The Founding of the Samoan Mission

R. Lanier Britsch

INTRODUCTION

In April 1974, President Spencer W. Kimball encouraged the Latter-day Saints to "lengthen their stride" and carry the message of the restored gospel to all the nations of the world. The size of the missionary force has grown considerably since that time and efforts are being made to gain entry and teaching privileges in countries which have previously been closed to LDS missionary activities. Nevertheless, a major percentage of the world population remains untouched by LDS mission workers. In addition to the European Communist countries, work remains to be opened in most countries of Southwest Asia and Africa, in all of South Asia, and in several areas of Southeast Asia. Of course, the People's Republic of China also remains closed.

When the problems of poverty, nationalism and anti-foreignism, governmental instability, literacy, and non-Christian religious systems are considered, the challenge to "lengthen our stride" seems difficult to meet. The devoted advocate of Church growth might be tempted to wonder whether the gospel can be taken to the remainder of the world until the Lord intervenes to change many circumstances and, in effect, open the doors.

In answer to such thinking, the historian of LDS mission expansion must point to past experience. It would not be accurate to conclude that the Church makes progress only in those times and places where the evidence would suggest lack of success. There have been many cases which clearly show the Church growing at times and in places where the odds are seemingly against it. National peace and stability do not necessarily create the best seedbed for the growth of the Church. In fact, turmoil, war, dislocation, suffering, and confusion have established a suitable climate for Church growth. Certainly one cannot conclude that wars are good or that unhappiness should be fostered to assure the expansion of the Church. Rather

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one must recognize that the gospel offers answers to those who are displaced, who suffer, or who need answers to life's questions.[1]

The case under consideration in this study is the Samoan Mission. Its establishment in 1888, which was the official founding date of the mission, came at a most unsatisfactory period in Samoan history. Governmental, social, economic, and to some extent religious problems all militated against the success of the LDS missionary corps. Nevertheless the Church was established and has grown steadily ever since. Today approximately twenty percent of the population of Samoa is LDS, the entire nation (both Western and American Samoa) is covered with stakes, and the First Presidency has just announced plans to build a temple there.

PERIOD ONE: WALTER MURRAY GIBSON SENDS MISSIONARIES TO SAMOA

The Latter-day Saint mission to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) which was founded in late 1850, ran into problems in 1857-58. For a variety of reasons—principally the apostasy of many of the Hawaiian converts and the fact that Brigham Young was deeply concerned about the impending Utah War—the Zion (Utah) elders were called home. After their departure in 1858, the local Saints were left to care for the Church. Three years later, in July 1861, the adventurer Walter Murray Gibson, who had joined the Church in January 1860, arrived in Hawaii as a missionary. His appointed field of labor was Japan and Malaysia, but he had also been asked by President Young to visit the Hawaiian Saints. Gibson went far beyond the authority given him and ultimately defrauded the Hawaiian members and misused his ecclesiastical authority. He was excommunicated in April 1864.[2]

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[1]Several of the most recent examples of LDS Church growth in locations of upheaval are Japan after 1945, the planting of the Church in Korea during the conflict there, the establishment of mission work in Thailand, largely as a result of American military people who were there in connection with the Vietnam War, and the brief beginning in Vietnam itself during the war. Certainly other examples could be given from Europe and Latin America.

[2]The most frequently cited books, articles, and theses concerning Gibson include: Gwynn Barrett, "Walter Murray Gibson: The Shepherd Saint of Lanai Revisited," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 40 (Spring 1972):142-62; R. Lanier Britsch, "Another Visit With Walter Murray Gibson," *Utah Historical Quarterly,* forthcoming; Gavan Daws, "The Shepherd Saint," *Shaol of Time*: *A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), pp. 220-25; Frank W. McGhie, "The Life and Intrigues of Walter Murray Gibson," (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958); James A. Michener and A. Grove Day, "Gibson, The King's Evil Angel," *Rascals in Paradise* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), pp. 120-54; Joseph B. Musser, "Walter Murray Gibson—Oceanic Adventurer," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 52 (September 1926):1709-32; Brigham H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church,* 6

Whether for good or evil, the influence of Walter Murray Gibson was felt far and wide. Gibson was an ambitious man who thirsted for power. Not long after he established himself as the supreme leader of the Saints in Hawaii, he decided to send missionaries to other islands of the Pacific. As early as September 1861 he reported to Brigham Young that he planned to expand the bounds of the Church in the Pacific to the Society Islands and other points. His hope was to convert a force of Polynesian elders to Mormonism and then train them to move into Malaysia and establish the Church and political kingdom there.[3]

In a 30 August 1862 letter, Gibson told President Young that two elders, "intelligent native brethren," had been dispatched on a mission to the Society Islands and Tonga Islands. He also said he intended to send other Hawaiian elders to the "Marquesas Islands, the Tonga Group, the Samoan Group, and for Malaysia and Japan."[4] Accurate records of Gibson's activities in this sphere cease with the letter just quoted, but we do know that two priesthood bearers were called as missionaries to Samoa, probably by early December 1862.

There is a sad irony surrounding the call of Kimo Belio and Samuela Manoa as the first missionaries of the Church to the Samoan Islands. Both men were faithful servants of the Lord who had been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood even before Gibson came to Hawaii. But through his clever manipulations of the Hawaiian Saints, Gibson had convinced many good men that he was authorized to enlarge the priesthood activity in Hawaii. He ordained twelve apostles, some seventies, an archbishop, and bishops to preside over the people. Kimo Belio was ordained one of the Hawaiian apostles, and Samuela Manoa was ordained a seventy under Gibson's hand. Belio and Manoa were so faithful they accepted Gibson's charge to open Samoa, but when Gibson was excommunicated in 1864, they were left to their own devices in Samoa.

Belio and Manoa sailed from Honolulu on 23 December 1862 and arrived on the tiny Samoan island of Aunuu, a mile off the

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vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1930), 5:97-100; Esther L. Sousa, "Walter Murray Gibson's Rise to Power in Hawaii," (M.A. thesis, University of Hawaii, 1942); Samuel W. Taylor, "Walter Murray Gibson: Great Mormon Rascal," *The American West* 1 (Spring 1964):18-27, 77; Lorrin A. Thurston, *Memoirs of the Hawaiian Revolution* (Honolulu: Advertiser Publishing Co., Ltd., 1936).

[3]Walter Murray Gibson to Brigham Young, 2 September 1861, letters to Brigham Young, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

[4]Gibson to Brigham Young, Church Archives.

southeast coast of Tutuila, now the principal island of American Samoa, on 24 January 1863. After laboring on Aunuu for several months with only one baptism, they moved to Tutuila and began teaching there. Before long they raised up a branch of forty-two baptized members, many of whom lived in Utumea. It is reported that Belio also extended his labors to Apia, on Upolu Island, and baptized several people there.[5]

When the mission was reopened in 1888, Elder Manoa reported that he and Belio had baptized around fifty people during all of their ministrations. It is doubtful that many more people than this were baptized, even though some sources have reported as many as 200 baptisms.[6]

Problems arose for the Samoan Mission. First, the mission was not sanctioned by the leaders of the Church in Salt Lake City. Second, local difficulties also arose. In 1868 Elder Manoa, having heard nothing from Hawaii since his arrival in Samoa, decided it would be appropriate for him to marry, and he did. Unfortunately the marriage failed and a year later Elder Belio found it necessary to excommunicate the thirty-three year old Manoa for adultery. Manoa remained outside the Church until 1876, when Church leaders in Hawaii gave permission for his rebaptism. This ordinance was performed by a Samoan elder, Miomio, on 4 June, one day after the now-aged Belio had died.[7]

Manoa did little missionary work after his reentry into the Church. When the mission was finally reopened, he reported that he had written to Hawaii a number of times asking for assistance. The question may be raised, why was the Church not paying attention to the little cluster of Saints in Samoa during these years? The best answer is probably that the Church was honestly ignorant of the few Saints who had been brought together in that distant place. Manoa's letters may have ended up in places other than the Church headquarters in Laie. I have been able to find only three references to Samoa in the Church Archives during these years. Harvey H. Cluff mentioned the Samoan group twice. The first reference is cited above; the second leaves us with a question. Cluff wrote: "In the evening Elder John A. West arrived . . . on his way to fulfill a mission on the Samoan Islands. He will stop here until his two

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[5]Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), p. 765.

[6]Ibid.; and also referring to a statement by Harvey Harris Cluff, "Autobiography," 6, 7, and 8 October 1871, p. 128, Church Archives.

[7]It is difficult to be sure of the facts in this situation. The only source was Manoa himself, and his story is not easily corroborated.

companions arrive."[8] Apparently West's two companions never did arrive, for he filled his mission in Hawaii.

The other reference is a letter from ten Samoan Saints who asked President Brigham Young to send "some of the servants of God." It arrived shortly after Young's death in 1877. We have no record that the letter was ever answered.

PERIOD TWO: JOSEPH HARRY DEAN REOPENS THE SAMOAN MISSION

The 1880s were difficult years for the Saints in Utah. The most serious problem was the polygamy issue. Many of the Church's strongest men were imprisoned during the later years of the decade. Joseph H. Dean, husband of two wives and father of five children by the first, Sally, spent part of 1886 and until 13 May 1887, in prison on a conviction of unlawful cohabitation. On the day of his release he went into hiding again because he had heard that deputies wanted to arrest him on charges of illegal voting. A close friend, William O. Lee, allowed Dean to stay in his home while plans were being made to take care of him. While Dean was there, he received a message from Apostle Franklin D. Richards. He asked Dean about the possibility of his filling a second mission in Hawaii. Since the subject had been raised by George Reynolds, Church mission secretary, a week or two before, Elder Dean was not surprised by Richards' request. The First Presidency wondered whether such a mission call would be too much for a thirty-one year old man with so many responsibilities, but when they learned that he had taken to the "underground" again, it was agreed that the mission call would relieve more problems than it would cause.

On Monday, 23 May 1887, Joseph H. Dean and his second wife, Florence Ridges, were "set apart to go [as missionaries] to the Sandwich, Society, Navigator (Samoa), or any of the other groups of islands that the spirit might dictate through the authorities."[9] Within a few days Joseph and Florence had said goodbye to Sally and the children and were on their way.

The records do not reveal what else, if anything, the Church leaders said to Dean concerning Samoa. But it is evident from his journals that Elder Dean was interested in the possibility of going to Samoa. By October 1887 he was aware of Samuela Manoa, and during conference he asked whether anyone knew his address.

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[8]Cluff, "Autobiography," 12 August 1872, p. 134, Church Archives.
[9]Journals of Joseph H. Dean, 23 May 1887, Church Archives.

Brother Kaleohano told Dean that he had received word from sailors of the Hawaiian Man-of-War *Imiloa,* which had just returned from Samoa, that Manoa was still there, "that there were a good many Saints there, and that they felt that the Church had forgotten them entirely." This news increased Dean's concern.[10]

As soon as he knew that Manoa was still alive and faithful to the Church, Dean began gathering information about Samoa. From a man who had worked there, Dean learned about steamship connections, the almost total lack of mail service, the cost of sailing to Tutuila, which was close to Aunuu where Manoa lived, the fact that there were 35,000 people living in the islands, and so on.

On 26 October 1887, Elder Dean wrote to Manoa and asked whether he would be able to care for him and his wife. Florence was five months pregnant, and Joseph must have been deeply concerned about housing, food, and other facilities. A few days later he wrote to Presidents Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon and explained the possibilities for mission work in Samoa. In December a letter from them told him to move ahead with the project as he saw fit.

Dean was busy with many matters relating to the Hawaiian Mission, but he continued to work toward going to Samoa. On 9 February 1888, Florence delivered a ten-pound baby boy. On the following day Dean received word from Manoa. He wrote in his journal:

> Manoa will open his house for us and make us comfortable. He is very desirous to have us come and says he thinks the prospects are as good for converts as on Hawaii nei. That settles the matter and I will be able to take Florence along with me.[11]

Dean's course was set. Florence and the baby needed time to gain strength, but they were all going to Samoa.

In early May, Elder Dean decided to sail for Samoa on 7 June. During the remaining time he made reservations for their steamship passage (at a reduced rate because of their ecclesiastical status), arranged with a faithful Hawaiian brother, C. K. Kapule, to come to Samoa as a missionary as soon as he could arrange his affairs (he was delayed because of the untimely death of his wife), and continued to search for information about Samoa. The Hawaiian Saints and the *haole* (white) missionaries held a number of feasts in their

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[10]Ibid., 9 October 1887.

[11]Ibid., 10 February 1888.

honor, and the much anticipated day for sailing finally arrived. Unfortunately the mail ship was three days late because of the late arrival of mail in San Francisco. This complicated the Deans' departure, because the captain was not sure he would even stop the ship at Tutuila and let them off. When the *Alemeda* was offshore a couple of miles west of Tutuila, the captain did stop the engines, and had the Deans lowered to a small rowboat that had come out to meet them.

The roughness of the sea, the uncertainty of the accommodations for his wife and infant son, and the knowledge that he was to open the gospel door to a new nation all caused some misgivings and anxiety in Dean's mind. He was somewhat calmed when the head boatman made it known that he had been sent by Manoa and would take them to his home in Aunuu. Because of the roughness of the sea, the Deans were forced to spend three nights on Tutuila. But finally the longboat was put ashore at Aunuu on 21 June 1888.

Manoa and his wife greeted Joseph, Florence, and the baby at the shore and took them to their frame house. Manoa ushered Elder Dean into a separate room away from the crowd and, taking him by the hand, he said in Hawaiian, "I feel greatly blessed that God has brought us together and that I can meet his good servant here in Samoa." Here Manoa broke down but soon controlled himself to welcome the new missionaries to his adopted land. It had been over twenty-five years since Manoa had seen an authorized priesthood leader from Zion!

The Deans were not troubled by the primitive physical circumstances they found in Samoa, although Hawaii was far more advanced. Brother Dean had studied the Samoan situation as carefully as possible before leaving Hawaii and had a fairly good idea what to expect. He was happy that Manoa owned a western-style home, and that there was even a bed prepared for their use. This may seem natural until one realizes that the Samoans sleep on mats on the floor of their *fales* (large mushroom-shaped thatched houses). In addition to the bed there was a good kerosene lamp, earthenware dishes, and a concrete floor. But they had "no stove, no cows, no bread, nor anything to make it of. No running water rainwater being all that they use. It seems that we will have to live on straight native fare." Probably Dean's greatest disappointment was with the mail. "The mail facilities seem to be at a fearful state. No inner island mail at all."[12] These inconveniences notwithstand-

[12]Ibid., 21 June 1888.

ing, Dean and his wife were excited to be in Samoa and were especially eager to begin teaching the gospel.

The natives of Aunuu were equally eager to hear Dean's message. On Sunday, 24 June, Elder Dean gathered a large number of the villagers and preached his first sermon. Brother Manoa translated from Hawaiian into Samoan after Dean spoke each sentence. The whole process was very cumbersome, so the new missionary was eager to learn the language as fast as possible.

On the following day Dean rebaptized Manoa, confirmed him, and ordained him an elder. This was thought necessary because of Manoa's questionable original authority from Gibson, and because of the questionable authenticity of his first rebaptism by a man (Miomio) whose priesthood authority could be doubted, having come from Manoa himself. The act of baptism must have been a spiritual experience for those who looked on, because a Samoan woman named Malaea applied for baptism almost immediately. Her faith seemed sincere, and so the good elder baptized her. Since she had not been baptized before, Dean counted her as his first Samoan convert.[13] By 3 July, Elder Dean had baptized fourteen more and felt much encouraged. He soon expanded his work to include occasional visits to Tutuila, where he baptized the daughter of a Samoan judge on 21 July.

On 29 July Brother Dean delivered his first sermon in the Samoan language. Evidently he had progressed very rapidly in the language, for when the first group of American elders arrived in October, they reported that he was speaking quite fluently. The encouraging thing was that Dean was having success during the first month of his mission. Considering the kinds of problems that existed in Samoa at that time, this success was encouraging.

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN SAMOA PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE LDS MISSION

Before the arrival of Christian missionaries in Samoa, the people worshipped a pantheon of deities. The names of these gods were not the same as those in Hawaii, but there are clear evidences of common origins. Unlike Hawaii, where traders and whalers flocked in large numbers soon after its discovery, Samoa remained quiet and relatively undisturbed by the modern world until much later. Even

[13]Manuscript History of the Samoan Mission, 24 June 1888, Church Archives (hereafter cited as MHSM).

as late as 1874 there were fewer than three hundred European and American residents in all of Samoa.

Christianity was introduced into Samoa after it was in Hawaii, Tahiti, and Tonga. Christian converts from Tonga, 500 miles south of the Samoan group, were the first emissaries of Christianity to enter Samoa, in 1828. Two years later one of the greatest missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS), John Williams, visited Tonga and then, in company with a Samoan chief who had been converted to Christ while in Tonga, he moved on to Samoa. While there he converted a large number of people at Sapapali'i, Savai'i. Williams' message was so willingly accepted that he promised representatives of various villages he would soon return with teachers to train them in the doctrines of the new religion. When he returned two years later, he was surprised to learn that the news of Christianity had spread over most of the main islands of the group. Once again he left his new converts and went to England to recruit more missionaries to care for the new flock. Although Williams did not return until 1838, and then for but a brief time, his efforts in England bore fruit, for by 1836 a new contingent of LMS missionaries had arrived in Samoa. To their surprise they found a thriving body (13,000) of Methodists who had been converted by Tongan missionaries. This development caused an open feud between the LMS group and the Methodists, but it was resolved in favor of the LMS in 1839. Thereafter the LMS had almost complete control over the religious lives of the Samoan people. Some small minorities of Methodists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and a larger group of Catholics grew over the years. The Roman Catholic mission was founded in Samoa in 1845.[14]

Just as the Latter-day Saints owe a debt of gratitude to the Protestant missionaries in Hawaii, so do they in Samoa. By the 1840s most Samoans considered themselves Christian. Although some of the changes these early missionaries demanded of their converts had little to do with Christianity (they sometimes equated the cultural preferences of the Western world with Christianity and required their converts to conform to these preferences), most of the work of the early LMS missionaries must be listed on the positive side of the ledger. They founded schools and even started a

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[14]Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century: The Americas, Australasia, and Africa,* Volume 5, A History of the Expansion of Christianity (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pp. 214-18; and Alan R. Tippett, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), chapter 4. The best LDS source relating the political situation from 1888 to 1899 is William O. Lee, "Political Samoa," *The Improvement Era* 2 (June 1899):434-41.

seminary in 1844 to train Samoan ministers. By 1842 the Book of John was translated into Samoan, and in successive stages the remainder of the Bible was published in Samoan by 1860. It should be noted that this progress was made under difficult circumstances and at the cost of much sacrifice on the part of the missionaries.

When Elder Dean and his companions began teaching Mormonism in Samoa, they did so as intruders into a stable religious situation. It is not surprising that the LDS and the LMS did not get along well together.

The political situation was much more complex than the religious when the Latter-day Saints arrived. In June 1888 Samoa was on the verge of a civil or tribal war. During the next several years LDS missionaries witnessed several battles and sometimes were caught between the warring factions who were attempting to control the country. The Samoan political situation was complicated by the involvement not only of several tribal factions who were seeking the kingship, but also by the presence of three foreign powers: Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. The degree of their involvement in Samoa varied, but all three nations were tenaciously defending their own interests and interfering in Samoan internal affairs as three men contended for the kingship.[15]

DEVELOPMENT DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF REOPENING

The difficult political and religious situation nothwithstanding, Joseph H. Dean moved ahead with his missionary work. On 30 October 1888, four months after his arrival in Samoa, he wrote to President Wilford Woodruff, explaining in part why he had not expanded the work beyond Aunuu. First, he did not feel that he should leave the forty or so souls who had joined the Church there since he arrived. He wrote: "My policy has always been to labor as hard to keep a member as to get a new one, and not to spread my wings over more eggs than I can keep warm." Second, he mentioned that he had not quite mastered the Samoan language in the four months he had been there. Then, almost incidentally, he mentioned that he had been working with the members on a new meetinghouse.

The modesty of his letter concealed his real accomplishments. In addition to taking care of his wife and new son, he had organized a branch, baptized at least thirty-five people (who had an additional twelve unbaptized children), organized a Sunday School and a Relief

[15]C. Hartley Grattan, *The Southwest Pacific to 1900* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 483.

ociety, looked after the arrival and subsequent work of Elder Kapule, who arrived on 13 August, and cared for and oriented Elder William O. Lee, his wife Louisa and their baby Louie, Elder Adelbert Beesley, and Elder Edward James Wood after they arrived on 10 October.

In addition to these activities, Elder Dean and his new flock were faced with a serious challenge. Whether true or not, a rumor was circulated to the effect that the reigning king, Tamasese, following the advice of his German adviser, Mr. Brandeis, had declared it illegal to join the Mamona (Mormon) Church. He allegedly threatened to arrest all who were baptized into the new church—President Dean along with the rest. After this scare, which first came in late August 1888, only one person, a young boy, had applied for baptism. Although the missionaries were not able to confirm the rumor, they later were assured by the American consul that they and their congregations would be protected; nevertheless, a civil war on Upolu Island was having a negative effect upon the work.[16]

The arrival of new missionaries made it possible to expand the work. Dean had concluded even before the end of October that Aunuu was not suitable for a mission headquarters. In fact he was anxious to move to Tutuila as soon as housing could be arranged. But even Tutuila was not central enough and before another year had passed, headquarters were moved to Fagalii, near Apia, the most important city in Samoa.

But the elders took matters one step at a time. When the new group arrived in early October they set about immediately to complete the meetinghouse mentioned above. It was eighteen by thirty-six feet and "very comfortable and commodious." The roof was of sugarcane leaf thatch, the lumber and posts were of breadfruit and coconut, and the floor was covered with clean white coral pebbles. Elder Wood said it was of half American and half Samoan design.[17]

The elders also devoted as much time as possible to the study of the Samoan language. The method employed was slow. They tried to learn some phrases, but most of the time they listened to the native speakers, jotted down the words they heard, looked them up in a dictionary, and then tried to use them.

The first conference of the Samoan Mission was held on 28 October 1888. In addition to the organizational advancements al-

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[16]Journal History of the Church, 30 October 1888, Church Archives.

[17]Edward J. Wood, "My Samoan Experience," *The Juvenile Instructor* 28 (15 May 1893):348. This is a portion of an eleven-part series which gives a great deal of information on a variety of subjects.

ready mentioned, President Dean dedicated the newly completed chapel, gave the new elders their assignments, called one Samoan brother to fill a six-month mission (a practice Dean had learned in Hawaii), and announced plans to make a walking missionary tour of the island of Tutuila as soon as possible.

Four days later President Dean took Elders Beesley and Wood with him to Tutuila. On 2 November, they began a twenty-three day teaching marathon that ultimately led them before 1,851 people in thirty-nine villages and required eighty-eight miles of walking. When they were through, they had baptized only three people, but the elders were sure that once the government problem was resolved, many more people would come into the Church.[18]

Actually the Tutuila tour was immensely valuable. By living with the Samoan people around the clock, the elders quickly became educated in the native ways. One of the first lessons they learned was the necessity of following local social customs when gospel standards would allow it.

They also learned that the best way to begin a gospel discussion was with the highest ranking chief or chiefs (*matai*) of a village. The Samoan social system is patriarchal. The village elders make the rules of the community; young people listen and obey. Therefore, it was best to contact the chiefs first.

The missionaries also learned to respect the intelligence of the Samoans, especially their knowledge of the Bible. The LMS had done a good work among the Samoan people, most of whom had learned to read using the Bible as their text. The LMS had also taught the people to pray and to hold a form of family home evening.

Every evening the chiefs came to have prayer with Dean, Beesley, and Wood. After prayer they had supper. Wood described it this way:

> On looking around the little village it was a beautiful scene. We could see in every hut the family gathered around the fireplace, singing or reading or praying, seemingly unconscious of all surroundings. This grand custom is followed in almost every household in the islands.[19]

Seeing the Samoan people pray and study the scriptures helped the elders realize that even though the people lived in huts and used ovens that were but heated rocks in the ground, they were very

[18]MHSM, 1-23 November 1888, Church Archives.
[19]Wood, "My Samoan Experience," p. 409.

spiritual and much loved of God. Love was extended to the missionaries many times as they tramped around the island. Wood noted that their own "testimonies were many times strengthened by having our food provided for us, having boats placed at our disposal, also having the privilege of holding so many meetings and in nearly every instance of having good places to sleep."[20]

In early December 1888, the missionaries bought a small (twenty-two foot) sailboat. It was well-made and had two sails, but it was very small for sailing in open water. They christened it the *Faaaliga,* "Revelation," and began sailing from place to place on Aunuu and Tutuila.

Soon after the end of the Tutuila tour, Elders Wood and Kapule were assigned to teach there on a permanent basis. They worked from the village of Alao, which already had some Mormon families. In early January, President Dean and his family moved there with them, and two weeks later moved on to Vatia, a "nice village" directly over the mountain north from Pago Pago.

The leaders lamented that rents were high, and they were saddened when rumors of war reached their village only a few days after they had moved there. The natives, including some of the members of the Church, then came to them and asked them to live in their homes. The reason for the new generosity soon surfaced: missionaries and their properties were exempt from the ravages of tribal war. On 7 February, Vatia was attacked by thirty followers of Mata'afa, one of the contenders for the kingship. As was customary in such circumstances, the warriors burned *fales,* destroyed other property, and killed livestock. It did not seem to be their intention to kill people on this occasion. By mistake some of the mission animals were killed and some personal property was destroyed, but the missionaries were not harmed.

After much hard work the elders built a twenty by forty foot mission house. It was constructed of coconut wood and was made with only tow axes and two native adzes. In early March, even before the house was finished, the Lees moved to Vatia from Aunuu.

On 12 and 13 March 1889, Dean, Beesley, and Wood embarked on a trip which was later described as the "most exciting and important boat voyage of our entire mission."[21] This voyage, which took the brethren to Apia, Upolu, covered forty miles of open water

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[20]Ibid., p. 491.
[21]Ibid., p. 539.

between the two islands and approximately twenty-five miles along the coast of Upolu. Their little twenty-two foot craft was hardly able to withstand the open seas, but made it close to Upolu, only to be overturned near shore. Natives righted the craft, and finally, the elders reached Apia.

They had lost all of their food when the boat overturned but were fortunate to have several kind men come to their aid. This trip to Apia was motivated by two desires. First, they hoped to establish the Church on Upolu. A Samoan convert during the days of Manoa, named Ifopo, had encouraged the elders to come to his home on Upolu. Ifopo later proved to be a faithful convert to the Church and helped establish the Church in his area. The other purpose of the trip was to visit the American consul in Apia and establish relations with his office. This was prompted by the Samoan civil war and its possible implications for the Church.

President Dean and his companions visited the American consul, Mr. Blacklock, and asked him if he had heard anything concerning the rumor that Latter-day Saints would be put in prison. He said he had heard nothing of the kind and assured them that he would guarantee their safety and the safety of their converts.[23]

It was while the elders were at Apia that a great hurricane struck, placing them in dangerous circumstances. A man named Moorse housed them in the loft of an old barn and slaughterhouse near the harbor. When the storm came, they had to remain in these quarters until it ended. The barn was so full of holes that they could hardly keep a candle lit even before the storm, but perhaps the flimsy construction helped the building to remain standing through the entire storm. Elder Wood later wrote that he stood at the window most of the day and night watching the ships in the harbor meet destruction. There was nothing anyone could do. But when the storm ended, "the beach was swept clear of its row of buildings, only one small building still stood, buried in sand to the roof, which alone had saved it from total destruction." Inside were Elders Dean, Beesley, and Wood.[24]

After completing their business in Apia they sailed toward the east end of Upolu. At Salea'aumua they located Ifopo, who welcomed them warmly, provided a feast, and ultimately applied for rebaptism. He had been baptized twenty-five years before, but it

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[22]MHSM, 12-19 March 1889, Church Archives.
[23]Ibid.
[24]*Cardston News* (Alberta, Canada), 27 October 1936; Wood, "My Samoan Experience," p. 632.

was considered best to do it again. With the performance of this ordinance the elders felt that the door to this large and beautiful island had been opened. They sailed that day for Tutuila.

The first annual conference of the Samoan Mission was held in Aunuu on 7 April. All the missionaries were present except Sisters Dean and Lee, and a fair number of Samoan Saints were there as well. The pattern for this conference followed the established procedure for such meetings elsewhere in the Church. The leaders of the Church were sustained, talks were given, and business was transacted.

On 16 June 1889, four new missionaries arrived: Elders Hyrum E. Boothe, Brigham Smoot, Jesse J. Bennett, and Brigham Soloman. When they arrived at Vatia, they found that the missionaries and the Samoan people were suffering from a famine caused by the hurricane. Then, two days later, Elder Smoot, who could not swim, stepped off the reef and drowned, but was miraculously restored to life through the administration of his fellow missionaries.[25]

June 1889 marked the end of the first year of the Samoan Mission. A meeting was held 18 June 1889, in which assignments were made to all the missionaries. Elders Lee and Bennett were appointed to labor on Tutuila and Aunuu, Beesley and Boothe were sent to Manua, and President Dean and Elders Wood, Smoot, and Soloman were given the task of opening proselyting work on Upolu. So ended the first year of the Samoan Mission. The Church was well-founded. Only time and work were needed to see the effort succeed.

It is noteworthy that by this time the missionaries had experienced almost every problem Samoa could offer them. They had endured war, famine, a hurricane, and other tropical storms. They had suffered sickness, apostasy, days in open boats, and storms at sea. Rumors had been circulated against them and Protestant ministers had used newspapers and their pulpits to republish all the old lies about Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints. (Although Elder Lee mentioned that the Roman Catholics were to be commended because they did not persecute the Mormons.) Their housing was inferior to their home in Zion, and living conditions resembled a perpetual camping trip. Nevertheless, through all this the elders were in excellent spirits and eager to spread the gospel throughout the islands.

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[25]MHSM, 16-18 June 1889; and Wood, "My Samoan Experience," pp. 634-35.