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**American Christian Penetration  
of Constantinople Society in the Late 19th Century\***

*A. The first American community in the Ottoman Empire.  
American missionaries.*

The first community of American subjects in the Ottoman Empire, at the beginning of the 19th century, was made up of merchants and missionaries. It was in 1811 that D. Offley<sup>1</sup>, representative of the great trading house of Woodmans and Offley, Philadelphia, established his first permanent office at the major port of Smyrna. A few years later, in 1819, the first two missionaries of the ABCFM<sup>2</sup>, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Reverends Plinius Fisk and Levy Parsons, stayed for a short time in Smyrna en route for Palestine. Throughout the 19th century the American merchants living in the Ottoman Empire remained few in number and resided exclusively at the major ports: Smyrna, Constantinople (Istanbul) and Trebizond. The American missionaries of the same period, however, mainly representatives of the ABCFM and, later, of the Presbyterian Board<sup>3</sup>, numbered no fewer than 550<sup>4</sup>. Most of the missionaries, particularly those employed by the ABCFM, were dispersed among mission stations throughout the interior of Asia Minor<sup>5</sup>.

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1. Uner Turgay, "Ottoman-American Trade during the 19th c.", *Osmanli Arastirmalari* 3 (1982) 197-199; D. A. Finnie, *Pioneers East*, Cambridge, Mass. 1967, pp. 20-44.

2. C. P. Kiskira, "Προτεστάντες ιεραπόστολοι στην καθ' ημάς Ανατολή, 1819-1914. Η δράση της American Board", (Protestant missionaries in Asia Minor, 1819-1914. The activities of the American Board), *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* (Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies) 12 (1997-1998) 97-129.

3. A. L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901*, Oxford 1966.

4. F. D. Greene, *The Armenian Crisis and the Rule of the Turks*, London 1895, p. 149.

5. E. Bliss, *Turkey. The American Atrocities*, New York, 1896, p. 314; C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 107. In the Asia Minor of the late 19th century there were some 12-15 mission stations. The missionaries themselves numbered about 145. The most numerous of the

The two most active of the various protestant missionary organizations based in New England, the ABCFM and the Presbyterian Board, set up a wide network of mission stations throughout the Balkans and Middle East in the 19th century. The activities of the ABCFM, in the vanguard of the American foreign missionary effort, extended throughout the European and almost all the Asian provinces of the Ottoman Empire from 1819 until 1931<sup>6</sup>. The Presbyterian Board commenced operations in the years following 1870 in Syria and Mosul, regions abandoned by the ABCFM for economic reasons.

The rights and status of American nationals in the Empire were determined by the American-Ottoman trade agreement signed by the US and the Sublime Porte in 1830<sup>7</sup>. Throughout the whole of the 19th century a Diplomatic Mission was based in Constantinople, headed by a Minister Plenipotentiary. All the American consulates were located at the major ports of the Empire, with the sole exception of the Sebasteia (Sivas) consulate, which served the Ottoman provinces in the interior of Asia Minor.

It is worth pointing out that until the 1890's the American missionaries were the only Westerners engaged in missionary work whose activities in the Empire were innocent of political motives. This is because the sights of American foreign policy at this time—now that internal crises such as the Civil War had been resolved—were set on the Caribbean and the Far East<sup>8</sup>. Relations between the United States and the Sublime Porte remained neutral through almost the whole of the 19th century, for America was far from Europe and not a member of the club of European Great Powers<sup>9</sup>. We receive a vivid, if exaggerated, picture of American diplomacy in the Empire of the 19th century from the

stations were those serving the Turkish-speaking Armenians in Cilicia and Cappadocia.

6. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-105. The ABCFM still survives in modern Constantinople, in the form of the Near East Mission (United Church Board for World Ministries).

7. E. Bliss, *op.cit.*, pp. 546-547.

8. J. L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927*, Minneapolis 1972, p. 40; P. Jenkins, *History of the United States*, London 1997, pp. 163-165.

9. S. Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire (1876-1909)*, London - N. York 1998, pp. 131-132. The Sublime Porte did not rank the US among the Great Powers until after the Spanish-American war (1898).

correspondence of a missionary from Constantinople: "The insulting conduct of the Sublime Porte towards General Wallace, American Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople, would have been more appropriate towards the representative of a Danubian principality"<sup>10</sup>. It was no great cause for surprise that the missionaries often had cause to complain of violations of their civil rights by the Sublime Porte, and of the weak and inadequate diplomatic representation of their government. In fact, when problems arose for the American missionaries stationed in the interior of Asia Minor, they would seek help and protection from the British, rather than the American, consulates<sup>11</sup>.

Relations between the Sublime Porte and the American missionaries were plagued by grievance and suspicion. Yet the Porte could never rid itself of this thorn in the flesh of Ottoman society<sup>12</sup>. Particularly vulnerable were the American vocational mission schools (known usually as American Colleges). In fact, from the closing years of the 19th century, as the Armenian question began to assume international dimensions and both sides embarked upon their own violent solutions of the problem, the missionaries inevitably found themselves at the centre of the storm, for the preference they felt for the Armenians over the other ethnic groups in the Empire was impossible to conceal. (There was no loss of life, since all the mission stations were guarded by Ottoman government forces, but the lives of many missionaries were threatened and many of the American mission schools suffered damage, the majority of their students being Armenians). The year 1893 saw the burning of the Girls' School at Merzifon (Marsovan), while in 1895 damage was inflicted on the American Colleges at Maras (Cilicia) and Kharpert (Harput)<sup>13</sup>. In the wake of these incidents, under pressure from public opinion among Protestant Americans (Evangelical Alliance of Boston), President Cleveland was compelled to send two American warships, the *San Francisco*

10. F. D. Greene, *op.cit.*, p. 161 (New York Semi-Weekly Tribune, March 28, 1884).

11. E. Bliss, *op.cit.*, p. 547. A request by the American government in 1895 to establish two consulates, one in Erzurum and one in Kharpert, was turned down by the Sublime Porte. See F. D. Greene, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-164.

12. S. Deringil, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-119, for the reactions of the Ottoman government to the "cultural mission".

13. See E. Bliss, *op.cit.*, p. 245; J. Salt, "A precarious symbiosis: Ottoman Christians and Foreign Missionaries in the 19th century", *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 312 (1985-1986) 65. Damage to the schools of Maras and Kharpert was estimated at \$90,000.

and the *Marblehead*, into Imperial waters<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, the American government sought reparations of \$90,000 from the Sublime Porte to cover the cost of the mission property which had been destroyed. This demand was only partially satisfied, and only after protracted negotiations<sup>15</sup>. Although provoked by the events of the Armenian tragedy, this diplomatic initiative by the Americans confined itself to safeguarding the violated rights of the missionaries and securing the continuation of the missionary enterprise in the Ottoman Empire.

It is interesting that in the 20th century (1894-1914), as the US began to emerge as one of the Great Powers, its foreign policy towards the Middle East (Eastern Question) remained unclear<sup>16</sup>. Thus President Cleveland's decision remained no more than a warning to the Sultan. In essence, American diplomacy of the period is still wavering between legitimate support for the missionary effort and the emergence of US imperialist ideology<sup>17</sup>. There can be no doubt that the presence of the American missionaries in this region of such great strategic importance—a presence which antedates by nearly a hundred years any explicit statement of political interest in the region (1914)—was the first step along the road towards the spreading of the “American dream” to this part of the globe<sup>18</sup>.

### *B. The Constantinople station. Its size and influence. The Evangelical communities*

The ABCFM missionary station in Constantinople was one of the oldest of the Turkey Mission stations (1831-1931), as well as the largest and the most enduring. It was founded by the eminent missionaries W. Goodell, H. G. O. Dwight and W. H. Schauffler<sup>19</sup> when the three men

14. J. L. Grabill, *op.cit.*, p. 44; R. Mirak, *Torn between two lands. Armenians in America 1890 to World War I*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983; J. Salt, *op.cit.*, p. 62. It was only natural that the missionaries should have sought more active support for the Armenians.

15. S. Deringil, *op.cit.*, p. 129. Compensation of \$2,200 was paid for the damage suffered by Anatolia Girls' School.

16. J. Grabill, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

17. J. Grabill, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

18. J. Grabill, *op.cit.*, p. 309. The Rev. J. L. Barton, secretary of the ABCFM, stated explicitly in 1936: “America's influence and interest in the Near East was begun and has been perpetuated by Christians”.

19. C. P. Kiskira, “Αμερικανοί ιεραπόστολοι στην Κωνσταντινούπολη του 19ου

settled in the city with their families in 1831, a year after the signing of the American-Ottoman trade agreement. Apart from the needs of Constantinople and the surrounding region, the station also ministered to the Thracian hinterland to the north as far as Adrianople, while to the south its reach occasionally extended as far as Bithynia in Asia Minor<sup>20</sup>. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, as the American missionary effort broadened its scope to take in the Bulgarians, a department of the Constantinople station was dedicated to serving the needs of the Evangelical Bulgarians of Constantinople (in this capacity it was included among the five stations of the Bulgarian Mission)<sup>21</sup>. This was at a time when the large Orthodox ecclesiastical community of the Bulgarian diaspora in Constantinople functioned as a cultural centre of national importance for the Bulgarians<sup>22</sup>. It is evident that the strategically crucial position of the Constantinople station was intended to serve the needs of all the ethnic groups comprising the multicultural society of the Imperial capital<sup>23</sup>.

Until the time of the Crimean War the first (four, at times five in number)<sup>24</sup> missionary families belonging to the station lived at Pera, at Galata or on the Bosphorus shore (Ortaköy, Bebek, Buyuk-Dere). Outside these districts and within the old city of Constantinople they moved with the utmost caution, only venturing to visit such heavily frequented places as the markets, squares and inns where they would find

αι.", (American missionaries in Constantinople in the 19th century), *Πρακτικά Συνδέσμου Μεγαλοσχολιτών* (Proceedings of the Megaloscholiton Association), Athens 1996, p. 133.

20. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

21. T. K. Nestorova-Matejic, *American Missionaries in Bulgaria (1858-1912)*, Ohio University Press (1985 Dissertation).

22. G. I. Kioutoutskas, "Η Βουλγαρική παροικία στην Κωνσταντινούπολη κατά τον 19ο αι." (The Bulgarian colony in Constantinople in the 19th century), *Πρακτικά Συνδέσμου Μεγαλοσχολιτών* (Proceedings of the Megaloscholiton Association), Athens 1996, p. 133.

23. The ABCFM tried to reach out to the Jewish and Muslim communities of Constantinople, but without success. In fact, the primary objective of the Puritan missionaries from New England—who made up 40% of the total complement of American missionaries—was to convert the Jews and Muslims of the Middle East. In the view of the Puritans, it was the duty of the Protestant Church to bring the light of God to those peoples living in darkness.

24. Among them were the missionary families of the Reverend E. Riggs, the orientalist, and the Reverend C. Hamlin, founder of Robert College.

safety in the crowds<sup>25</sup>. Their gradual penetration of, and acceptance into, the multicultural society of the city received little or no encouragement until the period of the Tanzimat reforms, principally as a result of the Imperial Edict of 1856. The missionaries now deserted Pera and settled in old Constantinople (within the southern sea walls), as well as in Hasköy and Scutari. A number of missionaries did remain at Bebek until 1863, when the Bebek Theological Seminary, until then the only American school of higher education in the Empire, finally closed its doors<sup>26</sup>. The strategic centre of all the missionary facilities and the core of the station for as long as it remained in operation, until the beginning of the 20th century, were the densely populated multi-ethnic neighborhoods inside the southern sea walls of the old city, mainly those within the triangle: Kum Kapu (Kontoskali), Yedik Pasa, Vlanga, Geni-Kapu, Psomatheia (Samatya)<sup>27</sup>. It was here that most of the missionary families worked and made their home. Here too, in 1870, appeared the first American women missionaries from the Women's Board, the women's section of the ABCFM. Outnumbering their male colleagues by almost two to one, it was these women who performed the lion's share of the missionary work in the region for more than half a century<sup>28</sup>. The presence of a number of women missionaries (teachers) in Hasköy until 1863 and in Scutari (Üsküdar) after 1875 is explained by the two Girls' Schools, operated by the mission, which functioned there<sup>29</sup>.

The Evangelical Armenians, the first disciples of the missionaries, settled alongside them, first at Pera, where they lived close to the missionary families and around the British consulate. It was at Pera, then, in 1846, immediately after the excommunication promulgated by the Armenian patriarch Mattaios against the members of the "Evangelical Union", i.e. the first Armenian Protestant converts, that the first small (40 individuals) Armenian Ecclesiastical Evangelical community came

25. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

26. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

27. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

28. For a general account of the women missionaries of the Women's Board, see C. Kiskira, "Evangelizing the Orient; New England Womanhood in the Ottoman Empire, 1830-1930", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 16 (1998) 279-291.

29. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 145. On the school in Scutari, M. F. Fincanci, *The Story of Robert College, Old and New, 1863-1982*, Istanbul 1983. The Scutari school is still open today in Amavutkoï (Istanbul Amerikan Kolejeri).

into being. This was the first Evangelical community to be established in the whole of the Empire. Two years later the great fire which almost destroyed Pera drove some of the Armenian community to seek refuge in Kum-Kapu, while others moved to Hasköy. These three small Armenian Evangelical communities were to prove the longest-lived of all the Evangelical communities of Constantinople<sup>30</sup>. The register for the year 1893 lists 127 members in the congregation of the largest community, that in Pera<sup>31</sup>. When the massacre broke out against the Armenians of Constantinople in 1896, the other two, smaller, communities in Kum-Kapu and Hasköy were decimated. A small number from Hasköy survived the massacre and fled to seek refuge in Bulgaria<sup>32</sup>.

Few Bulgarians were registered as Evangelicals in Constantinople. Yet among the Orthodox Bulgarians of the city it seems that there must have been a number who were kindly disposed to the Protestants, since the Protestant religious newspaper *Zornitsa* (Morning Star) enjoyed, of all the Bulgarian papers published at the end of the century in the capital, the largest circulation<sup>33</sup>.

The Greek Evangelical community of Constantinople, poor and small in number, was slow to organize itself, appointing as its pastor the Reverend Mr. Kazakos in 1888. By 1893 it could still boast only 22 registered members<sup>34</sup>.

The meagre financial resources at the disposal of all these Evangelical communities were insufficient to meet the cost of erecting a Protestant church in Constantinople in the middle of the 19th century<sup>35</sup>. Thus the Greek Evangelicals gathered to worship in the chapel of the Swedish Embassy in Pera, or in the old city, at the Bible House (close to Misir-Tsarsi)<sup>36</sup>. The Armenian congregation gathered in a shack at Vlanga, or at the Girls' School in Scutari<sup>37</sup>.

30. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, pp. 148-151.

31. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

32. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

33. *Missionary Herald* (1881) p. 293.

34. C. P. Kiskira, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-152.

35. F. D. Greene, *op.cit.*, p. 72. There was also the arbitrary attitude of the government, as well as the poverty of the Evangelicals. The decree permitting the building of the church was held pending for 15 years.

36. *Missionary Herald* (1899) p. 359.

37. *Missionary Herald* (1899) p. 360.

*C. The American missionaries in the multi-ethnic society of Constantinople. (19th century) Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), The Armenian Question*

The work of the missionaries at the Constantinople station focused exclusively during the first fifty years or so (1831-1880) on its proselytizing mission, yet without enjoying the success it anticipated within the multi-ethnic society of the capital, if we exclude of course the organization of the Protestant Millet<sup>38</sup>. An indication of the failure of their mission, with its exclusive concentration on evangelism<sup>39</sup>, was the decision of the Mission in 1863 to remove its two schools from the cosmopolitan capital of the Empire to the conservative, provincial society of the Asia Minor interior. The schools had functioned in Constantinople for 23 years, but were forced to close for want of students. The former Girls' School from Hasköy and the Theological Seminary from Bebek were reopened in Merzifon in Asia Minor. They were to constitute the nucleus of the important Protestant Educational Centre, Anatolia College (1864-1922).

From the last quarter of the 19th century, however, the work of the missionaries at the Constantinople station began to reach out beyond the small Evangelical community of the city (Protestant millet). Two key events in the history of the Ottoman Empire, the disastrous Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878) and the massacre of the Armenians (1894-1896), the "chosen people" of the American missionaries, ushered in new, wider forms of communication between the missionaries and all the ethnic groups and social classes of the Empire. From this time on the American missionaries established an unshakable presence in the society of Constantinople and the provinces, at last assuming a definite identity in the mind of the community, as clear as that of the German settler or the French religieuse. Their missionary work was not assisted only by

38. The Protestant millet was organized after 1846; In 1850 it was granted equal status to the other millet in the Empire, following representations to the Sublime Porte by the all-powerful British ambassador, Sir Stratford Canning de Redcliffe.

39. W. R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World. American Protestant Thought and Foreign Mission*, The University of Chicago Press, London 1987, pp. 77-90. The unchanging position of the Mission during the time of R. Anderson (1832-1874) was one of single-minded dedication to the religious objectives of the missionary effort, i.e. "Christ not culture".



the circumstances prevailing in Ottoman society as a consequence of the Russo-Turkish war and the Armenian tragedy; among the factors contributing to the more rapid penetration of the multi-ethnic society of the Empire by the missionaries were the liberal ideas, known as Protestant Liberalism, which were increasingly common in Protestant Theology from the last quarter of the 19th century<sup>40</sup>. Followers of these liberal trends, and the adherents of the Social Gospel which had begun to gain ground among American missionaries, now believed that more emphasis should be laid on the “cultural mission” than on the conservative ideology of “Christ not culture” which had determined their work until this time. In other words, the philosophy now prevailing within the American missions held that salvation was to be attained through the influence of the “appropriate” ambient atmosphere and through a form of spiritual osmosis between the missionaries and their disciples<sup>41</sup>. Thus the ABCFM, like the other American missions, came to rely more in its work on American cultural ideals (education, technology, philanthropy). It is obvious that the “American Christian culture” which was steadily gaining ground in the American missions over the two last decades of the 19th century, shared much of its inspiration with the ideology of imperialism<sup>42</sup>. It was, one might say, an ethical surrogate for imperialist ideology. If we bear in mind that after 1900 the American missionaries were not only better paid and more numerous than their European —mainly English— missionary “brothers”, but also the most arrogant and the most militant, we can understand more easily their unique enthusiasm and optimism, their confidence in that dissemination of “American Christian culture” across the globe, which culminated in the first three decades of our century<sup>43</sup>.

#### *1. Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878)*

The period of the Russo-Turkish War saw the first large-scale endeavour in Constantinople to propagate the ideals of “American Christian culture”. The missionaries of the Constantinople station succeeded in providing humanitarian aid to large groups of Muslim

40. Hutchison, *op.cit.*, pp. 102-124.

41. Hutchison, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

42. Hutchison, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

43. Hutchison, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93.

refugees who had fled from the centre of the hostilities, the European provinces of the Empire, to seek refuge in the capital. Reports dispatched by missionaries at the station<sup>44</sup> speak of thousands of refugees flooding almost every public space and building (mosques, schools) in the city from the very outbreak of the war, even taking over the derelict houses within the old city walls. Some of the refugees, hungry and sick with the measles and typhoid which decimated them, had crossed over to Scutari, where the Reverend Wood, author of the report, describes the funerals as almost hourly events. The Constantinople missionary station was swift to organize a broad variety of humanitarian relief, working in collaboration with the local office of the American Bible Society. Many of the Muslim refugees, approximately a thousand, were cared for in a charitable institution in Constantinople run by the missionaries Herrick and Hitchcock. The station missionaries also undertook the expenses of caring for another group of refugees: these had been admitted to the “asylum” run by the English philanthropist De Winton, before his death from typhoid.

In the 1880's a group of women missionaries from the station—Gleason, Schneider, Twichell and Newell—achieved a broader but also more lasting penetration of the multicultural society of Constantinople. They set up a permanent establishment in the poor neighborhoods inside the southern sea walls of the old city, in Yedik-Pasa and in Vlanga<sup>45</sup>; from this base, however, they also reached out to the districts of Kontoskali, Geni Kapu and Psomatheia. These quarters, a microcosm of Constantinople society, a melting pot of peoples, faiths and cultures, were home to Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, Catholic Syrian Jacobites, and others. The lodging houses of these districts often housed *bekiar*, young men from the provinces who had migrated to the city in search of work. Among this vast and populous mosaic of religions and ethnic identities the American women launched themselves on an ambitious cultural mission<sup>46</sup>: day and evening classes in English, Bible classes, sermons preached at the homes of the missionaries—but without the dogmatism and fanaticism of the past. Here too the American women

44. *Missionary Herald* (1878) p. 328.

45. *Missionary Herald* (1891) p. 248.

46. *Missionary Herald* (1889) pp. 136-139, 245 (1893) pp. 180, 186.

organized for the first time in Constantinople those associations for young Christians so familiar in the West: the YMCA and YWCA, Christian Endeavour and the King's Daughters. They also operated two clubs<sup>47</sup>, in Kum-Kapu and Tseberlitas, in order to foster that "spiritual osmosis" through which their disciples would absorb the riches of American culture in this most un-American corner of Constantinople. The threat posed to the Orthodox Christian population of the districts by the cultural and proselytizing work of these American women galvanized into action the two Patriarchates, the Greek Orthodox and the Apostolic Armenian. They flew to the defense of the Orthodox, establishing primary schools for the Greeks and Bible classes for the Armenians in the districts of Yedik Pasa and Vlanga<sup>48</sup>. Their action had the desired effect, at least as far as the Orthodox Greeks were concerned: en masse they deserted the Bible classes run for them by the American missionaries<sup>49</sup>.

Another part of the ambitious cultural programme designed and implemented by the station's missionaries for the ethnic minorities of Constantinople in the years following the Congress of Berlin was an initiative to improve the quality and scope of American education for women. When the original Girls' School run by the station had moved from Hasköy to Merzifon, a second Girls' School was set up in Yedik Pasa in 1870. This new school, which by 1890 had moved to Scutari, was gradually improved until it finally achieved college status (American College for Girls). Perhaps its most important innovation was the inclusion of English in the curriculum<sup>50</sup>. The graduates of the school, regarded at the time as the pinnacle of American educational provision for women in the Empire, were the "Americanized female elite", in every respect a match for the products of the Catholic girls' schools. As time passed the school acquired a more international character, now serving the affluent young ladies of the capital's multi-cultural society. The proportion of girls from wealthy Greek families<sup>51</sup> graduating from

47. *Centennial of Constantinople Station*, Constantinople 1931, p. 63.

48. *Missionary Herald* (1888) pp. 74, 117, 153.

49. *Missionary Herald* (1896) p. 244.

50. *Missionary Herald* (1880) p. 385. Examinations in English language. The other lessons included: domestic economy, French and piano. See *Missionary Herald* (1878) p. 218.

51. Who is who in the RC-AGC Alumni Community, Istanbul 1985, which gives the six

the American College for Girls in the first ten years of its existence, between 1890 and 1900, was modest: only six out of a graduating class of 56 were Greeks. Their classmates included Armenians, Albanians and Bulgarians. Muslims were admitted to the school only after 1908. The sole exception was the celebrated writer and feminist Halide Edip Adivar, who attended the school and graduated before it was opened to Muslims in 1908<sup>52</sup>.

## 2. The Armenian Question

The missionaries of the ABCFM, diligent correspondents for newspapers at home, were the first to alert the Western world to the problems of the Armenians, especially during the period of the Armenian crisis (1894-1896)<sup>53</sup>. In fact, the sympathetic interest the missionaries felt for the Armenians earned them the reputation of instigators of the Armenian-nationalist-liberation movement against the policies of the Ottoman government<sup>54</sup>. The dispatches sent home by the missionaries, eye-witnesses to the Armenian massacres (1894-1896), sparked a climate of "religious fever" among Americans at home. Societies were set up in many American cities, collections were taken, and various events were staged to gather humanitarian aid for the victims of the persecution. Most active of all these societies was the National Armenian Relief Committee<sup>55</sup>, which had offices in almost every state. Among its presidents were Brewer, the Supreme Court judge, and the missionary F. Greene.

The American people, as was only to be expected, entrusted the aid it had gathered into the hands of the missionaries of the ABCFM. Some 150 American missionaries, alone at first, later supported by workers from the American Red Cross<sup>56</sup>, brought to a successful conclusion this most difficult of humanitarian tasks, in the process cheering the spirits of

names of the Greek graduates from 1890 to 1901: Katerina Ioannidou, Aspasia Zerfou, Marianthe Zerfou, Marika Soulioti, Maria Kavallari and Chrysanthé Georgalidou.

52. C. P. Kiskira, "Evangelizing", *op.cit.*, p. 292.

53. J. K. Hassiotis, "The Greeks and the Armenians", *Νεοελληνικά* (Modern Greek) 4 (1981) 69-109.

54. S. Deringil, *op.cit.*, pp. 125-132. A charge which the missionaries denied. J. Salt, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-65.

55. E. Bliss, *op.cit.*, pp. 511-512.

56. E. Bliss, *op.cit.*, p. 513.

despairing Armenians throughout the Empire. Their reports<sup>57</sup> describe the care provided to thousands of victims of the persecution. They mention, for example, that in 1896 alone care was provided for 75,000 individuals in Kharpert, 15,000 in Erzurum, 5,000 in Maras, etc. The first coordinator of the American aid effort was the Reverend W. Peet, ABCFM treasurer in Constantinople. From 1895 to 1897 he was assisted in Constantinople, despite the objections of the Sublime Porte, by C. Barton, with staff from the American Red Cross. The Porte finally had no choice but to accept the presence of the Red Cross in Constantinople, after pressure was exerted by President Cleveland on Minister Terrell, the US representative in the capital<sup>58</sup>. The successful coordination of the efforts to distribute the humanitarian aid to the Armenian people increased the prestige enjoyed by the Americans in the Empire. An atmosphere of trust also grew up between the American missionaries and the Apostolic Armenians, and between the Americans and the Apostolic Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Patriarchate would henceforth even use ABCFM banker's orders to send aid safely to the Armenians of the Empire's eastern provinces<sup>59</sup>.

In the summer of 1896 Constantinople witnessed the most violent massacres of Armenians, the Sublime Porte having realized the inability of the Great Powers to come to their aid. Most of the victims came from the poor Armenian quarters of the —mainly Jewish— district of Hasköy, and it was from here that the survivors sought to escape. The American women missionaries immediately organized a huge relief effort in the district, using money sent by sympathizers in England and Germany to succour some 1000 Armenians from Hasköy<sup>60</sup>. In fact, when some 6000 Armenians were compelled to emigrate to Varna, the missionary Miss Frazer decided to accompany them and continue there the American humanitarian work<sup>61</sup>. Along with other American missionaries living in Bulgaria Miss Frazer set up in Varna small factories, with

57. *Missionary Herald* (1896) pp. 134, 437.

58. E. Bliss, pp. 513-514.

59. E. Bliss, p. 512; *Missionary Herald* (1897) p. 264, with a letter from the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople thanking the American missionaries for their aid to the Armenians of Hasköy.

60. *Missionary Herald* (1896) p. 220.

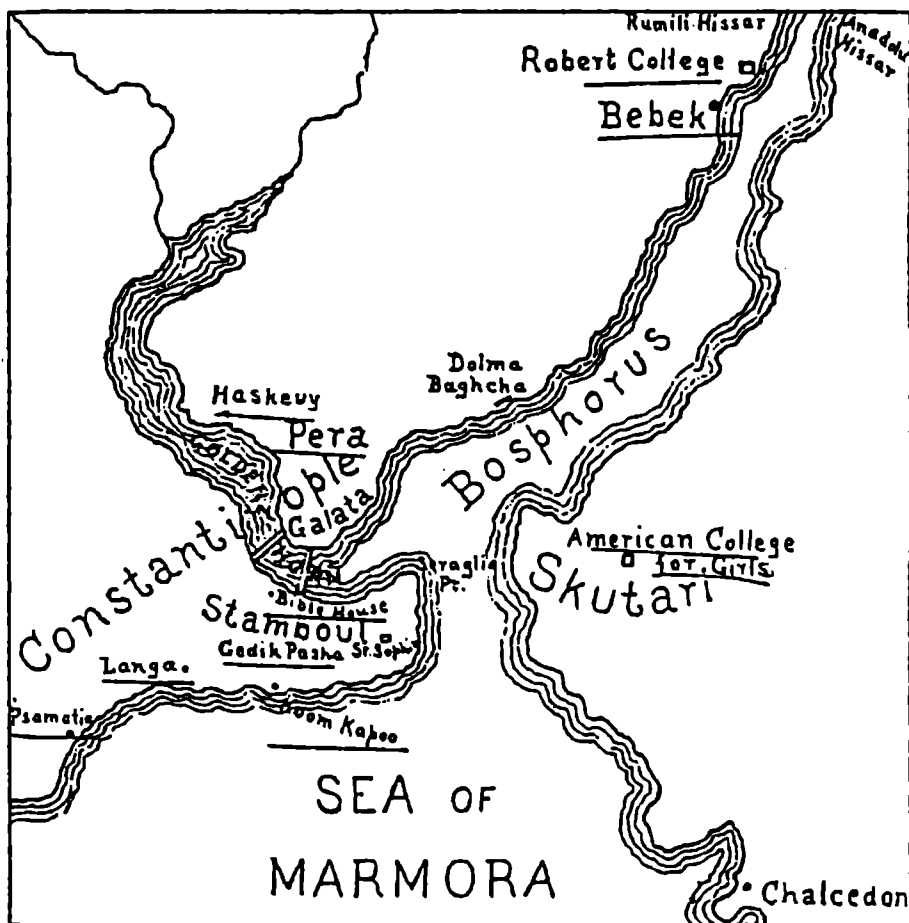
61. *Missionary Herald* (1896) p. 518.

capital supplied mainly by English philanthropists, in which the Armenian refugees could find employment<sup>62</sup>. Other American missionaries had at the same time organized similar enterprises in Asia Minor (Merzifon, Van, Urfa)<sup>63</sup>.

Taking as its starting point and its centre the work of the missionary station in Constantinople, work which targeted the whole spectrum of the multi-cultural society of the imperial capital, from the end of the 19th century the forces of "American Christian imperialism" turned their attention to a new cultural and social mission, and thus initiated the first manifestation of American intervention in Ottoman society and, more generally, in the Middle East as a whole.

62. *Missionary Herald* (1897) p. 130.

63. D. Quatert, "Age of Reforms 1812-1914", in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914*, ed. H. Inalcik, Cambridge University Press 1996, pp. 914-915.



1. American premises in 19th c. Constantinople.







*American college for girls, Üsküdar (1875-1914).*



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