

Mary Jane Woodger

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THE TEN PIONEERING
MISSIONARIES OF THE
SANDWICH ISLANDS, 1850–54

IN mid-October 1850, “Apostle Charles C. Rich, who was Brigham Young’s personal representative to all Latter-day Saints (LDS) in the Pacific Coast area,” rode into a mining camp in California. The purpose of his visit was to issue mission calls to the Sandwich Islands to Latter-day Saint miners. Miners “could not work during the winter months,” so it seemed reasonable to send some of the “idle gold miners” to the Sandwich Islands as missionaries.¹ Elder Rich selected and set apart ten miners to fill missions in Hawaii: Henry William Bigler, George Q. Cannon, John Dixon, William Farrer, James Hawkins, James Keeler, Thomas Morris, Thomas Whittle, Hiram H. Blackwell, and Hiram Clark, who was appointed president of the mission.²

After nearly a month at sea, on December 12, 1850, the ten missionaries arrived in Honolulu, Oahu, and became the first members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to visit Hawaii.³ Without any previous training or instruction, these pioneers plowed new missionary

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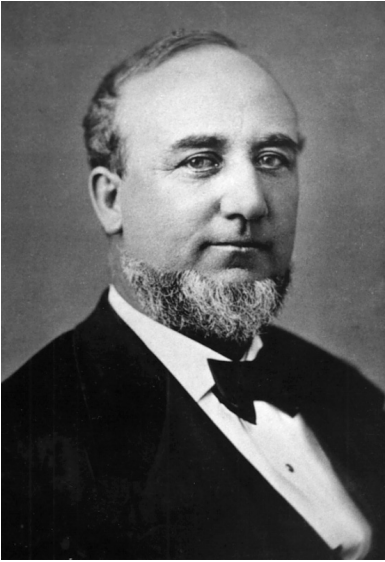
ground. When they arrived, these men, and more especially their leader Hiram Clark, were ill prepared to deal with the many obstacles they faced.⁴ Regrettably, the few general scholarly studies of Mormonism in Hawaii have tended to quickly pass over these men's short tenure in favor of the longer subsequent period when thousands were converted to the Church. As historian Donald R. Shaffer writes, "This omission is unfortunate, for the roots of LDS missionary success in this part of the Pacific, during the 1850s are to be found, ironically in the confusion and failure of the initial proselyting activity of these missionaries."⁵

Although they were untrained and ill prepared, these ten missionaries had great success in laying the groundwork for other LDS missionaries who later traveled to the Pacific and other international destinations. Tackling the manifold problems that befell one of the earliest groups that attempted to preach Mormonism in a non-Western culture, they paved the way for those who would follow. The activities of these early missionaries in Hawaii—teaching natives; dealing with government officials, Protestant missionaries, and local leaders; and establishing a permanent presence in the islands—show the development of proselyting techniques, programs, and the use of the Book of Mormon among the people of Hawaii.

DREAMS, PRAYERS, AND INSPIRATION

Prayer and inspiration were mainstays in these men's determination to be successful missionaries. These men constantly sought the direction of the Holy Ghost in their endeavors and in so doing set a pattern for future missionaries. In October 1849, Henry Bigler was struggling with a call he had received to go to California and mine gold. Just before leaving, Bigler had a dream that profoundly impressed him. He noted, "I dreamed I was not going to the mines but was on my way to the Pacific Islands on a mission to preach the gospel."⁶ This dream was a source of comfort to Bigler when he served in the Sandwich Islands. George Q. Cannon also reported having a dream that would greatly impact his future service in Hawaii:

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Elder George Q. Cannon, whose dream prior to arriving in Hawaii impacted the rest of his mission. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

I dreamed one night that this party of brethren were heaving at the windlass, having a rope attached to it reaching forward to the anchor at the bow of the vessel. We were working with all of our might endeavoring to raise the anchor, but seemingly we made little progress. While thus engaged I thought the Prophet Joseph came from the after part of the vessel dressed in his temple clothes, and tapping me on the shoulder told me to go with him. I went, and he climbed on to the forecastle and there he knelt down, also telling me to kneel down with him. He prayed according to the order of prayer which is revealed. After

prayer, he arose upon his feet. “Now,” said he, “George, take hold of that rope”—the rope we had been pulling with all of our might. I took hold of it, and with the greatest ease and without the least effort, the anchor was raised. “Now,” said he, “let this be a lesson to you; remember that great things can be accomplished through the power of prayer and the exercise of faith in the right way.”⁷

The Hawaiian missionaries followed the counsel that Elder Cannon received in his dream and sought the Lord through prayer to guide them.

When the ten missionaries arrived at the island, one of the first things they did was to walk up Nuuanu Valley to the top of a nearby hill overlooking Honolulu (now known as Pacific Heights). Each missionary carried a stone to help build an altar. Arriving at King’s Falls (now known as Kapena

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Falls), the elders bathed (their first real bath in a month), and then hiked another mile up the hill. In a secluded place about a thousand feet above sea level, they built a stone altar about three feet high and three feet around. They sang hymns and bore their testimonies to one another. After sharing their feelings about their mission, they knelt together as President Hiram Clark offered a prayer dedicating Hawaii for the preaching of the gospel. Clark asked “the Lord to open the way that they might be enabled to preach the Gospel on these islands . . . have his spirit to be with us at all times to guide us . . . preserve us from the adversary and from every evil, and that the honest in heart might embrace the truth.”⁸ This set two precedents: dedicating lands for the preaching of the gospel and setting apart missionaries for their service.

At sunset the missionaries descended the hill. Elder George Q. Cannon reported that their descent was quick and joyful, “and when men are joyful and the Spirit of the Lord rests upon them, they feel lithe and active. We had been in the prescience [*sic*] of the Lord, and had felt his power, and why should we not be happy?”⁹ The missionaries felt exuberance for the forthcoming work.

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE AND TONGUES

Despite such early optimism, in fewer than ten weeks half of the original group of ten missionaries were gone, the mission was without a president, and the prospects for the success of future missionary activity, at least in the opinion of the departed mission president, were virtually nonexistent.¹⁰ Much of the discouragement came because of a misconception on the part of the missionaries that they were only to preach to Caucasians. Historian R. Lanier Britsch observes:

The missionaries assumed that they had been sent to the islands to preach the gospel only to white people, but after surveying the situation, they realized that very few whites were available for proselyting in Honolulu.

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Since there was not enough work to be done among the *haoles* (whites) in and around Honolulu, the missionaries decided to divide into pairs and go to other islands to preach. It was decided that Blackwell and Hawkins would go to the “Big Island” or Hawaii, Cannon, Keeler, and Bigler would go to Maui, Dixon and Farrer would go to Kauai, and Clark, Morris, and Whittle would remain in Honolulu.¹¹

They began their missions teaching only English-speaking residents but had little success. They soon realized that “if we were to confine our labors to the whites, our mission to those islands would be a short one.”¹² Missionaries William Farrer and John Dixon, who arrived on Kauai on December 21, 1850, found no more than forty or fifty people who spoke English scattered over the island. Two days later they sailed around to Koloa, where they set up meetings with a few *haoles* (Caucasians) who worked at the plantation. After three weeks there was little positive response to the gospel message from the plantation workers, and there soon began to be antagonism toward the missionaries.¹³ Subsequently, Elders Farrer and Dixon departed Kauai in December and January of 1850–51, and no other Utah missionaries returned for three years.¹⁴ Elders Clark and Whittle, who had stayed on Oahu, gave up when they found that the “white people would not turn out to hear us & we could not make much progress in learning the native language for want of some person to teach us.”¹⁵

On December 22, 1850, Henry William Bigler delivered the first Mormon sermon preached on Maui to a congregation of white residents and itinerant seamen. Elder Bigler stated that he was chosen by his associates because “I was the oldest [and] must lead out” (he was thirty-five years old at the time). He and his companions were unable to generate any interest among the *haoles* on the island. Henry Bigler remembered, “There was not a great many white folks living at Lahaina, and the few who did [reside there] did not seem to take an interest in our preaching.”¹⁶

Hiram Blackwell and James Hawkins worked briefly in Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii.¹⁷ There were so few *haoles* to teach that Elder Blackwell

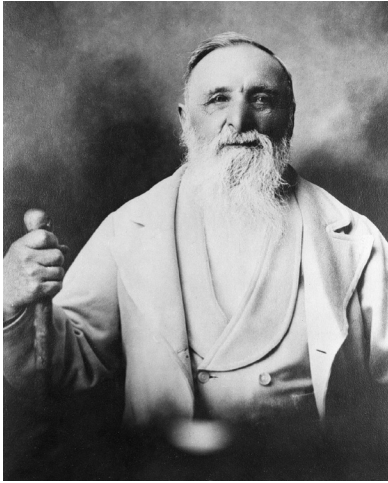
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decided he had accomplished all he could as far as trying to convert them. Although Elder Blackwell made a minimal effort to learn the Hawaiian language, “he thought it would take at least a year to speak it, and he doubted that native Hawaiians would ever accept the gospel.” Blackwell decided to leave the Big Island and tried to persuade Hawkins to leave with him, but Hawkins chose to stay until he received other instructions from Church leaders. On February 1, 1851, Elder Blackwell sailed from Hilo and arrived in Lahaina a day later. Blackwell gave a dismal report of conditions on the Big Island to Elders Cannon and Farrer, saying that the language was impossible to learn. Elder Blackwell then sailed from Lahaina to Honolulu, where he left the Hawaiian Islands altogether.¹⁸ Consequently, President Clark released Elder Blackwell along with two other missionaries, Elders Dixon and Whittle, and all three sailed from Hawaii. Meanwhile, Elder Hawkins stayed alone on the Big Island, having very little success.¹⁹

With such dismal attempts, even President Hiram Clark decided to go to the Marquesan Islands (French Polynesia) to preach rather than stay in the Sandwich Islands and encouraged the other missionaries to go with him. Accordingly, the other Mormon elders asked themselves whether to leave or begin to preach to the native Hawaiians. Elder Cannon observed, “It is true that we had not been particularly told *to* preach to the natives of these islands, but we were in their midst, [and] had full authority to declare unto them the message of salvation” (emphasis added). Furthermore, it had proved a “hopeless labor” trying to convert the white population.²⁰

Troubled, Elder Cannon went to a garden to pray and asked what the Lord would have him do. This prayer was answered in a very direct way. Cannon later related that during his prayer, “he talked with the Lord, heard his voice and felt His holy presence.”²¹ The Lord told Elder Cannon he was to stay in the Sandwich Islands.²² When Elder Clark saw that Elder Cannon and the four other missionaries were determined to stay in Hawaii, he agreed to let them stay until they were satisfied that they had warned the people by teaching them the gospel. Elder Clark then left alone for the Society Islands, while Elders Bigler, Cannon, Keeler, Farrer, and Hawkins remained.²³

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Henry William Bigler, one of the elders who chose to stay in Hawaii and eventually gained an appreciation for the people.
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Whereas the missionaries who left, such as Elder Blackwell, had seen the natives as degraded, those who stayed began to see value on the people with whom they had come to labor. Elder Bigler pronounced, “It is my belief that the Hawaiian race was once a favored people of the Lord and must have had the law of Moses and observed its teachings but through transgression they fell into darkness, error, and superstition, as regards the true God.”²⁴

As these pioneering missionaries embraced the idea that the gospel was for all people, they established a new precedent for all missionar-

ies—teaching all peoples and not excluding potential investigators based on race, culture, or language. Learning the language of the islanders would prove to be one of the hardest pioneering obstacles to overcome.

PIONEERING A LANGUAGE TRAINING SCHOOL

These missionaries devised many techniques that would be used by their successors. For example, they found books that would be of help in learning the new dialect. Elder Farrer wrote in a letter that he had procured *The Hawaiian Grammar* for the use of the elders.²⁵ The missionaries also became aware of the need to be among the natives in order to learn their tongue. Whereas these pioneers had first thought that staying together until they learned the language was the best idea, after a period of time they changed their idea. Elder Farrer reported, “We think it is best for us to scatter out among the natives in order to practice more in talking their language

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& to get our ears accustomed to their sounds.” The missionaries sought to find those islanders that would let them live with them so they could progress more quickly in learning the language.²⁶ Through intense study and dedication, they began to master the language.²⁷

They also turned to Heavenly Father in prayer and fasting for help with this difficult task.²⁸ And in many instances they were blessed miraculously with the gift of tongues:

George Cannon demonstrated a particular gift for the language. He reported that one evening, while attempting to converse with some Hawaiians, he felt an “uncommonly great desire” to understand them. Then, all at once, Cannon detected a “peculiar sensation” in his ears. He jumped up from his seat and excitedly told Henry Bigler and James Keeler what had just happened. They both expressed the belief that Cannon had received the divine gift of interpretation. From that point on he claimed to understand what the natives were saying.²⁹

A year after their arrival, Elder Farrer reported, “The Brethren were making good progress in the language that Bro Cannon spoke the language fluently, that Bro Hammond was so that he could address the people in their language but could not speak it perfect, & that Bro Keeler was so that he could speak a little in the native.”³⁰

The first formal language training school of the Church was also established on April 16, 1853, when Jonatana or Jonathan H. Napela, an early convert, proposed opening his home as a school to teach newly arrived missionaries the Hawaiian language using the Bible.³¹ Church historian R. Lanier Britsch concludes, “Apparently the sounds emerging from the newly arrived elders were less than encouraging. In the evening Napela made the missionaries practice reading from the Bible again.”³² Elder Ephraim Green wrote, “I have all ways [been] a hardworking man all the days of my life but this is the [hardest] work I ever [done] to set and study all day our teacher is very attentive [some] of the [Brethren] have got so they can read quite well

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but can't tell the meaning of what they read."³³

Having natives help missionaries with the language was not the only way in which these pioneering missionaries used local members to help them with the work, however. Early on these missionaries involved local converts in spreading the gospel.

INVOLVING LOCAL
CONVERTS

Even in the very early stages of the Church in Hawaii, pairing local missionaries with non-Hawaiians proved to be an effective strategy.

Dr. Ralph Kuykendall, the definitive historian on the Hawaiian Kingdom, asserted that the secret of the Mormons' success in the islands was placing local men in offices of leadership as soon as they were competent to serve.³⁴ Early converts such as Jonathan Napela, P. H. Keale (the district judge of Kauai), John W. Kahumoku, and J. W. Hosea Kauwahi were vital to the success of the missionary work. These early missionaries pioneered what would later become known as "splits," where missionaries pair with local members to teach.

In addition, missionaries immediately set apart local converts as leaders in the newly formed branches. On August 6, 1851, when Cannon organized the first branch of the Church in Hawaii, two teachers and three deacons were ordained from the Kula Branch in the village of Kealakou, and one of the teachers, Kaleohano, was appointed clerk of the branch on that day.³⁵ As we can see with the first organized branch, local members were set apart as part of the leadership.



*Jonathan H. Napela, pictured in October 1869, was founder of the first formal language training school in the Church.
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By “December 31, 1854, there were thirty-one foreign missionaries in Hawaii. . . . Foreign elders held all the mission and conference (district) offices, but the majority of the branches were presided over by local Saints. By this time there were seventy-five branches, and . . . *haole* missionaries could not lead each flock. Local converts to the Church were quickly involved in Church leadership. When branches were formed, local brethren were given the priesthood and asked to minister to the people. Not much time passed before Hawaiian men were ordained elders and sent on missions” throughout the Hawaiian Islands. As one missionary journal described it, “Hawaiian members of the Church were not left as passive onlookers but were involved in responsible ways from the beginning.”³⁶

Along with including local converts in leadership positions and missionary efforts, these early missionaries were also very concerned with following correct procedure in their interaction with local government officials.

ESTABLISHING POLICY FOR GOVERNMENT INTERACTION

It would seem that these early missionaries were very aware of taking a position that would agree with the twelfth article of faith, which states, “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” Early on, these pioneers established a relationship with the foreign government and wanted to be seen as following correct protocol. Within a few days of arriving in Honolulu, President Clark was concerned about the safety of the elders, so he visited British Consul General William Miller, who told him the laws of the kingdom would provide protection for the missionaries. With this assurance, the elders set sail for their assigned islands.³⁷ Missionaries in Hawaii and those serving in other foreign lands would always seek to conduct their lives in accordance with the law of the land in which they resided.

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These missionaries then set policy for others to follow as they secured necessary licenses to preach. For instance, after some local chiefs had forbidden Elders Cannon and Lewis on Maui to preach, they secured permission from the “Ministers of the Government promising . . . equal protection with the other religious societies on these Islands.”³⁸ Elder Farrer experienced the same thing in Honolulu when a chief forbade natives to join the Church and tried to drive him from the islands. Farrer remarked that “this was contrary to the laws of the Kingdom as all religions are tolerated.” There were all kinds of accusations that the brethren “were rebelling against the government, . . . preaching without the consent of the authorities of the nation, etc.” At each juncture, the missionaries followed governmental procedure and received proper permission before going ahead.³⁹

Likewise, when Church members broke the law, the missionaries turned them over to the civil authorities, once again proving that they were willing to obey the laws of the land. One situation that shows this policy was when a couple was caught in adultery and fined. Elder Farrer remarked on the situation, saying, “Missionaries whenever any of their members were caught in a crime & were punished by law they could not enter into their church again till they had paid their fine.” Whenever possible the missionaries were anxious “to magnify the Laws . . . so that Mormon[ism] would roll on & fill all the earth.”⁴⁰

Following Hawaiian law also included elders seeking appropriate channels to be able to officially perform marriages of LDS couples. Elders who were being asked to have LDS couples first married by Calvinist ministers made their case first before a local court, then before a district judge in a circuit court. Elder Farrer told the judge that the Mormons “wanted nothing more than the privileges granted to us by the laws of the nation but we should use every means in our power to obtain every right granted to us by the constitution.”⁴¹ LDS missionaries received permission to officiate at weddings.

On each of the islands when problems arose, the missionaries involved were fastidious about following the laws of the land. For instance, on the

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Big Island of Hawaii, Kohala was one of the strongholds of the Protestant ministry, whose ministers made false charges against the elders. On June 27, 1853, the LDS missionaries were arrested and thrown in jail for allegedly interfering with the school over which the local Protestant minister, Elias Bond, had charge by persuading students under Bond's tutelage to come under their training. LDS missionary Elder Kahumoku, having trained as a lawyer, defended the missionaries in court. More than five hundred spectators turned out to watch the trial. Kahumoku argued that the missionaries were priests and that they had the same right under the law to organize schools as any other priests. In addition, Elder Kahumoku argued, the law only mandated fifteen pupils in a school before a group could require the government to build a schoolhouse. LDS members already accounted for nineteen of the twenty-five students at the school in question, so the Latter-day Saints were legally entitled to the schoolhouse. The defense also suggested that if the LDS pupils contributed to the erection of the Calvinists' church then they should jointly own it with the Calvinists. The judge's decision was that the LDS schoolchildren should help build the Calvinist meetinghouse and be allowed to continue to attend the Protestant school.⁴² Although the judge had ruled against the Mormons, within a month that same judge, the schoolteacher, six of the twenty-five Protestant schoolchildren, and the missionaries assumed operation of the school.⁴³

As seen above, most of the problems encountered with spreading the gospel and with local governments were initiated by Protestant ministers. The handling of these other sects set forth practices that would be used in years to come by these original missionaries.

DEALING WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS

On Sunday, March 30, 1851, Elder George Cannon had his first encounter with a Protestant minister when he listened to Reverend D. T. Condie preach against the Latter-day Saints in the Congregationalist meetinghouse in Wailuku. Elder Cannon records that in his sermon

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Condie said, “Joseph Smith had pretended to see angels . . . and claimed that an angel had taken away the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, which, if genuine, should have been left for all the world to see . . . called Joseph Smith ‘a notoriously bad character,’ a thief, a law-breaker, a dissolute rake with ‘many wives or concubines’—in short, ‘a very wicked man.’ If Joseph Smith had truly seen angels . . . why did they not deliver him from death?” Miraculously, Elder Cannon understood what Condie had said in Hawaiian, even though he did not feel like he was fluent enough to respond to Condie’s charges in Hawaiian. Elder Cannon wrote in his journal, “My feelings while sitting listening to this tirade, can be better imagined than described. I felt as though if I had owned the world I should have given it to have been able to have talked with the Native.” “My first impulse,” wrote the youthful Elder Cannon, “was to jump [up] and tell the people he had told them a pack of falsehoods.” He decided against that rather brazen tactic and, instead, privately confronted his adversary after the service.

Elder Cannon went up to Condie and asked if he could “inform him better in regard to the things he had told this people” so that Condie could “disabuse the people of the lies he had told them.” Condie brushed aside the implication that he had spread lies, and Elder Cannon challenged him to prove Mormonism wrong from the scriptures. Elder Cannon declared, “I can prove before this whole people that what *you* preach is not the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the scriptures.”⁴⁴ The conversation between Condie and Elder Cannon was not cordial, but it had the effect of rousing the congregation’s interest in Elder Cannon’s purpose there. They discussed the “falsehoods” for half an hour, but the recantation that Elder Cannon had naively hoped for was, of course, never offered.⁴⁵

As with this encounter, the protests of other churches’ leaders increased people’s interest in Mormonism. Among Condie’s congregation was a Hawaiian circuit judge named Jonathon Napela, a man of considerable influence in the area. Napela was of chiefly rank and well educated, and he owned land. Elder Cannon stayed with Napela for several days after

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the encounter with Condie's congregation and spoke to him and several of his friends about the restored gospel. These men were interested in the differences between Protestantism and Mormonism. Despite the persecution that Napela endured for his interest in the message of Mormonism, he persisted in his study with Elder Cannon. Though Condie threatened to have Napela's judgeship taken away from him if his interest in Mormonism continued, Napela joined the Church. After his baptism, Napela wrote on April 8, 1852, to Brigham Young that he had seen a difference between the LDS missionaries and the Protestant ministers: "It is very plain to us that this is the church of God, and that it is the gospel which is preached by the white men from the Rocky Mountains; and there are many upon these islands who have obtained strong faith by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ the Lord, that we might receive the Holy Ghost."⁴⁶

The way missionaries responded to the opposition they encountered from other religious leaders actually brought many investigators into the Church. On other islands when Protestant ministers tried to interfere with the missionaries' work, the missionaries experienced the same results. For instance, when elders of the Church tried to land in Honolulu in August 1853, a smallpox epidemic was raging. The Calvinist preacher Reverend Bond used this as an excuse to quarantine the Mormon elders for an indefinite period—even though they were the only passengers so detained. Church members still gathered outside the stockade twice daily to hear the missionaries preach and teach, in spite of Reverend Bond's best efforts to prevent it.⁴⁷ Since the missionaries refused to retaliate, their tolerance proved fruitful. Farrer stated, "Pereicuiton [persecution] runs high here but notwithstanding all this the work prospers."⁴⁸ The work prospered despite the protests of ministers of other faiths. Persistence and a lack of retaliation became the policy used by these early missionaries and their successors. Rather than debating with their counterparts of other faiths, the missionaries taught the gospel as they understood it to their investigators. Surprisingly, much of what they taught is still used as the discourse for modern missionaries. Without any formal or informal training and instruction,

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the teaching curriculum these missionaries used is very close to what is now outlined in *Preach My Gospel* today.

TEACHING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

In scouring the journals and diaries of the original missionaries to Hawaii, one subject seems prominent in the elders' teachings. The pioneering missionaries constantly chose to teach about the first principles of the gospel. Those doctrines espoused in the fourth article of faith—"We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost"—were uppermost in the minds of the early missionaries, and all of them taught these concepts repeatedly.

Elder Clark spoke on the first principles of the gospel.⁴⁹ Elder Farrer constantly recorded in his journal that his discourses included the first principles of the gospel. Over and over again this was the subject of his discussions with local investigators.⁵⁰ Farrer was adamant to "prove that the Gospel was the same now that it was in the days of the Apostles and that it required the same Ordinances to save a man now as formerly: and the same Authority to administer in the ordinances." One of his constant teachings about the first principles of the gospel was that baptism was not intended for infants and that it was specifically to be performed by immersion and by those in authority. Farrer endeavored to "explain the principles of Faith, Repentance, Baptism for the remission of sins, & the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost together with the mode of baptism as practiced anciently."⁵¹

Elder George Q. Cannon also often spoke of the first principles of the gospel and was setting forth those principles when he converted Jonathan Napela.⁵² These four principles continued to be the mainstay of his discourses. In addition, the missionaries were very clear that the source material for those first principles of the gospel was the Book of Mormon.

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THE BOOK OF MORMON AS THE TOOL OF CONVERSION

The Book of Mormon became the instrument of conversion, and discussions with natives often began as they do today—by introducing them to the story of Joseph Smith’s First Vision and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.⁵³ The Book of Mormon often preceded the missionaries’ introduction, and natives, upon meeting the elders, asked to see the “Mormon Bible.”⁵⁴

Elder Farrer’s successors often declared that he was a “witness of the truth of the book of Mormon.”⁵⁵ The missionaries had strong testimonies of the Book of Mormon and firmly declared this testimony to others. Elder Cannon also declared his testimony of the Book of Mormon. When he first arrived in Hawaii, an initial lack of success among the *haoles* and his inability to understand the Hawaiian language afforded him extra time with the scriptures. He later recalled that it was during this time that he developed a real love for the Book of Mormon. He said, “If I felt inclined to be lonely, to be low spirited, or homesick, I had only to turn to [the Book of Mormon] to receive consolation, new strength and a rich outpouring of the Spirit. Scarcely a page that did not contain encouragement for such as I was.”⁵⁶ Thereafter, Elder Cannon would speak on the subject of the Book of Mormon when addressing congregations and in his discussions with investigators.

In January 1852, Elder Cannon’s love of the Book of Mormon led him to commence translating the book into Hawaiian. Jonathan H. Napela served as a collaborator in the translation. Elder Cannon later explained, “I would then read the translation to him going carefully over every word and sentence, and learning from him the impression the language used conveyed to his mind. In this way I was able to correct any obscure expression which might be used, and secure the Hawaiian idiom.”⁵⁷ Napela gave “the exact meaning of words.” Use of the proper idiom was vital to the correct translation. As would be done with future translations, other Hawaiian men of experience and education also listened and gave advice for the necessary revisions. In this way Elder Cannon and his Hawaiian associates adjusted the language of the translation to fit local cultural requirements and meanings.

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By the Hawaiian October conference of 1853, the translation was nearly finished and action needed to be taken to publish the book. A committee of three men—Elders George Q. Cannon, Philip B. Lewis, and Benjamin F. Johnson—was appointed to raise the funds required to purchase a press, and Elder Cannon was charged to travel throughout the islands to collect the money.⁵⁸ Elder Cannon asked the Saints to purchase their copies of the Book of Mormon in advance so that they could purchase a press with the advanced funds. However, many of the Saints were poor and could give very little. The missionaries appreciated the sacrifices made by the Saints to donate funds, and the project received large donations from unexpected sources. Elder Dennis, a convert to the Church in Hawaii and a man of considerable means and great generosity, promised to loan the mission one thousand dollars.⁵⁹ In January 1854 Levi Ha'alelea, a Hawaiian chief, also helped fund the press by loaning the mission five hundred dollars for the project, and the first Hawaiian edition of the Book of Mormon was published.⁶⁰

The work began on Christmas Eve in 1853, and by January 31, 1854, the retranslation was completed. This translation published by the Church was still being used in 1995.⁶¹ These early missionaries set the precedent that the Book of Mormon was needed in the process of conversion and that it must be available in the native tongue of those who are investigating the Church.

ESTABLISHING A PHYSICAL PRESENCE

These pioneering missionaries also placed great importance on having a physical presence on the islands. They constructed permanent structures, establishing a precedent that would be followed by future generations, who established chapels and eventually temples as quickly as possible in foreign lands. These structures had the effect of letting the Hawaiian people know that the Church's stay on the islands was not temporary.

Just a month after Elder George Q. Cannon arrived in Kula, friends of Napela completed the construction of a Hawaiian-style hut that Cannon was able to use as a regular meetinghouse.⁶² Just three years later, this hut

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was bursting at the seams because of increased membership, and one of the missionaries reported that it would not be “long until they will have to tare [tear] down and build greater for the house will not hold them mutch [much] longer also the Kula branch is on the increase every week in fact the work is spreading on the right & on the left on evry [every] hand & none can hinder for truth will prevail.”⁶³ On this same spot a grass meetinghouse was replaced with a frame meetinghouse along with a small amusement hall in 1928.⁶⁴

As soon as a small number of converts were baptized in an area, missionaries would turn their attention to securing a building for Church services. Many times in his journal Farrer notes that his activities included finding a “suitable place to meet” and eventually securing land for the construction of a meetinghouse.⁶⁵ The other missionaries were also involved in securing permanent structures for Church services. Elder Bigler reported at one point that “one of the brethren has offered gratuasly [graciously] a piece of land to build on and I hope before long we will have a meeting house of our own.”⁶⁶ As impoverished as these early missionaries were, it is interesting to note that they often succeeded in securing buildings that preserved the Latter-day Saint presence on the islands.

CONCLUSION

Despite severe limitations, these few pioneering missionaries were able to convert many people in a short span of time without the benefit of any training. The first conversions to the LDS Church took place on the island of Maui, where the first branch was organized in the Kula District near Pulehu on August 6, 1851. Membership grew quickly, and by the end of 1854 there were more than four thousand Hawaiian converts in fifty-three branches. There were several small LDS schoolhouses and meetinghouses, and the Book of Mormon had been translated into the Hawaiian language.⁶⁷

After they were deserted by their mission president, the five original elders who remained in Hawaii “dispatched a letter to Brigham Young requesting additional help in the work.”⁶⁸ In response to this plea, nine new

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elders were called at the Church's general conference in October 1852. But they did not arrive in Honolulu until early in 1853, so for almost two years these five elders were the only missionaries from Church headquarters.

In February 1854 the original missionary party was instructed by Brigham Young to prepare to return home soon. For these five men, this first mission to the Hawaiian Islands had been a growing experience. After three and a half years, they had a solid grasp of the language and the customs of the people, they had established friendships with Hawaiians who would continue to play a part in the future of the Church in Hawaii, and they had demonstrated time and again their dedication to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they established a firm foothold for Mormonism in the Sandwich Islands.⁶⁹ By 1853 in the Sandwich Islands there were fifty-three LDS branches with a total membership of 2,778 listed in the official census.⁷⁰

In July 1854 Elders Bigler, Cannon, Keeler, Hawkins, and Farrer secured passage on the steamship *Polynesian* bound for San Francisco. As he contemplated leaving the islands, Bigler wrote, "I thought how different it was when we landed here in 1850[,] ignorant of the language and among strangers . . . but now we [are] surrounded by thousands who seem to love us and are Saints." Although no exact departure date was noted, the returning five elders landed at San Francisco on August 12, 1854.⁷¹

These five pioneering elders established patterns that would be followed by future nineteenth-century missionaries. Their decision to teach natives the gospel and then include them in the work brought greater conversions. Policies, which included following the laws of the land, living among the natives, and nonretaliation, greatly enhanced the trust that Hawaiians had in LDS missionaries. The availability of the Book of Mormon in the Hawaiian language proved to be highly beneficial in the ability of future missionaries to convert natives. And, lastly, the establishment of permanent meetinghouses paved the way for a lasting presence of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the islands.

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