

Melton Mowbray

At the ordination of Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston, “A larger assembly than had ever congregated here thronged the old meeting-house. There were many outside who could find no accommodation within. Nearly all the Foreign Mission School were present; as also several students from the Andover Seminary, who afterwards became missionaries.”

“Strangers, too, from a distance were here, the honored and the excellent. There was Governor Treadwell, president of the American Board, firm and dignified. There was Doct. Samuel Worcester, the first Corresponding Secretary of the Board. Far-seeing, of sound judgment, and sound theological views, he was accounted one of the giants. There was Jeremiah Evarts, treasurer of the American Board, and afterwards secretary; sagacious, statesmanly, earnest, Pauline in person and with the pen. The Prudential Committee of the Board also came on from Boston — quite a different journey then from what it is now.”

“The sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Heman Humphrey, who had been a theological pupil of Mr. Hooker in this place, and was afterwards President of Amherst College, from the words: ‘And there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.’ (Joshua xiii: 1.) It was quite in advance of the general spirit and sentiment of the times.” (Hibbard, History of Goshen)

Humphrey “was also an early and an enthusiastic supporter of Christian Missions. He enjoyed the honor of preaching the sermon at the ordination of the first missionaries of the ABCFM to the Sandwich Islands— Rev. Hiram Bingham and Rev. Asa Thurston. ... He was identified with almost every prominent organization in his day for the spread of the Gospel.” (Neill)

“Rev. Mr. Perry gave the charge in a manner peculiarly impressive, holding out the large pulpit Bible, and enjoining upon the young missionaries faithfully to follow the instructions of that book. Rev. Dr. Porter of Farmington gave the right hand of fellowship. That saintly man, Jeremiah Hallock, of Canton, offered the consecrating prayer. Father Mills led in the opening devotional exercise, and Dr. Worcester in the closing.”

“Of the pieces sung on that occasion one was ‘Jesus shall Reign,’ one that will not become obsolete or distasteful till the predictions of Psalm seventy-second are fulfilled. But the tide of rising interest culminated at the close of the service. Without previous intimation the two consecrated young men stepped into the broad aisle, and with clear, strong, ringing voices — Thurston, tenor; Bingham, bass; sung Melton Mowbray (‘Head of the Church Triumphant’).”

“The effect was electrical. Those young missionaries were looked upon as martyrs. Some pictured them as finding their graves in the bottom of the ocean; some as meeting with death at the hands of savages; some as the welcomed heralds of glad tidings to isles waiting for God's law, and for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Enthusiasm rose to the highest pitch. There are junctures when nothing but the voice of sacred song can either lift the soul to heights unattained before, or give utterance to its exalted emotions.” (Hibbard, History of Goshen)

“Small wonder that the grand old tune ‘Melton Mowbray,’ with the fervent words of devotion. ‘Head of the church triumphant, We joyfully adore thee,’ was chosen and sung by the band of missionaries at the ordination of Messrs. Bingham and Thurston at Goshen, Connecticut, September 29, 1819. The words and music must have struck a responsive note of inspiration and courage in the hearts of those brave souls.” (Richards)



Goshen Congregational Church, Schoolhouse and Parsonage-1890 (later rebuilt) (Hibbard)

“Such a moment was that. The whole occasion is spoken of, by those now living who were present, as one of thrilling interest. For this region, at least, it was altogether novel. The children of some who were there have caught enthusiasm as they have seen the countenances of fathers and mothers almost transfigured with lofty feeling, while rehearsing that scene and noteworthy occurrences at the Sandwich Islands.”

“The ordination of those first missionaries to the Sandwich Islands, with its antecedents and results, furnished in no inconsiderable measure the staple of conversation among religious circles throughout the county, but more especially here. Hearts and hands before closed were then opened. It was a temporary Christian normal school, an effective missionary institute. Goshen was that week one Bethel.”

“The sentiments and feelings of the community were toned up to a level they had never reached before. It helped to make and keep this the banner town in missionary interest. In proportion to its number of inhabitants and valuation, more was at that time contributed here to the cause, and had been for ten years, than in any other town of the county, and perhaps of the country.” (Hibbard, History of Goshen) (Asa Thurston had died on the field of his mission in 1868, and Hiram Bingham died a little over a month after the 50th anniversary celebration.)

The Pioneer Company of missionaries (April, 1820) introduced new musical traditions to Hawai‘i - the Western choral tradition, hymns, gospel music, and Western composition traditions. They brought strophic hymns and psalm tunes from the late-18th century in America. The strophic form is one where different lyrics are put to the same melody in each verse. Later on, with the arrival of new missionaries, another hymn tradition was introduced was the gospel tune with verse-chorus alternation. (Smola)

When the American Protestant missionaries first arrived in the Islands, they broke into song. Hiram Bingham notes that on April 1, 1820, off Kawaihae, Kalanimōku came onboard their boat.

“The chiefs, on this occasion, were rowed off with spirit by nine or ten athletic men in each of the coupled canoes, making regular, rapid and effective strokes, all on one side for a while, then, changing at a signal in exact time, all on the other. Each raising his head erect, and lifting one hand high to throw the paddle blade forward beside the canoe, the rowers, dipping their blades, and bowing simultaneously and earnestly, swept their paddles back with naked muscular arms, making the brine boil, and giving great speed to their novel and serviceable sea-craft.”



“These grandees and their ambitious rowers, gave us a pleasing indication of the physical capacity, at least, of the people whom we were desirous to enlighten, and to whose necessities we rejoiced to know the Gospel to be adapted. As they disappeared, the sun sank to his western ocean bed towards populous China, and the full orb moon, brightly reflecting his light, rose majestically from the east, over the dark Pagan mountains of Hawaii, symbolizing the approach of the mission Church, designed to be the reflector of the sun-light of Christianity upon that benighted nation.

“Then, ere the excitement of the chiefs' visit was over, Mr. Thurston and his yoke-fellow (Hiram Bingham) ascended the shrouds, and, standing upon the main-top (the mission family, captain and crew being on deck), as we gently floated along on the smooth silent sea, under the lee of Hawaii's dark shores, sang a favorite song of Zion (Melton Mowbray), which they had sung at their ordination at Goshen, and with the Park St. Church choir, at Boston, on the day of embarkation.” (Bingham)

“Head of the Church triumphant,
We joyfully adore thee:
Till thou appear,
Thy members here,
Shall sing like those in glory:
We lift our hearts and voices,
In blest anticipation,
And cry aloud,
And give to God
The praise of our salvation.

While in affliction's furnace,
And passing through the fire,
Thy love we praise,
That knows our days,
And ever brings us nigher:
We clap our hands, exulting
In thine almighty favor;
The love divine,
That made us thine
Shall keep us thine for ever.

Thou dost conduct thy people,
Through torrents of temptation;
Nor will we fear,
While thou art near,
The fire of tribulation:
The world with sin and Satan,
In vain our march opposes;
By thee we shall
Break through them all,
And sing' the song of Moses.'

By faith we see the glory
To which thou shalt restore us;
The cross despise,
For that high prize,
Which thou hast set before us:
And if thou count us worthy,
We each, as dying Stephen,
Shall see thee stand
At God's right hand,
To take us up to Heaven."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBQ6jg0GUn4>

When the missionaries first arrived at Kailua-Kona in 1820, King Kamehameha II and his entourage came aboard the Brig Thaddeus and listened to the hymns sung by the missionaries. "Happy to show civilities to this company, at our own table, we placed the king at the head of it, and implored the blessing of the King of kings, upon our food, and on the interview."

"All assembled on the quarter-deck of the Thaddeus; and the mission family with the aid of a bass-viol, played by George P. Kaumuali'i, and of the voices of the captain and officers, sang hymns of praise."

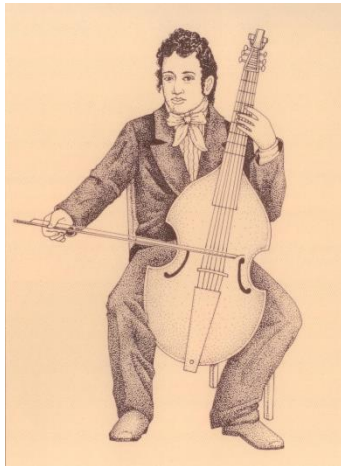
"Apparently pleased with this exercise, and with their interview with the strangers, our royal visitors gave us a friendly parting aloha, and returned with favorable impressions of the singular group of newcomers, who were seeking among them an abode in their isolated territories." (Bingham)



Later, on April 23, the first Sabbath on land, at Honolulu, "Probably the first sabbath in which the worship of Jehovah was ever observed in these pagan Isles. We have had divine service to-day in our own dwelling - our straw-thatched cottage - the congregation composed of white residents and Commanders of vessels now lying at the harbour, with many of the natives seated on the mats and surrounding the door." (Sybil Bingham)

“To-day, for the first time, we have public worship on land. A considerable audience of European and American residents, masters and other officers of vessels, chiefs, sailors, and common natives assembled, in and about the house occupied by Mr. Bingham, to hear the sound of the gospel, for the first time on these long neglected heathen shores.”

“The discourse was from Luke ii. 10. Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. The theme, the scene, the opening prospect, the dawning light of a brighter day, the incipient songs of Zion, conspire to animate our hearts, and to awaken an unusual joy in our souls, while we listened to the language of the messenger from heaven, and seemed to be favoured with the special presence of Him, who was born in the city of David, a Saviour, even Christ the Lord.”



“Our singing, aided by the bass viol, on which G. P. Tamoree (Humehume) played, was pleasing to the natives, and will probably have a salutary influence in winning them to approve and to engage in Christian worship.” (Journal of the Mission, Missionary Herald, May, 1821)

“One of the oldest residents, Mr. H—, at the sound of the songs of Zion had the tears upon his furrowed cheek. He had heard nothing of the kind for more than twenty years. He is a native of Mass. O, that it might appear that the gospel is not sent to him and others, after this long voluntary banishment from it, in vain.” (Sybil Bingham)

It has been stated that formerly there was no word in the Hawaiian language for singing as we know it. The modern term is hīmeni an adaptation of the word hymn. The native Hawaiians first obtained an idea of real melody from the hymn singing of the missionaries. (Roberts)

Once established in the Islands, missionaries used songs as a part of the celebration, as well as learning process. “At this period, the same style of sermons, prayers, songs, interrogations, and exhortations, which proves effectual in promoting revivals of religion, conversion, or growth in grace among a plain people in the United States was undoubtedly adapted to be useful at the Sandwich Islands. ... some of the people who sat in darkness were beginning to turn their eyes to the light”. (Bingham)

Missionary Period

Over the course of a little over 40-years (1820-1863 - the “Missionary Period”), about 184-men and women in twelve Companies served in Hawai’i to carry out the mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands. Collaboration between Native Hawaiians and American Protestant missionaries resulted in, among other things, the

- Introduction of Christianity;
- Development of a written Hawaiian language and establishment of schools that resulted in widespread literacy;
- Promulgation of the concept of constitutional government;
- Combination of Hawaiian with Western medicine; and
- Evolution of a new and distinctive musical tradition (with harmony and choral singing)