

Walter Murray Gibson: Shepherd L.D.S. Leader of Lanai

One of the most influential, exciting, colorful, and perhaps least understood men of the nineteenth century was Walter Murray Gibson.

With the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints out of his life, as well as its Polynesian members who had revered him almost as if he were divine, his activities at Lanai became meaningless. So he left his holdings there in the hands of his two sons, his daughter, and son-in-law and set out for Honolulu to a brighter, more exciting drama of public life.

One of his first acts in Honolulu in 1872 was to purchase a newspaper which he renamed "Nuhou" and began publishing in the Hawaiian language to and for the Hawaiian people. With the aid of his exceptional oratorical ability in both English and Hawaiian and the power of his Hawaiian language newspaper he played a significant role in electing Prince Lunalilo as King of the Hawaiian Kingdom followed by David Kalakaua thirteen months later, February 12, 1874, after the untimely death of Lunalilo. This was followed by the creation of a special electoral district on Lanai which enabled Gibson to run unopposed from this district as a legislative delegate from a foolproof elective base. Following a painless election in 1878 he became a member of Hawaii's Legislative Assembly.

From his base as a prominent legislator and as adviser to King Kalakaua, Gibson attracted attention all over Hawaii by bringing about the erection of a large, imposing statue of King Kamehameha and by planning and arranging a successful world tour of King Kalakaua in 1881 in which Kalakaua visited many of the world's most prominent rulers.

September 4, 1880 Gibson purchased Hawaii's most influential newspaper, the Commercial Advertiser. At approximately the same time he wrote

and published a remarkable book in the Hawaiian language called, Sanitary Instructions for Hawaiians. This book was a manual on medical hygiene to aid the Hawaiian people who were dying off rapidly from diseases introduced by Haoles.

Gibson became the champion of causes benefiting the Polynesian people. This factor in addition to his stature as the most dominant figure in the Hawaii legislature induced Kalakaua, who had a personal admiration for him, to take the unprecedented step of appointing Gibson to not one but a number of political offices.

Every man who spoke to Gibson seemed to be impressed and captivated by him. His charm and personality were coupled with a most ingenious outlook and one of the wisest political minds of the times. Most important of all, the Hawaiian people loved and trusted him. He talked to them in their own language and they considered every word he spoke as Hawaiian gospel. Gibson, through the Advertiser, described Hawaiians as a dignified, unassailable, clean, and upstanding people. It made sense for Kalakaua to keep such a man as close as possible to the throne.

In his new capacities Gibson's first notable accomplishment was his development of a new monetary system for the island nation. The new money was printed in San Francisco and the bills featured Kalakaua's robust frame. This was followed by the creation of a postal system. Gibson, himself, designed and printed the postage stamps for the Hawaii Island Kingdom.

Because of excessive debts incurred by the Hawaiian government from financing Kalakaua's world tour, from the coronation extravagance of King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani, from the erection of the magnificent Iolani Palace and from financing the effect of a number of irresponsible laws and decrees, Kalakaua's cabinet was forced to resign on May 18, 1883. On the

following day Walter Murray Gibson was presented to the public as Premier of the Kingdom of Hawaii and its Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In 1884 and 1885 Gibson through diplomatic means attempted to set up a confederation of Pacific Island states under the "protection" of King Kalakaua of Hawaii. Impatient with Oceania lethargy in 1886 he initiated expansion by the use of force and advocated invasion and occupation, if necessary. Efforts were to be directed toward Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Island group, Tahiti and the Gilbert Islands, in that order. A one ship navy was commissioned and sent to Samoa for this purpose. Had it not been for the excessive use of alcohol by the captain of the ship, George Gresley Jackson, and some of the crew and gross incompetence by some of the emissaries sent to Samoa particularly John Edward Bush and his secretary, Henry Poor, a confederation of the two kingdoms would very likely have become a reality. Instead four German warships sailed into Apia harbor and established Tamasese as King of Samoa under the protection of the German Empire.

Gibson's political enemies exploited international indignation over the military expedition to Samoa and the humiliation of the people at home over its failure. This put Gibson in a defensive position and his government in disrepute. He quickly lost support of the haole population.

In the early 1880's a Hawaiian League was formed composed of dual-citizenized largely Protestant Americans. The League in turn formed a citizen militia corps called the "Honolulu Rifles."

The "Honolulu Rifles" captured Gibson in July, 1887 and would have lynched him and his son-in-law, Fred Hayselden who was visiting him, if it had not been for the efforts of James H. Wodehouse, a British Commissioner, who claimed it would cause an international incident if a British subject should be executed in such a manner. Instead he was banished from Hawaii,

leaving on July 12, 1887 for San Francisco on the sugar freighter, "J. D. Spreckles" and arriving in San Francisco on August 6, 1887. He spent the following five months from August 10 until January in and out of St. Mary's Hospital and died January 21, 1888 of tuberculosis of the lungs.

Walter Murray Gibson's body was returned to Honolulu and on February 18, 1888, from ten in the morning until six in the evening it lay in state where thousands viewed his remains through a windowed coffin. Included among the mourners were the business and government officials of Hawaii but most numerous were Hawaiian people who grieved profusely. Long obituaries were carried in newspapers throughout the United States and in the leading cities of Europe. All acknowledged his intellect and statesmanship and admitted that he wore his virtues with style, flair, and splendor.

We now recognize who Walter Murray Gibson was and his place in Hawaiian political history. But we are not as interested here in this aspect of his life as in his Mormon years. So let us go back to the beginning and consider the series of events which led to him becoming a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

The family of John Gibson emigrated from Northumberland, England, sometime in the early 1830s to Montreal, Canada. They moved to New York City in 1837 and from there Walter, now a young man, hired out to drive a carriage from New York City to the Pendleton District of South Carolina.

It is a mystery how Gibson came to be known as a respected and educated man. He mentions only brief encounters with classrooms and teachers. He gives more credit for his education to his travels by land and by sea and to much time spent in the back woods of the Carolinas.

His parents, who now had a large family, followed him to South Carolina but he was too much of a free spirit to spend much time within the confines

of a family and largely lived alone. The meeting of his mate is best described by himself.

When I was yet a boy, I met in my wanderings in the backwoods of South Carolina a fair and gentle girl of my own age, who had never been more than half-day's ride from the plantation of her father. We often sauntered together in the still woods of Milwee on summer days; we would wade barefooted, the shallow streams; cross the deep and rapid creeks, with mutual help of hands to our tottering steps, as we walked the unsteady swinging trunk that bridged them over... We would rest beneath the dense shade, at the foot of some great tree, and talk our boyish and girlish fancies.... Ere long I was a man and we were married.

His wife, Rachel, soon gave birth to a daughter which they named "Talula," followed by a son, "John," and then a second son "Henry" at the birth of whom Rachel died in childbirth.

Gibson made a try for a short time to care for his children alone with the aid of a backcountry wet nurse for the newborn boy. He finally gave up and left the three children with Rachel's parents.

He set out for New York, a man in his early twenties, with the soft diction of a Southern gentleman which he proceeded to cultivate to vocal perfection. He emerged as a tall, mild-mannered man assuming an aristocratic bearing that he retained for the remainder of his life. It was 1845 and he was anxious to start his great adventure and ambition in life by going to sea. So he signed on as an apprentice seaman and began to master the art of seamanship and navigation.

After a year on an iron steamship he was back in New York as the skipper of a sailing vessel. After several successful voyages, one around the Horn to California and return, he and a small crew set out on an expedition for adventure.

For nearly seven months their little ship wallowed and rocked its way

out of the lower Atlantic and across the Indian Ocean arriving in the strait separating Sumatra and Java in the middle of December, 1851. The Dutch officials immediately became suspicious of a pompous man of British birth wandering in from nowhere, skippering a converted American ship completely empty of cargo, and seeking no cargo. The problem came to a head when a letter was taken from the person of Charles Graham, the Scotsman first mate of the ship, stating that the American Government was about to send ships of war to exterminate all the Dutch. After which Gibson would be available to take possession of the state.

The effect of this letter was to put Gibson in the Prison of Weltevreden. After three years of imprisonment the Dutch, apparently wanting to get rid of him with no further embarrassing implications, finally allowed him to escape. He was picked up by the American clipper ship, "H. B. Palmer" and in several months was back in America.

Gibson proceeded to Washington D.C. where he made a frantic appeal to the State Department to aid him in drawing up a case for restitution against the Netherlands. But the Dutch were patient and persistently argued that Gibson was guilty of high treason as charged.

As he wandered through the halls of Congress trying to keep alive support for his dying claim, he came to know Dr. John M. Bernhisel, Delegate from the Utah Territory to the United States House of Representatives.

Utah was Mormon country and Bernhisel was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The Church was having serious trouble with the United States Government at this time.

In June 1858, the New York Times reported that approximately a year earlier Walter Murray Gibson had submitted to Bernhisel a plan for the Mormons to emigrate from Utah to New Guinea. According to the article, the Mormon

leaders approved the plan and BernhiseI submitted it to President Buchana. and the United States Government in early 1858. The government rejected it as being too costly for taxpayer support.

In New York a few months after this article appeared, Gibson wrote BernhiseI that he intended soon to visit Utah. Having arrived at St. Louis in May, 1859, he wrote ahead directly to President Brigham Young:

It has been in my heart, many years, to propose to you and your people, emigration to the islands of Oceania....I spoke in this wise to Dr. BernhiseI at Washington three years ago.... It was in my heart, when a boy, to dwell in thought upon "Java and the isles afar off; that have not"; as said the Lord by Isaiah, "heard my fame, neither have seen my glory."

I have spent many years among the "isles of wait" for the Lord; and while I lay in a dungeon on the Island of Java, a voice said to me: "You shall show the way to a people, who shall build up a Kingdom in these isles, whose lives of power shall run around the earth." My purposes of life were changed from that hour.... I have thought again and again, that your people were the people; and yet as often rejected the idea:--but now I have resolved to come into your midst and declare the burden of my spirit.

Gibson wrote also that he had his three children with him, so he could not travel rapidly. But he did arrive in Salt Lake City in September, 1859.

President Young told Gibson that he should investigate the work of the Mormons. If he found the restored gospel as taught by adherents to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to be the truth he would be baptized and ordained an elder. Then President Young would send him and a few other elders to that people in the Pacific. In this way, Gibson could do more good than in any other way.

The two men evidently impressed each other favorably. Gibson took President Young's advice. He resolved to spend the winter in Salt Lake City and study Mormonism.

Walter Murray Gibson was baptized on January 15, 1860 in Salt Lake's City Creek by Herber C. Kimball. He was confirmed a member of the Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in President Young's office by Brigham Young, himself, assisted by Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel H. Wells. It was the day before Gibson's 38th birthday. His daughter Talula, who was now 16 years of age, was baptized and confirmed on the same date. Two months following their baptisms, both Gibson and his daughter received their endowments in the Salt Lake Endowment House. Gibson's early relationships with members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints indicate that he was genuinely attracted to the faith and sincere in his profession.

It is clear that there was respect and trust between President Young and Gibson. On April 9, 1860 Walter Murray Gibson was called on a 6-month mission to the Eastern States. He served a successful mission and because of his humor and oratory was often compared by his audiences to Mark Twain. Back in Salt Lake City, on November 13, 1860, President Young called him for a mission to China, Japan, the East Indies, and the Malay Islands.

President Young and Heber C. Kimball set Gibson apart for his mission to the Orient on November 19, 1860. The next day, Gibson received not one but three missionary commissions impressively adorned with ribbons and seals and signed by President Young, Kimball, and Wells as the First Presidency. He was also advised that if he had the opportunity he should look in on the Saints in Hawaii.

Accompanying Gibson on his June 15 departure from San Francisco by the bark Yankee was his daughter Talula. The party reached Honolulu on June 30, 1861, after a fifteen-day voyage. A short time after his arrival in Honolulu Gibson began to meet quietly with the Hawaiian Mormons. He told them that he had come to take charge and to do a great work in their midst.

Gibson found the church members in the islands sadly disorganized. To understand how this came about, it is necessary to look back briefly. The

first Mormon missionary effort in Hawaii involved ten men under the direction of Elder Hiram Clark, who arrived in Honolulu in 1850. Elder Clark soon became discouraged and left to do missionary work in the South Pacific. Of the missionaries who stayed in Hawaii, Elder George Q. Cannon became the leader. He helped to found the first branch of the church at Kealakou, Maui, in 1851. He quickly learned the Hawaiian language, and with the aid of a convert, Jonatana H. Napela, translated the Book of Mormon into the Hawaiian language. In the latter part of 1854, the missionary efforts became very successful. When the church had about 4,000 baptized members in Hawaii, a gathering place called "The City of Joseph" was established at Palawai on the Island of Lanai. Because of the troubles the Mormons were having in Utah with Johnson's army approaching, Brigham Young wrote in 1857:

...I think it best for all the Elders, with one or two exceptions, to come home....If there are any faithful Saints there, they are experienced enough in the work to stand firm in the faith while those who are filled with the lust of the flesh will float off with the current....You had better wind up the whole business.

Consequently, when Gibson arrived the missionaries had been gone for approximately three years and left the converts without any personal leadership from the headquarters of the church. On his arrival at Lahaina, Gibson wrote in his diary: "The Hawaiian Islands take the place of the Malay Archipelago in my thoughts." After seeing Palawai Valley on Lanai: "I will plant my stakes here and make a home for the rest of my days."

Seeing the disorganized state of church in Hawaii Gibson decided to delay his trip to the Orient and try to put the church in the Islands back in order. He chose to locate in the Palawai Valley of Lanai and direct the activities of the Church in all the Islands from there. Gibson began-- building, planting, preaching, baptizing, and adding to the funds for the

purchase of more land. Brigham Young wrote Gibson on October 31, 1861, that he was gratified with reports of Gibson's work. "Your labors and experience in your present field (wrote President Young) will not only be highly beneficial to you in your proposed future field, but will at the same time be very advantageous to the poor saints among and for whom you and your associates are laboring."

Gibson reported numerous baptisms: 130 on Kauai; 20 at Waipio, Hawaii; and about 30 at Kohala and Hilo, Hawaii. He asked a Bishop Wing in Honolulu to get certificates printed up in Honolulu from time to time because a great many persons from all Islands were "sending for their papers."

Gibson wrote toward the year-end 1861 indicating satisfaction with what he had done so far in the Hawaiian Islands:

...I continue to abide at the Hawaiian Zion (Palawai) on this Island; chiefly employed in organizing the labour of the Hawaiian Saints.

I have built a good meeting house here; a dwelling house; and am now engaged in a large school house, 50 by 20 feet. We have 82 children on Palawai; and it is noted for being the healthiest and most prolific spot, in all the Kingdom. I have sown 52 acres in wheat, planted 5 in sugar cane (on Maui), 5 in corn, and preparing to plant about 5 in rice. I have set out to raise the funds here, out of the soil, to advance me on my way to Malaysia. However, I am well content with what I have to do here; wherever I may get hereafter.

I have sent 3 white, and 14 native brethren out on missions; and there have been added 520 to the Church.

At the beginning of 1862, Gibson wrote in his diary of his rejoicing in the beauties of Palawai, in his way of life there, and in the devotion of his parishioners. He saw himself as their father, and allowed them to see him as an exalted person. Temporarily he seemed to have put aside thoughts of moving on from Lanai to other Islands of the sea.

We have been turning over the mellow soil. I never saw richer loam; and already the corn and the wheat look beautiful and full

of promise. I joy in watching the hope of harvest. I wonder why all men are not farmers. I love the earth....

Here is a fitting place for communing with a better world. There is (no) vice and riot of cities here, there is no pride and noisy pomp of courts, no hypocritic pretensions of stately churches, no plunder of armies, no ambitions of kings.

Now, what is there here? A sweet valley in a beautiful Island, an island of curious caves and coral borders washed by the everlasting blue sea. And in this sweet valley there is a little band, a community of men and women who are devoted to me. They are full of wonder, full of interest and like little children under me...like little children under a father's hand.

Gibson had learned the Hawaiian language so quickly that in September, 1861, he had preached his first sermon in Hawaiian. He had also translated parts of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and a summary of the life of Joseph Smith into Hawaiian. Gibson wrote that from September, 1861 to January, 1862 about 650 Hawaiians had been baptized. There were now in the Islands about 1200 reliable Mormons, and some 2,000 or 3,000 who were of "an indifferent character."

He informed President Young that he had set up an organization similar to the main body of the Church. He had created offices for the title-loving Hawaiians. This is of interest, because it is quite clear that Gibson kept the authorities in Utah informed of what he was doing to adapt the Church organization to the circumstances in Hawaii.

A continuing problem was the difficulty in acquiring enough land. Although the Hawaiian government took no decisive action against Gibson, he felt it was hostile toward him. "The Hawaiian government wants me to go away," he wrote in his diary, "and what is more particular, the landlord of Palawai, Haalelea, wants to back out of his bargain, and not let us have the land on the terms proposed or on any terms."

And yet he was happy on Lanai:

Lanai is my calmest and healthfulest home thus far. I have been alternating for many days between plans of labor here for years and a purpose of speedy departure....

And yet I am peaceful. I am hated and thwarted and yet I am cheerful and loving...The valley smiles like a lover....I have saved a good amount of the crop after much battling with the peelua grubs, the sun, wind and stray stock....In raising stock we have done better. My flock of goats has steadily grown to about 200 and I have killed fifty or more sheep and fully 500 turkeys....

Gibson had been trying unsuccessfully, to get the Minister of Interior, Prince Lot Kam, to take action to help him buy land from the government. By early July it seemed that Haalelea would after all be willing to sell the Palawai land, after backing down on his original agreement. This made consideration of the matter of government assistance in getting more land on Lanai more urgent because it would eliminate all doubts that Palawai would continue to become the permanent gathering place.

In his petition Gibson argued that if the government would sell or lease land to him, his organization would assume complete responsibility for its development. He further stated that besides promoting agriculture, he had directed the building of dwellings, a meeting house, and a schoolhouse. He had organized an industrial school in which eighty-two children and some adults participated. The school provided a common school education, with special attention to the English language. In an apparent reference to vocational education, Gibson said, "principles of science connected with useful manufactures are made familiar." Girls and boys are schooled separately, Talula being in charge of the girls. Some women with children also take part, and care of infants is part of the instruction. Gibson also said he was planning to build a hospital and devote some attention to the training of nurses.

In summary then, at a time when the Hawaiian population was undergoing a catastrophic decline, Gibson offered hope of agricultural development, better education, and better health. In return, and to continue the development, he wanted to buy or lease about 15,000 acres of government land. This would be in addition to the Palawai land he was trying to buy from Haalelea.

The king rejected Gibson's petition for a charter of incorporation for Palawai, but Gibson's efforts began to have favorable effects. Having considered a move to Kauai, and looking for land elsewhere in the other Islands, and considering a move deeper into Oceania, Gibson finally obtained most of the concessions he desired from Haalelea and the government.

In late 1863, eight Hawaiian elders jointly wrote a letter to a missionary in Utah who had earlier worked among them. They told of Gibson's activities and asked the former missionary's advice. After being translated, the letter was put into the hands of Brigham Young and he read it to those present of the Quorum of the Twelve at their regular meeting on January 18, 1864. In the letter, the Hawaiian elders charged Gibson with the following:

1. Selling church positions and priesthood offices for from \$25 to \$100 each.
2. Claiming Brigham Young had no authority in the Hawaiian Islands.
3. Taking possession of Lanai for himself.
4. Taking from the Church members all of their possessions.
5. Playing the tyrant over the Hawaiian Mormons.

President Young appointed two of the Quorum of the Twelve, Ezra T. Benson, grandfather of Ezra Taft Benson, Secretary of Agriculture under President Eisenhower, and Lorenzo Snow who later became President of the L.D.S. Church, to go to Hawaii and investigate. Elders Joseph F. Smith, also

a later President of the L.D.S. Church, Alma L. Smith, and William W. Cluff accompanied them as interpreters. Those serving as interpreters had earlier been on missions for the Church to the Islands.

They sailed for Honolulu by the clipper bark Onward and arrived there on March 27, 1864. They left a few days later for Maui by the Nettie Merrill and reached Lahaina on March 31. Captain Fisher, Ezra T. Benson, Lorenzo Snow, Alma L. Smith, and William W. Cluff got in the first landing boat. Joseph F. Smith did not get into the boat because he had a premonition of disaster. As they headed for shore in the rough waters, a huge wave capsized the small boat. Both Captain Fisher and Lorenzo Snow were nearly drowned. In fact it was claimed that Elder Snow had been under the water for twenty minutes when he was pulled out. He was finally revived by mouth to mouth resuscitation.

When Lorenzo Snow had sufficiently recovered, the investigating party crossed the rough channel between Lahaina and the Bay of Manele, Lanai arriving the evening of April 2. Gibson and his daughter appeared to be surprised to see the investigating party. He was busy making ready for the semi-annual church conference to be held beginning April 6.

Near Gibson's house was a large hollowed out rock. He had deposited there a copy of the Book of Mormon and other writings. Wearing temple robes he had consecrated the rock as the cornerstone of a future temple. He then covered the rock with brush and tabooed it. Gibson stated that if anyone dared uncover it, he would be struck dead.

Elders Joseph F. Smith, Alma L. Smith, and William W. Cluff visited the rock, together with Talula. Cluff pulled the brush away, exposing the rock to the wind and sun. The Hawaiians saw this and waited for Cluff to be struck dead for profaning the rock but no lightning struck.

The investigating party found that Gibson had taught the Hawaiians to look

upon him as an exalted person. In his presence they had to crawl on their hands and knees, the old way of entering the presence of royalty, and await his bidding to arise.

The investigators also found that Gibson had organized the males on Lanai, young and old, in military companies and was drilling them in the arts of war. He had indicated to them, according to some of the Hawaiians, that when they were well enough trained, a ship would come for them. They would sail off to the South Seas, take control of island after island, and organize an empire of the Pacific.

When the semi-annual conference was about to convene on April 6 in the meetinghouse on Lanai, Gibson arrived with Apostles Benson and Snow. Near the entrance, he told the Apostles to go in, that he had to go back to his room. A few minutes later he made a tardy, dramatic entrance. Ignoring the presence of Elders Snow and Benson, he called for the first hymn. After that he called on Elder Cluff to offer a prayer. Brother Cluff turned to Apostles Benson and Snow believing he should defer to them, but they asked Cluff to proceed. Then, after a second hymn, without conferring with anyone, Gibson began to speak:

My dear red skinned children: you are my children and I am your father; am I not. (Many answered, yes) I presume you are all anxious to know why these strangers have come among us? --- I am as much at a loss to know what they have come for as you are....

Did I not come here and find you like a flock of sheep, scattered and without a shepherd? Did I not gather you into this fold and have I not fed you? When these strangers were here before your true shepherd and father came, did you not have to feed and clothe them, instead of their feeding and clothing you, as your father is doing?

He went on like this for about half an hour. Then Ezra T. Benson arose and called on Joseph F. Smith to talk:

I am pleased after an absence of over seven years, to return and meet with you again....We have been referred to here as strangers....Did we not travel on foot, and preach the gospel to this people for eight years? Visiting you in your houses, administering to the sick, eating such food as you eat, depriving ourselves of the comforts and blessings of home and friends for the Gospel and your sakes....Did we set a price on the offices of the Priesthood we conferred on you? Did we exact tribute from you to purchase lands for us and our heirs? Now, when you contrast the labors of Pukuniah (George Q. Cannon) and his associates and us who came after them, with our friend here who assumed to be your leader and boasts of what he has done, you say whether we are strangers among the Hawaiian people.

In the afternoon Elder Benson and Elder Snow spoke briefly explaining the purpose of their inquiries. In the evening of April 7 there was a priesthood meeting, with a large attendance. Elder Snow asked Gibson:

"By what authority do you claim the right to preside over the Hawaiian Mission?"

Gibson sent Talula to get his commission from President Young which was elaborately decorated with ribbons and seals. He said, "I think, gentlemen, you will not fail to recognize the names of Brigham Young and his two counselors here....I think, gentlemen, you will not deny their authority."

Brother Snow replied: "Why, Brother Gibson, this document does not appoint you to preside over the Hawaiian Mission of the Church. You have assumed that authority."

Elder Benson summed up the case:

We have thoroughly investigated the charges preferred against Brother Gibson by several of your native Elders, and found them substantially true. He was not appointed to come and preside over this mission. In ordaining apostles, high priests, seventies, and bishops he assumed authority that belongs exclusively to the First Presidency of the Church.... His claiming that he had equal authority with President Brigham Young was most absurd. His purchasing this land of Palawai, and having the deeds made to him and his heirs was a fraud and a robbery. For all these unlawful acts we disapprove of this course and say he is not the president of this mission. And we ask you Saints to sustain us in this decision.

Elder Benson and Elder Snow asked Gibson to sign the land over to the Church. He refused. He said he would go his own way. He had received no counsel from President Young and he did not owe anything to the Church. He said he would try to keep his influence over the Hawaiians and those who left him would receive no benefit from the land.

Nevertheless, at the April 7 priesthood meeting all except one of the native Mormons voted against Elder Benson's motion to disapprove of Gibson's actions. Even so, the investigators advised the native Mormons to leave Lanai and return to their homes. Otherwise they would be "disfellowshipped." The branches would be reorganized.

Elder Benson and his associates returned to Lahaina on April 8 and that evening they held a council meeting at which they voted to cut Gibson off from the Church. Among their findings were the following:

1. He had ordained officials without authority for money.
2. He had bought land "for the Church" in his own name.
3. He had sought contributions under threat of disfellowship.
4. He had refused to acknowledge the authority of Brigham Young.
5. He was trying to use the Church to build a temporal Pacific empire.
6. He had departed from the gospel, introduced pagan superstitions.

Gibson himself apparently had little doubt about what action the investigators would take. The day after the priesthood meeting on Lanai, he wrote to Brigham Young:

I cannot forget my love and regard for your person, although you have dealt precipitately and harshly with me.-- My daughter remembers tenderly your interesting family.--I think and feel that though my spirit has not responded to your call, and we are now in different channels, that yet my course will never lead me into an attitude that will be hostile to you, or the work you direct.

Elder Snow and Elder Benson left Honolulu in mid-April, leaving Elders

Joseph F. Smith, Alma L. Smith, and William W. Cluff to try to put Church affairs in the Islands in order. The two apostles arrived in Salt Lake City on May 29. That same afternoon they reported on their investigation at a meeting in the Tabernacle. After their report "President Young stated briefly that the charge against Walter M. Gibson was not for owning property or for claiming it, for no one cared how much he had, if he only used it for the benefit of the poor who had given it, but the charge was his persistent refusal to be dictated by the Priesthood." President Young then moved that Gibson's excommunication be ratified, which the congregation did unanimously.

Although the Hawaiian Mormons on Lanai supported Gibson at the investigation, they soon began to realize that he was not what he purported to be. By the end of July, 1864, most of the Hawaiian Mormons on Lanai had gone back to their former homes on other islands. Only some seven or eight families remained with Gibson.

Joseph F. Smith, John R. Young, and William W. Cluff soon left for Utah, leaving Alma L. Smith and Benjamin Cluff to care for the affairs of the Hawaiian Mission. These two were soon joined by Francis A. Hammond and George Nebeker whose primary mission was to find a new gathering place. In early 1865, they purchased a 6,000-acre site at Laie, Oahu, for \$14,000. This site had been recommended and approved by Joseph F. Smith prior to his departure for Utah.

In conclusion, we should consider what manner of man was Walter Murray Gibson? How are the accomplishments of his life to be evaluated?

There are three logical alternative evaluations of Gibson regarding the years during which he was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The first is that in Gibson's youth he developed a dream of power, wealth, and dominion for himself over an empire in the Dutch East Indies or

a Kingdom of Oceania. This permeated his thinking and every act throughout his entire life. Consequently, he was never really converted to Mormonism and understood few of its principles. At the time he was baptized the LDS Church seemed to be a convenient vehicle to use for accomplishing his life-consuming empire-building aspirations. If he was never converted to Mormonism his excommunication had very little meaning and perhaps his actions which indicate that he may have been a rather poor emissary of the LDS Church should not be judged harshly.

Another logical conclusion is that Gibson was a Mormon apostate and renegade of the first order. He so perverted and made a mockery of the offices of the priesthood and the ordinances of the Gospel that God's forgiveness could not soon be expected. Rather than accept God's appointed Prophet and Apostles he took the power upon himself and caused his disciples to worship him as a God. Such behavior is a sin of the worst proportions.

A further possible conclusion is that he was sincere in the faith throughout his entire Mormon years and acted to the best of his ability in furthering the Gospel as he understood its principles under the circumstances he found among the Hawaiian people. Note that he had no association with the early members of the church in New York, Ohio, Missouri, or Illinois. His conversion was rather rapid and came from self-study. He was exposed to Latter-Day Saints in Salt Lake City for only a scant few months during which time he was busy preparing and making public speeches on subjects other than Mormon doctrine. There is no record of him holding any office in church organizations or of having leadership responsibility in any priesthood callings prior to his arrival in Hawaii.

Evidently he was severely limited in his knowledge of church organizations and procedures. He found the Church in Hawaii when he arrived in 1861 almost

completely disorganized and the converts were without formal education and lacking almost entirely in the experience and discipline associated with an organized church. It is evident for the most part that he kept President Brigham Young informed by letter of his activities and progress. Perhaps with his limited knowledge of the organization of the Church he did the best that could be expected of him under the circumstances and excommunication may have been a rather harsh judgment.

As to a final judgment whether Walter Murray Gibson was a renegade or a Saint the decision is left to you.