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**“Errand of Mercy”: American Women Missionaries
and Philanthropists in the Near East, 1820-1930**

In the 1820s American Protestant evangelists sailed to the Eastern Mediterranean with the ambitious goal of converting the people of the Near East¹ to Protestantism and enhancing American Protestant influence in the Holy Land. They arrived in the Eastern Mediterranean on a self-assigned religious and cultural mission to convert the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in the area as well as spread superior American cultural and material values. A successful missionary enterprise abroad, the American evangelists anticipated, would, in turn, contribute to the strengthening of churches and society at home.

Through their evangelical, educational, and philanthropic undertakings, American missionaries established a tradition of American voluntarism and cultural penetration of the Near East that spans over one hundred years. Since the U.S. government did not show active diplomatic interest in the Eastern Mediterranean until World War I, it was the endeavors of American evangelists that established the most distinctive American presence in the Near East².

1. The term was in use in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, denoting not clear geographic lines but instead western cultural and religious views and stereotypes. From an American, particularly missionary, perspective it encompassed Asia Minor, the Syrian coast, Palestine, and the Balkan possessions of the Ottoman Empire where the majority of Ottoman Christians resided as well as the independent Balkan nation-states. The State Department adopted the term as well. American academe followed by introducing scholarly studies entitled Near Eastern studies. For a critical reflection on the use of the term in American diplomacy and academe see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 290-300.

2. Until World War I missionaries received no diplomatic protection or financial support by the U.S. government. In fact, frustrated by the indifference of their government, they turned to British and French consuls for protection. Even during the war the U.S. government's support to American missionaries was not consistent. See Edward Mead Earle, "American Missions in the Near East", *Foreign Affairs*, v. 7, no. 3 (April 1929): 406; Joseph

Missionaries introduced the Near Eastern people to a growingly secular and modernizing American society, the norms and values of which had lasting impact upon the cultures and politics of the Near East. Moreover, their work of seemingly nonpolitical nature rendered the United States growing influence and afforded it the image of a benign power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In this paper I focus on the American women who pursued their call of religious and/or secular voluntarism among Greek as well as Ottoman Greek and Armenian, and to a lesser extent Turkish, women in the Near East. While maintaining traditional patriarchal values, which were not at all different from the value systems of Greek and Armenian Christian communities, Americans emphasized the woman's equal right to education and introduced the concept of professionalization. In chronological sequence I shall discuss the roles of wives of American missionaries, then independent women missionaries, and thirdly American women doctors, nurses, teachers, relief and social workers, who, through their humanitarian work, introduced to the Christian people of the Near East the American middle-class definition of women's roles in society. I shall trace their influence on Christian women but also the impact of that cultural enterprise upon the protagonists themselves and upon the American presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

I chose to explore the work of women because, although very crucial to the success of the U.S. missionary and philanthropic involvement in the Near East, it has remained unexplored. American women's voluntary work in the Near East offers a unique example of American female cultural activism abroad: the changing roles of women from a marginal presence and voice in the early private missions to their crucial part in the professional humanitarian organizations a century later. Furthermore, this study blends in an unexplored aspect of the history of women: development of self-consciousness, professional skills, and public aspirations among middle-class Near Eastern Christian as well as Muslim women as a result of the cultural encounter with their U.S. role models.

The "new" American women taught their Near Eastern disciples

L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Foreign Policy, 1810-1927* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 293; David H. Finnie, *Pioneers East: The Early American Experience in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 125-127.

ways of stepping out into the public arena and claiming a social role with the panoply of their familial values and skills. Such a public image was not unfamiliar to Near Eastern women but the evolving American example introduced more advanced skills, including training and education in administering and dispensing a wide range of short-term and long-term humanitarian assistance.

American women as well as men in roles of missionary evangelism and philanthropy demonstrated a mixed disposition of human compassion and cultural superiority toward the host cultures. On the one hand, they expressed dedication to and, even, altruism for their Christian charges, especially in times of political unrest in the Near East. While sustaining their humanitarian commitment to their Christian constituents, these U.S. soldiers of charity, however, did not abandon a deeper conviction about the superiority of their own American culture in contrast to Near Eastern Christian and non-Christian societies. I have termed this attitude of American women in the Near East feminist "errand of mercy" to distinguish it from maternal imperialism. The latter is a more appropriate signifier of the relation between American or European women and their charges in the colonies of their respective countries. While colonial women ascertained an imposing and dominant attitude, appropriately termed in historiography as "maternal imperialism", American women in the Near East could not and did not marshal such forceful influence³. The very absence of an American colonial apparatus or even U.S. colonial claims on the Near East prescribed a power relationship between American and Near Eastern women that was far less authoritative. Over time American women failed in their religious proselytizing efforts but gained cultural influence on Near Eastern women through appealing educational and philanthropic undertakings.

Mainly U.S. sources make possible the reconstruction of this story. They include the records of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and its affiliate, the Women's Board, U.S. diplomatic

3. Barbara N. Ramusack persuasively has delineated the term maternal imperialism in seeking to describe the relation between colonial British women and Indian women. See "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British women Activists in India 1865-1945", in *Western Women and imperialism Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 120-121, 132-134.

records, archives of all major American philanthropic organizations operating in the Near East, missionary magazines as well as autobiographies and travel accounts by missionaries, philanthropists, relief and medical workers. Greek primary sources are also utilized. However, they offer very little evidence about the American missionary activities in Greece in the early nineteenth century due to the fact that the U.S. evangelical efforts were quickly suppressed by the Greek Orthodox church and government. Invaluable materials relevant to the U.S. missionary work in the Ottoman empire are also missing: community and personal archives of Ottoman Greeks and Armenians perished during World War I and the subsequent exodus of the Ottoman Christians from Turkey; the records of American missionary schools and philanthropic institutions in Turkey suffered a similar fate. In contrast, the American relief campaign in Greece in the early 1920s is far better documented in Greek primary sources. Armenian and Turkish sources are not used in this study due to linguistic constraints.

The Missionary Helpmate

The American religious and cultural involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean began in the early 19th century. In the 1820s American Protestant, primarily Congregationalist, missionaries arrived in an effort to open a Protestant mission in the Holy Land and create an American Protestant presence in the area. Furthermore, they aimed to convert Muslim and Jewish subjects of the Ottoman Empire to Christianity and to enlighten the “Oriental” Christians to the evangelical truth. According to the American Protestant missionaries, Armenian and Greek Christian subjects of the Ottoman empire were identified as Oriental Christians. These communities had diverged from the true light of Christianity due to their long subjection under non-Christian rule. Among the American Protestant groups that sought to spread their evangelical influence in the Near East two were the most successful: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (hence American Board) evolved as the coordinating body of the American Protestant missionary work in Greece, European Turkey and Asia Minor-areas that fall under the scope of this study; the Presbyterian Board prevailed in the Arabic speaking areas of the Ottoman empire. Founded in 1810 by Congregationalist

missionaries in Massachusetts, the American Board launched its first missions to the Eastern Mediterranean in 1819⁴.

In the field, the American Board's ambitious proselytizing efforts were met with outright failure. Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities in the Near East responded with indifference and even open hostility, perceiving the Protestant evangelical work as a challenge and threat to their faiths and cultures. As a result, by the mid-1840s the American Board abandoned its fruitless attempts to convert Jews and Muslims and ended its open proselytizing efforts among Greek Orthodox Christians in Greece and in the Ottoman empire. It did not suspend its efforts among Apostolic Armenians for they proved more receptive to the evangelical message⁵.

Implicit in the American Board's efforts to create a mission in Palestine were two presumptions that were to some extent contradictory. On the one hand, the American Board anticipated that overseas conversions to Protestantism would impress the home churches and help rectify morality at home as well as strengthen the authority of the home congregations. On the other hand, the Board viewed its evangelical message, so contested at home, superior to "Oriental" Christian dogmas and practices and wished to employ it in restoring the spiritual essence of Oriental Christianity. The Near Eastern crusade ultimately represented a mixture of religious conviction, early nineteenth century enlightened humanitarianism, romanticism, cultural nationalism, travel, and overseas expansion. U.S. Protestant missionaries sought to redeem the Holy Land and the Near East and to redefine the area's spiritual role in the modern world by infusing the cultures of the area with American evangelism and secular republican values. However, the assertive rhetoric of spiritual penetration and appropriation of the area did not translate into a concrete plan of action. The missionaries possessed neither sufficient knowledge about the cultures and conditions in the Near East nor the financial

4. In the same year it dispatched its first evangelists to Hawaii, while it had already commenced its missions to India and to Malta in 1812 and 1815 respectively.

5. Bulgarian Christians also attracted the attention of American missionaries. Although the Board had considerable success there, it was the American Methodists who prevailed among the American evangelical groups in Bulgaria. On the subject see Tatyana Nestorova, *American Missionaries Among the Bulgarians (1858-1912)*. East European Monographs, Boulder, New York: Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1987.

resources to succeed in this ambitious enterprise⁶.

Initial failure in the spiritual “conquest” of the Holy Land as well as the concurrent Greek war of independence diverted the attention of the missionaries from Palestine to Greece. The Greek war elicited strong sympathy among philanthropic and government circles in the United States, manifesting itself in the dispatch of relief and military supplies to the Greek rebels. The New York Ladies Committee organized one of the most publicized relief shipments and asked Reverend Jonas King of the American Board to travel to the belligerent region in order to supervise the distribution of the supplies⁷.

The Greek national struggle represented a spiritual but also an ideological and political cause that excited and mobilized American evangelists. Greek political independence provided a twofold opportunity to restore the dogma and practices of the Greek orthodox Church to its early Apostolic form with the infusion of reflective aspects of Protestantism and to establish a representative Greek government modeled after the examples of classical Greece and the contemporary U.S. republic. On the ground the missionaries discovered that among the “gifts” they brought the most welcome was not evangelism but secular education for both genders.

In the early 1830s, seizing an unexpected opportunity, American missionaries along with private philhellenic groups hastened to open schools, including boarding schools for girls, in Greece in order to assist in the “intellectual and spiritual as well as political emancipation” of the

6. For a more extensive treatment of the ideological justification of the mission to the Holy Land and to the greater region see: William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987; Ussama Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” *American Historical Review*, v. 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 680-713. Edward Said treats the American missionary enterprise in the Near East as a component of U.S. political as well as cultural imperialism. In doing so he attributes to the U.S. government colonial interests which the latter did not articulate in the Eastern Mediterranean until the interwar years. See Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 294.

7. Clifton Jackson Phillips, *Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1810-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 141-142; Theodore Saloutos, “American missionaries in Greece”, *Church History*, v. 24, no. 2 (June 1995): 8-9; George J. Leber, *The 1821 Greek War of Independence and America's Contributions to the Greek Cause* (Washington, D.C.: Order of Ahepa, 1911), pp. 44-47.

Greeks⁸. *The New Haven Ladies' Greek Association* sought to educate girls with the purpose of raising "the whole female population from the degradation in which four hundred years have placed them, and of rescuing tens of thousands from that ruin which is certain, if left to wander about without a father or brother to protect them"⁹. With the support of the New York Ladies Committee and the American Board, Jonas King and Josiah Brewer, another member of the American Board, founded a girls' school on the island of Tenos. King also opened schools in Athens, the newly established capital of Greece, and on the island of Poros. However, all of his three efforts were short lived because his constituents soon discovered that King's educational work was integral to his proselytizing¹⁰.

The more successful missionary schools were those that avoided proselytism. In Ermoupolis, Syra, the local community asked Brewer to establish a school for girls. Having won over community support, Brewer focused on providing secular, rather than religious, education. In 1831 in Athens the American Episcopalian missionary John Hill and his wife Fanny-Francis established a school for boys, another for girls and a coeducational training institution for poor children. The most lasting missionary educational enterprises in Greece, the Hill schools, likewise owed their success to their founders' ability to tone down their missionary zeal. The girls' school, in particular, became a model of women's education in Greece. Studying at the Hill school was viewed as a sign of prestige in nineteenth-century Athenian society¹¹.

8. Phillips, *Protestant America*, p. 142; Jonas King to the Creek Committee in New York, 16 December 1828, *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (hence ABC), Unit 5: *The Near East, 1817-1919* (ABC 16), v. 3 (Woodbridge, Connecticut: Research Publications, 1984); Stephen Larrabee, *Hellas Observed: The American Experience of Greece 1775-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), p. 183.

9. Gerasimos Augustinos, "'Enlightened' Christians and the 'Oriental' Churches: Protestant Missions to the Greeks in Asia Minor, 1820-1860", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, v. 4, no. 2 (1986): 131.

10. P. E. Shaw, *American Contacts with the Eastern Churches, 1820-1870* (Chicago: The American Society of Church History, 1937), pp. 15-23, 32-50; Saloutos, "American Missionaries", pp. 10-11.

11. Sideroula Ziogou-Karastergiou, *He Ekpaideuse ton Koritsion sten Hellada (1830-1893)* [The Education of Girls in Greece (1830-1893)] (Ph. D. dissertation, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki 1983) pp. 37-39, 50-51, 82-85; Shaw, *American Contacts*, pp. 77-78.

While a few schools succeeded, the overall results of the American Board's work in Greece were modest. In the 1830s and early 1840s the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Church accused the missionaries of proselytism and subversion of the Orthodox faith. In close cooperation with the Greek government, it checked and significantly hindered American missionary activities in Greece¹². Among the missionary educational institutions, only the Hill schools survived but not without interruptions and serious scrutiny on the part of the Greek government¹³.

Faced with such obstacles in Greece, the American Board transferred its missionaries in the late 1830s to Smyrna to carry on their evangelical efforts with the Greek and Armenian communities in that Ottoman city and in Asia Minor at large. Soon thereafter the American missionaries encountered the vehement opposition of the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic patriarchs in the Ottoman empire. Alarmed by the American evangelical intentions, the two ecclesiastical prelates resorted to tactics of patriarchal exhortations and episcopal missives against the evangelists as well as popular agitation in order to sustain their flock¹⁴.

However, the adversarial attitude on the part of the two patriarchs and some members of the two Christian communities did not reflect the disposition of Ottoman Armenians and Greeks at large, especially those living in the larger urban centers. While rejecting Protestant evangelism, urban Ottoman Christians found American missionary educational programs attractive.

Taking into consideration the uneven developments in the Near

12. *The Missionary Herald*, v. 31, no. 3 (March 1835): 96-97; *The Missionary Herald*, v. 31, no. 6 (June 1835) 233; Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: American Board, 1862), pp. 355-356.

13. Marcellus Bowen, "Historical Sketch of Mission Work in the Smyrna Field, 1820-1844", ABC, 16.5, v. 6 (13): 2-3; Rufus Anderson, *Report to the Prudential Committee of a Visit to the Missions in the Levant* (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1844), pp. 5-9; *Diplomatic Relations of the United States (1872-1873)* (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1873): 246-249.

14. H. G. O. Dwight, *Christianity Revived in the East; or A Narrative of the Work of God Among the Armenians of Turkey* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1850), pp. 77-80, 190-199; Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878), pp. 30-39, 65-66; Augustinos, " 'Enlightened' Christians", p. 136.

Eastern field, the American Board tried to capitalize on the positive responses to its missionary efforts. In 1844, having curtailed its work in Greece, it also ended its open proselytizing efforts among Ottoman Greeks, choosing instead to enhance its successful educational and philanthropic activities among more receptive Ottoman Greeks. In the meantime, it had abandoned its fruitless attempts to convert Muslims and Jews. The only prospect for evangelical success in the Near East rested with the Ottoman Apostolic Armenians who proved more receptive to the evangelical message¹⁵. According to the Board's Prudential Committee, these new pragmatic commitments did not imply abandonment of the religious evangelical mission but, instead, an indirect, lengthier, and more exacting effort towards the eventual proselytism of the "nominal" Christians. This redefined mission also involved significant economic undertakings which ensured the self-sufficiency of most missionary work in the Near East¹⁶.

It was not only the positive response of members within the Christian Armenian and Greek communities that encouraged secular American Protestant missionary work in the Ottoman Empire. The willingness of the Ottoman government to accommodate American missionary operations should also be noted, especially when they involved missionary education. During the nineteenth century Ottoman sultans, mindful of the imperative to strengthen the empire and to emulate western European advances, embarked on substantial reforms in most areas of Ottoman public life, including education¹⁷. Traditionally, education fell un-

15. The American Board made its decision following the recommendation by Rufus Anderson. As a secretary of the Board, Anderson travelled to the area in 1843-1844. See Anderson, *Missions in the Levant*, pp. 6, 12-15; idem, *Memorial Volume*, pp. 285-288, 303.

16. Finnie, *Pioneers East*, pp. 35-44; Phillips, *Protestant America*, pp. 144-146.

17. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries westernization attracted more and more socioeconomic groups in the Ottoman empire. Not only ideas and ideologies, but also western science, technology, material goods, fashions, and life styles penetrated the empire. See Fatma Muge Gocsek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 37-43, 82-86; Serif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey", *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, eds. Albert Hourani et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 347-374; Roderic H. Davison, "The Millets as Agents of Change in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire", in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), pp. 321-324.

der the conservative influence of Muslim learned men (*ulema*), but, by secularizing and reorganizing it along western lines, the government aimed to turn it into a force of modernization. Thus while American Protestants were establishing their first schools in the Ottoman territories, the first Ottoman secular schools were appearing as well¹⁸. Even secular education for Muslim women was pronounced in the context of the reforms. The 1869 imperial Regulations for General Education provided for training colleges for women's teachers and for private liberal arts colleges for girls. Their numbers increased significantly by the turn of the century¹⁹.

The American Board's work in the Ottoman Empire developed steadily during the second part of the nineteenth century. Missionary stations were opened even in remote areas of Central and Eastern Turkey as well as in the European territories²⁰. In most stations the missionaries sought to establish schools at all levels from kindergarten to high school as well as colleges and seminaries²¹. It was in missionary coeduca-

18. W. S. Monroe, *Turkey and the Turks: An Account of the Lands, the Peoples, and the Institutions of the Ottoman Empire* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1908), pp. 170-171.

19. Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 63; Leila Ahmed, "Early Feminist Movements in the Middle East: Turkey and Egypt", in *Muslim Women*, ed. Freda Hussain (New York: St Martin's Press, 1984), pp. 113-114; Monroe, *Turkey*, pp. 162-163. A similar pattern unfolded in Egypt. The nineteenth century movement for women's right to education proceeded along the same lines of westernization and wider political reform in Egypt. See Hind A. Khattab and Syeda Greiss el-Daeiff, "Female Education in Egypt: Changing Attitudes over a span of 100 years", in *Muslim women*, pp. 170-172; Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 8-9.

20. For an account of missionary stations in Turkey see Albert Howe Lybyer, "America's Missionary Record in Turkey", *Current History*, February 1924, p. 804.

21. *Life and Light for Woman*, v. 17, no. 11 (1897): 405; Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Rockefeller Foundation, 2 March 1915, *National Archives* (hence NA), Washington D.C., "Inquiry Document", no. 838, pp. 11-20; James Levi Barton, "American Educational and Philanthropic Interests in the Near East", Address delivered at Brown University, March 12, 1932, New York: Near East Foundation, n.d. By the late nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire the American Board had developed a large field of operations. According to its own estimates, by 1887 there were in Turkey 361 common schools, 25 high schools, 18 girls' boarding schools, 4 colleges, and 5 theological schools, with a total of 16,088 pupils. See *Life and Light*, v. 17, no. 11 (1887): 405. Missionary reports do not provide specific data on the demographic profile of the student body, particularly female students. Only total numbers are to be found, often

tional schools and in boarding schools for girls where Greek and Armenian girls were exposed to American middle class ideals of womanhood²².

Turkish women also attended American missionary schools but their enrollment remained considerably lower than the numbers of Armenian and Greek students. The few Turkish students came from wealthier families in the larger urban centers of the empire, while the majority of Turkish women who pursued secular education enrolled in Ottoman rather than American schools. Christian and Muslim Arab women also attended schools established by the American Board but, as it was pointed earlier, most of the Arab speaking areas of the empire fell under the influence of American Presbyterian missionaries²³.

A significant number of missionary schools were established in urban centers and tuition fees were required in most of them. For this reason, missionary education was, on the whole, accessible only to the wealthier urban families in the Ottoman Empire. The Christian bourgeoisie in the Ottoman Empire had become financially prosperous by engaging for the most part in trade, manufacture, shipping as well as the professions.

Why did the Christian bourgeoisie in the Ottoman empire embrace American missionary education? Their improved economic status, enhanced education, and growing political awareness contributed to it. However, they were not content with their political status. Although in the nineteenth century representation of non-Muslims in various government bodies increased, the overall number of Christians in decision-making offices within the Ottoman administration remained small. Also within the three major *millets*, Apostolic Armenian, Greek Orthodox

without distinction of gender or age.

22. It should be noted that the movement for girls' secular secondary education in Western Europe "came into its own" in the 1880s. For details on that uphill battle see Francoise Mayeur, "The Secular Model of Girls' Education", in *A History of Women in the West*, v. 4: *Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, eds. Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 228-245.

23. In Egypt a female missionary from the English Church Missionary Society set up the first missionary school in the 1830s. It was later copied by British, French, and American religious societies. As in the rest of the Ottoman empire, communal and foreign schools attracted middle-class, mostly Christian, girls. See Badran, *Feminists, Islam*, p. 9.

and Jewish²⁴, an oligarchy of religious leaders and traditionally prominent families controlled the *millet* structure. Frustrated in their political aspirations, new entrepreneurial, commercial and professional Christian elites of the empire sought other outlets for public recognition. They grew increasingly attracted to the western ideologies of nationalism, liberalism, constitutionalism, and sought a secular education, professional competence, and material prosperity. A growing number among them chose American missionary education as meeting these needs for their children, and in embracing that education exposed their children to American middle class values²⁵.

The majority of the missionary schools in the Ottoman Empire and the few operating in Greece were “common” schools for boys and girls. Commitment to coeducation as well as the founding of boarding schools for girls demonstrate the missionaries’ intent to promote girls’ education. The curricula of those schools had a modern, secular orientation, emphasizing new social and economic demands in the western industrializing world. Courses in the sciences, geography, philosophy and languages were taught along with courses in humanities and religion. The importance of athletics and musical training was also emphasized, while extracurricular activities were designed along gender lines: home economics for women and practical skills of craftsmanship for men. Reli-

24. Since the early years of Ottoman rule religion became the sole criterion for every subject’s political identity and relationship with the government. The non-Muslim subjects were organized in *millets*, that is administrative entities along religious lines. This attitude of religious tolerance on the part of the Ottoman rulers counts as one of the strengths of the empire. The religious leaders of each of the three major *millets*, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, and Armenian Christian, were designated as the representatives of their *millet* before the imperial government. Besides ministering to the spiritual needs of the *millet* members, *millet* leaders also assumed secular administrative and judicial duties and supervised the educational work of their religious community. By the nineteenth century the number of Christian *millets* had increased as more Christian subjects pursued their ethnic-linguistic distinction and/or their autonomy from either the Greek Orthodox or Armenian Apostolic Patriarchates. The identity of the *millets* also changed as they downplayed their religious distinction and projected more eagerly their ethnic-linguistic traits. On the institution and changing role of the *millet* see Kemal H. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era”, in *Ottoman and Jews*, pp. 141-170; Davison, “Agents”, *ibid.*, pp. 319-337.

25. Gocek, *Rise*, p. 99; Earle, “American Missions”, pp. 404, 410-411; Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor: Confession, Community, and Ethnicity in the Nineteenth Century* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992), pp. 121-122.

gious instruction met the particular denominational needs of the students and amounted to basic Christian instruction. Missionary schools taught catechism only when the students or their parents demonstrated interest in Protestant teaching²⁶. Overall American missionary schools were among the first to implant in the Near East the principle of equal access to secular, especially higher, education for both genders.

By establishing boarding schools for girls in an area where the traditional patriarchal as well as the *millet* systems forbade women's engaging in any secular role, the American Board introduced a potentially revolutionizing phenomenon, an ideal of modern motherhood. Modern education was intended to develop young girls' personality and character so that they would become successful and devoted mothers. The missionaries were exponents of the American Victorian ideology of domesticity which implied the notion of separate and complementary spheres for men and women²⁷. Thus, while acknowledging women's right to equal access to education, the missionaries were mainly interested in enhancing the ideology of domesticity among their female students. Educated mothers were expected to inculcate their daughters with the proper values of female chastity, modesty and subordination to their male relatives and prepare them for the functions of a devoted wife and virtuous mother. Young women in nineteenth century Greece as well as among Ottoman Christian communities were raised to assume their domestic duties in a world prescribed by rigid gender lines and deeply rooted stereotypes. Nonetheless, conditions were slowly changing, especially for urban women. For example, higher education at missionary schools

26. *Life and Light*, v. 5, no. 2 (1875): 33-37; *Life and Light*, v. 6, no. 11 (1876): 325; *The Missionary Herald*, v. 70, no. 10 (October 1874): 310; American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *The Higher Educational Institutions of the American Board* (Boston, n.d.), p. 30.

27. The U.S. missionary ideal of a respectable woman drew from and reinforced the Enlightened conception of the civic woman, that is submissive wife and republican mother. This prototype of the female role was introduced in Greece and the Ottoman lands around the time the American missionaries began their cultural peregrinations in the Near East. On the Enlightened and French revolutionary image of the republican woman see Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "The Enlightenment and Womanhood: Cultural Change and the Politics of Exclusion", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, v. 1 (1983): 39-43; Elisabeth G. Sledziewski, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point", in *A History of Women in the West*, v. 4, *Emerging Feminism*, pp. 33-47.

presented young women with a growing involvement in the public arena²⁸.

Some of the new public roles for local women were introduced by the American women engaged in the missionary enterprise. In fact, female active participants in missionary work provided the example of a role model. Leaving behind the comparatively sheltered family life for the sometimes extremely arduous responsibilities of assistant and teacher in foreign lands, women followed their husbands to missionary stations in the Near East and engaged in "women's work". First and foremost they were entrusted with the responsibility of raising an exemplary missionary family. In the Board's opinion, it was the missionary family itself, that is the nuclear missionary family in contrast to the extended family of the host cultures, that was to serve as a prototype for the moral renovation of the "nominal" Christians. Therefore, it was imperative that married rather than single missionaries volunteered for duty in the Near East. The Board itself often acted as the coordinator of marriages²⁹.

In the Near East, the missionary family was projected as the ideal example while wives of missionaries demonstrated to their Christian and Muslim sisters the respect and dignity accorded to middle class American women. They intended to instill their social experiences among Near Eastern women through women's education and Bible gatherings³⁰. However, over time the elevated status of the woman in the missionary family did not attract Near Eastern women. Raising an exemplary missionary family remained a highly emphasized part of missionary duty, albeit, primarily as a means of missionary discipline.

The "women's work" at the missionary stations also entailed a host of public responsibilities, though domestic in nature: teaching in day, Sunday, and vocational schools, maintaining orphanages and boarding

28. *Life and Light*, v. 41, no. 2 (February 1911): 61.

29. Anderson, *Memorial Volume*, p. 276.

30. *Life and Light*, v. 18, no. 5 (May 1888): 171-172; Anderson, *Memorial Volume*, p. 272; Barbara Welter, "She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America", *American Quarterly*, v. 30 (1978): 625-630; Patricia Grimshaw, "'Christian Woman, Pious Wife, Faithful Mother, Devoted Missionary': Conflicts in Roles of American Missionary Women in Nineteenth Century Hawaii", *Feminist Studies* v. 9, no. 3 (Fall 1983): 511-512.

schools, promoting temperance, and making house-to-house visitations to distribute religious tracts and the Bible to Christian women as well as to dispense medical care to Christian, Muslim, and Jewish women of the area. Carrying out their voluntary tasks often required long and risky tours to "out-stations", that is towns and villages in a missionary district. Ridding on horseback in inclement weather and on unpaved pathways in fear of brigand attacks³¹ constituted the routine of such a tour³². Yet, the success of the task was not judged by a woman's ability to cope with the adversities of the trip but, instead, by her evangelical work at the out-station. Usually, the missionary wife made several journeys to the out-station before she was able to establish a group of women who were interested in reading the Bible or, more rarely, in converting to Protestantism.

All in all, the life of a missionary's family in the Near Eastern stations was very demanding. Missionaries and their wives reflected on their experiences in the reports back home. It was essential to demonstrate to the home congregations the exacting evangelical and educational work at the missionary stations in order to secure continuous funding. Reports were, in part, used as a means of promoting and publicizing missionary work. Also implicit in the reports was the call to the home congregations not to deviate from their pious ways or to cease their moral support for the worthy cause of the missionary work abroad.

31. Brigandage was widespread in the Ottoman lands as well as the independent Balkan states until the early twentieth century. One such incident, which attracted international attention, involved a missionary of the American Board. In September 1901 Ellen M. Stone, employed at the American Board station in Samokov, Bulgaria, was kidnapped by Bulgarian brigands as she was heading to an outstation for missionary work. Several months later, after U.S. diplomatic intervention and the payment of high ransom, Stone was released by her captors. See *Life and Light*, v. 31, no. 11 (November 1901): 481-485; *Life and Light*, v. 32, no. 4 (April 1902): 146-148, 151-155; J. M. Nankivell, *A Life for the Balkans: The Story of John Henry House of the American Farm School Thessaloniki, Greece* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939), pp. 123-142.

32. *Life and Light*, v. 18, no. 5 (May 1888): 171-172; *Life and Light*, v. 20, no. 9 (September 1890): 391; Lybyer, "Record", p. 804; John A. DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 12; Sylvia M. Jacobs, "Give A Thought to Africa: Black Women Missionaries in Southern Africa", in *Western Women and Imperialism*, p. 208; R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Missions History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1980), pp. 52-53.

Personal accounts of adventure and hardship appeared in missionary bulletins along with detailed descriptions of Protestant women's illuminating and "civilizing" work among the "nominal" Christian women.

Available sources, however, do not provide distinct profiles of the first generation of missionary wives in the Near East. Neither male missionaries nor their spouses recorded their personal experiences on the ground for posterity. Most of them did not write autobiographies and travel accounts or comment in their reports back home on family and social affairs. In fact, missionary reports from the Near Eastern field were deliberately austere with only passing references to personal matters such as serious illness or death in the missionary family. Official missionary correspondence focused on the work and accomplishments of the male missionary, while marginalizing the contributions of missionary wives. A case in point is Francis Hill who was instrumental in establishing the Hill school for girls in Athens and turning it into the first preparatory school for female teachers in the country. Yet, available sources attribute to Francis Hill a secondary role in that noteworthy enterprise, that is if they bother to mention her contribution at all³³.

During the first period of American cultural involvement in the Near East, 1820-1869, American missionaries along with their wives learned to modify and, even, compromise their initial goal of spiritual and moral "conquest" of the area. As the native interest in western education and material culture superseded religious and moral quests, the roles and duties of American missionary wives were also secularized and expanded in order to meet the changing demands. Although their traditional familial duties remained important, new and more diverse tasks were assigned to them which required the woman's growing public participation in the host community. To the women of the Near East, wives of American missionaries set an example of women entering the public, male-dominated sphere by performing the feminine tasks of caring, philanthropy and teaching.

33. A.G.G., "Hil Fane-Fragkiske" [Hill, Fany-Francis], "Hil Parthenagogeion" [The Hill School for Girls], *Megale Hellenike Enkyklopaideia* [Great Hellenic Encyclopedia] (Athens: Ekdotikos Organismos Ho Phoinix, "195?-1964?"), v. 24: 591-592; Ziogou-Karastergiou, *He Ekpaideuse*, pp. 37-39, 50-51, 82-85; G. A. Perdicaris, *The Greece of Greeks* (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845), v. 2: 295-296.

The Professional Female Missionary, 1868-1914

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, American missions abroad underwent a significant transformation. The religious-evangelical efforts of the earlier years gave way to secular evangelism aimed at fostering westernization of the host cultures based on the American paradigm. Secular education, medical assistance, improvement of living standards, and exposure to western social and political values became the core of the missionary work abroad.

The American Board also continued to redefine its work in the Eastern Mediterranean and stressed its secular pursuits. The very limited success of its proselytizing efforts in the earlier years had already prompted the Board to take a more secular and less evangelical path. In theory, nonetheless, the Board maintained that its ultimate mission was religious enlightenment; educational and philanthropic undertakings were the temporary means until time allowed for the resumption of evangelization.

In this context, American women arrived in the Near East in the later decades of the nineteenth century as active, independent missionaries, pursuing a career in professional roles of benevolence. The numerical increase is evident in the following estimate by the *Missionary Herald*, the American Board's official magazine: in 1890 American male missionaries in Turkey, including ordained priests, missionary physicians and other laborers, numbered 60, missionary wives 53, and "other" women, primarily single female missionaries, totalled 56³⁴.

Female missionaries were expected to work with young girls and women in the field. In 1868 the Woman's Board of Missions was created in cooperation with the American Board and was incorporated by the Massachusetts Legislature the next year. In the same year the first issue of *Life and Light for Heathen Women*, the new Board's magazine, appeared. The Woman's Board promoted female leadership in the

34. See *The Missionary Herald*, v. 86, no. 1 (January 1890): 8. According to Barbara Welter, "in 1830 females made up 49 percent of the American Congregational missionary force. In 1880 they constituted 57 percent of active missionaries, and the figure rose to slightly more than 60 percent in 1893". See Welter, "She Hath Done", p. 632; John von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism 1620-1957* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1992), p. 341.

foreign missions, raised funds for the support of single women missionaries, and committed itself to eradicating the “degradation and wretchedness of women in heathen and Mohammedan countries”³⁵.

Women teachers, nurses, and social workers were dispatched to the Near Eastern field. Women doctors were enlisted as well to provide medical services to the mission families and, by extension, to local Christian families associated with the missions. All female missionaries received a very small salary as well as living expenses. Therefore, their duties in the foreign field constituted a professional service. Single women responded to the call in increasing numbers for it offered an opportunity of spiritual and social contribution and a chance to travel to fascinating lands of historical and religious importance³⁶.

In contrast to their predecessors, independent American female missionaries left a more complete record of their public service. Living in an era of travel and travel writing, they employed writing to relay the demands as well as the significance of their work to their congregations back home and to the American public at large. Not only did they write descriptive and informative official reports. They also expressed their opinions on the course of the missionary work and offered detailed observations on the host cultures. Their memoirs and/or travel accounts of the “exotic” places and societies they encountered are valuable evidence of their professional and cultural peregrination in the Near East³⁷.

35. *The Missionary Herald*, v. 64, no. 4 (April 1868): 139; Woman’s Board of Missions, *Historical Sketch of the Woman’s Board of Missions Cooperating with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: Woman’s Board of Missions, 1883), pp. 9-11; Beaver, *American Protestant Women*, pp. 93-94. The American Board also cooperated with the Woman’s Board of Missions of the Interior for female missionary work in North America and the Woman’s Board of Missions for the Pacific.

36. Anderson, *Memorial Volume*, p. 276. For an analysis of the feminized professional role of the woman physician in Victorian America see Martha L. Hildreth, “Delicacy and Propriety: The Acceptance of the Woman Physician in Victorian America”, *Halcyon*, v. 9 (1987) 149-165. In 1900, in a centennial survey of foreign missions, James S. Dennis reported serving under all U.S. boards, 1291 wives, 1,015 single women, and 113 women physicians who might be either. See Beaver, *Protestant Women*, p. 109.

37. Examples of this genre of writing are D. T. Fiske, *Faith Working By Love: As Exemplified in the Life of Fidelia Fiske*, Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1868; Mary West, *The Romance of Missions in the Land of Ararat*. Boston: J. J. Arakelyan, 1880; Mabell Elliott, M.D., *Beginning Again at Ararat*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924.

In their public roles away from home, American female missionaries introduced a sharper prototype of a female pursuing a career of benevolence. While the early amateur was attracted to the mission field abroad by her sense of religious voluntarism and familial ties, the independent missionary made the foreign mission the object of her individual professional commitment. The years from 1880 to 1920, argues historian Patricia Hill, were the golden age in the history of missionary expansion and afforded an unprecedented opportunity for young women committed to that public call³⁸.

However, the example of the single professional woman posed a troublesome contradiction: in order to carry the duties of her professional role of benevolence the single missionary woman denied or sacrificed her own social responsibility of motherhood. This potentially threatening pattern of unfulfilled femininity, nonetheless, did not generate much opposition either in the U.S. or in the Near East. The particular tasks it entailed circumscribed a domestic and feminine realm of service, that is taking care of the extended society in place of one's own family.

Furthermore, during this period of growth in American missionary work in the Near East, 1869-1914, more demanding duties were assigned to women missionaries in the Ottoman empire. The number of female teachers increased as more missionary schools, particularly boarding schools for girls at the high school and college level, were opened. Indeed, American Protestant education reached its climax during this period. For example, the Constantinople College for Girls and the American Collegiate Institute for Girls in Smyrna (Izmir), which still operate today, were founded during that period of missionary expansion³⁹.

38. Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), p. 8; Rohr *American Congregationalism*, pp. 340-341. Hill suggests that there is also a clear socioeconomic distinction between the two groups: the early female relatives of missionaries had, by default, personal and often economic interests in the mission because their male relatives did so. On the contrary, single missionaries in the later years tended to be younger in age and of lesser economic means. Coming from small towns or rural areas in the U.S., they ventured abroad in search of higher earnings. Hill, *ibid.*, p. 127.

39. The names Istanbul and Izmir replaced with consistency the old ones, Constantinople and Smyrna, upon the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923. Until then the old names were used more frequently, especially by westerners.

Female missionary educators introduced western pedagogic methods that took root in the area. They were among the first to introduce kindergarten schooling in the Near East. Two such institutions operated in Smyrna and in Sofia, Bulgaria, with notable success⁴⁰. While the few kindergarten schools catered primarily to the children of wealthy families, other female missionaries chose to serve the unfortunate. In 1892 Corina Shattuck founded the American Industrial Institute in Ourfa, Turkey, to employ Armenian widows and orphans. On the property of the Institute she also operated a school for blind orphans. Upon her death in 1910, the school was renamed the Shattuck School for the Blind⁴¹. Ruth House, the daughter of John and Susan House, spent most of her life assisting her parents and later on her brother at the American Farm School in Salonika. Acting as “matron, nurse, teacher, hostess and in a number of other capacities”, among the Balkan Christian students of the school—many of them war orphans—, she helped them master agricultural vocational skills and develop community leadership roles. Susan Hill also proved her pedagogical skills but, furthermore, redefined her public role as her husband’s helper at the American Farm School in Salonika. Possessing a personal conviction of service to the world, “Mother House” crafted a very active participation in the education of the students as well as in the school’s cultural and economic contribution to the surrounding communities and to the Greek society at large⁴².

Besides education, wives of missionaries, as well as women missionaries applied a practical method of humanitarian assistance. They attempted to instill a spirit of profitable enterprise among Christian widows and orphans, who, as victims of local revolts or military insurrections, had fallen under missionary protection. They trained the destitute

40. Bowen, “Historical Sketch”, ABC, 16.5, v. 6 (13); “The American Kindergarten in Sofia, Bulgaria”, ABC, 16.5, v. 6 (65); Frank Andrews Stone, *Academies for Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey: 1830-1980* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 89-90.

41. “The American Industrial Institute, Ourfa, Turkey. Report for 1910-1911”, “Shattuck School for the Blind, Ourfa, Turkey. Report for 1910-1911”, ABC, 16.5, v. 6 (44, 45).

42. Brenda L. Marder, *Stewards of the Land: The American Farm School and Modern Greece*. East European Monographs. (Boulder; New York: Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 53, 19-20, 25.

Christians to make a profitable living out of traditional trades such as carpentry, tinsmithing, embroidery, lace and rugmaking, in order to escape the demoralizing state of dependence on relief assistance⁴³.

American missionaries also established hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries in the Ottoman Empire equipped with medical personnel trained in the United States. Their primary goal was to provide modern medical knowledge to their Christian charges. On the ground the American Board missionaries made medical relief accessible to Muslim and Jewish patients as well⁴⁴. By the turn of the century missionary hospitals in the larger urban centers introduced another innovation, women's medical care by establishing women's wards in their institutions to assist expectant mothers⁴⁵.

If the missionary women served as role models of modern motherhood and a woman's public service through charity, were they persuasive in conveying their message to the Near Eastern women? Available sources provide answers only about the female graduates of the missionary schools and not about Christian women who encountered the missionaries through philanthropy or proselytization. Near Eastern converts to Protestantism comprised a very small number. Perhaps, their minority status within the Ottoman Armenian and Greek communities compelled the Ottoman Protestants to maintain a low public profile⁴⁶.

Female missionary teachers and administrators of American Board schools pointed with pride to the large number of alumnae who got mar-

43. *The Missionary Herald*, v. 92, no. 6 (June 1896): 231-235; David Brewer Eddy, *What Next in Turkey: Glimpses of the American Board's Work in the Near East* (Boston: The American Board, 1913), pp. 74-75, 137; Clarence D. Ussher, M.D. and Grace H. Knapp, *An American Physician in Turkey: A Narrative of Adventures in Peace and in War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917), pp. 72-73.

44. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (1907), 2: 1057-1062; Eddy, *What Next*, pp. 133-135; Ussher & Knapp, *American Physician*, pp. 80-101.

45. *Life and Light*, v. 29, no. 2 (February 1899): 61-64; Ruth Azniv Parmelee, *A Pioneer in the Euphrates Valley* (np, 1967), pp. 5-14 in *Ruth A. Parmelee Papers* (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, California) (np, 1967), Box 4.

46. In 1906 there were 139 Protestant churches in the Ottoman Empire with 16,099 members. If we take into consideration that the Ottoman Armenian and Greek subjects numbered about four million before World War I, then the numbers of Ottoman Protestant converts exemplify the lack of American missionary success in evangelization. See *The Missionary Herald*, v. 102, no. 2 (November 1906): 545; Eddy, *What Next*, p. 77.

ried, thus fulfilling their civic duty as women. From a missionary perspective, marriage was considered even more successful if it secured a middle class status for the young women. Such partnerships were expected to enhance the growing western outlook which the young female alumnae had developed during their secular education in the missionary schools and demonstrated in their appearance, clothes, manners, and lifestyles⁴⁷.

However, women graduates of the missionary schools ventured beyond the civic duty of raising a family. According to missionary reports, graduates often pursued teaching at schools within their own *millet* or returned to their missionary *alma mater* as instructors⁴⁸. By the turn of the century, in accordance with the American college tradition, they established alumnae associations and became involved in enhancing the quality of academic life at their *alma mater*. For example, they organized fund raisers in order to upgrade the institution's science laboratory, to enhance its collection of works of art or to contribute to the purchase of land for the expanding needs of the institution⁴⁹.

Following in the steps of their American mentors, graduates formed women's literary clubs in order to advance women's concerns. Others created women's benevolent societies to care for the needy of their ethnic/religious community. Still others took upon themselves a more populist mission: they reached out to rural women of their *millet* to

47. *Life and Light*, v. 30, no. 6 (1900): 249; *Life and Light*, v. 32, no. 1 (January 1902): 15; American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *The Higher Educational Institutions of the American Board* (Boston, n.d.), pp. 26, 31. For western influences on women's fashion and clothing, see Nora Seni, "Fashion and Women's Clothing in the Satirical Press of Istanbul at the End of the 19th Century", *Women in Modern Society: A Reader*, ed. Sirin Tekeli (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1995), pp. 25-45.

48. *Life and Light*, v. 30, no. 6 (1900): 249; *Life and Light*, v. 32, no. 1 (January 1902): 13; American Board, *Institutions*, p. 14. Some of the returning alumnae sought employment at their *alma mater* to fulfil their enrollment agreement with the institution. In an effort to ease financial constraints, the school had waived tuition fees for those students with the understanding that upon graduation they would offer their teaching services to the institution. If, in the meantime they got married, it was the prospective groom who was obliged to reimburse the school for the expenses of the young woman's education. See Mrs Edward (Sarah D.) Riggs to Miss Lamson, Women's Board Missions from Western Turkey, Melrose, Massachusetts, 12 January 1926, ABC: Woman Board Supplement (6:34) (Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts).

49. *Life and Light*, v. 24, no. 11 (November 1894): 10; *ibid.*, v. 32, no. 1 (January 1902): 13.

enlighten and empower them as individuals. They taught their rural pupils reading and writing, basics of modern sanitation and housekeeping. On a more practical level, they taught these women ways of improving their material well-being by turning into profit their traditional crafts of weaving, lace and rug making⁵⁰.

Women's education, in fact, would have consequences unpredicted by its missionary advocates in the Near East. Education led women in that region as well as in other countries to look beyond their domestic duties and empower themselves intellectually and morally far beyond the bounds early advocates had foreseen. Missionary reports refer to alumnae who went on to pursue a career in nursing or medicine in the U.S. and Europe but also alumnae who took over the family business and thus stepped into male pursuits⁵¹.

Unfortunately, among the, perhaps, many examples of Near Eastern female alumni of American missionary schools who assumed a role in the public sphere the stories of only two graduates are delineated in some detail in the sources. Sara Saprighian graduated from the women's department of Euphrates College, Harpoot, eastern Turkey, in 1913. The outbreak of World War I disrupted her plans for studies in nursing in the U.S. Instead, she sought training as a volunteer nurse at the American missionary hospital in Harpoot where she apprenticed under Dr Ruth Parmelee until the Christian exodus from Turkey in 1922. Saprighian arrived as a refugee in Salonika, Greece, in winter 1923. She joined Parmelee at the American Women's Hospitals in Salonika⁵² and later followed her mentor to the AWH in Kokkinia (renamed Nikaia), Athens, where she completed her training in nursing in 1927. Soon after she took up an opportunity to study in the U.S. where she eventually settled⁵³. Kleoniki Klonari, born in Brusa, Turkey, received formal edu-

50. *Life and Light*, v. 41, no. 2 (February 1911): 60. Unfortunately, the official publication of the Woman's Board, which serves as the only source of this information, does not assess the number of graduates involved in the above activities nor the extent and/or success of their undertakings.

51. *Life and Light*, v. 32, no. 1 (January 1902): 13-14; *Life and Light*, v. 41, no. 2 (February 1911): 60.

52. In 1922 Parmelee, still a medical missionary of the American Board, volunteered her services with the American Women's Hospitals in Greece until 1933.

53. Ruth Parmelee, "Sketch of Sister Sara", *Parmelee Papers*, Box 2; Esther Pohl Lovejoy, *Certain Samaritans* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 324 (description

cation at an American missionary school for girls in Constantinople and afterward taught at a similar missionary institution until she left for the U.S. to study nursing. In 1899 she graduated from the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and went on to pursue post-graduate training as well. In 1901 she settled in Greece and served as superintendent at the Children's Hospital of St. Sophia in Athens. During the Ottoman refugee evacuation in Greece, 1922-1923, Klonari developed close professional cooperation with the AWH and the Nursing Service of the American Red Cross in Greece⁵⁴.

The stories of these two Ottoman Christian disciples to American missionary education reveal the predicament of the American missionaries and their students in the Ottoman Empire by the turn of the century. The ideology of nationalism had galvanized Balkan subjects in the early nineteenth century to claim their independence from the sultan's rule. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries nationalism made inroads among the ruling Turkish elites and among non-Turkish subjects in the Asiatic heartland of the empire. Suspicious of U.S. missionary influence on movements for ethnic independence, the Ottoman government intervened in the U.S. missionary work more frequently and imposed serious restrictions. American missionaries were required to curtail their work just when their field of operation was expanding.

The first major friction in the relations between the missionaries and the Ottoman government occurred during the Armenian revolt of 1894-1896. During the suppression of the revolt by Turkish armies Armenian students and personnel of the missionary schools as well as Armenian converts to Protestantism were killed and missionary property was destroyed⁵⁵. Turkish authorities suspected American missionaries of cooperating with the rebels and for that reason procrastinated reimbursing the

of attached illustration).

54. Charlotte M. Heilman, Assistant to National Director, American Red Cross Public Health Nursing and Home Hygiene, to Ruth Parmelee, 24 October 1933, *Parmelee Papers*, Box 3: Nursing in Greece, enclosure; Fred Field Goodsell, *They Lived Their Faith, an almanac of faith, hope and love* (Boston: American Board, 1961), p. 225.

55. Specific numbers of Armenians and missionary personnel killed during the revolt are not available. Richard G. Hovannisian assesses the number of Armenians killed in 1895-1896 to be approximately one hundred thousand. See Hovannisian, *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, v. 2: *Foreign Dominion to Statehood: The Fifteenth Century to the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 222.

missionaries for their loss of property.

In response to the humanitarian crisis, the Board established larger orphanages to provide for destitute Armenian children and dispensed emergency assistance to dislocated Christians but also to needy Muslims and Jews⁵⁶. The Board's policy of dispatching more women to the Near East mission fields proved effective as the demand for caring and philanthropy increased in those years.

World War I marked a turning point in the American missionary work in the Near East. Although missionaries were successful in persuading the U.S. government to maintain neutrality toward Turkey, missionary activities during the course of the war came to a standstill and a significant number of missionary schools closed down. The war precipitated the dissolution of the empire and the exodus of the Ottoman Armenian and Greek communities, thereby forcing an end upon the American missionary work in the area.

Did missionary education to Ottoman Christians heighten hostility between Muslim rulers and Christian subjects? It is improbable to trace the long-term social and political impact of missionary education upon the graduates of the American schools and colleges in the Ottoman lands. For most of them life after 1914 took a tragic turn: exile, economic ruin, and a refugee status. Nonetheless, one should emphasize the complex effect of missionary education: it encouraged ethnic and religious integration by bringing together the youth of diverse Ottoman communities. At the same time, the curricular orientation of the missionary schools emphasized western Christian values and beliefs, while perpetuating prejudices against Islam and the Muslim subjects of the empire. One can not argue with certainty that American missionary endeavors instigated Christian irredentism against the Ottoman state but it is also difficult to contend that missionary education reinforced Christian bourgeois loyalty to the Ottoman imperial government.

Far beyond the controversial effect of missionary education, more complex forces determined the fate of the Ottoman Empire after 1914: a decade of military conflict, demographic, social, and political upheaval, 1912-1922, sealed the fate of the Ottoman plural society and accelerated the alienation between Muslim Turks and the Christian ethnic groups.

56. Lybyer, "Record", p. 807; Earle, "American Missions", p. 405.

World War I and the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-1922 signaled the forcible end of the physical and cultural existence of the Armenian and Greek *millet*s in the Ottoman empire as well as the abrupt termination of the American cultural involvement among Ottoman Christians.

The exodus of Ottoman Greeks and Armenians and the concurrent independence of the Arab lands marked the end of the religious and ethnic diversity of the former Ottoman empire. In its place, the republic of Turkey emerged in 1923 as a modern nation-state with a far more homogenous ethnic and religious profile and a commitment to establishing western secular political and social institutions. The new republican government under Mustafa Kemal imposed serious restrictions on missionary work. In the aftermath of the war the American Board was unable to resume its work in Turkey. Only few high schools and colleges continued to operate in the major urban centers of Istanbul, Izmir, and Bursa. Those institutions had already grown into successful educational and economic enterprises. The Turkish government sought to sustain them but under strict scrutiny. After 1923 the student body changed to one with an overwhelming majority of Turkish students. The American Board also transplanted two colleges from Turkey to Greece and maintained altogether two women's and two men's colleges in Greece. However, mindful of the dramatic military, political and demographic changes in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Prudential Committee of the American Board ruled out the option of expanding its work in Greece or of reviving its missions in Turkey⁵⁷. The Women's Board merged with the American Board in 1927 and thus, its work abroad ended.

Unquestionably, the more lasting legacy of the American Board's involvement was the educational base it established in the Near East. Its advanced educational institutions served as models for the establishment of national educational institutions in the area after World War I.

57. Marjorie Housepian Dobkin argues that during the negotiations at Lausanne (late 1922-early 1923) for the settlement of the status of war between Greece and Turkey, members of the American Board lobbied the U.S. government incessantly in order to continue both American philanthropy and American business in Turkey. See Housepian Dobkin, *Smyrna 1922: The Destruction of a City* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972; reprint ed., Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1988), p. 227. The records of the American Board, however, point to a more mixed and indecisive attitude which soon afterward was manifested in the Board's significant curtailing of its work in Turkey.

American Women and Professional Philanthropy

Missionary women were the predecessors of another group of American women who established a more distinctive legacy of American female professionalism in the Near East. Those were doctors, nurses, relief and social workers, personnel of American philanthropic organizations which contributed relief and rehabilitation assistance to war victims in the Eastern Mediterranean during and after World War I.

In contrast to the private missionary efforts that hardly attracted the attention of the U.S. government, American philanthropy abroad after 1914 was employed as a visible means of American foreign policy. During the U.S. military participation in the European war, American relief agencies were required to abandon their humanitarian neutrality and to dispense relief aid only to the Entente countries and their armies. In the postwar years they adjusted to new demands again: the U.S. government authorized selective dispensation of philanthropic assistance in the world while pursuing two seemingly contradictory goals, global economic expansion but also diplomatic non-entanglement in world affairs.

The U.S. humanitarian campaign in the Near East during and after World War I constitutes another chapter in the American attempt to rescue the Near East, not from moral and spiritual decline as the missionaries had attempted to do earlier, but from the devastation of war. This intervention was predicated upon American material strength and progress. American medical, technical, and scientific resources and knowledge were committed to save the Near Eastern Christians. Philanthropy allowed the United States a non-controversial political involvement in Near Eastern affairs.

It is noteworthy that during this stage the rank and file of the American philanthropic organizations that operated in the Near East were women. Thus professionalization and rationalization of American philanthropy in the early twentieth century was accompanied by feminization of the rank and file. In the following pages we shall examine whether numerical majority brought along an empowering status for American professional women in philanthropy.

The Near East Relief (hereafter NER) was the first American humanitarian organization that began its operations in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 among persecuted Armenians. Until the end of World War I, other

American philanthropic organizations opened relief stations in the Ottoman empire as well; the American Red Cross (ARC), the American Women's Hospitals (AWH), the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). In addition a considerable number of the American Board's missionaries, women and men, volunteered their services to the philanthropic organizations, the NER in particular. Although their mission was to tend to the needs of the Christian populations, the American voluntary organizations offered aid to needy and sick Muslims and Jews as well.

American humanitarian work reached its highpoint during the massive refugee evacuation from Turkey into Greece in the fall of 1922 and early part of 1923 when approximately 1,2 million of Ottoman Christians, primarily Greeks, swarmed into Greece. Unable to deal with the enormity of such a demographic crisis, the Greek government appealed in September 1922 to the international community for emergency relief. In early October, the U.S. government committed the most extensive foreign assistance. President Warren G. Harding authorized the ARC and the NER to carry out the task. Doctors of the American Women's Hospitals (AWH) volunteered to be the medical arm of both ARC and NER in Greece⁵⁸.

A large number of refugees benefitted from the nine-month American relief campaign. The ARC, for example, distributed food, clothing and medical aid and supplies to hundreds of thousands of refugees⁵⁹. By the end of November 1922, approximately 200,000 refugees had received food from the ARC daily. In the winter and spring the number of recipients increased to between 400,000 and 500,000⁶⁰.

Concerned about the rapid spread of contagious diseases among both refugees and local Greeks, the ARC and American Women's Hospitals (AWH) launched a joint medical campaign. The two American organi-

58. *The Red Cross Courier*, 14 October 1922, pp. 1, 7; *Foreign Relations of the U.S. (1922)*, 2: 432.

59. Throughout the paper they are referred to as refugees because at least first generation Ottoman Greeks and Armenians in Greece never gained a new identity. They were called refugees and they themselves accepted the term to denote their sense of superiority toward local Greeks and their pride in the material wealth and cultural identity they had left behind.

60. American Red Cross, *Annual Report for the Year Ended June 30, 1923*, pp. 62-65.

zations maintained a quarantine station, disinfection plants, hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries in and around refugee camps. Doctors of the AWH were in charge of the medical operation.

It is not surprising that the doctors of the AWH paid special attention to the health needs of refugee women and children. In early 1923 the AWH established and operated in Salonika, one of the largest refugee concentration centers, a maternity ward of approximately 100 beds in one of the city's hospitals for the care of refugee expectant mothers. A year later when that refugee hospital was turned over to the Greek government, the AWH offered its services to refugee women at their hospital in Kokkinia, a large refugee camp in Athens⁶¹. However, neither the AWH nor the ARC had the financial means to provide prenatal care for all refugee expectant mothers. The two agencies attempted to reach them as well as the rest of the refugees through an educational campaign, involving the distribution of leaflets and posters in the refugee camps on fundamental rules of health education and disease prevention⁶².

Although limited in size and time, the humanitarian work of the American relief agencies left a lasting legacy among its recipients. Since the majority of the personnel were women, the contribution of the American agencies was identified in the collective memory of refugees and local Greeks with the image of the American woman caretaker. The AWH doctor, the ARC and NER nurse, the woman teacher at the NER orphanages, and the NER social worker introduced among native women a professional role model: someone who could restore faith in life for thousands of refugees by her professional competence along with her affection and altruism.

The notion of professionalism, introduced by the American women, reflects the American middle class Victorian values of higher education, hard work, competence, efficiency and strong sense of duty to the community. However, these specific professional roles maintained strong elements of domesticity and motherhood. Women as doctors, nurses and teachers were trained to provide public care in the same way as they would within the family. They were expected to demonstrate affection,

61. *Makedonia* [Macedonia], 4/17 February 1923, p. 1; Lovejoy, *Women Physicians and Surgeons: National and International Organizations* (New York: Livingston Press, 1939), pp. 143, 171.

62. *Makedonia*, 4/17 February 1923, p. 1; *The Red Cross Courier*, 23 June 1923, p. 2.

warmth, and personal sacrifice but were also required to rationalize and professionalize their feelings while upholding the ethical standards of their professions⁶³. Nursing, teaching, and, to a lesser extent, medicine, attracted American women mainly because they required domestic tasks. The male-dominated American society encouraged women to pursue these roles for they posed no obvious threat to traditional social values either at home or among the host cultures where these professional women were dispatched.

This generation of American women in philanthropic roles also wrote about their professional experiences. They did so with confidence in the importance of their service to the Near Eastern destitute. They conceptualized their work as part of the U.S. humanitarian campaign to restore civilian life in Europe, the Balkans and the Near East during World War I and its aftermath. They projected themselves as protagonists in the crucial role American philanthropy played in healing the devastation of war in the Old world.

American doctors and nurses often went beyond the call of duty in order to save refugee lives and for that reason the idealized image attributed to them by Ottoman refugees seems justifiable. Four women exemplify this altruism and self-sacrifice: Dr. Esther Pohl Lovejoy, the director of the AWH, worked incessantly during the dramatic days of the exodus to aid and save refugees swarming at the Smyrna port⁶⁴. As soon as the emergency evacuation was completed she returned to the U.S. to oversee personally a public fund raiser for her small organization so that AWH could partake in the relief campaign in Greece. Alice Carr, a NER nurse and a specialist in public health programs, spent 20 years among

63. Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence* (Yale Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 9, 61; Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture", *American Quarterly*, v. 27 (1975): 530-531.

64. Dr. Lovejoy along with other U.S. delegates were attending a meeting of the Medical Women's International Association in Geneva during the first week of September 1922 when the news about the refugee exodus from the Ottoman Empire reached them. Shortly after she arrived in Constantinople together with a few other AWH doctors. U.S. High Commissioner in Turkey Admiral Mark L. Bristol ordered her to proceed to Smyrna where she stayed until the massive evacuation of the Christian refugees was completed. Immediately afterwards she returned to the United States to raise more funds for the Near Eastern Christians. See Lovejoy, *Certain Samaritans*, New York: Macmillan Co., 1933.

the refugees in Greece⁶⁵. She helped them during their emergency evacuation to Greece and went on to dedicate her professional expertise to teaching rural refugee communities practical ways of rehabilitation and permanent settlement. She continued her work until the German armies occupied Greece in 1941.

Among the medical personnel of the AWH two professionals personify the commitment of that organization: Dr. Ruth A. Parmelee and R. N. Emilie Willms. Parmelee, the daughter of American missionaries in the Ottoman empire and a medical missionary of the American Board herself, joined the AWH in Greece in 1923 after she had served with the NER in the Ottoman empire. She offered her medical services to the Greek state throughout the interwar years either by sustaining hospitals established by AWH or advising Greek governments on public health reform initiatives⁶⁶. Willms arrived in 1929 and assisted Parmelee in building a professional Greek public nurse corps⁶⁷. Both were forced to leave Greece in the summer of 1941 before the advancing German armies. They went on to volunteer their medical services to Greek armies and refugees in Palestine. At the end of the war both returned to Greece and resumed their efforts to create a professional corps of Greek nurses as well as to build modern public health⁶⁸. While the work of some personnel has been recorded for posterity, the contributions of others may never be reconstructed. Those are American nurses and relief workers who died of contagious diseases in the Near East. That tragic

65. *The New Near East*, September 1925, p. 15; James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), pp. 197-198.

66. She was appointed a missionary of the American Board in 1914 and went to Harpoot, central Turkey. Soon after she volunteered with the NER. In early 1923, after the massive refugee exodus to Greece was completed, she joined the AWH and offered her service to refugees, women in particular. See "Outline of the Work of Dr. Ruth Parmelee", *Parmelee Papers*, Box no. 1; Fred Field Goodsell, *They Lived their Faith, an almanac of faith, hope and love* (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1961), pp. 113-114; Lovejoy, *Women Doctors of the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 351.

67. Near East Foundation, "An American Florence Nightingale", *Near East Foundation Archives* (Near East Foundation, New York), Project Files, Cabinet #5, Drawer 2, Greece Financial Reports 1930s.

68. Goodsell, *They Lived*, pp. 113-114; John S. Badeau and Georgiana G. Stevens, *Bread from Stones: Fifty Years of Technical Assistance* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1966), p. 37.

highpoint of their professional commitment is all we may ever know about them.

Despite their professional contributions, American professional women were constrained on the job. A closer look at the structure of the American relief agencies reveals the prevalent ideology of patriarchy and a contradiction which professional American women confronted at the "work place". Although they performed their job with rigor, dedication, discipline, and resourcefulness, they did not hold administrative positions in the organizations. Decision-making offices were held by male administrators, in spite of the fact that the majority of the personnel were women. Restricted from "reasoning" tasks, women were relegated to the feminine duties of caring, nurturing and assisting the refugees as missionary wives and female missionaries had been in the nineteenth century. Women missionaries did not enjoy equal status with men. Instead, they were called "assistant missionaries" and operated under a male administration. They were accountable to the American Board which commissioned unmarried women⁶⁹.

American professional women in philanthropic roles instilled among their Greek and Armenian emulators a professional image that reinforced the traditional elements of femininity. On the job, Greek and Armenian professional women were faced with the same constraining reality. They were also assigned tasks which emphasized the feminine traits of humanitarian service, while administrative responsibilities were entrusted to men.

AWH is the only example of an organization of professional women, who were allowed to hold the administrative offices of their organization. This irregularity can be explained by the circumstances of the agency's founding. During World War I the U.S. government did not allow women physicians to participate in the relief efforts in Europe.

69. Riggs to Lamson, Women's Board Missions from Western Turkey, 12 January 1926, ABC: Woman Board Supplement (6:34); M. M. Underhill, "Women's Work for Missions: Three Home Base Studies", *International Review of Missions*, v. 14 (1925): 389. This phenomenon of patronized professional work was not unique to Congregationalist missionary women. Other American women were also required to conduct their foreign mission work exclusively within organizations designated as auxiliary to the board of missions of their respective missionary society. See Ian T. Douglas, "A Lost Voice: Women's Participation in the Foreign Mission Work of the Episcopal Church, 1920-1970", *Anglican and Episcopal History*, v. 62 (March 1992): 42-44.

American women doctors founded the organization in 1917 to protest against that decision. The U.S. government was eventually compelled to grant recognition to the organization but limited its autonomy by assigning AWH to operate in Europe as the medical arm of the ARC and NER⁷⁰.

All in all, the number of Greek and Armenian women “converts” to middle-class American female professionalism in philanthropy was small. The financial burden of the large-scale relief campaign, in part, did not permit the American organizations to undertake training of Greek and refugee women in larger numbers. For example, the AWH operated a training school in public health nursing in Athens from 1927 to 1933. It was the most successful American effort to assist in modernizing Greek public nursing. However, only 27 Armenian and Greek nurses graduated from the school in the six years of its operation. Financial constraints necessitated a limited enrollment and continuous interruptions to its curriculum⁷¹.

Similarly small was the number of American women involved in relief work in the Near East but for different reasons. The total American personnel of the philanthropic organizations was small since those agencies predicated their humanitarian campaign upon a core policy of engaging local people in the relief operations. A corps of native professionals would carry on the rehabilitation work when the American organizations withdrew⁷².

Despite their small numbers, the female personnel of the American philanthropic organizations helped to turn their own professional achievements into an attainable goal for young native and refugee

70. On the AWH's political battles for recognition as an independent professional organization see Ellen S. More, “‘A Certain Restless Ambition’: Women Physicians and World War I”, *American Quarterly*, v. 41, no. 4 (December 1989): 636-660.

71. Emilie Willms, “School of Nursing Report”, 8 August 1933, *American Women's Hospitals Records* (Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, The Archives and Special Collections, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Greece, AWH School of Nursing [1923-1931], Box 10: 76 (7 of 28); Lovejoy, *Women Doctors*, pp. 347-348.

72. For example, in January 1923, in the midst of the refugee emergency campaign, the personnel of the AWH consisted of 3 American doctors, 10 American nurses, 2 English nurses, 30 native doctors, and 100 native nurses. See Jefferson Caffery, U.S. charge d'affaires ad interim to Greece, to Charles Evans Hughes, secretary of state, Athens, January 30, 1923, NA 868.143/1.

women as well. They helped establish training schools for public nurses in Greece. For example, in 1923 the Greek Red Cross Nurses Training School served as the only Greek public institution offering professional training for nurses. To upgrade the curriculum, NER personnel volunteered to teach a public health course and seminars on practical training on the condition that refugee girls from NER orphanages would be accepted as students⁷³. In December 1925, there were 26 students enrolled in the school, 13 Greek and 13 Armenian⁷⁴. The AWH training center for public nurses in Kokkinia, mentioned earlier, was also successful and received the attention of the Greek government and the press⁷⁵.

Viewing education as the primary avenue for economic improvement and social change, the American mentors provided financial support and encouragement for young Near Eastern women to pursue graduate studies abroad in the fields of medicine, nursing, and special education. The refugee crisis had exposed the rudimentary Greek public health system and had created a critical need for public nurses. According to a Rockefeller report, from 1900 to 1930, 21 Greek women studied nursing abroad. Eleven of them were trained in the U.S. and the rest in western European countries⁷⁶. Upon return to Greece, they contributed their expertise to the reorganization and modernization of the country's public health and social care system. The American organizations also pledged their financial support to train a corps of Greek teachers for children with special needs. Chryssoula Kyriakidou, one of the teachers chosen for the task, was sent to the U.S. on a two year scholarship for graduate studies in special education. Upon her return in 1928, she was

73. Near East Relief, "Agenda of the Near East Relief Conservation Committee", 9 January 1930, NEF Archives, Near East Relief Docket, pp. 81-82; Laird Archer, Director, Foreign Department of the Near East Relief, "Quarterly Report of the Foreign Department", 10 October 1929, NEF Archives, Near East Relief Docket, pp. 63-65.

74. Archer, "Annual Report of the Foreign Department of the Near East Relief for the year 1925", NEF Archives, Near East Relief Docket, p. 55.

75. "Outline of the Work", *Parmeleë Papers*, Box no. 1; Lovejoy, *Women Doctors*, pp. 347-348; Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, pp. 166-167.

76. Strobe to Russell, April 11, 1930, Record Group 1.1 Projects, International Health Division, Ser. 749 Greece, Box 1, Fol. 3, attached memorandum, *Rockefeller Foundation Archives* (Rockefeller Archive Center, North Tarrytown, New York); Alice Carr, *Public Health, Medicine and Sanitation in Greece (Before the Axis Occupation)* (Near East Foundation, December 1942), pp. 6-7.

appointed the director of the first Greek public school for deaf-mute children which operated in Athens⁷⁷. Georgia Vojadjoglou, an Ottoman Greek refugee, graduated from the AWH nursing school in Kokkinia in 1929 and pursued further studies in public nursing in the U.S. and Canada with the support of a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship. She went on to head the Greek State School of Public Health and Hospital Nursing⁷⁸.

A distinction should be made here, with regard to the social and economic background of the young Greek and Armenian women who were exposed to American influences. The missionary educational system had reached and benefitted primarily young women from well-to-do families, since only they could afford to complete their schooling. Later, the efforts of the philanthropic organizations reached women of different socioeconomic backgrounds. In fact, those setting the examples were also from different milieus. American women doctors were for the most part from the upper middle class. Nursing, on the other hand, appealed to American women from the lower-middle class with suburban and rural backgrounds. Trained nursing was overwhelmingly a career for single middle class women. Similar patterns can also be traced among their Near Eastern emulators. Young Greek women from well-to-do families became doctors, while lower-middle class native and refugee girls were attracted to nursing.

American professional women in philanthropy as well as their missionary predecessors identified with their students and the few Christian and Muslim professional women they worked with. They, nevertheless, maintained an attitude of cultural superiority towards the majority of Near Eastern women, articulating it with a rhetoric of cultural and feminist imperialism⁷⁹. Confident in the aspects of their spiritual and

77. Barclay Acheson, executive secretary, Near East Foundation, to Admiral M. L. Bristol, U.S. high commissioner in Turkey, 9 February 1932, *Papers of Mark L. Bristol* (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.), folder 72: Near East Foundation, p. 39; Archer, "Quarterly Report of the Foreign Department", 10 October 1929, NEF Archives, Near East Relief Docket, p. 66.

78. "The American Women's Hospitals in Greece" [1946], AWH Articles and Reports for JAMWA [Journal of American Medical Women's Association], AWH Records, Box 1: 7; Ethel S. Beer, *The Greek Odyssey of an American Nurse: Adapted from the unfinished autobiography of Emilie Willms, R.N.* (Mystic, Connecticut: Lawrence Verry Inc., 1972), pp. 8-9.

79. Alison Blunt reminds us of the dual identity that "imperial women" acquired: a

secular American culture, they wished to effect in the Near East material and social change leading to a reality that matched their own. Their reports or writings often reflected their astonishment at the different political, social, and cultural values of the Near Eastern people and at differences in work ethics and low standards in cleanliness and sanitation.

The following examples are telling of this persistent American sense of superiority. Dr. Mabel Elliott, who volunteered her medical expertise to the Near East Relief in Turkey in 1918, in her reminiscences from the region equated the traditional appearance, clothing, and life style(s) with lack of progress in one's social and cultural values. "Often," she recalls in her autobiography,

"one of my girls (Armenian hospital trainees), as clever and pretty and smartly dressed as any American girl, would ask me to visit her home. She would like me to meet her mother, she would say. With the tenderest of pride, she would take me into some primitive, Armenian house and present me to an old, toothless woman wearing Armenian veils and bracelets and a charm against the evil eye, and sitting on the floor by the ashes of a fire. The girl would say, 'My mother', as though she were a princess speaking of a queen. I often thought that in similar positions, few American girls can be so unconsciously fine"⁸⁰.

Esther Pohl Lovejoy's autobiography, *Certain Samaritans*, constitutes the most ostensible example of American humanitarian, moral and cultural "messianism" toward the Near Eastern Christians. This personal record centers on the American philanthropic involvement during the dramatic days of the refugee exodus from Turkey to Greece proper. In an imperious tone the author narrates the uplifting and civilizing mission of the Americans among the refugees as well as the local Greeks⁸¹.

feminine one empathizing with the natives and a masculine belief in their cultural superiority, imperial power, and authority. See Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), pp. 110-111.

80. Mabel Evelyn Elliott, *Beginning Again at Ararat* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), pp. 74-75, 16.

81. Esther Pohl Lovejoy, *Certain Samaritans*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933.

American women in philanthropy encountered an even more perplexing cultural experience. Although confident in their superior American culture, they were at the same time cognizant of the Near East's heritage as the site of a glorious classical past and early Christianity. In fact, that aspect of their work motivated and excited them a great deal. They often relayed in their reports detailed impressions from their visits to historical and archaeological sites, while failing to provide an informative account of their field work. However, in their view, the essence of the classical heritage had weakened among Greeks as much as the purity and zeal of early Christianity had waned over time among Armenians and Greeks. Thus, through their missionary and philanthropic work, they hoped to reinculcate the essence of Christianity and the values of democracy into the lives of contemporary Near Eastern Christians. Reflecting on the mission of the AWH in Macedonia, where many refugees arrived after 1922-1923, Lovejoy depicted her organization's role in an allegory built on a verse from the New Testament:

“‘And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying: Come over into Macedonia and help us’.

The Fate of Christendom was in the balance. Paul the Apostle, crossed the Aegean Sea from Asia Minor to Europe in answer to this call-and Luke, the Beloved Physician, went with him.”⁸²

Over time American women became more tolerant and appreciative of the strikingly different cultures they encountered in the Near East. Although in most cases their deep sense of cultural superiority was never eclipsed, they demonstrated more compassion towards the host cultures. Few of them were so enticed by the “Orient”, however, that they chose to live there⁸³.

If the Greek and Armenian emulators of American middle-class female professionalism in philanthropy were not many, where does the

82. Lovejoy, *Certain Samaritans*, p. 327.

83. On the subtlety and complexity of the cultural encounter for American and other “imperial” women who travelled for missionary, humanitarian, and/or colonial purposes, see Blunt, *Travel, Gender*, pp. 114-115, 140-141, 160-164.

significance of this phenomenon of cultural interaction lie? Its lasting consequence can be traced in the impact that the American mentors had upon other women's professional lives. The contributions of Greek, Armenian, and Turkish professional women to their fields of expertise were invaluable in the developing nationstates of the Eastern Mediterranean.

At the same time this undertaking in dispensing philanthropy established bonds among middle-class women and helped raise gender consciousness among Greek, Armenian, and Turkish women. However, the interwar political and economic instability in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean hindered social and economic changes favorable to women's claims. These seeds of gender consciousness had to await the end of World War II to develop into full-blown feminist consciousness⁸⁴.

In the process of social, economic, and political self-awareness, interaction with western European women also played a crucial role. Greek, Armenian and other Near Eastern women observed and interacted with European women when the latter travelled and/or settled in the region but also when they themselves began travelling to western Europe in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, American middle class women, in spite of their limited acquaintance with Near Eastern women, left a commanding image through successful educational work in times of peace and extensive humanitarian assistance in times of turmoil and upheaval.

Conclusion

None of the images of the "new woman" introduced by professional American women signaled a break from the traditional models of womanhood. Instead, the American role models integrated characteristics of domesticity and maternity as essential components of the education and professional identity of young women. The American paradigm(s) of the modern woman which reached the Near East in the nineteenth and early

84. Eleni Varikas, "Gender and National Identity in Fin de Siècle Greece", *Gender and History*, v. 5, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 269-283; Efi Avdela and Angelica Psarra, *Ho Feminismos sten Hellada tou Mesopolemou: Mia Anthologia* [Feminism in Interwar Greece: An Anthology], Athens: Gnose Publications, 1985; Ahmed, "Turkey and Egypt", pp. 111-123; Badran, *Feminists, Islam*, pp. 74-110, 207-219.

twentieth centuries emphasized individualism, secularization, material prosperity, and a woman's right to education and a professional career but equally advocated her traditional role in a male-oriented society. Both protagonists and emulators accepted gender differences as the natural order of things. At the same time their professional tasks legitimized female stepping out into the public arena and revealed women's abilities, self-confidence, and leadership skills⁸⁵.

In fact, American cultural intervention in the Near East did not proceed unchallenged. Armenian, Greek, and Turkish women were selective in the aspects of American culture they adopted. During the missionary stage they largely rejected proselytism, yet embraced western education, ideas and ideologies, life styles, and many aspects of western material culture. They demonstrated that interest again during the stage of American humanitarian assistance. When presented with the opportunity, Armenian and Greek refugees as well as local Greeks pursued higher education and professional training in Greece and abroad.

American female professionalism based on "womanly values" and prescribed by middle-class American women constitutes a form of American feminist "errand of mercy" that further enhanced the American cultural penetration of the Near East. As the American humanitarian and cultural involvement grew more secular, it became more and more the task of women. What had begun as a masculine enterprise of spiritual conquest reached its climax and ending as a feminine endeavor of relief and philanthropy, however, patronized and guided by the U.S. government.

85. Michelle Perrot, "Stepping Out", in *A History of Women in the West*, v. 4: *Emerging Feminism*, pp. 449-481; Nancy F. Cott, "The Modern Woman of the 1920s, American Style", in *A History of Women in the West*, v. 5: *Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Francoise Thebaud (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 76-91. For a succinct account of American women's civic action in the expanding separate sphere of the early twentieth century, see Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 321-372. Judith Papachristou takes it a step further and explores the stillborn efforts of female activists to delineate a rhetoric and agenda of American foreign policy reflective of feminine values. See Papachristou, "American Women and Foreign Policy, 1898-1905: Exploring Gender in Diplomatic History", *Diplomatic History*, v. 14, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 493-509.

Philanthropy, education and the dissemination of American social and cultural values along with modest commercial investments in the Eastern Mediterranean evolved into useful and effective ways of establishing a visible American presence in a region where the U.S. government did not pursue active and consistent diplomatic involvement until the 1940s.