

**HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE
HAWAIIAN MISSION AND THE
MISSIONS TO MICRONESIA
AND TE MARQUESAS ISLANDS**

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Historical sketch of the Hawaiian mission and the missions to Micronesia and te Marquesas islands by S. C. Bartlett

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S. C. BARTLETT

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MICRONESIA AND THE MARQUESAS
ISLANDS.

BY

PROF. S. C. BARTLETT, D.D.

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SKETCH OF THE HAWAIIAN MISSION.



IN the year 1809, a dark skinned boy was found weeping on the door-steps at Yale College. His name was Henry Obookiah (Opukahaia); and he came from the Sandwich Islands. In a civil war, his father and mother had been slain before his eyes; and when he fled with his infant brother on his back, the child was killed with a spear, and he was taken prisoner. Lonely and wretched, the poor boy, at the age of fourteen, was glad to come, with Captain Brintnell, to New Haven. He thirsted for instruction; and he lingered round the College buildings, hoping in some way to gratify his burning desire. But when at length all hope died out, he sat down and wept. The Rev. Edwin W. Dwight, a resident graduate, found him there, and kindly took him as a pupil.

In the autumn of that year came another resident graduate to New Haven, for the purpose of awakening the spirit of missions. It was Samuel J. Mills. Obookiah told Mills his simple story — how the people of Hawaii “are very bad; they pray to gods made of wood;” and he longs “to learn to read this Bible, and go back there and tell them to pray to God up in heaven.” Mills wrote to Gordon Hall, “What does this mean? Brother Hall, do you understand it? Shall he be sent back unsupported, to attempt to reclaim his countrymen? Shall we not rather consider these southern islands a proper place for the establishment of a mission?” Mills took Obookiah to his own home in Torrington, and thence to Andover for a two years’ residence; after which the young man found his way to the grammar school at Litchfield, and when it was opened, in 1817, to the Foreign Mission School at Cornwall, Conn. At Litchfield he became acquainted and intimate with Samuel Ruggles, who about this time (1816) resolved to accompany him to his native island with the gospel.

In the same vessel which brought Obookiah to America, came two other Hawaiian lads, William Tennooe (Kanui) and Thomas Hopu. After roving lives of many years, in 1815 they were both converted — Tennooe at New Haven, and Hopu after he had removed from New Haven to Torrington. Said Hopu, after his conversion, "I want my poor countrymen to know about Christ." These young men, too, had been the objects of much personal interest in New Haven; and in the following June, during the sessions of the General Association in that city, a meeting was called by some gentlemen to discuss the project of a Foreign Mission School. An organization was effected under the American Board that autumn, at the house of President Dwight, three months before his death. Next year the school opened. Its first principal was Mr. Edwin Dwight, who found Obookiah in tears at Yale College, and among its first pupils were Obookiah, Tennooe, Hopu, and two other Hawaiian youths, with Samuel Ruggles and Elisha Loomis.

But Obookiah was never to carry the gospel in person to his countrymen. God had a wiser use for him. In nine months from the opening of the Mission School, he closed a consistent Christian life with a peaceful Christian death. The lively interest which had been gathering round him was profoundly deepened by his end and the memoir of his life, and was rapidly crystallizing into a mission. Being dead, he yet spoke with an emphasis and an eloquence that never would have been given him in his life. The touching story drew legacies from the dying, and tears, prayers, donations, and consecrations from the living. "O what a wonderful thing," he once had said, "that the hand of Divine Providence has brought me here from that heathenish darkness. 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. My poor countrymen, who are yet living in the region and shadow of death! — I often feel for them in the night season, concerning the loss of their souls. May the Lord Jesus dwell in my heart, and prepare me to go and spend the remainder of my life with them. But not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

The will of the Lord *was* done. The coming to America was a more "wonderful thing" than he thought. His mantle fell on other shoulders, and in two years more a missionary band was ready for the Sandwich Islands. Hopu, Tennooe, and John Honoree, natives of the islands, were to be accompanied by Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston, young graduates of Andover, Dr. Thomas Holman, a young physician, Daniel Chamberlain, a substantial farmer, Samuel Whitney, mechanic and teacher, Samuel Ruggles, catechist and teacher, and

Elisha Loomis, printer and teacher. All the Americans were accompanied by their wives, and Mr. Chamberlain by a family of five children. Mr. Ruggles seems to have been the first to determine upon joining the mission, and Mr. Loomis had been a member of the Mission School. With this company went also George Tamorece (Kamaulii), who had been a wanderer in America for fourteen years, to return to his father, the subject king of Kauai.

The ordination of Messrs. Bingham and Thurston, at Goshen, Conn., drew from the surrounding region a large assembly, among whom were a great number of clergymen, and nearly all the members of the Mission School, now thirty or more in number; and "liberal offerings" for the mission came in "from all quarters." A fortnight later, the missionary band were organized at Boston into a church of seventeen members; public services were held Friday evening and Saturday forenoon, in the presence of "crowded" houses, at the Park-street Church; and on the Sabbath, six hundred communicants sat with them at the table of the Lord. "The occasion," says the "Panoplist" of that date, "was one of the most interesting and solemn which can exist in this world." On Saturday, the 23rd of October, 1819, a Christian assembly stood upon Long Wharf, and sang, "Blest be the tie that binds." There was a prayer by Dr. Worcester, a farewell speech by Hopu, a song by the missionaries, "When shall we all meet again;" and a fourteen oared barge swiftly conveyed the little band from their weeping friends to the brig "Thaddeus," which was to carry the destiny of the Hawaiian Islands.

While the missionaries are on their way, let us take a look at the people whom they were going to reclaim. The ten islands of the Hawaiian group — an area somewhat less than Massachusetts — were peopled by a well formed, muscular race, with olive complexions and open countenances, in the lowest stages of barbarism, sensuality, and vice. The children went stark naked till they were nine or ten years old; and the men and women wore the scantiest apology for clothing, which neither sex hesitated to leave in the hut at home before they passed through the village to the surf. The king came more than once from the surf to the house of Mr. Ruggles with his five wives, all in a state of nudity; and on being informed of the impropriety, he came the next time dressed — with a pair of silk stockings and a hat! The natives had hardly more modesty or shame than so many animals. Husbands had many wives, and wives many husbands; and exchanged with each other at pleasure. The most revolting forms of vice, as Captain Cook had occasion to know, were

practiced in open sight. When a foreign vessel came to the harbor, the women would swim to it in flocks for the vilest of purposes. Two thirds of all the children, probably, were destroyed in infancy — strangled or buried alive.

The nation practiced human sacrifice; and there is a cord now at the Missionary Rooms, Chicago, with which one high priest had strangled twenty-three human victims. They were a race of perpetual thieves; even kings and chiefs kept servants for the special purpose of stealing. They were wholesale gamblers, and latterly drunkards. Thoroughly savage, they seemed almost destitute of fixed habits. When food was plenty, they would take six or seven meals a day, and even rise in the night to eat; at other times they would eat but once a day, or perhaps go almost fasting for two or three days together. And for purposes of sleep the day and the night were much alike. Science they had none; no written language, nor the least conception of any mode of communicating thought but by oral speech.

A race that destroyed their own children had little tender mercy. Sons often buried their aged parents alive, or left them to perish. The sick were abandoned to die of want and neglect. Maniacs were stoned to death. Captives were tortured and slain. The whole system of government and religion was to the last degree oppressive. The lands, their products, and occupants, were the property of the chiefs and the king. The persons and power of the high chiefs were protected by a crushing system of restrictions, called *tabus*. It was tabu and death for a common man to let his shadow fall upon a chief, to go upon his house, enter his enclosure, or wear his *kapa*, to stand when the king's *kapa* or his bathing water was carried by, or his name mentioned in song. In these and a multitude of other ways, "men's heads lay at the feet of the king and the chiefs." In like manner it was tabu for a woman to eat with her husband, or to eat fowl, pork, cocoanut, or banana — things offered to the idols — and death was the penalty. The priest, too, came in with his tabus and his exactions for his idols. There were six principal gods with names, and an indefinite number of spirits. Whatsoever the priest demanded for the god — food, a house, land, human sacrifice — must be forthcoming. If he pronounced a day tabu, the man who was found in a canoe, or even enjoying the company of his family, died. If any one made a noise when prayers were saying, or if the priest pronounced him irreligious, he died. When a temple was built, and the people had finished the toil, some of them were offered in sacrifice. In all these modes, the oppression of the nation was enormous.

The race had once been singularly healthy. They told the first missionaries — an exaggeration, of course — that formerly they died only of old age. But foreign sailors had introduced diseases, reputable, and especially disreputable; and now, between the desolations of war, infanticide, and infamous diseases widely spread by general licentiousness, the nation was rapidly wasting away.

Such was the forbidding race on whom the missionaries were to try the power of the cross. "Probably none of you will live to witness the downfall of idolatry," — so said the Rev. Mr. Kellogg to Mr. Ruggles, as they took breakfast together at East Windsor, the morning before he left home. And so thought, no doubt, the whole community. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts.

Hopu called up his friend Ruggles at one o'clock on a moonlight night (March 31) to get the first glimpse of Hawaii; and at day-break the snow-capped peak of Mauna Kea was in full view. A few hours more, and Hopu pointed out the valley where he was born. A boat is put off, with Hopu and others in it, which encounters some fishermen, and returns. As the boat nears the vessel, Hopu is seen swinging his hat in the air; and as soon as he arrives within hail, he shouts, "Oahu's idols are no more!" On coming aboard, he brings the thrilling news that the old king Kamehameha is dead; that Liholiho, his son, succeeds him; that the images of the gods are all burned; that the men are all "Inoahs," — they eat with the women; that but one chief was killed in settling the government, and he for refusing to destroy his gods. Next day, the message was confirmed. Kamehameha, a remarkable man, had passed away. On his death-bed, he asked an American trader to tell him about the Americans' God; but, said the native informant, in his broken English, "He no tell him anything." All the remaining intelligence was also true. The missionaries wrote in their journal, "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it." The brig soon anchored in Kailua Bay, the king's residence; and a fourteen days' consultation between the king and chiefs, followed. Certain foreigners opposed their landing; "they had come to conquer the islands." "Then," said the chiefs, "they would not have brought their women." The decision was favorable. Messrs. Bingham, Loomis, Chamberlain, and Honoree, go to Oahu; and Messrs. Ruggles and Whitney accompany the young Tamoree to his father, the subject king of Kauai. The meeting of father and son was deeply affecting. The old king, for his son's sake, adopted Mr. Ruggles also, as his son, and gave him a tract of land, with the power of a chief. He prepared him a house, soon built a school-house and chapel, and followed him with acts of friendship which were of

great benefit to the mission while the king lived, and after his death. He himself became a hopeful convert, and in 1824 died in the faith.

And now the missionaries settled down to their work. They had found a nation sunk in ignorance, sensuality and vice, and nominally without a religion — though, really, still in the grasp of many of their old superstitions. The old religion had been discarded chiefly on account of its burdensomeness. We cannot here recount all the agencies, outer and inner, which brought about this remarkable convulsion. But no religious motives seem to have had any special power. Indeed, King Liholiho was intoxicated when he dealt to the system its finishing stroke, by compelling his wives to eat pork. And by a Providence as remarkable as inscrutable, the high priest threw his whole weight into the scale. Into this opening, thus signally furnished by the hand of God, the missionaries entered, with wonder and gratitude. The natives educated in America proved less serviceable than was expected. Tennooe was soon excommunicated; although in later years he recovered, and lived and died a well-reputed Christian. Hopu and Honoree, while they continued faithful, had partly lost their native tongue, lacked the highest skill as interpreters, and naturally failed in judgment. Hopu, at the opening of the first revival, was found busy in arranging the inquirers on his right hand and his left hand, respectively, as they answered yes or no to the single question, "Do you love your enemies?" and was greatly disturbed at being interrupted.

The king and the chiefs, with their families, were the first pupils. They insisted on the privilege. Within three months, the king could read the English language; and in six months, several chiefs could both read and write. The missionaries devoted themselves vigorously to the work of reducing the native speech to writing; and in less than two years, the first sheet of a native spelling-book was printed — followed by the second, however, only after the lapse of six months. From time to time, several accessions of laborers were received from America, and various changes of location took place. The first baptized native was Keopuolani, the mother of the king; and others of the high chiefs were among the earlier converts. The leading personages, for the most part, showed much readiness to adopt the suggestions of the missionaries. In 1824, the principal chiefs formally agreed to recognize the Sabbath, and to adopt the ten commandments as the basis of government. They also soon passed a law forbidding females to visit the ships for immoral purposes.

The gravest obstacles encountered, came from vile captains and crews of English and American vessels. They became ferocious