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## The Gospel and the Lamanites

Author(s): Antoine R. Ivins

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**Abstract:** The Church has long been interested in the American Indians because they are descendants of Book of Mormon people.

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## The Gospel and The Lamanites

*By Elder Antoine R. Ivins*

WHO are the Lamanites? In the Book of Mormon, all those descendants of Father Lehi who followed the leadership of Laman were classed as Lamanites. The term refers to a party rather than a family; they were the unrighteous among the children of Lehi. In view of the fact that the people known in the Book of Mormon as Lamanites accomplished the destruction of the Nephites we have attached the name Lamanite to the races of Indians found upon the American continent when it was discovered, assuming that they were all descended from the victors at the great battle of the Hill Cumorah. This may or may not be true but, nevertheless, to us all autochthonous inhabitants of the Americas and of some of the South Sea Isles are known as Lamanites.

The Church has always had a very great interest in our Indians because of the promises made to their fathers, of which we learn in the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery led the first mission of our people to them and on that trip both Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were made acquainted with the Gospel, the latter joining the missionary party. On this trip, which was authorized by revelation and made in the fall of 1830, three Indian tribes

were contacted and heard the story of the Book of Mormon. They were the Catterauguas, Wyandottes and the Delawares and the missionaries were hopeful of doing something worth while among the Delawares when the Agency officials ordered them out. The Indians were very much interested.

It appears that after this, little effort was made among them until after the coming of the Saints to these mountains, but they had hardly become established here in the midst of the Indians when they undertook again to carry the message to them.

Perhaps it was unfortunate that the Saints found their immediate Indian neighbors to be among the least developed of the native tribes, for the results of these many years of contact have not been flattering.

IN 1854 an expedition was organized and sent south to work among the Indians. It included such men as Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Jacob Hamblin, Ira Hatch—twenty-three men in all—who left Salt Lake City April 8, 1854.

They arrived at John D. Lee's camp at Harmony, May 16, 1854, and found there 12 or 15 families. "On the Sunday preceding the arrival of the newcomers the Indian school at Harmony showed an at-

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NOTE: The Magazine expresses appreciation to Professor Harrison R. Merrill for suggestions in preparation of this issue and for use of the following pictures: Cover, Frontispiece, Indian Woman, and Ralph Hubbard displaying war bonnet.

tendance of ten Indian children.” (See the Manuscript History of St. George Stake.)

On the 15th of June ten of these brethren went on south under Rufus C. Allen, with Ira Hatch as interpreter and Jacob Hamblin and William Hennefer also in the party. Indians were contacted at Toquerville, Washington and Santa Clara. At the last place eleven Indians asked for baptism and were made members of the Church. Further upstream Jacob Hamblin and Wm. Hennefer report administering to a very sick woman, at her request, after the Medicine Man had failed to help her, whereupon she was immediately healed. It is also reported that some 300 Indians were later baptized at St. George and received presents at the hands of Apostle Erastus Snow. When these gratuities were not continued some of the Indians asked to be baptized anew and to have the brethren tell the Lord they had been good Indians. This would seem like a good beginning but the advantage was apparently not followed up and little or no effort was made to carry these Indians along in their Church affiliation. Just recently, however, there has been some activity among them and at a recent meeting attended by the President of the Church and the writer in St. George an Indian holding the Priesthood of an Elder pronounced the benediction.

After St. George had been well established, the frontier of Indian missionary work was extended and in 1878 Erastus Snow and Anthony W. Ivins visited the Navajos and Pueblos and Llewellyn Harris went among the Zunis. Harris is said to have healed about 400 Zunis whom he found suffering from smallpox. Ammon M. Tenney is reported to have assisted in baptizing 115 of the Zunis.

Work moved on further in Arizona and we now have a fine group near Mesa organized into a ward of the Maricopa stake.

In 1883 Moses Thatcher and Bishop Preston led a group of missionaries into Idaho and Wyoming. We now have in the Malad Stake the Washakie ward with a fine lot of native Saints.

IT was but natural that the Church should look towards the many tribes living in Mexico, Central America and South America for it is generally believed by us that most of the events of the Book of Mormon history took place south of the Rio Grande.

In the early 1870's there came into Salt Lake City one Meliton J. Trejo, a Spaniard, led hither from the Phillipine Islands by a desire to learn more of this people of whom he had heard a little already. After investigation, he joined the Church and President Young gave him the task of translating certain parts of the Book of Mormon into Spanish. This collection of excerpts was entitled, “Trozos Selectos del Libro de Mormon,” meaning “Select Passages from the Book of Mormon.”

With more than 2,000 of these pamphlets in their packs the following named missionaries set out for Mexico from Salt Lake City on the 15th of September, 1875—Daniel W. Jones, Heleman Pratt, James Z. Stewart, Robert H. Smith and Wiley C. Jones. At Toquerville Anthony W. Ivins joined the party and Ammon M. Tenney was added at Kanab.

After many interesting experiences, they arrived at El Paso del Norte (North Pass) and on the 20th of March, 1876, Daniel W. Jones, Heleman Pratt, J. Z. Stewart, Wiley C. Jones and Anthony W. Ivins entered Mexico at Ciudad Juarez, opposite El Paso, Texas.

Nineteen days later they obtained from Don Luis Terrazas, Governor of the State of Chihuahua, permission to hold the first public meeting ever held in Mexico by Mormon Elders.

From this point it was decided to return, but before doing so names and addresses of some of the prominent men in the principal cities of Mexico were obtained from the local postmaster and packages of "Trozos Selectos" were mailed to them.

One of these pamphlets came into the possession of a more or less prominent Mexican who became interested in its story. He began a correspondence with the President of the Church which led to the sending of Moses Thatcher, J. Z. Stewart and Meliton J. Trejo to Mexico City where they succeeded in opening up a successful mission. This Mission has passed through varying vicissitudes until now we have the Spanish-American Mission and the Mexican Mission as well as the more recently established Argentine Mission, all of which are functioning nicely and, of course, use the Spanish language.

IT would not be complete should we not mention the missions of Polynesia. As early as 1844 men were sent into the South Seas in charge of Addison Pratt, having in mind the presentation of the Gospel to the whites of those Islands. Some of these missionaries went as far as India. It soon became apparent that the whites were not the fruitful field but that their converts were going to come from the natives. As a justification for their going we ask you to look at the groups of Saints in New Zealand, Samoa, and Hawaii and others of the Island groups.

It is hard to find more faithful and intelligent converts to the Church than have come from these Polynesian missions.

After having read the foregoing one can visualize a wide and populous area legitimately called Lamanite Mission field. Workers have never been too numerous in these areas and in some parts legal restrictions are such that the work advances slowly, but we hope that definite progress is being made.

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## PRODIGAL'S RETURN

*By Alice Lee Eddy*

I will arise and go unto my father  
 And to his father's gospel I'll return.  
 For in the rush of life I have missed something  
 That from my noble fathers I can learn.  
 They followed one who suffered persecution  
 And bore it Christ-like in the latter days.  
 They dared to turn their backs on ease and safety  
 To triumph in the humble, harder ways.  
 For they had peace in midst of tribulation,  
 They knew good will in midst of toil and strife.  
 Without the wealth and comforts we've acquired  
 They still could live the rich, abundant life.  
 Like them, with greed and vanity I've finished,  
 With mocking doubt and ridicule I'm done.  
 I will arise and go unto my Father  
 And thank Him for the blessing of His Son.