

Baibala

“It remains now, that I should shew that many Reasons of Moment may be alleged for the Justification of Protestants, which are dissembled by you, and not put into the Balance.”

“Know then, Sir, that when I say the Religion of Protestants is in Prudence to be preferred before yours, as, on the one Side, I do not understand by your Religion, the Doctrines of Bellarmine, or Baronius, or any other private Man amongst you; nor the Doctrines of the Sorbonne, or of the Jesuits, or of the Dominicans, or of any other particular Company among you, but that wherein you all agree, or profess to agree, The Doctrine of the Council of Trent ...”

“... so accordingly on the other Side, by the Religion of Protestants, I do not understand the Doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the Confession of Augusta, or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England, nor the Harmony of Protestant Confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater Harmony, as a perfect Rule of their Faith and Actions; that is the BIBLE.”

“The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only, is the Religion of Protestants!”

“Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable Consequences of it, well may they hold it as a Matter of Opinion: But as Matter of Faith and Religion, neither can they with Coherence to their own Grounds believe it themselves, nor require the Belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical Presumption.”

“I for my part, after a long, and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial Search of the true Way to eternal Happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any Rest for the Sole of my Foot, but upon this Rock only. I see plainly, and with mine own, Eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a Consent of Fathers of one Age against a Consent of Fathers of another Age, the Church of one Age against the Church of another Age.”

“Traditive Interpretations of Scripture are pretended; but there are few or none to be found: No Tradition, but only of Scripture, can derive itself from the Fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an Age after Christ, or that in such, an Age it was not in. In a Word, there is no sufficient Certainty but of Scripture only, for any considering Man to build upon.”

“This therefore, and this only, I have Reason to believe: This I will profess, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be Occasion, I will not, only willingly, but even gladly, lose my Life, though I should be sorry that Christians should take it from me.”

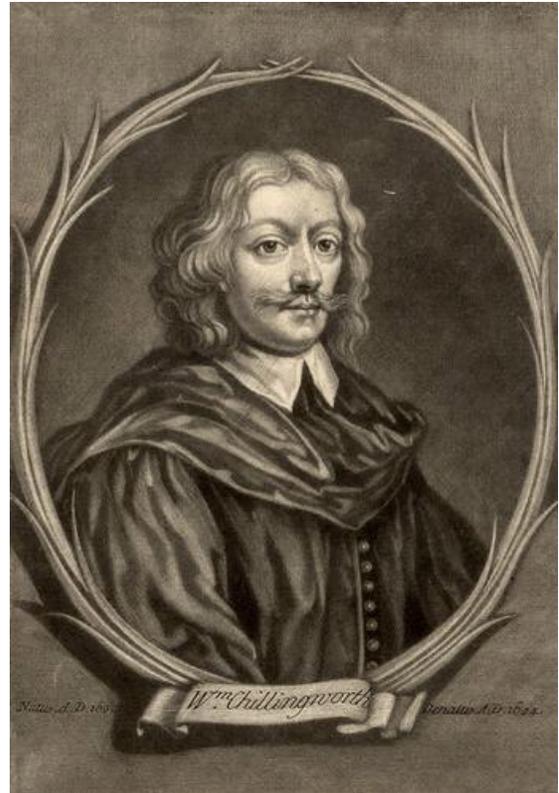
“Propose me anything out of this Book, and require whether I believe it or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human Reason, I will subscribe it with Hand and Heart, as knowing no Demonstration can be stronger than this; God hath said so, therefore it is true.”

“In other Things I will take no Man's Liberty of Judgment from him; neither shall any Man take mine from me. I will think no Man the worse Man, nor the worse Christian, I will love no Man the less, for differing in Opinion from me. And what Measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully assured,

that God does not, and therefore that Men ought not to require any more of any Man than this, to believe the Scripture to be God's Word, to endeavour to find the true Sense of it, and to live according to it.”

“This is the Religion which I have chosen after a long Deliberation, and I am verily persuaded that I have chosen wisely, much more wisely than if I had guided myself according to your Church's Authority. For the Scripture being all true, I am secured, by believing nothing else, and I shall believe no Falsehood as Matter of Faith.”

“And if I Mistake the Sense of Scripture, I cannot but hold my Error without Pertinacy, and be ready to forsake it, when a more true and more probable Sense shall appear unto me. And then all necessary Truth being, as I have proved, plainly set down in Scripture, I am certain by believing Scripture to believe all necessary Truth: And he that does so, if his Life be answerable to his Faith, how is it possible he should fail of Salvation?”



“Besides whatsoever may be pretended to gain to your Church the Credit of a Guide, all that and much more may be said for the Scripture. Hath your Church been ancient The Scripture is more ancient. Is your Church a Means to keep Men at Unity? So is the Scripture, to keep those that believe it, and will obey it, in Unity of Belief, in Matters necessary or very profitable; and in Unity of Charity, in Points unnecessary.”

“Is your Church universal for Time or Place? Certainly the Scripture is more universal. For all the Christians in the World (those I mean, that in Truth deserve this Name) do now and always have believed the Scripture to be the Word of God, so much of it at least, as contains all Things necessary; whereas only you say, that you only are the Church of God, and all Christians besides you deny it.” (William Chillingworth (October 12, 1602 – January 30, 1644); The Religion of Protestants A Safe Way to Salvation)

Missionaries Wanted Hawaiians to Read the Word of God

Every Protestant believer is essentially expected to read scripture directly - not simply listen to teachings from scripture, presented by priests (as done by Catholics). (StackExchange)

When the Pioneer Company of missionaries landed in the Island they “presented his majesty (Kamehameha II) an elegant copy of the Bible, furnished by the American Bible Society (intended for the conqueror (Kamehameha I)), which we had the happiness to convey and deliver to his royal son.”

“It contained the laws, the ritual, and the records of the new religion - the grand message of salvation which we proposed freely to publish, and teach the nation to read, understand and follow.”

“Thus commenced the kind and provident care of the American Bible Society for that benighted nation; a care, which has continued to flourish to this day.”

“The thought of such a present, to such a personage, at this juncture, by that noble institution whose fraternal co-operation with missionary societies, is so uniformly valuable, was exceedingly felicitous. The king seemed pleased to be thus complimented, though he could not read.”

“Bibles, furnished by friends for the purpose, were presented to the daughters of Kamehameha, and a good optical instrument from the Board to the king.”

“Presents, in such circumstances, have doubtless a winning influence, as missionaries are taught by the patriarch Jacob, who understood well the power of a gift ...”

“... as a pledge of peace for when he was about to meet his offended, warlike, and perhaps implacable brother, he, with supplication, painstaking, tokens of respect, and a present, ‘prevailed,’ and left the world a most impressive example for imitation, in uniting self-sacrifice, prayer, and appropriate means for winning souls, and elevating heathen nations.” (Hiram Bingham)

“The first object with the missionaries ... was to prepare elementary books, and to multiply copies, so that the ability to read intelligibly might become as extensive as possible. Their next object was to translate the Scriptures, and thus put it within the power of the whole population, who would take the trouble to learn, to read the word of God in their own language.” (Christian Observer, June 1832)

“For them, the Bible was the very voice of God, and any manifestation of religion without a Bible to depend on would quickly go astray and soon become only one more man-made religion. Had they converted all Hawaiians, but left them without a Bible, their mission, by their own standards, would have been incomplete and, in the end, doomed to failure.” (Lyon)

“God will carry through his work for us. I do not know what will God do for my poor soul. I shall go before God and also before Christ. I hope the Lord will send the Gospel to the heathen land, where the words of the Savior never yet had been. Poor people! Worship the wood and stone, and shark and almost everything their god.”

“The Bible is not there, and heaven and hell, they do not know about it. ... O what a wonderful thing it is that the hand of the Divine Providence has brought me from that heathenish darkness where the light of Divine truth never had been. And here I have found the name of the Lord Jesus in the Holy Scriptures, and have read that his blood was shed for many.”

“O what a happy time I have now, while my poor friends and relations at home, are perishing with hunger and thirsty, wanting of the Divine mercy and water out of the wells of salvation. My poor countrymen who are yet living in the region and shadow of death, without knowledge of the true God, and ignorant of the future world, have no Bible to read, no Sabbath. I often feel for them in the night season, concerning the 1088 of their souls. May the Lord Jesus dwell in my heart, and prepare me to go and spend the remaining part of my life with them. But not my will, O Lord, but thy will be done.” (Ōpūkaha‘ia)

“I had an interesting conversation with Tamoree, last evening, on the subject of religion. He asked, if I had any Bible in his tongue; I replied that I had not now, but it was our intention to make one, as soon as we should be sufficiently acquainted with, the language; and that we wished to obtain the Otaheite

translations and other books, to aid us in translating the Bible into the Owhyhee tongue; as some of the Taheitan language was similar to this, and some was not.”

“He seemed pleased, and replied in English, ‘some is alike, some different.’ I recited to him the first verse of Genesis, in Hebrew, and he repeated it after me. He then asked me what it was in English, and as I repeated it, he repeated it after me.”

“He asked again, what it would be in Owhyhee, and as I replied, he repeated as before, seeming to be pleased, not only with the knowledge of the important truth itself, but with my ability to translate it, and his own ability to repeat it, and with this specimen of the manner in which a Bible was to be made for this nation, in their own tongue.” (Hiram Bingham, July 28, 1821)

Hawaiians were Seeking the ‘New Technology’ of Literacy

“The missionary effort is more successful in Hawai‘i than probably anywhere in the world, in the impact that it has on the character and the form of a nation. And so, that history is incredible; but history gets so blurry ...”

“The missionary success over decades and decades becomes sort of this huge force where people feel like the missionaries got off the boat barking orders ... where they just kind of came in and took over. They got off the boat and said ‘stop dancing,’ ‘put on clothes,’ ‘don’t sleep around.’”

“And it’s so not the case”

“The missionaries arrived here, and they’re a really remarkable bunch of people. They are scholars, they have got a dignity that goes with religious enterprise that the Hawaiians recognized immediately. ...”

“The Hawaiians had been playing with the rest of the world for forty-years by the time the missionaries came here. The missionaries are not the first to the buffet and most people had messed up the food already.”

“(T)hey end up staying and the impact is immediate. They are the first outside group that doesn’t want to take advantage of you, one way or the other, get ahold of their goods, their food, or your daughter. ... But, they couldn’t get literacy. It was intangible, they wanted to learn to read and write”. (Puakea Nogelmeier)

“I think literacy was ... almost like the new technology of the time. And, that was something that was new. ... When the missionaries came, there was already contact with the Western world for many years.... But this was the first time that literacy really began to take hold. The missionaries, when they came, they may have been the first group who came with a [united] purpose. They came together as a group and their purpose was to spread the Gospel the teachings of the Bible. ...”

“But the missionaries who came, came with a united purpose ... and literacy was a big part of that. Literacy was important to them because literacy was what was going to get the Hawaiians to understand the word of the Bible ... and the written word became very attractive to the people, and there was a great desire to learn the written word. ... Hawai‘i became the most literate nation at one time.” (Jon Yasuda, one of the intern translators who participated in the Ali‘i Letters translation project)

The positive impact of the missionaries was almost immediately recognized. The Hawaiian frustration with the early foreigners and support for the missionaries is illustrated in comments from a couple chiefs of that time, Kaumuali'i (King of Kauai) and Kalanimōku (chief councilor and prime minister to Kamehameha I, Kamehameha II and Kamehameha III.)

Missionary Samuel Ruggles notes in his Journal entry on May 8, 1820 ...

“The inhabitants treated me with all the attention and hospitality which their limited circumstances would afford; and even carried their generosity to excess ...”

“This afternoon the king (Kaumuali'i) sent to me and requested that I would come and read to him in his bible. I read the first chapter of Genesis and explained to him what I read as well as I could.”

“He listened with strict attention, frequently asking pertinent questions, and said I can't understand it all; I want to know it; you must learn my language fast, and then tell me all.”

“No white man before ever read to me and talk like you.”

Translation of the Bible

“The Hawaiian translation of the Bible (Baibala in Hawaiian) remains the largest single volume ever printed in Hawaiian, with over 1,400 densely packed pages in its most recent incarnation (2012), slimmed down from an original (and unwieldy) 2,300 pages (1837-1839).” (In making of the Baibala in to the Hawaiian language, they translated the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament – it was not a translation from or to English.)

“It is probably also the largest and most demanding single literary project since Hawaiian became a written language, requiring the active involvement of at least nine regular participants (four American ministers and five Native scholars) and numerous others who contributed to a lesser, but significant, degree over a period of more than ten years.”

“The participants were the elite scholars of their nations: the Americans were the best-educated men of their generation, skilled to a surprising degree in the ancient biblical languages, while the Hawaiians were among the highest-ranking ali'i 'chiefs' and kākā'ōlelo 'chiefly advisors', each one a profound scholar in the language and oral literature of Hawai'i. The result of their long and fruitful cooperation was a superb Bible translation, far exceeding what either group could have produced on its own.”

“Two of the qualities that mark a good translation are fidelity and readability. The ideal translator has a firm and nuanced command of the source language (in this case, Hebrew, Aramaic, and ancient Greek) and is, ideally, a well-educated native speaker of the target language (here, Hawaiian). Not one of those who worked on the Baibala possessed both of these qualifications.”

“The result of their collaborative efforts is a testament to both. This article sets forth the history of the translation and the qualifications and organization of the translators and Native editors.” (Lyon)

During the annual meeting of that year, 1826, it was determined that the time had come to begin the work of translation in earnest. The four seminary-trained ministers, Hiram Bingham, Asa Thurston, William Richards, and Artemas Bishop, gathered in Kailua, Kona.

Named Hawaiian participants in the initial translations were governor of Hawai'i Island John Adams Kuakini; governor of Maui Ulumeheihei Hoapili; the ali'i nui 'high chief' Kēlou Kamakau of Ka'awaloa; the ali'i advisor to kings and foreigners Ioane Papa ʻĪʻĪ; and the learned and brilliant commoner Davida Malo. It would have been difficult then, and impossible later, to assemble a more eloquent, accomplished group of Hawaiian speakers. (Lyon)



Davida Malo



Gov. Kuakini



Gov. Hoapili



Ioane Papa ʻĪʻĪ



Thomas Hopu

The Hawaiian editors (no picture available for Kēlou Kamakau).

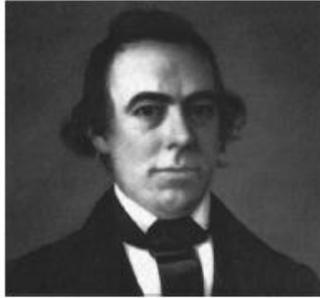
“For the first two years, progress was discouragingly slow, until William Ellis, a longtime missionary in Tahiti, along with several Tahitian Christians came for an extended stay in 1823. Ellis was fluent in Tahitian and, unlike the Americans, able to effectively converse with Hawaiians shortly after his arrival. He helped teach the language to the Americans both in person and through his sermons.” (Lyon)

“Missionaries compared their draft translations from the Greek, pondered the latest scholarship from Germany, America, and England, and consulted lexicons, commentaries, and other translations of the New Testament (e.g., Latin, English, and Tahitian). The real test came when Kanaka scholars reviewed their work. Was the intended meaning clear and forcefully stated in the Hawaiian? Were the words and grammar not merely correct but the best way to convey the desired meaning?”

“Each verse would be reworked, each phrase debated, each word carefully weighed. As there are over 30,000 verses in the Bible, it quickly became clear that the project would not be completed for many years.”

“A further difficulty was that many parts of the New Testament, particularly the letters of Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews, involve complex Greek rhetoric and vocabulary, much of which was beyond the ability of the missionary translators to approximate in their limited Hawaiian. Thus, as we shall see, once missionaries had given what they believed to be competent explanations of difficult passages to the Hawaiians, they were often unable to gauge the final result.”

“The Hawaiians, in turn, were reliant on missionaries to express complex ideas in their non-Native Hawaiian. Ambiguous and poorly articulated explanations would result in inaccurate renderings. By 1830, there was still no one person who knew with certainty that the Hawaiian rendering of a difficult text accurately conveyed the meaning aimed at. As it turned out, many years of revision lay ahead.”



William Richards



Asa Thurston



Hiram Bingham



Artemas Bishop

The four principal translators.



Lorrin Andrews



Sheldon Dibble



Ephraim Clark



Jonathan Green

The later missionary translators. All were in their late twenties or early thirties when they began work on the Baibala. Not pictured: James Ely.

“At the end of these first meetings in Kailua, each minister returned to his station, Bingham to Honolulu, Richards to Maui, and Thurston and Bishop to Kona. Their practice over the next ten years was to do apart what they had done together. Each worked closely with one or more Native scholars: Bingham with Ioane Papa ʻĪʻĪ, Richards with Davida Malo and Governor Hoapili, and Thurston and Bishop with Governor Kuakini and Kēlou Kamakau. Other Native scholars likely contributed, but we do not yet know their names.”

“The method was simple but rigorous. Each group was assigned a book or group of books from the New Testament. The missionary translator(s) would work through the Greek and prepare a draft. He and the Hawaiian-language expert would correct the draft until they were satisfied that the meaning was clear and the language was appropriate. A rubric was developed to aid in the choice of vocabulary, and, when necessary, to guide in the borrowing or coining of words.”

“The five Hawaiian monitors were the guarantors that the language of the Baibala would be clear, stately, and, to the degree possible, reflect the language as spoken by the aliʻi.”

“As one group finished a book or group of books, their work was copied and sent to each of the other groups. These, in turn, would go over the translations, the missionary comparing every verse with the Greek while the Native consultant would evaluate the Hawaiian. The missionary would then write in corrections, suggestions, questions, and comments and send it on to the next team. Once the drafts had

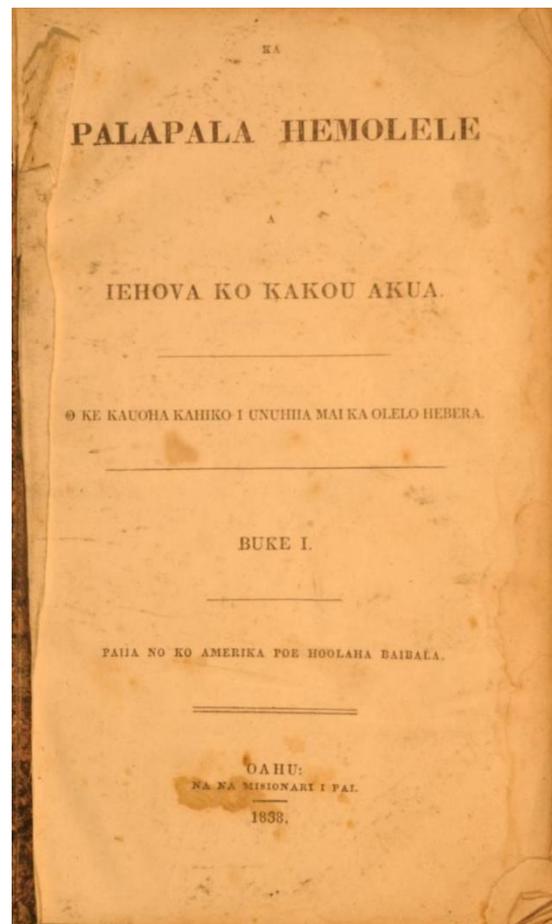
gone through all the groups they were returned to the original team, which would incorporate appropriate changes, make new copies, and send them off to the printer.”

“Starting in 1830, newer members of the mission, Sheldon Dibble, Lorrin Andrews, Jonathan Green, and Ephraim Clark, began to work on the translation, at first in cooperation with one of the other translation groups, and later taking responsibility to translate sections on their own. We do not know of other Kanaka scholars who joined the project, but since much of the work was done at Lahainaluna, it would be surprising if missionary translators did not regularly consult some of the well-known scholars who were studying there as adults, such as S. N. Hale’ole or S. M. Kamakau, especially when Hoapili or Malo were away on one of their frequent travels.” (Lyon)

“The last books of the New Testament were printed in 1832, and a complete copy was quickly bound together in red morocco leather to be presented to the dying Ka’ahumanu, who had done more than all others to secure the place of the Baibala in the Hawaiian Kingdom.”

“Work on the Old Testament proceeded at a faster pace. There was a gap of three years between the printing of the last books of the New Testament (Colossians through Revelation, all printed in 1832), and the first books of the Old Testament (five of the historical books were published in 1835), although the story of Joseph had been printed separately in 1828, and Lorrin Andrews had published parts of his translation of Proverbs in the Lahainaluna student newspaper, Ka Lama Hawaii, in 1834.”

“(A)lthough the Old Testament is nearly four times as long as the New, the translation was completed by 1838. Other factors were a much-improved proficiency on the part of the missionaries after a decade or more in Hawai’i, and that many of the most common or difficult translation issues had been resolved while working through the New Testament. The last book of the Old Testament was published in 1838, and 1839 saw the first printing of the complete Baibala.” (Lyon) (Lots of information here is from Kapali Lyon.)



“God's Word, the finishing sheet of which was struck May 10, 1839, has from the commencement of our mission been prominent in our teaching-prominent in all the schools, taught or superintended by our missionaries. The entrance of God’s Word giveth light.”

“He has honored the nation that has nobly welcomed his Word to their families and to their schools. God has honored the rulers who have encouraged its general circulation and free perusal among the whole population. In this the Hawaiian chiefs made more progress during the first nineteen years of the labors of the missionaries than the rulers of Italy, Portugal, and Spain, have made in half as many centuries, with all the aid of bishops, cardinals, and popes.” (Bingham)