

The background of the book cover features a sepia-toned illustration. At the top, several palm trees are visible against a light sky. Below them is a large building with a steep, thatched roof. The lower portion of the cover shows a group of people, likely at a religious gathering or revival, with some individuals standing and others kneeling in prayer.

# **THE CONCERT OF PRAYER**

**The Prayer Covering for  
Hawai'i's Historic  
Nineteenth-Century  
Revivals**

*Christopher L. Cook*

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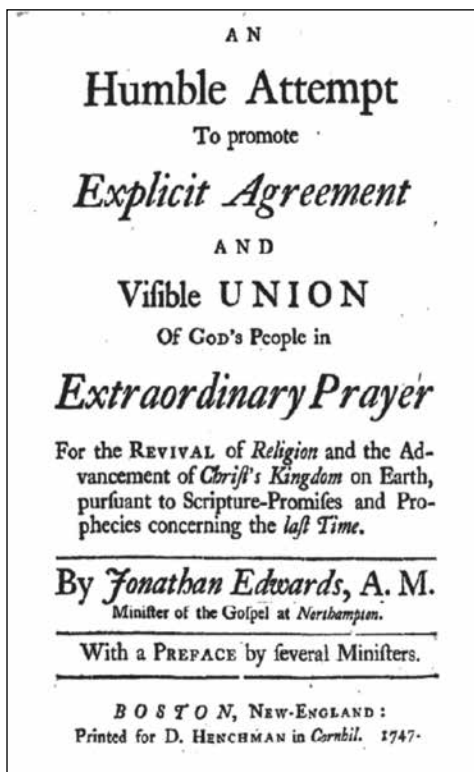
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# PREFACE

The missions-focused Concert of Prayer served as the prayer covering for the evangelical mission begun in Hawai‘i in 1820, as well as for the evangelical foreign missions sent from America and Great Britain that spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the globe to unreached nations in the nineteenth-century.

The Concert of Prayer service was simple, yet proved to be world-changing. Its two-part goal was to synchronize consistent prayer for the conversion of the world through reviving the Christian church, and through that revival to effectively and consistently advance the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

Usually held on the first Monday evening of the month the Concert of Prayer meeting brought missions to the forefront in local churches throughout the young United States and across Great Britain.

The Concert of Prayer lay behind the 1806 American foreign missions-seeding Haystack Prayer Meeting at Williams College in Massachusetts. In 1809 Haystack Prayer leader Samuel J. Mills Jr. met ‘Ōpūka-ha‘ia-Henry Obookiah in a dorm room at Yale College. Mills instantly envisioned an American mission to Hawai‘i to reach the Hawaiian people.

In October 1819 the pioneer mission to Hawai‘i – named the Sandwich Islands Mission – departed from Boston Harbor. The mission company held a monthly Concert of Prayer aboard the brig *Thaddeus*. Three native Hawaiian students from the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut joined them and were full members of their missionary church.

The consistent practice of holding a monthly Concerts of Prayer encouraged and prepared them to minister once ashore in the spring of 1820.

According to leading evangelical revival historian J. Edwin Orr, the Concert of Prayer led to a Great Century of Foreign Missions over the nineteenth-century. The evangelical church had grown from the cities, towns, and rural villages of the British Isles and the American Eastern Seaboard to a global movement. Young evangelical missionaries had successfully brought the



Gospel to Hawai'i and all the island kingdoms of Polynesia, to China, Korea, Japan, Burma, Palestine, Africa, and beyond. By 1906 at the centennial of the Haystack Meeting, thousands of full-time evangelical missionaries were in the field fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus.

Currently, the college student-focused modern day revival at Asbury College in Kentucky is capturing the notice of America and the world. At the roots of this revival is a decision made by its namesake – Methodist circuit riding preacher Bishop Francis Asbury (1745 -1816). Francis Asbury embraced the Concert of Prayer as the Second Great Awakening gained momentum about the year 1800 as this world-changing revival began to break out in post-Revolutionary War America. Under the prayer-based leadership of Asbury during his ministry the Methodist denomination grew from 1,200 to 214,000 church members with over 700 preachers ordained.

In America, the Concert of Prayer began with the ministry of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Mass. in the 1740s. Inspired by word of prayer-fueled revivals in Scotland during the Great Awakening (1720-1740) Edwards, the renowned American theologian, pastor, and

missionary to the Stockbridge Indians wrote a book that spread the Concert of Prayer in New England and the Middle Atlantic pre-Revolutionary War colonies.

The title of Edwards' book – almost long enough to be its own book – summarizes the heart of the Concert of Prayer: **A Humble Attempt (humility), to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union (harmony among the churches and denominations), of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer (local church congregations gathering in providential, history-making missions-focused prayer), For the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth (the Puritan church of early New England had grown stagnant, and new wine in new wineskins was needed to advance the Great Commission of Christ), pursuant to Scriptures-Promises and Prophecies concerning the last Time (Edwards theology looked ahead to a culmination of the Ages about the year 2000 A.D. looking forward to seeing the events prophesied in the Bible to soon occur, with Christianity spreading good throughout the world through foreign missions).**

The Great Awakening of this era did reawaken Christianity, with Edwards greatly aided by the preaching of English evangelist George Whitefield. However, the exciting Great Awakening revival meetings flamed out in the decades prior to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in the wake of criticism of emotionalism rather than Christ fueling the flame.

Edwards' Concert of Prayer book (I won't rewrite the title) was reprinted in England in the 1780s as sending foreign missionaries out to unreached nations came to the forefront in Great Britain.

The churches of the newly-born United States lagged behind in missions interest.

Concert of Prayer chronicler Natalie Nichols from

the Shades of Grace ministry explains the perilous state of the American evangelical church at this time.

“Following the American Revolution, the nation suffered a moral slump, to put it mildly. Drunkenness was epidemic. Out of a population of five million, there were 300,000 confirmed drunkards. Fifteen thousand alcoholics were buried each year. Churches were losing more members than they were gaining. Harvard had discovered not one believer in the whole of the student body. Princeton, a much more evangelical place, discovered only two believers in the student body.

She continues, “‘How did the situation change?’ asks J. Edwin Orr [leading modern evangelical revival expert]. ‘It came through a concert of prayer.’”

The pioneer mission to Hawai‘i emerged about twenty years after the launch of a Second Great Awakening Concert of Prayer movement in New England. A key event was a humble chapel Bible study on the truth of the Bible begun in 1799 at Yale College by its President, Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, which snowballed.

The Second Great Awakening Revival in New England grew as Concerts of Prayer spread to local churches. There a pious spirit led the way.

The heart of the Asbury Revival today is crowds focusing inward led by modern worship music with less-attended breaks for prayer and held short-term. The Hawai‘i mission sending Concerts were held consistently for decades in a multitude of local churches; were solemn with a focus on “extraordinary prayer” and reading of the Word; and had a goal of repentance in the local church enabling outward action towards the conversion of the world. The Concert of Prayer has proven results - the spread of evangelical Christianity throughout the world across the nineteenth-century. The Concert refers to

“concerted” prayer, not a music concert.

In the frontier state of Kentucky where Asbury sparked an offshoot of the New England Second Great Awakening, thousands of the interested and the converted gathered at camp meetings where emotional worship flowed freely. While secular accounts often focus on these often wild gatherings in the isolated forest, they overlook the population of believers in New England outnumbering their western kin by about ten to one persons.

The Concert of Prayer of the pioneer American foreign missions era commonly included a talk on missionary accounts taken from letters sent from mission fields, prayers for missions and the hoped for conversion of the world to Christianity, sometimes missions-focused hymns were sung, and often a collection was taken for missions.

A detailed look at behavior at a Concert of Prayer service during the Second Great Awakening appears in an 1828 report from the American Education Society. This series of meetings focused on America’s colleges.

“The day should be spent as a season of special fasting and prayer. It is very desirable that a portion of the time should be occupied in retirement by self-examination, acknowledging the mercies of God, confessing sin, petitioning for ourselves, and interceding for others....A part of the day should be observed in a public manner in prayer and in listening to addresses and remarks which may be made on the occasion. Most of the time, however, should be appropriated to prayer. This is the great business of the day of learning, and consecrate our young men, now in a course of education, to Christ and the church?...Verily he would. The revivals of religion which have been enjoyed in the colleges, are pledges of his love and earnestness of his pleasure.”

# Hawai‘i and the Concert of Prayer

**The Concert of Prayer**, a monthly gathering usually held on the first Monday of the month in missionary-era Hawai‘i connected the missionaries and Native Hawaiian and Tahitian Christians of Hawai‘i with the rapidly growing global foreign missions movement. Begun in Hawai‘i in April 1820, the Concert of Prayer was celebrated in Hawai‘i at least into the 1880s.

In the 1820s the missions-focused Concert of Prayer reached out to God from Hawai‘i each first Monday during a time zone-by-time zone global Concert of Prayer sweep of the earth from England, Scotland and Wales, crossing the Atlantic to New England, moving across the Pacific to Hawai‘i onward to China, to India, Burma and Ceylon, to Persia, to Beirut and sometimes Jerusalem – at mission stations wherever far-flung evangelical Christian missionaries found themselves.

A shipboard Concert of Prayer held by the Pioneer Company of the Sandwich Islands Mission occurred on the first Monday of the month aboard the brig *Thaddeus*, the ship known as the *Mayflower of the Pacific*. The *Thaddeus* departed from Boston in October 1819 and arrived off Kona, Hawai‘i in April 1820, a voyage made around Cape Horn of 164 days.

Missionary wife Nancy Wells Ruggles describes a shipboard Concert in a letter written to her family back in Connecticut on Monday, December 6, 1819.

“Attended the monthly concert this evening in the cabin. How animating the reflection that the disciples of Christ in every part of the world can unite at the same time in directing their petitions to the King of

Kings for the extension and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ in all parts of the habitable globe. Who would not esteem it a privilege to take a part in this glorious work, even though trials and afflictions attend on every side; for it is through much tribulation that we are to enter the kingdom of God. How much better to suffer affliction in the service of our Lord and Master than to dwell in affluence, and have no other treasure but that of this world. How precious is that promise, ‘Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.’”

With amazing, unplanned timing a Concert of Prayer was held aboard ship in the lee of Hualālai Mountain as Captain Blanchard steered the *Thaddeus* south from Kawaihae on Hawai‘i Island, approaching Kailua-Kona on Monday, April 4, 1820. This was the eve of the historic anchoring of the *Thaddeus* in Kailua Bay, and the coming ashore of leaders of the mission.

That evening gathering on deck the missionaries – with great expectations, and fears – sang and prayed prayers of thanks for a safe arrival in Hawai‘i. They interceded for their mission, asking God for Liholiho, Kamehameha II, to grant them permission to land and stay in Hawai‘i. Joining the American missionaries at this initial Hawai‘i Concert of Prayer were Kālanimoku, the prime minister of Hawai‘i, general and close advisor of Kamehameha, and queens of Kamehameha who had joined the ship at Kawaihae, at the base of Pu‘ukoholā heiau. At Pu‘ukoholā the missionaries made their first landing just days earlier.

Pioneer Sandwich Islands Mission leader Hiram Bingham described in his autobiography this momentous Concert of Prayer. Bingham had organized a Concert of Prayer while a student in 1815 at Middlebury College in Vermont.



A model of the brig *Thaddeus* in the history room of Mokuaikaua Church in Kailua-Kona. The church's historic rooster weather vane stands alongside the ship model and once perched above the steeple to remind the congregation to keep to their practice of praying before dawn, as they did in the Polynesian version of the Concert of Prayer.

“Becalmed in sight of the king’s residence, we were once more allowed on the morrow to unite with thousands of our friends whose sympathies and supplications had followed us, in observing the monthly concert of prayer for the conversion of the world...”

“As we coasted slowly along southward, we had a grand view of Hualālai, the volcanic mountain that rises some eight or nine thousand feet, near the western side of Hawaii, with its terminal crater, its forests, and apparently recent streams of lava.... mingling thanksgiving for our safe and opportune arrival, with petitions that an abundant entrance among these Gentiles might be ministered to us, and that our service

for them might be soon and joyfully accepted.”

From this significant, yet humble beginning the Concert of Prayer served for decades as the ongoing prayer covering for the American missionaries stationed in Hawai‘i.

On this same Concert of Prayer Monday, fellow American missionaries Adoniram and Ann Judson celebrated a key moment in their mission to the Burmese. After over a half dozen years of struggles, standing some 6,000 miles away from Hawai‘i in the Baptist mission compound in Rangoon, their Brethren brother from Andover Theological Seminary and the founding of the American Board, with his wife rejoiced over the baptism of one of their earliest Burmese converts, MOUNG SHWA-BA.

As the Hawai‘i mission expanded its leaders chose to schedule key events on the first Monday of the month, the global Concert of Prayer day.

For example, the printing of the first pages on the Mission Press set up in Honolulu, of a simple Hawaiian language alphabet, was purposely scheduled to coincide with the monthly Concert of Prayer held on Monday, January 7, 1822.

The ABCFM’s *Missionary Herald* back in Boston published that day’s mission journal entry.

“[Aug.] 7. Monday. Set up the printing press. It appears to have suffered but little damage by transportation, and promises to be a good one. We hope to be able before long to print some elementary lessons for our pupils. Observed this evening, as usual, the monthly concert of prayer—Thomas H. (Hopu) assisted in the exercises, made an address both in English and Owhyhee, and closed with prayer.”

Thomas Hopu served as a member of the missionary church and mission, was educated at the Foreign



From the World on the Mercator Projection exhibiting the American Continent as its Centre. Story Sheet Map Collection Mitchell, S. Augustus: Philadelphia 1867 Other Map Collection [ahemaps.org/map/229/](http://ahemaps.org/map/229/)

During Hawai'i's evangelical missionary era Concert of Prayer meetings circled the globe in a 24-hour period every first Monday of the month. As the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and the London Missionary Society, mission stations grew in number so did the spread of the Concert.

Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, and had the “mantle” of ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia-Henry Obookiah passed onto him following Henry’s death in Cornwall in 1818.

Hopu’s example led fellow Native Hawaiian Christians to soon begin their own Polynesian style Concert of Prayer. When Tahitian Christians landed in Honolulu in 1822 they joined in celebrating the Polynesian style Concert of Prayer.

The Hawaiian and Tahitian Christians followed a cultural tradition of early morning prayer, praying before the rooster crowed at dawn, “...as they do most of their meetings, this being a more convenient time for them than the eve,” a passage from the Hawai‘i mis-

sionary company's journal reads,

Yale graduate and Hawaiian Islands sojourner Chester Lyman attended an evening Concert of Prayer on Monday, June 1, 1846 at missionary Richard Armstrong's Church in Maui. "Few there except the missionaries. The natives hold their concert in the morning early, as they do most of their meetings, this being a more convenient time for them than the eve."

Missionary wife and school teacher Sybil Bingham described in her personal journal a Polynesian Concert of Prayer she attended on Monday, Feb. 3, 1823 at the Honolulu mission station.

"At four a meeting with the natives in our place of worship. Not less than 200 attended. Two prayers were offered, the first by John Honoru, and the last by Auna, the Tahitian chief with much ability and fervency. Between the prayers, Mr. B. addressed the people on the design of the meeting. They were told that the good people of England and of America, and of other lands were praying to the great Jehovah for them, that He would open their ears to hear and give them hearts to love and obey the Gospel; and that He would send his ministers, with his holy word, to all the dark places of the earth, that the whole world might be filled with the knowledge and glory of his name. This is the second prayer meeting which we have had with the natives on such an occasion."

Joining fellow missionaries and Native Hawaiian Christians at a Concert of Prayer gave reassurance to the women of the mission, easing the pain of separation from their families and encouraging them in their mission to prepare Hawai'i for the return of Christ.

In *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* author Dana Lee Robert explains,

“Millennial expectations took on added importance for many women once they actually began their missionary careers. Once they came face to face with the isolation and difficulties of missionary life, the idea that they were part of a divine plan for the world gave them strength to press on despite opposition and little apparent progress. Eschatological themes were encouraged by participation in the Monthly Concert of Prayer, a transatlantic tradition that dated back to Edwards’ day, when Christians met together to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the conversion of the world. Participation in a ‘season of prayer’ observed simultaneously by folks back home was a great comfort and inspiration to lonely missionaries on the field.”

Visiting sea captains joined in too. A log of the Hawai‘i voyages of the royal yacht *Haheo o Hawaii* compiled by Smithsonian Maritime Curator Paul Johnston notes, “1821 [1 January] [Honolulu] Capt. Suter...and 6 other sea captains join the missionaries for tea and the monthly concert of prayer.”

In 1821 at the Park Street Church in Boston – the church nearby the Long Wharf where the pioneer missionaries to Hawai‘i departed from in October 1819 – word of the successful planting of the pioneer Hawai‘i mission station arrived in letters sent aboard ships taking months to cross the Pacific and the Atlantic.

To mark this long anticipated news, a special Hawai‘i-focused Concert of Prayer was held at Park Street Church. Jeremiah Evarts, the leader of the ABCFM in Boston, delivered the address based on the report sent by the Rev. Hiram Bingham and his fellow ordained missionaries now settled in Honolulu and Waimea, Kaua‘i. Bingham wrote in his autobiography

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## **BOSTON:**

### **THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1821.**

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**We understand that intelligence has been received four months later from the mission to the Sandwich Islands, and also a late journal from Messrs. Fiske and Parsons, on a visit to the seven churches of Asia, which will be communicated at the Concert This Evening at the Park-street Church.**

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#### *A Residence of Twenty One Years in the Sandwich Islands:*

“The report of the arrival and reception of the mission reached the United States, in March, 1821, seventeen months after its embarkation from Boston. Multitudes, who had been aiding it by their prayers and contributions, and so long waiting to hear how it sped, received the intelligence with joy and devout thanksgiving, which it is believed will be renewed at length in heaven, and felt a new impulse to missionary zeal and activity: and others, who had been indifferent to the claims of Christ, were by these events led to engage in his service. As specimen of the feelings and reflections of the intelligent friends of the Redeemer’s cause in Europe and America, on hearing of the change of the tabus and the introduction of the mission...the honored Secretary of the American Board at a monthly concert for prayer at Park St. Church, Boston...A large concourse from different churches were there assembled to hear, and pray, and give thanks, whom, after alluding to our voyage and to portions of our journal

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RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE,  
SELECTED FOR THE MONTHLY CONCERT OF PRAYER.

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FOREIGN.

**SANDWICH ISLANDS.**—The following is from the joint communication recently received from the Missionaries, in the Island of Oahu.

*Progress of Religion among the Natives.*—Public preaching has been maintained here, pretty uniformly, three times a week, since the summer of 1822.

Our congregation in general has been large; for the last nine months averaging, on Sabbath morning, between 3,000 and 4,000; Sabbath afternoon, from 2,000 to 3,000; and on Wednesday evening, from 500 to 1,000. A large proportion of these are pretty constant hearers, residing in the village or town of Honoruru; but many are less constant hearers from neighbouring villages, and a considerable number are occasional hearers from all parts of the island, and strangers from other islands.

*Prayer Meetings of Males.*—Five years ago, Karaimoku and eight or ten other serious men were formed into a prayer meeting, to be conducted chiefly by themselves; that number has increased to 1,537, of whom 1,137 belong to the village and valley of Honoruru.

*Female Prayer Meetings.*—Four years ago, we recorded 700 females in Oahu as members of the female prayer meeting; that number has been gradually increasing, and now the number is 2,100, of whom 1,500 belong to Honoruru, and 600 to the other districts, who meet at their own places. This makes the aggregate 3,689 in Oahu alone, who are members of a weekly prayer meeting, the rules of which require, that no immoral person shall become a member, or, being known to be immoral, shall continue a member.

The female prayer meeting has been superintended by the females of the mission, residing at this station, who have attended in rotation from its commencement. When the meeting became so large, that the house which they had built for their accommodation would not admit more than half, and when a female voice could not be heard by all, either in reading the scriptures, or in prayer, or conversation, the meeting was divided into 30 classes, and placed under 30 native female leaders.

*Temperance and Inquirers' Meetings.*—Another association, under the direction of the brethren of the mission, is composed of the members of the church, and those who have manifested special seriousness, and a desire to profess their attachment to the word and service of God, and their hope and confidence in Christ. One of our number devotes half a day in a week to conversation, besides many occasional interesting interviews with them. These, about 600 in number, are emphatically the *temperance society* of Oahu. But its principal design is that of an inquiry meeting, and as such it often has new accessions. About 400 belong to Honoruru, and 200 to the other districts.

Concerts of Prayer Monday night services held in churches across the United States focused in on this 1831 Sandwich Islands Mission report sent aboard a ship from Hawai'i to Boston.

<i>Pittsfield, Ms. Monthly concert,</i>	-	-	16 00	54 00
Several persons, for S. Isl.	-	-	10 50	
An individual, for do.	-	-	1 00	
Contribution in the Rev. Mr. Humphrey's church,	-	-	41 00	58 50
<i>Plainfield, Vt. [See Marshfield and Plainfield,]</i>				
<i>Plainfield, Ms. Fem. Read. and Tract Soc. for S. Isl.</i>	-	-	7 50	
James Richards, Esq.	-	-	1 00	
A contribution, for West Ind.	-	-	52 45	
Miss M. H. Sl. Mr. D. 50 cts.	-	-	1 50	42 45
<i>Plainfield, Con. Monthly concert,</i>	-	-	-	18 00
<i>Plymouth, Ms. Monthly concert,</i>	-	-	17 00	56 70

Donations to the American Board, down to the penny, appeared in the back pages of each issue of the monthly *Missionary Herald*. Funds donated at the “Monthly concert” appear frequently. Funds from Pittsfield, Massachusetts listed here, from 1821, show a direct tie to the pioneer Sandwich Islands Mission company. The Congregational Church in Pittsfield was the home church of Waimea, Kauaʻi missionary wife Mercy Partridge Whitney. The Rev. Mr. (Heman) Humphrey gave the sermon at the ordination of pioneer Hawaiʻi missionaries Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston at Goshen, Litchfield, Connecticut.

which he was about to read to them...”

Prior to leading his congregation at the Haili Church in Hilo in becoming the largest Protestant congregation in the global evangelical church, the Rev. Titus Coan gained great respect for the blessings of the Concert of Prayer.

In his book *Titus Coan: Apostle to the Sandwich Islands* author and pastor Phil Corr relates,

“Titus and Fidelia had waited for years to be married....They were kept apart by the (American) Board until a vessel could be found for their transport. Finally the blessed day came. They did not waste any time after receiving (ABCFM leader Rufus) Anderson’s letter (of acceptance as missionaries). Titus Coan and Fidelia Church were married at the Monthly Concert of Prayer the evening they received Anderson’s letter, on November 3, 1834, at Churchville, New York. The following day they departed, taking the packet boat down the Erie Canal destined for New York City...” to begin their journey to Boston, the port of their departure for

Hawai‘i with the Seventh Company of Missionaries.

A Concert of Prayer for movements other than missions would be held in Hawai‘i on off-week Mondays. In 1837 a Concert aimed at ending slavery was held on a third Monday.

The pioneer American Board Palestine Mission can be seen as the other side of the coin from the Sandwich Islands Mission. Both missions shared departure services in Boston in late October 1819 and departed within 10 days of each other.

The ABCFM promoted the goal of the Palestine Mission as returning the Holy Scriptures to the lands of the Bible to encourage the reawakening of the ancient biblical prophecies foretelling Israel being reborn as a nation. Hawai‘i they saw as a fulfillment of Jesus’ parting command to take the Gospel to the “Far ends of the earth” to the most isolated archipelago in the world.

Palestine Mission missionary Pliny Fisk’s journal entry for Monday, February 3, 1823 was written in Egypt and notes holding a Concert of Prayer with a western distributor to Persia of Arabic language Bibles and Christian tracts.

By Monday, May 5 Fisk is now in Jerusalem. He writes,

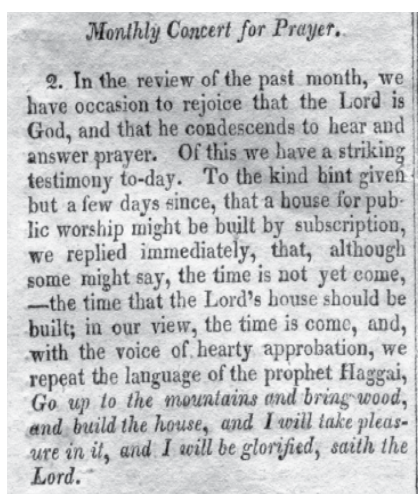
“The afternoon was a highly interesting season to us. We made our first visit to Mount Olivet, and there bowed before Him who from thence ascended to glory, and ‘sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.’ There we held our first Monthly Concert of prayer in the promised land—there, where our Lord first commissioned his disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, promising to be with them even unto the end of the world. There we have been permitted to look up towards Heaven and plead with

Him to hasten his second coming.”

Over thirty years into the mission to Hawai‘i, with the American Board beginning to end its support for its missionaries in the Islands, the Hawai‘i-based Hawaiian Missionary Society began to send Native Hawaiian missionaries to Pacific Islands.

A report from the Marquesas Islands appeared in the monthly *The Friend* publication dated Honolulu July 21, 1857. At the Fort Street Church the Rev. J. S. Emerson provided the details of a Hawaiian Missionary Society voyage sent out of Hawai‘i to the South Pacific, landing at Hivaoa island in the Marquesas.

“Our winds were easterly, both north and south of the equator, with but one or two days’ exception, till we reached the islands. Beating our way from within two days’ sail of Tahiti, with a strong current against us, we reached Hivaoa, the most north westerly island of the Marquesas Group, on the 30th of the month. On the 1st of June, we observed the Monthly Concert Prayer for Missions, near midway between Nuuhiva, Washington and Adams’ Islands. Our collection for Missions amounted to \$30.50.”



At the monthly Concert of Prayer held in Honolulu in May 1821 thankful news arrived of support for help from support outside the missionary station in Honolulu for the building of the first significant church sanctuary in the Hawaiian Islands, though thatched not built of stone.

# Concert of Prayer

## Background

All of the benefit of the Concert of Prayer to Hawai‘i finds its initial impulse in the life of renowned American theologian Jonathan Edwards. Edwards during the Great Awakening in the 1740s, a movement credited with spreading revivals across New England, wrote a book promoting the Concert of Prayer titled, “An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth.”

Joseph Tracy, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions historian wrote in the 1840s of Edwards and the Great Awakening.

“The Concert of Prayer for the Conversion of the World was first suggested by the leading revivalists in Scotland, in 1744 determined that for the next two years they would set apart time for prayer... As a result a group of ministers covenanted to give themselves weekly to ‘united extraordinary supplications to the God of all grace...earnestly praying to Him that He would appear in His glory.....by an abundant effusion of His Holy Spirit... to revive true religion in all parts of Christendom...and fill the whole earth with His glory.’”

A memorial printed in Scotland in 1746 recommended that evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic should establish a formal spiritual community through a “Concert for Prayer.”

Edwards received the pamphlet on the Scottish Concert of Prayer practice. The renowned Congrega-

tional pastor and theologian already knew that such efforts worked. He had organized meetings for prayer and praise which drew huge crowds to hear English evangelist George Whitefield in 1734-35.

He knew of similar awakenings in Scotland were sustained by weekly prayer meetings. The result of his research and writing was a strong case from scripture for organizing and promoting an international Concert of Prayer.

The Concerts of Prayer continued but eventually to little effect, leading to disappointment when no mass conversions occurred.

Though the Concert of Prayer wained for about forty years, the meeting returned in force on both sides of the Atlantic a few years after the birth of the United States following the 1783 peace treaty ending the Revolutionary War.

Edwards' book *An Humble Attempt* was reprinted in England sparking a new wave of Concert of Prayer meetings in that nation, especially among the Baptists. Cobbler and school teacher William Carey, known today as the "Father of Foreign Missions," headed off to India as a missionary thanks to an encounter with a missionary to Bengal at a seven-day Concert of Prayer.

Carey originally sought to be a missionary in Tahiti or Hawai'i. He was influenced by reading the journals of Captain Cook while he multi-tasked while working on shoes.

Carey sailed to India without coming under the wing of a missions board, for there were no foreign missions boards at that time.

In the newly-birthing nation of the United States the arrival of English copy of Edwards' book reawakened the Concert of Prayer. This led to the gradual overcoming of a long season of post-Revolutionary



“The narrative of Captain Cook’s two first voyages to the Pacific and discovery of Tahiti had appeared in the same year in which the Northampton churches began their seven years’ concert of prayer...From the map, and a leathern globe which also he (Carey) is said to have made, he had been teaching the children of Piddington, Moulton, and Leicester the great outlines and thrilling details of expeditions round the world which roused both the scientific and the (people) of England as much as the discoveries of Columbus had excited Europe. (Cook’s account gave Carey) the longing to tell (the Hawaiians) the good news of God...”

*(From the Life of William Carey by George Smith)*

War ungodliness. Alcoholism plagued the young nation along with a trend towards atheism brought about by the French Revolution and the stationing during the war of free thinking, non-Christian French and English troops in the thirteen colonies. A precipitous drop in church attendance swept across the 13 states.

Christian college students were persecuted for their piety and non-partying behavior at Harvard, Dartmouth, Yale and other college campuses originally founded to train Protestant clergy for the churches of the British American colonies.

As the foreign missions movement rapidly expand-

ed in England beginning in the early 1790s the first sparks of the Second Great Awakening were lit in great part by the Concert of Prayer for expanding the Kingdom of God.

The Concert of Prayer especially played a key role in the formation of the Missionary Society in England, which sent out the first-ever evangelical foreign missions company from that nation Aboard the ship *Duff* this party landed in Tahiti in 1796.

The Missionary Records of the London Missionary Society recalls the pioneer company sent to Tahiti holding a Concert of Prayer with a twist on the first Monday after their arrival at Matavai Bay on Sunday, March 5, 1797.

“On the 4th of April, 1797, they met in the morning of Tuesday, between eight and nine o’clock, to hold a monthly missionary prayer meeting, which they have continued ever since. This time was selected, as being the same as the hour on Monday evening on which christians in Britain were assembled. In references to the service, they observe, ‘We were revived with the consideration of the thousands of God’s people who were remembering us, and at the same throne praying for our success among the heathen.’”

After many years of difficulty for the Tahitian mission, Tahiti was declared a Christian nation in 1815. By 1820 the Missionary Society became known as the London Missionary Society.

The student Haystack Prayer Meeting of 1806 at Williams College led by Samuel Mills Jr. is credited as the seed of the Foreign Missions movement in America. Mills and his student prayer compatriots formed a secret missionary society known as the Society of the Brethren to launch American foreign missions. Mills and other missions minded young men by 1810

moved on to the Andover Theological Seminary north of Boston to gain divinity degrees qualifying them as missionary ministers and leaders.

The Andover students approached leading Congregational ministers in Massachusetts in 1810. Their goal was to fund and support companies of young American men and women who desired to lay down their lives at home to sail away to faraway shores to spread the Gospel to the non-Christian “heathen” nations of the world, heathen meaning non-monotheistic nations.

Within months their effort led to the establishment of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

The Brethren formed the Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Missions in 1811 to publicly promote foreign missions on college campuses and in churches. This group organized Concert of Prayer for foreign missions meetings at the Andover seminary, then the training center for American foreign missions. At these Concerts of Prayer a talk on a missionary subject, prayer for missions, and a collection for missions made up the program.

As the foreign missions movement stalled due to the embargo of New England ports during the War of 1812, a variation on the missions Concert of Prayer appeared. Prayers at these meetings sought safety for American towns and cities. England was then attacking and burning towns and cities along the East Coast. The practice spread across New England churches during the war. The end of war in 1815 released American ships and made safe sailing the Seven Seas. The merchant ships were the jetliners of that day and transported missionaries in safety to faraway nations.

A new version of the Concert of Prayer then

emerged. In an 1854 book titled *A History of Changes that Have Taken Place, and Events that Have Transpired, Chiefly in the United States, Between 1800 and 1850*, author Emerson Davis describes the start of a fresh foreign missions-focused Concert of Prayer series. This rebirth began in Litchfield County, Connecticut, the rural district which birthed the Sandwich Islands Mission.

“At the termination of the war, those who had enjoyed these seasons of united prayer, being unwilling to relinquish it entirely, after a few months agreed to meet on the first Monday of every month, in concert with their brethren in England, to pray especially for missions.

“The first meeting was holden at Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1816, at which the Rev. Mr. Mills, father of S. J. Mills, presided [S. J. Mills founder of American Foreign Missions, the Mills family adopted ‘Ōpūka-ha‘ia-Henry Obookiah in New England]. He opened the meeting by saying, ‘There is not a tongue in heaven or on earth that can move against the object of this meeting.’ Soon after, it began to be observed in many churches in different parts of the United States; and now wherever there are Christians whose benevolence is expansive, and who are waiting for the consolation of Israel and the ingathering of the Gentiles, this concert is observed.”

This new wave of Concerts of Prayer brought spiritual and financial support for sending a pioneer mission to the Hawaiian Islands, then known then as the Sandwich Islands Mission. Captain Cook had named the Hawaiian Islands this after his Voyage of Discovery sponsor, Lord Sandwich of the British Admiralty.

# Asbury College Revival – Back to the Future

As news of the Asbury College Revival spreading to other colleges in early 2023 has today encouraged churches across the nation, so did an outbreak of revivals back in the United States during the early years of the mission to Hawai'i. Future missionaries to Hawai'i attending college to become missionaries were among those impacted by this season of Concert of Prayer-driven revival.



From the *Twelfth Annual Report of the American Education Society held in New York City in May 1828*.

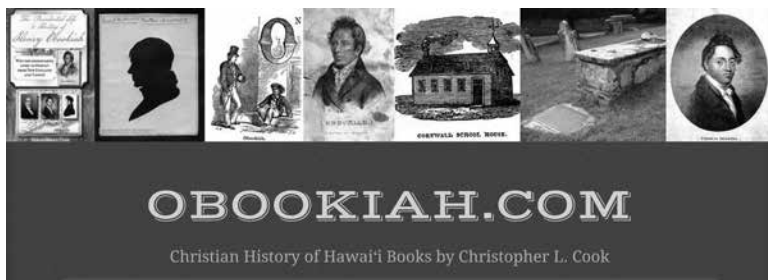
**The Annual Concert of Fasting and Prayer for Colleges and other Institutions of learning**, is now therefore established, by the concurrent voice of the churches, throughout this land. It is also specially sanctified by the great Head of the church, as will appear by the blessed effects which have followed it.

Subsequent to the establishment of the Sabbath Morning Concert of Prayer for Colleges, the Spirit of God was poured out, and animating were the results. From 1820 to 1823 inclusive, there were revivals of religion in Dartmouth, Middlebury, Williams, Amherst, Yale, Union, Hamilton, Dickinson, Jefferson, (Pa.) Washington, (Pa.) and Hampden-Sydney Colleges, College of New Jersey, Brown University, and the University of Ohio. Some of these revivals extended into the year 1824. In the years 1824 and 1825, there was

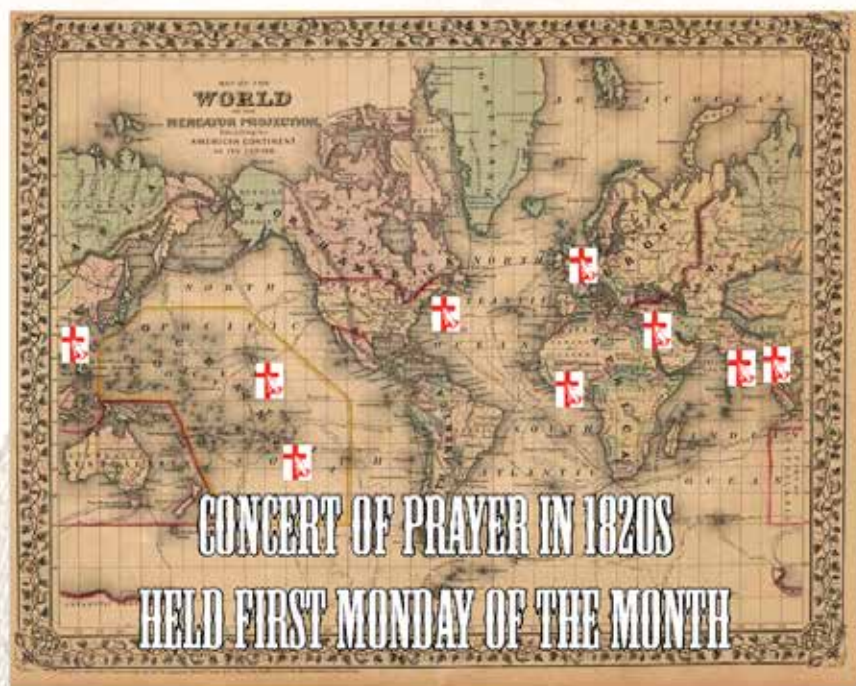
a revival of religion in five different colleges, besides more than usual seriousness in a number of others. In 1826, there was a revival of religion in six colleges; in 1827, in four : in 1828, in five. In 1829 and 1830, the Holy Spirit seems to have forsaken, in a very great degree, the institutions of learning. There were in them apparently but few conversions, and no revivals to any considerable extent. But the Lord had not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from them forever. He had mercy still in reserve. The year 1831 was emphatically a “year of the right hand of the Most High.” Nineteen colleges, to a greater or less degree, were visited with the effusions of the Holy Ghost, and it was computed that between 350 and 400 of their students were hopefully converted to God. In one college, a revival commenced the very day of the Concert. In 1832, God poured out his Spirit on some of our institutions of learning, though the number thus favored was small. The Holy Spirit descended on a few colleges in 1833, and some souls were converted. A promising state of religious feeling existed at the time also in other institutions. In 1834, revivals were enjoyed in a number of colleges, and many students were brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. During the last year, (1835,) eleven colleges were blessed with revivals, and between one and two hundred students were hopefully brought into the kingdom of Christ.

Since 1820, there have been revivals in the following institutions, viz. Bowdoin, Dartmouth, Middlebury, Williams, Amherst, Yale, Union, Hamilton, Geneva, Dickinson, Jefferson, (Pa.) Washington, (Pa.) Hampden, Geneva-Sydney, Washington, (Va.) Columbian, Oakland, Centre, Western Reserve, Kenyon, Granville, Marietta, South Hanover, East Tennessee, Illinois, Wabash, and Randolph –Macon, Colleges, the College of

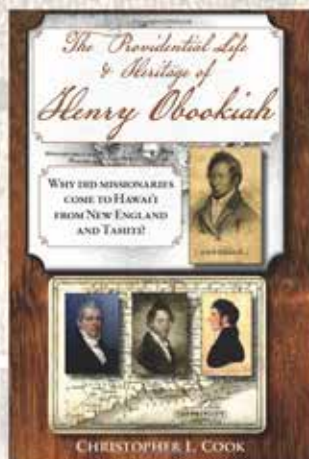
New Jersey, Brown University, Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution, University of North Carolina, University of Vermont, University of Georgia, University of Ohio, Wesleyan University, and Miami University. During this period, not less, probably, than 1,500 young men in these institutions have hopefully experienced the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit. Within this same time a large number of youth at academies and the higher schools have also become hopefully pious. In view of such displays of divine grace, who can doubt the efficacy of prayer? Who can doubt that this season consecrated by the church for united supplications on behalf of seminaries of learning, has the approbation and seal of Heaven?



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