

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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Edited by  
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company  
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada  
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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## MORONI, VISITATIONS OF

From 1823 to 1829, the angel Moroni<sup>2</sup> appeared at least twenty times to Joseph SMITH and others. Those appearances opened the way for the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon and laid the foundation of many of the Church's most characteristic teachings. As a resurrected messenger of God, Moroni told Joseph Smith about the Nephite record on gold plates and taught him concerning the gathering of ISRAEL, the forthcoming visit of ELIJAH, the imminence of the SECOND COMING of Jesus Christ, and the judgments to be poured out on the world prior to that event.

Of Moroni's first appearance on the night of September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith recorded:

After I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him. . . . While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air. . . . He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen. . . . His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. . . . His whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning [JS—H 1:29–32].

The angel introduced himself as Moroni, and as he told about the Nephite record, its contents, and the interpreters buried with it, Joseph saw in vision their location in the hill CUMORAH. Moroni warned Joseph not to show the plates or the interpreters to anyone except those whom the Lord designated. Moroni also quoted certain prophecies from the Bible, including Malachi 3–4, Isaiah 11, and Acts 3:22–23.

After the angel left, Joseph lay contemplating this experience, and Moroni returned a second time and repeated verbatim everything he had said in his first visit, adding more detail about the coming judgments, and then returned a third time to repeat his instructions and to warn Joseph that he must put all thoughts of worldly wealth aside and concentrate solely on the translation of the record and the establishment of the kingdom of God.



*The Angel Moroni*, by Millard F. Malin (1953, cast aluminum, gilded). This statue of Moroni, shown with sculptor, shows the angel carrying the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and, with trumpet in hand, proclaiming the gospel (see Rev. 14:6). It now stands on top of the Los Angeles Temple. Courtesy Special Collections Department, University of Utah Libraries.

As Moroni left the third time, Joseph said he heard the cock crow, the visitations having occupied the entire night. He arose and went into the fields with his father and his older brother Alvin, but felt tired and feeble. His father, noticing his son's condition, told him to return to the house. As Joseph was climbing over a fence, he fell to the ground unconscious.

The next thing he remembered seeing was Moroni standing over him, repeating his instructions of the night before, adding that Joseph should now tell his father about the visitations. Joseph did so, and his father, assured that the vision came from God, told Joseph to follow the angel's instructions (JS—H 1:46–50).

Joseph Smith then went to the hill and found the place shown him the night before in vision. He uncovered the plates and was about to remove them when Moroni appeared again, counseling Joseph that the time was not yet right. Instead, he

instructed Joseph to return to this spot at the same time the following year and that he should continue to do so until the time had come for obtaining the plates (JS—H 1:51–54).

It is reported that during those years Joseph Smith also received visits from Mormon, Nephi, and other “angels of God unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days” (HC 4:537; cf. JD 17:374; Petersen, p. 131). Joseph shared with his family some of his experiences. His mother, Lucy Mack SMITH, recalled, “From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. . . . He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious wor-



*The Fourth Appearance of Moroni to Joseph Smith*, by Gary E. Smith (1980s, oil on canvas, 36" × 42"). After seeing the angel Moroni three times the night before in his bedroom, Joseph Smith was so exhausted that he fell while attempting to cross a fence. Again the angel appeared, commanding Joseph to tell his father about the vision. Courtesy Blaine T. Hudson.

ship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them” (pp. 82–83).

Moroni temporarily reclaimed the plates and the interpreters after Martin HARRIS had lost the first 116 manuscript pages of the translation. Later, when Joseph Smith moved from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Fayette, New York, in June 1829, Moroni returned them to him there (Smith, pp. 149–50). Still later, Moroni showed the plates to the Three Witnesses (HC 1:54–55), took them after the translation had been completed (JS—H 1:60), and once more returned them briefly to Joseph to show to the Eight Witnesses (see BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES).

In addition to Joseph and the Three Witnesses, Mary Whitmer also saw the angel and talked with him. Mary Whitmer said she was shown the gold plates when she conversed with Moroni (Peterson, pp. 114, 116). Other sources indicate that Moroni appeared also to W. W. Phelps, Heber C. KIMBALL, John TAYLOR, and Oliver Granger (Peterson, pp. 151–52).

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## MORONI<sub>1</sub>

The first Moroni mentioned in the Book of Mormon (died c. 56 B.C.) was twenty-five years old when he was appointed captain of the NEPHITE armies (Alma 43:16). He upheld the liberty of the Nephites against threats posed by invading armies and by “kingmen” who tried to reestablish a monarchy by force after failing to win popular support. Moroni rallied his people for a seven-year struggle by raising “the title of liberty,” a banner on which he wrote his reasons for defense, and by having his people covenant to defend their freedom and obey God’s commandments (Alma 46:12–13, 20).