

Liu, Liyuan (2023)

The Work of the American Protestant Missionaries on Muslim Evangelization and Their Perceptions and Interactions with Muslim Turks during the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Period in Turkey (1878-1929)

PhD thesis. SOAS University of London

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25501/SOAS.00039594>

<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/39594/>

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**The Work of the American Protestant Missionaries on Muslim Evangelization and Their Perceptions and Interactions with Muslim Turks during the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Period in Turkey (1878-1929)**

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Liyuan Liu  
December, 2020

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## **Abstract**

The American missionary activities in late Ottoman society profoundly changed the Middle East landscape. At the American Historical Association's Conference in 1968, the American missionaries were addressed as "the invisible men of American history", implying their significance in shaping American history both at home and abroad. However, in terms of Turkish Muslims, despite being the majority group among Ottomans and in Turkey, their encounters with the American missionaries have largely been neglected in existing literature. This dissertation unveils the painstaking and reticent missionary enterprise by the American Protestant missionaries of American Board of Commissioner for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to evangelize the Muslim population in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic (1878-1929): the Muslim Mission. It also examines the Ottoman-Muslim-missionary encounters in various dimensions, including their interactions over educational, medical, gender, and minority issues, and their mutual attitudes and perceptions. This research particularly focuses on the questions of how the American Board developed the Muslim Mission through differentiation from the Christian Mission, and how the American mission was reflected by the Ottoman government and its Muslim subjects in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic of Turkey. The question of how the changing societal-political circumstances in the Ottoman Empire forcefully changed the agenda and conceptions of the American missionaries' 'Muslim evangelization' will also be examined throughout the study.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of my committee for all their help and guidance. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr Yorgos Dedes, for his patience and understanding at every stage of my dissertation. I also give especial thanks to SOAS for offering me a precious chance to pursue my educational vision, and to my undergraduate university BFSU for financing my first year's Master's study in London as a student of the Regional Studies projects of China. Meanwhile, I feel I have owed my parents so much as they have sacrificed a lot to support my long PhD study abroad. Last but not least, I appreciate all my friends who have supported me throughout the past years.

## Study Background and Literature Review

American foreign missionary activities are not only part of the history of American theological development but also American cultural history on the international stage. More importantly, as an important factor shaping modern histories in gender, social, cultural, religious, and political dimensions of the Middle East, Asia and Africa, this topic sheds light on the complexity of contemporary American foreign relations, particularly with the Middle East. The study of American Missionary encounters in the Ottoman lands – the focus of this dissertation – is a major topic in the field of Christian Mission studies that has evolved over more than 100 years and continues to be explored today. Such study started as early as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the first relevant work published in 1872. This publication – *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign-Missions to the Oriental Churches* – was written by Rufus Anderson, the former foreign secretary of American Board of Commissioner for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) during 1832-1866. With reference to the 50-year history of the Missionary Herald and missionaries' annual reports, Anderson recorded the history of the American Protestant missionaries' activities in the oriental countries, beginning with the early 19th century.<sup>1</sup>

Like Anderson, these earlier authors mainly had a missionary background – many of them were former missionaries and missionary administrators who were involved in the missionary movement. These studies of American missionaries constitute the major proportion of studies about the American-Turkish relationship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until the 1960s, these studies mainly concerned missionaries' cultural conversions and emphasized the American role in the modernization of the late Ottoman Empire

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<sup>1</sup> Other early publications relevant to American foreign missions in the Middle East include: *Foreign Missions, Their Relations and Claims* (Anderson, 1874); *Presbyterian foreign missions; an account of the foreign missions of the Presbyterian church in the U.S.A.* (Speer, 1901); *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Strong, 1910); and *One hundred years: A history of the foreign missionary work of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* (1936, Brown).



and modern Turkey – they generally represented a distorted and stereotypical Turkish-Islamic image, reflecting the scholarship’s lack of interest in Middle East cultures. As the main writers were travellers and missionaries themselves, such as Arthur Hornblow and Edward Prime, they tended to frame the Americans as the undertakers of sacred mission to modernize the region, to civilize and ‘enlighten’ local people, instead of considering the relationship to be reciprocal. These works provided useful historical introductions and sources for later Western missionary studies, but they are not unbiased academic publications – one can note their explicit evangelical tone within the framework of a denominational agenda.

From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as studies of Western missions became increasingly taken up by scholars from different academic backgrounds rather than religious circles, there was a positive quantitative growth and diversification of perspectives in studies of American missions in the Ottoman Middle East. Studies connected to the mission of ABCFM – the leading missionary institution in America – in the Third World has drawn more academic attention since the Cold War. Historians have been increasingly concerned about the educational and cultural dimensions of the American missions.<sup>2</sup> In his 1968 annual address, the president of the American History Association, John Fairbank, noted that scholars had become interested in saving missionary histories from the missionary authors themselves.

One general theme in recent scholarship is the evaluation of American missions’ social and cultural implications. ‘To what extent have missionary movements and their institutions contributed to Ottoman Turkish-Arabic modernization’ and ‘to what

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<sup>2</sup> Such scholarly works include: *Amerika und die orientalischen Kirchen: Ursprung und Anfang der amerikanischen Mission unter den Nationalkirchen Westasiens*. (Kawerau, 2019).; *Nineteenth century American schools in the Levant: a study of purposes*. University of Michigan (Lindsay, 1964); ‘American philanthropy in the Middle East, 1820–1960’ (Daniel, 1970); ‘Pioneers East, the Early American Experience in the Middle East’. (Finne,1967); *Protestant diplomacy and the Near East: missionary influence on American policy, 1810-1927*. (Grabill,1971) *An American mission: the role of the American University of Beirut*. (Hanna, 1979); and (Stone, 1984) *Academies for Anatolia: a study of the rationale, program and impact of the education sponsored by the American Board in Turkey, 1830-1980*.

extent has American culture been exerted on Ottoman Turkish and Arabic populations through missionary activities' are important questions which have preoccupied existing publications. Today's researchers generally agree that American missions played a crucial role in reshaping Ottoman society and this cannot be evaluated through the limited number of their converts alone.<sup>3</sup> Another common supposition is that the American missionary presence in the Ottoman Empires was positively correlated with regional socioeconomic attainment, and that the appearance of a missionary-produced Ottoman middle-class was generally conducive to the Ottoman Empire's enlightening and modernizing processes.<sup>4</sup>

Among later works, a representative monograph is A.L. Tibawi's *American Interests in Syria, 1800–1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (1966), which together with his earlier 1961 work on British interests in Palestine, established him as a leading figure in the field. A notable contribution is Tibawi's extensive use of newly uncovered materials, including not only American missionary documents, but also those of Ottoman archives for this first time. Through this approach, Tibawi provides a detailed case study of the American missionaries' efforts, conflicts in Syria, and their uneasy relationship with the ABCFM in the American centre. He implies that there was a gradual "secularization" in the missionaries' educational and publishing work, which is an inevitable means of maintaining American missionary influence in the Middle East. Notably, the American missionaries' attitude towards Ottoman Syrians in their correspondence and records was found to be ambivalent and patronizing. Despite this "spiritual arrogance", Tibawi generally holds a positive view towards the education work, medical service, and printing press that the missionaries

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<sup>3</sup> Several relevant overviews in recent years include: *Mission as Factor of Change in Turkey nineteenth to the first half of the twentieth century* (Kieser, 2002); *American Missionaries in Ottoman Lands: Foundational Encounters* (Sharkey, 2010); and *The American Protestant Missionary Network in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1914* (Ümit, 2014). *Amerikalıların Harput'taki misyonerlik faaliyetleri* (Açıkses 2003); *"Missions in Eden": Shaping an Educational and Social Program for the Armenians in Eastern Turkey (1855-1895)* (Merguerian, 2006); and *Artillery of Heaven* (Makdisi, 2008) apply this theme within the scope of Ottoman Harput, Kharpert and Lebanon in early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> Amasyalı, E. (2022). 'Protestant missionary education and the diffusion of women's education in ottoman turkey: A historical GIS analysis'. *Social Science History*, 46(1), pp.173-222.

introduced to the local community. However, Tibawi's conclusion that the American missionary educational work was "a consummation of evangelical endeavour" is doubtful as the authenticity of the missionary records was not always considered.

The number of monographs and articles relevant to American missionary studies continues to grow quickly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Besides treatises and articles, several edited volumes have also been published in recent years as the productions of international conferences on Western missions.<sup>5</sup> The general development of the academic environment, the increased availability of Missionary documents, and the rising academic interests in encounters in the Muslim and Christian worlds following 9/11 have all boosted this growth. More works involve multiple themes because scholarship increasingly tends to take local political, societal, religious, and cultural complexities into account when evaluating Western missionary activities in the Middle East. Studies have begun to transcend national boundaries with a transnational approach to evaluating the Christian Mission encounters. For examples, H.J. Sharkey has highlighted the unexpected consequences of cultural conversions on the Christian Mission in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.<sup>6</sup>

Many other thematic trends emerged from the 1980s and are still widely discussed until today. One of these was to discuss the ideological relations between the 'evangelization' and 'civilization' of the American missions, exemplified by William R. Hutchison's (1987) *Errand to the World, American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*. This book filled an early gap by providing a comprehensive history of American missions' back-home theories from the colonial to the contemporary period that had generally been neglected by scholars. Through the historical accounts,

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Doğan, M. A. (2011). *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*. University of Utah Press. There are also special edited journal issues on this topic, such as Baer, M., Makdisi, U., and Shryock, A. (2009). 'Tolerance and Conversion in the Ottoman Empire: A Conversation'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51(4), pp.927-940.; and Doumato, E. A. (2002). 'Missionary Transformations: Gender, Culture and Identity in the Middle East'. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 13(4), pp.373-376.

<sup>6</sup> Sharkey, H.J. (Ed.) (2013). *Cultural conversions: unexpected consequences of Christian missionary encounters in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia*. Syracuse University Press.

Hutchison suggested that a sense of missionary burden was generated with the revival of millennialism. Such an ideological and theoretical millennial burden vested the American missions with a self-assumed global American redemptive role, and justified Americans' cultural mandate to the world, which was also evident in the US political and economic rhetoric of that time. American foreign mission activists went beyond religious dimensions and caused tensions between the missions' Christianizing and civilizing dimensions. Although Hutchison does not provide a study of missionary front-line practice but a history of Protestant thoughts about its foreign missions, his insightful perspectives on the cultural imperialist nature of American missions provided jumping-off points for future scholars on American missions in the Middle East who discerned the intersection of Middle East centralism and American expansionism behind American missions. The religious-political connotations of the American Protestant missions posited by Hutchison are still debated today.

Gender also emerged as an important theme in American Missionary studies from the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> Yet works on American missions directed at Middle Eastern women were less common in these early works. *The Beginnings of Secondary Education for Armenian Women: The Armenian Female Seminary in Constantinople* (Merguerian, 1990) was one of the first works that engaged this theme by studying an American missionary educational enterprise for Armenian women in the Ottoman hinterlands. Other important works on American-Middle Eastern gender-oriented studies is Abu-Lughod's (1998) book *Remaking the Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, which featured discussions of American missionaries' influences on the transformation of women's education and gender relations in the Middle East.

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<sup>7</sup> Such works include: *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Beaver, 1980); *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Missions Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Hill, 1985); and *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Robert, 1996).

As a crucial approach to understanding the social-cultural implications of American missions, gender-based analyses became increasingly popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Like the earlier gender-oriented publications, ‘to what extent have American missionary women influenced changes in gender relations, social conventions and women’s awareness of modernity in Ottoman Turkey and the Middle East’ is a common theme in these works. A key methodology to answer this question lies in examining one or more missionary institutions run by and for women, such as orphanages, hospitals, and women’s schools.<sup>8</sup> In more recent studies, historians have managed to examine the American missionary influence on Ottoman women’s changes through statistical and mathematical methodology. For example, Emre Amasyalı explored the indirect effect of missionary presence and Christian competition on local Ottoman women’s education with a focus on human capital spillovers across ethno-religious lines through a GIS dataset, arguing that missionary presence is negatively related to share of population with a high school degree.<sup>9</sup> Finally, previous studies have shown that the later American educational mission generated a gendered dimension because the majority of missionary staff were women, and a relatively greater need for education was felt by Muslim women more than men in the Ottoman Empire (Sharkey, 2008; Reeves Ellington, 2013). Beyond the Ottoman Empire, there are also several notable studies that argue that the most important Protestant missionary contribution in education was its catalytic role in women’s emancipation. By comparing the larger educational gain of women to men, some researchers claimed a disproportionate influence of Protestant missions on the basis of gender.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Important publications include: *The Impact of American Protestant Missions in Lebanon on the Construction of Female Identity, 1860-1950* (Flesichmann, 2002); *19th-century Protestant Missions and Middle Eastern Women: An Overview* (Murre-van den Berg, 2005); *Petko Slaveykov, The Protestant Press and the Gendered Language of Moral Reform in Bulgarian Nationalism* (Reeves-Ellington, 2011); *The Gospel of Health-American Missionaries and the Transformation of Ottoman Turkish Women's Bodies, 1890-1932* (Kahlenberg, 2016); and *Of Women, Faith, and Nation American Protestantism and the Kyrias School for Girls, Albania* (Pahumi, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Amasyalı, E. (2022). ‘Protestant missionary education and the diffusion of women’s education in ottoman turkey: A historical GIS analysis’. *Social Science History*, 46(1), pp.173-222. Nunn, N., Akyeampong, E., Bates, R., and Robinson, J. A. (2014). ‘Gender and missionary influence in colonial Africa’. *African development in historical perspective*.

<sup>10</sup> Fourie, J., Ross, R., and Viljoen, R. 2014. ‘Literacy at South African mission stations’. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 40.4: 781-800.

Another important topic, studies on missionary printing presses and their publication operations in the Middle East provide a perspective to evaluate the American missionary movements from a social-cultural dimension. As a continuation of earlier studies (Coakley, 1999; Berg, 1999)<sup>11</sup>, this topic has been discussed in many recent publications, such as *One Script, Two Languages: Garabed Panosian and His Armeno-Turkish Newspapers in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire* (Ueno, 2016), and *Printing Arab Modernity: Book Culture and The American Press in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Auji, 2016). These works examine the role of these missionary printing presses as a cultural and propagating institution in translating and propagating ‘evangelical modernity’, facilitating the development of local language and literature, as well as raising ethnic-national awareness in the Middle East. Recent studies also suggest that there was a process of ‘secularization’ in educational, social, and medical institutions operated by missionaries, as well as in the contents published by some missionary printing presses. Works on this theme have been refined since previous work by Tibawi (Yetkener, 2011; Elshakry, 2011).<sup>12</sup>

Previous studies generally endorse the American missionaries who, although possessed an apparent sense of cultural and religious superiority towards Ottoman Muslims and local Christians, created opportunities for a new social configuration on Ottoman lands. On the other hand, more scholars from Turkey and the Middle East have also shown a growing interest in Christian Mission studies given that they have inevitably accepted the profound influence of American missions when discussing the

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<sup>11</sup> J. F. Coakley (1999). ‘Printing in the Mission Field’. Volume 9, Issue 1 of Harvard Library bulletin; Murre-Van Den Berg, H. L. (1999). *From a Spoken to a Written Language. The Introduction and Development of Literary Urmia Aramaic in the 19th Century*.

<sup>12</sup> Examples of secularization happened in Bebek Seminary and the American University of Beirut. See ‘At the Centre of Debate, Bebek Seminary and the Educational Policy of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (1840-1860)’ and ‘The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism’. Both in Sharkey, H.J. and Doğan, M.A. (Eds.) (2011). *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

development of modernity in the Middle East. One crucial work in Turkish was written by Kocabaşoğlu (1989).<sup>13</sup> It is path-breaking as the first monograph in Turkish that introduced extensive first-hand American missionary documents and archives collected in American libraries, and it is also one of the first works focusing on American missionary educational activities in Ottoman Anatolia. Represented by Kocabaşoğlu, scholars in Turkey after 1970s are generally in line with the national will of that time in refusing to become the US's satellite. Their political tendency is reflected in their study methods, approaching the missionary question with a critical tone. Those who reject the missionary presence in their country stress the inherent capitalist nature of Christian Missions, which was considered harmful to the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. With scholars debating American missionaries' role in the US's diplomatic and religious designs, such academic divergence has bifurcated the interpretation of the Christian Missions until today.

This development gave rise to another thematic question that has evolved since the 1970s within missionary scholarship: 'Whether and to what extent the American missionary movements involved politics as part of an imperialist agenda?' In these ongoing debates, more studies began to highlight the Western missions' political entanglements rather than valuing their humanitarian and modernizing contributions. Studies generally indicated the "chauvinism" and "civilizational exceptionalism" of the missionary perceptions of the Ottoman-Islamic world.<sup>14</sup> Some works from a Middle Eastern postcolonial view even treated the Western missionaries as "Neo-Crusaders" or "shock troops of Imperialism" whose cultural expansion had an enduring and harmful influence on the integrity of the Muslim community (Sharkey, 2011). From the 1970s to today, several authors have examined the implications of American missionaries' imperialist dimension in terms of American-Ottoman relations, international politics, American commercial interests, rising ethnic

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<sup>13</sup> Kocabaşoğlu, U. (1989). *Kendi belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika: 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan misyoner okulları*. Vol. 29. Arba

<sup>14</sup> Gorman, H. (2019). 'American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire's Service, 1820–1919'. *Diplomatic History*, 43(3), p. 546.

nationalism/sectarianism, interethnic tensions, and the Armenian question, with a focus on the relations between American missionaries, the colonial government and politicians, and local elites (Grabill, 1971; Abu-Ghazaleh, 1990; Salt, 1993; Balakian 2003; Moranian, 2004; Criss et al., 2011; Ümit, 2008).<sup>15</sup> One of the earliest examples, Joseph's *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927* was published in 1971, and another, *Altruism and imperialism: Western cultural and religious missions in the Middle East* (Simon/Tejirian) was in 2002.

There are many other significant themes and approaches in recent writings on American Missions in the Ottoman Empire. For example, different from the top-down perspective of previous studies is a detailed study of an individual Protestant missionary or educator's activities in his/her career, which provides an insight from an individual level to trace Protestant missionary activities and influences in general. One example is Mehmet Ali Dogan's dissertation (2013), *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and "Nominal Christians": Elias Riggs (1810-1901) and American Missionary Activities in the Ottoman Empire*, which focuses on the missionary work, intellectual fruits and linguistic ability of Elias Riggs, an eminent figure in the missionary movements. Another salient feature of recent studies is a new emphasis on the mutual influence and interactions of both the American side and Ottoman local actors, rather than an early interpretation of

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<sup>15</sup> Grabill, J.L. (1971). *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810–1927*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Abu-Ghazaleh, A. (1990). *American Missions in syria: A study of American Missionary Contribution to Arab Nationalism in 19th century syria*. Amana Books.; Salt, J. (1993). *Imperialism, Evangelism, and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*. London: Bookcraft, Ltd.; Esenbel, S., Criss, B. N., and Greenwood, T. (Eds.). (2011). *American Turkish Encounters: Politics and Culture, 1830-1989*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Balakian, P. (2003). *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian genocide and America's response*. New York: Harper Collins; Moranian, S. E. (2004). 'The Armenian genocide and American missionary relief efforts'. *Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare*, 15, pp.185-213; Ümit, D. (2014). 'The American Protestant Missionary Network in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1914: Political and Cultural Reflections of the Encounter'. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 4, No.6(1), pp.16-51.



missionary encounters as a unidirectional exercise exerted on the target subjects by the missionaries as the main actors, as found in literature written by missionaries themselves. In this regard, previous literature has discussed the transitional role of Christian missionaries (both Protestants and Catholics) from evangelizer to educator in the process of their Middle East local encounters.<sup>16</sup> In examining the specific dimension of cultural interplay, a notable example is Cevik's (2011) 'American Missionaries and the Harem: Cultural Exchanges behind the Scenes', in which she discussed the reciprocal impact from the American missionaries activities in the late Ottoman Empire on home decoration and furniture and women's clothing styles on both the American and Turkish sides, which is still a rarely discussed topic in general studies.

However, despite all the fruitful works that have focused on various missionary institutions, the diverse approach of recent research has various roots. Although the American Protestant missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire/Middle East have been increasingly studied from various aspects, it is notable that the mainstream approaches of existing scholarship tend to evaluate this topic from a Western/Christian, or pro-missionary perspective. The key literature traces the productivity of the American legacy in this region (see Heleen van den Berg<sup>17</sup>, Michael Oren<sup>18</sup>, and Ussama Makdisi<sup>19</sup>). These works stress the missionaries' monodirectional effects at enlightening the local people or democratizing the Third World. Current literature tend to have a limited preoccupation with elaborating the missionary-Ottoman encounters contextually in the multiplicity of social-historical reality. Some failed to scrutinize the internal dynamics of the local community, or overlook the religious-cultural nuances

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<sup>16</sup> Makdisi. (2008). *Artillery of Heaven: American missionaries and the failed conversion of the Middle East*. Cornell University Press; Sharly. (2008). *American Evangelicals in Egypt*. Princeton University Press; Reeves-Ellington, B. (2013). *Domestic frontiers. Gender, Reform and American Interventions in the Ottoman Balkans and the Near East*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press..

<sup>17</sup> Murre-Van den Berg, H. (2007). *New faith in ancient lands: Western missions in the Middle East in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*. Brill.

<sup>18</sup> Oren, M. B., & Oren, S. F. M. B. (2007). *Power, faith, and fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the present*. WW Norton & Company.

<sup>19</sup> Makdisi, U. (2011). *Artillery of Heaven*. Cornell University Press.

and influence of the missionaries on Islamic society. Furthermore, the political connotation between the Mission and the US presence was often overlooked by these studies when tracing the missionary legacy, or it was justified or even glorified by some Western scholars. Other Oriental scholars (Çağrı Erhan<sup>20</sup>, Nurdan Şafak<sup>21</sup>, and Uygur Kocabaşoğlu<sup>22</sup>) tend to use a nationalist approach, criticizing the American imperialism underlying the missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire. The authors' personal emotions are often influenced by their national identity and different cultural and religious background that intertwines with the narrative, or they are indirectly influenced by the comparative deficiency or disproportionate choice of their main primary and secondary materials, leading to significant biases in their conclusions.

Likewise, although publications on American missions are voluminous, most have been based on the missionary side: most scholars tend to approach the American missionaries' activities by investigating their institutions, their activities or by focusing on several missionary individuals and their activities – studies from the Ottoman audience's perspective are scarce. There are very few substantial studies on reactions to American missionary activities from Ottoman officials, either central or provincial. And current studies rarely focus on the interactions and mutual perceptions of missionaries and their Ottoman targets, particularly those non-Christian subjects, namely the Turkish and Kurdish Muslims and the Arabs, who generally held a tenacious attitude towards missionary activities. Most of the existing studies on this topic are either short or limited to a certain region, such as the Ottoman Syrian province or Egypt, which were beyond the Ottoman's reach. In certain aspects, such

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<sup>20</sup> Erhan, Ç. (2000) "Ottoman official attitudes towards American missionaries," *Milletlerarası Münasebetler Türk Yıllığı*, pp. 191-212.

<sup>21</sup> Şafak, N. (1999). *Osmanlı Arşiv kaynaklarıyla XIX. yüzyılda Osmanlı-Amerikan İlişkileri Gelişim Süreci Ve Yoğunlaştığı Alanlar*. Ph. D. Dissertation., Marmara Üniversitesi.

<sup>22</sup> Kocabaşoğlu, U. (1989). *Kendi belgeleriyle Anadolu'daki Amerika: 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan misyoner okulları* (Vol. 29). Arba.

neglect reflects an existing under-exploitation of non-U.S. sources which could shed light on the local perspectives of American missions.<sup>23</sup>

This is also the case when examining the missionary-Ottoman contacts as well as the influences of American missions on the Ottoman subjects' daily history. Unlike the voluminous English missionary archives that were well recorded and maintained, local sources consisting of printed materials (newspaper, church journals, photographs) or manuscript sources (correspondences, diaries) in local languages like Turkish, Arabic, and Bulgarian are hard to find and access due to political, financial, and linguistic reasons. This has hampered scholars' ability to read them fully, not to mention allowing them to fully grasp Muslim ideas about American missionaries. For example, one of these accessible local sources is the autobiography *A Muslim Who Became a Christian* (Avetaranian, J., Schafer, R. and Bechard, J., 2003), which depicts the life of a Turkish Muslim, Muhammed Sukri (1861-1919), who converted to Christianity and joined the German Orient-Mission after reading the Bible in Turkish. This autobiography provides a useful source for religious and social studies of the late Ottoman society but, as converted German evangelicals, the narrators provide only marginal accounts regarding American Protestant Missions. Despite these difficulties, it is imperative to devote more studies to the topic of missionary-Ottoman Muslim interactions as well as to decentralize these studies, because the map of missionary movements in the Ottoman Empire would be drawn is incomplete if it does not take into consideration the factors of the local environment and people among whom the missionaries worked.

Due to similar reason of resource scarcity, other related topics continue to be neglected. For example, little has been written about the many lesser known missionary organizations and their activities, the undiscovered contents of

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of colonial study methodology, see: Laura, A., and Cooper F. (1997). 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda'. In *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Culture in a Bourgeois World*. edited by AL Stoler, F Cooper University of California Press.

‘conversational preaching’ – an important evangelical form hidden from view – and the ambiguous child-rearing policies in orphanages and missionaries’ families (Murre-van den Berg, 2005). These subjects require further academic attention to exploit the untapped local reservoir of evidence. As another existing gap, the number of comparative studies of different types of missionary schools remains limited, which may require researcher’s interdisciplinary expertise and cross-regional linguistic grasp. Moreover, as with the above-mentioned existing demarcation of academic discourse, despite the tangled nexus of the American mission and the US states behind them which were more often brought forward by those historians to criticize the imperialist/capitalist focus, some scholars have asserted the salience of a relatively apolitical and humanistic feature of American Protestant mission in the Middle East in comparison to their European counterparts, such as the English and French Catholic Church or German Protestants (Earle, E. M., 1929; Makdisi, 2008). Some American missionaries themselves also seemed to imply the moral virtuousness of their mission by questioning the sophisticated aims of other Christian Mission’s agendas in the Empire.<sup>24</sup> However, such comparisons on the different traits between the missionary activities of various American-European Christian Missionary groups in the same Middle Eastern arena as well as research on the competition between them are topics awaiting further exploration.<sup>25</sup> In addition, previous studies argue that the widely read missionaries’ writings were influential on crystallizing American Orientalism and

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<sup>24</sup> For example, American missionaries complained about the arrival of the German missionaries in the Ottoman lands after the Hamidian Armenian massacres in 1898. Starting with relief work for the Armenian orphans, their activities quickly expanded to the field of education, hospitals and railway construction. While the Germans enjoyed a friendly political relationship with the Ottoman government, in some places the German Mission replaced the American missionaries’ functions. The failed cooperation caused an unsatisfactory relationship between the American and German missionaries from the 1890s to the 1910s. In this context, the American missionaries, who distinguished their Mission from the European imperialism-oriented missionary enterprise, carefully watched social and political changes in the country and were alarmed by assisting of Ottoman infrastructure construction, from which the Germans could obtain proportional benefits. As the American missionaries noted in 1911: “No one who has looked into the matter can doubt that Germany is working for political and commercial supremacy in Turkey... The best portions of the world for colonization are already taken up by other nations, and no better place for European enterprise is left than Turkey” ABCFM, (1911) *American and German Missions in Turkey*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A., No.851, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>25</sup> For related work, see Hauser, J. (2015). *German Religious Women in Late Ottoman Beirut: Competing Missions*. Brill.

exceptionalism that later played a role in shaping US foreign policies in the Cold War and afterward.<sup>26</sup> In a broader sense, a key question asks how the Christian Missionary activities carried connotations and acted to distribute and legitimize power and order abroad from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Existing literature has focused thematically on the different fields of American missionary activities of education, hospital or women, among others, but has barely considered the ethnic-religious angle. To fill these gaps, several studies on local responses to Christian Missions have been conducted. These works include: *Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in Egypt: With a Special Reference to the Al-Azhar High Corps of Ulama (1925-1935)* (Ryad, 2006); *Empire and Muslim conversion: historical reflections on Christian Missions in Egypt* (Sharkey, 2005); and *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Baron, 2014). All have discussed how and why the Muslim's welcoming attitude towards the European and American Missionaries changed and ended in resistance and resentment with some reference of English and Arabic sources. One key monograph on the theme of Ottoman Syrians' local perspective of American missions was *Artillery of Heaven* (Makdisi, 2008). Makdisi uses many local Arabic sources and missionary materials to recount the early encounters of American Protestant missionaries and the Ottoman Arabic regions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His work focuses on the dramatic story of one early Arab convert to Protestantism from the local Maronite in Lebanon, As'ad Shidyah, whose death was caused by the hatred generated by the religious incompatibility between evangelical Christianity and its Ottoman Christian/Muslim opponents. His 'martyrdom', as Makdisi argues, was later embellished and re-interpreted as a parable of modernity to serve the propaganda of 'liberal' America and American Protestantism. More importantly, Makdisi argues that the American mission later created unintentional and significant social implications

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<sup>26</sup> Little, D. (2008). *American orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945*. University of North Carolina Press; Lockman, Z. (2009). *Contending visions of the Middle East: The history and politics of Orientalism*. Vol. 3. Cambridge University Press; Khalil, O. F. (2017). *America's Dream Palace*. Harvard University Press; and Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York. Pantheon.

for the Middle East regions and population through their reorientation facing “the futility of direct evangelism”. The American mission shifted from illiberal evangelization to secular education and social welfare by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in response to local demands, and contributed to a diversified Ottoman modernity, together with its other Christian Missionary institutions and Ottoman counterparts, which had competing and dynamic contexts. His argument is far-reaching in setting the trend of the mainstream literature tracing the missionary legacy.

Another significant recent study is *Domestic Frontiers: Gender, Reform, and American Interventions in the Ottoman Balkans and the Near East* (Reeves Ellington, 2013), which draws on a broad range of local sources in Ottoman, Bulgarian, Russian, French, and English to trace the lesser known activities of American cultural expansion. It illuminates the American missionary influences of gender and race in a multi-religious context, and its impacts on the local daily life of Bulgarians, such as the Maronites, in the Ottoman Balkans. While revealing the missionary schemes to evangelize local women through their education, Reeves Ellington’s work shows how local communities took advantage of it and reshaped the evangelical message to suit their purposes, such as to help Bulgarian nationalists achieve greater autonomy from Ottoman states and the Greek Orthodox Church. In the religious sphere, like Makdisi’s *Artillery of Heaven*, by focusing on the history of local converts, Reeves Ellington similarly argues for the contradictions raised between American Protestantism and the local Churches: in her case, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and community, who witnessed the Protestant influence and conversion, challenged their local customs, orders and identity, and in some cases even led protests and shutdowns of American schools. In terms of gender, Reeves Ellington argues that the American education of women aimed to transplant the American ideology of domesticity into the Ottoman world through not only their girls’ schools but also their influential evangelical periodicals, like *Zornista*. This notion of American-Christian culture emphasized the ideal role of a Christian women individual as the head of her household and the significance of improving the womanhood position that could

elevate the overall social conditions. Yet Reeves Ellington probably overstates the national consciousness of the Bulgarian middle-class families who might have sent their daughters to the missionary schools because of their individual privileges, rather than as an act contributing to the emergence of the Bulgarian nation.

Another important work in recent years is *American evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (2008), in which Heather Sharkey examined the encounters of Presbyterian missions by American Protestant missionaries in Egypt from 1854 to 1967 through use of English and Arabic sources. Placing the American mission into both frontier and domestic contexts, Sharkey argues for connections between missionary work with Copts in Egypt and domestic work with African Americans in the southern US. Moreover, the significance of this work was the examination of the missionary-Muslim interactions by disclosing American Protestant missionaries' endeavours in converting local Muslims after the British occupation in 1882, when the American missionaries felt safe to initiate their Muslim-conversion work under British protection. He argued that the Muslim converts were rare due to the result of a 'social death' (though there was no judicial death penalty in that period) of Muslim men, and the strict family intervention imposed on Muslim women. Instead, the missionary work with Muslims elicited backlash among anti-colonial Islamic nationalists and activists who interpreted it as cultural imperialism and rallied their fellow Muslims to fight it. Facing growing local hostility, the Protestant missionary works became harder in Egypt after WWI, and by the late 1920s the local Muslim community formed new anti-missionary activism, while new Muslim organizations adapted missionary methods to suit their social welfare work and strict state controls nationalized the missionary institutions to a large extent.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See also: Sharkey, H.J. (2004). 'Arabic Antimissionary Treatises: Muslim Responses to Christian Evangelism in the Modern Middle East' in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 28(3), pp.98-104; and Sharkey, H.J. (2005). 'Empire and Muslim conversion: historical reflections on Christian Missions in Egypt' in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 16(1), pp.43-60.

Beth Baron's *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (2014) delves into the similar topic of the cultural-religious battlefield between the American Protestant missionaries challenging Islamism in Egypt and the Muslim activists confronting them, by exploring the 'orphan scandal' in which a 15-year-old Muslim orphan girl was beaten by a missionary who was attempting to convert her in a missionary orphanage – a public welfare sector in Egypt monopolized by missionaries. Baron argues that this 'scandal' was significant because it signified the beginning of the end of Christian Missions in Egypt and the rise of Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Sharkey's and Baron's studies provided important comparative references for studies on local reactions to Christian Missions from both central/local officials and the Muslim community in its Ottoman-Turkey counterpart. Juxtaposing the American missionary encounters in Egypt with those in Ottoman Turkey, one can find chronological and factual similarity in how the Americans approached Muslim conversion and how the Muslim world responded to the Protestant encroachment, although more acrimonious Muslim reactions were seen in Egypt than in Ottoman-Turkey because of the more explicit converting efforts. However, while investigating local encounters, whether with local Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Balkans, Middle East, and Africa, few existing studies have directly examined the encounters between local Muslims and American Protestant missions in Anatolian Turkey, where the extensive American Board's missionary network operated, in American Western, Central and Eastern Mission branches.

Studies on American-Ottoman official relations have been largely neglected and the topic of American missionaries' interactions with local Muslims and studies on missionaries' Muslim evangelization have been entirely overlooked. It is therefore necessary to devote space in this dissertations in this regard with a main focus on the core region of Ottoman Turkey. In relation to the Ottoman official response to missionary activities, since Deringi sheds lights on the Ottoman government's



counteractive reforms in response to missionary activities in his seminal work *The Well-protected Domains* (1998), several relevant discussions have been conducted in recent Ottoman studies, yet they are limited in number and length. One related article is ‘Ottoman Official Attitudes towards American Missionaries’ (Erhan, 2000) in which Erhan exclusively focuses on the Ottoman responses to American missions chronologically and thematically using both Ottoman and English archives. In his treatise, Erhan traced the earliest Sublime Porte’s reactions curtailing American missionary activities in light of the petition of the local Maronite Bishop in Mount Lebanon back to 1841, then the complaints of the Armenian patriarchate from 1944. Erhan also examined the official attitudes on American schools which had been increasingly unsupported from 1840 to protect the missionaries from ‘local assaults’, and later because of its ‘destructive’ reflections on the multi-religious Empire, then the attitudes sharpened after witnessing Armenian insurrections in 1890. In addition, he examined, briefly, the limitations imposed by the Ottoman government on the missionary printing activities from 1822 to 1880s. Although Erhan’s article contributed to the rarely analysed studies of Ottoman official reactions, it lacks detail and analysis, given its limited length and the failure to integrate his accounts with either the US correlation behind the mission or the Ottoman social context. Plus, the official responses after the Abdülhamid II period are also missing.

Emrah Sahin’s *Faithful Encounters: Authorities and American Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire* (2018) is a rare monograph on this topic. This book is based on Sahin’s PhD dissertation, *Responding to American Missionary Expansion: An Examination of Ottoman Imperial Statecraft, 1880-1910* (2011), and his following contiguous research on Ottoman official views of American missionary activities. Aiming to provide alternative stories to compare with missionary stories, Sahin productively explores official Ottoman policies that responded to various American missionary activities by exploiting official Ottoman reports. These activities included many fields such as missionaries’ traveling activities, their education and printing missions, and their criminal records (mainly focusing on the ‘Ellen Stone Affair’ and

a convicted American missionary, George P. Knapp). He makes a contribution by unveiling undiscovered late-Ottoman official anecdotes, records and reactions to depict how officials viewed American missionaries as a troublesome group that needed surveillance, control and confinement. His analytical methods, which comparatively demarcate the Ottoman official attitudes and responses centrally and provincially, are incisive and informative, reflecting a trend that emerged in recent studies of re-evaluating local agency alongside central authorities. Unfortunately, the lack of archival references from the American counterparts, the absence of responses from local Muslim populace and the failure to relate to dynamic social and cultural contexts renders the work less comparative and comprehensive. His generalization of the 'Ottoman government' throughout the time without articulating the regime changes may reflect his holistic view of administrative continuity but could also reduce the perspicuity in his exposition. But these issues cannot obscure the significance of his research in filling the gap of previously untapped studies on late-Ottoman official responses.

On the other hand, even less academic attention has been paid to non-official Ottoman Muslim encounters with Christian Missions, namely the response of local Muslim publics, whether elite or commoners, which constituted the milieu among which the missionaries worked. Not only are the Muslim groups' reactions to the shifting social progress of modernization and enlightenment that the missionaries themselves and many scholars claimed missing from the literature, but also how they responded to the Christian cultural-religious invasion and encroachment brought by the missionaries, specifically reactions to the perceived evangelizing efforts imposed on them. To date there has been no research exclusively on this theme except for some sporadic mentions as the by-products of adjacent studies. For example, as an interesting subtopic, the response of Turkish/Muslim students to American schools is partially examined in Goffman's 'From Religious to American Proselytism: Mary Mills Patrick and the "Sanctification of the Intellect"' (2011), in which she traces how the ardent and conscientious American missionary headmistress of American Girls'

College (ACG) in İstanbul, Marry Mills Patrick – who sought a friendly relationship with the elite Ottoman Muslim population – tried to promulgate the ‘non-sectarian’ idea of women’s education as well as to adapt the College educational agenda and American secular idea of nationalism in line with Turkey’s own emerging nationalism. Later Reeves Ellington (2013) echoed Goffman’s perspective by arguing that the ACG represented the “translation of an American culture of female moral authority to the Ottoman world”. While Goffman stresses the proactive and subjective role of the missionary headmistress and her College in the female emancipation campaign of İstanbul, she admits understating the influences on the school’s policy from outside political forces and the inward social dynamics and co-productivity – thus her work can be accused of hagiography and individualism to some extent. This might result from her major dependence on missionary-based primary sources that served the missionary aim but failed to take into consideration the broader undertaking of the top-down Muslim evangelization trends in missionary operations. Probably for the same reason, when referring to the Muslim students’ reactions, Goffman might have understated their negative attitudes and resistance, which in reality were commonplace in the missionary schools of the Empire. In ‘A Muslim/Turkish Minority in Ottoman Constantinople: The Muslim/Turkish Students of Robert College (1866-1925)’, Orlin deals with a similar question by featuring Turkish students in another influential missionary-related Robert College in İstanbul, but unfortunately his discussion is only composed of figures and narratives of some eminent Turkish alumni without historically contextualization, which impedes the profundity and analytic veracity of his research. The cultural-religious correlations between American missionaries and local Muslims, as a non-negligible factor when examining the political progress in Middle East history, needs more scrutiny. Previous scholarship has paid little attention to the reflections of Muslim students in missionary schools, who were one of major local actors intertwined with missionary activities, not to mention studies on encounters between missionaries and grassroots Muslim subjects in Ottoman Turkey.

As mentioned above, the propensity of existing literature on American missionary-Ottoman encounters is, when examining the evolving mindset of the missionaries and their regional activities, towards a collective omission of the parameters of the Board's guiding policies on Muslim proselytization that emerged in response to the Ottoman's shifting social-political circumstances. As in Goffman's work, such disjunction may make the missionary ideological trajectory seem more elusive for both students and readers tracing it. This situation also highlights the importance of reconstructing and re-evaluating the American missions in the Ottoman Empire through a thorough study on the American Board's Muslim policies in the Empire, which is still an uncharted topic among most studies on Ottoman history and Christian Missions. Despite the increasing number of American missionary studies, there is only one article, 'A Missionary Society at the Crossroads: American Missionaries on the eve of the Turkish Republic' (Yücel, İ., 2012)<sup>28</sup> that directly but briefly examines the Muslim Mission of the American Board from the 1910s to 1921. Many under-researched questions could provide more insights for missionary and Ottoman studies awaiting us to discuss. For example, as one most basic relative question, 'have American missionaries ever intentionally tried to convert Ottoman Muslims, directly or indirectly', remains unanswered. This notion of uncertainty can be exemplified by Selim Deringil's *The Well-protected Domains*, in which he concluded apropos the missionary question: "When all was said and done, however, the undeniable truth was that missionaries made very little headway among Muslim". Notably, he adds that, "although their later claims that they did not try are highly suspect", he does not follow up this remark with further analysis.<sup>29</sup> As examined in this study, the American missionaries did implement systematic proselytizing policies towards Ottoman Muslims to an extent that it even became their main agenda after WWI. Furthermore, there is no common answer to the simple question, 'when did the American missionaries discover their interest in re-approaching the Muslim population

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<sup>28</sup> Yücel, İ. (2012). 'A Missionary Society at the Crossroads: American Missionaries on the eve of the Turkish Republic'. *CTAD: Journal of Modern Turkish History*, 8(15), pp.51-68

<sup>29</sup> S, Deringil. (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains*, p.134.

after the 1860s?’ Several previous studies have mentioned the shifting emphasis of the American Board’s agenda to Muslim work, but with different conclusions. Some relate the date of commencement of the strategic American missionary advance towards Muslim evangelization to the 1910s when the Young Turk government had a liberal influence on American activities,<sup>30</sup> or to 1911 by “taking advantage of deteriorating conditions of the Empire at the end of the disastrous Tripoli and Balkan Wars of 1911 and 1912-13 respectively which radically changed the ethno-religious map of Ottoman Empire in favour of Turks and Muslims”,<sup>31</sup> or even to when “a memorable conference [was] held at Jerusalem” in the spring of 1924 which “henceforth determined efforts should be made to minister to Moslems as well as Christians”.<sup>32</sup> However, as far as this dissertation is concerned, the American missionaries’ Muslim proselytizing policy had formally begun as early as two years before the 1908 Revolution took place.

In conclusion, the current gap in research around Ottoman-American history necessitates further scrutiny of the encounters between American missionaries, Ottoman officials and their Muslim subjects. It is also significant to combine the thematic approach with an ethno-religious perspective that differs from the linear approach of existing literature. This dissertation aims to provide new thinking for Ottoman-Missionary studies by re-examining the various fields of American missionary activities with a focus on its Ottoman/Muslim encounters. By exploring the relations between the missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Ottoman/Turkish authorities as well as the Muslim population between 1878 and 1929, this dissertation highlights a historiographical topic that has long been neglected, even though in more recent years the activities of Christian missionaries have started to attract more scholarly attention within and without Turkey. In the current environment of the 21th century where hostilities between West and East are escalating and international relations tend to be judged with

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<sup>30</sup> Yücel, İ. (2010). ‘A Missionary Society at the Crossroads: American Missionaries on the eve of the Turkish Republic’. *Yıl 8. Sayı 15. Bahar 2012*. p.51.

<sup>31</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.48.

<sup>32</sup> Earle, E.M. (1929). *American Missions in the Near East*. p.414.

prejudice and one-sided preconceptions, I hope this research could provide a retrospective understanding regarding the outlook of American missionaries' movements in Asia Minor so as to shed light on the development of Middle East-American relations and the complexity of the contemporary Muslim-Christian relations from a historical perspective.

To produce a comprehensive study, apart from consulting English primary source recorded by ABCFM missionaries and other missionary organizations in the US as major primary sources, the research will also include materials from the Ottoman and Turkish sides, from İstanbul and online archives, including English and Ottoman official reports, newspapers, journals, correspondences, and missionary memoirs as well as those of Ottoman individuals, many of which have been previously overlooked. These primary sources are detailed in the bibliography at the end of the dissertation. Secondary literature was also extensively reviewed in different languages and from different perspectives to attempt to approach the topic without religious or national bias.

One important approach of this dissertation is to analyse different missionary institutions of importance, such as the American missionary schools, hospitals, social clubs, and printing presses. Given their primacy, the missionary educational institutions, which were the most significant component of the missionary networks, will be the major focus of this dissertation. I will also examine missionary-Muslim encounters from a thematic perspective and with an ethno-religious emphasis, which will be structurally reflected across eight distinct chapters. Following the introduction, which sketches out the historical background and the four major divisions of the evolving American Protestant missionary network in the Empire from the 1820s to the 1920s, Chapter I examines Ottoman/Turkish official attitudes and reactions towards the expansion of the American missionary activities from the Hamidian period to the early Republic of Turkey (1876-1929), and also examines how the missionaries responded. Chapter II extends the first chapter's discussion to include contentious

Ottoman-missionary encounters around minority issues, which was the most important and problematic theme for the both sides throughout the presence of the American mission in the Empire. Chapter III demonstrates the Muslim policy of the American Board that evolved from the ‘undercurrent’ of conversion endeavour in 1906 to the compromised strategies for survival under the Kemalist regime. Chapters IV and V elaborate on Chapter III, illuminating the missionary enterprise of Muslim evangelizing in the different fields of education, medicine, the Bible work for Muslim women, and literature and club work for Muslim men. Chapters VI and VII focus on the mutual perception and Muslim responses of the American missions, while the latter focuses more specifically on the response of Turkish girl students in ACG, an influential missionary girl’s college in İstanbul. Finally, Chapter VIII focuses regionally on the Muslim-missionary interactions in Gaziantep province, the birthplace of the Muslim Mission where the American missionaries who harboured an enthusiastic vision of evangelization among Muslims were based.

While aware of the pluralism of the Ottoman *millet*s, Turkish Muslims were the major group that my research concerns, so the umbrella term of ‘Muslims’ refers to the Turkish Sunni denomination by default in this dissertation. Unlike previous literature, within each chapter I do not emphasize missionary ‘achievements’ or criticize its imperialist touch, but instead focus on the American missionary work around Muslim evangelization and the missionaries’ interactions with both Ottoman officials and the Turkish/Muslim population during the late Ottoman and early Republic of Turkey.

Last but not least, it should still be noticed that apart from the pervasive missionary prejudices against Muslims, some accounts in the dissertation quoted unilaterally from the ABCFM missionary primary sources (or some from the Ottoman side) deserve more scrutiny and should not be taken as factual representations. As emic perspectives from these NOT impersonal historical participants, they may potentially fail to reflect historical objectivity. For examples, the accounts on the ‘undue treatment’ and the arrest of J.C. Martin and M. Alexis (Chapter 1, pp.72-73); the

missionaries' accusation against the Nationalist "Turks" murdering Christians/Americans (Chapter 2, p.95); the rumors about the death of Annie Allen, (Chapter 2, p.96) the controversial case of George P. Knapp and his 'mysterious death' (Chapter 2, pp.98-101); the official 'mistreatment' of F.H. Leslie (Chapter2, pp.101-103); and the missionaries' defence for the 1921 'Pontus Affair' at Anatolia College in Mersovan (Chapter2, pp.104-108); the defects of hiring Turkish teachers in American schools (Chapter 3, pp.187-188), etc.



# Introduction: Historical Background

## I. The Early History of American Protestant Missionary Activities in Turkey from 1821 to 1860

The American Protestant missionaries were not the first in the Ottoman Empire – early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic missionaries entered the area – however, they were the most influential missionary group to operate there. The American missionary movement that took place over 100 years in the Ottoman domain left lasting impacts on various aspects of education, publications, medicine, among others, in transforming the Middle East’s culture and move to modernity, which is a topic worthy of scholarly attention. The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the ‘Second Great Awakenings’ that swept the shore of the Atlantic, which was a Protestant revivalist movement that aimed to encourage believers to spread the Gospel and convert ‘pagans’ worldwide.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), established in 1810 in Massachusetts and involving various participants from Reformed traditions, was the largest and most important American missionary organization produced by this religious movement. The American Board sent the first American Protestant missionaries to the Ottoman Empire in 1820 – this represented the first ever contact between America and the Ottoman Empire. The initial purpose of the missionaries was to proselytize Muslims and Jews; however, they found the Muslims there to be almost inaccessible to all direct Christian labours, and their first effort in 1826 to work with the Greeks and Jews in İzmir (Smyrna)<sup>33</sup> was unsuccessful. Instead, the first hopeful contact they found was with Armenians, a Christian minority mostly

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<sup>33</sup> Place names in quotation marks are historical ways of spelling that were written in the American Missionaries’ documents (the same below); for other examples, Merzifon as Marsovan, Harput as Harpoot, Trabzon as Trebizond, İstanbuls as Constantinople, Urfa as Ourfa, Gaziantep as Aintab, etc.

consisting of Gregorians. Missionary Parsons, on his first trip to Jerusalem in 1821, encountered some Armenian pilgrims, whose interesting conversation drew from him the suggestion of a mission to Armenia itself. The missionaries received their first two native Armenian converts in 1826, in Beirut, Syria, which assured the missionaries that the Armenians, “with minds most wonderfully inclined towards the pure gospel”, were the ideal population for their evangelization enterprise in the Empire.<sup>34</sup> In 1829 the Prudential Committee prepared the way through an exploratory tour by two missionaries among the Armenians; two years later, a large missionary group, represented by Goodell and Dwight, was sent to İstanbul (Constantinople) to work among local Armenians. Compelled by the circumstances of the case, the missionaries reached people at first chiefly through schools and the press, sending forth several translations of the Bible in different languages and various other literature. Consequently, the American missionaries began their initial work among Armenians of Western Minor Asia. According to the scholar Secil Akgün, as the way of life of Armenians was like that of the Turks, the American missionaries equated the images of Turks and Armenians in the early stages of their activities in the Empire before the time of Armenian agitation for independence under the provocation of Western powers.<sup>35</sup>

Another historical event was the conclusion of the commercial treaty between the US and the Ottoman empire in 1830, which provided opportunities for a closer relationship between the two sides and stimulated the American missionary activities on the land; the missionary force soon increased substantially in western Asia Minor with encouraging results. A high school was opened in Pera, and stations occupied in Bursa (Brousa) and Trabzon (Trebizond). A school for girls – a novelty in the Ottoman Empire – was founded in İzmir. The preaching services seen in İstanbul paid eager attention to the Bible and were even attended occasionally by individuals far from the

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<sup>34</sup> Bartlett, S.C. (1880). *Historical sketch of the missions of the American Board in Turkey*. Boston: American Board, p.3.

<sup>35</sup> Akgün, S. (1989). ‘The Turkish Image in the Reports of American Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire’. *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 13(2), pp.92.

city. Although the missionaries pursued the policy of evangelization without making attacks upon the Armenian churches, the opposition was inevitably and increasingly aroused. Occasionally, it was reported that some Christians who sought Protestantism and missionaries were stoned and abused in the streets. The year 1839 witnessed the most devastating plot for the expulsion of Protestantism from the land when missionary workers were arrested and the mild Armenian Patriarch was deposed and replaced with a harsher man; bulls were issued by both the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs prohibiting the reading or possession of all missionary books, as well as all intercourse with the missionaries. It was heard that the enemies of the mission had enlisted some of the Sultan's chief officers. Fortunately, this persecution was effectually stopped by the defeat of the Ottoman army by the rebellious Pasha of Egypt.

With the support of foreign ambassadors, the first evangelical Armenian church in Turkey was formed at Constantinople on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1846, with a native pastor, to protect those protestant Armenians excommunicated from their old church by the sentence of the Patriarch; and during this summer followed by the establishment of three similar churches in Nicomedia, Adabazan, and Trebizond. This excision marked a new era in the history of the Armenian church. At that time, the Americans and those converts were deeply anathematized by the Patriarch, who denounced the US as a nation of infidels, without church or worship.<sup>36</sup>

In 1850 the Sultan issued the firmans to grant Protestants the *millet* status in the Empire, placing the Protestants on the same basis as other Christian communities. It legally prevented the prevailing abuses and attacks upon the Protestant Armenians. Again in 1853, Christian subjects were put on the same level as Muslims by the law; finally, in 1856, with the granting of full religious freedom by the Edict of Gulhane, the position of the American missionaries and their Protestant reforms in Turkey became more

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<sup>36</sup> Bartlett, p.9

secure – the number of missionary staff during this period multiplied several times.<sup>37</sup> It was noteworthy that the Edict of 1856 did not apply to Muslim subjects, who would still be threatened with capital punishment in the case of conversion. Thus by that time, the Muslim population was not the direct target of the missionaries, and little opposition could be seen from the Sublime Porte.

On the other hand, the Empire, facing several nationalist uprisings, provided a convenient ground for the missionary enterprises in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Crimean War in the early 1850s had a great awakening effect on the Armenians' nationalist mindset. During the several years of wartime, the state even encouraged the missionary work among Armenians as a potent measure to shield the Armenians from the provocative designs of the imperialist powers. The American missionaries were regarded as the representatives of the disinterested United States in the eyes of the Ottomans.<sup>38</sup>

It was evident that there was an unusual expansion in missionary work from the early 1850s. According to ABCFM documents, by 1855 there were three training schools for preachers, at İstanbul, Tokat, and Gaziantep (Aintab); there was also a girls' boarding school at İstanbul, and 38 other schools scattered over the country. The number of organized churches had grown in the nine years since the first was organized in 1846, to 24 – the largest of these was in Aintab with 141 members. In terms of publications, in 1855 some 35,000 volumes were issued, with nearly 5 million pages, chiefly in Armenian. The *Avedaper*, which began in 1855, was issued in Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, Greco-Turkish, Ararat Armenian, Bulgarian, and Kurdish. There was also a demand for the Scriptures in Turkish, in the Arabic characters. In terms of literature, the mission was greatly aided by the American and the British and Foreign Bible Societies, and the American and London Tract Societies. In terms of general

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<sup>37</sup> Bartlett, p.13

<sup>38</sup> Akgün, p.93.

work, the Turkish Mission Aid Society, which was organized in London in July 1854, began to render valuable cooperation.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the unstable state environment in the 1850s and the secure religious liberty after the 1856 decree opened great opportunities for the work of American missionaries in the land. It was at this point the Mission committee felt its urgent need for a division of the mission field as early as its Annual meeting in 1856. Finally, in 1860 the committee created new branches – the Western, Central, and Eastern Turkey missions – and then came the expansion period of missionary activities.

### **The Expansion of the American Protestant Missionary Activities in Turkey (1860-1914)**

The American missionary activities in Turkey was firmly established with the official division of four branches in 1860. The Eastern Turkey field covered the stations of Erzurum, Bitlis, Arabkir, and Harput (Harpout), also including the Assyrian Mission at Mosul and Diyarbakır (Diarbekir), which formed during the 1840s and 1850s, with a parallel evangelical interest in the Assyrians. Van was later occupied as an Eastern station in 1872 and integrated the Mardin and Bitlis stations. The Central Turkey Mission mainly included the stations of Aintab (1852), Kahramanmaraş (Marash) (1854), and Urfa (Ourfa) (1854); Adana (1852), Hadjin (1872), Tarsus (1859), Aleppo and Antioch were the leading outstations out of a total of 55. The Western Turkey field included six central stations – İzmir (1820), İstanbul<sup>40</sup> (1831), Trabzon (1835), Sivas (1851), Merzifon (Mersovan) (1852), and Cesarea (1854) – and 98 outstations, all west of the 38<sup>th</sup> degree of longitude, including stations among the Bulgarians in European Turkey. However, openings among Bulgarians and Turks made the former name inappropriate, and as a result, the European Turkey mission was separated from the

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<sup>39</sup> Riggs, Charles Trowbridge. *History of the work of the ABCFM in the Near East and more especially in Turkey*, p.25.

<sup>40</sup> The Robert College was technically not the property of the ABCFM but was highly related.

Western Turkey mission in 1871 as the fourth Mission for the work among Bulgarians.<sup>41</sup> (The European Mission is not within the scope of this research, neither are the activities of the American Presbyterian Board, which had been operating in Syria and Mesopotamia regions since 1870.)

The American missionary activities experienced a golden age from the 1850s to the early 1910s under its four separate Missions, despite a period of annoyance and obstruction under the Islamist regime of Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909), who with censorship and limitations, sensitively interfered with the missionaries whose work was deemed “faster than the slow firman would sustain them”.<sup>42</sup> The notable missionary development was exemplified by the establishment of Robert College and Syrian Protestant College in 1864 and the Constantinople Woman’s College in 1872. At an 1867 Boston meeting, the Prudential Committee of the ABCFM boldly claimed that the mission was “rapidly settling the Eastern question” and it was just a matter of time before “the evangelization of the Turkish Empire” was fulfilled.<sup>43</sup>

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one could observe that the American missionaries’ networks were operating everywhere in the Empire, with the missionaries settled in Anatolia and the Arabian and Balkan provinces. There were 376 missionaries, 787 local affiliates, and 80 institutions before 1860; by 1885 these numbers had grown to 422, 2,183, and 400 respectively around the world, with one-quarter of the missionaries in Ottoman lands – specifically, 147 missionaries in Anatolia, 52 in the Balkans, 50 in Syria, and 150 in other regions.<sup>44</sup> Notably, among 540 missionaries working in Turkey by 1895, 427 were in Anatolia.<sup>45</sup> By 1908, the entire American missionary network in

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<sup>41</sup> Riggs et al., p.22. See also: Ümit, D. (2014) p.38.

<sup>42</sup> Earle, E. (1929). ‘American Missions in the Near East’. *Foreign Affairs*, 7(3), pp. 398-417.

<sup>43</sup> ABCFM. (1867) *Fifty-seventh Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. Boston: T.R. Marvin, p.34, as cited in Doğan, M.A. (2013). American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and “nominal Christians”: *Elias Riggs (1810-1901) and American Missionary Activities in the Ottoman Empire*, p.136. (Also available at: <https://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:476248>)

<sup>44</sup> Şahin, E. (2018). *Faithful encounters: authorities and American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire*, p.147.

<sup>45</sup> Akgün, S. (1989) p.93.

Turkey had reached an impressive number of 140 churches, 16,000 members, 4,000 pupils in Mission Colleges and High Schools (23,000 in all), 102 ordained and 100 un-ordained preachers, 784 teachers, 1,100 total native labourers, 305 regular preaching places, 40,000 attendants, 54,000 adherents, 308 Sunday schools, 34,000 pupils, and seven hospitals with some 40,000 patients each year.<sup>46</sup> In 1914 the American missionaries claimed that one-third of the American Board's missionaries were in Turkey, and nearly all the strategic points of the country were occupied by missionaries, churches, or schools.<sup>47</sup>

### **1. The Western Turkey Mission (1860-1914)**

In terms of education, Robert College – called “the indirect child of the mission” – played a representative role in the field of missionary education. The founder of the college, Cyrus Hamlin, had resigned his connection with the Board as Principal of the Bebek Seminary in 1860, for disagreeing with Board Secretary Rufus Anderson over his opinion on establishing a new college in İstanbul. In Hamlin's conviction, such a college was a great need for the country, yet the Board in Boston preferred a vernacular education rather than one entirely in English, as well as moving the Bebek Seminary from İstanbul to Merzifon. With the financial help of Christopher Robert, a businessman from New York, Robert College was founded in İstanbul in 1863 by Hamlin. As the American missionaries in Turkey stated in their later papers, although the college was not under the care of the Mission, from its very inception the college was on most intimate terms of friendship and cooperation with the station and all its members. Many educational workers of the college formerly worked as Board missionaries or later became so, and a great number of the graduates became workers in the evangelical cause in various ways.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Seeds of the Turkey Mission*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 616. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.536,, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Riggs et al., p.31.

The education of women was also a great concern of the missionaries in İstanbul. Early in 1870, there had been an ambitious scheme drawn up to build not only a girls' school but also a real social centre, with both medical and evangelical work included. This idea soon came into practice and by 1876, a large building called 'the Home' emerged as the fruit of the plan in Shkodër (Scutari). However, the marriages outside the Missions of the ladies in charge of this work greatly hindered the development of the Home plan. Although the medical and evangelising sections of the plan were not of long duration, the school section finally survived, and the Home School for Girls became one of the most promising centres of mission work in İstanbul. By 1880, there were 88 students; 56 of them were boarders: 54 were Armenians, and 6 Turks. By 1890 the school had become an American College for Girls, with 106 students, of whom 75 were boarders: 43 Armenians, 23 Greeks, 14 Bulgarians, and 10 English.<sup>49</sup>

Beyond İstanbul, girls' boarding schools were founded between 1872 and 1876 in Merzifon, Manisa, Bahçecik (Bardizag), Talas, Sivas, and Bursa, by various female missionary workers. By 1880 there were 372 pupils in total in these schools. The development of high schools for boys occurred later, after a decision was made by the Annual Meeting in 1880. The first was built in Bahçecik, followed by Sivas. Short-lived schools were also tried in Tokat and at Bible House, in İstanbul, as well as one opened under Armenian management in Bursa. Each of these schools deserves a whole history of its own.

In relation to medicine, little essential medical work was undertaken in Western Turkey Missions from 1860 to 1890. Apart from the medical visits carried out by several missionary medical workers, there were no hospitals, dispensaries, or trained nurses within the Mission up to 1890. In relation to literature, in 1869 the literature department for the three Armenian Missions was organized. In 1878, a milestone was reached when the revision of the Turkish Scriptures, with the harmonizing of various Turkish editions,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



was completed. This project, which started as early as 1872, finished after six years, and slightly improved later, became the standard for the ensuing half-century and beyond. Apart from producing devotional literature and tracts, the Publication Department also issued many textbooks for schools, hymn, and song books in Armenian and Turkish, as well as weekly or monthly newspapers in Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, and Greco-Turkish, with the addition of monthly child's papers.

Finally, the establishment of the Bible House in İstanbul (Stanboul) in 1872 carried great significance for the missionaries. It was a four-storey building for American Bible and mission work that comprised offices, book, editorial, sales, and storage rooms. The publication department of the American Board's Mission occupied the larger portion of the building; the American Bible Society Agency with its story rooms was established on the second floor; and the British and Foreign Bible Society Agency and its storage rooms took the biggest place on the third floor. One of the large shops fronting on the street was a salesroom jointly maintained by the Mission and the two Bible Societies. In the missionaries' word, the Bible house, as "a centre of all forms of evangelism in the heart of Constantinople" was a symbol of "an epoch in the history of Christian work in the Turkish capital".<sup>50</sup>

In the 1890s the missionaries in Turkey witnessed terrible racial conflicts throughout the country. In the Eastern provinces, from 1894 to 1897, the Armenian population was suspected by the Hamidian government for their seditious nationalism and suffered from persecution and organized massacres. Similarly, the 30-day Greco-Turkish War in 1897 further led to the increasing nationalistic feeling and animosity between Turks and Christians. It was from this time that relief work began to be carried by the American missionaries. As one result of the disturbances, some American missionary buildings, including the colleges in Merzifon and Harput (of Eastern Mission) were

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<sup>50</sup> Riggs et al., p.35.

damaged by officials of the Ottoman army; the personal safety of the missionaries was severely threatened during this time and some even lost their lives in the conflicts.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the historical disturbances of 1894-1897, the work of the Western Turkey Mission experienced steady and – for the missionaries – encouraging development from 1890 to 1915. The 1908 Revolution and the establishment of the constitutional government was a milestone that provided a powerful spur for the progress of the missionary work. Notably, it opened the doors for wider and freer evangelising efforts, even for Turkish Muslims. Within 25 years, the number of individual churches rose from 34 in 1890 to 49 in 1914, with membership increasing from 3,118 to 4,147 and Sunday membership growing from 7,571 to 9,694.<sup>52</sup> High schools, colleges, kindergartens, and orphanages established after the massacres all experienced a gratifying growth in quality and quantity during this period. One simple example was Robert College, whose student body increased from 159 to over 600 within the 25 years. Hospitals were opened in succession in Talas (1892), Merzifon (1898), Sivas (1906), Konya (Konia) (1911). The first attempt at starting a hospital in İstanbul was made as early as 1908, but it was not realized until 1920.

## **2. The Central Turkey Mission (1860-1914)**

The Central Turkey Mission comprised the stations of Aintab, Maraş, Antioch, Aleppo, and Urfa. One female missionary and ten ordained missionaries with their wives worked there, two of whom were physicians. There were also 15 outstations with three ordained and 15 un-ordained workers. Twelve Churches were organized with nearly 600 members, and 3,692 registered Protestants.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Erhan, Ç. (2000). 'The American Perception of the Turks; An Historical Record'. *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, (31), p.93.

<sup>52</sup> ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. Vol. 22., Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>53</sup> Harrison, H. (195?). *A.B.C.F.M. history 1910-1942: section on the Turkey missions*. ABCFM Manuscript histories of missions, University of Michigan.

During this period, there was considerable growth in the churches of the Central Turkey Mission. According to 1890 Annual Meeting report, since the first church was formed in the mission in 1848 at Aintab, with eight members, the number of churches grew to 33 with 5,055 members, with a total of 17,000 avowed Protestants by 1890. The evangelical communities numbered 3,422 at Aintab, 2,375 at Maraş, 1,750 at Kesab (Kessab), and 1,300 each at Adana and Urfa. In some places, it was reported that the Protestants even numbered between a quarter and one-fifth of the entire Christian population.

The educational field was such a focus of the missionaries that it was said “wherever an evangelical community was started, there a school grew up”. The histories of many notable schools, such as the Girls’ Seminary at Aintab, the High School for Girls in Adana, the Higher School for Girls and Theological Training School in Maraş deserves their own in-depth studies. In 1879 the Girls School in Maraş was moved to Hadjin – the local people in Maraş were not pleased with this decision and set work to raised 500 Ltq. to hand over to the missionaries in 1881 to secure a girls’ college, which opened the next year; by 1890 it had 42 pupils.

Among the many schools, Central Turkey College was one of the most famous and influential. The idea of establishing the college was first put forward in April 1871 at a meeting of the Cilicia Evangelical Union, for the better training of candidates for the ministry. After five years of fund-raising and preparation, the Central Turkey College finally opened in 1876 in Aintab, with 11 in the freshmen class and 27 in the preparatory department. By 1880 it had over 80 students, including a medical department of about a dozen.<sup>54</sup> However, the medical department had to be closed in 1888 for lack of funds. By the 1890s the students averaged about 90 per year, 75 of whom were boarders. During this period, the college had its own Board of Trustees and was not in the strictest sense a Board institution, but its connection was so close that

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<sup>54</sup> Bartlett (1880).

could be considered a part of the Mission. It was notable that Dr F. D. Shepard, who worked in the American hospital in Aintab and had a close connection with the medical department of the college, had done great medical work at the station from 1882 to 1915 and earned a reputation among local Turks, Christians, and Ottoman officials. Research into his work in Azariah Smith Memorial Hospital could shed light on studies of the medical work carried out by the Board in the Central Turkey Mission.

The Central Mission was greatly affected by political disturbances from the 1890s. Apart from the above-mentioned Hamidian massacres in 1894-1897, there was carnage in Adana in 1909, and another series of massacres in 1915. The work of Central Turkey College was hindered in 1894 when two professors were arrested on the charge of sedition; in the turmoil of 1909, one American missionary and more than 20 pastors were killed in Adana. Even though, there was a steady growth in the number of converted Gregorians to Protestantism every year by these missionary efforts.

However, it is perhaps most noteworthy that during the years immediately following the 1908 Revolution, there was great liberty to preach to Muslims and to talk with them on religious themes. And it was from this time that the Central Turkey Mission addressed the issue of Muslim evangelization for the first time. In 1911, the missionary Stephen Trowbridge preached openly to a large number of Muslims together with 500 or 600 Armenians at Jiblin on Easter Day, giving an idea of the encouraging developments in relation to the evangelising work for Muslims.

### **3. The Eastern Turkey Mission (1860-1914)**

The Eastern Turkey Mission field comprised the stations of Mosul, Diyarbakır, and Mardin, which was formerly regarded as the Assyrian Mission, together with the eastmost stations of the Northern Armenian Mission, Arabkir, Bitlis, Erzurum, Harput, and later Van in 1872. There were 13 ordained missionaries, along with their wives, 36

outstations, and 10 recognized churches with 271 members, and 48 common schools with 869 boys and 272 girls.<sup>55</sup>

Language was a problem for the missionaries' educational work, as the Mission field was naturally divided into two large sections: Arabic-speaking and Armenian-speaking. Thus there were two separate theological seminaries, the Theological Training Institute in Harput (from 1860) and its counterpart in Mardin (from 1864), for the training of men and women in different languages for Christian work. The former Institute grew rapidly, becoming a Normal School in 1872, the Armenia College in 1878, before becoming the well-known Euphrates College in 1886 with official permit secured from the Turkish government. There were many other outstanding girls' schools in the region, such as the Girls' School in Harput, founded in 1863 and merged with Euphrates College in 1878; the girls' school in Bitlis, founded in 1868 then known as the Mt. Holyoke of Turkey; the Girls' Boarding School built in Erzurum in 1870; the High School for girls in Van; as well as the school at Mardin. Other boys' schools like the Boy's High school started in Bitlis in 1881 and in Erzurum in 1882, are also worth mentioning. The number of schools totalled 114 by 1870 and 137 by 1880, with 2,908 and 4,936 pupils respectively, which was considered a large education network.

Regarding the evangelical work of the Mission, it was notable that different from the other Missions, the work of the Eastern Mission put more emphasis on the founding of a Christian Church which could support itself and firmly cultivate local Armenian leaders for the evangelising enterprise. There was a general feeling shared by the American missionaries on the Eastern field that once a self-supported local church had been firmly established among Armenians on the basis of the Gospels, the further work of evangelizing Kurds, Turks, Jews or others could be left to this church, thus all missionaries could be withdrawn.<sup>56</sup> To this end, the theological seminary and the

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<sup>55</sup> *A brief history of Van Station, ETM.*

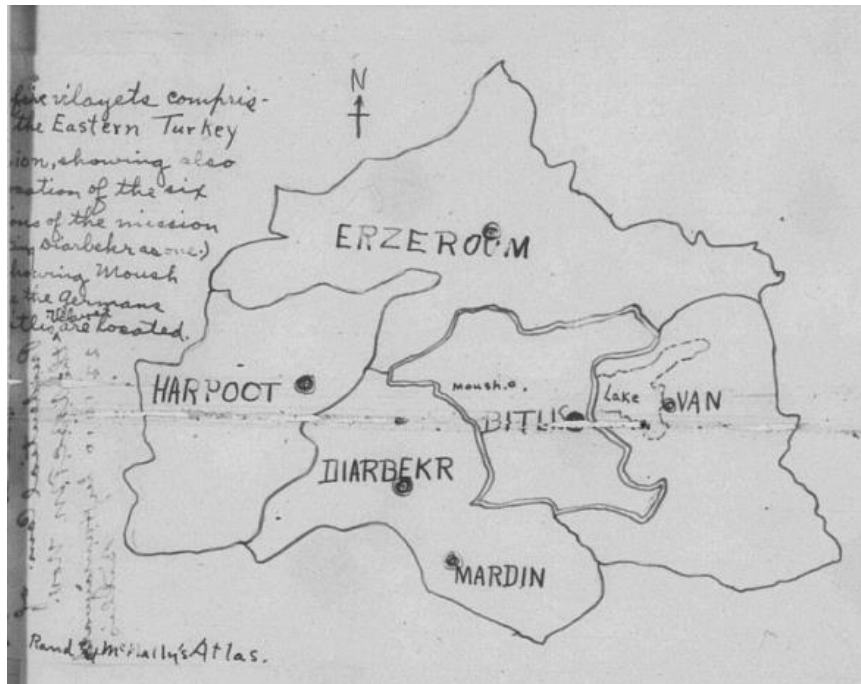
<sup>56</sup> Wheeler, C.H. (1868). *Ten Years on the Euphrates, Or, Primitive Missionary Policy Illustrated.* American Tract Society, p.61.

'female seminary' was established for preparing the local protestant workers for church and furnishing their wives or prospective female workers respectively. Another notable aspect of this Mission was the touring preachers of Gospel stories among the villages, towns, and cities of the wider district, which led to the emergence of small numbers of centres of Christian influence, some of which grew to be of much importance. The medical work of the Eastern Turkey Mission was, until 1890, relatively limited. There was only one hospital in Mardin and its operator, Dr D. M. B. Thom, was the only physician in the entire Mission by 1889.

Different from the steady growth in other Missions, entering the 1890s, the Eastern Mission had a difficult time, suffering a great loss of its American staff, with the number of appointed missionaries falling from 53 in 1890 to 36 in 1900, due to health issues, transfers or deaths.<sup>57</sup> Together with the alarming emigration of Armenian Protestant workers at the same time, especially from Harput to America, the Eastern Mission experienced a particularly tough period with a large loss of staff and communities. In 1892 the Mosul station was transferred to the Presbyterian Board; In 1912 the Mission offered to give up the Van province entirely to their German counterparts.

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<sup>57</sup> ABCFM, ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 703. 16.9.7. Vol. 17-18, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



Map of the Eastern Turkey Station (1914)<sup>58</sup>

#### 4. The European Turkey Mission (1870-1914)

The European Turkey Mission (renamed the Balkan Mission in the 1890s) was set apart from the Western Turkey Mission in 1870 for its work among Bulgarians, and comprised three main stations aside from the literary centre at İstanbul: Eski Zağra (Eski Zagra), Philippopolis (Philipopolis), and Samokov. The missionary work suffered during wartime from 1876-1878 but recovered rapidly after the war ended, with the Mission consisting of three stations in Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia, and Turkey. The first Bulgarian protestant church was established in the fall of 1870 immediately after the Mission was set up. Another notable achievement of the evangelical work was the completion of the Bible in Bulgarian in 1871, which was considered by missionaries to be significant in awakening the religious consciousness of the Bulgarian people. In the educational field, the first boarding school for Bulgarian girls was founded at Eski Zağra (Eski Zagra). The school was transferred to Samokov the

<sup>58</sup> ABCFM. (1910). *A brief address on the proposition to transfer the American mission work in Bitlis to the German Hülfebund*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.825, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

next year with about 25 pupils, and this number grew to 94 by the close of the 1890s. The High School for Boys at Philippopolis from 1861 to 1871 was moved to Samokov in 1872 as a theological training school, becoming the College and Theological Institute in 1880. By 1890 there were 80 students at the school.<sup>59</sup>

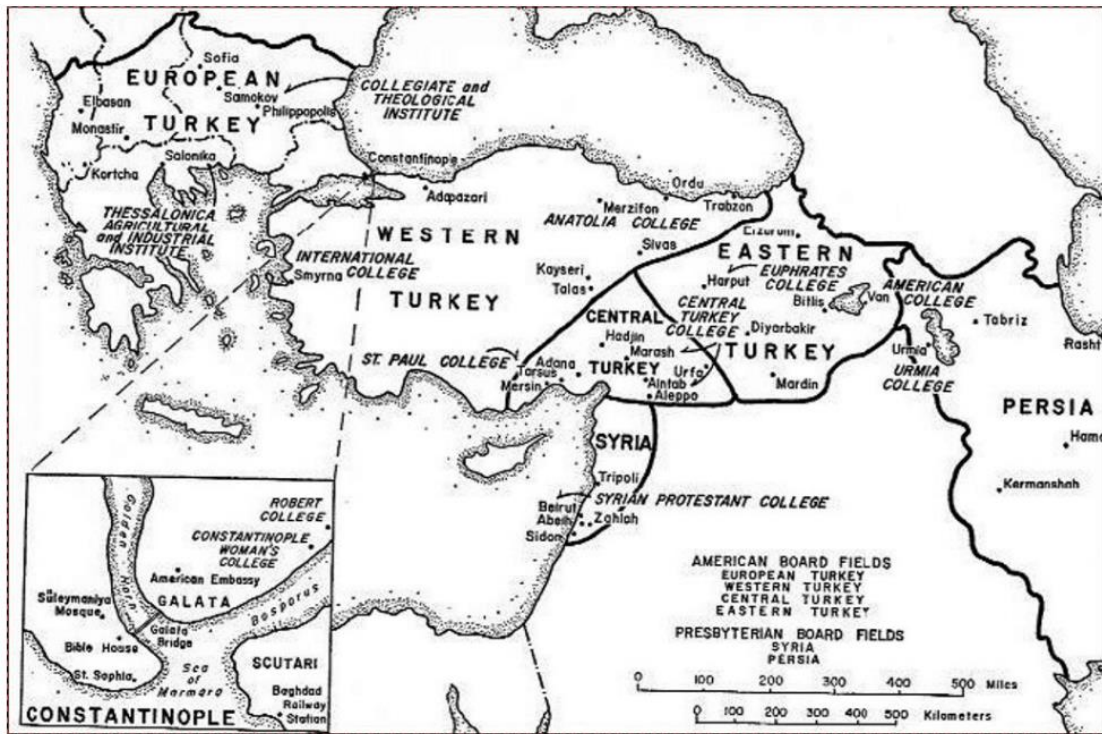
Since the 1890s, this Mission's region witnessed several wars, in 1897, 1911, 1912, and 1913 before the outbreak of WWI in 1914. Besides the work among Bulgarians in the Bulgarian Exarchate, the work in the Greek domain resumed through the reoccupation of Salonica as a station in 1894 – a station had operated here as early as 1849-56. The work among two hitherto untouched populations – Albanians and Serbians – also began in the 1890s. Although the examination of the European Turkey Mission is not covered by this dissertation (as it concerns the Muslim-Missionary relationship within the Anatolian region), this review is necessary to provide the context of the wider missionary network. Besides, it was notable that the activities of the American missionaries among Bulgarians played an important role in the emergence of modern Bulgarian nationalist consciousness.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Riggs et al., p.45.

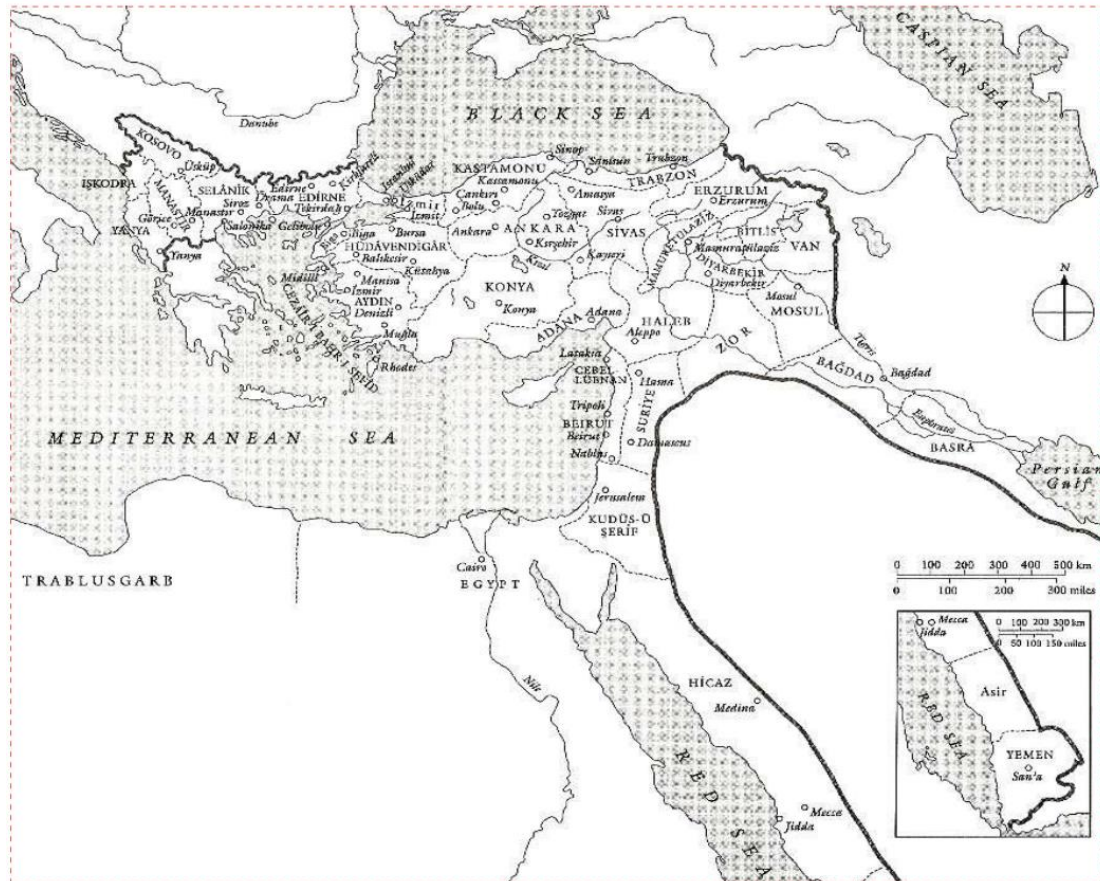
<sup>60</sup> Miller, C.L. (2017) 'American Missionaries and the Formation of Modern Bulgarian National Consciousness'. *East European Quarterly*, 45(3-4), pp.163-184.





Map of the ABCFM Turkey Mission, Missionary station and colleges (1810-1927)<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Grabill, J. L. (1971) *Protestant diplomacy and the Near East: missionary influence on American policy, 1810-1927*.



Map of Ottoman provinces (1900)<sup>62</sup>

## II. The Development of the Turkey Missions of ABCFM (1906-1929)

Section I shows that, for many years since 1821, the interests of the American missionaries' work centred on the non-Muslim population – the Armenians, Greeks and Bulgarians – who were called the 'nominal Christians' by the missionaries. As mentioned above, following the group of Muslims who became Christians in İstanbul in the 1860s through missionary efforts, most of the American missionaries felt that there was nothing that could be done about the Ottoman Muslims, to whom the conversion from Islam to Christianity was recognized as apostasy, which was subjected to the death penalty under religious law; the ramifications of this require further specific study. Evangelical propaganda on Muslim subjects was forbidden by the Sultan Abudlhamid and, until the 1908 Revolution, the only approach that the

<sup>62</sup> Fortna, B. (2002) *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*.

American missionaries could adopt in this regard was through holding private interviews. However, there was an emerging interest in Muslim evangelization among some American missionaries working in the Empire at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In general, the situation regarding missionary work among Muslims changed after the 1900s, or since the second half of the 1910s as far as the interior of Asia Minors concerned.<sup>63</sup> Entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the Missions, the feeling grew that this shelving of work among Muslims was “improper” and was “not called for”. However, this consideration led to a committee appointed to publishing a report on the work among Muslims and the first report was produced in 1906. This first report simply consisted of the accounts of some Muslims who had shown an interest in Christianity. These Muslims were represented with letters rather than their full names, considering the political sensitivity before the Revolution.<sup>64</sup> There was a further report the following year and more were regularly written on the work of Muslim evangelization henceforth. After the 1908 Revolution, the liberal political environment provided the missionaries with more opportunities for their evangelising work among Muslims, particularly for the Western and Central Turkey Missions. The Central Mission showed the most enthusiastic interest in Muslim work, by proposing to the Board a request for fieldwork, to re-evaluate the new conditions of the field for the evangelic work for Muslims in November 1908, which was accomplished in the early 1910s.<sup>65</sup> In 1913, further steps were taken at the annual meeting of the Western Turkey Mission. The Board considered the “definite and aggressive work for Muslims” to be possible and proposed to carry out the Muslim work by establishing kindergartens and clubs,

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<sup>63</sup> According to the Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, by 1914, 151 American missionaries, along with 1,204 Ottoman Christians, operated 137 churches, 9 hospitals, 8 colleges, 46 secondary schools and 369 elementary schools, with an enrolment of 25,199 mostly Christian, and some Muslim students. ABCFM. (1918). *The One Hundred and Eighth Annual Report*, p.170.

<sup>64</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956), *Christian-Muslim relations in Central Turkey and North Syria 1900-1940*. 1 vol. ABCFM, Houghton Library, Cambridge; Also see: ABCFM. (1906-07?). *Works for Moslems -Sept 05*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 660. 16.9.5. Vol. 15. No.240, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>65</sup> Harrison, H. p.2.

teaching illiterate young brides, and training Turkish-speaking missionaries.<sup>66</sup> In 1914, prior to WWI, the next step was taken by the Board in appointing sub-committees to do field research on medical, educational, and literature work among the Muslim population.<sup>67</sup>

The period of the First World War from 1914 to 1918 was the most disastrous for the American missionary work in the Ottoman Empire. By early 1917, more than half of the Board's missionaries in Turkey had been withdrawn or expelled for safety and political reasons, resulting in significant loss of personnel for missionary service. Correspondingly, by 1917, a large proportion of missionary stations had suspended their work and been completely evacuated, such as Talas, Adapazarı (Adabazar), Bahçecik (Baghtchedjik), Bursa, Bitlis, Van, and Diyarbakır, and many missionary schools closed. By the end of WWI, more than 18 missionaries had died in the field and over 22 in American.<sup>68</sup> During the year of National Struggle, there was a huge change in the missionary map of Turkey: the entire Eastern Mission was abandoned by the beginning of 1922. Those of the former Eastern Mission who were still at work mostly went either to the Caucasus region, working with Western Turkey Mission workers, or to Syria, among Armenian refugees, becoming connected to the Central Turkey Mission beyond Turkish domains. Regarding the Balkan Mission, in 1922 the Salonica station was incorporated into the Western Mission for management reasons, and Athens was occupied as a station of the Western Mission in the same year. The work in Monastir was transferred to the Methodist Board in 1921 for lack of funds, and for the same reason, the Board was compelled to withdraw from Albania, making the Balkan Mission the Bulgarian Mission.<sup>69</sup> In general, the whole Missionary network after WWI shrank to a large extent compared to how it looked in the 1880s.

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<sup>66</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the W.T. Mission, Talas Carsarea, July 5-12*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. 1910-1919, No.46, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>67</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Organization of Central Turkey Mission for Moslem Work, 1913-1914*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. Vol. 22. No.565, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>68</sup> Riggs, C.T. *History of the Work of the ABCFM in the Near East and More especially in Turkey*. pp.62-65.

<sup>69</sup> Riggs et al., pp.70-71.

From 1914 to 1923, it was notable that the series of Armenian deportations during the war, as well as the Greco-Turkish population exchange in its aftermath, led to a great loss in the Armenian and Orthodox populations in Turkey, who were once the two largest target group of the Mission. It also meant that the native Christian workers were no longer available. At the same time, the intense Muslim migration from the Balkan and Caucasus regions to Anatolia further rendered Turkey a more compactly Muslim country. This demographic reconstruction, together with the change in the missionary map, led the American missionaries in Turkey to reconsider their agenda towards work among Muslims after WWI. Following the 1918 Armistice, the secretary of the Board, James Barton, stressed the importance of Muslim work and requested two more missionaries from home to take charge of the Muslim work in 1919. In his words, the Christians were facing a great historical opportunity to enter the Muslim world.<sup>70</sup> In August 1921, a special meeting was held by the Western Turkey Mission to discuss the future of the Muslim work, marking a turning point in the Board's policy framework in Turkey.<sup>71</sup> In the early 1920s, it was the shared feeling of the American missionaries that the work for Muslims had become their primary agenda within the domain of Turkey.

In 1923 the definition of national borders which divided Turkey and Syria by the Lausanne Treaty rendered the name of the Central Turkey Mission inappropriate, while the transport and communication between Syrian stations and other inner Turkish stations were inconvenienced. Thus, in the following year, the Central Turkey Mission decided to carve off the stations in Syria into a separate unit and to combine the work of other stations within the Turkish border, such as Aintab, Maraş, and Adana-Tarsus, with the work of the Western Turkey Mission. In consequence, the four historical Mission divisions no longer obtained, and the new Mission in Republican Turkey was

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<sup>70</sup> Yücel, İ. (2010), p.57.

<sup>71</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol 1. p.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

renamed simply as the Turkey Mission, which implied the diminished scale of the American missionary network in the Republic of Turkey.<sup>72</sup>

In conclusion, after entering the Ottoman lands in 1821, the American missionary activities developed rapidly and became a systematic network in the 1850s. Divided into four Missions, the missionary activities prevalent in the Ottoman lands reached their peak in the 1880s, with the establishment of a wide range of missionary institutions, including schools, churches, hospitals, orphanages, and printing presses. Although there was a decline in the Eastern Turkey Mission after the 1890s, the general Mission developed steadily before WWI. By 1913, there were 163 churches and 450 educational institutions on Ottoman lands under the control of American missionaries.<sup>73</sup> The work of the Mission, however, was suspended to a large extent after 1922 when the Republic of Turkey was founded, and by that time the missionary activities were preoccupied with the Muslim population. Although the main target group of the missionary work were Ottoman Christians, it is noteworthy that there was a shifting agenda in the Mission towards Muslims from the early 1900s, which gradually became the major concern of the Board in the next 20 years. Moreover, the encounters between the Protestant missionaries and Ottoman Muslims continued to evolve from the very start of the mission, intertwined with numerous religious-cultural, and political factors. Consequently, the work of American missionaries among Muslims is significant, along with their interactions with Muslim Turks during the late Ottoman and early Republican period in Turkey.

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<sup>72</sup> Riggs et al., p.75.

<sup>73</sup> Cevik, G. (2011). 'American Missionaries and the Harem: Cultural Exchanges behind the Scenes'. p.468.

# Chapter I: Encounters between American Protestant Missionaries and Ottoman Authorities

Since the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the American missionary expansion thrived on the domestic upheavals described in the last chapter, surveillance and control became the buzzwords for state policy over the missionary issue. The Sultan, sensitive about all the threats to his sovereignty, adopted a huge surveillance system of censors and spies to carefully collect intelligence from every corner of his territories. Unsurprisingly, the American missionary influences became his great concern. His qualms were generated from the central government's findings from incoming provincial reports indicating that the number of minority rebellions rose proportionally with the escalating Great Powers' interventions and the increasing scale of regional missionary activities on the Ottoman Christians. To the Sultan and most of his ministers, these American missionaries who were entangled with the US political powers, were construed as the instigators and extrinsic supporters of the minority rebels, and the underlying bane of social disarray – their missionary influence was an irreconcilable menace to the Islamist core of his state policy, threatening Islamic-Ottoman legitimacy and accelerating disintegration of the Empire. Consequently, the Sultan highlighted the anti-missionary strategies in line with his Islamic policy. In *Well-Protected Domains*, Selim Deringil noted that the Sultan's personal perspective on missionary activities was notably ambivalent and historian-like: "Missionary effort was by no means an agency of imperialist policies. Often it was opposed to the colonial authorities... Yet the success of the Lord was a function of imperialist advance".<sup>74</sup> Thus the Sultan had no choice but to oppose the missionary expansions.

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<sup>74</sup> Deringil, S. *Well-Protected Domains*, p115. Quoted from Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, p71.

Despite being impossible for the Ottoman government to expel all American missionaries under international pressure, painstaking efforts were taken to keep close track of the missionary activities. In the Hamidian period, unlike the usually loose governmental controls of other foreign visitors and merchants who could gain “easy access” to the country and enjoy “absolute freedom of travel” even without the requirement of a Turkish passport,<sup>75</sup> the state imposed a stringent ikamet and teskere (passport and residence) policy on the missionaries who stayed in Turkey in order to locate and monitor them everywhere and anytime. Missionaries were warned to report their travel information simultaneously to the authorities when they were landing in or travelling around the country. Under such circumstances, when the missionaries failed to keep their information up to date on time but ‘moved ahead’ of the decrees, they were at risk of being intercepted and detained by government agents. For example, in June 1890, several missionaries were detained and interrogated by local agents when they arrived in the Damascus Province and settled in Beirut, with Ahmet Munir, the Minister of the Interior, angrily sending orders to investigate this “illegal case”. They were eventually released on the condition that they inform every step of their movements to the authorities.<sup>76</sup> The central authorities also constantly urged provincial governors to be on their guard for missionaries in their areas, so *zabtiehs* (Turkish officers) began to be sent to the missionaries’ sides when they were travelling on business or touring among mountains and villages. The missionaries knew well that these *zabtiehs* sent to “protect their safety” in reality acted more like governors’ spies to

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<sup>75</sup> As Suraiya Faroqhi argued in her classic monograph, *The Ottoman Empire and the World around It*: “the Ottoman lands were of relatively easy access to outsiders. Traders were allowed not only to come and go, but also to reside in the sultan’s territories for many years without becoming the subjects of this potentate. Even the rule that such foreigners should not marry local women or acquire real estate was often ignored in practice. Catholic missionaries frequently complained about difficulties encountered. But the truly noteworthy aspect of missionary activity was surely the fact that they were allowed entry at all, especially if we keep in mind that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries quite a few Europeans were still required to leave their respective homelands on account of belonging to the “wrong” denomination. Moreover, to my knowledge, the Ottoman elite never seriously considered instituting more stringent controls at entry points, of the kind that were customary in early modern Russia. As long as war had not officially been declared, the ‘well-guarded domains’ were traversed by many foreigners ‘coming and going’.” Faroqhi, S. (2004). *The Ottoman Empire and the world around it*. pp.213-14. For other references see BOA. HR.SYS.60.34.3.

<sup>76</sup> Ottoman Archives, (1890) *Birçok protestan misyonerin Suriye'ye gitmek üzere pasaportlarını vize ettirmeden Amerika'dan ayrıldıkları ve ekseriyetle Beyrut, Yafa ve İskenderun'a çıkararak faaliyette bulunacakları bildirildiğinden gerekli tedbirlerin alınması*. BOA. DH.MKT. 1728.79.



monitor their activities and frequently send back reports on whether they had been engaged in any “possible” seditious movement.<sup>77</sup> The Sublime Portes were also devoted to establishing a new ‘database’ of missionaries’ information for closer administrative control of their activities. In December 1883 a comprehensive demographic survey was conducted in Ottoman lands for financial and military use, in which the American missionaries and the Ottoman subjects they had converted throughout the Anatolian and Arab provinces for the first time became the targets of the government’s special concern. The Ministry of the Interior even organized a special committee to issue the foreigners with travel permits and track their legal status. For the imperial survey, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Works required “citizen identification reports” from the American, British, and French consulates, by this means the government would collect detailed intelligence on the Ottoman-located foreigners, especially the Missionaries, under the banner of providing them with “better and faster services”.<sup>78</sup> However, both the American consulates and missionaries made no response to this call, as they rejected the disclosure of any of their ‘classified information’ to the Ottoman officials. In the view of the Ministers of Foreign and Internal Affairs, the missionary activities had expanded to such an extent that some ‘incompetent officials’ failed to deal with the problem. To deter the non-compliant American missionaries, the Ministers had to revamp their diplomatic discourse, proclaiming that “any individual who resides in the Ottoman territories shall be treated as Ottoman subjects”, including those who claimed to be foreigners, unless the government officially verified their “foreigner status” with a granted “imperial certificate”, therefore those foreigners who did not submit their registrations – which referred to both the American missionaries who were obliged to purchase large premises to expand their operations and their Protestant converts who claimed

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<sup>77</sup> ABCFM. Reel 712, No.1063; ABCFM. (1919) *Ottoman Bank Relief Funds*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.536, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>78</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) pp.19-22.

American status – would be deprived of their privileged rights to property and services.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, the premises American missionaries purchased for their operational expansion was also blamed for the expansion of their ‘malicious influence’. Being aware of this, the government imposed barriers to stymie the missionaries’ land acquisition. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the foreigners’ purchasing of premises and properties in the Ottoman lands was banned by law, therefore in the early part of the century, the American missionaries acquired Ottoman land through non-Muslim middlemen: Greeks and Armenians and in some cases even the British (such as at the International College in Smyrna), under the nominal title of whose names the lands were registered for use by the missionaries. It was not until the 1864 Decree that the missionaries as foreign citizens were empowered with the same rights of owning lands and properties as Ottoman subjects.<sup>80</sup> The Decree also recognized missionary schools as charitable establishments which could be exempted from all Ottoman taxes. In practice, however, the state Ministries, especially from the 1880s, being intentionally inefficient, created prolonged procedures and various limitations to avoid or forestall property transfers and the granting of new licenses and building permits for missionary institutions. Although the special status of Westerners and stresses of American diplomacy relieved American missionaries from the exacting and arbitrary acts to which Ottoman subjects were exposed, the Sultan could divest accrued rights of the missionaries by his fiat, or by his will with skilled tact. For example, he officially refused to grant treaty rights of property holding by decrees in 1830, 1862, and 1874; he placed winning bids on property while it was still in the market; and he prohibited the transfer to agents who were Ottoman subjects, therefore making them ineligible for treaty rights.<sup>81</sup> Even for the already granted premises, the government could employ external limitations to

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. See also: Shaw, S. (1978). ‘The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914’. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9(3), p.325-338.

<sup>80</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.32.

<sup>81</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Correspondence of Marry Mills Patrick to the secretary of state on behalf of the Trustees of the American College for Girls at Constantinople*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 616. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.858, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

impose a long-term moratorium on construction operations: the missionaries of Robert College had to wait seven years to be allowed to build its first campus after acquiring its sites because of the enforced official restriction against importing its building materials into İstanbul.<sup>82</sup> In another case of a purchasing effort to build a new campus for the American College for Girls at İstanbul in early 1908, after delays and objections, the Sultan made a personal demand for the property out of his ‘private interest’. The government could indirectly make suggestions to the missionaries with a willingness to pay a bonus aside from the reimbursed expense, or the government would acquire and turn over the adjacent property of the lands to be bought, to make the land undesirable as a school site.<sup>83</sup>

Due to the incompatibility between the Ottoman administrative inefficiency and the rapid missionary expansion, the establishing of new missionary institutions and the enlarging and relocating of school buildings preceding official authorization were not uncommon, and a large portion of American institutions ran illegally without licences in the late Ottoman period. In these circumstances, a further step was taken to curb the booming American institutions. In December 1886, an crucial bilateral meeting was organized, attended by the Minister of Public Instruction, Münif Pasha, and the first secretary of American Legation at İstanbul, Pendleton King, whereby new decrees were issued to establish strict standards for teacher certification, curricula, and physical facilities at American schools.<sup>84</sup> This regulation incapacitated many teachers who

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<sup>82</sup> Riggs, C. T. *The making of Robert College*, Houghton Library, Cambridge. See also: ABCFM. (1908) *Correspondence of Marry Mills Patrick to the secretary of state on behalf of the Trustees of the American College for Girls at Constantinople*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 616. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.858, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> According to the new regulation, the teachers’ diplomat or certificate, the schools’ curriculum and its physical facilities should conform with article 129 of the Imperial Public Instruction Law, which ordered that the teachers of private schools should possess a certificate from the Ministry of Public Instruction or local authorities of education; the textbooks and courses used in schools should be approved by the Ministry of Public Instruction or local authorities of education so that no courses contrary to morals or politics be instructed in schools; the teachers should already have certificates, and they must be approved by the Provincial authorities of Education. ABCFM. (1889) Letter to the Department of State. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 596. 16.9.3. Vol. 9. No.467, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

failed to submit necessary credentials, thereby outlawing their schools and forcing their closure within three months.<sup>85</sup> Later, official attitudes towards the missionary schools were further exacerbated during the Armenian revolts, when the Ottoman authorities noted through their field reports that the American missionaries were involved in conducting “activities in violation of Ottoman laws and orders” (operating illegal schools and fuelling civil unrest).<sup>86</sup> The reports of the Ministry of the Public Instruction had a very vivid recollection of the order that went into force in 1886 requiring the closing of the unqualified American schools. Not only schools but also the American hospital in Talas was outlawed by the government in early 1907 and would have closed but for the new grade secured by the missionaries in the same year. To collect evidence against the so-called ‘illegal practices’, in 1890 the Minister of Education, Ahmet Zühdü, gathered the available statistics about the recorded missionaries institutions (including the capacity, status and management) from the local reports and amalgamated them into one database, where he evaluated whether the institutions had updated operation permits, cooperated with local governments or taught Muslim students. Later, in 1915, the database was enlarged by Zühdü’s successor, Mustafa Haşim, who added information about the unregistered institutions, whose figures were estimated against the previously recorded number. The minister noted that those “illegal” institutions were “hiding in odd corners and thus escaping detection”, thus necessitating “extreme caution”.<sup>87</sup> To confirm the missionaries’ “illegal practices”, the government gave special consideration to their enrolled Muslim students. For example, the prominent Turkish novelist Halide Edib, or “the Mother of the Turks”, described in her memoir that when she was a 16-year-old student in the American Girls’ College (around 1900), she was once chased by a boatload of police officers after the government spies had reported that her teacher had taken her to have

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<sup>85</sup> Daniel, R. L. (1970). *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960*. p.114, as cited in Erhan, Ç. (2000).

<sup>86</sup> Ottoman Archives. (1897) *Amerikalı misyonerlerin Erzurum'da asayışı bozucu faaliyetleri*. BOA. Y..PRK.HR. 25. 51.

<sup>87</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.23.

tea on an American yacht, and she was almost arrested on the grounds that she was “attempting to run away from Turkey by boat”.<sup>88</sup>

In the field of missionary publications, the contentions between the two sides also became noteworthy after the government introduced strict censorship on the publication and distribution of the missionaries’ religious books and tracts in the 1880s. The American Bible House or American Bible Society was the printing institution for American missionaries’ religious books and tracts, missionary schoolbooks, and other magazines and foreign literature. It originated with the very first missionary printing house established in Malta by Pliny Fisk in 1822, which was moved to İzmir in 1833, and eventually in 1852 to the mission centre in İstanbul where, as mentioned above, it jointly worked with the American Board and shared the same building with the Board’s headquarters.<sup>89</sup> In the 1860s, the House began to print publications in Turkish for Muslim use, and some Muslims converted to Christianity through missionaries’ efforts. Meanwhile, there was an increasing concern about foreign publications, including those distributed by Russians and Greeks seeking independence from the Empire. As a result, the Sublime Portes began to impose restrictions on missionary publications and to censor all books containing political or religious propaganda from 1862.<sup>90</sup>

The Sultan tightened publication censorship following the Bulgarian revolt in 1875. While the missionaries continued their publishing activities despite these limitations, with or without permission, the Ottoman authorities began to confiscate their missionary books at customs checks in the 1880s. Some American missionaries occasionally applied to reclaim the confiscated books, but the Ottoman government always took an attitude of negligence against these applications. For example, in 1880 a shipment of religious books imported by an American missionary without permission

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<sup>88</sup> Adıvar, H.E. (1926). *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*. pp.198-200.

<sup>89</sup> Kocabaşoğlu, U. (1988). ‘Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda XIX. Yüzyılda Amerikan Yüksek Okulları’ . , p.270.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

was confiscated at customs and the Turkish translator was held in prison for 15 years.<sup>91</sup> In late 1882 a new decree concerning the control of missionary publications was inaugurated by the Porte upon the proposal of the Ministry of Public Instruction wherein a special official seal should be stamped on all foreign publications after authorities' examination; apart from those publications imported and censored at the Ottoman customs, those that had already been distributed to interior foreign bookstores and those that had been printed and stored in the publishing house's depots were required to be collected and submitted for general examination. The leaders of the Bible House expressed their discontent about these arrangements and appealed to the intervention of the American Legation, considering it would impair the existing privileges and immunity for Americans and might be established as a compromise in the future. As a result of the negotiation, the government finally managed to enter the Bible House depository for inspection but dropped its order for the books in circulation.<sup>92</sup> Later, the government introduced a new law which required the sentence "Only for the use of Protestants" to be printed on the front page of every book as a prerequisite for republishing the Bible and Testament. As the American minister of Bible House rejected this condition, Bible and Testament publication was officially banned in 1883.<sup>93</sup>

### **The Missionary Perspective**

Although the government viewed the American missionary influences and their nexus with state power negatively, they still treated the missionaries with bureaucratic 'courtesy' in routine business. During 1877-78, when relief work had been inaugurated by the American missionaries in Eastern Turkey after the Turco-Russian war, to the surprise of the missionaries, it was "the first time that the local government sent spokesmen to thank the missionaries", showing their "surprise" and "admiration" for

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<sup>91</sup> Erhan, Ç. (2000). 'Ottoman official attitudes towards American missionaries'.

<sup>92</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.31.

<sup>93</sup> Erhan, Ç. (2000)

the missionaries' "impartial work" among both Christians and Muslims, which was "especially gratifying" to them.<sup>94</sup> Even the American missionary E. Munsell Bliss, who criticized the "Turks' Armenian atrocities" acrimoniously, claimed that the Ottoman authorities satisfactorily secured her safety as an American citizen after the Armenian deportation: "My own guards, 20 in number since Sunday, do my every bidding as if I were a queen. I use them for help in all sorts of ways".<sup>95</sup> However, beneath the facade of 'routine courtesy', relations were rife with tensions over the two sides' substantive interactions. On 10<sup>th</sup> December 1891, *The Ararat* (the American-missionary-operated Armeno-American weekly journal published in New York) lambasted the Ottoman government's three recent major misdeeds in relation to the American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, reflecting the problematic relations at the time: 1) the "direct violation of the clause of the treaties" through "the causeless arrest" of Mr Richardson of Erzurum (around September) and the confiscation of all his writings, and the arrest of Mr Crawford of Bursa on the Marmora Sea (9<sup>th</sup> October) for "his passports were in order" so "he should not travel", which was "equally clear violation of the clause of the treaties" by which Turkey was "bound to permit Americans to travel freely on their legitimate business in all parts of the empire"; 2) the confiscation of c.1,000 volumes of church hymn books and Bible dictionaries "belonging to the American Missions" as "American property" for two years, which was "in violation of the law, fixes the precedent for the treatment of other property of Americans"; and 3) the to-be-executed order newly issued by the Sublime Porte in October "prohibiting missionaries from holding public worship or conducting schools in dwelling houses", which was equivalent to an order closing the larger part of the missionaries schools and preaching places. It was interpreted by the author as the government's malicious response to the fact that the interests of the Muslims were "held to be imperilled by the stimulus given to the intellectual life of the Christians by these missionary institutions".<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> ABCFM. *Ottoman Bank Relief Funds*. Reel 712, No.1063.

<sup>95</sup> Bliss, E. M. (1896). *Turkey and the Armenian atrocities*.

<sup>96</sup> 'The Turkish Government and American Missions' . (1891). *The Ararat*, 10 December. BOA.HR. SYS.61.13.5. The article was believed to be reprinted from the Constantinople-Based American missionaries' Journal, *The Independent*.

In defending their privileged rights regarding opening and reopening their institutions, the American missionaries, especially after the 1886 regulations, felt bound to seek help from the American government. In 1900 the Committee of Political Relations of the ABCFM was established to this end with representatives from the missionaries and the American Embassy. Again, the missionaries and the American consulate found their solution in the treaties and capitulation, as they argued: “Existing schools of American citizens have the authorization of the Imperial government, by virtue of long usage and all past interpretation of the Capitulations. Hence, application for permits for these schools is not necessary, and, as it would imply the right of the government refuse the permits should not be made”.<sup>97</sup> However, despite being one of the rising Great Powers and recognized as ‘the most favoured nation’, the privileged position held by the American Embassy, as the American missionaries argued, was “never admitted by the government” until the Sublime Porte was compelled by the French to compromise “at the Cannon’s mouth” in the so-called Mityline Settlement in November 1901, when the Ottoman government was forced to recognize the legal status of French educational, charitable and religious institutions in the Ottoman lands. This Ottoman-French treaty urged the American missionaries to secure a similar application of the provisions in the treaty to their own institutions, therefore a special deputation was organized and sent to Washington in winter of 1902-03 by the aforesaid Committee. A significant meeting was held with President Roosevelt in the White House and Secretary Hay in the State Department, with the result that the US government became fully pledged to the task of securing for American institutions what France had gained for hers. The pledge by Hay was given to the missionary deputies in these words: “You may go back to Constantinople assured that this matter will be settled to your satisfaction”.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.36.

<sup>98</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of the MISSION TREASURER for the YEAR 1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39.No.534, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



Through resorting to the US government's clout, the American missionaries secured two *irades* (written edicts) from the Sultan. The first was given in August 1904 and guaranteed to the American institutions equal treatment to match those of other Great Power nations,<sup>99</sup> which, however, only okayed some of the activities the institutions undertook. Being unsatisfied with this partial grant, the Embassy pressed for a more satisfactory concession from the Porte, thus the missionaries obtained the second *irade* just before the Revolution in May 1907 to facilitate the transfer of American institutions to the hands of the missionaries, through which the Sultan recognized the American institutions (about 300 of them) as being legally established, with franchises being exempt from heavy land taxes.<sup>100</sup> Following the 1901 concession made by the Ottoman government to the French, the chief cases of the missionary Committee and the Ottoman Empire were exemplified by the long-term struggle for government recognition of the American institutions.<sup>101</sup> The document which passed between the American Embassy and the Porte at that time was printed in full in the Annual Volume for 1907 by the State Department and known as "Foreign Relations".<sup>102</sup>

In another notable lobbying case, the American Boards, inspired by their rising national self-confidence and the notion of 'New Manifest Destiny', in 1885 formally suggested to the American President that:

the occasional presence of our Mediterranean fleet in Turkish waters, or the frequent visit of some of our ships of war at Smyrna, the Dardanelles, or Salonica – not as a menace, but as a reminder to the Turkish government of the existence of the United States as one of the Great Powers of the world – would add very much to the influence of the American Minister, restore the credit and prestige of the

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<sup>99</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the Treasury Department and Political Affairs*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.521, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of the Treasury Department and Political Affairs*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 617. 16.9.3. Vol. 28. No.663, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>102</sup> See Foreign Relations Series Volumes, 1901-1909, Theodore Roosevelt, US Department of State Archive.

American name, and contribute not a little to securing the right and privileges of American citizens in accordance with treaty stipulations.<sup>103</sup>

The American missionaries who could not tolerate their privileges and ‘religious freedom’ being frequently slighted by the Ottomans often resorted to the US government to assert their ‘white man’ muscles. In August 1895 the US cruiser San Francisco was ordered to stay at Ottoman dock “at least a fortnight” and “much longer,” unless the vessel was “ordered away by the United States Navy Department” under the appeal of the American missionaries. Strikingly, even the American Rear Admiral Kirkland, commanding the Europe station, spoke upon this subject and was “emphatic in his condemnation” of the American missionaries in Turkey. Though his findings need more scrutiny,<sup>104</sup> they reflect some external impressions towards the missionaries at that time:

One of the most prominent Sunday school teachers in Syria spent three years in the Penitentiary at Pittsburg, Pa., and that, taken altogether, they are a bad lot. The cause of all the trouble... is that, relying upon the protection of the American government, the missionaries defy the local laws, and do not merit the despatch of a war ship at every appeal made by the missionaries, most of which appeals are not true.<sup>105</sup>

Some Ottoman scholars today see such American missionaries’ lobbying events as a testimony to rebuke their function as ‘political agents’ or ‘new frontiersmen’ of the ‘American imperialism’. Turkish scholar Devrim argues that the American missionaries were “instrumental in the orientation and articulation of the American foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire”, by stating that American warships were even sent “to the Ottoman ports six times under three different Presidents in a ten-year period”.<sup>106</sup> Western scholars who trace the US legacy in the Middle East tend to accentuate the American missionaries’ modernizing values. Edward Earle indicated

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<sup>103</sup> Earle, E.M. (1929) p.407.

<sup>104</sup> For counterarguments see Ottoman Archives (1895). *Reply to Admiral Kirkland. His Criticisms of American missionaries Abroad Are Traversed*. BOA. HR.SYS. 64. 27. 11.

<sup>105</sup> ABCFM. (1895) ‘By Cable to the Herald’. August 17, London. BOA.HR.SYS. 64.25. 3..

<sup>106</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.16.

that it was fortunate for both the American missionaries and the US government that the American Boards' suggestion in 1885 was not adopted. He tried to justify that there was neither American 'gunboat policy' in the Ottoman Empire nor a political-economic conspiracy between the US government and the American missionaries; there were only non-political and benevolent aims, if one takes the 'sophisticatedly questionable' relations between France and Germany and their dispatched missionaries into consideration.

### **Beneath the Facade: Relations in the New Era**

It was after the 1908 Constitutional Revolution that the pro-Western Young Turk regime's attitudes towards the American missionaries appeared to ameliorate to a large extent, as denoted by their cooperative policy. Indeed, in one missionary's memoir, C.W. Fewle recalled that he felt quite surprised and delighted when one Turkish CUP member, who was giving an address in a Greek church in İstanbul after the Revolution, thanked him in front of Turkish, Armenian and Greek flocks in a most cordial way for the work of the Americans and English in opening schools and teaching the principles of real liberty in this land.<sup>107</sup> In the same year, the CUP also invited the editor of the missionary weekly paper *Avedaper* to attend a united press meeting in İstanbul together with other Turkish editors to plan Turkish literature's prospects. In his correspondence with the Board's Foreign Secretary Dr Barton, the editor wrote: "I have to shake myself to believe that I am actually awake and not dreaming".<sup>108</sup>

However, this amicable relation tightened again in the following years while the CUP turned to a Turkish Nationalist pursuit. Not long after the Revolution the American

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<sup>107</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *The ? of an Ottoman ?* by Rev James L Fewle of Cesarea. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 616. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.864, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>108</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of the 37th Meeting of the Eastern Mission, held at Van July 19th to 23th, 1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.128, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>108</sup> Allen, H. M. (1908) Letter to Dr Barton, August 6. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 618. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.726, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

missionaries changed their optimistically complimentary tone to one of reproach, as they found in 1910 that there was little difference between the new bureaus and their predecessor in dealing with the missionaries' administrative business: "as usual in Turkish affairs the acts of the outgoing administration are tainted with suspicion and what was decided and became finished work before the change must be opened for discussion and review with the authorities who have lately come to power".<sup>109</sup> The CUP government's renegeing on the aforementioned 1907 *irade* acquired by the American missionaries was another sign of their intensified relations. This *irade* conditioned the American ownership of lands and properties in the Ottoman Empire and provided the same tax and tariff exemptions for the properties owned under the title of US citizens or organizations as those of Ottoman subjects,<sup>110</sup> henceforth it became a norm that the American missionaries transferred the ownership of American institutions from their nominal intermediary to their own title or the American Board's. However, endless delays were common when dealing with such official issues with the CUP bureau. The missionaries found the governmental control over their activities was as unrelenting as had been before – the previously secured *irades* of 1904 and 1907 had met with strong opposition by the new government before they could finally be acknowledged; although the American institutions were recognized as charitable institutions, which continued to enjoy the tax exemptions according to the 1907 *irade*, new taxes and restrictions were again introduced by the government from the 1910s to limit school expansion. The red tape of the cumbersome Ottoman bureaucracy was still too tight for the missionary expansion – William W. Peet, the treasurer of the American Board and also the legal adviser of the American Embassy in Turkey, complained in his biography that he was often in conflict with Ottoman officials in processing official business because of their "dilatatory tactics", despite their courtesy and fair treatment.<sup>111,112</sup> For the missionaries, all these practices implied an absolute reversal of

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<sup>109</sup> Milwaukee, W. (1911) *101st Annual Report*. Boston: Congressional House.

<sup>110</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.39.

<sup>111</sup> Peet, L.J. and Honor, N.L. (1930). *The Biography of William W. Peet* (Privately printed), pp.106-7, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989)

the new government's attitudes towards the old "dark days".<sup>113</sup> Thus it was not surprising that the American missionary Committees of Political Relations had become a consistent critic of the new regime, establishing a new principle in 1911 in connection with the erection of buildings, opening new institutions and so on: "All applications of this kind should be presented to the government through the Embassy and never through local officials".<sup>114</sup> The CUP government was not "fulfilling the promise", "harmonious" or "united", but "losing its hold among Muslim and Christian elites" – one can discern a pervasively sceptical criticism of the Ottomans'/Turks' capacity through a Western prism in many American missionaries' writings – just as the Anatolia College's president George White cynically remarked: "They [the CUP leaders] have now fallen from office and from public favor, but it is a question whether their successors will be able to do better."<sup>115</sup>

An anecdotal case also demonstrates the deep distrust between the missionaries and the local officials. In this case, Mr Holbrook, an American Missionary, was shot and killed near Sivas in August 1913. After a four-month investigation, the local court pronounced that Holbrook was accidentally killed by a Turkish man whose intention was not against a foreigner but a native. On the missionary side, though without legal evidence, they believed that the local authorities misjudged the case for they wished to "weaken foreign influence". As the missionary who handled this case asserted, "most or all of the local officials were probably bribed, and the Moutasrif and Vali, for unknown reasons, have persistently and in clear violation of the facts, and with no

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<sup>112</sup> However, not every Turkish official they had business with received a negative impression. For example, George White described the good efficiency and energetic Turkish officials who deeply engaged with the new idea of having a telephone in the office. ABCFM, ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, Houghton Library, Cambridge.)

<sup>113</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the Treasury Department and Political Affairs* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.518, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>114</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of the Treasures April 1912- The Department of Political Relations*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.528, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>115</sup> ABCFM. *New Times in Turkey*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40. No.580, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

sufficient evidence, stuck to this version from the first day till now”.<sup>116</sup> Though the truth had never been known, one can perceive that the relations between American missionaries and local governments were nowhere near as reliable as hoped, even in the most cooperative era.

### **Sharpened Relations during Wars**

After the outbreak of the First World War, a series of anti-foreign and anti-missionary policies was implemented by the Ottoman government with the new national spirits elevated nationwide, especially among Turkish youths, by the consciousness of the German military support. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1914, from the resolution to prove Turkey’s ability and right to control and regulate her own interests, the Turkish central government removed the capitulations, trying to throw off foreign influence and control of the state, therefore the American missionaries had to bear the brunt. In the Autumn just before the War, the local governments promulgated new regulations for foreign schools in view of the abrogation of the capitulations, voiding all special treaties except *irades*. Heavy taxes were once again demanded on school buildings, hospitals and lands, abrogating previous agreements and firmans, which were vainly protested by the missionaries and the American Embassy. At that time, people in Turkey could see bulletins posted in the city markets to the effect that foreigners before 1<sup>st</sup> October must promise to subject themselves to Turkish law or otherwise leave the country. As a sign of the anti-foreign/Christian spirit, in Talas the Protestant church was forbidden by the local government to show any religious pictures, which had never happened even in the Hamidian period. For the same reason, in September, in a local American commercial institution in Sivas, the Singer Sewing Machine Co., the US flag flown over their office was rather roughly taken down and carried off by Turkish gendarmes. In Merzifon the

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<sup>116</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *The Present Condition of the Holbrook Case*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3.Vol. 40.. No.531, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

city's roads were crowded with Turkish soldiers who had occupied the Anatolia College's library and American Hospital (on 14<sup>th</sup> August) with the firman of the local government saying that "the hospital, library, and hotel would be occupied by soldiers".<sup>117</sup> In the provinces of war zones, the local governments required the students and native teachers of the American schools to enlist in the army. The American missionary educators strongly opposed this policy and tried their best to negotiate with the local government, which became one of their major struggles during the war. All these events indicated that the Ottoman Turks had soon changed their dismal pessimism into a militant, nationalist spirit boosted by German Teutonism after the outbreak of WWI, creating unprecedented tensions with the American missionaries.

As soon WWI began, the CUP government promptly declared a funding moratorium to paralyze the international banking operation, which made the American missionary operations increasingly difficult by cutting off their finances. Concerning the American missionaries' rights, early in 1915, US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau managed to attain assurance from the Turkish government through negotiation that the American missionaries would not be disturbed, imprisoned or expelled since they were operating an American philanthropic organization, and also on the grounds that the US did not declare war on Turkey.<sup>118</sup> However, this promise was only kept for a short time, and a few missionaries were sent into exile or forcibly removed from their homes by governmental actions, including, in 1915, Dr and Mrs Floyd Smith of Diyarbakır, Dr Thom, Dr Andrus and Miss Fenanga of Mardin. In 1916, the entire body of missionaries from Talas, Sivas and Merzifon were officially expelled. In Sivas only Miss Graffam and Miss Fowle were allowed to remain. Of these missionaries, only four of the Merzifon stations were allowed to return from İstanbul after some weeks.<sup>119</sup> According to the missionaries, as the censorship for foreigners became stringent, the American missionaries' correspondence was interrupted, and no mention of it was

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<sup>117</sup> See Letters to W.W. Peet, 1913-1914. ABC 16.10.1, Vol.7, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>118</sup> Riggs et al., *History*.

<sup>119</sup> Riggs et al., *History*.

allowed in their writings. Only İstanbul remained open for the entrance and exits of foreigners and mail. The American missionaries also complained about the government's different and unfriendly treatment – the use of English was forbidden in letters, while German, French, Turkish and Arabic were all allowed. As a notable demonstration of governmental asperity, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1916, an executive order sent by central authorities urged American missionaries to leave the country permanently, “with no intention to come back”.<sup>120</sup> With the joining of the US military forces in the war in April 1917 – though not against Turkey – the Ottoman government felt compelled to break off diplomatic relations with the US under the influence of her allies and the widespread anti-foreign spirit, which put the activities of those American missionaries who still remained in Turkey under strict military surveillance.

This was the last straw, leading to the overt breakdown of relations between the Ottoman authorities and the American missionaries long after the anti-missionary policy had become the Ottoman authorities' consensus in the Hamidian period. In June 1917, the American ambassador Abram Isaac Klkus withdrew from İstanbul, urging the American citizens and missionaries to leave Turkey. While a large number of missionaries returned to the US via Switzerland,<sup>121</sup> other missionaries refused this call and chose to stay in their posts to continue their missionary efforts, such as medical care, education, and looking after orphans, in unsafe and underfinanced circumstances, although some left for personal reasons.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, removal of the American Consulate largely meant a divestiture of their once-protected rights for the remaining American missionaries.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.36.

<sup>121</sup> Including Dr W.W. Peet, who had been the main connection for relief and other missionary operations, and Mr L.R. Fowle, who was acting treasurer and the American diplomatic representative.

<sup>122</sup> Barton, J. (1918). *A Survey of the Missions of the American Board for the Past Year 1917-18*. Congregational House, Boston, pp.4Y.

<sup>123</sup> The Vice American Consul in Adana Province was John Debbas (Greek). He was imprisoned as a supposed spy under sentence of death. ABCFM. (1919) *Report of St. Paul's College and Academy for the School years 1914-1919*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.573, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



After the War, the Central Turkey College's overdue Report (1916-17) complained of how the Aintab government unduly treated the American missionaries by threatening their work and trying to prevent the missionaries from leaking news to the outside world through censorship. In May 1916, two American missionaries from the College, J.C. Martin and M. Alexis, were "arrested and practically imprisoned" by Turkish police as belligerents without warning following the government's suspicion that they were hiding Armenian Protestants from deportation (though whether this charge was true was not clearly mentioned).<sup>124</sup> As a consequence, they were dismissed from their posts.<sup>125</sup> In the following years, the missionaries alleged that the College were neither allowed to bring any written materials out of the city nor receive letters and telegrams from outside – they found themselves stuck in Aintab.<sup>126</sup> One reporter expressed how gloomy she felt when the governor's ban impacted her personally:

I could write only in Osmanli Turkish and that whatever I wrote would be read by himself as well by the censors. For a time I wrote, but no purpose. I found in various ways that my postals failed to arrive, and that letters from Mrs Merrill and from Mrs Trowbridge to me were not delivered. Even my weekly 'Berliner Tageblatt' came to the city, but was not given to me. Evidently the government intended to cut off all communication between the Americans here and the outside world.<sup>127</sup>

More noticeably, the College's cooperation with the Aintab governors ceased this year for the first time, as the missionaries had "failed to attend (?) functions at the government", and "invitations are no longer sent to the college as formerly". In conclusion, they felt that "under the circumstances, it seemed as well to stay away".<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.269.

<sup>125</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Report of the Central Turkey College for the Year 1916-17, being the Forty-first Annual Report*. Reel 667, No.251.

<sup>126</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.265; No.273.

<sup>127</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Report of the Central Turkey College for the Year 1916-17, being the Forty-first Annual Report*. Reel 667, No.251.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

In Aintab, Mrs Merrill also reported that one day after the official breakdown of the Turco-American relationship, her husband, the College president Mr Merrill, was arrested on the outskirts of the city by “mistake”.<sup>129</sup> Besides, the Turkish Officials were suspicious that the American missionaries in the Central Turkey College were “collecting wheat to have a revolution” with American soldiers hiding on the campus, so the American schools were under strict surveillance by the guards who were sent by the government and posted at the College gate, enforcing limits on the receiving of people and materials from outside.<sup>130,131</sup> Purchased wheat was confiscated many times at the school gate when it was carried onto the campus.<sup>132</sup>

By the beginning of 1917, over half of the Board’s missionaries were sent back to America or other mission fields with the Board’s evacuation order, many of whom never returned to Turkey. This enforced absence of staff led to a great loss of missionary services in Turkey. On the other hand, some who remained in Turkey devoted themselves to relief, medical and educational work. After all the Armenians had been deported and the campus properties had been taken over by the government, the American Board felt obliged to order a second evacuation of the remaining missionaries. By 1917, the following places had been completely evacuated: Talas, Adapazarı, Bahçecik, Bursa, Bitlis, Van, and Diyarbakır.<sup>133</sup> Several missionaries were engaged in medical work in connection with government hospitals or in other ways.<sup>134</sup>

The First World War shrank the scope of the American missionary network with the

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<sup>129</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.270.

<sup>130</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Report of the Central Turkey College for the Year 1916-17, being the Forty-first Annual Report*. Reel 667, No.250.

<sup>131</sup> About 160 orphans and students were kept in the College, of whom over 30 students were of military age hiding on campus to avoid deportation or conscription. The Central Turkey College was closed as early in 1915 for deportations before functioning as an orphanage, which was also a cover to shelter the older students. Not long after the relations broke down, the premises of the College were confiscated by the government. ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.267; No.271.

<sup>132</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.270.

<sup>133</sup> Riggs et al., *History*.

<sup>134</sup> For example, Drs F.D. Shepard, E.P Case, and M.H. Ward were in Constantinople during the Dardanelles campaign, helping care for the wounded. Drs W.S. Dodd and W.M. Post, with Miss North, found their hospital at Konya full of Turkish soldiers.

massive cessation of missionary activities and 7 of 17 stations permanently closed by the end of the War. Because it was very difficult to quickly find appropriate medical care and the medical supplies were always in shortage during the War, many American missionaries lost their lives to disease. As a result, the number of missionary staff diminished from 168 before to the War to 120 after it. Besides the casualties, the Board suffered a great loss of their native working force in the aftermath of the 1915 Armenian deportation. While the total number of native workers stood at 1,204 in 1914, this number decreased to just 324 by the end of the War.<sup>135</sup>

The deportations, accompanied by massacres and starvation, had forced the American institutions in those provinces to close or operate under the greatest of difficulties. Of the schools that stayed open in the deportation regions, many received no funds from the US. As most of the students' parents had been exiled, the students had to be kept on the campus before they had grown up to be conscripted; some schools were partially taken over by the army and the students had classes with outdoor practice drills outside every day. The government intermittently closed the schools and kept 'borrowing' materials from them for military use; in some schools, due to the loss of staff (either foreign or native) the school operations were reduced to a minimal level and the students took up positions as watchmen and gatekeepers.<sup>136</sup> In Eastern provinces, the missionaries' Industry Department provided financial support for both locals and themselves; some missionary institutions provided industry work for their students as a means to pay tuition fees, and the missionary orphanages found war-time self-support by assigning industry work to the orphans. Furthermore, another anti-Armenian measure of the government was the abolition of the Armenian Patriarchates of Van, Akdamar (Akhtamer), and Sis, the annulment of the Armenian Constitution granted in 1863, and the house arrest of the Armenian Patriarch of İstanbul at Kumkapı (Koun

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<sup>135</sup> Henry Harrison, 195-?. A.B.C.F.M. *history 1910-1942*, p.42.

<sup>136</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Report of the Central Turkey College for the Year 1916-17, being the Forty-first Annual Report*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.250, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Kapou), all of which happened in 1916.<sup>137</sup> Owing to the general deportation of Armenians in Asia Minor, most Armenians in inner Anatolia were removed or died, with the exception of some in İstanbul and a few scattered across central Turkey.

Apart from the deportation of the Armenians who formed the largest target community of American missionaries in Turkey, a very large portion of the Greek population, as the missionaries' second-largest target community, was exiled from the Black Sea Coast in the latter part of 1917 with the Russian advance into north-east Asia, lest the Greeks become the Russian's allies against the Turks. Due to the War, the American missionaries gradually found the most devastating outcome for their mission in Turkey: the loss of their native workers and their target communities rendered their work extremely difficult to continue.

Most missionary properties sustained some damage or were destroyed by the War. Moreover, from 1914 the government had taken over missionary properties by force either in whole or in part in practically every missionary station of Asiatic Turkey. For example, the missionary hospitals in Harput, Antap, Talas, Konya were all confiscated by the local authorities for military use.<sup>138,139</sup> While many missionary schools had to shut down for safety or political reasons, to those missionaries' relief, the Anatolia College in Merzifon, the International College and American Collegiate Institute in İzmir, the St. Paul College in Tarsus, and the Central College for Girls at Maraş managed to conduct educational functions throughout the War, as did the American College for Girls which was managed by the Woman's Board, and the indirectly missionary-connected Robert College in İstanbul. When the War ended in 1918, as missionary H.M. Irwin pointed out, except for some of the more important seaport

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<sup>137</sup> Riggs et al., *History*.

<sup>138</sup> ABCFM. Reel 714, No.659; Reel 632, No.408.

<sup>139</sup> According to the report, in Urfa, by the end of the War among all missionary properties, except for farms and vineyards that were not taken over, the Blind School and the Armenian Protestant Church were used as Turkish barracks; the Boy's Industrial Department was mostly used as a Turkish military hospital; and the Woman's Industrial House was occupied by Turkish refugees. ABCFM. (1919) *Mrs. Merrill's Statement in Regard to Central Turkey College and Hospital at Aintab*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.227, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

towns, there was practically no work for the Board in inner Anatolia.<sup>140</sup> Recovering the missionary network in Turkey to pre-War levels seemed to be impossible in its aftermath.

On 24<sup>th</sup> October 1918, when the War had practically ended, the Western Turkey Mission produced a memorandum to evaluate the current conditions for missionary work in Turkey. Regarding the Muslim work, according to writer H.M. Irwin, the prospect was rather uncertain and precarious:

It is not very easy to say just what the attitude of the Turk will be after this war. Until lately, fed up with false hopes of final success and false opinion he was rather a difficult problem. His utter defeat will have a salutary effect in this region, but nevertheless the other spirit will have left its mark. Work among moslems is a problem to be approached with caution and handed with gloves but if right person's hands are in the gloves much can be done. But any wholesale onslaught will we are afraid, be doomed to failure.<sup>141</sup>

In April 1918, a 57-member expedition team set out from New York to Palestine, funded by the American Red Cross and the Armenian and Syrian Relief Committee, of whom eight were Board missionaries.<sup>142</sup> In late 1918 many American Missionaries who were evacuated returned to Turkey after the War ended. Following the Armistice in 1919, 72 missionaries were sent by the Board to Western and Central Missions from the US under the name of the Middle East Relief to carry out relief work in Turkey.<sup>143</sup> Henceforth when WWI came to an end, several American missionaries returned to Turkey with the ambition to resume their missionary work in the name of relief work.

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<sup>140</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Harrison, H. (195?). *A.B.C.F.M. history 1910-1942: section on the Turkey missions.*

<sup>143</sup> 'Near East Relief Expedition Leaves'. (1919). *New York Times*, 17 February, p. 6.

## **Independent War: the Kemal Nationalist government's Missionary Policy**

In late 1918, on learning of the cessation of the hostilities in Turkey, the Board and its missionaries, who were on furlough, immediately set about planning for the return to Turkey of those who wished, and the relief work of those who had remained there throughout the war. From January to March 1919, over 250 American missionaries and relief workers were sent to Turkey under the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, which was chaired by the American Board Foreign Secretary, Dr Barton as the Committee's Chairman. A great proportion of the former missionaries in Turkey had returned within a year, though over 45 of them died during WWI (over 18 in Turkey and 22 in America). According to the missionaries, the Ottoman government facilitated the relief journeys and granted special letters of commendation to the provincial governors and wiring orders to help these Americans in every way.<sup>144</sup> With the missionaries returned, the schools and colleges reopened as quickly as possible, and usually with very large attendance, due to favours being granted to those who were unable to pay full tuition. The church in Aintab which had closed since the deportations of 1915 reopened on Armenian Christmas Day, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1919. In the city a new weekly paper, the *Rahvira*, was launched on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1919 by missionaries for the Protestant communities.

However, the post-war reconstruction of the missionary work in Turkey was nowhere near as smooth as the American missionaries expected, but to their surprise, the official missionary policy continued to tighten with the rise of the Kemalists in the ensuing War of Independence. Since 1920, Mustafa Kemal had set his standard in Sivas and defied the Allies to carry out the Treaty of Sèvres, which the Turkish government had been forced to sign in İstanbul.<sup>145</sup> Local Ottoman leaders were gradually replaced in the interior by the Nationalist authorities in the eastern parts of Turkey. The new local

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<sup>144</sup> Riggs et al., p.68.

<sup>145</sup> ABCFM. (1922) *Missions and Relief Work under Mustafa*. ABC 16.9.1 Vol.1. 1920-24, Houghton Library, Cambridge. p.259.

officials could decide local conditions directly as Ankara gave its representatives considerable freedom to carry out the Nationalist programme as they thought best. Nevertheless, Ankara's central Nationalist government evidently experienced increasing suspicion and opposition to everything non-Turkish. Especially after the Greek army landed at İzmir and nationalist war was declared against the Greeks, the government officials began to show distinct anti-foreign sentiments and inhospitality to the presence of Americans in the country.

The Near East Relief (NER), which was largely operated by the American missionaries, was accused by the Ankara government of being political propaganda and of partiality to the Armenians. Thus definite lines were laid down by the authorities which American missionaries were obliged to observe if they were to continue their work in Turkey. Among these conditions, the missionaries could distribute their aid along the same lines as the Red Cross, regardless of race or creed. Limitations were set up about relief which could be given to Greek and Armenian refugees. Before then the major relief work carried out under NER was for Christians. Other obstacles were put in the way of their relief work, such as the seizure of some missionary buildings used for production, the insistence of complete control over the Turkish orphanage although it was supported by NER funds, a great reluctance to furnish permits for the local travel of missionaries for the purpose of relief and medical work, and forceful deportations of some missionaries out of Anatolia according to the wishes of the local government.

As the war continued, missionaries were carefully monitored by the Turkish authorities. Their contacts with Turkish officials were largely through medical and educational institutions. According to the Kemalist government's orders, the American missionaries were required to be under the control of one of the local officials who technically acted as a liaison officer; in reality this officer had the right to inquire into all the missionary activities thus bringing them under the complete control of the local government. Unlike the old days, the missionaries could only complain about their

inherent rights being deprived in carrying on their work – but “nothing could be done” except with the permission of the local official as there no foreign consuls remained in Anatolia following the abolition of the capitulations. The missionary educational institutions also had to submit to local educational management or face closure.

Under this administrative system the treatments for missionaries could vary distinctly according to the different local officials. While in some mission stations the local officials continued to be friendly and the work went on as before, in other places unpleasant orders were constantly attached to their relief or other missionary work. In Merzifon and Harput the missionaries were forced to leave the country. In the notable case of Merzifon, the local governor was intensely hostile to the work together with the military governor of the district. They were accused by the missionaries of working together to “manufacture evidence enough pointing to a Greek uprising in the Pontos region”, arresting all the leading Greeks of the region, connecting the Americans with the movement and having them exported as a military measure.

In various stations, missionaries were asked for a list of the missionary staff among the relief workers and later the local officials were given the authority to deport whichever Americans they wished. In the missionary station of Harput local officials persuaded the military authorities to deport NER Director Henry Riggs on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1920, without giving him a chance to refute the charge.<sup>146</sup> According to the missionaries, this was because “apparently he was too friendly with both Armenians and Kurds”.<sup>147</sup> Mr H. Riggs had written a book, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia: Personal Experiences in Harput, 1915-1917*, that provided an important eyewitness account of the Armenian deportation, describing it as genocide and part of an extermination programme organized by the Ottoman government. The local authorities were criticized for trying to rid of the missionaries because “the presence of the missionaries in Turkey could

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<sup>146</sup> ABC 16.9.1.Vol.1, No.260, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>147</sup> Riggs, C. T., p.72.



hold the government in check”. Several months after the missionaries left Merzifon, the Christian quarter of the town was given over to the chief Osman Ağa (Osman Agha) as a reward for his joining the national forces. He reportedly pillaged and looted the houses, massacred the men and women and then burned the quarter to cover his crimes and prevent the return of the few survivors.

The American high commissioner indicated such unfavourable developments against the missionaries as the Turkish national products of wartime: “the Turks, finding themselves surrounded on all sides by hostile Christian people, have relied, to a certain extent, upon arousing Moslem feeling to help in creating a warlike spirit to meet the attacks of the Christians”.<sup>148</sup> The American missionaries similarly depicted themselves as the victims of the Nationalist policies and believed that such wide obstacles were imposed on them not primarily because of anti-Christian hospitality but rather due to the Kemalist government’s “xenophobia”, as the Turkish Nationalists were unwilling to have foreigners interfere with the Christian issues inside their borders. They argued that this official anti-Christian agenda was an ideological tool used by the Nationalists to justify their political purpose and military cause against their Christian enemies. They were not “hostile Christian people”, but at this particular juncture the missionaries bore the brunt of this agenda.<sup>149</sup> On the other side, for the Kemalist government and the Turkish Nationalists, the operation of the American missionaries was no longer merely about the white men’s beneficent salvation or religious penetration. It could be perilous to the nascent nation when politics was involved. With its potential threats to the Turkish national identity and the involvement of minority separatism, the missionaries’ activities were identified as harmful by the Kemalist government. Thus, it was not surprising that the American missionary network failed to fully regenerate in the Republic of Turkey, even as Westernizing reforms developed rapidly across the nation.

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<sup>148</sup> ABC 16.9.1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid

## **Chapter II: Minority Issues Shaping Official Ottoman Attitudes towards American Missionaries**

- Indignant Witnesses, Beneficent Victims or Seditious Culprits?

### **Introduction**

Regardless of the regime shake-ups and the evolving zeitgeist, the official attitudes – whether of the Hamidian government, the CUP leaders, or the Kemalist officials – towards the American missionary activities were almost invariably unpleasant. When the Armenian rebellions escalated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman government had to treat the American missionary activities more seriously considering its newly developed seditious ramifications. Thereafter the missionary affinity with the Ottoman minorities was imperilled as it was not merely a religious question but had political meaning. This official notion was inherited by their Young Turk successors who promulgated the order to expel most of the American missionaries from the country during the First World War as they were deemed accessories to the Armenian revolutionists. Until the early Turkish Republic, US operations in Turkey were still officially disreputable in the aftershocks of the 1921 Pontus outrage at Merzifon: these American institutions, which once served as penurious “dens of conspiracy”, continued to function under the pique of the Nationalist officials with its “misleadingly converting” detriment to the Turkish youths. To fully understand the pluralist interactions between the American missionaries and their Muslim milieu in the late Ottoman map, it is necessary to examine this topic more thoroughly. In this respect, this chapter focuses on the most prominent minority issue: the Armenian questions, around which the government-missionary relations revolved. Meanwhile, as a salient topic derived from the minority issue, how the government responded to the alleged ‘missionary crimes’ is later examined, spotlighting the cases of Gorge Knapp and Anatolia College. Therein

this chapter argues that the American missionaries were playing multiple roles in the late Empire as benefactor, suspect, witness and victim, and that the Ottoman-missionary irreconcilability over these minority issues and the incessant ethno-religious turmoil in the late Ottoman stage was the greatest contributor to their conflict-ridden relationship at that time. It was such a common preoccupation of the Ottoman policymakers that they had to turn against the missionaries in relation to their mutual irreconcilability over the minority issues.

### **Working in Dissonance: the Armenian Question**

The American-Ottoman discord was due in large part to the Armenian question that emerged in the Hamidian reign. In the Ottoman Empire, Islam was not only a religion but also a ruling social system. Especially for Sultan Abdülhamid II, unlike his predecessors who had permitted the Christian *millets* religious freedom, he had less religious tolerance but believed that an invasion of the Islamic system by pagan propagandists would be a great menace to the existing social-political rule. Thus, the Armenian communities – as the foreigners’ most intimate friends – together with their important supporters and benefactors, the American missionaries, soon became a problem in the Sultan’s eyes. American missionaries had recently deeply reformed Armenian religious life, marked by the establishment of the Protestant Armenian *millet*. They also helped the Armenians, who were once Turkish speakers, to revive their language by translating and popularizing the Bible in the modern Armenian language. However, their most troublesome accomplishments for the Ottoman governments were the ubiquitous missionary schools that fuelled Armenian nationalism.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the American missionaries were officially convicted of “confusing the minds” of people and “sowing the seeds of discord” in public.<sup>150</sup> The Armenian students in American schools had been imbued with Western ideas of liberty and patriotism, with an emphasis on their national identities and their own cultures,

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<sup>150</sup> Deringil, S. (1998). *The well-protected domains*, pp.39-42. as cited in Şahin, E. (2018) p.17.

traditions and histories. Thus, these Armenians developed a feeling of discontentment about their current status and a sense of superiority to their Muslim neighbours. Now the government unexpectedly found their Armenian communities, who had once been considered “good” and “always capable of loyalty”, seemed to have become “silly and incapable of telling good from the evil”, easily influenced by the “fooling” and “provoking” message under the American tutelage, even having the temerity to rebel against them.<sup>151</sup> A Turkish governor once said to an American missionary who was president of an American college: “You missionaries are at the bottom of this whole revolutionary trouble”. When the missionary replied that if the governor meant to say that they taught the people to rebel, the governor answered: “No, but you teach them to read, and in their reading they come across strange ideas”.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, to American eyes, such blame was nonsense but a revelation of the unfair treatment of the Christian minorities by “the ‘liberality’ of the Turkish government” who had imposed “systematic discouragement of education” on them, in a clear violation of their human rights.<sup>153</sup>

The Ottoman officials continually sharpened their attitudes towards the American missionaries when the Armenian rebellions became increasingly rampant in the late 1880s and 1890s. In 1887, the Huntchak Society was formed in Geneva by a group of young Armenians, imbued with an awareness of Nationalism – they had come to the conclusion that the only way to gain anything was “to strike for themselves”, after they had seen the results across the Russian border of the growth of Nihilism, and opposition to the despotic power of the Tsars. Their movement had drawn great attention from the suspicious Sultan, who issued orders to search the supposed Armenian Nationalists in Bitlis church in 1890, which caused the deaths of 20 “innocent Armenians”.<sup>154</sup> From then on, the insurrections of Armenian nationalists escalated in major towns of central

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> ABCFM. (1895) *Ermeniler ve Ermenistan başlıklı Washington Post'un makalesi*. BOA. HR.SYS. 64. 15. 16

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

and Eastern Anatolia, together with intensified governmental oppression. To crack down on the Armenian nationalists and break their connection with the threatening British and Russian Imperialism, during 1894-96 the Sultan organized a band of Kurds into the Hamidiye cavalry (official army) in Eastern Anatolia who carried out the notorious Armenian massacres. After the massacres, the American missionaries responded to the government's acts with acrimony. As noted by Dr Cyrus Hamlin, founder of Robert College, the Turkish government had "abdicated every claim to being classed in the category of civilized governments by officially aiding in the outrages".<sup>155</sup> When the American Embassy suggested to the Ottoman government that they only take action against the agitators, the officials replied: "If my quilt is infested with vermin, I do not try to pick them off one by one, I burn the quilt".<sup>156</sup> Such disparate propositions on solving the Armenian questions were the underlying cause of the escalating tensions.

During a time of revolts and massacres, the American missionaries became common suspects in the social disorder. The missionary operations, especially in the missionary schools and colleges, were related to the regional revolutionary movements by the Turkish officials and public press. Out of suspicion from Ottoman provincial reports that some Armenian students and teachers in the American Schools had contact with Armenian rebels, local officials asked for full-scale resistance to the American missionary activities. However, the foreign secretary of the American Board stated in 1894 that all their missionary activities were strictly apolitical with the intention "to promote the spirit of loyalty to the government on the part of all the population in the Empire"; even though some Armenian pupils in the American schools had become revolutionaries, "it is not because of the instructions received in these schools, but in spite of them".<sup>157</sup> Likewise in 1898, when the Ottoman minister Tevfik urged the American Consulate in İstanbul to take action against the American missionaries who

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Akgün, S. (1989) p.99, as cited in Galeb, G. (1940). *Not to Me Only*. Princeton. p.103

<sup>157</sup> Smith, J. (1894) 'The Turks and the Missionaries', 23 January. (English newspaper article collected in Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi. HR. SYS. 2737. 6.1)

were reported to be “converting” and “stirring up” the Armenian youths against the Kurdish Muslims and the state, the Consulate, which had direct relations with the American missionaries, nevertheless denied this charge, claiming that such blame was “arbitrary” and “unfair”, “only benefiting those who made up the charges”. The Consul argued that it was the Armenian Patriarch and local authorities who made up such crimes and scapegoated the American missionaries for their own faults, because the missionaries had deprived them of their “material benefits” which they otherwise could have obtained through a large group of compliant subjects. The Consul concluded that the American government would surely set the record straight.<sup>158</sup>

Instead of admitting their charges, the American missionaries pointed out that they were suffering from the escalating anti-missionary incidents concomitant with the missionary activity expansions. During the revolts of 1893-1895, some mobs occupied the missionary institutions, colleges and hospitals. They damaged the properties, maltreated some students, and threatened the missionaries with violence.<sup>159</sup> The American colleges in Merzifon, Harput, Adana and Maraş and some houses belonging to American missionaries were damaged or burned down during the mobs’ attacks. The responsibility for burning the building of Merzifon Girls’ School was later acknowledged by the Ottoman government and compensated for after an American investigation.<sup>160</sup> The colleges in Harput and Maraş had almost been destroyed in revolts. American college and hospitals in Aintab were threatened but escaped unscathed because they were some distance from the city and were under guard by Turkish neighbours.<sup>161</sup> The American missionaries later demanded an indemnity from the Sultan’s government for the damage to American school buildings by Ottoman armies. After several years of tedious negotiations, in 1901 the Ottoman treasury paid

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<sup>158</sup> Ottoman Archives. (1897) Amerikalı misyonerlerin Erzurum’da asayışı bozucu faaliyetleri. BOA. Y.PRK.HR. 25. 51.

<sup>159</sup> Ottoman Archives. (1895) *Adana’daki bir Amerikan misyoner kolejinin yapılan saldırı ve Anadolu’daki Müslüman Türklere yapılan iftiralara cevap olarak Halil Halid Bey tarafından Gladstone’a gönderilen mektup ve cevabının kütürü*. BOA HR.SFR.3. 434.34.

<sup>160</sup> Riggs et al., *History*, p.46.

<sup>161</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.32.

an indemnity sum of over \$8,000, which solved the pressing financial issue of the Board for their future activities.<sup>162</sup> The constant claims for compensation from the American missionaries became a vexing problem for the reluctant Ottoman government. Occasionally, the American government, whom the missionaries had turned to for help, had to resort to military threats to enforce the indemnity payments.<sup>163</sup> In another case, where the claims for damages made by American missionaries in Maraş were “so absurdly exorbitant” (one missionary claimed for \$1,800 worth of silk dresses and another claimed to have lost a library worth \$5,000 dollars) that the Ottoman government had “declined point blank to even consider them”.<sup>164</sup>

It was also annoying for the Ottoman authorities to find the American missionaries had begun to encourage their Armenian subjects to obtain US citizenship to escape from the Ottoman governing. The missionaries managed this through taking benefit from the privileges that the Ottoman government had granted to the foreign nations according to the earlier Capitulation.<sup>165</sup> At first, the policy of the American missionaries was to try to “keep the native Christians who had passed through the schools and become pastors at home”, thinking that they could work better in Turkey than in a foreign country. So prior to the 1890s massacres the missionaries were averse to signing credentials for those native Christians who planned to go abroad, and sometimes they would delay signing as long as possible.<sup>166</sup> As Ümit D. wryly remarked about the American missionaries’ paradoxical sanctimonious attitude:

the medium of instruction in the four Theological Seminaries was vernacular in conformity with the Americanist evangelism of the American Board aimed at students being trained as future preachers and ministers to disseminate the

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<sup>162</sup> Earle, E. M. (1929) p.406.

<sup>163</sup> Erhan, Ç. (2000) p.331. See also: Alan, G. (2008). *Amerikan Board'ın Merzifon'daki faaliyetleri ve Anadolu Koleji*. Vol. 112. Türk Tarih Kurumu, pp.406-475.

<sup>164</sup> Ottoman Archives. (1897) *Exorbitant Claims*. BOA HR.SYS.2742.2.

<sup>165</sup> Akgün, S. (1994). ‘Kendi Kaynaklarından Amerikalı Misyonerlerin Türk Sosyal Yaşamına Etkisi (1820-1914)’. *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, pp.21-23. See also: BOA. DH.EUM.5ŞB.19.11.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Christian and Moslems -Teachers of the Gospel in Turkey Charged with Grave Offences. -Natives Treated Like Slaves. -Mohammedans about to Appeal to Foreign Missionary Societies -Dr. Ward’s Reply’. (1888). *New-York Herald*, 19 May. ( Collected in Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi. HR.SYS 59.36)

Protestant Gospel in their Ottoman homelands without immigrating to other countries such as the United States which would otherwise impair the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth led by the United States.<sup>167</sup>

Yet the American missionaries abandoned their dissuasive policy after seeing the Muslims oppress their Armenian fellows during the massacres. Subsequently, the Ottoman Empire saw an alarming emigration trend among Armenian pastors, preachers and teachers in the east, especially from the Harput region to the US. In 1895 there were 38 ordained pastors and 44 un-ordained preachers in the Eastern Turkey Mission; five years later these numbers fell to 17 and 23 respectively. Membership of the Protestant church fell off from 3,107 in 1895 to 2,547 in 1910 as the result of the emigration.<sup>168</sup> This development deepened the central Ottoman government's conviction that the American missionaries were acting like imperialist spies in shipping the Armenian nationalists abroad. From the missionary perspective, although this trend of Armenian migration was "unavoidable", it led to a massive loss of their native workforce, which brought "great difficulty" to their educational and relief work, especially "in a crucial moment".

Apart from being a 'dubious agitator', an 'accomplice' and 'rebel-smuggler', the role of the American missionary as a witness and 'whistle-blower' to the terrible 'Turkish atrocities' also deeply angered the Ottoman government, which was another reason for their worsened relationship. The missionaries' critiques of the Armenian massacres perturbed the Ottoman government, as official Ottoman censors not only inspecting domestic missionary publications, but also closely followed foreign newspaper content. For example, to prevent the missionary "weapons of sedition" from "infecting the masses", the alarmed Ottoman authorities banned the circulation of the *Washington Post* of 21<sup>st</sup> December 1894, when its editor cited a missionary-sourced claim that the Ottoman authorities were intent on "destroying" their "entire Christian population".<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.34.

<sup>168</sup> Riggs et al., *History*, p.54.

<sup>169</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.101.



In another notable event, the Sultan particularly chafed at the American intervention in inspecting the Armenian massacres. During 1897-98, the *New York Herald* had become a strong defender of the Turkish government against accusations of massacre and cruelty. The newspaper sent an investigator in the person of George H. Hepworth, an American clergyman from Boston, at the instigation of Sultan Abdul Hamid himself. The investigator went through the eastern regions with an escort from the palace, including a secretary of the Sultan. But to the Sultan's chagrin, in 1898 Dr Hepworth published *Through Asia Minor on Horseback*, which proved to be a complete corroboration of the missionary standpoint, as well as "a piece of valuable documentary evidence from an eyewitness of the true conditions".<sup>170</sup>

Whereas on the missionary side, having deeply offended the Ottoman government with their seditious, discrediting role and their obstreperous defiance, these American witnesses developed generally negative attitudes towards the government and its Muslim subjects in the aftermath of the Hamidian massacres. Cyrus Hamlin adopted a more moderate tone in his article 'The Genesis and Evolution of the Turkish Massacre of Armenian Subjects' (April 1898), saying that the Turk was "capable of a terrible fanaticism", however he was also "an honest, kind, social, hospitable being, if you don't tread on his corns; and the stranger is very foolish to do that"; the Americans, on the other hand, "were deceived" by their own people. Whereas more missionary writings tend to adopt an acerbic view, like the evidential memoir *The Tragedy of Bitlis*, whose author, Grace Knapp, known as the "Hanum in Bitlis", castigated the Porte and the Turkish-American clashes for their cruelty. Nevertheless, she also mentioned that the Bitlis Governor approached Armenian orphans in a friendly way and treated the missionaries courteously.<sup>171</sup> Through their constant dislike of the despotic Sultan and the detailed reports of the massacres in the Western world, anti-Muslim public sentiments were widespread abroad, and the disreputable image of Turkey – "the

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<sup>170</sup> Hepworth, G.H. (1898). *Through Armenia on horseback*. EP Dutton.

<sup>171</sup> Knapp, G.H. (1919). *The Tragedy of Bitlis*. Fleming H. Revell Company, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989) p.94.

bloody Sultan”, together with his subjects, “the Barbarians”, or “the terrible Turks” – was ingrained in Westerners’ minds. In 1911, when Ahmet Yalman, a Turkish doctoral student at Columbia University’s School of Journalism, visited a coastal Maine town in the US on holiday, before his arrival the residents changed their locks – “even that of the jail” – because the “Turks were coming”.<sup>172</sup>

Apart from the Hamidian massacres, the 1909 Adana massacre was another notable event shaping the American missionaries’ hostile views against the Turks and the local officials. The American missionary activities, particularly for the Central Turkey Mission and their Muslim work, was severely interrupted by the Adana massacre during the counter-revolution in which Islam and public sentiments were used by the anti-Unionist forces to political ends.<sup>173,174</sup> It took the Central stations two or three years to recover from the shock and losses.<sup>175</sup> As reported, when the massacre broke out, a group of Protestant preachers and some leading Protestant workers were slain on their way to Annual Meeting in Adana by a mob. The American missionary Mrs Coffing, who opened the Hadjin Home School for Girls, was killed.<sup>176</sup> Another American missionary, Miner Rogers of Tarsus, who gave special attention to Islamic study, was also killed in the massacre.<sup>177</sup> As a result, the Adana incidents shaped the pro-Armenian-Nationalist views of some American missionaries, such as Mary Roger, who condemned the brutality and savagery of the ignorant Turks after witnessing some

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<sup>172</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.14.

<sup>173</sup> Ahmad, F. (1993). *The making of modern Turkey*. Vol. 264. London: Routledge, p.36.

<sup>174</sup> During this time, American missionaries throughout Anatolia were preoccupied with Armenian relief work and burdened by the stress of daily routine; the Central Mission suffered not only a great loss of missionary workers and native communities but also the loss of property (the number of Protestants in Adana station plunged from 2,400 before April 1909 to 1,600 by December, with a decrease in preachers and other workers from 44 to 21, schools from 52 to 16 and pupils from 1,300 to 1,000. ABCFM. (1910) *Report of Adana Seminary 1909-1910*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666; ABC 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.208, Houghton Library, Cambridge; ABCFM. (1910). *Adana Station Report for 1909-10*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.213, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>175</sup> ABCFM. (1911). *Aintab Station Report for 1910-1911*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.399, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>176</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Annual Report of Hadjin Station, Central Turkey Mission for Year Ending June 1, 1910*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2., No.292, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>177</sup> Merrill, J.E. (1956).

Turks murdering two American missionaries in the Adana clashes – she later became a supporter of the Armenian Nationalist claims.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, the resultant deteriorating resentment between local Muslims and Armenians in inner Anatolia had a long-lasting negative effect on the missionary work among Muslims. One example is that while in Urfa before the massacre many Bibles were sold every year to Muslims, but in 1909 only four copies were sold, and only one was fully paid for.<sup>179</sup> From then on, the missionaries were not only suspected by many Muslims for their ambiguous motives, but they also had to consider the indignant Armenians (including some native Protestants) who increasingly doubted the missionary work towards Muslims.<sup>180</sup>

During the First World War, the resurgent Armenian question from the 1915-17 Armenian deportation further crystallized the stark incompatibility of the two sides. While the American Board devoted their missionaries to carrying out relief work for the Armenian refugees by offering them food, money, medical care and shelter, some missionaries concealed their Armenian students and other local Armenians in missionary institutions, despite the official orders to prevent them from being exiled or conscripted; some missionaries constantly questioned local government affairs and made field investigations to reveal the Armenian atrocities; some even openly advocated Armenian independence, asserting that it was the only way to secure Armenians' citizen rights.<sup>181</sup> Such commiseration and defiance exacerbated their relations with the government and often led to rather harsh treatment by local officials. In the case of Merzifon, Turkish authorities entered the Anatolian College to deport Armenian students and teachers on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1915. College president Dr White refused to say where they were hiding. However, following the officials' threat that the College staff would be executed if he did not them hand over, Dr White gave up the

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<sup>178</sup> Akgün, S. (1989) p.97.

<sup>179</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Aintab Station General Report June 1911- June 1911*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.486, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>180</sup> In some case the missionaries heard opposition from Armenians for their work with Muslims. From the point of view of those missionaries who were devoted to Muslim work, it was considered unwise by some Armenians, who took it for granted that "American missionaries came for us", believing that the universal love of Christ should be encouraged.

<sup>181</sup> Ambrosius, L.E. and Winter, J. (2003). *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, p.262.

Armenians and held a prayer service for the deportees.<sup>182</sup> Dr White later revealed the Armenian atrocities in an article in the *New York Times*<sup>183</sup> and headed a 250-person Middle East Relief expedition team to aid the Armenian refugees.<sup>184</sup> In 1916, as the College was closed by the government for use as a military hospital (1916-19), Dr White was moved from Merzifon to İstanbul.<sup>185</sup>

The missionary intercession for the Armenians was ineffective but it convinced the hard-line Turkish authorities that they were a precarious impediment to wartime national security. Since WWI began, the American Ambassador had been negotiating with the Turkish government to secure the American missionaries' citizen rights, and he also urged them not to exile the Protestant communities during the deportations. Although Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, promised "again and again" that Protestants would not be exiled, this order was not put into practice when sent out from the centre. The American missionaries later learned in İstanbul that a duplicate order was sent to the local governors saying, "Carry out this order or not, as you please". There were one or two cases where local governors had the courage to carry out the first order, but this was not usually the case.<sup>186</sup> As a result, a great number of their native workers were either deported or died in inner Anatolia. Notably, Mehmet Talat, the "fanatically ambitious" Ottoman official who functioned as the Interior Minister from 1909 to 1918, also ordered a duplication of the reports related to the missionaries, wherein he discredited their assistance to the Armenians during the deportation and blamed them for sheltering several "rebels" who had operated in service of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The expulsion of the American missionaries from the Empire was finally ordered by Talat in 1917.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> White, G.E. (1917). 'Armenians Killed with Axes by Turks', *Current History and Forum*, November, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 339. CH publishing corporation, etc.

<sup>183</sup> White, G.E. (1917). 'Armenians Killed with Axes by Turks'. *New York Times*, 30 September.

<sup>184</sup> 'Near East Relief Expedition Leaves'. (1919). *New York Times*, 17 February, p. 6.

<sup>185</sup> Hovannisian, R.G. (Ed.) (2004). *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*. Vol. 5. Mazda Publishers, p.220.

<sup>186</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.267.

<sup>187</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.19.

Having recorded a large amount of evidence to reveal the Armenian atrocities through diaries, correspondence, and memoirs, the American missionaries replayed their role of witness to the deportation. Some of their writings were later published in *The Missionary Herald*, *Life and Light* (the latter published by the Woman's Board) and in Western newspapers, in which they bitterly condemned the characteristics of brutality, ignorance, hostility, and jealousy of the Turkish Muslims, swaying Western public opinions against the Turks in favour of the Armenians. Alicia Caraman's memoir *The Daughter of the Euphrates* (1919) expressed a particularly vehement condemnation of all Turks' brutality on the Armenian question, solely based on an Armenian perspective. Even the American missionaries who were formally "best friends" with the Turks severely criticised their crimes,<sup>188</sup> while the Ottoman government blamed the Armenians themselves. By this time the Turkish authorities were well cognizant that their notorious 'atrocious' and 'duplicitous' images were widespread in the Western world and the resultant negative foreign influence and pressures from the Great Powers were outcomes of the lurid and sometime exaggerated propaganda bombardment by the 'spy-like' American missionaries working in their lands.<sup>189</sup> What angered the Ottoman government more was that they were unable to defend themselves against the anti-Turkish propaganda because they had "few, if any spokesmen" in Western countries, and the Western press, "to all intents and purposes, was closed to" the Ottoman spokesman.<sup>190</sup> Therefore, the relapse of the Armenian Question during the War in 1915 prompted mutual aversion between the government and the missionaries. The degradation of their relationship under the CUP regime was a re-enactment of the scenes in the aftermath of the 1890s' Hamidian massacres.

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<sup>188</sup> They also blamed the German's indifferent attitude to the Armenian deportation.

<sup>189</sup> Deringil, S. (1998) pp.127-8.

<sup>190</sup> Powell, E. A. (1925) *The Struggle For Power In Moslem Asia*. London: Long. .

## **Criminals or Victims: American Missionaries “between the two fires”**

An intriguing topic for discussion is to what extent the American missionaries were involved in the Armenian revolutionary movements. From a holistic perspective, to refute the accusations of the Ottoman government against the missionaries would be spurious, given that the missionary role in minority education in fostering the ethno-nationalist awareness catalysed the inevitable process of Ottoman disintegration. This reasoning has been echoed by Ottoman historians investigating the corrosive influences of the foreign missionary activities on the unstable Empire, crediting them with imperialist motives.<sup>191</sup> When breaking this topic down individually, much as the American missionaries claimed innocence in their actions, some Ottoman studies, despite a dearth of evidence, purport that some American missionaries supported Armenian nationalism for decades, both emotionally and physically. Akgün concluded that many American missionaries worked in the Ottoman Empire “ostensibly to perform religious duties, but in reality to support Armenian nationalist claims”; their Armenian sympathies, sometimes “sheltering and hiding revolutionaries, and even providing arms for them”, thus became a significant factor in the deterioration of American-Turkish relations.<sup>192</sup>

Indeed, there were various sources that implicate the possible “illegal collaboration” between the missionaries and the Armenian rebels. For example, in 1893 two Armenian professors from the American College in Merzifon were apprehended and expelled after being accused of helping Armenian rebels by printing seditious placards which were posted in many places throughout Anatolia. That the cyclostyle used to duplicated the placards was only held by the American missionaries of Merzifon in this region was

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<sup>191</sup> Moranian, S. E. (1994). *The American missionaries and the Armenian question: 1915-1927*. The University of Wisconsin-Madison.

<sup>192</sup> Akgün, S. (1989) pp.97-99; for more related discussions, see Sahin, E. (2021). ‘Myth of the Eternal State: Armenian Outlaws, American Outsiders, and the Ottoman Search for Order’. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34(3), pp.491-503.

incriminating evidence of the missionaries' illegal involvements with the Nationalist revolts.<sup>193</sup> Yet no further actions against the American missionaries could be taken by the Ottoman authorities without corroborative evidence – every student with the slightest suspicion of sharing in this movement was promptly dismissed from the College. Similar cases took place in Van and Harput three years later. Moreover, a news report of 1897 more directly indicated the complicity of an American missionary teacher with Armenian outlaws. It was reported that when a group of “Armenian brigands who came over the Persian frontier” attacked Turkish villages, an American woman missionary was arrested “near the scene of the trouble”, who “had in her possession an apron full of cartridges intended for the brigands”. Strikingly, “she had a school there, and many of the scholars had their pockets filled with cartridges, and confessed they had been acting as spies for the brigands under orders from the teacher”. As this report came from Dr Angell, who was the appointed American Minister to Turkey through the influence of the American Board, and it was sent to the US Department of State, it would have shocked the US and American churchmen.<sup>194</sup>

The American missionaries liked to profess themselves victims regardless of who was embroiled in the political vortex. Having been “suspected” and “threatened” by both the government and the Armenian nationalists during the local turbulence in Merzifon, Van and Bitlis, the aggrieved American missionaries in 1895, opined that they were “between two fires”, feeling awkward in their movements and “in constant danger”.<sup>195</sup> It was wrong to think that American missionaries shared a close relationship with the American nationalists – there was even evidence that some American missionaries were attacked by the Armenian extremists because “they are refrained overtly... supporting the movement for Armenian independence”. The Armenian nationalists also attacked the American missionaries “in order to elicit foreign intervention”, as they

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<sup>193</sup> Riggs et al., *History*, p.46.

<sup>194</sup> ‘An Astounding Statement Made- American missionary an Ally and Spy of Brigands’. (1897). 15 November. (English newspaper article collected in BOA.HR.SYS.2742.2.2)

<sup>195</sup> ‘American and Missionary- Garabed Agha, Ablest Protestant of Marsoven, Murdered by Rioters’. (1895). 12 August. (English newspaper article collected in BOA. HR.SYS.64.25.4)

believed that only through the intervention of the Great Powers could the Armenians establish independence, as in the previous cases of Greece and Bulgaria.<sup>196</sup> This conviction was confirmed by Mark Sykes, the initiator of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, in the aftermath of the 1895 Zeytun rebellion:

The [Armenian] revolutionaries from abroad were always prepared to provoke a massacre in order to induce the [Great] Powers to assist them. I have a good reason to know that these wretches actually schemed to murder American missionaries, hoping America would declare war on the supposition that the Turks were the criminals.<sup>197</sup>

Despite the risks to their life and property, the American missionaries plunged themselves into work throughout the late Ottoman hinterlands where mobs and bandits were rampant in conjunction with wars, riots and epidemics. In 1893, Miss Melton, an American Presbyterian missionary, was reported to have been attacked by Kurdish mobs and “badly used” near Mosul.<sup>198</sup> In the Ottoman Balkan outposts, the notorious Ellen Stone Affair in September 1901 has been often dubbed the first foreign hostage crisis in modern American history, in which the Ottoman government did nothing to aid the rescue of American missionary hostage Ellen Stone, who had been abducted by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization for pro-Bulgarian political benefits.<sup>199</sup> This unresponsive Ottoman government, depicted by the missionaries as one of the two dangerous “fires”, could sometimes, however, unnerve the missionaries much more than the bandits.

The American missionaries, either through investigations or hearsay, accused the Turkish authorities of secretly killing their comrades because of their dubious

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<sup>196</sup> Grabill, J.L. (1964). *Missionaries amid conflict: their influence upon American relations with the Near East, 1914-1927*. Indiana University, pp.14-15.

<sup>197</sup> Sykes, M.S. (1988). *Dar-Ul-Islam: A Record Of A Journey Through Ten Of The Asiatic Provinces Of Turkey*, Darf Publishers Limited, London, pp 71-78, as cited in Karakaş, N. *The Armenian Question and the American Missionaries*, Marmara University. Available at: <https://turksandarmenians.marmara.edu.tr/en/the-armenian-question-and-the-american-missionaries/>

<sup>198</sup> ‘American Missionary Beaten; An Unprovoked Attack on Miss Anna Melton in a Turkish Village’. (1893). *New York Times*, 25 July, p.4.

<sup>199</sup> Carpenter, T. (2016). *The Miss Stone Affair: America's First Modern Hostage Crisis*. Simon and Schuster.



Armenian-related involvements, and then covering up the reports of such deaths to “make it appear that the death was from natural causes, or announced without any connections with Turks”. For instance, in 1920 when the Nationalist movement became aggressive and the killing of Armenians was “daily reported” in the interior towns, there was news that an American car had been attacked about 15 miles from Aintab – two Americans were reported killed by Turkish brigands. The officials disclaimed all knowledge and connection with the murderers, and in the subsequent investigation, they said that they thought the car was French. However, the American missionaries argued that all the evidence uncovered by the investigation indicated that there had been a connection between the murders and a general order to kill all Christians regardless of whether they were Nationalists in Aintab.<sup>200</sup>

The inquisitive American missionaries discovered all sorts of information and rumours. A lurid rumour circulated among missionary circles that Annie Allen had died strangely at Sivas in 1922. Miss Allen had been devoted to missionary relief work for Armenians, and she was sent to Harput to investigate difficulties that the American relief workers were having with the local authorities, which culminated in the deportation by the local government of several missionaries who worked on Armenian relief. She found out enough in Harput to satisfy her that the Greek deportees were being systematically starved to death and exposed to all kinds of mistreatment under the bad management of the local authorities. There had been unconfirmed reports that Miss Allen was poisoned and robbed when travelling from Harput to Sivas by the Turks. It was suggested that when she started back to Ankara, determined to demand severe measures from Mustafa Kemal, the local authorities who knew of her intentions threatened her overtly, saying that she should never be permitted to return to Ankara alive. On her departure day by carriage, an “accident” happened in which her horse had “run away” and thrown her to the ground. On her second attempt to return she

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<sup>200</sup> Jackson, J. B. (of American Consul) (1920) Letter to American High Commissioner, Admiral Mark L. Bristol. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

contracted typhus after she had been a few days on the road. At the same time, her carriage “broke down” again so she was compelled to travel on horseback for two days on the terrible road to reach shelter. She died soon after she arrived in Sivas of typhus fever.<sup>201</sup> The veracity of the relevant reports deserves further study. Later, the former Director of Near East Relief, Barton F. Plimpton, claimed in an informal report: “there have been reports circulated that Miss Allen was poisoned and robbed en route from Harpout to Sivas by the Turks. They are false”.<sup>202</sup> Whether true or not, such stories signified the deep-seated distrust between the local officials and the missionaries.

Beyond rumours, the case of George P. Knapp was more tangible but also debatable case when dealing with the Armenian question and missionary crimes, wherein the role of Knapp as a perpetrator or a victim has been obscured by mysterious occurrences. Knapp was a second-generation American Protestant missionary in Turkey. Born in Bitlis in 1863, he graduated from Harvard University in 1887 and Hartford Seminary in 1890, and later became a missionary in Turkey, where he was known as “a friend of the Armenians”. Early in 1896 he was suddenly arrested in his home in Bitlis on a charge of sedition and convicted of murder, with an oral statement that the government had secured from several local Armenians as incriminating evidence.<sup>203</sup> Without being tried, he was sentenced to be expelled from Turkey by the Turkish court. Throughout his journey of expulsion, he was “treated like a prisoner”, except in İstanbul where he was reported to be “treated by the Vali as a guest, not prisoner”. He was informed by the local government there that he was ready to be put on trail, but the government never acted, saying that they must have time to collect evidence.<sup>204</sup> In Aleppo, the Vali

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<sup>201</sup> ABCFM. (1922). *Informal Reports and Notes of My Anatolian Trips June 14, 1921- April 1, 1922*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.283B,

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ottoman Archives. (1893) *Bitlis'te mukim George Knapp adlı Amerikalı misyonerin çevredeki Ermenileri hükümete ve Müslümanlara karşı sürekli olarak tahrik faaliyeti yürüttüğüne dair Hariciye'nin müsveddesi*. BOA. HR.TH. 136, 85. See also: Ottoman Archives, (1895) *Amerikalı Misyoner George Knapp'ın o civardaki Ermeniler üzerinde icra ettiği sui tesir faaliyetine dair Bitlis Valiliği'nden gelen şifreli telgraf, Fransızca tercümesi ve Hariciye'nin ilgili tebliği*. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi HR.SFR.3, 440, 82.

<sup>204</sup> Riggs et al., *History*, p.55-a.

detained him for five days to force him to sign an agreement not to return to Bitlis again. Knapp steadily refused to sign on the grounds that he “had committed no crime and had in no way broken the laws of the country, and that the charges brought against him were entirely unfounded”.<sup>205</sup> He was sent to the US by the arrangement of the American Minister, and spent some two years in Massachusetts, serving as secretary of the National Armenian Relief Committee. Due to the Ottoman government failing to collect concrete evidence of his guilt, he would return to Harput, Turkey three years later, in 1899, where he originated extensive plans for agriculture and industry for the local needy people.

Seemingly, the Ottoman government could not get the better of the Americans over this case as it failed to penalize foreigners who perpetrated crime on Ottoman lands. Insisted on by the Americans, the incriminating proof could only be secured by examination on the spot and the examination could only be conducted by an American Consul – “no American citizens were amenable to the decision of a Turkish court but he must be tried by his own Consular court”.<sup>206</sup> This case caused backlash among the American press, who condemned the Ottoman authorities’ charge against Knapp, claiming that it was “of course absurd”, but throughout the Ottoman Empire the American missionaries condemned the tirades of the revolutionists as “not only foolish but wicked”. The American missionaries in Turkey were self-described as the last defenders of “the only bar to absolute subjugation and practical extermination of the Armenian people” by Ottoman Muslims after the English protection of Armenians “miserably collapsed”, thus the newspaper author concluded that it was considered small wonder that the Sultan “seeks by every means to discredit them and get rid of them”.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Ottoman Archives, (1896) *Amerikan Misyoner Georges Knopp'in tutumu*. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi. HR.SYS, 54, 2. See also: ‘Missionary Knapp’s Case’. (1896). *Los Angeles Herald*, 28 April. Volume 25, Number 200.

<sup>206</sup> BOA.HR.SYS, 54, 2.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

The death of George P. Knapp was reported on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1915 when the Armenian deportation was at its height. The news was brought by a Turk to the missionaries that Knapp had died suddenly of typhus in Diyarbakır. The Turkish officials certified his death from natural disease and asserted that the Turks had done all in their power to save him. However, knowing his close educational association with the Armenian people and set against the backdrop of the Armenian massacres in Anatolia, the real reason for his death was treated with scepticism. As his memorial paper said in the end: “Possible the whole truth may never be known. In any case, the earthly work of George Knapp was done”.<sup>208</sup>

The younger brother of the deceased missionary, J. H. Knapp, complained about the perfunctory treatment of his brother’s dubious death by the American Embassy and American Board. He was so obsessed with it that he later left his business in the US and enlisted for service with the ANF in 1919 as an American missionary working in a town near Diyarbakır, so that he could have the chance to make a full investigation. In field research in Diyarbakır, he soon learned from the locals that his brother had died from poisoning after drinking a cup of Turkish coffee handed to him by a prominent Turkish officer. Reportedly his brother was treated as a problem as he had known too much about the Armenian massacres which were then in progress. Later, a firmer testimony was received – an affidavit from an eyewitness to the execution, indicating that his brother was executed by shooting, as if he were a spy. In J. H. Knapp’s memoir, he also suspected that another dubious case was connected to a governmental assassination, wherein Miss Charlotte, an American Protestant missionary in Bitlis, had died of “heart failure” caused by fright during the Armenian massacres of 1915.<sup>209</sup> In 1920, after further investigation, the US government contacted the Sublime Porte in İstanbul, requesting the Porte take urgent actions to apprehend those involved in these deaths. The American government claimed,

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<sup>208</sup> ABCFM. *Memorial records for George P. Knapp*. American Research Institute in Turkey, Istanbul Center Library, online in Digital Library for International Research Archive, Item #17182, <http://www.dlir.org/archive/items/show/17182>

<sup>209</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

that Reverend Mr G. F. Knapp, after his forcible deportation from Bitlis because of his humanitarian activities in behalf of the Armenians, was taken from prison at Zok by four gendarmes, and after being carried three or four hours journey on the road from Zok to Diarbekir, was tied to a tree, shot and robbed. Special attention of the Sublime Porte is directed to the aggravated character of this outrage, owing to the apparently unprecedented fact that the murder appears to have been perpetrated by our officers of the Turkish government.<sup>210</sup>

Whether the Porte eventually cooperated with the American diplomatic note deserves further investigation.

Knapp was not the only American missionary who was reportedly 'mistreated' by the government as a separatist criminal and ended in a mysterious death. According to the missionary reports, in 1915, the American missionary F.H. Leslie was forcefully seized by Armenian Revolutionists and later died in suspicious circumstances. Leslie was an American missionary in Urfa who "had very close relations with local Armenians". He began to work as an American Consular Agent from July and October 1915 in the city. Although the American Embassy could not secure his position as American Consular Agent, the Consul insisted on his continuing to do business for them, which "led to a bad relationship with the local government". On 29<sup>th</sup> September 1915, a battle broke out in the city between Armenians and Turkish soldiers. The American Nationalists occupied Leslie's house where he had been detained for about two weeks until 15<sup>th</sup> October. After being relieved by the Armenian Nationalists, he was subjected to a stiff cross-examination by the local government for a whole day, and in succeeding days he was frequently called to the government for further questioning. According to missionary reports, the pressure of examination drove him insane. He came down with melancholia and a delusion that the government would soon murder him. Finally, on

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<sup>210</sup> Ottoman Archives. (1920) *Bitlis Amerika misyoneri olup, tehcir edildiği esnada Diyarbekir'da vefat eden George P. Knapp hakkında*. BOA HR.İD. 1666. 67.

30<sup>th</sup> October he was found dead from carbolic acid poisoning with a paper in his handwriting claiming it was suicide.<sup>211</sup>

The document below shows Leslie's statement about how he was detained by the Armenian Nationalists and seeking help from the government.<sup>212</sup> The missionary report about his death adumbrated a miserable American missionary who suffered maltreatment from the Turkish government, who was supposed to be his saviour during his incarceration. Though without direct accusation, the report made an oblique reference to his death by government order. Leslie's death was another example showing the hazardous predicament of the American missionaries who were caught "between two fires" of the Armenian nationalists and the Turkish government.

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<sup>211</sup> ABCFM, F.D. Shepard, M.D (1915) *Facts Regarding Rev. F.H. Leslie's Death*. ABC 16.10.1. Vol. 7, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>212</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *For My Successor. Statement by F.H.Leslie*. ABC 16.10.1. Vol. 7, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

COPY

FOR MY SUCCESSOR.  
Statement by F. H. Leslie.

On Wednesday, September 29, 1915, Armenian revolutionists entered the mission compound by force, and taking a position in the carpentry shop, held it by rifles. Men on the hill and in Kurdish houses to the north fired on the mission every day for several days. On Sunday, October 3rd, I sent a letter, with consent of the revolutionists, without whose consent no letter could leave the Armenian quarter, to His Excellency the Mutessarif, in which I explained my position and asked for protection. In this letter, I told the Mutessarif about the seizure of my shop and our danger. On Thursday, October 7, the government had a sign put up on the hill where they had made fortifications, which read, "Mr. Leslie, foreign subjects and children may come here for safety." We immediately requested permission from the Armenian revolutionists, without whose consent we would have been shot if we tried to leave, to leave the place, but permission was not only refused but an armed guard was placed over us. I wrote a short note to the Mutessarif, explaining why we could not come out, and next day we put up a sign on the roof of our building which read, "We wish to come, but they do not allow it," in Turkish language. I repeatedly requested permission of the revolutionists to leave the place, but they always refused. On October 6, the soldiers bombarded the Armenian quarter with cannon mounted on the hill near the castle, and about 6 p.m., a shot struck a small wall on the roof of our School for Blind building, destroying the wall but not injuring the main building. On Saturday, October 9, the soldiers bombarded our carpentry shop and also the orphanage kitchen and dining room, in which the revolutionists had barricaded themselves, and afterwards an attack was made by the soldiers, which was repulsed. At first, the revolutionists occupied only our carpentry shop, but (as stated above) they gradually moved into other parts, until they finally took possession of all the mission, except my private offices and rooms. I always forbade the use of everything, but could not compel obedience. After they had put a guard over me I was helpless. On Sunday, October 10, the soldiers made a determined attack against a strong position of the Armenians near the German Rug Factory, and took the position.

I forgot to write that, when the trouble between the soldiers and Armenians began on Wednesday, October 29, (This should be September 29. J.E.M.) I sent first Mr. Kenneth Joly who was visiting at the mission and afterwards Setrag Sahagian, our purchaser, to the police station on the Aleppo road to ask for a guard, but they found only one soldier there, who said he could not come. This was about three p.m.

(This last paragraph was written in different ink, and very apparently at a later date than the foregoing.)

Figure 1: Statement by F.H. Leslie

## **“Not a School but a Hearth of Conspiracy”: Disputes over the Pontus Affair**

The case of Anatolia College in Mersovan in 1921 demonstrates the political incompatibility between the American missionary institutions and the Turkish government. Strikingly, some Turkish scholars, such as Alan, Bayraktar, and Sakin see the event as “a good example for the missionary activities during the Turkish National Struggle”, and identify the College as “a good application field for the revolution thoughts planned in London”.<sup>213</sup> On the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> February 1921, Turkish professor Zeki Ketani<sup>214</sup> was assassinated by persons connected with the College on his way home after the meeting of the College’s Ottoman Literature Club.<sup>215</sup> A few days later, the College was searched by the Turkish Grand National Assembly for evidence of arms or ammunition, and for evidence of political participation. The cause accepted by the authorities was that the Turkish professor was thought by the Greek element in the college to have “given away” to the Turkish authorities the seditious activities of the Club. General Nourheddin Pasha, the Commandant of the Turkish Central Army, admitted that he did not know who had assassinated the professor, but it was later reported in the newspapers that one of his colleagues, a Greek professor killed him one night. It was also reported (by the newspaper *Yeni Gün*, representing the National Turkish government) that among the Club members there were Greek youths who had created a military organization under name “boy-scouts”, wherein regular conferences and occasional drilling took place as Club activities.

According to the Turkish authorities, the subsequent investigation for the murder indicated that the crimes had a connection with the Greek Club of Pontus Society, which had been established in Anatolia College in 1904. Incriminating documents were

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<sup>213</sup> For other articles on this topic, see: Çelik, R. (2011). ‘Pontus Meselesi Ve Tbm’nin Buna Karşı Aldığı Tedbirler’. *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 11(11), pp.73-92; Sakin, S. (2008). ‘TBMM’nin Pontus Meselesi’ne Bakışı ve Çözüm Arayışları (1922)’. *Askeri Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (11).

<sup>214</sup> The College was opened in 1913. In 1920-21 there were two Turkish teachers (Zeki Ketani and İsmail Şevket) and 218 students at the College.

<sup>215</sup> Riggs, C. T. (1939?) *Merzifon Station, 1830-1906; 1903-1939*. ABC 88, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



alleged to have been seized in the raid on the Pontus Literary Club in the College as proof of an existing connection between the school and the organization in Athens. The seized documents indicated that propaganda was regularly published in the College and sent abroad from there. The graduates of the College were alleged to have been sent to foreign countries to spread propaganda and had tried to create bitter, hostile feelings against Turks in those countries. Other items like the “coat-of-arms”, flags and maps belonging to the Pontus Kingdom were also found. According to their maps, the border of the Pontus Kingdom was to begin from Trabzon (Trebizond) and Samsun (Samsoun) and was to stretch as far as Ankara (Angora) and Amasya (Amassia).<sup>216</sup>

According to the missionaries, before the Affair in April 1920, the Kemalist authorities had “held the contention” that the College authorities were “compromised by political activities with Greeks against the government”, serving as a spy agency, and college president Dr White was engaged in spying and spiriting young Greeks and Armenians out of the country. Previously, the local official had sent for Dr White, warned him about the seditious activities of the Literary Club, and asked him to disband it. The missionaries claimed that Dr White had investigated the Club, then persuaded the local governors that it was innocent; Dr White then found himself in a dangerous situation and the shooting precipitated extreme measures by the authorities. After incriminating evidence such as Greek flags and essays on Pontus autonomy were found in the raid, the Turkish army were “given courage” to search Dr White’s private quarters. A certain discovery there most “unjustly” damaged the reputation of Dr White and the College in the Turkish eyes through their “characteristic interpretation” of it. A letter written by Dr White was found, in answer to one from a friend in the US, asking him to outline the outlook for further missionary work among Muslims. In his reply, Dr White mentioned certain Kurdish tribes which had been reportedly converted from

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<sup>216</sup> See various missionary reports in the ABCFM collections: ABC 16.9.1. Turkey Mission. New Series 1920-1929, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Christianity to Muslims in the past. This was considered an offence as it suggested Dr White aimed to proselytize.<sup>217</sup>

As a result, the College in Merzifon was suspended immediately by the Turkish National government on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1921. Three Greek teaching staff were executed in August 1921 following accusations of secessionist crimes.<sup>218</sup> Those Greeks connected to the Pontus Society organization were arrested. Almost all American missionaries then left Merzifon “in two trucks and 6 carts” on 21<sup>st</sup> March, heading to other missionary stations in Turkey for either relief or educational work, allow two remained behind to care for the Near East Relief orphans.<sup>219</sup> Dr White, who was blamed for being “supportive for the Club” was expelled from Turkey to America with his family. Later, in the Republican period, as the reopening of the College was impossible in Turkey (the Greek students were gone and the remaining Armenians were few), Anatolia College was finally moved to Salonica in Greece and Dr White was appointed president of the as-yet-unconstructed College in 1924. When Dr White finally arrived at the new campus from the US, he described the stark school building as being “without a book, a bell or a bench”.<sup>220</sup>

A noteworthy aspect of this case is that the American missionaries always had plausible deniability for their ‘crimes’. This time they attributed the Merzifon murder as being the “result of personal spite”, which could date back to the days of the occupation of the town by a British military force of 250 Indian troops in 1919. According to the American missionaries, in 1919 Mr Getchell, who was connected with the College, assumed or was given by the British rather more than the moral support of the Indian force during the war. He and some of his colleagues were reported to have boasted of this backing against the local authorities. Their mutual relations had never been the best at Merzifon, and acts such as the requisitioning of Turkish houses “backed by the troops”

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Sakin, S. (2010).

<sup>219</sup> Riggs et al. (1939). *History of Merzifon Station*.

<sup>220</sup> ‘Dr White, Headed College in Greece’. (1946). *New York Times*, 4 May, p.15.

resulted in the worsening of relations between the College and the government. A Turkish notable was ousted from the house he occupied on the grounds that it belonged to an Armenian who had disappeared in the 1915 deportation, and he was said to have vowed revenge. Getchell left the town about the same time as the troops were evacuated, and later the local governor (Kaymakam) appointed this Turkish notable as liaison and inspection official for relief work. Dr White protested this action, but the man remained in office. So when the Turkish professor was shot, he apparently “seized his opportunity to urge a search of the institution” as a form of “revenge”. After the murder, Dr White claimed the following justification for the Pontos Maps to disclaim the College’s political involvement with separatist movements:

We always recognized our obligations to the government in authority, and our American Officials in Constantinople frequently reminded us of our duty to maintain a loyal attitude toward the existing government and a neutral attitude as between contending parties with a spirit of friendliness for all. Our domineering visitors seemed eager to find some incriminating evidence, something that would implicate or compromise the Americans. This was the strong impression received by one of our number who was held in the President’s Office while the search was being continued there. At one time when I was present the General and the Judge compared notes in my Office over two College maps on which they read the word, “Pontus”. The maps were printed in Chicago some years ago to illustrate the Roman provinces in the time of Paul. But afterwards Turkish papers published statements to the effect that charts had been found in the College on which was outlined the province of Pontus which revolutionists connected with the College planned should be annexed to the Hellenic kingdom. Pictures taken years ago and showing Greek students in athletic costume were charged to represent soldier organizations formed for purposes of rebellion.<sup>221</sup>

Setting aside its credibility, the alibi of the missionary president reflected the dilemma faced by the missionary educators in that their evangelising enterprise had become out

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<sup>221</sup> National Archives of Microfilm Publications (NAMP). No.867.4016/433, as cited in Sakin, S. (2010).

of step with the official nationalizing line. In the president's self-vindication as well as evidence found in other broader primary archives from both (American or Turkish) sides, the authenticity of documentary evidence is obscured by ubiquitous subjectivity, thus to what extent the American missionaries (either of the Merzifon College or in other cases) were involved in illicit political activities is difficult to determine.

It has been shown that the backlash caused by this case against missionary education activities so perturbed the local Muslim society, that, even later in 1926, when another American school in Merzifon, the Girls' Boarding School, had reopened, "a persistent rumour that the school was to be closed and the missionaries sent away prevented many new pupils from coming to Merzifon".<sup>222</sup> Such fears were legitimate, for its ramifications were also profound in shaping public and official opinions against the American missionary activities. Immediately after the murder of Zeki Ketani, the American College was portrayed as "not a school but a Hearth (or Den) of Conspiracy" in the Turkish press. The newspaper *Agence d'Anatolic* chided the Turkish government for granting favour to the American schools, which Greek and Armenian young men took advantage of to distribute political propaganda through their papers, pamphlets and other printed materials.<sup>223</sup> Such critiques were taken up by the Turkish General Assembly members who had been convinced by the College investigations that the American schools were unwholesome for Turkish youths and that such schools where Armenian youngsters could gather should not be in operation as before.<sup>224</sup>

Mustafa Kemal expressed his opinions about this event: "After the Mondros Armistice, all Greeks became spoilt with National Greek action. The Greeks in Samsun region desired to found an independent Pontus state as a result of the spiritual support of American organizations in Merzifon and propagandists of Etniki Eteryia Association as

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<sup>222</sup> Riggs et al. (1939). *History of Merzifon Station*.

<sup>223</sup> 'The American College at Merzifoun and the Organization of the "Pontus" Society', (1921) 27 March, No.79, Ankara. (Translation from Ottoman Turkish is collected in ABCMF collections, Houghton Library, Cambridge. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2.)

<sup>224</sup> *Bakanlar Kurulu Kararları Kataloğu*, Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi. 248/2M.-S.

well as being armed with the help of foreign governments”.<sup>225</sup> Most likely, Kemal’s evaluation of the College case largely influenced his later decisions to adjust the Turkish educational policy regarding foreign schools in the ensuing republican years as they became more explicitly restricted than before.

The Pontus event also shifted the America Board’s policy. In its aftermath, the American missionaries were warned by the High Commissioner of the Board that in present circumstances, where the Turkish Nationalist government was in “bitter competition with Greece” and showing an “over-zealous attitude against sedition issues”, their contacts with Greeks should be more sensitive – it was suggested that it would be wise for the missionaries to develop their work along the line of education, medical and relief work, without merely proselytizing.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, after 1921 the general attitudes of the American missionaries became more cooperative with government control.

Throughout the decades, the American missionaries walked a tightrope over ethno-religious issues. They were never believed by the Ottoman governments, nor did they fully become the self-assumed ‘friends of Armenians’, as they also incurred the enmity of the Armenian Patriarch, who complained that American missionaries were stealing their congregations. Not to mention the cases where they were even abducted by the minority rebels in exchange for benefits. And their devoted investment to minority education could not ultimately thrive in Turkey and instead sometimes backfired in their Turkish-Muslim evangelizing work. Whether truths or rumours, reports relating to the Turkish government’s austere treatment of missionary “culprits” mostly occurred during wartime, as a sign of the drastically worsened relationship since the mid-1910s. More importantly, however, it implied that the First World War was a tipping point when the Turkish government managed to largely contain the missionary

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<sup>225</sup> Atatürk, M. K. (2000). *Nutuk (1919-1927)*. Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayını, p.424, as cited in Sakin, S. (2010). ‘Missionary Schools and Activities in Turkey During The Turkish National Struggle’. *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, (27)

<sup>226</sup> See missionary collections in ABC 16.9.1., Houghton Library, Cambridge.

influence. Thereafter the American missionaries gradually lost their sway in Turkey (which was also true of their position in the US) when their target Christian communities were forced to leave the country. In this sense, the minority issues, over which so much tension had been caused with the Ottoman authorities, was the very foundations upon which the edifice of the American missionaries had been built, the lifeline and justification of their presence in Turkey. Following the Independence War, the demise of heterogeneity had become a fait accompli under the Kemalist regime, forcing the American missionaries to forfeit all their stakes upon their native Christian brethren. It is unsurprising that the once-vociferous missionaries swiftly gave way to adopting an amenable tone, to sustain their activities in the face of government control.

# Chapter III: The Formulation and Transition of American Board Policies on Turkish/ Muslim Evangelization

-American Missionary Strategies: From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic (1906-1928)

## Background: A Long Run-up to the Muslim Work

At the 1908 General Annual Meeting, American missionary delegate L. Lee declaimed his ambitious vision on behalf of the Central Turkey Mission of a broadly-evangelized Ottoman Empire: “In next generation or the next every Moslem knee shall bow before Jesus and join us in crowning Him Lord of all”.<sup>227</sup> Though with hindsight the viability of this ambition was still in question, even without the advent of the incapacitating First World War, the rekindling of their long-relinquished Muslim-evangelizing aspirations after more than 80 years was intriguing. Nevertheless, such grandiloquence has often been forgotten in contemporary late-Ottoman studies.

Examining earlier Ottoman history, it seems that there were no planned or aggressive evangelical efforts aimed directly at the Ottoman Muslim population by the American Board until the second half of the 1800s. The first American missionaries who arrived in the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s had given up their attempts to convert Muslims after seeing their ‘bigoted’ attitudes, and turned their attention to the Gregorian Armenians and Catholic or Orthodox Greeks, who were regarded as the Nominal Christians of the Empire in need of regeneration. Apart from the obstacle of religious inertia in Islam, the American missionaries’ direct Muslim proselytizing remained practically dormant because of the fear, of both the missionaries and the Muslims, of

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<sup>227</sup> ABCFM, *Seeds of the Turkey Mission* (1908), Reel 616, No.539, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

incurring persecution for apostasy. Direct conversion was forbidden by the Ottoman law with a death penalty before 1856, with the law stating that: “Apostasy is an enormous crime in the eyes of God. The Mussulman who is guilty of it must be condemned to death, if he do not immediately abjure his error”.<sup>228</sup> The Tanzimat Edict of 1839 and the Reform Edict of 1856 – largely as the result of foreign pressure – provided the missionaries the legal basis for proselytizing in the Ottoman Empire by jointly guaranteeing the freedom of religious choice of all Ottoman subjects, Muslims and Christians alike. However, in practice, the Ottoman authorities interpreted “freedom of religion” as “the freedom to defend their religion” and inscribed this as a political principle in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin to prevent Muslim subjects from proselytizing.<sup>229</sup> In *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Selim Deringil points out that unlike in the past, conversions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were precarious in an environment of rising nationalism where religion and nationality were so entangled. To the Sultan of all-Muslim subjects, an Ottoman Muslim changing their religion could be seen as a failure to defend Islam and “would have a seriously de-legitimizing effect in the eyes of the Sultan’s Muslim subjects”.<sup>230</sup>

In İstanbul there was an appreciable evangelistic movement in the 1860s. Testing the long-held taboo, it indicated the embryonic concerns of the American missionaries in relation to Muslim evangelization. By 1864, more than 20 former Muslims had been baptized in İstanbul under the American missionary influence. Among them was Selim Effendi, baptized as Edward Williams, who had been licensed to preach. The work went on “very quietly but efficiently”, without disturbing the government, until the advent of two representatives from the Church Missionary Society who, in the warmth of their zeal, favoured a more open assault on Islam. Dr Pfander brought out his ‘*Mizan-ul-Hakk*’ (Balance of Truth), which excited severe opposition by the Turks. He was aided by a Mr O’Flaherty, who had been a sergeant in the Crimean War and then

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<sup>228</sup> Hamlin, C. (1878). *Among the Turks*. pp.83-84.

<sup>229</sup> Deringil, S. (1998). *The Well-Protected Domains*, p.115.

<sup>230</sup> Deringil, S. (2012). *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*.



felt called to convert all his Muslim friends. These efforts led to the sudden arrest and imprisonment of some ten Muslim converts in July 1864. Most missionary bookstores, the offices of Bible societies, and other missionary printing offices where most missionary books were printed were officially sealed for several days. Under the pressure of the British Embassy, the Turkish converts who had been imprisoned and exiled for two months were released and allowed to return. The above-mentioned Edward Williams died the following year.<sup>231</sup> As a result of this event, the evangelising work among Muslims was considerably hindered. Many Muslims chose to keep a distance from missionaries and dared not even read their books out of the fear of being persecuted. This feeling took years to overcome. The American missionaries also gave up their precarious interest in evangelizing Ottoman Muslims.

With the exception of the 1860s' religious movement, the American missionaries had practically nothing to do with the Muslim work, apart from occasionally selling or giving them some religious books. In his memoirs (1876), William Goodell remarked that, "Turks are not only conservative but they particularly dislike any movement that is demonstrative", however, many of them were interested in the Bible and had bought "several hundred of copies" from the missionaries over last five or six years.<sup>232</sup> In the Hamidian period, some open-minded Turkish families began to send their children to the American schools in İstanbul, İzmir, and Beirut, where Turkish students attended Bible courses and religious services together with the Christians. In the capital, the morning services of the Scutari Chapel, which opened after the Crimean War were occasionally attended by Muslim visitors. When these visitors came, the preachers would drop Armenian and speak in Turkish. In another Bible House Chapel at Pera, Muslim listeners sometimes attended Turkish service, which was mainly held for Turkish-speaking Armenians. The Turkish service in the Kumkapı (Koum Kapou) Coffee House in Pera was held once or twice a month with an average attendance of

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<sup>231</sup> Riggs et al., *History*.

<sup>232</sup> Prime, E.D.G. and Goodell, W. (1876). *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire or Memoirs of Rev. William Goodell*. p.425.

about 50, and a considerable part of these attendances being non-Protestants, including Muslims, “who do not elsewhere hear the Gospel preaching in the capital”.<sup>233</sup> Meanwhile, in inner Anatolia, such services hardly occur. But in American hospitals, Muslim patients sometimes came for better treatment or sometimes missionary doctors were called to Muslim homes. In addition, some mindful American missionaries would use their leisure time to approach Turks in local gathering places. For example, William Goodwell recalled that he spent a whole night sitting in a local Turkish cafe among Turks on his way to Aleppo. In the morning he concluded his regular morning prayer in Turkish in front of many curious Turkish eyes. To his surprise, all the Turks joined him with an appreciative “Amin” when he concluded his prayer with “amen”.<sup>234</sup> Occasionally, the missionaries would like to stay at a Turkish or Kurdish home of a local village for a night with curiosity while traveling among mountains in the hinterland. As far as this dissertation concerned, these activities constituted major contacts between the American missionaries and Anatolian Muslims before 1906. Yet these contacts and interactions seem rather negligible in terms of the wider mission of Muslim evangelization.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman authorities’ apprehension about potential Muslim conversion by American missionaries increased in the later Hamidan period. Their worries, for example, led to the demotion of an Ottoman Embassy’s chief physician in Rome. To Ottoman eyes, his marriage to an American woman exposed him to foreign customs and upset Islamic morality. Nevertheless, actual converts from Islam in the 19<sup>th</sup> century remained insignificant, and were mainly found in Arab provinces. Surprisingly, from 1864 to 1888, only two Muslims were reported to have converted to Christianity.<sup>235</sup> In 1898 American missionary in Beirut, Henry Jessup, even wrote a biography of Kamil Abdul Messiah, who was claimed to be one of the few

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<sup>233</sup> ABCFM. (1902) *Annual Report of the Constantinople Station*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 617. 16.9.3. Vol. 28. No.471, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>234</sup> E.D.G. Prime et al. (1876) p.409.

<sup>235</sup> BOA. HR.SYS. 59.36.

American-converted Arabs among those “first fruits of a mighty harvest to be gathered for Christ”.<sup>236</sup> Until 1907, the American missionaries generally thought that the work among Muslims should be done by native Christians, mainly through private religious conversations, while the latter thought this duty was for foreigners as they could more easily avoid persecution.<sup>237</sup> The missionaries’ Ottoman sympathizers in 1885 and 1890 claimed that: “In imparting education they did not proselytize... They sought, first and foremost, to organize an improved system of education for a people already Christian... The Muslim majority may not have been an immediate target but it definitely stood on the broader horizon”.<sup>238</sup>

### **Ground-breaking: The Underground Muslim Mission**

In 1906 a special committee on work among Muslims was appointed by the Central Turkey Mission of the American Board at a meeting in Adana, which appeared to be an innovation across the wider Missions. This development was in some way facilitated by those missionaries who gave special attention to Islamic cultures and who were sent from America to the Central Turkey Mission that year, such as Miner Rogers, Stephen Trowbridge, and Fred Goodsell.<sup>239</sup> That same year, an unprecedented report on the progress of the evangelical work among Muslims in Aintab was produced, breaking new ground for the Board. The report recorded several cases of Muslim individuals or groups who had shown interest in Christianity in Aintab and the vicinity.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.26. For further accounts on the early Muslim converts in the Middle East, see Makdisi, U. (2011). *Artillery of heaven: American missionaries and the failed conversion of the Middle East*. Cornell University Press. pp.144-179. NB: The Ottoman Arabic regions are not part of the scope of the current research.

<sup>237</sup> It could be argued that the missionary question regarding whether Muslim evangelical work should be done by natives or foreigners in Turkey had been constantly discussed and the answer changed several times due to historical and political changes in Turkey. By 1955, the American missionary John Ernest Merrill pointed out that (since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey) “it had long been the commonly accepted fact that Christian native people in Turkey could not engage in religious work with Muslims - that is Muslim evangelization on the part of the native people was out of the question, and that this must be, and could be undertaken only by foreigners” Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.62.

<sup>238</sup> Deringil, S. (1998) *The Well-Protected Domains*, p.132.

<sup>239</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.2.

<sup>240</sup> ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 660, No.240, Houghton Library, Cambridge

Considering the political sensitivity at the time, no single name or identifying references were mentioned in the report, and it was restricted to private use.

After a year's effort, the Committee on work among Muslims of the Central Turkey Mission produced its first Muslim-focused report at the 1907 annual meeting in Maraş.<sup>241</sup> In their field research for the report, the demographic composition and educational facilities of each region of the Central Turkey Mission were examined to evaluate the present situation and feasibility for potential Muslim evangelising work in the field. It also enumerated at length the activities of various Muslim individuals or groups scattered across the region who had shown interest in Christianity or had already converted, whose number was not considerable, but enough for the Mission to pay special attention to. Their findings in relation to the Muslim social situation included: 1) in central Anatolia, most evangelising work among Muslims was conducted by natives, and in a small number of cases by Muslims themselves spontaneously, but missionary involvement was rare (as mentioned above, it seemed that the most notable of the missionaries' modest evangelising effort towards Muslims prior to mid-1900s was Bible distribution); 2) religious propaganda towards Muslims would lead to official persecution, thus it was done in private; and 3) there were hitherto no missionary schools for Muslim children in the country, and there were often a small number of Turks with open minds or inclinations towards Christianity who wanted to send their children to missionary schools, however, this went against and was greatly hindered by the strong popular feeling and would be prevented by local governments with severe fines as well.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> ABCFM. (1906-07?) *Works for Moslems -Sept 05*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 660. 16.9.5. Vol. 15. No.243, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>242</sup> However, the official attitude and local government policy varied from region to region. For instance, in Central Turkey College, Muslim students were not uncommon and there was also a large number of Muslim students at the college of Beirut, which became a refuge to which Turkish students could be sent from a distance.

Against all the odds of religious impediment and political hostility, the American missionaries heartily confirmed the plausibility and validity of embarking on Muslim-oriented preliminary work right away. Geo-demographically, there was a significant Muslim population with a large number of entirely Muslim villages spread over the Anatolia plain – official Turkish statistics of 1914 showed that 400,000 of 500,000 people in Adana province were Muslims, for example, providing a solid base for this adventurous experiment.<sup>243</sup> Although the Muslim villagers in inner Anatolia were considered “densely ignorant”, the missionaries thought of them as “open to friendly approach” in general. They also found a general tendency among educated Muslims to manifest openness and friendliness towards missionary activities, especially towards what they could see was beneficial to the people – medicine, education, and industries. In addition, the Kurdish people were considered to be more open and prone to Christian influence in comparison to Anatolian Turks.<sup>244</sup>

More importantly, a self-proclaimed necessity of poor Muslims for humanitarian succour shaped their conviction. Journeying round Turkey, the American missionaries witnessed the poor conditions of many Muslims in terms of both health and economy. The recurrent Muslim image in missionary writings was constant suffering due to “filth, ignorance, superstition, and fatalism”. In some instances, they heard Muslims tell them their family troubles, questioning them and complaining that nothing had been done for them. The common Muslim idea at that time was that “the missionaries have come only for the Christians”. Therefore, the missionaries reconsidered and justified the necessity and responsibility of work among their Muslim neighbours. Finally, they were driven by their historically unfulfilled quest. The commencement of Muslim Missions in the mid-1900s was interpreted somewhat as a revival of their bygone task, their earlier

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<sup>243</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Report of Evangelistic Work for Women and Community Schools on the Cilician Plain – Moslem Work*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.76, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>244</sup> *Works for Moslems* -Sept 05. Reel 660, No.243; ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims – “Some Illustrations of the Need and Openings for Work among Muslim Villagers”*. ABC 16., Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21 part 1. No.715, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

claim of “an unarmed crusade” at the beginning of their Middle Eastern expedition in 1821 to convert the “infidels” who vanquished Byzantines and became the hosts of Ottoman territories.<sup>245,246</sup> In this context, the missionaries adjusted their narratives of strategical planning, claiming that the evangelising work among Muslims should not only be left to Christian natives, “but both foreigners and natives should take the initiative in this work according to their opportunities”.

With the joint efforts of the Committee members, an impressive plan for Muslim work was formulated formally throughout the Central Turkey Mission areas in a decision at the 1907 CTM annual meeting, to signal a new stage of the Board’s history. In the following years can be seen a boosted awareness and initiative around the Muslim Mission among the American missionary circle. For instance, immediately following the annual meeting, many missionary institutions saw a keen trend for Turkish language study. The Central Turkey College reported in 1907-08 that “the year just passed has been marked... by a new and very encouraging interest in the study of Osmanli Turkish”.<sup>247</sup> There was also an avid interest among missionaries in studying the Koran, Muslim history, theology, and ideology of Turkish and international laws related to the question of Muslim evangelization.<sup>248</sup> The missionaries also began to encourage native Christians to do evangelical work among Muslims, such as preaching motivating sermons in Protestant churches and convening meetings for their Protestant workers and communities on the topic of Muslim evangelization, setting up a special

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<sup>245</sup> Uygur, K. (2000). *Anadolu'daki Amerika-Kendi Belgeleriyle 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okulları*. pp.30-34.

<sup>246</sup> Some other missionary records could be found to reflect this idea: addresses, meetings and lessons on topic of Muslim evangelization were organized in different missionary institutions during 1906-07. At one church meeting, subjects were as follows: “Answers to Moslem”, “Our duty to this county”, “We are better off than the Christians were under the early Roman Empire in our freedoms to influence Mohammedans”, and “Mohammedan history and belief”. ABCFM. (1907) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslem Appointed by Central Turkey Mission at the Meeting in Adana, 1906, Presented at the Annual Meeting in Marash, June-July, 1907*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 660. 16.9.5. Vol. 15, No.249, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>247</sup> ABCFM. Reel 661, No.229.

<sup>248</sup> For instance, books introduced for missionaries in 1914 included: *Mission Work in Moslem Lands, Islam as a Religion*, the Koran, and the *Politico-Religious Theory of Islam*. ABCFM. (1914) *Supplementary Facts regarding educational work as related to Mohammedan Evangelization*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. No.614, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

fund for Bible or Testament (in Oslamli Turkish) distribution, training Bible women expressly for Muslim work, employing enterprising booksellers for the sale of Scriptures and other literature as well as for the advertising and 'brand-building' work of missionary bookstores, and hiring peddlers to tour Muslim villages with Bibles for distribution.

The missionaries also became more conscious to use every opportunity of social contact to build relationships with Muslims, thus "preparing the way for a definite work among them". Some examples of needlework and home visits by Bible women are examined in later chapters. There were many other examples, in which missionaries toured among different Muslim villages in person; they employed Turks as language teachers to teach the new missionaries; and in turn, they gave foreign language lessons to Muslims who wished to learn. In hospitals, religious services for Muslims were undertaken alongside medical services. The medical services also extended outside the hospitals to a medical tour. In high schools, the curriculum was adapted for the new Mulism Mission to make attendance by Turkish students possible. Missionaries were also willing to contact Muslim educators, and exchange visits between missionary and Turkish schools were initiated by the missionaries from the mid-1900s. To gain greater influence among Muslims, the missionaries were encouraged to write religious or general articles for Turkish newspapers. For the same aim, they also organized clubs and societies for Muslim men and women.

Concerning social contacts, missionaries were even trained to use techniques in conversations with Muslims to help approach them, such as using recommended parts of the Scriptures, particularly Genesis, as 'pick-up lines' to start an engaging discussion.<sup>249</sup> To make the Gospel better known among Muslims, the missionaries would often reflect on the questions asked by them during conversations and seek a better way to answer. Curious Muslims might ask various questions, such as "why did

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<sup>249</sup> ABCFM. (1907) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslem Appointed by Central Turkey Mission at the Meeting in Adana, 1906, Presented at the Annual Meeting in Marash, June-July, 1907.* Reel 660, No.252.

you come to this country?”<sup>250</sup> “Will you accept Mohammed?” “What did ‘dead in sin’ mean?”<sup>251</sup> “What is the doctrine of the Trinity?” “How do Christians pray?” To persuade the Muslims to believe the Gospel, the missionaries might say: “Mohammed is dead! What use does he have now for you? We need a living one”. During the contacts with Muslims, the missionaries found the Kurdish people, especially the Yezidi Kurds, to be “Nominal Muslims” who had a closer religious connection with Christians and were more accepting of Christianity,<sup>252</sup> like the dervish orders who shared many similar parables with Christians – notably some leaders of the dervish orders had a close relationship with American missionaries.<sup>253</sup>

The following statement from 1913 exemplifies their mindful persistence of Muslim evangelization:

we need to know and to study these people more fully and get into closer touch and to study these people more fully and get into closer touch and sympathy with them before we can accomplish much. We must appreciate their difficulties and the effects produced by their environment, and be able to look at things from their point of view. We very much need to have workers from among themselves-- those who can speak Kurdish to the Kurds... and Arabic to the Arabs...<sup>254</sup>

It is worth remembering that such “aggressive work for Muslims”, as referred to by the missionaries, had already begun in the last two years of the Hamidian period, when the Porte was trying to avert foreign influence from its Islamist core and creating an unpleasant environment for the missionaries. As this subject was apparently against the current mainstream Ottoman ideology, the missionaries resolved to keep the project confidential, emphasising it as “the undercurrent of all the missionary work”.

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<sup>250</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.32, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>251</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.204, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>252</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Aintab Station Field Report. July 1913-1914. -The Yezedees*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.130, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>253</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Aintab Station Annual Report. June 1912-June 1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.515, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>254</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.28.



## **Boon of the Second Revolution: Muslim Work in Full Bloom**

The Second Constitutional revolution in 1908 created a liberal and missionary-friendly atmosphere across the Empire, both politically and socially, which provided ideal ground for development of the missionary activities. This historical event gave the missionaries a considerable boost in their Muslim work. The restrictions on printing and distribution of books and the limitations on missionary travels were both abolished in late September 1908.<sup>255</sup> Muslim children could also enter the doors of missionary institutions freely without official or social persecution. All of which indicated an unprecedented opportunity for the work among Muslims.

In July 1908, following the Revolution, a General Mission Committee was appointed by the Western Turkey Mission's (WTM) Annual Meeting to draw up the general needs of the four Mission Sections, wherein the delegate from Central Turkey Mission (CTM), L. O. Lee for the first time brought the significance of Muslim work to the attention of his colleagues from the other Mission branches. He gave the caveats that the Muslim work should be carried on inconspicuously among Muslims in the most intelligent, effective, and sympathetic manner, and the designated staff and work should not be publicly announced even to American papers and their *Missionary Herald*: "Let us not 'shout the harvest home' but gather it noiselessly in, in silent joy".<sup>256</sup> In the following few years, delegates from the CTM were sent to present to virtually every Annual Meeting of the Western and Eastern Mission, urging and giving specific suggestions of work for Muslims for all Missions. The 1911 CTM Annual Meeting confidentially reiterated their evangelising resolve to prevail when their Muslim work was in full swing:

Under deep impression of the undeniably central and strategic position of the Turkish Empire in the Mohammedan world, with profound consciousness of the religious prejudice and spiritual inertia to be encountered in that Empire, and with

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<sup>255</sup> Erhan, Ç. (2000) pp.191-212.

<sup>256</sup> *Seeds of the Turkey Mission*. (1908) Reel 616, No.539.

keen appreciation of the unprecedented opportunity resulting from the new regime and growing spirit of inquiry, this call is issued to all Christians to unite in specific prayer for such a moving of the Spirit of God with reference to the Mohammedan world in general, and the Turkish Empire in particular, as shall result in the melting of prejudice and the awakening of spiritual hunger among Mohammedans, the imbuing of the native churches with the evangelistic spirit and the adequate increase of the missionary force.<sup>257</sup>

To conduct the work more efficiently, the CTM Annual Meeting held in the next year stated that the Muslim work in the Young Turk period should be include: Bible women; Bible distribution; educational adaptation;<sup>258</sup> reading rooms; medical touring; the arousing of evangelical Armenians to their missionary responsibilities; and the occupation of Aleppo as a strategic point for Muslim work. In the same year, the CTM wrote to the Prudential Committee of the American Board, urging the formulation of a definite programme of Muslim work for the entire Turkey Mission, and proposing a general field survey for preparatory work in the Muslim field of Turkey.<sup>259</sup> Evidently, the CTM had played an essential role in formulating the American Board's general framework of the Muslim policy in Turkey and liaison of the Muslim work among different Turkey Mission sections. The underlined sentences in the following missionary report from Maraş (21<sup>st</sup> March 1914)<sup>260</sup> and the statistics of Missionaries to be sent specially for Muslim work in the table show how the American missionaries in Central Turkey Mission were deeply engaged in their Muslim work:

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<sup>257</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Minutes of Annual Meeting June 1911*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.44, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>258</sup> This included adapting missionary schools to attract more Turkish students; enlargement of the staff and curriculum of missionary institutions to train missionary forces for work among Muslims; the establishment of training schools for Armenian Bible Women for work among Muslim women; the establishment of Girl's Schools specifically for Muslim girls; and kindergarten work among Muslims.

<sup>259</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Communication to the Prudential Committee from the Central Turkey Mission concerning Muslim Evangelization. June 1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. Vol. 22. No.492, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>260</sup> Goodsell, F.F. (1914) Letter to Dr J.L. Barton, March 21. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1, No.152, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Dear Dr Barton,

I would report the following votes signed in the affirmative (no nays) by nineteen voters of our mission.

“Because of the serious condition of our mother, we ask CTM for a leave of absence for fourteen months at our own expense, said leave of absence to begin about the middle of April 1914. Ina Verril, Ida Verrill.”

“During next year in America (if leave of absence is granted) when it is possible for us to be away from home, we desire privilege and permission for pleading the cause of the following interests connected with our work, and earnestly request CTM to recommend to the Board that such permission be granted if possible.

(1) For funds for Moslem kindergarten building and school supplies for the same;

(2) Salary for one Bible woman for Moslem;

(3) Funds for the city blind and woman who cannot do handkerchief work;

(4) Funds for school tuition (in part) for intelligent Syrian and Armenian girls;

(5) Funds for destitute Syrian mothers who cannot give a penny a week for their little girls' schooling;

(6) Supplies for our day and Sunday Schools in three sections of the city;

(7) Salary for a native man who can give him whole time to accompanying us we go about the city visiting among the Moslems.

Ida Verrill.”

Yours sincerely,

FF Goodsell

Sec'y CTM

2. Table 1: List of missionaries specifically for Muslim work to be placed in CTM (1914)<sup>261</sup>

	Missionary family	Missionary physician with family	Woman physician	Single Woman	Total
Adana	2	2	1		5
Aintab	2	2 – Dr Carly	(1)	(1)	4, (2)
Aleppo	(2)		(1)	(2) - for School	(5)
Antioch	(2)				(2)
Maraş	(2)			(1)	(3)
Urfa	(2)			(1)	(3)

ORGANIZATION OF CENTRAL TURKEY MISSION FOR MOSLEM WORK  
1913 - 1914

The following sub-committees are appointed in accordance with the plans approved at our last annual meeting. The chairman of each sub-committee is a member of the general Moslem Committee of the Mission. The fullest cooperation and earnest seeking to know and to do the will of the Lord Jesus in the face of our opportunities for witnessing --- a fit subject for special prayer as we seek to perfect organization for effective service.

**EVANGELISTIC WORK AMONG MEN**  
Mr Martin, Dr Chambers, Mr Fowle, Mr Leslie, Mr Gracey, Mr Wilson, Mr Goodsell

**EVANGELISTIC WORK AMONG WOMEN**  
Miss Stowbridge, Mrs Haas, Miss E. S. Webb, Mrs Martin, Miss Frearson, Miss Blakely, Miss Smith, Miss Salmond, Miss Ina Verrill, Mrs Christie

**MEDICAL WORK**  
Dr Hamilton, Dr Shepard, Dr Haas, Miss Bewer, Miss Davis, Miss Johnson

**EDUCATIONAL WORK**  
Dr Merrill, Mrs Rogers, Dr Christie, Miss Towner, Miss Foreman, Miss Gordon, Miss Ida Verrill, Miss Blake

**STUDY AND INFORMATION**  
Mr Woodley

**LITERATURE**  
Mr Fowle, Mrs Sheppard, Miss Cold, Miss Ainslie, Miss M. Webb, Miss Norton

**UNION AND PROGRESS**  
Mr Goodsell, Mrs Rogers, Mrs Merrill, Mrs Woodley, Mrs Fowle, Mr Leslie, Dr Chambers.

Figure 2: Members of the Committee for Muslim Work (1914)<sup>262</sup>

<sup>261</sup> The number in parentheses shows the missionaries to be placed during the next ten years, the number without parentheses shows existing missionary staff. ABCFM. (1914) *Minutes of the 55th Annual Meeting of the Central Turkey Mission 1914*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.145, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Entering the Young Turk Period, under the lead of the Committee for Muslim Work of the CTM, the American missionaries were increasingly cognizant that their work in Turkey was “not exclusively, nor even primarily, for the Christian races”, but was supposed “to win all the people of this land to Christ”.<sup>263</sup> As mentioned above, after the Revolution the American missionaries prepared the significant “All-Turkey Conference” with the General Mission Committee to facilitate their cooperation, especially in Muslim work, but the immediate advent of the First World War left this plan in abeyance. Aside from the Central Mission, the Western Mission carried out Muslim work in general terms of education and hospitals, and the most notable work in this regard was the Young Men’s Club at Cesarea and Talas. By 1911, in the Eastern Turkey Mission (ETM), definite openings for Muslim work had been done in Harput<sup>264</sup> and Van along the lines of school and hospital touring.<sup>265</sup> Notably, the Eastern missionaries found that touring with the Stereopticon was an efficient way to attract a great number of Muslims to hear Bible stories.<sup>266</sup> Apart from Harput and Van provinces, the missionaries of other Eastern regions also prepared their Muslim work with eagerness, such as learning the Turkish language so that they could tour.<sup>267</sup> Besides, the ETM required some new missionaries specifically for work among the Kurds.<sup>268,269</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> *Organization of Central Turkey Mission for Moslem Work, 1913-1914*. ABCFM. Reel 668, No.565, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>263</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *36th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Turkey Mission, held at Erzroum, July 15th-24th, 1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.40, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>264</sup> According to the missionary reports, it seemed that in Harput province the attitude of the local government was “far from sympathetic” and the local Muslims had relatively more conservative attitudes towards the American missionaries. ABCFM. (1914) *Annual Report of Harpoot Station 1913-1914*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.382, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>265</sup> Riggs, W. (1911) Letter to James L. Barton, July 24. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.9, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>266</sup> *Annual Report of Harpoot Station 1913-1914*. ABCFM, Reel 712, No.382, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>267</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Erzroom Report 1912-1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.248, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>268</sup> For example, in Harput in 1914: “the mission asks that three new men with their wives be sought and sent out for special preparation for advance work among the Kurds, for which the mission has unique opportunities. (You will note that the faith of the mission grew as the meeting advanced.)” Riggs, H.H. (1914) Letter to James L. Barton, July 21. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.73, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>269</sup> The arrangements of the ETM for Muslim work in 1913: “Since work for Muslims was a very important part of the purpose of beginning missionary work in Turkey, and since doors of opportunity are opening which we are not prepared to enter, we, the member of this meeting suggest the following plans

Nevertheless, as far as this research is concerned, it seemed that the major part of the Bible Women beyond the CTM field had not been quite “prepared” to enter Muslim homes, especially those of the WTM field, while some Bible women of CTM even dared to approach and talk to Muslims outside the mosques.

### **Muslim Project in Retrospect: Muslims, Proselytes and Real Seekers**

Following the American missionaries’ efforts, several recorded cases from 1906 to 1914 show Muslims who religiously converted to Christianity. Several examples were recorded by the missionaries to prove their achievements: in Jiblin, a village near Aintab, it was said that the Muslims were recently Armenian Christians who came under pressure to become Muslims, thus they were regarded religiously as half-Muslim half-Christian, and the American missionaries had given special attention to work among this group since 1906 – by 1913, “Some Moslims here read the Bible regularly and have family prayer. It is said that at least 80 families of the 100 Muslims families in the village are ready to accept Christianity, openly if only there were more security”.<sup>270</sup> In 1913-14, a Turkish lady who “sincerely seeking for light” finally became a Christian, even abandoning her previous attempt at suicide.<sup>271</sup> In Maraş in 1910-11, a 20-year-old

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for future work in Turkey as a means of reaching our Moslem neighbors: (1) The work should be so re-inforced that a special effort for Moslems can be made without causing the present work to suffer (2) Candidates for work in Moslem land should do special work in the study of Islam before coming to the field. (3) All new missionaries for Moslem work should learn Turkish or Kurdish thoroughly and at least one other language of the country. It is desirable that they should know enough Arabic to read and quote parts of the Korans. (4) All the missionaries should learn Turkish if possible. (5) All mission stations should have special courses of study in Islam and work for Moslems. (6) Every effort should be made to come into friendly and helpful contact with Moslem (7) We recommend that the Board start an institute for Moslem workers in some Turkish speaking station where new missionaries could study. (8) We recommend that special appropriations be made without delay to start Kindergartens for Turkish children in Armenian speaking stations. We think of no more powerful agency for obtaining entrance into Moslem homes and securing the interest and sympathy of parents and the rising generation, than kindergarten with Christian teachers.” ABCFM. (1913) *Report of the 37th Meeting of the Eastern Mission, held at Van July 19th to 23th, 1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.128, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>270</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.120-131, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>271</sup> ABCFM. *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.174

Muslim man had been baptized as a result of his reading of the scripture and conversation with one of the missionary workers in an outstation. His father was a conservative Muslim merchant. He felt that he could not continue this trade for long and would prefer employment as a nurse in a missionary hospital. This instance served to emphasize the difficulty of the social situation confronting a Muslim convert.<sup>272</sup> In Harput, Miss Jacobsen opened a clinic at her home for Muslim patients, calling her work “Home and Touring Nursing”. She reported that among her patients a Muslim woman was brought to confess Christ. On the return of her husband, she was bitterly opposed and all visits from Christian friends were forbidden. Miss Jacobsen had to be shawled and veiled to visit the converted woman, who claimed that: “They may persecute me, and even kill me, but they cannot take away my Lord”.<sup>273</sup> The 1914 CTM Annual meeting reported that “a Moslem boy in the school for the blind in Aintab has committed to memory many Bible verses. He goes about reading the Bible in the homes of Moslems. Some weeks ago, he applied to be received into the membership of the Second Church”.<sup>274</sup> In another anecdotal story, there was a Muslim student in the the International College in İzmir in 1914-15 called Şemseddin<sup>275</sup>, a former *imam* who had become a convert. He was believed to be the first former Muslim priest who dared to say he was a Christian when asked by an investigating judge why he had ceased wearing the white turban. As punishment he was enlisted in the army to be sent to the Dardanelles. Two days after this sentence was passed, the man who passed it fell from his horse and died. Out of fear, the other persecutors “became under complete restraint” and the majority of them began to take the missionary’s Bible study class in case the

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<sup>272</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Central Turkey Mission-Marash-Evangelistic Work*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. Vol. 21, part 2. No.372, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>273</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Report of the E.T.M. Medical Missionary Conference, 1914*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. Vol. 25 A. No.401, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>274</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Aintab Station Field Report. July 1913-1914*. Reel 667, No.122.

<sup>275</sup> Referred to as “Shemseddin” in the missionary report.

same fate befell them. Such story was recorded by the missionaries to suggest the divinity and superiority of Christianity over Islam.<sup>276</sup>

However, it should be remembered that such cases of Muslim conversions were by no means universal. Winning converts in the Middle East, unlike in Asia or Africa, in the words of the Anglican bishop Kenneth Cragg, was the “saga of the few”, because of the forbidden conversion of Muslims to Christianity.<sup>277</sup> In one rare case, John Avetarianian, was originally a *mullah*, but once he read the Bible he found the Koran “does not have its roots in the Bible” and he abandoned the Koran to become a Protestant missionary. When he visited the American missionaries who previously gave him the Bible, he recorded: “neither of them could hardly believe that I had been converted”.<sup>278</sup> Like other converts, his deeds were compiled in *The Missionary Herald* (1882). These cases were more a result of serendipity for the American missionaries, but they had to nervously arrange baptisms, concealment and future livelihoods of their Muslim converts out of fear of potentially lethal persecution and social expulsion for apostasy. Reportedly, there were also some Muslims who came to believe in Christ under the missionary influence but who did not dare to confess. Most of the open-minded or educated Muslims showed eagerness to learn Christianity out of their curiosity for new knowledge but were not necessarily ready to accept the “new life”. These people together with Muslim converts were both defined as “real seekers for the Truth” by the American missionaries to distinguish them from other Muslims.

Even the missionaries themselves tended to speak of the evangelical work among Muslims with ambiguous definitions. Their claim of Muslim evangelical work was two-fold: to convert the Muslims in the land and to save them from their pitiful situations. Practically this dual definition was further blurred by missionary

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<sup>276</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *The Twelfth Annual Report of the International College Paradise, Smyrna, Turkey. July 1st, 1914 to June 30th, 1915*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.742, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>277</sup> Sharkey, H.J. (2008). *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire*. Princeton University Press, p.218.

<sup>278</sup> Avetarianian, J., Schafer, R. and Bechard, J. (2003). *A Muslim who became a Christian*.



individuals who approached it from different ideological spectrums, that varied from religionism to internationalism. While their ultimate aim was to convert the Middle East, many American missionaries seemed to believe that what they were now doing in Turkey was essentially helping poor Muslims while “sowing the seed” – making the Gospels known to Muslims – in a moderate “enlightening” process rather than merely proselytizing. And there were always critical voices from their fellows about the nonreligious traits and pursuits within the American schools and hospitals. It was thus unsurprising that when responding to the rise of a nationwide Muslim antipathy against the perceived conversion attempts in the early 1910s, the American missionaries could confidently assert that such hostility from Muslims was just driven by their ‘misunderstanding’ of what they had actually done to improve their well-being.

## **Lost Palmy Days: Weighing Future Plans in Transitional Times**

As mentioned above, the Muslim evangelical work of American missionaries had experienced its best days in the Young Turk era, and this was followed by a sudden hiatus as the First World War created a vacuum of the Board’s missionary power in Turkey. Though this setback did not stop the missionaries re-pursuing their once-brisk Muslim business after 1918, having found that they were still in a tough socio-political environment even worse than before – they had to brace themselves for the expectedly harsh restrictions and handicaps against their activities imposed by the suspicious government.

Was the soil still fertile enough to “sow the seeds”? Standing astride the Ottoman and Republican epochs, American missionaries found that there were many factors which could profoundly influence their perspective on future Muslim work. The first factor

was the perceptible change in atmosphere of the people's mentality regarding religious matters. At the meeting held by Western Turkey Missions on Muslim work in 1921, Dr Mardin made an observation that at that time more and more military and civil leaders in the interior of Turkey had turned away from the Koran and faith, thus the approach of Islam of the previous era had to change. In İstanbul, since the Second Constitution, the spirit of Nationalism, had become the tool of the state and linked the state and religion as never as before, with the transfer of the government seat to Ankara and the effort of the Nationalists, the very foundation of Islam was threatened by materialism, which was more and more openly acknowledged by intellectuals, military and civil elites in the Anatolia interior. From the perspective of the American missionaries, this situation was not conducive to successful Missions. They thought that the question was larger than the threatened Islam, but the whole foundation of the faith had been undermined – in the missionaries' eyes, the Turks not only overthrew their tradition but also the Koran itself, which could be a step back regarding religious life and an obstacle for carrying out their missionary work in Turkey.<sup>279</sup>

The second factor influencing the future of missionary work was positive: the considerable inflows of new ideologies from outside of Turkey. The ideologies of feminism and liberalism from the West had long been rapidly improving the wider status of womanhood in Turkey. Women's emancipation bore fruit in the Young Turk period and continued in the new Republic. The American missionaries managed to seize the chance to play an important role in women's education and medical work as part of the feminist campaign in Turkey. This success, desired by both sides, provided a great opportunity for missionaries to push forward their Muslim evangelization. Meanwhile, foreign ideas were brought into Turkey by prisoners of the war in Siberia, as well as those in Egypt returning after the war.<sup>280</sup> The spread of literature was also significant for ideological exchanges, even though censorship in the 1920s was still

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<sup>279</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol 1. p.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

severe. For the American missionaries in Turkey, for a long time their printing work was devoted mostly to religious books and textbooks, but they found an opportunity in the 1920s to enlarge their publications to translations of English works of literature, and they even published several periodicals written by themselves for Turkish women and children. This factor was especially precious for the missionaries, providing hope for the penetration of Christian ideas in this Muslim country in the context of a severe political environment.

The third factor was the burgeoning anti-foreign atmosphere in Turkey at that time. After the Great War broke out in 1914, the attitude of the Ottoman government towards all foreigners grew negative. As the citizens of a then-neutral power, the American missionaries initially enjoyed some privileges in comparison to the British and French. However, heavy restrictions were imposed on them after the US entered the war and broke off diplomatic relations with the Empire in 1917. Parallel to a series of occupations of Ottoman territories by the British and French armies at the end of 1918, anti-foreign feeling in Turkey increased drastically, reaching a climax at the beginning of the 1920s.<sup>281</sup> At that time, the prevailing political propaganda and accusations by the nationalists against missionaries created a negative image against them and greatly impinged on their work. Rumours and accusations that missionaries and foreigners were “seeking to lead the Moslems away from his government” were circulating throughout the country. There has a common belief among Muslims that “any Turk who was friendly to the Americans and looked with favour upon Christian religion, was compromising his position”. As a result, no Muslims were willing or able to face the consequences of being close with missionaries. The missionaries at that time found it was extremely hard to develop any work for Muslims. Thus, some missionaries seemed

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<sup>281</sup> For example, Mustafa gave orders to restrict the activities of the Middle East Relief in 1920: 1) all poor people, not only Armenians, regardless of religions and race, should be helped; 2) it was forbidden for employees of MER to move from place to place; 3) commissaries in each unit should be named by the local government; 4) there must be no increase in the number of persons in the employment of the Committee. ABCFM. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

to hold a negative attitude towards the Turkish Nationalists, who “fortunately represent only a small fraction of the people” and were supposed to “lose their position of political influence” to democratic ideas.<sup>282</sup>

The fourth factor were the politically and demographically homogenized developments on the way to the new Republic. The considerable loss of the missionaries’ Armenian targets in WWI increased the significance of their Muslim work and led to a perceptible shift in the Turkey Mission’s policy towards Muslims after the War in 1919.<sup>283</sup> By 1920, there was controversy over the new approach towards the work among Muslims. Some missionaries argued that by representing a broader internationalism, in which approaching local people, whether Turks, Greeks or Armenians, as individuals, regardless of their religions and race, was the only option in the new historical setting. On the other hand, those who discouraged the adoption of the internationalistic approach thought that their missionary work suffered because they tried to straddle all classes and therefore were “respected by all but not loved by all”.<sup>284</sup> They believed a better suggestion to change the situation was to have some pro-Turkish missionaries, acting in a role to help the Turks surmount their hardships towards a new nationalistic life. The teaching of loyalty and the spirit of nationalism would be the new emphasis in the educational work of missionaries. Thus, missionaries thought they could gain entry for their more spiritual work among Muslims. One even made the extreme suggestion of devoting missionaries exclusively to the Turks, and to “leave the Armenians and Greeks to work out their own salvation”.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, Houghton Library, Cambridge. It was concluded that the attitude of the missionaries towards Turkish officials changed dramatically at different states following changes of official policy. A number of missionaries had shown a supportive attitude towards the Nationalist government in their reports, once the regime had stabilized.

<sup>283</sup> Barton, J. (1918). *A Survey of the Missions of the American Board for the Past Year 1917-18*. Boston: Congregational House.

<sup>284</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*.

After the 1915 genocide and deportation and the 1923 compulsory population exchange effectively turned Turkey into a religiously and demographically homogeneous country, there was also a split over opinions about the new missionary policy. Some missionaries believed that the work for Christian populations like Armenians and Greeks seemed more suitable and valuable for American missionaries than the work among Muslims. They argued that native Christians could do for the Turks what foreigners could not do in preaching and teaching Muslims in Turkey, so the work on Christian populations should not be given up (proponents of this approach included Dr MacCallum, Miss Kinny, and Miss Mills). They believed it would be better if missionaries' work also included the Christians who remained as well as those who had been expelled from Turkey. This idea led to the Greece Mission. However, some missionaries, like Mr Fowle, believed that the mass exodus of Christians had provided an unparalleled opportunity to establish a relationship with a large group of Mohammedans. He put forward an argument which was soon generally accepted among the missionaries, that in a certain sense the native Christians acted as 'insulation', keeping missionaries from Turks in the past, and with the large Christian population gone, Turks would thus become the major contacts of missionaries in the future.<sup>286</sup>

## **Saving the Missions: A Life-and-Death Decision**

On the eve of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the extremely tough situation in the country led many leaders in the US as well as missionary workers of the Board to hold the opinion that it was time to withdraw their work from Turkey. By the beginning of 1923, as the Lausanne Conference was in process, the question of whether the missionaries should continue or withdraw from Turkey became a serious issue for all the missionaries in Turkey. They faced great challenges both at home and abroad.

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

The reasons for withdrawal were three-fold: low finances, a sense of futility, and the need to change strategy.<sup>287</sup> It was argued that conversion was seen “in almost all countries, again and again; ... Conversions from Islam in the East Indies and parts of Africa run into tens of thousands; and in other parts of the Muslim world, such as India, Persia and Egypt, they are regular and familiar phenomena, if not yet relatively numerous...” However, after a century of effort in Turkey, the Turks still seemed to be “incorrigible, unconvertible, and anathema”. Therefore, many missionaries in the field or at home found it comparatively easy to appreciate the sense of futility, and withdrawal from Turkey was consequently seen as a strategy of movement, because “there were countries which welcomed the missionaries and institutions and where the same amount of sacrifice would produce far greater results than in Turkish Empire”.<sup>288</sup>

At that time there was strong opposition from the US, denying the values of the missionary work in Turkey. The quote below from correspondence to Dr Barton was written by a representative on the American committee who thought the Muslim work was a lost cause – it suggests that the missionaries at the beginning of 1920s found themselves in an embarrassing situation where their work was doubted not only by Muslims within the Empire but also by their countrymen at home:

It was useless to influence the moral of Turks thru any missionary effort... Missionaries [in Turkey] ought to exploit their present advantage with the Greek Orthodox Church, and waiting for the inevitable disintegrating of civilizing the Turk... Kemal is doomed to failure... The Missionaries are not doing, at the present time, any work that is worth mentioning. Ten out of your twelve stations are practically suspended, and the two schools in Constantinople are operating

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<sup>287</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *Report on the Findings Committee*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.23, Houghton Library, Cambridge. p.2.

<sup>288</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *Meeting of the W.T.M. Constantinople, January 9, 1923*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.19, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

upon a reduced basis. It is now a fad for the Turks to attend the schools in Constantinople, but the novelty of the experiment will wear off...<sup>289</sup>

Feeling the urgency to face the challenge of the “stay or leave” question, the missionaries in Turkey organized a series of meetings on this issue in 1923 before the eve of the establishment of Republican Turkey. That year they made notable efforts to convince the Board at home to continue their work in this land. The following points were concluded in their reports to argue for the necessity of continuing their front-line work in Turkey:

1. The real justification for Christian Missions to the Muslim Turks must not be sought in the number of conversions.
2. The fact was however that conversions of rich promise had occurred and continue to occur in Turkey.
3. The “by-products” of the medical and the educational institutions would never prove the idea that Christian Missions in Muslim Turkey had been futile.
4. Christian work to Islam was a long-term effort in which patients was necessitated.<sup>290</sup> The “strategic move” means to give up their 100-year work and withdraw, which was against the spirit of Jesus, would be a “much greater victory for Islam ” and “shameful” “expensive, disloyal and disastrous” failure to Christians.<sup>291</sup>
5. There was in fact an unparalleled opportunity for establishing relationships with a large group of Mohammedans with the great exodus of Christians at present.
6. The Turks needed Christ perhaps bitterly than any other race, in both spiritual and material terms.

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<sup>289</sup> American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, New York. (1924) Letter to Dr. Barton, February 5. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.19, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>290</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *Report on the Findings Committee*. ABC 16.9.1.Vol.1, No.23, Houghton Library, Cambridge. p.5.

<sup>291</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *Report on the Findings Committee*. p.6.

7. Although there was a large number of Turks opposed them, American missionaries were officially welcomed.<sup>292</sup>

8. There were many examples of cordial cooperation and supports from the Turkish government for the American institutions, and more and more institutions has managed to reopen by the permits of the government. Therefore the missionaries had “firm conviction that missionary effort and sacrifice in Turkey in the next few years is likely to be more vitally fruitful than at any time in the past.”<sup>293</sup>

In conclusion, in order to continue their work in the new country, the American missionaries had to be extremely optimistic and almost clairvoyant. They were not only convincing the Americans at home but also convincing themselves that their missionary enterprise for Turks would be promising in the new Republican era. During wartime, their major agenda was still focused on the evangelical work for Armenian and other Christian races in the Empire. At that time Dr Barton, the foreign secretary of the Board, held the conviction that the Muslim evangelization would be fulfilled by the means of evangelizing native Christians. When the new Republic became more homogeneous, he began to think that it would be easier and more direct to penetrate the Turks since there were practically no more Christians remaining in the country. Moreover, he believed that the effort to convert Turks would be successful since religion and state were now separated in Turkey, thus there would no official hindrance to the preaching of the Gospel among the Muslims. Besides, welcoming voices from the present rulers of Turkey like İsmet Pasha gave the American missionaries confidence to continue their Turkish Mission.

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<sup>292</sup> ABCFM. (1923) Meeting of the W.T.M. Constantinople, January 9, 1923. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.19, Houghton Library, Cambridge, p.2. According to Barton, İsmet Pasha and several members of the Turkish delegation had told Dr Peet several times that they wanted American institutions to remain for the welfare of the future Turkey.

<sup>293</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *Report on the Findings Committee*, pp.5-11.



The lands of the Ottoman Empire had long been the primary destination for the American missionaries because of their high prestige and appeal as the 'Biblical Lands', together with their historical significance as the lands of the crusades. Fighting in the Ottoman territories for over 100 years, these American missionaries had not only honoured themselves as the spiritual and religious crusaders of the new era but also established deep-rooted connections with the society and people of the empire, regarding the land as their second home, therefore it would be extremely unacceptable and shameful for them to withdraw with their grand religious motives and assumptions unfulfilled. As they had lost most of their targeted people after the population changes and the systematic Christian deportations, the American missionaries managed to formulate a new mission among the Muslim population, for the justification of their continuation in the new country. Furthermore, the American missionaries could argue in a boarder sense that they were to continue their mission in Turkey in the name of the whole of Christendom. As Barton asserted,

the events of recent years will make missionary operations extremely difficult and that the attitude of the ruling class of Turks compels us expect serious restrictions and handicaps to our work... [even though] there is, it is true, a large class of Turks who do not want us and bitterly opposed to our work [and] even if the Church in America should not rally to our support [the American missionaries should and must continue in Turkey, because] the sole responsibility for keeping Christian work and Christian institution alive in Turkey today rests upon the American Board.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Barton, J. L. (1923). *The problem of Turkey as the American Board views it*. pp.4-7.

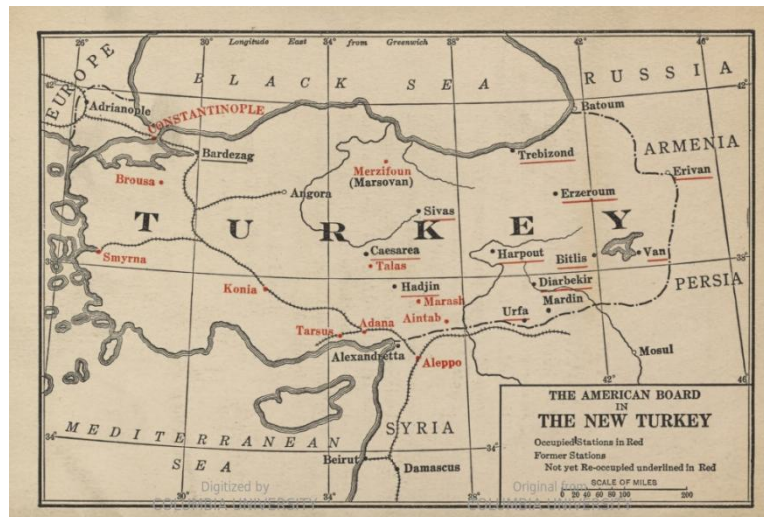


Figure 3: Map of American Protestant Missionary Stations in 1923<sup>295</sup>

### Reorientation: New Missions on the Muslim Footing

Following the armistice in 1918, the increasingly homogeneous population composition and the development of the nationalist government joined forces to formulate a new missionary agenda for the future under the name of Muslim Mission. Since the 1920s, there was a marked change in both the spirit and effort of missionaries in terms of work for Muslims. In 1922, missionary Goodsell noted that, “you would be interested to note how natural it seems now for the majority of our circle to think and speak of Mission work in terms of the Moslems”. In 1922, there was an open forum held as a full session with the topic “The Presentation of Christ to the Moslems”, which demonstrated the great concerns of missionaries about the reactions of Muslims to their evangelizing work. It was in this atmosphere that the Western Turkey Mission organized a meeting in 1921 to discuss the details of the work among Muslims.<sup>296</sup>

The missionaries were primarily interested in young Turkish people as a key approach to fulfil their ambition of Muslim evangelization. They believed that the future leaders

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

among the Turks and their Christian leadership (if it was to come) must come from the young generation, and modern pedagogy demanded young people as well. They believed that they were given the mission of the spiritual reconstruction of the Near East, so their chief efforts should be focused on the institution for young people where they could bring an influence to bare upon them. Schools and hospitals were considered suitable institutions for missionaries to achieve their goals. The particular interest of missionaries was to discover and develop leaders among those young people, which shifted their attention to the student class, with a primary focus on education. Some missionaries perceived the relative unimportance of missionary leadership but emphasized the importance of finding spiritual reconstruction, and these missionaries sought out the student elements, particularly in the Muslim communities.

Regarding the approach to evangelizing young Muslims, the missionary educator F. F. Goodsell put forward a “method of growth”. He argued that the change of individual conscience must be a natural growth, and the missionaries should show respects to each religious conviction at first, recognizing that growth involves various stages, which could be reflected in the different attitudes of various Muslims. Therein he classified these Muslims into several categories, such as those who were “almost in complete ignorance”, or those who “gave intelligent criticism of Christian teaching”, those who “had a keen sense of need or eager to learn Christianity” or those who were “stubborn with their own opinions on religions”. Correspondingly, Goodsell emphasized the importance of discrimination of various attitudes, which was required when missionaries encountered those of different conditions. Finally, Goodsell emphasized that the correct aim for missionaries’ work on Muslims was not to get individuals to change their religious and social relationships in a community but to make a steady, friendly drive at their conscience to awaken thoughts of Christianity.

As a result, the missionaries concluded four main methods for approaching the Muslim population:

## 1. Through Muslim themselves

Missionaries believed that the best approach towards their work among Muslims must be done by Muslims – in the setting where Anatolia became more and more Turkified, the task of evangelizing the Turks seemed more probably should be assumed by the picked individuals who came from centres like İstanbul or İzmir and other places where there was more “religious freedom” so that these men could “work back” to the interior. Missionaries also realized that there was a notable opportunity for reaching out Kurds in İstanbul and elsewhere and that it was urgent that they should set out to do Kurdish work. There was a large Kurdish population in the south and east of Asia Minor that was considered a main, separate group for the Turkey Mission to focus on. In 1910s American missionaries of CTM wrote reports for their Muslim evangelical work after studying on the Alevi Muslim group in central Anatolia, in which the origins and religious practice of the Christians and Alevis were compared to draw a conclusion that though Alevi group was Muslims minorities, there was a peculiar closer relation between their belief and Christianity. Some missionaries also claimed that they were good friends with some Muslim minorities’ leaders (though unfortunately so far this research has not found specific missionary reports in relation to policies on proselytising Muslim minorities).<sup>297</sup> In fact, the information about Alevi group in late Ottoman period was scarce, while the American missionaries kept documenting their contact with the Alevis from the 1850s to the 1920s that took place in Merzifon, Sivas, Elbistan, Dersim, Harput and Malatya and these records prove to be valuable sources for the studies of the Alevis’ social history.<sup>298</sup> According to Dr George E. White, the president of Anatolia College in Merzifon, there was a minority in the Muslim population of Shia or Ali Bey Turks who made up about a quarter of the Turks and were considered closer to the Christians in feeling and sympathy, much closer than to Muslims, and they endured religious tyranny at the time. Consequently,

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<sup>297</sup> See ABCFM microfilms, Reel 616-712, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>298</sup> Kieser, H. L. (2001). ‘Muslim heterodoxy and protestant utopia. The interactions between Alevis and missionaries in Ottoman Anatolia’. *Die Welt des Islams*, 41(1), p.90. See this article for more information on the interactions between Alevis and American missionaries from the 1850s to the 1920s.

American missionaries considered such part of Muslims as a particular group in terms of evangelization.<sup>299</sup> Notably, the seizure of those “separatist” papers on minority Muslims at the College unexpectedly caused an nationalist propaganda of the Unionist government trying to incorporate Alevis into their unitarian body.<sup>300</sup>

However, the missionaries themselves acknowledged that the methods of evangelizing Muslims through Muslims themselves seemed not hopeful or practice in reality. Furthermore, the Muslim work could be affected by local conditions and context in terms of time and place. Local mindsets varied across Turkey, and the political situation reacted to these differences. From Turkish articles and the Turks they met, the American missionaries learned that they were regarded by many Muslims as the greatest enemies in Turkey, who took Christian ideas into Muslims’ minds and these ideas were not in conformity with Muslims’ ideas and could be harmful to the country.<sup>301</sup>

## 2. Through the study of the foundation of Islam

Despite the tendency among Muslims towards nationalism, materialism and agnosticism, certain missionaries also found studying Islam to be important preparation for their work. They argued that the apparent agnostic attitude of Muslims was only on the surface – only by studying the foundation of their religion could missionaries understand their religion and outlook. The study of the actual education through which Muslims grew from children to adulthood was the key to understanding Muslims. Studying the religious textbooks used in Muslim schools was considered crucial for understanding Muslims’ minds.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>300</sup> Kieser, H. L. (2001), p.104.

<sup>301</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Through the operation of Muslim educational institutions

The American missionaries realized that their policy for Muslims should be “as wise as serpents and harmless as doves”. To fulfil the need for evangelization in this difficult period, missionaries felt they had to change their teaching methods for Muslims in their schools. Their old method involved every child, every day in the school year taking a Bible lesson. Some missionaries realized that this method could be too aggressive, which would backfire and defeat their purpose. They were interested in presenting the teaching of Bible classes to Muslims in a more acceptable way, with “some sort of bait that is alluring”. However, this suggestion was controversial among missionaries, and some insisting on conducting their schools according to the Christian standard. The need for tact in choosing and preparing these Bible courses could not be overemphasized and the importance of suitable literature for Muslims could not be overestimated. English books which were considered useful, such as Dean Hodges’ *Bible Stories*, were to be re-written with consideration of Muslim background.<sup>303</sup> In addition, the missionaries believed that primary and intermediary schools were the best places to approach Muslims and form their characters with Christian ideas. Therefore, they expected to open schools for kindergarten and the lowest primary grades for Turkish children and conduct teaching in the Turkish language in as many localities as possible. Over the course of a century, the permanent emphasis of the missionary enterprise in the Empire was on the teaching method, and in the 1920s approaching

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<sup>303</sup> For example, missionary Miss Greene conducted experimental work on a school with a whole department for Turks. Ramsi Bey, who was the instrumental in starting the school, said: “I don’t want people who come out for experience, I want missionaries”. As no Turkish students understood English at the beginning, in the first semester they were taught songs, poems and a few verses from the Old and New Testaments. By the second semester, Turkish students began reading Bible stories. They used Hodges’ *Bible Stories*, in three volumes. Students showed interest in the Bible stories and compared them with their own stories in Islam. Miss Mills also reported that there were 15 Turkish girls whose tuition was paid by two Turks in the city school in 1920. According to the Turks, as people from the families who wanted their daughters to teach were not those who could pay the rates of missionary schools, they selected these Turkish girls and put them in missionary schools; they were expected to become teachers in the Turkish quarter in the future. Taking the Bible class was a prerequisite for these 15 girls. ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

young Muslims through missionary educational institutions began to be stressed as a new policy, and to discover and develop Christian leaders among those young Muslims became the primary aim of missionary work for Muslims.

#### 4. Through medical institutions

Besides the educational institutions, the missionary hospitals and medical services were of great value in approaching Turks.<sup>304</sup> From the 1870s, the American Board organized missionary hospitals in various cities across Asia Minor, including Aintab, Adana, Kayseri, Merzifon, Erzurum, Harput, Van, Diyarbakır, and Konya. These hospitals were highly welcomed by the local people. With the medical Mission, the missionaries were able to build close contact with almost every religious and ethnic group in the Ottoman Empire. The total yearly treatments at the medical missions in 1910 reached over 130,000 cases.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, many hospitals reported that about half of the patients they received were Muslims. The medical missionaries gained a strong reputation among Muslim patients and their relatives, and through medical tours and home visits, they also established close contacts with many Muslims households.<sup>306</sup>

In this context, the hospitals were considered to hold special value as the best place to overcome the Turks' suspicion and prejudice about the missionaries, in rural areas especially, by offering a rare opportunity for local Turks to get in touch with Americans for sustained periods. As rumours about foreigners circulated, when Turks came to the hospital they were suspicious about the Americans, so the missionary hospitals took the opportunity to show the spirit of their Christian religion during the patients' experience on the wards. In this way, missionaries developed relations with Muslims and propagated Christianity. The missionaries believed that American hospitals could

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<sup>304</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>305</sup> İdris, Y. (2011). *Anadolu'daki Amerikan Hastaneleri ve Tıbbi Misyonerlik (1880-1930)*. Ph. D. Dissertation. Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Enstitüsü.

<sup>306</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.37-38.

represent the reality of their religion to the Muslims, and the medical work could be utilized in the evangelization work among Turks.<sup>307</sup>

### **Conclusion: Muslim Work in Retrospect**

To provide a different perspective on the late Ottoman religious society, this chapter considered the trajectory of the Muslim-oriented policies of the American Board. Their plan emerged towards the end of the Hamidian years and was duly adjusted to suit the new political environment in the early 1920s. At the beginning, the ambitious Muslim evangelization work was conducted by the CTM American missionaries who had shown a deep interest and sympathy in local Muslims after they were ordained in Turkey in 1906, and this aspiration expanded to a concerted effort across the other Missions from 1908 through collaboration at inter-Mission annual meetings. From 1906 to 1914, their Muslim evangelical enterprise was carried out in the fields of hospital and through Bible women, as well as through education, Bible distribution, clubs, and literature. The most radical work was carried out in the Central Mission field: for example, in Orfa, where “little thought” had been shown to such Muslim work earlier, a “band” of 28 native workers was organized for this plan, alongside the work centre of Aintab, and other important stations like Maraş and Adana.<sup>308</sup>

However, it can be argued that in the Young Turk era, the missionary education work which was believed to be the most potent measure in winning Muslims to the Christian faith did not receive a rapturous welcome from all Muslims throughout the Ottoman regions, except in several influential littoral institutions like those in İstanbul and İzmir. The manifest failure was particularly sobering in the Central Turkey Mission areas where their schools showed worryingly low levels of Muslim enrolment, considering the discrepancy between the great effort the Board poured into the Muslim

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> ABCFM, Reel 667.



work there and the actual results. This was to some extent connected to the pervasive regional differences that characterized late Ottoman society. Besides, the missionaries found it difficult to pursue Muslim work in four respective Mission branches simultaneously due to the inherent limitations of the American Board's administrative structure. Particularly in Western Mission, while the local Muslim environment inclined towards them, the missionaries generally demonstrated less motivation for this endeavour.

Another stark reality was that even in the Central Mission field there were still many Muslim-populated localities far beyond missionary reach. The Committee for Muslim Work acknowledged that there were several outstations that had stopped sending reports related to Muslim work. For example, Hadjin, a secluded mountain city of Adana Province four days distant from Adana city, had a dense Armenian population. While the Armenians had a complete educational system, the Muslims of the region were almost entirely illiterate. Hadjin was occupied as a missionary station in 1860 and the Hadjin Home School for Girls was opened by American missionaries in 1880, but the school was never open to Muslim girls. In 1912 a committee had been appointed to study the possibility of carrying Muslim work in Hadjin. However, until the end of the WWI, there was no real medical work, and the local Bible women had never given any time to Muslim work.

The First World War led to a partitioning of American missionary policies in Turkey in many ways. The result of the War profoundly reshaped the perspective of the American Board on its Muslim-evangelist scheme. Despite the Muslim work being carried out with alacrity in the Young Turk era, it was not until 1923 that this 'undercurrent' was given true prominence in the Missions. Contrary to the missionary rhetoric which increasingly stressed the strategic significance of proactive incursion into the Muslim world after WWI began, this chapter suggests that the Muslim policy became the priority of the American Board's work in the 1920s passively and unavoidably, as the only way left to justify their continuous existence in Turkey following the exodus of

their once-targeted Christian minorities. In fact, running American institutions for Turkish-Muslim students went against the grain in the 1920s, because the legitimacy of Muslim-converting schemes was not only deplored by the Turkish side, but also questioned by the missionaries themselves – at the front, some found their work lost its meaning with the native Christians gone; at home, the American Patronage Board and clergy considered the inconvertibility of the Muslim masses and doubted the efficacy of the front-line work.<sup>309</sup>

The American missionary activities in Turkey (the Muslim evangelizing work) dwindled since the Republic was founded in 1923, in the face of manifold obstacles, such as strict governmental supervision and restrictions, the secularizing state ideology and the prevailing xenophobic nationalism of Turkish civilians. The number of missionary staff remaining in Turkey declined to 138 by 1924, with 286 native workers. By 1927, there were only eight schools and three hospitals operating under the Board's management.<sup>310</sup> At that time, these institutions, whose participants were almost all Turkish, took on a less proselytizing attitude, becoming more like social service organizations. In 1928, in response to Turkish papers asking about their definite purpose in Turkey, the American missionaries replied:

We of the American Board have come with a great desire to help the Turkish people... to share that experience [God's gift of life] by word and deed if we may, but if that is not possible, by deed only... [We are] not propagandists for any system or church.<sup>311</sup>

The missionary author also admonished that the Muslim work were to “hold every method or means in a loose grasp”, because the “absolute essential” was not means or institutions, but “the power of spirit-filled personality” of every missionary worker, which was unworthy to be weakened in any form.<sup>312</sup> Similarly, previous studies had

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<sup>309</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>310</sup> ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.769.

<sup>311</sup> ABC 16.9.1.Vol.1, No.30.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

noted a tendency towards secularization (or moralization, Americanism or internationalism) in late-Ottoman American missionary teaching. By analysing the missionary discourse, this chapter suggests that the latest iteration of Muslim evangelising strategy in 1927, with a preference for a moderate moral and spiritual approach, was a deliberate outcome after engineering over many years by the American Board. It represented a dual concession in the new Turkey to the adverse political environment and the stubborn Muslim attitudes. After a century's worth of attempts, the impractical vision of 'Muslim evangelization' had been initially put away by the American missionaries, then providentially reintroduced in time at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it became a reason for their continued presence in Republican Turkey under the banner of "to work for and with the Turkish people" towards a fulfilment of Christian-like "unity, fraternity, liberty, and justice" in the new nation. Behind the present popularity of attending missionary institutions by young Muslim Turks in İstanbul, and beneath the American missionaries' enthusiastic and assertive narratives in pursuing their ultimate goals, laid their lament and perturbation for their largely emasculated superiority in the Republican days.

## **Chapter IV: American Missionary Education and Late-Ottoman Muslim Communities in the ‘Muslim Mission’ Context**

The changing role of American missionary education in late-Ottoman societies has been extensively studied, but with little consideration of the relationship between the American schools and their Muslim surroundings. This chapter focuses on a reassessment of the American missionaries’ educational work with the late-Ottoman/early-Republican Muslim communities, as part of the American Board’s Muslim evangelizing scheme. Following an examination of the long build-up and the post-CUP advance on Ottoman Muslim education by the American missionaries, I discuss the limitations of the achievements of the Muslim education work by juxtaposing its intrinsic and extrinsic constraints with its desirability for its Muslim subjects. Moreover, the de-religionizing process of American education for Muslim students from the mid-1910s to the late 1920s will be traced to outline the plight of the foreign schools in the new nation under an increasingly nationalized Turkish society and strict government control. Contrary to the missionary educators’ assertion of the necessity of Protestant routines on campus, it can be seen that the religious services discouraged Muslim attendance and became a cause of disputes with the Turkish government.

### **American Schools and Late-Ottoman Muslims**

Although the American missionaries’ primary targets were ‘nominal’ Ottoman Christians, they never gave up the idea of approaching Muslims, the ruling nationality of the Empire. The first American missionaries who ever tried to convert the local Muslims had found their stubbornness incorrigible – they complained that: “Contact

with Moslem minds” was “so difficult through other means”, “they rarely attend our missionary preaching, and rarely visit missionaries for religious conversion”.<sup>313</sup> In this circumstance, Christian education was exalted as a potent means of exercising religious influences to realize ‘religious freedom’ (conversion) among the Muslim population. The American missionaries made inroads in late Ottoman society with their educational offering, alongside a process of modernization and enlightenment that were increasingly appreciated by the contemporary Ottoman elites. It was no coincidence that the educational work of ABCFM was inaugurated in 1839 immediately following the Tanzimat reform. “In a measure possible through education”, they believed that “scripture truth may be inculcated in connection with science” and that the native Muslims would be attracted by the “superiority of Western knowledge” and thus converted intellectually and spiritually.<sup>314</sup>

Harbouring this ambition, the quantity and quality of American Protestant missionary schools multiplied in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, becoming the largest foreign school system in the Empire. Its huge success elicited a response from the Ottoman government through a campaign for educational reforms in 1869.<sup>315</sup> The American missionary schools were extended beyond mere evangelical institutions with only religious courses available for training indigenous preachers – they began to provide high-standard academic education aimed to produce Ottoman elites. By 1908, the American missionaries could claim that their schools had set the pace and established a standard for Ottoman education – the Turks sometimes proudly told them “with pride”: “This feature of our school is just like what you have at the College”.<sup>316</sup> Communities often preferred Protestant schools as it was believed that the moral influence, discipline and management of American schools were superior to those other establishments

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<sup>313</sup> Woman’s Board Mission, Dennis, J. S. (1877) *Daniel Bliss to the Board*, p.36.

<sup>314</sup> Bliss, *al-Durus al-awliya*, p.1-2., as cited in Iner, D. (2011). ‘The gospel of science and American evangelism in late Ottoman Beirut’. *Past and present*, 196(1), pp.173-214.

<sup>315</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2013). *Domestic Frontiers*, p.104.

<sup>316</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report Western Turkey Mission Education Commission*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 616. 16.9.3. Vol. 27, No.541, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

(such as the Latin, Jesuit schools for native Christians, or Turkish schools for Muslims). Among the American educational institutions, Robert College and Syrian Protestant College (founded respectively in İstanbul in 1863 and Beirut in 1866) enjoyed the best reputation for their academic quality. American-style courses of science and arts were added to their curriculum, which were not offered by their Ottoman official counterparts. By 1914 there was at least one well-trained missionary teacher in every station, and in some places the missionaries ran schools where they had no other missionary work.<sup>317</sup>

Table 2: Protestant Missionary schools in Ottoman Territories<sup>318</sup>

Date	Schools	Unlicensed Schools	Missionaries	Students	Expenditure
1830-1893	392	341			
1893 (in Turkey's boundaries)	624 (5 colleges, 80 high schools, 530 primary)		1,317 (233 Americans, 1,084 Armenians)	31,485 (4,085 in college)	\$10 million, \$ 7 million distributed for books
1895 (only in Anatolia)	435			19,795	
1900 (only in Anatolia)	417			17,556	
1904	269 (only American schools)	108			
1905	More than 400	316			
1913	450 (20 high schools)			25,922 (4,835 Armenians, 122 Turkish high school students)	
1914	675			34,317 (25,000 in Anatolia)	\$40 million

Some modern-minded Ottoman Muslim families who demanded better education were attracted by these schools and began to send their children to missionary schools

<sup>317</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Aintab Station Field Report. July 1913-1914*. Reel 667, No.127.

<sup>318</sup> Erdoğdu T (2003). 'Üsküdar Amerikan Kız Koleji'nin kısa tarihi'.

alongside Christian students. The Muslim attendance in missionary schools, which went against the Sultan's Islamic philosophy, led to concern from the Sublime Porte during the Hamidian reign. As noted by Jeremy Salt, "the relationship that developed between the missionaries and the Ottoman government was one of mutual suspicion and mutual dislike".<sup>319</sup> Previous studies have examined how the Hamidian government reformed the national educational system to counteract the influence of missionary education on Muslim subjects.<sup>320</sup> To counteract Muslim school attendance, the Sultan sent spies to hassle students and make surprise visits to missionary schools for inspection. Miss Patrick, headmistress of American Girls' College, recalled in her memoir that the teachers had to hide their Turkish students in the school library when the spies were on campus. In İstanbul strict travel restrictions were imposed punctually when schools opened in August to prevent enthusiastic students outside the city from approaching missionary schools; passports became "a vexatious" issue for missionary educators in controlling their activities.<sup>321</sup> In 1892, an explicit official decree was promulgated to forbid Muslim children attending Christian schools. The Sultan also imposed more limitations on the licensing procedure of missionary school to control the expansion of missionary education.<sup>322</sup> Officials also blamed the American schools for the later Armenian revolts after the 1880s – some American missionaries were even implicated and arrested for seditious actions. The following missionary account in 1905 from the Euphrates College in Harput provides a glimpse of the unpleasant relations between the Hamidian government and the American colleges:

That this college has met with the constant and persistent opposition of the Turkish government goes without saying. The erection of new buildings has been hindered or greatly hampered; its courses of study have been developed under severe opposition from within the Educational Department. Its teachers have been arrested and thrown into prison and its students put under suspicion simply because

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Deringil, S. (1993) pp.3-29.

<sup>321</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1930). *Under five sultans*, p.165.

<sup>322</sup> Deringil, S. (1993).

if the fact that they were securing a modern education. These are facts that are well known to all who have followed closely the story of this college.<sup>323</sup>

Nevertheless, the opposition from the Sultan and the pressure from local communities failed to inhibit the influence the spread of missionary schools among the Christian or Muslim populations. A small number of Muslims attended missionary schools regardless, largely consisting of the family of local notables and Ottoman officials.<sup>324</sup> Early in 1877, the founder of Robert College, Cyrus Hamlin, noted that the Ottoman “governing class”, unlike the “ignorant multitude” who “are still fanatical and bigoted”, “has wonderfully changed” under the Western influence of “scriptures, newspapers, books, education and the course of things”. He observed how they “are working slowly down into the mass, and religious freedom is coming in slowly, and in the only way possible, by *enlightenment*”.<sup>325</sup> Among the Ottoman governing class was a sister of Sultan Hamid who lived in a palace on the Bosphorus. Differing from other traditionally secluded Turkish women, the modern-minded princess “frequently rode horseback across the hills behind Pera in a European riding outfit”, and was “often accompanied by foreign ladies and gentlemen”. When she was about to send her sons to Robert College, the Sultan was informed by his spies and he forbade the enrolment by a royal decree.<sup>326</sup>

Over time, there was an increase in Muslim attendance at missionary schools, despite the strict prohibition from the minister of police. On the eve of the 1908 revolution, the Turkish children enrolled at the American school in Gedik Pasha district had reached 49, from 4 to 15 years old.<sup>327</sup> In Robert College, as noted in the memoir of George Washburn, who had devoted 40 years to the college: “We have had relatively few

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<sup>323</sup> ABCFM. (1905) *The Quarter-Centennial of Euphrates College at Harpoot, Turkey*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25 A. No.811, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>324</sup> Somel, S. A. (2001). *The modernization of public education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, autocracy, and discipline*. Vol. 22, Brill.

<sup>325</sup> Cyrus, H. (1878). *Among the Turks*, p.90.

<sup>326</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1930) p.168.

<sup>327</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 617. 16.9.3. Vol. 28, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



Turkish students, only one who has graduated, as it has been the policy of the Sultan to forbid Turkish students attending any but government schools. Notwithstanding this prohibition, we now have [in 1907] more than twenty Turks in the College, and its reputation among enlightened Turks is quite as high as with other nationalities”.<sup>328</sup> Delighted with this development, in 1890 missionary T. D. Jessup reported with pride that, “The Muslims are becoming enlightened and want induction, whether it comes as religious teaching or not. The more intelligent ones see that the schools of the missionary are more thorough and more advanced than their own, and they want to get benefit of them”.<sup>329</sup> Such ‘benefit’ was willingly offered by many American missionaries who were dedicated to the educational cause, because they increasingly believed – in the context of an Orientalist discourse coloured by superiority and racialism – that if it was not the ultimate spiritual salvation, then at least social, moral and spiritual redemption was being brought by their work to the Ottoman lands.

Because of the deregulation of the Young Turk leaders, the American missionary schools received a considerable boost in the number of Muslim enrolments after 1908, especially in İstanbul and Western Turkey where the Turks were considered to be more open-minded. As George Washburn noted, “the revolution of July 1908 was the triumph of a process of enlightenment which has been going on for many years among the Turks”.<sup>330</sup> The most representative example was Robert College: before 1908 the Turkish students in the College made up just 3-5% of the total student body – this number reached 15% in 1913<sup>331</sup> and 21% in 1914. In the American College for Girls at Scutari, the president recalled that the campus was practically besieged by Turkish applicants, and that the school had to reject many of their applications due to limited

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<sup>328</sup> Washburn, G. (1911). *Fifty Years in Constantinople, and Recollections of Robert College*. Houghton Mifflin, p.299.

<sup>329</sup> Woman’s Board, (1890) ‘Work Among Moslems in the Turkish Empire’. *Woman's work for woman*. New York, p.329.

<sup>330</sup> Washburn, G. (1911). *Fifty Years in Constantinople, and Recollections of Robert College*. Houghton Mifflin. p. xxviii.

<sup>331</sup> Sezer, A. (1999). *Atatürk döneminde yabancı okullar, 1923-1938*. Vol. 83, Turk Tarih Kurumu Basmevi, p.65.

space.<sup>332</sup> Sending their children to these colleges had become a fashion of the rich and high-ranked Turkish families in İstanbul. In the Gedik Pasha School, student applications were also rejected because of space limitations. During 1909-10, there were 99 Turkish, 87 Armenian, 66 Greek and 2 other pupils, thus the Turks had taken over the majority of the student body. There were also 25 Turkish boys and young men and 4 Turkish women taking private evening lessons.<sup>333</sup> The American School in Bursa also had a marked proportion of Turkish attendants, including 8 Turks and 17 Armenians in 1908-09.<sup>334</sup> With regard to the International College in İzmir, before the Revolution, there had been 12 Muslim students among a total of 334 in 1907. After the Revolution, in 1908-09, the number of Muslim students was nearly 50% higher than in the previous year.<sup>335</sup> Growing steadily, the Muslim registration rate reached one fifth by 1914. The influence of American education was clearly not confined to the Ottoman governing class but expanded its reach to middle-class Muslim communities. As the American missionaries observed, their Muslim students became more open-minded and more disciplined through receiving American education:<sup>336</sup>

Moslem students have become broader and more tolerant. They have gained a comprehension of the point of view of others. A feeling of fraternity has been aroused and a desire to serve others. In some cases, they have been led to attempt to break off their bad habits, especially the use of bad language. Confidence in ordinary Islam has been shaken. Students have been thrown back on the best teachings of the Koran. Some have assumed an eclectic position. Some have come to an understanding of spiritual teaching. Perhaps spiritual hunger has been awakened, and there may be those even, who are 'Almost persuaded'.

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<sup>332</sup> Davison, R. (2012). 'Osmanlı Türkiye'sinde Batılı Eğitim'. In *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, edited by Halil İnalçık and Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, p.673.

<sup>333</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of Constantinople Station for the Year 1909-1910*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.262, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>334</sup> ABCFM. (1909) *Report of Constantinople Station for 1908-09*. Reel 617, No.693.

<sup>335</sup> ABCFM. (1909) *Sixth Annual Report. International College. Smyrna (Turkey)*. Reel 628, 631.

<sup>336</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.198.

The expanding American education activities were viewed as the bellwether of the growing Western influence on the late-Ottoman society, where people's ideas about education, particularly for women, were experiencing rapid changes. For example, a Turkish official who had been an officer in Maraş for 20 years observed in 1910:

for the first time he had seen women receiving a man's education. All these years he had been turning over in his mind the question: Is it right? Is it proper? What will be the effect if women receive as much education as men? But that he was sure it was right and proper; the women were the mothers of the men of the land and their first teachers.<sup>337</sup>

By 1914, women's education had become more common. As a report of the Woman's Board pointed out: "There are not many villages now where the education of girls is looked upon with disfavour, or where the old joke of donkeys and girls being equally fit subjects for education, would find a response among the people. Even the most ignorant parents feel the impulse of the new life now stirring the community, and realize that education is the only thing which can lift their daughters to a higher level than their own".<sup>338</sup>

### **American Education Policy and Muslim Evangelization**

After the Second Revolution, American missionaries' educational work was officially appreciated and emulated by Young Turk leaders for its reputation of high standards among both Christian and Muslim communities. The government, which spoke highly of the missionary educational achievement, was keen to cooperate with American schools, such as by sending selected Turkish students to them for training, with the expectation of becoming teachers in national education, or by inviting missionary teachers to help the work of national schools. Through education, an amicable

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<sup>337</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Report of Adana Seminary for the Year 1910-1911*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.275, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>338</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Report of the Educational Work of the Woman's Board 1914-14*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.117, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

relationship was built between the American missionaries and the Turkish officials, which offered the missionaries greater potential for their Muslim work.

In the Muslim evangelizing scheme, the American Board was deeply interested in finding new fields to win religious influence over Ottoman Muslims. To this end, the American Board suggested accommodating the missionary programme to the government's programme as much as possible.<sup>339</sup> The missionary investment in kindergarten work for Turkish needs is a good example of this policy. From 1910, the Young Turk government put special emphasis on establishing Turkish kindergartens in Anatolia as a national educational project. As there were few qualified Turkish kindergarten tutors, in many cases the Turkish government engaged the assistance of American missionary teachers. In late 1911, the Inspector of Primary Schools sent an official of Adana to the local missionary seminary, requiring a Christian kindergarten teacher to assist the work of local Turkish kindergartens. However, as there was no one yet qualified for the work in the school the official left disappointed. The Inspector could not accept this answer and ten days later he returned to the school and expressed his appreciation for the missionary educational work and their eagerness to help:

You have the right spirit in your school. The children which come to your school come with love. Parents have to plan how they will keep their children at home if they are not well on a school day. Now with us it is not so. An earnest parent's first thought in the morning is how shall I induce my child to go to school today and a child's first remark is today I won't go to school. The teachers shout and scream and beat their pupils but with your schools it is all different. We want a Christian teacher to start the Kindergarten work and to teach our young teachers how to teach.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.201

<sup>340</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Adana Seminary Report. 1911-1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.284, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

This event was notable for piquing the missionaries' interest in investing in kindergarten work in Turkey. Seeing it as a great opportunity to insinuate themselves into Muslim education, a plan to open local kindergartens for Muslims was explicitly reiterated by the Committee of Muslim Work to the four Mission Branches in 1912. Meanwhile, the American missionaries passionately called for new normal and kindergarten training courses in their missionary institutions to fill the vacancies for Protestant kindergarten trainers and channel missionary forces into the Turkish institutions.<sup>341</sup>

More importantly, the considerable number of Muslim students in American colleges encouraged discussions about educational policy for Muslims among the missionaries in the post-Hamidian period. Notably, all American missionary institutions confirmed the primary evangelising guidelines, as attendance at chapel was required of Muslim students at every missionary school. In some institutions, the daily service was one of worship only. Regarding the school policy for Muslim students, in 1914 John Merrill, the educational secretary of CTM as well as the then-president of the Central Turkey College, asserted that it was essential for a Christian institution not to compromise itself in the face of the Muslim attitudes in relation to religious services in institutions, noting that the singing of hymns, reading of Bibles, and saying of prayers should conform to the original Christian ritual customs.<sup>342</sup> The missionaries noticed a tendency among Christian students "not to make a clear confession that they were Christians in the presence of Muslim companions", which, as Merrill suggested, needed to be counteracted. Another missionary observation was that the Christian students had to be made to appreciate the duty of Muslim evangelization.<sup>343</sup> This fact was illustrated in the memoirs of Halide Edib, who mentioned a passionate conversion attempt made by her

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<sup>341</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Adana Seminary Report. 1911-1912*. Reel 666, No.281; ABCFM. (1912) *Woman's Work in Aintab Station, 1911-1912*. Reel 666, No.494.

<sup>342</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.199.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

closest Christian classmate in the American Girls' College.<sup>344</sup> American missionaries generally believed that while Muslims should not be unduly offended, Christians should not have to conceal their presentation of Christianity around their Muslim peers and neighbours.

Education was emphasised over religious routines in some American missionary institutions from the early 1910s. Regarding the controversy among American educators over the arrangements and regulations related to Bible teaching, some held the view that their present teaching was in no way sectarian, while others believed that knowledge of the Bible was essential for any educated man. Structurally speaking, a partial reason for this growing controversy was the deficiency of administrative uniformity among the American institutions. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most American common schools were supported and controlled by Woman's Boards; some were supported and managed by individual churches, while a few were partially maintained by the American Board.<sup>345</sup> Because of a lack of a central authority or an educational bureau in the American Board to manage the missionary schools through a united order, the policy of college administration in relation to Bible teachings varied between institutions.

While in some colleges the Bible course was adjusted to attract more Muslim students, the majority of American institutions made no distinction, requiring the regular religious instruction of Christians as well as Muslims. They said that they had no difficulty in enforcing the rule and that they feared backlash from the non-Protestant factions later if exceptions began to be made. As the 1911-12 Report of the Boy's Boarding School in Cesarea said:

Muslim pupils also stated frankly that it was the moral tone of the school that recommended it to them; and although some objection was made to their boys

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<sup>344</sup> Adıvar, H.E. (1926). *Memoirs of Halide Edib*. Century Company.

<sup>345</sup> ABCFM. (1913). *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.27.

receiving Christian teaching, they became perfectly willing to accept this condition when it was pointed out that the religious teaching was the basis of the moral training.<sup>346</sup>

The International College of Smyrna also noted in 1909 that the growing spirit of liberty and irreligion could become a threat to their crucial religious work in relation to Muslim students who might refuse the compulsory Bible study and morning services.<sup>347</sup>

In some colleges, a modification was made to delay the requirement of Bible lessons for Muslim students until they had learned enough English to be able to use the language as their medium of instruction. Some missionaries believed that while retaining the attendance of Muslim students in chapel exercises, making the Bible lessons optional for Muslim students was an alternative, but this was unsuccessful in most of the American institutions. One college adopted separate lessons in morals for Muslim students instead of Bible lessons as an alternative method for Muslim education. Some missionaries noticed that some Muslim students were reluctant to take the Bible course merely because of its name. To make the Bible lessons and religious services optional was disapproved of by all American missionary educators, afraid of the danger of ‘moral decay’ among Muslim youths without adequate ethical teaching. American missionaries collectively believed that in the late Ottoman Empire, moral standards and consciousness were too low among Muslim subjects. College policies about Muslim religious observance were also varied: in some colleges, Muslim students were free to go to Mosque on Friday; in others, a place for prayer was designated for them. Anatolia College, for example, assigned their Muslim student minority (around 4% in 1914) a room “where they could repeat their prayers” and “made it easy for them to go to the mosque on Friday”. Such allowances did not exist in some other schools.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Cesarea Station, 1911-1912*. Reel 628, No.166.

<sup>347</sup> ABCFM. (1909) *Sixth Annual Report. International College. Smyrna (Turkey)*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.633, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>348</sup> White, G.E. (1940). *Adventuring with Anatolia College*, Section 2, No.22.

However, different from the missionary rhetoric, most Muslim families appealed to make Bible courses and religious services optional. The American schools opposed this policy in case it diminished their Christian influence over the Muslim students, fearing that “practically all Muslim parents would not chose the Bible study”. Several Muslim students dropped out of the American schools as they refused to take Christian religious instruction. Other Muslim parents concerned about the Christian influence on their children had talked with the schools about this subject but eventually acquiesced to continue sending their children when the missionaries interpreted their religious instruction as a method to teach children “to trust in God and to do His will”. In one case, the father of a student at Anatolia College only allowed his child to attend on condition that every morning the child had to read a selection from the Qur’an as a defence against Christian influence.<sup>349</sup> Some Muslim families and government officials even feared that American schools were not only “forbidding their Mohammedan prayers” but also “giving their sons pork to eat, without letting them know”.<sup>350</sup>

Alongside the de-religionizing controversy, discussions about feasible educational practices for Muslim students grew among American missionary educators – until the later Kemal government stifled all ongoing missionary educational experiments by forbidding Bible teaching and religious services in all missionary institutions. The general policy for missionary institutions embraced cooperation with the government, fraternization with Muslim schools, teachers and students, but with a focus on missionary education. The Board suggested that a Protestant educator should try to build close contacts with their Muslim students and make themselves a spiritual and moral model through teaching and prayer with love and sympathy. The missionaries began to reflect on the question of religious tolerance in their education. From the perspective of John Merrill, a Muslim student’s religion ought to be the best it could be. To forsake it, except as he accepted ‘higher truth’, meant to forsake their best. Thus, he argued that American missionaries should not be complacent about the drifting away of

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<sup>349</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.79.

<sup>350</sup> White, G.E. (1940). *Adventuring with Anatolia College*, Section 2, No.22.



a Muslim student from the reverence and goodness of religious instruction.<sup>351</sup> This reflection seemed of great significance in circumstances in which young Turkish men had a strong tendency to undo their previous faithfulness through Western (and their own) influences. A “policy of sympathetic helpfulness” was suggested as the best approach to missionary education among Muslims in the Young Turk period,<sup>352</sup> although this policy was often criticized by modern Oriental scholars as a hypocritical Western plot. The American missionaries considered the moral-religious education to be of utmost significance – not only did they pay attention to the Muslim youth but some also criticized the Armenian institutions’ efforts to exert an anti-religious influence on their people, which was accused of “perverting the morals”.<sup>353</sup>

The divergence of opinions among missionary educators and the propositions to secularize the curriculum to increase non-Christian enrolment further blurred the boundaries between religious and cultural proselytising in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, American education in the Ottoman Empire was by no means a one-way imperialist project. Its policy and purpose were both complex and dynamic, adapting to the process of social change and local interactions. Although its cultural imperialist nature is undeniable,<sup>354</sup> within the gates of the missionary school, norms of Western subjugation and cultural/social regulation were not very evident.<sup>355</sup> Furthermore, Muslims could

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<sup>351</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.201.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Preface to the Annual Report of Van Station for 1910*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.548, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>354</sup> Arguments regarding this topic are generally emphasized by Turkish and Arabic scholars. A powerful testimony is found in *Daybreak In Turkey* by James L. Barton, who was the foreign affairs secretary of the ABCFM (1896-1927): “These modern education institutions in Turkey are very important powers to reform the people’s living, thinking, tradition and habits. West’s products and machinery can enter to this part of East through these modern-minded guys in growing ranges. It would be correct to say that the money sent from America to support and establish the American Colleges in Turkey has been exceedingly paid back with its high interest thanks to the growing trade with this country.” Sakin, S. (2010). ‘Missionary Schools and Activities in Turkey during the Turkish National Struggle’. *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, (27), p.62.

<sup>355</sup> Kahlenberg, C. (2016). ‘The Gospel of Health’: American Missionaries and the Transformation of Ottoman/Turkish Women's Bodies, 1890–1932’. *Gender & History*, 28(1), pp.150-176.

often benefit from their interactions with missionary activities. Studies have shown that in many cases participating Muslims received American messages and reshaped them to fit their own agendas. For example, when Darwinism was introduced in Ottoman Syria by the Syrian Protestant College, Muslim intellectuals adapted its ideas to fit the Koran, to testify that the authority of Islam could be comparable with rationalism. This adaptation was significant considering that Darwinism was bitterly criticized as an apostatic fallacy even by many missionaries themselves at that time.<sup>356</sup> However, it could also be argued that social Darwinism, along with ideas of ‘Manifest Destiny’, were the driving forces of the missionaries’ evangelization efforts in the Muslim world.

### **American Education for Muslims: Reality and Limitations**

Despite triumphs in metropolitan settings, in the inner Anatolian regions, the Muslim attendance rate at American schools was generally lower. This was due to various factors such as regional differences in Muslim ideology, economic conditions, and school and local governmental policies. For instance, Central Turkey College, though being one of the most prominent institutions in Asia Minor, was far from influential among the Muslim population. The average enrolment of the Turkish student body from 1910 to 1913 was eight, never rising to more than 14 in a student body of 200, and only three Turks were enrolled in the academic year 1912-1913 with a total enrolment of 219 (see table below).<sup>357</sup> Similarly, very few Turkish students attended Tarsus College (or St. Paul’s College), with only two Muslim boarders and four city boys in 1914.<sup>358</sup> Both of these premium colleges were well located in relation to the Muslim population. In the case of the American Girls’ School at Aintab, only three Muslim girls regularly attended during 1912-13. In the Adana Seminary for Girls, the Muslim

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<sup>356</sup> Iner, D. (2011).

<sup>357</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of the President of Central Turkey College, Aintab, Turkey, to the Board of Managers of the College, Including the Report of the Azariah Smith Memorial Hospital for the Year 1912-1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21 part1. No.593, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>358</sup> Nevertheless, it was reported that “These [Muslim students] attend College service and quite often, of their own accord, are present at the Y.M.C.A. meeting”. ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*, Reel 667, No.160.

enrolment was five out of 212 total students in 1913-14. These figures were discouraging given the aggressive Muslim work done by the Central Turkey Mission, in whose stations these Colleges were situated. For reference, the American missionaries claimed that the Ottoman Muslim attendance rate in common missionary schools was 5% in 1912.<sup>359</sup> According to the statistics of the *Orient* in early 1914, the missionary college attendance rate for Muslims reached 14%. It appears that the missionary institutions in inner Turkey generally failed to make a difference to their Muslim surroundings.

a. Total Enrollment.				
	1913-14	1912-13	1911-12	1910-11
Total	232	219	246	179
Post-graduates	0	0	2	0
College	94	91	88	68
Preparatory	138	128	156	111
b. Residence.				
Aintab	123	110	153	113
College	55	47	52	40
Preparatory	68	63	101	73
Abroad	109	109	93	66
College	39	43	38	28
Preparatory	70	66	55	38
c. Race				
Armenian	218	211	221	168
College	88	86	83	48
Preparatory	130	125	138	70
Turk	8	8	14	6
College	2	1	3	
Preparatory	6	2	11	
Syrian	6	5	7	3
College	4		3	
Preparatory	2		4	
d. Creed.				
Protestant	146	142	154	113
College	60	66	63	48
Preparatory	86	76	91	70
Gregorian	75	71	74	52
College	32	24	23	20
Preparatory	23	47	51	32
Muslim	8	3	16	8
College	2	1	3	
Preparatory	6	2	13	
Other	3	3	2	1

Figure 4: Table of enrolled students' numbers of the Central Turkey College (1910-14)

The American missionaries ascribed the low Muslim attendance rate partly to the local government's efforts to keep Muslim boys from attending the missionary colleges.<sup>360</sup> In 1910 the American missionaries in Van observed: "The government is entering the field and would probably be glad to get this whole educational work into its own hands and make the schools helpful for promoting Moslem propaganda".<sup>361</sup> It was true that in 1908 the Young Turks at first not only permitted but also encouraged Muslim children

<sup>359</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>360</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of the President of Central Turkey College, Aintab, Turkey, to the Board of Managers of the College, Including the Report of the Azariah Smith Memorial Hospital for the Year 1912-1913*. Reel 666, No.594

<sup>361</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Preface to the Annual Report of Van Station for 1910*. Reel 712, No.548

to attend American schools, however the immediate social and political upheavals both at home and abroad (including the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Balkan War and the declaration of Bulgarian independence, the Turco-Italian War, the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907, and Russian manoeuvres to oust Mr Shuster from Persia) had turned the constitutional movement from liberal to nationalist goals. From the beginning of the 1910s, the government support for missionary education, both financially and emotionally, was weakening in Anatolia, but more in favour of the construction of their own national schools to win back Turkish students.<sup>362</sup> In the hinterland provinces, the government appropriated a huge amount of funding for local education. For example, in Sivas, the government made large appropriations for new schools in 1910 with a sum of about \$150 per month to provide salaries for teachers at about 20 new schools. By 1910 it was reported that the government had opened eight new schools for Turkish children in Sivas city and would open two more if space could be found for them.<sup>363</sup> The local Muslim schools could use this financial aid efficiently and developed rapidly, while American schools could only “share a little from it”. Most Muslim parents would send their children to a Muslim school, if one was already established and the standards met their needs, rather than a Protestant school, and this tendency was more universal in central Turkey where local Muslims tended to have more conservative views. Consequently, over time the American missionaries in Turkey felt a hostility concealed beneath the Ottoman officials’ notion that the American schools were rivals to the local Muslim schools.

Another of the government’s inhibiting strategies, ‘official smuggling’ of American school work, was also accused by the missionaries as a nuisance for their school work. They had found a corollary of the Turkish government formula: if there was a missionary school and its courses were considered innovative and beneficial, it would

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<sup>362</sup> For example, in 1914 a commercial school was opened by the Turkish government in Aintab for local Muslim students following the French system, as one of the three governmental commercial schools built in various places in Turkey. ABCFM. (1914) *Supplementary Facts regarding educational work as related to Mohammedan Evangelization*. Reel 668, No.612.

<sup>363</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *The Educational Outlook in Sivas*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40. No.365, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

be attended by some Turkish students – eventually it would draw the attention of the superintendent of the Department of Education. One day soon a Turkish official would come to the school, visiting its buildings, learning its plans and purpose and giving “some helpful suggestions as to its formal recognition on the part of the government” – later, somewhere else in Turkey, a national school would open on similar lines to attract Muslim students.<sup>364</sup> Such appropriation was frequently scorned by the American missionaries in private, and when the newly-established governmental school failed to be successful, an American missionary might gloat: “Turks for some reason do not seem to possess the genius requisite to make schools or school work a success”.<sup>365</sup> Importantly, such government policy not only impinged on missionary education for Muslim students but also represented an attempt to restrict the American institutions. In consequence, the apprehensive missionaries well understood the urgent need to reinforce of their own institutions. As the report of Woman’s Board in 1914 appealed: “We need aid of the WBM... so many anti-Christian schools are being started. To counteract their influence, and to prevent a lapse in moral in our own community, good strong Protestant schools are needed”.<sup>366</sup> The term ‘anti-Christian schools’ used in this report referring to the Ottoman national schools revealed the frame of mind of the American missionaries at that time.

Another common financial policy of the government in the 1910s to counter the expansion of the American schools was noteworthy: the government felt increasingly reluctant to cooperate with the missionary schools in incorporating new properties, enlarging campuses, and relocating schools (which usually meant extending the school’s scale). Thus in response, with the government’s unwillingness to extend any more financial benefits, new taxes were added to missionary school properties and

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<sup>364</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.721.

<sup>365</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Report of Aleppo Commission*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.197, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>366</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Report of the Educational Work of the Woman’s Board 1914-14*. Reel 667, No.118.

imported materials with the aim of discouraging school expansion.<sup>367</sup> The Ottoman officials set new restrictive conditions for the ownership transfer of all missionary properties (not just schools but also hospitals, orphanages, and churches), requiring that the area of a school's property should not grow more than twice as large as the original premises, with taxes gradually levied on the additional properties and buildings. Apart from concerns about Muslim education, the change in the official attitude also came about because the tax exemptions for a large number of missionary institutions negatively had influenced treasury revenue, and they also considered the American schools to be a rival system, established with the American mindset that "college education should be paid for privately", which was incompatible with the tax-free Ottoman educational system.<sup>368</sup> Consequently, with the intensified restrictions and the loss of previously favourable conditions, government attitudes towards foreign institutions, particularly the American schools, eventually regressed into a rivalry. By 1913, government-founded Muslim schools appeared in the Central-Eastern provinces, with English introduced as the medium of instruction, as the Ottomans did not wish their national schools to fall behind their rivals in English studies. One of the schools in Aintab imported two American teachers from the missionary schools. Such official demand was still welcomed by the missionaries, as it was seen as an evangelical opportunity, although they worried about the official intentions working against them.

The missionary education for Muslims was challenged not only by the efforts of the government but also by the dual 'backward' ideology and economics of the Muslim masses. The looser policy on education under the CUP gave the American missionaries opportunities to open their own schools for Muslim children. In this context, the first missionary schools specifically for Muslims appeared in the 1910s in some missionary stations. The schools' objective was not only to offer instruction about Islam but also to

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<sup>367</sup> For example, when they relocated school buildings, they had to pay half 'property taxes' in regard to the student tuition fees, and the mukataa (30% of the current value of the building). Schools were also required to pay "construction levies" and "custom tariffs" for imported construction materials.

<sup>368</sup> Ümit, D. (2014) p.40.

give “general enlightenment” lessons.<sup>369</sup> In the case of Maraş city, in July 1909 the first American school for girls opened specially for Muslims, with 12 pupils ranging from ages six to 16. The establishment of this little school owed much to a visit to local Muslim homes by two local Bible Women who had a connection with a local (German) missionary hospital, even though “the Muslims of Marash are exceedingly conservative”. However, in the first month of operation, the average daily attendance at the school was only six or seven students, with only three regular attendees. A school enquiry discovered several reasons for the irregular attendance rate, such as the divergence of opinion between parents or relatives and accident caused by family tension and conflicts. In one extreme case, a little girl was absent from school as she had disappeared with her mother from her home after a serious misunderstanding between her parents.<sup>370</sup> The factors that prevented Muslim girls’ attendance revealed not only the lack of “an ideal of order and faithfulness” but also the abject conditions of many Muslim homes, which as a commonplace occurrence throughout the inner Anatolia plain, often became a worrying obstacle to missionary education among the Ottoman Muslims. In another case, a little school for the children of the streets was opened by Miss Andrews in 1910; the attendance of Muslim pupils reached 17 by 1911 but a hostile demonstration on the part of the *hocas* reduced this to zero.<sup>371</sup> There were many other cases whereby Turkish students initially attended the American schools, which were generally open for all nationalities, but soon stopped. Statistics collected from various sources show that the Muslim graduation rate in American schools across the country was considerably lower than that of non-Muslim students.

The unsettled political environment between 1909 and 1913 was another factor which strongly shook the courage of the Muslim parents to send their children to American schools. In Anatolia Girls’ School in Merzifon, there were four Turkish students among

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<sup>369</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Supplementary Facts regarding educational work as related to Mohammedan Evangelization*. Reel 668, No.613.

<sup>370</sup> ABCFM. (1909) *Report of Women’s Work in Marash Field 1908-1909* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 661. 16.9.5. Vol. 16. No.815, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>371</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.724.

a 250-strong student population during 1911-12.<sup>372</sup> (In comparison, that year the American hospital of Merzifon treated 296 Turks, 340 Armenians, 241 Greeks, and 44 others.)<sup>373</sup> In the American girls' school at Talas, the political change of 1908 brought eight Muslim girls to the American primary school in the fall. However, in the winter "jealousy of the Muslim teacher" and "religious prejudice", and fear of political changes frightened the parents into removing their girls – by the end of the term all the Muslim girls had left. In the next several years, the frightened Turkish students still would not return to school. However, a very enthusiastic Turkish student, the daughter of the Ferik Pasha of Cesarea, went for English lessons once a week from a distance of five miles, which implies that different attitudes existed between the lower and higher Muslim classes towards the American schools. Many parents of Muslim students were important military and civil officers in both the city and *vilayet*.<sup>374</sup>

Furthermore, the low Muslim attendance rate also had something to do with the various school policies in different American schools. Not all American schools in Turkey were enthusiastic about accepting a large number of Muslim students. The President of Central Turkey College pointed out in the 1912 College Annual Report that, apart from the counter-influence of government efforts on education, the College itself was unwilling to receive or keep Muslim boys who were deemed to be "not morally and intellectually satisfactory".<sup>375</sup> In the city of Sivas, where the people were "more conservative and move more slowly than those on or near the seacoast",<sup>376</sup> before 1914 the Sivas Teachers' College had occasionally only had one Turkish pupil. In 1914, there between 7,000 and 8,000 soldiers flowed into the city and the College received almost daily visits from fathers, army officers and others who wished to send their boys to the College. The acceptance of such pupils was not in the College's plans, and it was expected to involve significant changes to the school programme and class

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<sup>372</sup> ABCFM. Reel 628, No.391.

<sup>373</sup> ABCFM. Reel 628, No.444.

<sup>374</sup> ABCFM. Reel 712, No.255.

<sup>375</sup> ABCFM. Reel 666, No.593.

<sup>376</sup> ABCFM. Reel 628, No.629.



arrangement, which required large additional expense to give private lessons to Turkish children. Because the Vali, Superintendent of Education and other prominent Turks had requested it, the College reluctantly had to receive a class of Turkish pupils in the fall.<sup>377</sup>

The language barrier was another difficulty of Muslim education, particularly in the Eastern Turkey Mission where the most used instruction language was Armenian in American schools. For example, College President (1910-21) Ernest W. Riggs noted that the failure of the Euphrates College in Harput (founded in 1852 as a theological seminary, incorporated as a college in 1878) to attract Turkish students was mostly because practically all of the College Classes were conducted in the Armenian language, though intense race prejudice added to the problem:

Doubtless you have wondered whether or not we have any Moslem students. We cannot have any under the present system without asking them to become Armenian in language and social standing. This is the poorest way to do, but the finest type of Turk is barred out... The Turks despise the Armenian language together with the race. They do not learn it and do not wish their son to learn it. The Colonel in charge of the forces in this Province has a son who has studied in French schools. His father is a most courteous and friendly gentleman with a good education. He asks me to take his son into our College as a regular student. I must reply, 'Your son can enter after he has sufficiently mastered the Armenian language as to be able to do all his work in that.' To say this is a practical refusal of admission, and reasonably.<sup>378</sup>

The statistics on the number of enrolments at Euphrates College from September 1912 to June 1913<sup>379</sup> is presented below. It shows that girls constituted the majority of the student body in standard education, the boys exceeded the girls in higher education,

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of the President to the Board of Trustees of Euphrates College Funds. 1911-1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.418, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>379</sup> \*In the girls department. ABCFM. (1913) *Report of the President to the Board of Trustees of Euphrates College Funds. 1912-1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.424, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

while Muslim attendance at the American institutions of Harput province was negligible.

*Table 3: Enrolments at Euphrates College, Sep. 1912 to Jun. 1913*

Classes	Boys	Girls
College	95	59
Varzharan	90	78
Gurtaran	(close)	62
Mangaran	*24	96
Kindergarten	*25	27
Kind. Training Class		12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>334</b>

Nationalities	Boys	Girls
Gregorian	120	190
Protestant	109	138
Syrian	1	4
Catholic	2	2
Muslim	2 (Kurdish)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>334</b>

To find a solution to this problem, in 1912 the College suggested four policies. First was to continue its line as an Armenian institution, which was considered not suitable for the new environment; the second and third suggestions were to make the teaching language and textbooks either Turkish or English, however, the former would definitely induce Armenian opposition, while the latter, which seemed to be the most plausible method and had already been introduced in several American institutions, would be problematic and not budget-friendly considering the situation of this far-off interior town. The last policy, to establish a Turkish department, however, would go against their general Muslim policy and cause rivalry between the two races.<sup>380</sup> Indeed, it was difficult for the missionaries to balance the work between Armenians and Muslims, but the College felt obliged to carry double work for Muslims at the expense

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

of losing the existing favour from the Armenians.<sup>381</sup> Apart from the difficulty of Muslim education, the College generally suffered from endemic disease and political disturbance in the early 1910s. Before the College could be fully reformed, the Wars from 1914 turned the College into a military hospital with its teaching staff expelled, fled or dead. The College was officially closed after the founding of the Republic of Turkey with their pursuit unfulfilled.

There were many other complex difficulties regarding the American Colleges' Muslim education during the Young Turk period which have not been examined, such as the different local policies which depended on the individual attitudes of the Valis;<sup>382</sup> the above-mentioned different treatment of the local Protestant religious workers towards other local communities; different regional demographic make up; and historical factors (such as the 1894-96 massacres) which influenced local Muslim-Christian relations.

Table 4: Statistics of Muslim students in American College in Turkey by early 1914<sup>383</sup>

Institution	Total Students	Muslims	Percentage
Robert College (İstanbul)	544	122	21%
Constantinople College (İstanbul)	278	60	21
Syrian Protestant College (Syria)	951	206	20
International College (İzmir)	400	75	19

<sup>381</sup> Since its founding, the missionary educators of the College had worked with the Armenians in the hope that they could be the leaders of the Muslims, until the beginning of the 1910s when a general feeling of the need for direct Muslim work prevailed among the missionaries. ABCFM. (1914) *Report of the President to the Board of Trustees of Euphrates College Funds. 1914-1914*. Reel 712, No.435. The following account by E.W. Riggs reflected his thoughts on carrying out Muslim educational work in June 1914: "Giving a good education to Christian men is a good thing, but as this is a missionary College, we must first try to carry the Gospel of Christ to those who do not accept him. If this is made the published purpose of the College it will frighten away the Turks and lose the sympathy of the Armenians, but we must have it as the shaping purpose back of all that we do. The result will be that the zeal of our Armenian friends for the College will be diminished. They will give their among elsewhere and will brand us as traitors to the purpose of the founders of the College." Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> For example, the missionaries of Harput planned to open a Turkish kindergarten in 1915 but they doubted its success due to the unfriendly government attitude. In comparison, in Van, Miss Silliman had opened a Turkish kindergarten in the Turkish quarter with about 30 children. A local committee of Turks provided them with support and the attitude of the local government and individual Turks was "highly favourable". ABCFM. (1914) *Report of Van Station. Eastern Turkey Mission. ABCFM. 1913-1914*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.587, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>383</sup> *The Orient*. (1914), as cited in ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.198.

Anatolia College (Merzifon)	400	18	4
St Paul's College (Tarsus)	210	9	4
Central Turkey Girls' College (Aintab)	157	5	4
Central Turkey College (Aintab)	232	6	3
Euphrates College (Harput)	245	3	1
Sivas Teachers College (Sivas)	143	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,560</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>14% (1/7)</b>

In conclusion, during the Young Turk period, the educational work for Muslims made a significant contribution to the improvement of Turkish national education. In other words, it could be argued that the Turkish government could benefit from the American missionary activities by adapting them for their own use. There was a delicate relationship between the missionaries and the government, with different motives on each side. The missionaries were making earnest efforts to exert Christian influence on the Muslim communities, while the Turkish government was trying to exploit missionary education to reinforce the national state and its power. Although the friendly government attitude to some extent facilitated the missionary work, the underlying competition between the missionaries and government in winning influence and faith among the Ottoman subjects was incessant and irreconcilable from the Hamidian period. The missionaries always had to scrutinise the government attitude before they made their next move towards their Muslim targets.

Additionally, although under the new regime the number of Muslim students attending the American school increased to a large extent, and although these students tended to be more open-minded than before, it did not necessarily mean they truly accepted the Christian influences. Not only the government but also Muslim students could use the American institutions to their own end. Indeed, as a Muslim student at Central Turkey College said: "We don't come to these American colleges for religious instruction. We come to get out of them everything that we can, and carry it back into Islam".<sup>384</sup> Before the First World War, such educational success in winning Muslim influence was only

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<sup>384</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.77.

refined in certain institutions in some Anatolia regions. Therefore, the influence of American missionaries' educational work among Muslims in the whole Ottoman Turkey was by no means prevalent. The conservative Muslims, who were deeply suspicious and hostile, tried hard to prevent the religious penetration and subversion of their existing social order by their Christian rivals. The educated Muslims, who had no fanatical devotion to Islam but in the context of growing nationalism, castigated those American missionaries who intruded into Turkey with little care for their religion but instead held deep-rooted prejudice and superiority over their custom, traditions, cultures and ideas. Entering the Young Turk Period, the American missionaries' educational mission for Ottoman Muslims briskly developed against a difficult background. Underneath the surface of the Young Turk government's educational cooperation with the missionaries was a relentless ideological war started by the Young Turks' Hamidian predecessors, who challenged the very basis of Ottoman legitimacy among its Christian and Muslims subjects.

### **The Transition of American Board Education Policies for Turkish Muslims**

With the disastrous impact of the First World War on the American missionary networks in Turkey, the animus of the Turkish government against the American missionary schools became more palpable after the outbreak of war, culminating in the suspension of the 1917 Turko-American relationship. With a number of American schools closed during wartime, for the remaining American institutions, official injunctions from the local Turkish governments against Muslim presence in relation to any Christian content, alongside with the surging nationalism among the young Turkish Muslims, as well as their stirring anti-missionary sentiment in response to the lately-perceived American proselytizing attempt, were the joint forces challenging the missionary hold-out for religious instillation that imposed onto their Muslim students. The case of the International College in İzmir provides an indication of the growing tensions between the American missionaries and both the local Muslim populace and

the authorities in a metropolitan port city when the hostilities broke out between the Turks and Greeks in WWI. The International College was developed from a kindergarten founded by the American Board missionary Maria Abegail in 1878, incorporating the American School for Boys and the American Collegiate Institute for Girls; the College was dissolved in 1933 as the result of failure to secure teacher salaries as well as several alarming conflicts between the school and its students.<sup>385</sup>

Following the outbreak of WWI in 1914, the operation of the International College was threatened by the political situation when the local government promulgated a law to prevent Greek students from the islands and Greece – who were considered belligerent groups and also constituted a large proportion of the student body – from attending the College. Consequently, only 42 students of the 410 registered in the previous year presented at the opening day in September 1914. Notably, as a result of the strong national spirit, while the school resolved to persist with its religious work, its morning chapel services and Bible studies faced continuous agitation of the movements carried on by a group of the older Turkish students. During the conflicts both the College and their Turkish student body resorted on the intervention of the government. As the College annual report of 1914-15 stated:

One of the immediate results of the annulling of the Capitulations was the issue of a complete new set of school regulations of which one of the most important requirements was voluntary attendance of Chapel and the forbidding of religious instruction. Although all the leaders in the movement against attendance of Chapel were former students, and consequently familiar with our regulations and custom in regard to these matters, they immediately took advantage of the absence of the Capitulations and the new school regulations to demand that they be excused from both Chapel and Bible study classes; and endeavoured to persuade other non-Protestant students to join with them in this movement. They appealed to the Governor of the Province and the Head of the Educational Department to support

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<sup>385</sup> Erdoğan, D.İ. (2019). 'The Activities of the American Educational Institutions in the Ottoman Empire: International College in Izmir', *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, XXXIX, pp.154-175.

their protest. We were greatly assisted, however in maintaining our position by the fact that, through the intervention of Ambassador Morgenthau, the enforcement of these regulations was from time to time postponed.<sup>386</sup>

Later in 1914, the governor called the College President Alexander Maclachlan and impressed upon him the reasonableness of the requirements of the new regulations, in view of the new constitution providing absolute religious liberty to all Ottoman subjects, noting that the College regulations insisting on the compulsory attendance at chapel and Bible study, being contrary to the spirit and letter of the Constitution, should be rescinded. By the strong and eloquent defence of College President, and the absolute objection of the College Trustees in America, the enforcement of the new regulations was temporarily postponed again. According to the College's report, it seemed that the American College had gained an advantage over local government in spite of the requirements of the new regulation. The following arguments were brought forward by the International College President against the Smyrna government:

1. The college students came to them of their free choice.
2. All their public announcements emphasized compulsory attendance at Chapel and Bible study.
3. Consequently, in registering, all students voluntarily accepted this regulation.
4. The College regarded a religious basis for all education as essential, and as Christians, it was natural that the College made the teaching and life of Jesus Christ the basis for its religious instruction.
5. All the American institutions in the Empire without exception were founded and administered on this principle.
6. In granting Imperial Firmans to these institutions, the government, having full knowledge of the religious basis upon which the American institutions were founded and administered, could not now veto the College's insistence on a

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<sup>386</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *The Twelfth Annual Report of the International College Paradise, Smyrna, Turkey. July 1st, 1914 to June 30th, 1915.* Reel 628, No.745.

continuance of the established custom in regard to these matters.<sup>387</sup>

Although the College was supposed to confirm the new school regulations, they adhered to their former custom throughout the following year, without being called to account by the government authorities. Some 25 Muslim student attended compulsory religious services and Bible class, many of whom were sons of high military and civil officials. In September 1915, the Governor of the Province reported to the central authorities that he had urged Muslim parents of eight Muslim College students to “break off relations with the missionaries”.<sup>388</sup> Nevertheless the College or its classes had never been stopped by the governor by force, about which the College President in his Report seemed somewhat triumphant and resolute about their advantageous stance in the “confrontation” with the Ottoman government. The President himself acknowledged that the American missionaries since the latter half of the Hamidian period had hardly been obedient to the Ottoman government regarding the Muslim evangelization. In addition to the International College in Izmir, practically all American schools in Turkey had no response to this new regulation during wartime. Owing to the busy affairs accompanying the warfare, the local Ottoman governments appeared to turn a blind eye to the American schools’ issues on religious services and Bible courses, but the question of tax collection was brought up in many regions with renewed vigour. In 1915, the Central Turkey College reported that “the new college firman... has stood us in good stead... the college has been the only one [in Aintab Province] possessing a permission which the government recognized as regular”, but the school was told they would be suspended within three weeks if they did not pay taxes.<sup>389</sup>

In Izmir, however, the attitudes of the local government sharpened with the advent of a

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<sup>387</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *The Twelfth Annual Report of the International College Paradise, Smyrna, Turkey. July 1st, 1914 to June 30th, 1915.* Reel 628, No.745.

<sup>388</sup> E. Sahin (2018) p.36.

<sup>389</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Central Turkey College Report by the President John E. Merrill.* ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.230, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



new Director of Education for the province in 1916-17. As the International College Annual Report of that year stated that they had to rely on the more accommodating Turkish governor to mitigate such impact: “strong pressure has from time to time been brought be bear upon His Excellency, Rahmi Bey, our faithful and efficient Governor-General, to take over our campus and buildings for one or other of the various purposes... he has always been firm in his refusal, and has only recently given me [the President] the most absolute assurance that we may continue to rely on his support and protection”.<sup>390</sup> Moreover, the considerable attrition of teaching staff (from 24 before the war to five by 1918, because of either military service or the prohibition on Greek teachers in the College) was also a grievous problem. Although the College’s religious policy on Muslim student survived without change, for various reasons (such as the US entering the war, prevalent anti-foreign feelings and movements, the American Board’s financial constraints, and the school’s new plan to cut accommodation) only four Turkish students out of 117 remained in the College in 1917-18. There was a constant worry among the missionary educators that the campus would be occupied by Turkish soldiers for military use at any time.<sup>391</sup>

Table 5: Statistics of International College’s student attendance<sup>392</sup>

	Greek	Armenian	Turkish	Jewish	Other	Total
1915-16	83	68	26	19	19	<b>215</b>
16-17	101	45	30	20	19	<b>215</b>
17-18	58	32	4	13	10	<b>117</b>
18-19	55	45	18	12	9	<b>139</b>

The College managed to stay open during the First World War, though with a modest

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<sup>390</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *The International College of Smyrna Turkey. 1916-1917. Fourteenth Annual Report of the President*. ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.775, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> As shown elsewhere, in early 1914 students attendance included 75 Muslims from a total of 400 students. ABCFM. (1919) *The International College of Smyrna Turkey. 1916-1917. Fourteenth Annual Report of the President*. Reel 628, No.793; ABCFM. (1918) *Third Annual Dean’s Report and Educational Statistics of the International College of Smyrna Turkey for the Scholastic Year 1917-1918*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.808; ABCFM. (1916) *Dean’s Report 1915-1916*. (International College of Smyrna, Turkey). ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40. No.536, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

scope and under greatest difficulty – no books could be imported and shortages of food and supplies increased. In June 1918 the local Governor asked the missionaries whether the College could be used for a few weeks as a gathering place for British prisoners to be repatriated according to the term of the Berne Convention – the missionaries declined as there would be no governmental interference without their consent. However in early September word came that the prisoners were being sent to the College anyway – soon after 12<sup>th</sup> September the campus hall and gymnasium were populated by 100-2,000 British and Indian soldiers, thus the College had to close temporarily and all school workers had to serve the British soldiers and Turkish officers until 4<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>393</sup> It was not long after the end of WWI that the national struggle followed. When the Greek troops occupied the city on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1920, the school faced greater pressure than ever before.

To generalize about the educational policies of the American Board would be a mistake, giving that each American institution adopted its own educational fashions, as a reflection of different attitudes of its missionary staff and the local contexts. For instance, in Tarsus, the local government treated missionaries relatively better than other governments, and St. Paul's College (1888-) managed to open during the War, "faint yet pursuing". After 1917, the broken relationship with the national government meant that only one American teacher remained, with a faculty of seven and 63 academy students. For the sake of the continuity of the school, they decided to "walk softly" and make some concessions – for example, in making Friday the weekly holiday instead of Saturday and hoisting the Turkish flag on that day. But there was no exception in religious services, against which no Muslim students objected. In 1918-19, there were 218 students enrolled in St. Paul's College, among whom 85 were Muslim,<sup>394</sup> – before the War in early 1914, there were only nine Muslim students out of 210 total, demonstrating the success of the College in obtaining a higher level of

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<sup>393</sup> ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>394</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Report of St. Paul's College and Academy for the Schoolyears 1914-1919*. Reel 667, No.570.

compatibility in a Turkifying milieu. In some sense, the social Darwinism internalized by the American missionaries to justify their religious ‘Manifest Destiny’ placed their American institutions in a strong position in the changing context of the Ottoman twilight.

### **Difficulty and Hope: American Missionary Education in the New Turkey**

Even though the American Board saw the necessity to shift towards Muslim education since the outbreak of WWI, in the ambiguous education agenda of the Turkey Mission, the vision to adopt pro-Turkish nationalist education in American schools was always juxtaposed with internationalistic appeals to have all children from different religions and nationalities living together on campus “in the spirit of love of the Christ”. It was not until the majority population of Turkey became Muslim Turks, after the Christian exodus, that the “internationalistic spirit” was eclipsed among American educators.<sup>395</sup> With these political and demographic changes, American schools received a higher influx of Turkish enrolment at the expense of Christian student loss, which significantly altered the student body structure. In St. Paul’s College in Tarsus, during the school year 1920-1921 there was only one Turk among the total enrolment of 202 students, however by 1923-24 the student body was split equally between Muslims and Christians. In the American School for Girls in Adana, which was once a college mostly for Armenian girls, during 1922-23, 112 were enrolment in total, with 20 Muslim students, 78 Christians and 14 Jews. (The removal of French schools in the previous year also contributed to a new influx of pupils.) By 1923-24, enrolment grew to 129, with 48 Muslims, 65 Christians and 16 Jewish girls, a more than twofold increase for Muslim enrolment within one year.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *American School for Girls, Adana, Turkey. School Year 1922-23*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.144, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>396</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *American School for Girls, Adana, Turkey. School Year 1922-23*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.144, Houghton Library, Cambridge. .

Moreover, as another major difference from the Young Turk period, the American schools received more public criticism from the Turks in the ideologically and structurally nationalizing country, and more radical public concern arose about the potential dangers of the missionary schools for the young Turkish generation. Early in 1921 a typical article entitled 'Foreign school and their influence' was published to encourage Turkish parents not to send their children to American schools, in which the author berated the foreign schools and missionaries as a tool used by foreign countries to injure and corrupt Turkey, penetrating not only the material well-being of the Turks but also their morals. The missionary schools overran the land "like a plague of locusts, with the pretext of giving us knowledge". It was dangerous to have the Turkish youth trained in foreign schools at the most sensitive and easily influential period of their lives. As the author claimed, each year half a million children in Turkey were being trained at 1,500 missionary schools, and of those children 60% were Muslims. In the case of İstanbul, with at thousands of Muslim girls between eight and 16 being educated in foreign schools, they were considered to be the main cause of the downfall of character and corruption of morals among Turkish women. Regarding Muslim boys, "not more than two in a thousand" of them had not been "spoiled" in foreign schools. The article argued that students in such schools received neither training connected to their own religion and nationality, nor the history, glories and present prosperity of their country, and that the Turkish language was just taught "in a most superficial way", thus the influence of these foreign schools was "carelessness in regard to all virtues", "a lack of religious and national sentiment", "no patriotism", and "vain-gloriousness". An extreme abhorrence for foreign schools and their conspiratorial missionaries was clear:

These foreign institutions, that have crawled like so many glittering snakes into the bosom of the fatherland, are belching forth all sorts of poison in the name of education. Not content with simply dealing in everything that eternally separates from each other those of different religious and systems, they have done and are doing everything possible to separate even those who belong to the same system and the same faith, from one another. Among those we have known of institutions that have as their sole object the attracting of Moslem girls

and their training and education in Christian customs and religion... The foreigners wish in this way to make us in reality their slaves. At the back of every missionary is a foreign occupation.<sup>397</sup>

The American missionaries were well aware of the prevailing anti-foreign sentiment of the Turks, yet suggested that such radical opponents “certainly did not represent the prevailing opinion throughout Anatolia”. Pointing out that the Turkish antagonism against foreign schools was mostly aimed at French schools, they believed the Ankara government also welcomed the American’s help. An American would rather sneer at these vehement attacks as “a frantic screech of despair” from those angry Turks who had realized that a mass of Turkish people had been influenced by America’s vital work, so the hostile reaction in the words of a missionary was a “peculiar paradox in the way the human animal acts”, that “often what he wants to do most he kicks away”.<sup>398</sup>

Yet the missionaries’ optimism was misplaced. While attending American schools remained a preference of some well-off Turkish families, entering the Republic period, the Kemalist government closed most of the foreign schools and kept the remaining American institutions under close surveillance. With a new nationalist principle, the government set up new school laws for all foreign and special schools in October 1922.<sup>399</sup> The Lausanne Treaty of 1923 created further regulations on foreign schools in Turkey: 1) “All the schools operating in Turkey up to 1914 are authorized to keep on, on condition of submitting to the control of the Commissariat of Instruction and to the rules concerning private schools”; 2) “Schools founded since the Moudros Treaty will

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<sup>397</sup> Euyud. (1921). ‘Foreign Schools and Their Influence’, *Konia Daily*, 11 August. (Translation from Ottoman Turkish is collected in ABCMF collections, Houghton Library, Cambridge. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, No.290.) (Same article was also published in *Ugua*, 1921, May 4, Ankara, No.649).

<sup>398</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol 1. No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge., p.11.

<sup>399</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *St. Paul’s Collegiate Institute. Report for School Year 1922-1923*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.150, Houghton Library, Cambridge. (In Diyarbakır this requirement was not enforced. These rules only affected schools run by foreigners but did not apply to Armenian or Greek schools or church schools under native management.)

be authorized to function only after investigation by the Turkish government by their program and activity.”; and 3) “The government may refuse authorization for the opening of schools in places where there are no persons of the nationality represented by the schools”.<sup>400</sup>

In the new political environment, missionary schools had to be under close inspections of the details of their school programmes by the local governments. The certificates of all teachers, textbooks and materials had to be examined. The Armenian teachers who had once contributed to the teaching staff were no longer allowed to work in American schools. The law said no Armenians or Arabs could teach in any elementary school or class, so American kindergartens and primary schools faced a problem of recruiting new domestic teachers from the Board to the Turkey Mission, otherwise their work would be partially or fully stopped. More importantly, Turkish had to be the language of the school and teachers of Turkish history, language and geography had to be replaced by Turks and approved by the Superintendent of Instruction. In addition, no chapel exercises and Bibles could be read or prayers offered when Muslims were present. All religious “pictures and statues” had to be removed as well.<sup>401</sup> In short, the missionary schools under the new law were obliged to be more Turkified by acquiring more Turkish elements in their teaching methods.

Nevertheless, the American missionaries seemed willing to accept all the new government supervisions and regulations, and they regarded adaptation to the new laws as a necessary sacrifice to plant seeds for future harvest. Regarding the governmental attitude, the American missionaries claimed that it was “satisfied” and “friendly” enough. In fact, a few remaining American schools were only some of the foreign institutions which had continued uninterruptedly in the new period since they had

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<sup>400</sup> ‘Foreign School (Letter Signed Muheyed)’, *Tanin*. (Translation from Ottoman Turkish is collected in ABCMF collections, Houghton Library, Cambridge. ABC 16.9.1., Vol.2, No.317.)

<sup>401</sup> Nilson, P. E. (1924) ‘Our Greatest Need, -Christian Teachers.’ Letter to Enoch Bell. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.151C, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

promised to abide by the law, while most foreign schools – practically all French schools and a large number of native Christian schools – were closed by the government as they failed to comply. To the missionaries' relief, their college churches, bible classes, and Sunday services were allowed to continue operating, though Muslim (and Jewish) students were forbidden to attend the regular services. It was notable that outside the school the city churches were all closed or under government control following an official attempt at national secularization.<sup>402</sup>

The American missionaries were prudent to change their opinions and actions according to the social-political changes. In contrast to the apparently deep distrust and discontent of the missionaries against the wartime Kemalist authorities, which they saw as a lost cause, just one or two years later, they changed their tone, asserting that the new government and missionaries could appreciate each other and work together in harmony, as per the description in the school report of 1923-24:

The new government has been settling down to a peace regime after thirteen years of war. Soldiers are taking up peaceful occupations and officers are turning their attention to civil administration. The new Republic is being established. New laws are being made and old method cast away. In every land a certain amount of experimenting in law making must of necessity go on. This is true here. We have as school tried to carry on our work under these laws as we have understood them. Our interpretation of them has not always been the same as that of some officials but our experience has been that difficulty comes from lack of understanding and a frank talk usually straightens them out. We believe that we now understand better what the government wishes of us and that the officials understand our aims better and we feel hopeful for the future.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> ABCFM. (1924) *Report for the Year 1923-1924* (St. Paul's College, Tarsus) ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1. No.151A, Houghton Library, Cambridge, p.3

<sup>403</sup> ABCFM. (1924) *American School for Girls, Adana, Turkey. School Year 1923-24*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.147, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

This cooperative attitude of the American missionaries to abide by the new regulation was their principle policy in the new period. The American teachers of the schools in Adana reported that immediately after the new semester began in September 1922, the government sent the new regulations to the school, responding to which the missionaries seemed to have done irreproachable work:

There was nothing we could not willing comply with, and in fact, that there was little we need change in our curriculum... We had already in our school more Turkish than the law requires of foreign schools. We had already tried to have a strong Turkish course for certainly it is most important that one should know well the language of the country and be able to read and write it easily.<sup>404</sup>

However, several Turkish articles were written accusing the American schools of illicit attempts to proselytize the Turkish children. For example, in ‘They convert our children’ (1923), the author reported that three students of the Gedik Pasha American School had come to the press office of the newspaper complaining about their teachers and lessons. The students complained that their teachers were teaching them the Bible and Christian beliefs instead of teaching lessons and they had reported this to the school president, but “she took no notice”, so “Now we came to you [the press office]. Our teachers are doing all in their power to convert us from our true religion. Do anything you can write, talk, but save us from this”. Here the American missionary schools were identified as “centres of Christian propaganda more than they are centres of science and learning”. The author also appealed to the Ministry of Public Instruction and Religious Affairs to establish serious measures against the American schools as “it has been seen that they served the organization of the hopeful Pontus in Sivasa and Amassia”.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *American School for Girls, Adana, Turkey. School Year 1922-23*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.144, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>405</sup> ‘They Convert Our Children! The American Schools Teach the Bible to Our Children’. (1923). *Ileri*, 23 March. (Translation from Ottoman Turkish is collected in ABCMF collections, Houghton Library, Cambridge. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, No.307.)



Another article, ‘An example of American Extreme Fanaticism – they sent our children to chapel’ published in the newspaper *Tevhid-i-Efkia*r 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1923, reported that the Muslim students at Robert College were obliged to go to chapel just like the Christian students. Although Robert College had announced that the Muslim students would not have to attend the chapel exercises by order of the Turkish government, the college was still reportedly requiring Muslim students to be present in chapel on Tuesdays and Fridays, because lectures were delivered on these days at chapel. Therefore, the college found a way to oblige Muslim students to attend chapel exercises despite the government order. The newspapers argued that while it had large lecture halls, the college delivered lectures in chapel and these lectures were not common lectures but religious sermons with the aim to spread Christianity and Protestantism. Finally, the newspaper demanded the government issue a second order to the effect that Muslim students should not enter the threshold of the chapel and thus prevent the Americans from converting them with “extreme fanaticism”.

The next day, the same newspaper also attacked the “uncivilized actions” of the Gedik Pasha American School, saying that in its title “They convert our children” to prove that American fanaticism existed on the campus. According to the article, the Muslim students at the school, who numbered 71, were obliged to each buy a copy of the Bible, and the school taught the Bible for one hour every day, requiring the students to attend and take part in Christian services every morning. The students were obliged to take the Christian position during prayers and to sing Christian hymns. Additionally, the school was not closed on Fridays and Kandil days (religious holidays corresponding to the phases in the life of the Prophet) but was on Saturdays and Sundays. It could be seen that the Turkish authorities and society were highly vigilant about every possible transgression of the American missionaries’ attempts to ‘convert’ their Muslim students. In another case, a Muslim student was prosecuted by her classmates and tried in Turkish court for being “too close with her American teachers”.<sup>406</sup> In response to the

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<sup>406</sup> ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

missionary wrongdoings and the civil inquisition, a new law was adopted in 1924 to forbid any kind of religious propaganda in educational and medical institutions in Turkey, which deprived the American schools of Bible studies and left the missionaries in despair.<sup>407</sup>

Apart from the religious prohibitions, the Kemalist authorities and their new laws also brought to the American schools a series of practical problems in course-teaching. First, it was difficult for the missionary schools to obtain suitable schoolbooks in Turkey. History and geography textbooks were obliged to be in Turkish under the new law, because most of those published abroad contained information that offended Turkish sensibilities. Sensitive topics included the Crusades, the backwardness of people of a particular faith or nation, geographical boundaries, particularly those of the non-existent Sevres Treaty, and references in national terms to people currently or formerly within the territories of Turkey. A schoolbook containing such topics would “cause danger” in teaching the Turkish children, according to the authorities.<sup>408</sup> Secondly, the new law required a forced change in the composition of the teaching staff and caused staff losses. For example, as to St. Paul’s College in Tarsus, it was reported that three teachers were asked to be dismissed by the government: one Arabic language teacher, since no Arabic could not be taught; and one Arabic and one Armenian teacher since Arabs and Armenians could not teach in elementary classes. The school in Adana also lost its Armenian teacher after she went to Alexander for holiday and was forbidden from returning to Turkey.

Moreover, how to get along with the new Turkish teachers was also an issue for American teachers. The missionaries found it hard to acquire proper Turkish teachers who were qualified by the Turkish education department. The American schools complained that the Turkish teachers tended to be unfamiliar with the methods and

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<sup>407</sup> Barton, L. J. (1924). *Status and Outlook of Missionary Work in Turkey*. p.2.

<sup>408</sup> ABCFM. (1924) *Memorandum for American Board Schools*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.29, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

ideals of American education. Though they did good work in the classroom, they had irregular attendance and demonstrated an unwillingness to do the same amount of work as American teachers. The difficulty was that to secure those Turkish teachers independent of Turkish schools was virtually impossible. Turkish teachers who were qualified by the Turkish government practically had been educated in Turkish school at government expense and have pledged themselves to teach a number of years wherever appointed they were by the Department of Education. A Turkish teacher mentioned in the report of the Adana college who was appointed by the superintendent with the promise that they would continue teaching throughout next year. However, when the superintendent changed, the teacher was taken away and replaced by two new Turkish teachers of the Girls' Normal school. Since their first duty was to the Normal school the missionaries changed their school programme so that the teachers might do their work in the missionary school during their free time, but the situation did not improve as one teacher failed to return after four or five days, and the other was later appointed to a new site after several weeks so the school programme had to change again. When Ramadan came, the Turkish teachers could not fulfil the same number of hours they had before. As a result, "the girls in school under the new laws got even less Turkish than before". This was an issue that the Turkish law and superintendent could not properly solve.

While they reluctantly embraced native Turkish teachers, the missionary schools felt a desperate need for Christian teachers, but since the native Christian teachers were not allowed to teach (and hardly to be found within Turkey), the best option was to import new domestic teachers from the US. Although the increase in Turkish teaching staff in the schools was accepted by the missionaries as a necessary sacrifice for their "beaten road in the future", they still thought that the Muslim ways and influences of the Turkish teachers corroded the purity and authenticity of Protestantism and Americanism, hindering their aim that one day Christianity would prevail in Turkey. However, due to financial constraints and lack of support from the half-hearted Board at home, the replenishment of American teachers became a grave problem for missionary work in Turkey. By 1924, as reported in Tarsus, the American college

continued with 200 boys and nine teachers, only two of whom were American. To comply with the law, the college also dropped chapel and Bible study and replaced them with morning assembly and scouting. Thus, the American schools became increasingly nationalized under the control of the new authorities.

On the other hand, the Turkish government was rapidly developing national schools along Western lines.<sup>409</sup> However, missionaries were still confident about their schools' future because they were still desired by many Turks, especially when they developed practical courses such as domestic science for girls and agriculture and trades for boys, which were greatly needed in the country. In this context, it was reported that in 1923 there were 257 Turkish children in their schools; this number rose to 919 in 1926, and more than 1,000 by 1926-27.<sup>410</sup> This development began to worry some Turkish intellectuals though they still reluctantly approved the American schools. From their perspective, one of the chief objectives was to gradually replace the foreign schools with their own Turkish scholastic institutions so that Turkish citizens were educated by their own educators – they believed that national education rather than foreign schools was “the future of Turkey”, and the Turks, as the “uncontested masters” of the country, ought to exercise complete sovereignty in the field of education. Consequently, as soon as Turks had set up good schools in sufficient numbers, the “humanitarian mission” of the foreign educators were expected to be terminated with immediate effect. However, as there was still a need for the American schools, they believed that the Turkish citizens should continue to “voluntarily” accept the “benevolent help” that missionary educators offered, until that “happy time” came, even though some of those establishments had been “nothing but rallying places of political bandits”. Thus, as long

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<sup>409</sup> ABCFM. (1927) *Stereoptican Slides in ZINJE-DERE*. (Talas) ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.214, Houghton Library, Cambridge. “Turks are making valiant efforts to improve their educational system and are eagerly following western methods. Teachers' salaries are now higher. European text-books have been translated in large numbers. Western educators like Dewey are being carefully studied and Turkish leaders are actually now travelling in Europe studying European school systems. All this means that there is hope for the progress of Turkey”.

<sup>410</sup> ABCFM. (1926) *Education*. ABC 16.9.1. 3. Vol.1, No.307, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

as the foreign schools respected Turkish principles, “traditional Turkish hospitality” borne from their religion and educational demands, allowed the foreign schools to profit and operate in the country with “confidence, gratitude and respect”.<sup>411</sup>

In 1925 a crucial education law involving the secularization of missionary schools was enforced to prevent children in Turkey under 12 years from attending foreign schools. This decision was made after the Turkish government decided the impressionable years from seven to 12 were important in the direction they gave to an individual’s outlook, thus the government determined that it would conduct all education for such children to develop national and patriotic Turkish sentiment.<sup>412</sup> Correspondingly, this government policy represented a huge blow to the American kindergartens and primary schools, being a strong counteraction against the established American Board policy to sow Christian influence among Turkish Muslim children. The new law also obliged each school director to sign a statement that they would abide by the law to secure permission from the Education Department to open American schools. Meanwhile, a strong appeal was made by the Turkish government to American schools to include more subjects such as manual training to match the Turkish “education for life”, through which the Turkish government hoped foreign schools could train Turkish citizens in labour courses to enable them to gain a livelihood.

The state intent to secularize and nationalize foreign schools continued in the following years. In 1926, another order was sent to the American school in Adana, requiring 12 large, framed picture of Mustapha Kemal Pasha be hung in the school. It was also forbidden to have any clerk in the school office who had not been approved by the local authorities. Plus, no boys were to be punished by suspension or expulsion without the

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<sup>411</sup> ABCFM (Translation from Ottoman Journal *Tanin*, written by Djelal Essad), 1928, August 8 (Talas). *Let Us Dot Our I's (let us be precise)*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, No.305, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>412</sup> ABCFM. (1924) Memorandum for American Board Schools. ABC 16.9.1.Vol.1, No.29, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

consent of the local leader.<sup>413</sup> Turkish enrolment continued to increase on the American campuses every year. By 1926, the Collegiate Institute at Gueuz-Tepe, İstanbul, reported its Turkish student body has grown to 70%, even though six free Turkish boarders were compelled to be received by the order of National Education Department that year. As the report concluded, the “Turkish student is everything”.<sup>414</sup> These circumstances indicated that the missionary schools in the new nation bore more and more Turkish traits under government control.

Responding to the national guidelines, the missionary policy had become Turkish-oriented by the second half of the 1920s. As claimed by the missionaries: “The AIM of the Mission is to make Christ known, the policy of the Mission may vary at different stages”. The missionaries had to continually abide by the new law and modify their school curriculum and structures to stay in the country. The discourse of direct evangelization began to appear less often in the new missionary agenda of the late 1920s, but the rise of the new emphasis on “reconciliation” was notable.<sup>415</sup> They argued that their direct purpose was to help Turks with the representation of the spirit of Jesus Christ. The predominant policy in Turkey at that time (c.1928) became “the rendering to Turkish people of every possible assistance as an expression of brotherly service in the name of Jesus Christ”. Such a policy was also called the “the principles of Incarnation”, which applied to the educational work among Turkish Muslims:

We accept the restrictions put upon our aim or message. We do not want to alienate children from their homes, their religion, or their country, but we do want to share with them a vital spirit which will recreate all of these things according to the mind of Christ. We will do this as we can, realizing that one of

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<sup>413</sup> ABCFM. (1926) February 21. Letter to the “Mother” of an unidentified American Missionary. ABC 16.9.1. 3. Vol.1, No.307, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>414</sup> McNaughton. (1926) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, November 12. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.182, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>415</sup> ABCFM. (1928) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, September 17. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.280, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

the first steps may be a longer or shorter period of Christlike service without direct preaching.<sup>416</sup>

Although many of their stations were closed and some schools ceased to operate, the American missionaries in the new Republic of Turkey, who had their work closely inspected by the government, remained steadfast and aspirational about their work. To them, Turkey was a pioneer field where strategic opportunities were especially open in education and medicine. Claiming to be interested in “the educational, moral, spiritual and economic advance of the people of Turkey”, the American students welcomed the day “when Turkish students will flock into our schools”, noting that “that day has already dawned”.<sup>417</sup>

## Appendix

### Missionary colleges in 1922

#### 1. Organized *independent* of missionary action

- *Robert College Constantinople*

Founded in 1863 by Mr Christopher Robert and Dr Cyrus Hamlin. Unlike other missionaries, Dr Hamlin thought that higher education in Turkey under American instruction should use English as its medium of instruction. The college aimed to give American college training in Turkey. It also gave thorough language courses in the vernacular. It later added an engineering school and granted American degrees.

- *St. Paul's College, Tarsus*

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<sup>416</sup> ABCFM, (1928) ‘Statement of Purpose’ (enclosure in letter), August 8. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1. No.280, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

Founded in 1887 to maintain an American Christian college in the birth city of St. Paul and to educate to needy boys, primarily with an emphasis on preparing candidates for the Christian ministry. Incorporated in 1887 as St. Paul's Institute, in the state of New York, the college's trustees later turned over the institution to the American Board, and the Board instructed the Central Turkey Mission to appoint a Board of Managers for its local management. This later body consisted of members of the CTM.

- *Apostolic Institute, Konia*

Founded in 1891, the local management was made up of native staff only.

2. Organized by mission action or in continuation of American missionary policy

- *Syrian protestant college, Beirut*
- *International College, Smyrna* (for men)
- *Constantinople College, Constantinople* (American College for Girls)

3. Organised as an outgrowth of mission policy but involving native co-operation

- *Central Turkey College, Aintab* (founded 1874)
- *Euphrates College, Harpout* (founded 1878)
- *Anatolia College, Marsovan* (founded 1887; troubles of 1895 led to re-organization of the college under purely foreign management)

4. Other institutions

- *Boarding School for Girls, Beirut*
- *American Collegiate Institute, Smyrna* (for girls, run by Woman's Board)
- *Boarding School for Girls, Marsovan,*
- *Central Turkey Girls' College, Marash* (run by Woman's Board)
- *Teachers' College, Sivas*
- *College, Van*

5. High schools



- *Adana American College for Girls* (1880-1927; mostly for Armenians)
- *Talas American College, Talas, Kayseri* (1871; secondary schools for boys)
- *The Armenian Girls' High School, Adabazar* (run by Miss Kinney)
- *Bithynia High School, Bardizag* (for Armenians)
- *The American School for Girls, Bursa* (1880; reopened 1921; for Armenians)
- *The Constantinople Language School* (1920; for new missionaries' Turkish language training)
- *The School of Religion at Constantinople* (1922; training religious and social workers in the Near East)

#### American schools operating in Turkey in 1927<sup>418</sup>

- *Gedik Pasha American Day School, İstanbul* (for girls and boys)
- *American Lycee for Girls, Brousa* (boarding and day students)
- *American School for Girls, Adana* (boarding and day students)
- *American Collegiate Institute for Girls, İzmir* (boarding and day students)
- *American School for Girls, Scutari, İstanbul* (boarding and day students)
- *American Collegiate Institute for Boys, Guez Tepe, İstanbul* (boarding and day students)
- *St. Paul's College for Boys, Tarsus* (boarding and day students)
- *American School for Girls, Merzifoun* (boarding and day students)

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<sup>418</sup> Goodsell, F.F. (Secretary of the Turkey Mission) (1927), Letter to American Ambassador, J.A. Grew, October 24. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.1, No.269, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

## **Chapter V: Working Among Muslims: the American Board's 'Muslim Mission' and its Interactions in the Late Ottoman Period (1906-1929)**

### **- American Hospitals: Gateway to the Muslim Masses**

Shortly before the first American hospital was built in Aintab in 1879, the American missionaries believed that its presence in this land of rampant “bigotry” could have multiple benefits, such as boosting religious influence and Protestant prestige, helping “the sick poor” with “spiritual as well as bodily healing”, using a transcendent power to “break sectarian fanaticism”, linking “Muslim, and Christian and Jew in the bonds of a common belief in a science” with Christian faith and love, securing native cooperation, and protecting the institutions from the “outbreak of religious intolerance and violence”.<sup>419</sup> With this understanding, by the Young Turk period nine American missionary hospitals had been established in Aintab Adana, Merzifon, Talas, Sivas, Erzurum, Harput, Mardin, and Van.

In the Board's first report on Muslim work of 1906, the American missionaries reaffirmed that the hospital work had gained acceptance among the local population and was providing the Mission with a great opportunity to work directly with local Muslims. Their Christian/Protestant messages could be introduced to the Muslim masses through closer relations between Muslim patients confined to hospital beds and Missionary workers who read them the Bible, sang hymns and recited parables or other stories. The report pointed out that, in the hospitals:

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<sup>419</sup> Yücel, İ. (2015). ‘An Overview of Religious Medicine in the Near East: Mission Hospitals of the American Board in Asia Minor (1880-1923)’. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 14(40), p.48.

a large proportion of the patients are Moslems... They hear the Gospel each evening at prayers in the wards and at services held there on Sundays, and the out-patients are touched through the services before the clinics three times a week. There are also the private conversations of nurses and the Bible women with a great many. Some are interested to read the Bible and many to learn the hymns... There are instances of Mohammedan patients who in the judgement of nurses have become Christians during their stay in the hospital.<sup>420</sup>

The importance of medical services provided through health centres for Muslim evangelising work came to be increasingly appreciated by all missionary workers in Turkey. Missionary hospitals where Turks regularly received medical services became key places, apart from American schools, to directly encounter a great number of Muslims. Moreover, missionaries frequently found that when the Muslims received treatment in American hospitals and observed their benevolent and impartial attitudes towards all patients, they were more likely to be sympathetic to and curious about Christianity and missionary activities, which were generally stymied by traditional prejudices and rumours about Christians and foreigners.<sup>421</sup> Turkish patients were observed to be most grateful for the treatment, and most “responsive and appreciative” to missionary workers, as well as “the most attentive listeners at the services”.<sup>422</sup> To the missionaries, American medical services were a potent method to evangelize Muslims, despite frequent failures to achieve this aim. For example, missionaries reported on an older Muslim named Hassim Agha who had kissed the Bible and came to believe its teachings after receiving a successful eye operation in Adana Hospital.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> ABCFM. (1907) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslem Appointed by Central Turkey Mission at the Meeting in Adana, 1906, Presented at the Annual Meeting in Marash, June-July 1907.* Reel 660, No.252.

<sup>421</sup> ABCFM. Reel 631, V.41, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989) pp.91-105.

<sup>422</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.205.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

The American hospital not only received a large proportion of poor patients (with about 50% seen for free)<sup>424</sup> but also had a highly heterogeneous populace. While Armenians constituting the largest part (around 40%), Muslims made up one of largest religious groups among American hospital patients prior to the Republic of Turkey, usually totalling 40% of patients.<sup>425</sup> Early in 1907, medical missionaries in the Adana Hospital noticed that “many Moslems were beginning to come”, accounting for about one-third<sup>426</sup> of patients. Many of them, particularly Muslim women, showed great willingness to hear the preaching in the hospital.<sup>427</sup> The medical workers in Konya also reported in 1911 that “among various patients we have met with all kinds, from fanatical opposers to hearty accepters”.<sup>428</sup> Another missionary observation was that “the hymn has a great power in drawing the Moslems”. It was reported that there were many Muslims who were greatly impressed with the hymns since Islamic rituals do not include them. Some Muslims even expressed their enthusiasm and hope to spread the hymns in their village.<sup>429</sup> For those patients who showed an interest in Christianity, Bibles and Testaments were given to them when they left, thus Bibles could be distributed to Muslim homes.<sup>430</sup> It was observed that, “a good many of our new gospel leaflets and tracts were distributed in the waiting room; Moslem and Christian women would crowd about one, begging for a ? or tract, for someone of their circle who could read. Some went to the villages with patients”.<sup>431</sup> While Muslim masses outside the hospitals tended to be impervious to other faiths and vigilant against direct missionary proselytizing, hospitals presented a key method for reaching Turks.

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<sup>424</sup> Yücel, İ. (2015), pp.55-58.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Also in 1907, Muslims accounted for around two-fifths of in-patients in the hospital at Aintab and one-third in Marash. ABCFM. (1907) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslem Appointed by Central Turkey Mission at the Meeting in Adana, 1906, Presented at the Annual Meeting in Marash, June-July, 1907*. Reel 660, No.248.

<sup>427</sup> ABCFM. (1907) *Medical Mission. Adana, Second Year's Report..* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 660. 16.9.5. Vol. 15. No.589, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>428</sup> ABCFM. Reel 631, V.041, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989) pp.91-105.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> ABCFM. (1907) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslem Appointed by Central Turkey Mission at the Meeting in Adana, 1906, Presented at the Annual Meeting in Marash, June-July, 1907*. Reel 660, No.250.

<sup>431</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.32.

The contacts between Missionaries and Muslims through medical services occurred much earlier and on a larger scale compared to contacts through educational institutions in some places. While the student body of Turkish Muslims in the Central Turkey College in Aintab grew from zero (in 1907) to ten (in 1908), after the Revolution, 75 Turks (among 219 cases in total) had received surgery at the American hospital of Aintab early in 1900.<sup>432</sup> Thus, for a long time the significance of the missionary medical service was even greater than their education work with regard to Muslim evangelization, at least in inner Anatolia. As pointed out in the 1914 Committee on Muslim Work Report: “Mission Hospitals constitute perhaps the best agency yet known in order to get into sympathetic touch with the Moslem”.<sup>433</sup> The same report also pointed out that the chaplain of Aintab Hospital “has well-nigh lived in the clinic building” so to meet Turks and Kurds – he was often seen talking with Turks in the hospital yard, halls or other corners.<sup>434</sup> In 1913-1914 in Aintab, 2,080 Muslims had used the clinic’s services, and there had been opportunities for missionaries to talk personally with 1,185 of them.<sup>435</sup>

Continuous records about the hygiene and medical conditions of the Empire were kept since the first American missionary medical workers arrived in the 1830s. As they had observed a high death rate of children in Muslim villages, a medical tour was emphasized as an important part of the medical service for those Muslims who lived far from the hospitals. Medical tours involved circulating around Muslim villages with a missionary physician and surgeon, accompanied by an evangelical worker (usually a

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<sup>432</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the Director of Central Turkey College, Aintab, Turkey-in Asia, for the Year 1908-1909. Submitted to the Board of Managers.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 661. 16.9.5. Vol. 16, No.339, Houghton Library, Cambridge; ABCFM. (1900) *Report of the Azariah Smith Memorial Hospital, Aintab, Turkey, Asia, September 5, 1899-June 25, 1900.* ABC 16. Unit 5. Reel 661. 16.9.5. Vol. 16. No.493, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>433</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.160.

<sup>434</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Minutes of Annual Meeting June 1911.* Reel 666, No.36.

<sup>435</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.204.

Bible Women). It often took missionary workers weeks or months to tour each village or town. The work mainly included treating simple ailments, giving advice about cleanliness, food, caring for the sick, and prevention of illness, thus winning the attention of the village folk to listen to gospel stories as well. In hospitals a considerable proportion of patients came from far off places. At Adana Hospital, between 1913-14, the inpatients from Adana city numbered 205, while 178 came from other cities and villages; there were 476 local Muslim clinic patients and 214 non-locals.<sup>436</sup> Hospital work meant that missionaries could enter new Muslim regions through their former patients.<sup>437</sup> (In one case, the missionaries visited a thief's home when touring Muslim villages – the thief had been a patient for six months in the hospital three years earlier, and he treated the missionaries well and showed real affection to the Armenian nurse who cared him.<sup>438</sup>) It was also noted that “Moslem women have most to endure and get less attention and relief, because male physicians are so little permitted in the homes of Muslim families”.<sup>439</sup> Women missionary medical workers were considered of great significance on these medical tours. A typical and important figure among the medical tour workers, Miss Trowbridge of Aintab Hospital was also the leader of the local Bible Women.<sup>440</sup> She had devoted herself to medical tours among Muslim villages from 1906 and even continued her efforts during the First World War.

More importantly, unlike other American missionaries who were more likely to encounter prejudice, medical workers were generally appreciated by the Turkish Muslims for their work. They were considered able to create greater influence and

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<sup>436</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *The International Hospital of the Central Turkey Mission.*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2, No.95, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>437</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission.* Reel 667, No.30.

<sup>438</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.210.

<sup>439</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *The International Hospital of the Central Turkey Mission. Report 1913-1914.* ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2, No.98, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>440</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.172; No. 209. Other examples were Miss Webb and Miss Wallis in Adana Hospital.

impressions in Muslim society with their privileged position. In one example, an American physician in Adana managed to establish an intimate association with the Vali Pasha by curing his daughter's typhoid fever; he was then ordered to become a government physician and was called on by wealthy Muslims nearly every day.<sup>441</sup> As another representative example, Dr Shepard was a missionary physician who worked in Aintab and had an enviable reputation throughout the county. His 30-plus years of work made him thousands of personal friends among all classes of people, both Muslims and Christians. He was decorated by the CUP in 1910 for his work during the 1909 massacres and honoured by the Turks as "the Great Hakeem". Muslims also frequently called the American hospital of Aintab – one of the most famous missionary hospitals in Turkey at that time – the "health home" (Shifa-khane) instead of the common Turkish term for hospital, "sick home" (Hasta-khane).<sup>442</sup> It was reported that in 1912, two-thirds of the patients in his private clinic were Muslims (501 out of 701), whereas in a general clinic the Muslim patients accounted for a little less than a quarter, which highlights his reputation among local Muslims.<sup>443</sup> Reportedly, Dr Shepard was once seized by thieves, but when they discovered who he was, they not only freed him but also escorted him home.<sup>444</sup> The American hospitals also had friendly relations with Turkish hospitals in general and sometimes cooperated in medical work. For instance, in 1910 Turkish surgeon Dr Shevke, who was a member of Sivas parliament and had a good reputation among his people, visited Sivas city, where he helped the American Hospital (West Memorial Hospital) with some patients and performed operation there. The Turkish surgeon at first was rather suspicious of the American operating room, but soon grew to appreciate it and even wrote an unsolicited recommendation for an Armenian nurse at the Hospital for her work.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666 No.720; ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*, Reel 667, No.208.

<sup>442</sup> ABCFM. *Facts Concerning Turkey College and Hospital. Aintab, Turkey*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21. part 1, No.538, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>443</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Minutes of Annual Meeting June 1911*. Reel 666, No.36.

<sup>444</sup> ABCFM. *Dr. Barton tells this story of Dr. Shepard*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5 Vol. 22, No.643, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>445</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Report of Sivas Station for Year 1910-11*. ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39,.No.580, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

The work of Muslim evangelization was carried out with most enthusiasm in the missionary hospitals of Aintab and Adana, with touring work in the local Muslim villages of central Turkey from the 1900s. After 1908, the deputy of the CTM began to urge the other Missions to carry out Muslim evangelical work at general Annual Meetings. In the hospitals of the other Missions, there was a growing concern for their Turkish patients as well, under the impetus of the Central Mission, which can be readily perceived from their reports and correspondences. For example, in the fall of 1908, as reported by the Sivas hospital, the medical missionaries took a ten-day medical trip to the outstation at Divrik, where they found great opportunities for work among the local Turks, feeling that they “must do something for the Moslems”. In the same report, they also recorded three cases of increasing numbers of Muslim patients, which showed their interest in Muslim work.<sup>446</sup> In 1913-14, when typhus was rampant in Eastern Turkey, the American Hospital in Van had the chance to receive a large number of Muslim patients, and two Muslims were converted in the hospital. According to the hospital records, a man who was a “rabid revolutionist and agnostic, ridiculed everything religious and blasphemed Christ”, became absorbed in the Bible after reading it in the hospital.<sup>447</sup> The same report also told the story of a Muslim patient who died with the Bible opened on his chest and praying for Christ. The Hospital received a letter from the government to thank them for their work in 1914. In Harput Hospital the American missionaries recorded stories of a few Muslim patients every year, and many religious services were practised in Turkish; the Muslims “often giving the closest attention, giving expressions of assent and saying ‘Ameen’”.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Allen, H. M. (1908) Correspondence to Dr Barton, August 6. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 618. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.726, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>447</sup> See letters to W.W. Peet, 1913-1914. ABC 16.10.1 1829-1960, V.7, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>448</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Tenth Annual Report of the Harpoot Medical Department Including Second Annual Report of the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital. For Year Ending June 30th, 1912.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.337, Houghton Library, Cambridge. For reference: Statistics of Harput American Hospital 1911-12 (The Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital): Turks 30%, Kurds 10%, Armenian 58%, Other 2%; Muslims 40% Christians 60% (Protestants 19%, Gregorians 39%, Roman Syrian & Greek Catholics 2%). ABCFM. (1912) *Tenth Annual Report of the Harpoot Medical Department Including The Second Report of the Annie Tracy Riggs Hospital.* ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.368, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



However, not all American Hospitals prioritized the work of Muslim evangelization in their religious services. As the Sivas Hospital (Western Turkey Mission) report of 1910 recorded, “Our Moslem patients always seem willing to listen to the Gospel reading and look forward to prayers. When owing to the great pressure of work, they had to be omitted in the evening a few times during the year, they have always asked why we did not have them”.<sup>449</sup> In the Anatolia College Hospital in Merzifon (Western Turkey Mission), although it was reported in 1908 that “the increasing proportion of Turkish patients is particularly notable” (about one-third), and that “the hospital being the only institution here to which the Turk is allowed access by the Turkish government”,<sup>450</sup> there was no sign of the missionary workers’ interest in giving special attention to evangelizing the Muslim patients in their hospital. In the American clinic at Diyabakır (Eastern Turkey Mission), religious services were not routine for Muslim patients either.<sup>451</sup>

Seeing the rampant typhus concomitant with the outbreak of WWI, the American medical missionaries felt obliged to help Turkish Muslims, whether out of a sense of the “white man’s burden” or humanitarianism “in the name of love of God”. The typhus epidemic that began in 1914 in Erzurum and Harput, Van, Bitlis, and elsewhere took numerous lives of the undernourished Turkish soldiers and populace. (For reference, in 1915 in Erzurum 30,000 to 40,000 people died from typhus – at its worst, the death toll reached 400 per day.)<sup>452</sup> The missionaries risking their lives were those who truly cared

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<sup>449</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Sivas American Hospital Annual Report July, 1910*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39. No.552, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>450</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Marsovan Station, Annual Report, -1907-'08*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 618. 16.9.3. Vol. 27. No.275, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>451</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the Medical Missionary Work of the ABCFM in Diabekir July1,1909-June 30, 1910*. ABC 16, Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A. No.222, Houghton Library, Cambridge. For statistics of new patients in Diabekir (1909-1910): Turk 293, Kurds 70, Armenians, 658, Syrians 122, Chaldeans 37, Jews 7 ,Greeks 7, Arabs 5; Muslims 365 of Total 1199. ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the Medical Missionary Work of the ABCFM in Diabekir July1,1909-June 30, 1910*, Reel 712, No.224.

<sup>452</sup> ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40., Houghton Library, Cambridge. See also: Harrison, H. (195?). A.B.C.F.M. history 1910-1942: section on the Turkey missions. ABCFM Manuscript histories of missions, University of Michigan.

about the Muslims' lives. Of course, the missionaries also stressed the significance of Muslim evangelization, and medical aid was the best method for this during wartime. A significant feature was an increasing emphasis of the American spirit aside from Christianity during the War. In September 1917, in *Conquered by Dirt and Disease-Turkey's Appeal to American Sanitary and Medical Aid*, Alden R. Hoover observed:

Turkey in her present condition of filth and de cease is a menace to civilization. American prestige in education and medicine has firm hold on the people throughout the country. America seems fitted as no other nation to cope with this urgent need. Medical and surgical work has proven one of the most effective means of winning the confidence of the Moslem people... As a means of bringing Christian culture to the Near East, the medical seems the most effective... America may well afford to embrace the opportunity which is opening before her in this region."<sup>453</sup>

American missionaries claimed that in general the CUP leaders maintained a friendly relationship, cooperating with them and appreciating their work before Turkey broke off relations with the US, because the Turks needed the American hospitals' medical aid. Also, they were proud of their wartime reputation among the Turks. The missionaries reported that sick Turkish soldiers were always to be taken to American hospitals rather than their own, about which it was said: "from which no one ever comes out except in a bier".<sup>454</sup> In some hospitals, religious services were allowed to be carried out in the wards among the soldiers. Most Armenian doctors and nurses who worked at the hospitals had the opportunity to avoid exile (unlike their families) and some even achieved prominent positions at work.<sup>455</sup> Such friendly relationship can be exemplified by a case in Harput in July 1916, when Enver Pasha visited the American hospital: he took a silver war medal from his own breast and pinned it on 12-year-old Henry Atkinson, whose father Dr Atkinson had died in December 1915 from typhus,

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<sup>453</sup> ABCFM. Alden,R. and Hoover, M.D. *Conquered by Dirt and Disease. Turkey's Appeal to American Sanitary and Medical Aid*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol.40, No.999.

<sup>454</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.273.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

contracted while nursing Turkish soldiers in the hospital, as a way of showing the government's appreciation of his father's work.<sup>456</sup>

However, as they were 'foreigners' in the eyes of the Turks, during the War the missionaries were treated by many in an unpleasant and suspicious way. Dr Hamlin was an American doctor in Aintab hospital; before the war, she had travelled to provide medical services in the Muslim villages; Dr Shepard had a nationwide reputation for his treatment. During the War, they both contracted typhus in hospital; while Dr Hamlin recovered, Dr Shepard died in December 1915. At that time a persistent rumour among the Turks suggested that the Americans made up the story about the doctor's death; he did not die but escaped to the US in an aeroplane to report what the Turks were doing. Only 13 Turks attended his funeral with special permits from the government – there were suspicions that the Americans buried an empty coffin to deceive them.<sup>457</sup> The following year, when Dr Hamlin went to the Turkish quarters to see her Turkish patients, it was recorded that she had "stones thrown at her and boys hooting at her... And yet Turks devoted to her because they need her... they were so afraid when relations were broken that Dr Hamlin would leave".<sup>458</sup>

After 1923, Turkish patients became predominant in the American hospitals. In Aintab, new patients at the clinic numbered 2,309 and treatments totalled almost 10,000. Of the 259 in the in-patient department, 211 were Turks. In the out-patient department, Muslim patients made up about 94% according to records. However, American medical work was under severe threat through the interference of the newly-established officials, as many American physicians were forced to leave their posts after being considered unqualified under the new Lausanne treaty.<sup>459</sup> As the restrictions placed upon medical

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<sup>456</sup> Riggs et al., *History*.

<sup>457</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.270.

<sup>458</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. No.272.

<sup>459</sup> For example, in Aintab Hospital, Dr Shepard, director and surgeon, was notified by the Turkish government on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1923 that he must cease practising and close the hospital, as he did not have a Turkish license to practice. It was also ordered that no drugs should be sold from the hospital pharmacy. This action rested on a legal requirement, hitherto unenforced, in the agreement reached by the Lausanne Conference. Dr Shepard arranged to have the hospital work continue under the direction of a capable

work by the government were reportedly “very unpopular with the bulk of the Turkish population”, the American doctors were later granted medical permits after a series of negotiations between American and Turkish officials – as a result there were only three American hospitals left operating in Turkey by the late 1920s .<sup>460</sup>

### **Working with Sisters: Bible Women for Muslim Women**

A major feature of the Board’s Muslim evangelical work was its Bible Women, conducted by and among women. Particularly in the Anatolian hinterland, Bible women played an important role in the field of the above-mentioned hospital work for Muslims. Arguably, the Bible women were the pioneers of the American missionaries’ advances towards Muslim as well as the most significant link between the missionaries and Muslim women. The Bible women were normally referred to as the local Protestant women workers supported by the Woman’s Board of Missions (WBM) or other missionary organizations. They were trained and led by American women missionaries with the aim to bring the message of the Gospel to women in the field, by taking up different occupations in local educational, religious, medical, and industrial work. They had previously carried on their work among Christians, but as the Central Turkey Mission started its Muslim work, the American missionaries began to manifest great interest in leading the Bible women into Muslim homes. By 1907-08, there were 14 Bible women in the Central Mission field, of whom six were in outstations and eight in

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Turkish physician. However, the arrangement was not acceptable, and the hospital was ordered closed. The hospital in Aintab managed to re-open when the American Board assigned Dr C. C. Piper, who had permission to practice medicine in Turkey with a Turkish license from England, to replace Dr Shepard, though permission to operate was refused on a technicality. Dr Piper spoke Arabic, thus Dr Shephard acted as his interpreter. But strict orders from Ankara stated that Dr Shepard was to have nothing whatever to do with the hospital, and he was obliged to comply. This matter was reported to the representatives of American interests in İstanbul and Washington, and a protest was sent directly to Ankara. In March 1924, after several months of waiting and negotiation, orders were given by the authorities of the Turkish Republic in Ankara to permit American hospitals in Aintab to re-open.

ABCFM. (1927 or 1928) *Memorandum re Work in Turkey*. ABC 16.9.1. 3. Vol.1. No.278, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

Aintab.<sup>461</sup> Spurred by the necessity of Bible woman provision, in 1906 the first Bible school was opened in Aintab for their training. Since then, an increasing number of Bible women were trained and appointed specially for Muslim work. As they were regarded as a crucial project for Muslim work, the requirement for more provision recurred constantly in missionary reports of that time. Those women who were already acquainted with Muslim locals were considered advantageous for the work, such as those who lived among Muslim communities, and those who worked (or formerly worked) in hospitals with Muslim patients. Besides the Bible women trained specially for Muslim women, those who could speak Kurdish and Arabic were in great demand (whose number were expected to be one-third of Muslim-oriented female workers), for the majority of Kurdish women in central Turkey could barely understand another language.<sup>462</sup>

The role of American women missionaries in introducing religious services to the Muslims in their hospitals was discussed above: they could seize the opportunity to develop intimate contacts with local Muslim women by using their gender privileges in various ways, such as through the local embroidery industry.<sup>463</sup> In Ottoman Turkey, the American missionaries were able to build relations with some local Muslims by employing them in various industries such as embroidery and textiles, as a means to support the local economy.<sup>464</sup> According to Turkish custom, direct communication, including eye contact, between Christian men and Muslim women had to be avoided.

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<sup>461</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of Women's Work in Aintab Station (Ourfa and Kessab excepted) 1907-1908*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 661. 16.9.5. Vol. 16. No.193, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>462</sup> For example, during 1913-14 there were four full-time Bible women in Aintab for Muslim work and one part-time. Two of these five also worked for Kurdish women. ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.174.

<sup>463</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of Women's Work in Aintab Station (Ourfa and Kessab excepted) 1907-1908*. Reel 661, No.201.

<sup>464</sup> Some missionaries ran various philanthropic industries to support local Muslims. For example, in the 1900s Mrs Shepard of Aintab employed about 400 Muslim women to do needlework. Mrs Atkinson of Harpout also founded a lace-work industry to support local Muslim women and even arranged to sell the lace products in America (ABCFM. Reel 703, V.318, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989). 'The Turkish Image in the Reports of American Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire'. *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 13(2), p.102). The missionaries of Central Turkey College in Aintab made stockings as a means of supporting students left at the College during the First World War. (Merrill, J. E. (1956). *Christian-Muslim relations in Central Turkey and North Syria 1900-1940*, p.57)

Thus, during the missionary-run embroidery work, a young male Christian worker who went to a house where needlework was given out the Turkish women had to talk outside with his back to the door and wait for some time before he could receive their work and pay for it. However, this was not the case between Muslim and Christian women. As suggested, one American missionary woman in Aintab, Mrs Merrill, began to take charge of such work in March 1908, so that Muslim women could come to her place for their pay and receive new work. Every Friday, the upper room and veranda were full of Turkish women waiting their turn to see the woman in charge of embroidery. The Bible women used the opportunity to read the Bible while they waited and had personal conversation with them in the embroidery rooms (about 25 individuals each week), which was called “seed sowing” by the missionaries.<sup>465</sup> Seeing the Turkish women eagerly learning and appreciating the parables, the missionaries were surprised at their intelligence and delighted at the results.<sup>466</sup>

This delight was a common feature in other missionary records related to Muslim contacts. For the American missionaries (and their Bible women employees), it was always a great pleasure to share with their missionary comrades when they had seen a Muslim who could appreciate the Bible, accept the doctrines from the stories, read the Bible their family and friends, and even apply the doctrine to daily life. For instance, the following account proudly shared their evangelical activities and showed how eagerly welcomed and anticipated they were by the Muslim women masses who abased themselves as ignorant “wild animals” for the missionaries’ “feeding”.

This has been listened to sometimes with friendly indifference but not a few times with interest and even with eagerness; at least there was often a real hunger for help and comfort. Some [Muslim women] said: ‘We are like the donkeys, we know nothing; we are like the wild animals on the hills, our tongues get used to the bad words’. Others said, ‘These are good words’. And

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<sup>465</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of Women’s Work in Aintab Station (Ourfa and Kessab excepted) 1907-1908*. Reel 661, No.201.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

several times came the request before the book bag was opened, 'Won't you read to us, Hanum'. When they had heard hymns sung they very often wanted to listen again and have others hear.

Several women listened hungrily and gave sympathetic assents and comments. One said 'Oh what sweet words these are. Why don't they stay longer and tell us more?' When we said we must get home to our stopping place to rest they still begged us to stay or come again. Suddenly we felt that we had a company of new friends.<sup>467</sup>

Apart from making use of their local-established embroidery industry, the Bible women also took on roles including medical care (doctor, nurse, or "smatterer"), teacher, dressmaker, lacework, or even as a Bible reader for the sick,<sup>468</sup> which were welcomed by Turkish homes. Furthermore, women missionaries who gave home-visits and religious services among Muslims were usually accompanied by Bible women. Compared with the possible inconvenience when men workers were involved, the women missionaries could freely approach Muslim women in hospitals, harems and on the streets. The Bible women used the freedom of entrance to Muslim homes as an entry wedge, creating an opportunity for work among Muslim women. A good 'full-time' Bible woman for Muslim work could make over 400 visits within a year in over 100 Muslim families.<sup>469</sup> The following quotation from a report of 1911 demonstrates the home visiting work of Bible women among Muslims:

By joining the women in their daily tasks cooking, washing, baking bread, she [Osana, the Bible woman] opens the way to many hearts and is able to talk with them of Christ's love and their need for forgiveness. Not only the women but often

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<sup>467</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.713.

<sup>468</sup> During the late Ottoman period, there was a superstitious view held by some Muslims that reading the Gospel at the bedsides of a sick person would have a healing effect, thus in some cases a Bible woman was invited to a Muslim home to read the Bible to the sick, or was welcomed onto the wards by a Muslim patient.

<sup>469</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Woman's Work in Aintab Station, 1911-1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1, No.497, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

the men also like to hear her sing our Christian hymns and very frequently ask her to get copies for them in Osmanli Turkish... The homes of both rich and poor are open to her.<sup>470</sup>

Apart from the Bible Women project, American missionary women managed to organize some woman's unions and clubs in which friendships between Muslim, Christian and missionary women could be established. For example, the Mothers' Union of Aintab, organized around 1910, was a successful example of a missionary women club that attracted both Christian and Muslim mothers. The club meetings were held monthly at a Protestant church, mainly consisting of an address on a subject connected to the care of the home and the training of the child, which was "enlightening" for those Muslim mothers.<sup>471</sup> As another example, in the Syrian quarter of Urfa, a woman's union was organized for the Muslim women who were employed by the missionaries for needlework.

The American missionary women also had considerable opportunity to visit Muslim women of rank in their home. Their courtesy and hospitality were often mentioned in their records: "The friendliness and cordiality manifested towards us have been quite marked, extending in two instances to invitation to course dinners".<sup>472</sup> There was even a confidential report produced in 1907 with a list of prominent Turkish ladies in Aleppo,

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<sup>470</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Report of Woman's Work in Aintab Station 1910-11*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1, No.479, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>471</sup> Subjects at meetings included: the duties and responsibilities of mothers in the new era in Turkey; relations between husbands and wives; home nursing and the prevention of illness; the family, the most important element in the development of the child; relations between home and school; modern movements in the interests of the child; early influences; a perfect woman; harmful customs and superstitions in the care of babies; intemperance in Aintab and what women can do about it; what education has done for women; care of the teeth; and mothers and daughters. ABCFM. (1912) *Woman's Work in the City of Aintab, 1911-1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1, No.491, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>472</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of Women's Work in Aintab Station (Ourfa and Kessab excepted) 1907-1908*. Reel 661, No.201.



who were considered ideal targets of possible religious work among Muslims. Such relations-building was taken as a significant method for Muslim work.<sup>473</sup>

On the other hand, it was natural that the missionary women would encounter some obstacles in their contacts with Muslims. They noticed the inability of many of the women to listen, except for a short time, to any talk that needed attention or thought: “Their untrained, childish minds quickly turn to trifling things, to gossip, to their ordinary work, to some peculiarity of the speaker, right in the midst of some solemn subject”.<sup>474</sup> Therefore when approaching Muslim women, the missionaries could only give “here a little and there a little” with practical application and illustration over and over again. Unfriendly reactions were also shown in some cases. In several places the missionaries met those who wanted to “argue, oppose or hinder”. The hostility often seemed to be stirred by some *hoja* or “important man, who kept himself in the background” or by the influence of local leaders. Such suspicion, dislike, or prejudice was also inevitable among some women. For example, the missionaries observed that some Muslims would respect a Missionary woman who approached them, but their positive feelings were neutralized by seeing the Armenian Christians who worked alongside her.<sup>475</sup>

Even the missionaries themselves admitted that “We are welcomed to Moslem homes, not because the people are interested in the Protestant religion”.<sup>476</sup> It seemed that most of the Turkish men and women who showed less prejudice against foreigners and rival religions, whether literate or ignorant, welcomed American missionaries mostly for the possible help they could offer, and for the curiosity of learning new things. In some cases, sick Muslim women welcomed the Bible women because of their superstition

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<sup>473</sup> ABCFM. (1907) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslem Appointed by Central Turkey Mission at the Meeting in Adana, 1906, Presented at the Annual Meeting in Marash, June-July, 1907.* Reel 660, No.248.

<sup>474</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.186.

<sup>475</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>476</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.190.

about the healing effect of Bible reading. Moreover, not all Bible women were keen on such work. In Urfa, while all Bible women except two did more or less Muslim work, only two or three enjoyed going among them when the unkind feeling of Muslims became more evident in 1913.<sup>477</sup> In another case, a Turkish woman *hoja* who had pleasant relations with Bible women and missionaries was rebuked by “unfriendly” women when they found her to have a Bible woman in her home, and she was later questioned because she kept a testament and had accepted tracts from the Christians.<sup>478</sup>

Although the Bible women served as an opening wedge to approach Muslim women at home, and more educational opportunities had been provided for younger female generations from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well, most Muslim women at that time confined themselves to home, remaining isolated from Turkish society and condemned to ignorance – they could offer little intellectual help to their husbands and children. Hence the missionaries’ efforts in women’s evangelization were still limited and marked by difficulties, given the bigger context of the Muslim masses. As Mr Livengood, a missionary at Harput Euphrates College, remarked in 1912:

One of the chief obstacles to progress is the position of the Turkish women. They are never allowed to show their faces in public nor converse or eat in the same room with men. If they are poor, they have to work very hard, but if they are married and in good moderate circumstances, they have servants do the work, and they themselves spend their days smoking cigarettes. Some of the ladies of the station visited a home where there were several wives. They seem to do nothing but smoke and talk all day and there was a girl in the room whose sole duty it was to furnish the ladies with cigarettes and light matches for them. Is it any wonder that the sons of such mothers do not have lofty ideals and ambitions?<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.189.

<sup>478</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.33.

<sup>479</sup> ABCFM, Reel 731, V. 2613, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989).

Finally, the Bible women agreed that the greatest difficulty in practice was the objection raised by Muslim women against “the life of Christians”, namely to become a convert. Some Muslim women might reply to the Missionaries and Bible women in a rather indifferent or scornful manner. Sometimes negative remarks were heard, such as “We must see the truth in you before we believe”, or “Christians preach but are not keen”.<sup>480</sup> In another case, an Armenian Bible woman in Adıyaman (Adiaman) could not justify Muslim work because she had a son who “is rather a hard character”, which “prejudiced the minds of people against her”. This negative reaction was quite hard to understand from the missionaries’ Western perspective.<sup>481</sup> By the time most of the American missionaries had left the country, their proselytizing attempts with Muslims may not have generated much success, despite their ardent ambition and glowing reports.

## **Working among Muslim Men: Missionary Experiments in Club and Literature Work**

### **Missionary Clubs for Muslims**

While the Bible women project proved to be promising among Muslim women, among Muslim men there was practically no direct evangelical effort by the Board by at least 1912. As the Committee on Muslim Work pointed out, although the missionary men had managed to make a good many friendly calls on Muslims through the years – some of which got beneath the surface of formality – there seemed to be no missionary project devoted to evangelical work for Muslim men, referred to as gender-based

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<sup>480</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of Women’s Work in Aintab Station (Ourfa and Kessab excepted) 1907-1908*. Reel 661, No.202.

<sup>481</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of Evangelistic Work in Aintab Station, 1912-1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.520, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

“distinct evangelising endeavour”.<sup>482</sup> The only work on Muslim men was almost wholly in connection with Bible distribution on the part of Armenian colporteurs and pastors scattered around the country.

It was easy to understand the underlying reason for such ‘commonplace’ or ‘insignificant’ work when considering the privileged work of ‘women for women’ that could be facilitated by the friendship and shared sympathy of femininity – something that did not exist among men. For example, some Bible women devoted themselves to Muslim work after their husband or relatives had been killed by Muslims in the massacres. In one case, an Armenian Bible woman whose husband was killed in the 1909 Adana massacre, continued to conduct Muslim work without hatred and hoped that the love of Christianity could redeem the Muslims. During her home visiting, when a Muslim woman accidentally learned that her husband had been killed by Muslims, she showed great commiseration, saying, “Oh, may their arm be broken!”<sup>483</sup> In general, the American missionaries observed that although the Turkish woman at first demonstrated suspicion and even antagonism, afterwards they would be frank and friendly, talking eagerly without any concern about gender and religion. However, the work of Bible women did not apply to Christian men and Muslim men, because the peculiar empathy and affinity that existed between women was not expected among men. More frequently, not only were the Muslim men strongly resentful, but the Christian men thought that the sins of Muslims were irredeemable.<sup>484</sup> Taking into consideration the conflicts and massacres of the 1880s to 1910s, the work for Muslim men was more likely to be hindered by religious prejudice and intensifying mutual resentment between Muslims and native Christians who were supposed to assume most of evangelical work with their Muslim neighbours.

This disappointing situation began to improve when the American missionaries started

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<sup>482</sup> ABCFM. (1912). *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.719.

<sup>483</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>484</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Aintab Station General Report June 1911-June 1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.486, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

opening clubs for both Ottoman Christians and Muslims in the Young Turk period, when unions and clubs became popular among young Ottoman men. The opening of the Boys' and Young Men's Clubs was the first experiment of the American missionaries in terms of club work. This club was modelled on YMCA societies, including reading rooms, gymnastics, lessons, and Bible instruction.<sup>485</sup> One club opened in Cesarea (Kayseri)<sup>486</sup> in the fall 1908 and another in Talas around 1905<sup>487</sup>, and they soon became important aspects of the Western Mission's work for its influence in "winning" Muslims "from their faith". In the club meetings, the American missionaries employed some novel tools, such as stereopticon presentations to attract Muslim attendants. (The missionaries also found it useful to approach both Muslim men and women by giving regular stereopticon tours around Muslim villages.) As early as 1909, the missionaries boosted the Muslim attendance at the clubs: "those who attended regularly are almost entirely Muslims. Especially is this so at evening meetings. Even our Sunday evening services draw two hundred or more Muslims and most 30 Christians and the difference in proportion is often more marked". The report in 1912 showed that, "in a congregation of 150-300 generally not more than four or five are Christians".<sup>488</sup> Such a situation disappointed the missionaries in Talas as they expected greater Christian attendance.<sup>489</sup> It was recorded that these Turkish audiences, who were mainly from middle-lower classes, were "wild, untutored" at first but soon effected a "very favourable appearance".<sup>490</sup> The club was well-known in the region and praised for the effects of enlightenment and fraternization by the Turkish elites. One Turk even remarked to the missionaries regarding the clubs: "Finally you fellows will get us, for

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<sup>485</sup> ABCFM. (1909) *Cesarea Station Report. Boys' and Young Mens' Clubs*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 618. 16.9.3. Vol. 27, No.134, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>486</sup> According to the missionary records, Cesarea was a city of around 50,000-55,000 people, about two-thirds of whom were Muslims of "pronouncedly radical type... In the fall of 1908 Rev. H.M. Irwin started a Young Men's Club in a khan in this city. The Khan contains four rooms... The third room is used for private room in which to *meet men for conversations and special engagements...*" (my italics). ABCFM. (1912) *Work for Moslems (Cesarea)*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39, No.172, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>487</sup> ABCFM. (1906) *Annual Report of the Cesarea Station. For the Year 1905-06*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 618. 16.9.3. Vol. 27, No.88, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>488</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Cesarea Station, 1911-1912*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39, No.170, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>489</sup> ABCFM. Reel 628, No.140.

<sup>490</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Work for Moslems (Cesarea)*. Reel 628, No.173.

you never give up”.

The American missionaries enjoyed building new connections with Muslim youths through their club work, as they observed that the Muslims, as the majority attendees, often showed a sense of “proprietorship”, speaking of it as “Our Club”. In 1912 the Club of Cesarea witnessed a notable increase of *hojas* in the reading room, whose one objection, was raised against the pictures of patriarchs and prophets hung on its walls: “This is sin. One good man is so conscientious that he cannot even read in the presence of such profanation and therefore takes his paper to another room”.<sup>491</sup> The missionary report of Cesarea’s Annual Meeting of 1912-13 shows their interest in Muslim works and their different attitude towards Muslims of different classes:

Although the great majority of our adherents are probably unthinking and bigoted Moslems, yet there are those of with Orthodox Islam, who are reaching out after something better, or at least different with the danger of running into materialism or pantheism or something else. It behoves us as a mission in this country to do something for all these Moslem people, particularly for this thinking and therefore more hopeful class.<sup>492</sup>

The increasing influence of the club attracted concern from both conservative Muslims and nationalist Turks. In the spring of 1913, as anti-foreign sentiment became increasingly evident in Turkey, the Sunday evening services of the Cesarea Club were finally ended by open opposition from young Muslim men who were either graduates or students of the Turkish Idadiye (preparatory) school. The matter was brought before the government, which had unsuccessfully tried to close the club. In court, these young Turkish men stated that they were provoked by an “organization” and were later released without punishment. Later, in 1914, the opening of Cesarea Club was prohibited by the local government but it was allowed to be replaced by a new

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<sup>491</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Cesarea Station, 1911-1912*. Reel 628, No.170.

<sup>492</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Caesaria Station, Western Turkey Mission. Annual Report, 1912-1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39, No.189, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

organization with the name “The American Muessese-i-Hairiye”.<sup>493</sup>

*Table : Statistics of the Talas and Cesarea Clubs, 1913-14*<sup>494</sup>

	Daily average attendance	Sunday School av. attendance	Sunday evening
Talas Club	40	65	55
Cesarea Club	75-80	/	250

Significantly, the Western Mission’s pioneering attempt at Boys’ and Young Men’s Clubs reinvigorated American missionary work for Muslim men. In early 1912, the sub-committee on evangelising work for Muslim men and Christian literature was organized in Central Turkey Mission. Inspired by the observation that in the “Reading Room Club” opened by their Western Mission fellows in Cesarea, over half of the attendees were young Muslim men, the American missionaries of the Central Mission decided to promote the “Reading Room Club” as the most feasible approach to Muslim men.<sup>495</sup> That same year, a similar Reading Room was opened in Maraş, becoming the local centre of Muslim evangelising work. Thereafter the missionary work for Muslim men flourished in relation to club-building and literature work (though to little notable effect).

The Marash Reading Room opened in 1912, under the name “Marash Kraathane” and was established for all young men in the region, whose population was then around 50-65,000.<sup>496</sup> Its administrator, Fred Goodsell, expressed a wish to increase friendly personal contact with Muslims and to remove the unfriendly spirit between Muslim and

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<sup>493</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *The American School for Boys. Talas, Turkey. Report of the School Year 1913-1914. Club Work.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39, No.216, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>494</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *The American School for Boys. Talas, Turkey. Report of the School Year 1913-1914. -Club Work.* Reel 628, No.214.

<sup>495</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Minutes of Annual Meeting of Central Turkey Mission.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.67, Houghton Library, Cambridge; ABCFM. (1913) *Minutes of Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting, Central Turkey Mission.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.189, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>496</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914.* Reel 667, No.166; ABCFM. (1914) *Marash Reading Room.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. Vol. 22. No.616, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Christians through this club. Taking the example of the Young Men’s Clubs in Cesareal, it had a reading room, night school and free athletic work. The formal permission for the night school was granted by the Turkish government in 1912 after two years’ effort, but the school was not formally opened until December 1913, with courses on foreign languages, arithmetic and music. There were 15 attendees at first, but four or five Catholic students were soon forbidden to attend by their priest.

*Table 7: Accessible readings in the Marash Reading Room, 1914<sup>497</sup>*

	English	Turkish	Armeno-Turkish	Armenian
Papers	4	3	2	3
Books	14	25	41	17

As the club became increasingly popular for men and boys, Saturday evening meetings commenced from 26<sup>th</sup> December 1913. According to the club report, at the beginning of the meeting, there would be a brief report on the political news of the week, followed by lantern pictures and games. Later a short address on various topics would be given by a missionary,<sup>498</sup> and each meeting would introduce a reading of a Bible story. Attendance at the meetings grew from about 20 to 250 over several months, most of whom were Muslims. Young local *Mullahs* were also reported to have attended on several occasions.

The athletic work was also increasingly welcomed by the general population, and it was encouraged by the local military ministry. The regular numbers doing sports during the winter of 1913 went from 25 to 50, and this grew to 250 in early 1914. It was reported that there could be 100 to 150 men doing indoor exercises at the same time.

Besides these missionary-run clubs, other facilities emerged during the Young Turk period. For example, the Moral and Improvement Society organized by the American

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<sup>497</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Marash Reading Room*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. Vol. 22. No.616, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>498</sup> For instance, Dr Sheppard on “Tuberculous and its prevention”, Mr Woodley on “India”, Mr Goodsell on “The power of habits for good or evil”, and Mr Lyman on “The Athlete”.



Bible House in İstanbul after the Revolution 1908 immediately attracted over 50 members, including both Muslims and Greeks.<sup>499</sup> The weekly meeting was attended by over 200 people and sometimes Muslims made up the largest proposition. The society had branches in Anatolia and Rumelia. But the public meetings were stopped after the declaration of martial law. As another example, the “Outdoor Club” (or “Open Air Club”) was opened for all local people in 1914 in a garden in the west end of Aintab city the stronghold of Muslim work in the Central provinces, with a view to providing clean and wholesome entertainment for young men, both Christians and Muslims. Provisions included newspapers, magazines, books, games, music, phonograph entertainments and lectures.<sup>500</sup>

During the Turkish wartime of 1914-1923, the missionary-run clubs continued to be welcomed by Turkish youths, but they received more scrutiny under the national social environment. The YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) clubs were mainly operated by American missionaries in Young Turk and Republican Turkey in line with the Board's club work. Its İstanbul branch was established in Pera in 1914, and it was later enlarged with the opening of another branch at ÇarşıKapı (Charsha Kapou) in Stambul. By 1922, there were over 300 members at the Stambul Branch, half of whom were Turks, who mainly attended sports activities, concerts, cinemas, lectures, and English classes. These missionaries' YMCA Clubs were referred to as ‘A Danger Under the Cover of Uplifting the Youth’ in a tirade in a Turkish newspaper (19<sup>th</sup> April 1922), stressing its danger to the Muslim youth in İstanbul for its essence of strong propaganda of Protestantism and its aim of extending Christianity, which was opposed by the Muslim's *Sheriat*. It was alarming for some to see “every Turkish citizen, young and old” began to be enlisted as members “without thinking or asking about it”, and even the Turkish workers there were willing to help missionaries propagate Protestantism for money. In Adana, the newly established branch of the YMCA was

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<sup>499</sup> ABCFM. (1909) *Report of Constantinople Station for 1908-09- Bible House Work*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 617. 16.9.3. Vol. 28, No.672, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>500</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Aintab Station Field Report. July 1913-1914*. Reel 667, No.122.

also brought under public scrutiny. In the local newspaper, the ‘New American Ojak at Adana’ was juxtaposed with the “intrigue” of the Merzifon College that was obliged to close in the same year – both were built for Christian propaganda. The Turkish population was told to be cautious and watchful for the American Protestant missionaries, who were “preaching their idea in the ground uncultivated”. Although the club “outwardly did not follow any religious purpose with access to everybody”, the films which were shown freely there “pertained to Christian ideas”, and those who managed it were American missionaries.<sup>501</sup> Although the American missionaries could attract Turkish youth through its novelties, its religious-cultural comparability and corrosive motives against the Islamic foundation of the state was increasingly recognized by the Muslim public.

### **Missionary Publications for Muslims**

With lavish funds invested by the Board, the publishing work of the American missionaries carried no less significance than its education and medical enterprises in the Ottoman lands. After the first American missionaries arrived, the American Press of ABCFM began its work in Malta in 1821. It later transferred to İzmir in 1838, and from there to İstanbul in 1853. The first periodical issued was a monthly magazine in Armenian published at Smyrna around 1835, and the weekly periodical *Avedaper* began in İstanbul in 1855 for Ottoman Armenians. By 1909 it had 1,206 Armenian and 1,725 Armeno-Turkish subscribers. *Avedepar* was the missionaries’ main publishing project before the First World War.<sup>502</sup>

Although for years the missionary publications were highly restricted and censored by

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<sup>501</sup> Ottoman Newspaper Article, 1921, May 6. Club of Y.M.C.A. New American Ojak (Foyer) at Adana, *Ugua*, no.651., collected in 16.9.1. Vol.2, No.292, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>502</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the Publication Department for 1909*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39, No.486, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Ottoman authorities, and the missionary publications were oriented to Armenian readers but with limited Ottoman-Turkish printings for a long time, some influence could be discerned on the Ottoman publishing industries. In 1897, author and founding editor of the Ottoman Imperial Press, Ahmet Mithat attacked the missionary publications, which were calling people to Christianity “against the faith of Islam” and “opened new theatres of war”. Paradoxically, the hostile Ottoman publishers who thought they were incompatible with the American message countered the missionary publication work by emulating their mass-printing technology. For example, the first illustrated Turkish newspaper, *Mirat- ı alem* (Global Mirror) copied the printing style and form of the Board’s work from its inception in 1883.<sup>503</sup>

Though American missionary pamphlets written in Turkish for Christian preaching were reportedly seized by state censors in the Hamidian period, missionary concerns about publishing English literature translations for Muslims occurred at a relatively late date. According to the annual report of the Board’s Publication Department, the first English literature in Osmanli-Turkish had been issued by the American missionary press in İstanbul around 1906. In that year’s report, the American missionaries observed that among the books they published, the Muslims welcomed those on scientific, educational and moral themes. Despite the religious controversy at that time, in which the government was equally opposed to their own publication plan, the American missionaries felt proud and ambitious about their future mission as they found the Turkish readers were “not flooded with reading matter, and often read again and again, a book which has awakened their interest”.<sup>504</sup>

This was especially the case after the Second Revolution when the missionaries were suddenly showered with accolades from Turkish intellectuals for their enlightening influence. Following the declaration of the constitution, within a week the editor of the

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<sup>503</sup> Şahin. E. (2018) pp.102-103; pp.131-132.

<sup>504</sup> ABCFM. (1906) *Report of Publication Department for 1906*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 617. 16.9.3. Vol. 28, No.757, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

American Press was invited by the Muslim editors of a Turkish paper (*İkdam*) to meet and form the Press Association.<sup>505</sup> Since then the American Press increasingly felt the necessity of more publications in Osmanli Turkish for Muslims. In 1910 three books were issued in Osmanli Turkish, two of which were Turkish Hymn Books, *The Dawn of Liberty*, and *The Unique Person of Jesus Christ*. By 1914, about 40,000 Khutbas and Story-Parables were put into circulation, with a large proportion going to Muslims in İstanbul. However, the missionaries had still barely begun to address pressing need to meet the great opportunities for Muslim readers.<sup>506</sup> The American missionaries even tried to translate the Koran into Turkish through their publishing house in İstanbul but they were later stopped by an official order.<sup>507</sup>

Early in 1877, an Ottoman press law was imposed to further limit the content of the missionary publications. When assessing the publication impacts with various sources, the Ottoman Inspection and Examination Committee found that susceptible Muslim families had begun reading Bibles and attending church masses under the influence of the missionary publications.<sup>508</sup> By 1914, the American missionaries could proudly claim that reading Bibles by Muslims was no longer a rare occurrence. Bibles, Testaments, hymnbooks, translations of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book on the doctrine of the Trinity, and Khutbas (Khutbahs) were the main literature distributed across Anatolia at that time. Muslims who would not dare to go to a regular bookseller would often turn to a storekeeper for a Bible. About one-third of those Muslim buyers from colporteurs were youths, and a third was the *Ulema* of his city.<sup>509</sup>

The missionary literature work for Muslims gained new significance in the early 1910s. From 1911 to 1913, the Italo-Turkish War and Balkan War had stirred up hostile

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<sup>505</sup> ABCFM. Reel 618, No.727.

<sup>506</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Publication Department Annual Report 1913-14*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 628. 16.9.3. Vol. 39, No.506, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>507</sup> ABCFM. Reel 667, No.159.

<sup>508</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.103; See also Akgün, S. (1994). Kendi Kaynaklarından.

<sup>509</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.195.

feelings among Muslims towards the Christians, which brought some trouble to the work among Muslims in various ways, including Bible distribution and social contact. To alleviate the intensified tensions, referred to as “the forces of evil” that existed among both Muslims and “nominal Christians”<sup>510</sup>, the American missionaries of CTM believed that literature such as the Scriptures, religious books, and tracts could lead to “helpful discussion” and “arousing of thought” among Muslims, especially Muslim men who were not easy to reach through the Bible-women-like project.

Meanwhile, Bible distribution was carried out through preachers, teachers, Bible women, colporteurs, clinics, village tours, house calls and industry (such as needlework), and by 1912 there 483 native workers assisting with Bible distribution. However, the American missionaries were not content with this small figure, and they expected to secure one worker to be involved in Bible distribution work for Muslims in every church throughout their field.<sup>511</sup> In this context, the Literature Committee of the Central Turkey Mission, first organized in June 1912, considered the matter of obtaining and distributing the Scriptures and other Christian literature in this mission especially for Muslims. Its report considered three points: 1) what literature existed in Turkish and how its production might be increased; 2) how they could obtain such literature for use in their mission; and 3) means of effective distribution.<sup>512</sup>

Besides expecting a calming effect on Muslim-Christian relations, the missionaries believed that the literature translated into Turkish would “do more good than harm” for Muslims. For example, a Turkish father who was interested in the New Testament secured a copy for his boy, but his *hoca* took it away, saying the son must read the Koran instead of Injil (İncil, the Gospel). The father replied that “He cannot understand the Koran because it is in Arabic, but seeing the Injil is in Turkish he can

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<sup>510</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Aintab Station Field Report. July 1913-1914*. Reel 667, No.126.

<sup>511</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.725.

<sup>512</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.40.

understand that”.<sup>513</sup> Such cases encouraged the American missionaries, who envisaged the prospect of Christian literature working for Muslim evangelization regardless of negative Ottoman public critiques against it.

However, the Christian literature in Turkish for Muslim readers was still rare in the Empire at that time. In 1914 there were six missionary presses (Beirut, Nile, Mission, Bible House, Potsdam, and Tiflis) that used Turkish (Ottoman/Arab script) type, but the only one that promised the development of its Turkish publications was the American Board press in İstanbul, which served as the main source of the provision of Christian literature for Turkish-speaking Muslims throughout Anatolia.<sup>514</sup>

On the other hand, American missionaries complained about the ‘unfair’ Ottoman censorship they faced that hampered their literature distribution, especially for Muslim readers. For example, in one Ottoman report in 1896 two Arabic pamphlets (*Selected Reviews in Geographical Science* and *Commensurate Answers*) that American missionaries wanted to circulate were found to be “illegal” by censorship agents because they “slandered the imperial state and agitated local Christians revolt against it”, which also engendered more central Ottoman concerns for “seizing and destroying” these “obscene” and “seditious” publications “on sight” when found. Even more stringent guidelines on missionary literature distribution was adopted by the Ottoman authorities after 1900 to prevent dangerous Missionary-Christian publications from reaching the masses, urging local agents to seize the unwholesome missionary literature and pamphlets, for example, the Turkish sermons ‘On Miracles’ and ‘The Place of the Virgin Mary’.<sup>515</sup>

In addition, although American missionaries launched notable reforms on literature

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<sup>513</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.159.

<sup>514</sup> ABCFM. (1915) *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.195.

<sup>515</sup> Şahin, E. (2018) p.124.

work to restore Armenian vernacular language, their achievement in late-Ottoman Muslim literature was difficult to calibrate due to the lack of concrete longitudinal date. For example, it was reported that in Halfeti, a south-eastern Anatolian town, “80 of 100 Muslim families” read the Bibles published and distributed by the American Board Press.<sup>516</sup> However, this figure is thought to be an overstatement, considering the local literacy rate.

Moreover, as a critical parameter of the American missionary contribution to late-Ottoman Muslim literacy, the literacy rate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman did increase steadily, and although difficult to prove, it was generally estimated to only be within single digits.<sup>517</sup> By comparing latitudinal literacy rates one could to some extent reflect the missionaries educational activities’ contribution to Muslim literacy. For example, despite state-run educational reforms, the illiteracy rate in Egypt changed only slightly from 94.2% in 1897 to 92.1% in 1917; whereas in Syria, with no organized state effort but “a smaller community and some missionary educational activity”, on the eve of WWI the situation was better, with an assessed illiteracy rate of 75%.<sup>518</sup> However, without further details, these figures fail to explain the missionary literature contribution to Turkish literacy. Additionally, in the above-mentioned Marash Reading Room, in 1914 the daily attendance averaged six Muslims and seven Christians. This percentage of Muslim visitors to the Room was notable because the literacy rate of Muslims in the district surveyed was only 5% according to the local authorities. But this figure is too limited to prove any substantial

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<sup>516</sup> Akgün, S. (1994). Kendi Kaynaklarından.

<sup>517</sup> See Findley, C.V. (1988). *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*. pp.52, 86, 139, 142-145, 174; Brummett, P.J. (2000). *Image and imperialism in the Ottoman revolutionary press, 1908-1911*. Suny Press; Fortna, B. (2012). *Learning to read in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic*, p.10, 14, 20, 24; Ayalon, A. (1995). *The press in the Arab Middle East: A history*. Oxford University Press, p.5, 23, 140, (Republic) 103, 141-2, 144-5, 153, 159; Ayalon, A. (2004). *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948*. University of Texas Press. Ayalon, A. (2016) *The Arabic Print Revolution: Cultural Production and Mass Readership*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, pp.158-9. For Republican period, see UNESCO. (1952) *Progress of literacy in various countries: a preliminary statistical study of available census data since 1900*.

<sup>518</sup> Ayalon, A. (1995). *The press in the Arab Middle East: A history*, p. 141.

missionary contribution to Muslim literacy.<sup>519</sup>

### **Literature Work for Muslims in the New Turkey**

The missionary literature work for Muslims was regarded as necessary for its potential to penetrate the ideology of the Turkish masses with the influence of Christianity. The American Board decided to develop this endeavour in Turkey as a major aspect of their policy early in 1922. Alongside their “policy of growth”, the emphasis of the literature work for Muslims was also on the literature for Turkish youth. Regarding this decision, the missionaries strongly suggested a public experiment by running their own family magazine in Turkish with departments for children and women, with stories and current events that would be of interest for Turks. Since there were only three Turkish periodicals in the country in 1922, the missionaries expected their work to be a valuable way to preserve the Turkish language as a literary language.

The American missionaries noticed “a particularly need for good literature for children and young people” in Turkey.<sup>520</sup> The literature work for Muslims was also argued by the missionaries to have a potential nurturing influence on Turks. The American missionaries in Turkey always asked why the Turks were different from Christians. According to J. K. Birge, who was in charge of the Board’s İstanbul Mission, the different “Turkish character” could not be attributed to Turkish blood, because many of the Turks they met were not Turks by inheritance, and as far as blood went, Turks were not many generations away from Christians. Instead he concluded that the major causes of any differences were environment and education. Therefore it

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<sup>519</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Marash Reading Room*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. Vol. 22. No.616, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>520</sup> ABCFM. *Statement of the Present Policy of the Turkey Mission of the American Board, October 1924*. ABC 16.9.1.Vol.4, No.31, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



was of great significance for educational and literature work among Muslims at an early age to experience the nurturing influence of Christianity on their development.<sup>521</sup>

However, there was no proof that such a nurturing influence had been effective in practice. The American missionaries had not felt free to engage actively in the circulation of literature work in the first half of the 1920s, in case it had a negative effect on their school and hospital work.<sup>522</sup> It was not until 1925 when the Executive Committee proposed a new effort to prepare the “preliminary Co-ordinating committee on Christian literature for Moslems” that the American missionaries overcame their former apprehension and put new emphasis on the translation service for evangelizing work among Turks.<sup>523</sup> They did this because they believed that translating Christian literature for Muslims would help with “taking of the Gospel message directly and winningly to Mohammedans”.

With this initiative in 1925, an increasing number of Turkish translations from English literature began to be published in Turkey by the Board’s Publication Department. For instance, the Turkish edition of the religious *Life of Christ* was published and circulated in various cities and villages in Turkey in 1927 by missionaries. The book was claimed to attract the interest of almost everybody and the Turkish readers spoke highly of it for the simplicity of its translation.<sup>524</sup> However there was a great difficulty in selling their religious book and the numbers of Turkish readers were unproven, as the missionaries admitted that they were only circulated the books carefully among their “Turkish

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<sup>521</sup> ABCFM. (1921) *Report on Work for Moslems*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol 1, No.14., Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>522</sup> MacCallum, F.W. (1927) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, March 7. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.10, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>523</sup> ABCFM. (1929) Letter on the first Mid-year Council of the Turkey Mission to Ernest W. Riggs, January 19. ABC 16.9.1. Turkey mission. New Series 1920-1929, Vol.1 1924-29, No.43, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>524</sup> MacCallum, F.W. (1927) Letter Dr Delevan L. Pierson, March 2. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.8, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

friends”. They later solved this difficulty to some extent by selling religious books through Turkish booksellers.<sup>525</sup>

In November 1927, J.K. Birge of American Board’s Publication Department noted that there was under 1,000 of Turkish books went into circulation from their hands throughout interior villages, alongside about 1,400 books and pamphlets in Greek and Armenian. Among these books some best sellers were *Little Lord Fountleroy* (though not translated not by the Department), a translation from French called *The Little Debtor*, and Gairdener’s short play dramatising the Bible character, *Joseph*.<sup>526</sup> In Aintab, Translation from English such as *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Florence Nightingale*, *Little Women*, *Coral Island*, *Up from Slavery* and short children’s stories from the *Golden Book Series* were welcomed by the people, and Dr Lorrin A. Shepard’s *Health Talk* in simple Turkish was the best seller.<sup>527</sup>

The American missionaries felt it was particularly “interesting” to see even the Turkish secular press occasionally “pointing the way to the ideals of Christianity” under missionary influence. In Merzifon, a Turkish organization called the Society for the Protection of Children even translated one volume of *Pollyanna* series into Turkish before the translation work of the American Board’s Publication Department itself. This Turkish organization also published *Heidi* for Turkish Muslims with the religious part retained. For another example, the government controlled and subsidised paper, *Hayat*, once published a Turkish translation of Selma Ogerlof’s article called “Jesus and St. Peter” in 1927; some religious booklets such as Tolstoy’s pamphlet “What is religion” in Jules Halderman’s series were also put into Turkish by a Turkish commercial firm.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Birge, J.K. (1928) Letter to Dr Enoch Bell, February 3. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>527</sup> ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.9, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>528</sup> Birge, J.K. (1928) Letter to Dr Enoch Bell, February 3. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.14, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Table 1: Distribution of Books of American Board's Publication Department<sup>529</sup>

18

Report of Books 1927 - 1928

Books in hand	Books in Sheet Form	Name	Books in hand	Books in Sheet Form	Distr.
		Universal Brotherhood	1091		29
		Christian Manliness	489		28
		Belief and Worship	74		11
		What is Faith in God?	3470		23
		King of the Golden River	440		8
		Hymn Book	322		113
	450	Song Play Book	393		200
		Rules of Conduct, Children	2752		31
		" " adults	3008		459
		First Passover Night	324	2500	490
	2500	The Maker of Men	1180		38
		Temptation and How to Meet It	1171		414
		Physical Geography	207	250	314
	250	Parable of the Sower	283		6
		Pilgrim's Progress I	217		145
		" II	239		34
	1988	Joseph	207	1988	33
	1250	" illustrated	65	1250	141
	750	Words of Jesus	426	750	28
		Life and Its Aims	1135		117
		What is Religion? (2nd edit)	3486		336
		Source of Power in Religion	46		609
		Authority in Religion	206		37
		Religion and Social Questions	337		41
		Faithful Narrator	393		135
	910	English-Turkish Redhouse Dic.	41	824	39
	1450	Turkish-English	34	1350	79
		Character and Self Control	3116		94
		Serhoshluk	77		631
		Character Building	1209		298
		Saul and Stephen	1655		321
		Doubt	1364		129
		Health Talks (2nd Edit)	1535		222
		Last Passover Night	304		471
	950	Dawn of Liberty	3155		70
		Science of Power	352	950	21
		Lahret	2676		54
		Natural Theology	2		1155
	1400	Astronomy	148		8
38941	11898	Carried Forward	240	1400	2
			38733	11262	16
					7534

<sup>529</sup> ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.18, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Report of Books 1927 - 1928

I 1927 Books on hand	Books in Sheet Form	Author Name in 1927	Books on hand	Books in Sheet Form	Distr.
		The Unique Person of Jesus Christ	108		60
I68		" " cloth	117		5
I22		" " "	1457		104
I561		Florence Nightingale boards	24		40
64		" " "	1724		61
I785		Who is My Neighbor?	186		26
212	2750	Subject Index of the Bible	1612	800	183
I795	800	Little Women			8
8		" " cloth	36		50
86		What Happened before the Hajira	1829		1408
3237		Picture Cards	400		254
654		Golden Path	891		
891		" " boards	374		254
628		" " Ladder	188		
188		" " boards	315	2000	281
96		" " Door	159		37
196		" " Key	2490		246
2736		" " Word	2740		260
		" " Deed	2699		303
		" " Life	2880		120
I955		King of Love	1745		210
2896		Coral Island	2510		386
733		Up from Slavery	520		213
567		Child Psychology	265		302
I871		Evvel Zemanda	1525		346
		What is Sin?	4289		731
		American Education	705		295
		War	1558		442
		Animal Pals	1655		345
		The Rabbit	2709		291
		Friendship	2915		85
		Famous Women	1285		715
		If I were A Girl	1864		136
		American Education (2nd. Edit)	990		10
		" " (3rd*)	1666		
-----			45744	2800	8207
22449	6050	Brought Forward page I	38733	11262	7534
38641	11898	Total Turkish Literature	84477	14062	15741
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61090	17948				

Scott Sweet, Andover, Maine.	
Eric Pattison, TOTAL DISTRIBUTION IN 1927	
Donald B. Perry, 122 Wickes Avenue, Yonkers, N. Y.	
Turkish Books 15741 - 1408 picture cards	14333
Armenian Books Freeman, Greenville, Maine.	15276
English Books Greenville, Maine.	3202
Greek and Greco-Turkish Books, Maine.	1538
Mrs. B. P. Sanders, Greenville, Maine.	
Total Distribution	34,349
Mrs. Hiram Hunt, Greenville, Maine.	
Mr. Charles Shaw, Greenville, Maine.	
Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Crafts, Greenville, Maine.	
Mr. Norman Fisherson, Greenville, Maine.	
Cash receipts from sales	4100.88 Ltq.
Mr. George S. Thomas, Dover, Mass.	

As one notable attempt, the Divan Yolu Book Store and its reading room managed by the American missionaries in İstanbul were reportedly welcomed by all classes of Turks. This book store functioned as a circulating library with the provision of various kinds of books, newspapers and periodicals in Turkish, English, and other languages. According to the missionaries, there were no fewer than 5,000 readers who came to the reading room regularly in 1925.<sup>530</sup> Not only Turkish students but also elites in different fields visited the bookstore and praise the service “with delight and pleasure”.<sup>531</sup>

It was heartening to the missionaries that such evangelizing work through Christian literature exerted an influence on Turkish youth in practice. For instance, in March 1927 a young Turk named Sa’adi come to visit the missionaries at the Bible House, professing that he had been led to Christ through the reading of the New Testament and through a dream in which Jesus appeared to him. The young man had a good Turkish education and had even written several poems since he had learned of Christ.<sup>532</sup>

<sup>530</sup> ABCFM. (1925) *Divan Yolu Book Store and Reading Room. Report for the Year 1925*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3 1924-29, No.4, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>531</sup> ABCFM. (1925) *American Reading Room. Report for the Year 1926*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3 1924-29, No.1, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>532</sup> MacCallum, F.W. (1927) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, March 7. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.10, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

Along with the early proposal, missionaries also planned to start a periodical in Turkish for young people, which became the missionary magazine *Muhit*. The sales of *Muhit* started to be sold from October 1928 in İstanbul, growing from 748 for the first issue to 1,916 for issue six.<sup>533</sup> By May 1929 about 2,000 copies was sold per month.<sup>534</sup> The missionaries became convinced of its “far reaching possibilities for influencing the country” and feel obliged to secure more materials from American magazines to reach higher quality in the future as they learned that the *Muhit* even gained the favour and endorsement of the Turkish government: it was reported in 1929 that the Department of Education had voted to recommend *Muhit* to all middle and high schools:

To the District Superintendents of Education:

The magazine *Muhit* published in Constantinople contains articles that are very useful for our schools. It is requested that you circularize the schools informing them that by action of the Committee on Educational Practice it is deemed suitable for school libraries to take the magazine and for the magazine to be recommended to scholars of the Middle and High grades.

Minister of Education,

Maarif Vekili

9/3/1929, Ankara<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Birge, J.K. (1929) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, April 6. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.15, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>534</sup> MacCallum, F.W. (1929) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, May 20. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.9, No.119, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>535</sup> Birge, J.K. (1929) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, April 6. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.3, No.14-15, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

*Appendix 1-2: the translation of the table of contents of the first number of Muhit<sup>536</sup>*

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<sup>536</sup> Birge, J.K. (1928) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, October 27. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, No.412-413, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



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For Imagination's Sake (a continued story by Reshad Noury Turkey's foremost story writer)... 461

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<sup>537</sup> Birge, J.K. (1929) Letter to Dr Enoch F. Bell, March 28. ABC 16.9.1. Vol.2, No.416-417, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

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Acknowledgments to various magazines.

Although *Muhit* and other missionaries' literature work were well received by the Turkey authorities and a great many of the youth, strong resistance from the Turkish nationalist intellectuals always haunted the missionaries. In 1929 the Turkish periodical *Resimli Ay* published a series of editorials to attack *Muhit* as well as the American missionary activities.<sup>538</sup> This Turkish periodical debunked the missionary's undisclosed intentions to capture the young people in Turkey as it accused Mr Birge of trying to influence the leaders who passed as Turkish nationalists and had an influence over the youth. It warned Turkish readers that the missionaries would be successful by eventually corroding the minds of the young Turks who would later become the leaders of the country, and now there had been many Turkish girls, such as İsmet Hanum, the daughter of Cevdet Pasha, becoming Christians under the missionary influence. The

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<sup>538</sup> Birge, J.K. (1929) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, June 11. ABC 16.9.1. Turkey mission. New Series 1920-1929, Vol.3 1924-29, No.17, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

genuine help from American missionaries, as it argued, was to “give money for Turkish students to go Europe and America for advanced studies”.<sup>539</sup>

Moreover, these articles such as ‘Tearing Down The Idols’ stated that many influential nationalists had become the tools of the missionaries through the “cheap weapon” of money. Missionaries were doing “wonderful work” by using “five or ten liras” to persuade these “revered idols” to write for *Muhit*. Several famous Turkish writers who had been invited to write for *Muhit*, such as Mehmet Emin<sup>540</sup> Bey and Abülhak Hamid Bey (translated as Abul Hak Amid), were denounced for their actions. As the periodical pointed out, an increasing number of articles had been published on the topic of spiritual satisfaction and religious literature. The famous authors of such articles had shared a common idea with the American missionaries, which were in substance missionary propaganda. With such dangerous propaganda and the encroaching Young People’s associations (such as the YMCA) which were filled with Turkish youth, they were “now drinking opium from the hand of the missionaries”.<sup>541</sup> The reputation of the missionaries was constantly challenged from 1914 as public spirit, on both religious and nationalistic grounds against foreign influence in Turkey became increasingly strong. In 1929, the Missionary Expulsion Society (*Misyonerleri Kovma Cemiyeti*) was established in Turkey to boycott the missionary activities by Turkish press circles.<sup>542</sup> Proudly claimed by Zekeriya (Zakaria) Bey, one founder of *Resimli Ay*, this organization was the very “first fruit of his attack on missionaries”.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid.

<sup>540</sup> It should be Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, a Turkish nationalist writer, poet and politician (1869-1944).

<sup>541</sup> ABC 16.9.1. Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>542</sup> ‘Misyonerleri Kovma Cemiyet -Hisriyanlık propagandası yapanlara hakkı hayat yok!’. (1929). Cumhuriyet, 10 March, p.1. Available at: <https://www.gastearsivi.com/gazete/cumhuriyet/1929-05-10/1>

<sup>543</sup> Birge, J.K. (1929) Letter to Ernest W. Riggs, June 11. ABC 16.9.1. Turkey mission. New Series 1920-1929, Vol.3 1924-29, No.17, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

## **From an Ethnic Viewpoint: Approaching Kurdish Muslims**

From the American (Western) missionary point of view, the Ottoman Muslim idea was influenced not by Turks but by Kurdish Muslims. In the Eastern Turkey Mission, where a large proportion of the work among Muslims for the American missionaries meant working among the Kurdish people, such work was regarded as a unique opportunity. Most of the Eastern Turkey Mission field belonged to Kurdish regions, which they referred to as Kurdistan, extending from the upper course of the plain of Tigris northwards to the Sassoon mountain, where about 60,000 Armenians and 180,000 Kurds lived, both speaking Kurdish, alongside Syrians, Jacobites, and Greeks.<sup>544</sup>

The Armenian people were always the American missionaries' first concern in the 1910s, even in some cases when carrying out Muslim work. There were three towns, Farkhin, Rudwan and Hazro in Kurdistan, where some Armenians lived, and most of the trade and industry was in their hands. The rest lived in villages and tilled the ground for the Turkish Aghas, to whom they had to pay taxes equal to one-sixteenth of all their revenue besides the eighth they paid to the government. Among these Armenians, hard poverty was not as apparent as it was in other districts, but illiteracy was high: in the centre of Kurdistan, Farkhin, among 20 to 30 homes only 4-5 women could read; in a village of Kilis (Kilise), no women could read.<sup>545</sup> As the missionaries observed, apart from two or three small Protestant communities in Farkhin and Kilise, most Armenians in Kurdistan were so-called Nominal Christians – ignorant of the Gospel and with low morality. The Kurdistan Armenians had an intense hatred of the Muslims – following the 1894 Sasun Massacre and the broader 1895-96 massacre in Eastern Turkey – thus practically no Armenian inhabitants sympathised with the American missionaries' Muslim work; many American missionaries themselves had unpleasant attitudes

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<sup>544</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of Kurdistan. By Miss Thora Wedel-Jarlsberg.* ABC 16. Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25. A, No.363, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>545</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of Bible Women and Work for Women in the Harpoot Field For the Year Ending June 1st, 1913.* ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25.A, No.360, Houghton Library, Cambridge.



towards the local Muslims.<sup>546</sup> A few Armenians renounced their faith to Islam, so that they could be “fearless to be robbed by the Kurds” but “robbed others” instead. To the missionaries’ disappointment, even the Protestant Armenians in Kurdistan felt a sense of superiority and dismissed the others. In this context, the missionaries found the greatest difficulty in their Muslim work in Kurdistan was the Christians who lived there. In other words, the missionaries thought their first duty regarding Muslim work in Kurdistan was the evangelical work among the local Armenians themselves and to “teach the salvation to others”. To establish self-supporting Protestant churches, which could produce capable native Protestant workers to evangelize the whole country, was the long-time pursuit of the American missionaries of the Eastern Turkey Mission.

To the missionaries of the Eastern Turkey Mission, medical services were the most efficient way to build contacts with the local Kurds. To reach them, two Protestant missionary nurses, (Norwegian) Thora Wedel-Jarsberg and (German) Eva Elvers,<sup>547</sup> who were working at the American Hospital in Harput, took a one-year trip to Kurdistan in 1911, and they continued to work among the Kurdish people during the First World War. During their tour, they started a dispensary in their home at Farkhin and the number of patients grew steadily to 80 per day. Their work was appreciated by many Kurds but they also received plenty of abuse and had stones thrown at them. As they recalled, “the roof of our neighbour’s house used to be lined with children who would keep on throwing stones and saying all sorts of ugly things. But on the whole, it was a very happy time. We felt we were representatives of Christ in that dark place and

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<sup>546</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of Bible Women and Work for Women in the Harpoot Field For the Year Ending June 1st, 1913*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25.A, No.183, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>547</sup> The two ladies were also important witnesses of the later Armenian genocide in WWI. From their perspective, “the Armenians themselves were to blame for the misfortune which had befallen them; the two associations, Dashnaksutiun and Hintschak, which had systematically worked on and terrorized the Armenian population for years; were mainly to blame. The Turkish government was completely right to take action against these dangerous elements”. However they were repulsed and indignant over the Turkish government’s killing of innocent women and children. See Suny, R.G. (2017). *“They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”*: A History of the Armenian Genocide. Vol. 23, Princeton University Press, p.298; Gust, W. (Ed.) (2013). *The Armenian genocide: Evidence from the German foreign office archives, 1915-1916*. Berghahn Books, p.262.

were glad".<sup>548</sup> However, soon the medical work was closed by the provincial government, after which they spent some time in the villages and in the Sasun mountains, where they had a very favourable impression of the Kurds. The mountain Kurds, especially the men, seemed very willing to listen to the Gospel and were courteous, while the Kurds of Farkhin were more fanatical, but even they could be reached though medical work.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Report of Kurdistan*. By Miss Thora Wedel-Jarlsberg. Reel 712, No.364

<sup>549</sup> The following account from the source regarding the contacts reflects some perceptions held by both sides: "They bring their flocks from the lowlands and live in camps for several months. The Kurds are... not so industrious or intelligent, nor so crafty either, but merry, always ready for a joke, childlike and in a way loving; on the other hand they are covetous: theft and robbery is their living and they 'lie like water' according to their own saying. Once we went to visit a camp noted for the fierceness of its inhabitants, so that we could hardly get our Armenian boys to show us the way. One of the women used us very roughly indeed. 'Aren't you afraid that we will kill you and take your things?' She said and pulled us about. 'No, we love you, and want to do you good.' 'Really, then we love you too, sit down and read to us.' So we did, and it was a joy indeed to hear these wild women explaining to each other what we had said. Once another woman took a stick to prevent our entering her camp, but she too ended by asking us to read, and became quite friendly. The first mistook us for policemen sent to inquire about the won oxen stolen by her people the day before. Our helmets are an object of wonder and fear. We are said to wear them in order to hide ourselves from God". (Reel 712, No.364)

## **Chapter VI: Mutual Perceptions between American Missionaries and Muslims in the Late Ottoman Empire, according to Missionary Literature**

It has been possible to find out many of their prejudices and superstitions, their customs and ideas, as for instance, ideas about the evil eye, about god, prayer, and sin. Their meetings are called mevlid and consist mainly of the chanting of the Koran. Khateem, the ceremony and procession of school children, upon the completion by one of their number of a certain portion of the Koran. They much dislike any pictures of sacred personages, but do not object to representations of parables or other stories.<sup>550</sup>

-Central Turkey Mission, American Board, 1908

### **From a Western Perspective**

Ever since their arrival in early 1820s, the mindful American missionaries – in contrast with the Ottoman Muslims who did seem fond of keeping written materials – left abundant writings in relation to their Ottoman surroundings. Through their long-term social contacts with Ottoman Muslims, the American missionaries could gradually observe and record the characters, personalities, cultures and customs of the Turkish Muslims in Anatolia, which are valuable sources for late-Ottoman historical-anthropological studies. Yet cautious treatment is required when dealing with these materials because of the pervasive Western prejudices.

A salient feature in the American missionary narratives is their assumed ‘white-man’ moral-intellectual superiority over the Ottoman Muslims. There was an implied portrait of themselves as “the only saver” from the “miserable life” of the Muslims, particularly

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<sup>550</sup> ABCFM. (1908) *Report of Women's Work in Aintab Station (Ourfa and Kessab excepted) 1907-1908*. Reel 661, No.201.



for Muslim women, as many Muslim women in Anatolia apparently pinned their hopes on Missionary education and relief. An example of this perception was recorded in 1912 when one Muslim girl asked the missionaries for work on Muslims: “Will nothing ever be done for us? Will we go on in the dark this way until the days of judgement?”<sup>551</sup> The hopeless and helpless image of Turkish women villagers recurs often in missionary records: “We were like animals... All you say is true but there is no one to tell us or help us”,<sup>552</sup> wherein a mixed sense of obligation, justification, sympathy and religious-cultural superiority was engendered, urging the American missionaries, as ‘God-sent saviours’, to rescue these pitiful women from a life of misery.

This implicitly patronizing nature was ubiquitous, in various forms, in the missionary interpretations of their Muslim friends. In 1915, Dr John Ernest Merrill,<sup>553</sup> president of the Central Turkey College, decided to run a stocking workshop to aid students financially during wartime. When he found some Turkish students did not care about dropped stitches in their work, he remarked: “Well, Turks didn’t expect to do perfect work... The idea of perfect work was a foreign conception”. After providing an example of the work of the Ford Motor Company, he boasted of the meticulous attitude of the US people with pride.<sup>554</sup> Proposing the idea of religious tolerance, while contradictorily stressing the omnipresent deficiency in Islam, Dr Merrill was one of the most ardent supporters and devotees of Muslim evangelization work among the American missionaries in the Empire.

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<sup>551</sup> ABCFM. (1910) *Report of the International Relief Commission. Adana Turkey*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 666. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 1. No.248, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>552</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Moslem Evangelization in the Field of the Central Turkey Mission*. Reel 667, No.31.

<sup>553</sup> Dr Merrill was President of the Central Turkey College (later Aleppo College) from 1905 to 1936; he was also a member of the Muslim Work Committee of the American Board’s Central Turkey Mission, which oversaw Muslim education work. His ideology about missionary education work for Muslims was instrumental in the Board’s policy-making. For his biography, see Amerikan Bord Heyeti (American Board), Istanbul, "Memorial records for John E. Merrill," American Research Institute in Turkey, Istanbul Center Library, online in Digital Library for International Research Archive, Item #17275. <http://www.dlir.org/archive/items/show/17275>.

<sup>554</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.57.

Like John Merrill, Dr George E. White (1861-1946), who called himself a “Turcophile” (Turk-lover), also represent a critical missionary view towards Ottoman Muslims. He served as the president of the American Anatolia College in Merzifon after 1913 and had good relations with not only Armenians but also many prominent Muslims. In his paper, ‘What is the Matter with Mohammedanism’ (1913), Dr White said that although Ottoman Muslims were viewed by many as holding militant attitudes, when one sat down for a frank conversation with a Muslim guest, a host would perceive his fraternal yearning. He admitted that Islam contains many beautiful precepts and aspirations and produced many winning characters, but as a system which lacked constraining moral power it broke down at a crucial point. In his claim, this defective Islamic system resulted in its regimes’ chronic ineptitude: “in all its centuries it could not produce an instance of a government to a measurable degree just, permanent and progressive”, and the CUP regime could do little better.<sup>555</sup>

As an acute observer of the late-Ottoman social scene, Dr White criticized the Islamic world from top to bottom, pointing out that the Turkish pessimism in regard to public affairs had dominated the country by 1913, with the result that Turks “in general have no real confidence in one another” and manifested an “appalling lack of public spirit and public integrity”. This Turkish pessimism and moral degradation was reflected in the debacle of the Balkan war, the scepticism and indifference among young Muslims regarding their dereligionizing trend, the intemperance of drinking against the Islamic law by the majority of Turks (as he was told by a white-turbaned Judge of the Sacred Law, though probably overstated, 90% of their people drank liquor), the veiling law that was ordered because of the “lack of trust” between Muslim men and women, the problematic and inefficient *vakıf* (tax) system, the “fundamental lack” of “love for God”, the religious fanaticism overriding the friendship between them and their Christian neighbours, and the practical fatalism – as the “fatal weakness of Islam” and social progress inhibitor – stressing the infinite will of God and the infinitesimal will of

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<sup>555</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *What is the Matter with Mohammedanism? By a Turcophile. (Dr. White of Marsovan)*. Reel 629, No.493.

man.<sup>556</sup> All these issues with Islam had led to a state of chronic dilapidation, defeat and decay in the country, whether materially or morally.

Dr White's view represented mainstream criticism of Islam from where justification for the Muslim evangelization mission was found. However, he differentiated the American missionaries from the general spirit of European Christianity, which approached Muslims with the dominating spirit of the Crusades and antipathy for Islam. In contrast, he urged American missionaries to approach Muslims patiently and earnestly with a wave of sympathy, prayer, and friendly efforts, through the agencies of hospitals and schools. On the other hand, in WWI, Dr White devoted himself to Near East Relief work for Armenians and supported Armenian independence. In 1921 he was arrested by the Turkish authorities and charged with separatism when "incriminating" papers on Muslims and Kurds were found in his house.<sup>557</sup>

Similar to Dr White, there were more American missionaries who criticized the Turkish Muslims and their ongoing problematic "Mohammedanism", and they interpreted it as a widespread discontent and revolt which found expression against Islam, as it existed on the eve of WWI: such as the steadily growing desire for education that signified "desire for more light", the demand for the emancipation of women, and the bold and searching criticism of present-day Islamism by well-known Sheikhs, Muslim professors and editors, especially in Egypt where there was a larger measure of liberty. A Muslim professor at Al-Azhar wrote, "There is no true and living Islam left in the

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<sup>556</sup> Dr White argued that fatalism would lead to a lack of real freedom of the human will, without responsibility, "real sin" or righteousness, just praise or penalty. He gave an example of his experience of an accident in which Muslims blamed no man for their trouble but believed it to be an act of God. He argued that this Muslim character of fatalism was a crucial factor leading to the failure of the Islamic state system. Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> 'Fairmount in Turkey Day- Dr. White, President of Anatilio College, Fairmount in Turkey, Will Be Here'. (1918). *The Sunflower, Fairmount College Weekly Newspaper*, 19 April, Vol XXIII No.25. (Translation from Ottoman Turkish is collected in ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, No.580, Houghton Library, Cambridge.)

world. We have lost the whole world and our sickness is incurable”.<sup>558</sup> As J.C. Martin observed, by 1914 the Muslim ritual was fast falling into disuse under Western influence. Even during Ramadan, in Kilis and Antioch, not 20% of the people kept the fast, and the proportion of those who performed the Namaz decreased daily. Among 40 Muslim muleteers in a caravan that travelled leisurely, making only four or five hours daily, none save one man was seen to recite his prayers, and then only twice in three days. Even a *Mufti* had given up preaching in a Mosque because “it had no influence on others, because it had no influence on himself”.<sup>559</sup> Habits of drinking and smoking, which were against Islamic law and morality, prevailed among Turkish Muslims, especially among youngsters at that time. Martin concluded that: “The prestige of Islam as a religious power is broken. The sword used for centuries as an agency to proselyte and subdue has fallen from its grasp and can never again be wielded for this purpose”.<sup>560</sup> From his perspective, the Islamic society was now derelict and all these events created circumstances in favour of Christian penetration, which legitimated their aggressive mission of Muslim evangelization.

It was true that even the most ‘Turcophile’ American missionaries working in Ottoman Turkey possessed certain Christian superiority and criticism of the non-Christian believers – those missionaries who backed the Armenians were largely responsible for spreading the notorious image of “terrible Turks” around the world. For example, the pro-Armenian missionary George P. Knapp, the secretary of Bitlis station who was later charged by the Ottoman authorities with “seditious instigation” of the local Armenians, inveighed against the outnumbered Kurdish Muslims in Bitlis in 1911 for their “bigoted” and “grossly superstitious” nature, which he said had negatively tarnished their Armenian neighbours who therefore “kept in a state of abject servility”, which, in tandem with the domination of the previous local authorities, had resulted in

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<sup>558</sup> ABCFM, *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.164.

<sup>559</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *What is the Matter with Mohammedanism? By a Turcophile. (Dr. White of Marsovan)*. Reel 629, No.493.

<sup>560</sup> ABCFM. *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.164.

an overall regional backwardness, both mentally and economically. His notions epitomized the deep-seated Western perception and conclusion that the superstitious Ottoman Muslims who stuck to Islamism were religiously stubborn and inveterately defective, but neglecting their own religious prejudice:

When the first sewing-machine was introduced into markets, for some time after pious Muslims would cover their heads when passing by, so as not to be influenced by the evil spirit which they believed lurked in it... Under this circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that they [the Armenians neighbours] too were usually bigoted and dominated by gross superstitions. The whole environment was such as to hinder all progress.<sup>561</sup>

Dr D.M.B. Thom was another American missionary who approached Ottoman Muslims from an Orientalist perspective. As a noted American physician of Mardin Hospital, he had more than 40 years' experience among the Muslims, both Turks and Kurds. By 1890, he was the only physician of the Eastern Turkey Mission, so he was kept busy travelling for medical calls throughout Eastern Turkey, including Mardin, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, and Bitlis. Like other American doctors in Turkey, Dr Thom had good relations and business with the local Muslim "Governors, Sub. Governors, Kimakams, Mudirs, Merelies, Pashas, as well as common Muslim people, beggars and all". The well-to-do Muslim houses showed gratitude for his treatment and invited him to feasts with hospitality and honour. Even the notorious Ibrahim Pasha was a warm friend, and he was allowed to eat with the Pasha's Harem. He claimed that his experience with the Muslim patients had been much more satisfactory than with Christian patients. One of his observations coincides with that of other missionaries like Dr White was that Muslims would not blame a doctor and treat him better because of their belief in fatalism, unlike Christians,:

The former [Muslims], his sickness is all from God – Kismet – if he recovers from his illness, it is, that the time of his death had not then come, and that God used the

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<sup>561</sup> ABCFM. (1911) *Annual Report of the Bitlis Station 1 April, 1910, to 1 April, 1911*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25.A, No.184-186, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

means thru the doctor to bring him to health again. Or if he died, his time of death had come and no number of doctors could prevent it. It is Kismet or Kudder in either case – the doctor is not blamed or abused, whichever way the case may turn out. While the Xtian, in treating them, if they get well the Lord cured them, and if they die the doctor killed them, no gratitude in either case, that is, among the majority of them. I have never been the recipient of a gift from a Xtian, while several Muslims have made me presents... There is this about it all, in all my travels I have always found Moslems the better host, but that is more a part of their religion than that they are larger and warmer hearted.<sup>562</sup>

Nevertheless, what impressed Dr Thom most about his Muslim patients was the inexplicable Muslim ideology and “Islamic superstition”. When he was still in his ‘green’ age in Turkey, he was asked to operate on a Muslim woman’s bladder, because it was obliged to have a man doctor to operate. It was “a huge shame” for the woman and the husband was so ashamed of her that he left the city, leaving two children, a 14-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter, to look after the case. When the doctor came to visit the women, he had to bring no one with him and was not allowed to go in by the door, but had to climb up the wall to enter the window as so not to be seen getting into the house. However, the woman died the next day from haemorrhage, the doctor remarking that the death was “much to their relief, as they would not have cared to look at her face again!”

In a later case, the doctor was called in Mosul to the house “of a big bag”<sup>563</sup>, to see a boy’s mother. The son was sitting by the sick Kurdish mother in their house – she “was all covered up, gloves on her hands, handkerchiefs wound round her, a heavy veil on her face, nothing to be seen but a bundle of clothes”. She allowed the doctor to feel her pulse but through the wrappings and refused him to see her tongue because “it was not

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<sup>562</sup> ABCFM, D.M.B. Thom, (1914) My Forty Years’ Experience among the Moslems. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25.A, No.898, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>563</sup> This phrase used by the doctor referred to the Kurdish mother for what she wore.

for the uncircumcised eyes of a ‘gouer’ to behold the flesh of a dried-up old hag of a Koordish Beg”. Feeling silly and angry Dr Thom then left the house. In his opinion, a doctor like him was always a privileged person, and even the Koran admitted that a doctor saw the Harem, which was no shame nor disgrace, so he found it difficult to understand the conservative thought of this old Muslim woman.

From Dr Thom’s generalizing perspective on the Ottoman Muslims, whether Turks or Kurds, they were a group of ignorant people who treated both Christians and themselves with terrible prejudice and were in urgent need of Western education. Notably, the years of experience and contacts with Muslims had not improved the doctor’s intrinsic impression of the Islamic world and its denizens, even though he enjoyed the hospitality and respect of his Muslim patients. As he concluded, the Ottoman Empire was “a country where selfishness enters so largely into everything”, where the Muslims – even those who had already been influenced by the evangelical and enlightening work – had “an axe to grind” with the American missionaries. Thus, the missionaries found it hard to trust the Muslim people, as “we Occidentals are so constantly deceived by them”.<sup>564</sup>

### **Western and Muslim Interactions**

Just like Dr Thom and George P. Knapp, a large number of American missionaries in the Empire understood and defined the Oriental ‘Muslim’ subjects indiscriminately as an umbrella group, whether Turks, Kurds or sometimes Arabs, from an ‘Occidental’ position. In their discourse, the Ottoman Muslim communities were bracketed together regardless of their ethnicity and religious sects. In comparison, some American missionaries who treated Muslim groups more conscientiously could distinguish the Ottoman Turks and held relatively more positive attitudes towards them. Hester Jenkins, an American educator of the American Girls’ College in İstanbul, who

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<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

developed cordial relations with her Turkish students through teaching, tried to correct the Western misapprehensions about Turks who were bracketed together with other Ottoman ethnic groups indiscriminately (mostly by the American missionaries themselves): “The Turks have been little understood by the English-speaking peoples. They have been judged, naturally but most unfortunately, by the tyrannical and cruel actions of their late Sultan, and often also by the excesses of Kurds and Bashi-Bazouls, who, while they are Ottoman subjects, are not Turks at all”.<sup>565</sup>

Similarly, John Ernest Merrill noted the problematic propensity of his American missionary colleagues to interchangeably refer to Ottoman Muslims as Turks, and Ottoman Christians as Armenians. The evolving ideas of this missionary man who was concerned with the cause of Muslim evangelization show that the interactions and perceptions between the missionaries and Muslims existed in a dynamic matrix. Notably, in hindsight, in his 70s John Merrill found his previous personal relations with the Ottoman Turks to have been “extremely limited”. As he recalled in 1950, about how his opinions had been changed after his intensive study of the Koran in the past:

I came to understand that I was ignorant. I knew so little about Islam. I know the Qur’an superficially. I realized this and tried to remedy it. I secured copies of the courses in religious instruction prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Education... I began an intensive study of the Qur’an, though in Rodwell’s translation... The Qur’an was a religious book... I came to the conviction that this was a truly – truly – a religious book. And more than that, that three-fourths of it was like the Old Testament. Also, I found that the demands of the Qur’an for a religious life was to believe and to do righteous works- a form of the demand for trust and for obedience.”<sup>566</sup>

Apparently, those American missionaries with a more positive view of Muslim Turks were usually those who could have a cordial relationship with their Turkish

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<sup>565</sup> Jenkins, H. D. (1911). *Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of a Turkish Woman's Life*, p.173.

<sup>566</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1956) p.32.



friends/students through regular and close contacts (though not all of them). Hester D. Jenkins, who tried to rehabilitate the Turkish reputation, could also see merits and possibilities in the enlightened Turkish women. Though she depicted an idle and lazy harem life of typical “Turkish hanums” in her book (1911), saying that their “moral character” showed “the same lack of training that marks their physical and intellectual nature” with no “self-control” at all – she “will cry aloud or scream, and let herself behave in a way that shocks our Western ideas” – on the other hand she rhapsodized about the active role of Turkish women intellectuals (educated by missionaries) in the late Ottoman society, such as Halide Edib, Feride Salih, Niguar Hanum (Nigâr Hanım), Fatma Alih (Fatma Aliye), Meliha Hanum, and Gulistan Hanum (Gülistan Hanım), who could be “intensively and naturally loyal”, exhibiting “patriotism” and “natural pride”, while being “docile and eager to learn”. She also believed in the female potential to contribute to the cause of Turkish national education: “I am sure Turkish women can be trained to make good teachers, and will [be] quick to absorb Western methods”.<sup>567</sup> Her views stood out, given that a large proportion of missionary workers in Turkey held a negative view towards Turks. For example, in a 1923 report from Aintab Hospital, the head nurse denounced the Turkish woman as “an impossible creature who pretended to wash clothes” as well as “an illiterate, undisciplined, irresponsible person with a very dull conscience”, who was very hard to train as a competent nurse for an American hospital.<sup>568</sup>

Similarly in Adana, Miss Harriet G. Powers expressed her visceral sympathy with the progressive late-Ottoman Turkish women. She cited her acquaintance with a local Turkish lady who had known her “even before the Empire opened to the West”, and the lady often discussed with her on the progressive writings by the Young Turks concerning the status of women in the Empire. In 1914, Miss Harriet pointed out that

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<sup>567</sup> Jenkins, H. D. (1911). *Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of a Turkish Woman's Life*. Chatto & Windus.

<sup>568</sup> ABCFM, Louise M. Clark, R.M. (1923 ?). *Report of Head Nurse*. ABC 16.9.1. Vol 1, No.167., Houghton Library, Cambridge.

she was impressed by the effervescent women's emancipation movement in the Young Turk era, and she wished to become part of it. Seeing Turkish women publishing articles in their women's journals, the emergence of Turkish women professionals – including the “first woman pilot” – and the growth of the Society for the Defence of Women's Rights during the female enlightenment boom, the missionary found this activity “so thrilling and interesting” and her heart was filled with “cheers for these Turkish women who say what they think”. Her observations even encouraged her to “start a women's club” in Adana on her return, “after studying those in Constantinople”.<sup>569</sup>

Like the Turkish lady acquainted with Miss Harriet, some educated Turks or feminists built a friendly relationship with the American missionaries. These Muslims regarded the missionaries as rare companions whom they could exchange progressive opinions with; in turn they were an important source for the missionaries to learn the Islamic mindset and traditions. In another case, a Muslim woman *hodja*, Nazmiye Hanum developed cordial relations with the American missionaries: after a missionary visit to her school she became a frequent visitor at the American school several times a week, studying the Bible and Christianity while the missionaries visited her to study Turkish.<sup>570</sup> Nazmiye partially believed the Bible, with reservations, and was referred to by the missionary as being “of unusual brightness and clear understanding”. These experiences also urged the American missionaries to develop a closer Muslim foundation in the Empire for the sake of the revived enterprise of Muslim evangelization:

I must tell you this that though the lady is asking so many questions she is at the same time true follower of her religion. We who from our childhood have heard the Gospel truths do not realize the suffering and doubt such a mind would have. We

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<sup>569</sup> Mt. Holyoke College Archives, Turkey (missionaries to Turkey), as cited in Akgün, S. (1989) p.103

<sup>570</sup> Every Christian teacher could teach Bible in missionary schools according to the Protestant doctrines, while only the best teacher in the Muslim schools could teach the Koran. Nazmiye hanum taught the Koran in her school. She had already read the New Testament before she met the missionaries. (Reel 666, No.724)

all feel that the time has come when work must be opened for the Moslems... Christians who will devote all their time to this work and who can understand the Moslem mind are needed now as never before.<sup>571</sup>

Popular topics discussed by missionaries and their intellectual Turkish friends included the comparison of Islamic and Christian education systems, as well as the similarities and differences in the Bible and Koran. Like Nazmiye Hanum, a Turkish female *hodja* was amazed to have God addressed as Father; she could not understand “God rested” on the seventh day in Genesis: “Does God get tired?” She became shy and covered her face when the missionary mentioned God’s presence with everyone; while she believed in the Old Testament and the Prophets, the miraculous birth of Christ was no miracle to her, as she told the missionary, because God who created the Earth and all that was therein could create Christ – but not as His son because how could a God have a son?<sup>572</sup> These intellectual Muslim friends had an eclectic perspective on religious differences while remaining faithful to Islam. The missionaries distinguished them from “traditional” Muslims by applauding their liberal thoughts in “pursuing” the “truth” of science and religion.

There were also some open-minded local Muslim teachers who, unlike the conservatives, approached American missionaries for help in Muslim education work. For example, a teacher in the chief Turkish school of a city asked a teacher in the missionary school about their method of dealing with troublesome or disobedient students. The latter answered his interlocutor by saying that the first step was for the teacher to call the student, see him alone, and show his duty in personal conversation. But the *hodja* replied that in their school they could not do that; no teacher dared to be alone with one of his boys, because of the stories that would circulate. Soon another *hodja* came to the missionary school and said: “Our school does not meet our needs. So

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<sup>571</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.724.

<sup>572</sup> ABCFM. (1912) *Report of Committee on Work for Muslims*. Reel 666, No.724.

I have come to you, our American friends, with my son, and I ask you to help us educate our youths as our teachers fail to do it”.<sup>573</sup> The missionary literature clearly shows the pride and joy of their advanced American/Christian education system in parallel with criticism of the existing Muslim/Islam pedagogy.

These kinds of Muslim-missionary intellectual communications were not uncommon in the late Ottoman Empire. While observing and criticizing the Muslim masses from a high position, most American missionaries were apparently disposed and felt privileged to develop genial relations with eminent Turkish elites or those of high rank. Many American missionaries, even those who supported Armenian nationalism like Miss Mary Rogers, noted that although there was “still much superstition and fanaticism” among “the masses”, and many of the Turks were “ignorant and lazy”, “a few educated ones” were “very different” and “seemed to be solid men” and they “have very friendly relations with them”.<sup>574</sup> Their Turkish Muslim friends were occasionally visited or invited into missionary homes, broadly talking on religion, policies, cultures, and education, which also provided a chance to learn the late-Ottoman mentality from their recorded dialogue. For instance, a high-ranking military general might share their disappointment that the European Turkey was “more of a hindrance than a help to the Ottoman Empire”. A faithful Muslim during Ramadan would complain how other Muslim people broke fast and smoke. A broadly educated Turkish student would scornfully tell the missionaries how the CUP leader Enver Pasha was “short-sighted”: “He had only known German but knew nothing about other European countries”.<sup>575</sup>

Sentiments like curiosity, grievance or defiance among the Muslims who questioned Christianity occurred often in the bilateral conversations. Some Muslims would ask the missionaries why they did not believe in Mohammed: “You say Christ is a prophet and

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<sup>573</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *What is the Matter with Mohammedanism? By a Turcophile. (Dr. White of Marsovan)* Reel 629, No.496.

<sup>574</sup> ABCFM. Reel 713, V. 2513, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989)

<sup>575</sup> ABCFM. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

He being the last one you say He is the greatest but Mohammed having come later you do not acknowledge as one because he would be counted the greatest having come last”.<sup>576</sup> The missionary teachers were embarrassed and did some soul-searching after one indignant Turkish student queried: “All these years your Christian nations have been calling us barbarians and cruel; but wherein does Christianity show itself to be less savage and more peace-loving at heart than we when you gone against each other with such terrible and bitter slaughter, one of the other?”<sup>577</sup> Some Muslims approached the American missionaries to criticize their condescending attitudes towards them: “Don’t infer that the natives are hostile to missionaries. They are not. They are anxious to have good Christians among them, but they do not want men who looked down on them as slaves and outcasts”.<sup>578</sup> Some white-turbaned faithful Muslims would complain about the rampant crimes despite their supposedly perfect Ottoman legislation: “Our Sacred Law contains excellent regulations. A thief is to have his left hand cut off, an adulterer is to be stoned, a sodomite to be impaled, a drunkard to be flogged, a murderer to be put to death... but why there is no fear of God... Crime is everywhere”; to which the missionary commented that the difference was “Muslims’ faith was founded on fear, Christian taught love to God and man... love is stronger than fear”.

An ambivalent Muslim feeling towards the Western Powers was observed in the conversations when some pessimistic Turks confided to the missionaries that they were longing for assistance from the Europeans yet feared the outcome:

the people generally dreaded a foreign occupation, first because they were jealous for the honour of their women, and second because they feared they would be urged to attend the church instead of the Mosque. Otherwise, the sooner the English took over the administration of the country, as they had done with India

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid.

<sup>577</sup> ABCFM, Harlow, S. R. (1914) *Islam and the War. Turkey*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, No.977, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>578</sup> BOA. HR.SYS. 59.36.

and Egypt, the better... Let me tell you, my friend, the time for the reformation of our Islam is past.

The “reformation” mentioned in this context referred to that of new institutions assisted by Westerners rather than the reform of the foundations of the faith, because as the missionaries saw it, they had lost their confidence in Islam.

To the missionaries, “Turks in trouble” was the characteristic image of the early 1910s’ Ottoman Empire. According to their observations, the Turks were not only embattled by outside enemies, losing faith and trusts in themselves, but also enduring precarious interior feuds between the Sunni Turks and the Shia or Alevi Turks. As an Alevi sheikh frankly told the missionaries about their hostility against their rivals:

Our people are a separate organization from the regular Turks. We care true to another; words die on the spot where they are uttered, and there is no betrayal of a man by his mate. We’ll give these devil-worshippers who are running things a little more time, a year or two years or three. Then if we see no more justice in public affairs than now, we’ll raise the standard of revolt. Our people are only just beginning to wake up, but by and by you’ll see what we’ll do.<sup>579</sup>

### **From the Muslim Perspective**

Like American missionaries who generalized about Muslims, the Ottoman Muslims referred to the missionaries in many cases without the classification of their nationalities or denominations, but generally as “Christian Missionaries”. A Turkish native would judge the American missionaries, based on either true observation or misconception. To Muslim eyes, the most common image of the American missionaries was them as strangers in a foreign land, or rather conquerors in an occupied country, living in princely style and spending their time like earthly potentates,

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<sup>579</sup> ABCFM. (1913) *Turks in Trouble*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 629. 16.9.3. Vol. 40, No.895, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

mixing only with wealthy and high-ranking natives. As claimed by a prominent Turkish doctor as well as many able Muslims, the American missionaries were “good men” and “the Turks respect them”.<sup>580</sup>

In Beirut, there was an affair that encouraged the unfavourable attitudes of the Ottoman Muslims towards the American missionaries in the late 1880s, when some radical changes were made in the Syrian Protestant College, one of the most influential American Colleges in the Ottoman Empire, it failed to meet the approval of the local inhabitants, both Muslim and Christians. One major change was the removal of the native teachers and the substitution of American missionaries, who were imported for that purpose. Another important change was the substitution of English for the Arabic language. The American missionary Dr Vandyke, one of the most prominent Arabic scholars at the time and “the best beloved missionary in the East”, sided with the natives, which was largely due to their friendship with him, while the American physician Dr Post took the opposite side – as a result, the natives were not very warmly disposed to him. This affair caused considerable discussion in the Empire and delegates were even sent from the US to conduct a thorough investigation. Although calm was eventually restored, the local attitudes towards the missionaries had reached their nadir.<sup>581</sup>

In this context, in 1888 an anonymous Turkish scholar – possibly one of the native members of the Syrian Protestant College – complained to the *Herald* in İstanbul about the Christian Missionaries who were, in their words, living an idle and luxurious life but with no thought for the poor and needy. As a convert from Islam to Christianity, he also represented the negative views of the Muslim natives at that time:

Christian Missionaries have done much harm to Turkey, all eulogistic reports to the contrary notwithstanding... They live in palaces, keep horses and servants,

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<sup>580</sup> ‘Boston Sunday Post'ta yayınlanan Doktor Kronberger'in Osmanlı lehinde, Boston Post'ta yayınlanan Alice Stone Blackwell'in Osmanlı'ya karşı saldırılarını muhtevi yazıları’. (1895). 6 July. (Collected in Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi. HR.SYS.64.15.6)

<sup>581</sup> BOA. HR.SYS 59.36.

feast sumptuously and spend very little time, if any, in trying to spread the Gospel. In Beyrout and Cairo there are missionaries with houses as well appointed as 'President Cleveland' and summer villas as comfortable as any at Newpork. There they live with their wives, children and retinues, drawing handsome salaries from that foreign mission societies and taking no pains to convert the natives to Christianity. Wealthy Mohammedans they condescend to visit and receive in their houses, but poor Mohammedans are not deemed worth even of a salute or a benediction.<sup>582</sup>

In contrast to the Western image of the missionaries who earnestly devoted themselves to benevolent work, the Turkish scholar described the missionaries as avaricious men who treated the native people ungenerously despite their considerable income:

Their covetousness is proverbial. As a rule, each of them obtains about £30 or \$150 a month salary – pretty large, considering how cheaply one can live in the East. Yet of out this large salary they do not pay their servants more than a few dollars a month each. The servant may have to support wife and family, but the missionary is not more generous on that account. 'Take what I give you or quit.' he says. And that ends the matter.<sup>583</sup>

The Turkish scholar also criticized certain unsympathetic treatment of the missionaries towards their native workers. In his opinion, to the Americans the natives were like nothing but slaves. He narrated a story in which a couple of young native teachers in a district missionary school had to break up their relationship after their missionary headmistress told them: "the day you marry, I dismiss you from the school". The missionary worried that the young woman would naturally leave the school if she got married. In the end, the missionary was recalled after the young man wrote a strong letter of complaint to the Foreign Mission Society in London.

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.



Consistent with the above-mentioned argument, in the same period a story circulated among the natives throughout Beirut about a miserly American missionary doctor who insisted on his patients paying the full amount of his bill. Once an old patient owed him a cent for treatment and when they met a few days later on the street the doctor asked for the cent, so the old man searched his pocket. Finding no cent, the doctor “went off in a huff”, and the next time they met, the doctor “snatched the old man’s cap from his head and swore he would keep it until the cent was paid”. In defence of this American doctor, his missionary friend Dr Ward argued that he should not be blamed as he did nothing wrong: “Now a cent is a small amount, but if anyone owes a cent to the doctor, he would not give himself or the debtor a moment’s peace until the cent was paid”.

Dr Ward was a senior American Board missionary at the Eastern Turkey Mission and editor of *Independence*. In response to the scholar’s charges, he argued: “Servants are cheap, and in Turkey everyone has a horse... A missionary’s salary was about \$1,000 a year”. “Being men of culture and decent instincts”, the missionaries had to import their furniture, and in other ways their style of living was vastly superior to the “mean houses” lived in by most of the natives. But to the American’s eye, there was nothing special about these things, as he argued: “Poor Mohammedans and Christian Missionaries have hardly anything in common. The missionaries do not try to convert them, and naturally do not court their society”. Regarding the servants’ salaries, the American missionaries took it for granted that a native should not be expected to be paid large wages according to the standard of the small costs of living in Turkey. Dr Ward justified his position: “Why should they, when they can get servants for that price? Here in America, if the servant is not satisfied with the wages which he receives he looks for another place. Should there be a different rule for missionaries’ servants?”<sup>584</sup> In this regard, previous studies also found that in their schools the American missionaries offered comparatively lower salaries for native Christian teachers themselves.<sup>585</sup> For example,

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<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Sharkey, H.J. and Doğan, M.A. (Eds.) (2011). *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational Encounters*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

in Syria, most American missionaries' salaries were "more than five to ten times" as much as their native employees (teachers or preachers), and it was not until the 1920s that this disparity was removed.<sup>586</sup> Moreover, whereas the Muslim journals criticized the missionaries' "covetousness", complaints were sometimes found in missionary reports about the local authorities who seized golds sent from the US<sup>587</sup> or about the governors who tried to appropriate relief funds from the Ottoman bank, which were supposed to be managed by the missionaries.<sup>588</sup>

Another common criticism from the Muslim intellectuals was that the Christian Missionaries knew little of Islam and despised the inhabitants of the East and their traditions and customs, dismissing the Koran as a book of nonsense and questionable morals. They also railed against the missionaries for their ignorance of the vernacular languages and inability to teach natives. These charges were partly true. While every American missionary in Syrian knew some Arabic, their limited understanding did not support them to teach native people. Only a few missionaries, like Dr Vandyke, had mastered the Arabic language. In Anatolia, American missionaries were trained to learn Armenian before they arrived in Turkey:<sup>589</sup> as one American missionary recalled in a letter, generally before they were sent to Turkey from America, they had learned the Armenian "alphabet and a few sentences en route", so that they could sing "Come to Jesus just now", in Armenian, when the Ottoman people "flocked out of town" to meet them as they arrived. However, working on the Ottoman lands, some of the missionaries neglected the study of Turkish but embraced the Armenian cause and restricted their relations to Armenians alone for decades,<sup>590</sup> let alone the study of Kurdish. Ümit D. found that only one-third of the American missionaries in Ottoman

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<sup>586</sup> Gorman, H. (2019). 'American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire's Service, 1820-1919'. *Diplomatic History*, 43(3), pp.547-8.

<sup>587</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 667. 16.9.5. Vol. 21, part 2. No.265;No. 273, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>588</sup> ABCFM. *Ottoman Bank Relief Funds*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25.A, No.1061-1063, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>589</sup> ABCFM. *Cold Experiences in Kourdistan*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 712. 16.9.7. Vol. 25.A, No.1053, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>590</sup> Frank Goodsell, *Personal Papers*. United Church Board for World Ministries Archives, New York, as cited in Akgün, S. (1989) p.97.

territories were versed in Ottoman-Turkish. It was not until after 1908 that more American missionaries in Turkey began to show interest in learning about Islam and the Turkish language.

Moreover, some Ottoman Muslim intellectuals criticized how the Occidentals who lacked the knowledge of native languages could hardly learn the truth of the Orientals through their missionary agents. A great number of Christian Missionaries had been sent to the Ottoman Empire and other non-Christian counties, and glowing reports of their success as evangelists were sent periodically to the parent societies, which were judiciously used to induce Christian sponsors to pour more funds into the Societies' treasuries to maintain the missionary work. In New England, the Congregational Committees, convinced by reports in the *Missionary Herald*, cheerfully endorsed the American missionary activities in the East, which were expected to rescue the 18 million "souls in need", both spiritually and financially. In this context, the missionaries were in charge of securing their own investments, sending home what reports they pleased and taking good care to prevent any native from carrying negative stories to the ears of the societies in Europe and America.

One of the stories circulated in the Ottoman Muslim journals in the 1880s indicated that the missionaries tried to keep a young Muslim traveller at home, and when they could not prevent the travel, they discredited the Muslim lest he cause any negative influence for the missionaries. To travel to Europe, the man had to consult the missionaries for his credentials, but when he opened them on board the ship he found that they had described him as a "tramp" and "vagabond" whose fame as a liar was known throughout Turkey, but in reality he was actually "wealthy" and "respected". Although the American missionaries could neither refute the charge or confound this story, from their perspective, all the attacks from the native intellectuals' circle represented the conjectures which one would naturally expect from an "ill-informed" or "malicious" Turk, said the American missionary Dr Ward. As he alleged, it was easy to understand that some of the Muslim natives were prone to be "not kindly disposed toward them"

and were “ready to bring against charges”. While the charges were not complete lies, or as the missionaries acknowledged “certainly have a grain of truth in them”, they were far from true and did not discredit the missionaries and their work: “All the missionaries are attending to their duties and have a beneficial influence on Turkey”.<sup>591</sup>

The hostile attitudes of the late-Ottoman Muslims towards the Christian Missionaries, which tended to be understated in the missionary reports, however, were constant. Before the “the Terrible Turks” descriptions began to be used in titles of Western print media, in the 1880s controversy raged in London and other Western centres over the question: “Is Mohammedanism better suited to the moral and religious needs of Oriental nations than Christianity?”. At the same time in many influential Ottoman native journals, such as *El Taktibakat*, in Beirut and Cairo and beyond, many articles appeared that deplored and denounced the “incompetency”, “covetousness” and “general worldliness” of the “so-called Christian Missionaries”.<sup>592</sup>

After a transitory period in the beginning of the Young Turk years, the Muslim-missionary relations had diminished by the eve of WWI when Muslim Turkish attitudes towards Christians and foreigners in the country had been largely exacerbated for two major reasons. First, the bitter feeling resulting from the Italian and Balkan wars found expression in various ways, but chiefly in a commercial boycott. From the missionary observations, the intensity of that bitter feeling, and the deep sense of humiliation was practically universal among the Turks. The second cause was connected to the discovery by the Turkish Muslims that definite and persistent efforts by the American missionaries were being advanced to “make the Gospel known to them”, or in other words, to convert them to Christianity or to another nationality than their own. Bitterness and anger against the missionaries could be seen at times. In several cases, the Bible women were suggested not to visit places where they planned to

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<sup>591</sup> BOA. HR.SYS. 59.36.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

go.<sup>593</sup> Some American missionaries found that they were losing the respect of their perturbed Muslim neighbours: one day when the chaplain of Aintab hospital went through the city, a Muslim caught his arm and demanded angrily, “Why do you never speak of Mohammed? It is all Jesus, Jesus! I have patience to listen no longer”.<sup>594</sup>

For the missionaries charged with Muslim work, such changes were appreciable yet could be readily sympathized with when putting themselves in the Muslims’ place. Paradoxically, the American missionaries claimed that these negative changes were by no means universal. As they pointed out, “with but few exceptions, the common people listened gladly and eagerly to the message which to many of them was entirely new, and indeed most wonderful”.<sup>595</sup> Simultaneously, other reports indicated that missionaries “were gaining prestige with the Muslims rather than losing such prestige. The crowds [in the market] have been notably good-natured.”<sup>596</sup> Goodwill and joyfulness were often expressed in the reports on Muslim works by those missionaries when they saw a friendship among Christians, Muslims, and themselves could be built through their efforts. Besides, Muslim attitudes towards American missionaries had never been black or white. In Syria in 1914, although the Muslim-missionary relations were tarnished by strong anti-foreign sentiment, Senni Bey, a high-ranking local official, and Ahmed Hassan Tabbara, editor of *al-Ittibad al-'Uthmami* (The Ottoman Union), a pro-CUP reformist Beirut newspaper, visited Syrian Protestant College (later American College of Beirut) to give special thanks to the American faculty and its Syrian students for their medical assistance to the Ottoman Army, who were fighting against Britain in Sinai and Palestine. This newspaper soon expressed its “great thanks” in an article to the Americans who “had seized every opportunity to serve the nation” by being “the surgeons” that “bound up the country’s wounds during its redemption in

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<sup>593</sup> ABCFM, *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.189.

<sup>594</sup> ABCFM, *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.204.

<sup>595</sup> ABCFM, *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.155.

<sup>596</sup> ABCFM, *Report of the Committee on Work among Moslems, Central Turkey Mission, 1914*. Reel 667, No.169.

blood”.<sup>597</sup> The American medical assistance for Ottoman armies continued to receive official gratitude in the ensuing wartime.

Finally, the missionaries understood one other important factor that caused varying attitudes among the local Muslims (and the Gregorian Armenians) towards them was the different course pursued by their native Christian religious workers in the localities. For example, in January 1914, Miss Jacobsen (a missionary nurse) and Mr Riggs (the President of Euphrates College) of Harput Station visited two outstations, Palu (Palou) and Peri, where they had preachers and schools. At Palou the local preacher was a “man of war” and he made the rights of the Protestant community clear against all opposition. When the missionaries invited the Turks to attend a stereopticon lecture in Turkish in Palou, no Turks turned up; in Peri where the pastor had for years cultivated friendly relations with those outside of his fold, a similar invitation resulted in a full house. The missionaries often found that old attitude of hostility and distrust on the part of the native workers was a barrier to any true approach to Muslims.<sup>598</sup>

In conclusion, although the American missionaries themselves claimed a neutral and philanthropic stance in the Ottoman Empire, they approached Ottoman Muslims with inherent Western prejudices and implicit superiority. The American missionaries’ activities and their relations with Muslim people varied from person to person, over time and between regions. They mainly perceived the Ottoman Muslims with a preconceived religious-cultural filter, intensified by their affinity with Ottoman Christian minorities who in their observation seemed to be “downtrodden” and losing identity under the Ottoman regimes.<sup>599</sup> Nevertheless, some of them cultivated close and amicable relations with Ottoman Muslims, especially in the Young Turk period when

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<sup>597</sup> Gorman, H. (2019). ‘American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire’s Service, 1820–1919’. *Diplomatic History*, 43(3), p.546.

<sup>598</sup> ABCFM. (1914) *Annual Report of Harpoot Station 1913-1914*. Reel 712, No.382.

<sup>599</sup> The ‘religious freedoms’ of the Ottoman Christian minorities, though not elaborated in this dissertation, was of great concern to the American missionaries. Not only was the decimation and forced conversion to Islam imposed by the Turkish authorities on the Armenians criticised, the American missionaries also called out the government’s Turkification of local Albanians during the Balkan war.

they could freely approach open-minded Turkish intellectuals and their Turkish students. By comparing the Muslim and missionary discourse, one can discern the tendency of American missionaries to downplay, omit or expurgate negative descriptions of the Muslim population and authorities, as well as their own misconduct, when writing official reports – they were well aware that the reports would circulate in the American headquarters and State Department.<sup>600</sup> The Ottoman Muslims (with regional and social differences) regarded the American missionaries as agents of Western powers and saw no difference between them and other European missionaries, whose ‘motives’ were often doubted by their American counterparts. Muslim sentiments towards American missionaries were affected by late-Ottoman political upheavals. Just as the American missionaries interpreted their Muslim evangelization agenda somewhat vaguely, the Ottoman Muslims had ambivalent feelings towards the American missionaries. As individuals, the American missionaries were respected for their meritorious work in the regions, but as outsiders representing the Western world, they were suspected, feared and hatred among the Muslims who lived there.

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<sup>600</sup> This editing of the truth also occurred in the missionaries’ reports on their general work, in the missionary-related primary materials of the Ottoman side, and in subsequent academic papers too, so it is important to be aware of this when conducting the bilateral discourse analysis on the subject of Ottoman-Missionary interactions.

# Chapter VII: Case Study of the American College for Girls and the Response of its Muslim Students towards Missionary Education for Women in İstanbul

## Women on the Two Sides

On the Ottoman side, women's education had been neglected for centuries. Government-established national schools for girls did not exist until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>601</sup> Muslim girls were expected to attend primary school at the age of five or six. They were taught reading and writing in Turkish, simple figuring, and reading of the Koran in the original Arabic, but without understanding it.<sup>602</sup> During the Tanzimat reform, the first Muslim women's middle school was opened in İstanbul in 1858. Hereafter, after finishing their courses at primary school, Muslim girls could enter middle school to take a course in religious knowledge, Ottoman grammar, pronunciation and structure, Arabic and Persian Grammar, Ottoman History, and some domestic courses, like embroidery and other handiworks.<sup>603</sup> However, the greater percentage of Muslim girls did no further study after they left primary school. Only upper-class girls were taught in harems by foreign governesses, who were introduced during the Tanzimat period.<sup>604</sup> In the Hamidian era, while a few privileged and ambitious girls could also take risks to attend missionary school for Western education, there were no Ottoman high schools or universities for girls until the Second

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<sup>601</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2013). 'Domestic frontiers'

<sup>602</sup> Jenkins, H. D. (2004). *Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of a Turkish Woman's Life*. Gorgias Press LLC, p.20.

<sup>603</sup> Gelişli, Y. (2004). 'Education of women from the Ottoman Empire to modern Turkey'. *SEER-South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, (04), pp.121-135.

<sup>604</sup> Woodsmall, R.F. (1936). *Moslem women enter a new world*. No.14, Round table Press, Incorporated, p.217.



Constitution period. Consequently, most Muslim women had a low level of education, behaving “as simple and almost as uncontrolled as a little child”, such that “intelligent men dread taking such women to wife”.<sup>605</sup>

The “women’s question” began to be discussed among Ottoman intellectuals from the Tanzimat period. Some believed that the lack of women’s education had resulted in ignorant Muslim wives and incompetent mothers who failed to support their reform-minded husbands or provide healthy and patriotic parenting. Thus, they saw the improvement of women’s roles and the transformation of women’s minds and habits through education as the saviours of the decadent Turkish nation. The above-mentioned emphasis on Ottoman education, particularly for Muslim women, fit in well with the American missionary women’s feminist tenets and thus created an advantageous context for the development of missionary girls’ schools in the Empire. However, in the Hamidian period, men with such convictions were still in the minority in the context of the wider Muslim population, and it was only after the Second Constitution Revolution that Ottoman women themselves gradually began to participate in the debate of “women’s question” with men as “actors”.<sup>606</sup> Among them, the most influential woman was Halide Edip, an ACG graduate and a prominent female nationalist, who is discussed below.

On the American side, female missionaries became an integral component of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American missions. Early on, gender inequality existed in missionary circles, as the opportunities for American women to participate in missionary causes were limited to the role of “assistant missionaries”, ordained as the accompanying wife of a male missionary. It was not until the American Civil War (1861-65) that the role of American women in missions expanded. The ABCFM invited Congregationalist women in Boston to establish a female auxiliary – the Woman’s

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<sup>605</sup> Jenkins, H. D. (2004) pp.32-34.

<sup>606</sup> See Kandiyoti, D. (1991). ‘End of empire: Islam, nationalism and women in Turkey’. In *Women, Islam and the state*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp.22-47.

Board of Missions (WBM) – in 1866, and at the same time began to send single women as missionaries abroad.<sup>607</sup> Women significantly outnumbered male missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere by 1890.<sup>608</sup> The Board had realized the importance of “women’s work for women”, in which single females who would otherwise stay enjoy “spinster status” at home were recruited to fulfil their Protestant ethos and seek new adventure in careers abroad, playing a key role in reaching “local populations living in traditionally gender-segregated settings”.<sup>609</sup> As the scale of women in missions expanded, the Board began to require a higher standard of education for the recruited women, thus in the Asian frontier, the bulk of the female missionaries who graduated from seminaries were gradually supplanted by well-trained intellectual women who tended to emphasise social causes over proselytising. In this context in 1871 the Constantinople Home School (later the American College for Girls in İstanbul), “a centre-piece of American education in the Near East”, was established in İstanbul by the Women's Board, yet controlled by male missionaries. In the early 1900s, the American female missionaries managed to gain control of the ACG from their male colleagues through the continuous growth of female missionary influence.<sup>610</sup> In the case of the ACG, the increase in the school staff’s academic education, the adaptation of the curriculum to enlarge enrolment, and the acquisition of greater local influence in the process of Ottoman social upheavals helped to precipitate the secularization of college education.

### **The Constantinople Home School**

The American Girls' College was the first institution to offer tertiary-level education in English to the multi-ethnic Ottoman women. As the predecessor of AGC, the

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<sup>607</sup> Goffman, C. (2011). ‘From Religious to American Proselytism’. In Doğan, M. A., and Sharkey, H. J. (Eds.) (2011). *American missionaries and the Middle East: foundational encounters*. University of Utah Press.

<sup>608</sup> Sharkey, H.J. (2010); Goffman, C. (2002).

<sup>609</sup> Kahlenberg, C. (2016).

<sup>610</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2013). *Domestic Frontiers*. University of Massachusetts Press, p.141.

Constantinople Home School opened with the aim of its founder and patron, the Woman's Board of Mission, to evangelize Armenian women through its education and teach them literacy, domestic skills, and medical instruction, so that they might act as agents to foster Christianity throughout the Ottoman territories. Thus, intensive evangelism was imposed by the teachers. As trained missionaries, they lived closely with and supervised boarding students who were required to attend religious activities. However, in subsequent decades, female educators increasingly saw themselves as professional trainers dedicated to "civilizing" Ottoman womanhood, while the Woman's Board maintained the school's Protestant evangelical origins. This deviation of values and overall aims between the women on the İstanbul frontier and the WBM in Boston was the source of increasingly irreconcilable tensions. As a result, the college finally suspended its financial connections from the WBM in 1908 and claimed itself to be an American liberal arts college of high intellectual rigour, working for the social, moral and intellectual betterment of Ottoman women.<sup>611</sup>

The president of ACG, Mary Mills Patrick, played an instrumental role in the transformation of the college's non-sectarian agenda. She came from the background of the new generation of American woman missionaries. After graduating from Lyons College in Iowa, Patrick did not marry and became a single woman missionary. Like other New Women, she was proud of herself for being independent and educated. And with a sense of American superiority, she believed that women's emancipation in other parts of the world could be achieved through missionary education. Appointed by the ABCFM, Patrick left the US to teach in Eastern Turkey at the age of 21. In October 1875, she was transferred to the Constantinople Home in İstanbul, then later ACG, before becoming the school's president in 1889. The following year, the Home School was granted a charter by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to become the American College for Girls with Patrick's leadership and WBM's support. The charter allowed ACG to become the first institution to offer tertiary-level education in English and to

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<sup>611</sup> Goffman, C. (2011).

confer Bachelor of Arts degrees to Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian and Turkish women in the Empire. By that time, the ACG had gained a considerable reputation as a centrepiece of American missionary education in the Middle East, and later recognition by the Ottoman government in 1895 as an officially chartered institution further boosted the college's status and influence among the local communities of İstanbul.

As the president, Patrick favoured the college's American and international ideals rather than its old missionary connections. Through the efforts of Patrick and her like-minded colleagues, there was a substantial expansion of the secular curriculum, such as English literature, mathematics, geography, zoology, botany, astronomy, physiology and hygiene, chemistry, geology, physics, and history,<sup>612</sup> while religious conversion of their students was not a priority. Furthermore, her years of work in İstanbul led her to develop an affinity with the Ottoman milieu. Unlike many other of her missionary fellows, she was increasingly convinced that the achievement of prevailing Christianity in the Middle East did not mean defeating Islam – the way to achieve woman's progress was not explicitly Christian, but through Americanising training and education. To reassure and persuade the Woman's Board, in her 1890 annual report Patrick resorted to rhetorical discourse to suggest that the better pedagogy lay in the moral education of "heart Christianity", through which students were not forced to profess Protestant faith, but would live a Protestant-like "righteous" life voluntarily.<sup>613</sup> On a practical level, Patrick argued that secularizing education was a measure to increase the school's competitiveness against other Catholic missionary schools and Ottoman government schools because it could prevent the students' fear of Proselytising, thereby potentially increasing the numbers of Christian and Muslim enrolments.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2013). *Domestic Frontiers*. University of Massachusetts Press.

<sup>613</sup> The American College for Girls at Constantinople. *Annual Report of the American College for Girls, 1889-1890*, Ms., Robert College Archives, New York, pp.2-4 (Hereafter Annual Report of 1889-1990).

<sup>614</sup> Ibid.

## The Early Turkish Students

Over the school's first two decades, few Turkish (Muslim) girls could be seen within the school's gates as a result of the Sultan's anti-missionary educational policy. However, partly as a result of declining evangelism, and partly because of the school's local popularity, ACG achieved its first Muslim graduate (1889-1890) by 1890.<sup>615</sup> This girl was İsmet Gülistan, whose father, Tewfik Bey (Tevfik Bey), was a colonel in the army who had married a woman from the previous Sultan Abdulaziz's Harem. As an untraditional Ottoman in that period, Tevfik believed that women's education was key to social development and he wished to promote women's education by sending his daughter to an American school. Reportedly, reactions in palace circles were suspicious, as women's education was not widely valued at that time:

Some said, "What's the use of teaching a girl to read and write? Will she be a secretly at Sublime Porte?", and still others advised, "Teaching as far as the recitation of prayer verses is quite enough." And some gibed, "Yes, teach her to write that she may use it for mischievous purposes such as writing love letters!" General Tewfik Bey was once heard to say to Pasha who had two daughters whom he did not even think of educating, "If you send those girls of yours to school, you will do greater service to your country than conquering the whole world!"<sup>616</sup>

Despite these oppositions and doubts, Tevfik sent his daughter to the school in 1889, "in consequence of the bitter animosity of the Turkish government to Christian

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<sup>615</sup> By 1890 another non-Christian student attended ACG. This girl, although not Muslim, was a Jewish protégé who had been sent by the Ottoman Ministry of Education. It was a demonstration of the recognition of the school's teaching by Ottoman leaders, despite their strict censorship of missionary textbooks imposed at the same time. According to the president's annual report, by 1890 the graduates from ACG numbered: "Armenian 52, Bulgarian 13, Greek 4, English 3, Jewish 1, Danish 1, American 1, Turkish 1" (ibid.). See also this chapter's Appendix.

<sup>616</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1934). *A Bosphorus adventure; Istanbul (Constantinople) woman's college, 1871-1924*, p.277.

education”. When Gülistan finally graduated in 1890 as the first Muslim graduate of the ACG, her father was pleased and seemed to feel that “he had accomplished something distinctly important”. In Patrick’s annual report of 1890, the girl’s father was highlighted as someone who “has shown great courage and independence of thought in continuing to send his daughter to [the school]” and had attended the “brilliant occasion” as a notable audience member “more than the usual number of representatives of the government, and diplomatic circles”. The president also felt “astonished” when the father came to her room in uniform and thanked her in person while she was dressing for the commencement exercises. Unfortunately, shortly after Gülistan’s graduation, her father died in exile as the Sultan’s penalty for his radical ideas.<sup>617</sup>

Gülistan’s presence in the 1890 commencement was described in Patrick’s annual reports and memoirs in detail: “The graduating class of this year is distinguished from all others in numbering among its members the first graduate from any Christian school belonging to the ruling nationality of the land, Gülistan İsmet Hanum, a young lady calculated by her character and attainments to bring honour to her alma Mater”. In the ceremony, Gülistan was “heavily veiled” and “sat with her mother near the stage” instead of sitting with her class, “as no Mohammedan girl could appear in public unveiled”. As an honorary graduate that year, she did not accept her diploma with others on stage, but received it with an audience.<sup>618</sup> When the diploma was “handed to her, the applause of the audience was almost beyond control, and the curiosity to see her was intense”.<sup>619</sup> Like every graduate, Gülistan was asked to write a composition entitled ‘Illusions of sense perception’, which was read by one of her classmates on her behalf in the ceremony and was announced as the best composition of the day. Later the

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<sup>617</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1930) p.166.

<sup>618</sup> She gained her diploma as a high student in the last graduating class before the school obtained its charter to become a college.

<sup>619</sup> *Annual Report of 1889-1890*, p.9.

composition was read by Abdülhamid II, after which the Sultan send it to the Minister of Education as a reference for the improvement of government schools.<sup>620</sup>

These depictions reflected the missionary educators' pleasure and special attention regarding their first Muslim student. They thoroughly approved of their student's attachment to the college and admired her eagerness to endure risks or hardship to attend. For them, Muslim students highlighted the school's cosmopolitan and international character, and the first Muslim student's graduation was deemed as a response to the ACG's increasing local influence.<sup>621</sup> The clear pleasure of Gülistan's parents reflected their acceptance of Christian education for Muslims in the ACG. It seemed that the relatively secularized school policy had not threatened Gülistan's religious beliefs nor challenged her Muslim customs. Gülistan had not been intensively proselytized to. Although she did not have to veil in class, Gülistan followed prevailing Muslim tradition to veil in public as other Muslim women did and did not appear on the platform with other Christian students. Her graduation, retaining Muslim religious practices, implied the school's early success in developing religious tolerance and diversity, as Patrick had expected. Through transferring the school from an evangelizing arm to an intellectual institution, Patrick hoped that it would have more potential to attract Ottoman students of all religions and nationalities.

Meanwhile, the American schooling had not undermined Gülistan's identity as a Turkish woman but had strengthened her patriotism, which could be seen in her future career. Despite the religious tolerance, there had been clashes between the student and the school. For example, there was a record of an event in Gülistan's (or "the Lady Zobeyide" as the writer anonymously called her) early school life:

The class was reading from an American lesson-book and came to the statement that 'the Turks were lazy and ignorant'. With flashing eyes the little Turkish girl

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<sup>620</sup> Patrick, M.M. *The First Annual Report, Freely, Robert College, c.1.* pp.147-150, as cited in Erdoğan, T. (2003). 'Üsküdar Amerikan Kız Koleji'nin kısa tarihi'.

<sup>621</sup> *Annual Report of 1889-1890.*

sprang from her place, threw the lesson-book on the ground, and cried out three times: ‘Stupid Americans! Stupid Americans! Stupid Americans!’<sup>622</sup>

On this occasion, the American Orientalist and racist stereotype against Turks resulted in Gülistan’s severe resentment, and a strong sense of Turkish identity could be discerned behind the anger of the girl. Her Turkish identity was highlighted in the school’s Christian/Americanized environment and strengthened while accepting Western education, morals, cultures and values. Indeed, according to her teacher Isabel Dodd, by the time of Gülistan’s graduation, she had shown “an almost passionate affection” for her teachers and alma mater, rather than regarding her teachers as “stupid Americans”, and her love and faith regarding Turkish people were “stronger than ever”.<sup>623</sup> By examining her later life it can be seen that Gülistan received the American message of liberty, patriotism and feminism at school and applied them in the struggle for a “new Turkey”. After teaching for a few years, she married the Community of Union and Progress (CUP) member Mustafa Asım in 1897, who later became one of the first members of the Grand National Assembly. Gülistan also became an active member of CUP, as well as a professional writer, contributing weekly to various Turkish reform and women’s journals. She founded the women’s branch of CUP in Salonika, and her home was used as the secret hub for CUP activities. When the Young Turks triumphed in 1908, she did not hesitate to climb platforms to address the crowds in the name of women in Salonika.<sup>624</sup>

Another prominent Turkish student attending the school in the early Hamidian period was Nazlı Halid (Nazlı Halid).<sup>625</sup> Her mother, the daughter of the youngest wife of an

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<sup>622</sup> Ramsay, W.M. (1909). *The revolution in Constantinople and Turkey: a diary*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p.183.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid.

<sup>624</sup> Os, N.A.N.M.V. (2013). *Feminism, philanthropy and patriotism: female associational life in the Ottoman empire, introduction*. Ph. D. Dissertation, Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University.

<sup>625</sup> For another research on American missionaries’s perception of Turkish women in the late Ottoman period, which mentioned Gülistan İsmet and Nazlı Halid, see Kırkpınar, L.T. and SarıdemirR, S.S.



influential official in the Sublime Porte, took the initiative to send her daughter to the school. Her father's life was frequently threatened when the Sultan's spies found Nazlı attending the school, so he was forced to return her home. However, when the daughter and her mother wept together at home, the father changed his mind, saying "What is my life worth to me with my wife and daughter both weeping? If you are determined to ruin me, so be it," and sent his daughter back to school.<sup>626</sup> However, the Young Turks came to power (1908) before her senior year, and she was able to graduate "in freedom and with honour" in 1910. After graduation, she became the wife of Yusuf Kemal, a politician in several prominent posts during the Young Turk and Republican periods.

The Young Turk Revolution triumphed in the same year the college cut off its connections with the Woman's Board of Missions. It was happy news for the ACG educators, as they believed that the CUP's triumph would not only inaugurate a new era of democracy and increased intellectual and religious freedom but would also be a harbinger of women's emancipation in Turkey. Indeed, Patrick predicted a new perspective following the revolution: "Simultaneously with the new regime in Turkey, we shall also have a new college, which, although it will rejoice in its past history, will more fully rejoice in its new opportunities".<sup>627</sup> Many students in the ACG also wrote a series of compositions in English to express their support for the CUP government and hope for Ottoman society. These essays were collected and printed as a booklet entitled *Echoes of the New Ottoman Constitution* (1908). The essays in *Echoes* reflect the ethnic-religious diversity of the ACG's students and the themes of the essays vary depending on students' background. While non-Muslim students, in general, had a

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(2021). 'II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Amerikan Basınında Türk Kadını Algısı'. *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 21(43), pp.581-605.

<sup>626</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1934) pp.230-231. Patrick, M.M. (1930) pp. 193-194; Jenkins, H. D. (1925). *An educational ambassador to the Near East: the story of Mary Mills Patrick and an American college in the Orient*. New York: F. H. Revell Co., p.160.

<sup>627</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1908). 'A Woman's College in Constantinople'. *The Examiner*, 22 October, as cited in Reeves-Ellington, B. (2015). 'Constantinople Woman's College: constructing gendered, religious, and political identities in an American institution in the Late Ottoman Empire'. *Women's History Review*, 24(1), pp.53-71.

concern for personal civil and political freedom (especially freedom of speech) as well as the release from past persecutions of their ethnic group, Muslim students particularly emphasised “the women’s question” as they had persistently endured lower social statuses, stringent restrictions on their daily lives, and prohibition on seeking a Western education.<sup>628</sup>

Muslim student Nazlı Halid’s paper, ‘Women and the Turkish Constitution’ was also included in this booklet. It emphasized the perspectives of woman’s status and education over all the others. Starting with comments on the traditional situation of Turkish women, she wrote:

Up to now no education was considered necessary for a woman, and her greatest work in life was to be a housewife... Women were considered to be much lower than men in everything. They were supposed to stay at home, deprived of every advantage in life, while their fathers, brothers, and husbands enjoyed themselves in every way; they were excused for ignorance when there were no schools to develop their minds.

After an argument about women’s active role in helping the revolutionary cause, Nazlı projected her hope for women’s better education:

This was the past. How does it compare with the present? The newspapers are printing article after article saying that women must work and help men. I hope it is not only in the way recognized by the past that we are expected to help men. Then the question arises, Are we prepared for any other work than that? No. How can we, since we are not educated? The thing we need most is education and good schools.

We as well as the men have suffered, and we also must have our freedom.<sup>629</sup>

Nazlı’s work not only reviewed the Young Turk’s effect on women’s reforms but also demonstrated the college’s influence on reshaping Turkish women’s minds. Compared to the past, women’s roles were widely discussed and increasingly emphasized by

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<sup>628</sup> Goffman, C. ‘Introduction’ in Jenkins, H. D. (2004). *Behind Turkish Lattices*, Gorgias Press.

<sup>629</sup> American College for Girls. (1908). *Echoes of the New Ottoman Constitution*, p.15

Ottoman intellectuals after the revolution. However, as a Turkish student who had thoroughly absorbed the message of the college, Nazlı assumed a prominent position: more than the subject, but an actor in the debate over the “women’s question”, which had mostly been discussed by men in the past. She also argued for the increased role of Turkish women: more than supporting their husbands and raising children, but devoted to the cause of social progress with an independent, liberated, educated, professional and confident female profile – like the American New Women ideal. As Kahlenberg argues, through the American intellectual, physical, and moral education, the ACG’s teachers “believed and hoped that they were transforming their students to be more like them”.<sup>630</sup>

*Echoes* also included an essay by Halide Edib, the most well-known Turkish alumna of the ACG. In her essay, she praised her American teachers for having “struggled to bring light to Ottoman soil, to Ottoman civilization, fighting for learning and culture” and showed great affection towards her alma mater by exclaiming: “I love, love, love the college”.<sup>631</sup> Halide Edib was frequently described as “the leading women in Turkey in popularity and influence” because of her work for the national cause, including her active involvement in Young Turk cultural politics (particularly the Turkish Hearth movement), her contribution to establishing women’s nursing activities during the Balkan Wars and in inaugurating programmes for women’s education, and her dedication in the War of Independence as the first Turkish woman to have a rank in the nationalist military.<sup>632</sup> Her prominence also made her the poster child of ACG, with Patrick and her colleagues considering Halide a representative of the ideal Turkish woman who had fulfilled her potential through American education.<sup>633</sup> Despite the Sultan’s formal ban of 1892, Halide Edib attended the ACG covertly as a day student during 1893-1894 until an edict was specifically ordered by the Sultan to forbid her

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<sup>630</sup> Kahlenberg, C. (2016) p.160.

<sup>631</sup> American College for Girls. (1908). *Echoes of the New Ottoman Constitution*, p.24.

<sup>632</sup> Ramsay, W. M. (1909), p.176. See also: Lewis, R. (2004). *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, travel, and the Ottoman harem*. Vol. 4, Rutgers University Press, pp.38-42.

<sup>633</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2015).

attending. However, she finally managed to return and became the college's first Muslim graduate with a BA degree in 1901.

According to Halide Edib, the college had a “strong influence” on her life. On one hand, she thought the school had an overall “liberating effect”, “giving me a much greater balance and opening up to me the possibility of a personal life with enjoyments of a much more varied kind”.<sup>634</sup> Indeed, while after graduation domestically she “led the life of the old-fashioned Turkish woman” with her husband and three children, “confined within the walls of [her] department”, outside the home she had various prominent identities such as Turkish female nationalist, stateswoman, writer, novelist and lecturer. As a Muslim wife and mother who never appeared unveiled, but playing a prominent role in nationalist fever, Halide not only validated the college's secular character but also proved the schools' “liberating effect” in providing her later life with much more possibility.<sup>635</sup>

On the other hand, while endorsing the message of American “motherhood” and “womanhood” received in the college, her contact with Christianity in the college did not undermine her faith in Islam, and she could demonstrate a Muslim way of conforming to the traditions of her own culture. As she wrote in her memoir: “I struggled to fit all the outlooks of life, acquired through my education in the college, into Islamic experience and belief”.<sup>636</sup> Halide experienced a “questioning and critical mood” in reference to the “matters of religion”.<sup>637</sup> Despite the college's multi-religious nature, Halide instead considered Christianity the most intolerant religion, with its “directing influence in the lives of its devotees”. She argued that Christian intolerance was reflected in its historical developments, which seemed contrary to its teaching

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<sup>634</sup> Adivar, H.E. (1926). *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*. p.190.

<sup>635</sup> Adivar, H.E. (1926). *Memoirs of Halidé Edib*. p.207.

<sup>636</sup> Adivar, H.E. (1926) p.192. See also: Murre-Van den Berg, H. (2005). ‘19th-Century Protestant Missions and Middle Eastern Women: An Overview’. *Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East: Two Hundred Years of History*. Oxford and New York: Berg, p.113.

<sup>637</sup> Adivar, H.E. (1926) p.190.

conveyed by Christ's own life, meanwhile the possibility of "ultimate bliss" of Christianity was more exclusive than any other religion. By contrast, Halide embraced Islam as a religion of "extraordinarily free and tolerant spirit", that allowed her to "fit all the new outlook of life, acquired through [her] education in the college, into Islamic experience and belief" while maintaining the "outward aspect of Islamism". Halide's perception of the college's values and her own religious and cultural values exemplified the ideological trend of the then-Ottoman intellectuals who tried to strike a balance between Western and Oriental. Beyond Anatolia, Murre-Van den Berg found students of later generations in the schools of Beirut and Jerusalem also "explicitly rejected" the missionary message of evangelical conversion, but accepted and internalized the religious message into their individual spiritual experience.<sup>638</sup>

Halide also articulated the American view of the importance of women's education. Like Nazlı, Halide also uttered a "cry" on behalf of Muslim women for more "knowledge and healthy Anglo-Saxon influence"<sup>639</sup> to be brought into Turkey in another of her essays, written in 1908. The missionary clichés of "Occidentalism" can be seen in her expression, which was turned to serve her own purpose. As she wrote, the educated minority of Turkish women understood the "Anglo-Saxons" occupied "so lofty a moral position in the world" because of "their sacred ideas of womanhood at home", so those educated women were doing their best to "place English influence and the English language foremost" in their future schools for girls. The land awaited the "more civilized womanhood" to "come and help to disperse the dark clouds of ignorance", and "the opening of schools by the English everywhere in Turkey would be welcomed by Turkish mothers".<sup>640</sup> This was a most convincing testimony of Halide's approval of ACG's work and her acceptance of American ideas. Together with her aforementioned positive response, her example demonstrated the ACG's broad influence and success as both intellectual institution and cultural proselytizer: although

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<sup>638</sup> Murre-Van den Berg, H. (2005) p.113.

<sup>639</sup> Jenkins, H. D. (2004) p. 37. See also Ramsay, W.M. (1909) p.179.

<sup>640</sup> Jenkins, H. D. (2004) pp.37-39.

Western Christianity failed to prevail in the Ottoman lands, Americans and their values had reached the hearts and minds of Turkish students through American education.

### **Amidst the National Upheavals**

The triumphant revolution effectively promoted women's education and expanded the ACG's sphere of influence in the Empire. The new CUP government advocated a more Westernized educational system and placed women's education reform on the political agenda. Therefore, the ban on Muslim attendance at the college was lifted, and old barriers like censorship and spies against Western education were removed "overnight". Besides, the college's claim of non-sectarianism and independence from the WBM in 1908 was well-timed with the cultural and political upheavals. The reorientation of the school's goals occurred not only because of the president's personal conviction but from practical considerations after recognizing the ineffectiveness of overall evangelization efforts. Therefore, Patrick hoped to win official and civil favour for the college and to become an active player in the Ottoman landscape.

The College's enrolments saw an immediate increase after the revolution as the Young Turks officially encouraged Muslim women to attend school. As Patrick boasted, "our parlours have been constantly filled with the veiled ladies of the ruling race": Muslim mothers sent their daughters and begged for admittance to the college, and even attended lectures themselves. For the first time, Turks became the second largest group at enrolment, with 34 Turkish students following 43 Bulgarian students.<sup>641</sup> Among the Turkish students, many were from upper-class families whose fathers were "the Chief Justice", "the Governor of Beirut, Syria and of a number of deputies in Parliament".<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> The American College for Girls at Constantinople, *Report of the Year 1909-1910*, Robert College Archives, Columbia University Special Collection, Box 19, New York, p.17, as cited in Goffman, C. (2011)

<sup>642</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1934) p.136; or see *Report of the year 1909-10*, p.17.

Differing from the Sultan, the CUP appreciated the ACG's work as an essential contribution to social progress and even saw the ACG as a model for Ottoman education.<sup>643</sup> Seeing Turkish officials call to congratulate the teachers on their progressive college, and hosting representatives inquiring about the college's needs, Patrick proudly announced that "the president was our friend".<sup>644</sup> For example, in 1911 Mehmed Halil Bey, the representative from the Department of Public Instruction, publicly praised the ACG as "one of the greatest centres of education and light for women in this land". In 1914 the Minister of the Department of Public Instruction visited the ACG to inspect the college facilities and education system "with great interest"; in the same year, Patrick was awarded the Third Order of the Shefakat by the Minister for the Interior on behalf of the Sultan for her work in women's education.<sup>645</sup>

Apart from encouraging overall Muslim enrolment, the CUP government also desired the college's help in providing teachers for Turkish schools. In cooperation with the college, the CUP government selected and then sent some Muslim students to the ACG to improve national education. These sponsored students promised to teach for five years in government schools after graduation. These students were "officially entrusted" to the college with the words, "We commit them to you, their intellectual training, their morals, and their health".<sup>646</sup> (Halide Edip was appointed by the government to select candidates.) Nevertheless, the teachers and students were "dismayed" by the government's centralized agenda which emerged not long after the "short day of heaven". Patrick changed her rhetoric when referring to the government's national education policy: "In the cry for education the government required 12,000 teachers, of whom only 500 were available. Our college was asked to supply this need. This was the

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<sup>643</sup> Başci, P. (2000). 'Shadows in the missionary garden of roses: women of Turkey in American Missionary Texts'. *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, pp.101-123.

<sup>644</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1930) p.225.

<sup>645</sup> *Report of the year 1909-1910*. pp.26-27.

<sup>646</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1934) pp.135-136.

only indication of the way in which the revolution of the young Turks transformed public sentiment and substituted freedom in Turkey for oppression".<sup>647</sup>

Another example of government-ACG collaboration was in women's physical training. Before 1908 the physical education courses were absent from most Ottoman boys' school and from all Ottoman girls' school. However, after the Empire lost most of its European territories in the Balkan war, CUP leaders began to emphasise national physical education and discipline as an important tool to produce a Turkish generation that was sturdy and patriotic.<sup>648</sup> In 1913 a nationalist institution named the Turkish Power Association was established by the government to improve Turkish public health.<sup>649</sup> ACG educators were enthusiastic in response to the official initiative for physical education. Correspondingly, they bestowed the Physical Education Department in ACG with full academic status in the same year. A variety of P.E. courses was newly set up, in which students were expected to attend several hours a week and to take final examinations for annual credit. Furthermore, a "Normal Course in Gymnastics" was opened for these students prepared to teach or assist physical training courses in public schools after graduation, which directly linked ACG physical training methods to those of public schools throughout the Empire.<sup>650</sup> These interactions between officials and the ACG indicated that the college had been integrated into the new Ottoman system (in terms of the American education resources and training models in physical aspects, and Western ideas including feminism, liberalism, positivism, and nationalism, but excluding Christianity in spiritual aspects) and applied it to its own political and national agenda.

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<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Okay, C. (2003). 'Sport and Nation Building: Gymnastics and Sport in the Ottoman State and the Committee of Union and Progress, 1908-18'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 20(1), pp.152-156.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

<sup>650</sup> Kahlenberg, C. (2016) pp.163-165.



The influx of Muslim students and the close relationship with the government marked the ACG's increasing influence among the Ottoman Turks, which was welcomed by the college educators, as they regarded Turks as the "dominant race", and as such were the best hope to reform the Empire.<sup>651</sup> As Patrick wrote, "It constantly thrilled us to welcome groups of these black-robed students eager for a new life of study. Once across the threshold, the black veils disappeared and modern seekers of knowledge came into view".<sup>652</sup> These self-congratulatory depictions embodied ACG educators' stereotypes about their Muslim students, in which the Muslim "black robe" and veiling traditions were frequently related to the physical and symbolic idea of Islamic backwardness.<sup>653</sup> While rhetorically endorsing the religious tolerance and taking pride in the school's importance and influence in the Ottoman milieu, ACG educators celebrated their cultural proselytizing impacts in physically and spiritually transforming the Muslim women "to be more like them".<sup>654</sup> In ACG teachers' "female Orientalist gaze",<sup>655</sup> Islam was culturally and morally beneath "Anglo-Saxon" Christianity, and as such, they placed themselves in an exalted position over Muslim women, as savours to counter the fallings of the Orients. In ACG teachers' view, "the salvation of the East depends upon the education of women, and the hope of the Near East is the Constantinople Woman's College".<sup>656</sup>

Muslim enrolment continued to increase during the period of war and political upheaval after 1912. This had a connection to the increasing social status of women in wartime. As many men had been called away from their regular pursuits to join the army and, some died or were injured on the battlefield, women were encouraged to take

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<sup>651</sup> Racializing as it was, this view was more positive than the overall view of the American missionaries who tended to portray Muslim women as "uneducated, degraded and benighted" Reeves-Ellington, B. (2015) p.62.

<sup>652</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1930) p.210.

<sup>653</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1934) p.158.

<sup>654</sup> Kahlenberg, C. (2016).

<sup>655</sup> Lewis, R. (2004).

<sup>656</sup> ACG. (1921) *Constantinople Woman's College, fundraising pamphlet*, 15 October. , pp.17-20 as cited in Reeves-Ellington, B. (2015) p.64.

up positions to fill the vacancies left by these men, which created an opportunity for the college's work in training professional women.<sup>657</sup> However, the political conflicts outside the school resulted in antagonism between different Ottoman nations, proving harmful to the harmony of the student body of different ethnicities. In the Balkan War, the larger proportion of college students was Bulgarians and Greeks, belonging to the allied nations against Turkey. To avoid tensions, the students "agreed among themselves" to "control their feeling in regard to national events", and the college faculty was "in general careful not to discuss what was going on in any way to cause irritation", thus a condition of "outward calmness" and harmony within the college could be carefully maintained during this difficult time.<sup>658</sup>

The tensions intensified after the First World War broke out. The Ottoman government formally joined the Central powers in October of 1914, and the college soon became an outpost of the enemy nation when the US entered the war on the side of the Allies in April 1917, which caused anxieties among the college staff and students. Fortunately, the college managed to open during the war thanks to the benevolence of Ottoman officials.<sup>659</sup> It seemed that the loyalty of the Turkish students to their college was not troubled by the college being "carried on by enemy", instead many saw the college as an escape from the war. When the schools seemed about to close, "girls cried and almost fainted", and the Turkish students "telephoned frantically" to their various officials to plead for the safety of the college.<sup>660</sup> As one Turkish student, Selma Ekrem, said about this event:

If school closed, what would happen to us? I loved school now, in its four walls I put everything else out of my mind. There the horror of war and death had to be forgotten with books... Also I became bolder. Now I had read and heard about the

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<sup>657</sup> 'Feminists in Turkey Educator Notes Change'. (1913). San Francisco Call, 17 July, Volume 114, Number 47.

<sup>658</sup> The American College for Girls at Constantinople. *Annual Report of the American College for Girls, 1912-1913*, Robert College Archives, pp.14-15.

<sup>659</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1930) pp.311-313.

<sup>660</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1934) p.194.

American women and admired them for their courage. They seemed as free as the wind to me who was shackled and bound. The war could not remove the only consolation I had, which was my American school.<sup>661</sup>

In the face of war, Patrick also carefully distanced the college from the Allied powers by insisting on the school's mission of education with an emphasis on "the importance of the spiritual side of life". She painted the college as an "oasis of peace", a world in which students of different nationalities studied harmoniously and exerted their democratic rights like voting and free speech in school events as citizens in a "miniature republic".<sup>662</sup> The Turkish students' national identity as Turks was not diminished by their loyalty to the college and admiration for American values in this "cosmopolitan haven". When the war ended in November 1918, the emotions of the Turkish students in the college were quite distinct from those of Christian students. As Ekrem recalled, while Christian students ran outside into the school corridors to celebrate the British occupation, and their American teachers' joy demonstrated a tacit approval, the "mournful groups of Turkish girls" instead "pored over the newspapers" with "hopelessness".<sup>663</sup> The reactions of the college student body were not as "united and calm" as Patrick claimed – like the city outside, the college was divided into "Turks" and "non-Turks". The Turkish girls now distinguished themselves from their Christian schoolmates who in their view stood for the colonial enemy, and "clung to each other and prayed that better days would come to [the Turks]". From Ekrem's description, a clearly growing sensibility of Turkish nationalism, and an unexpectedly provoked animosity towards Ottoman Christians, could be discerned within the college walls. Like many other Turkish students, Ekrem pinned her hope of for the Turks on Mustafa Kemal and his followers, but paradoxically, the deep-seated American influences in her

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<sup>661</sup> Ekrem, S. (2005). *Unveiled, the Autobiography of a Turkish Girl*. Vol. 5, Gorgias Press LLC, p.270.

<sup>662</sup> Patrick, M.M. (1922). An Oasis of Peace, *Our World*, 1(5), pp.110-17.

<sup>663</sup> Ekrem, S. (2005) p.280.

mind finally provoked her “irresistible” departure from the city to the US with the rhetoric of an escape from slavery to freedom.<sup>664</sup>

## **Epilogue**

After the war, Patrick approved of the American mandate in Turkey. When the proposal for a colonial mandate failed, Patrick campaigned for an American “educational mandate” in the spring of 1922, arguing that the civic mandate would bring American influence in commerce and arts and that the college was the very “fortress of America” in its cultural expansion.<sup>665</sup> After the founding of the new Turkey, Ataturk saw Western women as a model of modernity and progressiveness and initiated widespread woman’s reforms including enfranchisement, university co-education, desegregation of public transportation, and a ban on polygamy. Nevertheless, Ataturk’s “state feminism” was primarily a top-down effort with strict government control. Regarding the missionary schools, the response of the Ataturk government was telling: “instead of putting an end to the activities of American schools in Turkey, turning them in favour of Turkey in such a way that they would not harm Turkey”.<sup>666</sup>

Correspondingly, in 1923 the college commenced “direct relations” with the government in which its operation was closely under top-down state control, including biannual inspections, the appointment of government-chosen professors, official curriculum and material recommendations, and frequent meetings between the ACG and the Ministry of Education. The college’s cosmopolitan nature gradually disappeared after the 1923 population change, with Turkish girls replacing Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks to become the majority of the student body. Classes on Friday were obliged to be suspended, and Turkish became an obligatory course, with

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<sup>664</sup> Ekrem, S. (2005) p.288.

<sup>665</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2013) p.165.

<sup>666</sup> Sakin, S. (2010) p.70.

American and Greek courses removed.<sup>667</sup> What Patrick claimed to be feminist internationalism succumbed to Turkish nationalism for the college's survival during the new republican era.

## Appendix: ACG Student Statistics<sup>668</sup>

### Öğrenci sayısı ve profili<sup>72</sup>

	Mevcut	Mezun sayısı
1871 (Gedikpaşa)	3	
1874-75	40	2 (ilk mezunlar)
1875-76 (Üsküdar dönemi başladı)	36 (18 yatılı)	2 sınıf, 14.06.1876 yeni binada ilk diploma töreni
1876-77		Yok
1877-78		2 (hepsi Ermeni)
1878-79	Başkalarının yanında 2 Bulgar	Yok
1879-80	Başkalarının yanında 10 Bulgar	5 (hepsi Ermeni)
1880-81	Başkalarının yanında 22 Bulgar	Yok
1881-82		5 (4 Ermeni, 1 Bulgar)
1882-83		3 (1 Ermeni, 1 Bulgar, 1 Danimarkalı)
1883-84		5
1884-85		7
1885-86		10
1886-87		10 (1 İngiliz)
1887-88		10 (1'i Rum, İlk Rum kızı)
1888-89 <sup>73</sup>	103 (63'ü yatılı) (42 Ermeni, 16 Rum, 13 Bulgar, 12 İngiliz, 9 Yahudi, 7 Amerikan, 2 Türk, 1 Arnavud ve 1 Fransız)	8 (1'i Bulgar, 1'i Rum, 5'i Ermeni, 1'i İngiliz)
1889-90		5 (1 Türk)
1890-91	107	7
1891-92 <sup>74</sup>	137 (51 Ermeni, 29 Bulgar, 22 Rum, 14 İngiliz, 10 Amerikalı, 6 Yahudi, 4 Türk, 1 Fransız)	5
1892-93 <sup>75</sup>	147	7

<sup>71</sup> Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadolu'daki Amerika*, s. 120.

<sup>72</sup> Tablo genel olarak şu eserlere dayanılarak yapıldı, özel olanlar ayrıca gösterildi: Patrick, *Boğaziçi*, s. 31, 34, 37-39 ve Patrick'in raporları, *The report of 1896-97; The report of the president of 1900-01; The annual report of the Girls College for the academic year 1901-02; The annual report for 1902-03; The annual report for 1905-06*, Freely, *Robert College*, c. 1, s. 146-147, 152-153, 187, 190-191-196, 204'den.

<sup>73</sup> BOA., Y.PRK.ML., 5 Za 1306, 9/62.

<sup>74</sup> Fincancı, *Robert College*, s. 43; Stone, *Academias for Anatolia*, s. 74; Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadolu'daki Amerika*, s. 204. Patrick'e göre öğrenci sayısı 141'dir: Patrick, *The report of 1900-01*, Freely, *Robert College*, c. 1, s. 153'den.

<sup>75</sup> Fincancı, *Robert College*, s. 43; Stone, *Academias for Anatolia*, s. 74; Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadolu'daki Amerika*, s. 204.

<sup>667</sup> Reeves-Ellington, B. (2015) pp.65-66.

<sup>668</sup> Erdoğdu, T. (2003).

	<b>Mevcut</b>	<b>Mezun sayısı</b>
1893-94	173	7
1894-95	161	7
1895-96	177 (93 Ermeni, 21 Bulgar, 16 İngiliz, 15 Rum, 11 Yahudi, 9 Amerikan, 5 Alman, 2 Macar, 1 Türk, 1 Rumen, 1 Avusturyalı, 1 İtalyan, 1 Rus)	5
1896-97	115 (71 Ermeni, 10 Bulgar, 9 Yahudi, 7 İngiliz, 7 Rum, 5 Amerikan, 4 Alman, 1 Türk, 1 Rus)	3
1897-98 <sup>76</sup>	137 (70 yatılı, 60 gündüzlü) (Bir kısmı Rus ve Romanyalılarından oluşuyor)	8
1898-99	152	4
1899-00	152	1
1900-01	166 (83 Ermeni, 21 Rum, 20 Rum, 12 Türk, 10 İngiliz, 9 Bulgar, 4 Macar, 2 Alman, 1 Amerikan, 1 Yahudi, 1 Fransız, 1 İtalyan, 1 Avusturyalı)	7 (3 Ermeni, 1 İngiliz, 1 Avusturyalı, 1 Türk ve 1 Bulgar)
1901-02	128 (47 Ermeni, 20 Rum, 17 Türk, 17 Bulgar, 7 Yahudi, 7 İngiliz, 4 Alman, 3 Amerikan, 2 Macar, 2 Fransız, 1 Arnavud ve 1 İskoç)	4 (1 Bulgar, 1 Rum, 1 Rumen, 1 Avusturyalı)
1902-03	106 (41 Ermeni, 21 Rum, 17 Bulgar, 7 Türk, 7 Yahudi, 7 İngiliz, 2 Alman, 2 Macar, 1 Arnavud ve 1 Avusturyalı)	4 (2 Rum, 1 Alman, 1 Ermeni)
1903-04 <sup>77</sup>	129 (2 Müslüman)	8 (4 Ermeni, 3 Bulgar, 1 Arnavud)
1905-06	142	9 (4 Ermeni, 2 Rum, 1 Bulgar, 1 Yahudi, 1 ?)
1906-07	120	5
1907-08		6
1908-09		5
1909-10 <sup>78</sup>	Başkalarının yanında 5 Türk	15
1910-11		16
1911-12		23
1912-13	280 (197 yatılı) (74 Rum, 70 Ermeni, 58 Türk, 43 Bulgar, 17 Yahudi, 5 Amerikan, 5 Arnavud, 3 İsviçreli, 1 İngiliz, 1 Fransız, 1 Alman, 1 İranlı, 1 Rus.) (Dinlere göre 100 Rum Ortodox, 66 Ermeni Gregoryan, 63 Müslüman, 31 Protestan, 17 Musevi, 3 Katolik)	13 (7 Ermeni, 4 Bulgar, 2 Rum)
1913-14 <sup>79</sup>	644?? (55 Türk)	

<sup>76</sup> Bu sayı Osmanlı kaynaklarına göre 130'dur (70'1 yatılı, 60'1 gündüzlü): BOA., Y.PRK.DH., M 1315, 10/58.

<sup>77</sup> Arşiv kaydı 202 mevcut göstermektedir. BOA., Y.PRK.UM., 10 Ş. 1321, 67/29.

<sup>78</sup> Ülke, *İstanbul Amerikan Koleji*, s. 6.

<sup>79</sup> Ahmet Uçar, *Amerikan misyonelerinin Türkiye'deki faaliyetleri (1818-1930)*, Y. Lisans tezi, Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Dan. Prof. Dr. Mine Erol, Konya 1988, s. 197-198.

## **Chapter VIII: Case Study of the Encounters between American Missionaries and Turkish Muslims in Aintab Province (1906-1923)**

- The growing interest in Muslim evangelization

### **The Early Stage of the Muslim Mission in Aintab**

The relations and interactions between the American missionaries, the indigenous populace and the local government in Aintab station embodied the American Boards' Muslim evangelization. Aintab station, which was arguably the most crucial bastion of the Muslim work carried out by Central Turkey Mission among Muslims, witnessed the birth of the Muslim agenda during the mid-1910s when several ardent missionaries concerned about Muslim culture arrived in central Anatolia and began to plan their work. Stephen Trowbridge, who had been studying at Hartford Seminary, was sent by the American Board to the Central Turkey Mission in 1907. He showed special attention to Islam and planned to develop touring work among the Turks when he arrived in Turkey. He first visited five Turkish villages in the neighbourhood of Aintab, but no special reactions from the Turkish villagers were recorded. On his second trip, he visited a group of Muslims who were believed to be interested in Christian matters in Birecik (Birejik), on the Euphrates. Trowbridge went there to attend a meeting with the local pastor, Ketenjian, who was in friendly contact with the Muslim group. He reported that when the group had assembled the Turks took out their copies of the Bible and the evening was spent in considering Bible passages.<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>669</sup> ABCFM, ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 668. 16.9.5. Vol. 22, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the scope of the work of American female missionaries exceeded that of men in Turkey. In Aintab station, around the same time as Trowbridge suggested the idea of village tours by man, the Elizabeth Trowbridge, who had previously worked at the American hospital in Aintab for a long time, decided to dedicate the work of village visitations to women. She went to the neighbouring villages on a donkey, lived in local households and shared the lives of the women and talked with them. It was reported that she carried on this work for two or three years until the war, and her relations with the local people became very intimate. These experiences were considered to be the first experiment by American missionaries to develop work among Muslim Turks.<sup>670</sup>

There were many other American women who were interested in working among Muslims in Aintab, but much of this work was not largely written or reported on. There was a women worker at the Aintab hospital who did similar work to Miss Trowbridge, visiting Muslim homes in her spare time. The women used to come to Mrs Trowbridge, Miss Trowbridge's mother, at college to report her visits, events and conversations. The missionaries printed a pamphlet consisting of about 20 hymns in Arabic-Turkish to spread among Muslim women and other people around Aintab. Regarding these hymns, the women had reported that the Muslim people "liked to have her sing, or to sing with her". Most of these women workers had connections with hospital work. Apart from educational work, the most influential work with Muslims happened in the hospitals.<sup>671</sup>

Rather than schools, which were primarily opened for non-Muslims until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the missionary hospitals received patients regardless of their race or religion. Although when Turkish patients first came to the American hospitals they were often curious and anxious, many were willing to come and accept treatment thanks to the quality of the medical support. Because the patients often spent a relatively long time in the hospital wards during treatment, the medical workers could

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<sup>670</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1925).

<sup>671</sup> Ibid.



easily build close relationships with Muslims in-patients, thus many American women who worked in hospitals had key roles in contacting Muslim women. Although some American medical workers still expressed a prejudice against Muslim Turks, in general, they tended to develop a sympathetic feeling for the local Turks. In the hospital, these missionary workers could take advantage to carry out their evangelical work among these Muslim patients. For example, on the wall of the clinic hall there usually hung large religious pictures, like the image of Jesus and the Mother, as a form of “image instruction”. Turkish Gospels, religious pamphlets and readings were placed in notable places so that patients could easily find and read them while they were waiting for treatment or staying on the wards. Religious meetings were held regularly in hospitals where missionaries could read Bible stories for the patients, teach them hymns, and pray with them. On the other hand, the good quality of treatment provided by the American hospitals was important to leave a great impression in the minds of the Muslim patients who went there, and the American medical workers always attributed their good work to the merits of Christianity.<sup>672</sup>

The work of the American hospitals was welcomed among the local Muslim populations. For instance, as the director of the Aintab Hospital and an American doctor who worked there for his entire career, Dr Shepard had a great reputation among local communities and Turkish leaders. Many local Muslims, who were once his patients, reportedly returned to the hospital in later years to earnestly appreciate his work. Furthermore, the evangelical work of the hospital had a notable influence on Muslim patients. Many reports can be found in which Turkish patients, including Kurdish women, developed an interest in reading Bibles at home after they left the hospital. Miss Trowbridge, mentioned above, reported that there were at least 200 homes in Aintab where she was welcomed and perfectly free to go and speak as she

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

pleased as a “Christian woman”, due to her former working experience at the hospital.<sup>673</sup>

### **The Central Turkey College in Aintab**

The Central Turkey College was established in 1874 in Aintab by the American missionary Dr Trowbridge, who became the first president of the college and was the father of the above-mentioned missionary Stephen Trowbridge. It was opened mainly for local-Christians of Aintab and was moved to Aleppo in 1924. This college indicated the positive development of the missionaries in the local environment. Dr Trowbridge was the previous Vice-Consul of the US in İstanbul and he moved to Aintab when it was decided to build a college there. He visited the Muslim owner of the hill on the edge of the city, where it was decided to build the college, asking if he would sell the hill for this purpose. The owner was that he would not sell, but he would give it away. Consequently, the hill on which the college was built was called “the gift of an Aintab Turk” by the missionaries. The school dispensary was built about half a mile from the school, and it developed to become the Aintab hospital in later years. At the time of 1895 Armenian massacres, a mob came up from the lower city of Aintab to the edge of the city where the hospital was located and wanted to break into the hospital compound. At the door, they met a large Turkish neighbour, who forbade them to enter, which saved the hospital from being pillaged. At the same time, the college was also guarded by the locals. Thus, it can be concluded that American missionaries and their work were not opposed, if not welcomed, by the local Muslims in Aintab. The American missionaries argued that their relationship with local Muslims in Aintab was more cordial than in any other places in inner Anatolia, except the cities on the coast, like İstanbul and İzmir.<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid.

During the Young Turk period, another instance demonstrated the relations of the local officials and the American missionaries in Aintab, in which the American college worked together with the Turkish government according to the Turkish nationalist line. After the 1908 Revolution, both Muslim Turks and Christians celebrated, and the topic of freedom, unity and fraternity between relations was discussed nationwide. However, the celebration did not last long, following the Adana 1909 troubles. At the same time in Aintab there was a revolt within the college. Among the students, there was a group of Armenian revolutionists who sought to dominate the situation, by shooting up the place and intimidating one of the professors. The college had to close, sending all students home. A guard was sent by the government to surround the school. This event had a severe negative influence on the college and the Board of College Managers had to prepare a statement on the position of the college with regard to political affairs and its relations with the Turkish government. The college was reopened in the next fall under strict conditions and every student was compelled to make a solemn promise to refrain from political activities. However, the attitudes of the students were, in the words of the missionaries, “tragic”: most of them were cowed, but they felt that they were not wrong, but that the college teachers did not dare to tell the truth. To change this attitude and “enlighten these young men”, the faculty resolved to run a programme of lectures on political matters, inviting some Turks and other people to address them in lectures, and to help these Armenian students become “healthy, normal, helpful citizens under a democratic government”. This initiative by the college faculty indicated that American missionaries were eager to carry out their educational work in accordance with the new Turkish government, rather than supporting Armenian nationalism.<sup>675</sup>

From this period (the 1900s) a feeling emerged among the American missionaries which attached more importance to cooperation with the Turkish government. Simultaneously, the missionaries began to show special interest in evangelising work among the Muslim Turks, partly because of the enhanced relationship between the

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<sup>675</sup> Ibid.

American missionaries and the Young Turks government. After the Revolution, with the old obstacles removed, the missionary work was greatly facilitated. The new Turkish officials took a supportive attitude towards the Mission. They began to seek cooperation between the Turkish national schools and the missionary schools, and even publicly praised the latter as the model of national education. Many records had been found in the American missionaries' writings in which they greatly appreciated the work of the new government and strongly believed that there would be great prospects for the missionary work in Turkey. The influence of the Revolution encouraged a great number of Young Turkish students, especially young women, to enter the American schools that they were once forbidden to attend. With a large group of Turkish students flocking to the schools, it was not strange that the American missionary educators began to show increasing interest in Muslim evangelization after the Revolution. By the Republican period, this situation developed further as most of their Armenian students had been expelled from the new nation – the remaining students were nearly all Turks.

In the case of the Central Turkey College at Aintab, special privilege was offered to new Muslim students and they were not compelled to attend Bible classes. Beginner's English was added to the school curriculum to this end. The college also added a new course in their programme – the history of religions – which featured the history of Islam and required each student to have a copy of a translation of the Koran. A Turk was added to the teaching force to teach a portion of the Turkish curriculum so that it could meet the standards of the Turkish government for Turkish schools of a similar grade. These efforts by the college were aimed at adapting its curriculum to the standard of the national educational system, as well as attracting more Turkish students.

Several events at the college pointed to increasing contact with the local government after the Revolution. First, the government sent a member of local Parliament to the college to give a lecture to the students to explain the current political situation, which was a sign that the government was attempting to secure closer relations and a better understanding on the part of Ottoman subjects. Second, as the new laws required both

Muslims and Christians for military service, the college introduced military drills, conducted by an officer of the Turkish army. Furthermore, college diplomas were verified by the Department of Education at Aleppo, so that they had government-approved value. Before the Revolution, the college diploma had never been officially recognized in the Empire. Another indication was the application of the college for a new permit. The Board of Manager decided to add one additional year at the beginning of the school curriculum so that students could be granted a diploma with the same government standard as the “Lycée” by the end of the sophomore year, then two years would be partially devoted to pre-professional study. The purpose of this re-arrangement was to bring the college programme more completely in line with the government schools. After receiving applications for visas for diplomats from the college, the Director of Public Instruction at Aleppo came to Aintab to investigate the college. After a long wait, the college was able to receive a firman, which approved the petition. It was believed to be the first time an American educational institution in Turkey had been granted such broad privileges in Turkey, which showed the friendly attitude of the new Turkish government towards the college. The government planned to establish four national commercial high schools in different parts of the Empire; one was opened in Aintab, which in many aspects emulated the Central Turkey College.<sup>676</sup>

It was in this context that the missionaries concluded that the general situation regarding their Muslim evangelizing work seemed “not only friendly but free, and full of hope”. Experimental work among Turks in Aintab was carried out by the missionaries during these years, and they decided to introduce the first paid worker on Muslim evangelization. This worker was sent out to the village of Nizip (Nizib), about 30 miles east of Aintab, which had a Turk majority alongside a group of old Armenian Gregorians. This young man was an Armenian and a member of “the Lovers of Christ”, a local evangelical group within the Gregorian Church; he was sent by John Ernest Merrill, President of the Central Turkey College from 1905 to 1922 (and President from

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid.

1924 to 1927 of Aleppo College at Syria). He was a teacher in the village school for half of the day and spent the rest of his day doing what he thought could be done among the local Turks. To the missionaries, this was an experiment to explore the work a Christian could do among Muslims. As this idea was initiated by the president, he paid the worker from his own salary. This work gave the missionaries some confidence, as the young man reported to have found cordial relations with the local Turks. Around 1913-1914, there was a general distribution of copies of the New Testament among the Turkish villages around Aintab, which was considered by the missionaries as the next step of Muslim evangelization, which represented “freedom and a hopefulness that was full of promise”.<sup>677</sup>

### **Missions in Aintab during WWI**

During wartime, the relief work for Armenians became the priority of the missionaries in Aintab, and the plan for general evangelising work among Muslims was hindered. After the outbreak of WWI in 1914, the Aintab government called upon the population, both Muslims and Christians, for provisions to assist the troops, which was granted liberally. Later, groups of Armenian women and children who were sent away from around Turkey passed through Aintab on their way south. Seeing this situation, American missionaries in Aintab began to carry out relief work with these Armenian refugees as they passed through.

In the process of the relief work, there were some misunderstandings between the government and the missionaries. For instance, the money for relief work from Istanbul was first distributed by the missionary Dr Martin, and later by the Central Turkey College, and this action was misinterpreted by the local government. The College president was called before a military tribunal to explain the reason for this switch, and he was required to offer a copy of the bank account to be investigated.

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<sup>677</sup> Ibid,

Despite the “occasional misunderstandings”, Mr Merrill claimed that the general attitude of the Aintab government was “friendly”, and the American missionaries were granted broad freedom by the local officials to assist Armenian refugees and this permission to help continued throughout the War.

When the order for Armenian deportation came to Aintab, the missionaries there acted as intermediaries between the Armenian communities and the Turkish government. The American missionaries made great efforts to investigate the deportation and provide help to the refugees. In Aintab district, there were about 12,000 refugee women and children from the northern provinces in the most destitute conditions who were dependent entirely on American relief. The missionaries there also attended the city council meeting to ask the officials about the deportation order. However, the detail of the order was kept secret by the Turkish officers – Christians or Americans were forbidden from knowing the order’s contents and purpose (the systematic destruction of the Armenian communities) until the end of the War. When American missionaries questioned the reason for the deportation in the government office, the governor replied: “We know we’re doing something which is contrary to all the dictates of humanity... but we’re afraid of the fire”.<sup>678</sup>

As mentioned above, there was a friendly atmosphere in Aintab between the Turks – both local officials and communities – and native Christians, as well as American missionaries. Thus, the local governor carried out the orders in a mild way and each group of people who was sent away was allowed adequate time to make arrangements before leaving and had a military guard. As this friendly treatment was contrary to the spirit of the orders from İstanbul, this local governor lost his position. Similar situations happened in other places in Turkey where the governors who had a sympathetic way of treating Armenian refugees were replaced by new hard-line governors. The new Aintab authorities turned an unfriendly and suspicious eye towards

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

the missionaries, and the latter was henceforth not allowed to bring any writings out from Aintab until the War ended.<sup>679</sup>

Despite the missionaries' efforts, for their Armenian Protestant friends and colleagues, the missionaries could do nothing to save them from deportation by the government order. As noted in an earlier chapter, the central government issued a nominal order to exclude the Protestants from deportation, but left the choice in the hands of the local governments.<sup>680</sup> Although telegrams were sent by the from authorities (from Mr Peet, the American consul in Aleppo, and the Minister of the Interior, Talaat Bey) with assurances that college staff were not to be expelled, it was the Minister of the Interior who was the highest authority in this matter and he finally ordered the deportation of the American Protestant workers. As the missionaries said, "the Aintab government at that time was a very wicked and unfriendly man who had no mercy at all".<sup>681</sup> When the college faculty was to be exiled in September 1915, Mrs Merrill said: "It was one of the hardest days my husband and I ever knew. We were under great suspicion and it was impossible to do anything more than to see them".<sup>682</sup> Soon after all the native college staff (including professors, janitors, stewards, and farmers) were exiled, Mr Merrill visited the governor to protest. As his wife recalled:

My husband called upon the Governor as he was sitting with his Council around him, and he said in a very sarcastic tone. 'Isn't it about time to open the College? There is no objection to your doing so.' My husband said, 'It is usual to have teachers for a college, and as you know they have all been sent away.' As he left the room he saw them turn to one another and wink and smile. They had outwitted the Americans.<sup>683</sup>

As a result of the deportations, the Central Turkey Mission suffered a great loss of their target population and native workers. In Aintab, about 20,000 Christians were sent to

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<sup>679</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.265.

<sup>680</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.267.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>682</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.266.

<sup>683</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 668, No.627.



the southern deserts; many of them died of starvation and disease. The pastors and religious leaders in Aintab, including the Protestant churches, were sent down the Euphrates to the Deir ez-Zur (Dier-Zor) region, where almost without exception they were killed. It was estimated that up to 85,000 Christians were killed in various massacres in Deir ez-Zor.<sup>684</sup>

The American missionaries in the Empire were not only famous for their evangelising work, but also as witnesses and recorders of the Armenian deportation/genocide. During the years of the Armenian deportations in WWI, the American missionaries had done considerable work for Armenian refugees, running between stations, interviewing several Turkish officials and recording what they had witnessed about the deportations. What they recorded could be of great value for today's Ottoman studies on subjects such as Armenian communities and religious freedom. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of these records was lost for several reasons. In the case of Aintab, the missionary Ernest Merrill kept a daily record of events during the year 1915-19, which was always kept near the stove so that it could be burned if necessary. Finally, the records were burned at the request of his friends, together with college files and letters (some of the remaining files can be found in the ABCFM archives, in a terrible condition<sup>685</sup>), being worried that the papers might be seized by the authorities who might break into the American properties at any time.

At the beginning of the War, the use of Aintab hospital was offered for the Turkish government for the treatment of Turkish soldiers. When the relations between Turkey and the US broke down in 1917, American missionary doctor Caroline Hamilton and the nurse Miss Trowbridge were told they were forbidden to work in the hospital. Somehow, Dr Hamilton opened a clinic in her home from the hospital, where a wall was built by the Turks to separate her house from the military hospital. The Armenian

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<sup>684</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.666.

<sup>685</sup> ABC 16.9.5. Vol 30.

nurses who took care of Turkish hospitals were paid only two pieces of bread per day as wages and Dr Hamilton was obliged to help the workers from her own fees. During the Armistice the British took charge of the hospital from the Turkish army, making it a refugee site for Armenians.<sup>686</sup>

The educational work of the Central Turkey College was suspended from 1915 and the school buildings were taken over by the government in 1917.<sup>687</sup> The closing of the college courses was not only because its premises were occupied by the Turkish military, but also because most of the faculty had been deported. After the War, the college building was occupied by the British army as its headquarters. Consequently, the college was moved to Aleppo after the War. While the school was closed, the American missionaries kept 160 children on the campus, of whom about 30 Armenian students were of military age. They hid on the campus from being exiled or conscripted until 1917 when the government confiscated the college for use as a military hospital. These 30 students were eventually drafted into the army, after Mr Merrill had gone to great lengths to save them from being exiled.<sup>688</sup> The Girls' School in Aintab was also closed except for some 30 boarders who continued their work quietly. Two orphanages, one for boys and one for girls, were established and operated by the missionaries for relief work. However, both of these institutions suffered from lack of funds. The children were not adequately fed or clothed owing to rises in prices, and the older boys were drafted as soldiers.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> Ibid.

<sup>687</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Report of the Central Turkey College for the Year 1916-17, being the Forty-first Annual Report*. Reel 667, No.249.

<sup>688</sup> ABCFM. (1917) *Central Turkey College Report*. Reel 667, No.267; No.271.

<sup>689</sup> ABCFM. (1919) *Mrs. Merrill's Statement in Regard to Central Turkey College and Hospital at Aintab*. Reel 667, No.226.

## Evangelical Work during the British Occupation

Evangelical work among Turks was resumed during the British Occupation.<sup>690</sup> There were two particularly noteworthy efforts by American missionaries in Aintab to reach Muslims. The missionaries' tried to persuade local Armenian people to assist in popularizing the gospel among Turks. At that time the missionaries found a group of Armenian men travelling around the Turkish villages, carrying clothes and necessities such as needles, thread, and buttons, from town to town by donkey and spending nights in guest houses. It reminded them of similar touring work among Muslim villages carried out by missionaries before the War, but with a different purpose. Thus, the missionaries at Aintab tried to persuade these Armenians to carry the gospel to the Turkish villages. Although the suggestion was refused by the Armenians, the American missionaries were consoled as they saw the Christian influence of such work had a cooperative impact on their missionary work.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> The decision was made by the meeting of the Cilicia evangelical Union (or Cilicia Union). ABCFM. (1919) *Resolutions Adopted by the Cilicia evangelical Conference, October 1919*. Reel 668, No.690), the union of Protestant Churches. It consisted of various Protestant churches from different places, scattered over the Cilicia area of Anatolia. These churches were peopled by different races, largely Armenians, with Greeks and Syrians. American missionaries had close connections with the Union. The numbers and adherents of the Union constituted one-third of the Protestant Christians connected with the work of the American Board in the Ottoman Empire. ABCFM, Missionary Correspondence, 1914. Letter from the Board of Managers of Central Turkey College to the Trustees of Donations for Education in Turkey-otherwise the Trustees of Central Turkey College. Reel 666, No.535). The Union held the post of secretary, as well as representatives of local churches at most missionary stations like Urfa, Maraş, Aintab, and Mardin. The Union had took charge of the evangelical work among Muslims from the Central Turkey from the Young Turk period. It promised to be one of the foremost agencies in the work of Muslim Evangelization (Ibid.) It suffered a great loss (about two-thirds) of membership during WWI. In the above-mentioned meeting the Protestant Union received its first Turkish Church, which consisted of a group of converted Turks in connection with the activities of German missionaries at Maraş. This greatly encouraged the missionaries' interest in Muslim work. However, this Turkish church only lasted until the end of the French occupation. These group of converted Turks were scattered and their leaders were killed by Turks for their conversion in the aftermath of the withdrawal of the French army in Maraş. Merrill, J. E. (1925) p.50.

<sup>691</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1925).

Another effort was to distribute newspapers among Turks. While the British occupied Aintab they received everyday news of the word by wireless. A copy of the news was sent to the Central Turkey College Press where the materials were printed and distributed around the city by the American missionary workers. The newspaper was four pages long, with two pages in Osmanli-Turkish and two in Armeno-Turkish, allowing both Turks and Christians to learn what was happening in the world. Mr Merrill was the missionary who took charge of the publishing work – he also gave much of his time to work as an interpreter between the Turkish government and British officers, as well as to cooperating in the relief organization arranged by the British army. The newspaper soon became so popular that even people from outside of Aintab ordered it. As a result, the newspaper drew the attention of the local governor and the publishing was stopped. The missionaries thought that it reflected the conservative mindset of the local Turkish governor during the British occupation.

Although the missionaries in Aintab claimed that they still had quite intimate relations with the Turkish governor, there was an implication of a step backwards regarding official attitudes on religious matters. The governor told the missionaries that he knew the methods used by American missionaries in their work: “when they came to a place they employed a number of native people in various occupations, and so taught them what they wanted to say. These employed people formed the core of the community that they built up”. He also understood the deep interest of the missionaries in Muslim evangelization and told them frankly that it was impossible for a Muslim to become a Christian. It could be concluded that one reason the Turkish government allowed the missionary activities to continue without strict opposition was out of consideration of its political connections to the great power of the US. Another reason was that the Turks wished to take advantage of the missionary work for their own purposes, either for national development or for their own personal interests.<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

## **The Aintab Mission and Republican Turkey**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1921, Central Turkey College reopened with an enrolment of 65 students. However, by 1924, as there were no more Christians in Aintab, the college was moved to Aleppo, where most of the missionary constituency had been removed and the opening of a college was considered as a necessity.<sup>693</sup> Since then there was no Central Turkey College in Aintab city. There was another American High School opened for Turkish boys under the direction of the missionary Mr Isely under the Kemalist regime in Aintab for a year and a half, with around 30 to 40 students attending, but in the end, it had to be closed. However, the missionaries were pleased as four students among these boys came under profound Christian influence in their later life. They became interested in Christianity and went to Constantinople to continue their studies after the school was closed. They came back to Aintab when they graduated and three of them became doctors. One of them, Emin Kiliç, was well-known among American missionaries and people interested in Muslim evangelization, because he called himself a “Jesusist”. The others included Cemil Özbal, who became a surgeon of the American Hospital in Aintab, Abdülkadir, in private practice in Aintab. As their lives had been materially changed and conditioned by their studies and interest in Jesus, they were called the “Jesusists” group. Even in the 1950s, the missionaries still had intense interests in and continued to make reports on these four men, when they were in their 50s.<sup>694</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Aintab city, as one of the major stations of the Central Turkey Mission and the stronghold of the Board’s Muslim evangelical work in Turkey, was an instructive case

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<sup>693</sup> ABCFM. (1923) *Report from Professor Z.A. Bezdjian of Central Turkey College, the Present Civil Head of the Protestant Community in Turkey*. ABC 16.9.5. Vol.27, No.89, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

<sup>694</sup> Merrill, J. E. (1925).

to indicate the increasing interests of the inner Anatolia American missionaries for their evangelical work among Muslims and their relations with local Turks from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the early Republican period. It was notable that the relationship between Christians, missionaries and Muslims in Aintab was more cordial than in any other areas of the Anatolia hinterland. For example, due to better communication between local Muslim and Christian subjects, there were no conflicts in Aintab in 1909, while troubles emerged elsewhere and a great number of Protestant leaders lost their lives; pastors died in the 1909 troubles at Oanieh and Sai Gechid.<sup>695</sup> During the First World War, that an American missionary in Aintab was sent as a representative of the city to parley with the French Army was also an indication of the trust between local populations and the missionaries. It was in this relatively friendly environment that the missionaries at Aintab had shown special interest in their work among Muslims and carried out work to approach Muslims more than in other cities of inner Asia Minor. This work developed greatly in the loose political atmosphere of the Constitutional period, with a series of experimental tasks implemented by the missionaries in Aintab.

It is important to note that whereas the missionaries in Aintab claimed they had friendly relations with local Turks, such relations were actually rather limited. Although they had frequent communications with the local Turkish officials and they did good work among the Turks who attended their schools and visited their hospitals, there were a great number of Turks in Aintab who remained untouched. Not to mention the other regions of inner Anatolia, where the relations between Christians, Missionaries, and Muslims were less cordial than in Aintab. Conflicts frequently arose and the missionaries were even suspected of being mistreated by local Turkish officials – to death in extreme cases.

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<sup>695</sup> ABCFM. (1901) *Report of Aintab Station, Central Turkey Mission, for the Year 1900-1901*. ABC 16. Unit 5, Reel 661. 16.9.5. Vol. 16. No.9, Houghton Library, Cambridge.

However, after the War broke out in 1914, most missionaries' work was interrupted. Only part of their work managed to resume when Mustafa Kemal founded the Turkish republic in 1923, and the circumstances in the new period were no easier than before. Although the missionary educators of the Central Turkey College had shown special interest in enlarging their Muslim student bodies before the War, the school decided to move out of Turkey in 1924 since no more Armenian subjects remained in the city.<sup>696</sup> More trials of educational work for Turks also failed here under the Kemalist regime. Aintab Girls' Seminary also closed on November 1922, since most Armenians in Aintab had left the city for Aleppo and there were no students remained in the school.<sup>697</sup> Since the early 1900s, there had long been a discussion among the missionaries over the question of whether they should concentrate more on evangelical work among Muslims in the Empire, however at this time they had no choice but to accept that the only subjects of their work in the Kemalist period were Muslim Turks.

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<sup>696</sup> Merrill, J.E. (1925).

<sup>697</sup> Merrill, J.E. (1909 ?). *Girls' Seminary, Aintab, Turkey, 1859-1909*. Boston: Woman's Board of Missions.

## Conclusion

This dissertation has examined American Protestant missionary encounters with their Turkish/Muslim hosts (both the Ottoman/Turkish state authorities and the larger Ottoman/Turkish Muslim society) in late-Ottoman and early Turkey from 1878 to 1929 in various dimensions. Their relations changed dynamically and were often renegotiated. Before Young Turk period, the major American-Ottoman interactions involved the themes of official policies and legislation, whereas direct contacts between American missionaries and the Muslim population were still limited, as the main targets of the missionaries were Ottoman Christians. Different from the loose control on other foreign traders and travellers, the Ottoman government had a suspicious attitude to the missionaries and tried to impose strict management on their activities. Sometimes when the missionaries moved beyond government law, they tended to resort to US government and the capitulation, intensifying the tensions between the two sides. Thus, the missionary activities not only influenced American diplomatic decisions but also shaped the Ottomans' notions of foreign policies. Regarding the Armenian question, while it is undeniable that American missionaries played an important role in awakening Armenian nationalism, 'to what extent the American missionaries were involved in the Armenian nationalist activities' is still up for debate in the field of American-Ottoman studies. Unfortunately, to constraints related to time and availability of sources, some interesting topics such as correlations between the Armenian patriarchs and the Ottoman government in shaping the Ottoman policies of the missionaries remain unrevealed in this study.

Moreover, differing from the received wisdom that there was a rapport and rapprochement in the relationship between the Ottoman government and American missionaries in the Young Turk period, the study argues for the ideological continuity of different Ottoman regimes. Although previous limitations against the American



institutions had been loosened and new cooperation was enabled under the Young Turk regime, the notion of incompatibility and competition between the Turkish government and the American missionary institutions never ceased, particularly in the field of education, where the government still in some sense regarded the missionary schools as a rival system against the reforming state-run counterpart, reminiscent of the work of the Hamidian government.

The dissertation also examined the waning American missionary activities during wartime (1914-1922). Characterized by social upheaval and a series of decisive policy decisions by the Board for the missionaries' future work, this period was crucial in the American Board's history in Turkey. The once prosperous missionary network was ravaged by the outbreak of the First World War and never fully recovered, and the subsequent shifts in Turkey's political-social structure precipitated the change of the Board's priority from the Christian to the Muslim Mission. Unprecedented limitations were imposed on the missionaries by the Ankara government, which viewed the missionaries as colluding in imperialism and helping the revolting Armenians. During this period, the Merzifon murder and several controversial incidents uncovered in this study regarding the Turkish government's treatments of some American missionary 'suspects' illustrated the striking conflicts between the two fronts.

This study provides a new missionary map of early Republican Turkey. In some sense, the antagonism against the American missionaries from the Turkish masses and the government in this modernizing era was even stronger than that of the Hamidian and Young Turk periods. Throughout the Ottoman and Republican periods, as outsiders the American missionaries had never been truly accepted by the Turkish governments. The Muslim evangelical work in Turkey was always interpreted by the American missionaries with different aims and emphasis at different historical stages, but in reality, the missionary work among Muslims underwent a long-term transformation of secularisation by both internal and external forces. In the Turkish Republic, American activities were increasingly integrated into the national structure by the Turkish

authorities. Through official nationalising efforts, the Turkish government minimized the scale as well as the religious leanings of the American institutions. In response, the missionaries became increasingly obedient to the governmental rule over the years and finally embraced state control in the new Turkey. Over time, they learned to construct a relationship with Turkish Muslims marked by cultural appreciation and humanitarian principles rather than merely stressing the discourse of religious conversion. The American missionaries also became aware of their obligation to undertake Muslim evangelization work in Turkey by themselves, whereas before the 1920s they were strongly convinced that such work should be done mainly by the local native Christians.

Finally, by elaborating on two independent case studies, the last two chapters supplemented a more comprehensive picture of the missionary-Muslim interactions. The first case study discussed educational work and the Turkish girl students of an influential missionary institution – the American Girls' College – in the late Ottoman period. It argued that strong contacts and interactions between the American missionaries and their Turkish students played an active role in educational work to influence young Muslim women in İstanbul. The Turkish female students adapted to the Americanism and feminism that they saw at the school to promote Turkish nationalist and women's causes, and similarly the Turkish government used the work of missionary institutions to nationalist ends. Chapter VIII argued that Ottoman Aintab was the region that witnessed the closest relations between American missionaries and local Muslims from 1906 to 1923. Whereas the attitudes and responses of the Muslim communities varied in different Ottoman regions, the relations between local Muslims, Christians and missionaries were more cordial in Aintab than in any other areas of inner Anatolia as the result of the missionary cultivation. Through the efforts of several instrumental missionary figures there, such as the president of the local American College, John Ernest Merrill, the Aintab station became the source of Muslim evangelical work for the entire American Board Mission in Turkey.

The Muslim Mission was a subject that was avoided in most American missionary writings and has therefore been largely overlooked by existing literature. Throughout the preceding chapters, this dissertation argued that the American Board developed the Muslim Mission to differentiate it from the Christian Mission on the eve of the Second Constitutional Revolution on the initiative of some American missionaries who had new ideas about Muslim evangelization. The Muslim Mission emerged in the 1900s and thrived under favourable liberal political circumstances, but it did not gain real significance until Turkey lost most of its Christian subjects in the aftermath of WWI and the Independence War. By the early 1920s, work among Muslims finally dominated the agenda of the Mission and became the major effort of the Board. In other words, apart from the initiating role of the missionaries who saw the opportunity and necessity to advance their Muslim work, or who were willing to embrace the Muslim environment and enthusiastically alter their agenda towards the Muslim population, the rise of the Board's Muslim Mission to a large extent was driven by response to the shifting political and demographic environment. Though it was the largest missionary organization operating in the Empire, the only way to survive, like all other missionary groups, was to constantly adapt to suit the late-Ottoman social-political changes.

This study also argued that the mutual attitudes and relations between both missionaries and Muslims were plural, dynamic, and often ambivalent. Different Muslim groups would respond to the American missions in quite different ways, varying between classes, sects, regions, times, and from person to person. The relationship cannot be simply generalized as hostile or hospitable because of its complexity and discrepancies. As individuals, American missionaries were mostly welcomed and respected by many Muslim locals, given that their often meritorious activities objectively accelerated modernization processes in the Middle East. Being considered cultural intruders and foreigners representing a Western power, they were also faced with suspicion, fear, resentment, tensions, and misperceptions by the Muslim communities. This ambivalence is manifest in the case of early Muslim

intellectuals resisting the potential influence of American schools, which considered them indispensable for the Turkish national cause at the time. On the American side, the missionaries also varied in their individual perspectives towards Turks/Muslims and Muslim evangelization – such perspectives evolved rapidly during historical upheavals. While the idea that the missionaries held stereotypical Christian perceptions of ‘Turks as barbarians, and Muslims being terrible’ is not completely true, it would be unfair to agree with the missionaries who labelled themselves ‘true lovers’ of Turks and Turkey.

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