

Missionary Period

The Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM,) In giving instructions to a Company of missionaries headed to the Hawaiian Islands, noted (in part:)

“Dearly beloved in the Lord, Having devoted yourselves for life to the service of Christ among the heathen, you are convened in this city to embark for the field of labor which has been assigned you, and upon which your eyes have been fixed with earnest desire and fond anticipations. On the morrow you expect to commence your voyage to the Sandwich Islands ...”

“The conversion and salvation of the islanders to whom you are sent — to be accomplished, so far as human agency is concerned, by the preaching of the gospel, the establishment of schools, and all the means of imparting religious knowledge, — furnish an object of sufficient magnitude to claim your greatest exertions. Keep this in view, as a goal to which you should be advancing with quick and regular steps.”

“In your most retired meditations, as well as your conferences with each other, let the question often recur; ‘How shall we do most for the object of our desires and hopes? How shall these perishing immortals be saved? By what new and more effectual process can their consciences be enlightened, their hearts affected, and their lives adorned by the practice of Christian virtue? How shall the power of sinful habit be counter acted, and that great moral change be produced, which is forcibly described in the scriptures as a death unto sin and a life unto righteousness?’”

“By cultivating the friendship, which is here recommended, you will arrive at that desirable point in christian experience, where each will think little concerning his own things,—much concerning the things of others,—but most of all concerning the things of Jesus Christ.”

“You are to abstain from all interference with the local and political interests of the people. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and it especially behoves a missionary to stand aloof from the private and transient interests of chiefs and rulers. Inculcate the duties of justice, moderation, forbearance, truth and universal kindness. Do all in your power to make men of every class good, wise and happy.”

“Let it be apparent, also, that you have nothing to do with traffic, or gain; that far nobler objects brought you from your native land; and that you regard all that the world has to offer as of very little value compared with the salvation of a single soul. In any discussions and claims concerning property, whether the persons interested be natives or foreigners, take no part.”

“To visitors and occasional residents, whether from this country or any other, show yourselves kind, affable and obliging. Conciliate their esteem by the usefulness of your lives. Give no occasion for any report, unfavorable to the work to which you are devoted; and if your designs should be misrepresented, or even your characters defamed, you need be under no apprehension, but God will vindicate your cause.”
(Instructions from the ABCFM, 1838)

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the “Missionary Period”), about 184-men and women in twelve Companies served in Hawai‘i to carry out the mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands.

Forty Years of Foreigners Before the Missionaries Arrived

“The advent of the white man in the Pacific was inevitable, and especially in Hawaii, by reason of its size, resources, and, most important, its location at the crossroads of this vastest of oceans, rapidly coming into its own in fulfilment of prophecies that it was destined to become the chief theater of the world’s future activities.” (Frear, 1935)

Years before the westward land movement gathered momentum, the energies of seafaring New Englanders found their natural outlet, along their traditional pathway, in the Pacific Ocean.

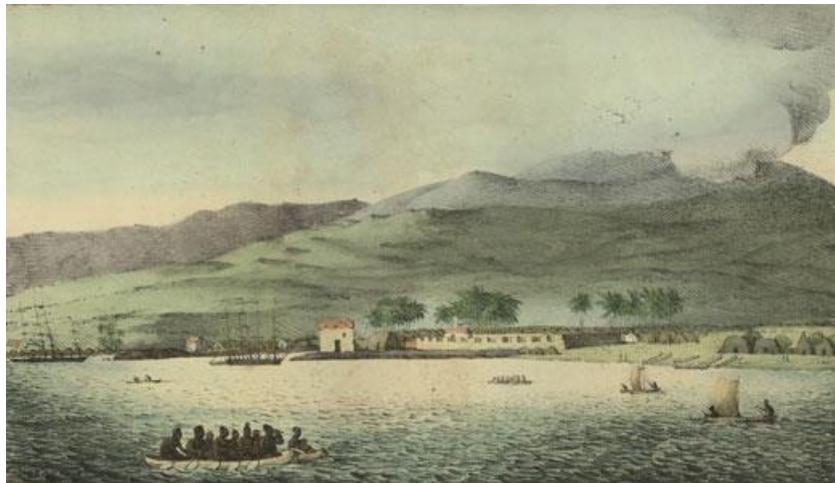
What helped started in the dawn hours of January 18, 1778, on his third expedition, when British explorer Captain James Cook on the HMS Resolution and Captain Charles Clerke of the HMS Discovery first sighted what Cook named the Sandwich Islands (that were later named the Hawaiian Islands.)

On the afternoon of January 20, 1778, Cook anchored his ships near the mouth of the Waimea River on Kauai’s southwestern shore. After a couple of weeks, there, they headed to the west coast of North America.

In the Islands, as in New France (Canada to Louisiana (1534,)) New Spain (Southwest and Central North America to Mexico and Central America (1521)) and New England (Northeast US,) the trader preceded the missionary.

Practically every vessel that visited the North Pacific in the closing years of the 18th century stopped at Hawai’i for provisions and recreation.

“During the forty-two years from Cook’s discovery to the arrival of the first missionaries, and long afterwards, there came this way thousands of whites beach-combers, Botany Bay convicts, fur-traders, whalers, and others, including black-birders in the South Seas, who, with noteworthy exceptions ...”



“... lived up to the then-prevailing motto that ‘there was no God this side of Cape Horn,’ or, when they rounded the Cape, ‘hung their consciences on the Horn,’ as it was said, and who, bent solely on their own profit and pleasure, brought muskets, alcohol, and infectious and contagious diseases, promoted licentiousness and exploited the natives, without a thought for their rights or welfare.” (Frear, 1935)

“The natives were quick to imitate the white man, whether as to clothes, liquor, tobacco, cards, or other things.” (Frear, 1935)

Hawaiian demand for American goods was rapidly increasing, owing to the improved standards of living. The central location of the Hawaiian Islands brought many traders, and then whalers, to the Islands.

Coming of the Missionaries

“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.” (Puakea Nogelmeier)



On October 23, 1819, the Pioneer Company of American Protestant missionaries from the northeast US set sail on the Thaddeus for the Sandwich Islands (now known as Hawai‘i.) There were seven American couples sent by the ABCFM to convert the Hawaiians to Christianity in this first company.

These included two Ordained Preachers, Hiram Bingham and his wife Sybil and Asa Thurston and his wife Lucy; two Teachers, Mr. Samuel Whitney and his wife Mercy and Samuel Ruggles and his wife Mary; a Doctor, Thomas Holman and his wife Lucia; a Printer, Elisha Loomis and his wife Maria; and a Farmer, Daniel Chamberlain, his wife and five children.

Along with them were four Hawaiian youths who had been students at the Foreign Mission School at Cornwall Connecticut, Thomas Hopu, William Kanui, John Honoli‘i and Prince Humehume (son of Kauai‘i’s King Kaumuali‘i and also known as George Prince Kaumuali‘i.)

After 164-days at sea, on April 4, 1820, the Thaddeus arrived and anchored at Kailua-Kona on the Island of Hawai‘i, about where the Kailua pier is today.

By the time the Pioneer Company arrived, Kamehameha I had died and the centuries-old kapu system had been abolished; through the actions of King Kamehameha II (Liholiho,) with encouragement by former Queens Ka‘ahumanu and Keōpūolani (Liholiho’s mother,) the Hawaiian people had already dismantled their heiau and had rejected their religious beliefs.

“And the missionaries, that first bunch on the Thaddeus almost didn’t get to land. I am sure many of you know the story that Kamehameha had said, ‘yes send missionaries from England,’ so when they arrived from America, his son almost said, ‘no, we’ll wait for the pizza we ordered ... this isn’t the group we asked for.”

“But, they 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.” (Puakea Nogelmeier)

“(F)or forty years Hawaiians wanted everything on every ship that came. And they could get it; it was pretty easy to get. Two pigs and ... a place to live, you could trade for almost anything.” (Puakea Nogelmeier)

“(The missionaries) come with a set of skills that Hawaiians are really impressed with. ... The missionaries were the first group of a scholarly background, but they also had the patience and endurance. So that’s part of the skill sets. ... That’s really the more important things that are attracted first.”

“But the second thing is they are pono.”

“They have an interaction that is intentionally not taking advantage. It’s not crude. They don’t get drunk and throw up on the street ... and they don’t take advantage and they don’t make a profit. So that pono actually is more attractive than religion.”

Collaboration between native Hawaiians and the American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, the introduction of Christianity; the creation of the Hawaiian written language and widespread literacy; the promulgation of the concept of constitutional government; making Western medicine available; and the evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing.)

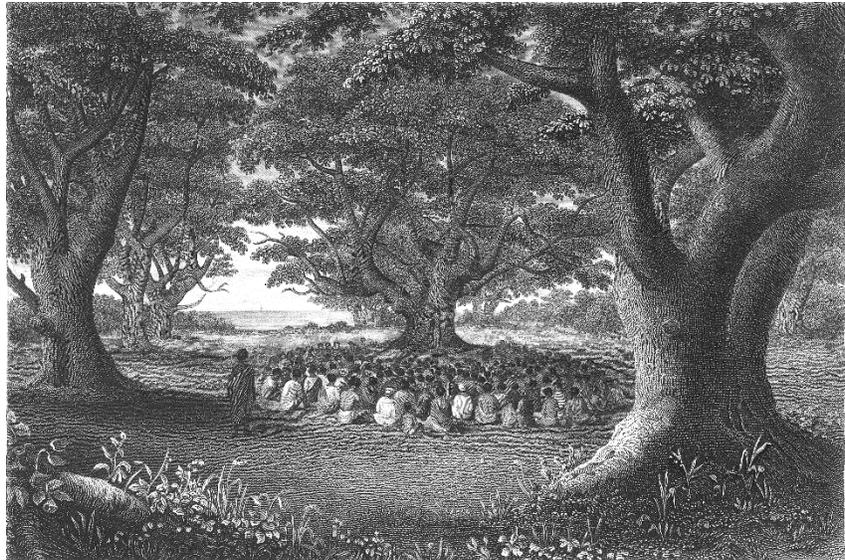
Introduction of Christianity

Within five years of the initial arrival of the missionaries, a dozen chiefs had sought Christian baptism and church membership, including the king’s regent Ka’ahumanu. The Hawaiian people followed their native leaders, accepting the missionaries as their new priestly class. (Schulz)

Keōpūolani is said to have been the first convert of the missionaries in the Islands, receiving baptism from Rev. William Ellis in Lāhainā on September 16, 1823. Keōpūolani was spoken of “with admiration on account of her amiable temper and mild behavior”. (William Richards) She was ill and died shortly after her baptism.

On December 24, 1825, Ka’ahumanu, six other Chiefs and one maka’āinana (commoner) were baptized and received Holy Communion at Kawaiaha’o Church. This was the beginning of expanded admission into the Church.

Kamakau noted of her baptism, “Ka’ahumanu was the first fruit of the Kawaiaha’o church ... for she was the first to accept the word of God, and she was the one who led her chiefly relations as the first disciples of God's church.”



Creation of the Hawaiian Written Language

In addition to preaching the gospel, one of the first things the missionaries did was begin to learn the Hawaiian language and create an alphabet for a written format of the language.

After Western contact and attempts to write about Hawai'i, early writers tried to spell words based on the sound of the words they heard. People heard words differently, so it was not uncommon for words to be spelled differently, depending on the writer.

Initially, the missionaries worked out a Hawaiian alphabet of 17-English letters. Then, on July 14, 1826, the missionaries established a 12-letter alphabet for the written Hawaiian language, using five vowels (a, e, i, o, and u) and seven consonants (h, k, l, m, n, p and w) in their "Report of the committee of health on the state of the Hawaiian language." The alphabet continues in use today.

Widespread Literacy

The missionaries established schools associated with their missions across the Islands. This marked the beginning of Hawai'i's phenomenal rise to literacy. The chiefs became proponents for education and edicts were enacted by the King and the council of Chiefs to stimulate the people to reading and writing.

Interestingly, as the early missionaries learned the Hawaiian language, they then taught their lessons in the mission schools in Hawaiian, rather than English. In part, the mission did not want to create a separate caste and portion of the community as English-speaking Hawaiians.

By 1831, in just eleven years from the first arrival of the missionaries, Hawaiians had built over 1,100-schoolhouses. This covered every district throughout the eight major islands and serviced an estimated 53,000-students. (Laimana)



In 1839, King Kamehameha III called for the formation of the Chiefs' Children's School (Royal School.) The main goal of this school was to groom the next generation of the highest-ranking Chiefs' children and secure their positions for Hawai'i's Kingdom. The King asked missionaries Amos Starr Cooke and Juliette Montague Cooke to teach the 16-royal children and run the school.

In this school, the Hawai'i sovereigns who reigned over the Hawaiian people

from 1855 were educated, including: Alexander Liholiho (King Kamehameha IV;); Emma Na'ea Rooke (Queen Emma;); Lot Kapuāiwa (King Kamehameha V;); William Lunalilo (King Lunalilo;); Bernice Pauahi (Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, founder of Kamehameha Schools;); David Kalākaua (King Kalākaua) and Lydia Lili'u Kamaka'eha (Queen Lili'uokalani.)

The King also saw the importance of education for all; “Statute for the Regulation of Schools” was passed by the King and chiefs on October 15, 1840.

Its preamble stated, “The basis on which the Kingdom rests is wisdom and knowledge. Peace and prosperity cannot prevail in the land, unless the people are taught in letters and in that which constitutes prosperity. If the children are not taught, ignorance must be perpetual, and children of the chiefs cannot prosper, nor any other children”.

Constitutional Government

Kamehameha III asked William Richards (who had previously been asked to serve as Queen Keōpūolani’s religious teacher) to become an advisor to the King as instructor in law, political economy and the administration of affairs generally.

Richards gave classes to King Kamehameha III and his Chiefs on the Western ideas of rule of law and economics. His decision to assist the King ultimately resulted in his resignation from the mission, when the ABCFM board refused to allow him to belong to the mission while assisting the King.

“The Hawaiian people believed in William Richards (Rikeke), the foreigner who taught the king to change the government of the Hawaiian people to a constitutional monarchy and end that of a supreme ruler, and his views were adopted.” (Kamakau)

Of his own free will, King Kamehameha III granted the Constitution of 1840, as a benefit to his country and people, that established his Government upon a declared plan. (Rex v. Booth - Hanifin)

That constitution introduced the innovation of representatives chosen by the people (rather than, as previously, solely selected by the Ali’i.) This gave the common people a share in the government’s actual political power for the first time.

Western Medicine

Later (when Richards was sent on a diplomatic mission to the US and Europe to recognize the rights of a sovereign Hawai’i,) King Kamehameha III asked missionary Judd to resign from the mission and serve as his advisor and translator.

Judd, a doctor by training, had originally come to the islands to serve as the missionary physician. While in that role, Judd set up part of the basement in the 1821 Mission House as a Western medicine pharmacy and doctor’s office, beginning in 1832.

Dr Judd did not dismiss Native Hawaiian medical practices. He thought Native Hawaiian practice should be improved. Over the years, Dr Judd modified his practice to include Native Hawaiian ingredients in his treatments.

Judd wrote the first medical book in the Hawaiian language and later formed the first medical school in the Islands. Ten students were accepted when it opened in 1870, all native Hawaiians (the school had a Hawaiians-only admissions policy.)

Distinctive Musical Tradition

Another lasting legacy left by the missionaries in the Islands related to music. Some songs were translations of Western songs into Hawaiian; some were original verse and melody.

Oli and mele were already a part of the Hawaiian tradition; it was delivered in an almost monotone way, without instrumentation, or with percussion (drums) or flutes.

“As the Hawaiian songs were unwritten, and adapted to chanting rather than metrical music, a line was measured by the breath; their hopuna, answering to our line, was as many words as could be easily cantilated at one breath.” (Bingham)

The missionaries introduced Western choral tradition, harmony, hymns, gospel music, and Western composition. In the early period, instrumentation included the “Church Bass,” a cello-like instrument and a flute. Later on, church organs, pianos, melodeons, and other instruments were introduced to Hawai`i.



One of the unique verses (sung to an old melody) was Ho`onani Hole - Ho`onani I Ka Makua Mau. Bingham wrote/translated it to Hawaiian and people sang it to a melody that dates back to the 1600s – today, it is known as the Hawaiian Doxology.

Another popular Hawaiian song was written by another missionary, Lorenzo Lyons. Lyons composed many poems and hymns; Lyons’ best known and beloved work is the hymn “Hawai`i Aloha,” sung to the tune of “I Left It All With Jesus.” The song was inducted into the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame in 1998.

“Widely regarded as Hawai`i’s second anthem, this hymn is sung in both churches and public gatherings. It is performed at important government and social functions to bring people together in unity, and at the closing of Hawai`i Legislative sessions.” (Hawaiian Music Museum)

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Collaboration between Native Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, the

- Introduction of Christianity;
- Development of a written Hawaiian language and establishment of schools that resulted in widespread literacy;
- Promulgation of the concept of constitutional government;
- Combination of Hawaiian with Western medicine; and
- Evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing)