

American Turkish Encounters

American Turkish Encounters:
Politics and Culture, 1830-1989

Edited by

Nur Bilge Criss, Selçuk Esenbel,
Tony Greenwood and Louis Mazzari

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P U B L I S H I N G

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	viii
------------------------	------

Introduction	1
--------------------	---

The Historical Stage

After Merchants, Before Ambassadors: Protestant Missionaries and Early American Experience in the Ottoman Empire, 1820-1860.....	8
Cemal Yetkiner, City University of New York	

Early Missions and Eastern Christianity in the Ottoman Empire: Cross-Cultural Encounter and Religious Confrontation, 1820-1856	35
Esra Danacioğlu Temur, Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul	

Robert College; Laboratory for Religion, Shrine for Science— Transculturation of Evangelical College Model in Constantinople.....	48
Aslı Gür, University of Michigan.	

The Long Journey of Cyrus Hamlin	61
Ted Widmer, Brown University.	

Turkish-American Relations from the Perspective of Local History: Literature of Harput	75
Muammer Gül.	

Young Turk Relations with the United States, 1908-1918	83
Feroz Ahmad, Yeditepe University, Istanbul.	

Ottoman Diplomatic and Consular Personnel in the United States of America, 1867-1917.....	100
Sinan Kuneralp, ISIS Istanbul	

The Interwar Years

A Palazzo on the Bosphorus: The American Embassy in Beyoğlu	110
Louis Mazzari, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul	

Admiral Mark Bristol and the Turkish Republic, 1923-1925	123
Hakan Özoğlu, University of Chicago	

The U.S. and the Sancak Question: Navigating a New Relationship in a Rapidly Changing Context.....	134
Sarah Shields, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	

World War II: The Foundation of the Modern American-Turkish Relationship, 1939-1947.....	163
Joshua Walker, Princeton University	

The Cold War

Reinterpreting Turkey's Marshall Plan: Of Machines, Experts, and Technical Knowledge	182
Burçak Keskin Kozat, University of Michigan	

American Public Support for Aid to Turkey after World War II.....	219
Kerem Ozan Kalkan, Middle East Technical University, and Eric M. Uslaner, University of Maryland, College Park	

The Formation of the American-Turkish Alliance and its Impact on Domestic Political Developments in Turkey from 1940 to 1960	236
Hakan Yılmaz, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul	

The One Coalition They Craved to Join: Turkey in the Korean War	261
Cameron S. Brown, Global Research in International Affairs Center, Israel	

The American Cold War Military Presence in Turkey	281
Nur Bilge Criss, Bilkent University, Ankara	

Revisiting the Origins of the Cyprus Conflict: The Impact of the Cold War and Turkish-American Relations	299
Aylin Güney, Yasar University, Izmir	

Cultural and Intellectual Interaction

Transferring American Models for Education in Business and Public Administration to Turkey, 1950-1970	316
Behlül Üsdiken, Sabancı University, Istanbul	

The Cold War, Jazz, and Turkey	331
Pinar Gözen, Università degli Studi di Trento, Italy	
Turkish-America on Stage: <i>Harputta bir Amerikalı</i> and <i>Pera Palas</i> , or Orientalism and Self-Orientalization in American Turkish Relations.	344
Gönül Pultar, Cultural Studies Association of Turkey, Istanbul	
Perceptions of American Aid as Reflected in Political Cartoons Published in Turkish Humor Magazines, 1945-1960	354
Murat Erdem, Ege University, Izmir	
Regional Security Issues and U.S.-Turkish Relations in the 1980s.....	366
Sabri Sayarı, Sabancı University, Istanbul	
Turkish American History Reflected in the Life of Howard A. Reed	381
Arzu Öztürkmen, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul	
Contributors	405

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Selcuk Esenbel presided over the process from conference through publication, springing from her personal commitment to the two nations’ shared political and cultural ties. Esenbel grew up in both countries through her father’s long years of diplomatic posting in the Turkish embassy in Washington, where she witnessed and absorbed the complexity of this encounter during the Cold War era. Louis Mazzari, of Boğaziçi University, edited the manuscript and managed its production. Bruce Kuniholm, of Duke University, and Heath Lowry, of Princeton, both contributed over the years. The editors appreciate the professionalism and expertise of Carol Koulikourdi, Amanda Millar, and Soucin Yip-Sou of Cambridge Scholars Press.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey and the United States have been critically important to each other since the beginning of the Cold War, although their relationship has faced a rocky road in the aftermath of developments following September 11, 2001, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Because scholarship on its roots has been relatively limited, Americans and Turks, as well as others who focus more generally on geopolitical alliances, would profit from an in-depth understanding of a history that spans the period from the beginning of the 19th century to the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The history of Turkish-American relations includes not only strategic, but also political, social, cultural, and intellectual dimensions. While critical to understanding Turkish-American relations, these dimensions rarely surface in today's discourse, which reduces bilateral relations to issues currently being contested. The encounter between East and West embodied in Turkish-American interactions ranges from the official and diplomatic to unofficial and informal exchanges at the social and individual level; while often compatible and friendly, such interactions occasionally have been less so. In this work, authors from both countries developed a variety of perspectives on these interactions through original research that will enable both specialists and general readers to appreciate its many facets.

The American-Turkish encounter has had a profound effect on both countries. In recent years, differing interpretations of that encounter have resulted in considerable rancor and contributed to a profound anti-Americanism in Turkish public opinion. That is all the more reason that a bi-national historic treatment of Turkish-American relations deserves an informed and thoughtful treatment. This is especially so in view of the recent political transition that is taking place in the Middle East and the leading role Turkey may be playing in the region in coming years.

This book consists of papers that were solicited from both Turkish and American authors, many of them young scholars, who were invited to a conference in June 2006 in Istanbul. The conference on "The History of American-Turkish Relations, 1830-1989" was held under the auspices of Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, in collaboration with a relatively new University in Anatolia, Harran University in Urfa, with the support of

Turkish and American sponsors, including Boğaziçi University, Boğaziçi University Foundation, Harran University, the Fulbright Commission, the C.V. Starr Center, the Turkish American Business Council, and Koc Holding. It also received the strong support of the cultural division in the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul. The doyen of Turkish-American cultural interaction, Ahmet Ertegun, of Atlantic Records, gave the opening address. The purpose was to bring together young and mid-career scholars, with longstanding experts in the field, to share information from sources recently made available, and to rethink and reinterpret important parts of this history. If, as E.H. Carr has asserted, history is a symbiotic relationship between the past and the present, the past periodically requires a fresh look from the vantage point of an evolving present. There is no time like the present to do this.

This is not a volume of proceedings, however. Subsequent to the conference, the authors were asked to develop papers that consisted of new and original work on American-Turkish relations in order to produce a comprehensive volume on the topic. The resulting studies are grouped in four major subheadings as “The Historical Stage: 19th century through World War I: 1830 to 1918”; “The Interwar Years: 1918 to 1939”; “World War II and the Cold War: 1939 to 1989”; and “Cultural and Intellectual Interaction.”

The book portrays American Turkish encounters between the selected dates of 1830 when the Ottoman Empire and the U.S. government signed a treaty of trade, prior to the Anglo-Ottoman Treaty of 1838, which began diplomatic relations, and 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell, which marked the end of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and disintegrated the premises of the American Turkish alliance. The dates are somewhat arbitrary, but we have felt that there was dire need to present a critical historical appraisal of American Turkish relations until the end of the Cold War, since the new post-Cold War era witnessed a new turn of events and shifts in the global political and cultural scene that have engendered the transformation of American Turkish encounters.

The authors have dealt with a rich array of topics ranging from the politics of war to the culture of jazz and business in papers that introduce a wealth of previously untapped documentation both from Turkish and American archives. The papers also use a variety of sources. Mazzari, for example, injects an analysis of the diplomatic and social history of Americans in Istanbul into the physical surroundings of the famous American Embassy in Pera. Gül and Pultar use modern Turkish literature to consider Turkish views of Americans. Erdem surveys political cartoons from Cold War Turkish newspapers. Öztürkmen conducts an oral-history

interview. While Sayari and Criss rely on diplomatic reports and documents, Üsdiken uses educational materials.

The overall treatment represents a multi-faceted appraisal of what was frequently a contested legacy, especially in Turkey. The mainstream Turkish nationalist and critical opinion has frequently viewed the American impact on the Ottoman Empire as that of self-serving missionaries who sewed seeds of separatism and discord. Later, as some of the articles point out, Turkish intellectual critics during the Cold War often saw the relationship with a jaundiced eye, believing the alliance had turned the Republic of Turkey into an outpost of American capital, military bases, and anti-communist ideology. Both views have not disappeared entirely, although as these articles show, enduring threads of this long-duree relationship make the story of American Turkish encounters a complex of contestation and cooperation.

The volume starts with consideration of the little-known elements of late Ottoman encounters with Americans. The studies of Yetiner, Danacıoğlu, Gür, and Widmer chisel out the complex history of American Protestant missionaries, targets of frequent accusations of being harbingers of ethnic nationalism and separatism. The articles bring to light the religious and intellectual background of the early missionary movement with a careful analysis of the religious mindset and intellectual vision of William Goodell and Cyrus Hamlin; a new interpretation of the missionary vision from the perspective of cross-cultural encounters and religious confrontation; and the interplay between “orientalist” images with the impulse to create “New England gentlemen out of orientals.” The articles suggest that the missionary legacy of American Turkish encounters surfaces as an enduring influence, which perhaps unintentionally formed the survival of the “trustworthy” image of Americans as educators and healers, meaning providers of modern education, medicine, and technology. That image possibly may have helped Turkish acceptance of Americans as providers of modernity during the controversy over machines and experts during the early Cold War, as shown by Keskin Kozat. This image of the American as educator and healer survived despite the criticism of missionary activity, from both Muslim Turks and the traditional Greek and Armenian Christian communities, over Protestant zeal to convert Muslims and so-called oriental Christians to the new and purified faith of revived Christianity. Gül shows that 19th-century American Turkish encounters also generated in local histories a wealth of fairy tale-like stories and poems, which created the quintessential image of the American missionary and conveyed Turkish views of the new land of hope and wealth, as well as melancholy and loss, in the history of Turkish

migrants to the United States, who arrived alongside the larger population of Armenians from eastern Anatolia.

Gür's article and Widmer's biography of his ancestor, Cyrus Hamlin, both analyze Hamlin's confrontation with the governing American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions over educational policy which pushed Robert College, the first U.S. school overseas, toward vernacular language instruction and liberal arts. The biographies of Americans in Turkey reflect the important role of such bi-cultural and bi-sited individuals as Howard Reed, a longstanding interlocutor and mediator of American-Turkish relations during much of the Cold War, whose interview by Öztürkmen forms an original contribution to the volume. Several articles, including those of Mazzari, Ozoğlu, and Shields, illuminate the activities and conflicting views of such diplomats as Admiral Mark Bristol, Joseph C. Grew, Henry Morgenthau, Abram Elkus, John Van A. MacMurray, General Charles Hitchcock Sherrill, Robert Peek Skinner, and others, about Turks and Turkey, and about the question of the Armenian mass killings in 1915 that presage the debate that continues in Washington today.

Ahmad's and Kuneralp's articles significantly contribute to our understanding of Ottoman Turkish views of the U.S. and highlight the activities of such early diplomats as Eduard Blacque Bey, Gregoire Aristarchi, Huseyin Tevfik Pasa Rustem Bey, Abdulhak Huseyin Bey, and Alexandre Mayroyeni, who also reported on the underside of American social relations with African-Americans and native tribes. For the late Ottoman foreign ministry, a post in Washington did not equal the prestige of an assignment in Vienna, Paris, or London. But Ahmad's treatment points to the roots of the Turkish elite view of the United States as a newly emerging power to counter-balance those European powers, including Britain and Germany, which had designs on the Ottoman Empire. Soon after World War I, liberal Turkish opinion momentarily flirted with the idea of a benign American Mandate. Yilmaz and Criss demonstrate that, after World War II, this view clearly later played itself out in the Turkish entry into the Western alliance.

Shields's article on the interwar years demonstrates the careful attention that American diplomacy paid to the incorporation of the former French Syrian Mandate territory of Sancak, or Hatay, into the Turkish Republic as an example of the U.S. desire for international stability through multilateral alliances, rather than mere nationalist irredentism or Wilsonian self-determination.

The mega-scale transformation in American Turkish relations obviously occurred with the onset of the Cold War, which framed much of

the dynamic, and created the contested components, of post-war history in Turkey. The articles on the Cold War—Yilmaz, Walker, Keskin and Kozat, Uslander, Brown, Criss, and Güney—delineate the complex story of Turkish and American rapprochement as a result of the superpower rivalry with the Soviet Union, when Turkey became part of U.S. military strategy in the region and a member of NATO. Walker portrays the alliance from several perspectives that trace the birth of a new American strategic interest in Turkey, and the Turkish view of the U.S. as a global balancer, replacing Britain, to counter Stalin's Soviet threat. Keskin Kozat study the American global intellectual construct of Taylorism and Progressivism in the Marshall Plan reconstruction of Europe that extended U.S. aid to Turkey in the form of machines and expertise for modernization. Kalkan and Uslander analyze public opinion polls that supported aid to Greece and Turkey. Brown considers the link among the politics of Turkey's turn to multi-party elections, its acceptance to NATO, and its entry in the Korean War. And Yilmaz surveys problems that developed over aid and Turkey's implementation of an American modernization program during the 1950s. In sum, they map the conceptual discourse of the day in Turkey and the United States, while they address the interplay of the national and global events.

Criss argues that the authoritarianism of Turkey's governments during the 1950s and 1960s, with their national-security policies of repression and their abuses of human rights in the name of anti-Communism, was a result of entry into NATO, which engendered the development of a Cold War-era national-security state that justified the empowerment of the Armed Forces toward domestic political intervention. Sayari looks at the strategic partnership of American-Turkish relations, which suffered greatly in the 1970s, then experienced a revival in the 1980s during the shift in U.S. regional security issues over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution. Coming after the 1980 military coup in Turkey, the new global situation brought the two nations closer again. However, the Gulf War and the Iraq War have more recently showed that Turkish elites have not continued to agree with every U.S. military policy in the region.

Of the various encounters between Turkey and the U.S., the cultural and intellectual legacies of the Cold War years stand out as surprising enduring elements of contemporary Turkish life. The fall-out in American-Turkish relations from the late 1960s throughout the 1970s over American deployment of Jupiter Missiles, as Criss points out, the Turkish intervention in Cyprus and the subsequent American arms embargo, described by Güney, overshadow the less well-known but possibly more enduring cultural encounters of the Cold War years. Gözen traces the

popular attraction to American jazz in the urban Turkish scene; Pülter considers images of American life in Turkish plays; and Keskin Kozat examines the training of a new cadre with American technical expertise. Üsdiken offers a perspective on American-style institutions of higher education with the founding of Middle East Technical University and Boğaziçi University (the former Robert College), as well as the development of American business and public administration programs, while Erdem considers Turkey's political-cartoon culture during the Cold War 1950s. The American-oriented modern culture and education of today's Turkey is markedly different than the region's other nations. The Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development, and the United Nations funded projects that pushed post-war Turkey toward an American model, rather than furthering the European models of previous Turkish reforms.

As these articles demonstrate, the gradual impact of the U.S. in Turkey ranged from the political to the cultural, from Cold War strategy to jazz diplomacy, from missionary schools to Turkish novels, medicine to business. The volume concludes with a personal interview of Howard Reed, who has been actively involved with much of what has transpired in American Turkish relations ever since World War II. Thus, this book ventures to show that when seen in a historical framework, the American Turkish encounter took place beyond the level of formal political and military ties during the Cold War period and has enduringly interacted at the level of educational, social, and cultural realms.

THE HISTORICAL STAGE

AFTER MERCHANTS, BEFORE AMBASSADORS: PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AND EARLY AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1820-1860

CEMAL YETKINER

Introduction

This chapter explores the establishment of American missions in the Ottoman Empire during the first decades of U.S. contact with the Middle East. It considers the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening during the first half of the 19th century in the northeastern United States and presents the origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), a foreign mission society that quickly became a model for Protestant missions around the world. These Protestant missionaries in Ottoman lands were not solely Christian evangelicals, but also created the image of the United States throughout the region.

These missions and their work in the Ottoman Empire shed light on American theological history and historiography of the Protestant missions. And in a larger sense, though, these missions planted the seed of “American culture” among the people in the Ottoman land for whom, at the time, the United States was an unknown land. Looking at the way these missionaries universalized “American culture” by equating it with “Christian revelation,” some see the effect as cultural imperialism.¹

This chapter will ask the following questions: How did American evangelical groups enter mission work and create various missionary societies? What were their aims? What were the characteristics of the first missionaries in the Ottoman Empire? What were their impressions about the people of the Empire? How did Istanbul become a center of the Board? Who were the first missionaries in the Ottoman capital, and what was their impact? And what was the local response?

During the nineteenth century, the United States built up its infrastructure in the Middle East and established relations with the Ottoman Empire. The

first Americans to make contact with the Ottoman Empire were New England ship captains and the merchants who started trading at Izmir in the 1780s. Politics and diplomacy remained relatively unimportant until the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation signed on May 7, 1830, an embassy was established, and Commodore David Porter was appointed to Istanbul in October 1831.² Porter remained in Istanbul first as charge d'affaires and then as Minister until his death in 1843. It was the Protestant missionaries, however, who made the most significant American impact on the culture of the region.

During this period, Americans realized that, to have an influence in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Middle East, they needed to know the cultures, languages, religious systems, and political orders. Missionaries did not intend to work as agents or the ambassadors of the United States, but rather saw themselves as agents of God.

They were, nonetheless, willing to help plant the seeds of American culture among the peoples, cultures, languages, and social orders in Ottoman Asia Minor. They worked through the press, through schools, hospital, and churches to meet, understand, and influence, then finally, create a living space among the Ottoman orders. They played significant roles not only by spreading Protestantism among the people of the Ottoman Empire and introducing American culture, but also through their efforts to understand the society that they sought to influence.

Uygur Kocabaşoğlu claims that “when the Ottoman intellectuals in the first quarter of the twentieth century began to discover Anatolia and wonder about it, American missionaries already knew it well. And because they did so, they probably knew much better than the Ottoman rulers the values, patterns of behavior, desires, prejudices, and expectations of the different ethnic and social groups living there.”³

The Second Great Awakening and the Emergence of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

The first phase of the Second Great Awakening took place at the turn of the 19th century, when many towns from Connecticut to New Hampshire were swept by a feeling of “refreshing showers” and began to establish home missionary societies.⁴ Similar missionary societies were already being established in Europe to evangelize non-Christian peoples around the world. The missionary movement in the Protestant sense—that is to say the “mission” to the “heathen” for “Christianizing” and “civilizing”—traces its origins to 1789 and the efforts of William Carey, a Baptist minister in England and later missionary in India. Within the next

decade, missionary societies were also established in Scotland the Netherlands, and Switzerland to evangelize in west Africa, India, and the Middle East.⁵

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, throughout the Second Great Awakening, similar missionary organizations were founded, first, for home missions and, later, abroad to preach the Gospel to the heathen. The religious revivalism of the First and the Second Great Awakenings helped shape the U.S. during its foundation years. The First Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s has been called America's first national event, and the Second Great Awakening of the 1800s through the 1850s, influenced the character of the early national period and the rest of the nineteenth century.⁶ The revivals associated with the Second Great Awakening took place not so much among people who heard the Gospel for the first time, but among those who had a basic understanding of the faith but had not found it meaningful in their own lives.⁷ These revivals led to the establishment of evangelical religious institutions and voluntary associations of private individuals for missionary, reformatory, and benevolent purposes throughout New England and the rest of the country.⁸ The American Society for Promoting the Gospel among the Indians and others in North-America, founded in 1787 by a group of New England ministers, opened a new chapter of modern missionary activities and elevated the religious aspirations of so-called heathens at home. Other missionary societies soon made their appearance.

These societies' aims were divided between evangelizing the "heathen" Indians and white Christians. According to Clifton Jackson Philips, New England missions found themselves "finding the aborigines gradually disappearing from her own borders, and drawn also to the task of supplying her own westward-moving populations with Christian institutions."⁹

On June 19, 1798, the Connecticut General Association constituted itself into a missionary society "to Christianize the heathen in North America and to support and promote Christian knowledge in the new settlements within the United States."¹⁰ Five years later, the Connecticut legislature granted a regular charter to the Connecticut Missionary Society, which soon founded the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* to promote the society's work and develop financial support. At the same time, a similar missionary society organization emerged in Massachusetts. The constitution of the Massachusetts Missionary Society specified the aim of establishing a mission abroad. Its object was "to diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel among the heathen as well as other people in the remote parts of the earth where Christ is seldom or never preached."¹¹

The movement quickly expanded. In 1801, the New Hampshire Missionary Society was established, and in 1807 the General Convention of Vermont began to operate as a missionary organization. Women's interest in missionary labor led to the foundation of the first missionary organization for women in October 1800, the Female Society for Missionary Purposes and four years later, the Female Cent Institution was founded in New Hampshire on the basis of members' contributions, a cent a week.¹²

New England Congregationalists were not alone. The Second Great Awakening spread beyond the denomination and region. By 1825, Presbyterians, Methodist, and Baptists gained missionary enthusiasm and reached New England's frontiers. Among these were the Home and Foreign Missions Society, the American Bible Society, the African Colonization Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Temperance Society.¹³ By the 1850s, fifteen different foreign missionary societies had been established.¹⁴

The men and women of these societies and foreign missions—mostly New Englanders—traveled far beyond the Atlantic, to India, the Ottoman Empire, Ceylon, Hawaii, China, and Japan. They were supported by communities that spread from New England to upstate New York and the Ohio Valley. As Philips writes, “[I]t was not only foreign commerce but foreign missionaries which made Boston a representative name for the New World in Smyrna, Canton, Honolulu, or Bombay.”¹⁵ Boston and the rest of New England planted the seeds of American culture and established the American way of life abroad.

In the fervor of the Second Great Awakening, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) began in 1806 with the “Haystack Prayer Meeting” of a group of students at Williams College, in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Samuel J. Mills, born into a Connecticut ministerial family in 1783, with four fellow Williams students, dedicated themselves to missionary service in foreign lands.¹⁶ After graduating, these students—Mills, James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harvey Loomis, and Byram Green—enrolled at Andover Theological Seminary.¹⁷ Andover, founded by an “orthodox coalition” led by Jedidiah Morse to counter the “Boston Harvard liberals,” became a permanent recruiting ground for the missionary movement.¹⁸ Every man in the first American mission in Ottoman Lebanon was educated at Andover.¹⁹ In the spring of 1808, in the northwest lower room of the East College, a secret society was formed, the *Brethren*, for the purpose of analyzing and formulating plans for “the future missions and effect in the persons of its members a mission or missions to the heathen.”²⁰

On June 27, 1810, four students—Adoniram Judson, Jr., from Brown; Samuel Nott, Jr., from Union College; Samuel J. Mills, from Williams, and Samuel Newell, from Harvard—appeared at a meeting of the Massachusetts General Association to present their statement and speak with established ministers about missionary work in India and with Native Americans in the newly opening West.²¹ The next day, two ministers, Drs. S. Spring and Samuel Worcester charted a plan for organizing the ABCFM, and three months later, in Farmington, Connecticut, a constitution was adopted and officers elected.²² Worcester became the Board's first secretary.²³ The ABCFM members stated that "their minds have long been impressed with the duty and importance of personally attempting a mission to the heathen," but wondered "whether they ought to direct their attention to the eastern or western world, whether they may expect patronage and support from a Missionary Society in this county, or must commit themselves to the direction of a European society, and what preparatory measures they ought to take, previous to actual engagement."²⁴

Following an unsuccessful attempt to solicit aid and funding from the London Missionary Society,²⁵ the board received a starting donation of thirty thousand dollars from Mary Norris, the widow of a Salem merchant and a founder of Andover.²⁶ A year later, in February 1812, the first ABCFM missionaries—Judson, Newell, Nott, and their wives, along with Gordon Hall and Rice—sailed for Calcutta.²⁷

The American Board was organized to "preach the pure gospel" in the "heathen world."²⁸ The board had soon enlisted many graduates from Andover and beyond as missionaries for foreign lands. A missionary was proscribed in the by-laws²⁹ of the Board as "one who has been ordained a minister of gospel and has actually come under its direction."³⁰ Rufus Anderson, the board's corresponding secretary from 1832 until 1866, described the missionaries' calling as "the forerunners of the Spirit, as pioneers, as healers. Their whole prescribed duty is to make proclamation of the truth."³¹ To do so meant to reject other religious dogmas, including those of eastern Orthodox churches. Their view was exclusive by definition. They were going out into the world to convert people to Protestant Christianity.

These missionaries traveled, worked, endured, and converted some but, they also faced deep disappointment when their gospel was rejected. At first, they genuinely believed that they would be able to convert the "sinners" without much resistance to their Christianizing and civilizing. But they quickly began to experience difficulties and soon adapted policies and strategies for foreign proselytizing.

The American Board was born in a period of time and place in which liberal and conservative strains competed for the hearths and minds of college students and educated men and women throughout New England. William Strong described the age of missionary ferment:

Back of Williamstown and accounting for Mills and the haystack, as for Andover Seminary itself, was the period of religious revival, which blessed New England as the eighteenth century turned into the nineteenth. The tides of religious life had reached a low ebb after the Revolutionary War and, before the welcome change began, infidelity was general and rampant. Educated men boasted of skepticism. The colleges were noisy with it. The reaction from the great awakening and its surge emotions was complete. Then came quietly a gradual renewal of religious desire. It appeared first in Connecticut and soon was felt in Mill's home Litchfield.³²

This thirst for religious revival in New England led many young men and women to enroll in various home and foreign missionary establishments and to explore to other parts of the country and the world. The board's first step was to prepare the minds of these men and women for their enterprise. They published illustrative sermons and read them in homes, at social visits, and at religious conferences. They worked to develop a missionary spirit among the students elsewhere. A young Williams student transferred to proselytize among prospective missionaries at Middlebury. Mills visited New Haven and numerous colleges, churches, and organizations.³³

As corresponding secretary, Rufus Anderson, played an important role in shaping the board's foreign mission policies from the 1830s through the end of the Civil War. Anderson helped set the terms of debate on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. He was also the most important American promoter in the mid-nineteenth century of the "Three Self" program. To advance the cause of developing indigenous Christianity, he asserted the goal of helping native churches to become "self-supporting," "self-governing," and "self-propagating."³⁴

The startling success of domestic evangelical revivals led mid-nineteenth-century Protestants to proclaim their confidence in the ability of the "Holy Spirit" to "convert" sinners without elaborate preparatory measures.³⁵ In time, board missionaries, funded by the U.S., established themselves in the Sandwich Islands, Ceylon, East India, China, Africa, and the Ottoman Empire.

Protestant Missionaries and Early American Experience in the Ottoman Empire, 1820-1860

The first overseas movement of “God’s people,” as they called themselves, of the American Board mission for the “spiritual renovation” of different societies was to India in 1812. Five years later, a mission to the Muslim Ottoman Empire was charged with acquiring “particular information respecting the state of religion and to ascertain the most promising place for the establishment of Christian missions.”³⁶ The first objects of the Board’s attention were Jews in the Holy Land. They were also curious about Muslim Turks and Arabs, and considered future missions among other nationalities and religious communities in the Levant, including Greeks, Copts, and Armenians.³⁷

In November 1819, the board’s first two missionaries, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, were sent to explore the far-flung lands of the Ottoman Empire and establish a station in Jerusalem for the conversion of Jews. Fisk and Parsons were classmates at Middlebury College in 1814, and together they prepared for Andover Seminary.³⁸ Like their colleagues, they were convinced of the need to evangelize the world to “facilitate the Second Coming of Christ.”³⁹

On October 31, 1819, Fisk and Parsons, along with members of the Park Street and Old South Churches in Boston, gathered to deliver instructions to missionaries bound for the Holy land and listen to sermons by those being sent to the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ Parsons preached in Park Street Church on the “Dereliction and Restoration of the Jews”; Fisk delivered a farewell sermon in Old South Church on the “Holy Land, as a Field for Missionary Enterprise.”⁴¹ Worcester delivered instructions to Parsons and Fisk. Their mission “was to be regarded as a part of an extended and continually extending system of benevolent action for the recovery of the world to God, to virtue, and to happiness.” In the prosecution of it, “respect was to be had, not merely to what might be effected by their own efforts directly, but also to the lights and facilities, the aids and inducements, which they might afford to the efforts of others, either acting contemporaneously with them, or successively to come after them.”⁴² Parsons reminded his listeners and himself that

The two grand inquiries ever present to your minds will be WHAT GOOD CAN BE DONE? and, BY WHAT MEANS? What can be done for the Jews? What for the Pagans? What for the Mohammedans? What for the Christians? What for the people in Palestine? What for those in Egypt? In Syria? In Persia? In Armenia? In other countries to which your inquiries may be extended?⁴³

On November 3, 1819, when Parsons and Pliny Fisk boarded the *Sally Ann* in Boston harbor and set sail for the Ottoman Empire, they carried with them their formal instructions, their Bibles, and their letters of protection from Secretary of the United States, the Governor of Massachusetts, and the British, French, and Russian consuls—as well as the hopes and blessings of the “American churches.”⁴⁴

Arriving at Izmir

After nearly five weeks of voyage, they entered the harbor at Malta, then home to the British Mediterranean naval force and the British Bible depository and press. In mid-January, after a week with the missionaries of the English Bible and missionary societies, they arrived in Izmir, or Greek Smyrna, an important city on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor and, for centuries, the departure point for Ottoman goods to European consumers.⁴⁵ They had left Boston with great expectations, but with limited knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and without any Turkish or Arabic. The day after their arrival, Fisk wrote a letter to his brother illustrating what he had seen on their immediate arrival in Izmir.

We arrived in this harbor yesterday. Mr. Parsons and I thought not best to go into town until tomorrow and we therefore remain in the ship. The Sabbath has been very different from one at Andover. Nearly a hundred vessels lie in the harbor, whose boats have been passing and re-passing all day; guns have been heard frequently, which, with the ringing of Catholic bells in town, and the shouts, yells, murmurs, and gabbling of Turks, Greeks, and almost every kind of people, in every district, and in their different languages, have made this a noisy day.⁴⁶

In Izmir, they soon met the European community, including the British consul, the chaplain of the Levant Company, and several foreign merchants, two of whom were brothers from the Perkins family of Boston.⁴⁷ Almost every day, the missionaries of different societies in and around Izmir came to visit. According to Parsons, their plan was to stay in Izmir two or three months, laying the foundation for a permanent mission, if possible. Then they would move to Scio, an island of the Aegean Sea near the Asian coast, and reside there until fall. They would visit the seven churches of Asia Minor, visit Palestine, study Arabic, and establish a printing press.⁴⁸

They observed and chronicled the local customs and the daily life in Izmir. They found it by far the best situation in the Levant for a permanent establishment, although it took until 1833 for the board to create such a mission.⁴⁹ Appalled by what they called Izmir’s “most dreadful moral

darkness,” Parsons and Fisk nonetheless described a city cosmopolitan and colorful.⁵⁰ Fisk wrote his family a series of city vignettes:

...one is clothed with long robes coming to his feet; another with large pantaloons coming only to his knees; one has a turban on his head, another a calpak-black, white, or green, sometimes globular, sometimes cubical, and often very large. The Catholic priests wear hats with broad brims; the Greeks, a small black hat without any brim. It is common to meet men with beards, that hang down on their breast.-Jews, Turks, Priests, &. The Turkish women are seldom seen abroad, and never except with their faces completely covered. The Armenian women have their faces nearly or quite all veiled; but the Greek women seem quite willing to have their faces seen. Their dress is generally very much like that of the English ladies.⁵¹

Early Explorations

By November 1920, Fisk and Parsons had visited the Biblical “seven churches of Asia” and they spent several months on Scio in the Aegean to learn modern Greek.⁵² At the end of the year, Parsons left Asia Minor for Jerusalem, leaving Fisk to fill the temporarily vacant post of chaplain to the Levant Company.⁵³ Parsons began to work among the pilgrims at the Holy Sepulcher. But a year later, on a second journey to Jerusalem, he took ill and died.⁵⁴

Fisk wrote to another young missionary-in-training, Jonas King, to carry on Fisk’s work. King was in Paris, studying Arabic with the famous Orientalist Sylvester de Sacy, and preparing for a professorship in Oriental Languages at Amherst College.⁵⁵ He left to serve in the mission for three years. Together, Fisk and King traveled from Cairo to Jerusalem, crossing the desert by camel and visiting Jaffa and Hebron in April 1823.⁵⁶ However, the unstable conditions in the region made the goal of a permanent mission in Jerusalem impossible. Within two years, Fisk, like Parsons, died while evangelizing among the Jews of Palestine.⁵⁷

In spite of their deaths, the first steps of Parsons and Fisk were followed by other young men and women missionaries who eventually succeeded in effecting the social, economic, and political lives of many ethnic minorities in Ottoman Asia Minor, Syria, Lebanon, and Jerusalem.

The Mission in Istanbul

After the death of Levi Parsons, the American Board attempted to establish mission in a safer location, and sent two new missionaries to Beirut, Lebanon. William Goodell and Isaac Bird, along with their wives,

Abigail Goodell and Ann Bird, arrived in 1823. But unrest in the Levant, the opposition of the local church leaders, and their own inexperience made a permanent mission impossible to achieve. It was only when Goodell arrived in Istanbul in 1831 that the first continuous mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the Ottoman Empire was established.⁵⁸ Goodell would become famous for his missionary work as the founder of the Constantinople Mission, translating the Bible into Armenian, and developing several schools for various sects of the Ottoman *millets*.

An Evangelical Life: William Goodell

Born in February 14, 1792, in Templeton, Massachusetts, William Goodell was the youngest of eight children. He attended Philips Academy in Andover and then Dartmouth College.⁵⁹ By the fall of 1817, he returned to Andover to enter the Theological Seminary, where he dedicated himself to evangelism. He became a home missionary, traveling house-to-house, distributing books and tracts, and organizing local revivals. In seminary, he took an interest in the work foreign missions and joined the ABCFM.

In 1823, Goodell and Isaac Bird opened the Board's first Levantine missionary station at Beirut. They preached from their house while spending the winter in the study of Turkish, Arabic, and Armenian, preparing to translate the Bible into Armeno-Turkish, the Turkish language in Armenian characters. In July 1824, the missionaries' wives opened the first home school in Beirut with seven students. They named it Christian Arab Tannus Al Haddad.⁶⁰

Goodell and Bird worked with two language instructors who also helped with their missionary work. Bishop Dionysius Carabet, or Armenian Garabedian, and Gregory Wortabet, or Vatabed. While Wortabet assisted Goodell in making a Turkish/English dictionary, Carabet assisted him in a translation of the Gospels into Armeno-Turkish.⁶¹

For a time they worked in Beirut without restraint from either civil or ecclesiastical authorities. Without any hostility, they evangelized Turks, Arabs, Maronites, Jews, and Greeks. Meanwhile, their mission succeeded in several conversions, including two Armenians, Jacon Aga, an Armenian Archbishop, who acted as British agent at Sidon and Armeno-Turkish instructor to Goodell, as well as Carabet and Wortabet, along with his wife, her brother, Joseph Leflufy, a Greek Catholic, Asaad Jacob, a Greek youth who afterwards apostatized, and Asaad el-Shidiak, a Maronite scholar.

Within the first year, however, the Maronite Patriarch forbid his people from reading the Holy Scriptures circulated by the missionaries.⁶² By 1827, with escalating Greco-Turkish warfare threatening their safety, Goodell and Bird decided to retreat. After five years in the Levant, they returned to Malta, where Goodell completed his translation of the New-Testament in Armeno-Turkish.⁶³

In Istanbul

Goodell was selected to open the mission in the Ottoman capital and traveled to Istanbul with a special mandate to work among the Armenian people in June 1831.⁶⁴ Ottoman Muslims were the ultimate object of the mission, but the approach was through the “subject nominally Christian populations.”⁶⁵ As with most of the Board’s Near Eastern efforts, the Constantinople Mission was outwardly concerned with the members of the Eastern Churches, which they sought to reform, rather than with Muslim Turks.⁶⁶

If the Armenians in the city could be converted, they might, in turn, help proselytize throughout the Empire. Goodell had already worked with Armenians during his years in Beirut and, in 1830, two other board missionaries, Eli Smith and Harrison Gray Otis Dwight, spent a year among Armenians in Eastern Anatolia and Persia, and their published observations were important for the future missions to the Armenians.⁶⁷

Goodell’s first objective was the social welfare and education of the city’s Armenians.⁶⁸ But his start was not propitious. Soon after his arrival in Pera, the foreign district of the city, Goodell lost his house, furniture, library, and papers to fire.⁶⁹ When the news of the disaster reached Izmir, American merchants, shipmasters, and residents showed their sympathy with donations of clothing and cash.⁷⁰

The Goodells’s lives reflected the connections that existed between the missionary enterprise in Istanbul and American merchant, scientific, and political interests in Istanbul. They lived for a time in an old palace along the Bosphorus, along with Dr. James E. De Kay from New York, a medical commissioner of the United States studying the Asiatic cholera that was also inflicting Europe and America; Henry Eckford, hired by the Ottoman government to superintend the construction of the Ottoman navy⁷¹; and Charles Rhind, who was negotiating a trade treaty with the Sublime Porte.⁷² The Goodells also spent the winter of 1831-32 in the home of Commodore David Porter, recently appointed charge d’affaires of the United States to the Sublime Porte.⁷³ It was in Porter’s home that the Goodells’s first child was born, the first child of American missionaries

abroad. With the suggestions of their American friends, the Goodells named it Constantine Washington to represent the two worlds.⁷⁴

Beginning of the Commission

The fire had left Goodell with no materials to begin his teaching among the Armenians. Instead, he started working with the Greeks of Istanbul and, by 1832, had established four Greek Lancastrian schools in and around Istanbul with 155 male students.⁷⁵ Like American schools of the period, classes of Lancastrian schools in Istanbul remained un-graded and had very simple curriculum focused mainly on reading, writing, and basic arithmetic. The Bible was the textbook. Instructions were in Greek and Armenian. The classrooms were spare—a floor covered with mats, benches for students, and occasionally desks in the American style.⁷⁶

Goodell's initial works received significant aid from Porter and the Russian Ambassador to Istanbul.⁷⁷ Porter believed in the missionaries' work and reported to the State Department that they were "generally men of liberal education and well-cultivated minds," and foresaw that by their Gospel work, their establishment of free schools, and their "historical and scientific researches, these countries, and mankind in general, will be much enlightened, and the United States in particular will derive...both honor and benefit."⁷⁸

The next year, 1832, Goodell was joined by Rev. Harrison G. O. Dwight, Rev. Eli Smith, and Rev. William G. Schauffler, who had previously made an extended tour of eastern Anatolia.⁷⁹ Schauffler's parents were German, living in southern Russia, and at the age of twenty-seven he traveled to Boston to attend Andover Seminary. In time he learned Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Spanish, as well as German and English. The Goodells, the Smiths, and the Schaufflers, and their children, would occupy the same house in Orta Koy, on the European side of the Bosphorus.

Missionary Impact and the Armenian Patriarchal Response

The early years of the Istanbul mission were difficult. It had been established at a time when Ottoman power was fluctuating, soon after the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826 and the acknowledgment of the independence of Greece in September 1829.⁸⁰ The missionaries began their labors quietly and with caution, having learned from their experience in Beirut. Goodell confided to his colleague Daniel Temple in Izmir that,

“the less people in general know of our operations, so much the better. We keep as much as possible behind the curtain, push others forward; our plans succeed in a manner, which truly astonishes us...”⁸¹

The missionaries also avoided any direct attack on the so-called “superstitions” and “errors” of the Eastern churches. If they had openly attacked the Armenian Apostolic Church or organized public associations of Armenian evangelicals, they would lose any hope of “reforming” the Armenian Church.⁸² Instead, they mobilized the Armenian community to change itself, in a “supportive” commitment with “enlightenment and reform” policies. But their work split the Eastern Gregorian Church. Instead of reforming the Armenian Church, the missionaries weakened and split it in years to come.

Boys and young men were educated in the Istanbul mission’s schools and seminaries to take a leading part in the reform process. The Armenian high school was opened in October 27, 1834, under the supervision of Paspatis, a native of Scio, who had been educated in the U.S. Natural science was taught, and classes were offered in English, French, Italian, Armenian, Turkish, Ancient Greek, and Hebrew.⁸³

Motivated by the example presented by the American Board and Armenian reformers, the Armenian patriarch reopened a national seminary in Istanbul under Krikor Peshtimaljian. Harris argues that although Peshtimaljian never professed Protestantism, he warmly supported the ABCFM efforts and came to be regarded by the board as the Erasmus of the Armenian Reformation.⁸⁴ Goodell notes that he was by far the most learned man he had found among the Armenians. Peshtimaljian’s influence on the Armenian community was very great, and he had already carried out reforms in his church and community.⁸⁵

Peshtimaljan’s sympathy toward the American missionaries helped them find volunteers for their Lancastrian schools. And Peshtimaljan’s school produced the two most important converts in the history of the mission: Hohannes Der Sahakian and Senakerim Der Minassian.⁸⁶ Sahakian’s work as a translator, and Minassian’s teaching helped enable the American mission to establish contacts with eastern Anatolian Armenians, exposing them to Protestantism, and they played essential roles as channels between the missionaries and the local Armenian community.⁸⁷ In Paul William Harris’ account, the idea behind the support of the American missionaries for these reform movements within the Armenian Church was the goal of building up a new Protestant community that would be as complete and autonomous as the Armenian *millet*.⁸⁸

By the mid 1830s, however, the mission’s success had created opposition, not from the Ottoman government which protected its

Muslims subjects from missionary evangelizing, but from the patriarch of the Gregorian Church.⁸⁹ The Protestants efforts to reform the Armenian Church, were a direct assault on the church hierarchy, practices, rituals, and various powers.

In early 1837, a patriarchal prohibition broke up the Mission school and warned the Armenian public in the city against the doctrines of its teachers.⁹⁰ Two years later, Patriarch Stepanos, who had supported reform, was replaced by Patriarch Hagopos, who moved quickly to crush the evangelical movement. Hohannes Der Sahakian and three others were banished and several more imprisoned.⁹¹ Motivated by his counterpart in the capital, the Greek Patriarch also issued a bull, “excommunicating all who should buy, sell, or read the books of the Lutherans or Calvinists, as the missionaries were called,” and an Ottoman Imperial Firman was also published, on top of all; requiring “all the Patriarchs to look well to their flocks and guard them against foreign influence and infidelity.”⁹² In addition to the Greek Patriarchal bull and the Ottoman Imperial Firman, the Armenian Patriarch issued two anathemas in 1839 against all “who should have any intercourse with the missionaries, or read their books, or neglect to inform against known offenders.”⁹³ Meanwhile, in early May 1839, a rich banker in the city, who was well know as a friend of the missionaries, was seized and confined in a mental asylum until he offered to build a college in Asian Istanbul. Two thousand five hundred people were suspected to have collaborated with the missionaries, and two bishops, five priests, and several teachers were arrested.⁹⁴

In spite of this crackdown, the mission put faith in the first formal Bill of Rights for Ottoman subjects—Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews—known as *Hatti Sherif of Gulhane* or *Gulhane Hatti Humayunu*—promulgated on November 3, 1839. Although this edict did not specifically grant religious liberty, it raised the mission’s hopes for political and religious toleration.⁹⁵

The reaction of the Armenian patriarch in turn led to sympathy on the part of reform-minded Armenians, and the missionaries sought to drive a wedge between Armenians. Goodell, Hamlin, and Dwight, constantly reported on the allegations, trials, and punishments meted out by the Armenian Patriarch against the missionaries and their Armenian converts. The Ottoman authorities finally accused the missionaries of proselytizing Armenians, an offence against the Sublime Porte.⁹⁶

When the initial opposition had broken out, nearly all the missionaries in Istanbul were absent. Schauffler had gone to Vienna; Dwight was in America; and Henry A. Homes was in Mesopotamia. Only Goodell remained, along with his colleague Cyrus Hamlin. Fearing an order to

leave the country, Goodell hid all his papers, journals, and correspondence.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, a council of Armenian leaders was called in August 1839 to consider the case of the exiles, and it was resolved that some sent into exile might be allowed to return to Istanbul, and that sentences against the evangelical converts should be commuted. Cyrus Hamlin wrote in an 1840 report concerning this matter:

The debates, we are told, were very fierce, and one or two adjourned meetings of the bankers and clergy were held, which only widened the breach. The nation seemed on the point of a serious division, when that practical good sense, which has hitherto kept the Armenian community from the fatal mistake of the other subject communities, prevailed, and the breach was healed. Hohannes is not to be recalled, as he is regarded as too dangerous a man to live in Constantinople. It is a good omen, however, that the subject has been introduced for discussion.⁹⁸

The missionaries feared a rupture within the Armenian community, although they themselves were the direct cause of the dissension, and their mission would ultimately lead to its split.

Cyrus Hamlin

It was under these circumstances in 1839 that Cyrus Hamlin, from Bowdoin College and Bangor Seminary in Maine, joined Goodell and the others in Istanbul as an American Board missionary. During his third year at Bangor, Hamlin decided to apply to the American Board for missionary service in foreign lands with China for his first choice and Africa the second.⁹⁹ But the Board sent him to Istanbul to join Goodell, Dwight, and Schaffler, along with their wives. Although not formally labeled “missionaries,” the missionary wives, or “Bible women,” assisted their husbands, ran model homes, taught at home schools. In Istanbul, Hamlin became the leader of Bebek Seminary, established to train young men for the Christian ministry.

During the second half of the 1840s, evangelical Armenians were beginning again their work with the missionaries, and a number of Armenians placed their sons mission families for education. It was therefore resolved in July 1840 that Hamlin should open a small boarding school for twelve students with two scholars from Izmit, or Greek Nicomedia, and one from Istanbul.

Alongside the publishing and translation work of the missions, education was considered an integral function of evangelizing. Obviously, primary schooling was not enough. In the missionary field, higher education was needed for the production of native preachers who could