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Mormon, Book of

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The Book of Mormon contains little in the way of innovative doctrines, but it does recount a visit of Christ to the New World after his Jerusalem resurrection. Its major theological contribution and readerly appeal have been its modeling of a kind of "dialogic revelation" as literal as OT versions, but more individualized and egalitarian. Although Mormons believe it is an authentic historical record of ancient peoples, its language and topics are in some cases germane to 19th-c. theological concerns, including those of the Restoration* Movement. It is esteemed by Mormons as "the Word of God," a companion to the Bible, and the principal evidence of Joseph Smith's status as a prophet of God and restorer of the true church of Jesus Christ. **See also LATTER-DAY SAINTS, CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF; MORMON WORSHIP; SMITH, JOSEPH; YOUNG, BRIGHAM.**

TERRYL GIVENS

Mormon, Book of. In 1830 Joseph Smith* published a book he claimed to have translated "by the gift and power of God" from ancient gold plates buried in a hillside in upstate New York. The book records the details of three ancient peoples who had inhabited the North American continent. The bulk of the record was purportedly made by "Nephite" prophets of Jewish extraction, who presided over their people from 600 BC until their extinction in the 5th c. AD. Throughout this period, Nephite prophets maintained records of wars, missionary labors, prophetic writings by Isaiah and other Old World figures, predictions of a coming Christ, and teachings about atonement*, faith* and baptism*, charity*, and other doctrines consistent with modern Christianity. Abridged by a Nephite warrior-prophet named Mormon, then buried in the ground by his son Moroni, the record was delivered to 21-year-old Smith in 1827 by that same Moroni (in the form of a resurrected being, or angel).