



The Hawaiian Islands Edward P. Baker (1893)

Edward P. Baker was a white Congregational minister who, at the time he wrote this address, was pastoring a congregation in Hilo, on the island of Hawai'i. He delivered the address in Chicago at the World's Parliament of Religions, a pioneering multifaith conference held in 1893 to showcase religions from around the world. Earlier that same year, white Americans living in the Kingdom of Hawai'i had overthrown Queen Lili'uokalani and established a new provisional government. The provisional government asked the United States to annex Hawai'i, but this was opposed by US president Grover Cleveland, who held that the coup against Lili'uokalani was illegitimate. Baker used his address at the World's Parliament of Religions to make a public appeal for annexation. The United States finally annexed Hawai'i during the presidency of Cleveland's successor, William McKinley, as part of the aftermath of the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Little Hawaii is the smallest of nations. Its population is 90,000, scarcely the equal of a fourth-rate American city. But this small nation has, at the same time, more religion in it than any I know of, considering its size. In one Hawaiian town alone are a Catholic church; four Protestant churches, speaking as many languages—Hawaiian, English, Japanese, Portuguese, and Chinese; a Chinese temple, Confucian; and a Japanese temple, Buddhistic. There was in that place, some months ago, a sort of survival of the Tower of Babel and the day of Pentecost combined, in the shape of a polyglot religious meeting in which there was prayer and discourse in five languages—Hawaiian, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, and English—and the different nations of which that meeting was composed heard every man speak in his own tongue. So that I feel at home in this parliament; for votary of Christianity as I am, I have repeatedly held parliaments, conferences, or inquiry meetings with the priests of Buddhism, to learn from them their method of solving the problem of existence, and have listened to their preaching in their own temples as they inculcated our ordinary 19th-century morality. Nor should I omit to say that Buddhism is (as I am able to state of my own personal knowledge) a missionary religion, the Buddhistic temple located in the place of my residence having been erected in part by funds sent thither from Japan by the Lincheu sect of that religious faith.^a

Hawaiians here recently asked to be taken under the wing of the American eagle, but the United States (so I have just seen in the papers) does not want Hawaii. Very well. If Uncle Sam doesn't want her, John Bull does. And Hawaii will then be something, when at length shall be established that finest of all routes for the circumnavigation of the globe, the chief points of which are Liverpool, Halifax, the Canadian Pacific, Vancouver, the Hawaiian islands, Australia, India, the Suez canal, and Gibraltar. The Atlantic Ocean is the present Mediterranean of the world, but the future Mediterranean of the world will be the Pacific Ocean. The possessor of the

^a *The small temple in Hilo to which Baker is referring was erected in 1889 by a priest of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, a branch of Pure Land Buddhism, who was visiting Hawai'i to investigate the prospects for opening sustained missionary work there. There is no "Lincheu sect." Perhaps Baker said "the Shinshu sect," and the stenographer recording his address heard "Shinshu" as "Lincheu."*

Hawaiian islands will hereafter dominate the Pacific Ocean. [...] Uncle Sam should not be too afraid of wetting his feet. Abraham Lincoln used to speak of Uncle Sam’s web feet.

A small request, truly, Hawaii makes of Columbia for just barely helping us to secure civilized government. Hawaii is too small to take care of herself. I submit, ladies and gentlemen, that 90,000 is not population enough to constitute a sovereign, independent nation, levying war and concluding peace. It is all very well to say that Hawaii must be autonomous and free; but so saying is as if the good Samaritan had said to the wounded man at the roadside: “I will not help you myself, nor let anybody else. I am going to stand guard over you to see that you are kept in a condition in which you are perfectly free to do as you please.”

That land where the hurricanes, even, are as gentle zephyrs; that land of fire, which contains the two greatest volcanoes on the face of the earth (we Hawaiians are the true fire worshippers); that land which God has not yet finished creating (and new land was actually formed as late as 1887); that land of the breadfruit, magnolia, and palm—this land, I say, though small, sends its greetings to the whole world in parliament assembled [...]

Source: Edward P. Baker, “Religion in Hawaiian Lands,” in *Neely’s History of the Parliament of Religions* [...], ed. Walter R. Houghton (Chicago: Frank Tennyson Neely, 1893), 574-575, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/cool.ark:/13960/t6m04pp2r>. Public domain.

“The Hawaiian Islands” is the title under which Baker’s address was published in the official proceedings of the World’s Parliament of Religions. Edward P. Baker, “The Hawaiian Islands,” in *The World’s Parliament of Religions*, ed. John Henry Barrows (Chicago: Parliament Publishing Co., 1893), 2:1070, 1072, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3316178>. Elsewhere in the official proceedings (1:138), Baker’s address is listed with the title “Christianity and the Hawaiian Islands.”

The official proceedings published merely a digest of Baker’s address, to save space. The longer version that appears in the Neely’s edition is a stenographer’s transcript made while Baker was delivering the address.

Excerpts edited and annotated by John-Charles Duffy. A grammatically unnecessary conjunction omitted. A period converted to a comma to correct a sentence fragment. Other punctuation emended for readability. Some spellings emended to the variants favored in the present day by Merriam Webster. The use of lowercase in the terms *Hawaiian islands*, *Suez canal*, and *good Samaritan* replicates the Neely’s edition.

These edited excerpts from Baker’s address are intended for **teaching** purposes only. For **research** purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite one of the sources listed above.



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