

POLYNESIAN RELIGIOUS REVIVALS:  
" A STUDY WITH BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses one aspect of missionary work in the Pacific during the early nineteenth century -- the occurrence of religious revivals in Polynesia under Protestant missionaries of the London Missionary Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The work of the L.M.S., centering on the Society Islands, was begun in 1797. The A.B.C.F.M.'s first Pacific missionaries arrived in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) in 1820.\*

These missions, the first in Polynesia, were not, however, the earliest of the modern era. The eighteenth century had already produced a great deal of evangelical work, home and foreign, beginning with the activity of the Anglican Church's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The Moravian Brethren, two decades after their formation in Germany in 1722, had workers in the West Indies, Greenland, the American colonies, South Africa, Dutch Guiana, and Labrador. The Wesleyan Methodist movement of the seventeen thirties in England had immediately assumed an evangelistic character; home missionaries were sent out from the seventeen forties on, and assistance was given to American Methodists after the War of Independence. George

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\* No attempt has been made to evaluate the work of British missionaries in New Zealand and French Catholic missionaries who came to various parts of Polynesia some years after the establishment of Protestant missions.

Whitefield, the English Calvinistic Methodist, made amazingly successful tours of the American colonies during the Great Awakening of the seventeenth forties. At the same time the Americans themselves were working vigorously among white colonists and Indians.

By the time of the Pacific missions of the L.M.S. and the A.B.C.F.M., the extent of activity was even greater. In England, sectarian societies representing Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, Anglicans, and Scottish Calvinists had come into existence and sent workers to many parts of the world. By 1820 the L.M.S. itself had, in addition to its stations in the Society Islands, fifteen posts in the Far East, two in Russia, two in the Mediterranean, twelve on the African mainland and two on islands off the coast, and three in the West Indies. Several of the New England states of America had home missionaries in the field by 1800. In 1812, the A.B.C.F.M.'s earliest overseas missionaries left for India.

The early years of mission work in the Pacific were characterized by constant labor in the face of sporadic aberrations and reversions to heathenism on the part of the islanders. Progress was generally slow; in some cases, missions had to be abandoned. A major achievement in the history of a mission was the conversion of members of the ruling families of the islands. The adoption of the new religion by the chiefs and its consequent observance by the

common people produced great outward signs of prosperity in the Christian church. Indeed, from 1830 to 1850, some of the biggest Protestant congregations in the world met for worship in Polynesia. Several of the British and American preachers in the South Seas spoke to thousands of natives each Sunday, and in many cases their sermons were regularly heard by the entire population of the islands where they were stationed.

Even this level of achievement, however, was no guarantee of ultimate success for the missionary cause. Christian observance of a "social" or "political" kind was not always accompanied by a thorough-going change in the moral basis of island society. Congregations might be huge, but actual membership in the church remained small. Outward conformity might be widespread, but inward conviction was not nearly so common. "Experiential conversion," the rebirth of sinful man into a "state of grace," was a rarity.

Occasionally, though, the missionaries were confronted by a more exciting and turbulent set of circumstances. A few of the Polynesian islands experienced religious revivals, amazing in their intensity and duration. Society wore a different face while these were going on, and the Christian church gained spectacularly in short-term influence, if less spectacularly in the long run.

One of the interesting things about the revivals was that they shared many characteristics in common, whether

they occurred in Eastern Polynesia under American missionaries, or in Western Polynesia under British missionaries. Further, they were strikingly similar in many of their manifestations to previous revivals in Britain and America. There can in fact be no understanding of the Polynesian revivals without a working knowledge of the evangelical background. Accordingly, attention has been given in the early chapters of the thesis to the particular quality of the eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelical mind, to the actual doctrinal content of the evangelical religions of that period, and to the operational effects of the practical application of this doctrine.

Another point of interest is that the Polynesian revivals were concentrated within a relatively brief time span -- roughly the thirty years between 1830 and 1860 -- which suggests that there was only a short period when conditions in the rapidly-changing society of Polynesia permitted the factors producing revivals to operate successfully. This idea is worked out in detail in the later chapters of the thesis, which thus becomes, in its entirety, a study with background.



## CHAPTER I

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PACIFIC MISSIONS

On August 10, 1796, the ship Duff, carrying thirty London Missionary Society workers bound for the South Seas, left Blackwall on the river Thames on its way to Spithead. The Society's flag -- three doves argent, bearing olive branches in their bills, on a purple field -- flew at the masthead. As the ship moved down-stream, the missionaries and their friends, a hundred voices strong, sang: "Jesus, at thy command, we launch into the deep." Forced to wait for a convoy at Spithead, the Duff did not get away from England till late September; and the voyage to the Society Islands took a further five and a half months. The missionaries went ashore at Matavai Bay on the island of Tahiti in the first week of March, 1797.

The idea of sending a mission to the Pacific had come to Dr. Thomas Haweis, rector of Aldwinkle in Northamptonshire and chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, in the seventeen eighties. He had read the published accounts of Cook's voyages to the South Seas, and, enthused, had arranged, with Lady Huntingdon's approval, to send two young theological students to Tahiti. They were to have sailed with Captain William Bligh on his second Pacific voyage, but problems arose -- the young men had not attended a recognized university and so were not permitted to be ordained. Bligh left without them in 1791.

During the early nineties, the missionary idea received a good deal of attention. Haweis put it forward again in a book of essays published in 1790; two years later, William Carey, the notable Baptist, wrote and spoke in support of missions to the heathen, and went on to found the Baptist Missionary Society. In 1793, a group of clergymen established the Evangelical Magazine; in the same year, regional associations of Congregational ministers in Warwickshire and Worcestershire resolved to support missionary enterprise with prayer and with money. The "Letters on Missions" of Melville Horne, a Church of England clergyman who had been chaplain to the British colony at Sierra Leone in Africa, were published in 1794, and excited a great deal of interest; towards the end of the year, several clergymen began to meet in London at regular intervals to work out a plan for a missionary society. This provisional committee arranged a series of general meetings for 1795, and at the first public gathering on September 22, a large and emotional crowd in the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel at Spafields heard Dr. Haweis speak from Mark XVI. 15, 16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature . . ." In the course of a week of meetings and services, the Plan of the Missionary Society was circulated, officers of the Society were elected, and the arrangements for the first missionary voyage were undertaken.

Over the next months, information about the South Seas was gathered, candidates for mission work were examined, and the Duff was purchased and outfitted. By the end of July, 1796, preparations were complete. The missionaries had been set apart for their work on the 27th; two weeks later, on August 9, a valedictory service was held, and early the next morning they went aboard the Duff.<sup>1</sup>

The Pacific Ocean had shaped the thinking of the people who formed the Missionary Society, and it dominated the first few years of activity. Throughout the preliminary writings of the organizers ran the twin themes of the urgency and expediency of mission work in the South Seas. Dr. Haweis, preaching at Spafields during the public meetings of September, 1795, spoke glowingly of the "new world, . . . lately opened to our view, . . . lands, which seem to realize the fabled Gardens of the Hesperides, . . ." and sorrowfully of the condition of the islanders: ". . . amidst these enchanting scenes, savage nature still feasts on the flesh of its prisoners -- appeases its Gods with human sacrifices --

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<sup>1</sup> Non-controversial facts in this chapter are from Reports of the Missionary Society, from its Formation in the Year 1795, to 1814, inclusive (London, n.d.), passim, hereafter cited as L.M.S. Reports, 1795-1814; Sermons, Preached in London, at the Formation of the Missionary Society . . . (London, 1795), passim, hereafter cited as L.M.S. Sermons; William Ellis, The History of the London Missionary Society . . . (London, 1844), pp. 1-50; Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895, 2 vols. (London, 1899, I, 1-100. Shortened titles have been used occasionally in the text. Full citations will be found in the bibliography.

whole societies of men and women live promiscuously, and murder every infant born amongst them; -- whilst every turpitude, committed in the face of open day, proclaims, that shame is as little felt, as a sense of sin is known."<sup>2</sup> The crying need for a Pacific mission was obvious; but India, China, Africa -- all were in this state. What made the Pacific the unanimous choice of the Society's leaders as the site of their first labors was the comparative ease, as they saw it, of mission establishment and administration there: "God sets before us an open door in these populous and extensive regions, and presents to us millions of precious and immortal souls, to whom we may have access, whenever we please, without any considerable difficulty."<sup>3</sup> The climate of the islands was healthy, food was readily available; society was comparatively simple in its structure, the natives were familiar to some degree with Europeans, and held them in generally high regard. The language was easy enough to learn -- a Marine corporal, after three months in the islands, spoke it fluently -- and it was distributed over a wide area.<sup>4</sup> In the event, eighty evangelists, ordained

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<sup>2</sup> L.M.S. Sermons, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> The Society's Directors, 1799, in L.M.S. Reports, 1795-1814, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> L.M.S. Sermons, pp. 168-172.

ministers and laymen, were chosen for overseas work in the first three years of L.M.S. activity, and all but thirteen of these were intended for the South Seas.

The evangelical impulse which led to the founding of the Pacific mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions came some twenty years later than its English counterpart. The A.B.C.F.M. had its immediate origin in a memorial sent to the General Association of Massachusetts in 1810 by four theological students at Andover seminary. The first Board missionaries left America for India in 1812. Missions to the Cherokees and to Ceylon were established over the next few years, and it was 1819 before the first missionaries intended for the Sandwich Islands were ordained.<sup>5</sup>

The exemplary history of the short-lived Henry Obookiah was intimately connected with the sending out of the Sandwich Islands mission. Obookiah was a Hawaiian youth, orphaned in the wars which preceded Kamehameha I's unification of the islands. An American sea-captain brought him and another young islander, Thomas Hepoo, to New Haven in 1809. On

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<sup>5</sup> Sources for the following section include The First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, with other Documents of the Board (Boston, 1834), passim; Rufus Anderson, History of the Sandwich Islands Mission . . . (Boston, 1870), passim; Edwin Welles Dwight, Memoirs of Henry Obookiah . . . (Elizabeth-Town, New Jersey, 1819), passim.

board ship, a Yale man, Russel Hubbard, had taught him the rudiments of English spelling, and during his first few months ashore Obookiah spent much of his time around the college grounds at New Haven, seeking instruction. Edwin Welles Dwight, who wrote his posthumous biography, was among his early friends and mentors. Then Samuel J. Mills of Andover, at that time a student convinced of the beauty and goodness of missionary work, came up to New Haven, met Obookiah, and got the idea of having him trained and sent back to the islands as a Christian teacher. Mills took Obookiah to Andover with him, and there the islander involved himself deeply in Christianity. (Mills went on to become the A.B.C.F.M.'s first missionary in India.)

Obookiah attained church membership in 1814; and by 1816 he had become so proficient at English and so conversant with the Scriptures that he could accompany an American Board agent on a speaking tour through part of Massachusetts to raise money for a projected Foreign Mission School at Cornwall. Seven years of exposure to New England Congregationalism had transformed Obookiah, and he went to study at Cornwall an outstanding young man: "His form, which at sixteen was awkward . . . had become erect, graceful, and dignified. His countenance had lost every mark of dullness; and was, in an unusual degree, sprightly and intelligent."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Dwight, op. cit., p. 85.

He excelled and delighted in prayer; he kept a model Christian journal; he exhorted people he met on his travels; he worked on a Hawaiian grammar, dictionary, and spelling-book; he translated Genesis into Hawaiian. Apparently destined for a fruitful career among his own people, he was cut short early in 1818 when he fell mortally ill with typhus. On his death bed, he admonished his fellow Hawaiians from the Foreign Mission School to love God; and he died on February 17, 1818, secure in Christ: "The Spirit had departed -- but a smile, such as none present had ever beheld -- an expression of the final triumph of his soul, remained upon his countenance."<sup>7</sup> Lyman Beecher, at that time pastor of a church in Litchfield, preached a funeral sermon over him, and this was published together with Dwight's memoir in 1819, the year of the departure of the Board's first islands mission.

In Obookiah's place, the Board sent to Hawaii three educated and Christianized islanders: Obookiah's former shipboard companion Thomas Hopoo, William Tenoce, and John Honore. They were to work with two ordained Andover graduates set apart for the islands -- Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston -- and with the specialists who completed the mission contingent: Thomas Holman the physician, Samuel Whitney and Samuel Ruggles the schoolteachers, Elisha

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

Locmis the printer, and David Chamberlain the farmer. The mission family boarded the brig Thaddeus at Boston on October 23, 1819, and, after a voyage of a hundred and sixty ~~three~~ days, sighted the island of Hawaii on March 30, 1820.

The L.M.S. was alone in the Polynesian islands until the coming of the Americans to Hawaii. There was no conflict of interest there: the two spheres of influence did not overlap. Nor did the coming of an (Anglican) Church Missionary Society group to New Zealand in 1814 impinge on the jurisdiction of the L.M.S. The Duff, on its first voyage in 1796-1797, had left ten missionaries at the Friendly Islands (Tonga), but the venture aborted -- a massacre occurred early in 1800, and the survivors left precipitately. In 1826, Wesleyans came there, and one later crossed to the Samoan Islands, where he was joined by a Methodist missionary from Fiji. These two were at work when the Dunottar Castle brought L.M.S. people to Samoa in 1836. The home administrations of the two Societies had already decided that the L.M.S. should occupy Samoa and the Wesleyans Tonga and Fiji; and this arrangement was put into effect soon afterwards.

During its first half century in the Pacific, the L.M.S. set up stations in the Society Islands (on Tahiti, Eimeo, Huahine, Raiatea, Bora Bora and Tahaa); the Hervey



Islands (on Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, and Mangaia); and Samoa (on Savaii, Upolu, Tutuila, and Manua). Unsuccessful attempts were made to plant missions in the Marquesas Islands and the Friendly Islands. The activities of the A.B.C.F.M., in its turn, were confined to the Sandwich Islands, except for a brief and unsuccessful attempt to evangelize the Marquesas.

Behind the flurry of evangelical activity at the turn of the nineteenth century lay a conviction shared by church administrators and prospective missionaries on both sides of the Atlantic: that the Christian church and Christian society stood at a critical point. Over the last third of the eighteenth century in England a group of Anglican clergymen had been publicly berating their Church's established torpor and talking with shame of the energy of the Methodists and sectarians in establishing missions. One of the forces which brought all these groups together in the nineties to form the L.M.S. was the idea, only half-developed at times but still influential, that the millennium might be approaching. Two kinds of evidence for this contention were brought forward. At home, social unrest was beginning to make itself felt, unrest which would become greater in the years during and after the Napoleonic Wars and would culminate in the reforms of 1832. Across the Channel, the French Revolution had begun in 1789, and during

the nineties was producing what seemed like appalling anarchy. Further away still, Britain's "second empire" had broken up, and her third, based on the conquest and colonization of heathen lands like India and Africa, was being established. Social philosophies allied with revolutionary politics -- rationalism, skepticism, deism -- had spread alarmingly. One tendency, then, was for churchmen to anticipate a time of great darkness and tribulation for Christianity.

Against this could be weighed the accomplishments, small but promising, of the missionary societies already at work, and the magnificent opportunities opened up in the countries newly discovered or subdued by the secular arm of Britain. Self-reproach, guilt and foreboding were common enough in the writing of the missionary fathers; equally strong was the positive belief that an immense but manageable task awaited the Church, that with God's help the unconverted parts of the world might quickly be brought to Christ.

This veiled millenarianism, with its typical compound of anxiety and hope, its simultaneous prophecy of doom and triumph, continued to inform the thinking of the L.M.S. leaders after the Society was well established. Ten years after the sending out of their first missionaries to the Pacific, the Directors were writing that "the peculiar character of the divine dispensations in the present day -- the important changes under which a great portion of the

world is passing -- the rapidity with which the plans of providence appear to be advancing to a crisis, should all inspire the hearts of christians with new energy, to improve occasions as they continually arise, and on the ruins of the kingdom of antichrist, as well as in heathen countries, to hasten to lay the foundations of christian temples."<sup>8</sup>

Even as late as 1875, belief in the total redemption of the world and the coming of the millennium could still be found in missionary thinking: "Taking as the basis of our calculations the progress that has been made during the past half century, and allowing for ever-increasing facilities, and ever-multiplying and extending agencies and influences, it would be an intensely interesting problem to work out, What will be the state and prospects of our world as regards its evangelization in 1895? Surely millennial ages will then be near, if they have not actually begun to run their course."<sup>9</sup>

A similar set of forces had been at work in America during the formative period of overseas missions. Religious leaders there were concerned about the effects of the War of Independence and the French Revolution, which they believed had led to great secularism. Deism was rampant in

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<sup>8</sup> L.M.S. Reports, 1795-1814, p. 240.

<sup>9</sup> A. W. Murray, Forty Years' Mission Work in Polynesia and New Guinea, from 1835 to 1875 (New York, 1876), p. 237.

the post-Revolutionary period, and by the end of the century it had penetrated even the strongholds of established religion, the theological seminaries.<sup>10</sup>

The response to this, in America as in England, was an increase in evangelical activity aimed at meeting the challenge of bad times. In any event, the "lean years" observed by clergymen just before and after the War of Independence had not been totally barren. For instance, in Connecticut there were revivals in isolated towns during 1767 and 1776; in the eighties, there were three separate periods of revival, one of which covered most of Litchfield County; and during the nineties a series of small revivals led up to the general awakening which occurred at the turn of the century. Religious interest continued to be strong up till the mid-twenties, and there were especially high points of activity in 1807-8, 1812, 1815-6, 1820-21, and 1825-6.<sup>11</sup>

Home evangelism of this kind produced a substantial missionary impulse in Connecticut and other east coast states, both in New England and further south. By the turn of the century most of the major denominations had organized

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<sup>10</sup> See William Warren Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840 (New York, 1952), pp. 53 ff; Roland H. Bainton, Yale and the Ministry: A History of Education for the Christian Ministry at Yale from the Founding in 1701 (New York, 1957), passim.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Roy Keller, The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut (New Haven, 1942), p. 37.

missionary societies, whose work was spurred on by the idea of the millennium -- much more widely-accepted and explicitly worked out than the English version. Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards and President of Yale, was one of many who construed parts of the Book of Revelations to mean that the reign of the Antichrist was about to end. Prophecy was popular, and many alternative dates for the second coming of Christ were put forward. Millenarian writers were in general agreement that the Antichrist's reign was to be 1260 years, and although there was some doubt about when the reign had begun and when it would end, one popularly-held belief was that the apocalypse would occur in 1866. Hence the need for immediate and widespread missionary work.<sup>12</sup>

Inseparable from their feeling of urgency was the conviction of evangelistic leaders and workers on both sides of the Atlantic that their grand mission was of ultimate importance to the world. The Reverend David Bogue of Gosport, preaching at one of the preliminary L.M.S. services in 1795, held that the process of geographical discovery was the hand of God opening the door to Christian missionaries. Spaniards had grown rich by plundering the Americas;

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<sup>12</sup> Oliver Wendell Klsbree, "The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in New England, 1790-1815," New England Quarterly, I (September 1928), 295-322.

Englishmen had carried off African natives into the profitable slave trade; British commerce and manufactures had found new markets; and literature, philosophy, and geography had all been advanced; but people who saw these gains as sufficient were subject to "the false imaginations of worldly men who see objects through a distorted medium." Christian zeal and the love of immortal souls should demonstrate more power of principle and more strength of exertion than "false imaginations." Lovers of the Gospel should "enter in, and labour for the salvation of perishing souls."<sup>13</sup> William Ellis, introducing his history of the L.M.S., saw in the missionary revival of his time not only a great amount of "spiritual prosperity" for the churches taking part, but also "most of the foundations of hope for the social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual benefit of our race . . ."<sup>14</sup>

Neither was there any doubt that the Pacific islanders were in desperate need of the Gospel. The missionaries agreed that the state of nature enjoyed by Polynesians was not a state of innocence, but rather "a state of nature fallen FROM innocence," "without the possibility of recovery, except by the faith of Christ, and redemption through his

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<sup>13</sup> L.M.S. Sermons, pp. 145-146.

<sup>14</sup> vi.

blood."<sup>15</sup> Hiram Bingham spoke for all his fellow-workers, American and English, when he described the beautiful Sandwich Islands in the spring of 1820 as a "dark and ruined land," and the inhabitants as "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, . . . whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."<sup>16</sup> Contact with white explorers, traders, sealers, and whalers had seemingly only served to heighten the islanders' natural depravity.<sup>17</sup>

The missionaries saw as inevitable a great battle between the forces of good and evil in the islands before the accomplishment of complete regeneration. The ideas of toil and anguish, of struggle against Satan, appeared repeatedly in their writings; and even though they went in peace, and their conquest was to be a bloodless one, there was considerable allegorical carnage connected with their

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<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery, ed. Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Rev. Daniel Tverman and George Bennet, Esq. . . . between the Years 1821 and 1829 (London, 1831), II, 59.

<sup>16</sup> See his A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands: . . . (Hartford, 1847), p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 56; James Wilson, Comp. Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean. Performed in the Years 1786, 1797, 1798, in the Ship Duff . . . (London, 1799), xxv.

enterprise:

. . . though Satan and all the host of hell should be stung with indignation and resentment at our boldness in the Lord, and fire the hearts of their deluded votaries with all the fury and madness which brutal ignorance and savage cruelty are capable of; though our God, in whose name we go -- our Saviour, by whose rich grace we are redeemed, should deliver us up to their rage, and permit our bodies to be afflicted, yea, persecuted unto death; yet, trusting in the faithfulness of the Most High, the goodness of our cause, the uprightness of our intentions, the fervency of our affection for Christ our head, and the elect of God, our hearts remain undaunted . . .<sup>18</sup>

Thus, even in the place where the home directors had forecast quick results, the first actual field workers anticipated endless struggle. Characteristically, they were modest about their own resources. "Our work is great, our strength is small, very weakness itself." Equally typically, they drew wholeheartedly on God for strength and support, and for assurance of their final triumph in his name. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He bids us fear not, and we have not only the assurance of his word, but also the testimony of his providence, that he is with us, and will never leave us nor forsake us . . ."19

Armed, then, with invulnerable righteousness, prepared for battle and glorying in the thought of suffering for the

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 15. He cites a message composed by the first L.M.S. missionaries as they waited at Spithead before leaving for Tahiti.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.



Lord's sake, conscious of their own insufficiency but trusting implicitly in the power of God, the missionaries went forth.

## CHAPTER II

### MISSIONARY THEOLOGY

It was about the central idea of the irresistibility of the Gospel message that Christians of many denominations had gathered to establish the L.M.S.; and from the time of the first meetings to the time when missions were established in the Pacific islands, other questions were relegated to positions of secondary importance compared with the urgent necessity of bringing God's word to heathen lands. "No scheme of worldly advantage, no projects of vain ambition, no selfish ends or aims, contaminate our views. Nor will the confused noise of the warrior, or garments rolled in blood, mark our progress. We meet under the conduct of the Prince of Peace; and unfurling the banner of his cross, desire to carry the glad tidings of his salvation to the distant lands sunk in heathen darkness, and covered with the shadow of death."<sup>1</sup>

The Fundamental Principle of the Society, adopted at the first annual meeting in May 1796, stressed the inter-denominational nature of the enterprise. It was not "Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of church order and government . . . but the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" that the missionaries were to

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<sup>1</sup> L.M.S. Sermons, p. 5.

carry to the South Seas.<sup>2</sup> (The L.M.S. directors applauded the zeal of the Moravian, Methodist, and Baptist missionaries who had gone out before their own interdenominational contingent, and set themselves to "imitate their truly primitive example" -- their use of the word indicates how much of the apparatus and trappings of established ecclesiastical Christianity they were prepared to abandon in the interests of successful evangelism.) The first workers were just as firm as their home leaders about the single-minded impulse which took them to the South Seas. They had Christ for their master, and only Christ, inasmuch as ". . . we desire to know and teach nothing but him crucified; to interfere in no contest, to disturb no government established, or introduce any peculiar modes of religious worship, but to leave every man to the book of truth for his guide . . . ."3

This stripping away of ecclesiastical and secular considerations put the L.M.S. people in direct line of descent from the great evangelists of the eighteenth century, and, in a broader sense, from the history-long procession of "enthusiasts" unable to find personal satisfaction and spiritual value in institutionalized religion. Moravians, Wesleyans and Calvinistic Methodists in England; and

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<sup>2</sup> L.M.S. Reports, 1795-1814, prefatory statement.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, op. cit., p. 320.

evangelistic Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists in America -- all had made drastic changes and simplifications in established church doctrine and practice. Eventually, of course, the new sects -- even the most radical and primitivistic -- had to face the problems of organization. But the Methodist society meeting never aspired to the ritual magnificence of a High Church mass. Wesley, George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and countless others, denied the use of church buildings, preached extempore to motley audiences in private homes, in ruined factories and warehouses, in the open air on commons and moors, occasionally even from the tops of tombstones in country churchyards.

No new common discipline replaced the old. Many of the sects rejected the idea of formal organization on principle; where it was attempted, the result was schism. Wesley spent a good part of his touring life enforcing conformity amongst his English societies by removing dissenters from membership. The First and Second Great Awakenings in America involved the growth and dissolution of innumerable congregations, established on the basis of difference with the parent body, and splintering further or disappearing completely because of internal strife.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Edwin Scott Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (New York, 1957), p. 63; Charles Hartshorn Maxson, The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies (Gloucester, Mass., 1920), pp. 34-35.

The charismatic nature of the leadership of evangelical sects had much to do with this constant tendency towards ecclesiastical anarchy: sectarian differences were embodied in personal differences. For instance, Wesley all his life shared several attitudes in common with the Moravians, who had influenced him tremendously at critical points in his early career; but the years of his first success as a preacher were also the years of the growth of a strange love-hate relationship with the English Moravians. He continued to praise many things about their work, but damned them for other things which he had not previously noticed. His language grew stronger, his rationalization of the estrangement more complete, and by the end of the forties he was calling their hymn-book an "amazing compound of nonsense and blasphemy," and the Brethren themselves "German wolves." Concurrently he was arguing with George Whitefield and writing in his journal with a notable lack of humility that if Whitefield did not become reconciled "the loss is all on his own side. I am just as I was: I go on my way, whether he goes with me or stays behind." Wesley could not even read David Brainerd's account of his mission to the Indians without attacking him for "magnifying his own work" and other faults. His journals are a chronicle of the seemingly inescapable, apparently self-imposed, spiritual and

doctrinal isolation of the archetypal evangelist.<sup>5</sup>

George Whitefield, for his part, was prepared to preach in any American church under the sponsorship of any or all denominations; but in the years of his success during the First Great Awakening he was compulsively censorious, and flayed other ministers engaged in the same work for their coldness and lack of zeal, thus losing support and forfeiting his welcome in many places.<sup>6</sup> Mellowed in his later years, he still could not bring himself to a rapprochement with Wesley. Writing in the previous century, John Milton had pushed this sectarian individualist tendency to its uttermost when he wrote that a true church could consist of one man. At times the eighteenth century evangelists seemed to be trying to demonstrate the point.

The tendency to censoriousness stemmed from the fact that each evangelistic Christian -- convert as well as leader -- was convinced of his direct access to God. The truth was in him: he was sure of this. When other people differed from him, he could not help but doubt their divine inspiration. Wesley lived his adult life in close and intimate association with supernatural presences. After his conversion, he noted the hand of God moving in his favor

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<sup>5</sup> See Nehemiah Curnock, ed. The Journal of John Wesley, rev. ed. (London, 1938), for Wesley's censoriousness, especially II, 329 ff.; III, 4; 389; 448; 499-501.

<sup>6</sup> Maxson, op. cit., p. 45.

innumerable times. The weather changed for the better just as he was about to begin preaching. Ruffians became meek and tractable at his mildest look and softest words; and though his preaching provoked innumerable riots and brawls, he was never once seriously injured. He went as far as the most extreme mystics when he submitted the question of his marriage to sortilege -- decision by lot -- finding God's will in the result. The Moravians, equally, were certain of God's protection. They once proposed buying and running ships of their own so that their continued safety at sea might be an advertisement for their righteousness. Jonathan Edwards, an exhaustive and clinical reporter of the minutiae of religious revivals with a naturalistic flair for description, remained convinced that God brought on revivals and Satan ended them.<sup>7</sup>

None of the evangelists ever found cause for self-doubt in the doctrinal differences surrounding them. They were humble only in the sight of God; if anything, wrangling strengthened their self-righteousness. And so Whitefield parted from Wesley (on the question of the persistence of grace among other things). Wesley, clinging to the indispensability of the Bible and the sacraments, was outraged in his turn when some of the English Moravians

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<sup>7</sup> Curnock, *op. cit.*, I, 192, 325-327; II, 514-515; III, 236, 496; other examples of Wesley's conviction of God's closeness are spread throughout the journals.

rejected these "means of salvation" and advocated "perfect stillness" or complete inaction. Jonathan Edwards refused to believe that lay exhorters and preachers could rescue souls from damnation; frontier Baptists and Methodists of the Second Awakening would not concede that any but lay priests had access to God.

The possible combinations and permutations of doctrine were endless. Yet there remained a unity of aim, a common vision, behind the work of almost all the evangelists. They all hoped to bring the sinner to see the hopelessly corrupt and depraved state of his soul in the natural world. They further hoped that after he had seen this he would turn for help to the grace of God. Having approached God directly and without reserve, he would be able to enjoy the direct, unreserved aid of God. From then on he would not live simply in a perfected state of nature; he would actually, though still in this world, be in a state of grace. His way of life, his perceptions of reality, would be completely changed. He would be a new man -- born again, regenerate.

Even on this common level there were differences in the way in which the experience of regeneration was described and explained. The mystically inclined characteristically spoke of a suspension of their own will, and a submergence of their individuality in a greater self -- a harmony with the universe. Frequently this was accomplished without the subject's volition, so that there was an especially strong



sense that a higher power had been at work, using forces far beyond the comprehension of human reason and the strength of human will. For others, non-mystics, there was often a strong effort of will, a high degree of volition. With Wesley, Charles Grandison Finney, and a great many lesser men, a long period of self-doubt and depression preceded regeneration. They wrestled with their souls, and forced the issue, although again the end was self-surrender.

After regeneration, the "mystical" enthusiasts, their individuality subsumed in the spirit of the universe, abnegated their self-reliance and with it their need for further effort to maintain or consolidate their position in respect of God. Hence their tendency (exemplified at times in English Moravianism) to abandon even the rudimentary formalism of the other sectarian denominations. In one of its extreme forms, this stripping away of externals included forgoing hymn-singing, Bible-reading, the administering of the sacraments, church-going itself, and the cultivation of complete moral inaction and stillness. Its other limit was antinomianism: complete irresponsibility of action, permissible because its practitioners held themselves to be incapable of sin.

Non-mystics did not speak of losing their individuality. God had made them new men, but each remained obsessively conscious of the state of his own soul. They looked constantly for signs that God remained as close to them as

he had been at the moment of their regeneration. These were the "experimentalists" or "experientialists." The conversion had generally been accompanied by signs, impressions, and sensations; and they continued to look for these to be sure that God was still with them. Evangelistic leaders of this kind wanted to know by the same means that their work was blessed, that it was of divine origin. The way of the mystics led to peace, to stillness, almost to inanition. The way of the non-mystics led to salvation through continual struggle against sin, their own and others', to personal, experiential knowledge of the presence of God.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most obvious common denominators of evangelical religion in all its forms is its non-rational nature. In his flight, escape, or release from the rational world of nature, the convert accepts the supernatural and hence supra-rational power of God. An almost inevitable accompaniment of this is an insistence on the irrelevancy

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<sup>8</sup> R. A. Knox, in his Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries (Oxford, 1950), p. 581, distinguishes "mystical enthusiasts" from "evangelical enthusiasts." Terminology is difficult; perhaps the two kinds of regenerates could be separated into "non-volitional" and "volitional" in respect of their behavior after conversion. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, 34th impression (London, 1923), explores the question at great length.

or actual harmfulness of rational modes of thought. Predictably enough, this tendency appears at its strongest in the mystics, amongst whom, as has been noted, the acceptance of God is most complete. The language of mystics is notable for its disregard of logical distinctions; opposites are readily harmonized, contradictions are accepted as parts of a larger synthesis.<sup>9</sup>

Non-mystical evangelical Christians also depend heavily upon non-rational sources of emotional strength. Their constant denigration of the religious value of churchly apparatus is just one part of a wide attack on human powers. In the course of the First Great Awakening in America, New Side Calvinists -- the faction roughly identified with militant evangelism and revivalism -- broke violently with conservative Old Siders on the question of natural versus supernatural explanations for so-called "conversion experiences." Even more extreme sectarians among the

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<sup>9</sup> See Louis Linn and Leo Walder Schwarz, Psychiatry and Religious Experience (New York, 1958), passim., for an interesting discussion of this point. Psycho-analysts apparently find the key to this non-rationality in the constant use by mystics of the imagery of eating, sleeping, and the union of a small self with a greater being. These pre-occupations together form a familiar psychological complex called the "oral triad," and are merely recollections of an infantile paradise. The mystic has regressed beyond the time when he could speak and form rational thoughts. Pre-rational memories of babyhood have become the materials of non-rational adult religion. Sometimes this connection is made even more explicit by mystics who describe their state as resembling the innocence of a new-born child, existing unaware of and untroubled by questions of good and evil.

Baptists and Methodists attacked human skills and powers when they claimed that education and formal training were irrelevant to true spirituality. Their farmer-preachers on the frontier during the Second Awakening often produced religious revivals which they considered unaccountable except in supernatural terms; hence the (to them) demonstrable inadequacy of reason.

The strength of the evangelical Christians lay, then, in their appeal to the emotions rather than to the minds of their listeners. No religion, of course, is more than partially cerebral in its formulation, but the evangelicals were particularly insistent that it was "heart-work" (to use Wesley's phrase) which was the test of true religious experience. This idea was attacked from both sides. The mystics, prepared to go unrewarded in their faith, and trusting completely in God, did not need to be re-assured. Another attack was made by conservatives representing established Anglicanism and Congregationalism, who refused to accept the validity of evangelical religious experience.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Just as the mystical experience is capable of functional explanation in psycho-analytic terms, so the general evangelical reaction against reason may be seen historically as part of the post-Enlightenment romantic movement. See John Herman Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age (Boston, 1926), pp. 389-422. Missionary theology may be described as Calvinism romantically construed.

But to the people in the middle ground -- the non-mystical evangelists -- the abiding presence of God was a central reality which could not be taken for granted, but had to be repeatedly demonstrated, experienced, felt. Nor could the sense of this presence be cultivated by rehearsing traditional dogma or liturgical forms. Religion was a matter of direct communication between man and God without the intervention of human artifice; this communication took place between God and the responsive soul of man; man's response was emotional and, by and large, observable.

## CHAPTER III

### DOCTRINE IN OPERATION

Doctrinally, as has been established, the evangelical Christians were concerned above all else with the problem of the salvation of the individual soul. Philosophically, they were emotionalists and not rationalists -- they conceived of God as reaching out to the hearts and not the minds of men. Operationally, then, their work amounted to an attack on the emotions of the unregenerate in an attempt to make them abandon sin and accept God. The classic evangelistic sermon was one which pointed to eternal damnation as the inescapable consequence of sin and then offered salvation to the sinner who accepted the grace of God. References to this kind of preaching abound in the literature of eighteenth and nineteenth century missionary work; and, taken together, they constitute another uniformity discernible among the many doctrinal differences to be found in that literature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Even on this constricted point there was a wide variety of opinion. Wesleyans and Calvinistic Methodists in England argued on the point of free will versus predestination; on the question of the need for constant renewal of grace versus the idea of the "perseverance of saints"; on the question of universal salvation versus the idea of a saved elect group and a body of damned unregenerates. In America, much the same questions exercised the Old and New Side Calvinists, and the Methodists and Baptists. Controversy, however, was rarely aired in the pulpit. Experience showed that audiences responded indifferently to speculative arguments and warmly to emotional appeals.

The advisability of limiting sermon topics to salvation themes was recognized by Wesley, writing in 1751:

I think the right method of preaching is this. At our first beginning to preach at any place, after a general declaration of the love of God to sinners, and His willingness that they should be saved, to preach the law in the strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible.

After more and more persons are convinced of sin, we may mix more and more of the gospel, in order to beget faith, to raise into spiritual life those whom the law hath slain. I would not advise to preach the law without the gospel, any more than the gospel without the law. Undoubtedly, both should be preached in their turns; yea, both at once, or both in one.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Grandison Finney, perhaps the most successful evangelist of the Second Awakening in America in the early nineteenth century and a very sophisticated manipulator of audiences, explained his methods in almost the same way when he wrote that "the true Philosophy of promoting and consummating an excitement and public action upon any subject is to confine the public mind to a point. Revivals of religion afford almost endless illustration of this. Introduce Baptism, Election, or any other doctrine that does not bear on the question of the immediate acceptance of Christ

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<sup>2</sup> Wesley's words are cited in William Sargant, Battle For The Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing (London, 1957), pp. 80-81. Sargant acknowledges L. Tyerman, Life and Times of Rev. John Wesley. M.A., 3 vols. (London, 1871), but gives no page reference.

and you either Kill or retard the work."<sup>3</sup>

The two polarities -- the Law and the Gospel, hellfire and salvation -- were constant in evangelistic preaching, and it was often very difficult to tell, from the words of a sermon, the denomination of the preacher. Wesley, theoretically a universalist convinced that God's love was capable of embracing all mankind, often wrote in his journal of frightening heedless audiences by concentrating on the terrors of damnation rather than the delights of salvation: a typically Calvinist gambit. The Sandwich Islands missionaries of the A.B.C.F.M. in the early nineteenth century were nominal Calvinists, and some were, indeed, rigorous enough; but others, imbued with ideas of disinterested benevolence and universal love of the kind being taught at several of the New England theological colleges, were capable of a warm-hearted optimism indistinguishable from stereotypic Methodism. Doctrinal lines, which on other matters marked the sects off from each other implacably, were blurred on this crucial issue.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> William McLoughlin, Jr. cites a letter by Finney in Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York, 1959), p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> For other instances of the uniformity of content of eighteenth century revival preaching, see Maxson, op. cit., pp. 18-55. Among the people discussed are Theodore Frelinghuysen, the Tennent family, John Rowland, and James Davenport.



Because this doctrine of salvation, preached from the pulpit, appears in retrospect as the irreducible nucleus about which revivals developed in widely differing periods and places, its nature and quality as an instrument of conversion are of great importance. The following pages discuss its place among the immediate causes of religious revivals.

There is no better place at which to begin an investigation of this kind than the works of Jonathan Edwards written at the time of the New England revivals of the seventeen thirties and forties. Edwards' sermons exemplify successful evangelical preaching. His narrative and argumentative works contain uniquely important information and opinion; and they form a useful bridge between the points raised in the opening chapters of this thesis and those remaining to be discussed.

In 1729 Edwards succeeded his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at Northampton, Connecticut -- a parish with a long revivalist tradition. Five years after his accession to the ministry, Edwards "brought about three hundred souls to Christ" in a revival lasting six months. He was a central figure in the First Great Awakening which swept the American colonies in the seventeen forties. He preached his most famous and effective sermons in those years, and George Whitefield spoke from his pulpit during one of his New England tours. When the zealous harmony of the New England

churches broke up into internecine strife not long after the Awakening began, Edwards became the chief apologist for the revival.

Edwards' tendency from the beginning of his Northampton ministry had been to strip away even the minimal ecclesiastical and formal comforts his grandfather had introduced into the Northampton version of New England Congregationalism. Under Stoddard, church membership had been wide and access to the sacraments easy. Edwards turned back from this polity to the idea of the purity and simplicity of the primitive church. This tendency was not formalised in his writing until after the Great Awakening, but its presence in his thinking was obvious from an earlier date. One of the strongest strains in his theology was his hyper-Calvinist insistence on the absolute insufficiency of man to achieve his own redemption by any means, his absolute dependence on the arbitrarily given or withheld grace of God, "the pollution . . . of [man's] own righteousness, that they can in no wise help themselves, and that God would be wholly just and righteous in rejecting them, and all that they do, and in casting them off for ever."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "A Narrative of Many Surprising Conversions," in The Works of the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, Minister of the Gospel in Northampton, Massachusetts, and afterwards President of the College in New Jersey, (Worcester, 1808), III, 29. Hereafter cited as Edwards, Works.

His simple and unalterable rigor on this point made his sermons terrifying in their implications; and the language he used, both in the pulpit and in his published works recalling the revival period, brought out these implications in concrete images of the terrors of God's judgment and the delights of salvation. Zealous ministers of the gospel

ought indeed to be thorough in preaching the word of God, without mincing the matter at all; in handling the sword of the Spirit, as the ministers of the Lord of Hosts, they ought not to be mild and gentle; they are not to be gentle and moderate in searching and awakening the conscience, but should be sons of thunder: the word of God, which is in itself sharper than any two edged sword, ought not to be sheathed by his ministers, but so used that its sharp edges may have their full effect, even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow . . . But all their conversation should savor of nothing but lowliness and good will, love and pity to all mankind; . . . they should be like lions to guilty consciences, but like lambs to men's persons. This would have no tendency to prevent the awakening of men's consciences, but on the contrary would have a very great tendency to awaken them; it would make way for the sharp sword to enter; it would remove the obstacles, and make a naked breast for the arrow.<sup>6</sup>

Edwards regarded the preaching of terror as rough surgery, and compared the evangelist to a surgeon who has to thrust the lance into the wound even though the patient cries out. The truth was terrible, and must be known: "To say anything to those who have never believed in the Lord

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<sup>6</sup> Edwards, "Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, 1740," in Works, III, 232-3.

Jesus Christ, to represent their case any otherwise than exceeding terrible, is not to preach the word of God to them; for the word of God reveals nothing but truth, but this is to delude them. Why should we be afraid to let persons, that are in an infinitely miserable condition, know the truth or bring them into the light, for fear it should terrify them?"<sup>7</sup>

The terrible truth extended far enough to include children, since "everyone that has not been born again, whether he be young or old, is exposed, every moment, to eternal destruction, under the wrath of Almighty God; . . . As innocent as children seem to be to us, yet, if they are out of Christ, they are not so in God's sight, but are young vipers, and are infinitely more hateful than vipers, . . . Why should we conceal the truth from them? . . . A child that has a dangerous wound, may need the painful lance, as well as grown persons . . ." <sup>8</sup>

It was among young people in Northampton that Edwards' revival of 1734 began. In 1733, after an "uninteresting" period of a few years, Edwards preached a series of sermons on what he called "awakening themes."<sup>9</sup> The young people

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<sup>7</sup> Edwards, op. cit., pp. 195-6.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> For representative revival sermons of Edwards see Works, VII, 326 ff., "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners"; VII, 375 ff., "The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable"; VII, 396 ff., "The Eternity of Hell Torments"; VII, 487 ff., "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

responded with sober behavior and a general concern for their spiritual welfare. The revival proper began with the sudden and unexpected conversion of a young woman well known in the constricted society of Northampton for her "company-keeping" and worldly manners.

Other young people followed this first convert; then all age groups were affected. Edwards began to devote a great deal of his time to meeting his parishioners in small groups or individually, urging them to consider the state of their soul and come to God. As word of the revival spread, many people, laymen and ministers, came from neighboring parishes to see for themselves; and shortly afterwards, excitement affected towns along the banks of the Connecticut River and eastwards to the sea.<sup>10</sup> At the height of the awakening, thirty people a week were announcing their conversion. On one occasion, Edwards received eighty people together for their first communion, and another sixty were ready for the sacrament before the next communion day.<sup>11</sup>

The end came in Northampton early in May 1735, when a curious aberration appeared in the town. To Edwards, "it became very sensible that the spirit of God was gradually withdrawing from us, and after this time Satan seemed to be

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<sup>10</sup> Gaustad, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Edwards, "A Narrative of Many Surprising Conversions," in Works, III, 22-25.

more let loose, and raged in a dreadful manner. The first instance wherein it appeared, was a person's putting an end to his own life, by cutting his throat. . . . After this, multitudes in this and other towns seemed to have it strongly suggested to them, and pressed upon them, to do as this person had done."<sup>12</sup>

The points to be noted in connection with the 1734 revival are firstly, the presence of a preacher of unusual power in a relatively small social group (Northampton at this time consisted of about two hundred families, most of them churchgoers); secondly, a preliminary period of heightened religious concern preceding the revival proper; thirdly, an outburst of religious feeling in one small group, spreading by some sort of contagion to other groups in the town, and then to other towns; fourthly, the sustenance of the mood of excitement by "unusual means" -- more frequent meetings than usual, and constant attention to anxious enquirers; fifthly, relatively quick baptism and admission to church membership of converts; and sixthly, the diversion and fading away of religious feeling as a result of subsequent unusual events. Some or all of these characteristics (except, of course, the suicides) were to be found in other revivals in England and America in the eighteenth century, and the Polynesian revivals showed a remarkable formal

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<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., pp. 77-78.

similarity to these outbreaks.<sup>13</sup>

Supporters and opponents of religious revivals broke most sharply on the question of the physical disturbances which accompanied religious conversion in many cases. Certainly these manifestations were remarkable. In 1734 in Northampton, and from 1739 onwards all over New England and many of the other colonies, people under the stress of religious anxiety burst out weeping and praying during service, and continued to lament for hours and even days after leaving church meetings. Some, apparently seized by the Devil, writhed and went into convulsions. Others, overcome by their conviction of sinfulness, fainted away. These physical responses were not confined to people of any one age or social group, nor did they strike people of any one moral attitude. A sudden conviction of sin might lay low a person of impeccable rectitude; again, a scoffer or mocker might be struck down in the midst of his transgression. Physical affliction was almost always accompanied by terrible mental strife; and physical recovery was often the concomitant of partial or total relief from sin and equivalent hope or certainty of salvation.

Over the same period, and later, in England, Wesley aroused similar responses among his hearers. His journal

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapters V and VI below.

first recorded physical disturbances on January 21, 1739; three months later, on April 17, there was an enormous communal demonstration. References to "the power of the Lord to wound and heal," or to Satan struggling to hold his victims, or to a vivid sense of divine visitation, recur frequently in journal entries over the next four decades. George Whitefield was more famous even than Wesley for his ability to raise his audiences to unbearable states of emotion. This fact was well-known in America before he arrived to make his first tour, and almost certainly gave him a head start in making inroads on his listeners' receptivity.

Other American evangelists of the First Great Awakening -- the Tennent family, John Rowland, James Davenport; later preachers of the Second Awakening -- Charles Grandison Finney and the rest of the group which evangelised the "burned-over district" of western New York in the eighteen twenties; all these evoked, recorded, and evaluated physical responses to the salvation message.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See William Warren Sweet, Revivalism in America: Its Origin, Growth and Decline (New York, 1944), for typical sermons and responses in the First Awakening; Catharine C. Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805 (Chicago, 1916), for extended eye-witness accounts of frontier camp-meetings, where bodily affections took extra-ordinary forms; Whitney B. Cross, The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, 1950), and William McLoughlin, Jr.'s previously-cited Modern Revivalism for the Finney period.



Edwards himself had provoked bodily disturbances in 1734; and again in the spring and summer of 1741 there was crying, fainting and jerking in the church at Northampton. He held that "great agitations of body, and an unavoidable leaping for joy" were to be expected at a time of revival. "Extraordinary views of divine things, and religious affections" were very likely to be "attended with very great effects on the body." His view of the gathering of souls was filled with the classic evangelistic images of struggle. Christ came "to send a sword on earth, and to cause division, no otherwise than he came to send damnation; for Christ that is set for the glorious restoration of some, is set for the fall of others, and to be a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to them, and an occasion of their vastly more aggravated and terrible damnation"; and with the working of such a powerful influence, "a great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, and darkness mixed with light, and evil with good, is always to be expected." In the circumstances, errors and irregularities were to be anticipated, caused by "the infirmity and weakness and common corruption of mankind, together with the circumstances of the work." In addition, the Devil would be working harder, because of the greatness of the display of God's power. Nonetheless, the revival should always be recognized as a work of God.

Bodily signs, though not infallibly proving God's presence, were "probable tokens" of that presence, "and

therefore when I see them excited by preaching the important truths of God's word, urged and enforced by proper arguments and motives, . . . I do not scruple to speak of them, and to rejoice in them, and bless God for them as such."

Edwards saw the cries of the affected as an indication of the power with which God was carrying out his work. He did not object to leaving the bodily affected together in groups; nor to noise-making, nor to loud singing.

Edwards answered the conservative description of the revival as nothing but "religious phrenzy" by carefully qualifying his approval of unusual means and responses. He consistently attacked learned and speculative preaching as cold and lacking in zeal, but he attacked equally strongly men who went into the pulpit claiming direct inspiration from God unaided by preparation or study. He also warned against an uncritical acceptance of outward signs and disturbances. They were to be restrained rather than encouraged; otherwise "they will be more and more natural and unavoidable, and the extraordinary outward show will increase, without any increase of the internal cause; persons will find themselves under a kind of necessity of making a great ado, with less and less affection of soul, until at length almost any slight emotion will set them going, and they will be more and more violent and boisterous, and will grow louder and louder, until their actions and behavior becomes [sic] indeed very absurd.

These things experience proves." His unqualified conviction that the work was of God; his modified approval of the outward manifestations; his attitude that the work should be judged by its fruits rather than its means; these things placed him squarely among the greatest of the eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelists of England, America, and the Pacific, all of whom were in substantive agreement on these issues.<sup>15</sup>

So far in this chapter two leading ideas have been stressed -- the uniform presence, transcending time and place, of the doctrine of salvation presented as a black and white choice between hellfire and heaven; and an apparent connection between the forceful preaching of this doctrine and the appearance of bodily disturbances accompanying the process of conversion. It remains, then, to see conversion in a general physiological and psychological context before transferring attention to the religious revivals of Polynesia.

The theory of conversion which will be outlined here is one which has ramifications outside the field of religion itself. It was formulated recently by a British psychiatrist, William Sargant, who was interested in the function of the

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<sup>15</sup> This digest of Edwards' views on revivals comes from his previously-cited works.

brain and its relation to conviction and conversion -- psychological, political, and religious. His researches and clinical observations over a number of years led him to believe that "almost identical physiological and psychological phenomena may result from religious healing methods and conversion techniques, equally in the most primitive and the more highly civilized cultures. They may be adduced as convincing proofs of the truth of whatever religious or philosophic beliefs are invoked. But since these beliefs are often logically irreconcilable with each other, and since the similarity of the physiological and psychological phenomena produced by their invocation are all that they may have in common -- we find ourselves confronted with a mechanistic principle deserving the most careful examination."<sup>16</sup>

The phenomena he refers to include the ones which have been noticed as accompanying revivalistic preaching in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And the physical and psychological conditions under which they typically occur approximate very closely those which revivalistic preachers, consciously or unconsciously, strove to produce. "For conversion to be effective," Sargant writes, "the subject may first have to have his emotions worked upon until he

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<sup>16</sup> See Sargant's previously-cited Battle For the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing, p. 75.

reaches an abnormal condition of anger, fear or exaltation. If this condition is maintained or intensified by one means or another, hysteria may supervene, whereupon the subject may become more open to suggestions which in normal circumstances he would have summarily rejected."<sup>17</sup>

Emotional stress is most effectively produced, Sargent argues, by prolonged insistence upon a single "loaded" point of political or religious doctrine or personal experience, calculated to bring the subject to the brink of distraction. When stress becomes unbearable, the brain ceases to function normally, and a re-orientation of behavior patterns and beliefs may occur, sometimes amounting to a complete reversal of past habits and convictions. There is an obvious correspondence between this sequence of events and the happenings at a protracted religious meeting where the preaching of hellfire for days and days together produced agony in audiences until they felt, in Edwards' words, "broken with apprehensions of divine wrath, and sunk into an abyss under a sense of guilt."<sup>18</sup> At that point the sinners were grateful to "fly from the wrath to come," and to seek escape in God's mercy. Significantly, in terms of this general theory, the question of salvation was always presented as a choice: "I beseech you, Friends, by all the

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> "A Narrative of many Surprising Conversions," in Works, III, p. 32.

happiness of heaven, by all the torments of hell, for the sake of God, . . . that ye awake. . . . Yea, I charge you by all the curses of the law, and blessings of the gospels, that ye would Awake. My friends, you are witnesses against yourselves, that I have set Death and Life before you; O choose Life that ye may live. . . ."<sup>19</sup>

Emotional pressure was maintained by evangelists who insisted time and time again on the urgency of the question of salvation. All the weight of their millennialist tendencies, all their sense of the immediate presence of God and their belief in the possibility of his direct action at any moment, gave great strength to their threats and appeals. They often, as has been noted, stood on tombstones to preach; and mentally, they conceived themselves and their listeners to be on the brink of eternity. Wesley used the example of a man in a state of sin leaving the meeting with his soul unchanged and suffering a fatal accident. He would go straight to the fiery furnace. The most famous passage of Edwards' most famous sermon -- "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" -- pictures man as a spider or some other loathsome insect, suspended, by nothing more than God's grace, over a scorching fire. Charles Grandison Finney had an elaborate parable worked

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<sup>19</sup> William Warren Sweet, in his previously-cited Revivalism in America, p. 55, quotes a sermon of Gilbert Tennent, preached in the early seventeen forties.

out to make his point for him.

Suppose yourself to be standing on the bank of the Falls of Niagara. As you stand upon the verge of the precipice, you behold a man lost in deep reverie, approaching its verge, unconscious of his danger. He approaches nearer, until he actually lifts his foot to take the final step that shall plunge him in destruction. At this moment you lift your voice above the roar of the foaming waters and cry out, Stop. The voice pierces his ear and breaks the charm that binds him; he turns instantly upon his heel, all pale and aghast, quivering from the verge of death.

The man in the reverie was the sinner on the way to hell. The observer was the revivalist or soul-winning Christian. The word 'Stop' was the word of life, the truth of the gospel.<sup>20</sup>

Concentrated and prolonged effort, applied in an atmosphere of urgency, are, then, vitally important mechanisms in religious conversion; and, according to Sargent, they often achieve spectacular results when applied to large groups, so that sympathetic contagion may operate. The break-down of one person or group may bring others to the point of collapse. The spread of the Northampton revival amongst the townspeople in 1734-5 has been noted; and the literature of the frontier revivals of the Second Awakening contains many references to large camp meetings at which contagion operated on a grand scale.

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<sup>20</sup> McLoughlin, op. cit., p. 71, citing one of Finney's sermons.

Sargant also notes the importance, though not the necessity, of a state of physical upset or debilitation in producing a heightened susceptibility to religious conversion. The phenomenon of individual conversion occurring during or after a severe illness is common enough; not so widely acknowledged is the background of general ill-health which has accompanied some of the biggest revivals of the modern era. For example, a diphtheria epidemic raged in New England from 1735-40, causing more deaths there than any war up to the time of the American Revolution. It killed more than a third of the people of Kingston, New Hampshire, over a one-year period; and in 1736 in a neighboring town, it killed 210 out of 1200 inhabitants. It is not necessary to stipulate a one-for-one connection between the epidemic and the Awakening of the forties before accepting it as a possible contributory factor.<sup>21</sup>

The uniformity of bodily and mental symptoms produced by the application of prolonged and ultimately unbearable stress, of whatever origin; the relative unimportance of doctrine in the broad sense and the relative importance of

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<sup>21</sup> See Gaustad, op. cit., pp. 20-21. He argues that the severity of the epidemic in any given area bore no observable relation to the intensity of the revival in that area, and that therefore there was no causal relation. This is to demand too much of the proposition; obviously it is not disease alone which bears on the question of intensity of religious feeling. See Chapter VII below for disease in the Polynesian islands during the period of the island revivals.



form and method of presentation, with its implication of the possibility of effectiveness in varied cultures; the auxiliary factors of disease and natural disaster as reinforcing agents; the mechanical nature of the operation of contagion among the affected -- these are the elements of Sargant's thesis which bear on the problem of the religious revivals of the Pacific. There is an effect of mutual sustenance: Sargant seems to have evolved a generally satisfactory theory of revivals, and the Pacific awakenings reinforce its validity by bringing support to its contentions from a source previously unexplored.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIANITY AND NATIVE SOCIETY

From the beginning of the missionary period in the Pacific, Polynesians and Christians placed different values on the various aspects of the missionary enterprise. To the missionaries, as noted in Chapter II, only the gospel message was ultimately important. The use of western technical skills and the inculcation of western social practices were nothing more than means to the end of spiritual conversion. This was true both of British missionaries, who were enjoined by their directors against any sort of temporal aspirations in the islands, and of Americans, among whom a broader view of missionary duty was orthodox at the outset. The Americans aimed at "nothing short of covering [the Sandwich Islands] with fruitful fields and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches; of raising up the whole people to an elevated state of Christian civilization." Granting that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it," the Americans still realized that the Lord would not build the house himself, and that "the preacher and translator, the physician, the farmer, the printer, the catechist, and schoolmaster, the Christian wife and mother, the female teacher of heathen wives, mothers, and children, were . . .

indispensable."<sup>1</sup> In actuality, of course, the British contingent which sailed on the Duff was as well-supplied with secular skills as the later American mission to Hawaii. Only four of the thirty British missionaries were ordained ministers. Included in the remaining twenty-six were carpenters, weavers, harness makers, hatters, tailors, shoemakers, coopers, blacksmiths, and surgeons.<sup>2</sup>

Double-natured missionary practice continued, reaching its height in the later period of widespread trading and advice to island governments. It was accompanied by a controversy over theory between the advocates of a Christianity which would produce civilization and the advocates of a civilization which would embody Christianity. Mission administrators, field-workers, and people altogether outside the missionary enterprise were involved.

In the islands meanwhile, change proceeded regardless of controversy, in a direction and at a speed largely determined by the natives -- none of whom, of course, were

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<sup>1</sup> Instructions of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Sandwich Islands Mission (Lahainaluna, 1838), p. 27; Bingham, op. cit., p. 60. They were at the same time enjoined against interfering in local politics.

<sup>2</sup> The L.M.S. directors, sending out missionaries on a one-way voyage to institute Christ's kingdom in the South Seas, had the Duff complete its journey with a trading trip to Canton. Their first spiritual venture thus returned a secular profit. See the Directors' Report for 1799, in L.M.S. Reports, 1795-1814, p. 93.

theorists. The initial response of the Tahitians to the coming of the white man had been a blend of realpolitik and materialism. They tried at first to kill the men of Samuel Wallis's exploring expedition. This could be construed as evidence of their desire to maintain cultural integrity against alien forces but for the fact that their second tactic, adopted in the face of military failure, was to barter their women for British nails and ironware. From then on through the missionary period in the Society Islands and elsewhere western material culture was rapturously received and quickly adapted to island forms of social and political life.

The natives of Rarotonga heard of Captain Cook's visits to Tahiti from a Tahitian woman who had come to their island. Her accounts of the material benefits of his voyages led the Rarotongans to pray to their gods to "bring the far-famed Cookees to our island, to give us nails, and iron, and axes; let us see these outriggerless canoes."<sup>3</sup>

When the Duff contingent went ashore at Matavai Bay in 1797 the natives were eager to help them establish their mission house. In return for this assistance, the missionaries made the king and queen a gift of a full wardrobe of clothes. The queen was delighted, but the king was

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<sup>3</sup> John Williams, A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands; with Remarks upon the Natural History of the Islands, Origin, Languages, Traditions, and Usages of the Inhabitants (London, 1837), p. 201.

unimpressed -- he would rather have had a musket, an axe, a knife, or a pair of scissors. Six weeks after the landing, one of the natives observed with some asperity that the missionaries "gave them plenty of the word of God, but not of many other things."<sup>4</sup>

Missionary attention and instruction eventually turned Pomare II of Tahiti into an indefatigable translator and scribe; and in 1807 he wrote to the directors of the L.M.S., addressing them as "friends," and putting a number of requests to them:

I wish you to send a great number of men, women, and children here.

Friends, send also property and cloth for us, and we will also adopt English customs.

Friends, send also plenty of muskets and powder, for wars are frequent in our country -- should I be killed, you will have nothing in Tahete; do not come here when I am dead, Tahete is a regardless country, and should I die with sickness, do not come here. This also I wish, that you would send me all the curious things that you have in England. -- Also send me everything necessary for writing -- paper, ink, and pens in abundance; let no writing utensil be wanting.<sup>5</sup>

Pomare was bartering promises and political influence for material goods, just as the kings of Hawaii later did; the common people of Tahiti traded just as avidly in their own valuables, with non-missionary and missionary alike. When

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson, op. cit., pp. 68-69; 160.

<sup>5</sup> This English translation from the Tahitian of Pomare appears in L.M.S. Reports, 1795-1814, p. 275.

Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet visited the Societies on their inspection tour for the L.M.S. in the eighteen twenties, they found a wide variety of trade goods on offer: cloth, lines, cordage, mats, bags, nets, stools, spears, and so on. "We made various purchases by barter; knives, forks and scissors were in the greatest request, but European cloth would have been more acceptable, now that civilization is increasing their wants and their comforts, the former stimulating them to procure the latter by honest industry, and improvement in such arts and manufactures as they already practise, or are learning."<sup>6</sup>

Europeanization was carried over into social culture. Tyerman and Bennet noted with approval the progress of the islanders under missionary guidance toward a regular habit of life in European-style villages. A settled place of residence gave the people their first sense of the "enduring, and endearing sweets of home," and encouraged them to enjoy European social amenities. For example, the people of Raiatea held a great outdoor banquet while the English visitors were there. At the previous banquet, six months earlier, all had squatted on their hams. Now a thousand people dined together from sofas, chairs, and

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<sup>6</sup> Montgomery, op. cit., I, 97. Aarne A. Koskinen, Missionary Influence as a Political Factor in the Pacific Islands (Helsinki, 1953), pp. 38-47, discusses at some length the mutual usefulness of native chiefs and white men (missionary and non-missionary).

tables. After dinner they drank tea and listened to speeches which contrasted pre-Christian life unfavorably with the mission order.<sup>7</sup> On Hushine, Tyerman and Bennet were received by a European-clad royal family. They were served wine with their meal, and then tea; after this the group prayed together; and finally the royal guard farewelled the visitors with a ceremonial volley of musket-fire.<sup>8</sup>

Rarotonga under Aaron Buzacott was the Europeanized jewel of the South Seas. John Williams came there in 1830 on one of his endless peregrinations, and found a newly-formed settlement sprung up at Arorangi.

The cottages of the natives were built in regular lines, about fifty yards from the border of [a] broad pathway, and about the same distance from each other. The chapel and school-house stand in the centre of the settlement; and by their prominence, the natives would appear to express the high value they attach to the means of religious instruction. Every house has doors and Venetian windows, which are partly painted with a lamp-black, procured from the candle-nut, and partly with red ochre or other preparations. The contrast between these and the snowy whiteness of the coral lime gives the whole a chaste and animated appearance; and as the houses are all new, and of nearly equal dimensions, the settlement possesses a uniformity which is seldom found amongst the South Sea Islanders. The portion of ground between the pathway and the house is either tastefully laid out and planted as a garden, or strewed with black and white pebbles, which gives to the whole an air of neatness and respectability creditable alike to their ingenuity and industry.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Montgomery, op. cit., II, 127.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., I, 149.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 362.

The islanders were quick to make a connection between western material culture and western religion. Many of the "civilization-oriented" missionaries encouraged them in this. Native Christians were known in many places by their adoption of European dress, particularly bonnets and hats; and this symbolic acceptance was backed up by a conviction that adherence to the new religion would bring worldly comfort and wealth. "Look at the chandeliers over our heads"; said a Raiatean native teacher in 1821. "Look at our wives; how becomingly they appear in their gowns and bonnets. Compare ourselves this day with the poor people of Rurutu, who have lately drifted to our island, and behold our superiority. And by what means have we obtained all this? By our own industry? -- by our own goodness? No; it is to the good name of Jesus we are indebted . . ."10

A Samoan chief of the thirties, observing the magnificence of European ships, clothing, axes, and knives, concluded that "the God who has given to his white worshippers these valuable things must be wiser than our gods, for they have not given the like to us. We all want these articles; and my proposition is, that the God who gave them should be our God."11

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<sup>10</sup> Montgomery, op. cit., I, 112-114.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 572.



The natives, again encouraged by some of the missionaries, included the idea of carrying material wealth to other places in their own conception of mission work. John Williams took Makea, the king of Rarotonga, to Samoa with him in 1832; and the king, elegantly dressed in a red surtout made for him by Mrs. Aaron Buzacott, was a fine advertisement for Christianity. The Samoans connected his imposing wardrobe with his new religion.<sup>12</sup> It is not difficult under the circumstances to account for the readiness of many islanders to make quick outward profession of belief in Christ.

During the period of transition from idolatry to professed Christianity, natives frequently attributed religious power to western goods such as cuckoo-clocks, drinking-mugs, blacksmith's forges and anvils, and so on. Particular reverence was paid to the printed word. The Bible in its physical form was sometimes thought to embody the whole of religion, as the first missionaries found on a preliminary visit to Eimeo. The people listened to them preach, and said it was "very good"; but it could be of no use to them to change their religion, as the brethren would so soon leave them and carry away THE BOOK."<sup>13</sup> Papeiha, a native teacher on Rarotonga, "carried his Testament with

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 430.

<sup>13</sup> Wilson, op. cit., p. 153.

him, [which] frequently elicited curious remarks. While walking about the settlement, the people would say, 'There! there's the god of that man! what a strange god it is, he carries it about with him, but we leave ours at the marae.' When they saw him reading, they would say that he and his God were talking together."<sup>14</sup> Islanders would follow messengers carrying letters for missionaries, and would put their ear close to the paper, hoping to hear something of the contents.<sup>15</sup> On Rarotonga, Williams wrote a message to his wife on a chip of wood; his messenger, a chief, later tied a string to the chip and wore it round his neck, explaining to his admiring listeners the wonders it could perform.<sup>16</sup> One native family used the alphabet as a prayer in time of danger; and others in similar circumstances chanted the lessons they had learned at school.<sup>17</sup>

There was a wide variety of response to the subject of Christianity itself. In some places the coming of the

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<sup>14</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>15</sup> Aaron Buzacott and J. P. Sunderland, eds., Mission Life in the Islands of the Pacific: Being a Narrative of the Life and Labours of the Rev. A. Buzacott, Missionary of Rarotonga, for some time Co-Worker with the Rev. John Williams, Martyr of Erromanga (London, 1866), p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>17</sup> Buzacott and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 64. It is interesting to note that at the very moment John Williams was clubbed to death on Erromanga in 1839, his two associates were distributing gifts and Williams himself was reputed to have been reciting the Tahitian numerals to a crowd of boys.

missionaries was regarded as a fulfillment of ancient prophecy. Elsewhere, natural disasters were attributed to the missionaries, who supposedly prayed down epidemics and hurricanes upon their enemies. Once again, some of the missionaries encouraged this sort of thinking. When Brother Broomhall of the first L.M.S. contingent to Tahiti fell ill with a fever, one of the native priests said it was caused by a Tahitian eatooa (spirit) who was angry and would kill him. Broomhall said he was not afraid of this: Jehovah, his own god, had sent the fever and would take it away. His words were widely noticed and repeated. The next day, after a good night's sleep, his fever was gone. The priest asked if the "Pretanee" (British) God had sent away the sickness, and Broomhall answered "Yes."<sup>18</sup>

Many attempts were made by the natives to second the power of the white man's god to their own use. The missionaries who landed on Tongatabu in 1797 were told by a resident Englishman that one of the chiefs had made a building "sacred to the God of Pretane," in which he slept when ill. On the rafters were placed spears, clubs, bows, and arrows, "to receive from their imaginary deity supernatural virtue, to render them successful against their enemies."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson, op. cit., pp. 165-166.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

Several different "lotus" or "sailor religions" preceded missionaries to Samoa. These were practised by travelled natives and by beached sailors or runaways from the convict colony at Port Jackson. One young man kept some old books in a native hut where he had erected a pulpit. The books were sacred, and were unveiled only on Sundays. The natives congregated to hear him read, and bowed to the books. He was supported by his disciples, who were spread over several villages.<sup>20</sup> On Upolu by the beginning of the eighteen thirties, two Englishmen had converted between two and three hundred natives to their version of religion -- "our God is good, and theirs is bad" -- and sealed the conversion with baptism: "They knows it does 'em good." These two also practised faith healing by reading prayers over the sick in return for property payment.<sup>21</sup>

The earliest most fully-developed case of adaptation of parts of Christian doctrine to native purposes appeared in the Society Islands in the eighteen twenties and

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<sup>20</sup> Buzacott and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, op. cit., pp. 420-421. The whole question of sailor Christianity is one which deserves a full treatment, both for its intrinsic interest and for the light it should throw on the reception of the white man in Polynesia and Melanesia. See R. F. Watters, "The Transition to Christianity in Samoa," Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand, VIII (May, 1959), pp. 392-399.

thirties. A native preacher arose on Tahiti, announcing that the millennium had arrived. There was no more sin, and hence no need for law. There was no hell, no devil, no future punishment; the missionaries lied by teaching the opposite. Because the millennium had come, the natives could drink spirits and practise polygyny. But they should continue to pray, using a blend of heathen songs and Christian forms. This new religion, known as the Mamaia heresy, had almost run its course in the windward islands by 1830, but it remained powerful to leeward for some years after that. On Maupiti, where there was a mission fully staffed by natives, it became orthodoxy. Here the heresy took on some of the appearance of a cargo cult: a large shipload of cloth was to arrive from the skies, and the natives made a boat to receive it. Swarms of fish were to come out of the sea onto the sand, wine was to come from heaven in bottles, and cows were to come down from the clouds.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This account of the Mamaia heresy is taken from Niel Gunson's unpublished Ph.D. thesis Protestant Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860 (Canberra, 1959). A full study should also be made of Polynesian heresies. Once again there is great intrinsic interest; and there is room for comparison between them and the much more highly developed cargo cults which developed in Melanesia in the later nineteenth century. See J. D. Freeman's unpublished article, "The Joe Gimlet, or Siovili Cult: An Episode in the Religious History of Old Samoa," (Canberra, Australia, 1958).

Surrounded and at times almost swamped by this melange of misappropriation and misconception, the true Christian spirit of vital piety was slow to emerge. In some of the Society Islands, the natives had been willing to burn their idols and forswear their old ways almost at first contact with the missionaries; but it was more than twenty years after the arrival of the Duff that the first genuine conversions were recorded. The journals of the L.M.S. workers during this "night of toil" make very depressing reading on the whole. Compared with Hawaii, the Society Islands were stony ground. In Hawaii, the ancient tabu system had been overthrown (through the workings of divine providence, so the missionaries thought) just a few months before the arrival of the evangelists. In the Society Islands, heathen practices continued to flourish, and there were recrudescences of pure barbarism for many years. In the Sandwich Islands, the political unity established by Kamehameha I before the missionary era persisted through the important early years of the mission. In the Societies, civil war forced an early abandonment of virtually the whole mission enterprise in 1809-1810 and continued to bedevil the missionaries on their return in 1811-1812. Finally, the French acquisition of Tahiti in 1843 made realization of their long-range plans impossible.

Even given favorable conditions, a long time elapsed before the islanders could give a serious hearing to the

important teachings of the missionaries, let alone accept Christ in what the missionaries considered a proper spirit of surrender. The languages had to be learned; parts of the Bible had to be translated into Polynesian dialects; natives had to be schooled in the reading, writing, and comprehension of Christian texts. All this involved a great deal of scholarly and administrative labor. And even this immense undertaking could not guarantee the moral and psychological transformation of Polynesians from a race of practised and complacent hedonists to a race of anxious enquirers with a satisfactory sense of guilt.

It was, nevertheless, during this transitional period that the great Polynesian religious awakenings took place; and their occurrence at a time in mission history when a great deal remained to be done before the "godly community" could be considered an accomplished fact raises some general questions about their social and psychological origins. There is a good case to be made for the theory that it was the imperfect, partial nature of the missionary achievement, its limits as much as its accomplishments, which gave a special force and character to Polynesian revivals.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that British and American revivalists had their greatest and most violent successes among the unchurched, the lowly, the unsophisticated -- Wesley with his industrial workers, and the frontier revivalists of the Second Awakening with their semi-literate farmers and a sprinkling of Negroes.

The Polynesian cosmogony contained several ideas which could be readily transferred or adapted to Christian teaching. To the Polynesian, the world in its objective physical manifestations was the result of a long, unbroken evolution from metaphysical beginnings. The great deities were directly in this evolutionary line. Behind and within all physical manifestations was a psychic life force: all objective phenomena of nature had their origins in this psychic dynamism, and all existed within its field of influence. Life could proceed equably only as long as metaphysical forces -- spirits and gods -- were placated and propitiated. Any deviation from the norm, favorable or unfavorable, was due to the interposition of spirits.<sup>24</sup> The Christian God of the missionaries was not greatly different from this immanent psychic force. He announced their coming with earthquakes; he brought them safe to land after storms at sea; he directed them to places where their work would be fruitful, or indicated by signs that the field was not yet ready for them; he brought down famine and plague on ungodly islands. A brooding omnipresence in the sky was common to the minds of both natives and missionaries.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> E. S. C. Handy, Polynesian Religion, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 34 (Honolulu, 1927), passim.

<sup>25</sup> This sort of thinking was endemic among the missionaries, and occurred frequently in the writings even of "sensible Christians" like John Williams. See his previously-cited Missionary Enterprises, esp. pp. 3; 82; 143; 307-308; 361-362; 397-398.



In terms of social practice and of communal and individual psychology, as well as of religious conception, the demands and expectations of Christian missionaries found precedent to some extent in the experience and traditions of the islanders. The Christian consciously met the native half-way by preaching to him in his own tongue; less consciously, the islander was able to accommodate himself to the new religion and the new way of life without a complete abandonment of pre-Christian habits and concepts.<sup>26</sup>

In the Sandwich Islands, where the tabu system was a thing of the immediate past; in the Societies, where its formal abandonment was achieved within twenty years; and in Samoa, where it had existed in a partially developed form, the new religion substituted for the old prohibitions another set of personal boundaries not to be overstepped without incurring the wrath of a tutelary deity. The manner of observance of these new tabus often went straight back to tradition: ". . . it is the universal practice of all the Christian natives of these islands to prepare their Sunday's food on the last day of the week. Not a fire is lighted, neither flesh nor fruit is baked, not a tree is climbed, nor a canoe seen on the water, nor a journey by

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<sup>26</sup> See F. J. H. Grattan, An Introduction to Samoan Custom (Apia, West Samoa, 1948), passim., for incidental references to this process in Samoa.

land performed, on God's holy day; religion -- religion alone -- is the business and delight of these simple-minded people on the Sabbath."<sup>27</sup> In just this manner, pre-Christian cooking fires signalled the approach of a pre-Christian tabu day, and in just this manner normal occupations were suspended on the special days of Ku, Kane, Lono, Kanaloa, and their counterparts, which were regular occurrences in the Polynesian calendar.

The persistence of Polynesian attributes was useful on other levels as well. Missionary journals and memoirs contained many admiring passages on the speed and skill with which some islanders, once motivated, mastered the reading and memorization of the Gospels, the attention with which they listened to sermons, and the enthusiasm with which they discussed them after service. These comments reflect the Polynesians' ability to commit long stretches of literature to memory, and their appreciation of -- their near-addiction to -- oratory and fine language. In the same way, the Polynesians were attracted to hymns translated from the English or written specially by missionaries in the local dialect.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Montgomery, *op. cit.*, I, p. 50. See also Bingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>28</sup> These developed a double currency. They were used in praise of God on the Sabbath, and as accompaniments to native dances during the week. Some of them were thus returning to their origins: they had been English dance tunes before religious words were composed to fit them.

The behavior of the natives at the time of the revivals not only showed correspondences with the behavior of other peoples under similar circumstances, but accorded with their behavior on certain occasions in pre-Christian times. The missionaries had congratulated themselves on stamping out public wailing and self-mutilation at native burials. In the Sandwich Islands from the mid-eighteen twenties on, the death of a chief was greeted with nothing more than seemly grief. Virtually the only out-cropping of deeply religious excess after that time occurred under missionary auspices -- at revival meetings. Further, accounts of spirit possession among the heathen are strikingly like descriptions of sinners seized by the spirit of the Lord. Dress this non-Christian differently, and he could take his place at a frontier camp meeting in America:

. . . his eyes are thrown into various contortions, sometimes staring wide, then half closed and sinking into stupor; while, at other times, the whole frame is agitated, and appears to have undergone some sudden and surprising change. The speech now becomes low, the voice squeaking and interrupted; then on a sudden raised to an astonishing degree. . . . When the deity quits [his body] he doth it with such convulsions and violence as to leave him motionless on the ground, and exhausted; . . . On coming to himself he utters a loud shriek, and seems to awake as from a profound sleep, unconscious of everything which hath passed.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson, op. cit., p. 349. See also Montgomery, op. cit., I, p. 91; and Freeman, op. cit., for spirit possession in pre-missionary island life.

In one other most important way the revivals were stimulated and aided by the nearness of Polynesians to their old life. Individual and collective memory was still sharp concerning the sins the missionaries proscribed as contrary to God's law. The most rigorous heavy displeasure and righteous sorrow was turned on islanders who clung to pre-Christian customs such as infanticide, polygamy, and tattooing -- practices which co-existed with formal Christianity on many islands or had been recently abandoned by churchgoers. The carnal brutality of the state of nature was castigated again and again by the missionaries. For the Polynesians, of all people, the awakening of a sense of guilt had enormous psychological implications. Complete and formerly complacent heathen sinfulness required a total expiation, a total surrender to the redeeming grace of the Christian God. Often enough it was the most "hardened sinners" who experienced the most overwhelming conversions -- for example, Aaron Buzacott's first converts on Rarotonga were a confessed cannibal, a warrior of note, and a sorcerer.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Buzacott and Sunderland, op. cit., p. 56.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE GREAT REVIVAL IN THE SANDWICH ISLANDS

The first decade of work in the Sandwich Islands yielded good results for the Congregationalist missionaries of the A.B.C.F.M. From the beginning in 1820, access to the ruling families had been relatively easy; and if Kamehameha II himself was a broken reed, at least most of the chiefs on Oahu and elsewhere were favorable to the mission and were attended by mission teachers. The most powerful royal supporter the missionaries had was Kaahumanu, the formidable dowager queen who had been instrumental in having the tabu system overthrown in 1819. She became a church member in 1825 and thereafter used her great influence to further the Christian cause. She died in 1832 with the words of a Calvinist hymn on her lips, and her passing marked the beginning of a mild but noticeable reaction against the mission.

Before this, however, the missionaries had made some headway in developing the outward forms of Christianity in the islands. The first orthodox marriages and burials were recorded in the mid-twenties. Christian education in mission schools was believed to be producing a generation of Bible scholars. On a wider scale, the missionaries could measure progress by the islanders' adoption of European clothes and material comforts. These advances were made against a background of helpful laws arranged by sympathetic

chiefs in 1824. Adultery and prostitution were prohibited by edict in 1825, and at a meeting in Honolulu in July of that year, the principal chiefs and the queen regent agreed to worship God, obey his laws, observe the Sabbath, attend to missionary instruction, and have their people become pupils in mission schools.

The death of Kaahumanu in 1832 was followed by uncertainty and drift: there was now no comparably powerful single figure to assume the regency. In this political hiatus, social laxness made itself apparent. Through the early thirties native pastimes were revived on most of the islands, and school attendance dropped substantially, forcing the missionaries to reconsider their whole educational program. This was also a period of specifically religious disturbance. The landing of a small party of Catholic priests on Oahu in the late eighteen twenties had caused a disproportionate agitation among Protestant mission workers, and even the eventual expulsion of the priests did not quieten the question completely. On the island of Hawaii, a semi-Christian priestess emerged as the leader of a group which eventually turned Catholic in the late thirties. At Puna in 1837, a native teacher professed to have had a vision, and drew a number of the people of the district after him.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, August 29, 1837, in Coan Letters, 1836-1845, on microfilm in University of Hawaii library. Original in New York Historical Society Library. Hereafter cited as Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

There were at the same time forces working within the mission itself to strengthen the position of Christianity during these years of wavering. New contingents had been arriving at intervals during the twenties and thirties to reinforce the original mission family, and with each increase in numerical strength old stations were re-invigorated and new ones opened up. By the end of 1837 there were ninety workers (including twenty-seven ordained ministers) at seventeen stations throughout the islands.<sup>2</sup>

In 1832, at Waimea on Kauai, missionary Peter Gulick experienced a sudden and unexpected revival of religious interest at his isolated station. Hiram Bingham came from Honolulu to preach with him and assist in the questioning and instruction of enquirers. Excitement continued for several weeks, and after one sermon three hundred "prepared to give themselves to God." Bingham wrote later that one of these "appeared to be seized with convulsions, which I regarded as proving nothing for or against the genuineness of the work. Mr. Gulick noticed, at other times, cases of bodily agitation, among the people, such as trembling,

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<sup>2</sup> Principal stations were established in this order up to and including the time of the Great Revival: Kauai -- Waimea (1820), Koloa (1834), Waioli (1834); Oahu -- Honolulu (1820 -- split into two churches 1837), Waiialua (1832), Kaneohe (1834), Ewa (1834), Punahou (1841); Molokai -- Kaluaaha (1832); Maui -- Lahaina (1823), Lahainaluna (1831), Wailuku (1832), Haiku (1834), Hana (1837); Hawaii -- Kailua (1820), Hilo (1824), Kaawaloa (1824), Waimea (1832), Kohala (1837), Kealakekua (1840), Waiohinu (1841).

falling down, and loud weeping, which he supposed to be produced by the Spirit of God."<sup>3</sup>

Nothing comparable happened at other stations further down the island chain; but the annual meeting of 1836 in Honolulu was followed by intense evangelical activity everywhere. There was general concern among the delegates about the world-wide state of Christianity, and lengthy memorials were sent to the A.B.C.F.M. urging greater attention on the mainland to mission work in general and the provision of greater resources for the Sandwich Islands mission in particular. Back at their home stations after the meeting, the missionaries began to hold special services and "protracted meetings." Late in 1836, Titus Coan of Hilo toured his district on foot and for several weeks spoke at crowded and interested meetings. At almost all stations, protracted meetings were held at the turn of the year. On Oahu, for example, preaching teams visited Honolulu, Ewa, Waiialua, and Kaneohe successively in a series of six-day meetings, exhorting the natives and holding prayer and enquiry sessions. The station reports for the year ending May, 1837 noted almost uniformly a heightening of religious feeling.

Embryonic revivals occurred at several stations in the middle months of 1837, and interest remained high until

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<sup>3</sup> Bingham, op. cit., pp. 442 ff.



November. Then, with startling suddenness, the east coast of Hawaii seemed to take fire. On November 6, Titus Coan began a protracted meeting at Hilo before a congregation of several hundred. The next day a tidal wave struck the village, taking several lives and causing great damage. From then on his congregations were unique in size and fervor. Coan left this center of enthusiasm to tour Puna in January, 1838 and the contagion spread with him. Concurrently Lorenzo Lyons had been working zealously with his congregations at Waimea, and now he began to achieve results apparently as spectacular as Coan's. Wailuku, on Maui, had also been hit by the tidal wave, and both there and at nearby Lahaina mission meetings took on extreme revivalistic aspects within a matter of days.

No strict sequence of events can be ascertained for the spread of the revival to Oahu, and from the language of missionary letters and station reports it would seem that the violence of feeling which characterized the awakening on the "big island" was present only in a modified form at Honolulu and surrounding stations. Nevertheless, outbursts did occur there from the time of the regular new-year protracted meetings of January, 1838, continuing on Oahu and the remaining islands (Kauai and Molokai) over the next few years. In general, excitement was at its height from November, 1837 to July, 1839 when the arrival of a French warship threw the islands into political confusion. From

then on through the early forties, most stations experienced a cooling-off period, punctuated by occasional echoes of the great days of the thirties. Newly-opened stations tended to outlast others in manifestations of excitement. Prolonged revivals had virtually ceased by 1848, the year of a great epidemic. Widespread sickness had a double effect: at some stations it brought about the final extinction of deep religious interest; at others it resulted in a brief resurgence of feeling. A second severe epidemic in 1853-54 all but concluded the revival period over the entire island group. Depopulation had been great; villages were scattered, congregations were decimated, impetus was spent. For six years, the church was in a depressed state. The last half of 1860 witnessed a brief revival, the effects of which were quickly dissipated.

The place from which the awakening impulse of the Great Revival radiated was the district of Hilo on the island of Hawaii; and at the center of the excitement there stood Titus Coan. An examination of his life and thought up to the time of the Revival does much to account for his success as an evangelist; and an examination of his work during the years of his greatest achievement helps to explain the form taken by the Great Revival in Hawaii, and throws additional light on revivals in general.

Coan was born at Killingworth, Connecticut, in 1801,

the son of solidly religious parents. His father was a sensible and temperate farmer; his mother was Tamza Nettleton, aunt of Asahel Nettleton, the well-known evangelist of the Second Great Awakening in New England. In common with all other young people of his time and place Coan was exposed at an early age to the workings of evangelical Protestantism. After serving a term in the militia, he came home to Killingworth in the midst of a revival under Nettleton, and saw a hundred and ten of his friends and neighbors accept Christ. Coan's own conversion was still some time away. In the summer of 1826 his brother George was called to the pastorate of a western New York church, at Riga in Monroe County. Titus went out shortly afterwards to take charge of a nearby school. He spent his next two years in this part of the religiously volatile "burned-over district."<sup>4</sup> He became a Sunday-school superintendent and later a member of his brother's church. Not long after this, he left Riga for Medina, a village west of Albion in Orleans County, where another of his brothers was a merchant. There he worked as a lay preacher, Sunday-school superintendent, and winter-time schoolteacher.

He had been undecided about his life's work; now, at the age of twenty-eight, he concluded that he would be

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<sup>4</sup> See Cross, op. cit., for a detailed discussion of the dynamic religious life of western New York from 1800-1850.

happiest and most useful as a lay worker in the church, rather than as a doctor, a schoolteacher or a missionary. He arranged to go back to Connecticut, wind up his affairs there, and return to work with his merchant brother in Medina. He took a canal-boat at Rochester, accompanied by a minister friend with whom he was going to attend the General Sessions of the Presbyterian Church at Philadelphia. Almost immediately he came down with a "shake of ague followed by a fever," which persisted all the way down to Albany and from there to New York. He gave up his idea of going to Philadelphia and instead waited out the course of his disease with friends. "I was . . . so prostrated I could go no further, and was laid at once on a bed of weakness, from which I did not rise for four months. A good physician and kind friends ministered to me daily, but the disease held me fast until I was wasted to a skeleton, so that I could not sit in an easy-chair without fainting till my bed was made. This was a time for reflection."<sup>5</sup>

By the autumn of 1829 he was well enough to be taken home to his father's house, and in October he began school-teaching again. During the winter there was a revival, the second of his lifetime, in the town of Killingworth and in his school and it was at this point that Coan made his

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<sup>5</sup> Titus Coan, Life in Hawaii: An Autobiographic Sketch of Mission Life and Labors, 1835-1881 (New York, 1882), p. 13.

decision for Christ. It seemed, he wrote later, "like the voice of God to me. I could no longer doubt. I had purposed and the Lord had disappointed. I had chosen, but He had other work for me."<sup>6</sup> His conversion had been preceded by physical and mental hardship and travail; when he came to consider his condition at the critical period it was in terms of an immediate and emotion-laden choice to be made between sin and grace; and his achievement of a state of regeneracy expressed itself in a new perception of things.

It is but a little time since I found my sins an oppressive load. My Savior hid his face for a moment. I sought him at twilight, at midnight. I inquired of the watchmen. I wandered over the field of truth. I looked, I listened, I fainted. My Beloved spake -- my soul melted -- I bathed his feet with my tears. I would not let him go till he pardoned and smiled. Do you ask where I found him? In Jer. iii, 19. At first his voice was indistinct, but it arrested my attention. I listened and he spake again. Is this, said I, the voice of my Father? Again the notes became more distinct and tender and earnest. He was inquiring how he should put me among his children. He stated the condition. 'Thou shalt call me my Father, and thou shalt not turn away from me.' My heart responded, 'My Father, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth.' I had read these words before, but I never found and ate them with such relish as now. The condition, 'Thou shalt not turn away from me,' seemed equally precious as the privilege of adoption. I thought I made or renewed an unreserved, an unconditional, cheerful, eternal surrender of myself to God. . . ."

Coan spent the summer of 1830 working with a minister

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<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Coan to Fidelia Church, December, 1832, in Lydia Bingham Coan, Titus Coan: A Memorial (Chicago, 1884), pp. 7-8.

friend in a revival which was in progress at Byron, Rochester, and a number of other New York towns. Here he met Charles Grandison Finney several times. In June, 1831, he entered Auburn Theological Seminary; on April 17, 1833, he was licensed to preach; four months later he embarked as an ordained missionary on an exploratory mission voyage to Patagonia. He came back from this unproductive work in May, 1834, married Fidelia Church of Churchville, and left Boston on December 5, 1834, as a member of a missionary group bound for the Sandwich Islands.

Coan was appointed to labor with missionary David Lyman at Hilo. The two men quickly came to a working agreement: Lyman would handle the mission school, Coan would be an itinerant preacher. His parish consisted of a coastal belt on the east coast of Hawaii a hundred miles long, inhabited during the early thirties by fifteen or sixteen thousand natives. The Lymans had been the only permanent missionaries there before he arrived; and though occasional tours had been made through the outlying districts, and schools had been set up, the condition of society was very little different from what it had been in pre-mission days.

By nature Coan was an extremely ardent man. Love was a driving force in his life: he loved his wife, he loved Christ, and he loved his work. Sometimes these affections

were mingled in his thinking. On his second wedding anniversary he wrote to his wife of their joint marriage to "Him whom our souls love." Jesus was their "eternal husband," and Coan looked forward to the time when "we shall feel our union to him consummated and changeless."<sup>8</sup> Late in life, Coan wrote to a fellow-clergyman about the overwhelming passion of his early Christian love.

When I came to these Islands, and before I could use the Hawaiian language, I often felt as if I should burst with strong desires to speak the word to the natives around me. And when my mouth was opened to speak of the love of God in Christ, I felt that the very chords of my heart were wrapped around my hearers, and that some inward power was helping me to draw them in, as the fisherman feels when drawing in his net filled with fishes.<sup>9</sup>

This "personal magnetism of love" was what endeared him to his hearers. Looking back, S. E. Bishop, who had spent his childhood on Hawaii at the time of the Revival, wrote of Coan wrapping his heart around his young listeners, and "[drawing] us, sweetly and irresistibly, to the love of God in Christ. I, later, came under the stringent intellectual and spiritual force of Finney, and felt the piercing power of the Spirit's sword, in his hands, but have never known a winning power of love in any preacher like that of the

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<sup>8</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, November 3, 1836, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

<sup>9</sup> Coan to S. E. Bishop, December 24, 1881, in Lydia Bingham Coan, *op. cit.*, p. 223. See also Coan to Fidelia Coan, August 8, 1841, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

spiritual father of our childhood."<sup>10</sup>

Coan was able to translate his spiritual ardency into physical energy. His parish was difficult and dangerous to traverse, but he itinerated endlessly. Just as he resembled John Wesley in his ceaseless attention to God as the source of his blessings, so he resembled him in his boundless enthusiasm for the practical work of evangelization. At the height of the Revival he wrote to his brother:

I am pressed above measure with watchings and preachings, and with cares and toil which cannot be told. But the grace of God is sufficient and he sustains me wonderfully. I am preaching almost incessantly, and in my narrow sphere I am determined, through the grace of God, fully to preach the Gospel of Christ. Much of the time I am absent on tours, travelling over burning lava, fording and swimming rapid and dangerous rivers, climbing rugged and slippery precipices, and preaching in doors and out of doors, in wind and rain, sunshine and shade, as the circumstances may be. I am often unavoidably exposed by rains, wet garments, &c. But I am sure that labor, and sometimes hardship even, is the best physic for man. I need not tell you that I am exceedingly joyful in all these labors.<sup>11</sup>

Coan's almost mystical conception of love, then, was capable of transformation into a sturdy practicality. His New Testament gentleness and spirituality were also balanced by an Old Testament sense of the power and harshness of a

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<sup>10</sup> S. E. Bishop in Lydia Bingham Coan, op. cit., pp. 222-223.

<sup>11</sup> Coan to Ezra Coan, October 15, 1839, in Lydia Bingham Coan, op. cit., pp. 60-61.



wrathful God. His own writing was full of this classic evangelistic tension, and his greatest triumphs came at a time when God appeared to have acted to force his parishioners to make an immediate choice between suffering the punishments of the Law and grasping the sweet rewards of the Gospel.

When Coan had come to Hilo, church membership had stood at about twenty. By April, 1837, there were eighty-four professed converts who had been received into the church. Coan had made a prolonged tour of his district at the end of 1836, with apparently good results; but in general the people of Hilo remained "hard as a nether millstone." By mid-1837, Coan was becoming impatient for the victory of Christ. "This people are . . . dead but God can raise them. Is it not time for him to work?"<sup>12</sup> Writing to Levi Chamberlain in Honolulu late in October on a business matter, Coan noted a stirring. "State of things interesting here. Sinners anxious. The Word has power. Pray for us."<sup>13</sup> Just two weeks after this hopeful premonition, God "visited the people in judgment as well as mercy."

On the 7th of November, 1837, at the hour of evening prayers, we were startled by a heavy thud, and a sudden jar of the earth. The sound was like

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<sup>12</sup> Coan to Fidelity Coan, August 29, 1837, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

<sup>13</sup> Coan to Chamberlain, October 23, 1837, MS in the library of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, Honolulu. Hereafter cited as Coan Letters, H.M.C.S.

the fall of some vast body upon the beach, and in a few seconds a noise of mingled voices rising for a mile along the shore thrilled us like the wail of doom. Instantly this was followed by a like wail from all the native houses around us. I immediately ran down to the sea, where a scene of wild ruin was spread out before me. The sea, moved by an unseen hand, had all of a sudden risen in a gigantic wave, and this wave, rushing in with the speed of a race-horse, had fallen upon the shore, sweeping everything not more than fifteen or twenty feet above high-water mark into indiscriminate ruin. Houses, furniture, calabashes, fuel, timber, canoes, food, clothing, everything floated wild upon the flood. About two hundred people, from the old man and woman of three-score years and ten, to the new-born infant, stripped of their earthly all, were struggling in the tumultuous waves. So sudden and unexpected was the catastrophe, that the people along the shore were literally "eating and drinking," and they "knew not, until the flood came and swept them all away." The harbor was full of strugglers calling for help, while frantic parents and children, wives and husbands ran to and fro along the beach, calling for their lost ones. As wave after wave came in and retired, the strugglers were brought near the shore, where the more vigorous landed with desperate efforts and the weaker and exhausted were carried back upon the retreating wave, some to sink and rise no more till the noise of judgment wakes them. . . . Had this catastrophe occurred at midnight when all were asleep, hundreds of lives would undoubtedly have been lost. Through the great mercy of God, only thirteen were drowned.

This event, falling as it did like a bolt of thunder from a clear sky, greatly impressed the people. It was as the voice of God speaking to them out of heaven, "Be ye also ready."<sup>14</sup>

After this, meetings at Hilo became more and more crowded, and hopeful converts were multiplied. The village became a metropolis. Whole areas in the outlying districts were

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<sup>14</sup> Titus Coan, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

deserted, and at times during 1838 the number of people encamped around Hilo reached ten thousand. Coan's congregations were doubled, and from the end of November on he preached daily. By the end of April, 1838, he had held six protracted meetings in Hilo and Puna, and had received 639 converts to the church. Fifteen hundred more stood propounded for admission.<sup>15</sup>

A few weeks after the tidal wave Coan toured Puna, and the excitement he provoked there matched the demonstrations which had occurred at Hilo. From then on for two years his life was an unceasing round of itineration and preaching crowned with immense success. Five thousand, two hundred and forty-four new members were admitted to the church between April, 1838, and April, 1839, and a further 1,499 during the next twelve months. On the first Sabbath of July, 1838, 1,075 converts were baptised on the "day of days" in the history of the Hilo church.

Like many of the other great evangelists, Coan saw his work as a tremendous battle. He used to wait, before preaching, for the assembling of the "Sacramental host" and for the "mustering of the troops of hell in order to bring on a general engagement, and once more to test 'the weapons

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<sup>15</sup> Hilo Station Report for the year ending April 30, 1838, MS in the library of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society. Hereafter cited as Station Reports, H.M.C.S.

of our warfare.'" His principal ally was a military God, "whose arm is omnipotent [sic], and whose voice is thunder . . . whose eyes are as a flame of fire and whose spear gleams lightning; . . . who judges and makes war in righteousness."<sup>16</sup> It was always "Jehovah's hammer," or "the battle-ax of the Lord," or "the arrows of the Almighty," which "broke sinners down"; and to be brought to the point of repentance was to be "slain of the Lord."

Amid this toil and struggle Coan found his greatest satisfactions. It was love of "privation and pain" almost equally with love of souls which pushed him on. "O, the tug of battle; the watchings, the fightings, the toils . . . But I love the struggle and God helps me wonderfully. I want to fight on till I die. I wish to die in the field with armor on, with weapons bright."<sup>17</sup>

Coan's means to success were very similar to those used by other great evangelists. He himself had seen "great and powerful awakenings under the preachings of Nettleton and Finney," and "like doctrines, prayers, and efforts seemed to produce like fruits among this people." Even without this explicit acknowledgment of kinship, it is easy to detect the traces of pure revivalism in Coan. He

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<sup>16</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, March 16, 1839, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

<sup>17</sup> Coan to Lorenzo Lyons, September 9, 1838, in Lydia Bingham Coan, *op. cit.*, p. 47. See also Coan to Fidelia Coan, October 23, 1838; and August 8, 1841; in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

spoke of the Holy Ghost falling on his congregations "under the most bold and searching and simple truth which I could present to their minds, and as the most unequivocal answer to prayer," and again of hardly knowing "whether to preach terror or consolation" to a congregation which professed to have submitted to the Lord.<sup>18</sup>

The manifestations produced by his preaching were identical with those recorded elsewhere during revivals. For two years it was a common thing for him to write of whole congregations weeping, wailing, and falling; and of individuals sensing the terrible presence of God so strongly that they quivered in every muscle, or wailed in "tremendous throes" like a "dying giant," or broke down with an "earthquake shock." Sometimes the fallen lay "groaning on the ground for 15 minutes or 1/2 an hour after the fight was done."<sup>19</sup>

At the time of the Revival, every sermon he preached was eagerly anticipated; and at Hilo the big meeting-house had to be carefully prepared to seat the great crowds. Skilled men were employed to have the people stand in "compact rows as tight as it was possible to crowd them, the

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<sup>18</sup> See Titus Coan, op. cit., p. 49; Coan to Lorenzo Lyons, January 25, 1838 in Lydia Bingham Coan, op. cit., p. 44; Coan to Fidelia Coan, March 18, 1838, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

<sup>19</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, March 9, 1838; March 18, 1838; March 16, 1839, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

men and the women being separated, and when the house was thus filled with these compacted ranks, the word was given them to sit down, which they did, a mass of living humanity, such perhaps as was never seen except on Hawaii."<sup>20</sup> The same excitement preceded his visits to outlying villages. Sometimes church members would go out ahead to bring in sinners to hear the sermon, and very often the congregation would be waiting for him in perfect order. It was such a "sea of faces" or "forest of heads" or "field of wheat just ready for the sickle" which produced the greatest numbers of weepers, prayers, fainters, and fallers.

I arrived [at Hakalau] yesterday at 8. a.m. Found a large company of children collected . . . in the met. house, besides several hundreds of adults. I was a little weary, but I felt the Spirit break upon my heart; So I went right in among the children and fell upon my knees and looked up to Heaven. The H. Ghost fell instantly, so soon as I opened my mouth. The place was shaken. The congregation was all in tears, and there was such a crying out as I had not heard before.<sup>21</sup>

Coan was convinced from the very beginning that the Revival was a valid and glorious work of the Spirit. He affirmed the value of physical manifestations. "Whatever others may say, I know and feel that such cries are tokens

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<sup>20</sup> Titus Coan, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, March 11, 1838, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

of the Spirit."<sup>22</sup> He was conscious that both his methods and his results would appear like "Methodism" or "fanaticism" to outsiders, and indeed he, along with Lorenzo Lyons of Waimea, came in for strong criticism from some of the more conservative Sandwich Islands missionaries and the home members of the A.B.C.F.M. Lyons, whose station and district adjoined Coan's on the coast of Hawaii, had worked among his fifteen thousand parishioners since 1832. He was an expert in the Hawaiian language and a skilled and prolific composer of hymns. Physically frail, he responded sensitively and emotionally to religious experience; and he shared with Coan a sort of febrile exaltation at the great happenings of 1837 and the next few years. From the beginning of their association the two men corresponded regularly; and they frequently compared notes during the Great Revival.

The conservative attack on Coan and Lyons concerned two main questions: the means used to produce so-called conversions, and the speed with which converts were admitted to church membership. Hiram Bingham had been non-committal about the physical manifestations he saw on Kauai in 1832, and he remained indifferent to them throughout the Great Revival. Sheldon Dibble, writing just a few years after the subsidence of the initial excitement, spoke of

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<sup>22</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, December 14, 1839, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.

pastors whose "excited minds" and "peculiar views" led them to use "special measures to operate upon the feelings of a congregation." Praying aloud by members of the audience, audible groans and loud cries, shrieks and lamentations, were part of a pattern of dubious special measures operating in an "uncontrollable state of tumultuous feeling."<sup>23</sup> Dwight Baldwin, a medical man and a most cautious evangelist, whose station at Lahaina on Maui had been among the earliest to experience revival symptoms, made a clear distinction between outward signs and inward feeling. By August, 1838, he noted, initial excitement had died down. There was less running to the mountains and bushes to pray, but the "real feeling" had not diminished. A protracted meeting in September, 1838, produced a great deal of "public exercise," but he found himself unable to tell what good had come of it.<sup>24</sup>

The church membership policy of Coan and Lyons worried the remainder of the mission and the A.B.C.F.M. greatly. In roughly six months between the outbreak of the revival and the end of the missionary year in May, 1838, Coan admitted 639 new members and Lyons 2,600. Their two stations

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<sup>23</sup> Sheldon Dibble, History of the Sandwich Islands (Lahainaluna, 1843), pp. 348-349.

<sup>24</sup> Baldwin to Levi Chamberlain, August 6, 1838; September 22, 1838, MS in Hawaiian Mission Children's Library, Honolulu. Hereafter cited as Baldwin Letters, H.M.C.S.



## NOTES ON THE GRAPH

The figures in this graph must be read in the light of knowledge of personalities and policies on the various islands. Hawaii and Oahu, in general terms, represented convinced and cautious revivalism respectively. Figures for 1838-1850 show very clearly differences in admission policy between Hawaii on the one hand and Oahu and the rest of the islands on the other. The two peaks of admissions on Hawaii illustrate in the first case the speedy admissions of Coan and Lyons and in the second case the admission of other converts made during the excited years and admitted only after a long probationary period. Between them, Coan and Lyons accounted for more than 75 per cent of admissions on Hawaii in 1838, over 90 per cent in 1839, about 65 per cent in 1840, less than 30 per cent in 1841, about the same proportion in 1842, and about 18 per cent in 1843.

Church admissions took place during a period when the native population was steadily decreasing, as shown in the following estimates, taken from the least unreliable contemporary sources:

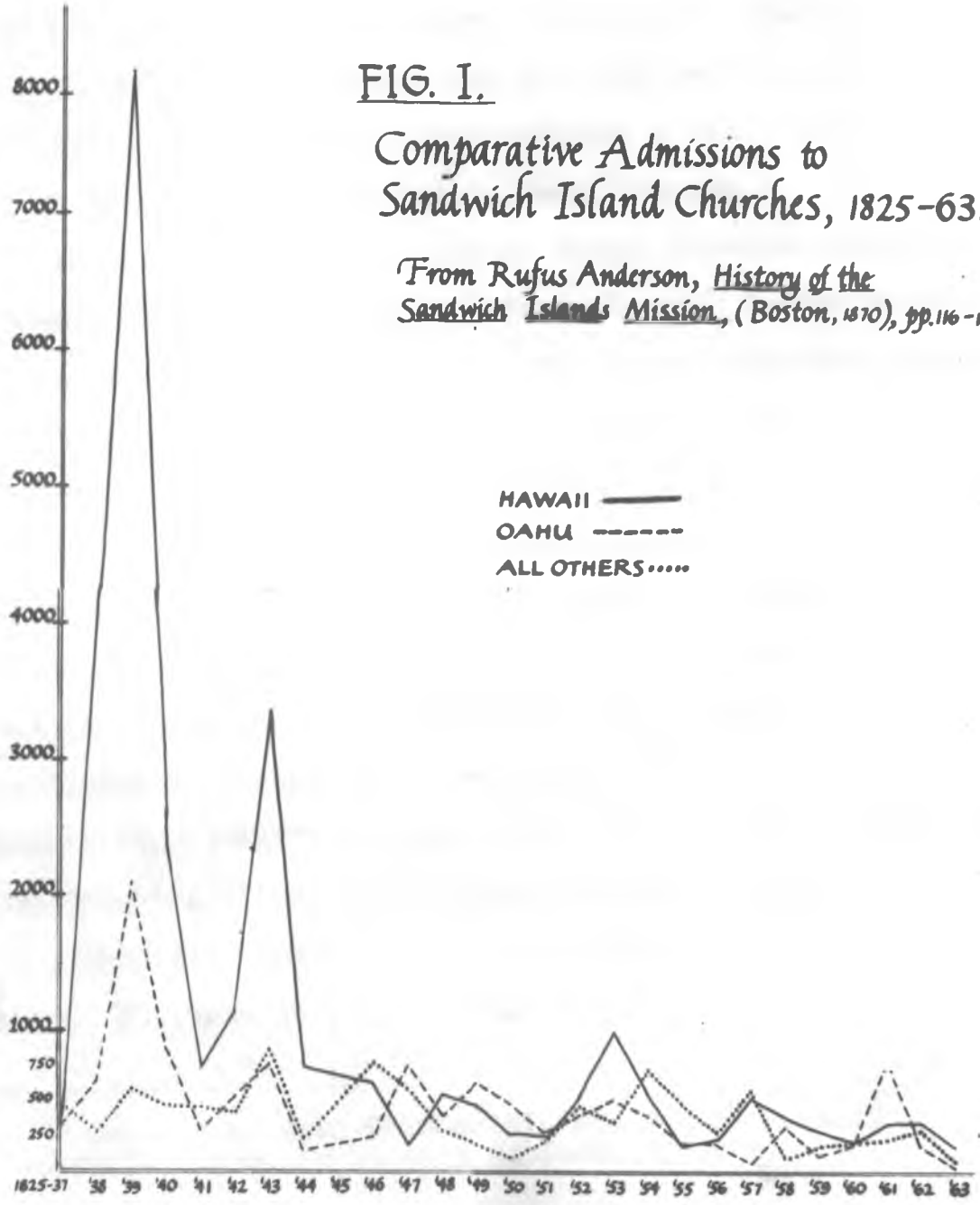
1823	--	142,050
1832	--	124,449
1836	--	107,954
1840	--	103,790
1844	--	99,626
1850	--	86,593
1853	--	71,019

Professor R. S. Kuykendall has calculated on the basis of these estimates that in 1840 almost 18 per cent of the native population were members of Protestant churches; in 1844, almost 23 per cent; in 1850, about 25 per cent; and in 1853, almost 30 per cent. The total "protestant" population, including favorably-disposed non-church members, was 56,840 in 1853, according to the official census. (See R. S. Kuykendall, The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1778-1854 (Honolulu, 1947), pp. 335-336.)

FIG. I.

Comparative Admissions to Sandwich Island Churches, 1825-63.

From Rufus Anderson, *History of the Sandwich Islands Mission*, (Boston, 1870), pp. 116-17.



together accounted for 3,239 of 4,930 admissions for the year 1837-1838. Over the next year, Coan admitted 5,244 and Lyons 2,300. Figures for other stations were higher in this year, because excitement had reached all the islands by then, but even so Hilo and Waimea together had seventy-five per cent of Hawaiian church membership. During the early forties Coan's church was probably the biggest in the world. By May, 1843, he had admitted a total of 8,221, and of these, 6,373 remained in good standing.

The first mass admissions on Hawaii brought reductive comments from missionaries in other places. Dwight Baldwin, writing to Honolulu in January, 1838, hoped that "the blessing of God will rest on your meeting -- but don't take 500 into the chh. the next day after it closes. The good Lord deliver us from chaff & make us wise to read the chr. of Hawaiian children! I thought all this mission were sufficiently awake and wise to know, that it were well to look the 2nd day at the converts among this people."<sup>25</sup> The missionaries, meeting together in mid-1839 as the Hawaiian Association, jointly recognized the possibility of error in assessing the sincerity of native converts, and admitted the probability that a few mission members had in fact erred. They advocated great watchfulness both before and

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<sup>25</sup> Baldwin to Levi Chamberlain and Samuel Castle, January 12, 1838, in Baldwin Letters, H.M.C.S.

after admission.<sup>26</sup>

The official response of the A.B.C.F.M. to the news of the revival and the growth in church membership approached a blanket condemnation. Secretary Rufus Anderson found arguments against speedy admissions in

the almost total want of moral and intellectual culture among the Hawaiian converts, and in the absence of all dread of persecution on making a profession of religion, to say nothing of the inferior power of discerning spirits in missionaries of the present day compared with that conferred upon the apostles. . . . One thing is certain; if the practice of admitting apparent converts so speedily and on such slight evidence becomes extensive in your churches, we can no longer appeal with any confidence to the number of church members as one of the sure evidences of the progress of the mission.<sup>27</sup>

Soon after criticism became widespread, Coan wrote to Lyons, in a manner reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards: "You say there will be noise where there is fighting and conquering. This is true, and there will be much noise before the world is converted to God." This did not worry Coan. ". . . I have little fear of the noise of praying Christians and wailing sinners, if so be the wailing is confined to time. In eternity it will roll up in fearful and augmenting notes for ever and ever. The most dangerous noise in a revival springs up, not, perhaps, from the devil,

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<sup>26</sup> Minutes of General Meetings of the Hawaiian Association, 1825-1853 (Honolulu, n.d.), pp. 34-35 of 1839 meeting.

<sup>27</sup> Rufus Anderson to the Sandwich Islands Mission, October 2, 1838, in General Letters to the Sandwich Islands Mission, 1831-1849 (n.p.).

nor from scoffers and open opposers, but from false or timid, or dictatorial friends." Here Coan was taking much the same ground as the evangelists of the previous hundred years who seemed almost to reserve their harshest language and bitterest resentment for the conservative members of their own sects. Just as Wesley came to call the Moravians German wolves, just as Whitefield and the Tennents flayed New England Protestants for cold formalism, so Coan railed against "unbelief, reason, and . . . caution," criticized "gainsayers," affirmed his love for the "battlefield, . . . where the darts of skepticism do not reach me," and gloried in the typically sectarian thought that weak, base, and despised things had been raised to confound the mighty. At his most agitated Coan described American mainland unbelief as "that cruel, soul-murdering Monster," and responded to his mission brethren's criticism by calling it "the devil's work." He said he was surrounded by so much calumny that he would have to spend all his time correcting wrong impressions if he wished to clear himself; meanwhile a tour of his district had given him the most unequivocal tokens of God's presence. Thus, once again, fervor, zeal, and self-righteous conviction had combined to push a great evangelist into a position of almost complete spiritual isolation from his clerical brethren.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Coan to Fidelia Coan, August 20, 1838; October 23, 1838; May 15, 1839, in Coan Letters, N.Y.H.S.; Coan to Lorenzo Lyons, December 25, 1837; February 25, 1839, in Lydia Bingham Coan, op. cit., pp. 43, 49.

Coan found ample justification for his policies in the urgency of the situation in the islands. He felt strongly that to leave people outside the protection of the church in the name of caution was to abandon them to "wander in darkness, uncertain as to their own character, exposed to every temptation of earth and hell, unknown and unrecognized as the sheep and lambs of the Lord Jesus, and in danger from the all-devouring lion."<sup>29</sup> The knowledge of so many thousands still unconverted tormented him, and he feared that he might die before the task was accomplished. There is more than a trace of egotism in his assumption of the whole burden of evangelization, contrary to his literary descriptions of himself as a weak and humble thing, but consistent with his self-confidence in asserting the rectitude of his own position against that of the remainder of the mission. Once again this is reminiscent of Wesley breaking from Whitefield and announcing that the loss would be all on Whitefield's side; and in this instance too it was possible for Coan to translate his personal drives into formal rationalizations. Where Rufus Anderson could find no analogy in past church history for the practices of the Hawaiian revivalists, Coan for his part could find nothing in "Scripture, nor philosophy, nor prudence" to justify

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<sup>29</sup> Coan in 1840 Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston, 1840).

slow admission.<sup>30</sup>

Lyons agreed with Coan on all these points. He insisted on his right to follow his own observations and experience "though everybody else were against me -- I have the bible also on my side."<sup>31</sup> However, he differed from Coan in one important respect. Coan had an elaborate follow-up system worked out for keeping a check on his converts and new members.<sup>32</sup> His sense of personal responsibility for his parishioners was not shared by Lyons, who tended to abdicate in favor of God once he had brought sinners into the church. Lyons had a tendency toward millennialism, and one expression of this was that he could be less deeply concerned than Coan about attacks on his methods. He bristled, to be sure, but fell back on the defense that the final truth was not for him or anyone else to know. He could only use his judgment, until he was proved right on "the last day . . . to which we are all rapidly hastening."<sup>33</sup>

It may have been that this conviction that God would

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<sup>30</sup> Coan to Lorenzo Lyons, January 25, 1838, in Lydia Bingham Coan, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> Lyons to Levi Chamberlain, January 17, 1838, MS in Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library, Honolulu. Hereafter cited as Lyons Letters, H.M.C.S.

<sup>32</sup> This system is described in detail in his Life in Hawaii, previously cited, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Lyons to Levi Chamberlain, January 17, 1838, Lyons Letters, H.M.C.S.

carry out the definitive winnowing of the church led Lyons to admit new members too freely and too quickly; or it may have been that he was led to imitate Coan's example although conditions in his district did not warrant it. In any event his church, alone in the island group, underwent tremendous fluctuations in membership in a very few years. Reporting in May, 1839, he listed 2,300 as received in the past twelve months, 4,474 in regular standing, and 250 under church censure for adultery, smoking, quarreling, lying, stupidity, and neglect of meetings. His report of May, 1840, showed a tremendous leap in suspensions and excommunications -- 2,016, making a total over the years of 3,404. In the same twelve months he had admitted after examination only 419 new members. In the year ending June, 1841, he admitted only 40 new members; and in the same twelve months 697 were suspended and 1,189 excommunicated. Total admissions to that point were 5,366; total excommunications were 2,790; the number of members remaining in good standing was 1,197. Over the next ten years, it should be noted, hundreds of these backsliders and apostates were received back into the church, with apparently satisfactory results.

If the history of the Waimea church seemed to prove the conservative point completely, Hilo refuted it. Coan's great congregations continued into the early forties, and his losses over less propitious periods were not appreciably greater, proportionately speaking, than those of stations



where conservative ministers worked.

The revival petered out at different times in different places. Lyons' troubled period began in earnest late in 1840 when he came back to Waimea after a month-long absence to find things "deranged," and the devil raging "at a most alarming rate." From then on, as he put it, the Lord was purifying and scattering rather than convicting, converting, and gathering. As it turned out, the years ahead of him were to produce nothing more than an occasional harking back to the events of the late thirties. Coan, returning from the 1840 General Meeting in Honolulu, found tares sown in Puna. There was moral lethargy, and some were wandering from the "path of life." In common with Lyons, he noted a tendency for the people to "choose Masters" -- to line up permanently either for good or for evil.<sup>34</sup> In general, Coan and many others noted about this time that the fervor of "animal excitement" was disappearing naturally and that the novelty of evangelical practices was wearing off. This suggests that, regardless of outside interruptions occurring to destroy revivalist spirit, a revival has some sort of organic life: conception, growth, maturity, decay, dissolution.

There were, moreover, several proximate factors, some

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<sup>34</sup> Lyons to Edwin Hall, December 8, 1840, in Lyons Letters, H.M.C.S.; Coan in Hilo Station Report, 1840-41, H.M.C.S.

operating throughout the islands, some at individual stations, which helped to put an end to the revival much as the peculiar wave of suicidal thoughts had done in Northampton in 1735. The most important of these have already been mentioned -- the coming of a French warship to the islands in 1839 and the subsequent political upheavals which culminated in the seizure of the islands by a British naval officer in 1843; the re-arrival of French priests in the late thirties and the spread of Catholicism in many mission districts in the early forties; and so on. It could be said in general terms that the early years of the revival were also the years of the greatest missionary influence in Hawaiian government. Men like William Richards and Gerrit Judd, working directly for the monarchy, were in an unsurpassable position to keep the minds of the chiefs upon mission matters; and the chiefs remained at this time tremendously important as guides and shapers of the lives and attitudes of the commoners. By the mid-forties, Kamehameha III's advisers were not solely mission-oriented: Robert Crichton Wyllie, minister of foreign relations from 1845 on; John Ricord, attorney general from 1844; and Chief Justice William Lee, for example, fell in this new category.

On Hawaii, mission work was disrupted for months in 1840 by the landing of the American Pacific exploring expedition under Charles Wilkes. Native labor was co-opted

for strenuous and prolonged work, and the single-minded attention to religion which the missionaries had cultivated was diverted to secular matters. Later in the forties, as has also been noted, the great epidemic further weakened churches in most places; and shortly after that again, the great demand for food and island produce which accompanied the California gold rushes led many islanders away from church concerns.

In this later period, it seemed, the reputation of the revivalist wing of the Sandwich Islands mission stood higher than it had done during the Revival itself. At any rate, station reports were careful to note any encouraging signs of revivalistic fervor. Where actual enthusiasm had produced censoriousness and friction, enthusiasm in prospect seemed desirable.

The 1860 annual meeting of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association deputed Titus Coan of Hilo and Benjamin Parker of Kaneohe to tour Oahu and report on the needs of the various stations. A few months previously (about October, 1859) Kaneohe had experienced a small resurgence of enthusiastic feeling, brought on, as Parker said, by a series of morning meetings and some "remarkable deaths." Fresh from this, Parker accompanied the evangelistic hero of Hawaii on an itineration which covered all the mission districts of Oahu. The tour produced "marked indications" of the presence of the Holy Spirit at Honolulu, "unequivocal

evidence of a revival" at Ewa, and similar manifestations elsewhere. The prevailing mood was one of restraint, and yet church admissions and restoration of backsliders rose to their highest point on Oahu since 1839.

Once again Titus Coan had been at the center of widening ripples of enthusiasm. He reported a "gentle revival" at Hilo after his return home, as did most of the other missionaries on Hawaii. Several districts on Maui and Kauai also went through a period of deep feeling a few months after Oahu was affected. Oahu, however, was the only island where the church gained significant numbers of new and returned members, and even there the revival spirit was quick to fade. Station reports and statistics covering the next two years indicated an almost total reversion to the depressed conditions of the late fifties.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Station Reports are incomplete for this period, but the general picture of the 1860 "revival" may be seen in the Minutes of the 1861 meeting of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GREAT AWAKENING IN SAMOA

John Williams was the first white missionary to come to the Samoan islands. In 1830 he left eight trained native teachers from the Society Islands to work among the people of two chiefs of the island of Savaii. One of these chiefs, named Malietoa, soon renounced heathenism and adopted Christianity, having experimented for three weeks to see whether his old gods would strike him down. Unharmcd, he became an advocate of the new faith and permitted his sons to become Christians too. Several other Savaiian chiefs followed his example, signifying their departure from the old ways by ritually eating some of their totem food -- a bird or fish or reptile in which a god's spirit was supposed to dwell.

Williams returned to Samoa in 1832 to find the demand for Christian instruction great. The Savaiian chiefs were asking for British missionaries, and in the interim were employing resident white men of dubious background to conduct services for them. On other islands as well, semi-independent white men were establishing rudimentary religions.<sup>1</sup> At Apia, on Upolu, the principal chief importuned Williams to leave him a native teacher, and Williams arranged this.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V above.

The next missionary visit came in 1834, when Charles Barff and Aaron Buzacott arrived from the Hervey Islands to prepare the way for the establishment of a permanent mission. John Williams visited England in the same year, and the immediate result was the despatch of six missionaries to Samoa. These were settled in 1836 at Pagopago and Leone on Tutuila; at Apia and Manono on Upolu; and Sapapalii on Savaii.

The reception of the permanent mission workers was generally good. Samoans were as anxious as other Polynesians to accumulate western goods and were willing to take concomitant religious steps to achieve this. The missionaries enjoyed another advantage in that their coming had been preceded by the work of native teachers and cult-leaders, helpful in varying degrees. Further, contemporary missionary observation was that the Samoans were savages "of the best type" -- that is, they were not characterized by "anything like the bloodthirsty cruelty of the Fijian, nor the implacable revenge of the New Zealander, nor the deep moral pollution of the Tahitian and Hervey Islanders and the Hawaiian." Comparatively permissive social character was paralleled by comparatively permissive religious attitudes: broadly viewed, Samoan religion was not nearly as complex and institutionalized as Eastern Polynesian religion.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Murray, op. cit., p. 39; Handy, op. cit., passim.

Against this fairly favorable background, work proceeded in the island group. On Upolu, exposure to non-missionary white contact and a disturbed local political situation tended to retard the coming of Christianity in its more developed forms. On Tutuila, where there was less outside interference, relatively quick strides were made, both at Pagopago and Leone. Archibald Murray, at Pagopago, began religious services and school instruction at once with the assistance of a native teacher. He began to itinerate early in 1837 soon after he became competent in Samoan. With the first partial converts he established special Friday classes which met to hear specialized sermons and do catechetical exercises. By June, 1837, the first Samoan native teacher was established at a station, and with the growth of native capacity, more and more villages were able to join the Friday class network. Towards the end of 1837 Murray and his co-worker George Barnden spent four months in Leone, a village twice the size of Pagopago, and during their stay the natives, already nominally Christian, took an important step -- they gave up heathen dancing. Shortly after this, Pagopago abandoned the practice also.

The year 1838 opened with growing audiences at the Friday meetings as people came to Pagopago from outlying districts to hear the missionary speakers. Many stayed for Sunday service, and Murray reported church attendance at between two and three hundred on some occasions. He considered

these visitors to be a force for good in their own villages. In eight out of the twelve principal villages in his district there were, in February, 1838, a few professed Christians. The other four, however, remained totally heathen, and this dark fact was pointed up when the first Christian marriage -- on February 20 -- was followed by an elaborately-staged, polygamous, heathen double wedding.

On April 2, 1838, judging that there were a number of natives "spiritually alive," Murray held a missionary prayer-meeting to stimulate his followers to do evangelical work in their own villages. A month later, he arranged a gathering of the entire Christian party from the two districts of Pagopago and Leone. His object was to reduce political tension -- there had been an indecisive war on Tutuila just before the missionaries arrived. The gathering went off successfully.

A church was formed on Tutuila in June, and on July 1, three Samoans, "true converts," received communion at the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. One of the three, a young chief called Pomare, later went as a native missionary to Tanna in the New Hebrides. Now Murray found that he no longer had to itinerate so much. Natives preferred to come in to Pagopago for Sabbath service, and so a great concentration of work was possible. In the meantime native teachers took over the work of proselytizing in distant villages. Murray was prepared, in good evangelical fashion,



to overlook their intellectual weaknesses and to praise their simple warmth and zeal. Further impetus was given to instruction by the arrival late in 1838 of three more missionary workers, including a printer, J. B. Stair, who began publication of religious works on Upolu (the printed word had already reached the islands in 1837, when chapters of the Bible and tracts in Samoan were brought from one of the missionary presses in the Eastern Pacific).

The major event of the early part of 1839 was the opening of a new chapel at Leone on March 6. There and at Pagopago a total of three hundred candidates were hoping for baptism. The annual May meeting attracted a crowd of between eighteen hundred and two thousand; and it was at this meeting that Pomare offered himself for mission work. On June 1, five new members were admitted to the church, and on June 2 a Sunday-school was set up. At about the same time, the "first decidedly hopeful death" occurred. A woman of Nuuli, a village near Pagopago where Pomare gave religious instruction, died whispering "Jesus, where art thou?" Her manner of death "occasioned much surprise, and produced a very favourable impression; those who witnessed it declaring that they had never before seen such a death."<sup>3</sup>

By mid-June of 1839, congregations at Pagopago regularly numbered between four and five hundred, and there

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<sup>3</sup> Murray, op. cit., p. 113.

were thirty-four people altogether teaching and working for the mission on Tutuila. Looking back on this period in his memoirs, Murray wrote that during October, 1839, symptoms appeared at Pagopago indicating "something more marked and extended than had yet appeared." He recalled a church meeting at which "a spirit of deep contrition, earnest desires after nearness to the Saviour, and longings to be instrumental in leading others to Him, seemed to fill the hearts of our little company." This attentiveness to religion persisted until the middle of the month, when he went to Leone, and continued after his return towards the beginning of November.<sup>4</sup> On November 3, at a communion service attended by seven hundred, nearly all the church members -- about twenty -- broke down. That afternoon, a fifteen-year-old girl, who had been "under convictions" for three or four months, became greatly agitated at Sunday-school; and in the evening, a native servant at Murray's house, "one of the lightest and giddiest in the family," burst into tears at a service the servants were holding among themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Pagopago and Tutuila at large were now on the brink of an awakening which was to prove in many ways comparable with

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 119-120.

<sup>5</sup> See Murray's Journal for November 2 -- December 27, 1839, in London Missionary Society Records Relating to the South Seas, 1796-1906 (MS on microfilm in University of Hawaii library), Journals, Box 9. This collection in its entirety cited hereafter as L.M.S. Records.

the one at that moment losing its impetus in the Sandwich Islands. The period of heightened religious interest on Tutuila late in 1839 appears to have been closely analagous to that which preceded the Hawaiian revival, and also to that in Northampton in 1734; and, as in Northampton, a small, highly susceptible group initiated religious excitement which later became contagious. The bearers of the contagion in Pagopago were the Samoan members of Murray's household. "At the time referred to, we had an unusually large number of people about us. To live in our family in those days was considered an honour and a privilege, and as our domestics were in the way of getting good and being fitted for usefulness as teachers or otherwise, we did not object to having a larger number than were needed for servants."<sup>6</sup> This well-instructed, intimate group, meeting at a time of evident concern for religion, was at prayer in Murray's house on the evening of Monday, November 4, 1839. Murray was commenting on verses of scripture, "dropping words of explanation, warning, or encouragement," when suddenly

a number of our company were seized with overpowering convictions. There was no more repeating of texts, and to attempt to read the Scriptures would have been useless, so I tried to pray; but while I was so engaged, the feelings of those who had been seized with convictions became more and more ungovernable, and when prayer was finished, the house was a

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<sup>6</sup> Murray, op. cit., p. 123.

very Bochim. It was vain to attempt to restrain or calm them by words, their distress was evidently too deep to allow of their attending to or being affected by anything that man could do or say.<sup>7</sup>

The eight who were affected continued to weep all night, and were in distress the next day. "They did not appear to doubt the ability and willingness of Christ to save them, but they seemed to have such views of their own sinfulness in connection with His sufferings and death, as filled them with overwhelming emotion, and prevented their looking away from themselves to Him."<sup>8</sup>

The prayer-meeting at Murray's house definitely marked a transition from formal to fervent Christianity among his parishioners. Interestingly enough, on that very date missionary William Day on Upolu was writing to Secretary William Ellis of the L.M.S., and he spoke of the progress of his station in words which summed up perfectly the characteristics of the less highly developed state of Christianity.

There are three things which have powerfully arrested my attention as evincing the great moral effect which has been produced on the Samoan nation: the general decorum in regard to the outward observances of religion, also in dress and manners, the great multitude of persons who have learned and are learning to write; and lastly the mental developement [sic]

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<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., p. 124.

and intellectual activity of a numerous class of enquirers, chiefly young men.<sup>9</sup>

There was nothing in Murray's personal background which made him more likely than other missionaries to evoke a revival. Unlike Coan, he had had no firsthand acquaintance with awakenings, though he and his wife had read of them in books. Indeed, his first reaction to the eventful prayer-meeting, as he recalled it, was "astonishment and almost alarm"; and he continued to have "fears and anxieties" during the early days of the movement. Intentionally or not, however, he had adopted means of intensive religious instruction of a kind likely to produce conversions accompanied by physical disturbance; and these had borne their first fruits at a time when the public mood was favorable to the growth of religious conviction. In the face of spreading excitement, Murray's doubts dropped away, and he reached the "settled conviction that it was God's work. . . . As we realised the fact that the Holy Spirit was really working mightily amongst us, quickening dead souls and raising them to a new and divine life, our joy was great, and we thanked God, and took courage."<sup>10</sup> He quickly

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<sup>9</sup> William Day to William Ellis, November 4, 1839, in L.M.S. Records, Letters, Box 12.

<sup>10</sup> Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125. Some months later Murray received news of revivals which had begun in his native Scotland at the same time as his own, and this further strengthened his conviction that the work was "of God."

adopted means of maintaining the high pitch of emotion -- protracted meetings, prayer, and discussion groups for anxious enquirers -- and carried out his revivalist functions with assurance and competence for more than a year. From then on, as the revival showed signs of subsiding and ultimately died away, he conferred often with his fellow workers to find ways of revitalizing the church on Tutuila.

His attitude toward revivals thus fell somewhere between the anticipatory fervor and total committal of men like Coan and Lyons and the critical coolness of the Sandwich Islands conservatives. The fact that a revival could gain momentum under the ministry of such a man reinforces the idea of the apparent importance of a "cadre" of religious susceptibles to the spread of heightened feeling. The fact of the continuance of the revival does not present any further problem of causation. In most revival situations, excitement seems to develop a self-sustaining life of its own, at least for a short while; and in this case, Murray soon became convinced of the validity of the work and took conscious steps to prolong it.

The operation of contagion was very marked in the early days of the revival. Murray had been very surprised to learn, the day after his own household had been overcome, that similar manifestations had been noticed at Nuuli, six miles away, at almost the same hour. What had happened, he later found, was that a young man of Nuuli had been at

Pagopago during the deeply emotional Sabbath services immediately preceding Murray's household prayer-meeting; he had gone home, and been stricken there. He, in turn, was surprised on coming back to Pagopago to find an awakening there.<sup>11</sup>

At Vaitogi, also close by, Matthew Hunkin, a reformed seaman, had been teaching. On the night of Monday, November 4, there were awakening signs at his station, and on Tuesday these assumed the "same decided features" which had appeared a day earlier at Pagopago. Murray noted in his journal for November 14 that the revival was "spreading and extending on every side." On November 21 he recorded the news of a revival on Aunuu, an offshore island where a native teacher had been at work for some time. Aunuu people had been in the habit of attending Pagopago service. By then the revival had also spread to Fagasa, the home village of the fifteen-year-old girl who had broken down at Sabbath meeting on November 3. At Lauili, four miles away from Pagopago, a chief and three women were under deep concern by December 3. During the rest of December Murray baptised earlier converts, some thirty in all.

Congregations continued to grow during the early months of 1840, and with the gathering of big crowds physical demonstrations became more noticeable. Throughout February

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<sup>11</sup> Murray's journal for February 10, 1840, in L.M.S. Records, Journals, Box 9.

there was weeping at service; and on February 28, at a solemn meeting at Pagopago, five native teachers had to be carried out. March 1 was a communion Sunday, and the serving of the Lord's Supper produced "an astonishing shaking, greater than anything seen before." Public lamentation continued all that day and the next. At a missionary meeting in the evening of March 2 there was general deep emotion, and a few were violently affected.

As had been the case in several other revivals, religious meetings of more than ordinary significance produced unusual demonstrations; and as was the case in the Sandwich Islands, an unheralded disaster gave added impetus to the maturing revival. On March 14, 1840, Murray went up to Leone to get ready to preach on the next day, a Sunday. Early on the Sabbath morning he was awakened by a messenger from the coast, bringing news of John Williams' death at the hands of heathen natives on Erromanga. Murray's account that afternoon of the Samoans' obligation to the martyr, who had been the first English missionary to bring the light to Samoan shores, reduced his congregation to tears. In the opinion of George Lundie, a young Scot who was an informal assistant to Murray throughout the revival, Williams' death was a vital element in the continuance of excitement. Murray had begun to notice a slackening of interest in some places; Lundie wrote that "the cause . . . of the [later] violent emotion is this, -- the people have been taught of the Spirit



to value the Gospel, (many of them supremely) and the mere mention of the thought that Mr. Williams was the first to bring it to their shores, and perished in doing the same for others, produces all this feeling."<sup>12</sup>

Up to this time the people of the Leone district had responded skeptically to the Pagopago revival. Perhaps traces of local factionalism lingered even after Murray's apparently successful "unity meeting" of May, 1838. Moreover, Leone had been without a white missionary since the accidental drowning of George Barnden at the end of 1838. Whatever the reason, they were cold. Now, in March, 1840, the same ship which brought news of Williams' death brought missionary William Slatyer to the islands as part of a reinforcement, and he was appointed to Leone.

On the last Wednesday of May, 1840, Murray and his co-workers held their annual missionary meeting at Pagopago. The recent arrival of British reinforcements and the subsequent sending out of Samoan teachers for overseas work had caused unusual interest in mission activity. Attendance from all parts of the islands was great, and contributions of native produce were generous. The Wednesday meeting was prolonged because of the "insatiable thirst" of the people,

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<sup>12</sup> -- Lundie, ed., Missionary Life in Samoa, as Exhibited in the Journals of the Late George Archibald Lundie, During the Revival in Tutuila in 1840-41 (Edinburgh, 1846), pp. 83-84.

and a great many remained through Thursday. Others stayed on longer still, waiting for the Friday and Sabbath services.

At last Leone was made ready for the revival. Many people from that district had come down to Pagopago for the missionary meeting. They had returned home by June 3, when Slatyer and Murray went up for a week's preaching. On June 5, the two preached before a congregation of a thousand, and 30 had to be carried out, overcome by their feelings. The next day a church was formed under Slatyer, with 43 members; and the days that followed continued to be marked by noisy services, violent seizures, and so on. By June 9, the whole village was in commotion. There was wailing in the woods and in the natives' homes. Murray estimated on June 10 that two hundred souls had been hopefully awakened.

Murray's return to Pagopago with this exciting news was the signal for a fresh outbreak at his home station. Communion was administered on Sunday, June 14, and although few were affected at service, "as soon as they got home, the Word had its effect, and it was a mighty effect. Almost every family was a scene of weeping at evening worship. Many were sought for, and found insensible, or nearly so, in the bush."<sup>13</sup>

By this time Murray had become aware of the possibilities of sustaining and re-inforcing feeling by special means.

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<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p. 115.

Earlier, as has been noted, he had been in some doubt about the nature of the work. At the time of the Leone outbreaks, well-convinced that the revival was of God, he still did not allow his own activities a part in causation. "Never did I feel more deeply my own utter helplessness, and consequent need of continual guidance and support from on High."<sup>14</sup> Now, according to Lundie, he had come to a realization of the close connection between means and ends, and, "calculating that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, and that a blessing could only be expected on means in some degree corresponding," he called for special meetings.<sup>15</sup>

Lundie's eye-witness account of the events of that week makes a good record of the Tutuila revival at its height. On Monday, June 15, at an afternoon service, a few people had been carried out while Murray was speaking. Then Lazareto, a convinced native convert, began to pray.

He had not gone on a few minutes, when the house seemed to shake, and the Spirit to dart his arrows of conviction with such a powerful hand, that the whole place was on the move. Women were carried out by dozens, convulsed and struggling, so as to drive five or six men about like trees in the wind, who were exerting all their strength to hold and convey them away. I had heard of beating breasts and tearing hair before, but now I have seen and shall not soon forget it. The weaker sex was not alone affected; many men were carried out lifeless

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<sup>14</sup> Murray's journal for June 8, 1840, in L.M.S. Records, Journals, Box 9.

<sup>15</sup> Lundie, op. cit., p. 115.

as stones, and many could scarcely be removed because of their awful convulsive strugglings. Poor Lazareto held out for a little, and then laid down his head and cried, and nearly fainted.<sup>16</sup>

By this time the chapel was two-thirds empty, and more continued to be carried out. All Monday night there was praying in the bushes, and preparations were made for another meeting on Tuesday. Murray read and preached from the parable of the ten virgins, provoking general weeping. Both men and women were carried out, almost as many as on Monday. "Maunga, the highest of the seven principal chiefs, was carried out like a stone. . . . As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he retired to the bush . . . to seek for mercy; and, several hours later, was brought in as dead by some who had found him in his place of prayer. Thus mighty is the word of God. . . ."17

News of the great happenings brought still more people in from outlying places. Many of them arrived already seized with deep concern. The unusual concentration of population which had characterized the Hilo revival (and which of course had also been a factor in the briefer excitements of Methodist camp-meetings in America) operated at Pagopago also. "All are busy building houses," wrote Lundie on July 3, 1840, "and clearing for taro-patches, in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 117-118.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

this district, that they may bring their sick and aged here, and themselves live near the Word. So that Pagopago is becoming the metropolis, by absorbing the population of the district."<sup>18</sup>

Between June, 1839, and June, 1840, 260 adults were baptized and 107 admitted to church fellowship by Murray (this was a sizeable part of the population of Tutuila, which Murray estimated at the time to be 4,000). Tutuila was outstanding among the islands. At about this time, Lundie made a trip to Upolu and found Christianity much less well established. He remarked that use of western clothes was not general, and there were only about thirty communicants, though many more had been baptized. In fact, none of the other islands ever experienced happenings like those on Tutuila. The probable explanation, at least in the case of Upolu, lay in the continuance of unsettled political conditions. Civil wars continued to divide the people, and at one point, Slatyer, by then working at Apia, was forced to leave his station. Other missionaries on Upolu reported disturbances which impeded their work.

The Tutuila revival continued through the remainder of 1840; and towards the end of July Murray reached the limit of his unquestioning acceptance of physical demonstrations. "My fear," he wrote, "is lest they should take up with

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

refuges of lies, or own in errors and extravagances during the present great excitement." By November, however, things had quietened down to the point where there was a "comparative absence of . . . extraordinary movements." An anniversary meeting celebrating the beginning of the awakening was held on November 4, and the expectancy built up among the natives during the early part of the day issued in commotion later on. This Murray was prepared to accept as the evidence of divine approval of his special means.<sup>19</sup>

Towards the end of 1840 Murray became severely ill and had to limit his preaching work to one sermon a day; then, early in 1841, he was appointed to take the place of John Williams as oceanic itinerator. He was away from Tutuila from February to September, 1841; and during his absence evangelical leadership at Pagopago devolved on the frail, tubercular layman, George Lundie, whose body collapsed under the strain. Lundie died in mid-September. Murray, on his return, saw this time as a period of cooling ardor. Summing up after almost two years of revival, he said that external manifestations had become less violent, though people were still carried out of services on some occasions. Seriousness in day-to-day activity, however, continued to be so marked that it seemed like one long Sabbath on Tutuila.

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<sup>19</sup> Murray's journal for July 29; October 31; November 4, 1840, in L.M.S. Records, Journals, Box 9.

No doubt a great deal that then appeared was mere sympathy -- merely indirect and incidental -- passing away with the occasion; but how powerful must have been the influence which brought about such a state of things, and kept it up for such a length of time; . . . for many months the bulk of the community seemed to feel and act as though looking habitually at, and under the influence of, things unseen and eternal.<sup>20</sup>

Murray's initial caution about the genuineness of the work and his later acknowledgment of the fugitive nature of some of its effects cropped out again in his attitude on church admissions. Between the formation of the church in June, 1838, and the end of 1841, he had admitted 190; of these, 160 remained. "Probably," he wrote to the L.M.S., "we do err on the side of overcaution . . ." Because it was considered honorable to be in the church, and because this might interfere with absolute purity, Murray insisted on a long probation to prove the strong and expose the weak.<sup>21</sup>

After the subsidence of the revival, Murray wrote of his hopes for a resurgence, a "latter rain," and expressed his confidence that the renewed use of special means would accomplish this. On a few occasions over the next few years -- for example, July, 1842 and May, 1846 -- circumstantial signs were visible on Tutuila, but they failed to develop fully. At one point late in 1843, Murray and his co-worker Thomas Bullen conferred on the falling off of vital religion,

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<sup>20</sup> Murray, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>21</sup> Murray to A. Sidman, January 7, 1842, in L.M.S. Records, Journals, Box 12.

and appointed special teachers' gatherings and public prayer meetings to revive interest. The result was a period of great activity and a recurrence of some of the symptoms of 1839-1840. At this time Matthew Hunkin was able to arouse the people of Manua, and a church was formed there. Bullen recorded a miniature revival on Upolu towards the end of 1844. He had been ill, and the natives' hopeful prayers for him had taken on a wider meaning for them. George Pratt at Matautu on Upolu reported a "shaking of the dry bones" in November, 1846, but noted that a large part of the excitement was caused by long-time candidates for admission who hoped to hurry their entry into the church. He reported another semi-spurious revival in June 8, 1850, at a time when there had been war and plague around his station:

". . . the fear of death excited by so much sickness and so many dying all around them, seems to be taking hold of many of them."<sup>22</sup>

Soon after his last awakening of any size, Bullen noticed a condition in his district which appears to have been reminiscent of the post-revival state of affected areas of America in previous awakenings. He said that a striking political and social unity had existed during the great awakening. The people of the four divisions of his district

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<sup>22</sup> Bullen to Sidman and Freeman, August 6, 1844, L.M.S. Records, Letters, Box 7; Pratt to Sidman, June 8, 1850, in L.M.S. Records, Letters, Box 23.



used always to assemble for service at Leone. Now that the novelty had worn off, internecine strife was growing up again. Congregations were broken up, and he and Murray both had had to form outstations in order to reach all the people with preaching. Along with this decentralization of worship went a spirit of comparative deadness in religion. There was no power in the Word, no evident and decisive conversions occurred, and there was no spirit of prayer in the church proportionate to the evils about in society.<sup>23</sup>

By the mid-fifties, the period of awakenings was demonstrably over. War had begun again in some parts of the islands; and concurrently another stage in the history of Samoan Christianity had been reached. George Stallworthy wrote to the L.M.S. about the new condition of the church.

Possibly the exact position we have lost will never be regained. The impulse of first love has spent itself. The novelty of christianity no longer attracts the people. Many who embraced it under shallow and false impressions and expectations have discovered their mistake. They find that they have been drawing water from the wrong fountain. They thirst, but not for Christian waters. . . . They return to worldly pleasures, but still refuse the heathen uniform in which they formerly pursued them. They perfer [sic] the Christian profession.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Bullen to Sidman and Freeman, June 29, 1846, in L.M.S. Records, Letters, Box 19.

<sup>24</sup> Stallworthy to Sidman, December 4, 1854, in L.M.S. Records, Letters, Box 25.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

So far this thesis has been concerned with the nature and incidence of religious revivals as they occurred in Polynesia -- their relations with revivals of the preceding century in Britain and America, and their partial origins in the disturbed and transition-torn state of Polynesian society between 1830 and 1850. It has been possible to draw lines connecting the whole Polynesian mission enterprise at various points. The missionaries, whether British or American, conservative or revivalist, shared a common doctrinal interest. Of all forms of Christianity which might have been brought to the islands, their version of Protestantism, with its peculiar emphasis on personal salvation, was one likely, on evidence from other places in Great Britain and America, to produce in the islanders the acute psychological conflict essential as background to evangelical conversion accompanied by physical disturbance. It remains to place the Great Revival of the Sandwich Islands and the Great Awakening of Samoa in a final over-all context of a different kind: they were, the record shows, the only prolonged and fully-developed revivals to occur during this most intensive and least interrupted period of missionary activity in Polynesia.

In some places, missions failed; in others, nothing more than formal adherence to Christianity was ever

accomplished; in others again, conviction and conversion were of a quieter, less public nature than on Hawaii and Tutuila. Occasionally, embryonic or localized revivals occurred without resulting in anything more widespread.

The Society Islands in particular, the center of the first attentions of the L.M.S., failed to produce any important awakening of a revivalistic kind. Indeed the most fervent response to Christianity in the period preceding the French protectorate in 1843 was a negative one -- the Mawaia heresy. The explanation in all probability lies in the absence of secure political and social conditions in which the missionaries could totally absorb the attention of the islanders. Civil war bedevilled the missionaries from the beginning, and the defeat in 1808 of their patron, Pomare, caused a wholesale evacuation of mission posts. Even Pomare's return to power in 1812 and the resumption of mission work under his aegis did not produce social conditions adequate for the appearance of highly-developed Christianity. Pomare's support and his royal example to the people (still a powerful influence in the formative years of Christianity) were qualitatively less useful to the Society Islands mission than those of the ruling families in the Sandwich Islands.

Whether because of the native ruler's inability to cope, or the missionaries' inability to proscribe effectively, or simply because of the more insistent pressure of outside

influences, the Society Islands apparently suffered more disruption from the activities of traders and sailors than did the Sandwich Islands or Samoa. Missionary accounts from the Societies about prostitution and drunkenness carried a note of pessimism that was absent from the fine indignation of their Sandwich Islands counterparts. All in all, a reading of the field-workers' journals, letters, and reports from both missions gives an impression of persistent "lean years" in the Societies and relative prosperity and cause for confidence in the Sandwich Islands. It is hard to discount the possibility that conditions and attitudes were mutually dependent and self-perpetuating.

If the ills of the Society Islands were due to secular troubles and disturbances caused by too great an exposure to the world, then Rarotonga, by contrast, should have been a likely place for revivals. It was far off the beaten track; its inhabitants had gratefully accepted Christianity after a brief false start; its principal missionary worker for some time was the great John Williams; the other main missionaries, Aaron Buzacott and Charles Pitman, were models, one of industry and the other of piety. And yet the highest pitch of religious excitement registered on the island was nothing like that of the great revivals, and the rate of church admission never indicated anything more than a steady state of "prosperity" in the missionary usage. Here, the explanation would seem to lie in the personality of the

missionaries. Pitman, a devoted worker, nevertheless had a most cautious and conservative attitude about native Christianity in all its forms. Williams and Buzacott were sensible artisan Christians rather than dedicated, spiritual evangelists like Coan and Lyons. Coan was worldly enough to cope magnificently with the problems of his enormous church, but his specifically material aims as a missionary were not ambitious. Williams and Buzacott on the other hand placed a tremendous importance on the "mechanic arts," siding strongly with the advocates of a civilization embodying Christianity.

Their energy in this direction was boundless: they built boats, jetties, roads, houses, chapels, model towns, and taught their parishioners as many handicrafts as they had facilities for -- printing, bookbinding, blacksmithing, soap-making, sugar-refining, and so on. Industrious "Europeanizers," they suffered in their turn from brief anti-European reactions among the natives: occasionally, a few disaffected people would return to native dancing or tattooing; but generally speaking the political powers in Rarotonga were in favor of the mission, and the rebels suffered the tempered penalties of Christian law. The church of Rarotonga, on the evidence, made quite a successful rapprochement with the world. In doing so, it may have excused itself from the spiritual throes of the church in other places.

Certain conditions in the islands operated independently of the volition or control either of natives or missionaries. Of these one of the most important was disease. The apparent clinical significance of physical debilitation in preparing the way for mental or spiritual conversion has been noted in connection with the theories of William Sargant; and suggestive documentation in an evangelical context has been adduced from the conversion of Titus Coan himself and from the communal conversions of the First Great Awakening in New England.

In Polynesian life, sickness and death from western diseases were a constant threnody. On the island of Hawaii, even before the epidemics of 1848 and 1854, depopulation had been rapid; and just two months before the beginning of the revival, Lyons was writing to the A.B.C.F.M. of mumps and fever in his district, accompanied by a famine which had lasted for about a year. On Tutuila in April, 1839 -- again just a few months before the outbreak of the awakening, Murray noted "an epidemic -- a kind of influenza. It spread over the whole island; I know not that a single individual escaped." Later, in mid-March, 1841, Lundie wrote that he was spending two or three hours a day ministering to the sick. He mentioned no specific disease, but its incidence must have been high: at the same time Slatyer wrote to Lundie's mother saying that he had been attending between

thirty and fifty patients a day for several weeks.<sup>1</sup>

Yet disease was clearly not a sufficient factor in the appearance of revivals. William Ellis estimated the population of Tahiti at the time of the missionaries' arrival to be about sixteen thousand. Within his lifetime it was down to an estimated six or seven thousand, and intelligent Tahitians were speaking of themselves as remnants of a doomed people. Physical ravages and mental foreboding did not issue in revivalism there. Nor did they on Rarotonga to the extent which might have been expected. Population there dropped from seven thousand to three thousand in the period of the great Hawaiian and Samoan revivals; two of the sizeable epidemics produced minor awakenings, but the others did not. The first period of unusual religious concern followed a multiple natural disaster. A hurricane in 1831 caused a famine, and while the population was debilitated, a native teacher came to the island sick with a scrofulous disease. It was contagious, and killed about five hundred annually for several years, against a birthrate of about one hundred. Buzacott made his first genuine conversions in 1833. In 1848, whooping cough affected the whole population, and in

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<sup>1</sup> See Lyons to the A.B.C.F.M., in Emma Lyons Doyle, Makua Laiana: The Story of Lorenzo Lyons, Lovingly Known to Hawaiians as Ka Makua Laiana, Hakū Male O Ka Aina Mauna (Father Lyons, Lyric Poet of the Mountain Country) . . . (Honolulu, 1945), pp. 99-100; Murray, op. cit., p. 168; Lundie, op. cit., p. 218.

1850 there was an epidemic of mumps. Then at Arorangi in 1851 missionary William Gill brought three hundred people under conviction of sin in the space of six months.<sup>2</sup>

The history of epidemics, hurricanes, and other natural disasters, followed through in the islands during the revival period, does not show, then, a consistent causal connection with the incidence of revivals. The most that can be said is that in both major awakenings widespread disease was present.

The beginning and continuance of a revival seem ultimately to hinge upon apparently trivial circumstances, once some great termini are established. Apparently the missionaries had not, before about 1830, made sufficient inroads on the islanders' minds to have awakened them in large numbers to a sense of guilt; after about 1850, for one reason or another, whether through disbandment or failure

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<sup>2</sup> See Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 113; Buzacott and Sunderland, *op. cit.*, *passim*. The Rarotongan mission had been indirectly responsible for the introduction and spread of disease on the island -- one plague was brought in by a native Christian; and, further, Buzacott had been one of the most energetic of all Polynesian missionaries in concentrating the native population in large villages, thus creating conditions favoring the extension of sickness. In view of this, non-revivalist Buzacott's comments on the epidemic period are poignant in the extreme. "Many of those who died," he wrote, "were from our classes of inquirers; and though many of them were not permitted to join the fellowship of the church on earth, we have reason to believe, from their dying testimony, that they are gone to join the church of the firstborn above. It frequently occurred to us that God had sent us to reap a harvest of souls. They will be our crown in the day of the Lord Jesus." Buzacott and Sunderland, p. 105.



of a mission, or the virtual consolidation of Christianity as a latter-day social institution, this condition was not fulfilled.

Within this time span, there were many occasions on which heightened religious interest was reported by missionaries. It is at this point that the incidence of a revival seems to balance on a razor-edge. On unhappy Tahiti in 1836, Henry Nott wrote of a great stir and desire for instruction among his people, many of whom had become anxious enquirers and hopeful candidates for baptism. The same condition had begun to be noticed at other stations. But Nott's first love -- his linguistic studies -- prevented him, he said, from spending much time among them. In any event, he wrote, "I still . . . suspect the sincerity of some of them, and I shall not be disapointed [sic] if they should turn back into sin . . ." Nott was succeeded in the next month by George Pritchard, and Pritchard's first letters made no reference to a revival.<sup>3</sup>

The difference in attitude between Nott and men like Coan was enormous, and surely must have had some bearing on the life or death of an embryonic revival. Yet the fact that Murray's revival survived his initial period of doubt, and the fact that the Sandwich Islands revival spread into areas controlled by conservatives, seem to complicate the

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<sup>3</sup> Nott to William Ellis, February 9, 1836, in L.M.S. Records, Letters, Box 10.

issue of personal influences. Still, the forces leading to the emergence of the revival spirit need not necessarily have been the only ones affecting its continuance. Given the existence of general heightened concern, the breakdown of a small group was possible. Then, given the presence of one highly-affected group, others might spring up without immediate direct missionary ministrations or even missionary presence, as on Tutuila; and, given initial impetus, a revival might sustain itself for some time -- witness the continuance of physical disturbance at Hilo in December, 1837, even after Coan had left to itinerate in Puna; and witness the back-and-forth movement of the Tutuila awakening from Pagopago to outlying villages, then to Leone, then to Pagopago again with renewed strength. In the case of the spread of great excitement from Hawaii to Oahu, it would appear that the conservatives, almost in spite of themselves, had prepared the ground well. Bingham recalled the immediacy and simplicity of the message preached at all stations during the revival period. The missionaries "insisted largely on the cardinal points, the ruined condition of the sinner and his exposure to everlasting death; the utter inexcusableness of his continuing his rebellion against God; his need of justification through the righteousness of Christ; the freeness and fullness of redemption through his blood; the duty of immediate repentance and faith as the condition of pardon; the necessity of the aid of the Spirit

of God in the work of regeneration and sanctification; and the importance of immediate submission to his guidance, teaching, and commands."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most important of Jonathan Edwards' insights into revivals was the one which rated the example of others, and imitation of that example, as the most powerful sustaining agent in an awakening. Observation had demonstrated this, he said; and certainly events in Polynesia a hundred years after he wrote seemed to bear him out.<sup>5</sup>

The place of intrinsic (organic) and extrinsic (adventitious or proximate) factors in the dying away of revivals has already been discussed. Common failure of conscious efforts to resuscitate the vital spirit after its first subsidence, and the merely sporadic appearance of apparently semi-habitual reminders of awakened days, are evidence of the essentially fugitive nature of the revival as a religious phenomenon.

The evangelist proper, and particularly the revivalist, urges his people to put away the world, and counts his work most valuable when this renunciation is most complete. Nevertheless he and his people must live in the world. Thus there is a fundamental hostility between the elements he

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<sup>4</sup> Bingham, op. cit., p. 521. See also Dibble, op. cit., pp. 348-349, for another conservative speaking in revivalistic terms.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, "A Narrative of Many Surprising Conversions," in Works, III, 18-21; 44.

works with. It may be that the tension he creates produces his highest achievements. Yet prolonged tension is not a viable state, and life must go on. The evangelist's proud insistence becomes his sad realization -- the Kingdom of God is not of this world.

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Primary documents of the Sandwich Islands Mission of the A.B.C.F.M. are housed in the library of the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society. Some remain uncatalogued, but where classification has been attempted, it is along the following lines. Manuscript is reduced to typescript; and then mission station reports are collected chronologically by district, e.g. Hilo, Waimea, Lahaina, etc.; and missionary journals and correspondence are collected by author, e.g. Titus Coan, Lorenzo Lyons, Dwight Baldwin, etc. The bulk of the H.M.C.S. collection of missionary correspondence is that directed to the headquarters of the mission in Honolulu. There is no complete coverage of "inter-missionary" correspondence. The H.M.C.S. library has, however, eight volumes of typescript copies of missionary letters covering the period 1819-1836, and a single volume covering the period 1841-1845. The library of the University of Hawaii has, further, a microfilm copy of correspondence between Titus Coan and his wife Fidelia for the years 1836-1845, the original of which is in the library of the New York Historical Society.

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