

**MY STORY OF SAMOAN
METHODISM; OR, A BRIEF
HISTORY OF THE WESLEYAN
METHODIST MISSION IN SAMOA**

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My Story of Samoan Methodism; Or, A Brief History of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in Samoa by Martin Dyson

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MARTIN DYSON

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MY STORY OF SAMOAN METHODISM



JONAH.
a native Christian of Samoa

MY STORY
OF
SAMOAN METHODISM;
OR,
A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE
WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSION IN SAMOA.

BY
MARTIN DYSON,
LATE MISSIONARY IN SAMOA AND TONGA.



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P R E F A C E.

MY STORY OF SAMOAN METHODISM has been written for all who take an interest in Christian Missions. It contains only authenticated facts, which have been collected with care. I have given them with impartiality, and expressed my own opinions on them with respectful deference to those who differ from me. I can truly say that, whilst I have a most sincere and very strong attachment to my own Church, yet I believe that God never designed Methodism to be His only agency in the conversion of the modern world. All Evangelical Missionary Societies have wide fields of labour, and Samoa is now *honourably* and *legitimately*, but at present perhaps *unwisely*, shared by *two* of them. If, even in the shading or dark part ~~of~~ my limning, I have done an injustice to any one connected with this Mission, no one will regret it more sincerely than myself.

MARTIN DYSON.

KYNETON, 4th August, 1875.

14 July 1943
Evans

MY STORY OF SAMOAN METHODISM.

Rise and Growth to 1839.

IT is our intention to write the history of Methodism in Samoa, South Pacific, from the time of its introduction by the Tongans down to the present time. We shall trace its rise and growth to 1839, its abandonment for eighteen years, according to the "united wishes" of the Directors of the London Missionary Society and the Committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, its resumption by the Australasian Conference, and its subsequent history.

We have no wish to overlook, and less to ignore the labours of the London Missionary Society in Samoa, but we purpose to refer to them only where we shall find them entangled with our own operations. The nominal adherents to that society in all Samoa number about 27,000. In 1862 the number of their church members was 4200; and of their candidates, 3245.† Two hundred teachers were then busily at work in as many villages and hamlets, and the whole mission was under the care of eight European missionaries. Their churches were dissimilar in quality, and did not much exceed the number of their teachers. Some of them were neat and large buildings, and a few of them would accommodate 500 natives. Notwithstanding the poverty of their people, they raised annually £2000, in contributions to the work of God and in the purchase of the Holy Scriptures.‡ It is to the missionaries of this society we most willingly cede the merited honour of having given to the church and Samoa a complete translation of the Bible in the vernacular. The opinion of one of them is that "It is free from all obsolete Samoan words and phrases, and will be far plainer in this respect to a Samoan than our English version is at the present day to many of our

*Dr. Beecham's Letter to Rev. A. Tidman, 1844.

†Western Polynesia, 457.

‡Western Polynesia, 459.

countrymen."* They have also an institution for training native agents, which is managed with ability and success. We freely express our admiration of much of their work, and our respect for the missionaries themselves as Christian brethren, and should deplore the decay of their society as a calamity to Christianity in the South Seas. To its devoted agents we sincerely say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you."

But while we say this, we have to add that they entertain and seem to cherish a bias, if not a prejudice, against the Methodist Mission in Samoa. A pious concern for the outlying heathen of other countries, the assumed waste of men and money on Samoa by the presence of *two* evangelical societies, and the supposed evils of nonconformity to the form of godliness, seem to have given a specious appearance to their continued opposition to Methodism in Samoa. In the following narrative, our end is to show that this mission is both a righteous and an honourable one, so long as the Wesleyan Conference shall choose to continue it, that the objections of the London Missionary Society to it are indefensible, and the renewed *Protest* against it, an unmerited wrong. We hope to show that their arguments concerning it are sophisms, and, unless we are mistaken, that they will not bear the crucible of public opinion for a day.

The introduction of Methodism to Samoa, was one of those fortuitous events which happen without a *human* purpose. It was in no degree the result of human design and arrangement. Tubou, the father of the present king of Tonga, openly renounced heathenism and professed Christianity in the year 1827. Subsequent to that time, large canoes once and again brought Tongans to Samoa, some of whom had already followed the example of Tubou and become Methodists. "There had been from time immemorial, frequent intercourse between the inhabitants of the Navigators' (Samoa,) and the Friendly (Tongan) groups."† Some of the Tongan Methodists, who visited Samoa, married into Samoan families and remained there. They next made an open profession of their new religion, which from that time was called in Samoa; the "*Lotu Tonga*," and they established family worship. A few Samoáns followed their example. The

**Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 171.

†*Williams' Enterprises*, ch. xvii., 77.