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Then Shall They Rejoice

Author(s): W. N. N.

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Abstract: This article describes episodes in which modern-day Lamanites of Mexican descent rejoiced upon receiving the Book of Mormon.

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EDITORIAL

“THEN SHALL THEY REJOICE”

A PROPHECY is recorded in the Book of Mormon that when the book is taken to the descendants of its writers—the Lamanites, or American Indian races—“then shall they rejoice.”

Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt were two of the first missionaries to proclaim the Gospel message to our red brethren. Elder Pratt records that a Delaware Chief replied to Oliver Cowdery's introduction of the Book of Mormon to the tribe as follows:

“We feel thankful to our white friends who have come so far and been at such pains to tell us good news, and especially this new news concerning the Book of our forefathers; it makes us glad in here”—placing his hand on his heart. “It is now winter; we are new settlers in this place [a newly created Indian reservation]; the snow is deep; our cattle and horses are dying; our wigwams are poor; we have much to do in the spring—to build houses and fence and make farms; but we will build a council house and meet together, and you shall read to us and teach us more concerning the Book of our fathers, and the will of the Great Spirit.”

Joseph Smith was visited by Indians who sought his counsel declaring the Great Spirit had proclaimed to them that Joseph was “a great prophet, chief and friend.” He told them of the Book of Mormon and its predictions of a new day of prosperity for them; he gave them copies of the book, and they went away rejoicing.

In the Mexican and other missions where our red brethren are located, many honest and sincere souls have been reached by the Lord's humble servants. With love in their hearts for these downtrodden people, missionaries have laboured among them, to bring the light to these benighted sons and daughters of our Father.

The wondrous story of the Book of Mormon often told in broken Spanish to the natives, has been indignantly challenged by many who bigotedly consider themselves “religious.” Such persons have declared vehemently: “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible!” Yet perhaps at the next door, that same message of life, humbly delivered, has found an honest heart; and into a soul free from prejudice, it has brought light.

While tracting one day in the Mexiean district of El Paso, Texas, Elder Donald Holley and I came to a modest and surprizingly clean, *tienda*—a tiny shop. Behind the counter stood a young native mother, ready to serve customers or chat with them. By her side, two little black-eyed tots gazed at us with evident interest. Elder Holley, new in the field, but better versed in the Spanish language, explained the Gospel message, exhibited a copy of the Book of Mormon, and told the woman of its sacred character. Turning the pages to Moroni 10: 4, 5, he handed her the book and asked her to read. She read aloud the words:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

When she had finished, she questioned us eagerly. She asked us if we had a copy to sell, and willingly paid the *cincuento centavos*—two shillings—asked for the book. Her interest was aroused; she inquired more concerning us and our message. We directed her to 2 Nephi, chapter 30, verses 3 to 8, and explained the principles of the Gospel to her. She said she recognized the Book of Mormon as a sacred historical record of her ancestors, and was happy to obtain it.

One old Mexican brother who regularly attends the meetings at the El Paso, Texas, chapel, first became interested in the Gospel by finding one day a traet entitled "*El Evangelio Restaurado*"—The Gospel Restored—which dealt with the Book of Mormon. He read the traet, felt the urge of truth, and tramped the streets for many hours inquiring for the Latter-day Saints' Chapel. When he found it and read the sign, announcing the hours of meeting, he wept for joy. He later accepted the Gospel, was baptized and became a faithful and zealous member of the Church.

Thus many instances might be recounted to show that the prophecy uttered by Nephi, ancient kinsman of the modern Indian, is being fulfilled. Thousands of Lamanites accept the Book of Mormon as a sacred history of their forefathers, and rejoice when they receive it. They acknowledge the plan of life and salvation, and partake of it. Their faith is touching and sincere; they believe implicitly in God and humbly rely on Him. They respect and honour His Priesthood; they love His valiant servants who come among them with the Gospel message. The light, knowledge and understanding that accompanies their compliance with the Gospel ordinances, fills them with gratitude to their Creator, for they know the Gospel is a blessing unto them from the hand of the Lord.—W. N. N.