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To Raise a Voice in Praise: The Revivalist Mission of John Henry Wise, 1889–1896.

AS THE LONG tumultuous summer of 1887 came to a close in Honolulu, the Protestant “Sons of the Mission”¹ found themselves in quite a conundrum. Members of the church administration had been supportive of, and involved in, the clandestine Hawaiian League that had recently forced a new constitution—commonly referred to as the Bayonet Constitution—upon the ruling sovereign of the Hawaiian Kingdom, His Majesty David La‘amea Kalākaua.² Hawaiian Evangelical Association (HEA) officer Rev. Oliver Pomeroy Emerson termed the act a “revolution” and wrote proudly concerning this “noble stand the sons of the mission took.”³ The new governing document both stripped most of the executive powers from the monarch and restructured voting qualifications for the elected legislature—essentially transferring much of the governing power in the islands to League interests. HEA officer Rev. Charles McEwan Hyde noted in a letter of 26 August, “The government, i.e. the executive power, is taken out of the hands of the Hawaiian people, who are utterly incapable of managing the government, or any business as we Americans understand business.”⁴ The political goals of these mission sons seemed well on their way to being achieved. Yet what of “the mission?”

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Native membership in HEA churches—a mixture of mostly Congregational and Presbyterian denominations—had declined significantly since the proud 1853 declaration of mission success by the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).⁵ The continuing high rate of death among Native Hawaiians due to disease was undeniably a factor in explaining the depleted HEA rolls, yet something else was also going on. Natives were leaving the churches of the HEA in large numbers to join other faiths such as the Catholic, Anglican, and Mormon denominations, and were also forming their own syncretic versions of Christian churches.⁶ The exodus of Native congregants from HEA churches paralleled the growing and more blatant association between their church administrators and the political maneuvers that many saw as distancing Native Hawaiians from decision-making power in their own nation. The acts of the summer of 1887, culminating in the imposition of the Bayonet Constitution, amplified this correlation for many, and accelerated the ongoing religious dispersal.⁷

Importantly, within the Native Hawaiian churches of the HEA themselves, a decided struggle between Native congregations and the mostly non-Native administration escalated. Facing a continuing loss of members and growing dissension, officers of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association sought to incite a powerful and lasting *Hō‘eu‘eu ‘Euanelio* (Evangelical Revival) among the Native population in Hawai‘i. They were aware that such an endeavor would need to be led by a Native pastor to be effective within the divisive and intensifying climate. The plan, therefore, was to educate, train, and send forth across the islands a small and specialized group of Native Hawaiians whose force of spirit and evangelical zeal would reawaken the flagging commitment of the Native people to the Protestant churches of the former American Mission, and by extension, the leadership of the Sons of the Mission.

The essay that follows examines these determined revivalist efforts at the close of the 19th century by officers of the HEA. Specifically, it highlights the administrative board’s drafting of a young Native Hawaiian named John Henry Wise to lead this critical operation, his evangelical training in the United States, and the dramatic outcome that followed his return to native soil.⁸ It contests previous representations of submissive, “missionized,” Native Hawaiian Christians by

highlighting Native action and agency while also positing the Wise example as representative of a broader struggle that was enveloping these Native churches. The choices made by John Wise, and many of his fellow Native Hawaiian congregants of this period, point to a self-created identity as Native Hawaiian Christian that refused the false binary of Christian vs. Royalist that sought to pit their religious faith against national loyalties. These po‘e aloha ‘āina [people who loved the land/patriots] defined, and in effect claimed, their Christianity.

A NATIVE MINISTRY

By the late 19th century the idea of developing a Native pastorate in Hawai‘i was not a new concept. The ABCFM had, since the 1840’s, been directing the Hawaiian Islands Mission to develop a long-term plan for the Islands that would not depend on costly support from Boston and would more closely mirror the foundational Congregationalist principal of local control of churches. That primary doctrine on church polity was reaffirmed at the National Congregational Council of 1865, held in Boston, when the council declared as their initial principle, “that the local or Congregational church derives its power and authority directly from Christ, and is not subjected to any ecclesiastical government exterior or superior to itself.”⁹ Nonetheless, at the time of the declaration that presented Hawai‘i as “a Christian nation,” only four Native Hawaiians had been ordained as ministers and only two were serving in Island churches.¹⁰ A decade later in 1863, when the HEA was handed significant autonomy by the ABCFM, the number of ordained Native Hawaiian pastors still stood at only four. The local Association itself noted, “The Gospel has been preached here for more than forty years” yet “In only a very few cases have natives been ordained, and placed over independent churches.”¹¹ In July of that year, long-time American Board officer Rev. Rufus Anderson sailed from Boston to deliver a sterner version of the message in person.¹² In a Honolulu address to the 1863 annual meeting of the HEA, the ABCFM representative again forcefully called for Native-run, Native-led, churches in the islands.

One of the near-immediate results of the Anderson visit was the creation of a theological school dedicated solely to the training of a Native clergy. A Pastor’s Training School opened in July of 1863

under the direction of Rev. William P. Alexander in Wailuku, Māui, with thirteen Native students.¹³ Over the next seven years the school licensed twelve Native ministers and appointed thirty-one of its students to island pulpits, although in some cases for only brief tenures. Recruitment waned, however, and by the 1870's the Hawaiian Evangelical Association was still far from being the Native-led, Native-run organization that the ABCFM had imagined.

Many within the HEA administration were reluctant to turn over even this degree of pastoral autonomy to Native Hawaiians. Rev. Elias Bond, member of the ninth company of American missionaries in 1840 and long-time pastor at the Native church at Kohala, declared in a 13 July 1874 letter, "we are driven now, at length to confess the Hawaiians, as independent workers in the Master's vineyard, are out & out failures. We must not mince words. The Haw'n, in his very best representative, at home, or abroad, having made his best possible record, as an organizer, + administrator, is a pronounced failure." He went on to warn, "were white influences removed from our churches today it wd. not be 5 years, ere a general wreck wd. ensue."¹⁴

There were significant reasons for the HEA administration to strive for the creation of a Native clergy. Membership in their churches had reached a numerical peak in 1856 and was on a continuing decline. There was a growing concern about whether the churches of the HEA would be able to maintain their influence over the Native populace. The Association's Committee on Instruction decided to create a new, centrally located, seminary that could offer among other things, the "advantages to be obtained from the mental stimulus of the metropolis . . ." ¹⁵ On 1 October 1872 the North Pacific Missionary Institute (NPMI) opened in Honolulu under the direction of Rev. John D. Paris.¹⁶ The school's three-year program curriculum included Bible History, Sacred Geography, Church History, Natural Theology, Evidences of Christianity, Christian Theology, Composition and Delivery of Sermons, and Pastoral Theology.¹⁷ Recruitment of Native Hawaiian students was an ongoing problem. A year after the NPMI had opened Rev. Paris wrote, "Aka, auhea la ka nani o ke aupuni kanaka ole?! Auhea hoi ka pono o ke Kula Kahuna haumana ole?" [But where is the glory of the Kingdom without men? Where indeed is the value of the ministers school without students?]¹⁸ Compounding the problem was the fact that Rev. Paris did not find all of the students who entered

the NPMI acceptable. Of the fourteen students who comprised the first class—five of whom transferred from the seminary at Wailuku—two were deemed unsuited to the ministry and another “haule iloko o ka upena o Satana” [fell into the net of Satan].¹⁹

In 1877, concerned with the ongoing failure to produce an extensive and enduring Native pastorate in the islands, the ABCFM recruited and sent its first new missionary to Hawai‘i in nearly two decades. On 31 May of that year, the Rev. Charles McEwen Hyde, former valedictorian at Williams College and graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, arrived in Honolulu under direction of the ABCFM to reorganize and direct the NPMI. He envisioned “a grand opportunity to do important service for Christ and for the world.”²⁰

Although the re-organized North Pacific Missionary Institute would produce forty-four Native pastors by the end of the century,



Ke Kula Kahunapule o ka Pakipika Akau (The North Pacific Missionary Institute) trained Native Hawaiians for the pastorate in Hawai‘i and Micronesia from 1877 to 1908. The building pictured was constructed in 1890 to house the school and was located on Punchbowl Street near Beretania in downtown Honolulu. Courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University and Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ.

many served only briefly and there remained a great deficiency; in 1888 twenty-eight of the sixty-six Native churches of the HEA had no pastor.²¹ In addition, the problems of the HEA within their churches were more complex than a simple lack of Native pastors. The growing involvement of church administration in the political affairs of the kingdom during the 1880's, combined with a more openly hostile rhetoric emanating from officers of the HEA towards Native practices within the churches, served to deepen divisions between the Native Hawaiian congregations and the all-white officers of the Hawaiian Board. The aforementioned revolutionary events of July 1887 amplified an already problematic racial discord. Some within the mission saw this divisive landscape as a long-standing problem of their own creation. On O'ahu, the HEA had a distinct, white church, Central Union,²² which was referred to as "the church," and ten other "native churches." Rev. Hyde, an officer of the HEA, explained in a later letter to the American Board that churches such as the Anglican Church in Hawai'i had "a large number" of "half whites" that attended, while none were to be found at Central Union. He further noted,

The course pursued by the American Mission has one evident result in our Church and Social life, an abhorance of miscegenation. Whoever of our young people marries a native or half caste drops socially, one might almost say is dropped out. Do you not see that this fact makes probable another factor in our present Social condition—a hatred of natives and half whites to the missionary party because of this social exclusiveness?²³

As the state of affairs became more acute, the HEA administration worked in a more committed and often-fevered manner to turn out trained Native subordinates into the congregations. The 1888 Annual Meeting of the Association addressed the situation with candor. A decision was made at that meeting to graduate eleven of the Native students of the NPMI early in order to get them into parishes "in this present crises of political and ecclesiastical affairs."²⁴ The effort to blunt Native Hawaiian dissension and anger and entice them back into the churches under the leadership of the HEA would need more than just Native pastors in the pulpits; the struggling movement would need a savior.

THE “EXCEPTION”

John Henry Wise, born in Kohala, Hawai‘i on 19 July 1869 to Julius A. Wise of Hamburg, Germany and Rebecca Nāwa‘a of Kohala, began his mission-led education as a young student at the Hilo Boarding School (HBS). Organized in 1836 under Rev. David B. Lyman, the school sought to teach young Hawaiian boys ways of industry and morality and served as a feeder school for the mission’s seminary at Lahainaluna. The school at Hilo became a vital link in the chain of mission-based education and was later described as the “nursery of leaders for the sacramental hosts of God’s elect.”²⁵ In its first five decades HBS sent more than two hundred pupils on to Lahainaluna and produced more than four hundred schoolteachers. The core of the training at HBS was always aimed at building strong Christian character. Rev. Lyman made clear, “The Bible, whether regarded to its influence on the government of the school, or on the Character,



The mission-run Hilo Boarding School, opened in 1836, began a period of rejuvenation and expansion after the arrival in 1878 of new principal Rev. William Brewster Oleson. This photograph was taken circa 1906. Courtesy of the Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society Library

mental and moral from time to eternity, is deemed of more influence than all other books studied in school.”²⁶

At the time of Wise’s arrival as a student in 1882, Hilo Boarding School was at a new location, near Haili Church, above Hilo, and was in the midst of a reinvigorating expansion after more than a decade of decline. The guiding force behind this rejuvenation was the school’s new principal, Rev. William Brewster Oleson, who had arrived in 1878. A Maine native, Oleson had also taken up an administrative position within the HEA as an officer of the Committee on Hawaiian Evangelization and would later become president of the Hawaiian Mission Children’s Society (HMCS). Rev. Oleson was outspoken and politically active, becoming a member of the Reform Party, a founding member and executive officer of the Hawaiian League, and one of the “persons chiefly engaged in drawing up the [Bayonet] constitution.”²⁷ He would come to be one focus for much of the increasing animosity among Native congregants towards their church administration.

Rev. Oleson, as both a school and church administrator, viewed his task at HBS as pushing his Native pupils to overcome “the pervasive immorality of the race” while gleaning the exceptions to be groomed as evangelical messengers. Serious concern existed about the idea of allowing for Native leaders within the revival. Oleson, and many others, felt that Natives should be given an education, but not so much as to lift them too high. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, mission son and founding principal at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, reviewed the work of the Hilo Boarding School for its Fiftieth Anniversary Jubilee celebration in 1886. In a letter to Principal Oleson that was reprinted in the mission paper *The Friend*, Armstrong wrote:

School training for the Hawaiians, the Africans, or the Indians should, in the great majority of cases be elementary, industrial, earnestly and practically Christian, not attempting the higher scholarship (though they can easily master advanced studies) but devoted to making self-reliant men and women of simple tastes, *above* their people yet *of* them and full of the spirit of missionary work for them. The Hilo Boarding School has better than any school at the Islands illustrated this idea. It is precisely what I have tried to do here. Not that I am in sympathy with

higher education for “the weak and despised races” for I believe in it for selected ones . . .²⁸

On 1 July 1886, Rev. Oleson began a new position as the first principal at the recently founded Kamehameha School for Boys (KS) in Kapālama, Honolulu, O‘ahu. Oleson brought John Wise and eight other of his most prized pupils with him to KS to create the school’s inaugural class. This school was now entrusted with heirs of the Protestant Mission education. Wise and the rest of the class arrived at a Kapālama school that exuded an exciting newness and vitality. The campus initially contained two dormitories, a dining hall, workshop, and principal’s residence. The young men chosen to attend KS seemed to be on the cutting edge of the future of Hawaiian education. Yet even at this remarkable new school, some things remained fundamentally the same. Education for these young Native men continued to have a focus of having them attain trade skills. Rev. Hyde, both an original Kamehameha School trustee and HEA officer, wrote, “We do not want higher education at all in the Kamehameha Schools. Provision for that will be made in other ways in exceptional cases. The average Hawaiian has no such capacity.”²⁹

For John Henry Wise, attendance at Kamehameha was an opportunity not to be wasted. He dove into his academic studies and extra-curricular activities, excelling in both. Wise was a gifted student of English and math. He also continued to hone two of the skills he had begun to master at Hilo: print production and carpentry. At an exhibition by the school at Kawaiaha‘o Church on 23 June 1889, Wise, as editor, read from the school’s first newspaper, *The Kamehameha Sentinel*. *The Friend* commented on the display of school talent: “Some of these Hawaiian youth were perfectly distinct in articulation of English words, which is not very common.”³⁰ Wise excelled in KS carpentry classes, winning a cash award as one of the young men who showed the most progress in his work in an October 1889 competition at the school. He was also very athletic, and was a natural leader. He helped organize the first KS baseball team, on which he played center field, and became an integral part of the 1890 championship “Kamehameha nine.” Intelligent, athletic, and charismatic, Wise drew attention. Oleson and others within the HEA took notice. This young

Hawaiian displayed many of the prerequisites that a candidate for the difficult evangelical task ahead would need.

NATIVE CLAIMS

The political turmoil of the late 1880's continued to engender a tense atmosphere throughout Honolulu during Wise's stay at Kamehameha Schools. On the morning of 30 July 1889, an armed group of over one hundred men led by Native Hawaiian Robert W. Wilcox, entered 'Iolani Palace grounds. In a planned attempt to replace the despised Bayonet Constitution, the men seized field guns and demanded to see the Mō'ī [Monarch]. Things did not go as planned and Wilcox and his men soon found themselves surrounded by the Hawaiian League's private militia, the Honolulu Rifles. Heavily outnumbered and outgunned, six of Wilcox's men were killed in exchanges of gunfire. He and the rest of his company were arrested.

The ongoing struggles within the Kingdom continued to remind the Sons of the Mission that while military and political battles could be won, the hearts and minds of the great mass of Native Hawaiians remained far across a troubled divide. The need to attempt to retain control of the Native churches of the HEA was now immediate. Corresponding Secretary Rev. Oliver P. Emerson wrote, "The urgency of the situation grows more pressing, but not a whisper of help from Boston comes to us."³¹

The HEA would continue its plea for new missionaries from the United States, but for now would need to rely on home-developed talent. Efforts in the islands had coalesced around a plan to train a select, powerful, Native force for evangelization among Native Hawaiians. Fund-raising circulars were sent out and private monies were raised. Speaking of possible Native leaders for the new effort, Rev. Emerson wrote to the ABCFM in early 1890: "Already one man has been found to take the matter into serious consideration + he was last year one of Mr. Oleson's Kamehameha School boys, his pet scholar he tells me."³² Rev. Hyde's NPMI was viewed as unable to fulfill the plan of further evangelical training for the important mission. The new leader would need to be lifted up out of the heathen environment that the HEA so often referred to in Hawai'i. The answer was to send Wise to the United States for a true immersion in the deep currents of American

evangelical training. Rev. Emerson explained the need to look elsewhere, "Take the matter of purity, there needs to be held up a new standard. The students at the N.P.M. Institute, as Dr. Hyde will tell you, have all of them come up out of a course of sin. Three years at Oberlin might put that man in the way of doing a great work for this people."³³

The plan was communicated to Wise and he accepted the daunting challenge. He had not yet finished his education at Kamehameha, but the state of the churches, and the nation, demanded immediate action. In July 1890, the board of the HEA voted to send John Henry Wise to Oberlin Theological Seminary for a three-year course of study. Weeks later, in August of 1890, this bright, articulate, twenty-year old Native Hawaiian from Kohala boarded a ship at Honolulu Harbor and set out alone on a journey that would cover more than 4,000 miles and end in a small Ohio town. There was a lot riding on Wise's shoulders and no one, not even this confident young man who was eager to serve his God and his church, could have any sense of how his mission would turn out.

AN EXPATRIATE IN OHIO

"The Hawaiian Board has also taken the responsibility of supporting a Hawaiian in Oberlin who is preparing himself for the native ministry."³⁴

Some of the late nineteenth-century religious training schools in the United States such as Yale, Andover, Williams, and Princeton had broad and deep ties with Hawai'i. The Theological Seminary at Oberlin, however, had something that held even more appeal for the Hawaiian Board and its new mission: a history and continuing reputation as a center of fiery evangelical revivalism. This Ohio seminary, near the shores of Lake Erie, had been founded in 1833 by New England missionaries who, spurred by the Second Great Awakening, had traveled outward from the country's evangelical base to erect institutions that would "train teachers and other Christian leaders for the boundless, most desolate fields in the West."³⁵ These early American pioneers for Christ were soon joined by one of the nineteenth century's most prominent and effective revivalist preachers, Charles Grandison Finney. Finney became president of Oberlin, and under his charismatic leadership the seminary grew to earn a national reputation for piety. By the late nineteenth century some Christians

were troubled by what they saw as more liberal teachings of the New England seminaries. Infamous Boston orator Joseph Cook declared, "Oberlin represented the original spirit of New England Puritanism better than any other institution."³⁶ Finney had once explained the Oberlin experience by describing how at this place "gales of divine influence swept over us from year to year, producing abundantly the fruits of the Spirit."³⁷ The HEA in Hawai'i was hoping for a sweeping gale of its own.

John Wise, now twenty-one years old, arrived at his new school in the middle of September 1890 aboard a train from San Francisco. He carried with him a deep sense of gratitude and indebtedness. In his first letter home from Ohio he explained to Rev. Emerson, the HEA secretary, "I want to thank the H. B. of M. [Hawaiian Board of Missions] for letting me have the first chance of their kindness, and I will try and pay them back by trying very hard to do what they want me to."³⁸ Wise noted the spirit of evangelical fervor that surrounded him. Oberlin hosted a university in addition to the theological seminary and there were lots of souls yet to be saved. On 8 October he wrote, "We had Rev. Fay B. Mills here these last weeks and he has done lots for our students. Over 500 of them became Christians, and he has stirred the people here in good shape. I wish he was at the islands. He has put new life into me and it will be my highest aim to try and be like him." Wise also noted other, more worldly changes so far from his tropical Hawaiian home, explaining the dip in his budgeted funds by writing "I have bought a good deal of heavy underclothing."³⁹

Oberlin's motto was "Learning and Labor" and manual labor was a significant part of the Oberlin experience. Considering the heavy course-load that Wise had taken on, and the rigorous academic standards that had to be met, he certainly had little time for idle activity. In a 17 November letter addressed "Dear boys" (likely his former classmates at KS), Wise describes a week filled with prayers, classes, lessons, chapel attendance, and Christian Association meetings.

We have breakfast at 7. Then morning prayers right after. At 7:45 I get to my room again and study my morning lessons. At 9 I have my class in grammar at 10 I have my Algebra. At 11 I go back to my room and study my afternoon lesson. At 12:15 we have dinner at 12:45 I get back to my room but most of the time I take a 15 minute walk and so gener-

ally get to my room at 1 then study my afternoon lessons again: at 2:30 I go to my gymnasium [*sic*] class, at 3:30 I go to my Physical Geog. Class: at 4:30 I take a little walk, and at 5 go to chapel. At 5:30 we have supper at 6 I get back to my room and begin my next days lesson.

This was Wise's Monday. Different courses, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) meetings, and other responsibilities filled the rest of a school week that included a half-day of courses on Saturdays. His Sundays, expectedly, were filled with religious obligations that included an early morning prayer meeting in which every student was expected to speak, a Bible class, a YMCA meeting, and both a morning and evening church service. Wise spoke to the boys back home not only of the demanding schedule, but also of the strict standards at his new school.

Every boy must be in their room at 10:05 and not go out till morning. Of course we don't have teachers with us every time but we are trusted to do the right always. Every boy must be at church in the morning and evening. Always send in a report every Monday morning. All the failures must be excused, if not for three times that boy is expelled from school.

No smoking, chewing or drinking. Cannot go out of town unless excused by the teacher. Always be present in your classes. Always have a good lesson, if not make it up on Monday. Not to be with the girls later than 7:30 in the evening. Not to miss chapel.⁴⁰

He acknowledged the difficulty of his workload, even mentioning that the large amount of expected reading was taking a toll on his eyes, but relayed that he seemed to be doing very well. Wise noted that his algebra teacher had embarrassed him by pointing out to the class the quality of his papers. The Oberlin instructor had spoken to the class of his work and commented aloud that she wished all her students had been educated in the Hawaiian Islands.

Wise's second term at Oberlin included new classes in rhetoric, logic, and church history. His positive reports back to the HEA were spurring confidence among the Board. Even though the project of sending Wise to Oberlin was costing a significant amount of money, Rev. Emerson now began including requests in his letters that the young Hawaiian student contact some of his former classmates at

Kamehameha in order to broach the idea of more Native trainees being sent to Oberlin.⁴¹

Time seemed to fly by for Wise during his first year on the Ohio campus and before he knew it the spring term, his second there, was coming to an end. Rather than finding himself worn out by a hectic schedule and a hard year's labors, he seemed energized and excited. Wise attended the seminary's 1891 commencement exercises as a spectator and wrote home with admiration of his "strong and earnest [*sic*] looking" colleagues who were headed out to the mission field. He revealed excitedly, "... I could not help from thinking that two years from today I will be among the graduates."⁴² He had attended a plethora of seminary lectures, revival gatherings, church services, and mission meetings over the academic year, but the summer did not offer a break from the religious immersion for this important seminary student.

The HEA funded travel for Wise to the Evangelical Summer Conference of the celebrated evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody in northern Massachusetts. Rev. Moody had founded two institutions, the Northfield Seminary for Young Ladies in 1879 and Mount Herman School for Boys in 1881, and the summer conferences at Northfield were attracting ever-increasing crowds of eager young students from around the country. Moody himself preached at most of the conferences and was often joined by a line-up of many of the most well regarded evangelist ministers of the day. A review of religious conferences across the country by the Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman mentioned several, saying "But Northfield is pre-eminently, in the judgment of many people, the most important gathering of bible students in this country, if not the world."⁴³ Wise left Oberlin for New England and arrived on the afternoon of 27 June in Northfield, Massachusetts. This eager and unabashed young Hawaiian seminary student, only a few hours after his arrival, was engaging the renowned Rev. Moody on theological topics. Wise wrote, "I went up to see him and had quite a talk with him." He relayed to Rev. Emerson the fruitfulness of his time at the conference:

There were over 500 students there from all around the world and I am sure we all received great blessings, at least I feel so myself. I think I have gained lots by this going east and I feel stronger for my work. I would like to go there once more before I come home because I feel

that my work will be more of an evangelist and Mr. Moody's speeches will help me a great deal.⁴⁴

It seems that an impression was also made on Moody. At the conference's closing meeting Wise was called on to deliver a ten-minute speech.

While at Oberlin, Wise also made good use of his talent in carpentry. He purchased a set of tools in Cleveland and took on carpentry jobs during his school breaks, explaining to Rev. Emerson that this was a way he could help ease the financial burden on those who were supporting him back home.⁴⁵ The young Hawaiian seemed to make his largest impression on the town of Oberlin, however, through another type of physical activity. In the fall of 1891, John Henry Wise joined the Oberlin College football team, becoming, likely, the first Native Hawaiian to play collegiate football in America. Football was a nascent sport on college campuses and the propriety of playing such a violent and dangerous sport was still being hotly debated. The annual intramural game between classes at Harvard was termed "Bloody Monday" and the ever-present "flying wedge" formation, which Wise led as Oberlin's left guard, offered a mass of helmetless offensive players locking arms and charging headfirst into the defense.⁴⁶ Serious injuries and deaths were an annual toll of the collegiate game. In a letter home to the HEA, Wise asked that his mother not be told that he was participating in the sport. Football had a fervent supporter, however, in Amos Alonzo Stagg, the all-American from Yale and coach at the University of Chicago. Stagg had lectured on the tie between sports and religion, arguing for an athletic evangelism.

The team that Wise joined was Oberlin's first to compete against another college and their initial opponent was a school more than twice their size. On Saturday, 24 October 1891, the twenty-two year old traveled with his team 140 miles north to Ann Arbor to compete against the University of Michigan. Oberlin lost that first game but the *Oberlin News* noted Wise's immense strength, reporting that he was "able to run with three men on his back without noticing the extra weight."⁴⁷ He would play well in all four of Oberlin's games that season and the team would finish with two wins and two losses. It would be Oberlin's next football season when the team, and Wise, would shine.

A recent law school graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, eager to try his hand at coaching his favorite sport, arrived on campus before the school's second season and offered to take up a position with the football team as player/coach. Oberlin's inability to offer any pay for the job was not much of a deterrent and the young man attacked his new project with an impassioned drive. It did not take long for everyone around the team to recognize his natural leadership ability and brilliant football mind. It is doubtful, however, that anyone knew the level of greatness that this first year coach would eventually achieve.

Born Johann Wilhelm Heisman, later known as John Heisman, Wise's new coach led the 1892 football team to an undefeated 7-0 season in which they beat Ohio State twice [40-0 and 50-0] and outscored their opponents 262-30.⁴⁸ The final game was a defeat of rival Michigan and when the team returned to Oberlin, Wise and the others were feted at an unplanned evening bonfire where all the players gave speeches and were cheered nearly non-stop.⁴⁹ The football team had gained a national reputation for Oberlin College with the school's name "being bruited about from coast to coast."⁵⁰ Wise, one of the stars of the team, was referred to in a Berkeley, California newspaper with his fellow guard 'Jumbo' Teeters as "two of the biggest men ever seen on a football field . . ."⁵¹ He had certainly gained recognition for his athleticism and determination in sports, but it was his mind and soul that those back home were focused on, and in that area of training he seemed even more dedicated.

Wise had begun to prepare a plan of action during his final term at Oberlin that focused his talents where he believed he could do the most good. "I ought to begin my work among the young people" he wrote on 22 January 1893. He recommended to Rev. Emerson that the HEA obtain a new building to house the YMCA in Honolulu. He also offered one explanation as to why the current association had garnered little interest among Native youth, "I know we have a building but the native boys are very slow in going there as everything is led in English."⁵² With a focused plan for the future, Wise went to work preparing himself for the labors ahead. He wrote in early March of extra academic work he had taken on, "I am taking a private study under Prof. Cummins on History, Organization, and Methods of work in the YMCA."⁵³ He was also preparing for his return to Hawai'i by



John Henry Wise (second row, second from right, in dark sweater) and the undefeated 1892 Oberlin College football squad that included player/coach John Heisman (second row, far left). Courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives

developing his skills in the pulpit. Wise enrolled in a choral class to improve his voice and informed Rev. Emerson, “I preached a sermon in front of our Pastoral Theology class and the boys thought it a fine production. I have another one ready to hand in for private criticism.”⁵⁴ He assured the Hawaiian Board, “Yes, I am prepared to preach, teach, yes anything.”⁵⁵

Wise had attended the First International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement in Cleveland as one of eighty-one student delegates from Oberlin. The convention hosted over 500 students representing 159 institutions from all over the world. Returned missionaries offered workshops and talks on the preparation needed to convert non-Christians. John Wise was recognized among the group as a Hawaiian Islander and was called upon to share his thoughts after the initial speeches. He felt it important to clarify his understanding of what was needed, and what was not, in Hawai‘i: “In the last meeting I was asked to speak of our need [at] home and I told them that we do not want missionaries to civilize us but to Evangelize us . . .”⁵⁶

By the time that his last term at Oberlin had neared its end, Wise

had spent almost three years in nearly constant theological study at some of the most prominent religious institutions in the United States. Indeed he had spent his entire educational life under the influences of a mission education that had only reached its apex here in America. Wise had embraced the evangelical teachings that had come in such a prolific and near-constant wave and was prepared in every way, writing, "Put me to work as soon as I have had a little rest after I get home, and we shall see whether the altars of Baal will prevail or that of Christ."⁵⁷ The HEA's prized pupil seemed exceptionally equipped to take on the task ahead. Wise himself seemed unbowed by both the situation and the work that lay before him. In one of his final letters home, a 19 March 1893 emotional missive to Rev. Emerson, this native of Kohala noted the tremendous religious and political turmoil in his homeland, placed a serene trust in his God, and made clear where his heart lay.

Let us trust in God for the best and ask his help in these hard times. He who can change the fate of the great nations of old will change the fate of our little country if we but put our trust in him. I love Oberlin and the idea of coming home nearly breaks my heart. I pray for her prosperity and if I could help her in the coming years, she will have my right hand. But above my love for Oberlin + America I have that love for my own Hawaii.⁵⁸

RETURNING HOME

John Wise was aware of the basic facts concerning the political situation in his homeland, even while living more than 4,000 miles away. He was, however, the recipient of a directed narrative. The Ohio newspapers, as others across the country, had carried reports on "the Hawaiian situation" throughout the early part of 1893. These stories supplemented the even more directed correspondences on the topic that arrived from Rev. Emerson and the Hawaiian Board. The mission paper *The Friend*, sent to Wise monthly from Honolulu, offered up a summary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom government on the front page of the February issue. A column entitled "A Wonderful Week" offered an explanation for the "shameful collapse of the once proud and noble monarchy":

Then, least looked for, and most dramatic of the series came the tragic, scenic, self-murder of the monarchy; when, encouraged by kahunas, the half-maddened Queen broke her oath, and discarded the Constitution, to the horror of her white partisans, and to the exulting hope of the people she was betraying, who now saw clear the way to cast off the incubus of her caprice and arrogance which they had so wearily and patiently endured. At once sprang forth the wrath and power of the conservative and long suffering whites.⁵⁹

Those living in Hawai'i over the past three years had witnessed the broad and determined calls by Native Hawaiians throughout the islands for a new constitution, both in the Kingdom legislature and within mass petitions presented to their Queen. They saw the Sons of the Mission, the men who were so desperately calling for a re-missionization of Native Hawaiians, challenged by their congregants as to whom was really being Christian. And they had heard early morning church bells ringing, calling Native Hawaiian Christians to their churches for prayer meetings that beseeched their God for the return of their beloved sovereign. The HEA churches were beset with an internal struggle that saw congregations pitted against an administration that had supported the takeover of the nation and promoted an annexation of their islands. When the steamer *Australia* arrived in Honolulu Harbor from San Francisco on 14 June 1893, John Wise was tossed into the middle of this tumult. It would not take long for his place in it all to become clear.

THE ONGOING STRUGGLE

One could point to several turning points in the latter part of the 19th century at which time events moved to more distinctly shape and define what was an ongoing and fluid relationship between Protestant Native Hawaiian congregants and their church administration. None of these times seemed to bring as much definition and clarity for both sides as the early 1893 coup d'état that overthrew the reigning Hawaiian monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani. In the aftermath, the ongoing tensions and battles within the HEA churches over political events in the kingdom erupted with a new force. Attacks from pulpits on the Hawaiian monarchy and pledges of support for annexation to the United States by some HEA pastors furthered the anger. The

Hawaiian Board knew that evangelical work among Native Hawaiians would need to be amplified. Three days after the coup, on 20 January, the Hawaiian Board sent a request for aid to possible patrons that stated, “The providences of these days are making it plain that the work of evangelizing the races that dwell together on these Islands must be pressed with redoubled vigor. The aboriginal people whom the fathers helped to rise to a better life, must be made yet more Christian.”⁶⁰

The HEA administration began to shape a narrative that sought to create a binary between a “Civilized Christian party” that supported the new government, and a “Royal Heathen Party” that sought the restoration of the Queen.⁶¹ On 22 January 1893, the Sunday morning that followed the overthrow, Rev. Thomas L. Gulick preached a sermon from the pulpit of Central Union Church in Honolulu entitled “Evils of Monarchy.” Gulick told the congregation, “It would seem as though human ingenuity could hardly have invented a surer method to degrade, endanger and enslave the people . . .” He continued with his thinly-veiled attack on the Queen of Hawai‘i by referring to wild rumors of debauchery at ‘Iolani Palace, noting that the higher one is raised in power “the lower they sink in subjection to their own sensual appetites making the gratification of lust a chief pursuit.”⁶² The sermon was meant for an audience beyond the congregation at Central Union. The address was published the following day “by request” in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (PCA)—a paper owned by Hawaiian League member, annexation commissioner, and HEA officer William R. Castle.

Churches were the sites where many naturally gravitated in the days following the overthrow, as Native Hawaiians had long linked church and state. Editors at the Hawaiian-language newspapers *Hawaii Holomua*, *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, and others, printed calls within their pages asking “na makaainana mai Hawaii a Niihau” [the people from Hawai‘i Island to Ni‘ihau] to come together at their churches and “e pule e hoomau ia ke kuokoa o ka aina” [pray that the independence of the land is preserved] and for “ka Moiwahine Liliuokalani” [the Queen Lili‘uokalani].⁶³ A week after the coup, Hawaiian Board President Albert Francis Judd received an anxious correspondence from Lāhainā which declared, “Ke pule nei na haipule e hoihoi hou mai i ka noho Moi . . .” [The devout are praying for the return of

the throne . . .].⁶⁴ At one of the largest and most renowned of the islands' Native churches, Kaumakapili, defiance of the Provisional Government, and church administrators who supported them, took extraordinary form. On 15 February *Ka Leo o Ka Lāhui* [The Voice of the Nation] published an article titled Haipule Mau Ma Kaumakapili [Ongoing Prayers at Kaumakapili] in which they explained.

Ua uluhua ka lehulehu i ka lohe mau i kela bele e kani mau nei ma ka halepule o Kaumakapili, i na wanao a pau, manawa o ka hora 4 a me ka hora 4:30. E kahea ana i ma kanaka Hawaii hapauea, mai na wahine a me na kane, e akoakoa ae ma keia halawai haipule kakahiaka, no ke noi ana ma ka pule e hoihoi hou ae i ka Moiwahine Liliuokalani iluna o ka noho Moi o Hawaii.⁶⁵

Some of the public have been annoyed in hearing that bell ringing at Kaumakapili Church, every dawn at the hour 4 and 4:30. Calling Hawaiians, the women and men, to assemble at this morning prayer meeting, concerning the requesting of prayer for the return of the Queen to the Throne of Hawaii.

This pre-dawn clarion call of congregants and elders at one of the main Native Hawaiian churches on O'ahu, resounding throughout downtown Honolulu, was more than just a symbolic defiance of HEA administration. It was a direct rebuttal of the posited link between "Royalist" and "Heathen." It was a claim on the God that HEA officers had always asserted that they knew better. When the English-language newspaper *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* complained about the early-morning prayer services, *Ka Leo* editors responded:

He hoike ana mai auanei ia oia nupepa Mikanele ia kakou, he mea maikai ole ka pule i ke Akua ma na Lani Kiekie Loa, oia wale no ke Akua oiaio hookahi. Ua ape aku kakou i keia la a kakou e lohe la i ka leo o ka bele e kahea ana i na kanaka manaoio o Hawaii nei. E ala e hele maloko o keia heiau o Iehove ke Akua Mana hookahi wale no.⁶⁶

The missionary newspaper reports to us that it is not a good thing, these prayers to God in the highest heavens, indeed the one true God. We did it again today and we will again hear the voice of the bell calling the true people of Hawaii. Rise and go inside this church of Jesus the one powerful God indeed.

The ringing of the church bell at Kaumakapili and the calling of prayer meetings that were repudiated by the church hierarchy only foreshadowed more deliberate struggles over control of churches that were developing throughout the islands. The Rev. Adam Pali, pastor at Waine'e Church in Lāhainā, Māui, and a supporter of the new Provisional Government, was in deep trouble in his parish.⁶⁷ Native legislator and lawyer William Pūnohu White was leading the opposition and church deacons had spoken of ousting Pali from the pulpit. He wrote to Rev. Emerson about the mounting pressure: "Ke auhulihia nei na kanaka na kane ame na wahine ma Lahaina nei." [The people, the men and women of Lāhainā, are revolting.]⁶⁸ Only days later the Rev. Samuel Kapu would add an anxious report from his church in Wailuku concerning, "hoopilikia i na Ekelesia o na Mokupuni o Maui nei, a me Hawaii apau." [problems in the Māui churches and all of Hawai'i.]⁶⁹ As the problems grew, Rev. Hyde assured the Board that much needed help was on the way. He wrote in late April, "Arrangements have been made for the return of John Wise from Oberlin."⁷⁰

WISE ENTERS THE FRAY

By the time Wise arrived home in June of 1893, a Native-led revival amidst the increasingly divisive climate in the islands seemed a necessity to the mission. After having him deliver a brief sermon at Kawaiaha'o Church in Honolulu the Sunday after his return, the Hawaiian Board drew up a plan for a Native evangelistic group that would include Wise. The "Komite Hoeueu" [Evangelistic Committee] that was created to travel throughout the islands consisted of John Wise and NPMI graduates Revs. Waiamaui, Ezera, and Timoteo. Some officers of the HEA were still wary. Hyde wrote, "I have often written about this. My ground for hesitation in regard to John Wise is the race characteristics, which so far have prevented the Hawaiians from any leadership in right directions to any great success."⁷¹ Yet Hyde was a realist. He knew well the condition of the HEA Native congregations. Soon, Wise would also. In a letter reporting on his brief trip home to visit his mother in Kapa'au, Hawai'i Island, Wise wrote of preaching to a large audience at Iole church. He explained to Emerson, "they are going to try and kick Kekuewa (Rev. S. W., the pastor) out of church just because he was one of the Native Ministers who went to see Pres. Dole."⁷²

Wise returned to Honolulu. *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa* announced the beginning of the important mission, “Eia ke hoomaka nei ke Komite Hoeueu a ka Ahahui mai o ka Pae Aina, oia na Rev. E. S. Timoteo a me J. M. Ezera a me John Wise, i ke komo kauhale ma Honolulu nei, a mahope aku i na mokupuni eae.”⁷³ [Here’s the beginning of the Evangelistic Committee of the Association of the Islands, it is Rev. E. S. Timoteo and J. M. Ezera and John Wise, in this town of Honolulu, and afterwards in the other islands]. Traveling to other congregations offered Wise not only an idea of the breadth of the problem within the churches, but also a clearer picture of one source. Writing to Rev. Emerson about their labors on O’ahu, he declared that a “drawback that we are having and a very bad one too, is Mr. Bishop’s articles in the papers.”⁷⁴ HEA officer Rev. Sereno Bishop, editor of *The Friend* and contributor to *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, had continued a steady stream of vicious attacks on the Queen and her “heathen” followers in both the English and Hawaiian-language press.⁷⁵

The committee traveled on to Kaua’i in October, visiting with Native Hawaiians both within the churches and in their homes. Wise stayed with Native congregants, hearing from those amidst the struggle and witnessing their actions to claim their churches. In church after church he saw actions by the great mass of congregants directed against an HEA administration that supported a government that vilified their Queen and offered up their nation as bounty to a foreign people. As Wise traveled from town to town, island to island, speaking with Native Hawaiians, his one-time mentor was on another mission, back in the country Wise had returned home from. HEA officer Rev. O. P. Emerson was in Washington D.C. promoting annexation. In an article titled “A Strong Witness,” *The Friend* reported on one particular address by the reverend, saying,

our dear brother Oliver P. Emerson was doing good service in Washington. He told the statesmen of the Capital, from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Presbyterian Church, how intimately the political issue in Hawaii then agitating the United States, was connected with the struggle of heathenism, revived by the Monarchy, to overthrow the Christianity of the native people.⁷⁶

The content of his speech was contained in another column entitled “Rev. O. P. Emerson at Washington: He Talks on Hawai’i. A Heathen-

izing Monarchy.” The HEA officer would move on to offer testimony to the Sub-Committee of Foreign Affairs of the U.S. Senate. Back in Hawai‘i the new HEA mission was faltering. After the Evangelistic Committee returned to Honolulu, Wise did not appear at several of the prayer meetings that Hyde had called.

In mid-November Rev. Hyde wrote an exasperated letter to the American Board saying “I am afraid that John Wise, whom the Board sent to Oberlin and kept there three years, is not proving any great help to our work.”⁷⁷ Two weeks later the December issue of *The Friend* addressed an explosive issue that had the nation talking. A front-page article concerning the possibility that U.S. President James Cleveland might restore Queen Lili‘uokalani to the throne was titled, “Impending Disaster to the Native Pastors and Churches.” The article, likely penned by Rev. Bishop, spoke of the religio-political problems within the church congregations and noted that while a few Natives were in sympathy with the new government:

The majority of their people are not so, because they are far less intelligent, and have been taught to regard this movement as a trampling on the inherent right of the native Hawaiian to be supreme in the government of his own country, however ignorant and incapable he may be of meeting the necessities of the grand civilization and immense production and commerce which have grown up in Hawaii, and in which the native has no part.⁷⁸

Hyde wrote on 4 December, “John Wise has been doing nothing for about a month, has espoused the cause of the Royalists, and does not seem to have much heart for the work any way.”⁷⁹ It seemed clear, as he had so eloquently written on the eve of his return, where John Wise’s heart lay. In a 1 January 1894 letter, Hyde questioned why the HEA was paying Wise “. . . when he won’t come near any of us but spends his time riding a bicycle or playing croquet with royalists?”⁸⁰ The next day a special meeting of the Hawaiian Board was called to discuss the situation. Hyde wrote directly to Wise on January 3rd with the Board’s recommendation that he seek other employment. He went on to say that “after some protracted discussion” it was decided that Wise could remain on for the following three months, at a pay totaling \$100 if he agreed to such work as Hyde would assign and superintend. He closed with the note, “I trust that this action of the Board will be satisfactory

to you.”⁸¹ A return letter the next day from Wise replied: “I am sorry to say that it is not satisfactory to me.”⁸² Hyde explained the situation to the American Board by writing, “John Wise whom we have been educating at Oberlin for 3 years at a cost of over \$2000 has been doing nothing but advocating restoration + associating with royalists, never coming near one of us, not even Calling on Mr. Jones, who paid \$500 a year for 3 yrs towards his expenses.”⁸³ Within months of Wise’s return to his homeland, after three years of training at Oberlin and elsewhere, the Board’s plan for him had failed completely. After all that the Board had invested, they were now forced to admit that they had lost control of their star pupil. Yet their dealings with this Native Hawaiian Christian from Kohala were far from over.

JOINING THE STRUGGLE

The oligarchy that had ruled since the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in January of 1893 had failed to realize their plan of immediate annexation to the United States; a more permanent form of government was needed to promote the appearance of legitimacy. On 4 July 1894 the Republic of Hawai‘i was declared. The move did not engender the desired peace and stability that had been hoped for. Special Agent reports by government informants filed throughout 1894 spoke of attempts to amass arms and ammunition by several Native groups seeking a restoration of the Queen. John Wise attended several important planning sessions of the Royalists and later testified that at a secret mid-December 1894 meeting with Colonel Samuel Nowlein he was officially commissioned into the Queen’s underground army.⁸⁴ In a pre-emptive strike against a suspected insurgency, Native patriots Joseph Nāwahī and John Bush were arrested on 10 December 1894 for “wickedly devising and intending to levy war against and oppose by force the authority of the republic of Hawai‘i.”⁸⁵ Both men, charged with treason, were imprisoned while awaiting trial. In the following weeks a shipment of guns would be landed at Sans Souci in Waikiki. Reports claimed John Wise had been seen cleaning and hauling the main shipment of guns that arrived aboard a steamer, west of Waikiki, in preparation for a counter-revolution. On 6 January 1895 a Republic patrol discovered a group of men with the guns. Gunfire was exchanged and Republic of Hawai‘i soldier Charles L. Carter was

killed. Government forces descended on the area and leaders of the plan to unseat the Republic, including Robert W. Wilcox, were pursued and eventually captured.

Martial law was declared in the wake of the events and a round-up of Royalist leaders and sympathizers produced the arrest of over 300 men. On 5 February 1895, the sixteenth day of a military tribunal, Wise was tried for misprision of treason. In a packed courthouse—he was tried on the same day as Queen Lili'uokalani—Wise appeared before the panel of military officers, pleaded guilty to the charges, and refused to make a statement. He was sentenced to three years imprisonment and led away. With the HEA's former star pupil now in O'ahu Prison, the Reverend Sereno Bishop would not miss the opportunity to use what he and some others saw as a failed experiment in Native Christian leadership to once again claim for himself and the other white elite of Honolulu the position of God's chosen. In support of this idea, an article titled "A Manifest Divine Protection" opened the February 1895 issue of *The Friend*. It stated that while one reason for the government's victory was the "vastly superior courage and prowess of the white man in battle with those of a weaker race," the devout should know that the success of the white leaders over the Natives was "the merciful gift of the Divine Protector, who 'teacheth our hands to war and our fingers to fight.'"⁸⁶

After the trials, Native Hawaiian women gathered regularly at the prison to pray for the release of the men. Outside petitions followed, along with prisoner requests for pardons, and over the course of 1895 the bulk of the men arrested were released from prison. John Wise wrote two letters of request for pardon during that year; both were denied. By the end of 1895 only eight of the more than 300 original prisoners remained locked away. The *New York Times* noted the affair, saying in a 23 November 1895 article titled "Honolulu May Release All Prisoners," that "It is probable that the few remaining native insurgents will soon be released, except John Wise, a native educated at Oberlin, who has proved a fractious prisoner."⁸⁷ Wise, although convicted of a lesser charge than many who had gained their freedom earlier, was in the last group released. In their first issue of 1896, the newspaper *Ke Aloha Aina* joyfully announced "Ua Hookuuia Mai. Ma ka La Makahiki Hou nei, mawaena o na hora 8 a me 9 A.M., ua hookuu pau loa ia mai la na poe paahao Aloha Aina i koe aku ma ka Halepaahao o Kauwa."

[Released. On this New Year's Day, between the hours of 8 and 9 A.M., the remaining patriotic prisoners were fully released from prison]. *The Hawaiian Gazette* described the scene saying, "There was a large crowd of natives outside the gates, and when the Hawaiians came out they were greeted with loud cheers." *Ke Aloha Aina* reveled in the fact that the last of the patriots had returned to be one with their families, loved ones, and friends, declaring "Hauoli Hape Nuia pu kakou i keia wa!!" [Now is a Joyous Happy New Years for us all!!]⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

"I never saw a more unchristian like set as these Missionaries, and so uncharitable as to abuse me in the manner they do from the pulpit."⁸⁹

—Diary entry of Her Majesty Queen Lili'uokalani,
5 February 1893

The Hawaiian "mission" circa 1893 was not the result of a teleological seventy-year presence in the Kingdom of Hawai'i by the American Protestant Church. Rather, it was a concerted and purposeful new "mission" shaped in part by the 1863 hand-over of autonomy from the American-based ABCFM. "Sons of the Mission" within the Hawaiian Evangelical Association administration were unwilling to accept the loss of religious, social, and political influence that a truly Native-led church would deliver. As tension in the Hawaiian Kingdom rose from a growing struggle over political control of the nation, white administrators attacked not only the abilities of Natives to lead both church and state, but also their abilities to worship their God. This led to the shaping of a new plan of action in Hawai'i by the HEA administration that called for a re-missionization of Native Hawaiians.

These actions by church administration engendered a powerful and decided response from Native Hawaiian congregations. While a large number of individuals left HEA churches for other denominations, many of those that chose to stay launched a struggle for control of their home churches. HEA leaders knew that amidst this environment they would need a Native Hawaiian who could stand above his people, leading them to return to the church, while remaining under administrative control. He would know the ways of his people yet abide by the wishes of his instructors. As Rev. Oliver Pomeroy Emerson put it, "Would that we had half a dozen Hawaiian born men to

help us who know the language + the people + who were yet white at heart.”⁹⁰

John Henry Wise seemed like an exceptional candidate. He stood out at every level of his mission-based education in Hawai‘i. To complete the conversion to the Christian leader that the HEA administration imagined, he would need immersion in the canon of revivalist doctrines that only God’s manifest country could provide. In the fall of 1890 Wise was sent to Oberlin College to receive the best evangelical training that America could offer. He believed strongly in his God and in his mission, and he worked tirelessly to equip himself for the most important of tasks. Yet upon returning to his land, to his people, confident in his understanding of the HEA’s plan and the field that lay before him, he witnessed something different. Asked to choose between his nation and his God, Wise defended both against the attacks of his church leaders. He challenged the assertion of his administration that their actions were part of God’s plan: he claimed his Christianity.

In explaining how someone in whom they had invested such significant effort, monies, and time, could so distinctly repudiate their designed mission, the church attempted to avoid allowing the issue to be shaped around religious and political dissent. *The Friend* posited a different, somewhat ironic, line of thought. The problem with Wise, they wrote, actually stemmed from his time in the United States. Harkening back to the warning issued by Samuel Chapman Armstrong regarding giving Natives too much education, the article declared that Wise had, while in America, become “inflated by his elevation in equal association with white youth.” There was still hope, however: “Being young he may yet learn wisdom and be restored to usefulness.”⁹¹

John Henry Wise served his nation and his people diligently throughout his life in remarkably varied and productive ways. He owned and edited the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ke Au Hou*, was elected to the Territorial Senate, worked as part of the Hawaiian Delegation to the U.S. Congress to pass the Hawaiian Homelands Act of 1921, served as interpreter for the U.S. House of Representatives, was a professor of Hawaiian language at Kamehameha Schools and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, served as superintendent of Kapi‘olani Park, and was considered an expert on Hawaiian tradition, serving as a translator for many important publications of ancient Hawai-

ian mo'olelo. When he died in 1937, the Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i renamed the school's athletic field Wise Field.

Wise's actions, during the critical years examined as part of this essay, like those of the congregations en masse, did not represent a rejection of Christianity. After his release from prison in 1896, Wise served as a pastor in the Ho'omana Na'auao Church in Honolulu—a non-HEA Protestant church—and continued to define himself as Congregationalist in the biographical information sent back to Oberlin College for yearly annuals. One obituary lists him as Rev. Wise. What he and the greater mass of HEA congregants were rejecting were assumptions by the white administration of the church that Native Hawaiians were unable to direct, define, and lead their own spirituality. They were rejecting representations of God's will that included a relinquishment of Native leadership to a land which their kūpuna [ancestors] had descended from, had served, and in which they were fundamentally and forever tied.

Like John Wise, the Native Hawaiian patriot Iosepa Kaho'oluhi Nāwahī had been educated in mission schools throughout his life and ended up in O'ahu prison for fighting those who attempted to take his nation. He too challenged HEA administrators' claims on both Christianity and Hawai'i. In May of 1895, soon after his release, and while sick from the tuberculosis that would take his life a year later, he wrote in *Ke Aloha Aina*:

Nolaila, e ka Lahui Hawaii, e hoonui i ke aloha no ko kakou aina hanau, ka Paeaina o Hawaii, alaila, e ola loihi oukou me ka oukou mau mamoma luna o ka aina o Hawaii a ke Akua i haawi mai ai ia oukou.⁹²

Therefore, Hawaiian People, let us increase the love for our birth land, the islands of Hawai'i; then, you and your descendants will live long upon the land of Hawai'i which God has given to you.

NOTES

This article is dedicated to the renowned historian Dr. Jerry Bentley (1949–2012). This piece came to life in a course he taught. R. W.

At the author's request, the standard practice of italicizing Hawaiian words in English text is not followed in this article. This change is intended to acknowledge Hawaiian as a Native, and not foreign, language in Hawai'i.

All translations in this essay are those of the author.

- ¹ “Sons of the Mission” was a term used by those both inside and outside of the church to describe descendants of the original American Congregationalist / Presbyterian missionaries to Hawai‘i.
- ² Five officers of the church administration—Rev. William Oleson, Henry Waterhouse, William O. Smith, Sanford Dole, and Nathaniel B. Emerson—are listed as co-authors of the Bayonet Constitution on a printer’s proof of the document held in the W. O. Smith collection at the Hawai‘i State Archives. Others in the HEA and HMCS administration were members of the Hawaiian League.
- ³ Rev. Oliver P. Emerson to Rev. Judson Smith, 7 August 1889, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu. The Hawaiian Evangelical Association, founded in 1854 as the successor to the Hawaiian Islands Mission, was the central association of the churches throughout the islands that gained a significant degree of autonomy from the ABCFM in 1863.
- ⁴ Rev. Charles McEwan Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 26 August 1887, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵ Sources include: Census Table of the Hawaiian Islands for 1853, *The Polynesian*, 15 April 1854; Report of the General Superintendent of the Census, 1896; Robert C. Schmitt, “Religious Statistics of Hawaii, 1825–1972,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 7 (1973): 41–47. While 56,840 Native Hawaiians declared themselves Protestant in the 1853 census, the total number of people (including both Native Hawaiian and other) that claimed that designation in 1896 was only 23,273. (The 1896 census did not break the numbers into ethnic categories as the 1853 survey had).
- ⁶ A collection of sources compiled by Robert C. Schmitt for the article “Religious Statistics of Hawaii, 1825–1972” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 7 (1973) display the broad trend of denominational migration and shows that by far the greatest shift was from Protestant to Catholic. The 1853 survey of Native Hawaiians lists 80.1 percent as Protestant. The numbers change to 36.8 percent Protestant and 24.9 percent Catholic by 1884 and 21.3 percent Protestant and 24.2 percent Catholic by 1896. Andrew Lind echoes this in “Religious Diversity in Hawai‘i,” *Social Process in Hawaii*, v16 (1952) writing, “The drop in the proportion affiliated with the Protestant church from 80 per cent in 1853 to 41 per cent in 1896 tells graphically the story of “back-sliding” and of proselyting [*sic*] by Catholics and Mormons during the last half of the century.” Church explanations for a drop in the numbers using the term “back-sliding” elide the more complex survey of Native agency that this essay begins to examine.
- ⁷ HEA officer Rev. Charles Hyde wrote of the “Revolution of ‘87, which gave the Hawaiian the back seat in political administration,” Letter to Judson Smith, 28 July 1897, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁸ John Wise had a long life filled with numerous significant achievements and varied positions including newspaper editor, school-teacher, territorial senator, and translator. This essay focuses solely on the period of his missionary training and subsequent actions to 1896.

- ⁹ "Debates and Proceedings of the National Council of Congregational Churches, held at Boston, Mass. June 14-24, 1865" (1866) Boston: American Congregational Association. 463.
- ¹⁰ Sources include: James P. Merseberg, "The Ministry of the Mission Field: Some Aspects of the Indigenization of the Church" (1965), thesis for Bachelor of Divinity, Andover Newton Theological School; Oscar Maurer, "Three Early Christian Leaders of Hawaii," Honolulu: Board of the HEA (1945); ABCFM, Thirty Seventh Annual Report of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association. While Native Hawaiians had preached in churches as "licentiates" before, James Kekela (1849), Samuel Kauwealoha (1850), Stephen Waimalu (1850), and David Malo (1852), were the first ordained Native Hawaiian ministers. Both Kekela and Kauwealoha served as missionaries to Micronesia.
- ¹¹ "Proceedings of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association at its Annual Meeting in Honolulu June 3, to July 1, 1863" (1864) Boston: T. R. Marvin & Sons. 56.
- ¹² Anderson served as an influential member of the American Board for forty-five years, wrote several texts on foreign missions, and has been described as the "Grand Strategist of American Missions" by R. Pierce Beaver in the introduction to *To Advance the Gospel* by Rufus Anderson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 9.
- ¹³ HEA, Annual Report, Honolulu, Hawaiian Board, 1870, 11.
- ¹⁴ Rev. Elias Bond to Rev. J. F. Pogue, 13 July 1874, HEA Letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ¹⁵ "Report of the Committee on Education," 26 February 1872, HEA Archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ¹⁶ Rev. Paris had been an unexpected member of the Hawaiian Mission since 1841. Originally assigned to the Oregon Territory, he instead stayed over in Honolulu after arriving with the ninth company of missionaries when word arrived that a Native uprising had wiped out the mission station in the Oregon Territory.
- ¹⁷ "Examination of the Theological School," *The Friend*, November 1873: 63.
- ¹⁸ "Hoi ke no Ke Kula Kahunapule ma Honolulu June 7 1873," HEA Archives—Schools—NPMI 1872—1885, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ¹⁹ "Hoi ke no Ke Kula Kahunapule ma Honolulu June 7 1873," HEA Archives—Schools—NPMI 1872—1885, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ²⁰ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Ephraim Clark, 16 January 1877, series 6 v29, candidate letters, ABCFM Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.
- ²¹ Twenty of the forty-four Native Pastors served in HEA pulpits for three years or less.
- ²² Central Union Church was formed from the merger of Bethel Union and Fort Street churches on 13 November 1887.
- ²³ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 26 May 1894, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ²⁴ Annual Report of the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, 1888. HEA Records, HMCS, Honolulu.

- ²⁵ Rev. Elias Bond, "The School and Its Founder" in "Jubilee Notes," *The Friend* November 1886: 2.
- ²⁶ Rev. David Lyman to Rev. Sheldon Dibble, 27 August 1840 in *Letters Pertaining to the Hilo Boarding School: 1834-89*, Unpublished letter-book, Lyman House Museum Library, Hilo.
- ²⁷ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Volume 3, 1874-1893*, (Honolulu: University of Honolulu Press, 1967) footnote. 367.
- ²⁸ Gen. S. C. Armstrong, "A Successful Piece of Missionary Work," in "Jubilee Notes," *The Friend*, November 1886: 6.
- ²⁹ Rev. Charles Hyde to T. Richards, 8 April 1893, Armstrong Letters, Williams College Archives, Williamstown. Two other boys, Samuel Keli'inoini and Charles E. King were sent abroad for further education at the Oswego Normal School in Oswego, New York, through funding by Kamehameha School founder Charles Reed Bishop in 1891.
- ³⁰ "Kamehameha Exhibition," *The Friend*, July 1889: 54-55.
- ³¹ Rev. O. P. Emerson to Samuel Chapman Armstrong, 16 November 1889, Armstrong Letters, Williams College Archives, Williamstown.
- ³² Rev. O. P. Emerson to Rev. Judson Smith, 10 January 1890, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ³³ Rev. O. P. Emerson to Rev. Judson Smith, 2 May 1890, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ³⁴ *Hawaiian Board Circular*, 20 January 1891, Judd Manuscript Collection. MS Group 70 Box 52.2.6 Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu.
- ³⁵ John Barnard, *From Evangelicalism to Progressivism at Oberlin College, 1866-1917*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969) 4.
- ³⁶ John Barnard, 15.
- ³⁷ Charles Grandison Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney*, (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1876) 348.
- ³⁸ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 3 October 1890, HEA Archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ³⁹ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 8 October 1890, HEA Archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁴⁰ John Wise to "Dear Boys," 17 November 1890, Record Group 21, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin.
- ⁴¹ Wise's classmate, Sam Kauhane, was referred to several times by Emerson. Wise replied that he had continued to write his friend and classmate from Hilo Boarding School and Kamehameha School, but without success.
- ⁴² John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 21 May 1891, HEA Archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁴³ J. Wilbur Chapman, *The Life and Work of Dwight Lyman Moody*, (London: J. Nisbit, 1900)
- ⁴⁴ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 14 July 1891, HEA Archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁴⁵ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 23 April 1891, HEA Archives, HMCS, Honolulu.

- ⁴⁶ There were eighteen football related deaths in 1905 and one journalist sought to put a stop to the bloody sport by publishing a two-part attack article titled "The College Athlete" in the June and July issues of *McClure's Magazine* in 1905. Henry Beach Needham, "The College Athlete," *McClure's Magazine*, June and July 1905. S. S. McClure Co.
- ⁴⁷ *Oberlin News*, 5 November 1891.
- ⁴⁸ Heisman was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1954. The annual award for the best college football player in the country, the Heisman Trophy, was named after him.
- ⁴⁹ Nat Brandt, *When Oberlin Was King of the Gridiron*, (Oberlin: Oberlin College 2001) 86.
- ⁵⁰ Brandt, 86.
- ⁵¹ "Oberlin Coach Puts Football Squad to Work," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 4 September 1926.
- ⁵² John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 22 January 1893, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵³ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 9 March 1893, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵⁴ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 9 March 1893, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵⁵ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 19 March 1893, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵⁶ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 4 March 1891, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵⁷ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 19 March 1893, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵⁸ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 19 March 1893, HEA archives, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁵⁹ "A Wonderful Week," *The Friend*, February 1893: 9.
- ⁶⁰ Circular of Hawaiian Board, 20 January 1893. Judd Manuscript Collection. MS Group 70. Box 52.2.8, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives. Honolulu.
- ⁶¹ These terms are used often throughout newspaper editorials, sermons, correspondences and stories. One example is: "Rev. O. P. Emerson at Washington: He Talks on Hawaii, A Heathenizing Monarchy," *The Friend*, February 1894: 10.
- ⁶² "Evils of Monarchy," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 23 January 1893.
- ⁶³ *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, 24 Ianuali 1893: 3; *Hawaii Holomua*, 24 Ianuali 1893: 1.
- ⁶⁴ Daniel Kahaulelio to Albert F. Judd, 25 January 1893, Judd Manuscript Collection. MS Group 70 Box 23, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu.
- ⁶⁵ "Haipule Mau ma Kaumakapili," *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, 15 February 1893.
- ⁶⁶ "Haipule Mau ma Kaumakapili," *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, 15 February 1893.
- ⁶⁷ Rev. Pali had angered his congregation by signing an oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government that had overthrown the Queen. He would eventually be removed from his pulpit by a vote of the congregation, setting off a divisive struggle between the congregation and church hierarchy.

- ⁶⁸ Rev. Adam Pali to Rev. Oliver P. Emerson, 10 April 1893, Judd Manuscript Collection. MS Group 70 Box 23, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu.
- ⁶⁹ Rev. Samuel Kapu to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 19 May 1893, Judd Manuscript Collection, MS Group 70 Box 23, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu.
- ⁷⁰ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 26 April 1893, HEA Letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁷¹ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 26 April 1893, HEA Letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁷² John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 26 June 1893, HEA Letters, HMCS, Honolulu. A July 1893 vote held at the HEA Annual Meeting on a proposal to call on Sanford Dole in his capacity as Provisional Government leader was divisive.
- ⁷³ "Nu Hou Hawaii," *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, 5 August 1893: 3.
- ⁷⁴ John Wise to Rev. O. P. Emerson, 13 September 1893, HEA Letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁷⁵ Besides editing and writing for *The Friend*, Rev. Bishop also wrote many articles during this period for *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa Puka La Kuokoa* and other papers.
- ⁷⁶ "Rev. O. P. Emerson at Washington," *The Friend*, February 1894: 1, 10.
- ⁷⁷ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 16 November 1893, HEA Letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁷⁸ "Impending Disaster to Native Pastors and Churches," *The Friend*, 1893: 91.
- ⁷⁹ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 4 December 1893, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁸⁰ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 1 January 1894, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁸¹ Rev. Charles Hyde to John Wise, 4 January 1894, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁸² John Wise to Rev. Charles Hyde, 5 December 1893, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁸³ Rev. Charles Hyde to Rev. Judson Smith, 5 January 1894, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu. Peter Cushman Jones financed the bulk of Wise's education at Oberlin and was a frequent and generous donor to the HEA. Jones was an HEA officer, past president of the YMCA, a founding trustee of the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association, a founding member of the Hawaiian League, and at the time of Wise's return to the islands was one of the four members of the Executive Council of the Provisional Government.
- ⁸⁴ John Wise repeatedly refused requests for information about the plans and actions of the Royalists during the period and did not speak publicly about the affair until offering testimony in a 1924 lawsuit. In that deposition he spoke of gaining an audience with the Queen where he and Prince Kūhiō laid out a plan to sail to the West Coast of the U.S. where they would purchase "2,000 modern rifles, 400,000 rounds of ammunition, and two Gatling guns" and recruit a band of 100 filibusters. Wise testifies that he and Kūhiō were unaware that a different plan was already underway.

- ⁸⁵ Trial Documents of Joseph Nāwahī, 4 February 1895, Republic of Hawai'i, Hawai'i State Archives, Honolulu.
- ⁸⁶ "A Manifest Divine Protection," *The Friend*, February 1895: 9.
- ⁸⁷ "Honolulu May Release All Prisoners," *The New York Times*, 23 November 1893.
- ⁸⁸ "Ua Hookuuia Mai," *Ke Aloha Aina*, 4 January 1895 [sic -1896]: 8.
- ⁸⁹ Diary of Queen Lili'uokalani, Lili'uokalani Manuscript Collection, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives, Honolulu.
- ⁹⁰ Rev. O. P. Emerson to Rev. Judson Smith, 2 May 1890, HEA letters, HMCS, Honolulu.
- ⁹¹ "Prisoners Sent to Hilo," *The Friend*, February 1895: 28.
- ⁹² *Ke Aloha Aina*, 8 June 1895: 4.

