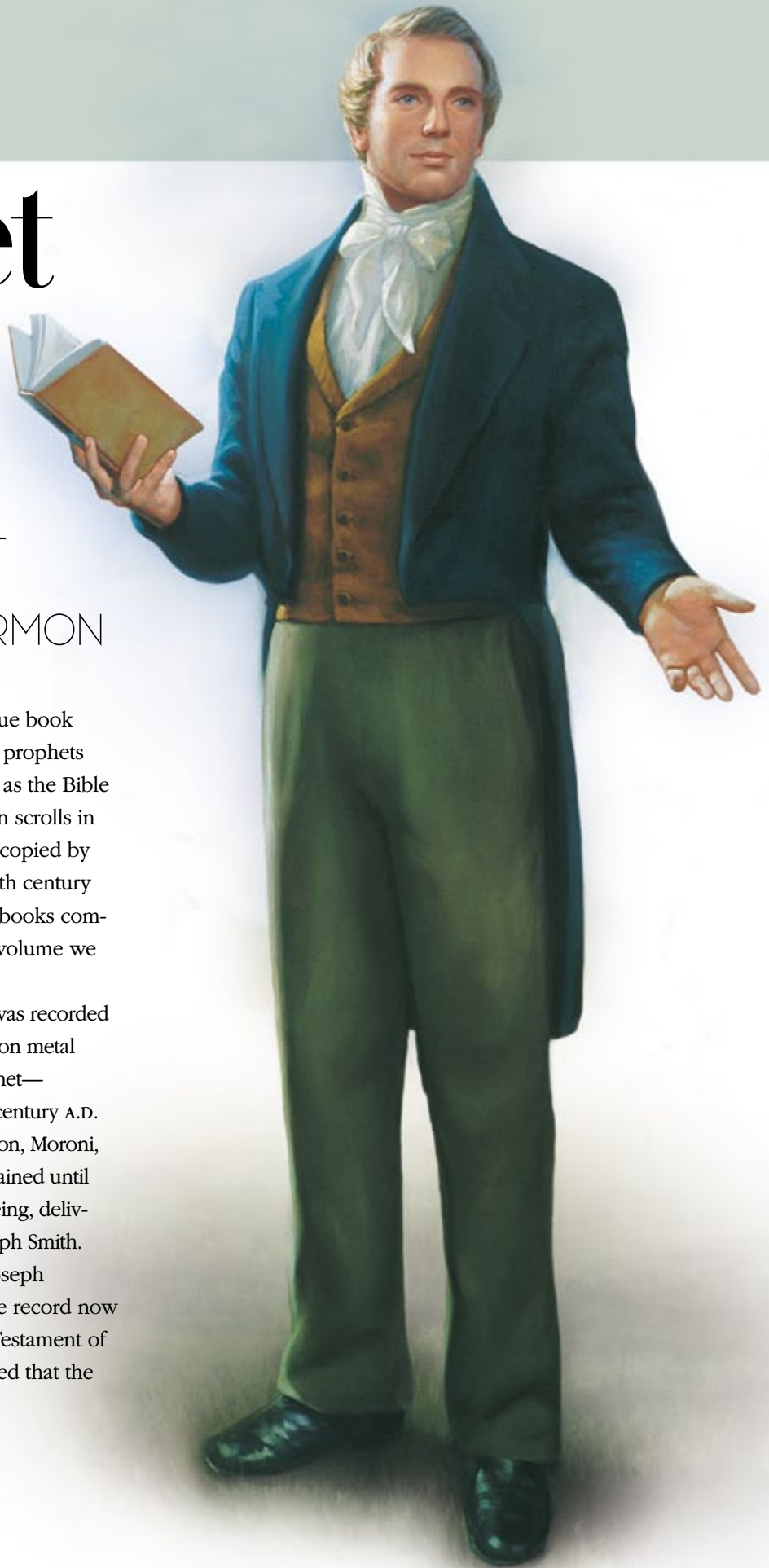
The Prophet Joseph Smith

TRANSLATOR OF
THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon is a unique book of scripture. Although ancient prophets wrote it, it did not come to us as the Bible did. The Bible was recorded largely on scrolls in the Old World as separate books and copied by scribes for centuries. Only by the fourth century after Jesus Christ were these separate books combined and made available as the one volume we refer to as the Holy Bible.

The Book of Mormon, by contrast, was recorded by ancient prophets in the New World on metal plates, abridged primarily by one prophet—Mormon (hence the title)—in the fifth century A.D. into one record on golden plates. His son, Moroni, later buried the plates, where they remained until 1827, when Moroni, as a resurrected being, delivered them to a young man named Joseph Smith.

What follows is the story of how Joseph received, translated, and published the record now titled the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Savior Himself testified that the book is true (see D&C 17:6).



FROM LEFT: BROTHER JOSEPH, BY DAVID LINDSLEY © 1998; JOSEPH SMITH SEEKS WISDOM FROM THE BIBLE, BY DALE KILBOURN © 1975; IRI; JOSEPH SMITH'S FIRST VISION, BY GREG OLSEN, MAY NOT BE COPIED; PHOTOGRAPH OF SCENE FROM JOSEPH SMITH: PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION, BY MATTHEW REIER © IRI



1. In 1820 a 14-year-old boy named Joseph Smith lived near Palmyra, New York. Though young, he was concerned about his standing before God and confused by the claims of various Christian religions that sought converts by discounting the claims of the others. Motivated by his study of the Bible, Joseph decided to seek wisdom by asking God, who “giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not” (James 1:5). He went into the woods near his home to pray.



2. As Joseph knelt and prayed, a brilliant pillar of light fell upon him. In it he saw two Personages. Heavenly Father spoke and said, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). The Lord told Joseph not to join any of the churches because none of them were true, but he was promised “that the fullness of the Gospel should at some future time be made known unto [him].”¹



3. Three years passed, during which Joseph Smith shared his experience with others—and was persecuted for it. He reported: “Though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and . . . I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

Since 1830 millions of people have read the Book of Mormon and have joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because of the Book of Mormon's witness

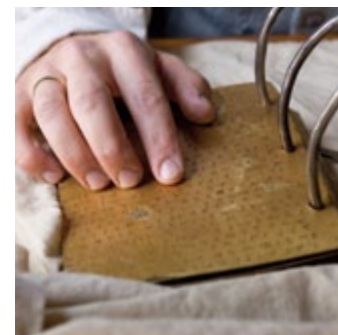
of the Savior. The book is also evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the Savior leads His Church today. Millions of people have tested and found true



4. On September 21, 1823, Joseph was praying when light filled his attic bedroom and an angel named Moroni appeared. Moroni told Joseph about writings by some ancient prophets. The record, engraved on golden plates, was buried in a nearby hill. Joseph was informed he was to translate the record.



5. Finally, on September 22, 1827, Joseph was entrusted with the plates, lifting them from a stone box buried under a large stone on a hill near Palmyra, New York.



6. As was common in rural areas in those days, Joseph Smith was largely uneducated. To assist him with the translation, God provided for him an ancient translation instrument called the Urim and Thummim. He was also blessed by the help of scribes who wrote what he dictated as he translated. Among these scribes were his wife, Emma; Martin Harris, a prosperous farmer; and Oliver Cowdery, a schoolteacher. The bulk of the translation work was finished less than three months after Oliver began serving as scribe.

Emma described what it was like to serve as Joseph's scribe: "No man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for,

Moroni's promise to all honest seekers of truth: "I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask

with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).



when [I was] acting as his scribe, [Joseph] would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him."²

Joseph explained the significance of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: "By the power of God I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics, the knowledge of which was lost to the world, in which wonderful event I stood alone, an unlearned youth, to combat the worldly wisdom and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries, with a new revelation."³

7. During the 18 months he had the plates, Joseph wasn't the only one to see or handle them. Three men—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—formally testified that the angel Moroni showed them the golden plates and that they knew the plates had "been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us." Eight other men also testified that they had seen and handled the golden plates.⁴

8. By August 1829, Joseph had contracted with publisher Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra, New York, to print the volume. Martin Harris mortgaged his farm to pay for the book's printing, and on March 26, 1830, the Book of Mormon was available for purchase.

9. On April 6, 1830, about 60 people assembled in a log home in Fayette, New York. There, as directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith formally organized the Savior's Church, restored as it was originally organized and led by apostles and prophets, authorized to speak for God. Later revelation to Joseph Smith gave the Church its name: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:4). ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:536.
2. Interview with Emma Smith by Joseph Smith III, Feb. 1879, in *Saints' Herald*, Oct. 1, 1879, 290.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 60.
4. See "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" and "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," in introduction to the Book of Mormon.

FROM LEFT: THE ANGEL MORONI APPEARS TO JOSEPH SMITH, BY TOM LOVELL © 2003 IRI; PHOTOGRAPH OF SCENE FROM JOSEPH SMITH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION, BY JOHN LUKE © IRI; BY THE GIFT AND POWER OF GOD, BY SIMON DEWEY; DETAIL OF PAINTING BY WILLIAM MAUGHAN © 1998; PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND © IRI; PHOTOGRAPH OF SCENE FROM JOSEPH SMITH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION, BY MATTHEW REIER © IRI