

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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destroy them” (Mosiah 10:17). When Laman’s descendants were converted to faith in Christ, however, they were exemplary in righteousness; and Book of Mormon prophets foretold a noteworthy future for them in the latter days.

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ALAN K. PARRISH

LAMANITE MISSION OF 1830–1831

The mission to western Missouri in 1830–1831 was important for three reasons: it demonstrated the Church’s commitment to preach to the descendants of the LAMANITES of the Book of Mormon; it helped establish a stronghold for the Church in KIRTLAND, OHIO, where the missionaries found numerous unexpected converts; and it ultimately brought Joseph SMITH to Jackson County, Missouri, to lay the foundation of ZION, or the NEW JERUSALEM.

This mission, one of the Church’s earliest missionary expeditions, commenced in October 1830 in New York State with the call of Oliver COWDERY, “second elder” in the Church; Peter Whitmer, Jr.; Parley P. PRATT; and Ziba Peterson (D&C 28:8; 32:1–3). It initiated the long continuing Church practice of taking the gospel to NATIVE AMERICANS. The Book of Mormon, in part a record of the Lamanite Indian origins, prophesies that the Lamanites will assist in building the millennial New Jerusalem (3 Ne. 20–21), to be located in the Western Hemisphere (Ether 13:3–6; cf. D&C 28:9).

In the early 1800s the U.S. government began removing eastern Indians to the American frontier west of all existing states. In May 1830 the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Law, further ensuring that the missionaries’ ultimate destination was just west of Independence, Missouri, the last American outpost before “Indian country.” To arrive there, the elders traveled on foot from New York, a distance of fifteen hundred miles, in mid-winter.

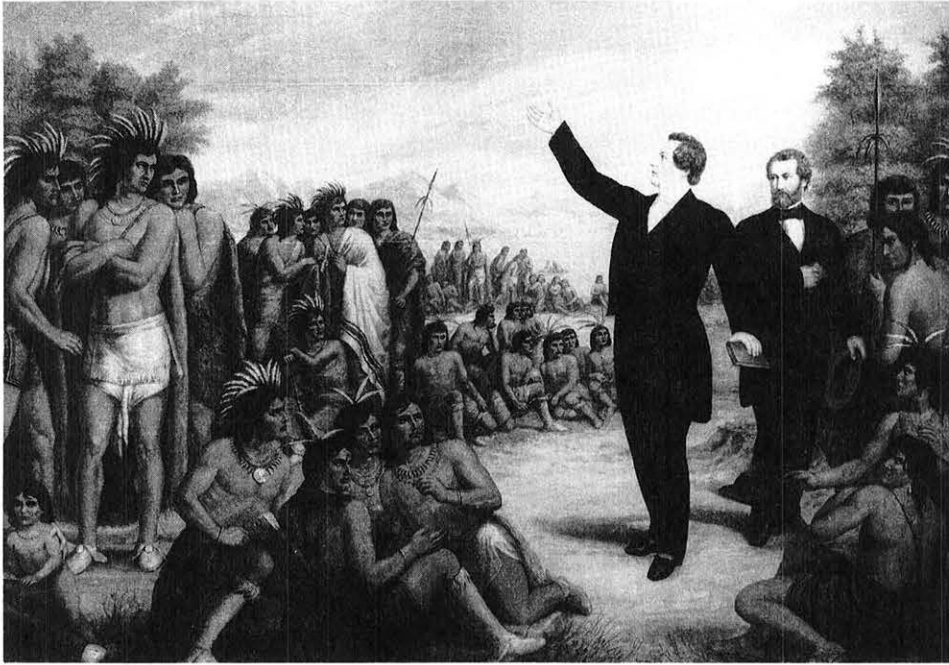
These brethren soon found audiences of white settlers and some Indians. First, at nearby Buffalo,

New York, they taught the Catteraugus Indians, who accepted two copies of the Book of Mormon. In northeastern Ohio they preached widely, and their message excited public curiosity. While visiting Mentor, Ohio, Cowdery and Pratt contacted Sidney RIGDON, a dynamic Reformed Baptist minister who was promoting New Testament restorationist beliefs in his congregation and was Pratt’s friend and former pastor. They challenged Rigdon to read the Book of Mormon, which he promised to do. Rigdon also allowed the elders to speak in his Mentor church and to his congregation in Kirtland. Positive response to their message was almost immediate. Many members of the congregation, including Rigdon, were baptized. News of their success spread rapidly, sparking intense public feelings and leading to more conversions.

In four weeks in northeastern Ohio, the elders baptized approximately 130 converts, 50 of them from Kirtland. These new members made Kirtland their headquarters. Among the converts were men who would become leaders in the Church: Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, Lyman Wight, Newel K. Whitney, Levi Hancock, and John Murdock. Two other prominent men, Edward Partridge and Orson HYDE, joined the Church soon after the missionaries departed. By the end of 1830, membership in Ohio had reached 300, nearly triple the number of members in New York. In December, after learning of the great Ohio harvest, Joseph Smith received a revelation directing the New York Saints to gather to the Kirtland area (D&C 37:1, 3), which most did in 1831.

Joined by Frederick G. Williams, a Kirtland physician, the four missionaries continued west in late November 1830, preaching as they traveled. They visited the Wyandot Indians at Sandusky, Ohio, where their hearers rejoiced over their message. However, during several days at Cincinnati, they were unable to interest other audiences. In late December, the elders took passage down the Ohio River toward St. Louis until encountering ice near Cairo, Illinois, which forced them to walk overland. Thereafter, their journey became increasingly arduous. Because of storms of rare severity, the winter of 1830–1831 is referred to in midwestern annals as “the winter of the deep snow.” Food was scarce, and the missionaries were forced to survive on meager rations of frozen bread and pork.

In late January 1831, still in the midst of intense cold, the missionaries arrived at Jackson



Joseph Smith Preaching to the Indians, by William Armitage (late nineteenth century, oil on canvas, 10' × 16'). In revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1830, the Lord appointed several early Church leaders to preach the gospel to the Lamanites. They visited Native Americans in New York, Ohio, and Missouri. Several Native Americans visited Joseph Smith in the early 1840s in Nauvoo, which gave him an opportunity to tell them about the Book of Mormon. Church Museum of History and Art.

County (see MISSOURI: LDS COMMUNITIES IN JACKSON AND CLAY COUNTIES). Independence, the county seat, was a ragged and undisciplined frontier village twelve miles from the state's western border. Here the missionaries separated. Whitmer and Peterson set up a tailor shop to earn needed funds, while Cowdery, Pratt, and Williams crossed the state boundary, called by them "the border of the Lamanites," into Indian country. After first contacting the Shawnees, the elders crossed the frozen Kansas River and walked to the Delaware Indian village located about twelve miles west of the Missouri state line.

The Delaware Indians had arrived there only the previous November after a toilsome journey of their own. Because of their present poverty and mistreatment at the hands of whites, the aged Delaware chief, known to the white man as William Anderson Kithtilhund, viewed any Christian missionaries with suspicion. After his initial hesitation, however, Kithtilhund summoned his chiefs into council. For several days, through an interpreter,

Cowdery shared with the receptive Delawares the Book of Mormon account of their ancestors.

Plans to establish a permanent school among the Delawares and to baptize converts were soon interrupted by an order to desist from the federal Indian agent, Richard W. Cummins. After issuing a second warning, he threatened to arrest the elders if they did not leave Indian lands. Pratt believed that the jealousy of the missionaries of other churches and Indian agents precipitated the order. In a letter to William Clark, superintendent of Indian affairs in St. Louis, Cummins indicated that the elders did not possess a certificate authorizing their presence on government Indian lands. Later in Independence, Cowdery wrote the superintendent requesting a license to return to Indian lands, but the request was never granted, and that effectively ended the Lamanite Mission.

From Independence, Oliver Cowdery dispatched Parley P. Pratt to the East to report on the mission while the remaining four missionaries preached to white settlers in Jackson County. In

the summer of 1831, Joseph Smith led a group from Kirtland to Jackson County to meet the missionaries. Through revelation the Prophet identified a site a half mile from Independence as the temple lot for the New Jerusalem (D&C 57:1–3).

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MAX H PARKIN

LAMANITES

The name Lamanite refers to an Israelite people spoken of in the Book of Mormon, who were descendants of LEHI and Ishmael, both of whom were descendants of JOSEPH OF EGYPT (1 Ne. 5:14). They were part of the prophet Lehi's colony, which was commanded of the Lord to leave Jerusalem and go to a new promised land (in the Western Hemisphere). The Lamanite peoples in the Book of Mormon during the first 600 years of their history are all linked in some way to LAMAN and Lemuel, Lehi's oldest sons. At times the name refers to "the people of Laman"; at other times it can identify unbelievers and ignore ancestral lines, depending on contextual specifics regarding peoples, time, and place.

LAMANITES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON. After the death of the prophet Lehi (c. 582 B.C.), the colony divided into two main groups, Lamanites and NEPHITES, (2 Ne. 5), each taking the name from their leader. These patronyms later evolved into royal titles (Mosiah 24:3; cf. Jacob 1:11). The Book of Mormon, though a Nephite record, focuses on both Lamanites and Nephites, by means of complex contrasts between the two groups. In the text, other peoples are generally subsumed under one of these two main divisions:

Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites. But I, Jacob, shall not hereafter distinguish them by these names, but I shall call them Lamanites that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites, or the people of Nephi, according to the reigns of the kings [Jacob 1:13–14].

In the beginning, political and religious disagreements arose between the Lamanites and the Nephites. Subsequently, an increasing cultural differentiation of the Lamanite people from the Nephites seems to have resulted from their different responses to Lehi's religious teachings. Social change quickly took place along many lines. Consequently, the name Lamanite can refer to descendants of Laman and his party; to an incipient nationality based upon an ideology, with its own lineage history and religious beliefs (Mosiah 10:12–17); or to one or more cultures. The Book of Mormon describes several Lamanite cultures and lifestyles, including hunting-gathering (2 Ne. 5:24), commerce (Mosiah 24:7), sedentary herding, a city-state pattern of governance (Alma 17), and nomadism (Alma 22:28). The politicized nature of early Lamanite society is reflected in the way in which dissenters from Nephite society sought refuge among Lamanites, were accepted, and came to identify themselves with them, much as some Lamanites moved in the opposite direction.

Early in the sixth century of Lamanite history (c. 94–80 B.C.), large-scale Lamanite conversions further divided the Lamanite peoples as many embraced the messianic faith in Jesus Christ taught by Nephite missionaries (Alma 17–26). The Lamanite king Lamoni, a vassal; his father, the suzerain king; and many of their subjects accepted the prophesied Christ and rejected their former lifestyles. They took upon themselves a covenant of pacifism, burying their weapons and renouncing warfare, and moved into Nephite territory for their safety (Alma 27:21–26; 43:11–12). This pattern of Lamanite conversion lasted for at least eighty-four years and through several generations (cf. Alma 24:5–6, 15–19, 20–24; 26:31–34; 44:20; Hel. 5:51; 15:9). This major division of Lamanite society had significant political impact: the identity of some of these converts remained Lamanite, but distinct from those who rejected the religion; others chose to be numbered among the Nephites (3 Ne. 2:12, 14–16); and the unconverted Lamanites were strengthened by numerous dissenters from Nephite subgroups (Alma 43:13), some of whom chose explicitly to retain their former identities (3 Ne. 6:3).

After the destructions that occurred at the time of Christ's crucifixion and the subsequent conversions (3 Ne. 11–28), a new society was established in which ethnic as well as economic differences were overcome, and there were no