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Mistaken ideas concerning the
the missionaries

TRANSLATED BY MARY PUKUI

The missionaries came to Hawaii in the year of our Lord, 1820, and landed at Kailua in Hawaii. There were ten of them, five men and five women. There were some natives among them that had gone to foreign lands. These were the first missionaries to come, Bingham and his company. When they went ashore with their wives the men, women, and children were eager to look at the white women, for they had never seen any before. They went to see Liholiho's mother, Keopuolani at Oneo where we were living. One of the native boys who came with the missionaries asked us, "Where are the kapu places and where are the free ones?" We answered, There are no kapu places, all are free." He asked again, "Where is Liholiho's mother?" We replied, "In the house."

They went into the house to see her. We looked at them and said to each other, "What queer looking hats, they are not like those worn by the men. The women's hats are so different, they poke out in front, the faces are way inside of them, the necks are stretched out." Therefore the women were named "stretched-out-necks".

One of the natives who accompanied them was nicknamed Maoui because he was bold in his speech. Keopuolani asked, "What are these haoles here for?" Maoui answered, "These are the priests of the great God in heaven. God is in heaven." Maoui continued to speak. "Lest the great day (la) of judgment comes." The people listened and said to each other, "It must be a great sun (la) indeed." They thought that he meant a great sun (la) was coming. This was a mistake.

After that the chiefs and missionaries met to discuss the remaining of the missionaries in Hawaii. It was decided that they stay and carry out their work. This was how they settled it. Some lived in Hawaii, some in Oahu, and some in Kauai.

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"Mistaken Ideas Concerning the Missionaries." Hawaiian Ethnographic Notes. Translation by Mary Kawena Pukui of Lahainaluna Student Composition "No ke Kuhi Hewa ana o ko Hawaii Nei i ka na Misionari Hana."

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The first church of God was built on Oahu. When it was completed some of the natives said among themselves, "That house of worship built by the haoles is a place in which they will pray us all to death. It is meant to kill us." Another said, "Why did the chiefs allow these people to remain and kill us by sorcery?"

The first letters were taught to the people of Oahu and so were the first reading lessons.

After the church was completed and the first Sabbath came to ^{enter} go into it, the natives went to look at the way the missionaries prayed, sang, and spoke on the Word of God. The people heard what the ministers said about God's word. After church each person returned to his own home, saying to each other, "They do not open their eyes when praying to God, they close their eyes." Others said, "Do you suppose that there ^{is} any good in that way of praying? We might all die ~~died~~ through their sorcery." Still others said, "There is no doubt ^{is} ~~to~~ that for the haoles prayer is powerful. So it was with Alika, that haoles that used the stinking wind [gas]." Others said, "Here again, when the priest prays and everybody closes the eyes, we will be shot to death." This was a mistaken idea.

Here is another mistake in their concept of God's word. We thought that God's word would be kind, but here we are reviled, called poverty stricken people, loafers, greedy for possessions. That too was a mistaken impression.

Bingham built a frame house at Honolulu and a cellar pit was dug on the site. The natives of Honolulu said, "That pit is a place where people stay with guns until the Sabbath comes. Then when the minister prays and the people close their eyes the haoles will come with guns and shoot everyone, then when the house was finished, a letter will be sent to the chiefs of America to send over people outside [of the harbors] and they will come ashore. The men will be placed in barrels and rolled in onto the shore." This is a mistake.

When Kalaimoku saw Bingham's house, he built a house himself, a stone one, saying, "His is a small house holding only a few men, mine shall be big so that it can hold many." This was a mistaken idea of Kalaimoku.

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Here is another mistake. When the church was built at Wainee, the people said, "First they will build a church, then they will send out the mu (men to catch victims for human sacrifices)". After the church was completed they said, "The church is finished, and they will not use it until a man has been buried at each door." They were fearful lest they be killed by a mu. They thought that Kumukahi, Kupa, Kua-mauna, Kanemaikou, Kaaia were the mu to find the victims for the dedication of the church. This was a mistake.

Here is another. On the day for the dedication of the church, the people of Lahaina were called to come to the service of dedication. All the people of Lahaina went, so did those of Honuaula, and those of Kauaula, all with great misgivings, and with great fear of death that day. They went down to the plain and rested. One of them said, "We are going down, but today all of us will meet with death." Another said, "Yes, we have heard that there are guns by the pulpit, loaded with shots. When the people go in Mr. Richards will stand at the door of the church. After everyone has gone in, he will close the door on us, then run quickly to the pulpit, light the powder in his gun, setting it off, and we will all die. It is better for us to go home." Some agreed to this, others said, "We shall go on, and if we die, we die."

The men went in fearfully, lest the house fall down. Those of Honuaula went home, and looked down to watch for the gun to go off and the house to fall down, killing the people within, and they were sorry for them.

They waited a long time, but the gun did not go off nor did the house fall down. The others came out all right. The watchers exclaimed, "There are the people, and none of them dead." This going into the church was to test the strength of the upper floor and not the lower one.

When some people turned to the worship of God, others said, "You may be converted, but we will not be converts until the chiefs are. The gods belong to chiefs and we will be converted after the chiefs." Again, they thought that the wine used in the sacrament was the blood of men taken from their livers and [so they said],

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"How disgusting. One would think that the haoles would behave better."

Here is another mistake. "The medicines drunk by the haoles are human liver. How disgusting. Let us not use any of their medicines."

Here is another mistake. "There is no Holy Spirit in heaven. The only holy spirits are those of our babies, and there is no such spirit in heaven."

It is well for us to learn to read and write, but let us not learn too much, for if anyone does so he will die, his brains will explode, his stomach will tear open," So there were some people who were afraid to learn letters. "It is bad to learn letters, it leads to poverty and is useless. These are worth while, farming and fishing. When one has fish and vegetable food, he eats until he is satisfied. His wife and children are fed and all is well. Letters are useless." That is why some people did not learn.

Here is another. "There isn't any use for us to pray to God. The soul is not saved, and it never reaches heaven. It goes down to Milu". Thus some people made their mistakes.

On the Sabbath day, those who did not attend services remained at home and slept on that day. They did not pray, read the Scriptures, meditate, nor fear God. In the evening some knew that the Sabbath was over, and so went out to bathe. They thought that the Sabbath was over because the sun had set. That was a mistaken idea of some of the people.

Here is another. When the people who had gone to church returned, those who had not gone brought shallow calabashes and set them down before the doors saying, "Put the property that you have brought in here, for you have been to church." That is why some people became hardened and skeptical.

Here is another. When Mr. Richards and others were at Halehuki, they made sandwiches with bread and eggs and took them to Kauikeaouli and Nahienaena. When they had accepted it and were about to eat, the chiefs and guardians of the royal children saw the yellow egg between the bread and said, "It is excrement. The royal children have been given the excrement of the missionaries children." The chiefs became angered with Mr. Richards and others for feeding the royal children with the

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excrement of the missionary children.

Here is another mistake. A certain man said, "There is no Jehovah in heaven, Jehovah, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are my two hands. I earn my food with them and they are my gods." Thus did some of the natives make their mistake.

Here is another. Some people thought of becoming members of the church without any deep thinking, but merely by coming in as members. Many attended a long time without being accepted as members, so they left. Therefore many turned to the Pope, because of mistaken ideas. Many made mistakes because they were not made church members.

Here is another mistake. When the school was built at Lahainaluna and completed, a road was made from Lahainaluna to Lahainalalo. Those who had mistaken ideas about it said, "The Haoles are building a road. All that remains to be done is to build a fence on both sides of the road, high ones so that no one could see over them, then they will plant grapes on both sides of the road. They will lay sticks across the fence for the grapes to climb on to darken the road so that when their ships come in they will roll barrels of gunpowder on the road to Lahainaluna. They will fill their houses with them, then they will pretend to go to meeting. They will twist wicks, light and leave them among the gunpowder. Then they will run with their wives to the ships. When the powder has blown up from Lahainaluna to Lahainalalo all the chiefs and people will be killed."

Here is another mistake. When Keopuolani died some people said that nothing would have caused her death if she did not listen to Mr. Richards and others. "If these haoles remain all the time in Hawaii, all the chiefs and people will perish and when no chief remains the land will belong to the haole.

Here is another mistake. In praying some people said "Humuhumunukunukuapuaa, sew the word of God in us. Amen." [the word humuhumu means to sew]

Here again. "If the missionaries keep coming to Hawaii we will all be hungry because of their sorcery prayers." They were very fearful of the haoles.

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