



Building a Protestant Church on Ottoman Armenian Soil


Osmanlı Ermeni Topraklarında Bir Protestan Kilisesi İnşa Etmek

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David BARCHARD 

Düşünce Yazısı

¹ Bağımsız Araştırmacı

 ORCID: 0000-0003-4233-1871

Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author:

David BARCHARD

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Abstract

The presence of American missionaries in late Ottoman territory, exemplified by figures like Smith and Dwight, marked a significant chapter in the region's history. Their legacy, spanning a century, left indelible marks on Türkiye's cultural and educational landscape, including the establishment of institutions like Robert College and the Redhouse press. However, their engagement was not without complexities, as they found themselves embroiled in the intricate interplay between the Ottoman government and the burgeoning nationalist movements among its Christian populace. This paper examines the missionaries' dual roles as contributors to Türkiye's development and intermediaries in the dialogue between nationalist aspirations and Western sympathizers, such as James Bryce. Delving into their initial harmonious coexistence with Ottoman authorities and subsequent entanglements, it sheds light on the missionaries' confrontations not with the government but with the Armenian Gregorian patriarchate, as they navigated the delicate terrain of religion and politics in Ottoman Armenian soil.

Key Words: American missionaries, Protestant Church, Ottoman Armenian soil

Özet

Smith ve Dwight gibi isimlerle örneklenen Amerikalı misyonerlerin geç dönem Osmanlı topraklarındaki varlığı, bölge tarihinde önemli bir döneme işaret etmektedir. Bir asra yayılan mirasları, Robert Kolej ve Redhouse basını gibi kurumların kurulması da dahil olmak üzere, Türkiye'nin kültür ve eğitim manzarasında silinmez izler bıraktı. Bununla birlikte, kendilerini Osmanlı hükümeti ile Hıristiyan halk arasında filizlenmekte olan milliyetçi hareketler arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimin içinde bulan misyonerlerin faaliyetleri karmaşık bir hal almıştır. Bu makale, misyonerlerin Türkiye'nin kalkınmasına katkıda bulunan ve milliyetçi arzular ile James Bryce gibi Batılı sempatanlar arasındaki diyalogda aracı olan ikili rollerini incelemektedir. Misyonerlerin Osmanlı yetkilileriyle başlangıçtaki uyumlu birlikliliklerine ve daha sonraki karışıklıklarına değinerek, misyonerlerin Osmanlı Ermenistanı topraklarında din ve siyasetin hassas arazisinde gezinirken hükümetle değil, Ermeni Gregoryen patrikhanesiyle karşı karşıya gelmelerine ışık tutuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerikan misyonerleri, Protestan Kilisesi, Osmanlı Ermeni toprakları

INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of Smith and Dwight, American missionaries became part of the late Ottoman landscape and would remain so for the next century. They were to bequeath to Türkiye some things which are still clearly of value. They would find Robert College in Istanbul, the forerunner of today's Boğaziçi University, and establish the Redhouse press and the Redhouse dictionary: All are important and lasting contributions to the life and culture of Türkiye. But they would also become entangled in the troubled interaction between the Ottoman government and the nineteenth century nationalist movements among its Christian subjects. By the final quarter of the nineteenth century, some would act as a conduit between the nationalists and their supporters in the West such as James Bryce.

For the first phase of their work in Türkiye, the missionaries were very seldom in conflict with the Ottoman authorities. They had different enemies. In 1850, Harrison Wright published *Christianity Revived in the East*, an account of horrors and violence perpetrated against Armenians and how Divine Providence (as the missionaries believed) had enabled them to overcome it and create a legally recognized church with branches across Türkiye. But the target of Smith's denunciation was not the Ottoman Government but the Armenian Gregorian patriarchate in Istanbul.

THE HISTORICAL PLACE OF MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS IN CHRISTIANITY

Missionary activity – i.e. the deliberate spreading of Christian religious beliefs through preaching and teaching culminating in the establishment of new churches -- derives from instructions given in the New Testament by the founder of Christianity to his followers: “Go you and teach all nations.”¹ The earliest Christian missionaries, including several apostles who had accompanied Christ, worked in Syria, Anatolia, Egypt, and Mesopotamia in the three centuries after Christ, a precedent of which the nineteenth century missionaries were acutely aware.

The arrival of the Turks in Anatolia in the eleventh century was followed by substantial dechristianisation and the creation of a Muslim majority and Muslim states there. By the 19th century, Christians accounted for less than a fifth of the population of Asia. The older religion was however still part of the landscape with Christians, churches, and monasteries scattered across it. These, as we have seen, were matters of great interest to visitors from Western Europe and Russia.

Catholics

The senior branch of western Christianity, the Catholic Church, had always believed in converting other nations and it had been at work in Türkiye for around six hundred years by the time the first American missionaries showed up in the Ottoman Empire.

By 1800 the Catholic presence mainly focused upon small indigenous Catholic populations as well as communities of Genoese and Italian traders, and the Maronites [a community of Arab Christians] in Syria, who had links with the Catholic Church going back to the 12th century. These had been revitalized and expanded in the 16th and 17th centuries. A notable consequence of these

¹ New Testament, Matthew 28. 18-20.

links with the Papacy was that the Maronite population thereafter increasingly concentrated around Beirut and Mount Lebanon, where direct links with the Mediterranean and European world were easiest to maintain. The Catholic Church in Ottoman times did not attempt to convert Muslims though earlier they had occasionally attempted to do so. After some mishaps – in 1314 Franciscan missionary priests were lynched in the streets of Erzincan for proselytizing to Muslims²—Catholic activity contracted to the non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire³ and in the mid sixteenth century, St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, used the idea of sending a priest on missionary activities in Türkiye as a kind of joking warning to troublemakers to behave since such a mission would probably be fatal.

Catholic-Ottoman relations were a part of the Empire's relations with France, the foremost Christian power of the early modern period and state with which the Ottomans were in regular friendly diplomatic contact from the 1530s, signing a formal alliance in 1536 aimed against Habsburg power in Spain and Austria. Though Ottoman relations with the Catholic Church went through difficult periods as well as good ones before the 19th century, Catholicism had thus put down roots in Ottoman soil much earlier than

Catholic influence worked to forestall the growth of Protestantism in Türkiye among native Christians. When Cyril Lucaris (b. 1572, executed 1638), a Cretan priest who had travelled in Europe and studied Calvinist theology in Geneva, was elected Greek Orthodox patriarch in 1612, the Jesuits and conservative Greek Orthodox theologians lobbied against him because of his Protestant sympathies and succeeded in having him deposed five times and eventually executed by Murad IV. If Lucaris had succeeded, he might have introduced into the Greek Orthodox Church changes very similar to those that the American missionaries would envisage for the eastern churches in the 19th century.

Armenians and the Catholic Church

The Gospels were translated into Turkish in the seventeenth century to serve the Catholic Armenians of Ankara while the Armenian Mekhitarian Society Venice, a monastic community founded in 1712, translated and published Armenian texts. In the final quarter of the 18th century, one of the Mekhitarists, Father Michael Chamich⁴ wrote a book of his own, *A History of Armenia from B.C. 2247 to the Year of Christ 1780*. Hardly noticed at the time of its appearance, it would play a crucial role in the next century in helping create a sense of an Armenian past which would underpin a rising nationalist movement.

Catholicism itself was not destined grow on Turkish soil. From the eighteenth century onwards the Catholic clergy were, as we shall see below, making some inroads into Ottoman Christian society but their role was destined to be limited. They faced strong opposition from the Greek Orthodox and Greek nationalists and the rise of an independent Greece in the 1820s was accompanied in some places by Orthodox attacks on Catholics as well as Greeks Though the

² Anthony Bryer, *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos*, London, 1980, 334; Anthony Bryer and David Winfield, *The Byzantine monuments and topography of the Pontos*, Vol. 1, London 1985, 171, 352.

³³ For a general review of Catholic-Ottoman relations, see Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923*, Cambridge, 1983 and 2006.

⁴ Also spelt as Mik'ayel Ch'amich'yants'.

Catholic presence in the Ottoman lands grew strongly in the 19th century with the proclamation of the Tanzimat rescript of 1839, with the building of new schools and churches, this had relatively little political impact on the Empire's life.

Protestant Missionaries

The new Christian movement in Anatolia would be not Catholic or Orthodox but Protestant. The Protestant form of Christianity—it may be helpful to remind non-Christian readers—had arisen with the anti-Papal reforms of Martin Luther and John Calvin and their followers in northern Europe in the sixteenth century. In Türkiye Protestantism was essentially confined to Embassy chapels in Constantinople for the first three centuries after the Reformation.

From the 1820s onwards however new waves of Protestant missionaries began arriving from America, Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany. What had brought them? The explanation lies at least as much in the rise of the modern world economy and the technological changes which accompanied it as it does in the foreground issues of religious beliefs, aspirations, and organisation.

The expansion of the European world through trade and colonization from the fifteenth century onwards brought individual Europeans belonging to different varieties of Christianity into close contact with non-Christians across the globe from China to the heartlands of North America. Unless they were saved, these populations were in the eyes of Christian Europeans certainly doomed to go to Hell. Moreover, in much of the New World Catholic missionary activity by Spanish and Portuguese priests had been in full swing ever since the conquest of Mexico in 1520. Competition between Catholic and Protestant missionaries began in the Americas but by the early 19th century it was taking place across the globe. The explanation for this expansion would appear to be the creation of a relatively safe worldwide marine order created by the dominance of British sea-power combined with improvements in shipping technology, including steam power, which were making long distance travel possible for new groups.

American Board of Commissioners on Foreign Missions

The organization which would dominate the international missionary presence in Türkiye in the 19th century was American Board of Commissioners on Foreign Missions, a Protestant body, founded in 1810⁵. Though the ABCFM called itself “American”, under the First Amendment there is no national church or religious body in the United States and could not claim to represent the whole of American Christianity. The Board did not have any formal sectarian identity but in practice it was Congregationalist and represented the “New Divinity” a modified form of Calvinism which had emerged in the late eighteenth century. Its theology was complex but, put simply, the followers of the New Divinity stressed free will, the duty to do good and atone for sin, and they downplayed the sharp Calvinist distinction between ‘God's Elect’ who would be saved, whatever they did, and the ‘Damned’ [often identified as native peoples] who were destined for Hell whatever

⁵ For the history of the ABCFM and its relations with the Armenian national movement, especially during World War one and afterwards, see Joseph L Grabill, *Protestant diplomacy and the Near East : missionary influence on American Policy, 1810-1927*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis 1971

they did⁶. These beliefs were a substantial departure from the original attitudes of Calvinism and naturally tended to give rise to the desire to spread religion and thus to missionary activity.

If these aspects of its theology were a striking deviation from previous Calvinist tradition, the New Divinity's organizational tenets remained firmly in line with earlier Calvinist teaching. The essence of Congregationalism was rejection of all churches with bishops and formal religious hierarchies including the American Episcopalian or Anglican Church which was a far bigger body than they were. But worldwide cooperation with other Calvinist churches was seen as important. Consequently, the ABCFM actively cooperated with other Calvinist missionary groups from Scotland, Germany, Netherlands, and Denmark whose theology and structure were more or less the same as theirs. Interestingly in view of the later cooperation between British and American missionaries and politicians, even in its first decade the movement was also in contact with the Evangelical Movement in Britain and apparently stressed cooperation between British and Americans⁷.

The first missionary work of the ABCFM came two years later in 1812 inside North America preaching to the Cherokee Native Americans in Tennessee. Protestant churches had been making attempts to convert Native Americans since the 17th century. Conversion was not the overt goal of this work: the Board's reports define the object of its mission work as "'to devise, adopt, and prosecute, ways and means for propagating the gospel among those, who are destitute of the knowledge of Christianity.'" This meant in essence distributing Bibles and encouraging study of them.

The next step was to send missionaries to other continents, starting with India in 1812. The missionaries' impulse to work so far from their native land did not come at the behest of the U.S. government which seems neither to have anticipated nor welcomed the consequences of this development. Like later lobbies in American politics, the missionaries would eventually bend U.S. foreign policy and public opinion to their will. As already suggested, the most obvious explanation of the ABCFM's expansion overseas was a consequence of the growth of international trade and the related advances in sea transport after the end of the Napoleonic wars.

For the first time, missionaries such as those of the ABCFM were able to go out and "teach all nations" in a way they could never previously have dreamed of doing. The Ottoman Empire, close to Europe but not under a European colonial power, would be one of their chief destinations.

Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire

It was in 1812 the ABCFM designed a possible mission to "the Ancient Christian Churches" of the Ottoman Empire and Arab, Persian, and Turkish Muslims. Its interest was initially in Syria and Lebanon (then outside the direct rule of the Ottoman government). By the 1830s American missionaries had by been active there for over a decade.⁸ They had also conducted surveys of the other lands of the Ottoman Empire to help identify where they might work. Their base—and the the

⁶ For this aspect of the ABCFM, see David W. Kling, *The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, Church History, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Dec., 2003), pp. 791-819.

⁷⁷ Kling, 797-8.

⁸ For an account of why the missionaries switched away from Syria and of their first operations in what is now Türkiye, see William Goodell, *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire*, ed. Edward D.G. Prime, New York 1876, 99-104.

initial site of their printing operations—was on British territory in Malta where the Protestant civil power could be counted on to support them.

These journeys were the prelude to the visit to eastern Türkiye of Eli Smith and Dwight Simpson in 1830-1. It was the culmination of a decade of arduous exploration by the missionaries. Türkiye's Aegean seaboard had been explored by Fisk and Parsons in 1820. Fisk went on to explore Egypt, Palestine, and Syria between 1821 and 1827. In 1827 Grindley went across Anatolia from Izmir to Cappadocia. The following year saw surveys in the Peloponnese, the islands of the Adriatic and the Aegean, and what is now Libya and Tunisia. Then came the crucial 16 month-long survey of the Eastern Ottoman Empire, the Russian Caucasus, and Iran made by Eli Smith in 1830 and the first half 1831 and that was to the Armenians, It was however the Armenians who struck their eye. The ABCFM noted “No direct intercourse had been opened by any Protestant missionaries with the Armenian Church; and the country itself...has almost disappeared from geography.” But the Armenians had already been spotted by the American missionaries on the Aegean seaboard as “promising fields for missionary culture⁹.” The Prudential Committee of the ABCFM issued instructions and authorized finance for the the journey on 19 January 1830 and six weeks later Smith and his companions.

The targets for their proselytism listed at the outset of ‘Missionary Researches in Armenia’ were not just Ottoman Christians but also “Turks, Turkmans, Kurds, and Persians.” But oriental Christians were first in line for their attention. The missionaries saw the continuing adherence to Christianity of the eastern Anatolian Armenians as “an indication of God’s intention ere long to restore its spirit” i.e., to introduce Calvinist practices.¹⁰

How had the missionaries learnt about the Armenians? Direct observation in the 1820s in Izmir and other Ottoman cities played a part. One of the first accounts of the Armenians for readers in Anglo-Saxon Protestant churches was written in the mid -1820s by Robert Walsh, an Anglican cleric who had served as Anglican chaplain at the British Embassy in Constantinople. His account, entitled “Some Account of the Armenian Christians at Constantinople”, was published in an Evangelical volume in 1827¹¹. Walsh’s account, hostile to Turks and also, in some degree to both Greeks and Armenians, surveys a much wider historical and geographic area than its title suggests. He estimated that there were about 1.3 mn Armenians in the world, of whom a million were in eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, while 200,000 were in Constantinople. These figures ignore the Armenian presence in western and central Anatolia and no source is given for them.

Walsh’s account, written after the Greek War of Independence had got under way, is already alive to their potential political importance as the concluding sentences of the article demonstrate. The Armenians “are now seldom heard of out of Asia, and their existence is hardly recognized as a Christian people. They are still, however, numerous and respectable; and as their number is daily increasing, they may yet form the nucleus of Christianity in the East, when the unfortunate Greeks have been all exterminated.”¹²

⁹ Eli Smith and H.G.O Dwight, *Missionary Researches in Armenia*, London, 184 Preface lxii

¹⁰ Smith and Dwight, op.cit. xiv.

¹¹ Robert Walsh, Some Account of the Armenian Christians at Constantinople in Samuel Carter Hall, *The Amulet or Christian and Literary Remembrancer*, Londo 1827, 34-62.

¹² Robert Wright, op.cit. 62.

Goodell arrives in Istanbul 1831

Walsh's views about the strategic role which the Armenians might some days were probably in the mind of William Goodell, the first missionary from the ABCFM's biographer during his first visit to Istanbul in the summer of 1831. His biographer writes: "The special object of his mission was to reach the Armenian population of the city, -- an intelligent, enterprising and wealthy part of the people, which might be expected to exert a powerful influence for good throughout the Turkish empire, when once they should embrace the truth as it is in Jesus."¹³

The Armenians and Nestorians were attractive to the American missionaries precisely because they were in a dependent position within a relatively weak state, a state which also happened to be non-Christian but might conceivably welcome the missionaries as allies against difficult local situations. If the Armenians had possessed a state of their own, with a national church, they would have been much less promising. It is noteworthy that in independent countries such as Greece, where "ancient Christians" did possess their own state, international Protestantism found it hard to put down roots.

There were some western missionary operations in Greece around this time.¹⁴ An Anglican, Dr John Henry Hill, was active in Athens in the first half of the 19th century with a school of 500 pupils in his school in Athens during the 1830s and 1840s, a much larger number than the ABCFM had in Türkiye and he is affectionately remembered in Greece today. But there were factors which averted possible confrontation. The Anglican Church is recognized by the Greek Orthodox Church and Dr Hill did not attempt to create a breakaway Greek branch of the Church of England.

Russia, the most powerful Orthodox country, was even less responsive to American Protestant missionary work—as it still is today—and activities there, despite some early efforts in southern Russia and the Caucasus quickly faded out.

No proselytisation?

If the isolated nature of the Armenians made them interesting for the ABCFM, a second reason for interest in these "ancient" churches was that in Protestant missionary eyes, the Armenian Church with its ceremonies and hierarchy of bishops had obvious resemblances to the Catholic Church which they detested. It was therefore ripe not so much for conversion as for Protestantisation. "...The ecclesiastical history of Armenia is so exclusively made up intrigues, and broils, and barefaced corruption of ambitious ecclesiastics, that I shall not be blamed for leaving it untold," Smith wrote.¹⁵ Smith and Dwight believed that their work in dealing with Oriental Christians such as Armenians and Nestorians would consist of mimicking the work of the Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther and particularly John Calvin in the West and inducing the churches of the East to shed their medieval baggage. Their intention was not to create new churches alongside the existing ones, but to get the Armenians and other Christians to make for themselves the sort of changes which had happened during the Protestant reformation in Europe. True religion would consist of making the Gospels freely available for reading by all members of

¹³ Goodell, *Forty Years*, 112.

¹⁴ Theodore Saloutos, *American Missionaries in Greece: 1820-1869*, Church History, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Jun., 1955), 152-174. The Board explored mission prospects in Greece during the 1820s and 1830s.

¹⁵ Smith and Dwight 41.

the church, destroying the hierarchy of the church and abolishing patriarchs and bishops, and getting rid of superstitious practices such as vestments, the sign of the cross, veneration of the Virgin Mary and the like.

This approach, though doubtless innocently intended, had two advantages. First it took several years for the American missionaries' intended converts during their first decade or so in Anatolia, to become fully aware of the direction in which they were being steered. Second the missionaries could state to the Turkish authorities, as they often did in the 1830s, that in their work in the Ottoman Empire, they were not engaged in proselytism. Most other kinds of Christian missionary were not able to do this.

Nevertheless, the Congregationalists were not without guile as the Instructions given the ABCFM missionaries about to work in Türkiye show:

“You are not sent among those churches to proselyte. Let the Armenian remain an Armenian if he will, —and the Greek, a Greek: and the Nestorian, a Nestorian; and the oriental, an oriental. Modes of government, both civil and ecclesiastical, are doubtless important: bur they are not the great thing. We cannot afford to spend much of our time, strength, and money upon them, while so great a work lies before us, as the conversion of the world. It may also be said of the rites and ceremonies of those sects, that they are mere out-works, which it is not necessary to remove, before you come to the citadel: and an assault upon them will awaken mote alarm—more fierce hostility—more general and decided opposition, than upon the citadel itself. Direct your whole force to the principal post, and when that is taken, the others will fall at once. It is not the rites, ceremonies and superstitions of these people, that you, a foreigner and stranger, can attack to the best advantage: and these will be corrected, as a thing of course, when your main work is accomplished.”

It was not only the Armenian Patriarchal authorities, and later the Ottoman government, but also other missionaries who came to find this approach deeply insincere. In 1862, an Anglican observer of the missionaries wrote bitterly:

“...For a time, caution restrained the American agents. They offered only secular education, the use of books, medical treatment, and other harmless boons, when they thought their position assured, they assumed their real character, and boasted, as we have seen, of the very operations which their nominal instructions forbade them to attempt. They even claimed to have the field all to themselves, and warmly resented the intrusion of other Protestant sects, and especially of Anglicans.¹⁶”

Operations in Constantinople in the 1830s

William Goodell arrived in the Ottoman capital in June 1831 and one of his first ports of call was the Armenian Patriarch Garabet III to whom he outlined his plans to establish a school and obtained a promise of support. Eli Smith tells us sardonically that the patriarch “received him with

¹⁶ T. W. M. Marshall, *Christian Missions: their agents, their method, and their results*; London and Brussels, 1862, 566.

true oriental politeness” and that there was little meaning in either the patriarch’s promise of support or his claims to love Goodell dearly.¹⁷

More or less exactly a year later, Eli Smith and his family also arrived to live and work in the Ottoman capital. By the end of the the missionaries were attempting to relocate their printing press from Malta to Izmir but facing strong Catholic and Apostolic Armenian opposition. In the capital, the missionaries had collected around 400 pupils, of whom about 30 were working at high school level, by 1835. They were still in regular contact with the Armenian clergy, but relations were strained though Stepanos II who succeeded Garabet III as patriarch from 1831 to 1839 was well-disposed towards the Americans. The Catholic Armenian patriarch was more hostile and in July 1836 ordered his congregation not to buy any bibles or religious literature from Americans or British. Some of the Armenian clergy were initially friendly to the missionaries, such as Bishop Matteos of Bursa, only to become their firm enemies as they began to understand the implications of the Americans’ teaching. As patriarch in the 1840s, Matteos would be one of the American missionaries’ most dangerous enemies.

About six months after the ban on buying bibles, at the beginning of 1837, the patriarchal clergy launched a campaign to get the missionaries’ high school shut down, but backers for the high school emerged from within an Armenian banker or financier, who made possible the creation of a new school with 600 scholars as opposed to the original 40. The missionaries seemed to enjoy growing support in the Armenian Gregorian millet and in early 1838, a church in Ortaköy was stripped of most of its icons (or as the missionaries called them ‘pictures’.) This was a major step towards Protestantisation but not all the patriarchal clergy seem to have disapproved: the Patriarch Stepanos himself was said to have remarked that the ‘superstitions’ would probably not last another ten years.¹⁸ There were reports that some Armenian priests had formally accepted the Protestant doctrines. But around this time, the new high school at Hasköy had to be closed apparently because its financial support had been withdrawn.

Though the missionaries wrote lengthy books, memoirs, letters, and tracts about their work and the difficulties they encountered, they do not give us much information about who it was among the Armenians that were attracted to their preaching, it seems fairly clear that craftsmen and the poor made up their following. The enemies of the missionaries are described as ‘magnates’ i.e. *amiras* while individuals mentioned consistently have humble occupations such as watch-maker. Smith makes it clear that the Armenians Protestant congregations were too poor to be able to manage without a subsidy from the ABCFM, even though this went against the Board’s principles. “The members of the evangelical churches in Türkiye are generally poor,” wrote Smith attributing this to their conflicts with the Patriarchate.¹⁹

The strong arm of the Sultan: the 1839 missionary crisis

The collapse of the high school was a sign that anti-missionary groups were now in the ascendant in among the Armenians of Istanbul. By the beginning of 1839, according to Eli Smith, bankers

¹⁷ Smith, *Christianity Revived*, 21.

¹⁸ Smith, *Christianity Revived*, 61-2.

¹⁹ For the role of the *amiras* and their relationship with the Patriarchate in the 19th century, see Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 50; Hagop Levon Barsoumian, "The Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul" (Ph.D. diss, Columbia Univ., 1980.) On the poverty of Armenian converts, Smith, *Christianity*, 318.

(who seem to have been sympathetically inclined to the Americans) were no longer dominant in the Armenian community. According to the missionaries, the dominant individuals were now Armenian architects and artisans working directly for the Sultan and enjoying direct access to court officials. This was an advantage which the missionaries' enemies quickly seized. The patriarch Stepanos was deposed on March 24. "The expulsion of Protestantism was an object which lay near their hearts, and they now resolved to make use of the strong arm of the Sultan to effect it. Accusations were presented against the Evangelical brethren, though the precise form of them is not known." But as Dwight observes, it had clearly been alleged that the missionaries were "being rebellious" against both the Patriarchate and the Sultan himself²⁰.

Behind these Ottoman opponents of the missionaries there was an external one of whom, being no doubt political innocents, they failed to take sufficient note. This was Russia, then at the zenith of its influence in 19th century Türkiye. Boutineff, the Russian Ambassador, was according to Leon Arpee 'an inflexible enemy of the American Board in Türkiye.' Boutineff warned the missionaries that his master the Tsar would not permit Protestantism to spread in Türkiye. The ambassador seems to have been an active opponent of the movement on the ground. Cyrus Hamlin, the future founder of Robert College who had arrived in Türkiye at the beginning of the year wrote that Boutineff was responsible for the persecution of several Armenians²¹.

A much more serious crackdown against the missionary movement followed with arrests and detentions (apparently in the Armenian patriarchal prison) during the spring of the year. The process began on 19 February with the arrest and imprisonment of Ohannes der Sahagyan, principal of the Hasköy School. He was accused of sorcery and turning paper into gold. On March 14 a pro-missionary priest from the school was also arrested. Commodore Porter, the American Minister, was informed by the Sublime Porte "that the government could no longer be answerable for the safety of the American missionaries, and they must at once retire from the country. The astounding reply of the commodore was that he had no official duties in regard to missionaries, but he would inform the gentlemen concerned, who would act for themselves."

First appeal for British support

Lacking American diplomatic support, four of the missionaries-- William Goodell, William G. Schaffer, Henry Holmes, and Cyrus Hamlin--then turned for support to Viscount Ponsonby, the British ambassador, writing him an eight-page letter of complaint is not mentioned in their own writing, but which survives today in the Ponsonby archive in Durham University library. "Persons distinguished for their moral character have been seized, imprisoned, and exiled, and no opportunity afforded them to answer or defend themselves," wrote the authors. Those affected by the high-handed actions of the Armenian ecclesiastical authorities were "bishops, some priests, some teachers, and all persons engaged in lawful and useful callings...even natural foreign protection has not been entirely respected," they wrote.

²⁰ H.G.Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey: A Narrative of the Protestant Reformation of the Armenian Church*, London 1854, 86. Christianity Revived in the East, 72.

²¹ Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening: a history of the Armenian Church 1820-1860*, Chicago, 1909, 103. Cyrus Hamlin, *My Life and Times*, Boston, 84-89, 1893,

“The exile of these respective individuals could not be brought about without the aid of the civil arm. The cooperation of the Sublime Porte was at last obtained by representing that these individuals had become opposed to the Church through the proselytizing labors of American Missionaries. What other charges were brought against them or against ourselves we know not; but we deem it due to our Ministerial character to vindicate it from false imputations, and we hope by showing the falsity of the charge of Proselytism brought against us at the Sublime Porte, to prove the innocence of the opposed and to procure for them at least the mead of sympathy. We declare therefore most solemnly that the charge of Proselytism as brought against the Missionaries of the American Foreign Mission Society in this place is completely false.”²²

In denying that they were engaged in proselytism, the missionaries were, as already noticed above, being economical with the truth, for, whatever their instructions stated about the ancient churches, they had certainly come to the Near East to make converts. In their travel book, Eli Smith and H.G. Dwight had even discussed the distant prospect of winning Muslim converts to their faith someday.²³

As we shall see, in the next two decades, Ponsonby’s successor, Stratford Canning, would prove himself an energetic ally of the missionaries and the Protestant cause in Türkiye. But Ponsonby, who could on occasion be an active supporter of minorities, protecting the Jews on the Aegean Islands against the ‘Blood Libel’ for example, did not give the missionaries the support they were hoping for. Hamlin later wrote bitterly. “Lord Ponsonby, unlike his successor Sir Stratford Canning, although a Protestant, had a supercilious contempt for all missionaries. When we appealed to him on behalf of some exiled Armenians, he replied to us in a style which no gentleman and no true diplomat would ever use.”²⁴ The missionaries were thus left without protection. To try and size up the threat from Mahmut II, Hamlin went to a mosque on the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus to watch the Sultan as he attended the Friday *Selamlık* prayers. “His eagle eye seemed to soar above the approach of death, but it was plain to every beholder that this was the last pageant of prayer for the dying caliph, and so it proved.”

Why does the failure of the British and American envoys to come to the help of the missionaries in Istanbul in the early summer of 1839 contrast so strikingly with the role of their successors which would grow steadily in the later 19th century? The answer is simply that missionaries and minorities did not yet exist as international issues. Porter and Ponsonby belonged to a generation for whom trade, and military and naval matters were the prime concerns of diplomats. Missionaries and their work must have seemed an unimportant distraction. There were indeed more pressing concerns for them: in the summer of 1839 the empire was on the brink of defeat and possible collapse. The problems of the ABCFM missionaries seem to have been ignored by the press and not an issue for politicians or public opinion. Had *The Times*, which covered events in Türkiye in considerable detail that year, covered the threat to the missionaries and questions been asked in Congress and at Westminster, Porter and Ponsonby would not have been able to

²² Smith and Dwight; Ponsonby Papers, Durham, GRE/E.25/1 6 May 1839. For Goodell’s own account of this episode: *Forty Years*, 229-38.

²³ Smith and Dwight, *Missionary Researches*, 341,

²⁴ Hamlin, *My Life*, 97-8.

brush the issue aside. But the missionaries had yet to discover that they had the power to mobilize opinion and governments in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Death of Mahmut II

Their troubles were still continuing during June when military catastrophe for the Ottomans came to the aid of the missionaries. “God himself interposed and by a series of striking providences arrested the persecution,” Goodell wrote. On 24 June, Mahmut II’s armies were annihilated at the Battle of Nizip by the forces of the Vali of Egypt, Mohammed Ali. The Sultan himself was fatally ill and no one dared to hasten his end by telling him the bad news. He was proclaimed dead on 1 July and the news of the defeat was then learnt by the missionaries.

A few days after the Sultan’s death, Goodell wrote in his diary “The old Sultan is sincerely lamented by many, especially the Christians. Many of the Christians wept as indeed they had good reason to, for all his measures were for their good. But he will be soon forgotten.”²⁵

This judgment was wrong. Though he had not lived to see the process advance very far, Mahmut II had wrenched the empire into a new western-oriented orbit. Four months later, his sixteen year old son, promulgated the *Hattı Şerif of Gülhane*, the Rescript of the Rose Chamber, the first ever constitutional guarantee in the empire’s history, in front of an audience of Muslims, Ottoman Christians and Jews, and foreign ambassadors. Though religious freedoms were not specifically referred to in the 1839 rescript, conditions for the non-Muslims in the empire grew more relaxed and in Anatolia, the Protestant presence began to grow. These developments were a logical progression from the policies of Mahmut II, who late in his life declared that henceforth he would recognize the Muslims only in the Mosque, Christians in the Church, and Jews in the Synagogue.²⁶ This view, the earliest form of Turkish secularism, was a necessary response to the goal of building a multi-ethnic society constructed along equal lines, that could survive in the international environment in which the Empire now found itself. Mahmut II had in any case been generally popular with westerners, perhaps particularly with Britons and Americans²⁷. The troubles of the missionaries were attributed by them mainly to the Gregorian clergy: since but for his permission they would not have been in Türkiye.

Missionaries and Armenians in the 1840s

The accession of Abdulmecit and the political ascendancy of the pro-British Koca Mustafa Reşit Pasha meant that the difficulties of the ABCFM missionaries subsided. Stepanos was briefly restored to the patriarchate in November 1840. During that year the Board sold more than \$300 worth of books in Constantinople and a boarding school of Armenia boys was opened at Bebek by Hamlin despite protests from local Greek and Armenian priests²⁸. One of their main objections – revealing since it shows the impact the missionaries had on daily life—was that they were encouraging Christians not to observe fast days. (The Armenian priest was said by Dwight to have changed his mind later and sent his son to the school.) Western travellers in the Ottoman empire

²⁵ Goodell, *Forty Years in the Turkish Empire*, New York, 1876, 238; but see also Dwight, *Christianity Revived*, 78 which accuses the Sultan of involvement in the crackdown on Protestants.

²⁶ Édouard Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le Tanzimat*, Paris 1882, 33.

²⁷ See for example, James de Kay, *Sketches of Turkey in 1831 and 1832*, New York 1833, 154-5.

²⁸ Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey*, 113-4.

at this date seem to have found Christian fasts if anything more onerous than Muslim ones. The Board continued to expand its activities outside the capital, notably at Bursa, Adapazarı, and Trabzon despite strong opposition from some of the Christian clergy. But it is clear from Dwight's own account that the situation was not totally polarized. The missionaries were increasingly alienated from the Patriarchate and senior bishops, but they continued to have some favourable contacts with sections of the Armenian clergy and episcopate and that the steadily expanding volume of bibles, tracts, and other books in Turkish and Armenian reached a growing number of readers. A year later, in the spring of 1842 one of the missionaries wrote that prospects for the mission had never been as good as they now were.

The 1843 Apostasy Execution

During the early 1840s it was not only the traditionalist Armenian clergy who were uneasy at the conversions. The Muslim clergy, whose traditional attitudes towards non-believers persisted unchanged until the Crimean War, were also uneasy. The ascendancy of Mustafa Reşit Pasha and supporters of westernizing reforms had lasted for little more than a year after the proclamation of the Tanzimat Rescript. After falling from office in March 1821, Mustafa Reşit did not return as Minister of Foreign Affairs until December 1845. He over three years in Paris as ambassador out of favour. During the years until his return opponents of change held the upper hand at court and in government. But their attempts to turn the clock back to a stricter Islamic social order had the unintended effect of drawing in strong Western diplomatic intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and increasing the overtly Christian nature of the Western diplomatic presence.

In the summer 1843, some of the Ulema found an opportunity to make their views on conversion clear. Early in 1842 Yahya oğlu Arekim (or Ovaghim), an Istanbul Armenian in the Topkapı district of the capital, converted to Islam converted to Islam, according to contemporary accounts²⁹, while drunk and in police custody rather than suffer 500 lashes. He had then fled to Syra (Syros) but returned after a year, been recognized, and arrested. He refused, even when an executioner showed him a sword, to return to Islam and was then clumsily beheaded, (the executioner fainted after carrying out the sentence), and his body and head were left in the fish market for three days before being thrown into the sea³⁰.

The death of Arekim was followed by attempts at retribution from the European Powers. After approaches from the relatives of the Armenian, the British Ambassador, Stratford Canning, and the French ambassador, Baron Bourqueney, made strong demarches to the Porte signed by the ambassadors of five countries.³¹ The ambassadors cited 60 passages from the Koran to argue that apostasy should not be punished with death. This argument was ineffective³². Three months after the first execution, a second took place in Bursa. These events were again widely reported in the European press. Most of the diplomatic corps seem to have been resigned to defeat over the matter, by Canning refused to give up. He knew how to mobilize public opinion in his home

²⁹ *The Times*, Wednesday, Sep 20, 1843; Stanley Lane-Poole, *Life of Stratford Canning* Vol. 1, 89-97.

³⁰ *The Times*, Wednesday September 20, 1843. For an ABCFM account of the death of Arekin, Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey*, 157-62

³¹ *The Times*, Friday November 10, 1843; Saturday November 25, 1843.

³² Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of Stratford Canning*, ii, 92-94.

country and the matter was brought to the attention of Parliament—the first of many such discussions at Westminster during the next eight years. The following year, 1844, a long parliamentary paper on the issue was published in Britain³³. By the end of that year Canning had managed to obtain the agreement of Abdülmecit that there would be no more executions. The British ambassador was so overcome with happiness that he begged the Sultan to allow him to kiss his hand³⁴. Abdülmecit had given on 22 March 1844 “his royal word that henceforth neither should Christianity be insulted in his royal dominions, nor should Christians be in any way persecuted for their religion.”³⁵ The wording represents a compromise, sidestepping the fact that apostasy from Islam is inescapably a capital crime according to Sheri’a law. Because of this awkwardness, the right to conversion from Islam to other religions would not be formally recognized in Turkey until the Hattı Hümayun of February 1856 was promulgated. But the missionaries understood that the right of Christians to convert to different denominations had been established.

The incident was something of a turning point in the relationship between the western powers and Türkiye in the 19th century and overshadowed other current issues that year, the chief of them being the need to stabilize the Ottoman currency. Outside Türkiye the execution was interpreted as a bid by the conservatives in the Imperial Council to reduce the power of Mustafa Reşit Pasha and the reform party though it was noted that the Şeyhülislam was among those opposed to the execution.³⁶ Nonetheless the question was tied up with that of the Empire’s political independence since both Russia and France were currently trying to expand the protection, they already exercised over Ottoman Orthodox and Catholic Christians respectively. Their underlying aim was doubtless to increase their power over the Ottoman lands, but they had some striking pretexts to draw on.

Another area affected by complaints of persecution was the Vilayet of Mosul, where the city contained large numbers of Oriental Christians not members of the Orthodox Church, while Bedirhan bey, the Kurdish tribal chieftain in Cizre, was launching an attack on the Nestorians of northern Iraq around the very date that the unfortunate Arekim was being executed in Istanbul. Bedirhan at this date seems to have had very traditional attitudes towards Christians and had not taken into account the international dimensions of what he was doing³⁷. American missionaries had already made contact with the Nestorian tribes, and they swiftly drew their situation to the attention of the American and British governments, these reinforced the complaints of the Nestorian Patriarch who had refuge in the British Vice-Consulate in Mosul., after several of his family were killed. The result was international publicity and diplomatic protests, and the Porte was eventually obliged to send out an expeditionary force under Osman Pasha which captured Bedirhan near Erüh in the summer of 1847 and sent him into exile for the next fifteen years. But the mission to the Nestorians had ended three years earlier. But in one way it did plant the seed for the much

³³ FO 352/33B *Extracts from correspondence dated 1843-4 relating to executions in Turkey for Apostacy from Islam*. Parliamentary Papers, 1844, No 51. Sir Culling Eardley, *Christianity in Turkey, Correspondence of the Governments of Christendom relating to executions in Turkey for Apostacy from Islam, London 1855*.

³⁴ Lane-Poole, *Life*, ii. 96.

³⁵ *Ibid* 98.

³⁶ *Times* Wednesday, 20 September 1843.

³⁷ On Bedirhan bey, his Cretan exile and the change in his attitudes which it seems to have produced see, David Barchard, Bedirhan Bey in Crete, in *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Diyarbakır* ed. Bahaeddin Yediöldüz and Kerstin Tomenendahl, Ankara 2008, 243-51.

more important American missionary activity in Anatolia in the second half of the century. After the ruin of the Nestorians, members had travelled north to Gaziantep (Aintab), the town which by end of the decade had become the first mission of the ABCFM in south-eastern Anatolia and the base for future missionary operations in southern Türkiye.³⁸

Towards a separate ‘millet’ for the Protestants

Throughout the 1840s the confrontation between the new Armenian Protestants and their American pastors on one side and the patriarchate continued. The missionaries were a foreign implant in a body which was determined to reject them rather than allow them to take it over. They themselves doubtless saw the Armenian church hierarchy as agents of the devil, just as the high clergy of the pre-Reformation Church in Europe had been to the first Protestant reformers. Nonetheless they were now entrenched in the Turkish landscape.

Charles MacFarlane, a Scottish writer who had visited Türkiye in 1827-8 and returned two decades later wrote that

“the gross, sordid intolerant Armenians: were “for ever at the elbows of the Pashas and exercising so direct an influence on the Porte, (to) lose no opportunity of thwarting the Greeks. ...the American missionaries had made a good many converts. I ought to add that they have done a vast deal of good in the country, in the way of moral and domestic training. These converts were cruelly persecuted by their brethren, whose coarse, unspiritual, and grossly idolatrous church they had abandoned.”³⁹

Though they appeared to be beleaguered and highly vulnerable, during these years the community being created by the Americans would move by stages first towards greater freedom and finally to full independence as a separate Ottoman ‘millet’ or recognized religious community alongside their persecutors. The Tanzimat rescript was followed by a pledge from the Sultan banning in religious persecution. In 1846 this was specifically applied to the Ottoman Armenian Protestants. A year later they had become a separate religious community, and in 1850 they became a separate though tiny *millet*.⁴⁰ This progression looks in retrospect inevitable and natural, but it was almost certainly the product of a combination of accidental events of which Türkiye’s growing dependence on Britain for protection against Russia and the personality of the British Ambassador, Sir Stratford Canning, are the most important. It may not be going too far to suggest that without Stratford and the implicit Anglo-Saxon solidarity of Evangelical Protestantism, the ABCFM movement would certainly not have grown in Ottoman Anatolia in the way that it did and possibly it would not have been able to put down roots in eastern Anatolia.

In that case, the situation in Ottoman eastern Anatolia would have played out very differently. Perhaps the Ottoman Armenians would have relied more heavily on Russian intervention. The involvement of western public opinion and governments would have been more limited. Those who find such a scenario implausible need only consider the fate of the nationalities, particularly the Circassians, living on the north of the Black Sea and in the Caucasus who suffered

³⁸ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 1850, 210.

³⁹ Charles MacFarlane, *Kismet or the Doom of Turkey*, London 1853, 222.

⁴⁰ *Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 1851, 20-1. (Some of the dating given in this report is inexact but fairly represents the sequence of events.)

a catastrophe which the western world has not comprehended to this day, and which has generated the minimum of human rights attention. But the Circassians and their neighbours of course were Muslim⁴¹.

In 1846, when Mustafa Reşit had been back in government for about a year, the Sultan made a speech declaring “that difference in religion is a matter that concerns only the consciences of men and has nothing to do with their civil position.” This meant in practice that Ottoman Armenians now had the right to secede from their church and form a Protestant congregation if they chose to do so. As a result, Protestant By the mid-1840s, the ABCFM had just under a thousand pupils in what is now Türkiye. The distinction between the forms of worship of the traditional Ottoman Armenian church and those of the missionary were now much clearer than a decade earlier. The missionaries had conduct prayers and services in Armenian and Turkish since their arrival in Istanbul. They had also recruited Armenian priests and other assistants. But it was not until 1846 that the first Evangelical church was opened in Istanbul under an Armenian cleric. Congregations were also officially set up also in Constantinople, Nicomedia, Adapazarı, and Trebizond.⁴²

This move followed the Patriarch Matteos’s formal excommunication, anathematizing, and attempted arrest of Vertanes, an Armenian Protestant priest on 25 January that year. This was accompanied by a patriarchal letter read out in every church ordering all Armenians to expel any Protestants in their household and family and for all Protestants to recant their errors and reconcile themselves to the Patriarchate.⁴³ This procedure was also carried out in Izmir, Izmit, Adapazarı, Trabzon, and Erzurum.

Excommunicated

On June 21, 1846, the patriarch issued a Bull (a formal statement) of Excommunication throughout the Ottoman Empire against all the Protestant converts. Until that point the missionaries seem to have hoped that perhaps they could persuade the historic Armenian Church to shed its Episcopal structure and adopt Protestant beliefs and organization, just as had happened in western Europe in the 16th century Reformation. Excommunication meant that the converts were now cut off from their original church and had, with the missionaries, to set up their own churches.

The first was set up in Istanbul ten days later, and others swiftly followed in Izmit, Adapazarı, and Trabzon where the ABFM had long been established and had meeting rooms and reading rooms.⁴⁴ But as Lybyer pointed out this still left the new congregations under great disabilities. As

⁴¹ On the expropriation of the Circassians and Abkhazians, see Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, Princeton, 1995, 34-39.

⁴² *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, 1850, 208. For the conversion issue in the Ottoman Empire in the 1840s and 50s, see Selim Deringil, "There Is No Compulsion in Religion": On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839-1856 in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (Jul., 2000), pp. 547-575. The conversion issue in Crete is discussed in David Barchard, 'Veli Pasha and Consul Ongley: A Diplomatic Relationship that Got Too Close' in Sinan Kunalalp, ed. "A Bridge Between Cultures", Isis Press Istanbul, 2007.

⁴³ Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey*, 215-34; Text of the anathema against Vertanes 323.

⁴⁴ Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey*, 135.

Lybyer noted “This procedure under the Turkish system left them outlawed, without the rights of marriage, burial, inheritance, or even business activities.”⁴⁵

Dwight’s account makes it clear that the Protestants were not simply suffering legal sanctions. During March 1846 from Istanbul to Erzurum, there were attacks on individuals and their shops and homes. Books and tracts were seized from shops and torn up. Some luckless individuals were imprisoned, and others given the bastinado by the patriarchal officials.

Stepanos, the former patriarch who was now bishop of Izmit (Nicomedia), now sided not with the missionaries but with his own church, being transformed in Dwight’s words ‘into a furious persecutor.’ Things were worst for the converts in Adapazarı where there was no incumbent foreign missionary to protect them: the American missionaries were learning in this conflict with the Armenian clergy something that they would apply during altogether different tensions in later decades. They could become effective protectors of their convert communities. However, they noted to their disgust, that a visiting American Episcopal missionary bishop, Horatio Southworth, took the side of the patriarchate and even regarded the excommunication sentence as just.⁴⁶

At this point the Protestant Armenians had recourse to the Ottoman civil authorities in the form of a letter to Mustafa Reşit Pasha begging that his Excellency would “order the Patriarch to withdraw his oppressive hand.” Mustafa Reşit’s fortunes were in the ascendant in the summer of 1846: he was already foreign minister and was about to become Grand Vizier for the first time. But he was unable to be of assistance to a foreign missionary community. “The Petition was treated with respect; but, owing to the influence of some of the Armenian magnates, it procured no relief.”⁴⁷

This was another step towards internationalizing the problem. If the Ottoman government could not deliver the protection for the Protestant Armenians, the next logical step was for the missionaries and their followers to turn to the international community. Harassment of the Protestants was still continuing: three watchmakers were thrown into prison by Turkish officials after representations from the patriarchate suggesting that they were trading without licenses. The Patriarch was reputed to have asked permission from the Ottoman authorities to banish nine prominent individuals. How were the missionaries and their protégés to defend themselves? As with subsequent human rights seekers in Türkiye they decided to turn to the international community via the embassies of the capital.

They were learning from the route taken by Stratford Canning over the execution for apostasy in August 1843. The Armenians who were being oppressed by the patriarchate wrote to the ministers of England, Prussia, and the United States, asking them to use their good offices for their release from prison and the guarantee of their civil rights.⁴⁸ This approach initially failed but the missionaries persisted. They pointed out that three years earlier the Sultan had given a clear guarantee that from now on there should be no persecution for religious opinions in Türkiye.

⁴⁵ Albert Lybyer, *America's Missionary Record in Turkey*, Current History (New York), 19:5,1924: Feb. p.807-8; Lane – Poole, *Life*, ii, 100.

⁴⁶ Dwight, *Christianity*, 242-259.

⁴⁷ Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey*, 234-5.

⁴⁸ Ibid 235.

The result was that Reşit Pasha summoned the patriarch and told him to cease his harassment of the Protestant and ordered the immediate release of the prisoners.

Stratford had been campaigning so strongly for Christian rights in Türkiye since 1843 that he had had to answer some searching questions from London about whether or not his activities in protecting Ottoman Christians had not exceeded his instructions. He was, as he himself noted, forbidden by his Ministry ‘to stand forth as the avowed protector of the Christians....and to avoid being considered as the organ through which complaints of hardships on persecution should be conveyed to the knowledge of the Porte.’ His reply was that in urging the Ottoman authorities to root out torture and ill-treatment he was serving “the evident interests of the Porte.” Stratford believed that by encouraging religious and social equality between the different religious and national groups in the Ottoman Empire, he was helping the process of stimulating Türkiye into becoming a modern state based on the Western principles of ‘liberty, toleration, and good government.’⁴⁹

Now that the missionaries and their followers had been institutionally disconnected from the Apostolic or Gregorian Armenian Church, a new legal status had to be granted. On 15 November 1847, Mustafa Reşit Pasha published a Vizierial letter to the *Defterdar* or Comptroller of City Revenues in Istanbul, which recognized that the Protestants formed a separate community and that their taxes and birth and death registers should be maintained separately, and that the Gregorian patriarch and his clergy should be prevented from interfering in their affairs. But his letter was apparently not circulated outside the capital.

Three years later, in November 1850, Canning succeeded in getting the terms contained in the Grand Vizier’s letter, and especially those passages emphasizing protection, restated even more powerfully in a charter from Abdülmecit which the Sultan signed and to which he added instructions written in his own hand. More importantly perhaps, it was promulgated throughout the country. This charter made the Ottoman Protestant Armenians into a recognized self-administering community or *millet*.⁵⁰ Since they had not bishop, the Protestants were to elect an ‘agent’ would act as their organizer in dealings with Ottoman officialdom. The new *millet* was miniscule compared to the larger Christian communities, but its members were now completely self-administering.

The victory of the missionaries had been accompanied by the downfall of their opponent Patriarch Matteos II who was removed from office after being found guilty of fraud against the public treasury and ‘other acts inconsistent with the dignity of his office.’⁵¹

The new church was tiny. In 1854 there were 15 evangelical Armenian churches in Türkiye with a total of just four hundred adult full members and 2,300 others who enrolled on the records of the missions. They were served by 15 foreign missionaries and ⁵²

⁴⁹ Lane-Poole 99-100.

⁵⁰ Dwight, *Christianity*, 320. Details of the organization of the new *millet* and the text of the official letters creating it, etc, *ibid* Appendices A to G 323-359.

⁵¹ Smith, *Christianity*, 297.

⁵² Smith, *Christianity*, 317.

Towards Coexistence

These events, as recounted by Wright, looked like an irrevocable parting of the ways. At the institutional level indeed, they were. The Armenian Evangelical Church survives to this day as a separate body on somewhat uneasy terms with the Apostolic Armenian Church. But in other ways they were not. Though separate Armenian Protestant churches would survive in Anatolia, the remainder of the century would see the confrontation between the patriarch and the missionaries wane and largely disappear. The Armenian Gregorian or Apostolic Church would resume its predominant role and though Protestant Armenians would continue to exist, serious tensions between them and the Gregorian church fades as new actors appeared in Armenian communities and the key political issue became Armenian nationalism and remained so until World War One.

Opening in the East

The missionaries would not have been deeply involved with the drama of Armenian nationalism if their presence had been confined to Istanbul and hinterland towns like Adapazari and Bursa. The opening of stations in Trabzon in 1835 and Erzerum in 1839 were the first operations in the East. From the late 1840s the pace changes as the missionaries began setting up a network of mission stations in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia, hundreds of kilometers from their initial operations in and around the metropolis. The work of the missions in Istanbul and adjacent cities had been intended as a preliminary to missions in northern Syria and eastern Anatolia.⁵³ As soon as the teeth of patriarchal opposition had been drawn the focus shifted to the areas which Smith and Dwight had originally intended to be the Board's main field of missionary activity in Türkiye.

The missionaries' first base was Gaziantep where around a fifth of the population of 80,000 was Catholic Armenian. The first Americans to arrive there found individual Armenians strongly interested in their publications and preaching. In March 1849, after only a year's work in the town, the Board claimed to have a congregation of a hundred and by June 1850, 400.⁵⁴

No doubt partly because of language difficulties, the Gaziantep converts were themselves enrolled in the work of spreading the message. Smith describes the process – and the reactions it generated.

“In several places in the southern portion of the Armenian field, where Protestant communities now exist, the work originated in the active and persevering labours of native brethren from Aintab. They were often maltreated at first; sometimes beaten and stoned by the mob, and the protection of the authorities was withdrawn and yet by patient perseverance, they gained their point. *Eleven times* (sic) were these hardy soldiers of the cross driven away from Marash, with indignity and abuse...”⁵⁵

The ferman creating the Armenian Protestant *millet* accelerated the pace of expansion. Stations were opened at Sivas in 1851; Merzifon and Ceyhan in 1852; Diyarbakır in 1853; Talas and

⁵³ See above note 37; Church Missionary Intelligencer Vol 1, 1850, 210-15; on Protestant numbers at Gaziantep, 214-215.

⁵⁴ Church Missionary Intelligencer, 1850, 212, 214. (There are discrepancies in the figures.)

⁵⁵ Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey*, 316.

Maraş in 1854, Harput in 1855, and Tarsus in 1859⁵⁶. In these remote and poor communities, the arrival of the Board's missionaries created links with the world community which had not previously existed, helped by the arrival of the telegraph in the following two decades.

These developments however were not taking place in isolation. In 1851, as the missionaries opened their station in Sivas, Bishop Mekertitch Khirimian, a strong nationalist and future patriarch himself, was sent by the patriarchate to Cilicia (Çukurova) and set about organizing a movement called *Ser* (Love) to work for Armenian independence.⁵⁷ The commitment of the patriarchate to Armenian nationalism and its ability to project its message to the Armenian population of eastern Anatolia would mean that the Board mission stations would soon be embroiled in violent social and political controversies they had not foreseen and become the fulcrum of serious conflicts between Türkiye and the Western Powers.

Behind there were powerful factors in which the missionaries themselves took little interest: the growth of specialist interest in Armenian culture and history among the Armenians in the West, failure to understand the precarious nature of the demographic situation in eastern Anatolia, blindness towards the rights, strength, and sentiments of the majority Muslim population, and the imaginative hold of nationalism on many ordinary Armenians. These issues will be examined in the next chapter

Meanwhile supporters of the Christian nationalists inside and outside the Ottoman Empire were doing their best to drive a wedge between the Porte and its Christian subjects. On March 15 1854, Henry Layard, the writer and archaeologist and one of the staunchest friends of Türkiye in Victorian Britain, wrote to Ponsonby, the former ambassador in Constantinople, referring to the “scandalous manner in which the Greeks not only try to [incite] the Christian subjects of the Sultans to revolt but to compromise them with the Turkish authorities and to refer them to ill-treatment that now is undermining the authority of the Sultan.”⁵⁸

Throughout the following decade, Armenian Protestants continued to suffer at the hands of the patriarchal authorities and the Ottoman government was caught between its own Christian communal leadership and western diplomats and missionaries. In March 1857, for example Nalbantian expresses the change as follows “Intellectuals, especially during the ‘sixties, had been leaning towards atheism and agnosticism, and the Armenian church was under constant attack. Their attitude towards the national church now underwent a significant shift. The church began to be recognized as the focus of Armenian life and the embodiment of the nation. The idea of reform within it was looked upon with disfavour.”⁵⁹

Modern Armenians were known as merchants whose diaspora which at that date stretched predominantly eastwards to India and Burma, though there was a tiny Armenian presence in some western trading cities such as Manchester.

In the Ottoman Empire, Armenians fell into two rather different categories. In Istanbul and some other towns, they were merchants, bankers, and artisans. They were also musicians and

⁵⁶ List from Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 15.

⁵⁷ Nalbandian, op.cit. 74.

⁵⁸ Ponsonby Papers Durham University Library, GRE E 356,

⁵⁹ Nalbantian, “*Armenian National Awakening*”, 57.

entertainers. Mahmut II's court acrobats for example were Catholic Armenians from the small village of Istanoz or Ziir, near Ankara. Outside the towns, the strongest concentration of Armenians was to be found in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus.

Inside the Ottoman Empire and outside it, they were therefore pre-eminently a scattered people. In this respect they were very different from the Christian nationalities of the Balkans such as the Serbs, who were mostly concentrated within a particular area, or the Greeks who also had a diaspora but had a recognizable homeland in which they were a majority and Ottoman Muslims a minority.

A contemporary described the Armenians as they appeared in the last decade of the reign of Mahmut II. They were predominantly a diaspora of merchants scattered across the world the Jews. He wrote: "The Armenians therefore, like the Jews, were obliged to disperse themselves over the world, and resort to commerce for the necessaries of life. Armenian merchants are now to be found in India, on the islands of the Eastern Archipelago, in Singapore, in Afghanistan, Persia, Egypt, in every part of Asia Minor and Syria, Russia, Poland, Austria, Italy; and even the present patriarch of Abyssinia is an Armenian. The valiant descendants of Haig are now, like the offspring of Abraham, considered everywhere clever and shrewd merchants: they were of great service to the East-India Company in carrying on their trade with the inland provinces of Hindustan; and it was once thought that they were fitter for this part of the mercantile business than any agents of the Company itself."⁶⁰

We can see the shape of things to come in two long articles on Armenian issues published in the same year (1833) in the *Eclectic Review*, a London intellectual review with a strongly Protestant Christian flavour⁶¹. In 1830s London, intellectual life for many people still revolved largely around theology. The first of the review's two Armenian articles was a discussion of three histories of Armenia, none of them published in the United Kingdom, the *History of Armenia from B. C. 2247 to the year*, by Father Michael Chamich [= Mik'ayel Ch'amch'yants' or Chamchian.] The second dealt with the travels of two well-known Protestant missionaries, the Revd. Eli Smith and Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in eastern Türkiye. The historical review explained why and how the Armenians had apparently become a homeless merchant people unlike the mountain warriors of Roman and medieval times.

As for the lands in which rural Armenians lived, they were by now being discovered by the Western world. The same reviewer wrote: "Hitherto, the attention of the British public has been too little directed to Armenia, to create a desire for further information respecting it. English travellers have come into contact with Armenian merchants and monks in different parts of the Levant, more especially at Constantinople and Jerusalem. Armenians are numerous also in India, as well as in Persia, being scattered all over the East. But the country itself has seemed to be so completely swallowed up between Türkiye and Persia on either hand, that it has well-nigh disappeared from geography, and few are the modern travellers who have crossed its once fertile and populous, but now bare and silent plains"⁶²

⁶⁰ *Eclectic Review*, October 1833, 300.

⁶¹ *Eclectic Review*, London, October and November 1833, 302.

⁶² *Ibid*, p 302-303.

Attitudes Towards Russia

Stocqueler's reaction was exceptional – he was of course writing close to the high tide of anti-Russian feeling in 19th century Britain. Relatively few nineteenth century British observers in eastern Anatolia, other than well-known exception such as Frederick Burnaby, exhibit hostility towards the Russia and there are few accounts of the situation of Armenians on the other side of the border. The anonymous reviewer in the *Eclectic Review* took a favourable view about the deportation and resettlement of Ottoman Armenians by Russia. “In fact, it has been the policy of Russia to treat the Armenian refugees with kindness and encouragement. Many thousands of them are naturalized, of whom many have risen to opulence, and not a few were elevated to offices of trust under the Emperor Alexander.”⁶³

Statehood

Both author and reviewer—with the recent success of the struggle for independence in Greece no doubt in their minds—were inclined to think in terms of a revived Armenian state, probably to be created under Russian auspices.

“It seems probable, that we may see yet in our times a new kingdom of Armenia, created out of barbarian elements by the generosity and magnanimity of the Emperor Nicholas.” wrote Johannes Avdall, translator of Michael Chamish's *History of Armenia*. The reviewer commented: “[...] as compared with the yoke of either Mohammedan power, the rod of the Christian barbarian might be to Armenia, protection.”⁶⁴

Both the book under review, and the review in the journal itself, end with a passionate prose poem from the translator and continuer of the history, Johannes Avdall, a member of the 40,000-strong Armenian merchant community in British India. He wrote “...our possessions are usurped by mercenary tyrants. The country of Ararat, whose mountains once echoed with the shouts of her happy and contented inhabitants, is now groaning under the treble fetters of the arbitrary powers who hold unlawful dominion over her. Her expatriated sons, sinking under the weight of their sufferings, with respondent voice meet the groans of their afflicted mother. Will this state of servitude continue for ever? Is there no prospect held out for the regeneration of the country of Armenia? Will the sons of Haic be for ever wretched wanderers over the surface of the globe? No. Better destinies await the fate of the unhappy Armenian nation; a better change will take place in her political condition.”⁶⁵

For anyone wanting to understand how nationalist movements develop and grow Avdall's words are fascinating. Though they were penned several decades before the earliest nationalist currents became detectable among the Armenians actually inside the Ottoman Empire, they already clearly possess full-blown nationalist vision and amplified and transmitted by sympathetic intellectuals in the West.

One of the first questions Johannes Avdall, the translator of the Armenian history, was indeed interested in demography and in 1837 published a census of the Armenian population of

⁶³ Ibid, p 302-303.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p 302-303.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p 302-303.

Calcutta⁶⁶. He must have been acutely aware that a similar enterprise in the Ottoman provinces traditionally regarded in the west as “Armenia” would have produced figures that would have looked very problematic.

The demography of the Ottoman Empire has been studied in detail by Justin McCarthy, Kemal Karpat and others. It tends to be passed over rapidly or even ignored in much Armenian historiography and polemical writing. “The Armenian population statistics on the eve of the genocide are still a focus of the most acute attention for defenders of the C.U.P.” writes Donald Bloxham, noting that “fraudulently (sic) minimizing the number of Armenians who had ever lived in the Ottoman Empire [became a means of retrospectively] undermining Armenian claims for autonomy or independence of the Armenian population.”⁶⁷ Only a few points need to be made here. Though reliable census statistics for the Christians of the Ottoman Empire are not available before 1878, the lineaments of the demographic situation can be discerned from the available evidence. Western travellers arriving in Ottoman cities in the first half of the nineteenth century almost invariably enquired of the numbers of Muslims, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews in each place and the figures they received point to a heavy preponderance of Muslims. Leaving aside the Armenian stronghold of Zeitoun (today the town of Süleymanlı in Kahramanmaraş province.) there appears to be no case of travellers ever being told of an Armenians majority when they arrived in a town, even in Van the sole Ottoman vilayet in which the Armenians held a plurality in 1914⁶⁸. David Urquhart, a contemporary observer, estimated in 1833 that overall there were around 600,000 Armenians out of a total population of 10.6 mn.⁶⁹ Ravenstein, another observer places them at around 760,000 In the final quarter of the century, when the future of the Armenians was becoming an international issue and the Ottoman government was conducting regular censuses there is much more information. In crude terms, the demographic situation in Anatolia, and the balance between Christians and Muslims, was completely dissimilar from that in the Ottoman Balkans where Christians outnumbered Muslims by a ratio of around two to one. In Anatolia as a whole, Greeks and Armenians taken together, seem to have made up less than one in five of the population. This was not an auspicious basis for a successful nationalist movement, and unlike the Christians of the Balkans and Greece, the Armenians were not adjacent to Europe or to the sea.

However, the Armenians did possess characteristics which was used to form a narrative by writers such as Avdall to appealed to the constituency in western public opinion which had supported the Greek struggle for independence. The Armenians had once had nationhood: in the Middle Ages and late Classical times they possessed states and kings and princes. They were mentioned in the New Testament. Above all, Armenians were Christians, even if their doctrines and rituals were ones which most British and American Christians at this date, being staunch Protestants, would consider unacceptable. The difference in fact legitimated interference: it was

⁶⁶ Census of the Armenian population of the city of Calcutta; Calcutta, 1837.

⁶⁷ Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Ottoman Christians*, Oxford, 2005, *Christianity Revived in the East*, New York 1850, 19.

⁶⁷ Smith and Dwight 306.

⁶⁷ The following account is taken mainly from Charles A. Freeze, *Catholics and Sultans*, Cambridge 1983, 178-89.

⁶⁷ W.J Hamilton, *Researches*, 1842 Vol. I, 427-8

⁶⁷ Smith and Dwight, 68.

⁶⁷ Smith *Christianity* 319-321, 208-9.

⁶⁸ Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities*, New York, 1983, 74-78.

⁶⁹ David Urquhart, *Turkey and its Resources*, cited in Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914*, 22.

necessary for men of the truer form of Christianity to change the religion of the Armenians, and indeed everyone else, in order to save them from the fires of Hell. This involved sending emissaries to live among them and talk to them directly in order to win them over to a higher form of Christianity. So, in 1829, the American Board of Commissioners had taken the decision to open a special mission to the Armenians. Its first activity was to send two of its clergymen, Eli Smith and Harrison Dwight on a tour of investigation in eastern Anatolia, the traditional lands of the Armenians.⁷⁰

Nomenclature

But they also relished the exotic putting the ancient names of the lands and provinces of Roman names, which would of course be familiar to any educated reader from the Latin of his or her school days. One of the names which was invariably included was Armenia and it was at this time that the travel book-reading sections of the English-speaking public began to be acquainted with Armenia and its hitherto scarcely known past.

For Smith and Dwight, eastern Türkiye was Armenia, though like other visitors they did not try to compute its demographic profile. They gave it this name for essentially historical and geographical reasons: the political geography of the Ottoman provinces was unfamiliar to western readers whereas the Classical names are not. And the people they addressed themselves to were Armenians. The same process was repeated in other Ottoman provinces. Even where a post-Classical name had supplanted a Classical one ('Candia' for Crete for example), the later name was replaced by the Classical one in the course of the 19th century. Elsewhere "Thessaly" and "Epirus" and Thrace were used instead of the names of the Ottoman vilayets. These names were of course exactly the ones used by the nationalist opponents of the Ottoman Empire who also drew on the Classical past for their legitimating ideology, and this fact would give Classical place names a growing political significance to which the Turkish authorities were fully alive. But reading the letters and writings of many of the missionaries, some of whom enjoined the local population to be loyal to the empire, it seems clear that at least at the outset they themselves had no inkling of this. They were dealing with Armenians in a land which they knew from Classical geography as "Armenia". What could be more straightforward? They did of course mention the Turkish authorities and current administrative arrangements when necessary. But one consequence of this policy was that it tended to obscure the presence of a Muslim majority and an Ottoman state in these areas and to undermine perceptions of Ottoman legitimacy which were already being called into question on other grounds.

For another striking feature of Smith and Dwight's writings is how future-oriented they are. They had come to Anatolia not just to explore and describe it but to change it. This attitude would of course not have been possible but for the Russian wars against Türkiye in the previous three decades which had clearly weakened the empire and to western observers signaled its approaching demise and disappearance. In Erzerum for example, Smith and Dwight found an Ottoman administrative centre with no Armenians in it: they had all been taken away by the Russian invaders three years earlier. However, they confidently forecast that the population balance would again change. "But it will not always remain in its present state. We doubt not that an Armenian

⁷⁰ H.G.O. Dwight, *Christianity Revived in the East*, New York 1850, 19.

population will again assemble here; and then it may be made an important centre for missionary operations.”⁷¹

Armenians, Catholics, and Protestant

In addition to relatively small numbers and their far away location, the Armenians of eastern Türkiye seem to have possessed relative limited means of social cohesion. It would be tempting to state that their church hierarchy provided leadership and a network of social contacts and to some extent this is true despite the vast distances and mountainous terrain over which the Armenian population was scattered, from Thrace to the Caspian., but the Armenians possessed one disadvantage which the Greeks did not: they were split into different confessional groups. During the late 17th and early 18th century, the Jesuits and Capuchins, two Catholic religious orders, had made inroads into Armenian communities in Istanbul and other cities⁷². As with conversion later, for an Armenian to become a Catholic in the 18th century was to become a “Frank” but the change entailed severe disadvantages: including the active displeasure of the Ottoman authorities and the Armenian Patriarchal officials and suspicion of treason, since the converts having no churches of their own, attended services with Catholics from western countries. Gomidas Kemurciyan, a Galata priest who had led the Catholicizing movement, was executed on 4 November 1707 having failed to convince an Ottoman Kadi that nationality and religion were not identical. However, France acted as the political protector of the Armenian community in Istanbul and by 1783 it was said to number 20,000. The Ottoman Armenians had become a fiercely divided community. In Ankara, always one of the main Catholic Armenian strongholds and the place where the Christian gospels had first been translated into Türkiye, the Catholics were in control of four of seven Armenian churches and believed to number around 4,000 persons. Suggestions that there should be a separate Catholic Armenian Millet began to be voiced in the early eighteenth century, but neither the Ottoman authorities nor the Gregorian patriarchate would accept such an idea. The disputes inside the Armenian community were irksome to the Ottoman government and in 1820, Mahmut II, on the advice of the Armenian patriarch Boghos, exiled all known Catholic Armenian priests from Istanbul while lay Armenians were ordered to take an oath of conformity to the Gregorian church, a practice which the Armenians almost certainly copied from Protestant England where a similar procedure was in use until that date to exclude Catholics from public office and the universities. This did not end the disputes, and by the end of the 1820s, the Armenian religious issue had started to intersect with Türkiye’s military and diplomatic problems created first by the Greek War of Independence and the Battle of Navarino, and then the Russian invasion of the Ottoman Balkans and Caucasus and the Peace of Adrianople. The ambassadors of France and Austria, Russia’s Catholic opponents, used the diplomatic leverage they now enjoyed pressing the Sultan to end the persecution of Catholic Armenians and by early January 1831, they had extracted an even greater prize. The Catholic Armenians of the Ottoman Empire finally got separate millet status under their own patriarch, equal to the traditional patriarchs of the empire.

This was the high point in the fortunes of the Catholic Armenians whose subsequent history was largely taken up not with persecution by the Gregorian patriarch and Ottoman authorities but by schisms and feuds of their own. The Gregorian patriarch and church authorities displeased

⁷¹ Smith and Dwight 306.

⁷² The following account is taken mainly from Charles A. Freeze, *Catholics and Sultans*, Cambridge 1983, 178-89.

though they were with the existence of a rival Armenian church would soon find more threatening rivals still, as we shall see. Behind the story of the Armenian Catholics however one can see the some of the ingredients of later Armenian situation: foreign missionaries, links created with them which produced conflicts with Ottoman local authorities, and which drew in diplomatic pressure from European powers and internationalization of their situation, exacerbating distrust among the authorities and Muslims. On the other hand, contact with a foreign church transformed and upgraded local Armenian Christians. W.J.Hamilton noted in Ankara in 1836, that the international contacts of the Catholic clergy there made them stand out. “I paid a visit to their bishop, a quiet intelligent old man, and found several other priests with him, all of whom understood a little Italian, most of them having been educated in Italy; their easy and European manners, and superior intelligence, contrasted strangely with the stiff Turkish formality of their schismatic brethren. All their priests are now obliged to go to Rome, where their principal seminary is situated, before they can be ordained. Formerly this seminary was on Mount Lebanon, where they now only keep up a small convent. The present system has at least this advantage, that it brings them in direct contact with a civilized world, and with civilized ideas.”⁷³ It is against this background of the obvious advantages and prestige conferred by ecclesiastical contact with the West that we should view what was to follow. “The papal Armenians own the name of Armenian still, but they like the Franks better than their own countrymen,” wrote Smith and Dwight, adding that the person who showed them the most kindness on their entire journey had been a Catholic Armenian priest 900 miles from Istanbul who had mistakenly supposed them to be Catholics.⁷⁴

One of the strangers—and possibly most disastrous aspects of the contact between western Europe and Türkiye in the 19th century is the unthinking acceptance among almost all western observers of the principle of eventually establishing a monoethnic or monocultural state for each Ottoman Christian nationality. The travelers from western Europe came from countries ethnically and linguistically more homogeneous than the Ottoman Empire, but almost all of them they contained mixed populations. During the previous two hundred years, the rise of toleration and the beginnings of pluralism had been one of the main themes in the life of most European countries. In 1821, the first constitution of Greece had specified at the outset that citizens of the new country should be Christian Hellenes. So, it is in retrospect strange that very few western observers called for tolerance and multiculturalism either in the Ottoman lands themselves or in the new Christian national states which would be carved out of them, even when it became clear that mass expulsion or worse would often be the price to be paid for the creation of these new homogenous countries.

It is hard to escape the suspicion that by first ignoring and later very often demonizing the Muslim Turkish population of Anatolia and the Balkans, and by ignoring their overwhelming demographic preponderance in Anatolia, many western observers, and particularly the vehement apologists for the Christian nationalist movements created an ideology which would implicitly accommodate Muslim dispossession. There were indeed discussions among the Turcophobe British intellectuals about what would happen to the Turks once the empire was overthrown. It was generally assumed that they would vanish from the stage of history in some way, either by converting to Christianity and being absorbed or by fleeing back to Central Asia: the forecast of

⁷³ W.J. Hamilton, *Researches*, 1842 Vol. I, 427-8

⁷⁴ Smith and Dwight, 68.

Cardinal Newman. In vain did a small group of Britons who actually knew the realities of Türkiye try to disabuse the educated public of these ideas by pointing to population strengths and the limited number of Britons who had confidence in the eventual success of the reform process was always negligible. Britain was of course the least turcophobe country in nineteenth century Europe. Its turcophobes were more vociferous precisely because until 1876-8 they had to debate with Disraeli, Layard, and others who saw Türkiye as an ally and a cause to support. They believed, as Palmerston and Stratford Canning had done, that Türkiye, whatever its religion and internal difficulties, was the only country in the eastern Mediterranean which could act as a counterweight to Russia. In France, Italy there were very few cultural allies of the Turks (Lamartine in France was an exception). The case of Germany was not very different. The German-Ottoman political rapprochement under Kaiser Wilhelm II should not be allowed to conceal the fact that --- partly because there was nowhere in Europe where Ancient Greek scholarship was more highly venerated—German intellectuals and writers tended to be at least as turcophobic as their French and Italian counterparts, even if their country’s foreign policy tended in another direction.

Writing on the eve of the Crimean War, with Russian pressure on Türkiye at its apogee, Smith was however uncertain of the future prospects for the Ottomans. “The elements of the political world are greatly troubled by disturbing forces from the north, and the whole civil and social fabric of this empire is threatened with convulsion if not dissolution.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Smith *Christianity* 319-321.

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