The Journals of Cochran Forbes, Missionary to Hawaii, 1830-1864. Honolulu: Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, 1984. Pp. 208, illustrated. $6.95.

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Cochran Forbes, who joined the Sandwich Islands mission in 1832 and labored at Kaawaloa and Kealakekua on the Big Island of Hawaii for most of his fifteen years in the Islands, did not enjoy a colorful career. Arriving more than a decade after the pioneer generation, he perforce could not make the waves (or headlines) that Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston generated. It is not clear that he would have done so in any event, for while his own generation sparked controversy within the mission over its more liberal requirements for religious conversion—methods Forbes practiced—it is Titus Coan who is remembered, not Forbes.

Although his work largely escaped public notice, Forbes is nonetheless a representative figure of the missionary experience, both public and private. His social origins, for instance, resemble those of other Americans who went to the Pacific as missionaries—he was a devout and well-educated son of a modest farming family. But whereas the early missionaries to Hawaii had come almost exclusively from New England Congregational backgrounds, Forbes' background was Mid-Atlantic Presbyterianism; raised in rural eastern Pennsylvania, he received his theological training at Princeton. This variation in the pattern was not all that significant, however; Princeton, after all, was not Harvard. Forbes' departure for the islands was also well within tradi-

tion: He married Rebecca Duncan Smith in early October 1831, was ordained later that month, and set sail in November. Preparation for his new roles as husband and missionary had indeed been brief.

Forbes was no better prepared for his encounter with the island peoples. As his journals demonstrate—and the first two volumes covering the years between 1832 and 1847 are crucial here—he adhered to the fundamental doctrines of American Protestantism, doctrines that strongly shaped his response to the Hawaiians. As his journal entries penned upon first contact make clear, he was particularly struck by what he perceived as the islanders' idleness, "which appears to be *the great curse* of this people" (p. 28). That in turn suggested something else: "They appear to have no knowledge at all of the value of time & but little of its passing. There is no publick clock in the town. And they will not work any more than will just support them from day to day which they can do in about 2 hours out of 24" (pp. 29-30). Forbes' early reactions tell us more about him than about the Hawaiians, of course. The importance he attached to work and time mark him as one for whom secular and spiritual rewards were earned in direct proportion to effort expended. He was hardly unique in this regard among his missionary brethren, nor in the ramifications of his insistence on the primacy of these values. He and his compatriots were blind to the value Hawaiian culture placed on leisure and no less blind to the disruptive impact a cash economy had on traditional Hawaiian life, one product of which was to create an urban underclass for whom economic opportunities were limited. This blindness comes as no surprise: By their nature, missionaries are cultural imperialists.

And these imperialists had enemies. The gravest threat to Protestant hegemony came from Catholic missionaries, who, like the tide, periodically swept in and retreated from the Islands throughout the late 1820s and early 1830s. Forbes' journals, which extensively chronicle the Catholics' activities on Hawaii, offer an intriguing perspective on the clash between rival Western religions, which until now has largely been seen through the eyes of those in Honolulu. Forbes used every means at his disposal to counteract Catholic inroads in rural Hawaii. His verbal disdain for his opponents knew no bounds, but his efforts were not just rhetorical. In January 1840, for example, he toured various island districts with Kapiolani and other luminaries, a time-honored means by which to display the tight link between Hawaiian nobility and the Protestants, thereby shoring up the position of both the chiefly class and their missionary allies (p. 88). Within his own congregation Forbes set aside days for fasting, thanksgiving, and humiliation, and intensified the conver-

sion process, at once rooting out backsliders and more quickly offering communion to those who professed an interest in "the truth."

The battle lines, it seems, were tightly drawn, but it was not, as Forbes would have it, simply a clash betwen Protestant truth and papist lies. Those Hawaiians who crossed (and occasionally recrossed) the religious demarcation, often did so to gain particular advantages. The support Boki, as governor of Oahu, gave to the first Catholic missionaries in the late 1820s is a celebrated case in point, and is not unlike events Forbes encountered a decade later on Hawaii. Take the case of Akahi, the head woman of Kealia. She was, Forbes wrote, "pleased with popery, because they do not require holiness of life as a test of communion. She will probably become a papist as she is unwilling to abandon her lusts" (p. 88). In other words, Akahi wanted to control her life on her own terms, something those who converted to Protestantism also sought. In either event, conversion was a means to an end, the tempo and timing of which the Hawaiians themselves largely determined.

The Protestant mission's hegemonic ambitions were thwarted in other ways, too. This was, Forbes averred, in part due to the sinful behavior of American sailors, one of whom offered twenty silver dollars to a Hawaiian Christian for the privilege of sleeping with that man's wife. Forbes applauded the Hawaiian's stout resistance—"O how noble does the conduct of this heathen appear alongside that of Capt. S" (p. 134)—but such sterling examples (and the comfort they brought) were rare. Indeed, by 1845 Forbes had serious doubts about the present achievements and future success of the missionary enterprise. The Hawaiians, even after twenty-five years of exposure to Christianity, languished under a "dreadful heathenish torpor," which Forbes compared to "some poisonous substance which completely enervates him." NO amount of moral persuasion could arouse him, for "he instantly falls back again so soon as his friend let go his hold. . . . Thus it is with these poor heathen they are completely bereft of all true moral principles and are left as a drunken man asleep amid pitfalls" (p. 158). Not for him the sanguine prognosis of an inevitable Christian triumph that many of his peers avowed, a pessimism that historians of Christianity in Hawaii should note. Forbes' frustration, vented after thirteen years in the field, suggests that the Hawaiians were quite capable of maintaining indigenous beliefs and traditional values decades after first contact.

There was a private dimension to Forbes' analysis of public failures and failings; his vision was clouded by nagging concerns within his own domestic arena. His journal is by no means as rich in its detail of family life as are other missionary journals, a deficiency that is partly due to his

gender; in keeping with the nineteenth-century notion of separate spheres for men and women, the journals reflect Forbes' limited interest in and inability to comment on domestic arrangements. But there is clear evidence that not all was well at home. In fact, more often than not, several members of the Forbes household—Cochran and Rebecca Forbes had five children —were ill. Intestinal viruses continually drained them (as did the prescribed bloodletting), so much so that Forbes often spoke of his wife as but a "mere shadow" (p. 154). These debilitating illnesses undercut Forbes' missionary work, for not only could his wife not "attend to her domestic affairs," but she was frequently buffeted by "a good deal of depression of spirits" (p. 154). Her husband consequently labored within the home perhaps as much as he did with those he had come to convert. And the frequency of illness increased as the years passed, forcing the family in 1845 to move from Kaawaloa to Lahaina in search of better health, a search that was unsuccessful. Within eighteen months Forbes noted that his wife's health was "so precarious that I cannot be fully devoted to my labors without neglecting her" (p. 182). Her health proved of greater importance than his missionary work, and in October 1847 the Forbeses sailed for New Bedford. They may not have finished constructing a New Jerusalem in Hawaii, but they themselves were forever changed by its environment, a fact of no little significance to the history of nineteenth-century Hawaii.