

CHAPTER III.

THE ISLANDS TO THE TIME OF THEIR CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY.

Testimony of Governor Kekuanaoa as to the Former State of the Islands. — The Government ask for Teachers in secular Matters. — The Signers. — Like Request from the Mission. — Why not complied with. — Aid from Missionaries indispensable to the Government. — Civil Government necessary for the Safety of the Church. — School for young Chiefs. — Testimony of Hon. Robert Crichton Wyllie. — Early Influences of the Holy Spirit. — Increased Vigor in Prosecuting the Mission. — Reason for it. — The Great Awakening, and its Results. — On the Admission of Converts to the Church.

THAT we may the better appreciate the change wrought among this people by the Holy Spirit, I quote the testimony of Governor Kekuanaoa as to their former state. It is from an address delivered by him in the Stone Church at Honolulu, on a day set apart for Thanksgiving in January, 1841, and published in "The Polynesian" newspaper of that time. Of course what we have is a translation.

"In looking," says the governor, "over the years that are past, I see great reason to praise God for his goodness to me, and to all who are here present. I look back to the reign of Kamehameha I., and around on the present state

of things, and I say there is no being so great and good as Jehovah, and there are no laws so good as his.

“I will mention some things which I saw in the reign of Kamehameha I. There were three laws: the first, *Papa*; the second, *Waiioahukini*; the third, *Mamalahoā*. The design of all these laws was the same, which was to deliver all criminals from the operations of justice, by appealing to the favor of the high chiefs. Whoever was protected by these laws might commit what offence he chose, yet he escaped all harm by the favor of the chiefs. We did not at that time see offenders tried by the judges, before witnesses, as we now do. Such a thought was unknown to us. Everything depended on the will of the chief.

“There was also idolatry. We worshipped wooden gods, and feather gods, and all sorts of worthless things. We then thought it was right to do so; but we see our error now, because we have new light. In former days, right and wrong were all alike to us; but now we see there is a difference. There is a right, and there is a wrong. Our idol gods knew nothing; but Jehovah knows all things, and has revealed some things to us. In this we are blessed; and to-day let us be thankful.

“Uncleanness abounded in our times of darkness. Some chief men had ten women; some had more, and some had less. So also those who had property had many women. Neither were the women confined each to one man. The law of marriage was then unknown. Untold evils arose from this source, such as infanticide, quarrels, murder, and such like things. All these evils are not done away, but they have greatly decreased.

“In the reign of Kamehameha I. we were not taught to respect the rights of others. We abused the maimed, the

blind, the aged ; and the chiefs oppressed the poor without mercy. We did not know then that these things were wrong, for we had no wise teachers ; but now it is plain to us that all these things are wicked. It would be well if we had left them off.

“ In those ancient times we were greatly given to gambling, drinking, and sports. These were universal, and the chiefs were foremost in them. It was common, also, for the chiefs to seize such property as they coveted, without giving anything in return for it. They took food, pigs, and this thing, and that thing, as they pleased. But in this respect there has been a wonderful change for the better. Property is now secured to all by the laws of the kingdom. We chiefs do not dare now to take property which is not our own. Some chiefs have done so, and they have been called to account. Taxes are now fixed and regular, and we have many good laws, like enlightened countries.

“ We are better clad than we used to be. I remember the time when we saw only the *kiha* and the *malo* among the common people. Great, indeed, was the amount of theft in our days of ignorance. It was connected with lying and robbery in every quarter. Laziness was thought to be honorable, and lazy people were the greatest favorites with the chiefs. When a chief died, there were dreadful doings. Teeth were knocked out ; uncleanness was seen everywhere, in open day ; heads were shaved ; food was destroyed, and every sort of abomination committed. Such was the state of things in the days of Kamehameha I. Have we not seen many great and new things since that time ?

“ I will now speak of Liholiho's reign. He made a law, called *makahonu*, on the death of his father. Great was

our rum-drinking, dancing, sporting, singing, stealing, adultery, and night-carousing, at that time. Large houses were filled with women, and whole nights were spent in debauchery. But Liholiho was kind to his chiefs, and to common people, and to foreigners.

“Very good were all these things in my mind in those days. But latterly I have become acquainted with the Word of God and the Law of God, showing a better way than any I knew before. Let us bless the name of Jehovah for all his benefits to us and our nation. Blessed is the man who keeps the law of the Lord.”

As many as ten years after a large portion of the influential rulers had become connected with the church, the following letter was addressed, by the young king and the chiefs, to their American patrons. It was dated August 23, 1836, and shows how much greater had been the progress of religion on the Islands, than of civilization.

“Love to you, our obliging friends in America. This is our sentiment as to promoting the order and prosperity of these Hawaiian Islands. Give us additional teachers, like the teachers who dwell in your own country. These are the teachers whom we would specify: a carpenter, tailor, mason, shoemaker, wheelwright, papermaker, type-founder, agriculturists skilled in raising sugar-cane, cotton and silk, and in making sugar; cloth manufacturers, and makers of machinery, to work on a large scale; and a teacher of the chiefs in what pertains to the land according to the practice

entertained concerning their own duties to the rulers, and also of the duties of those rulers to their subjects, he pronounces "worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and hung up in the House of Nobles, as a guide to their legislation."

As early as the year 1825 it was evident that the Holy Spirit had begun, in certain districts, to operate upon the minds of the people at large. As an illustration of this I quote from the journal of Mr. Richards, at Lahaina, on the Island of Maui, where Keopuolani died two years before.

"*April 19.* As I was walking this evening I heard the voice of prayer in six different houses, in the course of a few rods. I think there are now not less than fifty houses in Lahaina where the morning and evening sacrifice is regularly offered to the true God. The number is constantly increasing, and there is now scarcely an hour in the day that I am not interrupted in my regular employment by calls of persons anxious to know what they must do to be saved.

"21. For four days our house has not been empty, except while the door has been fastened. When I wake in the morning I find people waiting at the door to converse on the truths of the Scriptures. Soon Hoapili, wife and train, come and spend the day; and after the door is closed at evening we are interrupted by constant calls, and are not unfrequently awaked at midnight by those who wish to ask questions. Houses for prayer are multiplying in every part of the village, and the interest which is manifested on the

concerns of eternity is such as, only six months ago, I did not expect would be seen even for a whole generation.

“23. In the morning several females called, for the purpose of having a female prayer-meeting established. Kaamoku gave me the reasons why they wished to have another meeting. She said that the females were coming to converse with her night and day, and in so great numbers that she could find no rest, and they were all anxious to assemble together, that she might teach them, and they strengthen each other. She said she was acquainted with *thirty-one praying females* in Nahienaena's train. Considering her as a proper person to superintend a religious meeting, I gave my approbation; so that there are now three separate circles of females in Lahaina who meet regularly for prayer, embracing the number of about *sixty* persons. Eleven strangers have called during the day, to converse respecting the truths of Christianity.”

The state of the Islands became so interesting about the year 1835 as to lead the Prudential Committee to adopt more efficient measures, in dependence on divine grace, for hastening the close of their proper work; believing that, should it be found possible to complete it in the space of one or two generations, those Islands would be a glorious exemplification and proof of the power of the gospel in missions, for the encouragement of the Church of God in its efforts for the conversion of the world. After having corresponded sufficiently with the mission on the subject, a company of thirty-two persons, male and female,

was sent out by the Board, near the close of 1836, including four clergymen and nine lay teachers. Some surprise was expressed, at the time, by patrons of the Board, that so large a reënforcement should be sent to so small a field. It was said in reply, that the smallness of the field was the very reason for sending it; embracing, as it did, an entire people, in one compact group of islands, under one government, all easily accessible, and singularly prepared for the gospel. In no other nation could the Board so well make the experiment of the possibility of an early completion of its work. Events soon showed that this large reënforcement was none too large, and that it was eminently seasonable. The members were cordially welcomed by the king, chiefs, and people; and they had scarcely been distributed over the Islands, and acquired the language, when the wonderful awakening commenced, which resulted in very large accessions to the Christian Church, and the substantial conversion of the Islands to the Christian religion.

The first public indications of its approach were in the general meeting of the missionaries in 1836, and again in the meeting of the following year. The heart of the mission seemed then drawn out in desires and prayers for the conversion, not of the Islands merely, but of the whole world, to Christ; which found expression in a printed Appeal to the Churches of the United States, of singular earnestness and power. Being unfortunately based on the assump-

tion, that the great embarrassment in carrying on the work of missions was rather in the lack of *men* than of *money*, and coming, too, when an unusual number had received an appointment as missionaries, while the country and the treasury of the Board were suffering under one of the severest of our commercial distresses, the address necessarily lost much of its power. It was the joint production of several missionaries, but the substance and spirit of it afterwards appeared in a work entitled "Thoughts on Missions," by Rev. Sheldon Dibble, which has been widely circulated by the American Tract Society, and still has a living voice in the churches. Among the natives the great awakening may be said to have commenced at Waimea, on Hawaii. In the spring of 1838 there was evidence of the presence of the Spirit at nearly all the stations on that island. So there was on Maui, Oahu, and Kauai. It was a work with power, and the power was evidently that of the Holy Spirit. The dull and stupid, the imbecile and ignorant, the vile, grovelling, and wretched, became attentive hearers of the word, and began to think and feel. Even such as had before given no signs of a conscience, became anxious inquirers after the way of life. Whenever, wherever the missionary appointed a meeting, he was sure of a listening audience. However great the crowds, the meetings were generally conducted with ease and pleasure. The Sabbath was extensively observed, and rarely were natives seen intoxi-

cated. Family worship prevailed even to a greater extent than the public profession of religion.

The whole Bible was given to the Hawaiian people in their own language in the year 1839, the last sheet being printed on the 10th day of May; and nothing could have been more seasonable. In 1837 the number of church-members was 1259. In 1842 it was 19,210. In 1843 it was 23,804, then embodied in twenty-three churches. The congregations were immense during this season of extraordinary interest.

“The congregation at Ewa was obliged to leave their chapel, and meet under a shelter one hundred and sixty-five feet long by seventy-two wide, sitting in a compact mass, in number about four thousand. Of two congregations at Honolulu, one was estimated at two thousand five hundred souls, and the other between three and four thousand. At Wailuku a house ninety-two feet by forty-two was found too strait, and the people commenced building a new house one hundred feet by fifty. At Hilo congregations were sometimes estimated at between five and six thousand. Prayer-meetings were frequently adjourned from the lecture-room to the body of the church.”¹

Reviewing this work after more than a score of years, we can have no doubt that there was a deep and genuine religious awakening. It was first seen in the hearts of the missionaries. A historian from

¹ Dibble's History, p. 349.

among themselves affirms, that "there was among them much searching of heart, deep humiliation, strong feeling for perishing sinners throughout the heathen world, and especially for those at these Islands, and much earnest, importunate, and agonizing prayer."

"Neither can it be doubted," he adds, "that the Holy Spirit was poured down on the churches and congregations throughout the Islands, and at some places very abundantly. Such was the uniform belief and testimony at the time of all the laborers in the field, consisting of more than twenty ordained ministers of the gospel, and nearly the same number of intelligent laymen. And now, in the retrospect, after the lapse of nearly three years, such continues to be their belief and testimony. Among so many witnesses, collected from all parts of the United States, and differing considerably in their training and prejudices, there is of course a variety of views in regard to different aspects of the revival; but no one would dare assert that a work of grace was not experienced. Most pronounce it a powerful work, and some term it wonderful and unprecedented. The revival was the same in character with what had occurred before at particular stations, and the same also with what has been experienced at several places the last two years. It differed only in being more powerful and more general throughout the group. We shall be very much disappointed if at the judgment day it shall not appear that many souls were at that time truly converted."¹

¹ Dibble's History, p. 351.