

MISSIONARY  
WORK *in*  
ASIA *and*  
THE PACIFIC ISLES



*Fred E. Woods*

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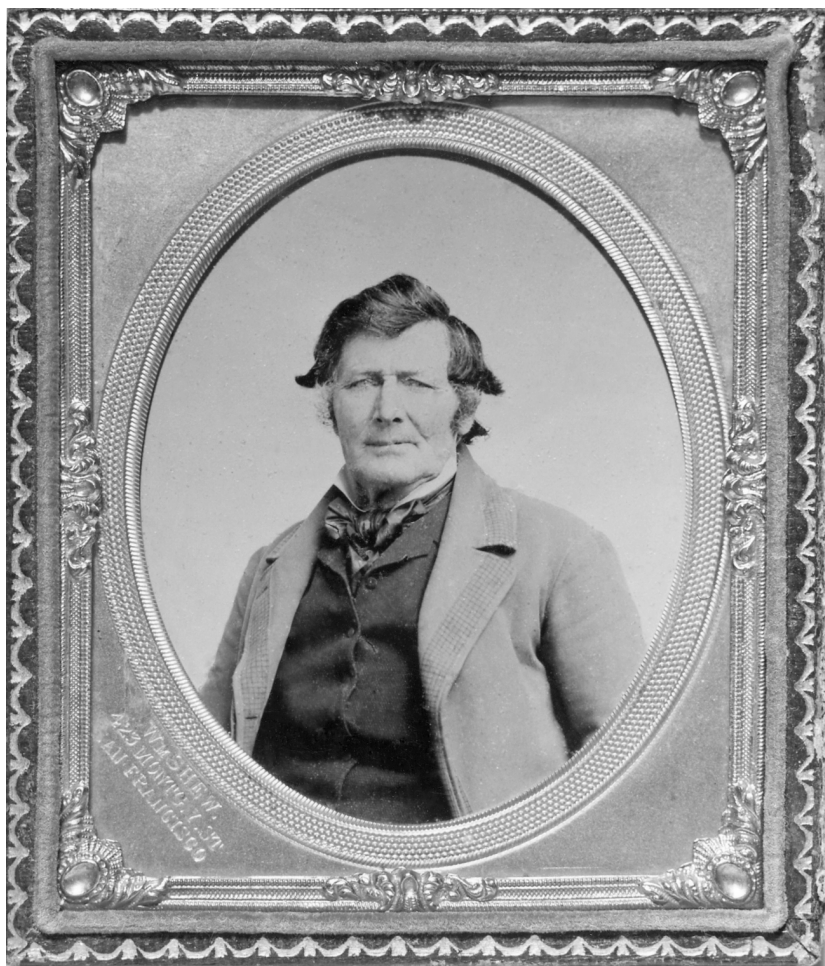
## LAUNCHING MORMONISM IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC: THE VOYAGE OF THE *TIMOLEON*

THE *Timoleon* is an excellent seaboat, but not a fast sailor; she makes sure passages, but not quick ones,” wrote Addison Pratt, a Mormon missionary who spent nearly seven months aboard this whaling vessel, which launched Latter-day Saint missionary work in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> Addison, the fourth of twelve children, was born in Winchester, New Hampshire, and commenced a career as a whale man at the age of twenty (1822). His sea journeys, including a six-month stay on the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands), left an insatiable desire to return to Hawaii. In 1838, Addison Pratt joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Three years later, and the same year that the *Charles W. Morgan* embarked from New Bedford on her maiden voyage, Pratt, with his wife, Louisa, and their four daughters, migrated with other Saints to Nauvoo, Illinois. Here, nestled on the banks of the Mississippi, the Pratt family began a new chapter of their life in what was then the designated gathering place for the Church.<sup>2</sup>

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GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD



*Addison Pratt left Nauvoo in 1843 with three other missionaries to teach the gospel in the South Pacific. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.*

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

While living in Nauvoo, Pratt became familiar with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other Church leaders. One of Pratt's four daughters, Mrs. Frances Pratt Dyer, explained, "One day in conversation with President Young in Nauvoo, they commenced to talk about those [Sandwich] islands and Brother Pratt expressed a strong desire to revisit them. Brother Brigham asked if he would be willing to be sent there on a mission. He said he would if he could have others sent with him. Accordingly three others volunteered to go, viz., B. F. Grouard, Noah Rogers and Knowlton F. Hanks."<sup>3</sup> Benjamin F. Grouard, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was also an experienced seaman. At the age of fourteen, he left his home and went to sea, traveling throughout the world. Because of his oceanic experience, he too was well suited to accompany Pratt on a mission to the islands of the Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

Noah Rogers, of Bethlehem, Connecticut, joined the Latter-day Saint Church in 1837 and moved with his wife to Missouri in 1838 to be with the Saints. In 1840, after having spent part of the summer in prison due to local persecution, he migrated with the Saints to Nauvoo. At forty-six years of age, he was the oldest of the four elders going to the Sandwich Islands and was therefore appointed president of the mission.<sup>5</sup> Knowlton F. Hanks, age twenty-seven, was the only bachelor of the group. According to Pratt's daughter, he was "a consumptive man, and a person much attached to Brother Pratt. He was raptured with the descriptions Brother Pratt gave of the islands, and risked his life in going to sea in the hope that he would reach a land that would be much easier on him."<sup>6</sup> Hanks felt that the change in climate would be good for him. According to Grouard, "He felt determined to perform the mission or die in the attempt."<sup>7</sup> On May 24, 1843, one week before leaving, "Addison Pratt presented the tooth of a whale, coral, bones of an Albatross' wing and skin of a foot, jaw-bone of a porpoise, and tooth of a South Sea seal as the beginning for a museum in Nauvoo."<sup>8</sup> Such was Pratt's excitement in returning to the Sandwich Islands, this time as a Mormon missionary.

In preparation for their missions, Pratt, Grouard, and Rogers were ordained Seventies, following the proselytizing pattern established in the New

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

Testament (see Luke 10:1). On Brigham Young's forty-second birthday, the missionaries left Nauvoo, thus beginning the first Latter-day Saint mission to the Pacific. Noah Rogers wrote of the event, "Having ben set apart together with Addison Pratt, B. F. Grouard & Knowlton Hanks to go to the South Sea Islands, we . . . took Leave of our fameleys & friends in Nauvoo on the first Day of June Eighteen Hundred & forty three About Two o'clock in the Day we went on bord the Steam Boat Sarah ann for St. Louis."<sup>9</sup>

Each missionary left behind a family that had to learn to cope with the loss. Knowlton Hanks, although a bachelor, left behind a brother, while Benjamin Grouard left behind his wife. Edda Hollister Rogers would take care of nine children while her husband, Noah, was away. Louisa Barnes Pratt, who was left to take care of four daughters while her husband, Addison, was away, stated that because the Nauvoo Saints were in a state of poverty she was left to "paddle" her "own canoe."<sup>10</sup> On another occasion, Louisa wrote of the poignant feelings she experienced in anticipation of Addison's departure:

I had greatly desired that he might be sent to our kindred in the eastern states, but never had such a thought entered my mind that he would be sent to a foreign land. My four children had to be schooled and clothed, and no money would be left with me. In those days nearly everything was trade; making it more difficult for a mother to be left to provide for herself and four children. My heart felt weak at first, but I determined to trust in the Lord, and stand bravely before the ills of life, and rejoice that my husband was counted worthy to preach the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

After spending time visiting among larger Latter-day Saint congregations in New England, wherein they solicited needed funds for passage, the four missionaries arrived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in late September, nearly four months after leaving Nauvoo.<sup>12</sup> By 1843, New Bedford was a very prosperous whaling town. Whaling had commenced in the vicinity around 1760. Following the Revolutionary War, when the area was all but

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

destroyed, New Bedford rebuilt its industry and became the leading whaling port in the United States.<sup>13</sup> By 1840 its population was assessed at about twelve thousand inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> While the 1841 New Bedford Directory lists over a dozen Christian churches, there is no mention of the Latter-day Saints. This is because the first public Mormon sermon was not preached in New Bedford until the following year. In early 1842, Elder William Hutchings preached in New Bedford's Liberty Hall. There was at that time only one known Latter-day Saint living in the city.

Because the local churches would not allow the Saints to preach in their buildings and since the Saints could not obtain halls, Elder Hutchings and other Mormon missionaries preached in private homes during the winter and spring. However, in the summer of 1842, a kind member of the Society of Friends, Daniel Butler, allowed the Saints to gather for their meetings in an "old building formerly used as a hemp loft attached to the old rope walks."<sup>15</sup> By the winter of 1843, a small congregation (or branch) was formed, and by the fall of the same year, the Mormons could boast of one hundred Latter-day Saints in the New Bedford Branch. However, by the following spring the number had decreased to sixty. Church members in New Bedford and other cities of the eastern United States were encouraged during the early 1840s to gather to Nauvoo, Illinois, where thousands of Latter-day Saints clustered to strengthen each other, receive instructions from Church leaders, and help in building a temple.<sup>16</sup>

It seems rather coincidental that on the very day that Addison Pratt arrived in New Bedford to make voyage arrangements for himself and for his companions (September 21, 1843), the *New Bedford Daily Mercury* carried a front-page story about the "Mormon prophet Joe [Joseph] Smith."<sup>17</sup> Pratt tried to book passage for him and his companions to go to the Sandwich Islands, but, having learned that there were no vessels sailing at this time, he and the other missionaries decided to launch their proselyting efforts on the Society Islands; they had heard that the whale ship *Timoleon* would be embarking on October 9 for this region. While the *New Bedford Daily Mercury* would simply note that on this day the *Timoleon* had cleared port, there is

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

no mention of the Mormon missionaries passing through New Bedford.<sup>18</sup> This was certainly in stark contrast to the excitement caused by the visit of Daniel Webster in the same year.

In attempting to pay for their passage, the missionaries found that they lacked the necessary funds. Benjamin F. Grouard wrote of the situation and of their miraculous deliverance:

We found by comparing we had not one half enough money to pay our passage, & we had no clothing nor any means of getting any neither did we know from whence our required help was coming, but we trusted in the Lord. . . . While waiting in this state of hope & anxiety, wondering from what source the Lord would send us the help he had promised us, Br. [Brother] Phillip B. Lewis, a member of the N.B. [New Bedford] branch of the church, came to us & asked us if we had the required means for our journey. We frankly told him our true situation & circumstances. He told us to give ourselves no more uneasiness as he would see that our passage was paid & we provided with all we stood in need of to make us comfortable on our passage.<sup>19</sup>

Phillip B. Lewis, a tinner from Marblehead, had lived in New Bedford since 1829. In 1842 he converted to Mormonism.<sup>20</sup> The following year Lewis came to the rescue of the missionaries at the request of Brigham Young, who, in the autumn 1843 Church conference in Boston, petitioned, "We want to send four missionaries to the Pacific Islands, and we want a little clothing, and beds, and money to pay their passage. Can you do something for them?" After little response, two days later Young delegated the responsibility to the members in the Boston region: "We call on the churches to fit out these men with necessities. Elder Eli P. Maginn and Elder Phillip B. Lewis we call on to fit them out. If Elder Lewis does not, Maginn will do it himself."<sup>21</sup>

On September 22, 1843, "Elder Addison Pratt, accompanied by Elder Philip B. Lewis engaged a passage to the Society Islands at \$100 each for



*Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

himself, Noah Rogers, Knowlton F. Hanks, and B. F. Grouard.”<sup>22</sup> On October 9, “Elder Philip B. Lewis donated \$300 towards their passage and fit out.”<sup>23</sup> Grateful for the assistance, the missionaries were nonetheless deceived in the purchase of their fare. Benjamin F. Grouard noted:

When Addison Pratt made the purchase for our passage, the owner whose name is Lauton [Asa T. Lawton] told him, that as other passengers were going the room would be entirely occupied, but if we would take our passage in the forecabin among the sailors we could go, but he would make no reduction of our fare. . . . We learned after we got to sea that he had lied most basely to us. The cabin passengers paid the same price as we did, & while we were cooped up in a small place 7 by 9, 4 of us in number, & fed on the very coarsest of sea fare, having to wait on ourselves, they had plenty of room and good food, & two or three to wait on them.<sup>24</sup>

Yet a more serious challenge awaited the missionaries. Just three weeks into the voyage one of their comrades, Knowlton F. Hanks, died and was buried at sea.<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Grouard recalled this sorrowful scene: “We had one source of grief & anxiety which was greater than all the rest. . . . To lose one of our small number & bury him in the ocean, was heart rending to us. . . . A very heavy weight was attached to his feet which would doubtless sink him far below the region of sharks, & probably preserve him entire until he shall come forth clothed upon with immortality. His death caused a vacancy that we felt sorely through the whole mission, but we felt to say, thy will O Lord be done.”<sup>26</sup>

Addison Pratt also recorded Elder Hanks’s burial at sea and the emotional impact it had upon him, his companions, and the crew:

Friday, Novr. 3d, 1843. A day of days to me is this, & long to be remembered. For this morning at half past five o'clock died my dear friend & beloved brother in Christ, Knowlton F. Hanks. . . . After we had prepared him in a neat burial robe, we wrapt him in a large winding sheet

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

& carried him on deck, a plank was laid in the starboard gangway, on it was prepared a piece of canvas, there we laid him & in it we sewed him up, to his feet was attached a bag of sand of about 60 lbs. weight. . . . Then her generous crew gathered around, & with uncovered heads listened in breathless silence to a verily appropriate prayer, which was made by Bro. Noah Rogers. Then they gently raised the end of the plank till the corpse slid off and struck in the water feet foremost. . . . As he sank my eyes followed him till a white speck vanished in the blue waters below.<sup>27</sup>

Another adversity that awaited these missionaries was the difficulty they had in finding a place aboard the *Timoleon* to engage in private prayer. Two of their number were full of gratitude when they finally had a chance to petition the Lord in privacy during a brief stop on St. Paul's Island. Noah Rogers recorded the following on February 22, 1844: "Grouard and myself ascended this Mountain first, which is two thousand feet high where we had a chance to kneel down by a rock and pray to the Lord without being disturbed, which was the first opportunity we had had for four [months] which we considered a great privilege."<sup>28</sup>

Along with the death of Elder Knowlton Hanks, the tight living quarters, and the lack of privacy during this lengthy voyage, William Plaskett of Nantucket, who was the captain of the vessel, tried the patience of the Mormon missionaries. Concerning the behavior of the captain, Benjamin F. Grouard wrote: "Our situation on board the ship was anything but pleasant, & there was no prospect of any change for the better. The captain was one of these self important men, who because he has command of a ship & a few sailors, felt as though he was absolute monarch of the whole world—in a word, he was a kind of genteel tyrant, with a very large share of self conceit. He would give us no liberty to preach on board because, said he, it is destructive to good discipline by encouraging familiarity between officers & crew."<sup>29</sup>

Addison Pratt also had difficulties with the captain. On several occasions he wrote in his journal about the unsteady life of Captain Plaskett. On

*Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

January 17, 1844, Pratt recorded somewhat sympathetically, "Our Captain is a man that possesses much nobleness of soul, but his manners & habits have become verry unsteady through an intemperate use of alcohol, but when he is himself, he is quite full of sport & past time." Pratt wrote on April 28, 1844, "The captain . . . the 2nd mate & one of the boat steerers got so drunk they could hardly take care of themselves, this day I got the first insult from him (the captain) that he had been pleased to bestow upon me, tho he had been pleased to deal them out to most of the passengers & crew, long ere this, & they were generally with the least provocation as was this case."<sup>30</sup> And on April 30, 1844, Pratt explained, "The Captain . . . gave me a verry pressing invitation to accompany him on shore, but the sensations I received from his ungentelemanly conduct a few days before had not yet subsided & I declined."<sup>31</sup>

Captain Plaskett had been so difficult to travel with that Pratt was surprised when Captain Plaskett treated him kindly at the end of the journey. In his journal entry for May 9, 1844, Pratt noted, "Capt. Plaskett made me presents of several articles that are of much service to me, & told the King [of Tubuai] that if he did not use [treat] me well, when he returned he would redress my wrongs. I took leave of them, they went on board & were soon out of sight." And on May 31, 1844, Pratt recorded, "Capt. Plaskett, when he took leave of me told them [the natives] through his linguist, that if they did not use me well, and see that I wanted for nothing, when he returned with his ship he should take me away from them and come home. This has put them under much fear of loseing me, and this, tho quite unexpected from Capt. Plaskett is quite to my advantage. They seem quite anxious to retain a missionary among them."<sup>32</sup>

Benjamin F. Grouard provided a description of the twenty-nine crew members, who ranged from the ages of sixteen to twenty-eight, and the two families who sailed as passengers aboard the *Timoleon*.<sup>33</sup>

The officers were not gentlemen, neither did they know [what] belonged to good manners. The crew were a mixture of good & bad—part were

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

old sailors & part were farmers sons—some had run away to escape punishment for their crimes, & others were seeking their fortunes, but take them together they were much better than the captain and officers.<sup>34</sup> Our passengers consisted of a Dr. Winslow, his wife, servant & three children, Mr. Lincoln & his wife all destined for Tahiti, seeking their fortunes. Dr. Winslow in religion was a unitarian as also was his wife, Mr. Lincoln & wife were baptists, & appeared to be an honest couple, the Drs wife I think was also an honest woman but a great lover of, that which is an abomination in the sight of God, popularity.<sup>35</sup>

Dr. Charles Frederick Winslow, a respected physician and scientist from Nantucket, was on his way to the Sandwich Islands with his wife, Lydia Jones Winslow.<sup>36</sup> Priscilla Lincoln and her husband, Seth, were very kind to the elders, and especially to the sickly Knowlton Hanks, and became the first two converts to Mormonism when two of the Mormon missionaries (Benjamin F. Grouard and Noah Rogers) later began their ministry in Tahiti.<sup>37</sup>

Despite having good relations with some of the passengers, the missionaries were not authorized to preach publicly to either the passengers or the crew while on board the ship. Addison Pratt recorded the following on March 12, 1844: “I have said but little in my journal respecting our labours among the ships company, (although there are flattering prospects) because preaching is not sanctioned by the Captain, therefore our teachings are rather of a private character.”<sup>38</sup> The following month Pratt wrote: “Made application to the Captain for the privilege of preaching to the crew, his answer was, ‘If we get a fair wind, I will see.’ So we have to be dependent on the winds for an opportunity to declair the glad tidings of salvation in a public manner to the ship’s crew.”<sup>39</sup> Although the winds didn’t cooperate with the elders’ desires, they were able to share their message in private conversations. As one author observed, “During those two hundred and three days which they spent on board the ship, the missionaries were not permitted to do any public preaching, but they spared no effort to strike up private conversations with individual passengers and members of the crew.”<sup>40</sup>

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

While limited to private conversations, the elders had a sizable influence on the crew, as is evidenced by Addison. This journal entry, dated February 11, 1844, notes the following: "I have said but little as yet about the progress of religion among the crew, tho our privilege among them is contracted, still there is some encouragement, the second mate told me today, he believed & intended being baptized, & most of the men in the forecandle have come under the penalty of a pound of tobacco fine, if they use profane language, this is a law they made among themselves, & among them there are many hopeful cases, these changes have been brought about by private conversations & lending books, & marking passages in their bibles."<sup>41</sup>

Just three days later Pratt recorded, "Received a present, new striped shirt, from Mr. Thompson the second mate, said we were preaching without hire, we deserved something."<sup>42</sup>

Aside from sharing their religious beliefs in private, the elders also enjoyed the excitement of being at sea on board a whaling vessel. On April 27, 1844, Pratt, a former whaler himself, gave a vivid account of the crew chasing whales:

This morning saw a whale breach off the lee quarter, we tacked ship & stood for the place, soon discovered a shoal of Sperm whales, we ran the ship quite near them & lowered 4 boats, the 4th Mate's boat got in among them & harpooned one first, his crew then beckoned to the other boats by swinging their hats. . . . The sight was fritefully grand, to see the ocean crimsoned for some distance around, & the whales sprouting up blood & lashing the ocean with their fins & flukes (or tails), till the water was in a bloody foam, I never saw whales so docile before, if the weather had have been clear, I think they would have killed nearly all the whales in the shoal, but it was verry rainy & foggy.<sup>43</sup>

Just three days later, the *Timoleon* stopped on the island of Tubuai, 350 miles south of Tahiti. There were no missionaries on the island at the time of their arrival, so the inhabitants were eager to have a missionary

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

abide with them. Addison Pratt felt he should be the one to stay, so Rogers and Grouard, with Pratt's consent, went on to Tahiti without him. Pratt had difficulty with the language. As one scholar notes, "American seamen on the island, who were building a schooner by salvaging parts from a wrecked ship, served as his interpreters on various occasions, including his informal gospel discussions at night. In time six of these seven American salts joined the Latter-day Saint church, forming the nucleus of the Tubuai congregation."<sup>44</sup>

On June 16, 1844, Pratt recorded in his journal these first baptisms on Tubuai, all of which were those of mariners: "Sabbath, today preached to a verry attentive audience. I felt much of the spirit, the hearers were well pleased so I heard, after service I baptized & confirmed Ambrose Alexander. I hope his companions will soon follow."<sup>45</sup> The following month Pratt further noted, "After the morning service I gave an invitation to all those who felt it their duty to be baptized to present themselves at a place appointed on the beach and I would wait on them. The multitude assembled there and there came forward, and I baptized, Charles Hill, John Layton, William F. Bowen, William Carrington, James Clark."<sup>46</sup>

Pratt wrote in a letter to his wife, Louisa, describing the sailors' conversions: "I doubt not but you will say, 'now my husband has got the desire of his heart,' when I tell you the six first persons I have adopted into the kingdom by baptism are sailors, and perhaps you ask, 'did you hammer the rust off them any?' I will answer, could you see them on their knees, and hear their humble petitions. . . . You would say, 'there has been a great change wrought some how.'"<sup>47</sup> On July 29, 1844, Pratt wrote of the pleasing feelings he had in seeing the sailors change their ways: "I cannot express the heartfelt gratitude that came over me when I saw the tears of penitence trickle down their sea worn faces, nor the warm emotions that vibrated my heart, while on their knees I heard them thank the Lord that I had been casually thrown upon this island & had become the humble instrument in his hands of bringing them to see their lost condition. I already feel the Lord has amply rewarded me for my sacrifice on this mission."<sup>48</sup>

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

In a letter to Brigham Young written two years later, Pratt relates the surprise he had at his own success:

The Lord has greatly blessed my feeble efforts to spread the gospel. I have baptized fifty-seven persons on this island [Anaa]. . . . Among them are the queen . . . a deputy king and his wife and daughter . . . the head chief and his wife . . . and several of the subordinate chiefs; so you see the reins of government are within the Church, and it has blundered me into a very awkward position, for if you will allow me to speak jestingly, I am prime minister of the island. . . . I often tell them I did not come here to make laws or to see them executed, but to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; . . . but I am not allowed to rest here, and so I have to do the best I can.<sup>49</sup>

The following account from Pratt's journal illustrates the love he had for the natives on Tubuai and the sincerity of their conversions. Pratt was talking with a native man who was nearing death, and the man asked Pratt,

"What is to become of me? I have been a warrior and a man of blood. . . ." Said I, "You did it in a time when you were swallowed up in heathenish superstition and ignorance. . . . Now your trust must be in him whose blood is able to cleanse you from all your sins. And now do not let your mind waver, but place your hope and faith on him, and he will lead you safely . . . to that blissful abode of eternal rest." I left him, and in a few days he died, without any kind of sickness.<sup>50</sup>

The Latter-day Saint missionaries followed the same pattern established by the Protestant missionaries in that they held several preaching services each Sunday and normally had their baptismal services also on the Sabbath just before their scheduled meetings. S. George Ellsworth explained, "Meetings consisted of hymns, prayers, confirmations, ordinations, and sermons. . . . School was conducted weekdays, with lessons in reading,

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

arithmetic, geography, and, sometimes, chapters of the Bible. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings, Pratt held Bible study classes.”<sup>51</sup>

While on Tubuai, Pratt was visited by a Captain McKenzie, who had met *Timoleon* passenger Dr. Winslow in Hawaii. Dr. Winslow had told the captain about Pratt’s work on Tubuai, so Captain McKenzie decided to make a visit. Captain McKenzie’s visit to Tubuai lasted several days, and of this visit Pratt wrote, “I found him to be the most agreeable, intelligent, and interesting ship master that I have ever been acquainted with. . . . He is a religious man; we investigated the latter day work considerably; he was much pleased with it, said it was the most like the gospel of Christ of any creed he had heard of yet, and he was determined on investigating the matter more fully.”<sup>52</sup>

While Addison Pratt was enjoying success on Tubuai, Noah Rogers and Benjamin Grouard were laboring in Tahiti. When they arrived in Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, they found the city and the island in turmoil. The French were fighting the natives for control of the island. The French government eventually ran the political affairs and initially allowed the Latter-day Saint missionaries to preach, but in 1852 the government forced the missionaries to leave Tahiti.<sup>53</sup> English missionaries preceded the Mormons at Tahiti and were a mixed blessing for the proselyting Saints. In 1795, leaders of independent churches joined forces with Anglican and Presbyterian clergy and laymen to form a mission society whose object was “to spread the knowledge of Christ among the heathen and other unenlightened nations.” In 1818 this mission society was renamed the London Missionary Society (LMS).<sup>54</sup>

The LMS arrived on the Society Islands in 1797 and taught the native Tahitians English, translated the Bible into Tahitian (1835), and abolished human sacrifice. But the LMS was not supportive of the message the Latter-day Saint missionaries carried to the islanders.<sup>55</sup> Because of the influence of the LMS, Elders Grouard and Rogers were prevented from preaching to the natives. Elder Grouard, anxious to proselyte, decided to go to the docks and preach to incoming sailors. He wrote, “A number of whale



### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

ships came in about this time & I had the opportunity of preaching to their Captains & crews. Many were believing & seemed detirmined [*sic*] when they got home to know still more of the matter. I baptized two from the ship Wm Penn, . . . had not the ship been bound to direct home I think several others would have been baptized.”<sup>56</sup>

One historian explained the difficult situation faced by the Mormon missionaries in Tahiti: “The natives were interested only in ending the war and solving its accompanying problems. The English missionaries excluded the Mormons from the only church facilities and influenced the natives against them. In addition, the Americans had the time-consuming task of learning the Tahitian language.”<sup>57</sup> Due to these arduous political and social circumstances encountered on Tahiti, Elders Grouard and Rogers decided to preach on different islands. In the spring of 1845, Elder Grouard chose to go east to the island of Anaa in the Tuamotus, while Elder Rogers chose to go west to proselyte among the Leeward Islands.<sup>58</sup> The English missionaries, however, forbade Elder Rogers to preach.

Having heard of troubles in Nauvoo, Elder Rogers left for home to protect his family, taking his voyage on the *Three Brothers*.<sup>59</sup> The captain of the ship, Captain Mitchell, gave Noah Rogers permission to preach during the voyage. After passing Cape Horn, Elder Rogers writes, “The Captain gave me leave to preach, which I did four or five Sundays: the result was that seven or eight believed, two of whom I baptized in Philadelphia. The Captain himself believed, but finding that he must obey also became very bitter, which rendered some part of the voyage rather disagreeable.”<sup>60</sup>

One of Rogers’s converts, Franklin R. Tower, joined the other Saints in Nauvoo and helped them as a spy since the enemies of the Church did not know him. Hosea Stout, Nauvoo chief of police, noted in his journal on January 20, 1846, that he had been given a letter which came from Tower, “who had been sent as a spy to Warsaw [Illinois]. It stated in substance that they were forming secret societies to make arrangements to make a simultaneous attack on Nauvoo and the temple, both by land and water. And at the same time to have the officers to attempt the arrest of some of the Twelve

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

[Apostles] and others.”<sup>61</sup> Two weeks later the Latter-day Saints crossed the Mississippi and began their trek west. Noah Rogers, while traveling with his family and the exiled Saints, died along the Mormon Trail in May 1846.<sup>62</sup>

Benjamin Grouard, in traveling east from Tahiti, did not meet with the same opposition Rogers had met, although his initial welcome to the island of Anaa was frightening. Elder Grouard wrote, “As we drew near the shore I saw the beach was already lined with natives awayting our arrival: & coming still closer, I could distinctly hear them shouting and jabbering like a flock of ten thousand wild geese. My feelings, as I approached this strange land & heard the wild shouts of these half civilized sons of the ocean, I cannot easily describe.” Grouard further noted, “I had not however much time for reflection before we arrived at the landing place & leaping on shore, I was the next minute surrounded by some two or three hundred natives of both sexes & all ages: naked, half naked & clad; hooting, hallowing, laughing, & jabbering like a legion of evil spirits. They looked to me wild & savage & hearing the frightful savage noises they made, & not being able to understand a word, I really did not know but what I had become a victim for sacrifice in very deed.”<sup>63</sup>

Elder Grouard soon found, however, that the natives were eager to hear his message. Since they rarely had a missionary visit because of limited resources on their island, they respected him for his desire to live among them. In a short time, many of the natives joined the Church. Elder Grouard describes in his journal the joy he had at seeing the natives change because of their conversion:

It afforded me great pleasure & satisfaction to witness the great change wich had taken place among those people since I had been among them. . . . To hear them calling upon the Lord, who but a few short years before were the most ferocious savage canibals, & to hear them call too in the name of Jesus for God to roll forth establish & build up his latter day work, it caused more joy in my bosom than I can tell. Yes, but a few short years have past since their large double canoes, manned with from 50 to

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

a 100 men, 15 & 20 in number would return from the adjacent Islands loaded with the skulls of those victims they had slain in battle & whose body's they had eaten.<sup>64</sup>

With the number of Church members growing and with the Church population living on several different islands, the question of the island Saints gathering to America arose. The first Latter-day Saint conference to be held on Anaa took place on September 24, 1846. On this historic day for these island Saints, Pratt recorded the following statistics: "At Putuahara, the Church assembled according to previous notice for conference & the following branches were represented, Tubuai 61, members, Metia, 14 members, on this Island 5 branches number 651 members, Makea, 81 mem, Aura 17 mem, Rairoa, 10 mem, And on 3 other Islands of this group of these in good standing are 18 members."<sup>65</sup> The following day Pratt noted the desire of these natives to gather with the Saints in the United States, saying, "Many of them were anxious to go to America with me, but said they could not for lack of means."<sup>66</sup> The following month Addison Pratt wrote to Brigham Young: "When we speak to them [the natives] about the gathering, they say, many of them, 'We are ready to go now!! But how are we to get there?' The only answer we can give is, The Lord will open the way."<sup>67</sup> Eight years later a vessel was purchased in San Francisco for this purpose, but the costs of maintenance and outfitting were too much.<sup>68</sup>

Due to limited communication from the Church in the United States, Addison Pratt decided to journey to Salt Lake City, the new headquarters of the Church, to receive counsel from Church leaders. On separating from Elder Grouard, Pratt wrote the following in his journal:

I shall never forget the parting with Br. Grouard, he & I have been yoked together in the mission for 3 & a half years, we have withstood the frowns of poverty, the opposition of men & devils, . . . the frowns of poverty & hunger, traveling over the sharp coral rocks, & slippery Mountains, with our toes out of our shoes & our knees & elbows out of our clothes, liveing

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

part of our time on cocoanuts & raw fish & sleeping on the ground for the sake of obeying the Savior's commandments & preaching the gospel to the natives of the south sea Islands.<sup>69</sup>

When Pratt finally returned to his family, who were now living in Utah, he was astonished at what he discovered. Addison noted, "The children had all grown entirely out of my recollection, & none of them knew me. I left them June 1st, 1843. . . . This was the 28th of September, 1848. Such a cruel Separation causes emotions that none can know but those who experience it. It was more like the meeting of strangers, than the meeting of a family circle. I shall never forget it."<sup>70</sup> Pratt's wife Louisa wrote of the effect of his return on their children after an absence of five and a half years:

The children came running to announce their father's arrival. He looked rough and sunburned. None but the eldest daughter recognized him. The others did not seem pleased with his appearance. So much did we seem like strangers that we scarcely knew what to say to each other. . . . The scene evidently affected him, as the feelings between him and his children were coincident. It was sad to realize what a change the lapse of years brings, changing forms and features in the domestic circle, even to cause estrangement in long separation. Nothing short of the interest and advancement of the kingdom of God could justify so lengthy a separation.<sup>71</sup>

The 1843–44 voyage of the *Timoleon* launched not only an adventurous whale hunt but also Latter-day Saint missionary work in the South Pacific. Today there are over 20,000 Mormons in French Polynesia out of a population of about 287,000. Thus, about 7 percent, or one in fourteen, are Latter-day Saints, who are associated with six stakes, fifty-one wards, thirty-one branches, and a temple in Papeete, Tahiti.<sup>72</sup> This study not only demonstrates the impact this *Timoleon* voyage had on Latter-day Saint missionary work in the Pacific but also demonstrates the diverse ripple effects

## *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

Christian proselyting had on those who journeyed to the islands of the sea. Furthermore, it beckons an investigation of the influence Christian missionaries of other denominations have had on mariners who transported them to or from their fields of labor or who came into contact with them while visiting oceanic regions.<sup>73</sup>

### NOTES

This is a revised and expanded version of an article by Fred E. Woods, "The Voyage of the *Timoleon*: Launching Latter-day Saint Missionary Work in the Pacific," *The Log* (Mystic, CT) 56, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 12–21.

1. "From the 'Islands of the Sea,' letter from Addison Pratt to Elder W. W. Phelps," *Times and Seasons*, November 15, 1844, 710. The *Timoleon* was built in 1810 in Dartmouth by Thatcher Magoun and Sons and measured 104 feet 2 inches long by 13 feet 8¼ inches wide and displaced 346 tons. It had two decks, three masts, a square stern, no galleries, and a billet head. This is information compiled by Douglas S. Pike, a descendant of Noah Rogers. The author wishes to thank Doug for his help in compiling materials used in this article.
2. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Sketches: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1920), 3:698–99; *The Journals of Addison Pratt: Being a Narrative of Yankee Whaling in the Eighteen Twenties, a Mormon Mission to the Society Islands, and of Early California and Utah in the Eighteen Forties and Fifties*, ed. S. George Ellsworth (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 1–18. See Fred E. Woods, *Gathering to Nauvoo* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2002), for the captivating story of the migration of Latter-day Saints to Nauvoo, Illinois, from 1839 to 1846.
3. Eugene M. Cannon, "Tahiti and the Society Island Mission," *Juvenile Instructor*, June 1, 1897, 334. Young's request for Pratt to serve a mission to the islands of the sea was certainly in concert with Joseph Smith's vision of Latter-day Saint missionary work. Smith advocated, "Don't let a single corner of the earth go without a mission." *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H.

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

- Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), 5:368. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 2:233, for the date of May 23, 1843, notes, “We set apart Elders Noah Rogers, Addison Pratt, Benjamin F. Grouard & Knowlton Hanks to take a mission to the Sandwich Islands.”
4. “B. F. Grouard’s Death,” *Deseret Evening News*, April 7, 1894, 4.
  5. *Journals of Addison Pratt*, 116; Douglas S. Pike, comp., “Noah and Eda (Hollister) Rogers & Family” (n.p.: 2000), 1–2, 76.
  6. Eugene M. Cannon, “Tahiti and the Society Island Mission,” *Juvenile Instructor*, June 1, 1897, 334.
  7. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, October 2, 1843, 20. This document and several other primary documents that shed light on this study are available in the Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as Church History Library.
  8. *History of the Church*, 5:406.
  9. Journal of Noah Rogers, June 1, 1843; Church History Library, original spelling has been retained. *History of the Church* notes that the missionaries were set apart (given blessings) in Nauvoo on May 23, 1843 (see 5:404). It further reveals that when President Brigham Young laid his hands upon the head of Addison Pratt, he gave him the following blessing: “Do not be hasty and passionate, but acknowledge goodness in all, where you find it. Hearken ye, they will say, one to another, to this man; and they will carry you and give presents, etc., you shall have power over the ship’s course, and shall return again to this land and rejoice with your family, if you are faithful.” One very interesting variation of the blessing is provided in *Journals of Addison Pratt*, 115, 532. Here Ellsworth, drawing upon the Addison Pratt Family Papers and the Journals of Wilford Woodruff (May 23, 1843), notes that the blessing actually stated that Young told Pratt, “Thou shalt have power over the ships crew” (instead of over the ship’s course). Evidence reveals that Pratt did indeed have power over the ship’s crew in helping to modify their behavior. Furthermore, the crew did bestow presents to Pratt as will be demonstrated.
  10. Louisa Barnes Pratt, “A Few Incidents,” *Woman’s Exponent*, September 1, 1881, 49.

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

11. *Mormondom's First Woman Missionary, Louisa Barnes Pratt: Life Story and Travels Told in Her Own Words*, ed. Kate B. Carter, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Nettie Hunt Rencher, ca. 1950), 228.
12. See *Journals of Addison Pratt*, 118. Ellsworth herein notes that the missionaries had a difficult time gathering money for their passage. This was because the New England Saints already had economic demands placed upon them; Church leaders had been requesting money for construction of the Nauvoo Temple. The Journal of Benjamin Grouard, July 19, 1843, 6, Church History Library, explains how the missionaries decided to go to different areas to raise funds for their mission: "Br. [Brother Hanks] in very poor health left for Salem. . . . Bro. Pratt was to go to Winchester N. H. & all the Branches lying on his way, Br. Rogers Connecticut & I was to go to Salem, from there to Lowell."
13. Zeph W. Pease and George A. Hough, *New Bedford, Massachusetts: Its History, Industries, Institutions, and Attractions*, ed. William L. Sayer (New Bedford, MA: New Bedford Board of Trade, 1889), 12–30.
14. New Bedford City Directory, 1841, New Bedford Public Library.
15. New Bedford Branch Record for 1842–1851, Church History Library, 1.
16. "Manuscript History of the Eastern States Mission," Church History Library, February 9, 1843; April 3–4, 1844. "Mormon Conference," *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1843, 125, notes that at this time there were ninety-six members, three elders, and eight "lesser officers."
17. *New Bedford Daily Mercury*, September 21, 1843, 1.
18. "Port of New Bedford," *New Bedford Daily Mercury*, October 9, 1843, 2.
19. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, October 3, 1843.
20. Journal of Phillip B. Lewis, 1, Archives and Special Collections, Joseph F. Smith Library, BYU–Hawaii, Laie, HI.
21. *History of the Church*, 6:14–15. This conference commenced on September 9, 1843, and lasted several days. It was held in Boylston Hall with 878 Latter-day Saints attending.
22. *History of the Church*, 6:37.
23. *History of the Church*, 6:52.

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

24. Journal of Benjamin Grouard, October 3, 1843. The *Vital Records of New Bedford, Massachusetts to the Year 1850: Births* (n.p.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1932), 1:293, lists Asa T. Lawton as being born May 7, 1810. The *Vital Records of New Bedford to the Year 1850: Marriages* (n.p.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1932), 2:333, notes that Lawton was from Portsmouth, Rhode Island, and that he married Ann Dayton of New Bedford in 1831. A decade later the *New Bedford City Directory* lists Lawton living at 26 South Sixth Street. The *Ship Registers of New Bedford*, vol. 1, 1796–1850, notes that Asa T. Lawton owned shares in seventeen voyages, mostly in connection with Joseph Dunbar. Alexander Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery* (New York: Argosy-Antiquarian, 1964), 1:398, provides evidence that in 1843 the *Timoleon's* manager was Joseph Dunbar, who was then associated with Lawton. The *New Bedford Daily Mercury*, October 9, 1843, notes, “Cleared—Ship *Timoleon*, N. W. Coast, by J. Dunbar & Co.”
25. Doyle L. Green, “Mission to Polynesia—Part III,” *Improvement Era*, June 1949, 371, notes that Hanks was the first Latter-day Saint missionary who died and was buried at sea.
26. Journal of Benjamin Grouard, November 3, 1843.
27. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, November 3, 1843, Church History Library. The *Seaman's Hymns and Devotional Assistant* (New York: American Seamen's Friend Society, 1843), 435–39, provides suggestions for burial services at sea. For example, there are a number of scriptural references that may be selected for the service—Job 1:21; Job 19:25–26; John 11:25–26; 1 Timothy 6:7; or a portion of Psalm 39 or 90. In addition, the singing of a hymn is suggested, as well as the specific wording of several prayers. When the body was ready to be launched into the sea, this manual suggested that these words of prayer be used: “We therefore commit his body, when the sea shall give up her dead.” This guide then suggested, “Here launch the body overboard, let it have time to go down, and then all fall on their knees, while the Leader makes the following prayer.” The author wishes to thank Laura Pereira, assistant librarian at the New Bedford Whaling Museum Library, for bringing this document to the author's attention and for going the extra mile with assistance in locating other needed items for this article.



### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

28. Journal of Noah Rogers, February 22, 1844. Rogers notes that during the evening the missionaries had dinner with Captain Mercator Cooper, who treated them very kindly aboard the whaling vessel *Manhattan*.
29. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, November–December 1843, 25–26.
30. R. Ward Gregg, ed., *American Activities in the Central Pacific, 1790–1870* (Ridge-wood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1967), 7:60, quotes an article published in a Honolulu pe-riodical titled the *Friend*, dated March 15, 1845: “The American Consul at Tahiti has sent home the American ship *Timoleon*, under the command of Mr. Brown, Sailing Master of the U. S. Brig Perry on account of the drunkenness of the master [William Plaskett] of said ship.” *Journals of Addison Pratt*, 589, explains that at this time the acting consul at Tahiti was George R. Chapman. In a letter written February 6, 1845, by Consul Chapman to the US secretary of state, the details of this unfortunate situation are given: “The unpleasant duty has devolved upon me of depriving Capt. Plaskett of his command, and the circumstances under which she arrived has obliged me to send her home to her unfortunate owners, with I fear at least a loss of \$20,000. . . . Complaints were made of brutal treatment on the part of the Captain, who was represented to be constantly in a state of intoxication totally unfit for the transaction of business necessary for expediting the departure of the ship, and whenever upon deck or able to leave his cabin, on a state bordering upon insanity . . . abusing with the most gross obscene language his officers and crew making use of weapons by which the lives of one or two of his crew has been seriously endangered . . . & threats were made against the life of Dr. Winslow.” George R. Chapman to Secretary of State, in Dispatches from the US Consul in Tahiti, July 2, 1841, to December 31, 1850, National Archives. A brief summary of the *Timoleon* log located at the New Bedford Whaling Museum Library, comp. Dennis Wood, vol. 1, part 2, 346, notes that Captain Plaskett was left sick at Ta-hiti on February 21, 1845, and that J. Hogan Brown was the master on the return voyage, which arrived back at New Bedford on July 12, 1845, with one hundred barrels of sperm oil for a voyage that lasted twenty-one months and three days. The entire “Abstract Log” of the *Timoleon* is a ten-page document that covers the pe-riod of December 9, 1843, to June 6, 1845, and is located at the National Archives. The author expresses appreciation to L. Reynolds Cahoon, assistant archivist for

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

Human Resources and Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, for providing a copy of this document.

31. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, January 17, April 28 and 30, 1844.
32. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, May 9 and 31, 1844.
33. The number of crew members and their ages is taken from the register for the 1843–45 voyage of the *Timoleon* (Crew Members List), at the New Bedford Whaling Museum Library, under the “New Bedford Port Society Records, Seamen’s Records, Seamen’s Register, 1832–1925,” 69. However, not all of the crew have their ages and physical descriptions listed, which include their height and hair color.
34. The comment made here about “old sailors” may refer to the years of experience a crew member had or may refer to his age. As noted in the previous endnote, several of the crew do not have their age listed.
35. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, November–December 1843, 25–26.
36. Dr. Winslow was born in Nantucket in 1811. He never converted to Mormonism, but he must have been influenced by the Mormon missionaries, as evidenced by the fact that he later moved to Salt Lake City, where he died in the summer of 1873 at the age of sixty-two. See Mrs. James C. Oehler, “By Strangers Honored,” proceedings of the Nantucket Historical Association, 1948, 22; and Winslow’s obituary in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 17, 1877.
37. S. George Ellsworth, *Zion in Paradise: Early Mormons in the South Seas* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Faculty Association, 1959), 9. On December 6, 1844, Grouard wrote a letter to his wife as evidenced in the *Times and Seasons*, August 1, 1845, 981, in which he said, “I have lived with Bro. Lincoln ever since I have been here [in Tahiti]. Both he and Sister Lincoln treated me as one of their own family. They want me to stay with them as long as I am here.”
38. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, March 12, 1844.
39. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, April 12, 1844.
40. Doyle L. Green, “Mission to Polynesia—Part III,” *Improvement Era*, July 1949, 371.
41. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, February 11, 1844.
42. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, February 14, 1844. According to the register for the 1843–45 voyage of the *Timoleon* (Crew Members List), at the

### *Launching Mormonism in the South Pacific*

New Bedford Whaling Museum Library, under the “New Bedford Port Society Records, Seamen’s Records, Seamen’s Register, 1832–1925,” 69, there is no crew member listed under the last name of Thompson. However, the second name listed below Captain William Plaskett is that of Daniel Tompkins, who appears to be the second mate and the Mr. Thompson to whom Pratt is referring. Tompkins is listed as coming from Albany, New York. No other information is provided.

43. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, April 28, 1844.
44. S. George Ellsworth, “New Wine and Old Bottles: Latter-day Saint Missionary Work in French Polynesia, 1844–1852,” in *Voyages of Faith: Explorations in Mormon Pacific History*, ed. Grant Underwood (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2000), 16.
45. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, June 16, 1844.
46. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, July 22, 1844.
47. Addison Pratt to Louisa Pratt, September 17, 1844, in “Extract of a Letter from the Island of Tooboui Society Group,” *Times and Seasons*, May 1, 1845, 882–83.
48. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, July 29, 1844.
49. Quoted in S. George Ellsworth and Kathleen C. Perrin, *Seasons of Faith and Courage: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in French Polynesia, a Sesquicentennial History, 1843–1993* (Sandy, UT: Yves R. Perrin, 1994), 9.
50. *Journals of Addison Pratt*, 292.
51. Ellsworth, “New Wine and Old Bottles,” 16.
52. Addison Pratt to Brigham Young, February 20, 1845, in “News from Our Mission in the Pacific,” *Times and Seasons*, November 1, 1845, 1020.
53. Latter-day Saint missionaries were not allowed to return to the island until 1892.
54. See “London Missionary Society,” *Wikipedia*, last modified January 26, 2012, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_Missionary\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Missionary_Society).
55. Ellsworth, *Zion in Paradise*, 8. Records of these missionaries are housed at the Council for World Mission archives at the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
56. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, November 26, 1844.
57. Ellsworth, *Zion in Paradise*, 9.

## GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

58. Seth Lincoln, who was a *Timoleon* passenger, became the Latter-day Saint ecclesiastical leader when Elder Grouard left Tahiti.
59. Ellsworth, *Zion in Paradise*, 12.
60. Noah Rogers to John Taylor, in “Communications,” *Times and Seasons*, January 1, 1846, 1087.
61. *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1889*, ed. Juanita Brooks (rep., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 107.
62. Pike, “Noah and Eda (Hollister) Rogers & Family,” 76.
63. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, May 1, 1845.
64. Journal of Benjamin F. Grouard, Summer 1845.
65. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, September 24, 1846.
66. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, September 25, 1846.
67. Addison Pratt and Benjamin Grouard to the Presiding High Council, October 19, 1846, in Ellsworth, “New Wine and Old Bottles,” 26.
68. Manuscript History of the Hawaiian Mission, March 17, 1854, Church History Library.
69. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, November 14, 1846.
70. Journals and Autobiography of Addison Pratt, September 28, 1848.
71. Pratt, *Mormondom’s First Woman Missionary*, 246. Addison, Louisa, and their children returned to do missionary work in French Polynesia, but they (as well as Benjamin Grouard) were forced to leave in 1852. Latter-day Saint missionaries did not return until 1892.
72. *Deseret News 2011 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2011), 487. On October 8–10, 2004, Latter-day Saints met in Papeete, Tahiti, to commemorate the 160th anniversary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in French Polynesia. See “160 Years in Tahiti,” *Church News*, October 30, 2004, 9–10.
73. The author is currently working on an article that discusses the contact between Mormon elders and missionaries from the London Mission Society in the South Pacific during the mid-nineteenth century.