

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: "THEIR OBJECT IS TO STRENGTHEN THE MOSLEM AND REPRESS THE CHRISTIAN": HENRY JESSUP AND THE PRESBYTERIAN MISSION TO SYRIA UNDER ABDUL HAMID II

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Henry Jessup and the American Presbyterian Mission to Syria faced a new challenge in 1885 when the Ottoman authorities closed various American schools there. Jessup, the Secretary of the American mission, responded with a rhetorical campaign against the Ottoman impositions that portrayed the policies of Abdul Hamid II's administration as new, pro-Muslim, anti-Christian, and designed to replace American missionary institutions in Syria with Muslim institutions backed by Ottoman force. While some of Jessup's writing while in Syria from 1856 to 1910 was polemical, his writing surrounding the school controversy in the 1880s rather reflected the historical context of local and foreign educational competition in Syria that now included Ottoman initiatives against foreign institutions who presented a threat to Ottoman-Islamic imperial discipline. This thesis seeks to contextualize Jessup's writing to portray 1885 as a watershed in the history of a mission whose evangelistic efforts were then successfully limited by Ottoman reforms.

“THEIR OBJECT IS TO STRENGTHEN THE MOSLEM AND REPRESS THE
CHRISTIAN”: HENRY JESSUP AND THE PRESBYTERIAN MISSION TO SYRIA
UNDER ABDUL HAMID II

by

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Dedication

Soli Deo Gloria

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Introduction

In conclusion, we would express our apprehensions that the inevitable tendency of the present repressive measures of the Porte will be to revive Mohammedan hostility to Christianity throughout this *Welaiet*,¹ to rekindle fires that may not be easily extinguished, to reverse the liberal and clement policy of the Sultan Abdul Mejid, who declared all Ottoman subjects to be equal before the law; to gradually extinguish, if persisted in, the only means of education and enlightenment open to the Christians of Syria and Palestine; and, finally, by encouraging Mohammedan hatred to Christian churches and schools, to rouse a spirit which would soon become uncontrollable, and end in a repetition of the scenes of 1860.²

Rev. Henry Harris Jessup D.D., American Presbyterian missionary to Syria³ from 1856 to 1910, composed this statement in 1885-1886 as a response to what he called “certain difficulties connected with the prosecution of Christian education, missionary and benevolent work” in “the *Welaiet* of Syria, including Palestine, east and west of the Jordan.”⁴ He was addressing the “representatives of the Christian powers at the Sublime Porte. . . [and] the Christian public” as the current Secretary of the Syria mission.⁵

¹ An Ottoman administrative district, similar to a province.

² Henry Harris Jessup, *Memorial of Missionaries in Syria and Palestine with Regard to Churches, Schools, &c.* (London: Spottiswoode & co., 1886), 12.

³ For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term Syria as the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and previous to 1870, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions used the term. For these missionaries, Syria described a region that today makes up much of the nations of Syria and Lebanon, or what is often referred to as Bilad al-Sham. This paper’s use of Syria, then, does not correspond to greater Syria, which encompasses modern day Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, parts of southeastern Turkey, and perhaps part of the Sinai Peninsula. The center of the mission was always in Beirut. This conception follows Fruma Zachs excellent work on the American missionaries’ invention of the term Syria based on their Biblical conceptions, which was then appropriated by Arab Christian intellectuals like Butrus al-Bustani. Fruma Zachs, “Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria? Revisiting the American Presbyterian Missionaries in the Nineteenth-Century Levant,” *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 2 (July 2001): 145-173.

⁴ Jessup, *Memorial of Missionaries*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3. The Sublime Porte refers to the Ottoman central authority in Istanbul under the Sultan. Jessup used the term “Christian public” here in an attempt to broaden the scope of his appeal, although in reality his audience would have been Protestants in the English-speaking world. Jessup’s audience and choice of words will be discussed at length in chapter four.

In the March 1886 publication of the missionary periodical, *The Foreign Missionary*, Jessup again stated his case, this time to the readers in North America and Europe:

Meanwhile the Government is aiding in the repair of old mosques, and the building of new ones, which need no *firman*s.⁶ The taxes paid by Christians are used toward building Moslem mosques. The late *Walz* [*Waly*]⁷ of Syria declared that as soon as the Moslem youth could be educated in the *Reshdiya*⁸ school, he would turn out every Christian government employe [e] in Syria. *Formerly there was nothing of this hostility*. All sects were allowed to build houses of worship without molestation. Now everything bearing the Christian name seems to be under the ban.⁹

These statements exemplify the focus of this paper: what did American Protestant missionaries to Syria in the late nineteenth century think about Islam and the Ottoman government; and as a corollary to this question, were these perceptions necessarily related? How much should these missionaries be categorized as Islamophobic polemicists¹⁰ interested only in the furtherance of their belief system and the ridicule of others? In other words, can Henry Jessup be compared with what Ryan Dunch has

⁶ An official Ottoman edict.

⁷ A governor.

⁸ Ottoman schools between the primary, or *sibyan* schools, and the higher levels of *Idadiya*, *Sultaniya*, or *Madrasa*. For more information about the Ottoman educational system, see Selçuk Aksin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), which provides an in-depth discussion of the development of Ottoman state education.

⁹ *The Foreign Missionary*, Volume XLIV, (New York: Mission House, 1842-1886), March 1886. Emphasis is my own.

¹⁰ My definition of polemical, as taken from the Oxford English Dictionary is as follows: “a controversial argument; a strong verbal or written attack on a person, opinion, doctrine, etc.; (as a mass noun) writing or opinion of this kind. Also: (in sing. and pl.) aggressive debate or controversy; the practice of engaging in such a debate.” A secondary definition is: “a polemical argument—a diatribe.” Related to this is the definition of a polemicist: “a person who argues or writes in opposition to another, or who takes up a controversial position; a controversialist.” Jessup’s writing, especially that surrounding the 1885 school controversy (to be explained below), has often been seen as an example “polemical” missionary writing in the sense of writing that is purposefully combative and aggressive. Rather, this paper will argue that Jessup’s writing surrounding the 1885 controversy should more accurately be described as rhetorical. My definition of rhetorical, again from the OED, is as follows: “the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others” or “speech or writing expressed in terms calculated to persuade.”

termed the “popular image of the finger-wagging missionary condemning a host culture wholesale and seeking to replace it in its entirety”?¹¹ Through a study of missionary documents with a specific focus on Henry Jessup’s writing surrounding the controversy of the 1880s described above, Jessup’s discourse will be contextualized to argue against the interpretation that views it as polemics about Islam and the Ottoman government based on Orientalist foundations. This is not to suggest that Jessup and other missionaries did not perpetuate certain Western stereotypes about the Ottoman and Muslim world, as they clearly did with their continued use of inherently prejudicial and incorrect terminology such as “Mohammedan” and “Turk.” Even so, the larger issues that Jessup addresses concerning the controversy in the 1880s with the Ottoman government demonstrate that his writing was rhetorical and crafted to uphold the work of the mission amidst an acute climate of opposition and a larger context of educational competition.

Henry Jessup’s views of Islam, and his overall “zealous” attitude, have been the subject of many scholars’ interest (or perhaps even ire).¹² Not only are Jessup and

¹¹ Ryan Dunch, “Beyond Cultural imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian missions, and Global modernity,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (October 2002), 322.

¹² For example, A.L. Tibawi, who might be called the authority on Jessup and the American mission to Syria, asserts that “he did not conceal his hatred of Islam”. A.L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Works* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966), 269. Elsewhere, on page 256, he argues that Jessup “never concealed his contempt for ‘nominal’ Christians, his hostility to the Ottoman system, or his hatred of Islam.” Edward Said references Jessup as a missionary who was a part of the “imperial constellation facilitating Euro-American penetration of the Orient.” Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 294. Adnan Abu-Ghazaleh dubs Jessup a “diehard missionary polemicist” who “persisted in maintaining a bitter vendetta against the Muslim religion for many decades.” Adnan Abu-Ghazaleh, *American Missions in Syria* (Brattleboro, Vermont, Amana Books, inc., 1990), 47. Samir Khalaf, who does at least use more of Jessup’s publications, although he neglects to look at any archival or unpublished work by Jessup, judges Jessup as a missionary who “refused to discard or even temper his defamatory images of the Levant or his arrogant evangelistic perspectives.” Samir Khalaf, *Cultural Resistance: Global and Local Encounters in the Middle East* (London: Saqi Books, 2001), 35. Khalaf also sees Jessup as “exemplary and perhaps unrivalled” in his perpetuation of medievalist stereotypes about Islam and the Orient. Khalaf, 162. Jens Hanssen, one of the more recent scholars to address Jessup in his *Fin de Siecle Beirut*, only uses material from his memoir *53 Years in Syria*

American missionaries like him portrayed as Orientalists,¹³ but they are also seen as having an even more bigoted view of Islam based on their strong religious beliefs. However, scholars have yet to look at this Presbyterian missionary in an in-depth, longitudinal, or contextualized enough fashion to do justice to his work as a missionary.¹⁴ Because he is so often held up as the prototype of American Missionaries to the Ottoman Empire,¹⁵ or to Muslims in general, it is essential to reevaluate his role and legacy, especially in light of recent scholarship on the Ottoman Empire under Abdul Hamid II.

American missionaries have often been a part of scholarly debates concerning the last century of the Ottoman Empire. The wealth of documents left behind by these missionaries and the unique role that they played as Westerners in long-lasting and intimate relationships with the “other” in the Ottoman world has placed them in the crosshairs of such larger questions as the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of the *millet* system,¹⁶ the origins of Arab nationalism, modernization theory in the Middle East,

and highlights him as “even more outspoken” in his Orientalism, bigotry, and superiority than fellow missionary Daniel Bliss, who Hanssen already tagged as someone who saw “backwardness and fanaticism . . . [as] innately Oriental qualities.” Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siecle Beirut* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005), 184-185.

¹³ Khalaf, 105-125.

¹⁴ A.L. Tibawi is really the only scholar who has looked at Henry Jessup in detail and taken into account the large volume of primary sources available; however, I hope to nuance his work with the aid of research done in the years after the publication of his work in 1966. Based on the wealth of materials on Jessup and the Presbyterian Mission to Syria in general, there is certainly enough information that this project could be extended into a dissertation in the future.

¹⁵ For example, Kenneth Cragg called Henry Jessup the “doyen of the American Presbyterian Mission.” Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 135. Robert Haddad quotes from Jessup’s *The Greek Church and Protestant Missions* (1891) and suggests that Jessup “spoke the sentiments of two generations of Presbyterian toilers in the Syrian vineyard.” Robert M. Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 80. Edward Said solely references Jessup’s memoir *53 Years in Syria* for his discussion of American missions to the Arab world in the nineteenth century. Said, 294. Samir Khalaf uses Henry Jessup, “a quintessential Protestant Orientalist,” for his discussion of missionary reports being read back in the United States and contributing to American Protestant images of Islam because his “life and thoughts. . . stand out as a paramount example.” Khalaf, 162, 152.

¹⁶ The term for the Ottoman administrative system governing religious minority groups in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Each community had its own hierarchy that controlled civil affairs for the community, collected taxes, and represented the community to the Ottoman government. For more on

the impact of the Capitulations,¹⁷ and the nature of imperialism/colonialism, to name only a few. While certainly at times the role of missionaries has been overblown, recent scholarship continues to assert their importance as a source and a center of cross-cultural interaction for studies of the last century of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸

As more documents are made available in Ottoman archives and elsewhere, more and more excellent scholarly works are being produced that shed light on the American missionary experience in the last century of the Ottoman Empire. These works, that are able to take into account documents in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Turkish, Armenian, as well as Western languages, portray the setting in which Rev. Jessup and many others like him worked, under Sultan Abdul Hamid II (beginning in 1876), as increasingly contentious.¹⁹ As the Ottoman centralization program grew especially beginning in the late 1870s, competition among those groups or individuals who had influence over the populace also grew. Among these figures are the Ottoman central and local authorities, the religious hierarchies of the various minority groups of the Empire, the foreign powers (especially France, Britain, and Russia, but also the United States), the *ulama* (both traditional and modernist religious scholars), and missionaries (even among different

this issue see, Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society, Volume II: The Arabic Speaking Lands*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meir Publishers 1982), 69-88.

¹⁷ The Ottoman system governing foreign trade within the Empire. European nations were given certain trading privileges and rights of extra-territoriality. European merchants then sought to extend these privileges to local protégés (non-Muslims) in order to further commercial interests. Certain nations formed long-standing connections with certain local minority groups, such as the French with the Maronites.

¹⁸ Many works could be mentioned, but two that should certainly be pointed out as examples are Jens Hanssen's *Fin de Siecle Beirut: The making of an ottoman Provincial Capital* (2005) and Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ In addition to the already mentioned works by Hanssen and Fortna, see Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: IB Tauris, 1998) and Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) emphasize Hamidian policy against foreign, and particularly, missionary influence.

missionary groups). Syria-Lebanon was a particular area of interest to all parties concerned because of its diverse makeup, chaotic recent history, and reputation as a (relatively) liberal center of education and the press.²⁰

This new scholarship also agrees that the Ottoman authorities were specifically aware of what they perceived to be the very negative impact of American Protestant, as well as other Christian, missionary work in the Empire. These Ottoman authorities, both from Istanbul and from local administrations,²¹ sought to implement their anti-foreign program especially in the coastal area of Syria including Beirut because it had historically been a region of heavy foreign influence, communal conflict, suspect loyalty to Istanbul, and a location that had the ability to influence other parts of the Empire through its press establishment. Quite literally, the Ottoman government and Henry Jessup, as leader of the American mission in Syria, squared off into what would often be a rhetorical battle, although it also had concrete results, for influence over the Ottoman populace in Syria-Lebanon.²²

The field in which this hostility was most clearly present was that of education because it was the primary means through which American missionaries sought to influence those with whom they interacted, including members of various religious groups in Syria-Lebanon. Having largely abandoned direct proselytism with Muslim groups certainly by the 1840s, the American mission had gradually shifted its focus

²⁰ See for example Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 55-64.

²¹ This paper seeks to add to the already significant work done on the late Ottoman Empire concerning the question of the relationship of center (Istanbul) to periphery (such as the Arab Provinces, including Syria). For example, see Hasan Kayali's *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

²² This paper will focus on missionary activity in greater Syria, although this same argument has been and could be made for other regions of the Empire. See Rogan's *Frontiers of the Empire* (1999).

towards education as the most effective means of influence.²³ Especially in the 1860s and 1870s, American mission schools multiplied. Their reputation for “modern” schooling including Western languages brought demand from the local population. Schools, conducted often in houses (those owned by sympathetic local Syrians), had also conveniently been a field of influence that was relatively safe and possible to develop under Ottoman rule, as compared with church-building for example.

However, the Ottoman authorities, especially through the use of the school reform law of 1869,²⁴ also hoped to use schools as a means by which to inculcate Ottoman ideals and loyalty to the Sultan and Empire. The Ottoman authorities saw this missionary influence in education as a direct and worrisome threat to their rule. The Ottomans worried especially about possible missionary influence over Muslims of the Empire, but also about the disrupting effect that missionary education might have on the delicate *millet* system governing the religious minorities of the Empire. This threat carried far beyond the field of religion though, as the Hamidian regime increasingly sought to use Islam for political legitimacy, which was engendered in schools, even while they hoped to maintain the support of the various *millets* in the Empire.

Beginning in 1885, the American mission to Syria, under the leadership of Henry Jessup, faced the most direct challenge to its education-based program of missions in the history of the roughly sixty five year old mission: the forcible closing of mission schools in different parts of Syria. While Jessup complained about Islam and Ottoman rule many times previous to 1885, these complaints were always less pronounced than those

²³ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 143.

²⁴ The ramifications of this law will be discussed later in the paper; but in short, the 1869 law (inspired by a French program) set apart public and private schools, made primary education free and compulsory for all Ottoman subjects, and called for the development of higher schools in larger towns and cities. Tibawi, *American Interests*, 257.

concerning internal debates within the mission, the competition of other foreign schools, and the difficulty of carrying out their work with the local Eastern Christian population. By the 1880s however, the mission had grown large enough in size and influence to both be recognized by the Ottomans as a serious threat and for the missionaries to have developed a firmer sense of their supposed rights as a mission. Furthermore, schools had become the central focus of the Presbyterian American mission's program. All of these elements combined under the already broader tense atmosphere of the Hamidian Empire to mark the school closings beginning in 1885 as a watershed in the history of the Presbyterian mission to Syria. Due to the change of 1885, Jessup's rhetoric shifted, and Islam and the Ottoman authorities were now jointly blamed for persecution against the mission. Finally, from 1885 until World War I and the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Presbyterian mission's work became increasingly secular as a response to what ultimately was a successful assertion of authority and centralization from the Ottoman government.

In sum, Jessup's language against Islam surrounding the school closings in 1885 and following should be seen in the context of the growing purposeful conflation of the religious with the political, the Caliph with the Sultan, which the Ottoman authorities hoped would bolster their authority throughout the Empire. A closer reading of the sources of the period and a broader understanding of the context surrounding these missionaries demonstrates that American Protestant missionaries in the last sixty years of the Empire were participating in a competition for influence in which they were just as "guilty" as the authorities governing the region in which they worked. The Ottomans were indeed the sovereign political authority in Syria who desired to maintain peace among the various religious groups in the Empire, but the conflict of the 1880s was a

unique situation where the Ottomans attempted to assert a new, centralized, control over Syria to which many people in Syria besides the American missionaries reacted. Jessup did not show deference to Ottoman impositions in Syria in the 1880s; rather he challenged the Ottomans' claim for influence in Syria based on his understanding of the crucial role (for himself, for the mission overall, and for the people of Syria—Christians and Muslims) of the American mission there. Without placing blame on either side, a picture emerges of a conflict between two sides that believed deeply in what they were doing and were willing to use any means available to them to support their cause.

Significance

This paper offers a contribution to multiple fields of historical study—both regional and topical. It also contributes especially to the history of missions and the history of the late Ottoman Empire but also, and at the same time, to imperial/colonial and religious history.

In the field of missions history, this paper first and foremost follows the model laid out by Ussama Makdisi, Ryan Dunch, and Fruma Zachs that moves beyond the past controversy concerning the relationship of missionaries to imperialism/colonialism. Instead a missions history that recognizes the complexity of the interplay of various forces at work on and from both the missionaries and the indigenous culture will be portrayed. This process will be described through contextualization of missionaries, descriptions of change over time, and evaluations of certain local reactions to missionaries.

Secondly, the paper adds to the work of scholars such as Jens Hanssen, Eugene Rogan, Bruce Masters,²⁵ Benjamin Fortna, Selim Deringil, and Ussama Makdisi, who have all demonstrated the utility of studying missionaries in order to understand the late Ottoman Empire, and especially greater Syria. Missionaries, who usually spoke the colloquial dialect and lived for years among the local people not just in ports or capitals but also in rural areas, were in the unique position to comment on a changing society in late Ottoman Syria. Deringil even argues that Hamidian actions in the provinces to foster an official state connection with Hanafi Islam²⁶ were “perhaps best understood for what they were by the missionaries.”²⁷

Thirdly, by contextualizing missionary rhetoric, the culpability of missionaries in the Orientalist enterprise is to a certain extent diminished. Certainly, missionaries often espoused bigoted and ethnocentric viewpoints and engaged in polemics, but by focusing the study on one individual missionary in a specific context, Henry Jessup can no longer be seen as a classic example of what Dunch has dubbed the “narrow-minded chauvinist whose presence and preaching destroyed indigenous cultures and opened the way for the extension of colonial rule.”²⁸ If nothing else, the focused reading of one missionary’s documents calls into question the view that suggests that all missionaries to the Middle East or anywhere else were all the same across time.

²⁵ As this author’s work has not been referenced as of yet: Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁶ Hanafi refers to one of the four Sunni schools of law. Each school, or *madhab*, extends back to a line of teachings from the medieval period in Islam and are accepted by all Sunnis as legitimate, if not necessarily preferable. The schools correspond largely to regional designations, but the official Ottoman school was the Hanafi. See Deringil, 46-50.

²⁷ Deringil, 114.

²⁸ Dunch, 307.

More specifically, this study calls into question the prevailing view of Henry Jessup as the “legendary” and “ubiquitous” example of the American missionary to Syria in the late nineteenth century who remained a “diehard missionary polemicist” throughout his fifty-three years as a missionary.²⁹ Through the means of an in-depth reading of Jessup’s wealth of writing, over a length of time, and in specific historical circumstances, Jessup is historicized to fit Zachs’ model: “every missionary was a world of himself, with his own character and understanding and should be examined as such.”³⁰

Fourthly, the great distance between the ideals of the beginnings of the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century and what this had become in practice by the late nineteenth century demonstrates the transformation of missions between ideals and practice. When the American Board of Foreign Missions first turned its focus to mission in the Ottoman Empire in 1810s, the intentions were actually to proselytize among Jews and Muslims near Jerusalem with a wider millenarian conception of the purpose of their work. By the 1880s the practice of the Syria mission (which had been transferred to the control of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in 1870) had become educational work with Eastern Christians near Beirut. When missionaries were actually working on the ground in Syria, missionary work was often much different from the official program of the mission board back in the United States, and this is demonstrated throughout the history of the mission. This also fulfills the prescription of recent missiology theory that stresses the malleability of mission work as it was put into practice and negotiated with the local society. The mission, in other

²⁹ Said, 293-294. Abu-Ghazaleh, 47.

³⁰ Fruma Zachs, “From the Mission to the Missionary: The Bliss Family and the Syrian Protestant College (1866-1920),” *Die Welt des Islams* 45, no. 2 (2005): 290.

words, has a specific history of its own that sheds light on missionary practice in Syria in the later nineteenth century.

In the regional history of the late Ottoman Empire, the paper also illuminates multiple issues. First, it contributes to the already voluminous studies available concerning the question of the influence of missionaries on Westernization and modernization in the late Ottoman Empire, even though it does not focus on these issues. More specifically, this includes such issues as the growth of nationalism among different groups in the Ottoman Empire and the question of the *nahda* or Arab awakening that George Antonius' work made so famous.³¹ While this debate is not directly addressed, this study's stress on the pervasiveness and importance of American educational missions (in the minds of the missionaries, Ottomans, and locals) as well as its focus on the complex situation of educational competition complicates this question in order to suggest that the answer may not be found in either/or conclusions.

This paper also adds to the recent studies of the centralization and political consolidation policies of Abdul Hamid II. A central tenet of these policies was an improvement of the Ottoman state educational system that attempted to supplant American and other Christian missions influence while at the same time using them as a model for improvement. The Hamidian policy against foreign missionary schools also sheds light on the question of Ottomanism versus Pan-Islamism under Abdul Hamid II. The Ottoman government was interested in using both models for political control as much as possible. The Ottomans were not only concerned about the possible missionary impact on Muslims and heterodox Muslims (including the Druzes and the Nusairis-

³¹ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: H. Hamilton, 1938).

Alawis) but also on various Christian *millet* groups within the Empire.³² The Ottomans were worried about the missionary impact on the Christian groups of the Empire for two main reasons: an economic loss due to missionary education leading to greater ties with the foreign powers who enjoyed the benefits of the capitulations and a political loss due to missionary education leading indirectly or directly to heightened nationalist tensions among the various Christian minorities of the Empire.

As a corollary to the issue of consolidation, the paper also contributes to the study of the continuity and change of the Tanzimat reforms into the Hamidian period. The actual history of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century contradicts the prevailing model of the “Sick Man of Europe,” as recent scholarship has shown. Overall, Abdul Hamid II’s policies of centralization and consolidation made a definite impact, especially in the Arabic speaking regions far from Istanbul. Specifically, Hamidian policies vis-à-vis the American mission were largely successful in creating a new status quo that led the missionaries toward marginalization and secularization. All of this was accomplished despite the balancing act that the Ottoman government was forced to play because of the ever-present threat of Great Power “diplomacy”—either through polite discussions between diplomatic officials or the imposition of gunboats and soldiers.³³

The interplay among Ottoman central authorities in Istanbul, local provincial authorities, and other local power holders also contributes to the historiography of center-periphery in the late Ottoman Empire, about which Hasan Kayali and others have written. At least as far as the Ottoman initiatives against American missionary institutions go, a complicated picture emerges where there was at times cooperation between central and

³² See chapter two for a brief explanation of these groups.

³³ The Great Powers refers especially to France, Britain, and Russia.

local authorities and at other times disagreement. Certainly, there was enough room in the 1880s in Ottoman Syria for central authorities, provincial authorities, village authorities, and *millet* authorities to each find arenas in which they might assert their authority—and at times all joined together against the American missionaries.

In addition, this paper also is significant for its reevaluation of the 1885 controversy over the closing of mission schools. It updates the work of Tibawi and Abu-Ghazaleh, who interpreted Jessup's response to the school closings based on his supposed long-standing hatred of Islam. Recent works on the Hamidian policy against missionaries suggest that Jessup was actually responding to specific and new Ottoman policies that benefited Islam and damaged Christian missionary interests.

Finally, this paper adds to the growing body of work about late Ottoman Syria-Lebanon. Especially Beirut, but also the surrounding areas in Syria-Lebanon, were important areas of contact and controversy for many different groups that the Ottoman authorities hoped to suppress. The 1885 controversy also provides a unique view into the impact of Hamidian censorship measures which affected the American mission, but which also led to the exodus at the same time of various literary institutions to Cairo.

In conclusion, this paper focuses primarily on the context for missionary writing. It finds both dualities and discrepancies among missionary perception, presentation, and the reality of events. It also explores the nature of the Ottoman response to American missions. It also hopes to shed light on the area of education both in the small scale of missionary schools and more broadly in Ottoman Syria. Ultimately, this project has ramifications in three main areas: the history of American Protestant perceptions of Islam, the history of American Protestant missions to the Ottoman Empire, and the

history of the interaction between two very different cultures in the context of missions. The paper then falls mainly under the rubrics of religious (missions) history, imperial/colonial history, and the regional history of Ottoman Syria.

Outline of Paper

The first chapter will locate the arguments made in this paper in the fields of history of missions and history of the late Ottoman Empire. The methodology will follow the recent work of Fruma Zachs and Ryan Dunch, who have argued for a new reading of missionaries that rejects the common debates over imperialism and turns rather to a study that emphasizes the unique and complex nature of missionary work. Through contextualization and awareness of local perceptions, missionaries are historicized and removed from the past framework of “cultural imperialism.”

The second chapter will provide a brief historical background of the history of the Presbyterian mission to Syria. Through a description of the roots of the mission in the Second Great Awakening and the prevailing American view of Islam in the early nineteenth century, it will be possible to understand the world from which Jessup came to be a missionary to Syria in 1856. This chapter will also provide a brief history of the Syria mission to 1860, when the disastrous civil war in Syria broke out, with a stress on the policies, debates, and struggles of the mission. This background information will primarily emphasize how the history of the mission up to 1885 provides the context that made the school closings in 1885 such a decisive moment.

The third chapter will provide a brief introduction to the 1885 school closings and Jessup’s rhetoric surrounding the controversy. This introduction will provide the reader with key examples of Jessup’s perceptions of the controversy and his written language

designed to convey the message that the Syria mission faced an immediate threat to its continued work in Syria. For Jessup, the threat came from an Ottoman government imbued with Islam in order to limit missionary activity.

The third chapter will then continue to highlight key points in the history of the Syria mission during the time of Jessup from 1860 to 1885 as a means of comparison with the turning point of 1885. Despite facing several crises during this time, Jessup's rhetoric was different in character from the missionary response to the 1885 controversy. By evaluating Jessup's rhetoric and response concerning the key events of this time period, it becomes clear that he saw the main difficulties prior to 1885 as rebuilding after the 1860 war, internal conflicts of the mission, continued struggles with native Eastern Christians, and competition from other foreign missions—especially French and Russian.

The fourth chapter will entail an in depth study, especially through various types of missionary documents, of the 1885 controversy. The 1885 school closings were a watershed in the history of the American mission to Syria that caused a shift in Jessup's language. Jessup cast fear and blame more on the Ottoman government and Islam than on the previous targets mentioned in the previous chapter, particularly Eastern Christians and other foreign missionaries. The analysis will demonstrate that a close reading of missionary sources shows that this new rhetoric was partly due to his perceptions and goals but also due to the reality of a recently increased climate of opposition to missionary work under Abdul Hamid II. Not only were the Ottoman authorities attempting to limit or stop the influence of the American missionaries in Syria, they were also implementing new policy initiatives, such as an increase in state-linked schools, mosques, and *ulama*, that would supplant missionary influence. Furthermore, the

American mission also faced different circumstances in Syria as local Muslim and Christian initiatives in the area of culture and education, the previous purview of the missionary in their mindset, increased in Syria during these years.

The fifth chapter will act as a brief epilogue to the 1885 controversy. The 1885 school controversy, in some ways, never really ended for the American mission. Hamidian policies of centralization and censorship had taken their toll on missionary initiatives, and the American mission grew increasingly secular and marginalized. The missionaries were forced to comply with Ottoman regulations, signaling a victory for the Hamidian regime. The missionaries still found ways to operate in Syria, but these methods had to conform to Ottoman regulations more than before the 1885 controversy. A new status quo developed as the missionaries, still under the leadership of Jessup into the 1900s, eventually grew weary of resisting in vain the Hamidian policies that had effectively limited American missionary initiatives that had grown strong by the early 1880s.

The sixth chapter will include the conclusion as well as mention some possibilities for future research based on this project.

Chapter I: Theory

Introduction

The debate among scholars concerning the role of missionaries, especially those during the period roughly between 1850 and 1950 when mission activity was high and imperial activity was also high, centers around the question of the relationship between missionaries and imperial/colonial power. Scholars, specifically in the field of Middle Eastern history but also in many other fields, have disputed whether to dub them outright tools of colonialism, more subtle participants in the process of colonialism of culture and the mind, bringers of beneficial aspects of Western modernity and Christianity who unwittingly participated in actions beneficial to colonial regimes, or outright altruists interested only in bringing the Christian gospel and needed services to the local people. Whatever their exact role on this spectrum of analysis, the amount of argument about missionaries suggests their continued importance to studies of this time period in many places around the world, the Middle East and Syria not the least. This importance is due to the central point that “however we [scholars who work on missionaries] conceptualize the process, there is no disputing that the Christian missionary movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an important medium for the dissemination of Western concepts and institutions into non-Western societies.”³⁴ This chapter will attempt to describe the methodological placement of this paper by highlighting some of the key historiographical controversies surrounding the history of modern missions and where this paper lands in those controversies.

³⁴ Dunch, 318.

Past Historiography

There are essentially two main paradigms for how missionaries have been viewed in the historiography concerning their connection with imperialism.³⁵ The first is the argument that missionaries were party to imperialism because they directly aided in the political and economic colonization of local people and societies. The second main trend, which stems in large part from the post-colonial work of authors such as Frantz Fanon,³⁶ is to leave aside the question of the direct tie to political or economic forces and to argue that missionaries were part of a process of “cultural imperialism.” “Cultural imperialism” argues that missionaries were important for the process of colonization because they worked in the sphere that outright economic and political colonialism did not—that of the culture of societies. Both processes are dubbed “imperialist” because of their “coercive imposition” where the politics, economics, and culture of an indigenous society are altered and lose their previous dominant position by the outside force of an empire.³⁷

Probably the most important piece of scholarship concerning the field of Middle Eastern history in the last thirty years is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which agrees with both of the paradigms mentioned above. This groundbreaking and complex study argues essentially that the history of Western scholarship on the “East,” (here to the Arab world) is intertwined with the processes and institutions of colonialism and can no longer be seen as work of objective scholars. This work, along with the broader corpus of post-

³⁵ Dunch, 308-309. Dunch’s 2002 article, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity” is the key conceptual basis for this chapter.

³⁶ For example, Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1994). This work was first translated into English in 1965.

³⁷ Dunch, 302.

colonial studies and in the 1990s subaltern studies, has changed the field of Middle Eastern history to the extent that, arguably, all works published are in some ways dependent on and influenced by Said's work. Most scholars have acknowledged that "the transformation of the world in the modern era has involved the global extension not only of political relations, industrial production, and trade, but also of cultural forms, nation-states, rationalism and science, secularism in politics, constitutional government, and mass education (in certain forms and emphasizing certain subjects), and these changes have been intimately related to structures of power and dominance, and to colonialism in particular."³⁸ The nature of Said's evaluation dictated that Said would discuss the role that Christian missionaries had to play in colonialism. Said did not like what he saw.

Said argues that missionaries, be they French, British, or American, were all participants in colonialism. Said does not give an in-depth enough discussion of missionaries for his work to be placed with confidence on the spectrum of the four positions mentioned above, but he does argue that they "openly joined the expansion of Europe."³⁹ Finding no difference between American missionaries and European ones from the nineteenth century empires of France or Britain, Said argues that "the early missionary institutions—printing presses, schools, universities, hospitals, and the like—contributed of course to the area's well being, but in their specifically imperial character and their support by the United States government, these institutions were no different from their French and British counterparts in the Orient."⁴⁰ Despite Said's clear admission that the United States was not an empire until the twentieth century, he still

³⁸ Dunch, 303.

³⁹ Said, 100. Here Said is quoting from A.L. Tibawi's British Interests in Palestine 1800-1901. I would argue that Said misinterpreted Tibawi's intention by conflating "the expansion of Europe" with direct colonialism.

⁴⁰ Said, 294.

argues that “ubiquitous” and “legendary” American missionaries to the Arab world were a part of the process “during the nineteenth century [where] the United States was concerned with the Orient in ways that prepared for its later, overtly imperial concern.”⁴¹ Finally, Said, with a footnote specifically to Jessup’s memoir *53 Years in Syria*, asserts that Americans in the Orient (including of course missionaries) constituted an “imperial constellation facilitating Euro-American penetration of the Orient” that “has never stopped.”⁴² In short, Said agrees in large part with the criticism of missionaries brought by both of the paradigms mentioned above—that missionaries were involved in colonization directly through economics and politics as well as in their impact on indigenous cultures.

Another piece of more recent scholarship that follows along with Said’s evaluation of missionaries in the Middle East is the work of Samir Khalaf, although Khalaf avoids the term “cultural imperialism.”⁴³ Khalaf, a Lebanese sociologist who teaches at the American University of Beirut (which Jessup helped to start), portrays Jessup as the classic example of a “Protestant Orientalist” who through his “reconfirmation of disparaging stereotypes” contributed to the continuation of negative American Protestant images of Islam.⁴⁴ Khalaf harshly condemns Jessup, who “refused to discard or even temper his defamatory images of the Levant or his arrogant evangelistic perspectives,” as participating in a process of “cultural penetration.”⁴⁵ Khalaf does, however, stray from Said’s outright connection of American missionaries

⁴¹ Said, 293-294.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 294.

⁴³ This section refers to chapters four through seven of Samir Khalaf’s 2001, *Cultural Resistance*, which all concern American Protestant missionaries to Syria.

⁴⁴ Khalaf, as opposed to other authors who have mainly used only his memoirs, does cite six of Jessup’s publications. Khalaf, however, does not use any of Jessup’s unpublished materials.

⁴⁵ Khalaf, 35.

with direct colonial coercion; instead, he contends that the missionaries participated in “non-aggressive and unobtrusive measures.”⁴⁶

Recent Scholarship and the Old Paradigms

Based especially on the impact of post-colonial and subaltern studies and to some extent as a reaction against the harsh criticism from Said and his followers, recent scholarship has argued for a change in the understanding of missionary work away from either of these two main paradigms. Recent scholarship takes the old historiography of missions to task first by denying overt missionary connections with political and economic colonialism (which Said argues by referencing payment from the United States government). Dunch agrees with the influential study of the Comaroff’s concerning British colonization in South Africa⁴⁷ in the rejection of overt colonial connections: “generally speaking, neither mission societies nor missionaries as individuals were directly influential with their home governments or their colonial representatives, nor were they directly linked to the traders and economic interests of their home countries.”⁴⁸ Rather, “the interests of missions were often diametrically opposed to those of their compatriots in government or commerce, and the relationships on the ground between missionaries, consular/colonial officials, and traders were as often cool or antagonistic as warm or cooperative.”⁴⁹ Even if this point is accepted however, the argument of “cultural imperialism” still remains.

⁴⁶ Khalaf, 36.

⁴⁷ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁴⁸ Dunch, 308. According to Dunch, the Comaroff’s study does not reject the concept of “cultural imperialism” which they call “colonization of consciousness.” The Comaroff’s, however, were studying a region that was directly colonized by the British in the nineteenth century, and that was exclusively missionized by British missionaries. This is quite a different situation from Syria, which had many different groups of missionaries and was not directly colonized until after World War I. See Dunch, 314.

⁴⁹ Dunch, 314.

Secondly, recent scholarship argues against the continued use of the term “cultural imperialism” for four main reasons.⁵⁰ First, it essentializes the nature of the culture or civilizations that the missionaries brought as some sort of “imagined national or cultural authenticity” (such as Said’s conflation of all Western missionaries, at all times, and to all of the Orient).⁵¹ Secondly, it does not give enough agency to the local culture for how that society desired, interacted with, altered, or rejected the message from the missionaries. Thirdly, it simplifies a series of complex relationships to that of missionary and local receiver (Said’s vague declaration that missionary institutions “contributed of course to the area’s well being”⁵²). At the same time, this simplification of relationships “skews our gaze too much towards looking for subjugation, collaboration, or resistance, or, even less usefully, towards fruitless debates about motives and unsupportable distinctions between cultural exchange and cultural imposition.”⁵³ Finally, the term “cultural imperialism” is often used by scholars who are actually discussing possible missionary connections with overt colonial power or missionary racism and paternalism. While these do at times exist (although certainly not the majority), these both miss the main thrust of “cultural imperialism”—to look at the actual impact of missionaries, not just at their attitudes.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Dunch., 318. See pages 303-307 for the larger description of ten problems that he finds with the use of the term “cultural imperialism.”

⁵¹ Samir Khalaf also presents an interpretation of American missionaries that gives little credence to changes over time based on specific historical circumstances: “Jessup was still upholding the same medieval mindset, with all the unflattering images, that he had carried over with him from New England half a century earlier.” Khalaf, 167.

⁵² Said’s opinion of Western Christian missions, and American missionaries specifically, in many ways mirrors the sort of scholarship that Said was arguing against. By essentializing missionaries and their impact across time and space, he ends up making the sort of argument about them that many of Said’s own targets for justifiable blame in *Orientalism* made about Islam and the Orient—that *it was and is always this way everywhere*.

⁵³ Dunch, 318.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Dunch's argument against "cultural imperialism" is founded upon the principle that there is today a modern global culture that has not only brought changes to indigenous cultures influenced by colonialism but also to the cultures from which imperialism came. This new "world order can quite reasonably be characterized as hegemonic, that is, at once dominant and subtly coercive, yet also simultaneously embraced, contested, and subverted by the human agents within it."⁵⁵ This new framework applies to missionaries to suggest that they should be seen "simultaneously [as] *agents* of the spread of modernity vis-à-vis non-Western societies, and *products* of its emerging hegemony."⁵⁶

A New Turn

There has also been a recent push in the scholarship concerning missionaries to leave behind the seemingly endless debates about just what exactly the missionary relationship with the colonial, or at least expanding Western, power was. Ussama Makdisi argued in his 1998 article on American missionaries in Syria that there should be a move away from the "heated debate mired in a fruitless endeavor to establish whether or not the missionaries were 'imperialist'."⁵⁷ Ryan Dunch argued in his 2002 article on "cultural imperialism" and missions that scholars needed to "get beyond the polarized praise and blame tendencies of earlier scholarship" since these provide "an unsatisfactory model for analyzing either cultural interaction in general or the missionary movement in world history in particular." Fruma Zachs in her 2005 article on American missionaries and the Syrian Protestant College agreed with Dunch in her project to show that the

⁵⁵ Dunch., 313.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 318. Emphasis is his.

⁵⁷ Ussama Makdisi, "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1997), 681.

“relationship between American missionaries and the local population was more complicated than that expressed by either side of the debate and can be viewed as including both arguments, depending on the individuals who were active at the time.”⁵⁸ Jens Hanssen in his 2005 book about turn-of-the-century Beirut also attempted a similar project that would shift the focus away from the imperialist debate. His goal was to provincialize (using the subaltern terminology from Chakrabarty⁵⁹) the “European impact on education and culture in the late Ottoman Empire” by demonstrating the complicated nature of education in late Ottoman Beirut where there were “many connections between thinkers, schools, and religions.”⁶⁰

While each of these authors certainly still argues for various interpretations of missionary work that place each author somewhere in the framework of the imperialist debate, the point is that none of these authors wrote primarily about the relationship of missionaries with imperialism, as, for example, Said did in *Orientalism*. The primary focus of each of these works was to demonstrate the complicated nature of the situation where missionaries were working in a certain context; the authors’ positions’ on the role of missionaries in imperialism is only of secondary or tertiary importance. By accepting then the basic point that the missionaries were involved in a system of give and take with the local society where the missionary is an actor bringing change and a recipient of change, the true historical complexity becomes clearer. Historians can then move on to

⁵⁸ Zachs, “From the Mission to the Missionary,” 255.

⁵⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁶⁰ Hanssen, 164, 187.

new questions concerning missionaries rather than falling into the old “vindicating or vilifying” paradigm.⁶¹

These scholars have argued persuasively that there is greater benefit from and ability to do studies of missionaries that: (a) recognize that their attitudes change over time based on their own experience and interaction with local people and societies (b) view missionaries more in their specific context and circumstances rather than just as texts in vacuums⁶² (c) focus more on the actual impact of missionaries (d) evaluate the local reaction to and perception of missionaries (e) evaluate them in a more comparative (across different regions especially) light and (f) recognize them as one of many elements in the spread of a “globalizing modernity” rather than necessarily tied with the spread of a coercive imperialism that forced a Western modernity.⁶³

Where this paper fits in

This paper seeks to follow in the theoretical path of the authors mentioned above who have moved beyond the question of the relationship of the missionary to imperialism to questions that address the complex of missionary interactions. It will also attempt to contribute to the growing body of work that addresses the six research topics mentioned above. In particular, the three main goals will be to recognize missionaries as changing over time based on their surroundings, to read missionary texts in context, and to evaluate

⁶¹ Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land,” 681.

⁶² Here see especially Dunch, 309-311. Missionary texts written for home consumption are often used to generalize about the inherent Orientalism of missionaries. These studies are “not always undertaken with sufficient awareness of the context and purpose of the texts in question, or their relationship to actual missionary practice on the ground (remembering that, unlike Said’s Orientalists, missionaries immersed themselves for decades in their host societies), and were often changed by their exposure to them.” Dunch, 310.

⁶³ See the works already mentioned by Dunch, Hanssen, Makdisi, and Zachs. The term “globalizing modernity” is from Ryan Dunch’s article.

the local (in this case mostly Ottoman governmental, but also various local groups and individuals) perception of missionaries.

Specifically, this paper will follow the methodological approach articulated by Zachs' maxim that "every missionary was a world of himself, with his own character and understanding and should be examined as such."⁶⁴ This is especially true for Henry Jessup who spent fifty-three years in Syria and therefore most of his life there—indeed he was buried in Beirut. Jessup's long-term experience in the Syria mission certainly shaped much of his thought. Based the decentralized nature of the American mission where control and policy did not radiate directly from either Boston or Beirut, studying individual missionaries who had significant leeway in their own locale of mission work fits the context of the Syria mission.⁶⁵ Despite his overarching belief in the Syria mission (as he saw it) and his position as Secretary of the mission from the 1870s, Jessup could not and did not prevent other American missionaries serving in Syria from holding a different understanding of events. The amount of material available for study on Jessup, both published and unpublished, also demonstrates the complexity of his thought and the way that it changed over time. Jessup's changes of attitude, opinion, ideology, and targets for blame and praise suggest that he never had a clear program of thought but was rather shaped by the specific context of the time. Finally, based on the fact that Jessup

⁶⁴ Zachs, "From the Mission to the Missionary," 290.

⁶⁵ Two brief examples illustrate this point. Ussama Makdisi discusses the conflict that Henry Jessup, Daniel Bliss, and other missionaries with to the Syria mission had with fellow missionary William Benton. Unlike most of the members of the mission, Benton did not flee his mission station during the 1860 war in Syria, did not blame the Druzes for the war, and held firm in his commitment to his mission station. Benton was eventually dismissed from the mission and largely ignored by Jessup and Bliss when they later wrote their memoirs. (Makdisi, "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible," 710). A second example is that of W.K. Eddy, who under the orders of Jessup in 1890 attempted to plead with the *Waly* of Damascus for the re-opening of some American mission schools that had been closed by the authorities. In a letter to Jessup on October 23, 1890, Eddy declared his independence and complained to Jessup: "As soon as this visit is over I shall resign any connection with this absurdly futile attempt to overrule the administrative policy of the Damascus *vilayet*." Presbyterian Historical Society (hereafter PHS), RG 115, Box 8, folder 10.

was so closely involved with most of the major initiatives of the Syria mission, his writings display a complex man who had different interests and concerns that would often become intertwined. Jessup also had enough longevity to be a part of the Syria mission through multiple and crises of the mission including the 1860 war in Syria and the 1885 school controversy. Jessup was also a part of several periods in the mission including its infancy period to 1860, its growth from 1860 to 1885, and its decline into secularization and stagnancy in the 1890s and beyond.

At the same time, there are potential weaknesses to an approach that focuses on one missionary. Firstly, the project has the potential to devolve into a biography that overly stresses Jessup as representative and as a result paints an incomplete picture of an American mission made up of many unique figures. Secondly, it could have the effect of minimizing the extent to which the project contributes to Ottoman and Syrian history. Finally, and most importantly, the focus on Henry Jessup could overemphasize the role of American missions in Syria. The American mission, although the oldest and largest in Syria in the mid to late nineteenth century, was only one of many (Russian, German, Italian, French) in Syria. The American focus especially limits the reader's view of the large impact of French Catholic missions in Syria, which would eventually contribute to the French being given the mandate of Syria after World War I.⁶⁶

Ultimately, however, Henry Jessup provides a unique opportunity to evaluate the complexity over time of the American mission to Syria. Jessup never had a clear policy, and certainly not one that governed his attitudes and actions through his fifty-three years in Syria. Certainly at times his policy did favor some form of increased Western

⁶⁶ William I. Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon, 1900-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 11-22.

imperialism in Syria, include comments that attacked Islam and Muslims, and blame the Ottoman government for complex conflicts in Syria. At other times, however, Jessup highly valued the lack of imperialism in Syria, wrote comments that attacked Eastern Christianity and Roman Catholicism much more than Islam, wrote comments that sought common ground with and praised Islam, and praised the Ottoman government for its beneficial and tolerant policies. It would be incorrect to characterize Jessup completely by any one of these stances because his attitudes must be evaluated in their specific context.

The one overarching goal that does mark Jessup is his commitment to the advancement of the mission, even though what exactly he thought or the Presbyterian Board thought this “mission” was changed over time based on certain circumstances. Jessup, as a devoted Presbyterian, believed that his calling transcended the constraints of the Ottoman government, local hindrances, and even at times the disagreement of his missionary board and fellow missionaries. Also as someone who spent so long in Syria and as part of a mission that had set down roots in Syria in the 1820s, Jessup felt a strong connection to Syria that was reflected in his willingness to argue against the Ottoman authorities who were attempting to institute their imperial program there.⁶⁷

The following chapter will begin the discussion of the history and context of the American mission to Syria, which Jessup joined in 1856, thirty-seven years after the first two members of the mission set forth for the Holy Land. While Jessup was in some ways following in the footsteps of those two men, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parson, in many ways,

⁶⁷ These points will be discussed at greater length later in the paper. For Jessup’s connection with Syria, I am following the work of Fruma Zachs, “Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria.” For the imperial project of the Ottomans, especially in the years after the 1860 war in Syria, I am following the work of Ussama Makdisi, “After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 601-617.

the context of the Syria mission had changed. In order to understand Jessup and his actions as a missionary in Syria, particularly his response to the 1885 school closings by the Ottoman authorities, it is necessary to explore the roots and early history of the American mission to Syria. This exploration will demonstrate the complexity of missions and of individual missionaries just discussed. Later chapters' comparison and contrast with the next chapter's discussion of the early history of the mission make this even clearer.

Chapter II: Historical Background

Introduction

A brief evaluation of the formative background of the American mission to Syria up to 1856, when Jessup joined the mission, provides the necessary underpinning for Jessup's experience there as well as why 1885 was such a significant turning point for the mission. Before 1821, when the mission in Syria would actually commence, the Second Great Awakening had provided the original motivation for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to begin its missionary work around the world. The specific nature of this millenarian enterprise combined with particular trends in American religious and political history to determine the Levant as one of the central destinations of that mission board. The United States, more so than Europe, saw the Ottoman Empire as the heartland of Islam and formed certain ideas about Islam based on that assumption. The discussion of these two historical factors will provide a view into Jessup's background and experience in the United States before joining the Syria mission in 1856. The contrast between the "other worldly" and "othering" trends of these two background factors and the reality of the history of the American mission in Syria demonstrates the importance of reading Jessup's writing in a specific context of time and space.

Since the mission started in Beirut in 1821 and Jessup did not join the mission until 1856, many formative events had already shaped the mission of which Jessup would eventually become the Secretary in the 1870s.⁶⁸ The two major developments in the

⁶⁸ This was an informal title used by Jessup to describe himself as the leader of the American mission to Syria. Jessup's main responsibilities included coordinating the efforts of the many American missionaries scattered throughout Syria as well as acting as the mouthpiece of the mission to Western, Ottoman, local authorities, other foreign missions, and the Presbyterian Mission Board in the United States. See Tibawi, *American Interests*, 256. Jessup also acted as Director of the American mission schools, a responsibility which Jessup took very seriously due to the importance of these schools for the influence and notoriety of

history of the mission, which indeed are directly relevant to the situation during Jessup's time and specifically the 1885 controversy, were the turn from the attempt to work with Jews and Muslims to working mainly with Eastern Christians and the turn from proselytism to a focus on education. Both of these were a result of difficulty in gaining influence with the local population as well as legal barriers enforced by the Ottomans. These changes occurred chiefly because of missionary experience working on the ground in Syria over time that taught them to be more pragmatic and less idealistic in their goals and actions. The missionaries faced enough resistance from the local and Ottoman authorities to cause them to alter their tactics, but not enough to cause them to give up hope in the efficacy of the mission to bring transformation to Syria.⁶⁹ Accordingly, this chapter will also include some brief notes on the groups with which the American missionaries were working as well as some major historical trends relating to the Ottoman authorities. The two major changes toward Eastern Christians and education also went ahead despite opposition from the mission board and supporters at home, which left the missionaries in Syria with an embattled sense of the importance of their mission. This manifested itself in the reality that by the 1850s, Syria had become home for the American missionaries. During this time period in 1856, Jessup joined the mission, first in Tripoli but for most of his fifty-three years in Syria, in Beirut. Four years into Jessup's time in Syria, barely enough time for him to have learned the language very well, a civil war struck the region east of Beirut and disrupted the American mission, the local

the mission. In this capacity, Jessup was in charge of the mostly native Christian teachers in the many schools throughout Syria. His responsibility as Director of Schools did not include authority over the Syrian Protestant College, founded in 1866 and directed by Daniel Bliss, because the Syrian Protestant College was a separate, although related, enterprise.

⁶⁹ As will be seen more later, this view of transformation, as formulated chiefly by the American Board's Director Rufus Anderson (see below), was both religious and civilizational (civil-political-societal). The American mission did not make a distinction between the two.

society, and Ottoman interests in Syria. This event influenced Jessup in the same way that his background in the United States and the history of the Syria mission did.

The Second Great Awakening and Millenarianism

Beginning in the late eighteenth century in England, and quickly transported to the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Second Great Awakening was a grassroots movement among especially Baptist, Reformed (Congregationalists and Presbyterians), and Methodist Protestant Christians in the English-speaking world.⁷⁰ The movement emphasized personal activity to help usher in the kingdom of God on earth. As mentioned above, part of the theological underpinning of the movement was eschatological. Christians thought in terms of the end times, but believed that certain conditions needed to be fulfilled before Christ would return and usher in the new Millennium.⁷¹ The first of these was that the gospel message, as interpreted by these Protestant groups, must be spread around the world; this would fulfill the Great Commission in Matthew Chapter Twenty-Eight. The second of these, a doctrine known as Restorationism, was the idea that the Jews should be brought back to the Holy Land in order for the conditions for Armageddon and their eventual conversion to Christianity to be fulfilled.⁷² Mission to Muslims would fulfill both of these conditions, as the proponents of this theology believed that Ottoman Muslim rule over the Holy Land

⁷⁰ For more information on the Second Great Awakening, especially its relation to missions, see Charles L. Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena, Calif: William Carey Library, 1976), 213-286. Also see William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Also see James A. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1969), 68-103. For a more specific focus on the Second Great Awakening and its application to missions to the Muslim world see Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83-90. Finally see Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2007), 81-89. My discussion draws mainly from the work of Marr and Oren.

⁷¹ The Millennium refers to an expected thousand-year reign of Christ on earth where the nations would follow Christ in his rule of justice, peace, and harmony.

⁷² This, of course, is the same ideology that has been responsible for Christian Zionism through the years.

prevented this restoration of the Jews.⁷³ All of this was based on a complex eschatological theology popular at the time, which John Nelson Darby, a radical Irish Anglican priest had first propounded in the late eighteenth century.⁷⁴

Despite the fact that this movement placed a central focus on individual activity, the movement caught on quickly especially in the Puritan based New England Reformed Churches.⁷⁵ With the reformation now three centuries years in the past, these Protestant descendants of the Puritans hoped to carry on the same type of purifying work by spreading the true gospel around the world, especially to the “heathen” populations, or those who had never before been reached with the gospel. This fit right in line with the Puritan theology of John Edwards and others that saw America as a new Zion, where American Christians had a responsibility to spread this unique blessing. With the increased ability to travel overseas and the increased reach of Western countries into various parts of the globe by the early nineteenth century, the goal of being “salt and light” to the world became at least more of a geographic possibility.⁷⁶

In the early nineteenth century, these ideas became current in the prominent colleges and seminaries of New England, especially Andover Theological Seminary, where these ideas began to be put into practice. Men from the schools and churches of New England increasingly in the early nineteenth century gathered together to form various mission organizations that would be responsible for the carrying out in practice of

⁷³ Along with the already cited works, see the concise description in Thomas S. Kidd, “Islam in American Protestant Thought: Precious little courtesy or understanding,” *Books and Culture: A Christian Review* (Oct. 2006).

⁷⁴ Don Wagner, “For Zion's Sake,” *Middle East Report* no. 223 (Summer 2002): 53-54.

⁷⁵ Oren, 82-86.

⁷⁶ This was a common missionary conception of their work taken from Matthew Chapter 5.

the theology of the Second Great Awakening.⁷⁷ The first of these groups to turn its attention overseas, from what had in the past been a mission to the indigenous peoples in North America, was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.⁷⁸ This group, first organized in 1810, included both Presbyterians and Congregationalists. It also had a particular interest in the Middle East. As mentioned above, the Holy Land figured prominently in the thought of the Second Great Awakening, and the American Board would send its first two missionaries to the Middle East in 1819, Levi Parson and Pliny Fisk. This was the initial foundation of the Syria mission, of which Jessup became a part in 1856, although the original destination of Parson and Fisk was Jerusalem.

Islam in the American Mindset

Besides the theological basis for the American Protestant interest in Syria and Palestine, there were other tangible reasons within American political and religious history for why this region was the focus of the American Board and other American mission groups. Underlying the more concrete examples of the Muslim world and the Ottoman Empire that would confront Americans especially after 1800, there was a wealth of Christian literature concerning Islam available for consumption. The most prominent of these works was Humphrey Prideaux's *The True Nature of Imposture Displayed in the Life of Mahomet* (1697), which was reprinted in the United States in 1798.⁷⁹ This work,

⁷⁷ Women were also active in the lower levels of the movement and participated in missions, but the leadership of the societies was male.

⁷⁸ For more on the American Board, especially its work in the Muslim world, see Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record: Anglican and Reformed Approaches in India and the Near East, 1800-1938* (South Pasadena, Calif: William Carey Library, 1977), 103-152. This work is also particularly useful for its comparison of various Reformed mission boards, as after 1870 the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church USA took over the Syria mission and the American Board maintained control of the mission in Anatolia.

⁷⁹ Kidd, paragraph six. Andrew F. Walls, "Africa as the Theatre of Christian Engagement with Islam in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 29, no. 2, Special Issue in Honour of the Editorship of Adrian Hastings 1985-1999 and of His Seventieth Birthday. 23 June 1999 (May 1999): 156.

which represents a common theme in Western literature and sermons on Islam in this time period, suggested that the Prophet had created Islam as a means to gain political and military dominance. Shortly after in 1702, Cotton Mather, a prominent Boston preacher, wrote about some Europeans being held in captivity by North African pirates:

“Mahometan Turks, and Moors, and devils, are at this day oppressing many of our sons.”⁸⁰ The use of “Mahometan,” “Turks,” and “Moors,” all of which are incorrect and prejudicial Western references to North African Muslim Arabs and Berbers, are even equated with “devils.” This parallel usage demonstrates how Mather set up the North African Muslims as an example of what American Christians should see as the evil “other.” Another polemical tract, published in America in the late eighteenth century, was *The Conversion of a Mehometan*.⁸¹ This tract contained a fictitious letter by a “Turk” named “Gaifer” describing his conversion to Christianity—a device actually intended by the author to make a theological point about Anglican Church authorities. The term “Turk” would continue to be used by Western authors as a prejudicial reference to any Muslim or person from the “Orient,” despite the fact that Turks were one of many ethnic groups in the Ottoman world and that some Turks were not Muslims. Each of these works demonstrates that Muslims (Mahometans) and Turks (Ottomans, or any Muslim from the “Orient”), were used by Western Christian authors and preachers as a means to situate Western Christians in opposition to the “other” of the “Oriental.” The terminology used in these works such as (in all of its spellings) “Mohammedanism,” “itself an Orientalist designation that gave undue centrality to the place of the Messenger Muhammad in the faith of Islam”, was based on American ideas and domestic issues and

⁸⁰ Kidd, paragraph five.

⁸¹ Ibid., paragraph seven.

not on any sort of real interaction with Muslims.⁸² In other words, the term “Mohammedanism” was an inherent criticism of the Muslim faith because it implied that Islam was actually a Christian heresy where Muslims worshiped the Prophet Muhammad, which is false characterization of one of the three Abrahamic faiths.

One of the first international conflicts in which the new Republic of the United States came into conflict with the Muslim world was that of the so-called Barbary Pirates.⁸³ In short, this was a series of minor conflicts between 1785 and 1815 over naval rights in the western Mediterranean between the United States and the states of Algiers and Tripoli. The conflict, in which some American sailors were held captive, held American interest because these North African territories represented “models of despotism and decadence” to the new, and still developing Republic of the United States.⁸⁴ Americans, who may have already had a vague idea about Islam based on popular literature and sermons, now had a concrete international situation that contributed to their conception of Islam and the East. Furthermore, the conflict symbolized for Americans the growth of their influence internationally, where the East represented a possible venue for growth of American influence vis-à-vis Europe.

The Ottoman Empire, ruled by the “despotic” sultan, represented the key image of the Muslim “Orient” and all of its “despotism and decadence” especially to American Protestants who saw their “republican system and moral culture, linked in many minds with a clear sense of political destiny and religious mission, as one fit to replace (even if only symbolically) the decadent and outmoded Turks, who many viewed as a despotic

⁸² Marr, 6.

⁸³ See Robert J. Allison, “The United States and the Specter of Islam: The Early Nineteenth Century,” (Working Paper for the Council on Middle Eastern Studies at the MacMillan Center at Yale), 1-8.

⁸⁴ Allison, 1. For Americans, Algiers and Tripoli represented a political and social system that they shunned because of their vulnerable stage of development.

and satanic opposition.”⁸⁵ Not until 1830 did the United States sign a formal treaty with the Ottoman Empire, so as of yet there were few American travelers or merchants in the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶ Based on the lack of physical interaction before 1830, the political image of the “Barbary Pirates” and the literary images of polemical works like that of Prideaux carried significant weight.

As opposed to Europe and European missionaries who actually had a greater interaction with Islam in Africa because of the restrictions on direct proselytism of Muslims in the Ottoman Empire and the expansion of missions in West Africa,⁸⁷ American Protestants remained focused on the Ottoman Empire, and specifically the Holy Land. In the Ottoman Empire, French mission efforts (renewed in 1831) focused on creating or bolstering Uniate Catholic communities,⁸⁸ and British missions (begun in Syria and Palestine in 1823⁸⁹) were “early interested in developments which could bring renewal to the ancient Eastern Churches.”⁹⁰ What little sustained interaction missionaries from either country had with Muslims was in Africa: the French in their North African colonies and the British in West Africa.⁹¹ Especially beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, British sponsored missions in the Niger territories increased; even

⁸⁵ Allison, 1-2. Marr, 9.

⁸⁶ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 2-3.

⁸⁷ Walls, 155-174. This is an excellent article that goes through the history of Western writing about Islam and how it affected Western thought as well as the interaction of European missions and West Africans.

⁸⁸ Chantal Verdeil, “Between Rome and France, intransigent and anti-Protestant Jesuits in the Orient: the beginning of the Jesuits’ mission of Syria, 1831-1864,” in *Christian Witness Between Continuity and New Beginnings: Modern Historical Missions in the Middle East*, ed. Michael Marten and Martin Tamcke (Piscataway, N.J. : Transaction Publishers, 2006), 23-32.

⁸⁹ Vander Werff, 154.

⁹⁰ Walls, 171 11n. Also see Vander Werff, 153-155.

⁹¹ For French missions in North Africa, see for example Joseph Dean O’Donnell, *Lavignerie in Tunisia: The Interplay of Imperialist and Missionary* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979).

though this effort demonstrated “how resistant to Christianity Muslim communities were.”⁹²

American Christians, who similarly to their European counterparts had few sustained encounters with Muslims (as will be seen below), focused more of their missionary energy on sending missionaries the Ottoman Empire. Protestant missionaries turned towards (in their mindset) “what the West generally saw as the heart of the Islamic world, where the Prophet’s deputy, the leader of the faithful [the sultan], presided over the immense, if ramshackle” Ottoman Empire.⁹³ Moreover, the fact that the Ottoman Empire was a region where Europe did not have anything other than an infant British mission by 1820 added to American Protestant interest there because they had a chance to make their own mark.⁹⁴

A significant part of the American image of the Ottoman Empire included its purpose for American domestic issues—either as a negative model of what America should not be or as a positive model of what America should be. In both cases, the Ottoman Empire became the “other.” As mentioned above, the Ottoman Empire represented a negative theological, political, and moral example of the other. A further example is that of prophetic literature, which contributed especially to the Protestant Second Great Awakening view of Islam.⁹⁵ In the apocalyptic worldview of these prophecies, the growth of foreign missions was crucial for the eventual downfall of Islam, as some Protestants interpreted Revelation Chapter Sixteen.⁹⁶ These prophecies actually had their foundation in internal American issues: “by figuring Islam as a

⁹² Walls, 160-161.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁹⁴ Oren, 88.

⁹⁵ Marr 90-116.

⁹⁶ Kidd, paragraph eight.

temporary scourge that God would soon remove, eschatology enabled American Christians to resolve the problem of Islam by explaining it within the terms of their own cultural desires and beliefs.”⁹⁷

But not only was the Ottoman Empire the negative example of decadency, backwardness, despotism, and false religion, it was employed at the same time as a positive model for reform.⁹⁸ The two key examples of this positive usage are drunkenness and slavery, which many Protestant reformers saw as significant blights to their image. Other negative aspects of American society according to these reformers included “xenophobia, exploitation, racism, and sectarianism.”⁹⁹ These reformers thought that “if only Americans could reform the behaviors in their own midst that tarnished their ideals of democracy and Christianity, then the nation would assume its exemplary power to influence the world, even before the act of venturing into foreign terrain.”¹⁰⁰ Overall, this process occurred in three steps: (a) “infidelizing” negative aspects of American society to make them seem even worse by their association with foreign practices (b) ills of American society that had been “infidelized” then extended domestic reform into an international campaign that enlarged American influence and finally (c) the positive use of the Ottoman Empire to demonstrate the true depth of American vice.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, while this process “showed more openness to Islam than . . . earlier stereotypes,” it did not demonstrate “any abiding interest in the religion of

⁹⁷ Marr, 133.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 134-184. This chapter, “Antebellum Islamicism and the Transnational Crusade of Antislavery and Temperance Reform,” provides an excellent discussion of the overlapping American employment of images of the Ottoman Empire that were both critical and romantic.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 138.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 134-139.

Islam.”¹⁰² Of course, what made this vision of the Ottoman Empire possible, even though used for a domestic purpose, was actual interaction with it including travelers’ accounts that increased after 1830 and missionary writings that began a decade before.

The New England Protestants who first joined the American Board’s mission to the Holy Land in the early 1800s were shaped by a combination of the theology of the Second Great Awakening, the politics of American Republicanism and its interaction with Algiers and Tunis, the traditional Western literature on Islam, and American prophetic media. These missionaries would not, however, continue to be wholly shaped by these influences. Once the missionaries physically arrived in the Ottoman Empire, they began to experience and describe in writing a “somewhat more realistic portrayal of the practices of Ottoman life, which helped instigate a slow reassessment of derogatory stereotypes of the Turk,” even though the term continued to be used incorrectly as a reference to Ottomans or Muslims.¹⁰³

In general however, the impact of various American religious and political interactions with Islam and the Ottoman Empire on individual missionaries is an area that requires further study. For example, Henry Jessup’s diary from his seminary years would hopefully provide clarity on just how New England Protestants interacted with the various material available concerning Islam and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁴ A study of the curriculum of the seminaries which Jessup and other missionaries attended in the northeastern United States would also add to this understanding. Most probably, each missionary was impacted in a unique way by different influences; but for those who came

¹⁰² Marr., 139.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁴ The Henry Harris Jessup Papers, held at the Presbyterian Historical Society, contain Jessup’s journal from his student days at Union Theological Seminary. PHS, RG 183, Box 2.

in the years after the mission had been founded, official mission publications such as the American Board's *Missionary Herald* probably provided an important resource.

From Jews and Muslims to Eastern Christians

Fisk and Parson, the first American Board missionaries to the Middle East, grew up and were educated in this American and American Protestant climate. The two set out first for Jerusalem in 1819 where their mission was to explore the possibility of future direct proselytism with Jews and Muslims there. Before arriving there, they spent time learning language and marshaling connections in Smyrna (Izmir), where Parson grew sick and was unable to continue. Fisk, now joined by Jonas King, who had already learned some Arabic, attempted to move on to Jerusalem; however, these early missionaries saw quickly that direct proselytism, especially to the Jews and Muslims of the Holy Land was if not a lost cause, then certainly an incredible challenge.¹⁰⁵ Several legal impediments prevented mission work there: "Franks" were not legally allowed to live in Jerusalem, proselytism of Muslims was illegal in the Ottoman Empire, and even proselytism to Jews and Eastern Christians faced legal and administrative problems based on the organization of the *millet* system.¹⁰⁶ At this point in time, if an Ottoman subject had converted to Protestantism, they would have lost their legal status. As a result of the hostility faced in Jerusalem, the missionaries moved north to Beirut. Beirut not only was more welcoming in that it had a higher proportion of Christians than Jerusalem (Beirut

¹⁰⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the history of the American mission to Syria, see A.L. Tibawi's *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work*. For the purposes of this abbreviated history, I have consulted A.L. Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," in *American University of Beirut Festival Book (Festschrift)*, ed. by Fuad Sarruf and Suha Tamim (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1967), 257-294.

¹⁰⁶ Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 258-259.

was in fact a majority Christian city),¹⁰⁷ but it also still fit within the missionary ideology of doing mission in the Holy Land of Syria, even though the epicenter of Jerusalem had been abandoned for the present. The missionaries knew quite well that Jesus had visited Tyre and Sidon, just south of Beirut.

While Beirut may have been more welcoming than Jerusalem, the missionaries still faced the same imposition against preaching to Muslims and Jews. Similar to American perceptions of Ottoman subjects as “Turks” and “Mohammedans,” the Fisk and King faced the difficulty of being foreigners who were fit into existing domestic images. The Americans were known by the terms “Frank” (dating back to the Crusades), “infidel,” or more correctly as “English.”¹⁰⁸ Especially before the American treaty with the Ottomans in 1830, the Americans were legally recognized by the Ottoman authorities as members of the English *millet*, not to mention the language that Parson and King spoke. The American missionaries adapted quickly to the new situation however, and came to a new strategy as soon as 1826. They now saw that their best approach was to “rouse ‘nominal’ Christians from their slumber and then to hope that they would in God’s good time impart the Christian message to the Jews, Muslims, and Pagans.”¹⁰⁹ This approach was a convenient compromise with the original goal: the first mission to Muslims and Jews (based on millenarian theology) was not abandoned, but at the same time mission work could continue under the current political circumstances.

Furthermore, the missionaries’ hoped that this new method might actually work better in

¹⁰⁷ For example, Beirut’s municipal council in 1879 had forty-six Christians (of various confessions) and only fourteen Muslims (only Sunni). Hanssen, 149. Even though this statistic is from roughly sixty years after the American missionaries first came to Beirut, these statistics are representative of the diversity of the city to which the missionaries came in the early 1820s.

¹⁰⁸ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 25-26, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Tibawi, “The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College,” 263.

the long run; who better to convert Muslims than those Christians who had lived with them for over a millennium?¹¹⁰ But in order for this to take place, the missionaries believed that Eastern Christians must be instructed in the essentials of the Protestant gospel, including the sinfulness of humanity, the necessity of sanctification through the Holy Spirit, and salvation by faith alone through the grace of Christ.¹¹¹ The missionaries believed that these ‘nominal’ Christians had fallen into “ignorance and superstition” and were therefore in no state to spread their faith effectively.¹¹²

There were many different groups of Eastern Christians as well as various heterodox Muslim groups that the missionaries at times struggled to reach with their message after turning their immediate focus away from Muslims and Jews. This task became all the more difficult when Catholic missions to the Middle East were renewed in 1831 because some of these groups already had historical connections with the Church in Rome.¹¹³ The field of the American mission in Syria contained at least five Christian communities¹¹⁴ including the Maronites,¹¹⁵ Greek Orthodox (both the Arabic rite and Greek rite),¹¹⁶ Melkites (Greek Catholics),¹¹⁷ and Armenians.¹¹⁸ In such a diverse region

¹¹⁰ For more on this new missionary strategy see Vander Werff, 103-152.

¹¹¹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 102.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ For more on the revitalization of Catholic missions in Syria see Chantal Verdeil, “Between Rome and France.”

¹¹⁴ For the purposes of this paper, only a brief description of the groups will be given. For more information, see Robert M. Haddad’s *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society*. Also see Aziz S. Atiya, *History of Eastern Christianity* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968). Also see Andrea Pacini ed., *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). This book includes many helpful statistics, charts, and maps.

¹¹⁵ The Maronite church, which thrived at Mt. Lebanon, was a Uniate church—one which held to its own eastern rites and Syriac liturgical language, but had maintained its allegiance to the Pope in Rome. This allegiance was reaffirmed during the time of the Crusades. Since the early 1600s, the Maronite church had developed a strong connection with the French, who saw part of their role in Syria as that of the protectors of the Maronites.

¹¹⁶ Part of the historical Eastern Orthodox Church, whose patriarch was and is in Istanbul (Constantinople). This was one of the largest groups in Syria and in the Ottoman Empire, especially if both the Greek

as Syria, the missionaries worked with other Christian groups as well, but these five figured most prominently in the region. The American mission also had periodic success working with the local Druze¹¹⁹ and Nusairi-Alawi¹²⁰ communities, with whom the American mission would still seek to work during Jessup's time as Secretary of the mission in the 1870s and 1880s.

Even though there was no official proscription against proselytism of these various Christian groups, the missionaries still had a difficult time beginning their work with them. This was not due to any official Ottoman effort, but rather to the initiative of the leadership of each of the local Christian communities who shunned all manifestations of Protestant initiative. These ecclesial leaders, the "principal enemies" of the American mission, even went to the extent of "repeatedly anathematizing any of their flock who had dealings with the Protestants."¹²¹ Certain church leaders had more success than others in persuading their flock to stay away from the missionaries, however.¹²² The Maronites, based on their historic connection with Rome and France, were particularly

speaking (whose clergy did not marry) and Arabic speaking (whose clergy do marry) are included. This was one of the main groups that attended American mission schools in Syria during the nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ The Melkites were and are a smaller group in Syria who practiced the Byzantine rite (making them very similar to most Eastern Orthodox churches in this respect) but acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope. Although similar to the Maronites in some respects, the Melkites emerged later than the Maronites, whose history extended back to the early Byzantine period.

¹¹⁸ The Armenian Church, another of the largest Christian groups in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, was and is an ancient church with its own language and rites (as an ethnically based church). There were more members of this church in Anatolia than in Syria, but Armenians became probably the most receptive group to the American mission. For more on missions to Armenians see Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism, and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896* (London, England: F. Cass, 1993).

¹¹⁹ The Druzes were and are an group that was an offshoot of Isma'ili Islam and who regard the eleventh century Fatimid ruler al-Hakim as the expected *Mahdi*. The Druzes have historically held a position of power in Lebanon and often contested with the Maronites for influence near Mt. Lebanon.

¹²⁰ Another heterodox Muslim group in Syria, the Alawis (as they today prefer to be called) are similar to Shia Muslims in that they hold 'Ali to be of high importance. For this paper, I will mainly use the term Nusairi to refer to this group, since the missionaries used this term.

¹²¹ Jeremy Salt, "Trouble Wherever They Went: American Missionaries in Anatolia and Ottoman Syria in the 19th century," in *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East*, ed. Eleanor Harvey Tejirian and Reeva S. Simon (New York, N.Y: Middle East Institute, Columbia University, 2002), 144.

¹²² Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 262.

resistant.¹²³ In order to best reach these groups of Christians—particularly the Greek Orthodox and Armenians who had a significant population, faced the least opposition from their clergy, and were the most receptive to the Protestant message—the American mission hoped to provide schooling for their children. Based on the lack of other schools capable of presenting more than traditional education to young pupils and the other public services that mission houses offered (such as medical care), Syrians slowly began to participate in the efforts of the American mission.

From Proselytism to Education

After an initial rough period in the 1820s and into the 1830s when the continuance of the mission was very much in question and only a handful of missionaries worked in Syria, the mission grew slowly but steadily. The mission continued to expand its small network of schools, most of which were primary or common schools, that taught basic reading in Arabic through the medium of the Bible. The teachers were native Syrians, and the schools met in houses that the missionaries rented.¹²⁴ At the same time, various political events encouraged the Syria mission to hope for more success. In 1830, the United States signed a formal agreement with the Ottoman Empire, allowing Americans to travel freely, with the proper paperwork, in the Ottoman Empire. This would at least allow American missionaries entering the field of Syria more leeway on their stopping points in Istanbul, Smyrna, and Cyprus. Syria also saw change in the 1830s. Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Mehmed Ali of Egypt, took over the rule of Syria during the 1830s as

¹²³ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 36. The famous example of this is As'ad Shidyaq, a Maronite employed by the early missionaries to teach Arabic, who converted to Protestantism. He was the first “martyr” for the missionary cause, as he died in the prison of the Maronite patriarch.

¹²⁴ For the best overview of American mission schools, see Rao H. Lindsay, *Nineteenth Century American Schools in the Levant: A Study of Purposes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, School of Education, 1965). Even though this work is somewhat dated, it gives detailed information on the motivations, methods, and practice of American mission schools. For the common schools, see pages 87-116.

part of Mehmed Ali's challenge to Ottoman rule. While the American mission was still very small at this point, Ibrahim's rule encouraged liberalization and Western influences, so the missionaries were able to work in more freedom than before 1830.¹²⁵ In order to gain Western support against Mehmed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, the Ottomans sought the help of the Great Powers, for which the Ottomans in return issued the first of the Tanzimat edicts in 1839.¹²⁶ For the Syria mission, this represented another gain and further possibility for mission work because the Tanzimat declared greater equality across confessional lines within the Empire. In 1844, shortly after this edict was issued, the Ottomans abrogated the death penalty for apostasy from Islam.¹²⁷ The second of the Tanzimat edicts in 1856 even gave the missionaries hope that Muslims could legally convert to Christianity, although the Ottomans held to a different interpretation of this law that still prevented conversion.¹²⁸ The combination of the various Ottoman reforms in this period caused the Syria mission to grow in its boldness and hope that the legal-political constraints set against them would one day be repealed.

By the 1840s the mission was beginning to attract new missionaries and more funds, which allowed the mission to set up new schools and churches in Syria. Eventually, the mission had grown strong enough to attract some converts, which became

¹²⁵ Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 264.

¹²⁶ This paper will not address the Tanzimat reforms in detail. Tanzimat refers to a period in Ottoman history between 1839 and 1876 where liberalizing reforms were passed due to European pressure and an Ottoman hope that these reforms might strengthen the Empire. For more information on the Tanzimat reforms see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963). Also see Moshe Maoz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine, 1840-1861; the Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

¹²⁷ Oren, 129.

¹²⁸ Jeremy Salt, "Trouble Wherever They Went," 159. Salt explains the Ottoman position this way: "the Shari'a was the law of the land and the entire structure of Ottoman authority was underpinned by the legitimacy of the sultan as a Muslim ruler. . . the Ottoman government could not possibly tolerate any questioning of the truth of Islam. That could only be seen as subversive and having practical consequences." Also see Tibawi, *American Interests*, 175.

a debate with the Ottoman authorities and the mission itself. Up until this point, there had been a debate within the mission about whether a native church with native leadership should be formed or not.¹²⁹ Until the late 1840s, those who believed in the message that the missionaries brought would have mostly remained in their old churches as “reformed” members of their historical *millet*. Rufus Anderson, the head of the American Board from 1832 into the 1860s, was a strong proponent of the anti-civilizational ideology that argued for evangelization by missionaries that led to the formation of a local church under local control.¹³⁰ For Anderson, the work of bringing “Christian civilization” (Western, especially Protestant, civilization) was not the direct responsibility of the missionaries. Rather, transformation would come from within as the gospel took root.

The controversy in the 1840s over those Syrians (formerly Greek Orthodox) who had declared themselves Protestants lingered until British consular officials intervened with the Porte. The British, who saw a possibility to increase their influence through the protection of what would be the new Protestant *millet*, were able to influence the Ottomans to concede the issue and grant an official *millet* status (meaning the community would have official legal status in the Empire and would have a native representative to advocate to the Porte) to the tiny Protestant community in Syria.¹³¹ The American mission rejoiced in what they saw as a major victory. It was especially important

¹²⁹ For an extensive study of this issue, see Habib Badr, “Mission to “nominal Christians”: The policy and practice of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and its missionaries concerning Eastern churches which led to the organization of a Protestant church in Beirut (1819-1848)” (Ph.D diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1992).

¹³⁰ The comments on Anderson are drawn from Hutchison, 77-90.

¹³¹ For more on this controversy in the 1840s see Caesar E. Farah, “Protestantism and Politics: The 19th Century Dimension in Syria,” in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986), 320-340. For the Ottoman perspective see Cagri Erhan, “Ottoman Official Attitudes Towards American Missionaries,” (Working Paper for the Council on Middle Eastern Studies at the MacMillan Center at Yale), 315-341.

because, at this point, the mission still had no assurance that it would be able to continue. Rufus Anderson had been known to shut down ineffective missions (meaning those which did not see enough people converted) and he also made periodic trips to visit and oversee specific mission fields.

Anderson's anti-civilizational ideology for the mission also dictated that education should only be done as a means to the end of bringing people to Christ. Anderson's framework for the mission did cause some conflict between the Board in the Boston and some of the missionaries in Syria who wanted to push education that focused more on secular subjects because this would put the missionary schools in higher demand and contribute to the civilizational transformation of Syria.¹³² In the end, Anderson won out in the controversy because schools, especially primary schools, could still be started even under Anderson's framework where schools provided the essential teaching that would lead students toward Christ. American schools expanded into the 1850s because the type of education that the mission schools provided still included enough of the subjects that local Syrians demanded, especially training in English. For example, the Beirut High School, the first of the American missionary boarding schools, opened in 1835 and operated for seven years.¹³³ Despite the higher cost of these schools, the mission board saw this as a unique opportunity to carry out Anderson's conception of schools leading to religious reform because it could carry on the early teaching from the common schools into a higher level. The Beirut boarding school taught arithmetic, grammar, geography, astronomy, history, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, logic,

¹³² Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 265-271.

¹³³ For boarding schools, see Lindsay, 140-170.

and the English language.¹³⁴ Clearly, these mission schools were much more than simple Sunday schools. The Beirut school was only for boys, but the mission also conducted schools for girls, often run by the wives of missionaries.¹³⁵ The girls' schools were designed differently from the boys' schools because of local and missionary gender conceptions. The first girls' school was opened in Beirut in 1833 and gave its first public examination in 1836.¹³⁶ The examination included the subjects of reading, spelling, geography, arithmetic, scriptures, English, and music. This subject matter took up about half of the time of the girls in the school; the other half was spent "in learning domestic arts, including sewing."¹³⁷ All of the mission schools focused on teaching in the vernacular of Arabic, which contributed to their success, especially as opposed to their key competition of the French Jesuits who mostly taught in French to Maronites. The schools were also particularly successful because once students began their education in the lower level common schools, which were often the only modern schools in the region, they would be more likely to continue in American schools at higher levels. The missionaries hoped that by spending more time in the context of American missionary education, students would be more likely to be converted, or at least influenced by, Protestant theology, practice, and worldview.

Conclusion

By the 1850s, Rufus Anderson's policies had become firmly implanted in the mission. More students, beginning in the late 1820s, had now been through the American missionary educational system. As Ottoman policies from 1839 to 1856 continued to

¹³⁴ Lindsay., 142.

¹³⁵ For girls' schools, see Ibid., 116-139.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 120.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

become more liberal based on pressure from the Great Powers, the missionaries grew in their hope for increased latitude for their work. More practically, because the Ottomans had done little to limit the growth and tactics of the Syria mission as exemplified by their allowance of the Protestant *millet* in 1847, the missionary efforts on the ground in Syria continued to expand. By the late 1850s, there were nine mission stations in Syria: Beirut, ‘Abeih, Sidon, Hasbayya, Dair al-Qamar, Bhamdun, Kafr Shima, Tripoli, and Homs. There were four native Protestant churches with a total of seventy-five members, although none had native pastors. The thirty primary (common) schools, however, did all have native teachers.¹³⁸ This was the state of the mission that Henry Jessup joined in 1856, after being trained at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Upon his arrival, he was first stationed at the mission station in Tripoli. Jessup came with a new set of “reinforcements” of American missionaries including Daniel Bliss (the eventual founder of the Syrian Protestant College) who signaled the success of the now thirty-seven year old mission.¹³⁹ These new missionaries, especially Jessup and Bliss, would go on to have a key impact on the mission into the twentieth century.

¹³⁸ These statistics are from Tibawi, “The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College,” 266.

¹³⁹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 130.

Chapter III: Context and Rhetoric 1860-1885

Introduction to the controversy of 1885

The Syria mission of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States faced its greatest challenge beginning in 1885 when the Ottoman authorities began to forcibly close American missionary schools. Henry Jessup, who arrived at the Syria mission in 1856, and had experienced the civil war in Syria in 1860 and other difficulties for the mission, described the controversy over schools that began in 1885 in very stark terms that suggest a beginning of a new period in the history of the mission. In both published and unpublished sources, Jessup, the stated clerk or corresponding secretary of the Syria Mission since sometime in the 1870s,¹⁴⁰ described the growing connection of the Ottoman government with an overtly exclusionist Islamic policy. For the American mission, which had more than once been in danger of being closed,¹⁴¹ this new policy and the corresponding closing of mission schools had the direct effect of threatening to bring to an end all of the gains that the mission had made since the chaos of the war in Syria in 1860. Jessup argued that this constituted a clear change from the tolerant policies of the Tanzimat period (to 1876) where the place of Christians (both native Christians and missionaries) within the Ottoman Empire had grown steadily.

¹⁴⁰ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 256.

¹⁴¹ For example, in 1845, the mission board (then the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) had “seriously contemplated closing down its Syrian mission because of its lamentable achievements.” Farah, “Protestantism and Politics,” 323. During the American Civil War, which corresponded in the early 1860’s with the civil war in Syria, the mission faced a serious shortage of funds. Jessup described this situation in July of 1860: “The cutting down and disbanding of schools, the dismissal [sic] of tried helpers from our service, thus requiring them to seek support in other employments, and the restriction of our labors in almost every department, were matters which, as you can well understand, occasioned us the most profound sorrow.” Kamal S. Salibi and Yusuf Q. Khuri, eds., *The Missionary Herald* (Amman, Jordan: Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 1995), vol. 4, 377.

According to Jessup, more than ever before, the Ottoman government wielded the authority of Islam for their own ends and persecuted Christian establishments in the Empire accordingly. Analysis of Jessup's rhetoric surrounding the 1885 controversy will be pursued in depth in chapter four; this brief section is designed to give an initial picture of his perceptions.

In the *Memorial of Missionaries*,¹⁴² composed by Jessup in the initial aftermath of the first school closings of 1885, Jessup describes his perception of the new Ottoman measures. Jessup goes on to present why the closings were not only, according to his Western-Christian interpretation of the Tanzimat reforms to which the Ottomans disagreed,¹⁴³ illegally prejudicial against Christians¹⁴³ and therefore contrary to past decrees of the government but also unbearable because the Ottoman authorities did not even carry out their own laws for the legal maintenance of schools in the Ottoman Empire.

The most stringent orders have been sent to all the Turkish officials [from Istanbul to the provinces in Syria] to close at once all Christian schools which have no *firmands*. Mohammedan schools are not interfered with, but on the contrary, the local authorities are everywhere enjoined to open schools for the Mohammedan children, for which *Khotibs*¹⁴⁴ or Mohammedan teachers will be supplied . . . The law as now being

¹⁴² Jessup, *Memorial of Missionaries*, 1886. All of the quotes from this brief section are taken from this document.

¹⁴³ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 175-176.

¹⁴⁴ Jessup's continual use of the term "*khotib*" for the Muslim teachers in state-backed schools presents multiple questions. First, exactly what Arabic word was he referring to? Most probably, Jessup was using the word more properly transliterated as *khateeb* or *khatib*, which can be translated as a public speaker, orator, lecturer, or preacher. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed., ed. J. Milton Cowan (Ithaca, New York: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 1976), 246. Most often the word *khateeb* is used to refer to the person who gives the message at Friday prayers at the mosque, so this raises the further question of whether or not a *khateeb* would also have acted as a teacher in schools in Syria and whether or not Jessup thought this was the case. Finally, Jessup's use of the term raises the question of whether Jessup himself knew the correct term that should be used or if he was using this term in an inflammatory fashion for his Western audience. An interesting comparison can be found in Jessup's letter in Arabic to the *Waly* of Damascus on April 30, 1891. Here, Jessup uses the word "*mu'allim*," the proper Arabic word for teacher (Wehr, 637), to refer to the teachers in the American mission schools. PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 10. This suggests either that Jessup was wrongly (and possibly purposefully) using the term "*khotib*" in the *Memorial of Missionaries* or that he sincerely believed that the acting Muslim teachers in state-backed schools were also preachers in mosques.

enforced, tends to the utter extinction of all village schools, except those taught by Mohammedan *Khotibs*, and discriminates against Christianity. Christian children cannot attend the schools of Mohammedan *Khotibs*. The Koran is the text-book; the *Khotibs* are fanatical Mohammedans, acquainted only with Mohammedan books, and teaching only Mohammedan doctrines. Such is the state of prejudice in villages, that Christian children cannot attend schools taught by Mohammedans, nor is it likely that they would be allowed to do so. . . Thus whole Christian communities are being deprived of all means of instruction, and the poor people left to see their children grow up in ignorance.¹⁴⁵

Clearly, Jessup frames the situation in terms of persecution on religious grounds. This position was based principally on his perception of American mission schools as “the only means of education and enlightenment open to the Christians of Syria and Palestine”¹⁴⁶ and Ottoman backed schools as nothing less than the “schools of Mohammedan *Khotibs*” taught by “fanatical Mohammedans.”¹⁴⁷ Jessup was particularly incensed by this situation based on the widespread influence of American mission schools in the villages of Syria, where the presence of any school that taught foreign languages and reading was unique.

In order to evaluate this missionary writing in its proper context, more of the immediate history of the mission must be described, again with a focus on the nature of missionary language concerning the events from 1860 to 1885. The rest of this chapter will evaluate this period where the mission built back up after the disastrous civil war of 1860. Missionary writing, particularly that of Henry Jessup, during this time period reflected the various events and climate of this time period, just as they did after 1885; however, the situation had changed after 1885, as Jessup’s writing clearly reflects.

¹⁴⁵ Jessup, *Memorial of Missionaries*, 9.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

Introduction to 1860 to 1885

The major conflicts for the Syria mission during Jessup's years there before 1885 did not have to do with Islam or the Ottoman authorities. Jessup's writing during this time period leading up to the crisis of 1885 demonstrate his own development as a missionary as well as the major issues that faced the mission during this time period. Some new issues, problems, and competing forces faced the mission after 1860; but on the whole, Jessup's writing describes how the American mission's chief problems in this period remained the same as those before 1860. The larger issues that caused problems were rebuilding after the war of 1860, the internal mission issues of funding and ideology, the encroachment of other foreign missions, and rejection from local Eastern Christians. All of these controversies are reflected in Jessup's writing—both published and unpublished. Secondly, Jessup's writing on Islam and the Ottomans during this time period demonstrates two things: that they were less of a problem for Jessup than the previously mentioned issues and that secondary sources written about Jessup have often given a false impression of Jessup by not addressing the fact that Jessup was only secondarily concerned about Islam and the Ottomans. The discussion of Jessup's writing on Islam will demonstrate additionally, however, that Jessup, at least in published sources for home consumption, reified many prevailing American stereotypes about the "Mohammedan" for American readers. Furthermore, during this time period, Jessup's negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims were not directly connected with the Ottomans, as they would be after 1885. Finally, American mission schools increased significantly during this time period, which was a causal factor for the controversy in 1885. By 1885, Jessup felt that the mission had grown, especially in the area of schools, to the extent that

it contributed to his feeling of justification in responding vehemently even to official Ottoman measures that carried the weight of military and legal force.

This chapter will primarily use Jessup's published sources from the period after 1860 up to 1885 including his writing in the *Missionary Herald*,¹⁴⁸ and two of Jessup's books *Syrian Home Life* (1874) and *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem* (1879). Evaluation of these sources will be supplemented by selected secondary sources' evaluations of Jessup's writing during this time period. By focusing on selected portions of Jessup's published materials up to 1885, more weight will be concentrated on Jessup's writing after 1885 in chapter four. Furthermore, Jessup's published writing prior to 1885 highlights the contrast of Jessup's rhetoric before and after 1885. Jessup came into his own during this twenty-five year period from 1860 to 1885, as he increased his publishing beginning with his first book in 1873 entitled *The Women of the Arabs*.¹⁴⁹ Jessup also became the Secretary of the American mission in the 1870s. However, neither of these points suggests that judgment on Jessup's attitudes as a missionary should be based entirely on his publications of this period. Jessup's later writing changed based on different historical circumstances, which further demonstrates the point that Jessup cannot be said to have had one ideology that was the underlying cause of all of his opinions and actions throughout his fifty-three years in Syria.

¹⁴⁸ The official publication of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions that included reports from all of the missionary fields of the Board including Syria. Khuri and Salibi have compiled all of the reports from the Syria mission into a five-volume work, which I have used for this paper. The *Missionary Herald* was written and compiled for home consumption, even to the point that direct pleas for funds and prayers from the readers and home churches were included. Undoubtedly, this publication had a large impact on American Protestant conceptions of the world, especially among Reformed New Englanders. For more on this, see Marr, 12 and Khalaf, 151.

¹⁴⁹ The contents of this book were included in the 1874 publication of *Syrian Home Life*, which I have consulted for this chapter.

Before moving into a discussion based on Jessup's publications, it should be made clear that missionary publications were designed and written for a specific purpose.

This necessarily meant that the account would be exaggerated:

For the pious, simple folk who take great interest in missionary enterprise, but who are entirely ignorant of the circumstances of missionary work, the sun must always shine; a cloud on the horizon is intolerable; this is, as it were, the condition of their support; the result is the issue of reports positively grotesque in their optimism, in which Scripture texts jostle strangely with palpably exaggerated retrospects and forecasts.¹⁵⁰

This description of missionary publications came from an American missionary to northern Iraq in the mid-nineteenth century, so his background and mission conception was very similar to Jessup's. This does not explain away the often pejorative and polemical language in missionary publications, but it does place it in context. Jessup's goal was not to provide a clear historical account.

The Impact of the War of 1860

The 1860 civil war in Syria wrought changes on Syrian society, Ottoman policies concerning Syria, and missionary conceptions of the future work of the mission in Syria.¹⁵¹ In short, the war was fought mainly between the Druzes and Maronites that incorporated class, territorial, and religious discontents. The Maronites lost the war badly causing the French and other Great Powers to take great interest based on their tradition of "protecting" the Christians of the Ottoman Empire. Western gunboats were stationed

¹⁵⁰ J. F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England: A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁵¹The classic work on the war is Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). More recently, Ussama Makdisi has produced several excellent studies of the war in Syria as well. In addition to the already mentioned "After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire" that explores Ottoman and local Christian conceptions of reform in Syria after the war and "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity" that explores the impact that the war had on the American mission, see his *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2000).

off the coast of Beirut and French troops were dispatched. The Ottomans led by the delegation of foreign minister Fuad Pasha and largely due to Western pressure, attempted to reassert control through harsh imposition of their imperial rule on what they viewed as a backward and tribal society.¹⁵² Syrians, notably the intellectual figure Butrus al-Bustani, were shocked by the war and attempted to implement reforms in society that would prevent a similar outbreak of violence in the future.¹⁵³ For example, in 1863 Bustani started a school in Beirut, *al-madrasa al-wataniyya*, which consciously sought to instill a Syrian identity across confessions. Jessup's reaction and response to the war, while very different, was no less jarring for the future of the mission.

The American mission was left in disarray in the practical maintenance of the mission as well as the conception of what the mission should look like in the future. While the roots and early history of the mission remained an important foundation for the Syria mission, the fact that the war caused almost all of the American missionaries to flee to Beirut and all of the schools to be closed determined that the Syria mission faced a new beginning after the war in 1860.¹⁵⁴ Jessup, who had been in Tripoli for his first four years in Syria, remained in Beirut for the rest of his years in Syria. In a report published in the *Missionary Herald* from June first to sixth of 1860, Jessup described the results on the mission of the "deadly strife" of the war: "at present our educational labors, all our itinerancy and book distribution, and much of our preaching, are seriously interrupted."¹⁵⁵ Even five years after the war ended and having gained three new missionaries in 1863, the American mission still complained of having only about half of the workforce that it

¹⁵² Hanssen, 164-165. Makdisi, "After 1860," 605-606.

¹⁵³ Hanssen, 166-168. Makdisi, "After 1860," 607-610.

¹⁵⁴ Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 266-267.

¹⁵⁵ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 4, 384-385.

had before the war.¹⁵⁶ The schools, the main manifestation of the American mission in Syria, suffered especially due to the war. By contrast, in 1858, there were thirty primary schools and two higher schools, and in 1870 there were as few as seven schools with only one higher school.¹⁵⁷ So even with ten years in which to rebuild the mission after 1860, the American mission still struggled to rebuild after the losses caused by the war.

Jessup and most of the other missionaries, with the notable exception of William Benton who was later cast out of the mission for his contradictory actions,¹⁵⁸ held to the explanation of the Great Powers that the Druzes were the first to blame for the war, European intervention was needed even if French protection would be “most unfavorable to the prosecution of the missionary work,” and that the Ottoman government had used the war to the their own advantages.¹⁵⁹ Jessup’s account, however, is not cut and dry. Jessup’s description of the war in his letters published in the August of 1860 *Missionary Herald* not only adds to Western misconceptions about the war and the Ottoman Empire but also presents a complex account of various causes for the war. For example, he makes little distinction between Druzes and other Muslims, Maronites and other Syrian Christians, or various local officials and “Turkish officers.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time, multiple groups in addition to the Druzes are correctly blamed for the conflict, including “Greek and Papal ecclesiastics [who] have been stirring up their people to a war of *extermination* against the Druzes.”¹⁶¹ Overall, he exhibits a confusion and panic characteristic of someone in the midst of a chaotic situation where his life was in danger; rumors are

¹⁵⁶ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 179.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 143, 180.

¹⁵⁸ Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible,” 710.

¹⁵⁹ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 4, 384-385.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 386.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 387.

passed along as possible truth to the American audience including the possibility that “the Pasha of Beirut, *it is said*, furnishes the Druzes with ammunition.”¹⁶² But Jessup does not suggest that the Ottoman governor of Beirut is acting out of Ottoman-Islamic hostility towards Christianity, rather the governor was “very anxious to see the fall of a town [Zahleh] which for years [had] been in rebellion against the Sultan.”¹⁶³ At the same time, Jessup’s chaotic description of the conflict and the language that he uses to do so can only have bolstered American Orientalist perceptions of the Ottoman Empire: “it would not be surprising should a new crusade against Druze and Mohammedan despotism be awakened in Europe.”¹⁶⁴

In the end however, while Jessup may have blamed the Ottomans for not taking an active role in defending Syrian Christians in the war and for possibly contributing to their demise, he did not frame his criticism as a critique based on the Ottomans being Muslims. The chaos of the war, not the Ottomans, had forced the closing of mission schools. Jessup saw the Ottomans as a conniving political entity, not an oppressive Muslim force, which hoped to play off various groups in Syria against each other in order to increase their own rule there. He also does not describe one “Ottoman” entity—various Ottoman officials acted out of different interests. In addition, Jessup does not show any positive inclination toward an increase in Western rule in Syria; he actually displays frustration at the possibility of the increase of French and Russian influence.¹⁶⁵ Jessup concludes his letter with evangelical language that demonstrates both his own confusion about the events but also the nature of his audience: “the work is

¹⁶² Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 4, 386.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 387.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 387.

the Lord's and he will carry it on."¹⁶⁶ Having fled to the safety of Beirut, Jessup and the rest of the American mission in Syria faced the difficult task of rebuilding what had been started in 1821. Even though the war ended due to Ottoman and Western intervention, the mission still faced an uphill climb because of internal issues in the mission. This difficult rebuilding process hardened Jessup's resolve to carry on the work of the mission against all adversaries.

Internal Difficulties in the Mission

Funding

Jessup was certainly aware of the possibility that the Syria mission would not be able to continue. Whether this would occur by a direct closure by the American Board, as was possible in the 1840s,¹⁶⁷ or simply from a lack of funds, Jessup could not be sure. Unfortunately for Jessup and the American mission, the period after the war in Syria in which the mission desired to rebuild coincided with the civil war in the United States. Secretary Anderson mandated that a third of the funds for the mission would be cut and that the scope of the mission would be limited so as not to attempt to compete with other European missions who had more funds.¹⁶⁸ Jessup resorted to direct pleas for funds in his articles in the *Missionary Herald*. In a letter from August of 1861, Jessup hoped to gain funds from readers by describing the situation in Syria as presently dark but with a definite latent possibility for great growth of the mission and conversion of Syrians to Protestantism. The period directly following the end of the Syrian civil war was a time when "the call for help was coming in earnest tones, from various parts of the land

¹⁶⁶ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 4, 387.

¹⁶⁷ Farah, "Protestantism and Politics," 323.

¹⁶⁸ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 179. Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 267.

hitherto inaccessible to the missionary; and we hoped for a glorious harvest, after the forty years ‘sowing in tears’ of the Syria mission.”¹⁶⁹ As a result, the present need for funds from American Christians was great, but they “cannot go forward; [their] hands were tied; [they] have not the means.”¹⁷⁰ Although aware of the difficulty of the civil war for American Christians, Jessup followed the model of other American Protestants who hoped that negative aspects of American society would be done away with in order to make American missions more vital and influential. Jessup questioned, “will it [the war] not elevate the American church to a new standard of piety, increase prayer, and prepare the way for new and vigorous prosecution of the missionary work throughout the world?”¹⁷¹ Jessup, as a New School Presbyterian from the north who supported abolitionist movements, was aware of the ills of the society from which he came, although this awareness is certainly not prominent in his writings.¹⁷² Finally, Jessup stressed to his readers that without funds the people of Syria would go to Catholic schools: “shall our native helpers be obliged to enter secular employments, and the youth of Syria be given over to the Jesuits for want of Protestant schools?”¹⁷³ Not once in this appeal does Jessup mention the Ottomans or Islam; instead, the major threats to the future of the American mission are native Eastern Christian clergy and Catholic missions efforts.

Based on the lack of funds, the American mission did not receive as many new reinforcements from the United States and was forced to compromise on primary schools,

¹⁶⁹ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 5, 28.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁷² James W. Fraser, *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America* (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 44.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 29.

to which they granted more independence. Rather than direct control by the Americans, schools run by native teachers were given grants provided that they used the Arabic Bible and accept “occasional visits by members of the mission or their native agents.”¹⁷⁴

Although seen as an unfortunate decision based on a lack of funds at the time, this shift in policy would end up contributing the great growth of the mission in the period leading up to 1885, as will be discussed briefly below. The confusion, complicated by the lack of funds, over just how the mission should proceed with its work, especially in a climate where other European missions were growing in size and influence,¹⁷⁵ further hindered American missionary efforts after the war of 1860.

The Ideology of the Mission

The American mission in Syria, from its beginnings in the 1820s, had been in conflict among its own missionaries and with the American Board in Boston over just what strategy the mission should follow for its work in Syria. This was another issue in the period after 1860 that employed the American mission’s time and energy. While there had been some clear developments over the years including the shift from Jews and Muslims to Eastern Christians and the shift from proselytism to education, Anderson’s anti-civilizational strategy had limited the American mission from gaining a wide following in Syria because it did not directly coincide with native demand for education. Local Syrians were most interested in learning Western languages, mathematics, and bookkeeping, which the growing number of French (Catholic) and Russian (Orthodox) schools in Syria provided.¹⁷⁶ Jessup and the other missionaries hoped, as seen in Jessup’s article requesting funds in 1861, to both increase the size of the mission and prevent local

¹⁷⁴ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 179-180.

¹⁷⁵ Tibawi, “The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College,” 267-268.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 267-268.

students from going to Catholic or Orthodox schools. The opportunity to solve this problem of educational philosophy, aggravated by the lack of funds in the 1860s, came in 1866 as Anderson's time Secretary of the American Board ended and the plans for the Syrian Protestant College were laid.¹⁷⁷ The Syrian Protestant College was conceived (beginning in 1862 shortly after the end of the Syrian civil war) as an educational institution not under the direct control of the American Board, or its follower from 1870 the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church.¹⁷⁸ This new institution would train students for various (other than religious) career paths and would at the same time provide the first opportunity for higher education in Beirut, something the Catholics could not yet offer.¹⁷⁹ The competing Jesuit university, St. Joseph, was founded eight years later in 1874.¹⁸⁰ Because they sought funds from outside sources including many British donors, the College could function with more autonomy, even though its directors, including Jessup, were members of the American mission. As had occurred in the past with other issues, the missionaries in Syria found a way to compromise the ideals of the mission board with their practical needs on the ground in Syria.

This change in philosophy was not only based on the pragmatic need to compete for students in Syria, it also was related to a shift in missionary thinking about the role of politics. This shift did not mean that Anderson's policies were abandoned however. Anderson's anti-civilizational policy did not die out after his retirement in 1866; his successor Nathaniel Clark "scrupulously followed" Anderson's ideology.¹⁸¹ Anderson's

¹⁷⁷ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 178. Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 268-277.

¹⁷⁸ Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," 268-269.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 269-270.

¹⁸⁰ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 227.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

thinking also affected the nature of the Syrian Protestant College because it maintained an evangelical focus with teaching in Arabic.¹⁸² This ideology would remain an important part of the thinking of Henry Jessup, secretary of the American mission from the 1870s. Jessup at times, especially when pressed with opposition from the Ottoman government in the 1880s as will be seen in chapter four, clung to the original and ultimate goal of the mission: to instill the Protestant gospel into all of the mission's efforts in order to reach Syrian Christians so that they eventually might lead the Muslims and Jews of Syria to the gospel as well. How this process was worked out in reality is another question; the mission that Jessup oversaw gradually became an institution that employed both a civilizational and anti-civilizational approach to missions, depending on the circumstances.

Despite the continuity of the anti-civilizational approach, as Ussama Makdisi has argued effectively, the chaos of the 1860 war in Syria left a lasting impression on the missionaries in Syria that caused them to lean more towards a political vision of their future work in Syria. After 1860, the “tide, however, had turned irreversibly” and they were “now willing to take the side of a secular European power.”¹⁸³ The Syrian Protestant College was one of the main examples of this turn toward a civilizational approach; it was designed to “engage directly with worldly and secular affairs.”¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, even though the College started in the 1860s teaching in Arabic, by the 1880s the College had begun “teaching secular sciences in English, which the missionaries recognized was the language of modernity.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Tibawi, “The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College,” 270.

¹⁸³ Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible,” 707.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 708.

But this new hope in politics was not supportive of any European intervention; Jessup only approved of greater European political control in the Ottoman Empire if it would benefit the work of the mission. As described above, in the midst of the 1860 war in Syria, Jessup approved of European intervention for the immediate needs of the time—the protection of American missionaries and Syrian Christians who were both in serious danger.¹⁸⁶ But Jessup had no interest in long-term Russian or French control in Syria because this would have limited their efforts at Protestant missions.¹⁸⁷ While the Ottoman government might offer certain legal restrictions and encumbrances to the American mission, Jessup did not desire the downfall of the Ottoman Empire to the extent that he would have rather seen a Catholic or Orthodox power controlling Syria. Again during the period after the 1860 war, the Ottoman Empire was not as pressing a threat to Jessup as that presented by Catholicism or Orthodoxy.

However, Jessup reacted much more positively to the possibility of British protection of regions of the Ottoman Empire because he hoped that bring greater possibilities for American Protestant mission work. Jessup saw this as a concrete possibility only after the Cyprus Convention of 1878-1879, where the Ottomans had ceded control of Cyprus to the British in return for British protection against the Russians. Jessup saw this as a concrete sign of future British protection of throughout the Ottoman Empire. It was in the context of this political agreement that Jessup wrote *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem*, published in 1879. This book, Jessup's second major work following the 1874 *Syrian Home Life*, described why the time was ripe for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity in the Ottoman Empire and what the positive

¹⁸⁶ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 4, 387.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 384-385.

and negative factors were for that conversion. The introduction describes how God has ordained this exact time for the conversion of Muslims, the first chapter describes the “unfavorable features” of Muslim conversion (criticisms of Islam), the second chapter describes the “favorable points” of Muslim conversion (areas of agreement with Islam), and the third chapter describes the “Probable effects of the British Protectorate over Asiatic Turkey” (Jessup’s hopes after the Cyprus Convention).¹⁸⁸ Jessup concludes with the idealistic and racially-charged hope that “the two great branches of the Christianized Anglo-Saxon race [could] go hand in hand to the great work assigned us in the evangelization of the Mohammedan world.”¹⁸⁹

Jessup’s language throughout the book certainly validates criticism of his writing. Jessup interchangeably uses the terms “Mohammedan,” “Moslem,” “Islamic,” “Ishmaelite,” and “Eastern” throughout the book. This terminology, despite Jessup’s experience in the Muslim world, demonstrates the pervasiveness of American Orientalism,¹⁹⁰ which Jessup contributed to with his writing. However, despite the many instances in the book of “unstructured, situational personal events, often derivative of some chance occurrence attributed to others, [becoming] the basis for reconfirming a generalized image or misrepresentation,” Jessup’s criticism does not extend in the same way to the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹¹ Because Jessup is “not writing from the political standpoint, but only from the position of students of the divine providence,” he focuses

¹⁸⁸ Henry Harris Jessup, *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1879). Jessup provides another example of the positive use of the Muslim world, specifically in regards to Muslims’ “total abstinence from alcohol.” Jessup, *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem*, 94-95.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

¹⁹⁰ See Marr, 6.

¹⁹¹ Khalaf, 165.

on broader conceptions of Christian versus Muslim civilization.¹⁹² The Ottoman Empire is for Jessup a major political representation of Islamic civilization, but Jessup does not portray the Ottoman authorities as acting directly against missionary efforts. Of course, Jessup hopes that British control would mean the possibility for Muslims to convert to Christianity without repercussions and the prevention of events like the war of 1860 where many Christians were killed.¹⁹³ But most of Jessup's hopes for the future of an Ottoman Empire under British control concern better conditions overall for the people of the Empire such as the end of tax farming, the curbing of disruptive nomadic tribes, greater religious equality, freedom of the press, better education (although he positively describes the efforts of Midhat Pasha), and a reconstruction of the judiciary.¹⁹⁴ Jessup's *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem* reflects his hopes at one point in time for the benefits British political intervention in the context of the Cyprus Convention; by 1885, Jessup turned his attention directly to the Ottoman authorities who before had remained a secondary concern to his goals for the American mission.

Encroachment of other Foreign Missions

The obstacle to American missions in Syria that most bothered the Presbyterians and Congregationalists that made up the mission was the competing influence of other foreign missions, especially Catholic and Orthodox missions. Henry Jessup's writing, especially in the *Foreign Missionary*, demonstrates this defensive reaction based on the impression that Catholic missionary efforts in Syria acted in direct response to their efforts. Americans Protestants during the nineteenth century, either in the mission field or at home in the United States, did not have good relations with Catholics. One example

¹⁹² Jessup, *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem*, 108.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 115, 123-125.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-123.

of this in the United States is the fight over the nature of public schools. The prevailing model for public schools in the United States was essentially a Protestant one; for example, the King James Version Bibles used in schools did not include the apocrypha.¹⁹⁵ Other texts used in school frequently used the pejorative term “Popery” to describe Catholicism.¹⁹⁶ At this period in American history, Catholicism was associated with foreign and un-American sentiments, even though by 1850 they were the largest single religious denomination in the United States.¹⁹⁷ Worldwide Catholic-Protestant relations also were not cordial. The missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, in Syria demonstrated these hostilities in their work there.

Even though French Catholics had a historical connection with the Maronite and other Uniate churches in Syria and the Middle East, this connection was mainly ecclesiastical until later in the nineteenth century;¹⁹⁸ the early to mid-nineteenth century was a “low point” for Catholic missions in Syria.¹⁹⁹ Having only begun the modern mission to Syria in 1831 as a response to the threat of Protestant missions, the Jesuits (the largest of several Catholic groups in Syria) believed it was “necessary to consolidate churches [especially Uniate churches] threatened by Protestants.”²⁰⁰ The American mission correctly saw the Jesuits especially, but also Catholic missions overall, as the largest threat to their efforts with local Syrian Christians.²⁰¹ English, Scottish, German,

¹⁹⁵ Fraser, 54.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 55-56.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 49-51.

¹⁹⁸ Hourani, 57.

¹⁹⁹ Heleen Murre-van den Berg, “‘Simply by giving to them macaroni’: anti-Roman Catholic polemics in early Protestant missions in the Middle East, 1820-1860,” in *Christian Witness Between Continuity and New Beginnings: Modern Historical Missions in the Middle East*, ed. Michael Marten and Martin Tamcke (Piscataway, N.J. : Transaction Publishers, 2006), 73.

²⁰⁰ Verdeil, 30.

²⁰¹ Murre-van den Berg, 73. Tibawi, *American Interests*, 118-119.

Italian, and Russian missions also grew in the period after 1860.²⁰² For example, were it not for the interruptions that Russian wars with the Ottoman Empire caused, more situations like that of Nazareth in 1876 might have occurred: the Protestant school there had to be closed due to the fact that the Russian-backed orthodox school attracted all of the local Orthodox students.²⁰³ Russian efforts also found success because of the struggle between the Arabic speaking laity and the Greek-speaking church hierarchy. The Russian goal was first to “support and maintain Orthodoxy in the Holy Land, that was, to preserve the Arabs in their faith,” which clashed with the Greek hierarchy’s hold on the Eastern Orthodox Church.²⁰⁴ The Greek hierarchy saw Russian efforts as “an attempt to wean them [Arab Orthodox Christians] away from” their authority.²⁰⁵

Despite the competition from many different foreign groups, the most prominent for the Americans was always the “Jesuits,” the name given by the Americans to all Catholic missions.²⁰⁶ This presentation of competition to the mission is similar to the way that Jessup and other missionaries often described Muslims in the Syria—all as one group of “Mohammedans.” Americans recognized correctly, however, that the real Jesuits acted in direct opposition to their work; the main example of this was the creation of the University of St. Joseph in 1874-75 after the foundation of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866.²⁰⁷ This was confirmation of the fact that the Jesuits in Syria were “fired by a spirit of opposition to the Protestant mission.”²⁰⁸ Especially after 1860, this

²⁰² Tibawi, *American Interests*, 222-227.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁰⁴ Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine, 1843-1914; Church and Politics in the Near East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 137.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁰⁶ Murre-van den Berg, 71.

²⁰⁷ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 227.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

competition increased, but even as early as 1845, the American mission was aware of the growth of Catholic missions.²⁰⁹ Due to the fact that, even by American accounts, Catholic schools provided “a wider liberal education” that was attractive to local students,²¹⁰ Catholic missions began to seriously threaten the growth of American mission schools after 1860. The Americans felt particularly threatened because the Catholics were reaching out to more than just the local Catholic communities.²¹¹ Led by French Catholic supported missions, the American mission now was small in comparison the various educational efforts of the many the schools of rival foreign groups such as the French or British (in 1869 at least forty-five in Beirut alone) as well as the many local Christian and Muslim schools.²¹²

Despite Catholic denials, Jessup pointed out continually that Catholic missions were growing, threatening Protestant missions, and acting in direct opposition to American efforts. While Jessup may have been accurate in his descriptions of Jesuit efforts, he also exaggerated Catholic efforts and continued to misuse the term Jesuit. Through the decade after the 1860 war and up to the turnover of the mission to the Presbyterian Board in 1870, Jessup continually recounts instances of Jesuit actions against the mission. For example, in Jessup’s 1861 appeal for funds cited above, he describes how the Americans were caring for orphans from the 1860 war: “there are Protestants, Greeks, Maronites, and Greek Catholics; and if they leave our instruction, the Jesuits stand ready, like ravening wolves, to seize upon them. . . shall we give them

²⁰⁹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 117-119.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 181-183.

up?”²¹³ Later, in 1864 Jessup explains how the Jesuits “published a book against Mohammedanism, of the most abusive character” that Jessup believed was calculated to “provoke the Government to a rigid censorship of all the printing presses in Syria, and thus to fetter the Protestant press; as the amount of printing done by the Jesuits is but trifling.”²¹⁴ A year later, Jessup relayed the story of a Protestant convert who had his daughter taken from him by the Maronite authorities and placed in the custody of the “Papal Sisters of Charity” in Beirut.²¹⁵ Despite the fact that he just described the Maronites and the Sisters of Charity as the parties involved, Jessup still questioned whether “the French consulate in Syria, so long identified with the Papacy here, will be willing or able to remove a Protestant child from that labyrinth of Jesuitism.”²¹⁶ Besides supporting local Christians against Protestant efforts, Jessup also blamed the Jesuits in 1870 for printing “a book attacking Protestantism and the missionaries in the most virulent and obscene language, so that all respectable men of the Maronite and Greek Catholic sects disown and repudiate the book.”²¹⁷ Finally, in 1870, Jessup frames his disagreement with the Catholics in global terms: “the Jesuits here are working with sleepless vigilance, to force the native Syrian Catholic sects to the acceptance of the decrees of the Council²¹⁸ . . . the only result thus far in Syria, is to unite the Maronites and the Greek Catholics against the dogma of infallibility.”²¹⁹ Jessup displays an obvious bias against the foreign Catholics in Syria who, for him, can only do good

²¹³ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 5, 30.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

²¹⁸ Jessup here is referring to the First Vatican Council (December 8, 1869-July 18, 1870) that, among other things, decreed the infallibility of the Pope. Protestants wrote “as Protestants, and [concluded] what the Vatican Council decreed was blasphemous.” James H. Smylie, “American Protestants Interpret Vatican Council I,” *Church History* 45, no. 4 (Dec. 1969): 472.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246-247.

unintentionally. This competition against French efforts in Syria was only beginning in the period from 1860 to 1885; French initiatives in Syria would only grow in importance up to World War I, after which they justified their takeover of the Syrian mandate with their widespread network of schools and other social services there.

Jessup does also briefly mention difficulties with other foreign missions, but these accounts are not as frequent or harsh as those against the Jesuits. Due to the fact that the conflict with Catholicism was historical, present in America, and present in Syria, American missionaries and the Jesuits carried on a longstanding dispute there different in character than those that Jessup mentions with other foreign missions. Even other Protestant missions could be the targets of disapproval for Jessup based on their “religious tone” being “not the most satisfactory,” although not to the degree of the Jesuits.²²⁰ Jessup worried that “English and Prussian educational and religious enterprises are constantly increasing. . . it seems as though education would be taken out of our hands ere long.”²²¹ Jessup at other times praised other Protestant efforts in Syria, such as “Prussian deaconesses” in Homs.²²² In the pages of the *Missionary Herald*, Jessup did not mention the incursion of Russian backed Orthodox schooling in Syria because most Russian efforts were farther south such as in Jerusalem, although other Protestant missionaries connected with the Syria mission did complain about their influence.²²³ Jessup, from his location in Beirut was constantly most worried about Jesuit influence, although problems with local Christians were at least as troublesome for Jessup.

²²⁰ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 5, 38.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²²² *Ibid.*, 50.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

Rejection from local Eastern Christians

As had been the case up to 1860, the American missionaries faced a stern challenge from local Christians who did not share the Americans belief that they required “reforming.” Their Priests and other clergy figures especially did not welcome American efforts, even though children of the various Eastern Christian groups in Syria did attend American schools. Eastern Christian opposition to American efforts could also be particularly troubling for the American mission because complaints from Syrian Christians to local and higher Ottoman authorities carried weight; the government officials wanted to maintain the status quo especially after the chaos of 1860. In the period after 1860, the situation became even more difficult for the Americans because, while they were attempting to rebuild their own school system, local Christian education also expanded. For example in Beirut, the Greek Orthodox had a high school from 1854, the Maronites began a local high schools in 1861, the Greek Catholics began theirs in 1866, and Butrus al-Bustani’s school for all sects began in 1863.²²⁴

Jessup’s writing in both the *Foreign Missionary* and in his first major work *Syrian Home Life* (1874) demonstrates the various American frustrations with local Christians, whom he saw as their natural “sphere of influence”. In 1862, Jessup recounted how the new governor of Mt. Lebanon, Daoud Pasha, was a “bigoted papist” who “surrounded himself with those who are the most bitter enemies of the Protestant religion” and made efforts to return a building in Ain Zehalta to the Greek Catholic community even though the Protestants had been using it.²²⁵ Later that year, Jessup described a movement toward Protestantism among the Greek Orthodox of Homs which the “Greek Priests, having

²²⁴ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 181-182.

²²⁵ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 5, 38.

exhausted all their own means of persecution, had had recourse to the Moslems of the baser sort, telling them that these Protestants are freemasons, or worshipers of the sun, who deny the existence of God; hoping thus to stir up persecution against them among the fanatical.”²²⁶ Following up on the story in Homs later in the year, Jessup recounts how the Protestants there had remained firm and persecution from the “wicked Priests who had anticipated the utter overthrow of Protestantism” had increased: they were “deprived of business,” “threatened with death,” and “stoned and railed upon in the streets.”²²⁷ Jessup also picked out the persecution of native Protestants by the Maronite clergy; in 1865 he described how a native Protestant near Beirut refused to pay an indulgence to the “notorious Maronite Bishop Tobia” and had his wife and daughter taken from him as a result.²²⁸ In each case, Jessup focused his malcontent against the clergy of each local Church, but whatever vitriol Jessup displayed writing for the *Foreign Missionary* was only magnified in his first full length book, *Syrian Home Life* (1874).

For the purposes *Syrian Home Life*, Jessup’s description of both Syrian Christians and Muslims is extremely negative, essentialist, and anecdotal. The book is a collection of stories from Jessup’s time in Syria up to 1874 that focuses on stories that exalt the American mission and situate Catholics, Muslims, and Syrian Christians as the “other.” He seems to have gone back through the stories from his first twenty years in Syria that he wrote for the *Missionary Herald* and embellished them to make them even more ridiculous and Orientalist than in their original telling. Jessup continues in this book to use Western stereotypical language such as his description of the new Pasha of Damascus after the war of 1860: “this Mohammedan Pasha behaved himself while Fuad Pasha was

²²⁶ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 5, 43-44.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

present. . . but he was a Turk, and soon proved his nationality.”²²⁹ But whatever condemnation Jessup has for Muslims, he reserves his worst for the local Christian Priests and the bulk for Syrian Christians. Jessup selects various negative stories about Priests with the conclusion, “as donkeys have a world-wide reputation for stupidity, it is eminently proper to set the Syrian Priests next in order, for, with rare exceptions, they are marvels of ignorance.”²³⁰ This sort of caricaturist writing characterizes this book, which was actually a collection of Jessup’s writings up to that point in Syria. As discussed above, Jessup had not abandoned the Orientalist language by the time of the composition of his next book, *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem*, but Jessup does make more of an attempt in his second book to avoid stereotypical judgments based on embellished stories.

Whatever the exact tone, it is difficult to find examples of Jessup making a positive reference to the clergy of any of the local Eastern Christian groups. Jessup’s strong reaction was based on the difficulty that the American mission had in bringing these groups into the Protestant fold. The difficulties Jessup expresses, however, mainly concern adult local Christians who are attempting to or have joined the Protestant denomination. In one key area, to be discussed below, the American mission had good success in reaching the local Christians—through education of their children in American schools.

On Islam and the Ottoman authorities

There were, of course, also examples of American missionary difficulties with the Ottoman authorities. First, missionaries complained about the Ottoman authorities when

²²⁹ Henry Harris Jessup, *Syrian Home Life*, comp. Isaac Riley, (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1874), 332.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

they intervened in local disputes. Jessup complained in 1862 of the influence that Greek Catholics had on the Ottoman authorities: “the Priests and monks control the Government, and use the Turkish soldiers to carry out their infamous designs.”²³¹ Jessup is primarily concerned about the influence of local Christian clergy, and the Ottomans (while probably not acting exactly as Jessup describes) were interested in maintaining peace among the *millet*s. When it came to a Muslim converting to Christianity, however, the situation was different. Although Jessup admits that he is unclear on the true details, he suggests that the Ottoman authorities had put a certain Damascus Muslim who had converted to Protestantism through “every kind of abuse and insult” including dragging him “through the streets, his hands in wooden stocks, an object of contempt, and a warning to all Mohammedans.”²³² Interestingly, Jessup mentions no negative consequence on the mission for such an isolated instance of a Muslim converting to Protestantism, which makes the reader wonder if the story was largely a fiction designed to instill interest in the American readers. Even in Jessup’s highly polemical 1874 *Syrian Home Life*, Jessup describes the Ottoman laissez faire stance on American missions: the “Turkish Empire [has] just strength enough still to extend leveling law over its wrangling Christian sects, to the prevention of intolerance; and with weakness enough to allow Christian missionaries free access even to its Mohammedan population, and, nominally at least, to allow entire religious freedom to its 35,000,000 subjects.”²³³ A decade later, Jessup would be writing much differently about the Ottomans.

Secondly, the missionaries complained between 1860 and 1885 about Ottoman censorship of the press. Even though British missionaries throughout the Ottoman

²³¹ Salibi and Khuri, *The Missionary Herald*, Volume 5, 50.

²³² *Ibid.*, 117.

²³³ Jessup, *Syrian Home Life*, 35.

Empire were actually the more pejorative in their daring to publish polemics against Islam even in Istanbul,²³⁴ the Americans felt that they were unjustly characterized as being the same as the English missionaries.²³⁵ Ali Pasha, in response to an English publication, issued a letter to the British authorities arguing against any preaching of “systematic propaganda” in the Empire due to its tendency to exploit people based on their needs and to misrepresent other religions.²³⁶ Ali Pasha skillfully composed the document in such a way as to contextualize Ottoman strictures against missionary efforts that crossed the line into “systematic propaganda” through a comparison with similar European laws as well as British laws against Protestant proselytism in India. In all three of these cases, Ali Pasha argued, the primary concern was the “danger of arousing religious and racial passions in a multi-religious and multi-racial state with incalculable consequences.”²³⁷ Based on this policy, the Ottoman authorities maintained strict censorship of all publications in the Empire, not just those of missionaries. The Americans did in fact remain more cautious than the British: only one American missionary was reprimanded and the Americans refused to publish some polemical British missionary documents.²³⁸ On the whole, the relationship between the Ottomans and the American missionaries up to 1885 was casual and even liberal, especially because the Americans were cautious and did not loudly proclaim what little work they might have done with Muslims.²³⁹ For example, the Syrian Protestant College, although it did not register as it should have as a private institution after the 1869 Ottoman education law

²³⁴ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 171-172.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 177, 222.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

was passed, it was still allowed to function tax-free as a charitable institution.²⁴⁰

Beginning in the 1880s, however, Jessup would find himself in a nearly decade-long struggle with the Ottomans due to their efforts against American missionary schools, the centerpiece of American missions in Syria.

Overall, the nature of these conflicts is distant; the Ottomans in this period are mainly an authority from a distance who at times steps in to deal with local conflicts. Often, local Christians or Muslims would appeal to the Ottoman authorities for intervention when the Protestants disrupted their local affairs. Even though Fuad Pasha and the Ottomans hoped to use the aftermath of the 1860 war to impose stricter Ottoman imperial rule in Syria, the Ottoman central authorities did not accomplish this until the time period of the 1885 controversy during the reign of Abdul Hamid II.

Jessup's accounts also are not clear on whether the Ottoman intervention is from local Ottoman officials or from Istanbul. What is clear, however, is Jessup's continual use of the "Turks" or the "Turkish authorities" instead of Ottomans and "Constantinople" for Istanbul. Here again, Jessup's language in publications for home consumption represents both his own prejudices as well as an impact on the American public that maintains stereotypes. The same is true of the other groups about which Jessup writes including the Jesuits and Syrian Christians. It is the conflicts with these two groups in addition to the internal problems of the mission that most occupied Jessup during the years leading up to the 1885 controversy.

²⁴⁰ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 203.

Note on the expansion of American mission schools

Amidst all of the aforementioned difficulties, American schools multiplied during this time period. This is somewhat remarkable, even to the point that the main historian of the American mission has few answers for the increase.²⁴¹ Even though Jessup's writing contains frequent references to persecution and struggles with various groups and authorities in Syria, his writing also contains many references to the growth of the mission in the years between 1860 and 1885. For example, in *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem* (1879) Jessup describes how American schools "have stimulated other sects and communities to found schools of their own, so that the work of popular education is advancing with great rapidity."²⁴² Jessup also denotes the specifics of the growth of the mission from nothing in 1860 to "hundreds of common schools, five colleges, nearly a dozen female seminaries, six theological seminaries and a medical college" by 1879.²⁴³ According to Shahin Makarius' report in *al-Muqtataf* in 1882, there were more "evangelical" (mostly American) schools in Beirut (3,121) than any other type of school.²⁴⁴

Further complicating this growth was the increase in the Ottoman state educational plan. The Ottomans, as far back as 1845 when a state system of education was first recommended, recognized the benefits of education and its particular importance as a means to keep Western influence out of the Empire.²⁴⁵ However, the 1869 "Comprehensive Law of Reorganization" provided the real boost for Ottoman

²⁴¹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 212.

²⁴² Jessup, *The Mohammedan Missionary Problem*, 103.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Henry Diab and Lars Wahlin, "The Geography of Education in Syria in 1882. With a Translation of "Education in Syria" by Shahin Makarius, 1883," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 65, no. 2 (1983): 117.

²⁴⁵ Davison, 244.

education in this period.²⁴⁶ This law divided Ottoman schooling into five levels, where the lower three would ideally be provided throughout the Empire and the higher two ideally in the provincial capitals. This law also made it more possible for non-Muslims to go to state schools and required private schools to register and provide proof of teacher's diplomas. Ultimately, this law would not be effectively enforced, especially in the provinces farther from Istanbul, until the 1880s under Abdul Hamid II.

So why did American mission schools grow over this twenty-five year period? Five reasons are apparent. First, the indirect system of administering primary schools functioned very well as a compromise system because native teachers were less likely to be disliked by Syrian parents.²⁴⁷ Second, the Syrian Protestant College was successful. The common schools throughout Syria and the five missionary stations of Beirut, 'Abeih, Tripoli, Sidon, and Zahleh, functioned as a feeder system toward the SPC, which was in high demand for its curriculum including multiple Western languages and technical training in Arabic.²⁴⁸ Third, the Americans were able to ameliorate relations with the Greek Orthodox community to some extent, so Orthodox Priests were less likely to anathematize relations with Protestants.²⁴⁹ Fourth, after the transfer of the Syria mission to the Presbyterian Board in 1870, there was a short-lived increase in funds, so that for three years it was the third highest funded mission after India and China.²⁵⁰ Finally, after these funds dried up, the mission was able to procure increased funds from private donors, perhaps due to the notoriety of the Syrian Protestant College.²⁵¹ Through a

²⁴⁶ Davison, 247-248. This law will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

²⁴⁷ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 180, 200.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

combination of these factors and the divisiveness of the competing missions, by 1885 the American mission was the single most formidable mission in Syria as well as the most widespread.

Conclusion

Only by the 1880s had the American built back up enough after the chaos of the 1860 war to feel capable of challenging the Ottomans or for the Ottomans to bother with American schools. In the 1860s and 1870s, the Americans challenged the local community schools and schools backed by non-Protestant foreign powers because these did not have the sovereign and concrete authority of the Ottomans. Against these non-state opponents, the mission grew and its schools multiplied. The combination of this increased missionary presence, the changes in Ottoman policy beginning in the early 1880s, and the expansion of other foreign and local schools at the same time, created the perfect storm of competition leading to conflict. The school closings of 1885 became the tipping point for a controversy that had been quietly building from 1860 to 1885 but finally occurred based on all of these new or expanded factors. The American mission had never faced such direct opposition from the Ottoman authorities in Syria, especially not towards its schools. Jessup interpreted this opposition as the major threat to the mission. This fear precipitated a major campaign to garner Western diplomatic and Protestant public support for the fight against the new Ottoman policies. As Jessup had done prior to 1885, he turned to the pen as his best means by which to shape others' opinions about the situation of the American mission in Syria. Jessup initiated a new campaign of language that focused on the oppression from the Ottoman government and

its handmaiden of Islam that was different from the language of the controversies of the past twenty-five years.

Chapter IV: The 1885 School Controversy in Context

Introduction

The school controversy that began in April of 1885 was a watershed in the history of the American Presbyterian mission to Syria. The context surrounding the mission was different from, although comparable to, that of the previous twenty-five years. Before 1885, the American mission, according to Jessup, faced difficulties from the Ottoman government, but its chief opponents in Syria (in both their perception and in reality) were unreceptive Eastern Christians and French and Russian religious initiatives in the region. Jessup's rhetoric after 1885 should be read not as a characteristic polemic against Islam but rather as a response to the hostile reality of the context of the 1880s where Islam was increasingly used by the Ottoman government for political reasons.²⁵² The Ottoman government of Abdul Hamid II began a major reform effort in the 1880s that was a direct response to their perceived threat of competition over influence of Ottoman subjects, of which the American mission was the primary example for both the provincial authorities in Syria and the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul. After a lengthy period of liberalizing reforms in the Tanzimat era in which Jessup had grown accustomed to an Ottoman Empire that did not bother the American mission significantly, Abdul Hamid attempted to reassert a program that brought Islam directly into politics. Jessup took a position where he felt that he had just as much right as the Ottoman political authorities to influence the people of Syria. Both sides were willing to employ various types of initiatives to maintain or strengthen their hold. As a result, Jessup's rhetoric took on a

²⁵² Other sources have addressed Jessup and the missionary response to the 1885 school controversy have painted the picture that the response was more about Jessup's own longstanding hatred of Islam than about a real context of events. See especially Tibawi, Abu-Ghazaleh, and Khalaf. This will be addressed further later in this section.

defensive tone, now heightened against the Ottoman government and Islam, which had only sparsely been seen in the past because the larger threats to the American mission came from groups other than the Hamidian Ottoman authorities. The Ottomans presented a new challenge for Jessup and the American mission because the Ottomans had the power to enforce closure of American schools. In fact, when compared with Ottoman writing in the same context of the 1880s, Jessup's writing shares many similarities that suggest a larger climate of competition among various groups, including the Jesuits, Russians, and local Muslims and Christians, for influence over Ottoman subjects in Syria. This competition was the most fervent in the area of education as it served a needed purpose and was a useful means of gaining long-term influence in Syria. All of the groups involved in this competition saw education as the most important factor; and at the same time, each group did not separate the various means by which their educational missions could be supported. Jessup's writings surrounding the 1885 controversy over schooling, similar to the period from 1860 to 1885, again reflect the reality that both missionary perceptions and historical reality were influential in shaping missionary response. Overall, a close reading of Jessup's writing surrounding the 1885 school controversy, in comparison with Ottoman sources and in the context of heightened educational competition, demonstrates that Jessup had a clear understanding of the current situation of the American mission. Jessup accurately saw the future influence of the American mission in Syria as being in serious jeopardy.

Of course, Jessup's writing does display many instances of "Protestant Orientalism," as Samir Khalaf has dubbed it, as well as specific anti-Islamic aspersions, as has been seen especially in published sources like *The Mohammedan Missionary*

Problem and Syrian Home Life. Jessup, like any other American missionary to the Muslim world, came to the mission field with certain preconceived notions about the Ottoman Empire and Islam based on the context discussed in the second chapter of the paper. But at the same time, readings of Henry Jessup and other American missionaries that do not also highlight the historical and rhetorical context are inherently flawed. Arguing especially against Samir Khalaf's ahistorical notion that "one only has to skim through the writings of Jessup. . . to realize how inflexible and prejudiced [he was],"²⁵³ it is only through the context of the specific time period, comparison and contrast with other missionary writing in other specific circumstances, and through a detailed and longitudinal study that missionary texts can be interpreted.

Ottoman Policy Changes in the 1880s

Having had several years to consolidate his position in Istanbul after the brief constitutional attempt in 1876, Abdul Hamid II began in the 1880s to implement a program that would attempt to solidify the Empire internally so as to defend the Empire externally. He recognized that the Empire under his rule had grown increasingly fractious due to various nationalist movements by minority groups. Even though this was not a new perspective, he also believed that the Great Powers of Europe had become a threat to the Empire that could not be ignored, especially after the 1878-79 Cyprus Convention, the Russian incursions at the same time, and the 1882 British takeover of Egypt. In order to bring about these reforms, Abdul Hamid attempted to impose centralization and consolidation, especially in the more far-reaching regions of the Empire such as Syria and Transjordan. Part of this program involved creating a new

²⁵³ Khalaf, 124.

Ottoman identity that would bring solidarity and impose discipline across the Empire through the use of Islam.²⁵⁴ This was a tenuous project because Hamidian policy makers also hoped to put forth the program of Ottomanism that would appeal to Ottoman subjects across confessions.²⁵⁵

Abdul Hamid II's reforms were designed to tackle both the internal and external threats to the Empire at the same time, and Henry Jessup and the American Presbyterian missionaries were at the crux of these two policies. In the eyes of the Ottoman government, American missionary education presented the largest threat because it was the largest and oldest manifestation of all of the Western Christian missions in the field of modern education and the founding mission of Robert College and the Syrian Protestant College.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, American missionary education was indirectly and/or directly especially responsible for the increasing solidarity and demands of various Christian *millet* groups in the Empire as well as the growing threat of takeover by one of the Great Powers.²⁵⁷ The threat of what Grand Vezir Kamil Pasha called in 1889 "treasonable doctrines" being propagated in the American missionary schools was imminent in the

²⁵⁴ See especially the works by Deringil, Fortna, and Rogan. This section draws much from the excellent work of these three authors that go into much more detail than will be possible here on Ottoman policy against threats from foreign missions (in Syria, the Americans in particular), other foreign power elements, encroachment from elements of neighboring countries, and *millet* education.

²⁵⁵ See for example, the introduction to Hasan Kayali's, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

²⁵⁶ On the primacy of the threat the Ottomans felt from the American mission schools see Fortna, 77-80 and Betül Basaran, "American Schools and the Development of Ottoman Educational Policies During the Hamidian Period: A Reinterpretation," in *International Congress on Learning & Education in the Ottoman World: Istanbul, 12-15 April 1999: Abstracts*, ed. Ali Caksu and Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1999), 185-205. Jesuit schools had been there for many years previous, but the type of education they offered was mainly ecclesiastical. Hourani, 54.

²⁵⁷ This has been a subject of much debate in the past. See for example Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine*. Also see Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East*. On the British, see Farah, "Protestantism and Politics: The 19th Century Dimension in Syria." This paper will not attempt to answer the question of how direct the missionary influence on *millet* nationalism or Great Power imposition was. For the purposes of this paper, the point remains that the American mission was at least perceived by the Ottoman authorities as an important factor in both of these threats to Ottoman authority.

mind of Ottoman officials.²⁵⁸ Just as the American mission under Jessup saw schooling as its primary field of work, the Ottomans also saw education as the most important segment of their plan of response. Demand for education was high, and schools were the “most direct means to win the minds of local people to their faith.”²⁵⁹ The people throughout the Empire recognized this new educational focus; the Ottoman rash of new school construction beginning in 1884 and the program of public morality tied up with this provided the “most visible impression of the changes the state was effecting in the Empire.”²⁶⁰

Policies to promote centralization and consolidation

The Ottoman program for centralization and consolidation began in earnest in the early 1880s once Abdul Hamid II’s power had been consolidated. Scholars have generally argued that after the constitutional attempt of 1876 had been pushed aside by Abdul Hamid in favor of a return to a more autocratic rulership, the Tanzimat period of reform came to an end.²⁶¹ More recent research has called this idea into question. The Hamidian period saw many reforms, some of which were enacted before his time as Sultan but only carried out under his authority. However, as Benjamin Fortna has pointed out, the Islamic element of many of Abdul Hamid’s policies suggests rather an appropriation of past legislation for new purposes.²⁶² In general, the Hamidian regime attempted to bring under control different elements of Ottoman governance and society and to extend its influence more concretely to parts of the Empire farther away from

²⁵⁸ PHS archives, Box 8, Folder 9. Letter of April 27, 1889 from Strauss (American legation in Istanbul) to Pringle. This point will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

²⁵⁹ Rogan, 136.

²⁶⁰ Fortna, 115.

²⁶¹ For discussion of the broader context of these reforms see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire* and Moshe Maoz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*.

²⁶² For example see Fortna, 60, 93-95.

Istanbul.²⁶³ In order to foster a wider reach for Istanbul that would build up the Empire from within, efforts were made to improve the enactment of taxation, censorship,²⁶⁴ and especially education policy. Other efforts included the redistribution of territories, such as the creation of the province of Beirut in 1888.²⁶⁵ New and more efficient governors were also sent to the provinces to make sure that these developments were carried out.²⁶⁶ This program of centralization also included modern improvements to railroads, the military, irrigation, and industry.²⁶⁷ This process certainly did not always go smoothly, but it was pursued with the hope of preserving the Empire.

As mentioned previously, Syria was a particular target for the Hamidian reforms because it was in reality and also represented a location of incredible confessional diversity, confessional conflict, foreign power intrusion, suspect loyalty, dangerous ideologies, and non-state run education. In addition, the large number of thriving printing presses compounded this threat: all of these dangers to state authority could be exported to other regions of the Empire effectively.²⁶⁸ This is reflected by the statistics of missionary schools that show a particularly high concentration there,²⁶⁹ the many complaints from Ottoman officials in the province,²⁷⁰ and the Ottoman response that included chiefly the creation of the new province administered from its capital in

²⁶³ Especially see Eugene Rogan's *Frontiers of the State* (1999).

²⁶⁴ Donald J. Cioeta, "Ottoman Censorship in Lebanon and Syria, 1876-1908," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, no. 2 (May 1979): 167-186. Hourani, 245-246.

²⁶⁵ Hanssen, 180-181.

²⁶⁶ Although Midhat Pasha's stay as governor of Syria in 1878 was short-lived and before the reforms had begun in earnest, he still represents a larger trend.

²⁶⁷ Deringil, 9-12.

²⁶⁸ Benedict Anderson and other scholars of nationalism have highlighted the importance of what Anderson dubbed "print-capitalism" to the growth of such movements as nationalism (but this could also be applied to the spread of other ideologies), especially in the periphery regions of Empires. Ussama Makdisi has also applied this connection with Anderson. Makdisi, "After 1860," 605.

²⁶⁹ See Fortna, 77-80.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 48-60.

Beirut.²⁷¹ The new provincial capital of Beirut provided the Ottomans with a means to “maintain a closer scrutiny” of the region that was full of foreign influences, along with all the other factors mentioned above.²⁷²

Policies to promote Ottoman Legitimacy through the use of Islam

Sultan Abdul Hamid II, faced with the internal and external threats mentioned above, hoped to cultivate a system of rule where Islam could be used to foster increased legitimacy and increased loyalty to Ottoman central authority. The Hamidian administration saw Islam as a convenient instrument to propagate imperial authority because it had applicability across ethnic boundaries throughout the large and diverse Empire. In addition, Islam provided a strong historical concept of power that could be used to ensure success in their project of the strengthening of imperial control in the outlying regions of the Empire. This process was necessary for the Hamidian administration because “just as the state was permeating levels of society it had never reached before, making unprecedented demands on its people, it created new strains on society” that would require the increased security of Islamic legitimacy.²⁷³ This was a multifaceted campaign that had many applications; the Ottomans saw education as the prime means by which to inculcate this new ideology. As a result, the efforts of the American mission in Syria, especially its wide educational reach, were in direct opposition to this new implementation of an “official faith” that sought to use “Islamic vocabulary and ideological tools” to simultaneously root out opposing viewpoints and implement their own.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Fortna, 75-83.

²⁷² Ibid., 51.

²⁷³ Deringil, 9.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 13.

Ottoman Perceptions of Missionaries

As Abdul Hamid formulated this Islamic policy in the 1880s, one of the first tasks was to gather information about the missionary institutions within their domains. Because up to the 1880s missionary institutions had largely been left alone due to their satisfying a need for “neglected social services” that the Ottomans were not equipped to fulfill,²⁷⁵ the question of the extent and nature of missionary influence was a new one for the Ottomans.²⁷⁶ Munif Pasha, the Ottoman education minister, issued a memorandum in 1886 concerning non-Muslim schools in the Empire that described how “the Ottoman state had no knowledge of what transpired in these institutions.”²⁷⁷ More specifically, the Porte was “completely in the dark about curricula, textbooks, and moral character and behavior of the teachers in its non-Muslim schools.”²⁷⁸ Interestingly, the memorandum was issued after the Ottomans had already closed as many as thirty-three American mission schools in Syria, as Jessup described in the *Memorial of Missionaries*. This demonstrates that the Ottomans certainly knew something in the general sense about the negative impact of mission education, and this knowledge was based first and foremost on complaints from the provinces.

Local officials were in the unique position to see the influence of mission schools, particularly if the town or village under their control did not have any modern alternative to missionary education. For example, the Ottoman governor of Syria, Reshid Nashid Pasha, wrote to Istanbul in 1887 concerning education funding and the threat of American (listed first) and other missionaries in Syria:

²⁷⁵ Rogan, 123.

²⁷⁶ Fortna, 96-97.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

[The Missionaries] are educating Muslim and Christian children gratis and seducing and convincing the children of those who do not send their children to their schools by any means available and are corrupting the subjects' upbringing. In spite of this, so far no schools have been built by the [Ottoman] state as is necessary to be beneficial and to compete with them.²⁷⁹

Many other calls from the provinces similar to this one made their way to Istanbul in the 1880s. Even where some progress had been made in the cities, the situation was still desperate in the rural areas, as Ali Pasha the governor of Beirut argued:

Coming to the districts appended to Beirut, there are many foreign schools in the Nusayri areas to the north and Latakia and Tripoli and in other provinces. Many students are being educated in them and since there are no [Ottoman state] schools in those areas apart from the rushdiye [advanced primary] and ibtidai [new elementary] schools in the aforementioned places [Beirut proper], the children of these areas are all growing up with foreign education and consequently, foreign influence is easily increasing day by day.²⁸⁰

These fears were based on scattered accounts of Muslim children desiring to convert to Protestantism and Eastern Christian youths holding decidedly Western modes of thought, or in short, that the hearts and minds of the Ottoman subjects in the region were being corrupted by missionary influence.

The Ottomans took these warnings seriously, both in order to satisfy the demands of their constituency but also because they recognized the larger negative possibilities from missionary influence. Calls from the provinces began at least as early as 1880. Already by 1881, a memorandum from the Ministry of Public Education recognized the need to speed up the process of enforcing the laws of the already existing 1869 law that provided a legal framework to close private schools in the Empire unless they had the

²⁷⁹ Fortna, 59.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 56.

proper documentation.²⁸¹ One of the steps in this process was to create local educational councils with the authority to regulate private schools and manage state civil schools; Syria was the only one of the councils prepared by 1883 that was not in Anatolia.²⁸² There was a strong presence of local Muslim religious notables on these councils, although it is unclear if they were entirely made up of Muslims.²⁸³ For example, out of the required fourteen members of the educational councils,²⁸⁴ seven of them were *ulama*.²⁸⁵ The head of the council was Muhammad Hamzazade, the Hanafi *mufti* of Damascus,²⁸⁶ four were also accredited to teach in local religious schools, and two held high positions in the Ottoman court system.²⁸⁷ The participation of Muslim notables in Ottoman state educational initiatives further supports the “normal and regular flow between the religious, the judicial, and the civil worlds.”²⁸⁸

Based on the lack of information that the Ottomans had and the example of the Syrian Protestant College not registering under the 1869 law,²⁸⁹ it is clear that this law had not been acted upon in the decade since its inception. Throughout this scramble in the early 1880s to formulate a response to missionary efforts in the Empire, the

²⁸¹ Basaran, 189.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁸³ Based on the example of the Ottoman appointed educational inspectors where a Greek was appointed first before later only Muslims were entrusted with the position, it seems quite possible that both Christians and Muslims would have sat on the educational councils. See Fortna, 96. In Syria, which had such a diverse religious makeup, it would make sense that the Ottomans would desire to have as many Syrians of various confessions taking part in the Ottoman system. However, it also seems possible that the Ottomans would have desired to keep Muslims in these positions, as they later did with the educational inspectors.

²⁸⁴ PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 9. Letter of May 28, 1886 from Jessup to Beirut consular official Bissinger. Bissinger informed Jessup that on the regional council of education there were currently ten sitting members out of a required fourteen.

²⁸⁵ Randi Deguilhem, “A Revolution in Learning? The Islamic Contribution to the Ottoman State Schools: Examples from the Syrian Provinces,” in *International Congress on Learning & Education in the Ottoman World: Istanbul, 12-15 April 1999: Abstracts*, ed. Ali Caksu and Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1999), 290-291.

²⁸⁶ *Mufti* refers to the chief jurisconsult of the region.

²⁸⁷ Deguilhem, 290-291.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

²⁸⁹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 203.

authorities in Istanbul also hoped to maintain the image that they could provide the needed recipe for success. Similar to the missionary conception of their work in Syria, “in the late Ottoman period the disparity between the pessimism over present circumstances and the optimism for the future speaks to the tremendous hope that state officials placed on education.”²⁹⁰

Ottoman Response

Having prepared a plan of action in response to the growing trend of complaints from the provinces, the Ottomans acted both retroactively in opposition to already-established missionary efforts as well as proactively to subvert any demand for them in the future. This program was also multifaceted in the ideology that it espoused. The Hamidian regime simultaneously pushed a new state school system that theoretically would encourage Ottomans of all sects to participate and a coordinated program to bolster the Hanafi Islam in the provinces.²⁹¹ Moreover, these two programs were combined into one in the new Ottoman state schools. Underlying the entire program was the larger promotion of Sultan Abdul Hamid II as the Caliph of Sunni Islam. Ottoman sultans had nominally claimed the title in the past, Abdul Hamid hoped to use it for his unique pan-Islamic campaign to foster unity across the Empire.²⁹² In order to instill official Ottoman Hanafi Islam under the leadership of Abdul Hamid II, the Hamidian regime sent traveling *ulama* to Iraq, Cyprus, and Syria.²⁹³ These men preached morality and how to recognize right from wrong, and missionary institutions and thought were

²⁹⁰ Fortna, 49

²⁹¹ See footnote on page eleven for Hanafi Islam.

²⁹² Deringil, 44-67. Rogan, 152.

²⁹³ Fortna, 93.

certainly on the wrong side.²⁹⁴ These *ulama* were sent to regions that the Ottomans had also slated for a new state school or government-sponsored mosque because the Ottomans recognized that constructing a building took a good deal of time.²⁹⁵ In addition to the mosques that the Ottomans already monitored through the *waqf* system,²⁹⁶ the Ottomans constructed entirely new mosques.²⁹⁷ The combination of these three government sponsored Islamic elements was designed to instill an official “Islamic morality.”²⁹⁸ The new buildings were “set apart physically and architecturally [and were] closer in style to other government structures than to the *maktab* or the *madrassa* of classical Islam,” but inside they contained mosques.²⁹⁹ This new physical construction of space was designed in order to contribute to a new Ottoman official understanding of Islam that the Hamidian regime saw as essential for maintaining cohesion across the Empire. Inside these new buildings, the Ottoman state conducted an “optimistic attempt to inculcate the discipline and morals it deemed necessary to control student behavior and thought, and thereby safeguard the Empire’s future.”³⁰⁰ Students, when looking back on their time in state schools, remembered studying the Islamic sciences without this posing any issue of secular versus religious contradictions because “the schools were not regarded and did not function as a secular environment apart from the religious one.”³⁰¹ Each of these measures was designed to proactively supplant missionary education because Ottoman state schools would now be providing the education that before only

²⁹⁴ Fortna, 94. Rogan, 152.

²⁹⁵ Fortna, 94.

²⁹⁶ A *waqf* was a mortmain system, where endowments were continually used for the maintenance of a mosque, school, hospital or other social service establishment.

²⁹⁷ Fortna, 130-164.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Also see Deguilhem, 288-289.

³⁰⁰ Fortna, 42.

³⁰¹ Deguilhem, 289.

missionary schools could provide. But for the Ottomans, proactive measures were not enough to stem the tide of missionary influence.

The Ottomans first attempted to find out as much as possible about what missionary education was going on in the Ottoman Empire. They already had the legal basis to do so; the 1869 Education law required private schools to register and provide information on curriculum and teaching staff. The vast majority of private schools in the Ottoman Empire had not done this, but the Ottomans could not enforce the law of 1869 in regards to private schools until they had instituted an effective system of educational inspectors. After first appointing a Greek to inspect the foreign schools, the Porte judged later that it was too sensitive an issue to leave to anyone but a Muslim.³⁰² With the authority of the Ottoman government, these inspectors and the local educational councils asked the various missions in the Empire for documentation on each of their schools including especially when they began and whether the school had received official license. Secondly, the Ottomans wanted to determine whether the teachers in the schools had diplomas. Finally, they wanted to determine the nature of the curriculum in the mission schools.³⁰³ By 1893, minister of education Zuhdu Pasha had enough information to conclude that out of approximately four hundred Protestant and American schools in the Empire, 341 functioned without official permission.³⁰⁴ The Ottomans also compiled a separate list of just American schools.³⁰⁵ Another report issued by Zuhdu Pasha roughly a year later explained that American schools had been spreading in the Empire like an

³⁰² Fortna, 96.

³⁰³ As will be explained below, this was the process that Jessup and the American mission went through beginning in 1885.

³⁰⁴ Fortna, 77-78.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 79.

“epidemic disease.”³⁰⁶ Based on these reports, Zuhdu Pasha recommended quickly forcing these schools to obtain official licenses, preventing non-Ottoman subjects from teaching in the schools, limiting future schools to areas with large amounts of foreign students, requiring schools to accept inspections, and replacing the need for mission school by building more Ottoman schools.³⁰⁷ Ultimately, these reports and recommendations would be codified in laws beginning with the 1896 “Instructions Concerning the Duties of Directors of Education in the Imperial Provinces” that essentially made prosecution of the 1869 law easier.³⁰⁸ While over a roughly twenty-year period, Ottoman measures concerning education were successful, they were certainly not fast. In order to demonstrate to mission schools (especially American ones) and to local constituencies that they were serious about the reforms, the Ottoman authorities went to the extreme of ordering local Ottoman authorities to close some mission schools.

The Ottoman regime of Abdul Hamid II had concrete fears of missionary influence, especially American influence in Syria, in the Empire. There were direct links between missionary activity in the Empire, its perceived threat by the government of Abdul Hamid, and the Ottoman imposition of reforms (especially in the field of education) designed to limit and supplant missionary activity that used Islam as a means of imperial control. Ottoman initiatives under Abdul Hamid have been traditionally (and wrongly) viewed as secular and therefore opposed to local Muslim initiatives. The secular interpretation is based on the influence that the French secular school system had on Ottoman educational reforms. Certainly, the Ottoman reforms were greatly influenced by the French system, but the Ottomans also included their own policy of religious

³⁰⁶ Basaran, 190.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 190-191.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 191-192.

education in state schools. Ottoman educational reform under Abdul Hamid II employed Islam and cooperated with local Islamic elements of Syrian society. All of this was part of a new imperial program designed to consolidate power, especially through the use of Islam. American, and other Christian, missionary schools came into conflict with the Ottoman program both because the Ottomans were interested especially in keeping Muslim areas of the Empire Muslim and because they sought the larger goal of moving more students of all confessions into Ottoman state schools. The final aim of the Ottoman educational reforms under Abdul Hamid II was “to leave no Muslim pupil in foreign schools.”³⁰⁹ Even though those state schools were imbued with Islam, the Ottomans also desired to impart Ottomanism, which reached across religions, through those schools. Closings of American mission schools were only part of the Ottoman initiative to stop the dangerous influence of the American missionaries.

Henry Jessup was aware of the Ottoman response, that new research has outlined so well, to the work of foreign missions.³¹⁰ Having benefited from recent scholarship on Ottoman concerns about foreign education in the Hamidian period, the following chapter considers both sides of the school controversy of 1885.³¹¹ Both the Ottoman officials and Henry Jessup actually saw the controversy in a very similar way—as an outright

³⁰⁹ Somel, 204.

³¹⁰ This paper will argue along the same lines as Eugene Rogan who demonstrated missionary awareness in Transjordan of the new Ottoman policies. Rogan, 144-145, 157-158. Fortna and Deringil are aware of the missionary response to the Ottoman initiatives, but they are focused more on Ottoman sources and response than those of missionaries. None of these scholars discuss the missionary perception at length or make detailed conclusions about the missionary description of the persecution they felt they were facing. Fortna does mention briefly the missionary response, but simply reproduces Tibawi’s interpretation (see the following footnote). Fortna, 92-93.

³¹¹ A.L. Tibawi’s work (and Abu-Ghazaleh’s work fits into the same category) is the best work based on missionary sources that also takes into account the larger context, but this work does not include the recent research performed by Deringil, Fortna, Rogan, and others in Ottoman sources. As a result, Tibawi misses the context of outright educational competition, specifically the Ottoman use of Islam. Tibawi’s account portrays Jessup as having a long-standing hatred of Islam that was displayed in his polemical response to the 1885 school closings.

competition for influence over the Ottoman subjects of Syria. By 1860, when Jessup arrived in Syria, the mission was forty years old, and its missionaries began to see Syria more as their homeland and not just as a mission field as their missionary board emphasized.³¹² Even if this conception of “Syria” was their own, their sense of belonging to the region was “obvious.”³¹³ This factor contributed to Jessup’s strong reaction to the Ottoman measures of the 1880s; Jessup saw the people of Syria as more his field of influence than the Ottoman authorities’. This competition, that employed whatever means necessary including educational, religious, cultural, and political manifestations of influence, is described in Jessup’s writings beginning in 1885 with the same specifics, tone, and implications of the Ottoman sources, both provincial and imperial. Jessup’s rhetoric around 1885 concerning Islam and the Ottoman Empire chiefly reflected this context of opposition and not Jessup as an unchanging “Protestant Orientalist” and “diehard missionary polemicist.”³¹⁴

The 1885 School Controversy through Missionary Documents

In the mind of Henry Jessup, the closing of the mission schools was proof that the Ottoman government had shifted its policy from that of tolerance, embodied by the Tanzimat period, to that of authoritarianism and exclusivity on religious grounds. Jessup’s defensive reaction to the 1885 school closings and the larger context of Ottoman educational initiatives in Syria was based on very real circumstances; however, Jessup, like the Ottoman authorities, did not hesitate to exaggerate those circumstances in order to support his vision for a successful American mission in Syria. Despite his exaggeration, Jessup’s switch in focus from other Christian competition before 1885 to

³¹² Zachs, “Toward a Proto-Nationalist concept of Syria,” 152.

³¹³ Ibid, 153.

³¹⁴ Khalaf, 105-125. Abu-Ghazaleh, 47.

Ottoman Islamic oppression suggests that his response was based on very real and new circumstances that were not present before this time. Jessup's understanding of the situation was, however, contested by other Americans in Syria. Others, even those supposedly under Jessup's leadership, expressed clear disagreement with Jessup's full-fledged campaign to combat the Ottoman measures by any means available. Further complicating the nature of the competition between the American mission and the Ottomans, both Jessup and the Ottomans expressed similar attitudes and actions concerning the controversy over schools in Syria. Both sides certainly saw education as the primary means of implementing their influence.

Finally, secondary sources also shed light on Jessup's response. Some secondary sources read Jessup's response chiefly as proof of his own defensiveness and internal weaknesses of the mission. Other secondary sources corroborate Jessup's understanding of the events surrounding the school closings. These evaluative themes will be explored through the lenses of the four major pieces of writing that Jessup produced concerning the school controversy: the *Memorial of Missionaries*, the *Foreign Missionary*, missionary correspondence, and Jessup's memoir.

Outline of School Controversy, 1885-1893

The overall picture of the events of the school controversy will be described through Jessup's writings; however, a brief outline will provide further clarity. Initially, the Ottoman authorities closed roughly thirty American missionary schools in Syria, Palestine, and the Transjordan during the 1884-1885 school year. Jessup, as director of the American mission schools, responded by gathering as much information as he could on the situation and publishing his findings as widely as possible in order to gain broader

support. Jessup rejected the Ottoman initiatives on multiple grounds and hoped that through the influence of Western diplomacy, the situation might be reversed. After these initial efforts failed to gain enough currency to garner significant political support, Jessup and the American mission tried to dodge further Ottoman closings but also were forced to gather the information required by the 1869 Ottoman education law. Jessup hoped that this compliance would alleviate the immediate situation where further American schools were closed and others were delayed in being reopened. Having then submitted the necessary paperwork, Jessup lobbied American diplomats and Ottoman authorities for the reopening of American schools. When these efforts did not meet with success, the American mission attempted to discern whether or not the Ottomans only cared about mission schools with Muslim students or if *firman*s were required. Finally, as will be addressed briefly in the epilogue and conclusion, Jessup and the American mission resigned themselves to the current situation where the Ottoman laws, including the new laws passed in the 1890s, became the new reality for the mission.

Memorial of Missionaries

The *Memorial of Missionaries* of 1886, composed by Henry Jessup in order to raise support from Western Protestant diplomats in the Ottoman Empire and Christians in general, describes his great offense at at least thirty-three mission schools being closed.³¹⁵ Each of these schools was part of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church's mission in Syria, which had been separated from the American Board's mission in Anatolia in 1870.³¹⁶ This document was the culmination of Jessup's initial efforts after

³¹⁵ Jessup, *Memorial of Missionaries*, 8-9. The rest of this section will be from pages 8-10 of this document, unless otherwise specifically noted.

³¹⁶ The American Board also had difficulties with the Ottoman authorities, although this subject does not fall under the purview of this paper. For more on Ottoman strictures against American missions in

the school closings in the school year of 1884-1885. After Jessup was made aware of what was happening by letters and telegrams from the different mission posts throughout Syria, he sent letters to his missionary contacts throughout Syria in an attempt to comprehend the overall situation.³¹⁷ Jessup also wanted to equip himself with as much information as he could in order to prepare his response to the Ottoman measures. His target audience was the Protestant reading public in the West. Interestingly, Jessup used the term “Christian public” in order to make a broader appeal (as well as based on his nineteenth century Protestant worldview where Protestants were the true Christians), even though his actual audience was predominantly English-speaking Protestants. The document also acted as a formal request for action by the American consulate in Istanbul. Jessup had already been in close contact with the American legation in Beirut led by Erhard Bissinger, who according to a letter sent to Jessup on May 28, 1886, had actually advised Jessup to write the *Memorial* in response to what he called “this vexatious school question.”³¹⁸

According to Jessup’s account, schools in the regions of Latakia, Adana, Tripoli, Hama, and Hauran were closed by a combination of “bands of soldiers,” local sheikhs forced to cooperate, local *Mutasarrifs*,³¹⁹ local *Kaimakams*,³²⁰ or if no specific authority is mentioned, by “the Turkish authorities.” The closings were a shock to Jessup for many reasons, not least of which was the fact that so many were closed around the same time. This suggested that a new and coordinated plan of action had been undertaken by the

Anatolia see Erhan, 329-332. For more on how Ottoman efforts against mission schools affected missions in Transjordan, see Eugene Rogan’s *Frontiers of the State* (1999).

³¹⁷ The letters and telegrams sent to Jessup are in PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 9.

³¹⁸ PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 9. Letter of May 28, 1886.

³¹⁹ The governor of a district, part of the larger *vilayet* (province) governed by a *Waly*, or *Wali*.

³²⁰ The local governor of the smaller *nahiye* (communes).

government against the mission. Jessup argued that “scores of schools of all grades were in operation, and had been in operation for years before the school laws were enacted. . . and since their enactment they have been almost universally ignored by the public authorities.” For Jessup, this illegal (again based on his perception of the Tanzimat reform), unjust, and exclusionary government action had come out of nowhere. Jessup expressed his understanding of the situation by asserting that “recently, repressive measures of the most severe character have been enforced” that would eventually lead to the “virtual extinction of all but the Mohammedan schools.” Jessup pins the blame for this situation squarely on the “official persecution by the Turkish authorities” that was designed to limit the work of the “Christian schools” and support new Muslim schools run by “fanatical Mohammedan” *Khotibs*.

Certainly, Jessup used language (Turkish, fanatical, Mohammedan) as other polemical American writings of the time did—to essentialize the Ottomans and Islam. Many Ottoman administrative figures in the nineteenth century were not Turkish; many were Albanians, Greeks, or Arabs. The use of the term “Mohammedan” inherently suggested that Islam was a heretical religion centered around the Prophet Muhammad; no Muslim would refer to him or herself by this term. His continued use of these terms throughout the *Memorial* suggests their importance to his rhetoric. His use of terms here is also similar to that of his two publications of the 1870s discussed in chapter three, which suggests that Jessup used these terms in publications for home consumption because they would have both resonated with that audience who knew very little about Islam and because they would portray a certain negative image of Islam vis-à-vis American Christianity. His use of the term in publications even after thirty years in Syria

also supports Khalaf's point that "Jessup was still upholding the same medieval mindset, with all the unflattering images, that he had carried over with him from New England half a century earlier."³²¹ At the same time, as will be discussed below, these terms do not appear in Jessup's unpublished writing.³²²

The entire *Memorial of Missionaries* actually addresses various grievances that Jessup held against the Ottoman authorities, but for the purposes of this study it is most germane to focus on those relating to the closing of schools. Jessup levels seven major charges on different levels against the Ottoman and local authorities in regard to the closing of schools. First, Jessup argued that the history of laws relating to missionary schools did not justify the current closings. Second, the closings occurred without justification and not according to the law. Third, the Ottomans were depriving many people of the only opportunity for education. Fourth, the Ottomans were unfairly prejudicial against Protestant (especially American) institutions. Fifth, the closings coincided with the opening of Islamic institutions. Sixth, it was impossible to meet Ottoman demands as they were not even following their own rules, especially regarding the makeup of local councils of education who had the authority to decide educational policy. Finally, they were using unjust taxation to pay for this new program. This extensive list was designed to convince his audience, the consulates of the Protestant powers in Istanbul and the Protestant public at large, that a combined effort was needed to reverse the recent course in Syria of Ottoman official persecution of American missionary institutions as well as of Ottoman official support for Muslim institutions.

³²¹ Khalaf, 167.

³²² Further study would benefit the question of Jessup's terminology. It would be especially interesting to find out what terminology Jessup used when directly addressing the Muslims he encountered in Syria. My research for this thesis would need to be extended in order to more fully evaluate this issue.

Jessup truly regarded the closing of schools as a deliberate policy of the Ottoman government to augment Islam at the detriment of Christianity as well as hoped to use exaggeration to convince his audience of this position.

Based on the Ottoman documents concerning the Hamidian educational program of the 1880s evaluated above, Jessup's account hits very near the mark. Jessup was especially aware of the coordination of the Ottoman's retroactive measure of closing American schools with their proactive measure of opening schools. Jessup's perception of the lack of separation between state schools and Muslim education also reflects the reality of the mingling of Ottoman state measures with local Muslim notable figures. Most specifically, Jessup points out the fact that local *ulama*, whom he calls "fanatical Mohammedan *khotibs*," were involved in the Ottoman program.³²³ As Jessup correctly understands, Ottoman official measures were not in discord with local Muslim efforts. Rather they were designed to bolster what was already there and had been shown to be lacking.³²⁴ There was crossover of teachers, students, curriculum, materials, space, and religiosity between the religious and state school systems, and this system was also supported by local *ulama*.³²⁵ Some local *ulama*, such as Mahmud Hamzazade, the Hanafi mufti of Damascus, even participated directly as members of the provincial educational councils set up by the Ottomans.³²⁶ Hamzazade was the head of the Damascus provincial council of education from 1878 to 1885.³²⁷ In short, to "ignore the strong religious

³²³ Fortna argues against prevailing historiography that saw a disconnection between the Hamidian measures and local *ulama*. Fortna, 73.

³²⁴ Fortna, 72.

³²⁵ Deguilhem, 288-290.

³²⁶ Ibid., 290-291.

³²⁷ Ibid., 290.

element in the Hamidian educational movement is to overlook a significant component of its *raison d'être* and numerous aspects of its practical application."³²⁸

Jessup's correspondence with Bissinger, the American diplomatic official in Beirut, also reveals, however, that Jessup was certainly not impartially recounting facts about the situation. Bissinger noted to Jessup that some of his numbers about schools the Ottomans had closed were incorrect, but Jessup did not change the document before publication.³²⁹ Bissinger in fact told Jessup that two, not twenty-one schools had been closed near Latakia. Bissinger does, however, agree with Jessup that the Ottomans were not complying with their own laws (specifically the 1869 education law that dictated how private schools in the Empire should be governed by the authorities) because there were only ten members of the regional board of education in 1886, not the required fourteen. Bissinger went on to list the specific names of those on the regional board and gave this as proof that the Ottomans did not actually have legal authority to close American schools in Syria.³³⁰ It is not possible based on the sources currently available to know exactly who was right about the statistics of the closings, but certainly the discourse with Bissinger demonstrates that Jessup wrote the *Memorial* with a certain purpose that did not preclude using exaggeration and selective use of statistics to make an argument. Nor did this purpose prevent Jessup attempting to make use of the American diplomatic (secular) structure in the Ottoman Empire, despite the fact that Jessup was at times, as with the statistic dispute, directly contradicted by the members of the American legation.

A.L. Tibawi, the main scholar who has studied the American mission in the context of the 1885 school closings, on the whole argues that the *Memorial* did not

³²⁸ Fortna, 93-94.

³²⁹ PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 9. Letter of May 28, 1886.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

represent the reality of the situation in Syria. Tibawi only believed in the partial validity of the section of the *Memorial* that dealt with school closings (the only portion that this paper addresses), which contributed to his skepticism of that section. For Tibawi, Jessup was “more concerned with answering critics and apologizing to friends [as well as] finding an external scapegoat for internal stagnation and inadequacy” than in representing a concern based on reality.³³¹ In short, Tibawi argues that Jessup’s perception and argument that “the Ottoman education law and the school system based upon it were inspired by hostility to Protestant missions” must be rejected as “unsatisfactory.”³³² Tibawi justifies his skepticism also by referring to the situation as nothing but a small matter, as a defensive reaction by Jessup whose teachers lacked the necessary documentation, as unimportant because the schools closed were in rural areas, as fomented by over-zealous local officials, by a twenty-year grace period since the 1869 law, as not supported by other Christian mission groups in the region, and finally because in his mind this was just another case of Jessup displaying his continual “hostility to the Ottoman system. . .and hatred of Islam.”³³³

While there is certainly some truth in Tibawi’s understanding of the *Memorial* as we have seen that both Jessup and the Ottomans were willing to employ many different tactics to support their cause, his argument lacks the recent research about the definite Ottoman official fears concerning American missionary efforts. New research highlights the wealth of Ottoman documents from Istanbul and Syria that specifically reference the danger of American mission schools and the larger interpretation of Hamidian policy that used the 1869 law for its own larger purposes of education reform that would instill

³³¹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 258.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*, 254-270.

obedience in Ottoman subjects by pushing an official connection with Islam. The *Memorial* certainly shows that Jessup was aware of this larger plan. Furthermore, if numbers of schools are taken as a measure of the growing importance of American schools in influencing Syrian youths, Tibawi underestimates the real importance of American schools in the region, particularly in the rural areas. American common schools, those teaching young children basic reading skills as well as often some English, were spread throughout Syria in regions that would have only had traditional *millet* or Muslim education if even that. For Jessup, the long-time head of the American mission, the efforts of the mission constituted the central effort of his life—one that he passionately believed in because it met real needs of Syrian people, particularly those in the underdeveloped rural regions of Syria that the Ottomans had ignored. In addition, if the Ottoman authorities had attempted to close American schools in the cities of Syria, this would have caused a more serious reaction by the foreign powers in Istanbul, which they did not want to face. Indeed, this is also part of the reason why few of the other missions participated in the campaign of the *Memorial*; their schools had not been closed in part because their consular officials had more power in Istanbul than the American officials there.

Finally, even the specific tone of the *Memorial* mirrors that of the Ottoman documents about mission schools. For Jessup, as for the Ottomans, the possibilities for the future were so great, but the current disastrous problems threaten to prevent this. Jessup's conclusion describes how the current "repressive measures" will act to "revive Mohammedan hostility," to "rekindle fires that may not be easily extinguished," to "reverse the liberal and clement" policies of the past, to encourage "Mohammedan hatred

to Christian churches and schools,” and to “rouse a spirit which would soon become uncontrollable, and end in a repetition of the scenes of 1860.” If not for these persecutions, the American mission efforts to bring the “only means of education and enlightenment open to the Christians of Syria and Palestine” would be allowed to thrive in the future. The *Memorial*, taken in its entirety, echoes the Ottoman sources (and the argument of the scholars mentioned above) in its defensive yet hopeful tone, description of specific events, concept of larger Ottoman initiatives, description of the significance of American schools, and warnings for the future.

The Foreign Missionary

Jessup argued similarly about the closing of American mission schools in Syria by the Ottoman authorities in the official publication of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, under which the Syria mission had operated since 1870. In an attempt to portray the desperate nature of the situation to the readers, Jessup warned that the “whole influence of the government is more and more anti-Christian” because of what he saw as their objective to “strengthen the Moslem and repress the Christian element in the Empire.”³³⁴ He also described to the readers how the situation was not just about the persecution of the work of the American mission, but also how the government was attempting to set up Muslim institutions as a replacement. Specifically, the government was “aiding in the repair of old mosques, and the building of new ones” that were not required to pass through the same administrative hoops as American mission institutions.³³⁵ Jessup also added that the work of the American presses in the Ottoman Empire had also come under what he called a “new and repressive policy on the part of

³³⁴ *The Foreign Missionary*, Volume xlv, October 1885, 222. *The Foreign Missionary*, Volume xlv, March 1886, 466.

³³⁵ *The Foreign Missionary*, Volume xlv, March 1886, 467.

the Turkish government.”³³⁶ In all of this, Jessup echoed the tone expressed in the *Memorial of Missionaries* that the Ottoman repression of the mission was a new occurrence where “formerly there was nothing of this hostility” and “now everything bearing the Christian name seems to be under the ban.”³³⁷ Through Jessup’s writing in the *Memorial of Missionaries* and in *The Foreign Missionary*, he had made himself the mouthpiece for the Presbyterian mission to Syria in hopes that he could convince other Protestants of the plight of the mission. Jessup’s language gives a clear picture of a desperate situation.

Missionary Correspondence

Based on missionary correspondence that was never published, a clearer picture emerges of the great frustration that Jessup felt over the school closing controversy. From the initial school closings in 1885 into the 1890s, Jessup corresponded with his fellow missionaries, pleaded for support from the American and other consulates, and asked local officials to reopen schools that had been closed and for the promise that no further schools would be closed that had fulfilled the requirements of the 1869 Ottoman education law. The correspondence demonstrates that Jessup, as well as other American missionaries, felt that their efforts were often in vain as the Ottoman authorities enclosed the American schools in a sea of red tape. This struggle that often bore no fruit left Jessup in a state near despair.

The case of the American school at Hama offers an excellent example of the American frustration as well as providing for a more concrete vision of how the school closings were actually carried out. In 1889, in the continuation of the controversy that

³³⁶ *The Foreign Missionary*, Volume xlv, May 1886, 572.

³³⁷ *The Foreign Missionary*, Volume xlv, March 1886, 467.

began with the school closings in 1885, a missionary school for boys of roughly eighty students in Hama was closed. The story of the closing is recounted in letters from September 10, 1889 and September 13, 1889 between Henry Jessup and Erhard Bissinger, the American consul in Beirut in the 1880s.³³⁸ Jessup was in fairly constant communication with Bissinger during the years of the 1885 school controversy pleading for consular intervention with the authorities in Istanbul, which Jessup always called Constantinople. Jessup's continued use of the ancient Christian name for the city demonstrates that even in unpublished documents, Jessup's Protestant American bias did at times show itself.

Jessup informed Bissinger how the headmaster of the Hama school, a native convert to Protestantism named Selloun, recounted to Jessup how the *Waly* of Damascus sent him telegraph orders to close the school or face consequences. Jessup wrote back immediately by telegram instructing Selloun not to close the school until forced to do so. Later, Selloun sent a second telegraph explaining how one officer and five soldiers had come to the school and forcibly closed it.

Jessup, in his letters to Bissinger, fumed over the situation of the Hama school. Jessup complained, "we have fought this fight for two years and supposed we had the victory." Because the "*Waly* of Damascus yields to local intrigue and influence, instead of obeying the laws," it "imperils every American school in Syria." For Jessup, the "arbitrary act" of the Hama school closing proved that there was "evidently duplicity somewhere—we believe the government has sent *secret orders* nullifying the order of

³³⁸ Letters of September 10 and 13, 1889. PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 10.

May 16” that had stated that American schools needed no special permit to stay open.³³⁹

This statement is significant because it reveals Jessup’s clear belief that, while local events or leaders may have predicated a specific school closing, the real impetus was from the Ottoman central government in Istanbul. For Jessup, this systematic program of closing American mission schools would not have occupied the American mission since 1885 if it were not for the policy of the Ottoman central government. The *Waly* was determined, based on the supposed secret orders, to close the schools “at all hazards” against the Grand Vezir’s order of May 16, which Jessup was sure that the *Waly* had received. Jessup concludes the letter by exclaiming, “at this rate, American rights will seem to be trampled in the dust.” His last words in the letter ask the seemingly despairing question “is there no relief?”

These two letters between Jessup and Bissinger are a fitting example of Jessup’s perception of persecution. Facing what he believed to be a deliberate program against the main manifestation of mission work, the schools, Jessup cast blame for the situation on specific conflicts in Hama stirred up by town notables, local and regional authorities, and on the Ottoman central government. He used every available means to combat the school closings, particularly appealing to the local and central government on his own and through American and other consulates, but he still felt that these efforts might result in nothing. The fact that these pessimistic feelings were present even in an unpublished letter suggests that Jessup truly felt oppressed. Despite Jessup’s strong tone and condemnations of the Ottoman central government and local officials, not once does Jessup mention anything having to do with Islam in the letter. Jessup is indeed deeply

³³⁹ Emphasis is his.

upset by the situation, but his response in this unpublished letter is practical not polemical. Jessup's first interest is in finding out just what the Ottoman authorities are doing; at that point, Jessup will continue to use what influence he has on Western diplomats in order to alter the course of events.

Jessup's Memoir

Keeping in mind that memoirs can be as much a record of their own time as a description of past events,³⁴⁰ Jessup's memoir, *53 Years in Syria*, must be read with caution. This work has been so extensively used by historians for information about Ottoman Syria and Jessup himself that it risks being overused. A massive two-volume work, Jessup's memoir is the closest thing to an encyclopedia of the history of the Syria mission as is available. Interestingly, however, Jessup gives very scant reference to the school controversy of the 1880s in *53 Years in Syria*. For example, in the timeline that Jessup provides at the back of the work, he does mention the 1869 Ottoman education law, but mainly as a reference to the limits that it legalized on the efforts of the American Press.³⁴¹ Furthermore, the timeline contains no reference to the school conflict, which took up most of Jessup's time for nearly a decade. Instead, for the year 1887 Jessup cites the Sultan placing the "seal of authorization upon thirty-three different editions of the Arabic Scriptures and parts of Scriptures."³⁴² It seems that Jessup chose to remember positive aspects of the history of the mission from the 1880s rather than recount a major shift in the policy of the American mission where the mission was forced to adhere to Ottoman statutes that limited American evangelical work. In the body of the memoir,

³⁴⁰ Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932-1941* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21.

³⁴¹ Henry Harris Jessup. *Fifty-three Years in Syria* (New York: Fleming H. Revell company, 1910), 812.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

Jessup does not reference the beginning of the school closings in 1885, but there are two references to Ottoman closings of American schools in 1888. However, Jessup neglects to describe the reality of events. He does mention the *Memorial of Missionaries*, but concludes that the issue was resolved when the Ottoman education minister “issued orders recognizing all existing schools and forbidding interference with them.”³⁴³ The minister did indeed issue such orders, but this was hardly the end of the conflict, as Jessup complained about in his letters to Bissinger on September tenth and thirteenth of 1889.³⁴⁴ Jessup does give a more complete account of the school controversy later, however. Jessup accurately describes the back and forth between Ottoman strictures and his response, and he concludes the matter on the question of whether or not the Ottomans and Americans agreed on American schools being left alone “on the condition that *only Christian* children be received.”³⁴⁵ Jessup says that the American legation refused these terms, and “finally the schools were reopened without conditions.”³⁴⁶ Not admitting that the schools may not actually have been reopened without conditions, Jessup simply offers that “much has been published since that time and much has been done in the way of securing American schools.”³⁴⁷ Ultimately, Jessup leaves the reader with as close to an admission that the American schools had to give in concerning the school issue as he seems capable of:

The medical college in Beirut is visited every year by an imperial medical commission, who, in connection with the American faculty, examine the students and confer upon the worthy the imperial medical diploma. Various questions with regard to the American institutions remain unsettled, but, as a rule, the *established* day-schools, boarding-schools,

³⁴³ Jessup, *Fifty-three Years in Syria*, 503.

³⁴⁴ Letters of September 10 and 13, 1889. PHS, RG 115, Box 8, Folder 10

³⁴⁵ Jessup, *Fifty-three Years in Syria*, 533.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

and colleges are not interfered with. Where the government refuses a permit, it is generally through fear that a school or hospital with a permit may refuse to pay taxes. In this respect, the Americans would cheerfully pay taxes if the institutions of other nationalities did the same. But to be asked to do what no one else does, and to bear the burdens which the Sultan has excused other from bearing, savours (sic) too strongly of injustice and partiality to be meekly endured by an American official.³⁴⁸

Despite the fact that Jessup seems to dwell more on the positive in his memoir, his negative language about Islam remains, although to a somewhat lessened extent. For example, on the question of whether the intricacies of American Protestant denominations mattered in Syria, Jessup pointed out that “Mohammedans and heathens care nothing and understand little of our peculiar differences.”³⁴⁹ But in reference to the school controversy, Jessup wrote of being “kept busy by the Ottoman government.”³⁵⁰

Conclusion on Jessup’s writing

The most consistent and credible critique of Jessup’s defensive response to the 1885 school closings is that Jessup ignored the fact that the Ottomans were primarily concerned with mission schools in predominantly Muslim areas. A.L. Tibawi has made this case effectively, and the later work of Benjamin Fortna and Selcuk Somel support his conclusions.³⁵¹ Fortna argues that the Ottomans “used the weapon of school closure sparingly and mainly as a means of maintaining” the historical practice of missionary work in minority Muslim regions (such as Beirut).³⁵² For example, Somel has pointed out that “the foundation of [Ottoman] public schools in a certain locality or the raising of the educational quality of a government institution was often contingent on the positive

³⁴⁸ Jessup, *Fifty-three Years in Syria*, 533-534.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 474.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 533.

³⁵¹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 254-270. Somel, 202-204.

³⁵² Fortna, 92.

inclination of the local Muslim population in question toward foreign institutions.”³⁵³

Somel mentions specifically that the “setting up of public schools among the Nusairi population in the *sancak* of Latakia (*vilayet* of Beirut) commenced only after American missionaries began to be active among the local population.”³⁵⁴ This is also particularly interesting because the Ottomans here considered the Nusairis, a heterodox Muslim group, as Muslims. Abdul Hamid was, first and foremost, concerned about maintaining legitimacy as the sultan of Islam—the defender of Hanafi Sunni Islam throughout his realm.³⁵⁵ Education was the primary means by which the Hamidian regime attempted carry out this mandate. This program was, however, not mutually exclusive with concurrent programs to maintain legitimacy with various *millets* of the Empire, as expressions of legitimacy often overlapped. In the end, though, the “final aim” of the Ottoman government under Abdul Hamid was to “leave no Muslim pupil in foreign schools.”³⁵⁶

At the same time, to aver that Jessup’s claims were essentially propaganda designed to cater to his audience in the West and to find “an external scapegoat for internal stagnation and inadequacy” is to overemphasize the Ottoman focus on Muslim areas and to miss the larger point about how the missionaries and the Ottomans conceived of their influence in Syria.³⁵⁷ Both felt that the region was theirs to work in, certainly with competition, but both looked forward to their ultimate success in molding the people of Syria to their vision of the future. Jessup’s position held much less legal, political, or

³⁵³ Somel, 203.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ See Hanssen, 68-69 for Ottoman efforts to bring the Nusairis in Latakia to Ottoman official Hanafi Islam.

³⁵⁶ Somel, 204.

³⁵⁷ Tibawi, *American Interest*, 258.

historical weight, but in his missionary mindset, he held firm. For the Ottomans, this was a Syria that was increasingly under the imperial sway and that contributed to the growing need for military officers and educated bureaucrats. As a result, the Ottomans were not limited in scope merely to outlying missionary outposts in predominantly Muslim regions. Rather, they were interested in the gradual replacement of all missionary influence by the imposition of their own new school system, and the imperial rubric that followed. Ideally, the Ottomans wanted to foster a “common sense of loyalty among Muslims and non-Muslim students in competent state schools” and to limit new missionary schools “only to those areas with a sufficient number of foreign children in need of education,” not just to majority Christian regions.³⁵⁸ In the meantime, they were willing to be pragmatic by mainly limiting coerced closing of missionary schools to those areas where mainly Muslims resided and had been complaining to the Ottomans for help accordingly. Not only would this satisfy provincial calls for help from Istanbul thereby bolstering Syrian Muslim loyalty, but also the action would not rouse a concerted and coordinated effort of the Western powers on behalf of the mission establishments. The American diplomatic efforts, with only lackluster help from the British, would be much easier for the Ottomans to manage than if they had closed a British or Jesuit school.

For Jessup, the vision of the future entailed a Syria that was increasingly autonomous, most probably under British protectorate as Egypt and Cyprus already were. This would then allow for the possibility of direct proselytism of Muslims and the entrance of Syria into the world of “civilized” nations—meaning especially those molded by Protestant Christian civilization. In the present, the Syria mission, under Jessup’s

³⁵⁸ Basaran, 191.

leadership, was interested in the expansion of its schools throughout Syria to create “facts on the ground” that would be increasingly difficult to limit. This would also include a continuance of the American policy of opening schools in rural areas where no other modern schools existed, both for altruistic and more self-interested reasons. If the American school were the only one around, of course the possibility of Muslims or other non-Christian groups attending would be higher. Jessup’s vision (following the trend that the mission had followed since the late 1820s) still remained pragmatically to work with local Christians first, but with the maintenance of a larger vision of transformation of the Muslim edifice of the Ottoman world through that initial work. If, in the present, this vision also meant that a certain amount of Muslims, Druzes, and Nusairis were educated in American mission schools, so much the better.

In conclusion, Jessup’s writings about the school controversy from 1885 to 1893 reflect the same historical circumstances, objectives in the present, and hopes for the future as those of their Ottoman counterparts. Selim Deringil, writing about Abdul Hamid and his administration in their struggle to hold off Great Power encroachment, argues that they still had agency: “operating under severe constraints, to be sure, they were nonetheless able to carve out a critical space for maneuver in an increasingly hostile environment.”³⁵⁹ The same was true of Jessup and the American mission in Syria as they continued to run their schools and combat the Ottoman closings through every method available to them. Both felt oppressed and responded in such a way as to hold onto what they felt was theirs: influence over the people of Syria. This chapter has argued that, at least up to 1893, the missionaries “critical space for maneuver” diminished based on the

³⁵⁹ Deringil, 3-4.

Hamidian measures. The following chapter of the paper will address briefly the history of the mission after 1893 in order to provide a brief view of how the controversy that originally began in 1885 continued a decade later and more.

Based on the specifics, tone, and implications of both Ottoman and missionary sources, it is clear that Jessup and the Ottoman officials had a similar understanding of the school controversy of the 1880s. In other words, not only are the specific facts presented by both sides similar (even to the point that Ottoman statistics designed to limit mission influence were in part constructed based on Jessup's reports), but also the tone and rhetoric of the writing are remarkable similar. Both recognized that American schools had only recently become a perceived threat to the Ottoman government. Jessup's rhetoric implies shock that the Ottomans, who had shown tolerance in the past, were now imposing such a harsh change of policy. The Ottomans also expressed surprise at how little they actually knew about American schools; their sharp action in response also suggests the truth of this fact—if something were not to be done soon the situation might get out of hand. For example, the Ottoman education minister Munif Pasha admitted in 1886 to a lack of knowledge about foreign schools, so much so that the first Ottoman-appointed education inspector was a Greek even when the purpose of the education program was to boost official Islam in schools.³⁶⁰

In addition, because the Ottomans saw education as the key to influencing the people of Syria, the “disparity between the pessimism over present circumstances and the optimism for the future speaks to the tremendous hope that state officials placed on

³⁶⁰ Fortna, 96.

education.”³⁶¹ The exact same could also be said of Henry Jessup as the Director of the American mission schools in Syria. It was through education that the “only means of enlightenment” would be brought to the people of Syria.³⁶² These tones of stagnancy and idealism are also similarly couched in language of center-periphery. The “laments” and “desperate pleas for help” by Ottoman officials in the province of Syria (provincial) reflects a “bleak” situation where they as governors with insufficient funding from Istanbul (center) were incapable of properly combating the “ominous presence” of missionaries who were “seemingly able to command vast financial, cultural, and political resources.”³⁶³ Jessup’s writing in the *Foreign Missionary* and the *Memorial of Missionaries* reflects the same need for help in Syria (provincial) from the Protestant diplomats in Istanbul (center) as well as for funding from the mission board in the United States (center) and its donors/supporters. The similarities between Jessup’s and Ottoman rhetoric speak to their shared interest: influencing the people of Syria to think and act according to each of their worldviews.

Jessup and the Ottomans both showed a willingness to compete using whatever means available to them; they also did not see it as a problem that their measures transcended the boundaries of secular and religious, factual and exaggerated, overt and covert, or ally and enemy. It is interesting to note that, for the purposes of this educational struggle, they were both even willing to bend the lines of their frameworks of religious orthodoxy/orthopraxy and “civilized” versus “backwards.” For example, the Ottomans conceived of the Druzes or Nusairis (Alawis) as Muslims in need of official protection and education, and Jessup conceived of Eastern Christians and Roman

³⁶¹ Fortna, 49.

³⁶² Jessup, *Memorial of Missionaries*, 12.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

Catholics as members of the “Christian public” who should (if in the West) care about this persecution of fellow “Christians” and should (if in the Ottoman Empire) be allowed to receive the benefits of American missionary education.

Furthermore, both sides saw the people of Syria as part of their natural “sphere of influence”. Jessup showed no deference, until forced in practice to do so, to Ottoman imperial control. This suggests a larger center-periphery issue: many residents of Syria felt the new and oppressive presence of the Hamidian reforms—not just Jessup and/or the American missionaries. The following section will demonstrate this new impact of Ottoman impositions on Syria overall in the 1880s.

The Larger Context of Competition over local influence

Based on the closing of missionary schools in 1885 and the years following by the Ottoman authorities, the fact that Jessup presented the new major threat of the Ottoman government (as opposed to other foreign missions and local Christians in the past) in his writing is understandable. While the nearby Jesuit school or Greek Orthodox school may have had the ability to take possible students away from American schools, to plead with the Ottoman authorities for intervention, and to use diplomacy to influence Ottoman actions; neither of the other groups had the direct power to bring soldiers and forcibly close a missionary school, as the Ottomans did.

However, Jessup’s shift in rhetoric belies the fact that competition other than that from Ottoman-Islamic schools in the arena of education continued, and perhaps even increased in the 1880s. The following discussion of local Christian and Muslim educational efforts as well as other foreign (especially non-Protestant) schools contributes to an understanding of why both the Ottoman authorities and the American mission

described the situation in Syria in such drastic tones. Both felt that the educational competition was already stiff enough and realized the great potential for others to move in on their “sphere of influence”.

Local Christian Initiatives

Recent scholarship, particularly that of Jens Hanssen, has demonstrated that the region surrounding Beirut was also a center of local educational initiative. Local Christians, notably Butrus al-Bustani, attempted to create local educational opportunities other than those provided by foreign missionaries or the state. Bustani’s project, beginning in 1863, was a cross-confessional enterprise designed to prevent Syria from falling into a repeat of the violence of 1860. The curriculum of the school included Arabic literature, French language, mathematics, and English; and the students came from as far away as Iraq and Greece.³⁶⁴ Bustani’s project coincided with the other *millet* high schools that opened in the decade after the Syrian civil war, as mentioned above, although Bustani’s was different in that any student could participate.

Local Muslim Initiatives

Various Muslim groups, especially those with Islamic reformist leanings, had also begun to attempt reform of the local Muslim schools of Syria. Through the influence of reformist *ulama* like Muhammad Abduh who had fled to Beirut after the British takeover of Egypt in 1882, these local Muslim groups constructed their own schools as well as pleaded with the Ottomans to improve the state schools. Abduh’s influence was key for Syrian Muslim educational initiatives because he was able to win over the support of

³⁶⁴ Hanssen, 168.

conservative local *ulama*.³⁶⁵ Muslim reformists in Syria did not want to use the model of foreign missionaries (“rivals with a head start”) or the traditional Muslim model (“obstacles to Muslim enlightenment”).³⁶⁶ Abduh molded the new school, the *al-madrasa al-sultaniyya*, into an institution that would teach “industrial sciences, intellectual discussion, and moral character building” through a curriculum that included multiple languages, sciences, mathematics, as well as religious studies.³⁶⁷ Christians who attended would have to study Islamic jurisprudence, but they would also be allowed to attend Sunday courses taught by an appointed Priest.³⁶⁸

The success of the school combined with Abduh’s fame enabled him to write a prescriptive letter to the Sheikh-ul-Islam of the Ottoman Empire describing the need for modern state schools against the threat of missionary education. Abduh saw missionary education as resulting in a situation where “by the end of their schooling their hearts become void of every Islamic bond and pass out as infidels under the cover of the name of Islam.”³⁶⁹ Abduh added, however, differently than most of the pleas from the provinces mentioned above that mainly sought more funds, that a new Muslim state education (such as that found at his school in Beirut) was needed that would provide a competing modern education to that offered in mission schools. Abduh returned to Egypt in 1888 before seeing a definite increase in Ottoman initiatives there,³⁷⁰ especially the absorption of the school he started with the Ottoman state school in Beirut.³⁷¹

³⁶⁵ Hanssen, 172.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 176.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 177.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 188.

Foreign Power Initiatives

Finally, the British, Italians, French, Germans, and Russians were also active in the field of education in Syria. At times the American missionaries and Ottomans directed complaints against these establishments, but the existing system of capitulations, the confessional diversity in Syria, and the continued need for benevolent enterprises (such as schools, orphanages, and medical clinics) overall allowed these groups to find their own “sphere of influence” that did not bring them into the type of conflict with the Ottoman authorities that the American mission faced. Most of these groups were not as widespread or as longstanding as the American mission, and the French, the main exception to this, thrived in their historical milieu of work with the Maronite community. By World War I, France was the unquestioned leader of foreign education in the Ottoman Empire, especially in Syria as there were roughly 500 French ecclesiastical schools with between 50,000 and 60,000 students.³⁷² This extremely complex educational situation in Syria presented the American mission and the Ottomans with a multifaceted challenge to what they each viewed as their natural domain—the people (for the Americans, especially the Christians) of Syria.

Jessup, who up to 1885, had complained most about local Christian and other foreign competition in Syria, set aside this rhetoric once the Ottomans began their new education program in the 1880s. Jessup was now confronted with the reality of American schools being forcibly closed by the command of the sovereign Ottoman authorities. At the same time, however, his defensive tone also reflects this wider climate of educational competition in Syria from local Christian, local Muslim, and foreign power initiatives.

³⁷² Shorrock, 17.

Chapter V: Epilogue to the School Controversy

This brief chapter will demonstrate that the 1885 school controversy represented a victory for the Hamidian centralization plan. It is true that the American mission schools were able to continue to function either by following the Ottoman educational policies or by operating quietly in predominantly Christian areas. However, Jessup's response to the school closings in the 1880s was the last time that the American mission hoped to challenge Ottoman regulations in order to maintain Rufus Anderson's policy of education designed primarily to gain Protestant sympathizers or converts. The Ottomans were clearly aware that the American schools were not teaching purely secular subjects and that students who went through the missionary schools had tendencies that the Hamidian regime feared and resented, on political and religious grounds. Jessup recognized that the Ottoman reforms of the 1880s in Syria would call the future of American mission education into question and fought hard to prevent this. In the end, the American mission was forced to comply with Ottoman educational regulations that required the submission of diplomas for teachers, curriculum information, and educational materials.

Abdul Hamid's goal was to both limit missionary influence, especially in education, and to build up Ottoman state education (based upon the model of Western schools) as a replacement for missionary institutions. The Ottomans reasoned that if they were able to fill the vacuum of educational need, they would be able to bolster their own power and detract from that of the missionaries. This policy was based upon the many calls from the provinces complaining of the lack of Ottoman-Muslim education and the successful influence of mission education, even to the extent that Muslim elites sent their children to mission schools. This two-pronged strategy sought to fulfill both goals

simultaneously. First, the Ottomans were able to compile enough information on the missionary institutions to be able to monitor their activities more closely. This knowledge enabled them to pass laws in the 1890s and into the 1900s that detailed educational policies to an even greater extent than the education law of 1869.³⁷³ Second, through the 1890s and up until World War I and the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans were increasingly able to provide the services that the American (and other foreign) missionaries used to be the only ones to provide. The main examples of this were modern education, medical services, orphanages, and printing presses. A specific example of this was the Ottoman College in Syria started in 1895.³⁷⁴ Ottoman control extended further and further into the provinces as the effects of centralization began to take place.

The Ottomans were not able to shut down American schools or prevent them from growing in size or prestige (this was especially true for missionary schools of higher education such as the Syrian Protestant College and Robert College), but they were able to keep that growth within the confines of their plan for moral discipline (and therefore political order) by enforcing the education law of 1869. In other words, the Ottomans tolerated, and perhaps even benefited from, the continuance of missionary education because it now remained within their ideological limits and also produced educated graduates who became beneficial members of society. For example, the Ottomans dictated that all medical students had to take the official government exam before being

³⁷³ Basaran, 190-194. Also see the previous chapter.

³⁷⁴ Hanssen, 181.

legally licensed, even if they had been educated at the Syrian Protestant College on their own and missionary funds.³⁷⁵

This victory of Ottoman educational policy necessarily dictated that American schools would grow increasingly secular, as clearly occurred in the 1890s and beyond.³⁷⁶ Over time, missionary ideology changed based on years of frustration due to a lack of success in reaching Muslims with their message. Missionaries came to hold a “social gospel” position that saw education for education’s sake as being a mission in itself.³⁷⁷ This shift also fit internal liberalizing developments within Western Protestantism.³⁷⁸ No longer was preaching the Christian message such a key goal for missionaries. The ultimate example of this trend was the change of the Syrian Protestant College to the American University of Beirut in 1920.

Two other factors contributed to this increased secularization and marginalization of American missionary education. In the 1890s, an increased number of Syrian Christians began to emigrate, many to the United States.³⁷⁹ The American mission also had trouble obtaining funds from the United States.³⁸⁰ These factors also contributed to a trend of entrenchment in the American schools that limited their influence.

In 1906, shortly before Jessup’s death in 1910, Jessup attended a missionary conference in Cairo that brought Protestant missionaries from around the world together to discuss questions relating to missions in the Muslim world. In part of the conference entitled “The Mohammedan World of Today,” which obviously still used the Orientalist

³⁷⁵ See previous chapter.

³⁷⁶ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 277, 289.

³⁷⁷ Zachs, “From the Mission the Missionary,” 288-291.

³⁷⁸ John Joseph *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 230-231.

³⁷⁹ Tibawi, *American Interests*, 280.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.

terminology, Jessup gave the introductory paper. His paper focused on the main issue of what he called the “Spiritual Destitution of Islam.”³⁸¹ Jessup wavers between viewpoints that are similar to those that he expounded in the 1870s in *Syrian Home Life* and the *Mohammedan Missionary Problem* and viewpoints that suggest a gradual development of his thought towards a greater acceptance of Islam for what is truly is. For example, Jessup begins by quoting the British writer on Islam Sir William Muir,³⁸² who is notorious for his scathing pamphlets concerning Islam: “the sword of Mohammed and the Koran are the most stubborn enemies of civilization, liberty, and truth which the world has yet known.”³⁸³ But Jessup then goes on to continually use the term “Islam,” even though at times he does still use the pejorative term “Mohammedan” and even though his use of “Islam” is often for the purpose of denigrating it as a system of faith.³⁸⁴ Jessup also argues that one of the urgent needs for missionaries in the Muslim world is to show Muslims that “Christians are not their enemies” because long wars have put Christians in the position of political hostility, which can only be overcome with “patience, kindness, and Christ.”³⁸⁵ He is also sensitive to the specific context in “Turkey” where Christians are “political foes of Islam,” so missionary tactics should be education, distribution of scripture in local languages, prayer, and living a “Christian life.”³⁸⁶ Jessup concludes by implicitly praising imperialism by reminding his listeners that the best hopes for conversions of Muslims are in countries like Egypt and India that are not ruled by a

³⁸¹ Missionary Conference on Behalf of the Mohammedan World, *The Mohammedan World of To-day; Being Papers Read at the First Missionary Conference on Behalf of the Mohammedan World Held at Cairo April 4th-9th, 1906*. (New York: Revell, 1906.) 14.

³⁸² See for example Sir William Muir, *Sweet First-Fruits: A Tale of the Nineteenth Century on the Truth and Virtue of the Christian Religion* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1893).

³⁸³ *The Mohammedan World of To-day*, 12.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

Muslim ruler.³⁸⁷ Jessup's speech to the 1906 Cairo Conference demonstrates the complexity of his ever-changing attitudes as a missionary. In 1906, Jessup both uses Orientalist language less frequently and advocates non-imperialist methods; but at the same time, Jessup displays attitudes that marked his writing in the 1870s when he hoped that the British would increase their political sway in the Ottoman Empire. Despite the maintenance of some Orientalist language and viewpoints, Jessup seems to have been changed by his long years in Syria.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Henry Jessup's long career as a missionary in Syria saw him outlast several Ottoman sultans, Ottoman political periods, crises of the mission, ideological periods of the mission, American diplomats, and even wives. His work in Syria began in 1856, the year of the second Tanzimat edict and four years before the 1860 civil war altered Syrian society and politics completely. In 1856, Rufus Anderson was still firmly in control of the American Board, which was not even the mission board under which Jessup served most of his time in Syria. The American mission to Syria in 1856 was still a small and somewhat insignificant mission in the overall scheme of Reformed missions from New England. Centralized and consolidated Ottoman control in Syria (except perhaps in Damascus) was a distant reality, just as Beirut was still a relatively unimportant city. Jessup himself started as a young seminary graduate with little knowledge of Arabic. Through Jessup's fifty-three years with the American mission in Syria, Jessup experienced and caused many changes that shaped his own writing. Beirut had not yet become the intellectual, cosmopolitan, and political center that it would be by the late 1880s. Just as Jessup and Syria changed and were changed between 1856 and 1910, Jessup's rhetoric also changed.

This paper has argued centrally that the 1885 school closings was a watershed in the history of the American mission to Syria that altered Jessup's attitude and writing accordingly. The Hamidian regime in the 1880s made sweeping changes especially in the provinces of the Empire. These reforms were based on Abdul Hamid's imperial Ottoman, and necessarily Islamic as this paper has shown, vision for how society should be ordered in order to consolidate the Empire internally so as to strengthen it externally.

Henry Jessup became aware of these sweeping changes because of the Ottoman school closings in 1885. Up to this point, Jessup's writing had reflected the reality that most of the problems for the American mission came from sources other than the Ottomans and Islam. After 1885, Jessup began a new rhetorical campaign that accurately described as well as exaggerated the Ottoman-Islamic reform efforts in Syria in order to gain support from the Protestant powers and public. Jessup recognized that the Ottoman efforts presented a direct threat to the most influential element of the American mission, its schools. The nature of education in the American mission schools—as it was designed to instill Protestant and Western thought—also presented a threat to the Ottoman authorities. For many reasons including Jessup's deep personal faith as well as the history of the American mission in Syria, Jessup responded defensively to the Ottoman efforts to remove the dangerous Protestant ideology. While the Ottomans never intended to enforce closure of all of the American schools in Syria, Jessup worried that Ottoman efforts would be especially injurious to American missionary efforts in outlying and confessionally diverse regions of Syria. Furthermore, Jessup realized that if the American mission were forced to give into the new Ottoman regulations for education, the previous leeway and influence of the American mission schools would be greatly diminished. Jessup also recognized the increasing presence of Ottoman state education, or at least Ottoman-influenced education, that would receive many of the students that the American mission hoped to reach.

In the end, Jessup's vehement efforts from 1885 into the early 1890s were largely ineffective in altering the course of Ottoman efforts against American missionary schools. The Ottoman efforts at reform that began in the 1880s were practical and done

in such a way as to not induce a sustained reaction from the Great Powers. While American missionary efforts continued to have an important impact especially in the areas of religious publication and higher education, the mission as a whole grew more secular and marginal in the 1890s and into the new century. Henry Jessup, by the time of his composition of his memoir in the late 1900s, had witnessed the transformation of the American mission in Syria from a fledgling operation with significant hopes for future improvement and success into an entrenched institution that held onto its many gains but did not look forward (correctly) to the type of success that had seemed possible in 1856. Soon after Jessup's death, the Ottoman Empire would be ended by World War I, an event that also caused great destruction to American mission efforts in Syria. During the interwar period, the new French mandate government of Syria did not look kindly on the mission and the Protestant missionary enterprise as a whole entered a new period where the concept of missions designed to bring religious transformation in the Muslim world overall would be called into question.

What Jessup had witnessed and fought against in 1885 was in many ways the beginning of the end for the original hope of the American Board's mission to Syria: to reach the people of the Holy Land with the gospel message and in so doing to bring about transformative change in the society as a whole. While the educational and civilizational efforts of the mission would carry on to some degree after the end of the Ottoman Empire, its original religious goals, that Jessup also held, were successfully checked by the Hamidian reforms of the 1880s.

Questions for Further Study

For the purposes of this master's thesis, there were many interesting elements for study that arose that could only be mentioned briefly. Were this thesis to be expanded, several further perspectives would be added in order to provide a richer account of the Syria mission.

Conceptions of gender had an important impact on both missionary writing and practice. Jessup, for example, especially used his perception of the supposed degrading Muslim treatment of women as a reason for the inherent illegitimacy and inadequacy of the religion. An evaluation of the shaping of the missionaries' own ideas of gender, in the midst of the Victorian era ideal of the woman as the moral defender and uplifter of the home and family, would do much for explaining how he criticized Muslim treatment of women. Gender is also significant in the area of education, as Linda Herrera has pointed out so well.³⁸⁸ Oftentimes, the mission schools are referred to in missionary and secondary sources (including this paper) simply as schools with students, while actually what is being referred to are boys' schools with male students. Schooling in Syria in the mid to late nineteenth century was hardly ever coeducational, especially on the lower levels.³⁸⁹ For both Christian and Muslim schools, there was almost "no formal education for girls and. . . non-religious books were a luxury."³⁹⁰ Of course the exact statistics on this are difficult to ascertain because some schools, such as the primary Muslim schools were theoretically open to both genders.³⁹¹ This is certainly a significant question, because, based on Shahin Makarius' statistics published in *al-Muqtataf* in 1883, in 1882

³⁸⁸ Linda Herrera, "Education, Islam, and Modernity: Beyond Westernization and Centralization," *Comparative Education Review* 48, no. 3 (2004): 318-326.

³⁸⁹ Deguilhem, 285-295.

³⁹⁰ Zachs, "Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria," 154.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

in Beirut fifty-four percent of the students in Christian schools were female and only seventeen percent of the students in the Muslim schools were female.³⁹² Certainly, one of the major impacts of the American mission was its great expansion of female education, although on a different (more domestically centered including such subjects as sewing and feminine formation overall) curriculum. Ellen Fleischmann's recent study highlights many of these issues in its evaluation of the Beirut Female Seminary, which went on to become the first women's college in the Arab world.³⁹³

A more complete study would include a more in-depth study of how concepts of gender, both masculinity and femininity, were important in the American mission's crafting of their program of education, curriculum, and even conception of schools. For example, girls' schools were often run by the wives of the male missionaries who came to Syria. Missionaries, who saw the schools for both boys and girls as a means to bring up polite and cultivated men and women, hoped to impart feminine attitudes (at least as they saw them) through these female teachers. Of course, this was also related to local sensibilities that would not have allowed girls to be away from the company of their parents unless in the care of a trusted woman.

Furthermore, this also brings up issues concerning missionary conceptions of marriage. For example, the American Board, at least for a time, did not allow male missionaries to go overseas until they were married.³⁹⁴ Nor were women typically

³⁹² See Diab and Wahlin, 113, 117.

³⁹³ Ellen Fleischman, "Evangelization or Education: American Protestant Missionaries, The American Board, and the Girls and Women of Syria (1830-1910)," in *New Faith in Ancient Lands*, ed. Heleen Murrevan den Berg (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 263.

³⁹⁴ Carolyn McCue Goffman, "Masking the Mission: Cultural Conversion at the American College for Girls." in *Altruism and Imperialism: Western Cultural and Religious Missions in the Middle East*, ed. Eleanor Harvey Tejirian and Reeva S. Simon (New York, N.Y: Middle East Institute, Columbia University, 2002), 89.

allowed to go without a spouse.³⁹⁵ At the same time, missionary schools for boys, including the Syrian Protestant College, hoped to foster masculinity: “the goal was to create the ideal man and prepare him for daily life.”³⁹⁶ In the overall project to study the interplay of cultures, civilization, religions, etc. of the missionary enterprise, gender has been an understudied issue that demands further study for its insight into missionary attitudes and local reaction.

The second main area where this project would hopefully expand in the future would be to include much more about the indigenous reaction to the American mission to Syria and at the same time about the actual impact of the mission. Dunch’s article points out quite correctly that there have been many studies concerning missionary attitudes, perceptions, etc., but that there is a lack of studies that evaluate the actual impact of missions. He also argues persuasively that studies about impact are actually more fruitful and steer the field away from the endless debates of the past concerning the relationship of missionaries to imperialism. A study of indigenous reactions also demonstrates the reality of the agency that the people of Syria certainly had.³⁹⁷ To study only missionary attitudes is to neglect a crucial element that shaped how missionaries actually did their work. This paper has attempted to present as much about impact and indigenous reaction as possible, mainly based on the excellent work of other scholars, but until the author’s proficiency in other languages increases, this project must be postponed.

³⁹⁵ For some examples, see Lindsay, 116-139.

³⁹⁶ Fruma Zachs, “From the Mission to the Missionary,” 264.

³⁹⁷ One of the best studies currently available that puts this into practice for Syria in the late nineteenth century is Norbert J. Scholz, “Foreign education and indigenous reaction in late Ottoman Lebanon: Students and teachers at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut” (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1997).

Another possible area for future study is that of class. Although Keith Watenpaugh's recent book concerning the presence and character of the middle class in early twentieth century Aleppo only briefly mentions missionary impact, this study signals an important point of study for future research.³⁹⁸ Did the American missionaries in Syria in the nineteenth century have any impact on the formation of class-consciousness, at least in terms of a sort of intellectualized class? They certainly hoped to, especially through their educational work, the Syrian Protestant College being the premier example of this.³⁹⁹ One important part of the American mission to Syria, at least in the rhetoric of the mission boards and in the writings of some missionaries like Daniel Bliss, was to create a new class of educated Syrian men and women (especially men) that would uplift Syria and help place it among the theater of other "civilized" and "modern" nations. Butrus al-Bustani, the American mission's most famous pupil, certainly bought into this project to some extent, although he also used what he had learned to craft his own vision of Syria's future.⁴⁰⁰

It is also true that many of the alumni of the Syrian Protestant College went onto fill more service sector (doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.) jobs than their fellow Syrians, especially those who were not able to reach the higher levels of other foreign, Islamic, or Ottoman state schools.⁴⁰¹ This question is in some ways related to the larger issue of the possible relationship of the Syrian patriotism movements of Bustani and other Christian

³⁹⁸ Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). Pages 284-288 do discuss missionaries briefly; Watenpaugh describes the missionaries as having an "underlying paternalistic assumption of the missionary effort." Watenpaugh, 285.

³⁹⁹ See Scholz, "Foreign education and indigenous reaction." Also see Zachs, "From the Mission to the Missionary."

⁴⁰⁰ Makdisi, "After 1860." Also see Jens Hanssen, 163-189.

⁴⁰¹ See Scholz, "Foreign education and indigenous reaction." Also see A.L. Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College."

Arabs in the late nineteenth century to later Arab nationalist movements.⁴⁰² In other words, how much did this class of Syrian men who attended missionary schools have an effect on larger movements in Syrian history? Perhaps the later influence of men such as Michel Aflaq suggests that the answer is at least not insignificant, although due to various historical factors, in many ways late Ottoman Syria seems to be a historical high point for Christian Arabs of Syria.

Finally, in the long-term, this project would be improved if it were able to be performed in a comparative perspective. The findings of this paper would be enriched by a comparative look, for example, at American Protestant missionaries in Kurdistan in the mid-nineteenth century and those in Syria at the same time. Or even more broadly, a study comparing and contrasting French Catholic missions in colonial North Africa with American missions in Ottoman Syria would be both exciting and beneficial. Dunch calls, in his 2002 article, ultimately for more comparative studies that shed light on “globalizing modernity,” and studies such as those just mentioned would fulfill this call in hopes to emphasize the diversity of the missions enterprise and the complexity of the relationship between Western Christian missionaries and indigenous societies.

⁴⁰² This is the main thesis of George Antonius’ book, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (1938), which was also referenced in the introduction of this paper. For a more recent evaluation of the assertions and validity of Antonius’ work see William Cleveland, “The Arab Nationalism of George Antonius Reconsidered,” in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James P. Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

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