

The American Protestant Missionary Network in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1914

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Abstract

American missionaries have long been the missing link in the study of the late Ottoman period despite the fact that they left their permanent trade in American as well as Western conceptions of the period such as “Terrible Turk” and “Red Sultan” just to name a few. From the landing of the first two American Protestant missionaries, Levi Parsons and Pliny Fisk, on the Ottoman Empire, as a matter of fact on the Near East, in early 1820, until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, American missionaries occupied the increasing attention of the Ottoman bureaucracy in domestic and foreign affairs while the mission work in the Ottoman Empire established the largest investment of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) in the world, even above China and India, on the eve of the war. The bulk of the correspondence of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period was with the United States and this was chiefly concerned about the American mission schools. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine the encounter between the Ottoman officialdom and the American Protestant missionaries in Ottoman Turkey during the successive regimes of Sultan Abdülhamid II and the Committee of Union and Progress, the Unionists in the period of 1876-1914. The paper, while shedding light on the historical development of the activities of the American Board, mainly the schools and addressing the concerns and reactions of the Ottoman authorities to American missionaries and their establishments, demonstrates further how the missionaries were instrumental in the orientation and articulation of the American foreign policy towards the Ottoman Empire even to the extent of sending the American war vessels to the Ottoman ports six times under three different Presidents in a ten-year period. The very agenda of the missionaries, namely, to evangelize the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, which remained dormant throughout the nineteenth century, resurfaced on the eve of the First World War given the radical change in the ethnic and religious map of the Empire in favor of Turks and Muslims following the disastrous Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 carving out the last remaining Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: *American Protestant missionaries, Ottoman Empire, Abdulhamid II, Unionists, missionary schools.*

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to understand how the rapid development of American mission establishments under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.),¹ particularly the schools, in Ottoman Turkey² put the United States, in the heyday of its becoming a great power, and the Ottoman Empire, the only Muslim power, in a situation of contention, competition, and survival. The encounter between the American Protestant missionaries and the Ottoman officialdom was a microcosm to that between the “Christian America,” of which internationalist pattern was largely articulated by the evangelical terms of Manifest Destiny and the racist tone of Social Darwinism, and the Ottoman Empire, the “last Muslim empire,” struggling to maintain its fast fading place in the international arena. I coined the term “missionary network” as an analytical aid to indicate the intermingled nature of the American missionary-philanthropic enterprise in Ottoman Turkey, which included a wide range of individuals from Presidents and Congressmen, businessmen and diplomats, to educators and journalists.

¹ From here on, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) will be referred as the American Board.

² Ottoman Turkey comprises just about the territories of modern-day Turkey with the exception of the Eastern Thrace, which is within the boundaries of today's Turkey.

The encounter occurred at a time when the United States, galvanized by its self-claimed Manifest Destiny, swept into the realm of the Ottoman Empire, which was crumbling because of its failure to reconcile ethnic and religious differences, territorial disintegration, and foreign intervention. The Ottoman decision makers, cognizant of the competence and long-term tenure of the American missionary institutions, adopted a systematic policy of pressure and confinement which expressed itself in the form of new tax requirements and restrictions over the land ownership. The intent of these policies was to counter the spread and enlargement of the mission establishments, which, far from being the abandoned child of the American state and diplomatic officials, enjoyed the support of the American Embassy and the State Department as well as the endorsement of several Presidents both orally and by action. Concerning the literature on American missionaries and the Near East especially for the time period in question, the main problem lies on the inadequacy of the primary studies and of the sources they are based on. These existing studies either treat the American mission work in the region in general or concentrate on the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. As to sources, they largely use American missionary, diplomatic, and state materials, and to a certain degree local sources, such as family papers, local newspapers, and journals. These studies either neglect the Turkish sources or do not have the ability to draw on them or rarely examine the Ottoman archival materials. When they do, they use Ottoman primary sources either to a negligible degree or for a confined topic, such as how the Ottoman central and provincial authorities reacted to the American missionaries in the eastern provinces.³

There were missionaries of other nationalities operating in the Ottoman Empire long before the American missionaries came in such as the French and the British missionaries who had been in the Empire since the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries respectively, yet they largely concentrated their work on certain areas such as the Syrian region in the case of the French missionaries and Egypt in the case of the British missionaries and on certain groups such as Maronites and Copts in their respective areas of concentration. American missionaries expanded their work throughout the Ottoman Empire from the provinces in the Balkans to those in the Arabian Peninsula regardless of the geographical and ethno-sectarian differences. Since the outset, there were different sectarian groups of American missionaries from Catholics to Mormons and working under Boards of varieties. However, it was the American Protestant missionaries under the auspices of the American Board, the first and the leading American missionary institution, which dominated the Ottoman lands, particularly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in scope, quantity, efficiency, property, and various types of work ranging from churches and hospitals to relief work and orphanages, and to printing presses and schools. The American missionary work, in general, was composed of “three legs,” namely evangelization, medical work, and education. Given its capacity and efficiency, especially when related to educational activities, printing press might be considered as the fourth leg of the missionary work. Evangelization, aiming at converting the “heathen,”⁴ was basically composed of preaching in public and private and distribution of Bibles, pamphlets, and other religious tracts. Regarding the medical work, since it was believed that Jesus was a healer and that the intimate and the trustworthy relationship between a patient and a doctor would be a venue for the spread of the Gospel, missionaries gave particular importance to the establishment of hospitals on the ground they operated. However, it was the field of education, namely, the schools from kindergarten up to college of the three fields of work, to which the American Protestant missionaries under the American Board, especially in Ottoman Turkey, attached the utmost importance and for which they operated in full capacity both in number and property.

³ See, Grabill, Joseph. *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971. Stone, Frank Andrews. *Academies for Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey: 1830-1980*. New York: University Press of America, 1984. Abdella, Eleanor. *God's Ear: Women, Islam, and Healing in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. Kieser, Hans Lukas. *Iskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet, 1839-1938 (Missed Peace: Missionary Activities in the Eastern Provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Ethnic Identity, and State, 1839-1938)*. Translated from German. Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2005. Salt, Jeremy. *Imperialism, Evangelism, and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*. London: Bookcraft, Ltd, 1993.

⁴ In its early connotation, the word “heathen” primarily signified “pagans,” such as Native American tribes of the United States and peoples of India and China. Later on, it included all unevangelized communities regardless of geography, like Jews, “more benighted parts of the Roman Catholic world,” “nominal Christians of Western Asia,” e.g., Armenians, Assyrians, Yezidis, Chaldeans, Nestorians, and Maronites, and Muslims and “nominal” Muslims of the Near East such as Druzes of Mount Lebanon and Nusayris of Southeastern Anatolia.

Given its magnitude and frequency, relief work can be considered as the fourth leg of the American mission work in Ottoman Turkey particularly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, while the printing press, in general, as the fifth leg for its publications of importance and large scale ranging from Bibles and religious tracts to missionary journals and various course materials taught at mission schools.

Revivalist Roots of American Foreign Mission Work

American Protestant missionary foreign work was rooted in the First and Second Great Awakenings of the early eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries respectively. Both revivalist movements aimed at taking off the Bible from dusty shelves and putting religion in daily lives of its followers again. While the former largely favored the missionary work at home, the latter opted for the spread of Protestant Gospel worldwide. Being the forerunner of the revivalist movements in the United States, the First Great Awakening, also known as the Great Revival, was similar to earlier revivalist movements in Europe such as English Methodism, Pietism or Polish Judaism.⁵ Its goal was to reintroduce religion into the routine lives of its adherents, commoners and gentry alike.⁶ Going back to the 1730s, the First Great Awakening reached its climax in the 1740s, largely thanks to the engaging sermons of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758),⁷ a Congregationalist, who was a firm believer of Puritanism and Calvinism. While expounding the notion of salvation by God and predestination as opposed to free will, Edwards strongly believed in intimate and individual religious experience with God and, through a high powered preaching, galvanized the emotions of his listeners while urging them to be active participants in their religion rather than passive observers. It was time for a merchant as well as for a farmer to read the Bible thoroughly on his own rather than merely being in conformity with religious doctrines. Working passionately for the “revival of religion and the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on earth,”⁸ Edwards, however, was removed from his Church for his approach against the “unconverted” in the aftermath of which he spent most of his time as a missionary among the Native Americans and writing.⁹ In fact, he was quite a prolific writer during his lifetime. One of his most influential writings was on the life of David Brainerd, a dedicated missionary among the Native American tribes in North America whose work was marked by “heroism” and looked up to by generations of American Protestant missionaries at home and abroad. The study of Edwards on Brainerd, namely, *An Account of Life of the Late Reverend David Brainerd*,¹⁰ written in 1749 became a classic within the missionary circles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as missionary work, initially among the native “heathens” and then among the foreign ones, turned out to be the most captivating and enduring offshoot of the revivalist movements. Shortly before his death, Edwards was called to be the President of the College of New Jersey and served very briefly.¹¹

“A humble attempt” by Edwards to lay down the roots of evangelical spirit at home was cultivated and expanded by Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) thanks to his innovative notions of “disinterested benevolence” which encouraged foreign missionary work in an altruistic pattern and became a motto for generations of American Protestant missionaries and “consistent Calvinism” which challenged the ethnic and credal boundaries of the traditional missionary work.

⁵ Outram, Dorinda. *The Enlightenment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 3rd ed., 2007.

⁶ Stephenson, George M. *The Puritan Heritage*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

⁷ Jonathan Edwards was a minister and preacher from New England. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut, he attended Yale College, the hotbed of evangelism at that time, where he claimed to be converted. Following the couple of years of studying, preaching, and teaching in the aftermath of his graduation, he became minister to a Congregational Church in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1727. Atkins, Gaius & Fagley, Frederick L. *History of American Congregationalism*. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1942; Dexter, Henry Martyn. *The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years as Seen in its Literature with Special Reference to Certain Recondite, Neglected or Disputed Passages in Twelve Lectures Delivered on the Southworth Foundation in the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass., 1876-1879*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880.

⁸ Edwards, Jonathan. *A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth*. Boston, New England: (Printed for D. Henchman in) Cornhill, 1747 <http://edwards.yale.edu> date of access: 03.17.2014.

⁹ http://www.thirdmill.org/newfiles/jac_arnold/CH.Arnold.CH.36.pdf date of access: 03.16.2014.

¹⁰ <https://archive.org/details/accountoflifeofl00brai> date of access: 03.16.2014.

¹¹ Upon the death of his son-in-law, Aaron Burr, who was the President of the New Jersey College, Edwards reluctantly accepted the position in 1758. Due to catching smallpox, Edwards was able to execute his new position slightly more than a month upon taking office. Burr was the father of future U.S. Vice President Aaron Burr. For the life and works of Jonathan Edwards, see Marsden, George. *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

A native of Newport, Massachusetts, Hopkins was also a graduate of Yale College and a member of the Congregationalist Church. He was an ordained pastor and trained in theology by Edwards himself and enjoyed the close friendship of Brainerd. Appointed to the First Congregational Church in his hometown in 1770, he kept his position until his death.¹² Aside from his reassessment of Calvinism, it was more of his promotion of Christianity in foreign lands that he left an enduring mark. Unlike the Calvinists before him, including his mentor Edwards, Hopkins championed missionary work in foreign lands: "The Gospel is ordained to be preached to the whole world, to all nations, to every human creature."¹³ Upon his arguments, Calvinists were divided into "old line," traditional Calvinists, who did not favor missionary work outside the United States and Hopkinsian Calvinists, who supported evangelical work abroad.¹⁴

Religious revivalism and evangelical spirit, both nurtured by the First Great Awakening, did not persist for long. Rationalism and skeptical views about religion, both of which were by-products of the French Revolution and the subsequent French Enlightenment, challenged the fundamental ideas of the Great Revival, such as predestination and salvation by God. Traditional Calvinism was confronted by new notions of deism, Unitarianism, Universalism, free will, and individual liberty. Accepting the existence of God, deism held the individual to be the sole responsible of his or her actions. Unitarians rejected the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, argued the oneness of God, and held that Jesus was only the Prophet of God and a religious teacher who conveyed the divine message. Universalists endorsed the ideas of free will and universal salvation in that salvation was possible for all regardless of the sins. As a result, many people left their churches and established new ones in conformity with these new ideas and ideals. The outcome was the formation of many separate Universalist and Unitarian churches in New England, especially between 1779 and 1782. However, the Age of Reason did not escape challenge in its turn. It was confronted by another revivalist and evangelical movement in early nineteenth century.

Threatened by the ideas of the French Enlightenment and the following foundation of Unitarian and Universalist churches, members of the existing churches, from Congregationalists to Presbyterians, in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, revitalized their respective New England churches and strengthened the smaller ones, such as the Methodists and Baptists. Similar to the leading preachers of the First Great Awakening, prominent figures of the new revivalist movement were graduates of Yale College and they also tried to inspire people to display interest in religion again. The leading preacher of the Second Great Awakening, Timothy Dwight, was President of Yale College (1795-1817). A grandson of Jonathan Edwards, Dwight served as a chaplain in the Revolutionary Army and had a noteworthy career in the Congregationalist ministry before becoming the President of College. He later was influential in the foundation of Andover Theological Seminary (1809), an institution intended to counter the Universalist and Unitarian influences in Harvard College. Not only the regular churchgoers, but also those who did not associate themselves with a particular denomination were included within the outreach of the second revivalist movement. Further, the new revivalists, unlike their predecessors, inculcated a sense of social responsibility which would be quite instrumental in establishing many colleges and divinity schools in the line of traditional Calvinism.

As much as the Second Great Awakening aimed to encourage the emotional and personal experience with God and to reestablish the Bible in daily life, the Age of Reason left its enduring mark on the earlier conceptual and institutional forms of Christianity in that traditional interpretations of salvation and predestination had to be revisited. Consequently, many denominations acknowledged an individual's role in his or her own salvation and destiny.

¹² For the life and works of Samuel Hopkins, see West, Stephen. *Sketches of the Life of the Late Reverend Samuel Hopkins, D.D., Pastor of the 1st Congregationalist Church* (ed.). Hartford: Connecticut, 1805; Hopkins, Samuel. *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*. New York: Garland, 1987. Hopkins, Samuel. *Twenty-one Sermons on a Variety of Interesting Subjects Sentimental and Practical*. Salem: Joshua, Cushing, 1803. Hopkins, Samuel. *Treatise on the Millennium*. Edinburgh: Vernor and Hood, 1794. E-book: Columbia University Library EResources. Hopkins, Samuel. *An Inquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel*. New Port: Rhode Island, 1783. E-book: Columbia University Library EResources. Walker, Williston. *Ten New England Leaders*. New York: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1901.

¹³ Hopkins, Samuel. *Works of Samuel Hopkins*. Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1852, v. I, 365.

¹⁴ Foster, Frank H. *Genetic History of the New England Theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907. Heimert, Alan. *Religion and American Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966.

A revised approach to the power of one's will together with a new sense of social responsibility mobilized many religious men and women to organize various missionary societies throughout the United States. To spread the "Gospel in all lands"¹⁵ was the stimulating motto behind the emergence of such societies as the New York Missionary Society (1796), Massachusetts Missionary Society (Boston, 1803), and the Connecticut Missionary Society (1803). Encouraged by the cultural, social, and economic optimism of the early nineteenth, the Second Great Awakening emphasized the power of individualism and promoted socio-religious mobilization at home and abroad. As a result, many Americans came to believe in their country's special destiny to serve the entire world as a model and to spread the Protestant Gospel worldwide. Captivated by this evangelical spirit, Dwight remarked in 1781 during a sermon given at Northampton, "Could stupid heathens or hardened Jews, sit silent and unmoved, under such *mighty interpositions* as those, *Providence has distinguished this land.*"¹⁶

Both the First Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening drew large numbers of their adherents from the female population.¹⁷ The background of the female participants in those revivalist movements and the reasons that drove women to evangelical venues were similar. Largely drawn from the lower segments of the society, either as a reaction to familial and social pressures or as a result of their changing roles at home and in society during the rapid industrialization process, many women ran off from their homes and factories to find peace and comfort in religion and in milieus associated with religion such as churches and various societies. Consequently, they not only increasingly became active members of churches, but also of philanthropic, relief, and missionary organizations. These women would become the pioneers of female education at home and abroad. When male American Protestant missionaries were on board for foreign work, being a wife was not the only role to play. Women went overseas to serve as midwives, nurses, teachers, instructors, and missionaries in time.

In the early formation of foreign missionary work, *millennialism* was another influential component, having been a formative factor in both revivalist movements. The idea was simple in that the end of the world was imminent and the Kingdom of God was soon to be established which had been a strong Christian belief from the early days of Christianity to the Protestant Reformation while many Protestant sects were moved by a millennial anticipation based on the demolition of the Church of Rome. When the Puritans of England started a new life in the New World, they carried with them this anti-Papal and anti-Church of Rome conceptions along with the apocalyptic and eschatological views of the early Christians. They held a premillennial anticipation that a thousand years of Christ's reign would follow a catastrophic Second Coming which led a passive popular stance. However, by the early decades of eighteenth century, the passive idea of premillennialism gave way to an active idea of millennialism based on the idea that a thousand years of peace would be followed by the Second Coming of Christ. Jonathan Edwards became very influential in the reformulation of millennial thought. The turn of the nineteenth century further increased the eschatological debates and the millennial hopes and reached its climax when Thomas Jefferson took Presidential office in 1801, marking the beginning of a new century and a strong anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ. The new idea prompted its adherents to be actively involved in the process as the Second Coming could only be realized through the gradual conversion of the world to Protestant Christianity which could be achieved through peace and prosperity.¹⁸ Millennialism played its part in the organization and the spread of missionary work in foreign lands. So did the new colleges in New England.

Formation of the American Board of Comissionaries for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.)

In 1806, a couple of students in their freshman year in Williams College, namely, Samuel J. Mills Jr., Harvey Loomis, Byram Green, Francis L. Robbins, and James Richards were all together to engage in a ceremony of praying and meditation in Sloan's Meadow.

¹⁵ Austin, Samuel. *Christians Bound to Spread the Gospel among all Descriptions of their Fellow Men.* Salem: Joshua Cushing, 1803.

¹⁶ Dwight, Timothy. *A Sermon Preached at Northampton on the Twentieth of November.* Hartford, 1781. Italics are mine. The word "heathen" in here is used in a comprehensive context. See f. 5.

¹⁷ Morgan, Edmund S. *Puritan Family.* New York: Harper & Row, 1966; Henretta, James, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815,* Lexington, MA: Heath, 1973; McLoughin, William G. *Revivals, Awakenings, Reform.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

¹⁸ This active idea of millennialism also led peace and temperance movements to speed up the Second Coming of the Christ.

When suddenly a thunderstorm broke out, the young men took shelter from the rain in the lee of a haystack and stayed until the sky cleared. During their brief refuge, Mills proposed to his fellows to spread the Protestant Gospel overseas. The outcome was, two years later, the formation of an undergraduate secret society named “The Brethren” determined to fulfill the Great Commission of the Christ.¹⁹ In 1861, upon the suggestion of Mark Hopkins,²⁰ President of Williams College, the Sloan Meadow site was marked by a monument dedicated to this very origin of American Protestant evangelism abroad.²¹ Samuel J. Mills, Jr. (1783-1818) was son of a clergyman from Connecticut and was brought up by his pious mother in the hands of whom he converted to be “in the service of God as missionary” at the age of sixteen.²² Thus, when he entered Williams College, he was already a young man passionate with the idea of evangelical Christianity.²³ Mills, Jr. was no different from any of his contemporaries growing up in New England.²⁴ Rooted in the religious revivalism of the mid-eighteenth century, the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century, aiming at relocating religion in the daily lives of its followers, was taking a firm ground in the American religious landscape.

By the late eighteenth century, many new colleges Williams (1793), Bowdoin (1794), and Union (1795) were established in New England to counter the liberal theologies of Universalism and Unitarianism.²⁵ Seen as centers for tradition, piety, and orthodoxy, the new colleges were intended to provide members of the ministries with the traditional teachings of the Congregationalist Church and the doctrines of Calvinism. Bowdoin College was established with a strong affiliation with the Congregationalists, and Williams and Union Colleges were run by the followers of Edwards.²⁶ The rivalry among the colleges hardened with an appointment crisis in Harvard College which would pave the way for the foundation of the Andover Theological Seminary.

¹⁹ With the exception of Harvey Loomis who favored the evangelization at home first, all participants consented to the proposal of Mills to disseminate Protestant Christianity throughout the world. Perry, Arthur L. *Williamstown and Williams College*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899. Loomis, Elias (ed.). *Memoirs of American Missionaries Formerly Connected with the Society of Inquiry Respecting Missions in Andover Theological Seminary*. Boston: Pierce and Parker, 1833.

²⁰ Mark Hopkins later on became a member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and served as its fifth President (1857-1887). As a Christian missionary, Hopkins harbored an aggressive approach towards Islam in that it was “unsustained by miracles or by prophecies, propagated by the sword, encouraging fatalism and pride, and intolerance, sanctioning polygamy, offering a sensual heaven.” These notions then were not uncommon in many leading U.S. colleges such as Yale and Harvard. Hopkins, Mark. *Lectures on the Evidence of Christianity before the Lowell Institute*. Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1864. Rudolph, Frederick. *Mark Hopkins and the Log: Williams College, 1836-1872*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956. Barton, James. *Christian Approach towards Islam*. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1918.

²¹ “Haystack Monument” was built next to the Mission Park at Williams College campus. See, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0f/Williams_College_-_Haystack_Monument.JPG date of access: 03.01.2014.

²² Strong, William E. *The Story of the American Board: An Account of the First Hundred Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910.

²³ Mills was a child of the Second Great Awakening just as his father, Samuel John Mills, had been that of the First Great Awakening. The latter, during his unusually long lifetime which he spent in a prolific pattern, energetically gave volumes of sermons, published some of them, and also edited “Connecticut Evangelical Society” for many years. However, Mills, Jr., unlike his father, lived briefly, yet left no less impressive imprint than his father thanks to his evangelical endeavors in and outside the United States. Being instrumental in the formation of many important organizations including the American Bible Society (1816) and the American Colonization Society (1817), he served as the agent of the latter in Sierra Leone, British West Africa. During his career, Mills, Jr. made a reputation of being a widely traveled missionary and one of the early advocates to train young men of color to be preachers and teachers of their race. These features singled him out as the “father of missionary work in Christian America.” He also published an account of his two travels to the South. Mills, Jr., Samuel John. *Memoirs of the Reverend Samuel J. Mills, Jr.* New York, 1904.

²⁴ For biographical sketches of the early missionaries, see Newcomb, Harvey. *A Cyclopaedia of Missions*. New York: Scribner, 1855; Bliss, Edward M. *The Encyclopedia of Missions*. New York: Fung & Wagnalls, Co., 1891 and Dwight, Henry O. (ed.). *The Encyclopedia of Missions*. New York: Fung & Wagnalls, Co., 1904.

²⁵ Tewksbury, Donald G. *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War*. New York, 1932.

²⁶ Interesting to note are the mottoes of these colleges which reflect the pious (and patriotic) mission of the schools such as *At Aquilla versus Coelum* (As an Eagle towards the Sky) at Bowdoin and *Scientia et Virtus* (Knowledge and Virtue) at Middlebury. Oddly, the motto of Union College is in French rather than usual Latin: *Sous les lois de Minerve, nous devons tous freres* (We all Become Brothers under the Law of Minerva). Bowdoin introduced French on an equal level Greek and Latin to its curriculum, thus becoming a pioneer in that matter.

In 1805, Henry Ware (1764-1845) was elected to the D.D. Hollis Professorship of the newly founded Divinity School at Harvard. Known for his liberal thought, Ware was one of the leading figures of Unitarianism and pastor of the First Unitarian Church in Massachusetts, which he had to leave upon his appointment to the Harvard Professorship.²⁷ The feud over his appointment was so deep and Hollis was only able to take his position in 1816. In the meantime, outraged by the naming to the Divinity School of a person of unorthodox beliefs, Congregationalists were organized under the leadership of Reverend Jedidah Morse to establish a Theological Institution²⁸ in Andover. In spite of being a traditional Calvinist, Morse, as a millennialist, ambitiously supported foreign missionary work and sustained his antipapal and anti-Turkish bias. In 1816, during a sermon, he even prophesied the fall of both the Pope and the Ottoman Sultan.²⁹

In 1808, the Theological Institution in Andover opened its doors as a part of the Phillips Academy.³⁰ A sermon delivered by Timothy Dwight, one of the founders of the school and the President of Yale College as well as the leading name of the Second Great Awakening, marked the imminence of the evangelical mission of the school while he was heralding the end of the “the ancient establishments, civil liberty, and religion of the *Old World*” as well as the demolition of the “Romish hierarch,” and the “tottering [of the] *mosque of Mohammedism*” and the heathen idols.³¹

Not long after of the opening of Andover Theological Institution, enrollment of seven young men in 1810, namely, Samuel J. Mills, Jr., James Richards, Gordon Hall, Luther Rice, Adoniram Judson, Samuel Nott, and Samuel Newell would be instrumental in the formation of American missionary work abroad. Except for Newell of Harvard, all students were graduates of the new colleges established during the Second Great Awakening. Mills, Richards, Hall, and Rice graduated from Williams College, Judson from Union College and Nott from Brown College. That same year, four of them, Judson, Nott, Mills, and Newell formed a secret organization namely, “Society of Brethren,” in line with “The Brethren” of four years earlier. Judson emerged as the leader of the group. They pledged to “set their hearts upon undertaking a Christian mission in some foreign land”³² and, to this end, appealed to the senior professors at Andover. With their endorsement, in June 1810, the same student group met with their “reverend fathers” in the meeting of the General Association of Massachusetts Proper at Bradford. The General Association was a body of conservative Congregational ministers which represented the “more evangelical wing of the denomination.”³³ At the Bradford meeting, the students presented a petition begging “to state that their minds have long been impressed with the duty and importance of personally attempting a mission to the heathen” and stating their “devot[ion] to this work for life, whenever God, in his providence, shall open the way.”³⁴ The content of the petition had been embraced by Hall and Rice as well, but they avoided the signing in case a high number of signatories could alarm the senior professors. The student appeal at Bradford for a Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was approved and the Board was constituted in September 1810.

Two years later, the Board, without waiting for the incorporation act, sent its first missionaries, Judson and Newell, along with their wives, to Calcutta, India. Due to the imminent war with Britain and the general decline in evangelical spirit, the Board was able to acquire an incorporation act from the Massachusetts Legislature under the name of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions only after the departure of its very first missionaries.

²⁷ Ware, Henry. Sermon delivered at Hingham, May 5, 1805 on the dissolution of his pastoral relation to the First Church of Christ. Boston: E. Lincoln, 1805; Ware, Henry. Letters addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists occasioned by Dr. Wood's Letters to Unitarians. Cambridge: Hillard and Metcalt, 1820, and Ware, Henry. An Inquiry into the Foundation, Evidences, and Truths of Religion. Cambridge: John Owen, 1842.

²⁸ At the time of its opening, the school was named “Institution” instead of “Seminary.”

²⁹ Elsbree, Oliver W. The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America 1790-1815. Williamsport, PA: Williamsport Printing and Binding, Co., 1885.

³⁰ Woods, Leonard. History of the Andover Theological Seminary. Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1885.

³¹ Dwight, Timothy. A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Theological Institution in Andover and at the Ordination of Reverend Eliphalet Pearson, LL.D. Boston: Belcher Armstrong, September 28, 1808. It is noteworthy that in his sermon, Dwight mentioned the Catholics, Muslims, and the pagans, but not the Jews. Italics are mine.

³² Strong, 3.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 4, 5.

At the outset largely composed of Congregationalists, the American Board soon became a nondenominational institution with the inclusion of other denominations, such as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and members of the Associated Reform Church. However, the Congregationalists always constituted the majority in the American Board.³⁵

Encouraged by the success of the “The Brethren” in William College, a new society for foreign missions concurrently came into being at Andover under the name of “The Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Missions.”³⁶ In the coming years, both the Society and Andover provided a large reservoir of students eager to serve as missionaries in foreign lands right after their graduation from the Seminary as missionary work and the Seminary meant to be the same over time.

A closer look to the membership of the American Board reveals the eclectic nature of the American Protestant *missionary network* which would be conserved throughout its active years. Eighteen of its twenty-six members were college graduates. Except for two from Harvard and Columbia Colleges, the rest were graduates of colleges associated with Congregationalists. Besides Timothy Dwight and Jedidah Morse, there were John Jay, diplomat and statesman; John Lagon, ex-governor of New Hampshire and senator; Elias Boudinot, signer of the Declaration and the founder of the American Bible Society; and William Bartlet, William Phillips, and Robert Ralston, wealthy businessmen. From its inception, American Protestant missionary work abroad has been a network of individuals of backgrounds as diverse as college students and academics, statesmen and diplomats, journalists and businessmen, and clergymen.

The Periodization of the American Mission Work in the Ottoman Empire

Pioneer Missionaries Go Abroad, 1819-1850

The period 1819-1850 marks the pioneer period for American missionaries going abroad. India was the first place where the American Protestant missionaries landed. However, it did not take too long for them to turn their attention from South Asia to the Near East thanks to the outbreak of the Anglo-American War in 1812 and administrative problems between the American and the British missionaries operating in Calcutta. As early as 1813, the American Board was thinking about establishing a permanent station in Jerusalem.³⁷ The Holy Land had always been a powerful magnet for missionaries and millennialists: Zion was the prerequisite for the God’s Kingdom on earth.³⁸

³⁵ The American Board was soon an inspiration to similar organizations. Baptists in 1816 and Methodists in 1819 established their own organizations with aims parallel to those of the American Board. The American Baptist Missionary Union was established by Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson who were former members of the American Board, disagreed with the Board on various issues and resigned. Neither of these missionary organizations nor others ever reached the size and strength of the American Board. The American Bible Society, founded as a non-denominational institution in 1816, provided support for all missionary organizations abroad.

³⁶ Loomis, Elias (ed.). *Memoirs of American Missionaries Formerly Connected with the Society of Inquiry Respecting Missions in Andover Theological Seminary*. Boston: Pierce and Parker, 1833.

³⁷ Ottoman (Turkish written with Arab alphabet in the period of pre Republic of Turkey) and Turkish place names are provided with their current Turkish spelling or, when necessary, in conformity with their reference to Ottoman primary sources as opposed to their English spelling or to their pre-Ottoman naming as preferred in American diplomatic, state, and missionary documents, such as İzmir instead of Smyrna as referred in American documents for the former case or Diyarbakır as opposed to Diyarbakir for the latter case while excluding those provided with their common usage, such as Istanbul with English spelling as opposed to İstanbul with current Turkish spelling and as referred in Ottoman official documents or such as Jerusalem in its commonly usage and as referred in American archival materials as opposed to Kudüs in Turkish spelling or al-Quds in Ottoman reference. Regarding person names, I opted for Turkish spelling, such as Abdülhamid instead of Abdulhamid in English spelling. Ottoman and Turkish place and person names, when first mentioned, will be accompanied with their English spelling or with their pre-Ottoman naming as preferred in American documents within a parenthesis.

³⁸ In early nineteenth century, many writers and poets as well as missionaries on both sides of the Atlantic were very much attracted to the “recapture” of Zion as was obvious in the verses of Rudyard Kipling:

But we will go to Zion, By choice and through dread,
With these our present comrades,
And those our present dead;
And, being free of Zion
In both her fellowships,

Edward Bliss points to the remarkable resemblance between the “Promised Land” and New England in terms of size, location, and shape while comparing the two halves of Palestine with those of New England, namely, New Hampshire and Vermont.³⁹ “It seemed intolerable to its founders that Christianity’s birthplace should be forever in the grip of Islam, or left to exhibit a form of Christianity, ancient and well-established, but for the most time lifeless.”⁴⁰ On September 23, 1818, the Prudential Committee of the American Board resolved that the Rev. Messrs Levi Parson and Pliny Fisk be designated for Jerusalem and other parts of the Western Asia.

Both Fisk and Parsons were graduates of Williams College and Andover Theological Seminary. During their stay at Andover, they were also members of the Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Missions. Before leaving the country to establish a permanent station in the Holy Land, the two young missionaries were “instructed” as to how to carry out their mission on the ground, from learning the languages and collecting information about the land and its people that they were about to encounter to distributing Bibles, pamphlets, and other religious tracts. The initial instructions given to Fisk and Parsons were following as:

You will survey with earnest attention the various tribes and classes which dwell in that land and in the surrounding countries. The two grand inquiries ever present in your minds will be, ‘What good can be done?’ and ‘By what means?’ What can be done for the Jews? What for the pagans? What for the Mohammedans? What for the Christians? What for the people in Palestine? What for those in Egypt, in Syria, in Armenia, in other countries to which your inquiry may be extended?⁴¹

In conformity with the instructions, missionaries would try “to reach those who are Christian in name and the Jews” with the hope that “good news” would be welcomed by “both Jews and the Gentiles there.”⁴² On November 3, 1819, Parsons and Fisk, the first two American Protestant missionaries to the Near East, sat sail from Boston to İzmir (*Smyrna*). İzmir had long been a well known Ottoman port city in the Aegean coastal region of Western Anatolia where American merchants did a prosperous business. American citizens with good connections resided in the city, which also hosted a helpful British consulate and an international trading community. Thus, the city seemed to be a proper embarking spot to reach the Holy Land. The new missionaries found it such a convenient place that they even considered establishing the permanent station in İzmir instead of Jerusalem. However, upon the strict instructions of the headquarters in Boston, they remained loyal to the original plan. Once landed in İzmir, Parsons, in a letter to his family in February 1820, wrote, “I find a great desire in my breast....to see a system in operation which, with the divine blessing, shall completely demolish this *mighty empire of sin*....How many souls are shut from the light blessings of the Gospel.”⁴³ Subsequent impressions of the Ottoman lands by the American missionaries were not positive either:

Sit down and sup in Zion
Stand up and sup in Zion
Whatever cup in Zion
Is offered to our lips!

Kipling, Rudyard. *Collected Poems*. New York: AMS Press, 1970.

³⁹ Bliss, II, 373.

⁴⁰ Strong, 80.

⁴¹ Quoted in Barton, James L. *Daybreak in Turkey*. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1908, 119-120.

⁴² Shaw, Plato E. *American Contact with the Eastern Churches*. Chicago: The American Society of Church History, 1937.

⁴³ Morton, Daniel O. (ed.). *Memoir of Rev. Levi Parsons: First Missionary to Palestine from the United States*. Burlington, VI: C. Goodrich, 2nd ed., 1830. “A mighty empire of sin” later became a common phrase, especially employed by missionaries, in reference to the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, as mentioned in many letters of complaint penned by missionaries, it is important to note that there was a practice of editing the reports, journals, and letters which were sent out from the ground to the American Board headquarters in Boston, not only for a better language, but more importantly due to a concern of abiding by the policies of the United States and the Board. Italics are mine.

Here were 40,000,000 people crowded together and yet *separated by ironically differences of race and religion*, and embittered by years of controversy and warfare. Except in the coast cities, there were scarcely any educated men; the women were uniformly illiterate. There was *no literature*, apparently no desire for it; everywhere a *stagnant barbarism*, under the *oppressive* hand of the *sultan-caliph* at Constantinople. From one hand of the empire to the other, there was not a missionary station permanently occupied, *not even an established missionary* to whom those pioneers could go for counsel or with them they could *divide the land*.⁴⁴

During their assignment, Parsons and Fisk took the opportunity to visit Ottoman Turkey. As much as Jerusalem was dear to all missionaries for being the birthplace of Christianity, Turkey occupied no less a place: it was where “almost every land named in Bible history”⁴⁵ was located; the very first churches of Christianity were established; many apostles, first and foremost Paul, were born; and where the Bible was compiled. In the aftermath of their brief historical tour to the ancient sites of Christianity in Anatolia, Fisk returned to İzmir, while Parsons continued his journey until he reached the Holy Land, which made him the first American missionary in Jerusalem (1821).⁴⁶ Following the instructions of the American Board to establish a permanent station in the city, Parsons expanded his efforts to this end. However, due to failing health, the outbreak of the Greek revolt, which had an impact on the Greek population in Jerusalem, and the unfriendly welcome of the local Orthodox population and their church, Parsons decided to leave the city for İzmir where he reunited with Fisk in 1822. However, his bad health soon took them both to İskenderiyye (*Alexandria*), Egypt for a change of climate. There, Parsons became the first martyr of the American missionary work in the Near East.⁴⁷ His place was soon filled by new missionaries.⁴⁸

When early American missionaries arrived in the Ottoman lands, they were convinced of finding an empire stagnated in the Biblical times with its “heathen” inhabitants ready to receive the Protestant Gospel. Inspired by millennial hopes, the missionaries anticipated a quick overthrow of the anti-Christ Turk. The existence of a multireligious, multicultural, and polyglot society like that of the Ottomans with a *millet* system, which was the semi-independent organization of various ethnic and faith communities, was inconceivable to American missionaries expecting to find a “mighty empire of sin” of “ironically differen[t] races and religions” that were all “crowded together.”⁴⁹

Mary Mills Patrick, future President of Istanbul (*Constantinople*) Women’s College, was most astonished by the complex composition of the Ottoman Empire when she first visited the country. Failing to conceive the structure and operation of the millet system, Patrick thought of it as nothing but “separation” of people into “classes” based on religion:

⁴⁴ Strong, 81. Italics are mine. Aside from being written with pure ignorance and prejudice regarding the political, social, and cultural history of the Ottoman lands, Strong, in his assessment, was also dismissing the French and British missionaries, operating in the Ottoman territories long before the American missionaries came on the scene. Especially the former had been concentrating in the Mount Lebanon region since early mid-sixteenth century. British consulates in various Ottoman metropolises including Istanbul, İzmir, and Beirut had long been sources of support for the British missionaries before they extended their assistance to the newly arrived American missionaries in the nineteenth century. The question of “divide the land” is of grave importance. During the series of peace conferences organized in the aftermath of the First World War such as Paris Peace Conference (1919), the San Remo Conference (1920), and the Lausanne Conference (1922-23), parties were quite careful not to step in each other’s “sphere of influences” with which they had associated themselves through their respective religio-political activities over the years. The French were sensitive about the Mount Lebanon and Cilicia, the British about Mesopotamia, and the Americans about the Eastern Anatolia and Istanbul. This is the subject of another study of mine.

⁴⁵ Strong, 80.

⁴⁶ Bond, Alvan. *Memoir of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, A.M. Late Missionary to Palestine*. Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1828.

⁴⁷ Morton, Daniel O. (ed.). *Memoir of Rev. Levi Parsons: First Missionary to Palestine from the United States*. Burlington, Vermont: C. Goodrich, 1830.

⁴⁸ Following the death of Levi Parsons, his position was filled with Jonas King, a graduate of Williams College and Andover Theological Seminary (1822). To serve for the American Board in the region, King declined his new post as professor of Oriental languages at Amherst College and joined Pliny Fisk for three years, during most of which he remained in Beirut.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

The thing that amazed me most in my new environment was the absolute *separation of the people into classes*. Accustomed to a country of one language, and a government wholly free from religious prejudice, I could not comprehend why one of my new friends spoke one language in her home and another an entirely different one, neither of them being able to understand the other. Still less could I conjecture why my questions regarding this strange state of affairs should always be answered in terms of religion, as, for instance, “She speaks Greek because she is Orthodox,” as the Greek church was commonly called, or “She speaks Armenian because she is Gregorian,” the name of the Armenian church.⁵⁰

The conception of Cyrus Hamlin, future President of Robert College⁵¹ in Istanbul, with respect to the “Eastern populations” was not that much different from Patrick:

Religion has divided them into the Greek Church, the Armenian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church; and among all these there are subdivisions, not tending to unity. There are Moslems and Jews. The Bulgarians were breaking loose from the Greek Church, and the religious aspects of the East were unquiet.⁵²

The American touch in the Ottoman territories did not create an instant magic the way the missionaries expected, but at least they tried to do their best to get acquainted with the region. Therefore, the period from the day that the first American missionaries landed in İzmir up until the mid-nineteenth century was mostly a preparatory episode without gaining any immense accomplishment. Missionaries were largely concerned with getting sufficient training in the field to be familiar with the land and its inhabitants and their cultures, customs, and habits. As a result, they focused on language learning, traveling as much as they could, preaching in private, distributing Bibles and religious tracts, opening presses, and experimenting with schools. For the early period, missionaries in Ottoman Turkey were largely situated in the big cities of İzmir and Istanbul. In late 1830s, as they began to “wonder” the interior of Anatolia, they established a station in the province of Erzurum in 1839, the first station in the Eastern region of Anatolia. The city soon became a stopover for missionaries who wanted to travel into Ottoman Turkey.⁵³

Early American missionaries, upon their arrival in Malta, established a printing press for the use of the American missions in the field.⁵⁴ There had already been a printing press run by the British missionaries. In fact, American missionaries were assisted by the British and the locals on how to operate the press. The American missionary printing press, called “The American Press” at the time of its establishment and renamed as “The Evangelical Printing Establishment,” supposedly provided a means through which “the Papacy will be undermined, and Islamism will tremble to its center.”⁵⁵ Within a decade, the American mission press printed 350,000 volumes which summed to 21 million pages, most of them dealing with subjects like the lives of the prophets or apostles and reflected the life and culture of New England.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Patrick, Mary Mills. *Under Five Sultans*. New York: The Century Co., 1929, 29.

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion for the early stage of Robert College, see, Ümit, Devrim, “Introduction,” *Fifty Years in Constantinople: Recollections of Robert College*, Washburn, George, 1909. (Reprint) New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2nd ed., June 2012.

⁵² Hamlin, Cyrus. *Among the Turks*. New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878, 285.

⁵³ Beyond the metropolises in Western Anatolia, the very first American missionary station was established in the province of Trabzon (*Trebizond*), located in the coastal Black Sea region, in 1835.

⁵⁴ During the service of Pliny Fisk and Jonas King at Malta, the two were joined by the next American missionary in the Ottoman lands, Reverend Daniel Temple along with his wife (1822). Next to İzmir, Malta served for a while as a stopover for American missionaries who would operate in the Ottoman Empire. Temple brought a printing press with him when arriving in the island. *The Missionary Herald*, XXII (1826), 212.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Among the early popular religious tracts there can be counted Leigh Richmond’s *The Dairyman’s Daughter* and Hannah More’s *The Shepherd of Salisbury* which reflect how missionary work was not confined to spread the “good news,” but also aimed to proliferate the Christian culture embodied in the New England literature. For the American missionary printing press at Malta, see Burke, William J., “The American Mission Press at Malta,” *New York Public Library Bulletin*, 41 (1937), 526-529.

With the establishment of the American missionary schools, the printing press provided text books for the curriculum in Italian, the lingua franca of the Levant, and English along with vernacular languages including Turkish, Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish (Turkish written with Armenian characters), Hebrew, and Kurdish. In 1833, the American mission press at Malta was relocated first to İzmir and then, in 1834, permanently to Istanbul in Ottoman Turkey, Beirut in Syria, and Urmia in Persia.

However, the most significant venture that the pioneer American missionaries were involved in was education, the single most ambitious and most competent work of the missionaries with enduring mark. In 1823, two young missionaries, Isaac Bird and William Goodell, accompanied by their brides,⁵⁷ arrived in Beirut⁵⁸ after a temporary stay at Malta. The former was a graduate of Yale and the latter of Dartmouth. Both attended Andover after their graduation from college. In 1824, the wives of the missionaries opened a co-ed school for six Arab elementary children in Beirut. This first and modest milestone was the harbinger of the massive American missionary enterprise in the field of education in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁹

In early 1829, the imminent war between the Ottomans and the British; a declaration of war by Russia against the Ottomans; the departure from Beirut of the British Consul, Peter Abbot, a longtime friend and guardian of the American mission in the city and from Istanbul of the other European ambassadors; and finally, the absence of a permanent American naval force in the Mediterranean prompted the American missionaries serving in the Beirut station to leave the city temporarily for the Malta station. During their Malta retreat, the missionaries organized a conference to discuss the expansion of the mission and the reassignment of the stations accordingly. Proximity to the Holy Land was a prerequisite for the spread of the mission work.⁶⁰ As a result, William Bird was sent to Beirut, Goodell to Istanbul to open a new station, Eli Smith and Harrison Gray Otis Dwight to the Eastern provinces of Ottoman Turkey where the Armenian population was largely located.⁶¹ Upon the reassignment of the mission work, the name of the Palestine Mission changed to the Western Asia Mission, also known as the Mission in Turkey, excluding the Beirut and Malta stations which were included in the newly named Syrian Mission. Regarding the Mission in Turkey, the Earl of Shaftsbury remarked, "I do not believe in the history of diplomacy or in the history of any negotiations carried on between man and man, we can find anything equal to the *wisdom*, the *soundness*, and the *pure religious truth* of the body of men who constituted *this mission*."⁶²

With the transfer of the American mission press from Malta to İzmir in 1833, the latter city became the first center of the Western Asia Mission. The following year, when the press was permanently transferred from İzmir to Istanbul, the latter emerged as the center of the Mission in Turkey. By 1829, the American Board was not the only American missionary organization operating in the Ottoman lands.

⁵⁷ The American Board was careful to send male missionaries overseas who were married. When Jonas King, during his service to the Greek community in İzmir, married to a local Greek girl from the city, this caused such a stir that the Board started to send only married male missionaries abroad. Regarding female missionaries, the practice was different. By the 1840s, following female involvement in foreign missionary work, especially in the fields of education and health, had become effective, female participation, regardless of marital status, remained desirable. Phillips, Clifton J. *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810-1860*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.

⁵⁸ By 1825, Malta and Beirut were established as the permanent stations for the activities of the American Board missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. The former station largely served as a first break in the journey for missionaries, before they embarked on Beirut and as the hosting place for the American mission press.

⁵⁹ Anderson, Rufus. *History of the Missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Oriental Churches*. Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1872.

⁶⁰ *The Missionary Herald*, XXVI (1830), 76-77.

⁶¹ Dwight, Harrison G.O. *Christianity Revised in the East*. New York: Baker and Scribner, 1850; Dwight, Harrison G. O. *Christianity in Turkey: A Narrative of the Protestant Reformation in the Armenian Church*. London: James Nispet and Co., 1854.

⁶² Strong, 107. Italics are mine.

The American Bible Society, the American Baptist Missionary Union, the American Episcopalians, the Ladies' Greek Committee of New York, and the Female Society of Boston and Vicinity for Promoting Christianity among the Jews were also functioning in various regions of the Ottoman Empire, but neither of them reached the size, quantity, competence, variety, property and the efficiency of the American Board.⁶³

Missionaries Pave the Way for Diplomatic Relations and for the Recognition of the Ottoman Protestants as Millet

The reorganization of the American missionary work and its subsequent expansion in the Ottoman territories led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States. The latter was attached to the *Monroe Doctrine* and to maintaining its diplomatic relations with the Old World via consular relations at the ministerial level instead of the ambassadorial level. The Americans thought that a treaty with the Sublime Porte could set a pattern for similar relations with the North African corsairs. In fact, right after its independence, the United States signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce with France which became a standard for the subsequent American treaties. As early as 1811, the first American "commercial agent" in Ottoman territory (İzmir), David Offley, a Quaker himself from Philadelphia, without the authorization of the American government, through his own initiative managed to reach a treaty with the Ottomans. On February 8, 1830, The Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, thereby establishing diplomatic relations.⁶⁴ The Treaty officially rewarded the Americans with the most favored nation status and gave the American ships permission to pass to the Black Sea.⁶⁵ In return, according to the separate and secret article of the Treaty, the United States promised to assist the Ottomans to build their warships and to this end to provide them with the renowned American timber. Almost a year later, the Treaty, with the exception of the secret article, was ratified by the U.S. Congress. Subsequently, David Porter was appointed the first American *charge d'affaires* in Istanbul.⁶⁶ In 1839, Porter, by a congressional act, was raised to the status of minister resident, which he held until his death in 1843. Improvement in diplomatic relations was favorable to the American missionaries.

From the time the American Board missionaries landed in the Ottoman Empire, they were under the close surveillance of the Ottoman government as the latter was experienced with the long-established British and French missionaries. In February 1824, almost four years after Fisk and Parsons debarked in İzmir, Bird and Fisk were arrested in Jerusalem while distributing Bibles, Psalters, and other religious tracts. In June that same year, the Ottoman government issued a decree prohibiting the distribution of Bibles, pamphlets, and religious books and tracts.⁶⁷ However, the Ottoman approach towards the missionaries was not confined to prohibitive and punitive measures. With the Imperial Rescript of Reorganization (*Gülhane Hatt-ı Humayun*) of 1839 the Ottoman administration assured freedom for all Ottoman subjects irrespective of religion and ethnicity. The Rescript largely aimed to preempt any foreign influence within its boundaries. Upon the increase of American Protestant missionary activities in Ottoman territories and the subsequent emergence of a local Protestant community chiefly among the Armenian subjects of the state, the Ottoman sultan, thanks to the intermediaries of William Goodell and Sir Stratford Canning,⁶⁸ the British ambassador to Istanbul, issued an imperial decree (*ferman*) recognizing the Protestant community in the Empire. In 1850, another imperial decree granted the native Protestants millet status. When the millet system was abolished on paper with the declaration of the Imperial Rescript of Reform (*Islahat Fermanı*) of 1856 recognizing the subjects of the Ottoman Empire as "citizens" (*tebaayi Osmaniye*), Protestants maintained their rights as citizens of the Ottoman state.

⁶³ Strickland, William P. History of American Bible Society. New York: Harper, 1849.

⁶⁴ Gordon, Leland G. American Relations with Turkey, 1830-1930. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932.

⁶⁵ Miller, David H. Treaties and other International Acts of the United States of America. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-1948, III, 541-557.

⁶⁶ Porter, David. Memoir of Commodore David Porter. Albany, NY: J. Munsell, 1875.

⁶⁷ *The Missionary Herald*, XXI (1825), 92.

⁶⁸ Fisher, Sydney N., "Two Centuries of American Interest in Turkey," Pinkney, David H. and Ropp, Theodore (eds.), *A Festschrift for Frederick B. Artz*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964, 119-120; Nordmann, B. F., "American Missionary Work among Armenians in Turkey (1830-1923), Pinky and Ropp, 230-231.

Selim Deringil argues that these two decrees soon became points of reference for the American missionaries to legalize their religious and educational activities among the non-Muslim people of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ The imperial decrees of 1839 and 1856 paved the way for the elimination of different treatments of the Empire's Muslims and non-Muslims before the law. This found absolute articulation in the eighth article of the first Ottoman Constitution (*Kanun-i Esasi*) of 1876 in that "everybody under the Ottoman allegiance, irrespective of his religion and sect, is identified as Ottoman without an exception" (*Osmanlı tabiiyetinde bulunan herkes, hangi din ve mezhepten olursa olsun, istisnasız Osmanlı tabir olunur*).

Missionaries "Wander" in Interior Anatolia, 1850-1876

The period from 1850 up until 1876 was defined by the rapid growth of the American missionary work in the interior regions of Ottoman Turkey. Evangelical interest was no longer confined to metropolises like İzmir and Istanbul, but distant provinces and their environs were also covered by the missionary activities.⁷⁰ The expansion of missionary work required a division of the field. In 1857, "Armenia" was divided into northern and southern Armenia, and three years later at the annual meeting of the northern section of Armenia, the areas covered by the Mission in Turkey were treated in terms of being "Asiatic" and "European." "European Turkey," including the European lands of Ottoman Turkey, namely, the Balkans and Thrace, are not within the geographic concern of this study. "Asiatic Turkey,"⁷¹ was divided into three fields, namely Western, Central, and Eastern Turkey. Extending from Istanbul in the west to Trabzon in the Black Sea region and from İzmir on the Aegean coast to Sivas in the east, the Western Turkey Mission covered the largest area of the three missions. The previous Southern Armenian Mission now became the Central Turkey Mission, including the cities of Adana, Tarsus, and Mersin in the west and Urfa, Antep (*Aintab*), and Halep (*Aleppo*) as the chief spots in the east. As for the Eastern Turkey Mission, it was put together from the Northern Armenian Mission and the remnants of the Assyrian and Nestorian Missions, with its main locations being Erzurum in the north, Harput in the west, Van and Bitlis in the east, and Diyarbekir and Mardin in the south. "The missionaries in 1860 began to anticipate the time when in that portion of Turkey no increase of missionaries would be needed; the native church would be able to maintain the growing work."⁷²

In 1871, the American Board increasingly concentrated its works in Ottoman Turkey. The Syrian Mission and the Mission on Nestorians in Persia were transferred to the Presbyterians under the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Thereafter, the American Board confined its activities to Turkey alone.

⁶⁹ Deringil, Selim. *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimization of Power in the Empire 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1998, 115.

⁷⁰ New centers in the interior lands were mostly opened among the Armenian population: Antep, 1848, Sivas, 1851, Adana, 1852, Diyarbekir, 1853, Talas and Maraş (*Marash*), 1854, Harput (*Harpoot*), 1855, and Tarsus, 1859. Compared to the Turkey Mission, progress in Syria Mission beyond Beirut was slow: Abeh, 1843, Tripoli, 1848, Sidon, 1851.

⁷¹ "Asiatic Turkey" comprises just about the territories of modern-day Turkey, with the exception of the Eastern Thrace which is within the boundaries of today's Turkey.

⁷² Strong, 200.

In 1876, the American Board, well-establishing itself in the three Turkey Missions,⁷³ was convinced that the “golden opportunity” to disseminate the “evangelical truth” arrived.⁷⁴ The same year, the Committee on Western Turkey Mission reported back to the headquarters of the American Board with strength of mind on the promise of the mission work in cooperation with the non-Muslim populace:

*....Just now no others of our missionary fields are attracting so much attention as those in the Turkish Empire. The eyes of the civilized world are fixed upon that country. Every morning bring its telegram of changes in the state and aspect of affairs there, or of some new phase in the political complications, which may affect its condition and the condition of its people; and we can only pray a prayer in which we feel that the whole Christian world will join that whatever may occur, those who love Christ in that country, and those who are laboring to build up his kingdom, may be under his protection, and that all changes may conduce to the progress of his gospel.*⁷⁵

The mission work of the American Board including evangelism, medical work, and education was largely concentrated on Armenians, especially on those located in Northern Turkey, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ The Board particularly emphasized “three important points in Northern Turkey,”⁷⁷ namely, Istanbul, Antep, and Harput.⁷⁸

⁷³ To illustrate, in 1876, Western Turkey Mission had 6 stations, 76 out-stations, 27 churches, 24 missionaries, 1 other male assistant missionary, 41 female assistant missionaries, 16 native pastors, 29 licensed preachers, 87 school-teachers, and 35 other helpers. Six stations were “Constantinople” (Istanbul), Manisa, “Marsovan” (*Merzifon*), Sivas, “Cesarea” (*Kayseri*), and “Broosa” (*Bursa*) which had sixteen, three, fifteen, seven, nineteen, and sixteen out-stations in that order. In Istanbul station, whole number of registered Protestants were 550, common schools 4, male pupils 67, female pupils 36, whole number of pupils in common schools 103, no pupils either in theological schools and classes or in female boarding schools, and whole number of pupils 103. In sixteen out-stations of Istanbul, the numbers for the specified categories were following as 1,026, 13, 248, 192, 440, none, 80, 46, and 103. In the Western Turkey Mission as a whole, total number of registered Protestants were 6,810, common schools 83, male pupils 1,954, female pupils 1,227, total number of pupils in common schools 3,181, pupils in theological schools and classes 75, pupils in female boarding schools 121, other adults under instruction 302, and the whole number of pupils 3,679. The same year, Central Turkey Mission included 2 stations, namely, Antep and Maraş which had twenty and nine out-stations respectively. The Mission as a whole had 26 churches, 6 missionaries, 1 physician, 13 female assistant missionaries, 19 ordained native ministers, 19 licensed preachers, 50 teachers, and 8 other helpers. Detailed statistics for the Central Turkey Mission was not provided. Concerning the Eastern Turkey Mission, it was composed of Harput, Erzurum, Van, and Mardin stations which had sixty-three, eighteen, twenty, and fourteen out-stations accordingly. The Mission had 30 organized churches, 13 missionaries, two of whom were physicians, one physician, 20 female assistant missionaries, 20 pastors, 28 preachers, 86 teachers, and 64 other helpers. In Harput station, the leading station of the Eastern Turkey Mission, total number of students in theological schools and classes were 8, pupils in normal school 55, boarding schools for females 1 with pupils of 5, common schools 4 with pupils of 220, other adults under instruction 20, and the whole number of individuals under instruction was 338. The Eastern Turkey Mission had in total 4,407 individuals under instruction, 591 of whom were adults; 3,631 of whom were pupils in 133 common schools, 94 in 4 boarding schools for females, 55 in normal schools, and 36 in theological schools and classes. See, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Boston: Riverside Press, 1876, 21-22, 33-34, 41-42. The source will hitherto be referred to as the Annual Report.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXVI. Italics are mine.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁸ Harput became the province of Elazığ in today's Turkey.

While preaching, churches, Bible Societies⁷⁹, Y.M.C.A., Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.), Sunday schools, home visits, and women's meetings established the work of evangelism, educational and medical work were carried out through schools and colleges and hospitals respectively. The most impressive and lasting achievement of the American educational enterprise was the foundation of Robert College and the Istanbul Women's College, both located in the capital of the Empire, and of the Syrian Protestant College (later American University of Beirut) in Beirut, all of which immediately became leading places of learning in the region and models for later missionary schools.⁸⁰ Bebek Seminary was the predecessor to Robert College, which was the first American missionary school of higher education in the Ottoman Empire, in fact in the entire Near East.

Basic Notes on the Ottoman Law and Regulations

⁷⁹ The works of the American Bible Society are not within the confines of this study. However, it is worth mentioning that the Bible Society, located in Istanbul, shared the same building with the headquarters of the American Board. It concentrated on sale and distribution of religious books and tracts including Bible, Hymns, and pamphlets. The (American) Book Department, which was conjointly working with the Bible Society and the American Board, was in charge of the job. Seizure of books, especially at the Ottoman customs, was one of the points of contention between the Ottoman authorities and the American missionaries. To preempt any further complaint on the part of the latter, the Ottoman Government, upon the proposal of the Ministry of Public Instruction, ruled, in late 1882, that a special official seal should be affixed to foreign books and tracts whose introduction and circulation would cause no "inconvenience" to the Empire. This was to be done at the time of their entry into the country following the usual examination. The sealing or stamping of the volumes was intended to prevent any possible seizure and detention by the Ottoman officials in the interior. Concerning the books, which had been printed abroad and were already in foreign bookstores for sale, it was asked that they be submitted at once for the same procedure. In the face of the new ruling, leaders of the Bible Society, Henry O. Dwight and Isaac D. Bliss, showed their discontent and asked the intervention of the American Legation, in consultation with the State Department, on their behalf. Inspection of imported books at the customs was a common practice. However, American missionaries commented that application of the ruling on the books located in the depots of the Society would impair the privileges and immunities of the American citizens and might be established as a *modus vivendi* for similar Ottoman requests in the future. Regarding the books which had already been distributed to bookstores in the interior for sale, they found it to be practically difficult and expensive. Following the appeal of Dwight and Bliss, Lewis Wallace, head of the Legation, communicated with Arif Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the modification the new ruling. Adopting an intermediate position, Wallace objected to the gathering up and bringing of the books which had already been sent to the interior cities, but suggested that the Bible Society would open its doors and offices to the Ottoman officials for inspection. As the correspondence between Wallace and Arif Pasha continued, the intention of Ottoman authorities and the objectives of the new ruling became more apparent. The "mode" of inspection was aimed at protecting the "morals and usages" of the country and did not target "Protestantism, scientific or literary matters." Indeed, it had been a common practice on the part of Ottoman authorities to grant "any such work," published in one of the languages spoken by the Christians of the Empire, authorization in conformity with the law and the general rules. However, they made it clear that the ruling was confined to books in the depots of the Bible Society which were imported and which were printed without authorization, and they dropped the requirement for books which were already in the hands of foreign bookstores in the interior. Later on, the Ministry of Public Instruction further required the notice "For the use of Protestants" to be contained on the cover and the first page of each book, a condition to be met for the publication of Bibles and Testaments at the time of inspection. The Bible Society did not find this ruling acceptable either and communicated with the American Legation accordingly. This may imply that the American Bible Society did not want to confine its outreach to Protestants or to Christians merely. It would be worth examining further whether the Society eventually complied with the ruling. With or without the required notice, religious books and tracts continued to be the main task of the Book Department and the main source for "literature" taught in the American Board schools between 1876-1914. U.S. Department of State. Papers Related to the Foreign Relations of the United States <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu>, (Enclosure I) Arif Pasha to Mr. Wallace; 30 December 1882, (Enclosure II) Managers of Bible House to Mr. Wallace, 11 January 1883, (Enclosure III) Mr. Wallace to Arif Pasha, 14 January 1883, No. 166. The source will hitherto be referred to as Foreign Relations. Foreign Relations, (Enclosure I, Translation), Arif Pasha to Mr. Wallace, 2 April 1883, Mr. Wallace to Arif Pasha, 12 April 1883, No. 205; (Enclosure I), Note Verbal, 9 May 1883, No. 218.

⁸⁰ American Board schools initially followed the template of Lancasterian schools in England. Built and developed by Joseph Lancaster in 1798, a young Quaker and a Dissenter not associated with the Church of England, this type of school was based on a monitorial system resulting from the own experience of Lancaster as a school manager. In charge of a school, which was growing in size with insufficient funds to hire more teachers, Lancaster established a monitorial system where more accomplished students, after being instructed by their teachers, were asked to teach and monitor their fellow students. There were certainly other educators before Lancaster who followed a parallel system, but the American Board schools opted for the Lancasterian system.

When the American missionaries arrived in the Ottoman territories and began to establish their institutions, namely, schools, churches, hospitals, and orphanages and expanded them in size and quantity over time, there emerged two chief problems to be covered between the Ottoman state and the American missionaries and the parties, most of the time, spoke the different language. One was the purchase of an Ottoman land upon which the proposed missionary institution would be established. Second was the grant of an imperial decree (*irade-i senniye*) sanctioning the American party to build its institution. The decree had to be followed by the issue of an official permission (*ruhsat itasi*) which would allow the missionaries to erect their edifices and legalize their actions. The first of two problems was particularly related to the status of foreigners within the Ottoman boundaries. This had always been of importance throughout the existence of the Ottoman Empire. Suraiya Faroqhi argues:

...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'.⁸¹

In the nineteenth century, foreigners, in rule, were not allowed to purchase lands and properties in the Ottoman Empire. Hence, American missionaries, in the early part of the century, purchased lands through the intermediary of a non-Muslim (i.e., Greek or Armenian) residing in the imperial domains and therefore were able to occupy the lands for their purposes.⁸² Those lands were generally state (*miri*) lands. In this case, purchased lands and the institutions (i.e., schools) built on them were registered under the nominal Ottoman subject or citizen, but the actual owner and user of these lands and properties was the American Board. Upon the introduction of the Land Law of 1864, there remained no difference between an Ottoman citizen (*tebaayi Osmaniye*) and a citizen of a foreign country (*tebaayi ecnebiye*) in terms of owning land and property within the Ottoman Empire as long as they acted in conformity with the imperial laws and regulations.

Regarding the establishment of various institutions by foreign citizens, provided these establishments were schools (*muessesat-ı tedrisat*), these, at the outset, were exempted from all kinds of taxes (*her türlü vergi*) and fees (*tekalif-i rusumiye*), including the custom duties (*gümruk resmi*), given the fact that schools were recognized as charitable establishments (*muessesat-ı hayriye*). In rule, an imperial decree and the subsequent issue of official permission were prerequisites for the authorization of the institution and confirmation of its tax and fee exemption. With respect to additional buildings and expansion of properties, these, as a rule, were also subject to imperial decree and issue of permission. However, in practice, the establishment of a new school; extension of a school building or property; or change of location of a school to another place preceding the grant of an imperial decree and the issue of permission was not uncommon. In those cases, official procedures were just formalities legitimizing the status of foreign establishments as *faits accomplis*.⁸³

⁸¹ Faroqhi, Suraiya. *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004, 213-14.

⁸² In some cases, American missionaries purchased lands through the British. A most noteworthy example was Rev. Alexander MacLachlan, a British citizen himself, who was the founder the International College in Izmir and under whose name the school property was registered. This caused a lengthy problem between the Ottoman officials and the American missionaries when the American Board made an official request for the "title correction" (*tashih-i kaydı*) under the Board's name.

⁸³ It would be further useful to give some basic information on the administrative divisions of the Ottoman Empire at the time. In the post-Tanzîmât period, the administrative division of the Empire was largely organized along the line of the (French) Napoleonic code in that the Regulation for the Provinces (*Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) of 1864 replaced the old division of the provinces by *eyalet* with a new division by *vilayet*. The Regulation was followed by the General Provincial Regulation (*Vilayet-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) of 1867 and by the General Regulation for Provincial Administration (*İdare-i Umumiye-i Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) of 1871. The Empire was divided into provinces (*vilayet*), which were further divided into

Missionaries as Significant Actors in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1909

The period of 1876-1909 signifies an era when missionaries established themselves as significant actors as well as an epoch when the bonds which were holding the Ottomans all together were fast breaking apart owing to European intervention, failure to reconcile ethnic and religious differences, territorial disintegration, and a wrenching series of social and economic crises. The period was further marked by the reign of Abdülhamid II of 33 years which was identified with autocracy and firm surveillance of state and social affairs. Giving top priority to the preservation of the traditional fabric of the Ottoman state and society, Hamidian regime saw the American missionaries as well as their establishments and their evangelism with universal inspirations as a direct and substantive menace to its very core, namely, Islam, state-society parameters, and populations of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. As a result, he put the American missionaries and their activities of variety ranging from the distribution of religious books and tracts and conversion to missionary-Armenian connections and missionary educational establishments under meticulous surveillance while dominating the public sphere to the extreme extent. Cognizant of the strength and abilities of the Ottoman Empire as opposed to those of the United States, Abdülhamid well played the rules of the power politics in that instead of attempting to deport the American missionaries and outlawing their establishments, particularly the schools and colleges, he countered the American mission schools, largely targeting the non-Muslim populations of the Empire with their Christian content and curriculum where English was employed as medium of instruction, with his own network of primary schools (*mekatib-i iptidaiye*) and industrial high schools (*medaris-i sanai*) aiming at the Muslim populace with their Islamic content and curriculum where Ottoman Turkish was used as a medium of instruction.

Hamidian schools, primary and industrial high schools alike, were established in all administrative divisions from provinces all the way down to towns, but a special importance was given to the towns, where the American missionary schools with primary sections were concentrated. To this end, on January 9, 1899, an imperial decree was issued to authorize the allocation of seventy-five percent of the tax revenues of a town, called “educational share” (*hisse-i marif*), to the establishment of primary and secondary schools (*mekatib-i rüşdiye*). The imperial decree specified the urgency of primary schools and asked the local authorities to apply effective measures against apostasy.

The “mission” of the American educational establishments and their rapid expansion in size and number by the early 1880s and the commitment of the American missionaries to the “Commission” among Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman state resulted in the close surveillance of the American missionaries and their activities by the central and local authorities in conformity with the imperial rulings. This was centered on the question of conversion (*tanassur*), a term used in reference to conversion to Christianity irrespective of the religion abandoned. If the conversion took place from Islam to Christianity, this was recognized as apostasy (*irtidad*) and was subjected to death penalty in accordance with the religious law (*şer’i hükümler*), but not strictly criminalized based on the imperial law and regulations.

subprovinces (*sancak* or *liva*), districts (*kaza*), subdistricts (*nahiye*), and towns (*karye*) in that order. The province was governed by a governor (*vali*), who presided over a provincial administrative council (*vilayet idare meclisi*), which was composed of leading officials and representatives of the Muslim and non-Muslim population of the province assisting the governor in an advisory capacity. The provincial highest civil authority of a subprovince was a subgovernor (*mutasarrıf*) who headed an administrative council (*liva idare meclisi*) of a similar composition and capacity as that of the provincial council. District and subdistrict were governed by *kaimmakam* and director (*müdüür*) respectively, the first of whom presided over a similar advisory council. In accordance with the increasing centralization, the highest civil authority in town went from an *imam* to a headman (*muhtar*), who was appointed by the center. During the tight rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r.1876-1909), whose reign was associated with firm centralization, administrative divisions of the Empire remained pretty consistent given the sultanic control over the Ministry of Interior Affairs. See, Ortaylı, İlber. *Tanzimattan Sonra Mahalli İdareler* (Local Administrations in the Post-Tanzîmât Period). Ankara, 1974; Findley, Carter. *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: the Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*. EBooks, Columbia University Library EResources, 1980; Deringil, Selim. *Well Protected Domains: Ideology and Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1998. Deringil, Selim, “Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman Empire: Abdulhamid II 1876-1909,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23 (1991), pp. 1-27.

Sultan Abdülhamid often issued imperial decrees for the investigation (*tahkikat*) of missionary activities throughout the Ottoman domains by respective local authorities, who were asked to report to the Yıldız Palace⁸⁴ on the findings of their inquiries.⁸⁵

Simultaneously, the United States, emerging from the Civil War of 1861-65, reunited in an era of Reconstruction in the end of which it emerged stronger by reconciling racial differences and establishing itself as an economic and industrial giant. The transformation that American state and society were going through enhanced the country's self-confidence and inspired the "New Manifest Destiny." Having expanded as much as it could in North America, the United States was now ready to swell into new realms outside the American hemisphere. This was felt to be not only inevitable, but also the "divine" right of the United States and was cultivated by circles as varied as historians, intellectuals, businessmen, politicians, missionaries, and the like. Social Darwinism justified the Manifest Destiny which was the application of Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) laws of evolution and natural selection among species to human society and the nations. Similar to the survival of the fittest in nature during evolution, only the fittest individuals in society and the fittest nations in the international arena would survive the fierce competition. Therefore, Social Darwinism along with Manifest Destiny were implemented to justify the American imperialism. These ideas certainly went beyond the intentions of Darwin. Under the racist tone of Social Darwinism, President Theodore Roosevelt (r. 1901-1909) divided the world between civilized nations, including whites, Anglo-Saxons, and Teutonic, and uncivilized nations, namely, non-whites, Latins, and Slavs. A strong sense of competition and desire to contend, survive and grow stronger suited well the aggressive nature of the American foreign missionary work. In his reply to concerns about the Jesuit schools run by the French in Ottoman territories, Cyrus Hamlin, founder and President of Robert College, had no doubt that in a "fair" competition with the "Roman peril" in the field of education, Protestant schools would win.⁸⁶ In the age of American imperialism, missionaries were the new frontiersmen, and they found favorable ground in the interior lands of Ottoman Turkey.

By 1881, missionaries occupied in Ottoman Turkey,⁸⁷ numerous centers of activities, namely, Istanbul, İznik (*Nicomedia*), Bursa, İzmir, Manisa, Merzifon, Sivas, Tokat, Trabzon, Erzurum, Bitlis, Van, Arabkir, Harput, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Musul (*Mosul*), Tarsus, Adana, Maraş, Antep, Halep, Urfa, and Antakya. Connected with most of these central stations, and within a radius of hundred miles of each, were numerous out-stations in which schools were established and in which the Gospel was regularly preached by trained natives. The four stations in Eastern Turkey Mission, for example, consisted of 120 out-stations. One of them, Harput, had sixty-seven out-stations in which twenty-one churches were established.⁸⁸

Next to preaching and healing, education established the third leg of missionary work and formed the single most ambitious, solid, and widespread occupation of the missionaries. By 1881, there were three colleges, Robert College in Istanbul, Central Turkey College in Antep, and Euphrates College, also known as Armenian College, in Harput; four Theological Seminaries in Merzifon (taught in Armenian, Turkish, Greek), Harput (Armenian and Turkish), Mardin (Arabic), and Maraş (Turkish); and twelve Seminaries and High Schools for Girls (the Home in Istanbul, Seminaries in Merzifon, Harput, Mardin, and Antep, and the High Schools in Bardezağ, Bursa, Manisa, Sivas, Kayseri, Bitlis, and Maraş). All these schools together had an attendance of 800 students and had coursework taught in vernacular, namely, Armenian, Turkish, and Arabic along with English, which, most of the time, was the medium of instruction. It is interesting to note that the medium of instruction in the four aforesaid 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 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.

⁸⁴ Yıldız Palace was the residence of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

⁸⁵ To illustrate, for the Christian converts in Maden, a town of Akdağmadeni, which was a district of Yozgat, a subprovince of Ankara in late nineteenth century, see Yıldız Esas Evrakı (*Yıldız Main Documents*) Y.EE 132 38 23 31 A-Z4/24-X. Istanbul: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (*Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives*).

⁸⁶ "Give the two systems a fair trial, the Protestant and the Jesuit, in education; and if the Jesuit survives, let him survive. It is *"the survival of the fittest....If, however, you have no schools or very inferior schools, the Jesuits will undoubtedly take the advantage offered to them."* Hamlin, 281. Italics are mine.

⁸⁷ The region is mostly referred as Asia Minor in missionary documents.

⁸⁸ James Barton, Personal Papers, A.B.C.F.M. Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

With respect to the “Christian literature” for religious and educational purposes, three hundred million pages were published in various languages to “meet the growing interest in education” and to “provide for the Christian nurture of the people.” Beside the textbooks for schools and “many valuable works on Christian Doctrine and the evidences of Christianity,” the newspaper press occupied the most “important agency in molding the popular mind throughout the Empire,” next to the Holy Scriptures in different languages.⁸⁹

The question of American missionary schools and their relation to the central and provincial authorities provoked a constant, heated debate both among the missionaries themselves and at the American Legation in Istanbul as well. In the late 1880s when the American schools covered the map of Ottoman Turkey, the main discussion between the Ottoman and American officials evolved around the question of official permission. There was no straightforward understanding shared by the parties on the issue as the American missionaries continued to open their schools without the Ottoman prerequisites. However, American schools generally applied for the official permission, albeit belatedly to enjoy the tax exemption for the additional edifices and expanded properties. They further sought the approval of the Ministry of Public Instruction for their programs of studies, text-books, and for diplomas or certificates of their teachers in order to minimize the interference of the Ministry with the school work.

In early December 1886, an important meeting took place between Munif Pasha, Minister of Public Instruction, and Pendleton King, Charge d'affaires ad interim of the American Legation, to regulate the cooperation between the American schools and the local authorities. Following the meeting, Munif Pasha, on December 28, 1886, sent the following circular of instructions to the Provincial Governors asking them not to interfere with the schools provided the latter submitted their programs of study, text-books, and the diplomas or certificates of their teachers and were found in conformity to the Article 129 of the Public Instruction Law⁹⁰:

General instructions were issued sometime ago, with the object that three months time should be given schools established without permission within the Imperial Provinces, and if within that time, they did not comply with the requisite rule that action should be taken against them in accordance with the law. Now, according to the information which reaches us, some of these schools have for some reasons been closed, but several of them have now given assurances that they will conform to the terms of the law. Consequently you will see fit to allow the re-opening of such schools as will conform to Article 129 of the Public Instruction Law; the closed schools of Jesuits to be excepted until further instructions are given.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Article 129: Private schools are those, whether free or not free of charges, which are originated and founded by communities or by individuals, whether Ottoman subjects or foreign subjects, and whose expenses are paid either by their founders or from the [Endowments] Vakfs attached to the schools. Official permission is given for the establishment of such schools in the Ottoman Empire, if they are in the provinces, by the Provincial Administration of Education and Governor of the Province, and if they are in Istanbul, by the Ministry of Public Instruction. The teachers should possess a certificate from the Ministry of Public Instruction or from the local Administration of Education. The books used and the program of course of studies pursued, should be approved by the Ministry of Public Instruction or the local Administration of Education, in order that no lessons contrary to morals or politics be taught in these schools. While these three conditions are not fully complied with, permission is not granted for the opening or continuance of private schools; and when action contrary against them takes place, the schools are prohibited and closed. When the teachers to be employed by anyone who opens a private school already have certificates, it is necessary that they should cause these certificates to be approved by the Provincial Administration of Education. *Düstur (Ottoman Laws Publication)*, Vol. 2, 204, Part II: *Hususi Mekatib (Private Schools)*.

⁹¹ (“*Vilayat-i Şahane’de, bila ruhsat küşad edilmiş olan mekteblere, üç ay muhlet ihsan olunarak, bu müddet zarfında ruhsat talebine teşebbüs etmeyenler hakkında, mumale-i Nizamiyenin icrası hususu mukaddema Nezaret-i acizinden yazılmış idi. Bu defa istihbar olduğuna göre, mekatib-i mezkurdan bazıları, her nasılsa kapatılmış olup, fakat şimdi bunlardan bazıları, hükm-ü Nizamiyenin icrasına muvafakat göstereceklerini temin ettiklerinden olveçhile, Maruf Nizamnamesi’nin 129. Maddesine tevfiik hareket ettikleri halde, kemaken açılmaları hususunda mücade-i itya vilayetpenahilerinin ve olan Cizvit mektepleri müstesna tutulup onlar için ishar-ı ahbara intizar buyurulması babında*”). Ibid.

Simultaneously, King communicated with Charles Dwight, Secretary of the Bible House in Istanbul, to forward the Legation's instructions to the managers of all the American schools in the Ottoman Empire and to ask them to inform their respective local authorities that they were ready to submit their study programs, text-books, and teacher diplomas and certificates for inspection (December 30, 1886). The "principles" that were underlying the instructions of the Legation were as following as:

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*.

No text-books should be allowed in these schools which have not approval of the Department of the Public Instruction; no teachers should be employed save those who are authorized by the Department to teach in the Ottoman Empire and course of the study should be approved by the Department. Hence those in charge of such schools should at once present to the local authorities requests for the approval of such textbooks as do not already bear the authorization of the Department, as also course of study and diplomas of teachers. Every facility for the inspection of schools should also be offered to the local authorities.

In opening new schools it is desirable to select text-books that have been already approved and put the schools in charge of teachers who have already been provided with the Government certificate to teach. The authorities then can be notified that a new school conforming to the law is open to their inspection. All teachers from America should on their arrival secure the authorization to teach just as doctors secure permission to practice medicine.

Theological Seminaries attended only by candidates for the Ministry, who pursue strictly theological studies, are not supposed to be subject to inspection, since they deal solely with spiritual matters.⁹²

It is noteworthy, as emphasized both in the communication of King with Dwight⁹³ and in his instructions to the managers of the American schools, that while the inspection of course of studies, text-books, and diplomas or certificates of teachers in American schools by the Ministry of Public Instruction was regarded as the "territorial right" of the Ottoman state, establishment of American schools in the Ottoman lands was interpreted as a capitulatory right conferred by the Ottomans. This was not a misunderstanding, but rather wishful thinking on the part of the Americans that they were one of those "Great Powers" granted capitulatory rights in the Ottoman domains. Being recognized as "the most favored nation" (*en ziyade müsade-i millet*) by the Ottomans did not make the American claims for capitulations, such as benefited by the Europeans in the Empire, entirely unfounded. It is further of note to highlight that the American officials, as a consequence of this interpretation, insisted on the redundancy of the application for official permission despite the specific ruling of Article 129 in the Public Instruction Law. Otherwise, this would mean accepting the governmental authority over the American schools, which they tried to curtail by all means. Although it is not mentioned in that particular article, official permission, whether by central or provincial authorities, was, as a rule, always to be preceded by an imperial decree.

During this period, American missionary influence in Ottoman lands was to such an extent that Reverend James B. Angell, a missionary himself as well as a member of the Congregationalist Church, was appointed to the position of Envoy Extraordinary to represent the United States in Istanbul in 1897 which he was going to keep for a year.⁹⁴

⁹² A.B.C.F.M. Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁹³ "...It is considered that principle and rights conferred by the Capitulations and by long usage in regard to the establishment of schools are kept intact and examination of [c]ourse of [s]tudy and of the [t]ext-books comes within the territorial rights of the country." From Pendleton King, Charge d'affaires ad interim, Legation of the United States, Istanbul, to Rev. Charles Dwight, Bible House, Istanbul, December 13, 1886. A.B.C.F.M. Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁹⁴ The level of diplomatic representation of the United States in Istanbul, which was raised from status of Minister Resident to that of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in 1881, was raised to status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in 1901 while turning the American Legation in Istanbul into American Embassy and has been continuing since then.

This was a manifestation to how the missionaries were gaining ground in every venue in the Ottoman Empire. Even upon his return to the United States, statements of Reverend Angell were of such great concern to the Ottoman authorities that they were closely followed by the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁹⁵

By the turn of the twentieth century, hard work of more than eight decades paid off and the American mission establishments in the Ottoman Empire reached its climax with nearly three hundred institutions of variety ranging from schools and colleges, which occupied the dominant place, to churches, hospitals, and orphanages. The wide expansion of the institutions along with the Ottoman-French Treaty of 1901 recognizing the legal status of French schools and charitable and religious establishments in the Ottoman Empire urged the American missionaries, given the most favored nation status of the United States, that their similar educational, charitable, and religious institutions of nearly three hundred should also be granted the same status through a bilateral treaty. This would not only enable the American institutions to enjoy the same exemptions and immunities granted to the French institutions, but would further pave the way for the title correction of the properties of these establishments from individuals who held them in trust to their respective institutions. Current Ottoman law and regulations only allowed individuals to own properties and register them under their names. However, a bilateral treaty succeeding an imperial decree, as was seen in the cases of French, Italian, Russian, German establishments could safely open the path for the title correction of mission properties under their respective institutions. To this end, missionaries from the ground and the Boston headquarters, on one hand, frequently petitioned the American Legation to communicate with the Ottoman authorities including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Pasha,⁹⁶ and Abdulhamid II, and, on the other hand, appealed, often along with leading Congressmen, philanthropists, editors of the missionary network, to the State Department and President Theodore Roosevelt to press on the American Government for a treaty with the Sublime Porte⁹⁷ to guarantee the protection of the American educational and religious establishments amounting to nearly six million and a half million dollars in Ottoman lands. Efforts bore fruit with the successive Agreements of 1904 and 1907 between the United States and the Ottoman Empire.

It is essential to mention two points of importance in that first, neither the Agreement of 1904 nor 1907 was a “Treaty” per se as accorded between the Ottoman and the French in 1901, but rather a note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, based on an imperial decree, agreeing to treat the American institutions “on equal footing” with other similar foreign institutions without explicitly recognizing the legal status of American schools or granting them the same privileges and immunities, first and foremost the tax exemption, like what the American officials and missionaries understood of the Treaty of 1901. Second, during the lengthy negotiations between the Ottoman and American parties expanding over years, Ottoman officialdom sat a new condition of American ownership, which would be directly inquired by the Ottoman officials, for the American mission establishments to get recognized by the Ottoman government and, therefore, to be granted with title correction. That is why, on the eve of the First World War, both the American Embassy and missionaries with the full support of the Department of State behind them labored meticulously for the title correction of American institutions and their tax exemption while working on meeting the new official requirement of American ownership.

Storm before the Storm: The Disillusionment of the American Missionaries with the Committee of Union and Progress (C.U.P.) on the eve of the First World War, 1909-1914

⁹⁵ Hariciye Nezaret-i Muhaberat-ı Umumiye Dairesi Siyasi Evrakı (*Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Office of General Communication, Political Documents*) HR_SYS 2742 2 45 1897 11 15. Istanbul: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (*Prime Ministry's Ottoman Archives*). James B. Angell upon his return to the United States continued to serve as the President of the University of Michigan (1871-1909), a post which he adjourned during his service as the American Minister to China (1880-1881) and to the Ottoman Empire (1897-1898). He was followed by Oscar Straus as the US Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary (1898-1899) who earlier (1887-1889) served in the same position. Straus became the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman capital in 1909 which he would continue for a year. He was also the first Jewish American to represent the United States at Ambassadorial level.

⁹⁶ Foreign Relations, (Enclosure) Mr. Leishman to Tevfik Pasha, April 20, 1904, No. 763. On September 2, 1902, Leishman made his first strong communication with Tevfik Pasha regarding the official recognition of American educational, charitable, and religious institutions and subsequently, on September 26, submitted a list of three hundred institutions. Leishman reiterated its appeal on dispatches of February 3 and 25, 1903.

⁹⁷ Ottoman Government was referred as Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı âli*) in official documents.

The five year period preceding the First World War in the United States was marked by the notion of progress which echoed both in domestic and foreign quarters while the Ottoman state was going through a revolutionary period with the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid II of 33 years by the Committee of Union and Progress, the Unionists, in late April 1909. American missionaries initially welcomed the end of the Hamidian era as they were optimistic about the new regime with which they hoped to establish a workable relationship. They looked forward to working with the new regime without the shadow of Abdülhamid and anticipated more favorable conditions on questions of tax and tariff exemptions as well as the relocation and expansion of the mission properties. As a result, reports of the American Board defined the year 1909 as “an eventful and memorable one” for the prospects of the closure of the Hamidian era.

In 1909, the regional sections of the American Board, namely the Western Turkey Mission, the Central Turkey Mission, and the Eastern Turkey Mission visibly emphasized the educational work in Ottoman Turkey.⁹⁸ Two veterans of the “Constantinople Station,” Dr. Greene and Dr. Herrick, in reflecting on the fifty years of the station, took note of an important change in the conduct of the work, which was the “establishment of high school and colleges,” followed by the opening of hospitals and dispensaries, and the “phenomenal” increase in the number of women missionaries. Dr. Herrick was as optimistic about cooperation with the new constitutional regime as he was about the missionary work:

We who together *have given a century of service to evangelistic work in the Ottoman Empire* exult in the privilege so long granted us of sharing in a work on which the divine blessing has so conspicuously rested, and we bid all who come after us to work with a confidence unshaken that in the years to come in *all departments of our common work* will be with accelerated velocity, will be with a wider constituency than heretofore, will enlist a vastly increased number of competent laborers, *will do more than any other influence or agency to contribute to the safe and permanent establishment of real liberty and constitutional government and to the final triumph of the kingdom of God and of the church of Christ in this land.*⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Western Turkey Mission included six central stations, namely, İzmir (1820), Istanbul (1831), Trabzon (1835), Sivas (1851), Merzifon (1852), Kayseri (1854); 98 outstations; 21 ordained men, one of them a physician; 3 other physicians; 2 teachers; 1 treasurer and business agent; 27 wives; 28 single women; total missionary force, 82. There were 38 native pastors; 37 other native preachers; 304 native teachers; 18 Bible-women; 10 other native helpers; 121 places for stated preaching; average congregations, 13,477; 43 churches, 16 of which were entirely self-supporting; 4,630 members, 224 received on confession in 1909; 117 Sunday schools, with 11,046 pupils; 1 theological seminary, with 3 studying for the ministry; 3 colleges, with 572 students; 15 boarding and high schools, with 1,633 students, 765 of them girls; 140 other schools, with 5,867 pupils; total under instruction, 8002. There were 3 hospitals, with 3,901 patients; 3 dispensaries, where 20,107 treatments were given. Native contributions for Christian work, \$16,270; for education, \$64,737; total, \$81,007. Concerning the Central Turkey Mission, it included three stations, namely, Antep (1852), Urfa (1854), and Maraş (1854). Hadjin (1872), Adana (1852), and Tarsus (1859) were the leading outstations out of 55. The Mission further included 8 ordained men; 7 wives; 19 single women: 38 organized churches; 150 added by confession; 67 Sabbath schools; 1 theological seminary; 3 colleges; 13 boarding and high schools; 65 other schools; 6,362 total number under instruction; 1 hospital, 5,588 patients; 2 dispensaries, with 79,990 treatments. However, annual report of the American Board for 1909 warns its readers that aforesaid numbers were incomplete as the reports were destroyed during the “uprising” in last April and the “figures [were] made up from previous years. As to the Eastern Turkey Mission, which was the smallest of all Missions, included five stations of Bitlis, Erzurum, Harput, Mardin, and Van along with 102 outstations; 12 ordained missionaries, two of whom were physicians, 15 wives, one a physician; 14 single women; total missionary force, 44. There were 19 ordained native pastors and 47 unordained preachers; 238 teachers; 23 Bible-women; 10 other native helpers, making a total of 337 native laborers. There were 74 places of regular meeting; 44 organized churches, six of which were entirely self-supporting. The 75 Sabbath schools had a membership of 6,817. There were two theological schools, with 23 studying for the ministry. There is one college, with 238 students; 11 boarding and high schools with 773 pupils; 4 kindergartens with 173 pupils; 137 other schools, with 6,789 pupils, making a total under instruction of 7,996. Native contributions for Christian work amounted to \$8,556.41, and for educational work, \$9,486.50, a total of \$18,110.12. There were hospitals, in which 659 patients were cared for; and 6 dispensaries, where 46,011 treatments were given. Report states that this was accomplished despite the absence of three physicians who were on leave in the United States at the time. Annual Report, 99th, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 13-15, 1909. Boston: Congressional House, 53, 61-2, 71-2.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 54. Italics are mine.

During this time period, Ottoman practice and regulations towards foreign institutions in general and the American missionary institutions in particular changed drastically. Until 1908, the general official attitude concerning foreign institutions of education and religion had been to recognize them as charitable foundations because of their public service. Ottoman authorities, both local and central, saw no difference between Ottoman and foreign nationalities in terms of the establishment or running of these institutions and exempted them from all types of taxes and tariffs accordingly. Tax exemption was not retroactive and was effective through the official recognition of an institution by an imperial decree. When the foreign institutions expanded their properties or added new buildings, Ottoman officials applied no severe restrictions. However, as these institutions especially American missionary schools, with their pronounced evangelical curriculum and large non-Muslim student body, began to spread widely throughout the Ottoman territories and their tax and tariff exemptions grew to have consequences for the imperial budget, Ottoman authorities started to modify their policies around 1908. The policy change was further related to the political turmoil on the foreign front given the Ottoman-Italy War of 1911 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Therefore, the Ottoman Government wanted to assert a stronger hold over foreign institutions.

Under the Ottoman-American arrangement of 1907, the introduction of precondition of American ownership was one of the early signs of change in attitude of the Ottoman officialdom towards the American missionary establishments. This was an official prerequisite which those establishments had to comply with for the title correction of their properties under the respective institutions in the imperial registry.¹⁰⁰ There was also a certain will and interest on the part of American missionary schools, which were associated with the American Board, to correct the title deeds of their properties from individuals who held them in trust to themselves or to the American Board. They deemed it more valuable and secure to own properties and buildings as American institutions. This was evident in the annual speech of President Gates in 1904 when he declared the Robert College property of twenty-two acres to be an American property protected by the American flag and Constitution.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the chief motive behind the title corrections of properties from individuals to institutions was to continue to enjoy tax and tariff exemptions since, in conformance with the current Ottoman laws and regulations, the first step to benefit from such exemptions was to register the property “under an institution” (*müessesese namına*) and the arrangement of 1907 conditioned such registration on the American ownership. The reason why the Ottoman authorities stipulated such a precondition might be that they did not want to see cooperation between the nationalities of different countries, especially the British and the American missionary establishments. As it is clear in the case of corrected list presented by the American representatives during the negotiations between the Ottoman and American parties,¹⁰² they did not want Ottoman citizens, particularly of non-Muslim origin, to purchase lands on behalf of American citizens and institutions. The Ottoman authorities preferred a clear picture of who owned what within the imperial lands and wanted to regulate this through the prerequisite of American ownership. If the American missionary institutions wanted to get officially registered under their own names, they would have to abide by the new official requirement. In fact, when the properties on which the American missionary schools would be built were purchased by foreign citizens other than Americans, and registered under the names of these individuals, the tax records of the properties were kept on that basis until the American ownership was managed and, therefore, the path for the title correction under relevant institutions or their overseeing boards would be opened. The property, when approved, was transferred “free of charge” (*bila ücret*) to an American citizen and this made the official permission based on an imperial decree as well as the title correction of the missionary establishment under the American Board achievable. Ottoman authorities made it evident that they were not happy about the increasing number of applications by the American missionary schools for title correction under the American Board; they demanded strict conformance with the new requirement.

¹⁰⁰ When the American Board, by 1870, became in charge of missionary activities in Ottoman Turkey and the American Presbyterian Board in Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine, title correction of an institution, whether it was a school, church or the like, was implemented under its respective Board.

¹⁰¹ Since Robert College was independent of the American Board, the College property was registered under Robert College instead of the American Board. Most of the missionary schools were associated with the Board and they were registered on its name. Robert College. Annual Report of President Caleb F. Gates of Robert College, 1904.

¹⁰² Foreign Relations (Enclosure 2), Ambassador Leishman to the Secretary of State, May 28, 1907 (File No. 4960/69-72).

Another sign of change in Ottoman policies towards the American missionary institutions during this time period was the increasing resistance of the Ottoman authorities to the missionary schools incorporating new properties and adding new buildings into their campuses. They showed similar concern when schools desired to relocate to another place since this move was usually intended to extend their property. In view of the rapid expansion of American missionary schools, especially in the areas of large non-Muslim population, the Ottomans responded by applying new taxes on buildings, properties, and imported materials. This was intended to dissuade the establishment of new missionary schools. Given the American mind-set that college education should be paid for privately, which was in contrast to the tax-free Ottoman education system, officials no longer wanted to assist a rival system, by extending financial benefits. In terms of new taxes on buildings, Ottoman officials started to look at whether schools admitted students with “tuition and fees” (*ücretli*) or “without charge” (*meccanen*). In the former case, they were asked to pay half of the “property taxes” (*emlak vergisi*), and in the latter case none. Regarding the property taxes, this type of tax was basically required when the schools applied to relocate their campuses on expanded “land” (*arazi*) such as in the case of the relocation of the International College in İzmir. They were asked to pay *mukataa*, which was ten times as much as the “rent for the land” (*bedel-i öşr*), corresponding to thirty-percent of the current value of the new property. All other taxes were calculated as the difference between the value of the current property and that of the new property. Schools were also required to pay “construction levies” (*inşaat-ı rüsumiye*) and “custom tariffs” (*gümrük vergisi*)¹⁰³ for construction materials imported from outside Ottoman domains.¹⁰⁴ For the procedure of title correction, school authorities were first asked to sign a document (*sened*) agreeing with this new set of tax requirements. The *sened*, a brand new official requirement of extreme importance, following its endorsement by the school administration would be transferred to the American Embassy¹⁰⁵ for approval before being passed over to the respective provincial authorities for action. In one final obstruction for the expansion of properties and addition of new buildings, especially in the case of the relocation of school campuses, Ottoman officials set a condition that the school property should not exceed an area twice as large as the ground on which the main original school edifice was built, and they gradually applied taxes on additional properties and buildings. These new restrictive regulations about the size of properties and the number of buildings were not specific to schools, but included churches, hospitals, orphanages, and other missionary institutions as well. All of these practices evoked strong reactions from American missionaries and officials who desired to maintain the previous favorable conditions, but the Ottoman authorities maintained their stance and in time intensified the restrictions against the foreign institutions in general and the American missionary schools in particular.

Reconstruction of the Mission Work

In 1910, the American Board had decided to organize an “All Turkey Conference” for the following year with the gathering of all missions in the Ottoman Empire to discuss and decide on the measures and policies for the work carried on in the Empire, and a commission to this end had been established. The Conference would also address the C.U.P. regime and the “national conditions” in the Empire. However, just prior to the departure of the commission, it was decided to postpone the whole event as the missionaries on the ground held that “the New Turk Party was losing its hold and that there was a danger of a political overturning that might, and probably would, render useless any plans.”¹⁰⁶ By 1911, just three years after the 1908 Revolution bringing the second constitutional parliamentary period, and two years following the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid II, both of which events were embraced by the missionaries with great hopes for the possibilities they might convey for the mission work, American missionaries were no longer optimistic about the C.U.P. regime due to its tightening control over missionary work, especially in the fields of schools and taxation.

¹⁰³ In fact, the Regulation on Customs (*Gümrük Nizamnamesi*) of August 21, 1865 (7 Zilhicce 1281) did not require any custom tariffs for the materials that would be used in the service of the foreign institutions including the items for construction. However, this ruling also became subject to modification in time.

¹⁰⁴ To import the construction materials from the United States was a natural consequence of being an “industrial complex” as articulated by Cyrus Hamlin for American missionary schools in foreign lands. The practice turned out to be a valuable outlet as well for American items, particularly for the time period when there was no levy charged at the customs.

¹⁰⁵ See, ft. 94.

¹⁰⁶ The Party, referred inaccurately as the “New Turk Party,” was the Committee of Union and Progress (C.U.P.), which was mostly staffed from the ranks of the Young Turks. Annual Report, 101st, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 10-13, 1911. Boston: Congressional House.

This is abundantly apparent in communiqués between the American officials and the Ottoman authorities. However, in their official reports, they preferred to articulate a different side of the story. Given the fact that these reports were not only circulated within the headquarters of the American Board, but also within the State Department, the missionaries on the ground were always careful to maintain the interest and support of the Board and the state officials:

The [G]overnment of Turkey under the Young Turkey Party is not fulfilling the promise of its organization. The party is not harmonious or united and its policy has been wavering and its administration such as to lose the confidence of many able Moslems, not to mention the European nations.¹⁰⁷

American missionaries were acute observers of the country they were residing in. While observing the election of 1908, the C.U.P. regime, the emergence of new parties opposed to army control over legislation, the “impotence” of Sultan Mehmet Reşad enthroned following the deposition of Abdülhamid, and the general disturbances and rapid dissolution process that the Ottoman domains were passing through, the missionaries came to realization that they had to adapt the work at hand to the uncertainties and the new possibilities of the time. While the clocks ticked in late 1911, American missionaries became concerned about any direct bearing that the Ottoman “unrighteous war” with Italy might have on missionary operations. This emerged as a reality of the daily life of any missionary, especially in the stations of İzmir and Istanbul of the Western Turkey Mission.¹⁰⁸ Given the proximity of the Mission to the central government and to the scenes of the Ottoman-Italy war and the imminent war with the Balkan states, official control became much more stringent. American missionaries believed that the war with Italy was the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire:

There are indications that the dismemberment of the [E]mpire has well begun and that too with a secret understanding upon the part of the European powers. Many of the Turks look upon the attack upon Tripoli as the first act of a twentieth century crusade which is to result in wrestling from the Moslems their last and greatest power. There are indications that confirm this position.¹⁰⁹

Even though the year 1911 was a trying moment for its work, the American Board welcomed the increase in the number of Muslim students attending the religious services and the sale of “Christian Osmanlı [Ottoman] books,” including the New Testament, as much as the attendance to missionary schools, and saw in this a possibility that the fields, which had remained so far unreachable, could be “ready for the harvest.”

...classes that could not be approached a few years ago seem now to be waiting for the simple Gospel message. *The time has come when our missions should be permitted to make the advance for which we have labored, sacrificed and waited for nearly one hundred years.* We have no assurance that the opportunity will be indefinitely continued, while there is reason to believe that, unless we enter the door while it is open and when the invitation is given, we may soon find it closed in our faces.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Unlike the ambition of the American missionaries in the face of the Ottoman-Italy War of 1911 for new possibilities of work among the Muslims of Ottoman Turkey, the official American stance was cautious as the U.S. Government declared its neutrality on the eve of the war along with its protection extended to all American citizens and corporations including the American missionaries and their work. “In the war which unhappily exists between Italy and Turkey, this Government has no political interest, and I took occasion at the suitable time to issue a proclamation of neutrality in that conflict. At the same time all necessary steps have been taken to safeguard the personal interests of American citizens and organization in so far as affected by the war.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Congressional Records. *President Taft’s Annual Message to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives*, December 5, 1911, Vol. 48, Part I, 73. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

¹⁰⁹ Annual Report, 1911.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Italics are mine.

The “unreachable areas” were the Kurdish population, “some of the most virile of the populations of Turkey”¹¹¹ and the “ruling [Turkish] race,” for the latter of which very little direct work had been done for obvious reasons.¹¹² That is why only one-third of the American missionaries operating in the Ottoman domains were versed in the Turkish language. The prospect of work among the Turks demanded not only financial means and new missionaries in the field, but also those who were trained in the language.¹¹³

The changing attitude of the American mission work towards Muslims was also the result of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, which were causing territorial losses to the Empire in the peninsula:

The expulsion of the Mohammedan government from Macedonia and from a large part of Thrace has made a deep impression upon many of the *Mohammedans of Turkey* who have cherished the *hitherto the dream that sometime the Sultan of Turkey would sit upon the throne of world and all nations would be subject to the one supreme Mohammedan power*. This dream has received a rude awakening within the last year or two, so much so that in their public press and in personal conversation many Mohammedans have declared that they *have lost faith in their government*, and it is evident that many a *doubt* is coming into the Muslim mind as to the *supremacy of the Mohammedan religion*.¹¹⁴

Territorial losses at the hands of Christian states brought about by the Balkan Wars were conceived by the American Board that the Muslims of Ottoman Turkey would become more “friendly” and “accessible” for the Protestant Gospel: “There has never been a matter of greater importance before these missions than this, or one requiring more thorough investigation, profound statesmanship, and confident belief in the supremacy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its adaptation to all classes.” All three missions of Turkey organized meetings to respond to the “new situation” in Turkey which was emerging “for the first time in the history of the American Board’s work in Turkey.” Missionaries of the Central and Western Turkey Missions urged that “special” missionaries should be set apart for that particular type of work and, in general, missionaries suggested opening special schools for “Mohammedan children” from kindergarten up. This was particularly important for the Eastern Turkey Mission where the medium of instruction of most of the American mission schools was Armenian “while the Mohammedans speak only Turkish.” By 1912, American missionaries considered reducing work for Armenians as the latter had already founded schools and had well-established leaders thanks to the three quarters of a century of missionary work among them. It was time to “more than double emphasis” upon work among Muslims. This became the chief purpose of ongoing American missionary work in Ottoman Turkey, and this necessitated further inquiries in the field and new organizations to carry out the new mission.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile, it is essential to emphasize that not only the devastating Ottoman-Italy War of 1911 and Balkan Wars of 1912-13 paved the way for the reconstruction of the mission work, but also the “progressivism” of the Wilson Presidency, which saw a self-righteous and self-appointed America’s taking a leading role on the world stage as a requirement as much as an outcome of “the Holy Scriptures,” provided the missionaries with a helping hand from at the top back home in order to carry the Protestant Gospel to the Muslims of Ottoman Turkey in a more confident manner.¹¹⁶

In 1913, when there were only six more years left for the centennial celebration of the American Board work in the Ottoman Empire, the new areas that were lying before the American missionaries seemed especially urgent.

¹¹¹ Annual Report, 1911, 80.

¹¹² Next to the Kurdish and Turkish populations of Ottoman Turkey, the new targets of the American missionary work were the Albanians, who are not within the scope of this study since they were contained in the Balkan Mission, which would replace the European Turkey Mission in 1912 due to the territorial changes of the ongoing Balkan Wars.

¹¹³ Activities of the American Presbyterian Board, which had been running the regions of Syria and Mesopotamia separately since 1870, are not within the scope of this study. However, it would be worth looking at whether there was any type of simultaneous effort on the part of the Board to reorganize its work to have an emphasis upon the Muslims of those regions.

¹¹⁴ Annual Report, 1912, 68-69. Italics are mine.

¹¹⁵ Annual Report, 1912, 69.

¹¹⁶ “...Bible has stood at the back of the progress....America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scriptures.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Congressional Records. *Address of Hon. Woodrow Wilson, Governor of New Jersey, in the Auditorium, Denver, Colorado, on the occasion of the tercentenary celebration of the translation of the Bible into the English Language*, May 7, 1911, Vol. 48, Part 12, Appendix 1911-12, 501-502. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

At the outset, missionary work in the imperial lands had aimed at the Muslim and Jewish populations of the Empire. When the Protestant faith did not move the hearts of these populations for a variety of reasons, ranging from the confidence of Muslim and Jews in their own faiths and disdain for the alien culture represented by the American missionaries, to close surveillance under the laws and bylaws of the Ottoman local and central authorities, missionary work had to turn its attention to the Christians, including the “nominal” ones, of the Empire. It had therefore largely concentrated on the Armenian and Greek populaces through whom the American missionaries expanded their activities over time with increasing “native” mission involvement while having a grip on Nestorian, Syriac, and the like populations of the Empire as well. When the successive Ottoman-Italy and Balkan Wars provided the American missionaries with an unprecedented opportunity to extend their work to the Muslim populations of Ottoman Turkey, they reorganized their work accordingly in different ways. One of them was an increasing emphasis on self-supporting industrial work, especially in the Eastern Turkey Mission. This was conceived to be a “new point of contact”¹¹⁷ with the Muslim community, and missionaries hoped that this would evoke less suspicion and misunderstanding from residents, as well as from local and central authorities. The new emphasis upon industrial work in the Eastern Turkey Mission was in contrast to the Western and Central Turkey Missions where the emphasis had been upon school work, which was deemed to have been best fitted to reaching out to the Muslim students in those areas.¹¹⁸ In fact, the rise in the number of Muslim students over the time period of 1909-1914 in many leading colleges from Robert College of Istanbul to International College of İzmir verifies the achievement of this emphasis. By the end of 1913, out of a total student population of 3,560 attending the “American Christian Colleges” in Ottoman Turkey, 496 or 14 percent were Muslims. Missionaries also hoped that the diverse student body would create a “feeling of fraternity” among the pupils while helping to ease the prejudices of centuries and that a “spiritual hunger” would be awakened as Bible and Christian studies continued to be obligatory for Muslim students as well.¹¹⁹

The successive wars also resulted in a transition period for the Ottomans from an empire to a constitutional regime struggling to become a nation. The wars left the Empire with large Muslim and Turkish populations whose interests found expression in the newly arising Pan-Turkic ideologies of the Committee of Union and Progress. As sharp observers of their environment, American missionaries were cognizant of the fact that by the middle of 1913, the Ottomans, reeling from the dismembering wars as an “empire,” were in the process of finding their new voice, even though this was appraised within a Christian connotation by the missionaries:

Turkey is an empire, but it is not a nation. It has not in itself power, spiritual or material, sufficiently strong to weld together all of these elements into a nation. The people are beginning to realize that true progress can come only from life within.¹²⁰

As early as June, 1912, at the peak of the Ottoman-Italy War and the growing collaboration of the Balkan states against the Ottomans, the Central Turkey Mission seized the moment for “direct work” among Muslims and Evangelical churches, along with native Christian workers, approached the Muslim populace. In Urfa, for example, one of the stations of the Mission which earlier had only “little thought” about work for Muslims organized a “band” of twenty-eight native workers who met regularly to formulate the plans and the means to carry out the new mission.¹²¹ The conclusion to which the Mission arrived was that:

¹¹⁷ Annual Report, 1913, 85.

¹¹⁸ “...The methods used have been those that are recognized everywhere in missionary circles as fundamental for the breaking down of superstition and laying the foundation for a future *self-supporting, self-directing, aggressive Christian Church*, with all that belongs therefore. It is well known that while in the beginning large emphasis was laid upon the Moslem side of the work, later, owing to the opposition developed, attention was turned to the nominally Christian races, namely, the Armenians and Greeks, and through them and for them *to the present time* the Christian work has been carried on.” Annual Report, 1913, 72. Italics are mine. Unlike its usual connotation, the word, “aggressive,” was not used in a negative way. Among the American missionaries, the notion of being “aggressive” was used to emphasize the strong, determined, and ambitious nature of the missionary work.

¹¹⁹ “Some have come to an understanding of spiritual teaching, and in others a spiritual hunger has been awakened. Nearly all of these students have regular studies in the *Bible* and are brought constantly into close touch with *Christian instruction*.” Annual Report, 1913, 84. Italics are mine.

¹²⁰ Annual Report, 1913, 78.

¹²¹ Annual Reports of the American Board do not specify the type of the new mission work for Muslims, how the American missionaries tried to approach the Muslim populace, or the means to be applied for the new task. Given the Ottoman

the power of Islam has waned during the last eighteen months as it had not done before for centuries. Confidence in Mohammedanism seems breaking down, with a growing religious discontent among the thinking and earnest Mohammedans. This has gone on to a far greater extent than even the Mohammedans themselves are willing to admit. *The mission looks upon this condition as a definite call to them for aggressive advance. This opportunity is unusually manifest among the women.*¹²²

Not only an empire in recession, thanks to a series of wars and the consequent pronounced demographic change in favor of Muslims, in general, and Turks, in particular, but also an increased appetite among the missionaries towards the Muslim populace created an unexpected type of circulation between the schools run by the Ottoman Government and the missionary schools. By 1913, there were two kindergartens opened by the Government in Halep, whose Protestant female teachers were trained in the American mission schools of Antep and Maraş, two stations of the Central Turkey Mission. It was further reported that the superintendent of instruction in the "Mohammedan" schools in Edirne wrote to the Antep mission for teachers. Next to the demand for teachers trained in American mission schools, the Ottoman Government in 1913 began to establish schools for Muslim children with English as the medium of instruction especially in the Eastern provinces. One of them was at Antep, a subprovince of Halep, and the Government again appealed to the mission schools for teachers. Two Christian teachers, one of whom was a graduate of the Mission High School in Bardezağ,¹²³ were accordingly provided. Presumably, hiring teachers from American mission schools was judged necessary by the Ottoman Government given the scarcity of Muslim teachers versed in English. Further, the Government did not want to leave the Muslim students behind in learning English, in comparison with the rival missionary schools with their overwhelmingly non-Muslim student bodies. American missionaries welcomed the Ottoman demand and responded with great pleasure as the hired teachers were considered to be another venue for the Missions to disseminate the Protestant Gospel and culture among the Muslim children. "This is only an indication of the activity of the Government in promoting modern education, and in this they turn to the Christian schools for their teachers and leaders."¹²⁴

The outbreak of the Great War (First World War) in Europe in early August 1914 and the subsequent Ottoman entry into the war in late October 1914, at the time when one-third of the work and the workers of the American Board were in the Ottoman Empire, had three immediate impacts on the American mission work in the Ottoman domains. The first was financial.

ensorship and surveillance over the foreign and missionary mails and publications, particularly due to the war conditions, it is possible that the American Board did not choose to reveal the specifics of the new work for the Muslim residents of Ottoman Turkey. It might be assumed that the new task included preaching among Muslims. On the other hand, industrial work on the basis of self-support increasingly developed as an important component of the new task to reach out the Muslims. For the time period of Fall 1913 and Fall 1914, the Industrial Institute in Urfa, Central Turkey Mission, included a carpentry, cabinet shop, iron work, machine shop, tailor and shoe shops with students numbering 21 in carpentry and cabinet apprentices, 7 in iron smith and machine work, 9 in shoe-making, and 11 in tailoring apprentices. The female contribution to the industrial work was indispensable. There were 1,777 women, especially in the manufacture of handkerchiefs. Annual Report, 1913, 101. This well explains the cotton crisis between the American missionaries and the Ottoman authorities in 1912. As to the industrial work in the Eastern Turkey Mission for the same time period, most of them, like those in the Central Turkey Mission, were connected with the American mission schools along the line of industrial schools. In Harput industries, the orphanages and the industries connected with them were closed, but the lace industry with 40 woman employees was maintained along with the Euphrates College of Harput, which kept a tin and iron shop, cabinet shop, and book bindery as a "part of its work." The superintendent of the cabinet shop was a graduate of Boston school. Van Industries were also largely able to maintain their work. The lace industry had 100 girls and women and the "marketing of the product" was under the charge of a well known, long time missionary, Mrs. Ussher. Mardin Industries in the same Mission also included a lace industry along with carpentry, stone dressing, printing, and book binding. Lace was marketed in New England, and the industry was connected to the boys' high school, therefore, having "educational" value as much as "self-help" and commercial values. Annual Report, 1913, 106.

¹²² Annual Report, 1913, 82. Italics are mine. While reading the Annual Reports of the American Board, one should bear in mind that these reports from the field were being circulated not only among the headquarters of the Board in the United States, but also in the U.S. State Department. Given the fact that to keep up the interest and support of both the Board administration and the state officials was among the top concerns of the missionaries in the field, it was always possible to compromise the realities of the Mission areas in favor of the rhetoric.

¹²³ The other was in one of the American mission schools in Istanbul. Annual Report, 1913, 83.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Upon the Ottoman entry into the war, the Government promptly declared a funding moratorium. To secure and transmit funds through ordinary channels became impossible: the credits in the banks of Istanbul became of no value. The same with bills of exchange in Great Britain (London) and in the United States (Boston and New York). The regular expenses of the American Board alone in Ottoman Turkey were \$18,000 a month, not including those of the independent colleges. It was not advisable to secure gold through the American battle ships that were in a British port and about to set sail for Ottoman waters. In this time of emergency, the American Ambassador provided the American Board Treasurer in Istanbul with \$17,000 from his personal funds. Some American corporations which had agencies in Istanbul, chiefly Standard Oil of New York, stepped in to ease the strenuous conditions of the American missionaries, especially those operating in the interior, by the means of providing ready cash. The Company also secured cash for colleges independent of the Board, such as Robert College. For a year following the Ottoman entry into the war, the Treasurer of the Board in Boston provided the Treasurer of the three Missions in Ottoman Turkey, William Peet, with more than half a million dollars for both regular and relief work. Of this amount, \$300,000 was sent by “individual Armenians and Turks” to their “friends” in Ottoman Turkey.¹²⁵

Second, as the war broke out in Europe, the Ottomans ordered a general mobilization in the latter part of August. In the beginning, this included males only between the ages of twenty and forty-five. Later all males were called regardless of age, including those who had previously enjoyed exemption from military duty by paying an indemnity tax. This development caused a drastic decline in student enrollment in the American mission schools, particularly in the early part of the academic year.¹²⁶ Third, some missionary buildings, such as hospitals, were taken by the military. These structures were considered useful by the Ottoman military men under the unusual conditions of war. For example, a new hospital building in Merzifon which was completed around the time that the Ottomans declared war on the Allies was occupied by the soldiers for a month. American missionaries were particularly concerned that the school buildings, especially in the Eastern Turkey Mission, would also be taken by the military.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 1913, 74-75. Ibid., 1914, 76-77.

¹²⁶ Annual Report, 1913. To illustrate, despite the outbreak of the war and the Ottoman participation, International College in İzmir survived the academic year of 1914-15. Initial enrollment was 42 and increased to 180 throughout the year. This was quite a decrease when compared to the enrollment of 410 in the preceding year. Annual Report, 1914, 98-99. The Report for 1914, unlike the previous ones, specifies neither the ethnic nor the religious break-up of the students. Speaking of the imperial decree legitimizing the College, it states, “[t]he Imperial F[e]rman, granting full privileges to the College became an accomplished fact in November.” This is in clear contrast to the reality both in terms of the nature of the imperial decree, as it did not grant the College full privileges as claimed, and the date of the decree since it was not issued in November 1914, but in June 1914. The Annual Report for 1914 further states that the final decision concerning the “compulsory chapel and Bible attendance” in the College was postponed. Given the fact that those classes were obligatory for all students regardless of religion attending the American mission schools, there might have occurred some particular sensitivity under the war conditions on the part of Ottoman authorities against the classes. Furthermore, the same Report gives information concerning the enrollment in American schools during the first year of the entry of the Ottomans into the war: “It should be stated in this connection that *the attendance of the Mohammedans upon the mission schools during the year beginning with last autumn was unprecedented*. This would hardly have been expected in view of the fact that Turkey was at war with Christian nations.” Annual Report, 1914, 80. Italics are mine. The decline in the enrollment was also related to the fact that American schools began to admit only students who would pay the tuition and fees in full amount. Concerning the industrial work in the Missions of Central and Eastern Turkey, missionaries worked hard to keep the work alive. With respect to the former Mission, the Industrial Institute of the Urfa Station included high school and industrial departments along with an orphanage. Work under the Industrial Department, as usual, contained sections for carpentry and iron work together with the handkerchief industry. It was reported that nearly 2,000 women in the time period of late 1914-late 1915 received their main support from making of handkerchiefs. The report underlines that all Departments were self-supporting with the exception of the ‘handkerchief industry’ as the ongoing war prevented the shipment of several orders of handkerchiefs which “brought unusual hardship to the women workers.” This was mainly due to the commercial nature of whole process of making and exporting of handkerchiefs which was against the Ottoman regulations. Regarding the industrial work in the Eastern Turkey Mission, it continued to provide support for orphans and means for students to help paying their tuition. Products of lace industries at Harput, Van, and Mardin continued to be exported to the United States. At Harput, in connection with the Euphrates College, tin and iron shop along with cabinet shop and book bindery maintained their work throughout the given period. At Mardin, carpentry, agriculture, printing, and book binding were, as usual, essential parts of the industrial work. Ibid., 111.

Wheeler Hall, associated with the Euphrates College in Harput was occupied by the Ottoman soldiers for two weeks.¹²⁷ Even though the action did not become a common pattern for the early part of the war, the American Board continued to report on occasional occupation of some school buildings along with the turning of chapels and mission schools into mosques and “Turkish” schools respectively.¹²⁸

Furthermore, American missionaries were also concerned about the citizens of Great Britain, who were working at different capacities under the Board, and about the security of their mails. With the Ottomans involved in a war with the British, the American Board arranged new formulations for thirty-six missionaries and others cooperating with the Board, all who were of British citizenship. A formally sealed certification was prepared by the Board to testify to the concerned person’s association with the American Board, an American corporation, and therefore his entitlement to American protection. Henry Morgenthau,¹²⁹ American Ambassador in Istanbul during the early part of the war, was useful in transmitting of these certifications to the British missionaries of the Board. However, a real difficulty arose when the American Board properties were registered under the name of British subjects. Upon the sending out of an order to the local authorities to take possession of all properties that belonged to the citizens of countries which were at war with the Ottomans, there was little that could be done by American missionaries and officials. Board properties at Afyonkarahisar, Western Turkey Mission, and the property of a Board orphanage at Maraş, Central Turkey Mission, were taken by the Ottomans.¹³⁰ American missionaries were also concerned that their mails were being intercepted and censored. They complained that English was forbidden as a medium of mail and German, French, Turkish or Arabic were allowed. Letters were supposed to be brief and contain no reference to local conditions. They further complained that Istanbul was made the only port of exit and entrance for travelers as well as for mail.¹³¹ The material and circumstantial conditions of the missionaries became more trying for all three Missions as the Ottomans fought fierce battles in multiple fronts from the borders of Russia to Gallipoli and from Western Anatolia to Yemen.

American missionaries, who thought that the Ottoman-Italy War of 1911 would bring the end of the Ottoman Empire and started to reorganize their work to include the Muslims of the Empire, became convinced after the outbreak of war in Europe in the summer of 1914 that there would be no “Turkey” left at the end of the war. Therefore, with the destiny of the Ottomans tied to an alliance with Germany, the destiny of American missionary enterprise, which had long been tied to that of the Armenians among whom the missionaries largely worked, had to accelerate its efforts to attract the Muslim populace, especially in Ottoman Turkey given the extent of the deportation of Armenians from all over the parts of Anatolia to Mesopotamia (today’s Iraq) and Syria. However, both sides continued to remain loyal to each other: “The Armenians have had demonstrated to them as never before the fact that their greatest and truest friends among all the people of the world are the missionaries who have lived among them, and who, in this time of their supreme sorrow, have cast in their lot with their people.”¹³² At the peak of the Armenian deportations in 1915, a statement of a leading Armenian figure was reported as follows: “Unquestionably the Lord led to the organization of the American Board a century ago that it might in 1915 be the agency of salvation for the race.”¹³³ Even though the American Board had to continue to “rely upon the remnant of the Armenian race as a strong cooperating force for the permanent Christianization of what is now the Turkish [E]mpire,” missionaries had a few fundamental reasons why their work henceforward chiefly had to concentrate on “Mohammedans,” especially given the current conditions, which were “distinctly encouraging.”¹³⁴ First, they believed that the Muslims of the Ottoman Turkey had lost confidence in their government as well as in the superiority of their religion due to successive defeats at the hands of Christian powers and the futility of the recent call of the Ottoman Sultan for a general Holy War, which had evoked no response among the Muslims of the Empire nor within the Muslims populations of India and Egypt.

¹²⁷ Annual Report, 1914, 87.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 88-89.

¹²⁹ Henry Morgenthau served as the American Ambassador in Istanbul for the period of 1913-1916.

¹³⁰ Annual Report, 1914, 77-78.

¹³¹ Ibid., 78.

¹³² Ibid., 89-90.

¹³³ Ibid., 90.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

The diminishing power of the Caliph at a global level meant that the two hundred millions of worldwide Muslims were now “groping” for leadership, which the missionaries hoped that they could claim both nationally and globally.¹³⁵ Second, missionaries were encouraged by the increasing sale of the New Testaments in Turkish and Arabic among the Muslims alone.¹³⁶ Third, they were encouraged by another increase which was in the number of students attending the American schools and they embraced the new trend with much enthusiasm.¹³⁷ Next, the missionaries believed that their determination and stubbornness for the teachings of Jesus Christ even under the most strenuous conditions such as the ongoing war, must have shown something to the Muslims about Christianity and about themselves as the disciples of the Christ. They hoped to build upon this good impression among Muslims to achieve their conversion.¹³⁸ Further, interestingly enough, they saw the Christian women of harem, as a very good source of Christian influence on their homes since “spiritual seed” had never been lost and would bear its fruit sooner or later. An impact of Christianity through its very own women upon Muslim households was insurmountable.¹³⁹ Especially aware of the possible destiny of the Armenian women and girls under the conditions of war and deportation, missionaries “have every reason to believe and know that which now seems [t]o be such a terrible disaster and which causes untold mourning and sacrifice, will prove to be, under the hand of God, one of the Divine means *for implanting the spirit of Christ in the very heart of Islam.*”¹⁴⁰ Finally, American missionaries were aware of the fact that when the reorganization of their work targeted the Muslims, the days ahead would not be easier than the previous five years.¹⁴¹ However, they were determined to carry the “*reconstructive and aggressive Christian work*”¹⁴² to the Muslim populace of Ottoman Turkey and the plans for “reconstruction” of the mission work for the war years and beyond were already at hand even though the details were hard to predict:

¹³⁵ “...The Moslems of Turkey have repeatedly spoken of their sense of discouragement over *their religion* and its *proven inability* to meet the needs of a nation, as well as of their feeling that *Turkey herself is doomed to extinction as a nation*. There seems to be a general feeling among the Mohammedans of Turkey today of abject discouragement, both with reference to *their nation and their faith.*” Ibid., 91. Italics are mine.

¹³⁶ “...One who is familiar with the country knows well that when a Mohammedan buys a book, it will not be lightly destroyed, especially if the book contains the name of Allah. There has been, in the last few years, *an unusual sale of small Turkish Testaments that can be concealed in the girdle* and about the clothing, and there is every reason to know that the Mohammedans to an unusual degree have been and are studying the content of Christianity.” Ibid. Italics are mine. It was not uncommon that the missionaries sometimes pushed the boundaries of their imagination and practiced a tendency to give rather favorable reports for their work among the Muslims especially during the period of the reconstruction of the mission work.

¹³⁷ “It is manifest that the Mohammedans of Turkey have awakened in the last two or three years, to a marked degree, to the importance and value of a Western education. This has been shown by unusual number of Mohammedan pupils in Christian schools throughout the [E]mpire, accompanied by the tendency to increase. ...[a] few years ago, *parents were persecuted for permitting their children to attend a mission school*; very little of that persecution has appeared in the last two year or so.” Ibid., 90-91. Italics are mine. For the latter part, the alleged persecution of Muslim parents who sent their children to foreign missionary schools, there was no official regulation banning the parents from doing so and this was one of those high moments of imagination of missionaries.

¹³⁸ “The manner in which the Armenians have met the destructive attack upon them has made a profound impression upon multitudes of Mohammedans...the way in which the Christian missionaries, who to the Mohammedans are the embodiment of the Christian conception of what Christ taught His disciples, have remained at their posts, facing death, and even dying at the place of duty and service, meeting unmeasured hardship and all simply that may minister in the name of the Christ to a stricken people has probably done more to make clear to the Mohammedans that for which Christianity stands than a generation of preaching. This year of war and massacre has revealed to the Mohammedans the true spirit and the true heart of Christ in a way that has already made its indelible impression upon the Moslem minds of Turkey.” Ibid., 92.

¹³⁹ “While the Mohammedans have violently and most cruelly taken Christian girls and women into their harems and made them members of their own households, they little realize that they are introducing into their homes the leaven of the Gospel of Jesus Christ...[S]piritual forces are never dissipated, and the seed of the Gospel of Christ, sown in the hearts of these young women who have had thorough training in Christian schools, some of them during almost their whole life, will unquestionably bear fruit, and prove to *be the leaven working within the very center of the Mohammedan communities of the Turkish [E]mpire.*” Ibid. Italics are mine.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 92-93. Italics are mine.

¹⁴¹ “...What those conditions will be, no one would attempt to predict, but we are confident that they can never be worse, and we have no little reason to believe that they will be better and more favorable to the development of the Christian Church and Christian institutions than anything hitherto experienced in that country.” Ibid., 93.

¹⁴² Ibid., 89.

We believe and know, however, that they will be different from those which have been followed in the past that methods of work will need to be *adapted to the new conditions*. There must necessarily be an immediate call for men and women to take up and organize this work; there will also be *an urgent and pressing call for funds* for buildings and the construction of institutions *adapted to the needs of the new conditions* which we shall there confront. These conditions are now being studied and *plans laid for the new approach*, and *we have every reason to believe that, in that center of Islam, the American Board has an opportunity which it has not faced in all the century of its history*, to lay deep and strong the foundations *for the future Christian church and school and press, and for a Christian approach to a people which has hitherto presented the most stubborn opposition to missionary effort of any race or religion, but which opposition seems now to be breaking at its very center.*¹⁴³

Conclusion

During the period of the rule of Abdülhamid II and the subsequent regime of the Committee of Union and Progress (1876-1914) preceding the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was in recession and the American missionaries, as the evangelical arm of a great power, were deeply establishing themselves among the non-Muslim populations of the Empire, particularly the Armenians. The Ottoman officialdom set itself to counter the ambitious, determined, and expansionist activities of the American missionary enterprise in a variety of venues ranging from schools to relief work. Under the Hamidian regime (1876-1909), establishment of industrial schools and primary schools by the Ottoman state, with an emphasis on the latter, was undertaken in emulation of the educational work of the missionaries. This new educational effort was aimed at the Muslim children of the Empire; it used Ottoman-Turkish as the medium of instruction and included the principles of Islam in the curriculum. By contrast, the mission schools largely targeted the non-Muslim populations; in most, the language of instruction was English and the coursework had a pronounced Christian flavor with a stress on classical studies and extracurricular activities of Christian content, such as Bible hours after school.

As a result of the autocratic nature of the Hamidian rule, the Ottoman-missionary face-off was not confined to schools, but extended to the surveillance of missionaries, interception of mail, central control over the provinces, relief work, extraction of missionaries who did not abide by the domestic laws and regulations, and to naturalized American citizens of Armenian origin. The Unionists, who took control in 1909 and ruled throughout the World War I, intensified the policies of Abdülhamid and introduced new tax requirements and land restrictions as a way of confining the American religious, educational, charitable institutions run by the missionaries. This came as a blow to the missionaries. The new policies on taxation finally found articulation in the Regulations of 1914, and later culminated in the abrogation of economic concessions, generally known as capitulations, for foreign institutions shortly before the Ottoman entry into the war. Largely concentrating their work among the non-Muslims of the Empire in general and the Armenians in particular in the Central and Eastern Turkey Missions of the American Board, the American missionaries, by 1911, began to reorganize their work to concentrate on the Muslims 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 the Ottoman Empire in favor of Turks and Muslims.

The period of the First World War and beyond is not within the scope of this study. However, it is essential to mention two points of importance. First, on the Ottoman side, some of the measures taken by Abdülhamid II to counter the American missionaries and their establishments, particularly the mission schools from kindergarten up, mainly the establishment and wide extension of primary schools and industrial high schools with a particular emphasis on the former left a permanent mark on Ottoman and, later on, Republican educational system as this network of schools, especially the priority and importance attached to the primary schools, was maintained by the rule of the Committee of the Union and Progress and the subsequent regime of the early Republicans of modern Turkey. Second, on the American side, the reconstruction of the American missionary work starting from 1911 with its emphasis on the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire became much more evident under the destructive conditions of the war both for the Armenians and for the Empire as a whole.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 93.

Through the remnants of the Armenian population in Ottoman Anatolia, and benefiting from the conditions of an Empire about to dissolve, the American missionaries seized the moment to Protestantize, by every means possible, the Muslims, including the ruling Turkish element of the population as well as the Kurdish and Albanian populace, who were often considered “unruly” groups.¹⁴⁴ In addition to their well-known work through schools and relief operations, the missionaries resorted to the press and to direct preaching and sale of New Testaments among the Muslim population which was rather unusual given the audience. The moment was not to be missed. The determination of the American missionaries to help the deported and migrant Armenians return to their previous habitats in Anatolia during the post-war period, as well as to keep the century-old missionary investment in the Ottoman Empire alive during the First World War, became one of the chief reasons for the United States not declaring war on the Ottomans in the wake of the American entry into the war in April 1917. The missionaries became equally determined to exercise influence over the United States government in the postwar settlements, ranging from the special task of the King-Crane Commission (1919) to the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Subsequently, they adapted their mission work, mostly the “American Christian Colleges,” to the new conditions and realities of the Kemalist Republican regime in modern Turkey. Yet even then, the American Protestant missionaries remained intent on staying true to the original aim of “permanent Christianization” of the “Turkish” lands, which they saw as the “very heart of Islam.”

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