

Griffin's History

Chapter IX

MISSIONISM IN POLYNESIA

The following is taken from the 'Banner of Liberty/ a paper published in the State of New York:

"It is a very common thing to hear boasting of the good results of missionary labor in improving the morals of the natives of the Sandwich Islands. The accounts, however, from that country are generally written by missionaries themselves, and hence the reason of their boasting. Other kind of writers give a very different view of things; and, as proof of it, we present the following on the subject from John C. Jones, Esq., who was formerly United States Consul at Oahu. Mr. Jones resided at the islands nearly twenty years, and of course was well qualified to judge of the effects of missionary labors, and the influence of the missionaries upon the lives, and conduct of the natives. This extract was first published some time ago, but it is as appropriate now as it was then. Mr. Jones says:

"I came to this land when, I may almost say, another order of beings peopled these shores. The native population, in the days of the good and great Kamehameha, possessed different feelings from those we now see around us, and with whom we are compelled to associate. Then, the white man was respected, and the stranger, humble though he might have been, found a welcome at the abode of the savage.

"Professed Christianity has been proclaimed throughout these benighted isles, but what has been its effects? Where are its fruits? We cannot see them manifested in the true piety of the converts; we cannot see them displayed in the acts of justice, and benevolence of its boasted professor; what, then, has it effected? The destruction of every finer feeling which this unsophisticated people once possessed. It has swept from them every sense of humanity and hospitality which was so characteristic of them in by— gone days; it has constituted them a nation of hypocrites.

"I would not be understood to say, that this has been the effect of true Christianity, such as was taught by the merciful son of God; but is Christianity inculcated by biased emissaries, sent out by the professors of a particular doctrine, to sectarianize and plunder these unsuspecting children of nature!

"The fruits of the spirit, I have always been taught to believe, are love, peace, and charity; and when I can see such virtues emanate from the word that is proclaimed, then, and not till then, shall I be willing to go hand in hand with those who encompass sea and land to evangelize the natives of Hawaii.

"But this people are fast passing away; death is stalking abroad among these beautiful isles, sweeping away, with frightful rapidity, their once dense population. In a few years they will cease to exist, only in remembrance, and, at no protracted period, the inquisitive white man, as he ponders over the structure of their remains, will wonder to what order of beings they belonged."

Our limits will not permit us to publish the shameful and anti— Christian conduct of the missionaries in these islands. This has already been done, to some extent, by a portion of the political and religious press of this country. We have given the results of missionary influence among the natives, as witnessed by the United States consul, who resided there nearly twenty years. We must now hasten to our own country and talk about things nearer home.

The following letter, dated Washington City, March 5, 1831, and signed by six Indian chiefs, was taken from the Washington Globe:

"We, the Chiefs and Sachems of the Seneca Nation of Indians of Sandusky, Ohio, have often heard of the goodness of our white brothers and sisters in the United States, and that they have given and sent many presents of money, cloth, and clothing to us, to relieve the distress of our women and children. We thank them for their charity and good will; but we solemnly say to them that we have never received from them a cent of money, nor cloth or clothing.

"Brothers and Sisters: We speak the truth to you as it is given to us by the Great Spirit, in whom we trust and believe, and wish you to listen to us that you may no longer be in the dark. We hear that collections have often been made in all your churches for us, and that you, from the best motives towards us, have entrusted them to the missionaries, whom we call black coats, to present us.

"Brothers and sisters: We ask you all in the name of the Great Spirit, in whom red and white men believe, not to send anything more to be given us by the black-coats.

"Brothers and sisters: We ask you to hear what we say, for it is true. We have found the black— coats treacherous and they deceive us. They come among us and ask us to give them our property for saving our souls after we die. We do not like it, for they know no more about the next world than we do. We think the Great Spirit will save our souls and that the black— coats cannot.

"Brothers and sisters: How can we have confidence in men who have deceived both you and us? We feel friendship and affection for you, and we know you feel the same for us. We wish you to know the truth, and we will tell it to you. If you send us any more presents, we hope you will send them by honest men, who do not pretend to so much goodness.

"Christian brothers and sisters: We red children of Nawoneti, whom we call the Great Spirit, who is present everywhere, now give you a talk which we hope will be long remembered by you all. Do not be deceived by the black— coats. We believe they are sent out by the Bad Spirit to make a talk to us. If the Great Spirit had sent them out, they would have given us your presents, and their talk would have made us better! but their talk do us no good, and we hear nothing of the presents you sent us.

"Brothers and sisters: We do not worship the Great Spirit as you do, but our belief in him and our worship is sincere, and we think it acceptable to Him. You do not think so. If we should send out our teachers of our religion to you, you would not believe them. It is contrary to your belief, but your black— coats say we must believe yours. You have your own teachers, let us have ours. We are grateful for your kindness. We should be glad to have you send persons to teach us how to plow and reap, and teach us all the arts of agriculture. This would make us happy—but the black— coats cannot.

"Brothers and sisters: This is the truth that you have not known before. We are your friends, and wish that you may not be deceived."

As our limits require us to be brief, we will pass over many other items, and give an extract from the writings of Joseph Erwin, relative to the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi. He emigrated to the Natchez country in 1783; was a member of the first Baptist church formed in the State, and a delegate in the Convention which formed the first Association, and has been an orderly Baptist ever since:

"There has been abundance said in our religious world, about evangelizing and converting the heathen of Burmah, Hindostan, &c. But let us look at the effect of missionary labors among the poor heathen at home. I live at this time nearly in the

center of the Choctaw nation, now occupied by the whites, where the missionaries swelled their neck veins for years among the wild men of the forest; trying to evangelize the hearts of that people; trying to stimulate them to receive the Gospel of Christ. And after spending thousands of dollars among the Choctaws, and other red tribes, what is the result of all their efforts? why hardly a remaining vestige of all their missionary labor.

"Although it may seem bordering on the marvelous— and it is no gratification to me to say it—yet, there are living persons now in this land, that have been eye—witnesses to the application of the whip or cow hide on the backs of numbers of the red men of the forest, in enforcing the doctrines of the Gospel upon them. Yes, in this very land where I now live, the most unlimited extent of blind infatuation. There are powerful arguments in the whip, when it is applied with judgment, but I don't believe it ever evangelized the heart of a poor sinner."

The author of this work, having been engaged for a number of years in surveying land for the general government, among the Choctaws, previous to their removal west of the Mississippi river, had a fair opportunity of learning something of their religious ceremonies, none of which had the least "vestige" of true Christianity. Indeed, the external forms of Christianity was no where found among them; no, not even in the slightest degree. But it is now said that the missionaries "have done many wonderful works" among them, which of course is an additional proof of the great propriety of their removal to a dark corner of the world, seeing that they could not be converted in the presence of an intelligent community.