

THE POLYNESIAN MISSION.

An address read by Elder Andrew Jensen at the Polynesian Reunion at Calder's Park, July 7, 1898:

When the Book of Mormon first made its appearance and disclosed the fact that the North American Indians were a remnant of the House of Israel, the first Elders of the Church became deeply interested in that people, and desired to approach them at once with the sacred volume, which gave not only the history of their forefathers, but contained also the fullness of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, a few months after the organization of the Church in 1830, we find four of the first ordained Elders leaving the state of New York and traveling westward about thirteen hundred miles to commence that missionary work among the Lamanites which has been continued to a greater or less extent by our missionaries from that day to this.

As the work rolled on, the inspiration which rested on the Prophet Joseph Smith enabled him to look beyond the boundaries of the great American continent, and behold some of the islands far out in the Pacific ocean inhabited by a people who belonged to the same race as those who came from Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of Christ. The strange sayings of the Nephite historians became clear, and suggested the thought that the ships built by Hagoth and others on the western shores of the American continent were not necessarily lost, though heard of no more by the Nephites. The gentle trade winds, assisted by the currents of the deep, may have wafted these early navigators westward. Weeks, and perhaps months, passed away during which nothing but sea and sky greeted the anxious gaze of the voyagers. We can imagine their anxiety and anguish, and finally their exquisite joy when the mountain tops of the traditional Hawaika, so well known to Polynesian song and tradition, appeared on the western horizon. The rest is easily imagined. The beautiful and fertile islands of the Pacific became the new home of the lost navigators and their descendants. Generation followed generation; and in due course of time that particular branch of the human family known today as the Polynesian race, spread from island to island and from group to group. Thus we find that Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, the Marquesas, the Tuamotus, the Society Islands, the Austral group, Cooks Islands and numerous other islands known by separate names, not to speak of the larger islands constituting New Zealand, are (according to the firm belief of the Latter-day Saints,) inhabited by a pure remnant of the House of Israel.

It was these people the Prophet Joseph had in view when, in 1843, at Nauvoo, Illinois, he directed Brigham Young, then president of the Twelve Apostles, to select some faithful Elders and send them as the first missionaries bearing the restored Gospel to the Pacific Islands. Addison Pratt, Noah Rogers, Benjamin F. Grouard and Knowlden F. Hanks were the Elders chosen. After being ordained, blessed and set apart by the Apostles at the headquarters of the Church, these four, whose names will never be forgotten in Israel, bade their families and friends an affectionate farewell and started on the first mission appointed by the Church to a people who knew not the English language. Their departure was witnessed by the Saints at Nauvoo, June 1, 1843. After a tedious journey they reached the coast of New England and there assisted by kind friends, they were enabled to secure passage on the ship Timoleon. From New Bedford Mass., on October 9, 1843, they commenced a voyage of many months, and

to one of their number it proved the last voyage indeed. Elder Knowlden F. Hanks, who was sick with consumption before he left his native land, succumbed to that dreadful disease, and on November 3, 1843, he breathed his last in the arms of his brethren; and thus he became the first of our missionaries Elders who died and was buried at sea. The three surviving missionaries continued the voyage. After doubling the Cape of Good Hope, and passing the continent of New Holland or Australia, and also New Zealand, they found themselves one beautiful morning in April, 1844, approaching the little Island of Tubual, one of the Austral group, situated about 350 miles south of Tahiti. Here they landed; not with the intention of remaining, but for the purpose of replenishing their stock of provisions. The Lord, however, put it into the hearts of the natives of that little island to plead, and that too in great earnest, that one or more of the white missionaries who had come from far-off America should remain with them, and teach them the Gospel of the Savior of the world, of whom they previously had heard a little through Protestant missionaries who had visited them. Their request was granted; Elder Pratt remained on Tubual, while his two missionary companions continued the voyage to Tahiti. And thus Tubual became the cradle of "Mormonism" to the Polynesian family; for here it was that baptism and confirmation by divine authority was first performed in this dispensation on the Pacific Islands. This took place Sunday, June 16th, 1844, when Elder Pratt baptized and confirmed Ambrose Alexander, a white man who, together with white companions, were engaged in building a ship on Tubual. About a month later (on July 21, 1844), Elder Pratt baptized eight others, among whom were four natives, namely, Nahota and his wife, Tell, Pauma and Hamoe, who thus became the first converts to the fullness of the Gospel among the Polynesians. Other natives followed and on July 28, 1844, Elder Pratt, overjoyed at his success and full of thanksgivings to his divine Master, had the pleasure of organizing the first branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the islands of the Pacific.

The time allotted me on this occasion will not permit me to narrate any details of this most important mission, the history of which, when prepared by the Church historians, will make very interesting reading to the Latter-day Saints and others. Suffice it to say that Elder Pratt afterwards assisted Elder Grouard in opening up a very successful mission on the Tuamotu Islands, where nearly two thousand natives were baptized, during the few following years. Elder Rogers, after visiting a number of islands in the Society and the Hervey (or Cook's) groups, returned to Nauvoo in 1845 by way of Cape Horn, and thus he became the first of our Elders who circumnavigated the globe as a missionary.

Elders Pratt and Grouard continued their labors successfully until 1847, when Elder Pratt also returned to America, and on Sept. 28, 1848, after more than five years' separation, joined his family in Great Salt Lake City; for during his long absence the Church had been driven out of Nauvoo and his family, among the rest of the Saints, forced into the wilderness.

Elder Pratt's return to the islands on a second mission, accompanied and followed by other Elders, their banishment by the French government in 1852, the severe persecutions to which the native Saints, under Catholic intolerance, were subjected, their isolation from the headquarters of the Church for forty years, the re-opening of the

mission in 1892 by our esteemed veteran, Elder James S. Brown (who performed an important mission to the Society Islands from 1850 to 1852), aided by young missionaries, and their late experience with the present French officials, who in 1895 made another attempt at closing the mission by banishing our Elders, cannot be told in a few minutes, but in due course of time it will be read by us and our children as interesting history.

Nearly seven years after the first call for missionaries to the Pacific Islands was made, another group of the islands included in modern Polynesia became the scene of missionary operation by Latter-day Saint Elders. The 12th of December, 1850, witnessed the arrival at Honolulu, the capital of the Hawaiian kingdom, of the little whaling vessel Imaum of Muscat, which had on board ten Mormon missionaries. Their names were Hiram Clark, Thomas Whittle, Henry W. Bigler, Thomas Morris, John Dixon, Wm. Farrer, James Hawkins, Hiram Blackwell, James Keeler and George Q. Cannon. After dedicating themselves and the Hawaiian group to the service of the Lord, these Elders separated, and in pairs commenced missionary work on the four principal islands of the group. Rejected by the few white inhabitants, who resided in Hawaii, Hiram Clark and four of the other Elders became discouraged and left the islands, while the five remaining missionaries, namely, Geo. Q. Cannon, James Keeler, William Farrer, James Hawkins and Henry W. Bigler, turned their attention to the natives by studying and learning their language and preaching the Gospel to them. The glorious success which attended the labors of Elder George Q. Cannon on the island of Maui, where he commenced to baptize June 22nd, 1851, and where he organized the first branch of the Church in Hawaii, August 6th, 1851, is something that every Latter-day Saint takes delight in speaking about, and something too that has encouraged thousands of other young Elders who like Elder Cannon, have gone forth on their first missions. Elder Cannon's labors encouraged the other Elders, and hence the success of the Hawaiian mission.

As other missionaries arrived, the Gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith was preached in nearly every village throughout the Hawaiian kingdom, and numerous branches raised up by the Elders from Zion, assisted by many excellent and faithful native missionaries, were grouped into conferences, the natives were instructed in the order of the Church and the Holy Priesthood, gathering places were appointed and everything possible done for the advancement of the natives in the scale of intelligence and good morals.

Since 1850 nearly four hundred American missionaries, among whom about fifty missionary sisters, have labored in the interest of their Master's cause in Hawaii, most of them very successfully, and many and interesting are the experiences which these our missionary brethren and sisters can relate in regard to their work and associations with the natives of those beautiful islands. Among the Elders whose first missionary experience was gained in Hawaii are many who subsequently became prominent in the Church. Thus two members of the First Presidency, (George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith,) four presidents of Stakes, (Wm. W. Cluff, Francis A. Hammond, Edward Partridge and Silas S. Smith,) two of Utah's delegates to Congress, (Geo. Q. Cannon and John T. Caine,) and many other men of note in the Church, filled missions to Hawaii in their younger days. The kindness, hospitality, confidence and love which the Hawaiian Saints, as well as their kinsfolks