



# Serving the Lord in Spanish

By Jennifer Maddy  
(Based on a true story)

Imagine that your friend handed you the best book he or she had ever read. You open the cover . . . and discover you can't read the book. It's in a different language! What would you do?

In the early years of the Church, the Book of Mormon was printed only in English. President Brigham Young called two missionaries to preach the gospel in Mexico and translate the Book of Mormon into Spanish. But they needed more help to do it. Little did they know that across the ocean, God had prepared a man who could give them exactly the help they needed.

Meliton Gonzalez Trejo came from a wealthy family in Spain. He studied hard in school and became an officer in the Spanish army. He was always interested in religion, but nothing he found felt quite right. One day he heard another officer talk about a group of people who called themselves "Saints." They belonged to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and a prophet of God had led them to the Rocky Mountains in the United

States. Meliton felt a strong desire to meet them. He joined a military expedition to the Philippines, hoping this would help get him to the United States later. But Meliton got so busy with his work that visiting the Saints started to feel less important.

Then Meliton became seriously ill. He remembered why he had come to the Philippines and prayed to God about what he should do. That night, Meliton had a special dream. He knew he was supposed to leave for the Rocky Mountains.

Once Meliton recovered from his illness, he continued his journey to the United States. He arrived in California on July 4, 1874, and headed toward Salt Lake City.

When Meliton arrived in Salt Lake, he ran into a problem: he could read English but had never spoken it. He couldn't communicate with anyone! But he decided that if he couldn't talk to people, he would get their attention another way. Meliton put on his Spanish army uniform and marched up and down

the city streets. As he hoped, many people noticed him! Finally he was spotted by a member of the Church named Brother Blanchard, a university professor who spoke Spanish. Brother Blanchard helped Meliton get settled in Salt Lake and taught him the gospel. Soon Meliton was baptized.

Brother Blanchard also introduced Meliton to President Brigham Young. Meliton told President Young that more than anything, he wanted to translate the Book of Mormon into Spanish.

President Young asked Meliton to help the missionaries who were going to Mexico translate parts of the Book of Mormon into Spanish. Meliton spent many weeks translating the English words into Spanish. Each night he reviewed his translation with the missionaries. They spoke some Spanish but felt this important translation needed a native Spanish speaker. They knew Meliton was an answer to their prayers. In 1875 the translation was published. It was called *Trozos Selectos*

*del Libro de Mormon* (Selected Passages from the Book of Mormon).

The missionaries were now ready to go to Mexico. They loaded 1,500 copies of the translated scripture onto horseback and started on their journey. For the first time, Spanish speakers were able to read the Book of Mormon in their own language! Even though Meliton had lived thousands of miles away in Spain, Heavenly Father led him to exactly where he needed to be. Because of Meliton's courage and faith, he helped bring the word of God to countless people. ●



Meliton Gonzalez Trejo (1844–1917) served several missions in Mexico and baptized some of the first members of the Church there. In 1886 Meliton helped finish translating the entire Book of Mormon into Spanish.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ROBISON