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The Congregational Mission Movement
To Hawaii

By William K. Voigt

Bill received The Alfred D. Grey Memorial Award at Estes Park, CO, on June 23, 1986. The Award is presented to a graduating Fellow who demonstrates exceptional scholarship and perception of the Congregational Spirit.
THE CONGREGATIONAL MISSION MOVEMENT
TO HAWAII

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I wish to express my gratitude to the librarians who provided invaluable assistance in locating original manuscripts.

I dedicate this paper to my parents, whose love for the Hawaiian Islands inspired this research.
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Approach

"Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people. This, for ages, was emphatically applicable to the isles of the great Pacific Ocean. But the Divine said, 'Let there be light." 1

When an attempt is made to reconstruct a period in history, the writer stands in the precarious position of having to sift through bits and pieces of valid evidence to ascertain that history and then to present it to the reader in such a manner which claims reasonable objectivity, so I would argue. Nevertheless, when all accounts have been balanced against each other, the individual writing the history will often feel a particular bias expressed at times throughout the writing. Therefore, the purpose of this paper will be to examine the origins and the early years of the Congregational mission movement to Hawaii through the lens of reasonable objectivity, recognizing the biases. Based on the completed research, I will make particular claims regarding this movement, in the summary portion of the paper. The opening quote by Hiram Bingham, one of the pioneer missionaries makes a particular claim on behalf of the missionaries and sets the tone for this paper.

1 Hiram Bingham, A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands (New York: Sherman Converse, 1847) p. 1.
2.

The controversy over the Congregational missionaries and the Hawaiian people rages on even as this paper is being written. The historical material is voluminous, most of it being of a polemical nature on behalf of the missionaries or on behalf of the Hawaiians. Today, each group has their own bookstore and museum in Hawaii. Each side lays claims for the way the history really shaped itself.

In a recent newspaper article, a group of Hawaiian women from the town of Waianae on Oahu were quoted as saying: "We hope they (the Christian Churches) will reveal to you the pain and the conflicts we as Native Hawaiian women have felt in disowning our gods, our spirituality, our culture, our symbols, our language, and our dignity, replacing them all with the Christian God." 2

The approach of this paper attempts to examine the validity of such claims, to examine the historical events as they unfolded in the time frame researched, spanning from 1810-1826. To broaden the scope any further would serve to devalue the amount of time and research needed to focus on this particular aspect of the movement.

Regarding the mission movement and the response by the Hawaiians I will make this opening thesis statement, as it reflects directly on the approach to this paper; that is, nothing done of substantive value in the course of human history is without its own price. The groundwork laid by the pioneer missionaries and the Hawaiian Ali'i (pronounced āh-lee-eē), the Royalty of Hawaii, is nothing short of radical. It changed, forever, the life of a nation and the race of a particular people. This paper approaches the issue of the origins of the movement and makes the claim that mutual compatibility and understanding existed between the pioneer missionaries and the ali'i.

2 Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 12 October 1985
It was, I feel, not until subsequent generations that a strong rift grew between the missionaries and the people of Hawaii.

**Methodology**

The methodology employed in the research of this paper is one that utilizes aspects of "form criticism". Form criticism is normally applied to the interpretation of Scripture and Old Testament criticism, but can be used in other writings as well. This method, developed by the German scholar Hermann Gunkel, labeled Formgeschichte, looks at a genre of writing to see how it originates in a particular life setting. The claim for this method is that the setting can be recovered through a study of the genre itself. It is a way of analyzing the literature - the structure, the intentions and settings, to arrive at a pre-literary form (a life setting). Thus it yields a reasonably objective study of the time period. To arrive at this life setting, in the early 1800's, I have used the letters, journals and diaries of the missionaries and the ali'i as a primary source to avoid the polemical nature and coloration of history as given in later documents on the mission movement.

The genre of these writings is such that I was able to pinpoint manners of speaking, language and words used by particular people, as well as their ideas. It also enabled me to detect forged documents as well as editorial insertions into writings and letters by other people. The later documents are valuable in their own way however, for when examined in light of the letters and journals I was able to arrive at the bits and pieces of valid evidence that I referred to in the opening sentences of this paper. Additionally, on a subjective level, it is important to have an understanding and appreciation of
both cultures when doing the dry aspects of objective research.

In this section, therefore, I would claim that this methodological approach insures maximum objectivity within the research.

Myths and Forgeries

Myths

Dispelling myths is never an easy task. One undertakes to disturb traditional mind sets and to shape them towards a new understanding. The myths created regarding the origin and early years of this movement are plentiful and require a more in-depth understanding to dispell them. I believe I have only begun to scratch the surface in this paper. Some scholars have spent a lifetime studying this history, and therefore I do not even presume to make a major inroad on this level. I do not believe that the initial history of the movement was a "them versus us" concept, but, as I claimed in my thesis statement, a history of mutual compatibility and understanding.

Since the advent of the book Hawaii, by James Michener, and the subsequent movie, many myths have been promulgated regarding the inception of the missionary movement. It is important to note that even Michener claims that Hawaii is not an historical account. Yet the doubts persist. Michener's main character, Abner Hale, is not a real person but rather a composite of several individuals. The idea that the missionaries came and destroyed the Hawaiian gods is also false. The religious beliefs in Hawaii were already going through an upheaval, and the old way of life had been in a state of change for at least a decade prior to the arrival of the missionaries.
King Kamehameha I (ca. 1753-1819), the great unifier of the islands into one nation, made this remark in the last years of his reign: "The Islands will be united, the kapu of the gods overthrown, those of the heavens (the chiefs) will be brought low, and those of the earth (the common people) will be raised up."  

This prophetic remark by King Kamehameha I would come to fruition within several years of his death and would precede the arrival of the missionaries by almost two years. I will speak in greater detail on this subject under the heading of "The Hawaiian Response" in the latter part of this paper.

Michener also depicts the missionaries as the carriers of disease which devastate the Hawaiian race. Let it be noted that forty-two years before the first mission group came to Hawaii in 1820, that almost one half of the population had been diminished by syphilis and other diseases brought to the islands by the sandalwood traders, the sailors and foreigners whose only motive seemed to be an economic exploitation of the native civilization. Later, with Captain Cook, the whaling vessels would bring further ruin, destruction and disease which greatly affected the Sandwich Islands, as they were called so many years ago.

Is this all written to say that the missionaries are not held culpable for any of their actions having negative consequences? The answer is no. However, we must keep reminding ourselves that myth and fact often become intertwined and to unravel them takes a bit of doing. Later in this paper, the state of life affairs as regards the missionaries and the Hawaiians will be discussed. Through their

Mary Kawena Pukui, Nana I Ke Kamu (Look To The Source), (Honolulu: Queen Lili'uokalani Center, 1895) p. 273.
own words, I will endeavor to let them become the authors of their own fact and fiction.

Forgeries

In order for the original words of the missionaries and the Eli'i to have any credibility, it must be determined whether or not the writings are accurate. In my research I have discovered forged documents by the missionaries as well as the ali'i. In addition, there were numerous documents which claimed to be written by the Eli'i but in fact were probably written by others. The unanswerable question regards the identity or identities of those who did the altering on different occasions.

In several letters supposedly sent by the Hawaiian royalty to the British government, accusing the missionaries of wrongdoing and stealing the land for America, one sees a blatant forgery between the style of language used in these letters versus the letters of communication between themselves, their people and the missionaries. Words are spelled differently than the same words found in their other letters. Phrases are used which are uncharacteristic of the Eli'i. The claim was also made that these particular letters were written in their own hand. This would have been difficult, because at the date of their writing none of the ali'i could write more than several words of English, let alone entire constructs of sentences. My guess is that the letters were written in Britain by political agitators anxious to have the missionaries removed from the islands. I will say more about this further along in the paper.

On the other hand, I found repeated insertions by the missionary interpreters when they wrote letters for the ali'i. It was often
the case, until later years, that the missionaries would write the letters dictated to them by the ali'i. One example of this is in a letter from King Kamehameha II (Liholiho) to Jeremiah Evarts, Corresponding Secretary for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (hereinafter referred to as ABCFM). The letter is indicative of the halting English speech of Kamehameha until we reach a sentence which says, "the ministers came hither to do good to us." One sees this sentence in the midst of broken English, as a most unusual phrase. It should also be noted that Mr. Evarts appears to be the direct supervisor to whom the missionaries report. This is simply one example of many documents I examined where editorial insertions seem to have been made.

Getting behind the inserted phrases, deciding which letters appear uncharacteristic of the person writing them, is the task at hand. The final product of the original thoughts and words expressed, either by a missionary or a royal personage, will validate the thesis statement and findings of this historical review.

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CHAPTER I

IN AMERICA

Henry Obookiah

Henry Obookiah, a young Hawaiian, now becomes the focus for determining the origins of this mission movement. He will be the figure that will bring about a mission fervor which will carve out a lasting place in history.

The myth surrounding this young man is that he was found crying on the steps of Yale University, pleading for the salvation of his nation. In his own words written in his memoirs, Henry Obookiah invalidates this myth, but he does cry out for the salvation of his nation. He writes about himself with such a simplistic beauty and passion that the reader is left feeling his sense of conversion; furthermore, it becomes possible to understand how the religious community in Connecticut could have felt a sense of calling to the Sandwich Islands.

Henry Obookiah (pronounced Òbó-ꗸ-kāy-āh and spelled several different ways depending on what source you read) was born in Hawaii. Early in his childhood his family was killed in a tribal warfare which occurred in his village. He was left to be raised by an uncle who was a high priest in the religious cult of the islands. Obookiah never adapts to this lifestyle and instead is intrigued by the foreign vessels which sail in and out of the harbor bound for distant lands.
His spirit of adventure prompted him to run away from home and he boarded a ship bound for New York. The master of the ship was a man by the name of Captain Brintnell, who eventually took Obookiah to stay with him in New Haven, Connecticut. Soon after their arrival in New Haven, and a stay with Brintnell, Obookiah was received by the religious community into their homes. The Rev. E.W. Dwight and Mr Samuel Mills became his patrons. Under the tutorship of Mills, Henry Obookiah learned much of the English language, and eventually he visited the classrooms of Andover Theological School where his knowledge continued to increase.

In time, he was sent to a school in Cornwall, Connecticut which had been founded by the ABCFM for the education of foreign youths. He attended this school with several other Hawaiians, one of whom was named Thomas Hopu. Obookiah "became a devout Christian and translated some portions of the Scriptures into his own language." 5

Perhaps the most moving aspect of Henry Obookiah's life is his conversion. While in Connecticut the religious community filled his time and mind with religious concepts and the language of the Christian community. His memoirs reflect this "religious language" in broken English. In the first part of his memoirs one senses a type of knowledge which sounds like a mental regurgitation of the ideas of the people with whom he is surrounded. The concepts of Christianity are straight out of a New England Puritan ideology. On the other hand he strenuously rejects the gods of Hawaii. This does not seem surprising in light of the conditions on the islands when he departed.

5 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, October 23, 1819 to October 3, 1823 (author unknown) Yale Divinity School - Rare Manuscript Division (Microfilm, ABC 18.8, Reel 793, Document 464)
The extent to which he held these beliefs seems uncertain until the time following a severe illness. During his illness and afterwards, he speaks about a feeling of having the Holy Spirit with him. I do sense that he crosses a fine line from a kind of mental knowledge of Christianity to a subjective feeling of experiencing conversion, of having Christ now as his Lord and Savior. His writing takes on a joyous ring which is nothing short of inspirational to the reader. He expresses this joy with a child-like simplicity which is the hallmark of this individual who, for all intents and purposes, gave the religious leaders the impetus to consider the Sandwich Islands as a new frontier ripe for evangelism.

Hiram Bingham wrote of Obookiah in this way:

The generous heart of Opukahaia (Obookiah), touched by Divine grace, glowed with gratitude to God and his people for the Christian privileges which he was allowed to enjoy... (he) expressed feelings of confidence in God and of compassion for his countrymen, which drew the hearts of Christians more and more closely to him and his distant dying tribe. 6

Let the words of Henry Obookiah speak for themselves as an example of the simplistic and loving nature of his writing:

When I at home—Torrington—out in the field I can't help think about Heaven. I go in a meadow—work at the hay—my hands—but my thoughts—no there—In Heaven, all time, then I very happy. 7

As a personal tribute to Henry Obookiah, I am reminded of the Beatitude in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they

6 Hiram Bingham, A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands (New York: Sherman Converse, 1847) p. 58.

shall see God." Henry Obookiah died not long after, at a young age, in 1818, the year before the pioneer mission company sailed for Honolulu. The great Congregationalist, Dr. Lyman Beecher, delivered the sermon at Obookiah's funeral.

Response to Henry Obookiah

This ability to learn the language and adapt quickly to Christian concepts endeared Obookiah to the religious community. His ability was widely discussed throughout the area of New England. Perhaps the most interesting factor which coincides with Obookiah's arrival is that the Rev. E. W. Dwight was on the Board for Foreign Missions. In several years to come (1815-1818), Dwight and Obookiah would speak of the need for the message of salvation to be brought to the Islands. Listening attentively to this message was a young Congregational college student at Andover by the name of Hirman Bingham.

In the words of Henry Obookiah:

O what a happy time I have now, while my poor friends and relatives at home, are perishing with hunger and thirsty, wanting of the Divine mercy...poor people! worship the wood and stone, and shark and almost everything their god... May the Lord Jesus dwell in my heart...I hope the Lord will send (unclear) them the Gospel. 8

This particular entry was written several years from the first entry quoted in this paper. Note the improvement in the style of the English language. Many of his other remarks parallel this one.

Inspired by this message and by the continued expressed desire of Obookiah and Thomas Hopu to have the Gospel spread to their lands,

the clergy and young college students, soon to be ministers, were filled with a missionary zeal rarely found in our world today. The response to Henry Obookiah's pleas were answered and an unparalleled mission movement began to take shape.

In a memorial service sermon, delivered by Rev. Joseph Harvey to the students at the foreign mission school in Cornwall, following the death of Obookiah, these words sum up much of the feeling about this young Hawaiian:

Thus has God led us, and thus has he blessed us in this undertaking. He has taken from us the dear lamented Obookiah - but not until he had finished the work which God gave him to do. We can now look back and see the whole design of God in bringing this youth to our country. He was the instrument...of exciting a spirit of prayer...in behalf of his native Island.  

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9 Joseph Harvey, The Banner of Christ Set Up, (A sermon delivered to the Foreign Missions School in Cornwall, Connecticut, May 6, 1818)
CHAPTER II

ABCFM

Calling Forth the Missionaries

Hiram Bingham, along with his fellow classmate Asa Thurston (the other primary mission leader in Hawaii) volunteered their services to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the summer of 1819. They request an assignment to the Sandwich Islands.

The Board, with previous influence from Rev. E. W. Dwight and the testimony of the life of Henry Obookiah, along with other young Hawaiian men, felt the desire to seek out this new mission field. Funds were meager, but they approved the first pioneer mission company to venture forth.

For Hiram Bingham, the events of his life took on a rather brisk pace, to say the least. He graduated from Andover in the first week of September, 1819. He was ordained with Asa Thurston in Goshen, Connecticut on September 29, 1819 and for his next act (it does seem a bit humorous) married Sybil Mosley on the 11th of October, 1819. I say this is humorous because he met the young lady only four weeks prior to their marriage and one week prior to his ordination. It was interesting to note in the documents of the ABCFM's reports that they frowned on a single man traveling to a native land without a wife. What amazing timing! Be that as it may, this union worked out.
well and they worked diligently in the new land to share the Gospel of Christ.

The sermon delivered at the ordination of Bingham and Thurston recalled the vivid imagery of Old Testament idolatry, and the worship of foreign gods which caused the destruction of Israel. It spoke of the voice of the prophets and their tirade against the evil people of Israel. The sermon was meant to be appropriated to the setting in which Bingham and Thurston would find themselves. This charge to the young missionaries was supported by the Board, whose theology tied in well with the theme of the ordination sermon (which lasted several hours).

These are but a few of the words in this sermon, also meant for the hearing of the other missionaries traveling to "Owhyhee" (Hawaii) as the ABCFM so often called it:

> The heathen themselves may rage - Satan may come down with great wrath, and in his convulsive struggles for (unclear) may yet shake the foundations of the earth; yet God's promise cannot fail. In spite of all Satan's efforts to prevent it, Zion will arise and shine..." 10

**Sailing to the Sandwich Islands**

On October 23, 1819, the pioneer company of missionaries and their wives, accompanied by three Hawaiians from the Foreign Missions School, set sail from Boston, Massachusetts. Their vessel was a Brig called the "Thaddeus" under the direction of Captain Blanchard.

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10 Heman Humphrey, The Promised Land (An ordination sermon delivered in Pittsfield, Massachusetts on September 29, 1819) p. 10.
On the day they departed from their homes and their country, the first entry was written into a journal which would help to document the mission activities for years to come:

October 23, 1819 "This day in the good providence of God, we have been allowed to leave our dear native shore, on an embassy of mercy, having been set apart to the work of propagating the Gospel in the Sandwich Islands. And though we go (unclear) to a foreign place, not knowing the things that shall befall us there, we cheerfully commit ourselves to His guidance and protection."

After a lengthy voyage which documents everything from mission plans to weather and seasickness (Hiram Bingham was one of the last missionaries to gain his sea legs), the Brig Thaddeus landed at Kawaihae, where they learned of the death of King Kamehameha I, and the overthrow of the ancient gods. After taking on passengers, they sailed on to Kailua, Hawaii, where they dropped anchor on April 4, 1820. The missionary album notes that the, "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions paid $2,500 for the passage of the missionaries, besides provisioning them for the long voyage." 

Rev. Hiram Bingham, leader of the group, records the following words at the time of landing:

The appearance of destruction, degradation, and barbarism, among the chattering, and almost naked savages, whose heads and feet, and much of their sunburnt skins were bare, was appalling. Some of our number, with gushing tears, turned away from the spectacle." 

11 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, October 23, 1819 to October 3, 1823 (Houghton Library, Harvard University, Mass.)


Upon landing, Bingham's words tend to support Michener's Abner Hale character, in his book *Hawaii*. There is much to be said about this, and I will continue to develop this portrait of the unofficial mission leader in the next section.

The mission movement now takes root in a new land. For better or for worse, the missionaries and their families, as well as many of their generations to come, will become a major part of the fabric of Hawaii.
CHAPTER III

The Missionaries

Hiram Bingham

On Sunday, April 24, 1820, Hiram Bingham delivered these opening remarks during the first worship service:

Soon the Sabbath morning sun, having always a peculiar charm, rose upon us in unusual splendor, and arrangements were made for the public worship of Jehovah, whose claims we came to present. With comfort and courage did we seize on the opportunities afforded us, to bring to the notice of the people the sacred day of God, and on the first Sabbath that dawned on us in our new abode, to announce to those, who both native and foreign, assembled at our call, the general object of our mission adopting the language of the heavenly messenger to the shepherds of Judea: 'fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.'

14

Much has already been noted in this paper on Hiram Bingham. Traveling to Hawaii, upon graduation from seminary, with a true zeal for missionary work, this man would change the life and social environment of a nation (your typical, average seminary student).

Hiram Bingham has been idealized by some and vilified by many. Thought to be a pompous, pious hypocrite, he has faired poorly in historical reconstructions. If we are to understand Bingham in an objective light, we must understand more about his backround.

He was born to Calvin and Lydia Bingham on October 30, 1789. He was raised in a devout religious environment, his parents being

14 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, Yale Divinity School - Rare Manuscript Division (Microfilm ABC 18.8, Reel 793)
strong Congregationalists. Several documents note, in retrospect, that his parents hoped he would become a farmer and care for the family land in Bennington, Vermont. This was not Bingham's desire however, and in 1811 he went through a conversion experience during a revival meeting led by the Reverend Daniel Marsh. In later years he was strongly influenced by the teachings of the Reverend Elisha Yale of New York and, as noted earlier in the paper, graduated from Andover Theological School in 1819. During his years of study with Elisha Yale, Bingham studied Greek and Latin, and was strongly taken with the study of Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather. Speaking of his mentor, Elisha Yale, Bingham said, "he enlarged my views relative to the great work of beneficence...and gave impetus and direction to the little energy I possessed." 15

Modeling his ministry on Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather, it is no wonder that Bingham's style was so obnoxious and so outrageous to so many. The greater question though, is - was it a style that was destructive, or one that should have been changed. I would answer, no. Given his time, his environment and his setting, one wonders if so many would have received the saving message of Christ had he been any different. It may also be important to recall that while Bingham's most severe critics were the white commercial traders and politicians of Britain and America, his most beloved contemporaries were his fellow workers and the Royalty of Hawaii.

As to the latter remark, I will show this endearment to Bingham in the next section entitled, "The Hawaiian Resonse". In

further research on the character of Bingham, Sereno Bishop writes the following:

All looked up to Bingham as the strongest man of the mission, and a leader...the highest testimony to the mental and moral qualities of Mr. and Mrs. Bingham was in the immense personal influence which they acquired over the minds and hearts of the leading royal chiefs. This ascendancy made him extremely obnoxious to the majority of foreigners who detested moral restrictions. \(^{16}\)

When history has so conditioned us to see the Hiram Bingham as Michener's Abner Hale, in a black top hat and dark, clawhammer coat, it is difficult to believe that Bingham could have done nothing less than forcefully subjugate an unwilling and innocent people. While there is truth to a self-righteous, often obnoxious side of his personality, most of the character of Abner Hale as Bingham, may be dismissed as myth. While Bingham uses a language regarding the people that we might find repugnant or distasteful in our century, we must keep in mind the environment that shaped Bingham's attitudes; furthermore, in my research of his original writings, I soon came to discover that when Bingham spoke of the darkness, the foulness, the pollution of heathenism, his references were in the context of speaking to the spiritual side of the peoples' souls, as he saw it. His sketches and drawings of the people and the land, his writings of the native converts, show a missionary who had a great capacity for love, as well as righteous anger and zeal.

I close this section with a quote written by Hiram Bingham (ca. 1843) following the funeral of a Hawaiian convert named Bartimeus. Formerly called Puaaiki, who later became known as the

blind preacher of Maui, his eyesight had been lost since infancy when his mother attempted to bury him alive (the custom of infanticide) due to his deformities:

He was transformed into an enlightened, ardent, sanctified disenthralled, firmly established worshipper of God, a faithful disciple,...an acceptable minister of Christ, loved and admired by those who knew him and lamented by all. To God alone, and forever be the praise."

Theological Focus

The theological focus of the missionaries reflects several lines of thinking. Once again I focus on Hiram Bingham, as well as his contemporary, Asa Thurston and generalize to the other missionaries, as much of their theology is consistent with each other. While Bingham assumes the unofficial role of mission leader and preacher, the equally capable Asa Thurston became the educator of the Hawaiian people, motivated by the enthusiasm of Queen Kaahumanu, the favorite wife of King Kamehameha I (he had a number of wives).

In the research it became quite clear that the ideals of a promised land, as in the Old Testament, along with the setting of the idolatrous nations of Judea and Israel (ca. 780 B.C. - 587/6 B.C.) are where Bingham and Thurston see themselves. There is a strong sense of the voice of the prophet. Isaiah and Jeremiah, along with Amos and Hosea, are frequently quoted in Bingham's correspondence. Asa Thurston, in his sermons and teaching lessons often refers to the Hawaiian people as the children of Israel, and uses other imagery to suggest that time period in the Old Testament. They see the gods and temples of the Islands as the cause for destruction and God's wrath, much the same as the theological

precepts which explain the fall of Israel to the Assyrians and eventually Judah to the Babylonians. The theology is not limited to the Old Testament however, and additional journal entries by Bingham, Thurston and Samuel Ruggles note the hardships of St. Paul as he sought to bring the message of Christ to the Gentile world.

Blended together with the Old Testament theology - the wrathful, angry God to disobedient people - was the love of Christ in the New Testament, as cited earlier where Bingham announces the prophetic message of "good tidings of great joy". Many of their letters express the love of Christ, yet often in a way that we in the twentieth century find hard to understand. Their seeming hardness was not limited to the non-Christian, but among themselves as well.

In a letter to Mrs. Chapin, wife of Dr. Chapin (medical missionaries on Maui), Persis Thurston, daughter of Asa Thurston, writes the following message on March 16, 1842, from South Hadley, Massachusetts:

I sympathize tenderly with you in your continued affliction, but it is the Lord's doing, and blessed be his holy name.\(^{18}\)

The question we need to keep in mind here is whether our theology regarding Christ's love today has any superiority over the notion of the love of Christ in the 1800's setting. History must view the actions from their time and setting, and not from any seeming moral superiority on our part in the twentieth century.

\(^{18}\) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Library, Harvard University - Rare Book and Manuscript Division) From a collection of letters by the Thurston family.
CHAPTER IV

Missionary Documents

Charges Against the Missionaries

The charges against the missionaries are profuse, and space is too short to elaborate on all of them. Let me simply say that many charges were leveled at the missionaries by American and British traders, whaling sailors and politicians. Before the missionaries came to the Islands, the people were ripe for economic exploitation. The traders spared no niceties in taking advantage of the situation.

Today, if one visits the islands of Hawaii, and listens long enough to the people who have been living there for some time, you often hear the phrases, regarding the missionaries, "They came to do us good - and they did damn well," also, "They taught us to pray, and when we raised our heads, our land was gone" (my own sources in Hawaii). There is some truth to both of these, phrased in different ways over the years by historians and Hawaiians alike. The missionaries gained a great deal of land, and in decades to come, would be the corporate power brokers of a vast fortune gleaned through economic gain. The missionary descendents would, in time, weave themselves into the multi-faceted loom of Hawaiian society. However, this paper does not inquire into charges of later years, only into the origins and early years.

22.
Clarification

In the early years, the land grants given to Hiram Bingham and the other missionaries were gifts of the ali'i in the 1820's. That the missionaries claimed them so readily might be seen as an error in judgement. The scant and meager support of the ABCFM as the years went by also suggest a reason why they accepted the lavish gifts of the Royalty.

In regards to other charges by the British government that accuse the missionaries, specifically Hiram Bingham, of politicizing the Islands, Governor Boki of Oahu, in December of 1826, lent his support to a document written by his brother Kalaimoku which flatly refutes the government charges. One may correctly assume there were people in the British government who would have liked to have claimed the territories for themselves, and were not above forgery to do so.

In a random letter from Oahu by Reverend Richards, dated March 1, 1826, to Jeremiah Evarts of the ABCFM he writes:

Captain Percival...treated the missionaries with tolerable politeness. In one of his first interviews with Rev. Mr. Bingham, however, he expressed his extreme regret that females were prohibited going on board of vessels...{he} began to ridicule our attempts to instruct the people. 19

The documents seem endless, but the important thing to bear in mind is the person or persons making the charges.

19 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, 1824 to 1830, vol. 2, Yale Divinity School - Rare Manuscript Division (Microfilm, Reel 794)
CHAPTER V

The Eli'i

The State of Affairs

An important aspect of the Congregational mission movement was the state of affairs in the Sandwich Islands in the years just prior to their arrival. The natives lived under a regulated system of laws known as kapu. The word is a form of the Tahitian word tapu (taboo). This systematic direction of daily life applied to all classes within the society. The most common punishment for the breaking of the kapu was execution by stoning, being clubbed to death, being buried or burned alive. Today, if one visits the Bishop Museum in Hawaii, these ancient clubs and weapons can be viewed. One look tells you the impact they would have made upon someone's skull.

An example of breaking the kapu would be if an individual were to allow his or her shadow to fall upon the house or personage of a chief or high priest. To overstep the boundaries of the land belonging to the ali'i meant sure death. Women could not eat with the men and they were also forbidden to eat bananas, coconuts and pork. Infanticide was also practiced. Thousands of babies were buried alive by their parents, especially if the child had any noticeable deformities. Sacrifices to the gods and goddesses were frequent and often involved human sacrifices. In the years before
the arrival of the missionaries, these practices became less frequent.

To leave it at this however, would be to do a terrible injustice to the society. Many accounts show a people who were living an idyllic existence. Life was not as harsh as in other islands of the Pacific. The rich forests and greenery of the valleys yielded a harvest of plenty for the natives. Their story is a rich history of oral traditions, close family ties (including the marriages of brother to sister) and an ordered society which foreigners found to be nothing short of a pleasure paradise, away from the rigidities of American or European society. The ali'i had a favorite sport, noted in the journals by the missionaries, which spoke of the Kings and Queens riding long wooden boards through the ocean waters (we call it surfing). The artifacts of that time show a highly developed stone age culture who lived in a society with a hierarchy, the Ali'i being at the top. It is important to remember, though, that when the missionaries arrived, the religious system of Hawaii was in a complete upheaval.

Description of the Ali'i (Hawaiian Royalty)

The kapu way of life was ended for all intents and purposes in 1819, by King Kamehameha II, following the death of King Kamehameha I. The chiefs and priests urged the overthrowing of the ancient kapu system and King Kamehameha II seemed willing to oblige them.

The ali'i, as I have referred to them throughout the paper, were the royal Kings and Queens of the Islands, as well as Princes and Princesses. When the missionaries arrived in Hawaii, King
Kamehameha II and Queen Kaahumanu (the wife of the deceased King Kamehameha I) were the ruling monarchs. King Kamehameha II, also known by his Hawaiian name, Liholiho, enjoyed rum and alcohol in general, and did not become a Christian convert until almost two years after the missionaries landed, although he supported them in their endeavors. Queen Kaahumanu and the Island high chiefess, Kapiolani, then, were the movers and shakers which enabled Christianity to flourish on the Islands. In 1824 Kapiolani staged a dramatic scene at the base of the volcanic site known as Halemaumau. Daring the fire goddess, Pele, to harm her, she declared that Jehovah was her God, and that she no longer feared or recognized the ancient goddess. This brave act gained her fame and recognition not only in Hawaii among her own countrymen, but also in Britain, where Tennyson wrote a beautiful poem in tribute to this woman and her heroic deed. This also became a monumental triumph for the missionaries.

For the purposes of this paper, then, these were the ali'i that were important to the early years of the Congregational mission movement.
Letters and Documents

It is to Hiram and Sybil Bingham's credit that they had what could only be described as a winning way with the ali'i. While their battle was for spiritual converts, Queen Kaahumanu was fighting for education for herself and her people. Between these two goals, mutual understanding and appreciation were born. Bingham endeared himself to Kaahumanu, King Kamehameha II, and Kapiolani, as well as they to him.

Let their words speak for themselves. In 1823, the exact date is unclear, King Kamehameha wrote this message to the ABCFM:

This is another communication to you. You have heard... our gods in former times were wooden gods, even in the time of my father before me: but lately, I have cast away the wooden gods. Good was my casting them away before arrival of Bingham and Thurston...Like Christ saying to all disciples, 'go, go, teach all nations.' May you be saved by Jehovah and Jesus Christ our common Lord. 20

Written by an interpreter for Kamehameha II, the words and the signature match the style of other communications by him and reflect much of his thinking, upon his conversion to Christianity.

20 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, October 23, 1819 to October 3, 1823 (Microfilm ABC 19.1, Reel 793, vol. 1) Separate letters of the Eli'i to the ABCFM
On November 20, 1826, the Island high chiefess, Kapiolani, writes to the ABCFM the following message:

We express to you is the continued joy we have in hearing of the light...the Son of God. We do not know any fault of your company. The word of God is what you put in this dark land. 21

One might suspect editorializing in this kind of a statement, but Kapiolani writes numerous messages, stating the spiritual condition of the land in terms that come directly from Bingham and Thurston. This portion of her letter is in keeping with many other documents that she wrote. Her commitment to the Christian faith was paralleled only by that of Queen Kaahumanu.

On March 15, 1825, Queen Kaahumanu writes these beautiful words to Jeremiah Evarts of the ABCFM:

Here is my love to you as you have loved me and my husband. I now give you my thanks for having spoken to me of the word of the Lord. I now take heed to the word of the Son of God. I teach (my family), all together with common people. Jesus is atonement for sins of the world...let my word be seen by all the missionaries. 22

These are only but a few samples which were written by the ali'i in support of the missionaries. If one were to be propelled in time back to the Islands during these early years, it would not be an uncommon sight to see Hiram Bingham and Queen Kaahumanu touring the villages of Oahu to see that the spiritual and educational plans were being carried out.

21 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, 1824 to 1830, vol. 2, Yale Divinity School - Rare Manuscript Division (Microfilm, Reel 794)

22 Journal of the Sandwich Island Mission, 1824 to 1830 vol. 2, Yale Divinity School - Rare Manuscript Division (Microfilm, Reel 794)
Changing A Nation

There is no doubt in my mind that Bingham and the other missionaries, especially Bingham, endeared themselves to Kaahumanu, Liholiho, and Kapiolani. The relationship between Bingham and Kaahumanu was one of respect, toleration and understanding. In each other they saw a way to achieve their individual goals. Their individual communications regarding each other, show this mutual respect and desire for the new beginnings of a nation under the Christian God. It might be said that the missionaries strongly spoke out for the destruction of the ancient religious practices, but this would only have supported what was already taking place under the ruling ali'i.

The changes were vast and sweeping. Sybil Bingham, the Thurston's, and the other missionaries began a rapid process of education, beginning, as requested, with Queen Kaahumanu herself. The changing of a nation was underway. It was underway, in a spirit of mutual compatibility and understanding, in those early years, between the missionaries and the ali'i, as I have claimed in my thesis statement at the beginning of this paper.
SUMMARY

The mission movement has caused a great deal of controversy. Many people have undertaken the task to defend one side or the other. It seems, to me, that much of the task of evangelism calls for a strong, persuasive manner; moreover, it demands a character of a faith-filled life, a life committed to that faith, and a zeal for the salvation of those who have not heard the word of Christ. This mission movement does nothing less than to call a nation to conversion. The missionaries saw themselves in the light of Old Testament prophets, they saw themselves as early Christians converting pagans to Christianity.

In the early years of Christianity, Paul attempts to convert a Gentile world. Acts 2:41 records the conversion of "about three thousand souls" when Peter called upon the people to "Repent, and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." In spite of the Hellenistic influences, in spite of any Gnostic influence, Christianity survived and claimed for itself the message that salvation came through Jesus Christ.

The mission movement, as documented by the missionaries, finds its basis in early Christianity. Winning the people to Christ was the task of the missionaries. The issue at stake, in this mission controversy, is the Christian faith. True enough, the problems of land gathering, and later corporate and political issues taint the movement, in my opinion. However, this in no way invalidates the
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sincerity with which this great movement began. The origins and early years reflect a mutual compatibility and understanding lost to many who have succumbed to myth and incorrect historical reconstruction.

I am reminded of the Scripture from Romans 10:14, "But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?" How indeed? The missionaries stepped out boldly in the name of Christ, and the Hawaiian people responded. Earlier in this paper I stated that nothing done of substantive value is without its own price. The salvation of one who has not heard the Gospel message is, to me, the greatest substantive value to that human life.

In 1856, Leonard Bacon delivered the ordination sermon to Hiram Bingham, Jr. At the end of the sermon, Hiram Bingham, Sr. gave this charge which serves as a summary to this paper:

Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. Give thyself wholly to the cause of human salvation, and with all patience, diligence, humility and prayer, persevere unto the end in cooperating with God; that, at the close of a faithful ministry and a useful life...you may be inspired to say to those who stand around you and to distant friends, 'Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved, by ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'

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23 Leonard Bacon, Ordination Sermon of Rev. Hiram Bingham, Jr. 'Charge To the Evangelist' by Hiram Bingham, Sr. (New Haven: Thomas H. Pease, 1856) p. 20.
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