American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in the Service of an Islamic Empire

by

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Preface:

I hope that this text will be of some use to other scholars whose work will build and improve on my own; before I begin in earnest, I will make note of a few matters which might make its arguments clearer and provide clear directions for further investigation.

First, a note on terminology: the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, and Jordan did not come into existence with anything like their present boundaries until the partition of the Ottoman Empire which followed the First World War, which only occurred at the very end of the period which American Ottomans covers. Throughout most of the text, I use the term “Syria,” as the 19th century’s Europeans, Americans, and Ottomans did, to refer to the region bounded in the north by the Tarsus Mountains, to the south by the Sinai Peninsula, to the east by the Syrian Desert, and to the west by the Mediterranean Sea; a region which roughly corresponds to the present-day states I mentioned above plus the small portion of Turkey surrounding the cities of Iskanderun and Antakya. In sections discussing the region after the First World War, I will use the term “Greater Syria” to distinguish it from the French Mandate created at that time. I will also follow period practice by using the term “Syrian” to refer to that region’s settled Arabic-speaking inhabitants of all faiths. Before the Ottoman Empire’s fall, “Lebanon” was used to refer to a region which became part of the modern nation-state of that name; it roughly corresponds to modern-day Lebanon’s Mount Lebanon governorate. To avoid confusion, I’ll use the term “Mount Lebanon” throughout the text to refer to the region. I will also follow period practice by using the term “Palestine” to refer to the region now occupied by Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Second, a note on this study’s limitations. I am all too aware of my own biases, limitations, and failings as a scholar, and I suspect that they will create many opportunities for the historians,
religious scholars, and anthropologists of the future to improve upon my work. My most painful deficit is linguistic. The Ottoman state plays an important role in my analysis, but by the time that my research revealed its enormous salience in the story that I am trying to tell, it was too late for me to learn Ottoman Turkish and still finish this dissertation in anything like a timely manner.

Consequently, I’ve had to reconstruct Turkish-speaking Ottoman officials’ motives by examining their actions as recounted by Arabic-speaking Syrians and English and French-speaking expatriates, reading their French and Arabic-language correspondence with various foreigners, and drawing upon a flourishing and expanding body on the late Ottoman period, whose many excellent authors have my deepest gratitude. A better Ottomanist than I will doubtless be able to tell a smarter and more sophisticated version of the story I am writing here.
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Introduction:

Histories of American power in the Middle East used begin on February 14, 1945, the day that Franklin Roosevelt, returning from the Yalta Conference, hosted King 'Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud aboard the USS Quincy, laying the groundwork for ARAMCO and the US-Saudi Alliance. William Eddy, an OSS agent and future father of the CIA who served as the US “Special Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary” to 'Abd al-Aziz, served as their interpreter. Bill Eddy was one of the US government's first Middle East specialists, and, like many others in that group (including his cousin, Harold Hoskins), he came out of a much longer American engagement with the region. Born in Beirut in what was then the Ottoman Empire, he was the son and grandson of American Protestant missionaries.¹ His father and grandfather, both also named William Eddy, served a mission which had sought to evangelize and educate the western part of region then known as greater Syria since the 1820s.² The Syria Mission, which was affiliated first with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (a cooperative organization which operated missions for the US's Congregationalists and Northern Presbyterians) and later with the Presbyterian Board of Missions (the missionary arm of the reunified post-Civil War Presbyterian Church), spawned a surprising number of the people and institutions which shaped the first iterations of American power in the Middle East. Its members had founded the American University of Beirut, a prestigious “sheet anchor” of American soft power in the region which both trained US intelligence agents and

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¹ Osamah F. Khalil, America’s Dream Palace (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), chap. 2.
² Throughout most of this dissertation, I use the term “Syria” as Americans, Europeans, and Ottomans did in the 19th and 20th centuries, to refer to the region bounded by the Taurus Mountains in the north, the Sinai Peninsula in the South, the Mediterranean on the west, and the Syrian desert on the East. It roughly corresponds to the area now occupied by Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine.
bolstered America’s image among the local intelligentsia. David Dodge, a scion of the Bliss and Dodge families which led and sponsored the American University through its early years, took up a leading role at the Arab-American Oil Company, which still holds a monopoly on exporting petroleum from Saudi Arabia to the United States. Its members also helped to establish and supply the fieldworkers for what became the Near East Foundation, the first major American-sponsored NGO to pursue development projects in the Middle East, whose projects inspired Truman’s Point Four plan for global development. The Mission’s scions, including Bayard Dodge, and its students, including Philip Hitti, helped to establish the disciplines of Near Eastern Studies and Middle Eastern Studies in the US academy. The American missionary community which emerged in Beirut and the regions surrounding it in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created many of the earliest institutions which helped to instantiate American empire in the Middle East.

In my dissertation, I am investigating this missionary community in its heyday—the era which Americanists call the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, Middle East specialists think of as the twilight of the Ottoman Empire, and Europeanists think of as the high age of imperialism—with the intention of excavating the origins of America’s modern imperial relationships with the Middle East and the Muslim world. Ever since the emergence of American global hegemony in the 1990s and the 9/11 raised interest in the origins of the US relationship with the Muslim world, many historians have searched for the origins of this relationship in the years before the Second World War. Many scholars have argued that Europeans’ encounters with Muslims in the early modern period helped to create what we now think of as the Atlantic world, and the multitude of European and Creole

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3 Khalil, America’s Dream Palace, chap. 4.
identities which flourished within it.\(^7\) Others have looked to formative encounters during the decades of the Early Republic which immediately succeeded the American Revolution, particularly the “Barbary Wars,” a naval conflict between the early US and the North African states of Algiers and Tripoli, arguing that this early collision shaped both the American vision of the Muslim world and the budding country’s sense of identity.\(^8\) A third vein of scholarship focuses on how Muslims appeared in 19\(^{th}\) century American political, religious, and aesthetic discourses.\(^9\) And, unsurprisingly, many authors share my own sense of the Syria Mission’s historical importance, and center missionary encounters in their own accounts of America’s early relationship with the Middle East.\(^{10}\)

These historians have offered a wide variety of different interpretations. The earliest accounts, like David Finnie’s *Pioneers East* and Joseph Grabill’s *Protestant Diplomacy in the Near East* see Americans’ 19\(^{th}\) century involvement in the Middle East as a prelude to a benevolent era of US “soft power” in the region in the middle of the twentieth century. Later works, like Robert Allison’s *The Crescent Obscured*, Thomas Kidd’s *American Christians and Islam*, Ussama Makdisi’s *Artillery of Heaven*,

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and Karine Walther’s *Sacred Interests* argue that early encounters both demonstrated and fomented a fundamental American exceptionalism and Islamophobia which continues to shape American foreign policy in and domestic attitudes toward the Middle East; in essence, they argue that the modern “American orientalism” that authors like Edward Said, Zachary Lockman, and Douglas Little have observed has deep roots within the US’s earlier history.\(^{11}\) Other works, like Denise Spellberg’s *Thomas Jefferson’s Qur’an*, Christine Heyerman’s *American Apostles*, and Ussama Makdisi’s *Faith Misplaced* present more optimistic views of early US engagements with the Middle East and Muslim world, arguing that early Americans’ writings about and activities within the Middle East contained at least the possibility of genuine tolerance, mutual understanding, or beneficial social cooperation. *Faith Misplaced* employs what Hayden White might identify as a tragic narrative structure, arguing that by throwing its weight behind the emerging state of Israel’s policies, the mid-century United States betrayed the promise of its positive early relationship with the region; Spellberg and Heyerman offer a more hopeful approach, seeking tolerance and understanding in America’s past in the hope that their discoveries might help to foster similar rapprochements in the future.\(^{12}\)

Despite their differing chronological frames, subjects, and structuring narratives these accounts share common analytical features. Almost all of them assume that 19\(^{th}\) century American society and religion, and the missionaries who sought to spread them abroad, were fundamentally inimical to the values and social structures of Middle Eastern societies. Even Spellberg and Heyerman’s optimistic accounts are premised on the idea that Muslims were a fundamental “other” for Americans in the period. Makdisi’s account and others feature an equally powerful assumption


that American missionaries were an “other” which the Ottoman political order had difficulty assimilating. All of these authors are sophisticated thinkers with a rich grasp of history’s nuances; they would reject Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis, but their arguments all assume that conflict or difference was the fundamental dynamic structuring the dialectical relationship between 19th century Christian Americans and Muslims; Americans might travel into the Muslim world, but they could never be of it.

Americans, and American missionaries in particular, also play a surprisingly extensive role in the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire and the mandate-era Middle East, which also tends to treat them as an exogenous influence. In 1966, AL Tibawi argued that the most significant consequences of US involvement in the Middle East prior to the Second World War stemmed from the educational work performed by American missionaries. Indeed, most historians who posit a role for Americans in Ottoman and Mandate-era Middle East history do focus their attention on American missionary educators. The focus on education reflects a few of the most important trends in Ottoman history and the historiography which follows and reflects it. The 19th century was an era of political and intellectual upheaval in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire’s rulers and their autonomous vassals in Egypt undertook ambitious projects to strengthen their states’ militaries, re-shape their societies, and enrich their economies. At the same time, intellectuals in the

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14 This is a central issue in pretty much the entire corpus of historical work on 19th century Egypt and the late Ottoman Empire over the last thirty years. For some major “hits,” see works like Khaled Fahmy, All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt (Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 2002); Christine M. Philliou, Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011); Omnia El Shakry, The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
Eastern Mediterranean created an explosion of new literary, social, political, and scientific writings. Scholars like Albert Hourani have long traced the genesis of modern Arab nationalism and modernist Islamism to this era’s intellectual ferment. As scholars like Marwa Elshakry and Ilham Khuri-Makdisi have recently shown, this movement, often referred to as the nabḍa, or Arabic literary renaissance, touched the Ottoman Empire’s Turkish-speaking core as well as its Arabic-speaking periphery, and encompassed socialist and scientific, as well as nationalist and Islamist, thinking.

Education was a domain where these two modernizations met. Schools, whether they were operated by the Ottoman state, local religious communities, or foreign missionaries, were both sites of knowledge transmission and instruments of their organizers’ social engineering projects. Consequently, they play an important role in the historiography of both Ottoman statebuilding and the nabḍa. Most of these accounts characterize “foreign” schools operated by missionaries and


catering to various local constituencies as exogenous to Ottoman society, antagonistic to local educational institutions, and threatening to the Ottoman political order. 18

In American Ottomans, I am going to argue that the assumption that Gilded Age and Progressive Era Americans (and especially American missionaries) were fundamentally antagonistic to the social order of the late Ottoman Empire and other contemporary Muslim societies is incomplete; complicity as well as conflict structured their relationship to the Ottoman order. American Protestant missionaries certainly criticized Ottoman society, presented themselves as its antagonists, and drew on (and elaborated) a variety of Islamophobic orientalist discourses in the memoirs and reports they created for public consumption in the United States, where audiences expected them to advance the causes of Protestant Christianity and Anglo-Saxon civilization at the expense of “Other” religious and social orders like Ottoman Islam. Similarly, late Ottoman elites, seeking to legitimize themselves as defenders of a Muslim-led and indigenous social order, sometimes chose to present themselves as foreign missionaries’ adversaries. However, in Syria, these instrumental rhetorical postures concealed a hidden history of adaptation and collaboration. American missionaries adopted local norms about language and learning to guide their Bible translations and educational projects, cultivated the friendship and patronage of the Ottoman governors of Mount Lebanon and Syria, shaped their colleges to train officials for Ottoman military and administrative service, provided services to Beirut’s commercial elite, and used their ties with

Press, 2017). Other historians, like Susanna Ferguson, are currently tracing the intellectual genealogy of Arabic-language concepts of education in the period.

18 This assumption is particularly pronounced in Evered, Empire and Education Under the Ottomans; Deringil, Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire. Both works present Ottoman educational reforms as efforts to compete with missionary-operated schooling in the Empire’s peripheries.
various stakeholders in Ottoman Syrian society to survive revolution and war and thrive in their colonial aftermath.

My claim, which runs against so much existing historiography, is an extraordinary one. And indeed, my forerunners have plenty of strong evidence to support their position. In important ways, American missionaries actually were structurally opposed to at least some aspects of Ottoman society. Islam was undeniably a pillar of the Ottoman order, and the missionaries held long-term ambitions to convert Muslims to evangelical Protestant Christianity. The Empire’s central bureaucracy also relied on religious and aristocratic notables from religious minority groups to manage and govern its subject populations, so efforts to convert Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Druze Ottomans all potentially threatened its fundamental social order.\(^{19}\) The missionaries also frequently critiqued aspects of Ottoman society other than religion, and, as the twentieth century approached, those critiques were more likely to embrace culturally or biologically racist doctrines which dismissed or demeaned Arabs and Turks as inferior peoples. So, my counter-claim will require strong supporting arguments supported by strong evidence. I was able to gather that evidence and construct those arguments because I took a novel approach to theorizing and historically investigating missionary work. Before I dig into the meat of my argument, I will try to elucidate this framework as sharply and clearly as possible.

I’ll begin by posing a question: what exactly are missionaries trying to do when they travel to distant lands, encounter their religious and cultural others, and try to convert them to their faith? To get a handle on that question, we will have to get a handle on the concept of religion itself, which scholars have wrestled over since William James and James Frazier launched the comparative study of religion in the Gilded Age. In an oft-cited passage which still represents state-of-the-art thinking

in religious history, Robert Orsi argues that religion should be understood not as “a medium for explaining, understanding, and modeling reality,” but “a network of relationships between heaven and earth involving humans of all ages and many different sacred figures together.”

This definition excels at capturing aspects of human religious experience which the paradigm Orsi was critiquing (the Jamesian liberal Protestant-centric religion-as-creed model which had once dominated religious studies) neglected, but it’s also a discursive Ouroboros, self-referentially eating its own tail. Orsi uses humans’ relationships with sacred figures to define religion, but he does not explain how we might identify them outside of contexts which we already intuitively recognize as religious.

New work in anthropological theory illuminates a path which might take us beyond this self-referentiality. In his essay “The Original Political Society,” Marshall Sahlins argues that most early human social groups, including the most egalitarian were “in structure and practice cosmic polities, ordered and governed by divinities, the dead, species-masters, and other such metapersons [more-than-human beings] endowed with life-or-death powers over the human population,” and that the first intra-human political hierarchies were subordinate parts of these greater cosmic polities.

Many Axial Age thinkers drew stricter boundaries between the material and the spiritual, which put more distance between humans and metapersons (consider the Christian division between flesh and spirit, the Qur’an’s injunctions pitting love of the world against love of God, and the Buddhist concept of maya), but the “cosmic polity,” synthesized with Orsi’s definition, offers us a useful model for thinking about religion. If we specify that Orsi’s sacred figures are more-than-human entities with life-or-death powers over humanity, his definition loses its self-referentiality but retains its capaciousness. The amorphous “network of relationships” also gains an analytically cogent

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structure; it is actually a hierarchy in which humans are more-than-human metapersons’ subjects or supplicants.\textsuperscript{22} This conceptualization’s usefulness does not depend on the truth content of religious people’s beliefs. Even if their existence is uncertain, beyond-human cosmic overlords’ invisibility and omnipresence puts believers under the ultimate form of panoptic surveillance.\textsuperscript{23} Their commandments regulate believers’ everyday behaviors more stringently than the most ambitious bureaucratic states’ laws ever have, and they inspire humans to action just as effectively as law, the nation, and other abstractions with important roles in political theory. Whatever their ultimate metaphysical status, cosmic polities’ metaperson rulers are certainly real enough in ways that matter to play an active role in our analysis.\textsuperscript{24}

If we define religions as political hierarchies led by more-than-human beings, we might also reconceptualize religious communities as groups of people who recognize themselves and each other as obedient subjects of the same cosmic sovereign. I include obedience as a criterion because history, literature, and myth include many groups and individuals who worship the same gods, but see each other as religious others. Catholics and Protestants counted each other as heretics even

\textsuperscript{22} Some readers might note a similarity between my conceptualization of religion and James Frazer’s in \textit{The Golden Bough}. He defines religion as “a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.” I agree with him that religion is characterized by hierarchical relationships between humans and beyond-human entities, but I think that his definition runs into serious trouble in the many cases where religious practitioners engage in non-transactional religious behavior, whether they believe that obedience to divine beings is good but does not change their conduct (including the Calvinists of Frazer’s Britain, who believed that righteous behavior was the fruit rather than the cause of predestined divine election), or have affectionate relationships with sacred figures, like some of the Catholic devotees of saints who Orsi profiles in \textit{Between Heaven and Earth}, or, like many practicing but non-believing Jews, see obedience to a divine law as valuable and righteous whether or not the God who prescribed it actually exists. Also, unlike Fraser, I think that our definition of religion should acknowledge that divine beings exist and have agency, if not necessarily in the ways that religious practitioners think that they do—a position which I’ll offer a clearer explanation for below. For the definition I quote here, see James George Frazer, \textit{The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion}, ed. Faser (OUP Oxford, 1998).

\textsuperscript{23} I’m referring to the concept of always-possible but uncertain oversight elaborated in Michel Foucault, \textit{Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison} (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

\textsuperscript{24} Incorporating metahuman beings into our analysis of politics also allows us to achieve Dipesh Chakrabarty’s ideal of incorporating models of society other than those embraced by modern Western social science into our analyses, as he did when he gave a god’s agency pride of place in his transformed history of the Santal rebellion. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, \textit{ Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference - New Edition} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), chap. 4.
though they both worshipped the Trinity, and we would hardly call Paradise Lost’s Satan a Christian or the Qur’an’s Iblis a Muslim even though both are intimately aware of God’s existence and subject to his power. Most religious practitioners rely on sources outside themselves to bring their beliefs and actions into obedient conformity with their cosmic sovereigns’ will. These sources can include texts, narratives, institutions, hierarchies, communities of peers, rituals, repertoires of rhetoric and performance, and, at least in practitioners’ subjective experience, direct encounters with metapersons. I will call these normative sources “authorities.” Authorities play an essential role in the cosmic polities which subsume religious communities, mediating between practitioners and their cosmic rulers, much as institutions, bureaucracies, laws, and officials mediate the relationship between sovereign and subject in worldly human polities. Many authorities are instantiated in material objects and social institutions, so our study of religion needs to extend into the physical and human social worlds. Political, economical, and environmental factors will inform our analysis, which will not be materialist in a “vulgar Marxist” sense but embrace the social, material, and discursive together as Bruno Latour suggests in his superlative We Have Never Been Modern.

So, let us use this analysis to develop a model of missionary work. If religions are cosmic polities, missionaries are would-be conquerors seeking to bring their religious and cultural Others into obedience to their cosmic sovereign. As religious practitioners, missionaries usually believe that a particular set of authorities brought them to orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Their task is to create or reproduce authorities which will have the same effect on a foreign population; to do that, they will need to construct or import efficacious repertoires of rhetorical practice, rituals, social institutions,

25 Here, I’m generalizing the concept of “authority” from historical Christian theology. Some modernist Protestant theologians have taken similar steps; see, for example, the classification of parts of the human mind, like reason and conscience, as authorities in James H. Snowden, “Authority in Theology,” The Biblical World 51, no. 2 (1918): 80–89. Much as Snowden’s generalization found inspiration in the developments of Jamesian psychology in his own era, my own draws from the anthropology and religious studies of my own era. But I am a historian, not a theologian, so my characterization is descriptive rather than prescriptive.

texts, material objects, etc. This is a severe challenge, because most authorities are societally, politically, culturally, or linguistically specific. Those which guide the missionary in her home society are often unintelligible or impotent in other contexts. Historically, missionaries have responded to this challenge with two repertoires of practice. The first attempts to reproduce missionaries’ home societies in a foreign milieu, creating contexts which might make religious Others more susceptible to accepting the missionaries’ inherited authorities in relatively unaltered forms. When they worked on smaller scales, European Christian missionaries established included intentional communities like John Elliot and Daniel Brainerd’s “praying towns” for Indian converts in colonial Massachusetts, economic units like the Anglican Church Missionary Society’s “industrial missions” in East Africa, and the global constellation of schools and orphanages which American Protestant women established to instruct “heathen” women in their preferred gender roles. On larger scales, missionaries working in fields like Sub-Saharan Africa and Hawaii co-operated with European or North American colonial empires to re-shape indigenous societies’ kinship structures, economies, and political hierarchies. To implement practices from this repertoire, missionaries needed to displace, counteract, or destroy indigenous social structures in spaces under their control, using capital or armed force from their home societies.

The other repertoire re-shaped missionaries’ inherited authorities to make them powerful in foreign contexts. These re-creations were literal or figurative acts of translation. To accomplish

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these translations, missionaries had to study the languages and cultures of receiving societies, and engage in a sort of comparative anthropology to find concepts and structures which might correspond to those which empowered their authorities at home. Sufi shaykhs’ syncretistic practices in India and Matteo Ricci’s efforts to reconcile Catholic doctrine with Confucianism and ancestor veneration in China are well-known projects from the translational repertoire. Christian missionaries in the high imperial era also translated authorities and performed the comparative religious studies which made them possible. FE Ellinwood, the general secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, Gilded Age America’s best-funded transnational missionary society, invoked one of his religious community’s own most important authorities, the New Testament, in his preface to Kamil, a biography of a convert from Islam to Protestantism who joined the missionary enterprise:

…an admirable example is afforded to missionaries in heathen and Moslem lands… of that alert and ever wise tact which finds “the line of least resistance” to the heart and conscience of one’s adversary. There are those who stoutly deny the necessity of learning anything whatever concerning the non-Christian religions, who deem it utter folly to study the Koran, even though one labors in Syria or Persia…; all that is needed is the story of the Cross. This young Syrian did not thus believe. If he had been a student of the Koran before, there was tenfold necessity now, for it was upon the teachings of the Koran and the entire cult of Islam that he proposed to move with an untiring and fearless conquest. He would have to deal with men of intelligence and intellectual training, and if he would show the superiority of the gospel of Christ, he must know how to make an intelligent comparison. If he would inculcate the supreme truth, he must generously recognize any particles of truth already possessed. Paul on Mars hill before a heathen audience of Greeks, Paul before Agrippa, a ruler versed in the doctrines of the Jews, was not more wise and tactful than Kamil.30


Both repertoires have parallels in the practices of worldly human political empires. Empires often destroy rival power structures by destroying monuments, burning books, suppressing narratives, and executing local elites. This mode found its most extreme expression in the genocidal settler-colonization of North America and Australia, which wholly uprooted or exterminated indigenous societies to secure land and resources for their conquerors. Empires also frequently co-opt rival elites and power structures for their own ends. The Ottomans, who brought nomadic tribes into their service with special gifts and privileges; the Spanish, who re-purposed Aztec tributary structures in their system of labor conscription; and the British, who studied, codified, and applied forms of both Hindu and Islamic law in India, all found this path useful, and the institutions which defined their empires grew from conquered peripheries as well as the imperial center. “Translating” missionaries, like these worldly imperialists, embraced local social structures to facilitate an expansionist political project. To subordinate others to their gods, they needed to subordinate their evangelistic projects to local social systems and cultural logics. We can recognize that both missionaries’ struggles against and accommodations with foreign social hierarchies as cosmic-political imperial acts.

The framework which I’ve laid out here combines the strengths and evades the weaknesses of three major historiographic and anthropological models of the relationship between religious conversion and worldly human social hierarchies in the missionary encounter. One of these models, which emerged from the postcolonial scholarship of the 1970s, presents missionary evangelism,

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especially that carried out by European and American Christian missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, as an inherently violent project intrinsically linked to the practice of colonialism. Like many historians and anthropologists, I’ll refer to this conception of missionary work as “cultural imperialism.” The cultural imperialism framework has proved empirically and analytically valuable since its inception. It effectively explains missionaries’ relationships with human social hierarchies in the many cases where they tried to displace or destroy indigenous social structures using European capital and military force. It also has allowed historians and anthropologists to make substantive arguments about the relationship between missionaries’ religious activities and worldly politics.

Unfortunately, the “cultural imperialism” model struggles to handle situations where European and American missionaries or their converts embraced translation rather than destruction. Ryan Dunch and other critics have argued that the “cultural imperialism” framework models missionary work’s power dynamics as absolute and one-directional, when, in reality, the hegemony of Western imperialism and capitalism varies, or has varied across time and space, and indigenous peoples have had agency to choose a wide variety of responses to missionary work.33 Many historians and anthropologists of religion have followed up on this critique by studying missionary projects’ unintended religious consequences and using a polycentric “World Christianities” framework to analyze emergent practices and belief systems which the “cultural imperialism” framework struggles to explain.34 The World Christianities model has given historians and anthropologists a flexible understanding of the varieties of religious experience which missionary encounter have produced. However, unlike “cultural imperialism,” which directly links missionaries’

participation in colonial power structures with their religious ideologies, “World Christianities” offers no systematic account of the relationship between religion and politics in the missionary encounter.

Since this paradigm’s ascent ruptured assumptions about missionaries’ relationship with empire, many good histories of the politics of mission have drawn a Cartesian divide between missionaries’ religious beliefs and their relationship with worldly hierarchies, in effect advancing a third model of mission’s politics. In these texts, religion appears mainly as an identity marker which fostered cooperation or antagonism between missionaries and particular human rulers; the content of missionaries’ beliefs and practices is largely irrelevant to their analysis. This literature has effectively captured the remarkable variety of missionaries’ relationships with European and North American empires, but it’s uncomfortably silent about the main social phenomenon which motivated and justified missionary work.

The cosmic polity model of religion combines the World Christianities framework’s flexibility with the cultural imperialism framework’s substantive analysis of the relationship between missionary religion and worldly empire and the Cartesian divide framework’s nuanced analysis of the varieties of missionaries’ relationships with. It’s particularly useful for understanding missionaries who operated in the translating mode, because it helps us to understand that their translations were intended to bring populations into obedience to new rulers whose laws and commands would closely regulate their everyday lives. Like the colonial ethnographies that Dipesh Chakrabarty discusses in the introduction to Provincializing Europe, these were “rough translations” which served

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political purposes. But instead of asserting a fundamental difference between colonizers and colonized, as Chakrabarty’s “rough translations” did, missionaries’ translated authorities made them participants in existing indigenous social structures. Their evangelistic project integrated them into non-European, non-Christian empires, social networks, and cultural systems which often shared their European counterparts’ repressive and hierarchical qualities.

*American Ottomans* examines how American Congregationalist and Presbyterian missionaries of the Syria Mission (affiliated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from 1819-1870 and the Presbyterian Board of Missions from then onward) and the Syrian Protestant College (now famed as the American University of Beirut), who came to Ottoman Syria seeking to enlighten its Muslim and “nominal Christian” peoples, ultimately integrated their missionary work into Ottoman social structures. Throughout the 19th century, they presented themselves to American audiences as bearers of knowledge to a deeply and fundamentally ignorant people, whose religions, social structures, and bodies of knowledge lacked value. In a representative passage, Henry Harris Jessup, their most prolific polemicist, used these words to characterize Ottoman Syria upon his 1853 arrival: “Intellectually, the land was in utter stagnation… it was in general true that there were in the land neither books, readers, nor schools, as such… The Oriental mind seemed asleep.” He and his colleagues, he implied, would awaken it. Jessup’s narrative obscures the Syria missionaries’ actual project. The authorities which, in their eyes, brought them into faithful obedience to their God were deeply bound up with both their language and their conceptions of rhetorical eloquence and learned status. They lacked the power to forcibly transform the Ottoman Empire’s culture society and culture, so they chose to render their authorities in an

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37 Here, I use “Syria” as 19th century European, American, and Ottoman observers did, referring to the region bounded by the Taurus Mountains, the Sinai Peninsula, the Mediterranean, and the Syrian Desert.
Ottoman idiom. To acquire and mobilize the knowledge which might make their translations possible, American missionaries studied at the feet of Ottoman—and often, Ottoman Muslim—intellectuals, changed their practices of prayer and worship, and reproduced Ottoman social hierarchies within their community of converts.
Chapter 1: Strange Idioms

To function, the translating mode of missionary work which I described in the introduction required missionaries to develop a sophisticated understanding of the societies where they worked. Exploration and learning were major preoccupations for the 19th and early 20th century Anglo-American Protestant missionary movement as a whole. The British missionaries of the 19th century were active and energetic participants in the Royal Geographical Society.39 Encyclopaedic sociological surveys like the Syria Mission alumnus James Dennis’s *Christian Missions and Social Progress* suggest that their American counterparts were just as intellectually active.40 19th century Protestant missionaries were explorers, ethnographers, and naturalists. They informed both scholarly and popular audiences at home about natural history, geography, foreign cultures, and non-Christian faiths.41 Their periodicals were many Americans’ main source of knowledge about the world beyond Christendom.42 Clearly, gathering information about their mission fields and disseminating it to English-speaking audiences was a matter of enormous importance for Protestant missionaries of the high imperial era; they invested a great deal of valuable time and energy in the process.

American missionaries working in the Ottoman Empire in general, and Ottoman Syria in particular, were no exception to this trend. Exploration, study, writing, and communication all made

42 Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870 - 1920* (Anne Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1984). As Hill’s title suggests, missionary and, in particular, missionary women’s writings were especially important sources of information for American women. See also Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages.”
up enormous portions of each missionary’s career. Indeed, the mission’s first leaders, Pliny Fisk,
Levi Parsons, and Jonas King spent the first decade of the Mission’s existence exploring the cities of
Greece, Rumelia, Anatolia, and Syria. Like the Apostle Paul, whose missionary journeys through the
Eastern Mediterranean they re-traced, they met with potential friends, sought converts, and publicly
challenged rival religious leaders. However, they spent much of their time simply learning about the
region’s languages, cultures, landscapes, and politics. 43

In 1828, the final year of their first decade of work, some the missionaries began to abandon
the adventurous model of missionizing and set up permanent operational headquarters, or
“stations,” in Syrian towns. Beirut, a port city with a large Christian population, a large foreign
presence, the protection of Mount Lebanon’s emirs, and regular shipping and mail from Europe and
the United States, was the first such station. It hosted the Mission’s central headquarters, its first
church building, its first schools for both girls and boys, and, after a brief interlude during which the
missionaries fled to Malta, its printing press. 44 By 1860, the Mission had opened more stations in
three major mountain towns, ‘Abeih, Bhamdoun, and Deir al-Qamr, two major port cities, Tripoli
and Sidon, and a major inland trade center, Homs. 45 These “station” towns usually contained the
missionaries’ residences (where their minor children lived), their larger congregations, and their
secondary schools. As the mission acquired its first converts, it hired “native helpers” or “native
evangelists,” from among them, and paid them to work as primary school teachers and prayer
leaders in the smaller villages near each station. Even after the missionaries established themselves
and their employees in permanent locations, the missionaries continued their exploratory travels. In

43 Isaac Bird summarizes this process in his Isaac Bird, Bible Work in Bible Lands, or, Events in the History of the Syria Mission
(Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1872). For a more recent historian’s description, see Heyrman,
American Apostles.
86, 192, 199–201.
45 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:176.
1831, two of their number went even further afield, performing “a most ambitious and exacting survey of Persia, Russia, and Northern Turkey” to provide more logistical information for their future colleagues.\textsuperscript{46} Other missionaries, attached to particular stations, regularly travelled on horseback through the towns and villages near their stations. These journeys played a role in missionary work’s administration--Americans, unwilling to grant their Syrian converts and employees their complete confidence, insisted on visiting periodically to oversee their work. However, these trips also allowed the missionaries at particular stations to maintain up-to-date information about social, political, and religious trends and events among the nearby populations, which frequently populated their reports.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, itinerating was exploratory as well as managerial. Both missionary men, like William King Eddy, and missionary women, like the physician Mary Eddy and the evangelist Bernice Hunting itinerated.\textsuperscript{48} This practice continued into the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

One young “itinerating” missionary, FE Hoskins, left a diary recording the thousands of miles that he spent on horseback each year visiting the twenty-two villages where his late 19\textsuperscript{th} century station, the mountain town of Zahle, oversaw educational and evangelistic work. On average, he spent about two-thirds of the year on the road; his and his colleagues’ study of the land never ceased.\textsuperscript{49}

Navigation and survival, pre-requisites for the work of spiritual conquest, required the missionaries to gain a strong sense of the Ottoman Syria’s complex physical, cultural, and political geographies. The station travel circuit, which took missionaries further away from the well-trod routes between Syria’s urban centers, came with novel difficulties and dangers, especially in the 19\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{46} Khalaf, Protestant Missionaries in the Levant, 200.
\textsuperscript{47} This pattern of activity becomes clear if one examines the reports that these station’s secretaries produced at the end of each year. See, for example, William Bird, “1864 Report of the Abeih Station,” 1864, Record Group 115, Box 1, Item 5, “Abeih Station 1844-1874,” Presbyterian Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{48} Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes, 1870-1888,” 1888, Record Group 492, Box 1, Item 1, Presbyterian Historical Society; Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes 1904-1914,” 1914 1904, Record Group 492, Box 1, Item 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{49} Hoskins, Franklin, “Dr. Hoskins’s Personal Records,” 1920 1888, Archives Item 19, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
century’s early and middle decades. Syria’s port cities are separated from the plains of its interior by two high and steep mountain ranges, the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon. Mount Lebanon, as the highlands around the Lebanon range was then called, lacked paved roads before the 1860s. Travel through the area exposed the missionaries to steep inclines, rockslides, unpredictable weather, and the possibility of getting lost. The Syrian mountains’ complex topography helped to foster a similarly complex human geography. The French historian Bernard Heyberger described Syria’s Christian communities as a “mosaic” of diverse and geographically dispersed communities, many of which had strongholds in the highlands. Muslim minority groups also used the uplands to flee conscription and taxation. The Americans encountered a variety of unusual religious minorities, including Twelver Shi’ites, Alawites, Druze, Greek Orthodox Christians, and Maronite and Melkite Catholics. Each of these communities’ leaders developed their own distinctive view of the Americans and their work. Some, like the Druze sheikhs, who had cultivated close ties with the British, were friendly and helpful; others, like the Maronite Catholic clergy, were distinctly hostile. These religious groups were themselves embedded in complex political structures. In early 19th century Mount Lebanon, the heart of the Syria Mission’s field, major landholders, including Druze aristocrats and Maronite monasteries, owed relatively loose allegiance to its official rulers, the Shihab family. Their nominal Ottoman overlords exercised even less direct control. The early 19th century’s events, including an Egyptian invasion, a multi-power intervention to restore Ottoman

52 For a portrait of these groups by a close missionary associate, see John Wortabet, Researches into the Religions of Syria:Or, Sketches, Historical and Doctrinal, of Its Religious Sects, Drawn from Original Sources / (London : , 1860), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101045231568.
53 For information about the missionaries’ cooperation with the Druze, see Tibawi, American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901, 77. For more about their clashes with the Maronite hierarchy, which led to the death of one convert, Asa’ad Shidyaq, see Makdisi, Artillery of Heaven, chap. 4: "An Arab Puritan".
supremacy, and persistent British and French meddling led to increasing tension between the Druze and Maronite sects, rebellions that challenged the old feudal system, and a period of instability that only ended after the Syrian civil war of 1860.\textsuperscript{55} To get a sense for this terrain, missionaries relied on a variety of informants who were already embedded within Ottoman society. Their first contact upon arriving in a new city was frequently the British consul, whose role as a legal advocate for merchants and agent of imperial intrigues required him to develop an intimate familiarity with the area’s political landscape.\textsuperscript{56} These consuls could call on their own local employees, multilingual workers called Dragomans” or “Kavasses” who served European diplomats and travelers as translators, middlemen, and fixers; their knowledge, too would have been at the missionaries’ service.\textsuperscript{57} These diplomats put them in touch with local notables, including priests, aristocrats, merchants, and intellectuals, who frequently provided the missionaries with further hospitality and information. The missionaries tried to understand the Ottoman Empire through direct and immediate personal experience, but they interpreted that experience with the help of many local guides and informants, whose interests and perspectives shaped and colored their understanding of Syria; the comparative anthropology which they would use to implement their mission frequently reflected their perspectives.

Indeed, the missionaries believed that local elites’ viewpoints were of particular use to their Mission, and they sought to study local discursive and cultural hierarchies which they could mobilize in their work. This adoption is particularly visible in the missionaries’ study of Ottoman Syria’s languages and religions. Language plays a key role in this story because text and speech encoded key

\textsuperscript{55} Traboulsi, chap. 2: "The Bloody Death of the Muqata’ji System".

\textsuperscript{56} See frequent mentions of consuls in Bird, \textit{Bible Work in Bible Lands, or, Events in the History of the Syria Mission}; Heyrman, \textit{American Apostles}. For more on the Ottoman politics of the era and consuls’ role therein, see

\textsuperscript{57} Indeed, these subordinate officials even went to court and petitioned officials on behalf of the Consuls. See George Jackson Eldridge, “Letter to Earl Russell, Foreign Secretary,” Consular correspondence, April 1, 1864, Foreign Office Records Series 78, Item 1833, UK National Archives. This letter explains some of these functions while seeking funding to hire more help.
authorities which mediated the relationship between the Syria Mission’s home religious community and their cosmic sovereign. The authority which the missionaries and other American Congregationalists and Presbyterians most frequently invoked was the Bible. A strong focus on scriptural authority had been a cornerstone of Protestant practice since the Reformation. Martin Luther, who the Syria Mission’s writings identified as a spiritual forerunner and inspiration, argued that the Bible should be the primary authority governing Christian doctrine and conduct, that it contained all the information that Christians needed to achieve salvation (a doctrine he and subsequent Protestant theologians referred to as *sola scriptura*, or “scripture alone”), and that Catholic theologians’ attribution of equal authority to the church’s traditions and the apostolic succession of its leaders was heresy. In 1646, English-speaking Calvinists adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith, which affirmed the *sola scriptura* doctrine.58 Their doctrinal descendants, including the America’s Congregationalists and Presbyterians who founded and funded the Syria Mission, continued to affirm the Confession in the 19th century. In 1886, the Mission printed and translated a catechism explaining its tenets, which they entitled *Usul al-Ayman al-Masibi*, or “Foundations of the Christian Faith.”59 *Sola scriptura* remained central to the missionaries’ conception of authority.

Protestantism’s founders viewed Scripture not just an authoritative guide to belief and practice, but an active agent which directly compelled readers toward orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Luther himself attributed the Reformation’s success to the Word’s action rather than his own efforts: “I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor

ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything.” However, Luther and his contemporaries also believed that the Scriptures’ action in their own societies required at least one form of human mediation. The Old and New Testaments’ authors inscribed them in Hebrew, Aramaic and koine Greek, which few European Christians could read; the Catholic Vulgate Bible was in Latin, which also had relatively few readers. Luther argued that this state of affairs cut ordinary Christians off from their faith’s textual wellspring, and, in 1522, he assembled a German translation of the New Testament from Greek and Hebrew sources. The Scripture which made Popes and princes tremble was a simulacrum of the original, and Luther had to take great care to reproduce his sources’ semantic content and rhetorical effects.

The British and Anglo-American Protestant missionaries of the 19th century inherited Luther's project. Throughout the 19th century, English-speaking Protestant missionaries re-created the Scriptures for new linguistic communities with energy and verve. By 1900, they and their indigenous employees had created new versions of the Bible in hundreds of languages. American missionaries in Hawaii, who the Syria Mission's members recognized as the early 19th century's most successful Protestant proselytizers, even invented a writing system for the Hawaiian language to use in their own Bible translation. Protestants in the US and the UK founded Bible societies to fund and organize these projects. The Syria Mission's members saw the Scripture as a divine agent which would play a pivotal role in their quest to convert the Levant. Isaac Bird, the Mission’s first chronicler, documented his colleagues’ hopes that the Gospel would transform the region’s Druze

61 MacCulloch, Reformation, 132–33.
62 A Syria Mission alumnus offered a globe-spanning discussion of these translation projects in Dennis, Christian Missions and Social Progress, 172–74.
63 Hiram Bingham, A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands (Hartford, CT: H. Huntington, 1848), 152–55.
64 The Syria Mission corresponded extensively with both of this organizations while it was working on its own Bible translation, and later, sought funds from both for printing and distributing the text. See Syria Mission, “American Bible Society,” 1914 1875, Record Group 115, Box 1, Folder 17, Presbyterian Historical Society; Syria Mission, “British and Foreign Bible Society,” 1865 1832, Record Group 115, Box 5, Folder 12, Presbyterian Historical Society.
and Muslim inhabitants. Translating the Scriptures was especially important for the Syria Mission because the doctrine of sola scriptura differentiated them from the region’s entrenched Christian denominations. Circumstances made these churches’ members the Mission’s main source of potential Protestants. In the 19th century Ottoman Empire, converts from Islam to Christianity faced a harsh political environment. The Sublime Porte executed apostates until 1844, and as late as 1864, it imprisoned Muslims who became Protestants. To protect themselves and their nascent congregations, the missionaries targeted Syria’s existing Christian communities (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Syriac), who they hoped to recruit as allies in their battle to convert the Muslim world. To this end, the first American missionaries engaged the region’s priests and monks in both dialogue and controversy. They continued these contentious conversations in print. They critiqued the “Eastern Churches” for using holy books in “alien tongues” like Latin, Greek, or Syriac, rendering their spiritual content inaccessible to Syria’s Arabic-speaking population. They also argued that the Gospel’s absence from “Eastern” Christians’ everyday lives explained their failure to convert their Muslim overlords. To win, Bird argued, Christians needed to “exchange their sword of steel for that of the Gospel.” They believed that a proper Arabic Bible could bring the Ottoman Empire’s Christians and Muslims into obedience to god.

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66 Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 74, 80.
67 Speaking of Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, some of the first American Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, the missionary Isaac Bird wrote “The plan before them was to obtain the sympathy and co-operation of the nominally Christian population, and through them to reach, in the end, their long-avowed and oppressive enemies.” Bird, *Bible Work in Bible Lands, or, Events in the History of the Syria Mission*, 16.
68 For a representative example of these confrontations, see Bird, 146.
69 One of these critiques, the Eighth of Isaac Bird’s “Thirteen Letters” to the Maronite Bishop of Beirut, circa 1863, specifically upbraids the Catholic church for its use of “alien tongues” in the liturgy. Isaac Bird, “Thirteen Letters” (1863), Archives, Item 21, Near East School of Theology Special Collections. These critiques were not always accurate—the Greek Orthodox church had no objection to Arabic scriptural translations.
70 Bird, *Bible Work in Bible Lands, or, Events in the History of the Syria Mission*, 16.
Despite the *sola scriptura* doctrine, Bible translations were not the only authorities which guided Protestants. After Germany’s printers made Luther’s translation widely available, their author decided that ordinary Christians needed more than just linguistic assistance to understand God’s word. German peasants used Luther’s Bible as a warrant to rebel against the aristocracy, including Luther’s protector and patron, the Elector of Saxony. Their revolt led Luther to believe that unguided interpretation of the Scriptures threatened Christendom, and argued that Christians should study under the direction of trained clergy in organized, state-sponsored churches.\(^71\) Other Reformers, including John Calvin, also adopted this position. Historians describe these figures as “magisterial” Reformers because they emphasized the importance of organized governance and teaching to Christian life.\(^72\) For most of Europe’s Protestants, an educated ministry, a church organization, and their state’s power joined the Bible as authorities. In Protestant England, communal authorities determined Bible translations’ texts. The famous King James Version achieved ubiquity throughout the English-speaking world because England’s feuding Puritans and High-Church Anglicans could agree on its contents. Its text (along with its Puritan precursor, the Geneva Bible), interpreted by a magisterial clergy and state, guided the society which English Calvinist emigrants founded in Massachusetts.\(^73\)

By the 19th century, the newborn United States had abolished state religion, but its Protestants still balanced two very different understandings of which authorities should govern religious life. The first of those perspectives descended from the older magisterial tradition; its adherents no longer advocated for state churches, but they still believed that Christians needed the guidance of an organized religious community with a trained ministry to obey God’s will. The

\(^{71}\) MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 164–70.

\(^{72}\) MacCulloch, 248–50.

Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches which sponsored the Syria Mission had sprung from the Calvinist magisterial Reformation, and carried on its traditions. They established colleges like Harvard, Yale, and Amherst, as well as theological seminaries like Andover, to teach the clergymen who guided their communities. These colleges’ and seminaries’ practices reflected magisterial assumptions. Most professors were clergymen. Their curricula prioritized Latin and Greek; which their first students used to read the original Gospels, classical philosophy, and contemporary European scholarship. In the early 19th century Greek and Latin still held a central place in American schools and colleges. Educators believed that Greek and Roman texts’ moral, historical, and rhetorical content would make their students virtuous and capable actors in their new country’s public sphere. They also thought that the grunt work of memorizing classical grammar and vocabulary strengthened students’ minds. Although the classics did not have immediate theological content, they were a necessary attainment for would-be Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers, whose authoritative status depended on the intellectual powers which classical study was believed to impart. Students at theological seminaries pursued a more specialized course of study with a strong emphasis on Biblical hermeneutics and Protestant thought. The Syria Mission embraced its sponsoring churches’ emphasis on an educated ministry. Its male members were all either medical doctors or ordained pastors in the Congregational and Presbyterian churches, and they all held degrees from colleges, medical schools, or theological seminaries. Its female members (in the earliest decades, officially dispatched as wives; later in the 19th century, as

76 Winterer, chaps. 1–3.
78 For information about the Mission’s early leaders and members, see Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, vol. 1, chap. III: “The Seven Pioneers of Mission Work in Syria.” Their denominations’ leadership did insist that ministers be college men; see Khalaf, Protestant Missionaries in the Levant, 30.
missionaries in their own right) were usually well-educated women who had studied under private tutors or in female seminaries (the 19th century term for women’s teacher-training institutions). These missionaries believed that the magisterial authority of an organized church led by a trained ministry formed obedient Christians.

The other conception of authority, which emerged with the Great Awakening of the mid-18th century, was evangelicalism. Evangelical Protestants believed that Christians became true believers and practitioners through a conversion experience that changed their relationship with God. Between the Great Awakening and the First World War, most American evangelicals understood conversion as a personal process which successively transformed Christians’ emotions, beliefs, and conduct. Converts had to experience “conviction” that they were a fallen sinner, fear damnation, and develop a sincere desire to repent. Then, they had to embrace a belief that Jesus, as the son of God, had died for their sins, and submit themselves to his guiding authority. Newly-awakened faith, and the submission which followed it, would save them. External observers could recognize their salvation by its fruits, including inner peace, altruism, and a rejection of sensual pleasures. In the evangelical view, the conversion experience, rather than communal rituals like baptism, created true Christians. Because evangelicals saw a direct relationship between converts and God, mediated by prayer and Scripture-reading, as Christianity’s heart, they sometimes rejected magisterial conceptions of authority. Many successful revival preachers were women, African-Americans, or unschooled men rather than licensed graduates of formal colleges and seminaries. However, the evangelical movement enjoyed great success within the magisterial churches, whose members often embraced evangelicalism without abandoning their longstanding views on ministerial

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79 See, for example, Edward William Hooker, Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith ... (Boston, MA: Perkins & Marvin, 1839).
81 Noll, In the Beginning Was the Word, 191–97.
training and church governance. In the early 19th century, the evangelical flame touched many of the Syria Mission’s personnel. A memoir compiled from the letters and diary of one member, Sarah Smith, offers a vivid description of her own conversion after attending a revival meeting in 1820:

Much joy followed, and the night was spent with her sister, in wakefulness, conversing upon the wonderful grace of God. But in the morning, she arose under a cloud. Her sister took her to her pastor; but she found no relief. On reaching home, she threw herself upon her bed; and then had such views of her heart as she never had before. She felt that she was a sinner against God, and loved to sin, and she abhorred herself for it. It was an hour of intense conviction of her sinfulness. Overwhelmed with it, she knelt by her bed, went again to her savior, and then found permanent relief.\(^{82}\)

An analysis of religious revivals like the one which brought about Smith’s conversion reveals how believers reconciled contradictions between the evangelical and magisterial conceptions of authority. At the meeting, a human speaker’s words put Smith into an emotional state which brought about her spiritual transformation. She believed that God and the scriptures were the ultimate agents of her conversion, but they could act upon her because a preacher explained Scripture’s meaning to her and exhorted her towards repentance.\(^{83}\) Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers’ education emphasized both Biblical exegesis and rhetorical prowess. Together, exegesis and rhetoric allowed ministers to clarify the Gospel to their listeners and give it a force which generated the emotions leading to conversion. It’s no coincidence that the most noteworthy evangelical thinkers who operated within magisterial traditions, like the Anglican George Whitfield and the Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards, gained their greatest fame as orators.\(^{84}\) Eloquent speech reconciled magisterial and evangelical understandings of authority.

\(^{82}\) Hooker, *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith ...,* 21.
\(^{83}\) Readers familiar with Islamic studies might recognize parallels with the contemporary Muslim practice of listening to sermons which inspire pious fear and repentance in believers; see Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006).
\(^{84}\) Noll, *In the Beginning Was the Word,* 198.
As magisterial-evangelical Calvinists of the 19th century, the Syria Mission’s members sought to preserve or reproduce eloquence when they translated their authorities. They understood that to do that, they needed local linguistic and cultural knowledge. Mission spokesman Henry Jessup succinctly expressed this imperative as he experienced it upon his 1856 arrival:

Yet, though nearer my work than ever before, I was stopped on the very threshold by the barrier of the Arabic language, and felt as one dumb; with a message, and yet unable to deliver it. But having come to preach in Arabic, I resolved, ‘Preach in Arabic I will, by the help and grace of God! While I study the language, its hard gutturals and strange idioms, I can study the people and their ways, so different from our Western ideas, and they may teach me some things a Westerner needs to know.’

The missionaries’ attitudes about the relationship between education, rhetorical eloquence, and religious authority led them to seek linguistic and cultural expertise which would make them recognizable as learned men and women. In a guide for new missionaries beginning to study Arabic, Cornelius Van Dyck, the Mission’s master linguist, urged students to learn to speak not just “fluently and intelligibly,” but “intelligently as well.” Another missionary, George Post, urged new missionaries to seek the local equivalent of “a polite education.”

The Syria Mission’s first members first tried to acquire this authoritative knowledge by studying in the Western college and university system which had made them authorities at home. They were frequently familiar with Semitic languages before they arrived in the field. Most male missionaries graduated from American theological seminaries, where Hebrew was part of the curriculum. Jonas King, who came to Syria in 1823, also studied Arabic in Paris under the famous

85 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:21.
86 Cornelius Van Dyck, “Suggestions to Beginners in the Study of Arabic,” 1892, Archives Item 679, Near East School of Theology Special Collections. Van Dyck wrote this pamphlet near the end of the 19th century, but it’s based on his experiences studying Arabic in the 1830s and 1840s.
87 George Post, “Suggestions to Missionaries to Aid Them in the Study of Arabic,” Circa 1892, Archives, Item 681, Near East School of Theology Special Collections. Post’s guidelines are based on his experiences studying in the 1850s.
Orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy. However, his philological training quickly proved insufficient, and he soon hired his Syrian host's son to tutor him in the language.\(^89\) His successors’ memoirs confirm that throughout the 19\(^{th}\) century, American missionaries mastered Arabic in Syria itself, training one-on-one with Syrian teachers.\(^90,91\) However, they typically sought tutors with more social status than the typical teenager, so that their language could carry power and authority.

The missionaries knew only a little about local conditions when they arrived in Syria, but with the help of consuls, interpreters, and other local informants, they recognized some of the empire’s state and religious institutions as analogues of important social formations in their homeland. Consequently, they tried to learn Arabic from people who were associated with those institutions, who could model high-status language use for them. Learning and language stratified 19\(^{th}\) century Ottoman Syria’s hierarchy. The region’s ruling classes, including officials from the imperial center, military aristocrats, clergy, and administrators referred to themselves as \(söz\) \(sahibleri\), or “masters of the word,” and identified rebels against their rule as \(jubhal\), or ignorants.\(^92\) In the century’s middle decades, social upheavals and state-led modernization projects disrupted threatened these elites and changed their formal status, but a restoration of order in the 1860s preserved both their authority and its sustaining dialectic of knowledge and ignorance, which came to incorporate a division between the backward and the modern.\(^93\) The missionaries drew their first teachers from three distinctive subgroups of the \(söz\) \(sahibleri\). The first was a (mostly Christian and Jewish) stratum of clerks, administrators, and tax farmers known as \(mudabbers\), who served Syria’s (mostly Muslim

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\(^89\) King’s language training is discussed in Makdisi, \textit{Artillery of Heaven}, 91.
\(^91\) Language tutors also appear in the Mission’s late 19\(^{th}\) century financial records. “1891 Syria Mission Budget,” 1891, Archives, Item 338, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
\(^92\) Ussama Makdisi, \textit{The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), chaps. 3: "Knowledge and Ignorance".
\(^93\) See Makdisi, chap. 7: "The Devil’s Work".
and Druze) feudal aristocrats and appointed governors. The poet Nassif al-Yaziji, a *mudabbir* who served as personal secretary to Mount Lebanon's ruler, the Emir Bashir Shihab II, before his downfall, was one of the Mission's most valuable teachers. The second was the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox clergy. Another of the missionaries’ teachers, Butrus Bustani, who had studied at the Jesuit college of 'Ayn Warqa, came from this class. The Americans also sought teachers among the *'ulama*, a class of experts defined by their mastery of the *'ulum al-din* or Islamic religious sciences, which included Qur’anic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence. They led prayers at major mosques, adjudicated disputes in court, offered legal advice, and oversaw *awqaf*, or charitable endowments.

Cornelius Van Dyck studied under Yusuf al-Asir, a Muslim scholar trained at Cairo's al-Azhar University, a famous center of Islamic learning, and in the 1850s, Henry Jessup studied grammar under an *'alim* who he referred to as “Sheikh Owad.” Even in the 1890s, when a number of educated Protestant converts were available to serve as teachers, George Post urged new missionaries to read the Qur’an with a “shaykh,” or religious expert. The Mission’s early teachers represented Syria’s ruling intelligentsia.

In better times, these religious and administrative intellectuals might not have deigned to tutor these often-judgmental foreigners. Fortunately for the Americans, and unfortunately for the scholars, the first half of the 19th century was an era of upheaval and uncertainty in Ottoman Syria. A succession of conflicts, including Napoleon's 1798 expedition to Egypt, the Greek Revolt of the 1820s, Mehmet Ali of Egypt's 1831 rebellion and invasion of Syria, the subsequent Ottoman

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94 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 63. Bustani and al-Yaziji’s personal biographies, including their service as teachers to the missionaries, appear in Traboulsi’s account because they were major figures in the 19th century history of Arabic writing.

95 For a concise description of the religious sciences and their place in the broader Ottoman intellectual world in a longer historical context, see Shefer-Mossensohn, *Science Among the Ottomans*.


98 George Post, “Suggestions to Missionaries to Aid Them in the Study of Arabic.”

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reconquest of the region, Tanyus Shaheen's 1859 anti-feudal revolt, and the Syrian Civil War of 1860; disrupted the region's feudal system of tax farming and land tenure, and temporarily displaced or disillusioned its educated former servants. The missionaries' tutors held a variety of attitudes toward their pupils. Some, like Butrus Bustani, chose to convert to Protestantism. Others, like al-Yaziji and the Muslim al-Asir, kept their faith but also maintained long-standing friendships and professional relationships with the Mission. A few, like “Sheikh Owad,” who Jessup uncharitably described as a “Muslim bigot” who “spat towards” his future pupil Mrs. Lyons “with unutterable contempt” upon first meeting her, had rockier relationships with their American students. The early 19th century's upheavals ultimately left the söz sahibleri intact, but they gave missionaries a valuable opportunity to learn from elite teachers.

The söz sahibleri held a variety of religious and intellectual viewpoints, but shared bodies of linguistic knowledge united them. Part of that corpus was literacy itself. In the early 19th century Arabic-speaking Eastern Mediterranean, this was an uncommon skill. Between 1800 and 1870, European and Ottoman observers routinely estimated that fewer than 10% of the population could read, even in relatively well-educated areas like Egypt and Mount Lebanon. Distinguished Syrian intellectuals' literacy went well beyond the language of everyday life. Some of them used Ottoman Turkish, a refined, Persianate dialect associated with the court in Istanbul. However, most of them read and wrote in Arabic. To understand what made their writings special, we must understand an

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99 Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, chap. 2: "The Bloody Death of the Muqtas'ji System". It's worth noting that not all of these groups faced the same struggles at the same time—the 'ulema, for example, regained influence in the wake of the re-imposition of Ottoman state power after the civil war of 1860. See Itzchak Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001).

100 Bustani’s conversion is mentioned in Henry Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, 1:106.

101 As we shall see later, both of these men worked on the Mission's Bible translation project and taught advanced grammar and rhetoric at the Syrian Protestant College.


Arabic linguistic phenomenon which scholars call diglossia. In day-to-day life, most Arabic-speaking, both today and in the 19th century, speak, or spoke a local colloquial, or 'ammiya dialect, which varied between different regions of the Arab world. Scholars, clerics, and administrators, by contrast, usually inscribed (and still inscribe) intellectual, religious, and official texts in the classical, or fusha (“elegant”) dialect. Fusha differs from the colloquial dialects in its grammar, phonology, and vocabulary, to roughly the same extent that Latin differs from the Romance languages.

Mastery of 'ammiya is insufficient for reading and writing fusha text. Fusha had been a principal language of Islamic and secular scholarship, belles-lettres prose, and court poetry across an enormous breadth of space and time. A 19th century practitioner could comfortably read pre-Islamic love poetry from the Arabian Peninsula, 9th century Hadith collections from Transoxiana, 11th century rhetorical exercises from 'Iraq, 12th century philosophical treatises from Andalusia, and 15th century histories from Egypt as well as contemporary writings. This long literary tradition conferred prestige on scholars who could read and write in fusha.

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105 Some scholars divide fusha into an ancient classical language (“Classical Arabic”), and a modern written language (“Modern Standard Arabic.”) However, I'm convinced by the linguistic anthropologist Niloofar Haeri, who notes that present-day Arabic speakers use the same term to refer to both classical and modern writing, and argues that efforts to render fusha Arabic a “modern” language distinct from its classical form have only been questionably successful. N. Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt* (New York, NY: Springer, 2003), xi.

106 In some cases, Arabic-speakers designate speech as fusha or 'ammiya based on its content rather than its linguistic properties. Walter Armbrust describes cases he encountered in Egypt where speakers designated academic speech about literature as fusha even though it was articulated with typically colloquial vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Walter Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 3: "The Split Vernacular." However, in most cases, the terms also clearly refer to languages with significant structural differences. For a description of those differences, see Altoma, *The Problem of Diglossia in Arabic*, 107–12.

107 In Egypt, native speakers of the Egyptian 'ammiya dialect report significant difficulty mastering the classical usage in school and using it correctly on exams and in other settings well into adulthood, suggesting that mastering fusha is a nontrivial challenge even for educated people in present-day Arabic-speaking countries. Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People*, 39–40. My own conversations with university-educated Syrians and Lebanese in Beirut suggests that speakers of the Syrian 'ammiya dialect face similar difficulties.

108 For an extensive treatment of this body of literature which explores both its continuities and its changes in depth, I would recommend Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of Its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).
Fusha Arabic’s charisma also emanated from key Islamic authorities. For Muslim scholars, fusha was a sacred language whose rhythms imperfectly echoed the “inimitable” Qur’an, a document which offered its sublime eloquence as proof of its divine truth. It also encoded most texts on the “religious sciences” informing Islamic jurisprudence and law.\(^\text{109}\) Arabic-speaking Christian clergy and mudabbirs did not share these authorities, but under centuries of Muslim rule, they had adopted Islamicate literary values.\(^\text{110}\) Nassif al-Yaziji, a Greek Orthodox Christian, sought to match fusha’s greatest rhetors, crafting a rhymed prose collection in the style of the 11\(^{th}\) century master al-Hariri of Basra.\(^\text{111}\) Butrus Bustani, a Maronite turned Protestant, put the classical language to novel uses, compiling the first Arabic encyclopedia and translating European novels, including Pilgrim’s Progress and Robinson Crusoe.\(^\text{112}\) Ottoman Syrian intellectuals’ attachment to fusha did not make them backward or timeless (Westerners inclined towards hubris should remember that Isaac Newton wrote his Principia Mathematica in Latin), but it did reflect the 19\(^{th}\) century Ottoman Syrian social hierarchy and its legitimating ideologies. When coupled with a conceptual division between “learned” ruling classes and “ignorant” subjects, the valorization of fusha, Islam’s sacred language, supported Ottoman Sunni sultans, soldiers, and scholars’ claims to rule. It also created costly barrier to acquiring “learned” status, entrenching the divide between knowledgeable ruling classes and their ignorant subjects. *Fusha* Arabic was integral to Ottoman Syria’s social hierarchy.

The missionaries sought learned status and *fusha* mastery in their Arabic studies. Unfortunately, we lack precise accounts of early missionaries’ lessons. In its first decades, the Mission had no systemic standards for language training.\(^\text{113}\) However, some missionaries who came

\(^{109}\) See Allen, chaps. 3: "The Qur'an: sacred text and cultural yardstick."

\(^{110}\) Indeed, their communities were deeply shaped by their status as protected, but subaltern subjects under Muslim rule. See Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique*, chap. 2.


\(^{113}\) Henry Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, 1:115. Jessup offers a remarkably frank account of some of his colleagues’ linguistic failings and deficits.
to Syria before 1870 offered their successors systemic advice drawn from their own learning experiences. In 1888, the Mission voted to examine and certify new members’ Arabic skills before allowing them to participate in decision-making.\textsuperscript{114} They chose two veteran missionaries, Cornelius Van Dyck (who came to Syria in 1840) and George Post (who arrived in 1863), to administer the exams.\textsuperscript{115} Both men wrote study guides for new missionaries. Like most curricula, these guides aspired to a level of mastery beyond what most missionaries actually achieved. Van Dyck corresponded as an equal with the famed European Orientalists Edward Lane, Emil Rödiger, and Gustav Flügel. His guide, which prescribed an exhaustive and exhausting course of study, seems geared towards reproducing his own level of skill rather than the Mission’s average.\textsuperscript{116} However, he and Post wrote from their own and other missionaries’, language-learning experiences, and their programs of study are consistent with descriptions of language training in the memoirs of other missionaries who came to Syria before 1870, so along with those memoirs, they offer us insight into missionaries’ early Arabic studies.\textsuperscript{117}

Both Post and Van Dyck stressed that aspiring missionaries should ideally devote their first year in the field to language training. They drew on Van Dyck’s own experience to suggest that the new arrival live apart from American colleagues, lodging with a Syrian family and endeavoring to speak only Arabic. Both also recommended six hours of daily formal study, supplemented by other forms of engagement, including, Van Dyck suggests, “speaking, talking, repeating phrases, or some

\textsuperscript{114} Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes, 1870-1888.”
\textsuperscript{115} These dates come from Henry Jessup, \textit{Fifty-Three Years in Syria}, 1:105, 269.
\textsuperscript{117} I listed these references above when I described
of the many ways which an earnest student will find even in his dreams.”118 New missionaries were to spend most of those six hours with their tutor at first, then transition to spending the time in private study as they mastered the language. Lessons began with reading, writing, and pronunciation. The third of these tasks required particular attention and effort. Van Dyck notes that a good instructor should “have the patience to drill his pupil in pronunciation, unmercifully if necessary.” Pronunciation might have been particularly problematic because most dialects of Arabic include phonemes that don’t appear in English (including the pharyngeal fricative ’ayn, and the uvular fricative ’ghayn) and distinguish between sounds which English speakers consider identical.119 Mastering these new sounds required hours of intensive, exhausting work for both students and tutors. However, it was essential if missionaries ever wanted to achieve the eloquent speech that played such an important role in their understanding of clerical authority and conversion. Both Van Dyck and Post suggested that students practice reading and pronunciation simultaneously, reading a simple Arabic text aloud while a tutor offered corrections. This training process inverted the educational hierarchy which American missionaries presented to their audiences at home. Instead of confidently instructing ignorant “heathens” in literacy, the missionaries stumbled through elementary texts under the discipline of Greek Orthodox poets and Muslim shaykhs. Achieving eloquence in Arabic required missionaries to submit to Syrian intellectuals’ discipline.

Through that submission, the missionaries adopted, internalized, and operationalized their teachers’ hierarchical view of Arabic’s dialects. Their official study guides dismissed Syrian ‘ammiya Arabic, the language of everyday life, a proper object of extensive linguistic study. Although both

118 Even brand-new missionaries would probably have difficulty mustering a full six hours a day for language training, but many seem to have come close to this ideal. Daniel Bliss never achieved Van Dyck’s level of Arabic mastery, but claims to have spent five hours a day studying Arabic with a tutor and sought out conversations with ordinary people as often as possible. Bliss, *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss*, 115.
Van Dyck and Post asserted that it was important for missionaries to master the colloquial dialect, it holds only a small place in their recommendations. They assume that new missionaries will learn it through trial and error, making “mistakes, and ludicrous ones too.”

Instead, Van Dyck and Post urged missionaries to master *fusha* at a high level. In guidelines concerning grammar, Post directed students to begin with the parts of speech, and Van Dyck urged them to master “the form of the verb.” Both missionary scholars marked mastery of *al-Sarf*, the Arabic language's morphological structure, which generates meaning by combining roots and patterns, and *al-Nahu*, the Arabic case system, as key learning objectives. These grammatical arts were, and still are far more essential for eloquent writing in *fusha* than for everyday conversation in ‘*ammīya*. Van Dyck and Post prescribed classical methods to master these classical skills. After getting basic explanations from instructors and memorizing verb forms through written drill, student missionaries were to reach a higher understanding by reading language manuals written in, and describing the use of, *fusha*. Both curricula recommended one of these guides, Nassif al-Yaziji’s *Fasl al-Khitab (Parts of Speech)*. Van Dyck also suggested the 18th century *Bahth al-Matalib (Research of the Required)* for guidance in *sarf* and the 13th century *al-Ajrumiya for nahu*. Both he and Post advise that advanced students tackle the *Alfiyya*, a 13th century grammatical text by the Andalusian scholar Ibn Malik. This eclectic curriculum, which incorporated texts from across the extensive temporal and geographic scope of *fusha* literature, framed classical Arabic as the universal, timeless, and “grammatical” language of the

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120 Cornelius Van Dyck, “Suggestions to Beginners in the Study of Arabic.”

121 The mission began publishing *Fasl al-Khitab* for use in the schools they operated; the edition I found was Nassif al-Yaziji, *Fasl al-Khitab* (American Mission Press, 1887)


Islamic world. It did not acknowledge that 19th century Syria’s everyday spoken language had a distinctive grammar worthy of linguistic study.

The missionaries’ guidelines for mastering vocabulary also centered and valorized fusha. Post and Van Dyck directed students to start with their Syrian colleague John Wortabet’s elementary English-Arabic Lexicon (Van Dyck also recommended the German orientalist Freytag’s scholarly tome) and then, after mastering more of the language, switch to Butrus Bustani’s pioneering Arabic-Arabic dictionary, the Mubit al-Mubit. Van Dyck’s guidelines also recommended the 14th century Arabic dictionary whose title Bustani was riffing upon, al-Fairuzabadi’s al-Qamus al-Mubit. These were all fusha dictionaries. Van Dyck acknowledged that fusha and colloquial Arabic have different vocabularies, but characterized ’ammiya not as a distinctive language, but a “vulgar,” corrupted form of fusha:

“Beginners often ask, 'shall I learn the classic or the vulgar Arabic first?' The proper reply to this question is, 'learn both together.' Get your phrases in the common dialect so as to be able to use them without appearing pedantic, but learn the correct, classical expression at the same time, if there is a difference. You will very soon be able to devote your entire attention to the classical language, and be able at once to reduce it to the vulgar dialect if required; but having only the vulgar will not enable you to use the more classical expressions as may be desirable in public speaking or extempore prayer.”

This passage’s final sentence suggests that Van Dyck did not consider ’ammiya an appropriate or persuasive vehicle for expressing religious sentiments. He and Post urged students to work with their teachers to attain eloquence in fusha instead. To that end, the guides urged new missionaries to

master 'ilm al-balagha, or formal Arabic rhetoric. For this, they recommended that students use al-Yaziji's Kitab 'Agd al-Jamaan fi 'ilm al-bayaan, and then the 14th century Persian scholar and Islamic legal expert al-Teftazani's texts on the same subject.125

The missionaries' search for eloquence did not end with language manuals. Post and Van Dyck argued that to attain a true “polite education” and learn to pragmatically use fusha as a high-status Syrian would, the new missionary should read classical Arabic literary, historical, and religious texts. Both men urged students to read the Maqqammat of al-Hariri to master Arabic prose.126 They also directed their younger colleagues to master fusha intellectual traditions, like history. They suggest the 14th and 15th century writer al-Maqrizi's history of Islamic Egypt and the 16th and 17th century Algerian writer al-Maqqari's history of Andalusia.127 However, their most extensive recommendations directed new missionaries to study Islamic texts. They urged students to read the Qur'an in depth and enhance their understanding with the help of the 13th century Islamic jurist Al-Baydawi's commentary Asrar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil (Secrets of Revelation and Interpretation).128 Van Dyck also encouraged new missionaries to study Multaga al-Abhur (“Meeting of the Seas”), a 1517 guide to the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence by Ibrahim al-Halabi.129 These texts would give new missionaries grounding in Qur'anic exegesis and jurisprudence, two of the three core Islamic

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126 Al-Hariri wrote in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Maqamma is a stylistically rigid Arabic prose genre designed to show off the writer’s rhetorical brilliance. See Amina Shah’s Introduction to her translation, Amina Shah, The Assemblies of Al-Hariri: Fifty Encounters with the Shaykh Abu Zayd of Seruj (London, UK: Octagon Press, 1980), viii.


religious sciences, or ‘ulum al-Din, and also get a sense for how Muslim writers used *fusha* to articulate sacred concepts and ideas.\(^{130}\) The scholar-missionaries urged their colleagues to study Islam under the direction of Muslim teachers; Post specifically recommended that missionary students study the Qur’an with a Muslim *shaykh*, much as we know that Cornelius Van Dyck, and Henry Jessup actually did during their own training. To operationalize Islam’s sacred language, the missionaries studied its religious manifestations and sought to imitate the speech and insights of Islam’s most authoritative practitioners.

The missionaries’ decision to harness the charisma of *fusha* to bolster their own authorities comprehensively shaped their evangelism in ways that broke with contemporary American Calvinist practice. Most dramatically, they created a “vernacular” Bible in a classical language which few of their proselytes could understand without further education. This project, which began in 1848 and ended in 1865, was the Mission’s most important mid-century endeavor. It sought to create a version of the Scriptures which Syrians would find authoritative and convincing. Other Arabic translations of the Bible had actually existed for centuries, but the missionaries’ learned Syrian interlocutors found them wanting. The missionaries believed that some of the existing texts’ inadequacy stemmed from their colloquialism. In 1844, Eli Smith, the first missionary to manage the translation project, made the case for new scriptures, with this critique of existing Arabic scriptures: “The whole version is not in a classical style. The structure of the sentences is awkward; the choice of words is not select, and the rules of grammar often transgressed. We have been ashamed to put the sacred books of our religion, in such a dress, into the hands of a respectable Mohammedan, and Druze, and felt it our duty to accompany them with an apology. And some of

us never think of reading a chapter in public without previously revising it.” Later, he made it clear that the mission's Bible would reflect “classical usage” in Arabic even when local audiences would find \(\textit{fusha}\)'s vocabulary unfamiliar, writing “we here and there adopt a word, now gone out of use, especially where the connection gives an intimation of its meaning, trusting to the future enlightenment of the nation to bring back the language again nearer to its classical richness and purity,” and declaring that the mission wanted to “avoid, in a great degree, giving the work the savor of a local dialect; which would be impossible, were we to descend to the vulgar language of conversation.” Smith believed that to be an authoritative text with the power to convert and save ordinary people, the Arabic-speaking world's Bible had to be written in extraordinary language. His own religious tradition emphasized the importance of clarity and rhetorical power in Scripture’s operation on the human heart, and he believed that such eloquence and authority in Arabic required classicism. The Bible’s eloquence was so important that he and his colleagues were willing to undertake the effort and expense of educating a broader body of readers to understand it. In the short run, the new Bible would have to appeal to the educated Syrians who they hoped would serve as their partners in bringing about “the future enlightenment of the nation.”

To create a classical translation that both Muslim \(\textit{shaykhs}\) and Christian Syrian literati might find clear, compelling, and credible as well as correct, the Mission enlisted locally recognized scholars. Smith hired Butrus Bustani, who knew Syriac, Hebrew, and Greek, to write the translation's first draft, paying him tens of thousands of piasters to do so. Smith reviewed and amended Bustani's text with the help of existing Arabic Bible translations, German Biblical scholarship, and \(\textit{fusha}\) language manuals, including Ibn Malik, al-Teftazani, and Fairuzabadi's works.

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Not trusting his own grammatical and rhetorical skill, he went over the drafts with Nassif al-Yaziji, who offered “his criticisms upon it, as an Arabic composition, in reference to grammar, lexicography and taste.”  

It was clear that Smith and his collaborators believed that their Bible had to excel according to both the stringent semantic standards of Scriptural literalism and the linguistic ideologies of Syria’s literati.

Even with their extensive textual resources and linguistic talents, this team found writing a *fusba* Bible translation challenging. In his 1854 account, Smith mentions that Bustani was often unsatisfied with his own phrasings and marked out passages he disliked in red ink. Vocabulary also posed problems. Of al-Yaziji, Smith wrote “Master as he is of Arabic grammar, and richly as his mind is stored with Arabic words, it was soon found that, in the terms of natural history, and certain other sciences, as well as in the technicalities of different trades and professions, as in other like matters, his knowledge was indistinct and often very defective.” Smith was often able to find appropriate terms, but only with great difficulty. The body of classical Arabic knowledge that Smith, Bustani, and al-Yaziji shared often failed to fit their needs, but despite its challenges, the three men remained committed to using *fusba* in their translation.

In 1856, Smith died of stomach cancer and the Mission appointed Cornelius Van Dyck to carry on his work. Smith's death severed Bustani's contract to finish the translation, and Van Dyck came into conflict with al-Yaziji, so he enlisted a friend and former teacher, the Muslim al-Azhar graduate Yusuf al-Asir, to finish the work of translation with him. The final version of the Mission's translation, which the missionaries came to call by Van Dyck's name, was also a product of

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133 Eli Smith.
134 Eli Smith.
135 Eli Smith.
136 Cornelius Van Dyck, “History of the Arabic Translation of the Scriptures,” March 7, 1885, Archives, Item 895, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
the linguistic knowledge which Islamic religious education imparted.\textsuperscript{137} The mission's commitment to classical Arabic, as well as its longer-term ambitions to evangelize the Muslim world, led its members to view this interfaith collaboration as a feature, not a bug. In 1864, when the mission sent Cornelius Van Dyck to New York to electrotype plates for the Bible's final draft, they declared that “they have been peculiarly favored in securing coadjutors of the highest repute from both Christian and Mohammedan scholars.”\textsuperscript{138} This unusual cross-faith project also put the missionaries in a sticky theological position. As we have already seen, these missionaries, like other Protestants, had a religious commitment to vernacular-language scriptures, and attacked other Christian sects for writing and praying in Latin, Greek, and Syriac. But by adopting Classical Arabic as their Bible's language, they, too, rendered their scriptures in an ecclesiastical language which many Arabic-speaking Syrians would be unable to understand. It was just the sacred language of Islam rather than that of Roman Catholicism. The mission's own reports on their work acknowledged that connection. When explaining how their Bible could be used in different parts of the Arabic-speaking world, they wrote

\begin{quote}
It is a peculiarity of the Arabic language above perhaps all other tongues that in its literature it is the same in all countries where it is known. Mohammedan scholars largely outnumbering Christian give laws to the language and thus the literary character of the language has been given a permanent form, being fast anchored to the Koran and its exegetical literature; the standard in Arabic for all ages and people, guarded as such by religious scruples in this case as well as questions of taste.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

One could make the same argument about Latin in Luther's Europe, but the missionaries never acknowledged this tension between their traditions and their translations. Their accounts, both external and internal, elide this tension by treating this Bible translation as a rendering of the

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\textsuperscript{137} Cornelius Van Dyck.
\textsuperscript{138} Syria Mission, “Minute on Electroplating the Bible,” August 24, 1864, Record Group 115 Box 2, Item 22 “Arabic Bible Translation,” Presbyterian Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{139} Syria Mission.
\end{flushleft}
Scriptures in a local, vernacular language, the same as any other in the vast global Protestant mission field. In 1854, Smith wrote “it is only by attempting it in the country where the language is spoken, and with the assistance of valuable helpers, that I have any hope of succeeding.” Smith certainly knew that fusha Arabic wasn't spoken in day-to-day life in Syria (or any other Arabic-speaking region). His letters acknowledged the difference between classical and colloquial languages, and his conscious decision to reject the latter in favor of the former. Smith and his colleagues’ choice radically changed the character of a key authority in the evangelical Protestant cosmic polity. Their new Bible would still act on Syrians’ hearts and minds through the eloquence of its words, but it would do so more through the beauty, purity, and sacred resonance of its language rather than its content. This decision integrated the Mission’s Bible into the corpus of sacred and secular fusha literature whose existence and continuity helped to define and uphold Ottoman Syria’s ruling classes.

Fusha ideology also shaped how the Mission and its employees translated other American Calvinist authorities, including the church community, the repertoire of communal worship, the clergy, and the . The Mission organized congregations led by missionaries, Syrian pastors, and so-called “native evangelists” who performed something like the US Congregationalist and Presbyterian church services of their own era, complete with scripture readings, collective prayers, a sermon, and hymn-singing. Their Bible translation already ensured that Scripture readings would always be in fusha. The mission's manuals for pastors also prescribed fusha prayers for a variety of different situations, including baptism, communion, weddings, and funerals. Perhaps most remarkably, the Mission also produced fusha hymnals, which usually coupled the tunes of popular English and American hymns with Arabic poems written by Syrians working for the Mission. We know less

141 The first preserved, printed manual of this sort is probably Al-Minbar Fi Kanisat Beirut (“The Pulpit in the Church of Beirut”) (Beirut: American Mission Press, 1896).
142 Creating this hymnal was a fairly difficult process, and the Mission didn't create an edition that it considered acceptable until 1874. Edwin Lewis, a professor at the Syrian Protestant College, had attempted the first draft of many
about sermons, although missionaries’ memoirs suggest that both they and their Syrian evangelists preferred to preach in fusba. Remarkably, it appears that many missionaries never even mastered ‘ammiya at a level that would allow them to sermonize in the language. Henry Jessup remarked that the first generation of missionaries considered Eli Smith especially skilled because “the women of Bhamdoun [a Mount Lebanon village near Beirut where many of the missionaries kept summer homes] could understand his preaching.” Fusha was the official language of Syrian Protestant worship.

This classicism made the Syrian Evangelical church’s services very different from their vernacular English-language American Presbyterian model. Much of the service would have been hard for many Syrians to understand. On the same page that he stated that most missionaries and Syrian preachers offered sermons in fusba, Henry Jessup acknowledged the classical language’s inaccessibility: “Now, high Arabic is beautiful. It is ringing and poetical, and to an audience of Arabic scholars, it is a literary treat. But the common people do not understand it. They wonder and admire and are not fed.” Even Syrian Protestants who could understand fusba readings, prayers, and sermons would have a weekly religious experience sharply differing from their American Protestant contemporaries'. Congregations in the northeastern United States, most of the missionaries’ homeland, would have sung hymns like “John Brown's Body,” written in the language translations, but the mission’s educated employees and associates found his verses awkward and full of mistakes. Later, a committee of Syrians worked together with one of the mission’s members to compose poems on theological topics and couple them with hymns, a difficult and time-consuming task made harder by the fact that many typical meters for Arabic poetry don’t comfortably scan with the rhythm of English-language hymn-tunes. For more details, see Syria Mission, “Arabic Hymnal,” n.d., Record Group 115, Box 2, Item 18, Presbyterian Historical Society.

143 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:142. Jessup notes that he preferred to preach in the colloquial language, but could not routinely do so until he abandoned preaching from manuscripts, which he always wrote in fusba. It’s remarkable, and telling, that he didn’t consider using the Arabic alphabet to write down a sermon in ‘ammiya instead.

144 After about 1880, many of the Syria Mission’s incoming members were second-generation missionaries who had spent most of their childhood in Syria, and, as a result, spoke ‘ammiya fluently. As we shall see in later chapters, this had some significant effects on the mission’s operations.

145 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:142.

146 Henry Jessup, 1:142.
of their everyday life to address the political concerns of their era. The Mission's translation rendered the song as “Askara al-Rahman” (“Soldiers of Mercy”), a song in fusha with abstract lyrics about the need for spiritual force, which the audience might have found more akin to a Gregorian chant in Latin than a popular song in their own language.\textsuperscript{147} In some ways, this classicism may have made Syrian Protestant services less accessible than their Maronite and Greek Orthodox counterparts, who had started to perform parts of their service in ‘ammiya Arabic as early as the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{148} However, despite Jessup’s laments, his American and Syrian colleagues continued to use fusha sermons, hymns, scriptures, and prayers. To create an authoritative service whose elements would compel Syrians into a proper and obedient relationship with God, they sacrificed their own tradition of vernacular worship and embedded their rhetorical repertoire in a tongue which Syrians already recognized as eloquent and sacred.

The classicism of Syrian Protestant services reproduced Ottoman Syria’s social hierarchies within the community of converts. It barred all but the most educated Syrians from complete participation in Protestant religious life. The role of fusha required pastors, preachers, and teachers to become part of the söz sahibleri if they were to be effective and authoritative guides to Scripture-reading Protestants; effectively, the new church’s human authorities had to be members of the ruling class. To build and strengthen its church, the Syria Mission, to an even greater degree than other Protestant missions worldwide, invested extensively in education throughout the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. By 1896, the Mission operated 91 Sunday schools and 127 common schools which served both boys and girls, 3 “Female seminaries,” (secondary schools for young women) 2 boys’ high schools, a theological seminary and a college.\textsuperscript{149} AL Tibawi’s pioneering account, American

\textsuperscript{147} Samuel Jessup and George Ford, \textit{Hymn Book with Tunes} (Beirut, Lebanon: American Mission Press, 1885), 56.
\textsuperscript{148} Heyberger, \textit{Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique}.
\textsuperscript{149} “Missions in Syria,” 1896, Archives, Item 857, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
Interests in Syria, argued that these educational establishments were the America’s most comprehensive and consequential project in the Levant before the First World War. All of these schools taught *fusha* so that their students could read the scripture, and all of them re-enforced the language ideology which valorized classical Arabic and its masters. In later decades, the Mission’s schools helped the Americans to forge critical alliances with both Ottoman officials, who saw missionary education as a useful tool for training their modernizing state’s administrative class, and Syria’s aristocratic and commercial elite, who saw it as a useful tool for reproducing their social status. As we shall see in later chapters, missionaries’ acts of translation integrated their institutions into the broader structures of Ottoman society.

Of course, the missionaries were important as image-makers as well as institution-builders; they created the first large bodies of informed writing about the Ottoman world by Americans for American audiences, and as many scholars have argued, their words and thoughts helped to shape and structure the American orientalisms of later periods. These writings both reflected and served the missionaries’ overall cosmic political project; their authors included information which echoed the perspectives of the local notables whose authority the missionaries wanted to emulate, but shaped its presentation to encourage American audiences to continue providing donations and volunteers to the missionary cause. I’ll provide examples of this influence in the writings of the Syria Mission’s most aggressive anti-Islamic polemicist, Henry Harris Jessup. He was both the Mission’s most prominent fundraiser and its most prolific spokesman. His writing also epitomizes the religious and civilizational arrogance which characterized the Victorian-era Anglo-American Protestant missionary project. Thomas Kidd used Jessup’s *The Women of the Arabs, The Mohammedan Missionary Problem*, and *The Setting of the Crescent and the Rising of the Cross, or, Kamil Abdul Messiah* to

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illustrate anti-Islamic tendencies in American missionary writing.\textsuperscript{151} Ussama Makdisi, offering a more expansive reading, argues that Jessup represented American exceptionalism and Orientalism writ large, describing his \textit{Fifty-Three Years in Syria} as a history which imagines a wholly modern, humane, and enlightened Protestant America and a wholly backward, cruel, and ignorant Muslim Ottoman Empire, and casts them as ultimate opposites.\textsuperscript{152} Neither of these scholarly characterizations is inaccurate, or unfair to Jessup. However, Jessup’s books reflect his curiosity as well as his arrogance, and they are marked by his linguistic and literary education under the tutelage of a Muslim scholar as well as his training at Union Theological Seminary.

This legacy is sharply visible in the way that Jessup defines and draws boundaries around Islam itself. The image that he projects is, in many ways, a misleading caricature, but it’s clearly a misleading caricature of Sunni Islam as it was practiced and expounded by the ‘ulema of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Ottoman Empire. In one pamphlet, \textit{The Mohammedan Missionary Problem}, he characterizes Muslims as a religious community closely bound by both state-sanctioned Islamic jurisprudence and the secular laws of the land.\textsuperscript{153} This declaration would have raised eyebrows among the many Ottoman Muslims who dissented from the state’s officially-sanctioned Sunni theology and Hanafi school jurisprudence. When, in that same pamphlet, he does discuss some of those groups, he denies them not just the dignity of being considered Muslims, but the dignity of being recognized as religious groups at all, classing them as members of “the numerous wild and semi-barbarous tribes which infest large districts of the Empire.” His subsequent list carelessly jumbles ethnic and religious groups together: “These are the Koords, Yezidees, Turkomans, Nusairiyeh [the present-day Allawites of northwestern Syria], Ismailiyeh [Shi’a Muslims of the Ismaili sect], Bedawin Arabs, and

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kidd, \textit{American Christians and Islam}, 48–53.
  \item Makdisi, \textit{Artillery of Heaven}, 168–72.
  \item Henry Harris Jessup, \textit{The Mohammedan Missionary Problem} (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1879), 72.
\end{itemize}
Circassians.” The Yazidis’, Allawites’, and Isma’ilis’ divergence from the Ottoman Empire’s official orthodoxy are explained by the remnants of their pre-Islamic beliefs; they are “semi-pagan tribes” not even afforded the dignity of being recognized as heretics. Jessup also characterized the “Nusayrī” or Allawite faith as a “weird system of truly diabolical mysteries” whose beliefs were “horrible and gross superstitions.” He recognized the Druze sect of Syria, who the Mission worked among for years, as a distinctive religious group with coherent beliefs, but often lapsed into treating them as a “wild” ethnic group instead, comparing them to the Modoc Indians of the Black Hills. Jessup also dismissed the Islamic practices of less-organized unorthodox groups. He wrote that “The Bedawin Arabs [ie: desert nomads] are simple monotheists, and, though regarded by the government as Mohammedans, have no religious sheikhs or imams, no hours of prayer, and rarely keep the fast of Ramadan or make the pilgrimage to Mecca. So the Moslems say: ‘There are three classes who have no religion, muleteers, Bedawin Arabs, and women,’ because they do not observe the rituals of Islam.” Muslims, then, are those who live under the regulation and discipline of the sort of religious intellectuals who taught Jessup himself. In fact, he explicitly used their judgments to discern who was and was not a Muslim. He attacked Abdullah Quilliam, a prominent British convert to Islam, by citing a critical account of Quilliam’s practices published in the Beirut Muslim newspaper Thamarat al-Fanun (“Fruits of the Arts”) by Shiekh ‘Abd al-Karim Marat of Medina. Even as he critiqued and disparaged their doctrines, Jessup took the Ottoman ‘ulema seriously and canonized their viewpoint as the “true” version of Islam.

154 Jessup, 113–14.
156 Henry Jessup, 1:124.
157 Jessup, The Setting of the Crescent and the Rising of the Cross, 41.
His relationship with the ‘ulema also complicated his efforts to disparage Islam as an empty, backward body of ritual. His writings frequently represent Muslim intellectuals as energetic opponents that the would-be Christian missionary should take seriously, and heirs to a powerful intellectual and spiritual tradition that he or she should take pains to master. Jessup offers his clearest portrait of the fervent, formidable Muslim scholar in The Mohammedan Missionary Problem:

We have already alluded to the great Mohammedan missionary university in Cairo, Egypt, with its ten thousand pupils and three hundred Mohammedan sheikhs as teachers. The central and fundamental study is the Koran and the Koranic literature, such as Arabic grammar, prosody, logic, rhetoric, with Mohammedan history and laws. These young men live in ascetic simplicity, studying, eating, and sleeping on the floor, and boarding themselves at a cost of not far from four cents a day. They are trained in the Koran, and fitted to go forth throughout the Mohammedan world as teachers and interpreters of the Koran. They are a real power in Asia and Africa, and Christian missionaries find graduates of the Azhar their ablest and most formidable enemies in these great dark continents.159

A few pages later, he even suspends his typical characterization of Islam as immutable and antimodern, noting that “One of the weapons which the Mohammedans are borrowing from Christianity in fighting Christianity is the printed page.”160 Indian Muslims like the author of the Izhar ul-Haqq, and, as Jessup mentions in his preface, Syed Ameer Ali and Syed Ahmed Khan, opposed Christian missionaries in the press with the same knowledge and fervor which the graduates of al-Azhar used to battle them from the pulpit.161 In this pamphlet and elsewhere, Jessup suggests that Christian missionaries could only face these formidable foes by mastering their own bodies of knowledge. In a list of “favorable features” that Jessup believes could help Christians evangelize the Muslim world, lists nine items which relate to tenants of Muslim belief (drawn from the Qur’an, Hadith literature, and fiqih) — monotheism, “reverence for the Old and New Testament Scriptures,”

160 Jessup, 57.
161 Jessup, 8.
veneration of Jesus as a prophet, respect for Christians and Jews as “people of the book,”
iconoclasm, prohibition of alcohol, belief in a final judgment, “the doctrine of fate, and of absolute
surrender to the decree and will of God;” and a belief in humanity’s future apostacy from Islam.162 To
have any hope of operationalizing these beliefs, Missionaries would have to understand them well.

This theme recurs in Kamil, Jessup’s biography of a Syrian Muslim convert to Protestantism
who took up the missionary cause in the port cities of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf.
Jessup presents Kamil, as a graduate of an Ottoman military school and the son of an ‘alim.163 As
such, he possessed a respectable range of Islamic religious and scholarly knowledge. After taking up
the evangelistic cause, he marshalled this knowledge in his efforts to convert other Muslims. In his
correspondence with his father, he cited passages from the Qur’an to argue that the Old and New
Testaments were products of divine revelation still binding on Muslim believers.164 He used a
similar rhetorical strategy to appeal to young Muslims in Yemen, citing four Surahs to argue that
Islam enjoined living and believing according to the New Testament.165 He coupled these scriptural
arguments with appeals to learned Muslim practice, demonstrating his skill at tajweed (a beautiful
form of recitation used in Muslim sermons and prayers) with texts from both the Qur’an and the
Van Dyck Bible.166 These techniques failed to convince his father, but they did draw the rapt
attention of the young Yemenis who Kamil encountered. His deeper knowledge of Islam, Jessup
implies, made him a stronger advocate for Christianity. Kamil’s Islamic training helped to bring him
and his proselytes closer to God.

162 Jessup, 59–106.
164 Jessup, 92–93.
165 Jessup, 67.
166 Jessup, 66–68.
Makdisi’s analysis of Jessup’s writings also notes the value he placed on knowing about Islam. He argues that it was a manifestation of his self-conception as an enlightened, objective, and impartial scholarly observer, dispassionately examining the Middle East that he is elevated above, and separate from. Jessup’s knowledge did serve this function, and he put his writing in dialogue with the othering discourses that Edward Said described so aptly in *Orientalism.*

*The Mohammedan Missionary Problem* urges readers to dive into orientalist texts from George Sale’s translation of the Qur’an to Edward Lane’s *Modern Egyptians,* and only grudgingly acknowledged dissenting responses, in English, by Syed Ameer Ali and Syed Ahmed Khan. But these Western writers were not the only, or even the principal source of Jessup and his colleagues’ knowledge of Islam and the Middle East. Jessup, like Kamil, had studied under the Muslim scholars who he had presented with a frothing combination of fear, disgust, and admiration. Islamic knowledge was both the missionary’s greatest obstacle and his most important tool; Muslim scholars were both his adversaries and his teachers; their definitions of Islamic belief and practice, and its boundaries became those that he presented to his fellow Americans.

Every method of learning or knowledge-making necessarily creates blind spots; the missionaries’ study methods were no exception. Some of those blind spots emerged from time and energy constraints on missionaries’ studies. Both Van Dyck and Ford asserted that missionaries should ideally spend their first year or so in the field doing nothing but studying the language, but acknowledged that in practice, many missionary recruits would have work obligations which would prevent them from doing that. Throughout the 19th century, the missionaries frequently complained that they were understaffed and asked their sponsoring boards to dispatch more missionaries to

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Syria. This perpetual need for more staff stemmed from its members’ and sponsors’ racial and cultural prejudices; the Syria Mission generally insisted in putting Anglo-Americans in charge of its stations’ and schools’ correspondence, finances, and administration, and frequently established new institutions which would need American personnel to operate. The epidemics which periodically struck Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon during the summers also frequently killed new missionaries, who were unused to Syria’s germ environment; between 1870 and 1888, seven missionaries died premature deaths in the field, a harsh toll for an organization which never had more than thirty American personnel in the field during that period, and also had to deal with members’ retirements and home leaves. In practice, then, many of the Mission’s recruits quickly took up occupations which limited the time that they could spend studying their field and its languages. This time constraint interacted with the biases that their study methods imparted to limit their view of Islam and Arabic literature, preventing them from mobilizing popular forms of rhetoric, storytelling, and piety for their conversion project or accurately representing them in their writings. In 1895, one of their converts, Said Jureidini, returning from the United States, established a fast-growing Lebanese Baptist church which embraced services in the vernacular in earnest; its sermons were grounded in popular forms of speech and rhetoric. His choice illuminates a path which the American missionaries were unable to recognize as valid. Their eagerness to embrace power through their studies precluded such possibilities in both their evangelism and their orientalism.

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169 This frequently recurs in Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes, 1870-1888.”
170 See Ch. 4 for more details
172 Melanie Trexler, Evangelizing Lebanon: Baptists, Missions, and the Question of Cultures (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).
Now, our scale changes; we shall pass from the power dynamics of an Arabic lesson to those of the American economy and the Ottoman state. We will see that missionaries’ embrace of Ottoman elites’ ideologies of knowledge were ultimately accompanied by their embrace of Ottoman elites themselves, and that their efforts to educate the Ottoman world were fueled by their growing friendships with the Northeastern US’s ruling class. The question of Protestant missions’ relationship with both capital and empire has long preoccupied historians and historical anthropologists. Most scholars have argued that missionaries’ educational and evangelistic projects naturally aligned them with capitalism and European empires; and against non-Christian states and alternative economic systems. One especially influential study, John and Jean Comaroff’s paradigmatic Of Revelation and Revolution, draws a direct line between Protestant missionaries’ activities, the expansion of capitalism, and the 19th century British conquest of the Tswana people, who lived on what became South Africa’s northern frontier.173 Sally Merry Engle’s study of the American Board’s most prominent early 19th century mission field, Hawai’i, where missionary activities paved the way for legal and political reforms which themselves paved the way for white planters’ takeover of the island, follows the same trajectory.174 Historians of American missionaries’ relationship with the Ottoman Empire, including Hans-Lukas Keiser, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, and Selim Deringil have also taken this tack, arguing that American missionaries opposed and undermined the Sublime State while promoting new forms of economic and political organization.175

174 Merry, Colonizing Hawai’i.
175 Kieser, Nearest East; Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Domestic Frontiers: Gender, Reform, and American Interventions in the Ottoman Balkans and the Near East (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Deringil, Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire.
Other scholars have challenged the presumption of an immediate and natural alliance between missionaries, European empires, and capital. Andrew Porter argues that British missionaries’ willingness to antagonize local elites that colonial officials wanted to cultivate, as well as their desire to protect populations who the officials wanted to exploit, frequently erupted into fierce rhetorical combat. American missionaries operating within the British sphere of influence also frequently developed tense and complex relationships with their overlords. As scholars like Emily Conroy-Krutz and Heather Sharkey have shown, American Protestant working in Britain’s most important colonies, India and Egypt, both benefitted from imperial assistance and chafed under imperial constraints, seeking protection but also protesting restrictions on proselytization. Here, I will be working within and expanding this alternative intellectual tradition by exploring the contingency of American Protestant missionaries’ relationships with US capitalists and their relationships with non-Christian empires and political leaders. The Syria Mission’s members enjoyed the protection and patronage of British diplomats and New York plutocrats, but they developed equally important alliances with the Druze shaykhs of Mount Lebanon and the ruling bureaucrats of the Ottoman Empire. These relationships were vital to the Mission’s survival and subsistence. The Mission’s members worked hard to cultivate them, and strategically shifted their stances when geopolitical and economic conditions shifted. Missionaries’ identities and ideologies shaped their needs and priorities, but never clearly predicted their partnerships; to build the institutions which evangelization required, they approached potential patrons flexibly and opportunistically.

Contingency is often most visible in moments of change and crisis. Two such crises, the Syrian Civil War of 1860 and the American Civil War of 1861-1865, illuminate how the Syria mission’s members mobilized identity and ideology in response to their changing needs and

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176 Porter, Religion Versus Empire?
177 Conroy-Krutz, Christian Imperialism; Sharkey, American Evangelicals in Egypt.
conditions. The 19th century’s Syrian Civil War, which begun as a conflict between Druze aristocrats and Christian clerics and peasants in Mount Lebanon, and spilled into the streets of Damascus, shook or destroyed social and political structures that the Americans had come to depend on for their safety. No longer able to rely on their old protectors, the British empire and its allies among Mount Lebanon’s Druze notables, the missionaries entered a new relationship with the Ottoman central bureaucracy’s handpicked representatives in Syria. The American Civil War, which began just as the crisis in the mission field ended, cut off the missionaries’ regular stream of funding, but ultimately helped them to develop deeper relationships with the USA’s ascendant ruling class, whose donations allowed them to significantly expand the scope and scale of their work. The missionaries’ relationships with US capitalists and the Levant’s empires were not pre-determined by their evangelistic, educational, or “civilizing” commitments, but flowed from the particular challenges and opportunities that emerged from the American and Ottoman political economies.

To understand the shift, we must understand what came before it. Here, I offer a sketch of missionaries’ position in the political economies of Ottoman Syria and the United States in the mission’s long infancy, between 1820 and 1860. I’ll start with the Ottoman Empire, which encompassed their mission field. The early 19th century was a period of upheaval throughout the Sultan’s “well-protected domains.” In the 1820s, Sultan Mahmud II saw his Empire’s old military-bureaucratic institutions flail and fail as his Greek subjects revolted and Russia invaded its Balkan territories from the north. He purged the “Phanariot” Greek merchant houses of Constantinople, the Empire’s unofficial foreign service, and abolished the Janissary Corps, the longtime backbone of its military. These decisions paved the way for the Tanzimat, a mid-century period of reform which saw the genesis of a new Ottoman army, navy, bureaucracy, and infrastructure. Paradoxically,

178 Philliou, Biography of an Empire, chap. 3.
in the short run, they also increased the Ottoman state’s dependence on the Muslim and non-Muslim religious elites who had traditionally buttressed imperial rule. Mahmud II only thwarted the Janissaries with support from the 'ulama, or Muslim religious scholars, of Istanbul.179 Christian leaders also played a part. The Ottoman historian Christine Philliou, describing the aftermath of the “Auspicious Incident” that abolished the Janissary corps, offers this remarkable illustration: “Within İstanbul, janissaries had performed a range of peacetime municipal and civil duties, such as fighting the frequent fires in the city. After the Corps was abolished, the janissary firemen were dismissed, and the Armenian patriarch was called upon to provide ten thousand Armenians from Anatolia to serve as the new firefighting force for the capital city. Two thousand Armenians reported for work within four days and became the new firemen of İstanbul.”180 Because they leveled the Ottoman state’s existing bureaucracy, the Empire’s reforms required cooperation from older religious institutions.

Between the 1831 and 1840, Ottoman rulers also faced a direct challenge from the rebellious governor of Egypt, Mehmet Ali Pasha. This ambitious statesman and soldier had taken the reins of the Empire’s most populous and economically Arabic-speaking province in 1805. In the decades after his accession, he pursued an extensive program of administrative reform, economic development, military expansion, and colonial conquest. He used his new army to conquer the Sudan for himself, and to fight on his Sultan’s behalf against rebels in the Hijaz and Greece. After the Greek Revolt, he demanded that the Sublime Porte add Syria to his domains, and, when the authorities in Istanbul refused to comply, his son Ibrahim Pasha invaded the region. By 1832, Ibrahim’s armies reached Anatolia, and decisively defeated Ottoman forces at the battle of Konya.

Only an intervention by Britain, France, and Russia, at the Sultan’s invitation, prevented Mehmet Ali from seizing control of the empire. A subsequent intervention in 1840, led by Britain, Austria, and Russia, pushed the Pasha’s forces from Syria, but established Egypt and the Sudan as his family’s permanent, hereditary, autonomous fief.\(^{181}\) Mehmet Ali’s revolts both reflected and contributed to the empire’s decentralization and the weakness of its central institutions during the 19\(^{th}\) century’s first decades. The Empire’s dependence on foreign interventions against Mehmet Ali was part of a broader trend. As Christine Philiou has argued, the Sultan and his ministers turned to diplomacy as a solution to domestic problems.\(^{182}\) This increased the Sublime Porte’s reliance on European powers in general, and Great Britain in particular. Their interventions helped to guarantee the Empire’s territorial integrity at the expense of its sovereignty.

The crisis of the reforming Ottoman state was particularly pronounced in Syria. In the reform era, Ottoman governors dispatched to cities like Damascus, Sidon, Aleppo, Jerusalem, and Naablus could only raise revenues and soldiers with the help of prominent urban ‘ulama and merchant families, who sometimes worked to overthrow provincial governors they disliked.\(^{183}\) Most of Syria’s great cities were close to highland regions integrated into the Ottoman polity by their rulers, military aristocrats who pledged allegiance and paid tribute to the Sultan, but avoided direct central control. These problematic partners of the Sublime State included the Druze and Maronite shaykhs of Mount Lebanon, the hill-lords of central Palestine, and the Kurdish princes who ruled the East Anatolian mountains near Aleppo and Mosul. Upland nobles sometimes conspired with urban notables against Ottoman rulers.\(^{184}\) Mount Lebanon’s aristocracy and clergy played a particularly important role in the reform-era histories of both the Syria mission and Syria itself.

\(^{181}\) I draw this account from the superb Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*.

\(^{182}\) Philiou, *Biography of an Empire*, chaps. 5–6.


\(^{184}\) Hourani, 51.
Under the direction of their leader, the Emir Bashir Shihab, they supported the Egyptian invasion of 1831. In 1840, they revolted against Egyptian rule, inviting and co-operating with a British, French, and Ottoman intervention to restore something like the old order. After the intervention, the Mountain’s Maronite and Druze notables invoked the text of one Ottoman reformist proclamation, the Gülhane decree of 1839, to demand rights and recognition as members of their particular religious communities, and the French and British, respectively, continued to support them in that capacity. Religious leaders, including the Patriarch of the Maronite church, took on an ever-more prominent role in local politics. These aristocratic and clerical notables were a thorn in Ottoman governors’ side, but they also helped to uphold order and secure the crucial cooperation and support of the Great Powers. They remained an important part of the Ottoman state’s apparatus in Syria.

Between 1820 and 1860, American missionaries frequently found themselves at odds with this imperial order or notables. Indeed, they frequently and deliberately antagonized Mount Lebanon’s Maronite Catholic clerics and aristocrats’. Pliny Fisk, Levi Parsons, and Jonas King, the first “American apostles” in the Middle East, were ever-hungry for more knowledge about the region, its languages, and its culture. However, they and their immediate successors stridently sought to spread their faith with drama and defiance. They were expansionist Christians, full of zeal to convert the world in a single generation, anything but meek and mild.

In Isaac Bird's *Bible Work in Bible Lands*, the early mission’s earliest published history, the missionaries’ early encounters with

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185 Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 53.
186 Makdisi, 58–59.
187 Makdisi, 60–61.
188 This is a key argument of Heyrman, *American Apostles*.
Ottoman religious communities followed a clear pattern. After the missionaries arrived in a new city, like Malta, Smyrna, or Beirut, they would begin by making contact with resident Americans, Britons, or known Protestant sympathizers. Then, they would study the local languages, if they did not already know them. Once they had gained some of the knowledge which would let them navigate the area, they began to meet local notables, preach publicly, and cultivate relationships with potential converts. Finally, they would confront the Empire's long-established Christian clergy in impassioned debate. One such debate, between the American missionary Jonas King and the Maronite Catholic monks of Mount Lebanon's old capital, Deir al-Qamar:

Here Mr. King entered into a detail of some of the abominable practices of the Church of Rome about the time of the Reformation, and on his remarking that the Church at that time had become very corrupt, both priests and people, Father Paul and all present exclaimed, "The Church corrupt! The Church corrupt! Impossible! Impossible!"

[King replied] “Not at all impossible. The Jewish Church was once the only Church of God, and did it not fall into error and wickedness?"

[Monks:] "But the Christian Church cannot wander, for Christ said, 'Lo, I am with you always.'"

[King:] "Yes, with his Church to prevent it from destruction, but not from wandering, for St. Paul says that in the last time there shall come in errors — many shall depart from the faith, giving heed to

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190 As I argued in the previous chapter, we should always remember that missionaries’ published sources served instrumental purposes and treat them with appropriate skepticism, especially when they describe encounters or relationships between missionaries and Ottomans. In this case, however, many details of the itinerary that Bird describes accord with early missionaries’ diaries and correspondence, and, as we shall see later, local historical memory, so it makes sense to accept their broad outlines, if not their florid details. For more about how this account corresponds with material in diaries and correspondence, see Heyrman, American Apostles.

191 Christianity had a long history in Ottoman Syria, and the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches had strong institutional presences there. See Heyberger, Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique.

192 The Maronites are a distinctive religious community who made up a plurality of Mount Lebanon’s population in the 19th century. They affiliated themselves with the Roman Catholic church during the Crusades, but maintain some distinctive rules and practices.
doctrines of devils" (Father Paul interrupting, "Yes, yes, that is very true"), "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving."

This word among so many priests and monks was like fire to powder, and there was at once an explosion from the whole body of them. So great was the tumult that for some time it was impossible to speak. 193

It's unlikely that these encounters were the explosive religious and rhetorical smackdowns that Bird paints for us. But even if they did not proceed as Bird described them, these confrontations had a lasting social significance that echoed in their confessional foes' own hagiographies. Maronite Catholics told of how their most far-famed clergyman, Butrus “Pierre” Bustani, archbishop of Tyre and Sidon, stood firm against the missionaries’ challenges, naming him the “Thunder of the Protestants.” 194 Catholic notables saw these interlopers as enemies.

Throughout this cycle of travel, study, communication and confrontation, the missionaries approached the Empire's Muslim majority with caution. They engaged in lengthy dialogues (and sometimes even student-teacher relationships and friendships) with scholars, but shied away from publicly challenging Islamic doctrines, institutions, and religious leaders. The Empire sentenced an Armenian Muslim apostate to death in 1844, and imprisoned Muslim converts to Protestantism in Constantinople as late as 1864. 195 Although the early missionaries burned with a fervor to evangelize the globe, in practice, they picked their battles. In the Levant, they focused their preaching on the region's existing Christian sects (Eastern Orthodox, Greek and Maronite Catholic, and Syriac) hoping that these “nominal Christians” could one day help them to convert Muslims, lending manpower, political support, and local linguistic and cultural knowledge to a broader evangelistic effort throughout the Ottoman Empire. The missionaries sought not only to win adherents from

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194 This appears in French sources from the period, like Baptistin Poujoulat, *La vérité sur la Syrie et l'expédition française* (Paris, France: Gaume frères et J. Duprey, 1861), 75.
195 Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 74, 80.
those churches, but to make them into instruments of evangelism; recruiting their clergy, challenging the authority of their traditional ecclesiastical hierarchies, and transforming their beliefs and practices.\footnote{Isaac Bird’s account of the Mission’s beginnings makes this goal clear. Bird, \textit{Bible Work in Bible Lands, or, Events in the History of the Syria Mission}, 16–17.}

The Syria missionaries’ focus on converting Christians brought them to Mount Lebanon and the nearby port cities of Beirut, Sidon, and Tripoli, where Syria’s largest concentrations of Christians lived.\footnote{Heyberger, \textit{Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique}, 22–26.} Their confrontational repertoire of denunciations, debates, and harangues challenged Ottoman political authority even though they left the Empire's dominant faith untouched. For centuries, the Ottomans had embraced a pragmatic, ad-hoc mosaic of laws and arrangements granting its different religious minorities distinct privileges and obligations. Under these systems, the Empire's non-Muslim clergy had the responsibility and authority to tax and police their flocks. In doing so, they upheld both the Empire's authority and their own.\footnote{Ussama Makdisi offers an elegant and immediately relevant portrayal of the system’s functioning in Ottoman Syria in Makdisi, \textit{Artillery of Heaven}, chap. 2: "The Grammar of Heresy".} In peripheral regions like Mount Lebanon, Christian clergy, especially the Maronite church’s priests and monks, worked together with Christian, Muslim, and Druze feudal nobles to provide education and administer justice. Some noble families, like the Khazins of the Kisrawan district, gave the church land to sustain monasteries, and sons to serve as abbots and bishops.\footnote{Makdisi, \textit{The Culture of Sectarianism}, 39.}

As we saw above, the early decades of Ottoman reform, which eviscerated the Empire’s military bureaucracy, and the aftermath of the 1840 intervention in Syria made these clerics even more powerful and important. When the missionaries confronted Ottoman Syria's Orthodox and Catholic clergymen, they were taking on a part of the Ottoman political system, albeit a somewhat recalcitrant one. In the early 19th century, American missionaries' beliefs were, as Ussama Makdisi argues, an uncomfortable fit with the
Ottoman Empire's multi-religious society, and they were an even worse fit for its sectarian political order.\(^{200}\)

Throughout this early period, Ottoman officials at all levels, preoccupied with rebellions in Greece and Egypt, treated the missionaries with malign neglect. They did not actively persecute the missionaries, but usually looked the other way when Syria's existing Christian clergy, seeking to counter the missionaries' efforts, subjected Protestant converts to property destruction, threats, and violence. The Maronite Catholic Patriarch Yusuf Hobaish imprisoned one convert, Asa'ad Shidyaq and held him until his 1830 death, with the complicity of Emir Bashir Shihab, who the Sublime Porte had appointed ruler of Lebanon.\(^{201}\) In 1847, in the town of Hasbeyya, the local Greek Orthodox community assaulted, sued, and destroyed the houses of the town's Protestants, with the complicity of Habib Pasha, the Porte's representative in Damascus.\(^{202}\) In 1858 and 1859, Amin Bey al-Shuhail, the administrator of Qana, near Saida (Sidon), refused to intervene when local Catholics and Orthodox Christians carried out similar attacks on the Protestant community in Saida.\(^{203}\) The state's resources were generally thinly-stretched at this time, but Ottoman officials were particularly loath to spend them protecting Protestants; earlier in the 1840s and 1850s, they made several active interventions to defuse conflicts between Mount Lebanon’s larger and more politically significant Druze and Maronite communities.\(^{204}\)

However, the Ottoman state’s domestic reforms and diplomatic entanglements gave the missionaries and their converts formal avenues to protest and resist local notables’ hostility. An


\(^{201}\) Makdisi, chap. 5: "An Arab Puritan".


\(^{203}\) William Woodbridge Eddy, “Letter to Consul Noel Moore,” March 18, 1859, AA 7.5, Box 1, Folder 11, American University of Beirut Archives.

\(^{204}\) See Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*. 
1847 Imperial decree recognizing the Protestant religious community, and then the Great Reform Edict, or *Hatt-i-Humayun*, of 1856 gave them the same corporate rights as Catholic and Orthodox Ottomans. The Reform Edict was both a part of the overall project of liberalizing and modernizing the Empire and, perhaps even more importantly, a useful tool for placating Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire's most important ally in the Crimean War, which had only ended earlier that year. Neither of these edicts immediately ended local officials' indifference to Syrian Protestants' plight; the Hasbeyya incident continued even after the 1847 decree, and the Qana incidents followed the Reform Edict; but they did allow the Protestants and their missionary allies to appeal to the central government. After 1860 and a series of important political events I will discuss later, no Syrian Protestant community experienced targeted communal violence.

The missionaries invoked these decrees to ask the British government for protection. During the 1840s and 1850s, Britain's representatives in the Ottoman Empire made several interventions on behalf of American Protestant missionaries and their converts. The missionaries could use three major tools to encourage their interventions. One was a sense of cultural, religious, and racial kinship. The Syria Mission's members understood that the British Empire was a potential protector and guarantor; when they first arrived in the Ottoman Empire's cities, British missionaries and diplomats were often their first point of contact. The Ottoman Empire's resident Britons received them warmly as colleagues or co-religionists. The American missionaries, conscious of their vulnerability, deliberately cultivated this sense of kinship in their interactions with influential British travelers and diplomats in Syria. Their encounters with British consuls and vice-consuls stationed in Beirut, Saida, Tarabulus, and Damascus were frequent, friendly, and sometimes even

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205 Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 77–79.
206 I haven't come across any evidence of such violence in my extensive archival research, and Henry Jessup doesn't mention any in *Fifty-Three Years in Syria* even though his readers would have eaten it up like popcorn.
207 See, for example, Bird, *Bible Work in Bible Lands, or, Events in the History of the Syria Mission*, 17–20.
familial. They called on one another as houseguests, and contracted more formal and intimate relationships. In 1842, Cornelius Van Dyck married Julia Abbot, the daughter of Britain’s first Consul General for Syria, Peter Abbott. Julia’s mother was an Italian woman whom Isaac Bird inducted into the Protestant faith in 1827.208 A parallel set of friendships and family ties connected British consuls’ diplomatic and household staff with the missionaries’ Syrian converts and friends. For example, Saliba Jerwan, a convert who entered the mission’s service as an evangelist and a pastor, first encountered the Protestant faith as a boy, serving in the household of the Arbeely family, who served as Britain’s vice-consuls in Sidon throughout the 19th century.209 Analogously, Noel Moore, the British Consul-General in Beirut, hired Khalil Mishaqa, a relative of Mikhail Mishaqa, a prominent Protestant convert and friend of Eli Smith, to serve as his dragoman, or translator, in 1851.210 The Mission and its Syrian friends worked to make themselves both figurative and literal relatives of Britain’s official representatives in Ottoman Syria.

The Syria missionaries could also seek British protection through the ties that they cultivated with British Calvinists and evangelical Anglicans. As early as 1832, they began to distribute scriptures and tracts provided by the British and Foreign Bible Society.211 In the 1850s, they also developed a working relationship with missionaries from the Church of Scotland operating in Damascus.212 The devout supporters of these missionary organizations and members of their evangelical social networks were an important British political constituency. These often-rich and sometimes titled pious Britons strenuously objected to what they perceived as mistreatment of

208 “Memorial Minute for Mrs. CVA Van Dyck,” December 3, 1918, Record Group 492, Box 4, Item 2 “Syria Mission Minutes 1913-1922,” Presbyterian Historical Society. The document unfortunately omits the name of Julia’s mother.
209 Saliba Jerwan, “Autobiography of Saliba Jerwan,” 1911, 3–7, Archives Item 428, Near East School of Theology Special Collections. Jerwan was born in 1836, and thus, became a Protestant in the 1840s or 1850s.
211 See “British and Foreign Bible Society, 1832-1865,” 1865 1832, Record Group 115, Box 4, Folder 12, Presbyterian Historical Society.
212 “Church of Scotland, 1851-1959,” 1959 1851, Record Group 115, Box 1, Item 25, Presbyterian Historical Society.
Protestants by a British ally. When the Qana Catholic and Orthodox communities persecuted the town's Protestants, WW Eddy, the American missionary on the scene, tapped these ties and sent a letter to the British Evangelical Alliance. That body asked the British Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Malmesbury, to help. The Earl took their concerns seriously, and asked the embassy in Constantinople to intervene.\textsuperscript{213} The missionaries had a stick as well as a carrot; they could use the threat of public outrage or political embarrassment to compel British diplomats to act on their behalf. Growing connections between the British and American missionary movements and the British public’s sympathy towards the transnational Protestant missionary community made the 19\textsuperscript{th} century British imperial power a great boon to American Protestant evangelists, who could now rely on powerful imperial protectors in much of the world.

American missionaries also cultivated relationships with British officials by furthering their strategic interests. Although they may not have known it, their efforts supported British diplomats’ long-term plan to develop a significant Protestant population in the Ottoman empire. This community, it was hoped, would sympathize with Great Britain, much as Syria's Catholic and Orthodox minorities already sympathized with France and Russia, and provide Britain with pretexts for political meddling. In a series of letters regarding the Hasbeyya incident, Consul Wood of Damascus proposed, and Foreign Secretary Viscount Palmerston endorsed, an intervention with precisely this goal in mind.\textsuperscript{214} Missionaries also helped British diplomats’ work in much more immediate and conscious ways. They often provided diplomats with up-to-date information on the areas where they lived and worked, as William Thomson did when he informed Noel Moore about

\textsuperscript{213} Much of this exchange was published in a December 1858 issue of \textit{Evangelical Christendom}, the press organ of the Evangelical Alliance. AUB Archives AA 7.5.1, Box 1, Folder 11
\textsuperscript{214} Wood, “Letter to Viscount Palmerston.”
Druze resistance to Ottoman conscription efforts in 1852. Material as well as affective ties bound British officials to American missionaries’ interests.

The Syria Missionaries worked to cultivate relationships with influential Britons even when doing so jarred with their religious sensibilities. Somewhat remarkably, they often chose to swallow their convictions and build relationships with Britons hostile to the missionary project, and even Christianity itself. William Thomson put his religious scruples on hold to perform an official funeral service for the well-connected British aristocrat, archaeologist and adventuress Hester Stanhope, who he described as “sensible, well-informed, and extremely shrewd,” and the mistress of “extraordinary powers of conversation.” Stanhope, the niece of prime minister William Pitt, and an illustrious woman in her own right, might have been amused by the missionary’s affectionate description, and the Protestant service he spoke over her body. Her own distinctive beliefs combined agnosticism about God’s nature with certainty of her own divine inspiration. This faith was a far cry from the missionary’s own strict Calvinism. His colleagues at home might have raised an eyebrow if they knew he was performing a ritual normally reserved for community members over the body of a famous but well-connected heretic, but the ceremony allowed him to perform in front of most of the area’s resident Britons. Thomson’s colleague Joshua Ford showed even greater discretion when he befriended the archaeologist and diplomat Austen Henry Layard on an 1850 exploratory trip to Mosul in Ottoman Iraq. Ford’s letters suggest that he was exceptionally pious; perhaps even more so than many of his colleagues. He ended an August 1865 missive to his son George with this meditation on religious duty and concern for salvation:


“The forty years of my existence seem but as a dream when I look back upon them, and if I look forward, they seem still less in comparison with the eternity before me. More than twenty five of them have been consecrated in some measure to the service of Christ… I would record…that there is nothing really worth seeking or having but the love of God and union to him in faith and obedience, and there is nothing wholly and necessarily evil but departure from God and disregard of his will. Choose Him as your portion, my dear child; seek him daily, hourly, constantly, and consider all else worthless in comparison; and thus whether your life on Earth be long or short, it will end in bliss and life eternal.”

However, Ford’s correspondence with Layard suggests that during at least some days and hours, he was willing to put evangelism aside and avoid defending his faith even in conversation with an interlocutor who actively disparaged it. After the missionary returned to his station in Aleppo, the archaeologist wrote to thank him, both for the pleasure of his company and his “kindness and delicacy in not touching upon religious subjects during our intercourse at Mosul.” Layard was “most averse to discussions of that nature” and uncomfortable with “the dogmas of Christianity,” and appreciated the missionary’s forbearance. For a man like Joshua Ford, whose faith was central to his life and outlook, silence in the face of Layard’s dismissal likely would have been painful. However, he might have been able to justify it as a service to his Mission’s long-term interests. Layard was a well-connected and influential man. His archaeological work in Mesopotamia helped to lay the groundwork for later British imperial ambitions in the region, and, in the 19th century’s middle decades, he played an instrumental role in establishing a more interventionist, humanitarian role for Britain’s consuls in the Ottoman Empire. Ford and his

colleagues probably reasoned that even apostate Britons could be valuable allies who could defend
the institutions and authorities which they believed true Protestantism needed to survive and thrive.

The Mission’s other key local protectors offered even greater challenges to their Protestant
sensibilities. These were the Druze Sheikhs and Emirs who ruled Mount Lebanon’s southern
regions, the Shuf and the Metn. When the Shihab family ruled the Mountain, Druze aristocrats
collected revenue, owned large tracts of land, and administered justice in districts they controlled.
They also cultivated the loyalty of peasant farmers and fighting men through their patronage and
prestige. In 1840, they led the revolt against Egyptian rule, and, with support from their British
allies, won paramount control of the Druze-majority villages of the Shuf and the religiously
pluralistic villages of South Lebanon in the peace settlement. When they traveled into the
mountains of Lebanon, the missionaries mostly worked in the Druze-dominated mixed districts.
Their first stations there, established between 1840 and 1860, were in the villages of Bhamdoun,
‘Abeih, Suq al-Gharb, and Deir al-Qamr, all in the Druze-ruled half of Mount Lebanon. As
Ussama Makdisi points out, American missionaries sought the protection of Druze emirs who, in
turn, saw them as a source of useful knowledge and “a conduit to British power.” The Americans
and their Syrian employees expended labor and treasure to cultivate their relationships with the
Druze notables who protected them. Druze leaders welcomed the mission’s day schools with open
arms even as they and their followers continued to resist or avoid conversion. The mission’s first
high school, the ‘Abeih seminary, was supposed to train Syrians to evangelize and teach in the
Mission’s service, but it quickly took on a number of Druze students with no stated interest in

222 Makdisi, 61–65.
223 Tibawi, American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901, 130, 146; “1858 Report of the ‘Abeih Station,” 1858, Record Group 115,
Box 1, Item 5, “Abeih Station 1844-1874,” Presbyterian Historical Society; William Bird, “1859 Deir al Qamr Station
Report,” 1859, Record Group 115, Box 6, Item 19, Presbyterian Historical Society.
224 Makdisi, The Culture of Sectarianism, 91.
conversion, including the son of an Emir. In doing so, the Syria Mission used resources earmarked for evangelism to cultivate ties with the local nobility.

The narratives that the missionaries presented to audiences back at home depicted this work as purely evangelistic. In an 1840 issue of the *Missionary Herald*, his missionary board’s widely-read periodical, William Thomson called for “immediate and extended labors among the Druzes” in the wake of the 1840 intervention. Perhaps misinterpreting his own ignorance of the more esoteric and concealed aspects of Druze belief and practice, he characterized their faith as “a strange, absurd, but strongly rooted system of irreligion.” With more detailed information about their faith, missionaries might establish an educational system, teach Druze children “the doctrines of the Bible,” and “overthrow at once their awful superstition throughout their whole nation,” or convince the most respected Druze religious initiates to help them convert the common people. This stated plan was broadly consistent with the missionaries’ long-term strategy for converting Muslims and other non-Christians in the Ottoman Empire. However, Thomson’s description neglected the fact that the mission’s ongoing efforts to convert the Druze were almost entirely unsuccessful, and that there were no indications they would improve in the near future. Thomson’s omissions do not suggest naivete, but rather, an awareness that the mission’s willingness to provide services to non-Christian political leaders might make his pious American readers uncomfortable. But to succeed in its goals and create the institutions which might Christianize the region, the Mission would need to survive and operate in the Ottoman political and economic worlds. Their political

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225 “1850 Report of the Abeih Seminary,” March 6, 1851, Record Group 115, Box 1, Item 5, “Abeih Station 1844-1874,” Presbyterian Historical Society.
226 Druze religious law forbids initiates from sharing the details of their more esoteric rituals and doctrines with outsiders.
228 See previous chapter.
position in the Ottoman Empire responded to those needs, and it was not dictated by religious affinities and affiliations.

The missionaries’ relationship with American capital was just as important to its survival functioning as its relationship with Ottoman Syria’s notables, and, in some ways, almost as fraught. Missionaries’ sacred work inextricably tied them to the world of the market. The first American missionaries in the Levant, Pliny Fiske and Levi Parsons, caught a clipper plying the Salem to Smyrna shipping route, using America’s blossoming long-distance trade to reach their mission field.229 Thirty years later, their successors bought steamship tickets.230 Once they arrived, they also had to pay for food and shelter. As their enterprises grew, their need for space grew as well, so they got cozy with local land agents. Each of those newly-bought buildings needed cleaning and maintenance, and the missionaries’ families needed cooked food and care, so the Americans also hired local servants. Land and labor were much cheaper than they were back in New York, but travel and subsistence still carried costs.231 The work of exploration, education, and evangelism pulled missionaries into even more transactions. To do their work in Syria, they had to continually seek land and labor. Any teacher or preacher needed to speak the local language. As the previous chapter shows, the mission’s members had to hire local intellectuals to teach them. The schools that they opened throughout the region needed teachers, even though their students could often afford only small fees. In 1851, the Abeih station alone ran up $6,569.12 in expenses, or the equivalent of about 48 New York farmworkers’ annual wages.232 The mission’s common schools and academies

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229 Heyrman, American Apostles, 88–90.
231 Bliss, 113–30.
needed meeting places, which the missionaries, not allowed to officially own property, had to either rent or purchase and specify as *awqaf*, or tax-exempt charitable endowments, a process that required them to pay officials’ fees and hire local land agents.\(^{233}\) Creating the Arabic Bible that was so important to their mission also required significant outlays. The missionaries had to pay Butrus Bustani, Nassif al-Yaziji, and Yusuf al-Air for their assistance in translating it, and to print it and other tracts, they needed to establish a press of their own in Beirut. By 1850, the press employed a lay printer from Great Britain and five Syrians who served as compositors or press operators.\(^{234}\)

Before 1860, the Syrian Protestant church had a relatively small membership, which couldn’t possibly sustain all of these expenditures. Indeed many of its members were employees of the mission. In 1851, 14 of 25 members affiliated with Beirut’s congregation worked for the Mission as teachers, translators, evangelists, or colporteurs.\(^{235}\) This community could hardly afford to sustain a strong ministry on its own, and many of its members, who had sometimes alienated their old religious communities, depended on the Mission for their livelihood. The missionaries’ disbursements of funds helped to sustain and maintain its community of converts as well as its active enterprises.

Thus, the evangelistic struggle required American capital to proceed. But in antebellum America, both the nature of the US currency and the distribution of American wealth made it difficult for the missionaries to raise funds they could use overseas. Furthermore, the Syria Mission’s understanding of its own goals and interests often created conflicts with the organizations

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\(^{233}\) For details, see Syria Mission, “Property,” 1840, Record Group 115, Box 15, Folders 9-17, Presbyterian Historical Society.


that raised funds on their behalf in the US. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), founded in 1810, financed the Mission’s work until 1870. The Board drew its funding and personnel from America’s Congregationalist and northern (“New School”) Presbyterian denominations. Most of these churches’ members lived in the mid-Atlantic, the upper Midwest, or New England. Consequently, the Board and its missionaries had a strong Northern sectional character. All of the “seven pioneers” who Henry Jessup described as founders of the Syria Mission were from New York, New England, or Ohio. The Board’s sectional ties did offer opportunities to raise funds from the New York and New England’s wealthy and influential merchant families; its first headquarters was Salem, one of the early republic’s most prosperous and cosmopolitan ports.

However, the missionaries’ denominational and sectional ties often hampered, rather than helped, their search for funding. A story from the posthumous “memorials” of the New York merchant William E Dodge, who became one of the Mission’s biggest benefactors in the postwar period, hints at the missionaries’ hurdles. In this episode, Dodge, then a 13-year-old schoolboy in Borzahville, Connecticut, sought to help out Obookiah, a Hawaiian convert to Protestant Christianity who had come to New Haven seeking knowledge that would help him to educate and evangelize his countrymen. Dodge and his friends had little money, so they grew potatoes in a nearby swamp, and sold their harvest to buy sheets and clothes for the Hawaiian missionary. Dodge probably told this story to emphasize his piety, his commitment to the missionary project, and his businesslike virtues of industry and thrift. We should not accept it at face value. His claim

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237 Henry Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, vol. 1, chap. 3.
239 The “memorial” was a Gilded-Age genre which cobbled writings and statements by and about a dead man or woman into something like an ad-hoc posthumous autobiography.
of youthful poverty is particularly preposterous, because his father David Low Dodge was the manager and largest stakeholder in Connecticut’s first cotton mill. However, this story, like other useful myths, resonated with the experiences of its wealthy, pious, Northern evangelical audience. Before the American Civil War, William Dodge and his Northern social peers had more to offer missionaries than a few potatoes that they grew in a bog, but they still only owned a relatively meager share of America’s wealth. In the early 19th century, the USA’s largest concentrations of capital lay far beyond the Northeast’s port cities, factory towns, and farming villages. The Dodges of the world might have been committed to the American Board’s work, but most of America’s concentrated wealth was not theirs to offer. Between 1830 and 1860, enslaved people made up 15-20% of American assets. The men and women who kept them in bondage, who also held vast tracts of prime land and other important assets, were America’s richest and most politically powerful class. The wealth of their plantations drew investment from across the country and the world. In the 1830s, New Orleans had “the densest concentration of banking capital in the country,” outshining New York, Boston, and Philadelphia as America’s pre-eminent financial center. A financial crisis that started in 1837 damaged the South’s banks and exchanges, but it didn’t push the planter gentry from its place as America’s paramount class; its members continued to increase the productivity of their estates and find capital to finance their expansion. The ABCFM’s organizers recognized this imbalance, and actively solicited donations in states like Georgia and South Carolina. However, the Board’s Northern identity and some of its missionaries’ personal commitment to abolition made it harder to raise funds below the Mason-Dixon line. Its members

241 Dodge, 4–5.
243 Baptist, 143.
244 Baptist, 255.
245 Baptist, 352–53.
246 Heyrman, American Apostles, 80.
247 As we shall see, several of the Syria Mission’s members were themselves abolitionists.
who worked among the Cherokee opposed the Indian removal policies of the 1830s, which outraged planters seeking new lands to exploit in the Southeast.\textsuperscript{248} America’s deepest pools of capital remained largely outside the Board’s reach.

Even the relatively small amounts of money the Board could raise from Northern donors sometimes proved difficult for the Syria Mission’s members to use. In the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, gold and silver currency, or specie, was relatively rare in the United States. Most people carried out their day-to-day business with promissory notes that they, or a local bank, underwrote.\textsuperscript{249} Banks’ ability to make good on their promissory notes varied wildly, and the profusion of different banks issuing notes made it easy for counterfeitors to create convincing fakes. Many Americans were unwilling to accept banknotes from outside their area, and they accepted even relatively trusted notes at a significant discount from their face value. The Second Bank of the United States issued notes which were recognized and valued all over the United States, but Andrew Jackson’s bank war ended its reign in the 1830s.\textsuperscript{250} Americans could only use banknotes to buy gold and silver, the currencies that they could use for foreign exchange, at very unfavorable terms. America’s specie shortage thus made the ABCFM’s efforts to provision its workers overseas significantly more expensive.

The Syria Mission also had to fight other missions for a share of the limited pool of available funding. Their field’s overlap with the Biblical Holy Land drew Americans’ interest, but their slow struggle to win converts discouraged donors at home. As the story of young William Dodge’s missionary potato farm suggests, the Board’s mission to Hawai’i, which successfully brought the islands’ royal family and its political elite to Protestant Christianity, won considerably greater

\textsuperscript{248} Conroy-Krutz, \textit{Christian Imperialism}, chap. 5.
\textsuperscript{249} For a discussion of methods of payment and the difficulties of collecting debts in New England in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, see J. M. Opal, \textit{Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England} (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 87.
\textsuperscript{250} See Stephen Mihm, \textit{A Nation of Counterfeiters} (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
attention and accolades. It came to employ a force of American missionaries more than twice the Syria Mission’s size, even though it ministered to a much smaller population in a much smaller geographical area. In the 1830s, the Board’s receipts increased with the growth of the Northeast’s industrial economy, but the number of missions it sponsored grew as well. In this decade, the Syria Mission spun off other Levantine Missions in Anatolia and the Balkans, and it also faced new competing ABCFM missions in Africa, China, Persia, India, and Southeast Asia.

Conflicts over strategy and spending created tensions between the Mission and the Board. As the previous chapter showed, the Syria Mission’s members developed an approach to missionary work and scripture translation that centered classical Arabic literacy, and required them to provide potential proselytes with an extensive education. To expand the population of Syrians who could understand and would encounter Protestant services and the mission’s fusha Arabic scriptures, the missionaries had to bring large numbers of Syrians into its schools. Subjects beyond literacy itself, like English, French, history, geography, mathematics, and the natural sciences provided a valuable incentive for Syrian parents to send their children to Protestant missionaries’ schools. The mission had a particular interest in educating Syrian women, who were even less likely to be literate than the region’s men, so that the Syrian Protestant church might achieve a favorable gender balance and begin to reproduce itself through marriage, heterosexual reproduction, and child-rearing. In the 1840s and 1850s, Rufus Anderson, the ABCFM’s corresponding secretary and chief administrator, argued that expansive educational programs diverted valuable resources from the organization’s central evangelistic mission, and thus, that missionary organization should focus on preparing “native evangelists” who could minister to the local population and help create self-sustaining

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251 See Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands.*
253 I plan to address the Mission’s early masculine-heavy gender balance and the issues stemming from it in my revision of chapter 1.
“native” churches. He upbraided the Syria Mission for its extensive investments in education and its particular interest in educating women, who the Calvinist churches supporting the ABCFM were not yet willing to ordain as ministers. He also argued that the Mission’s schools “denationalized” Syrians with English and French lessons, alienating them from their own society and making them unfit to minister to their compatriots. Although Rufus Anderson and the Syria Mission’s members shared a broad conception of the set of authorities (including institutions) which brought humans into an appropriate relationship with God, they had very different conceptions of what sort of action were most likely to bring that about, and of how to best adapt American Calvinist authorities to a new context. To at least some extent, this perspectival disjuncture stemmed from missionaries’ direct experiences in the field. In this case, their strategy of spinning their work for American audiences backfired, since it led their correspondents back in the United States to misunderstand why they pursued a particular course of action.

This split between the missionaries and their metropolitan overseers did not prevent the mission’s members from pursuing their favored education policies; indeed, as Ellen Fleischmann points out, they eventually just chose to ignore Anderson’s critiques and continue teaching English and French. However, the conflict did prevent the missionaries from expanding their educational project. It would only be able to open two high schools (one for boys in ‘Abeih, and one for girls in Beirut) before two great conflicts shook up its relationships with Ottoman Syria’s powers and America’s ruling classes.

255 Fleischmann, 272–73.
256 Fleischmann, 275–76.
These two great crises came on in short succession. The first was the Syrian Civil War of 1860, a social revolution which the previous decades’ international pressures transformed into a sectarian struggle in Mount Lebanon.²⁵⁷ Rumblings in the 1840s, when Christians in the Shuf and the mountain’s middle regions objected to the newly paramount position of their Druze overlords, the end of the Shihab emirate, and rising taxes, foreshadowed the war to come.²⁵⁸ However, it was an intra-sectarian 1858 social revolution, not an inter-sect skirmish, that ultimately put the region on the warpath. A Maronite commoner named Tanyus Shahin led the peasants of Mount Lebanon’s northern, predominantly Maronite, Kisrawan district in open revolt against the area’s most prominent local aristocrats, the Khazin family, who were also Maronites, threatening the area’s longstanding social order, which rested on a firm division between “learned” notables and “ignorant” commoners.²⁵⁹ Shahin’s revolt overcame opposition from the nobility and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. With victory, he won the Maronite church’s support. Two years later, Maronite peasants from the Mountain’s mixed districts asked the revolutionary to help them overthrow their Druze feudal overlords, and Shahin, with support from both the Maronite clergy and French Catholic missionaries, led a rebel army into the Druze-held Matn district.²⁶⁰ Ensuing skirmishes between Shahin’s forces and Druze villagers drove the Druze nobility to organize a military response. Their forces, led and organized by the Jumblatt and Abu Nakad families, quickly routed both Shahin’s Maronite army and their main allies, a band of Greek Catholics from Zahla, a formidable fortress town just east of the Lebanon range.²⁶¹ The victorious Druze aristocrats chose to consolidate their authority by crushing the Maronites’ presence in their part of the mountain.

²⁵⁷ As far as I can tell, there is no scholarly consensus on what this conflict should be called; I tried to choose a neutral term which captured its geographical and temporal scope.
²⁵⁹ Makdisi, The Culture of Sectarianism, 96–97.
²⁶⁰ Makdisi, 120–24.
They burned Zahla and Jazzin, a predominantly Maronite village near Sidon, massacred the adult male Christians in two major Mountain towns, Hasbayya and Deir al-Qamr, and drove their wives, mothers, sisters, and children to the coast. They also executed French Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries, because they believe that France supported the Maronite rebels. Christian refugees flooded from the Mountain to Damascus, where fears of violence erupted into a very real, bloody struggle between the city’s Muslim majority and its Christian inhabitants, who suffered its most horrifying consequences.

This war’s immediate effects on the mission were surprisingly gentle. Mount Lebanon’s mixed zones under Druze rule, where many of the missionaries lived and worked, sat near the conflict’s heart. Deir al-Qamr, where the missionary William Bird resided and oversaw several schools, and Hasbayya, where the biggest cluster of Protestant converts outside Beirut lived, were major centers of missionary activities before the massacres. However, the missionaries managed to escape danger throughout the war, and even extend protection to their congregants. Henry Jessup and Daniel Bliss obtained helpful intelligence about the conflict from Colonel Charles Churchill, a British intriguer and longtime Lebanon resident with close ties to the Druze aristocracy. Jessup’s memoir suggests that he and his fellow missionaries faced no danger from the Druze armies, who spared Protestant missionary buildings even when they razed entire settlements. The missionary William Bird’s house sheltered the only Christians who avoided execution or exile at Deir al-Qamr. After that day’s bloody deeds were done, the Druze commanders even arranged to protect Bird’s property and to safely convey the refugees he housed to the station at ‘Abeih. The Mission’s wartime records corroborate Jessup’s account. In an 1860 annual report, Simeon Calhoun wrote

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262 Fawaz, 59–73.
263 Makdisi, The Culture of Sectarianism, 139–40.
264 Fawaz, An Occasion for War, chap. 4: The Damascus 'Incident'.
265 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:174.
that the Druze treated the Americans “with all kindness and consideration, even in the days of highest excitement and terror.” Druze protection also extended to the missionaries’ converts; Calhoun also wrote that “not a Protestant house in Lebanon was robbed during this fearful year, and that, with a single exception, the whole Protestant community kept away from the scenes of violence.”

The missionaries’ ties with Druze shaykhs and British potentates helped to keep their community safe throughout the struggle.

The war’s aftermath, however, brought sweeping changes to Syria’s political order, which would force the missionaries to adapt. In July of 1860, Hurşid Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Sayda, enlisted the help of Beirut’s French and British consuls to negotiate a peace between the Maronite nobles and clergy of northern Mount Lebanon and the Druze aristocrats of the south, which nominally restored Mount Lebanon to its pre-Shahin status quo. In practice, this settlement would have favored the Druze, who had seized and distributed lands which the southern districts’ Catholics, dead or fled, had left behind. However, the war’s intensity drew responses from both Europe’s great powers and the Ottoman imperial center in Istanbul. The Sublime Porte, seeking to forestall a European intervention, dispatched Fuad Pasha, a former diplomat and Minister of the Interior, to Beirut in July, at the head of an army of 16,000, with orders to pacify and re-order Syria. Napoleon III of France sent a force of 12,000, accompanied by overseers from Britain, Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Russia, for much the same purpose. Together, these forces determined who would be punished and compensated for their part in the conflict, and how the Mountain would be governed going forward. Together, they executed 357 Druze and Muslim Damascenes for their involvement in the riots, removed southern Lebanon from Druze notables’ jurisdiction,

268 Makdisi, The Culture of Sectarianism, 144–45.
imposed indemnities on the Damascene Muslim and Lebanese Druze communities, and executed Sa’id Jumblatt, the most prominent Druze leader. They also made Mount Lebanon a *mutasarrifiya*, or special province under the direct control of a Porte-appointed government. The “règlement” governing the Mountain after the final peace settlement specified that the governor should be a Christian appointed by the Porte and approved by the European great powers. It also instituted an elected “administrative council” with a specified sectarian and geographic breakdown. Mount Lebanon’s old order was gone.

The French intervention and the settlement that followed it humiliated the Porte, but also strengthened its hand in Syria. Shahin’s revolt, the war, and its aftermath broke the power of Mount Lebanon’s feudal nobles and put them under the command of an Ottoman official loyal to the central bureaucracy. Simultaneously, the “règlement” committed Europe’s powers to use their diplomatic influence to support, rather than undermine, the region’s peace and order. In the late 19th century, governors like Rüstem Pasha could banish lay and clerical Catholic troublemakers from the Mountain without any objections from Europe. The postwar administration imposed what Engin Akarli called a “long peace” which lasted until the First World War, paved hundreds of kilometers of road, and cultivated cross-sectarian political coalitions. Its success helped the nearby city of Beirut, which came to carry most of the Mountain’s commerce, to grow from a sleepy town of 6,000 in 1860 into a thriving port of several hundred thousand by the 19th century’s end. It also helped the Ottoman state to establish a strong, centralized administration in Greater Syria. In 1865, the Porte bundled the region, except for Lebanon, into a single province, or *vilayet*, with a

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272 Akarli, 43.
273 Akarli, 53, 55.
capital in Damascus. This province’s governors, freed from the difficulties of managing Mount Lebanon’s fractions notables, worked to sedentarize Syria’s nomadic tribes, quash the influence of highland notables in Palestine, and standardize taxation and administration. The civil war’s resolution strengthened both Ottoman Syria’s economy and its centrally-appointed overlords.

The missionaries’ close relationships with the British and Druze protected them throughout the Civil War of 1860, and persisted after its close, but these old protectors could no longer serve the Americans’ evangelistic and political strategies with their old effectiveness. In the war’s aftermath, the mission did continue to depend on Druze protection; in an 1863 report, Calhoun wrote that “The Druzes are a wall of defense. To them is it due that we are on this mountain.” Nevertheless, the war troubled the Mission’s projected plans to educate, enlighten, and evangelize their protectors in the Mountain, the Druze aristocracy. Several of their former students had participated in the massacres. According to Calhoun, one, a “much enlightened” Druze aristocrat, “was known to have been at Deir al Komr at the time of the slaughter, and it was feared he had put forth his hand to the deeds of violence committed there.” The extent of his participation would remain an agonizing mystery. Calhoun wrote: “It was often a subject of thought with us how the divine Providence would dispose of his case. Would he be seized, tried, condemned, executed? He is gone, has had his trial before a most impartial tribunal; but his verdict we must wait days to know. Some two months or more ago, he went in company with a Maronite to a neighboring village, despatched his business, and was returning, when he was fired upon by a company of disguised persons. Three balls pierced him, and he fell dead!”

275 A number of historians have discussed these events, but there’s a particularly elegant summary to be found in Cem Emrence, Remapping the Ottoman Middle East: Modernity, Imperial Bureaucracy and the Islamic State (New York, NY: I.B.Tauris, 2012), 56–57.


guilty, but he and his peers’ proximity to 1860’s most sanguinary events shook missionaries’ stated conviction that they could reform and convert their longtime allies. In 1866, William Bird, now stationed at ‘Abeih, complained that the Druze were, with the Maronites, one of “the two most unpromising sects for missionary effort,” suggesting that his colleagues’ high hopes of earlier years had evaporated.278 By the late 1870s, would-be Druze converts to Protestantism encountered suspicion and scrutiny from both the Mission’s other converts and later, the missionaries themselves.279 Missionaries’ reports began to cast the Druze as an intrinsically mysterious “strange people,” erasing almost a half-century of experience living and working among them.280 The war and its aftermath drove a wedge between the mission, its converts, and the Druze, derailing the mission’s ambition to convert them.

The missionaries’ other key allies, the British government, also became less helpful in the war’s aftermath. British diplomats saw their Druze allies defeated, their reputation ruined, and their political position weakened. Hence, they supported the newly muscular Ottoman state’s efforts to keep the peace in Syria, even when doing so required them to leave Protestant missionaries in the cold. Some of the Syria Mission’s colleagues in other parts of the region learned about British officials’ new indifference from firsthand experience. In 1874, an American missionary in Damascus allowed “upwards of two hundred natives of the Greek Orthodox Church,” who were protesting their Patriarch's use of the 1860 civil war indemnity, to use a British property to meet, utter “violent aspersions” about the Patriarch, and publicly convert to Protestantism en masse. In time, this mass conversion could have provided the nucleus for a large, thriving Protestant community in Damascus, but it also might foster violent conflict between the new Protestants and their former

280 Wood.
Greek Orthodox co-religionists. Essad Pasha, the Vali of Syria, who wanted to avert another wave of bloodshed in the city, imprisoned some of the dissidents, and Britain's man in Damascus, Vice-Consul Green, stood by his decision.281 The Protestant missionaries could still grow their flock, but if they wanted diplomatic support, they would need to do it quietly. In one exceptional case, Britain's Consul-General in Syria, George Jackson Eldridge, did actually try to help two former “Nusayri” (Allawite) converts to Protestantism, inducted into their faith by the Reformed Presbyterian missionaries of Latakia, claim exemption from conscription as Christians.282 But even under those circumstances, he stressed that he had long urged caution on Protestant missionaries, telling Sir Henry Elliot, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, that “I quite share the opinion of Halet Pasha [the Vali of Syria] that it is most undesirable that the non-Christian subjects of H.M. the Sultan should be encouraged to make a hollow profession of Christianity with a view of evading their duties towards the state. I have frequently impressed my views in this sense upon overzealous missionaries, and have always refused to interfere in similar matters unless fully convinced of the sincerity of the conversions.”283 And even in this exceptional instance, British intervention failed. The British Dragoman in Damascus, Selim Mishaqa, reported that Ottoman authorities had brought the converts to Damascus, forced them to observe Muslim prayers and festivals, and refused to release them from service.284 The Vali of Damascus put his Empire’s need for ready conscripts, and its authority over minority religious communities, above British concerns. Even when British diplomats gave Protestant missionaries their full support, they were unable to fulfill all of their

282 The Nusairiya, or Allawites are a religious minority whose members mostly live in the coastal mountains of Northern Syria. Today, most of their members identify as Shi’a Muslims, but in the 19th century, the Ottoman government considered them non-Muslims. The Reformed Presbyterians were an American denomination separate from the mainstream Presbyterians who sponsored the Syria Mission.
requests. Instead of relying on the British Empire, missionaries would need to work within the constraints that Ottoman officials set.

The Syria Mission’s members fully understood these changes, and soon came to embrace the Ottoman imperial center’s new, powerful representatives in greater Syria. They exploited a shared interest in education, which the missionaries saw as necessary to their conversion project and the officials saw as paths to strengthening the Empire, to create possibilities for cooperation. In 1863, Daud Pasha, Mount Lebanon’s first governor under the new regime, gave “very handsome donations” to the mission’s high school in Abeih, because he believed that it contributed to the development of scientific knowledge and a new administrative class in Syria. By accepting his gifts, the missionaries aligned their schools with his own modernizing ambitions, lending them the goodwill they had accumulated with Mount Lebanon’s people. The missionaries also wrote favorably about his plans to build carriage roads from Beirut to Deir al-Qamr. The missionaries could also bond with Mount Lebanon’s governors over a shared hostility to the Mission’s hated rivals, the Mountain’s powerful Maronite clergy. In 1880, one American, FW Wood, wrote favorably about the mutaserrif Rustem Pasha’s efforts to curb the Maronites’ influence. The Mission’s own frequent anti-clerical polemics aligned with Rustem’s ambitions, and created further possibilities for cooperation. During his 1874-1883 tenure, Rustem developed a close personal friendship with the American missionary and educator Daniel Bliss, and sent his son to study at the Mission’s Syrian Protestant College. The missionaries chose the handpicked representatives of the

288 The friendship is mentioned in Bliss, The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss, 233. The son’s attendance is mentioned in William Booth, “Letter to Daniel Bliss,” November 27, 1876, AA 2.3.1, Box 10, Folder 5, American University of Beirut Archives.
world’s pre-eminent Islamic empire as their new friends, allies, and political protectors, and cemented that alliance by providing services on their behalf. Their place in Ottoman Syria’s political cosmos changed with the events of the early 1860s, and they adapted and responded to that change by changing their own orientation to the state. As we shall see more in the next chapter, they built on their friendships with Ottoman officials by openly aligning their schools with the Sublime State.

The American Civil War, which started in 1861, brought a similar revolution in the mission’s relationship with American capital. At first, the conflict created a terrible crisis for the Syria missionaries and their colleagues around the world. Textile manufacturing, still one of the North’s biggest industries, temporarily lost the main source of its raw material, cotton. The war effort consumed much of the country’s manpower and industrial capacity. The US government addressed its outstanding debts by issuing a fiat paper currency, the greenback, temporarily depreciating the dollar’s foreign exchange value. A year into the war, the ABCFM, burdened by both falling donations and the dollar’s inflation, fell into debt. By 1864, the organization had cut the Syria Mission’s education budget from $2,587 to $787. In that year, the Mission closed many of its schools in Mount Lebanon; the struggle in the US hurt the Mission as much or more than the struggle in the field itself.

However, in the long run, the American Civil War and its consequences significantly improved the Mission’s prospects by unifying, energizing, and empowering a class of Northeastern, evangelical, and philanthropically ambitious capitalists. The wealthiest among them, New York’s merchants, industrialists, and bankers, forswore their pre-war political divisions and quickly threw

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289 For a discussion of cotton manufacturing’s diminishing but still important role in the Northern economy of the 1850s, see Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 323.
290 See Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters*, chap. 7.
their social and financial clout behind the war effort. Debates between those who had favored compromise with the South, and those who favored a harsher federal response became moot with the war’s outbreak. Over the course of the war, the city’s bourgeoisie, who both materially supported and profited from the war effort, also largely united behind Abraham Lincoln’s policies of trade protectionism, railroad expansion, and emancipation. The war gave the class a shared political identity. A unifying spiritual and philanthropic movement accompanied this unifying economic and political mobilization. The American Civil War struck down America’s young men in unprecedented numbers; 620,000 fell to battlefield wounds or camp fevers. The families of the living hoped for their sons’ survival; the families of the dead for their salvation. These concerns erupted with the first shots fired at Bull Run. In 1861, pious gatherings like New York City’s Fulton Street Prayer meeting gathered to share sentimental stories about a Brooklyn drummer boy who prayed every day before rifle fire cut him down, or accounts of Union soldiers crying out for God to have mercy on their souls as they perished. The North’s churches and its upper classes mobilized their resources and worked together across denominational lines to provide physical and spiritual care to the Union Army. The US Sanitary Commission provided surgeons and medical supplies to care for the sick and wounded, while the US Christian Commission supplied soldiers with chaplains and Bibles. Both organizations provided families with information on the fate of their sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands. These commissions changed the ways that the richest Northerners collectively mobilized their wealth. Before the war, these urban elites’ cross-sectarian

295 The second of these, though somewhat alien to many contemporary Americans, was a highly salient concern in the 19th century, see Faust, 27–32.
297 Faust, This Republic of Suffering, 107–12.
collective efforts focused on establishing local civic institutions like museums, opera houses, hospitals, and colleges, which helped them to reproduce their class’s habitus and hegemony in the spaces where they lived. 298 When they worked on wider scales, they usually operated within their own denominational traditions, as the Northeast’s Calvinists did when they founded the ABCFM. The war forged ecumenical alliances between the North’s elites on a much grander scale, and led them to identify themselves and their philanthropic work with the war effort, and with it, the nation’s identity and interest.

The war also helped the Northeast’s elites to seize the commanding heights of the US economy and bring more of the country’s resources under their own control. Throughout the conflict, the Union’s demands for arms and equipment enriched the region’s industrialists, metal merchants, and mine owners. State-sponsored efforts to build new regional and transcontinental railroads helped the Northeastern capitalists who owned and operated them. The US government’s demand for credit also helped to enrich banking families like the Seligmans, who sold Treasury bonds overseas. 299 After the war, the US government directed its resources westward, simultaneously expanding railroad networks and crushing Native American nations. 300 Northeastern capitalists controlled the railroads and the 131,230,358 acres of federal land grants that came with them. 301 America’s westward expansion gave Northeastern merchants and industrialists access to a “cheap nature,” or set of resources that capital could quickly and cheaply mobilize for its own use. 302 Boston’s banking families quickly developed strong relationships with Western producers and made

299 Beckert, The Monied Metropolis, chap. 4: Bourgeois New Yorkers Go to War.
301 White, 23–24.
a killing in iron and copper mining. In Colorado’s mountains, in the 1870s, workers hired with Northeastern capital split open rich seams of anthracite coal, providing valuable fossil fuel for America’s growing railroads and factories. By selling crop insurance and speculating on grain futures, Northeastern capitalists also found ways to profit from the expansion of agriculture in the West. They also moved to acquire forests, railroads, and agricultural lands that once belonged to their defeated Southern rivals, using their influence in Congress to ensure that the once-enslaved would never get “forty acres and a mule” for their years of brutal and unrequited toil. William E Dodge, a metal merchant who made enormous profits from the war and the mining boom that followed it, the president of the New York Chamber of Commerce and, in later decades, the Mission’s greatest patron, bought so much land in Georgia that locals renamed a county there after him. The industrialists, merchants, and bankers of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, whose community leaders came to embrace the missionary project, prospered from the enormous postwar expansion of America’s continental empire and political economy.

The missionaries were able to turn these social economic developments to their advantage, and find new funding for their projects in Northeastern capitalists’ pockets. The first and most ambitious of these new endeavors was the institution that came to be known as the Syrian Protestant College. The missionaries conceived this school in 1862, as their financial outlook grew bleaker. They believed that the new school could help them to train a population of Syrian Protestant doctors, pastors, clerks, and statesmen who might, in turn, come to financially support the evangelization of their country. But because of both the Mission’s poverty and Rufus Anderson’s unfavorable opinion of educational projects, they needed to raise them outside the

303 Maggor, Brahmin Capitalism, chap. 3: Brahminism Goes West.
306 See Chapter 3 for more details on this issue.
American Board’s regular channels. The Mission chose one of its own, Daniel Bliss, to lead their fundraising efforts. Bliss and his colleagues effectively and flexibly mobilized a variety of personal and political connections, as well as both secular and religious civilizational ideologies, to link the Mission’s work to the social and spiritual ambitions of America’s rising ruling class. He made the College a proud symbol of American capital as well as American Christianity.

Bliss began his campaign by fostering a friendship with William E Dodge, America’s wealthiest metal merchant, who presided over New York’s Chamber of Commerce throughout the 1850s, played an important role in the US Christian Commission and held a central place in the Northeast’s elite social networks. In some ways, Bliss and Dodge were an odd couple. Unlike the privileged Dodge, and even many of his missionary brethren, Bliss came from a poor, migrant, New England family, and spent his youth working odd jobs as an apprentice or journeyman laborer in rural Ohio. His parents lacked both political power and bourgeois respectability. However, in his dealings this upper-class donor, Bliss used stories of his hardscrabble upbringing to present a shrewdness and pragmatism that he used to bond with the privileged capitalist. Most 19th century missionaries’ memoirs emphasize their authors’ passage from sin to salvation; Bliss’s Reminiscences skips the standard conversion narrative and instead emphasizes young Daniel’s calling to labor. In this episode, the future missionary, doing a brief stint as a tanner’s apprentice, struggled to stretch slippery hides over a drying rack. His first failures in this tricky task threw him into a rage, and he cast the hides onto the floor. Then, he was struck by an epiphany—something, “call it conscience, call it reason, call it the Spirit of God, call it what you will,” came over him, and he told himself “Dan Bliss, this is shameful. You have a good place, a good master, he trusts you—do your

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307 Beckert, The Monied Metropolis, 58.
308 Daniel Bliss, The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss (Revell, 1920), chap. 2: “Childhood and Youth.”
duty.” Bliss’s life, in his own telling, was defined by this call, from an ambiguous origin, to diligently participate in early 19th century Ohio’s hardscrabble market economy. His self-narrative was not so different from William Dodge’s. As the story of the “missionary potato patch” that I recounted earlier suggests, the merchant prince also linked his youthful industriousness with his pious ventures. In autobiographical anecdotes like those he shared in a published lecture on “Old New York,” Dodge also emphasized the manual labor and long hours that were part of his early apprenticeship as an ambitious young clerk in the great city. In their own ways, the two men both drew on a prominent ideology celebrating hard work which all of Gilded Age America’s major social and political movements used to legitimate their arguments. Thus, Bliss made his biography became a help rather than a hindrance in his efforts to find funds among the Northeastern urban elite.

After his stint as a tanner, Bliss pursued a liberal education at Amherst, then theological training at Andover. These schools both expanded his intellectual horizons and helped him to climb the social ladder. He represented a relatively new, and newly-respectable New England social type: the intellectually ambitious farm boy seeking something greater and more prestigious than propertied independence, aligning himself with a nation-oriented elite rather than his community-oriented friends and family. He married Abby Wood, a New England aristocrat and childhood friend of Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson, a match which, with his education, completed his ascent to respectability. Before his great fundraising journey, Bliss had befriended Reverend David Stuart Dodge, William’s son, while the merchant princeling was on a pilgrimage to the Holy

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309 Ibid., 40.
312 For more about the development of the New England culture of ambition in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, see Opal, Beyond the Farm.
Land. On their visit, the Dodges recognized Daniel and Abby Bliss as countrymen and social peers; they became fast friends. Bliss capitalized on this encounter when he ran into William Dodge at the 1862 meeting of the ABCFM, where they both spoke. The merchant invited his son’s friend to dinner, and developed an interest in his work. He soon became the College’s most important patron and champion in the United States, using his social, political, and financial clout to advance the project. With Dodge’s help, Bliss quickly brought another prominent businessman, William A Booth, on board. In the summer of 1863, Booth convinced Samuel Tilden, a prominent lawyer who went on to win the popular vote in the contested 1876 presidential election, to draft an ironclad charter for the College. He also helped Bliss and Dodge convince other philanthropists, like Erastus Corning and James Brown, to support the College. On May 4th 1864, New York’s governor signed the charter into state law, incorporating the Syrian Protestant College in New York and waiving the usual legal limits on the capital it could hold.

Throughout these early maneuverings, Bliss was able to take advantage of both the New York bourgeoisie’s political consolidation and a set of identities and affiliations that he and his colleagues shared with men like Dodge and Booth. The Syria Mission’s members had close ties to the Union war effort and the Republican Party. Henry Jessup, the mission's main spokesperson for fifty-seven years, was the son of William Jessup, a Pennsylvania judge who led the nominating committee that chose to run Abraham Lincoln for the presidency in 1860. His brother and colleague Samuel fought in the Army of the Potomac as a chaplain, alongside future medical missionary and Syrian Protestant College professor George Post. They also frequently shared

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314 Bliss, 130.
315 Bliss, 169.
316 William A Booth, “Sketch of the Early History of the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut,” July 9, 1889, AA 1.6.1 Box 1 Folder 4, American University of Beirut Archives.
Northeastern elites’ perspectives on issues like slavery. Bliss was a committed abolitionist whose early letters home described the ruins of Tyre and Sidon, and warned that his homeland might share the “doom of the oppressor” if it did not abandon the evils of slavery. This view certainly connected him with William Booth, who, in a letter that reached Bliss in Britain, decried the ignorance or moral failure of British Christians who supported the South even though the Union struggled “in ameliorating and elevating the condition of all the family of man,… and in proclaiming liberty to the millions of slaves there.” The war smoothed over political divides that once existed. Before the struggle, Bliss’s views would have put him at odds with the gradual emancipationist and “Compromise” Whig positions that many Northeastern elites still held. Amherst’s faculty forbade him to give an abolitionist speech at his commencement. Dodge, Bliss’s friend and patron, abhorred slavery but still sought a mediated peace at the war’s outset. He would have once seen Bliss as a dangerous radical. However, the emerging New York elite consensus in favor of the war and emancipation erased these potential divides.

In short order, Bliss, capitalizing on these connections, managed to raise about a hundred thousand dollars, a sum which would allow him to furnish a small campus for the College and pay a few professors. Bliss bet that time would lend more international confidence to the US’s paper currency, though, and while waiting for his freshly-raised greenbacks’ value to stabilize, he traveled to Britain to raise gold to cover the College’s start-up costs. There, he used his high profile and prominent backers in the United States to win the endorsement of the Earl of Shaftesbury, and, quite quickly, found the funds he sought. Bliss used both the solidarity and socially competitive

319 Daniel Bliss, “Letter to a Cousin,” July 26, 1856, AA 2.3.1 Box 9, Folder 7, American University of Beirut Archives.
320 William Booth, “November 24 1864 Letter to Daniel Bliss,” November 24, 1864, AA 2.3.1 Box 10, Folder 5, American University of Beirut Archives.
322 Dodge, Memorials of William E. Dodge, 92–93.
324 Bliss, 179–81.
instincts of the American and British upper classes to persuade potential donors. In the US, once he had brought William Dodge on board, he could cloak his own project in the powerful merchant’s credibility. In a letter to New York’s Chauncey Rose, Bliss cited the advice and approval of “a few business men of extended views and great experience,” including Dodge and Booth to convince the businessman that his venture was above-board. He also appealed to Rose’s potential aspirations for prestige within New York’s social networks by slyly suggesting that the SPC might, in exchange for a larger donation, institutionally immortalize him by endowing a “Rose professorship.”325 In Britain, he leaned perhaps even more heavily his friends’ credibility, circulating a pamphlet listing the Earl of Shaftesbury and all the other gentlemen who had offered the College their patronage or endorsement.326 In the postwar era, the network of supporters that Bliss cultivated within America’s elite social networks helped the Mission to develop. Throughout the late 19th century William E. Dodge, his US Christian Commission colleague Morris K Jesup, and Jesup's business partner John S Kennedy all gave particularly generously.327 Their donations allowed the missionaries to acquire more land, hire more workers, and build grander institutions, including a multitude of schools and hospitals.

The war’s end also secured the Syria Mission’s future access to capital. The peace brought about the re-unification of the Northern and Southern Presbyterian churches by decisively resolving the debate over slavery which had divided them. In 1870, the reunified church established its own

325 Daniel Bliss, “Letter to Chauncey Rose, Esquire,” February 2, 1864, AA 2.3.1 Box 9, Item 3, American University of Beirut Archives.
326 Daniel Bliss, “Subscription Circular for the Syrian Protestant College,” July 27, 1865, AA 2.3.1 Box 9, Item 3, American University of Beirut Archives.
327 William E Dodge was the College’s first key donor and fundraiser. See Bliss, The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss, 168–69. Over the course of his lifetime, Morris K Jesup gave over $200,000 (an enormous sum at the time) to the College. See Daniel Bliss, “Letter to the Bliss Family,” February 19, 1908, AA 2.3.1, Box 9, Folder7, American University of Beirut Archives. JS Kennedy gave on numerous occasions; the May 6-11 1911 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission records a $25,000 bequest from his estate to found a hospital. See Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes 1904-1914.” For info about Jesup’s involvement with the USCC, see William Adams Brown, Morris Ketchum Jesup: A Character Sketch (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 48.
Presbyterian Board of Missions. The ABCFM, which had previously pursued the missionary ambitions of America’s Congregationalists and Northern Presbyterians together placed many of its mission fields, including Ottoman Syria, under the new Board’s auspices.\textsuperscript{328} Many of New York’s wealthiest residents, including William E Dodge himself, were Presbyterians, and the influential merchant and his co-religionists gave generously to the new organization.\textsuperscript{329} This shift cemented the Syria Mission’s close connection to the Northeast’s wealthiest men, their global ambitions, and the immense reserves of capital which they could donate to its cause. By the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the Mission had used its wealthy donors’ bequests to open a college and medical school, nine secondary schools, and over 100 primary day schools.\textsuperscript{330} The scope and scale of its work, and its potential for building relationships with different sectors of Syrian society, swelled with contributions from American capital.

The missionaries’ relationship with American capitalists, like their alliances with Druze, British, and Ottoman notables, was critical to their work; like those alliances, it required work to establish and maintain, and could only emerge under specific historical circumstances. The possibilities and constraints they imposed shaped and directed the Mission’s behavior going forward. The late 19\textsuperscript{th} century’s economic and imperial landscapes were contingent on the period’s major historical developments, and Protestant missionaries worked to make sure that religion’s necessary institutions could grow and thrive in the face of those tectonic shifts. In places like the Ottoman Syria, where non-Christian rulers still held their own against European interlopers, missionaries’ strategies and alliances took on surprising shapes; in places like the United States, the “expected” alliances only took shape after a dramatic upheaval in the country’s political economy. Missionaries’

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\textsuperscript{328} Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes, 1870-1888.”
\textsuperscript{329} Dodge, Memorials of William E. Dodge, 334.
\textsuperscript{330} “Facts and Figures of the Syria Mission,” 1905, Archives Item 863, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
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identities and ideologies shaped, but did not wholly determine their politics, because the authorities which they believed made men and women into good Protestant Christians were social and material as well as textual and ideological, and they needed both protection and economic support to thrive and flourish. In parts of the 19th century world where non-Christian polities still stood strong and independent, like Qajar Persia, Qing China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire, this required missionaries to form relationships with surprising patrons and protectors, while economic weakness and domestic political conflicts made their expected sources of funding less useful or accessible.
In the wake of two catastrophic civil wars that devastated their homeland and Mission field, the Syria Mission embarked one of its most intensive and influential projects: founding a college. The missionaries referred to this new institution as the Syrian Protestant College, or in Arabic, al-Madrassa al-Kulliya al-Injiliya (literally: The Evangelical Collegiate School, or The Evangelical Total School), but the local press’s name for it, al-Kulliya al-Amrikiya, or “The American College,” proved more enduring. In 1922, the College became the American University of Beirut. The river of historical change that flows from the College is both broad and deep, and historians have worked to chart its most important currents. George Antonius, Betty Anderson, and Marwa Elshakry, among others, have mapped the school’s intellectual contributions, characterizing the College as a conduit that carried liberating or modernizing ideas, including secular Arab nationalism and European-style science, from the United States to the Levant. Keith Watenpaugh, meanwhile, has argued that in the wake of the First World War, SPC’s faculty members took a leading role in the reconstruction of Armenia, Lebanon, and Syria, and in doing so, both shaped modern humanitarianism worldwide and provided a model for American educational and development projects in the Middle East. Historians of 20th century encounters between the US and the Middle East, like Osamah Khalil, have argued that AUB was a “sheet anchor” of American soft power in the region.\(^{331}\)

Throughout these historical accounts and others, the College, and later, the University, serve as a symbol of America’s orientation towards its Orient, an exogenous institution imported from

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across the Atlantic. Indeed, several historians have elegantly used its history to describe shifts in America’s approach to the Ottoman, Arab, or Muslim worlds. These include Samir Khalaf, who described the College as both the culmination of the New England Puritan evangelistic ethos and the start of a benevolent educational project, and Ussama Makdisi, who used the school’s history to trace a transition from paternalistic, but altruistic missionary and humanitarian projects to the violent, coercive interventions of the post-1948 period.332 This symbolic use is misleading. The College was a place where American-funded projects progressed, but it was not, and never could be, purely American. It was not an Amherst on the Mediterranean, but a hybrid between a Puritan college, an Ottoman military training school, and a madrassa. Its corporate structure, staff, and curriculum reflected the values of Ottoman officials and Syrian intellectuals as well as American churchmen and capitalists. Despite its founders’ missionary identities and goals, it drew prestige from, and upheld, the hegemony of Muslim intellectuals and the Ottoman state.

Contemporary scholarly accounts might miss the College’s adaptations to its environment because missionaries’ memoirs, magazine articles, and pamphlets deliberately obscured its boundary-blurring pursuit of local recognition. They presented the College as a font of enlightenment for an ignorant land, worthwhile precisely because Ottoman Syria’s people lacked knowledge and educational institutions with real value. A prospectus for potential British donors argued that “No existing Schools or Institutions can meet [the demand for educated professionals]; the instruction given is either wholly elementary, or, as in the Roman Catholic and in some of the Native Schools, it is partial, deceptive, and perverting,” and described Syria’s “native” doctors as “quacks and medical jugglers.”333 However, if we examine how the College actually operated in the context of 19th

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332 Khalaf, Protestant Missionaries in the Levant, chap. 9; Makdisi, Faith Misplaced, 1–5.
333 Daniel Bliss, “The Syrian Protestant College,” February 12, 1866, AA 1.3 Box 1 Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
century Beirut, we will see that the school provided instruction in modes of knowledge that its founders disparaged, imitated some of the institutions that they called “inadequate” or “perverting,” and asked some of the “quacks and medical jugglers” to endorse its MDs. We can resolve this seeming paradox with two observations. First, the College, like other American missionary institutions which I describe within these pages, operated within the political economy of Ottoman Syria and needed to draw on local sources of land, labor, and protection. Second, that it sought to grant both its professors and its graduates recognition as high-class experts in a society with rich, pre-existing ideas about who counted as “learned” and what they knew. These two challenges, bare survival and academic distinction, ensured that the College’s fate would rest on its popular reputation and its relationships with the local elites whose projects and values it would come to adapt and serve.

I’ve explained both the problem of bare survival and the problem of social distinction, as they relate to missionary work, earlier in this dissertation, but it will be worth conceptualizing how the second problem played out in the field of education in a little more depth here. To that end, let us return to the proposals and prospecti that the missionaries prepared for potential donors in the United States and United Kingdom, examining them not as comprehensive blueprints requiring only the enchanted touch of capital to summon a full-fledged institution into being, but as hazy, aspirational sketches of an institution which did not yet, and might never, exist, and, as Daniel Bliss, the hypothetical College’s first President and fundraiser-in-chief later admitted, “was looked upon by the natives as an experiment which might succeed or not.” A pamphlet that Bliss distributed in London in 1866 asserted that the College would meet Syrians of all religions’ thirst for “Education, and that of a higher order than has heretofore been possible.” It would train “Teachers, Preachers,

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334 Daniel Bliss, “1877 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” 1877, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
Translators, Physicians, Lawyers, Engineers, Clerks, Secretaries, and other well-educated men.”

This panoply of prospective professions points to a part of the process of education that would prove particularly problematic for the new school. To be a teacher, physician, or engineer with any hope of “enlightening” Syria by informing or persuading others, a College graduate would need the trust and respect of his countrymen. New knowledge alone was insufficient to make a scholar credible. Indeed, both historically and in the present day, humans frequently make judgments about whose accounts of the world to trust on the basis of the speaker’s social role; our conceptions of expertise are embedded within broader social contexts and hierarchies. Thus, to create intellectuals who the Ottoman public would believe, the College needed to sculpt its students’ social identities as well as their intellects.

The College’s educational project also had economic goals which informed both its need to shape Ottoman perceptions of its graduates’ credibility and the particular audiences within Ottoman society whose judgment its leaders considered most important. The College’s founders sought to create a new class of Syrian bourgeois professionals who would, in one stroke, fulfill their homeland’s need for skilled labor and provide a financial base for the spread of Protestantism in Syria. William Thompson proposed the College to the American Board in 1862, while the American Civil War still raged. The conflict captured pious Americans’ charitable attention, and plunged the Board into penury. By 1864, the funding shortfall forced the Syria Mission to close many its schools in Mount Lebanon. The College was part of a plan to reduce the Mission’s

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335 Daniel Bliss, “The Syrian Protestant College.”
337 Syria Mission, “Reasons for the Establishment of a Syrian Protestant College,” Circa 1862, AA 1.3 Box 1 Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
dependence on donors in war-torn America. One early pamphlet, “Reasons for the establishment of a Syrian Protestant College,” argued that the Syrian Protestant community needed to “be emancipated from the enfeebling and depressing influence inevitably resulting from dependency upon foreign charity,” or in less florid terms, to pay for its own education and evangelization. The College’s graduates, the pamphlet argued, would provide those “emancipating” funds. The pamphlet suggests that a needy country would quickly and unquestioningly raise graduates to prominent position, but this bit of missionary bravado only loosely reflected reality; Ottoman elites used a different set of criteria to marked learned men than their counterparts in the northeastern United States did, and the College would need to adapt to those standards.

Let’s take a moment to consider what made men socially recognizable as “learned” in the Ottoman Empire and the United States. In the Ottoman world, many markers of academic distinction emerged from the interests and practices of the ‘ulama (singular: ‘alim, lit: “scholars”), a class of experts in the Islamic “religious sciences,” (including Qur’anic exegesis, theology, and jurisprudence) who dominated Ottoman intellectual life throughout the Empire’s first five centuries. Although the early 19th century’s upheavals challenged their dominant position, in 1860, Mose Ma’oz argues that the ‘ulama still “controlled the religious institutions, the judicial and educational systems, and the administration of the charitable endowments [including schools, orphanages, mosques, and hospitals]” throughout Syria and Palestine. They drew their authority from both their religious role and the modernizing mid-century Ottoman state, which incorporated them into its provincial administrations. Many markers of distinction associated with the ‘ulama were bodies of knowledge that they used to carry out spiritual and juridical duties. The most

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342 Ma’oz, “The ‘Ulama and the Process of Modernization in Syria During the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” 77.
343 See, for example, the Naqshbandi shaykhs of Damascus, Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, chap. 3.
important of these was probably their mastery of Arabic’s *fusba* or classical dialect.\textsuperscript{344} *Fusba* Arabic differs from spoken Arabic dialects, in its grammar, phonology, and vocabulary, to roughly the same extent that Latin differs from the Romance languages.\textsuperscript{345} It had been the language of Islamic and secular scholarship, bellettristic prose, and court poetry across an enormous breadth of space and time. A 19th century ‘*alim* could comfortably read pre-Islamic love poetry from the Arabian Peninsula, 9th century Hadith collections from central Asia, 11th century rhetorical exercises from Iraq, 12th century philosophical treatises from Andalusia, and 15th century histories from Egypt as well as the *Qur’an* itself, and writings from his or her own era.\textsuperscript{346} Syrian writers outside the ‘*ulama*, and even outside of Islam, used *fusba* to mark their own learning and skill. Nassif al-Yaziji, a Greek Orthodox Christian, sought to match *fusba*’s greatest stylists, deliberately crafting a rhymed prose collection that might compete with the 11th century master al-Hariri of Basra.\textsuperscript{347} Butrus Bustani, a Maronite turned Protestant, put the classical language to novel uses, crafting the first *fusba* encyclopedia and translating European novels, including *Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*.\textsuperscript{348} Members of the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy, like Germanos Farhat, an 18th century Archbishop of Aleppo, also studied and wrote in-depth about *fusba* grammar.\textsuperscript{349} The modernizing governor of

\textsuperscript{344} Some scholars divide *fusba* into an ancient classical language (“Classical Arabic”), and a modern written language (“Modern Standard Arabic.”) However, I’m convinced by the linguistic anthropologist Niloofar Haeri, who notes that present-day Arabic speakers use the same term to refer to both classical and modern writing, and argues that efforts to render *fusba* Arabic a “modern” language distinct from its classical form have only been questionably successful. Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People*, xi.

\textsuperscript{345} In some cases, Arabic-speakers designate speech as *fusba* or *’ammiya* based on its content rather than its linguistic properties. Walter Armbrust describes cases he encountered in Egypt where speakers designated academic speech about literature as *fusba* even though it was articulated with typically colloquial vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, chap. 3: “The Split Vernacular.”. However, in most cases, the terms also clearly refer to languages with significant structural differences. For a description of those differences, see Altoma, *The Problem of Diglossia in Arabic*, 107–12.

\textsuperscript{346} For an extensive treatment of this body of literature which explores both its continuities and its changes in depth, I would recommend Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of Its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

\textsuperscript{347} Allen, 275.

\textsuperscript{348} Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 32.

\textsuperscript{349} Féghali, “Germanos Farhat, archevêque d’Alep et arabisant (1670-1732).”

The ‘ulama and other Syrians also gained distinction by mastering the curriculum of the Ottoman Empire’s most important educational institutions, the madrassas. Most of these schools taught the “primary sciences” of *tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis), *hadith* (knowledge and evaluation of alleged sayings of the Prophet), and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), as well as the “auxiliary sciences” of grammar, logic, Islamic theology, arithmetic, geometry, and philosophy. Most received their initial funding from the Ottoman state or local nobles, and were sustained by the proceeds of a *waqf*, or untaxable religious endowment.\(^\text{350}\) Using the primary and auxiliary sciences, the ‘ulama could instruct Muslims in the Ottoman Empire’s official *Hanafi* school Sunni Muslim doctrines. Even more importantly, they used those bodies of knowledge to articulate credible legal judgments.\(^\text{351}\)

The primary and auxiliary sciences played an important instrumental role in the Ottoman religious and political order, and they conferred the prestige of both Islam and the Ottoman state on those known to master them.

Members of the ‘ulama and other Ottoman intellectuals could gain recognition by attending a madrassa, but also through another mechanism, the *ijaza* (lit. “permission.”) The *ijaza* was a credential, issued by a recognized teacher, certifying a student’s capacity to transmit a particular body of knowledge, as well as the *isnad*, or human chain of transmission, connecting the teacher to the knowledge’s original source. This system emerged from the Muslim community’s efforts to establish the authenticity of *hadiths*; only a chain of creditworthy narrators could confirm that any alleged saying of the Prophet bound believers’ behavior. During the medieval period *isnad* and *ijaza*

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\(^\text{351}\) Members of the Damascus ‘ulama often focused on getting instruction in Hanafi jurisprudence so that they could be effective public servants. See Weismann, *Taste of Modernity*, 97.
mechanisms expanded to govern the social recognition of other forms of knowledge transmission, including Islamic jurisprudence, esoteric Sufi practice, poetry, and even craft guilds’ trade secrets.\footnote{William A. Graham, “Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation,” \textit{The Journal of Interdisciplinary History} 23, no. 3 (1993): 510–14, https://doi.org/10.2307/206100.} In the Ottoman Empire’s 19\textsuperscript{th} century, most doctors, engineers, and chemists trained under a single teacher as apprentices.\footnote{İhsanoğlu, \textit{Science, Technology, and Learning in the Ottoman Empire}, III, 16 ; IX, 166.} In this accreditation system, the authority to teach and practice emerged from a chain of personal student-teacher relationships stretching back to a widely-recognized source of knowledge. Individuals, as well as institutions, could confer distinction.

In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century’s middle decades, the Ottoman and Egyptian governments, seeking to strengthen their economic and military might, created new markers of educational distinction which certified that their holders had mastered “foreign” bodies of knowledge whose introduction Ottoman and Egyptian bureaucrats regarded as essential to their states’ political survival. Both states, seeking to thrive and succeed in a cutthroat geopolitical environment, established new, “modern” militaries that used European weapons and drill.\footnote{See Philliou, \textit{Biography of an Empire}, chap. 3; Fahmy, \textit{All the Pasha’s Men}.} These armies were their main bulwark against the claims of European imperialists and recalcitrant nationalists, so Ottoman and Egyptian leaders had a strong interest in keeping their soldiers, and the populations who furnished recruits and funding, healthy. In 1827, Egypt’s ambitious ruler, Mehmet Ali, founded Qasr al-‘Ayni, a European-style medical school, run by Antoine-Barthélemy Clot, a French doctor and Egyptian military officer, to translate medical texts and train doctors who would strengthen the state by caring for sick soldiers, controlling epidemics, and providing evidence in criminal and civil trials.\footnote{Khaled Fahmy, “The Anatomy of Justice: Forensic Medicine and Criminal Law in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,” \textit{Islamic Law and Society} 6, no. 2 (1999): 237–38, https://doi.org/10.2307/3399313.} In 1838, just before outset of the reformist Tanzimat period, Sultan Mahmud II, with the assistance of
Austrian physicians, established a similar medical school in Istanbul. These schools’ graduates, by virtue of their knowledge and their affiliation with the state, had access to military rank and administrative office. As key instruments of their empires’ foreign and domestic policies, they shared some of their rulers’ power and prestige. An Egyptian or Imperial medical license was a potent marker of social and intellectual authority.

The forms of educational distinction which the Syria Mission’s members acquired in their homelands rested on structurally similar, but otherwise unrelated foundations. In the 1860s, most American institutions of higher education, were small colleges that, like the Ottoman Empire’s madrasas, drew their authority from religious and ruling elites. These schools were established by Protestant clergymen, paid for by merchants’ gifts, and legitimized by royal, and later, state, corporate charters. They trained men for membership in America’s genteel social elite or future work in the “liberal professions”: medicine, law, and the ministry. Most professors were men of the cloth, and, at the schools that offered professional training, doctors and lawyers. The composition of the colleges’ faculty and the careers available to their students reflected the 17th century English universities which inspired their foundation and supplied their first generation of professors and administrators. This legacy extended to the Colleges’ curricula. The most prominent subjects were Latin and Greek, whose mastery marked educated American gentlemen in much the same way that mastery of fusha Arabic marked educated Ottomans. At the colleges’ birth, students needed these languages to read the Gospels in their original tongue and access most cutting-edge European philosophy and scholarship. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when

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358 Geiger, chap. 1.
fewer graduates joined the clergy and more scholarship appeared in the vernacular, Americans came to view the classical languages as a foundation for social morality, and their study as a font of mental strength. Latin and Greek gave learned Americans intimate access to the written records of ancient Greeks and Romans. These texts offered American students examples of virtuous behavior, insight into the imagined foundations of Western civilization, and valuable models for public oratory. Educated Americans also believed that the hard work of conjugation, declension, translation, and recitation would cultivate students’ “mental discipline,” a general cognitive capacity which young men could exercise like a muscle and exert to excel in every sphere of life. Like Ottoman intellectuals, they prized languages they did not speak, as conduits that connected the pious to their holy books, linguistic links to long-lasting literary traditions, and general markers of education and erudition.

In the middle decades of 19th century, the United States, like the Ottoman Empire, developed new models of higher education that fit the shifting demands of a transforming political economy without entirely abandoning older sources of academic distinction. Cornell University, founded in 1865 with a land grant from the state of New York, an enormous donation from its namesake telegraph magnate, and mandate to provide instruction in every field of human endeavor, developed a new paradigm which the educational historian Laurence Veysey identified as “utility.” Cornell, along with the Midwest’s great land grant institutions, purported to draw its authority from the usefulness of the knowledge they conveyed. This emphasis fit comfortably with the philosophical currents of Gilded Age America, especially William James’s new epistemic doctrine of “pragmatism,” which made a proposition’s usefulness the main measure of its truthfulness.

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360 Winterer, chaps. 1–3.
361 Veysey, The Emergence of the American University, chaps. 1: Discipline and Piety.
362 Veysey, chap. 2: Utility.
However, even these new institutions still drew most of their faculty from graduates of the older American colleges, their overseers from the clergy, their funding from prominent businessmen, and their corporate charters from state governments. They also continued to teach their students Greek and Latin. “Useful” knowledge still needed a connection with older educational forms to convey social distinction, and American higher education continued to rest on the social authority of the church, the gentry, the state, and the classical languages.

These sources of authority paralleled, but did not overlap with those that mattered in the Ottoman world. In 1860, only a small subset of the Ottoman Empire’s inhabitants with both a need to hire educated Syrian workers and the resources to pay them well would immediately recognize American sources of academic distinctions. The American college system and its curricula grew out of British universities like Oxford and Cambridge, and both intellectuals and clergymen had enjoyed careers that crossed the Atlantic over the past few centuries, so the British and American systems of academic distinction were interoperable, although the mother country’s institutions held greater prestige. The Ottoman Empire’s British residents might thus immediately recognize a Protestant College’s degree. The British Consul-General in Beirut, or his subordinates in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Sidon, might want College men to serve as dragomans or kavasses. These diplomatic positions combined the roles of translator, lawyer, and fixer.364 British merchants in Beirut, like James Black and Henry Heald, might also want graduates for clerks, agents, or interpreters.365 These paths to employment might be smoothed by the close social ties between Ottoman Syria’s American missionaries and elite Britons. Together, they had recently organized an “Anglo-American Relief

364 George Jackson Eldridge, the British Consul-General in Beirut during the College’s earliest years, describes these officers’ functions in an appeal for more funds to pay them with. George Jackson Eldridge, “Letter to Earl Russell, Foreign Secretary.”
365 Black and Heald are listed among Beirut’s major British merchant firms by Leila Tarazi Fawaz, Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut (Harvard University Press, 1983), 80.
Committee,” providing clothes and food to refugees from the Syrian Civil War of 1860. But a few subalterns in a few foreign firms and consulates could hardly provide the economic base for an expanding church or change the intellectual climate of an entire region. To succeed, the College’s graduates would need the patronage and recognition of both Ottoman officials and educated Syrians. The missionaries’ claims to self-evident intellectual superiority belied their lack of standing in the country they wished to instruct. To make their College relevant, they would need to clothe it in their adopted country’s academic regalia, and like the coterie of European military and scientific experts then employed in Cairo and Constantinople, they would need to do so by participating in Ottoman institutions.

As we’ve seen in previous chapters, cooperation with local institutions was at least as important for addressing the problem of bare survival as it was for the problem of academic distinction. Missionaries’ accommodation of the Ottoman order extended to one of the school’s most theoretically “Americanized” aspects: the governance of its property and finances. As my last chapter noted, the College drew its funding from donors in Britain and the United States. Its fiscal foundation was its founders’ close relationship with prestigious, prosperous, pious, and proud elites in both countries. These donors saw the school as a component of their own social capital, and took a stake in its management as they would with any other major investment. In the United States, a corporation chartered in New York held the College’s financial assets. The school’s biggest donors, led by its most prominent champions, the prominent merchants William Eale Dodge and William A Booth, formed a Board of Trustees which, at least in theory, controlled its assets’ fate. Of course, these owners could not effectively direct an institution in Beirut from New York.

367 Part of my planned second chapter, “Two Civil Wars,” focuses on how the Syria Mission built relationships with, and came to depend on, this social class.
368 William A Booth, “Sketch of the Early History of the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut.”
City. The Syria Mission’s members had considered several different plans for the school’s day-to-day governance. One participant in the debate, William Thompson, argued that they should appoint a Syrian as the College’s first president, and include Syrians in a Beirut-based “Board of Managers,” that would oversee the College on behalf of its Trustees. Daniel Bliss’s memoirs state that “On further consideration, and in view of well-known facts, this theory was abandoned before any concerted action was taken.” He hints at these “well-known facts” by citing James Black, a major British merchant in Beirut, and one of the Mission’s advisers on “business” matters, who “stated that he could not recommend an institution to the patronage of benevolent men unless its President and Board of Managers were Americans or Englishmen.” Black, like many of the Mission’s members, believed in Anglo-Saxons’ racial and civilizational superiority, found Syrians unfit to control an institution’s finances, and expected American and British donors to share their preconceptions.

So, the Missionaries constructed an administration that, in theory, would keep the College’s purse-strings in tightly clutched Anglo-American hands. They made their colleague Daniel Bliss the College’s President, and appointed a Board of Managers including three of their own, a colleague from the Reformed Presbyterian mission in Latakia, James Black, and the American and British Consuls in Beirut. But as they attempted to flex their fiscal muscles and use part of the College’s extensive endowment to purchase a plot for a permanent campus, they faced major obstacles to their complete autonomy. Ottoman law forbade Americans from owning land in the Empire. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish later wrote to the American legation in Constantinople in response to missionaries’ later inquiries, to express his puzzlement that “our countrymen, who, when at home

370 Bliss, 165.
371 Board of Managers of the Syrian Protestant College, “Minutes of a Meeting Held for the Purpose of Organizing the Board of Managers of the Syrian Protestant College,” June 7, 1864, AA 2.2.1, Box 1, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
at least, are usually characterized by prudence as well as sagacity in business, should, on repairing to Turkey, so far divest themselves of those qualities as to purchase real estate without duly examining their right to do so.” He clarified that the US government could not and would not indemnify them from the risks they incurred by making “covert purchases.” In the absence of official rights or US government support, missionaries enlisted one of their wealthier Syrian converts to help them reconcile American capital with Ottoman law. In 1868, they hired Mihayil Gharzuzi, who worked as a wakil, or land agent, to buy a large seafront tract on the headland west of Beirut and endow it as a waqf for the College’s benefit. On paper, Gharzuzi also served as the waqf’s main trustee and held both the power and responsibility to make use of the land for a particular charitable aim. In 1874, the College’s representatives registered property transfers from Gharzuzi to the Board of Trustees at the American consulate in Beirut, completing one of the “covert purchases” that Fish described in his telegram, probably hoping that future negotiations between the United States and the Sublime Porte would confirm the land’s American ownership. However, this transfer, performed without the oversight or imprimatur of any Ottoman official, would not legally binding until such a treaty was signed. For the next forty years, the College’s real property was part of the same sort of endowment that funded the Ottoman Empire’s mosques, soup kitchens, and madrassas. The College’s administration, which did not officially own the land it had paid for, would need the help of sympathetic local agents and imperial officials in order to expand, keep, and secure their property, which the waqf’s local trustee might hypothetically wrest from them at any time. To use the finances

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372 Hamilton Fish, “Extract from a Dispatch from the Secretary of State on Holding Real Estate in Turkey,” 1872, AA 2.5.3.3.0 Box 1, Folder 4, American University of Beirut Archives.
373 Abdullah Sir’ar, Beirut Majlis al-Shari’a, “Waqf Deed for Syrian Protestant College Lands,” 1868, AA 2.5.3.3.0 Box 1, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives.
374 US Consulate in Beirut, “Certification of Property Transfer,” August 1874, AA 2.5.3.3.0 Box 1, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives.
that they wished to control absolutely, they had to seek Ottoman subjects’ patronage and submit to Ottoman officials’ oversight.

In the sphere of teaching and translation, the College’s new administration was even more willing to adopt local forms and norms. These included markers of learning and bodies of knowledge associated with the ‘ulema and the madrassas that educated them. The school’s official Arabic name, al-Madrassa al-Kulliya al-Injiliyya, hints at this connection. Although some Syrians, like Butrus Bustani, who founded a secular Madrassa Wataniya, or National School, in 1863, put the term to new uses, the word retained strong associations with the Empire’s older and more prestigious higher schools. When a subcommittee of the Ottoman High Council decided, in 1845, to draw up plans for a new Western-style university in Istanbul, they identified the institution as a Darulfünun, or “House of the Sciences,” rather than a madrassa. The Ottoman ministers’ name-giving suggested a decisive break between their school and the Empire’s existing institutions; the missionaries’, by contrast, suggested continuity.

This continuity was more than cosmetic. It began with the College’s professors and instructors. The professors, as Faculty members, had a share in the school’s governance, and needed the Trustees’ approval. In theory, they would also need to be able to teach in Arabic. In 1862, only a small pool of candidates could fulfill both conditions. Of those not already employed in missionary, military, or diplomatic positions, the Syria Mission’s own children, born and raised in the Levant but educated in the United States, offered perhaps the best pool of potential recruits. However, most of these young men were reluctant to abandon their comfortable, genteel lives in the United States. In letters to potential donors, Daniel Bliss expressed his hope of recruiting one of

375 For discussion of the “National School,” see Makdisi, Artillery of Heaven, 207–8.
376 İhsanoğlu, Science, Technology, and Learning in the Ottoman Empire, VII, 828.
these missionary sons, William H Thomson, but this plan never came to pass.\textsuperscript{377} Despite the constraints he faced, Bliss’s first two selections show an attentiveness to markers of learning that Syrians might have cared about. At its first official meeting in 1867 (a year after the school opened), the Syrian Protestant College’s faculty included three full members: Bliss, the veteran Syria missionary and physician Cornelius Van Dyck, and Hanna, or John Wortabet.\textsuperscript{378} The third of these men was a “native” intellectual in every sense. Wortabet was an Arabic-speaking Syrian of Armenian ancestry. As a young man, he converted to Protestant Christianity, served the Syria Mission as a “native evangelist,” challenged the American Board’s refusal to accept Syrian preachers as full missionaries, moved to Britain, accepted ordination from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and joined its mission in Aleppo.\textsuperscript{379} He became a doctor during his time in Syria, probably apprenticing under a local physician’s tutelage, but he sought and achieved recognition as a medical practitioner and researcher in the United States and United Kingdom. In 1854, he published “On the Fevers of Syria” in the American Journal of the Medical Sciences, which described him as “A native Syrian physician.”\textsuperscript{380} A year later, Yale College awarded him an honorary MD.\textsuperscript{381} In 1860, he broadened his Western scholarly portfolio with an account of Syria’s religious groups for British audiences, capitalizing on the public interest that followed his homeland’s civil war.\textsuperscript{382} These efforts, and his status as an ordained minister in a European church, appear to have rendered him acceptable to the Board, much as his local apprenticeship rendered him acceptable to Syrians seeking medical knowledge and treatment.

\textsuperscript{377} Daniel Bliss, “Letter to Chauncey Rose, Esquire.”
\textsuperscript{378} Syrian Protestant College Faculty, “November 1 1867 Minutes of the Syrian Protestant College Faculty,” November 1, 1867, AA 3.4.2 Box 1, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
\textsuperscript{381} Connecticut Medical Society, \textit{Proceedings and Medical Communications of the Connecticut Medical Society}, vol. 4, 2 (New Haven, CT: Connecticut Medical Society, 1875), cliii.
\textsuperscript{382} Wortabet, \textit{Researches into the Religions of Syria}. 
Wortabet’s book about the “Religions of Syria” shows that he was also well-versed in the Islamic ‘ulum al-din whose mastery marked madrassa graduates and members of the ‘ulama. A chapter concerning “Mohammedans” extensively cites the philosopher al-Razi, the foundational jurist Abu Hanifa, the Qur’an itself, and many specific hadiths, suggesting that their author had some familiarity with Islamic philosophy, tafsir, fiqh, and the “science of hadiths.” He frequently qualified his accounts of Muslim beliefs and practices by noting that some of Islam’s “sober doctors” did not endorse them, suggesting that he had read a wide spectrum of Islamic scholarship, and studied its subtleties.383 Cornelius Van Dyck had also worked to acquire something like an ‘alim’s knowledge and status. During his first years in Syria, he studied fusha Arabic and its grammar under two recognized scholars, the poet Nassif al-Yaziji and the al-Azhar-trained ‘alim Shaykh Yusuf al-Asir.384 His studies with al-Asir went beyond the boundaries of language itself. In a pamphlet prescribing a course of study for new missionaries, Van Dyck encouraged pupils to tackle specific volumes on Qur’anic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence, as well as classical Arabic rhetoric, philosophy, and history.385 Van Dyck’s teachers may or may not have granted him an ‘ijaza, but his connection with them, and the knowledge they had imparted to him, granted him some of their prestige. Both he and Wortabet held important local markers of scholarly distinction. Over the rest of the College’s first decade, Bliss took care to appoint other American faculty members who followed their path from among his missionary colleagues and a corps of young temporary instructors they recruited in the United States. George Post, a former missionary who taught botany and medicine, created his own guide for new missionaries, replete with references to an Islamicate knowledge base that rivaled Van Dyck’s.386 Edwin Lewis, who became a popular chemistry professor, studied Arabic poetry and

383 Wortabet, chap. Mohammedanism.
384 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:106–7. Al-Yaziji had served as the secretary for Mount Lebanon’s feudal ruler; see Traboulsi, A History of Modern Lebanon, 63.
385 Cornelius Van Dyck, “Suggestions to Beginners in the Study of Arabic.”
386 George Post, “Suggestions to Missionaries to Aid Them in the Study of Arabic.”
wrote Arabic lyrics for classic American hymns. His selections, who showed a distinctively high degree of attainment in Islamicate forms of knowledge (especially fusha Arabic) even among colleagues who sought to acquire these forms of knowledge for their work, suggests that Bliss understood how his faculty’s mastery of locally recognized forms of knowledge shaped both their own and their institution’s overall credibility.

The College’s early coterie of non-tenured instructors provides an even clearer demonstration that its administrators saw Syrian forms of knowledge and scholarly distinction as valuable contributors to SPC’s educational project, even when those hires brought the school’s “American” and “Protestant” identities into question. They appointed Asa’ad Shadudi, a Protestant convert and local intellectual, to teach mathematics and “natural philosophy” even though he lacked any credential from a European or American institution. They added another locally distinguished convert, the Jesuit-trained Butrus Bustani, to their ranks by inviting him to affiliate his “National School” to the College as a “preparatory department” that would train younger students unready for higher education. More strikingly, the College hired Nassif al-Yaziji to teach fusha grammar and rhetoric without demanding that he abandon his Greek Orthodox faith. Both al-Yaziji and Bustani were major Syrian writers and intellectuals, who are recognized today as foundational figures in modern fusha Arabic literature, distinguished by both their mastery of older literary forms and their striking new uses for the language. Their services didn’t come cheap relative to those provided by other literate locals (Eli Smith had noted the significant expense of

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387 Syria Mission, “Arabic Hymnal.”
388 Daniel Bliss, “1868 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” June 24, 1868, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
390 Daniel Bliss, “1868 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
391 Both of these men had longstanding relationships with the Syria Mission, and I discuss their works in more detail in earlier chapters.
hiring both to assist with Bible translations Bliss), so their hiring suggests that Bliss and his colleagues recognized and valued their literary skills and the local prestige they brought to the school. A few years later, when Bliss fell out with al-Yaziji over the scope and structure of his teaching duties, hired Yusuf al-Asir to replace him.\footnote{Daniel Bliss, “1869 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” 1869, AA 2.3.1 Box 18 Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.} Thus, the College not only employed scholars whose skills, associations, and reputations were consonant with ‘ulama conceptions of learning, but incorporated a Muslim ‘alam, and a graduate of the world’s most prestigious madrassa, into its own staff.

The school’s curriculum and teaching materials also reflected Ottoman, and Islamicate, concepts of learning. In medicine, mathematics, and the natural sciences, the College offered courses that reflected European and American scholarship, but overlapped with madrassa or apprenticeship offerings. In 1869, its first year operating on its Ras Beirut campus, the College offered instruction in algebra and logic, which its students could just as easily have learned at a place like al-Azhar.\footnote{Daniel Bliss.} Its course in “natural philosophy,” or physics, included astronomy, an important part of the madrassa curriculum and an area where the ‘ulema had kept up with European developments.\footnote{İhsanoğlu, Science, Technology, and Learning in the Ottoman Empire, col. 2.} Courses in chemistry, botany, anatomy, and materia medica would all have parallels in the Syrian intellectual tradition, whose local practitioners often eagerly assimilated European knowledge to their own.\footnote{One such eager adopter was the Mount Lebanon physician Mikhail Mishaqa, who obtained translations of French scientific books from his uncle in Egypt. Mikhayil Mishaqa, Al-Jamah 'ala Igtinah al-Abhab (Damascus, Syria: (unpublished manuscript), 1873), 62–63.} The translated textbooks that Van Dyck, Wortabet, Post, and Lewis crafted, in fusha, for their students, frequently followed key conventions of belletristic Arabic writing. For example, Wortabet’s anatomical tome, Kitab al-Tawdih fi Usul al-Tashrib (literally: “Book of Clarification in the Foundations of Anatomy”), used motifs like a rhyming title and a bismillah, or “in
the name of God,” at its opening. The College’s students, and other learned local observers, might find some of the school’s scientific offerings unusual, but they could relate them to bodies of knowledge that they understood and valued.

If we direct our gaze to the humanities and social sciences, we shall see even more signs that the College strayed from its American model and embraced local forms of learning. Greek, the public-spirited young American’s gateway to the rhetorical power of Demosthenes and the democratic virtues of ancient Athens, as well as the New Testament in its original language, was altogether absent. Latin, the language of European learning and Roman virtue, only held a vestigial place as a second-year elective. Unlike its 19th century American counterparts, the College did not require its mastery for either admission or graduation. Fusha Arabic, the language of the Qur’an, Islamic scholarship, and Islamicate literature, took these European classical languages’ curricular place. In the College’s first decade, applicants had to prove their knowledge of its vocabulary and grammar to win admission, much as their counterparts applying to Amherst or Harvard rattled off Latin declensions and conjugations to stern examiners. In 1873, the Faculty established a “Preparatory Department” to train students who failed its entrance examinations in arithmetic, geography, and fusha Arabic grammar. Neither Latin nor the College’s offered “modern languages,” English, French, and Turkish, were admission requirements. Students in the College’s “Collegiate” (ie: liberal arts) and “Medical” programs had to study higher levels of Arabic grammar and rhetoric. Even though learned Americans regarded Latin and Greek as essential sources of character and markers of scholarly distinction, the Syrian Protestant College chose to focus on

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396 John Wortabet, Kitāb Al-Tawdhib Fi Uṣūl al-Tarbiyā / Asbāb Al-Dhul Al-Tarbiyā / Abā’ab Al-Dhul Al-Tarbiy / (Bayrūt : Al-Tawdhib, 1871), 1, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.321054951809.

397 Daniel Bliss, “1869 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”

398 Daniel Bliss, “1873 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” July 18, 1873, A 2.3.1 Box 18 Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.

399 Daniel Bliss, “1869 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
teaching a different classical language that connected its students to a non-Western and non-Christian literary, cultural, and religious heritage.

In 1871, the College’s faculty considered, and advocated, adding other forms of Islamicate knowledge to the curriculum, and other locally distinguished intellectuals to the teaching staff. In response to an inquiry from the Board of Trustees, they envisioned establishing a law school that would teach “both Mohammedan law and the Napoleonic code.” They believed that “With the aid of the native lawyers [who they would hire, at reasonable rates, to teach their students] it is believed to be possible for the Faculty to so direct the studies that commendable progress would be attained, and a body of advocates raised up that would be an honor to the College and a benefit to the country.” This plan set out a future, not an immediate course of action; the faculty argued that this new department’s opening should await the end of an ongoing recodification of the Ottoman Empire’s laws. However, they urged that “the senior class be instructed in the general principles of Mohammedan law.”

This plan, pursued to its logical conclusion, would require graduates of the Syrian Protestant College, an avowedly Christian school, founded and managed by missionaries, to study the Qur’an, the hadiths, and the rules governing Muslim conduct. It would require not one, but many teachers from the ‘ulema. Its graduates would master the same bodies of knowledge as their madrassa counterparts. The plan for a law school never came to fruition, and fiqh never became part of the College’s official curriculum. The institution’s trustees in New York would have been reluctant to countenance such a change, and the legal reforms which might have made law a remunerative profession in the late Ottoman Empire never came. However, the fact that the College’s faculty contemplated, and even endorsed this remarkable transformation demonstrates

400 Daniel Bliss, “1871 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” 1871, AA 2.3.1 Box 18 Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
their willingness to incorporate forms of learning that might distinguish their graduates, even when they threatened the school’s religious identity.

The College also tried to distinguish itself and its students, and avoid potential political problems, by seeking patronage from the Ottoman state. As I argued in the previous chapter, the Syrian Civil War of 1860 and the political upheaval that followed brought the Syria Mission’s members into closer relationships with the ambitious, self-consciously modernizing Ottoman bureaucracy in Constantinople and its appointed representatives in the province of Syria (which included Beirut) and the special autonomous region of Mount Lebanon (which abutted it). In 1870, a year before the College’s first class completed their studies, Cornelius Van Dyck wrote to one of these officials, the Vali, or provincial governor, of Syria, to request “the appointment of a Medical officer of the Government to be present at the annual examinations of the Medical Department of the Syrian Protestant College for the purpose of attesting his satisfaction with the acquirements of those on whom the College shall confer its diploma by adding his signature to that of the Faculty of Medicine.” The Vali, eager to broaden his province’s potential pool of modern military medical men, endorsed Van Dyck’s request and sought the Sublime Porte’s approval.401 In a letter explaining the exchange to the US Consul-General in Beirut, Van Dyck expressed his, and his colleagues’, hopes “to have the Institution established on a truly national basis, with government approbation and aid,” and obtain a firman, or Imperial decree, granting the College’s graduates an official medical license.402 Although the American missionaries frequently blamed the Sublime Porte’s policies for their projects’ shortcomings, they were, in practice, eager to make their College part of the Ottoman state-building project.

401 We know about this exchange because Van Dyck forwarded a copy of the Vali’s letter to the US Consul in Beirut, so that the American legation in Constantinople could Cornelius Van Dyck, “Letter to LM Johnson,” December 12, 1870, AA 2.3.1 Box 9, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives. 402 Cornelius Van Dyck.
The governor of Syria was eager to embrace them; the Sublime Porte itself offered an official relationship on more cautious terms. On March 15, 1871, Mehmet Emin Âli Pasha, the Ottoman Foreign Minister, wrote to note that the Imperial Medical Faculty had received, but rejected the College’s petition. The Imperial Faculty were reluctant to give up their monopoly on determining who could serve as Ottoman medical officials, and particularly reluctant to give that authority to a foreign-organized and foreign-sponsored institution. However, the Foreign Minister also stated that “To prove its desire to spread the benefits of science in all parts of the Empire,” the Imperial government would cover the travel and living expenses of “indigent” students traveling to Constantinople to take the Imperial Medical Examination. This decision allowed the Sublime Porte to tap a new source of well-trained recruits, and show-off its modernizing munificence towards a peripheral province without surrendering its authority to choose who could impose quarantines and investigate crimes on its behalf to a foreign missionary organization. Following a longstanding Ottoman tradition, it would mobilize foreign expertise towards its own ends. This deal also helped the College, which it marked as part of a recognizable path to profit and power.

Nevertheless, this concession did not satisfy the College’s faculty, who continued striving to make their medical school an officially Ottoman institution. In 1873, they sent another plea to the Porte, hoping that “the Imperial Faculty will enter into correspondence with us as a legitimate succursale [branch], and will exchange with us specimens illustrative of Natural Science and Antiquities, as well as the publications which may be issued by the two faculties. It will also give us great pleasure to receive a visit from a delegate of the said Faculty.” They sought recognition from both the state itself and the scientific community that it cultivated in Constantinople, even if it

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403 Mehmet Emin Âli Pasha, “Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sublime Porte,” March 15, 1871, AA 3.9.2, Box 1, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives. Translation from French is my own.

404 They communicated this message through US diplomatic representatives in Beirut and Constantinople. See Syrian Protestant College Medical Department, “Letter to J Baldwin Hay,” October 24, 1873, AA 3.9.2, Box 1, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
meant subordinating the College’s medical curriculum to an Ottoman institution’s. Their pleas were not in vain. In 1878, Rashid Pasha, another Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, informed them that the Empire, seeking to improve relations with the United States (a potentially valuable trading partner, if not an influential power in the region) and spread science throughout its provinces, would make the College a “medical school of the second rank” whose graduates could come to Constantinople and take the Imperial Medical Exam as soon as they received their diplomas, without administrative hurdles or delays.405 The College had not won the right to license official physicians on its own, but it and its students could bask in the glory and prestige of the Sublime State.

Unfortunately, reader, I don’t read Ottoman Turkish, and can’t provide you with a complete account of the Ottoman bureaucracy’s decision-making, but it’s reasonable to conclude that the Sublime Porte probably conferred this distinction because it, and its subordinates in Syria, found the College’s graduates useful. In its first two decades, the school took its duty to train its medical students for administrative service seriously. It mandated examinations in hygiene, the 19th century’s most important body of knowledge related to public health.406 It also taught al-Tib al-Sha’ri, or forensic medicine. One surviving examination from 1884 asks students to explain, among other matters, how to differentiate between the effects of a head wound and a stroke, how to tell if an infant was stillborn or smothered, how to determine the age of a fetus, and to explain the definition of “poison” in a forensic medical context.407 This program of preparation effectively prepared many SPC students for public service. In 1888, Daniel Bliss sent out a circular to find out what the College’s graduates had made of themselves. Many of his former students wrote about their government service in Ottoman Syria. They had worked as municipal doctors, sanitary inspectors,

405 Rashid Pasha, “Message from Rashid Pasha,” July 3, 1877, AA 3.9.2, Box 1, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
406 Daniel Bliss, “1883 Report of the SPC Faculty,” 1883, AA 2.3.1 Box 18 Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
407 “Imtihaan Fi Al-Tib al-Sha’ri,” March 1884, AA 3.9.2, Box 9, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives.
quarantine enforcers, hospital administrators, and forensic investigators, in Beirut, Sur, Homs, the Metn, Damascus, Ba'albek, Zahle, Saida, Suq al-Gharb, Haifa, Tarablus, Hasbeyya, and other Syrian towns. In these posts, they helped the Ottoman state resolve disputes and promote population growth by producing official scientific truths in court, caring for the sick and wounded, dispensing medication, and protecting the population against epidemics. These career trajectories show that College performed a valuable service for the Sublime Porte, and, in turn, that its efforts to distinguish its medical graduates as administrative officials were successful.

As we have seen, local ideas of learning and markers of academic distinction shaped the school’s teaching force, curriculum, corporate structure, political affiliation, and purpose. The quest for credibility also demanded and directed the labors of the school’s staffers and students. They spent their time and energy in grueling efforts to promote and perform their knowledge for a broader Syrian public. The faculty and teaching staff, whose personal brand was, thanks to the ‘ijaza model of accreditation, essential to the College’s academic reputation, fought on the front lines of this unceasing public relations campaign. As Marwa Elshakry mentions in her magisterial *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, these men launched a barrage of translated textbooks and brand-new scientific publications at Beirut’s rapidly expanding reading public. Their textbooks met their students’ own needs, and supplied other schoolrooms throughout Beirut; George Post launched a College medical journal in 1874, and two graduates-turned instructors, Ya’qub Sarruf and Fares Nimr, published *al-Muqtatf*, an encyclopaedic journal of the arts and sciences. Elshakry focuses on the spiritual and intellectual motives that drove this flurry of publication, but these books and journals also served valuable social functions. They alerted a region of readers already interested in “Western” scientific

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408 This collection of letters, all in Arabic, all sent in December 1888 and January 1889, have been an amazing source for tracking SPC’s impact on the region even in its earliest decades. AUB Archives AA 2.3.1 Box 3 Folder 1
knowledge to the College’s activities, they marked their authors as purveyors of valuable knowledge, and they did so in a *fusha* linguistic register that readers from all of Ottoman Syria’s sects would recognize as learned.

The College’s simultaneous effort to corporealize their curriculum in “cabinets” collecting Syrian plants, fossils, minerals, and artifacts served a similar purpose. This museum-making enterprise was an important institutional priority. In 1869, only three years after the College’s official opening, and a year before the start of construction at its official Ras Beirut campus, the project was already in full swing. George Post swelled the college’s “Herbarium” through “collection and exchange,” and acquired “many specimens of mineral ores, also a number of stuffed birds and animals collected mostly from Egypt.” John Fraser, one of the school’s temporary English instructors, collected 566 “Greek, Phonician, Roman, Jewish, Cufic, Alexandrian coins and some others.” The US Consul at Cyprus, Luigi Palma di Cesnola, a prolific amateur archaeologist who later became the first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, gave them “a variety of ancient pottery, taken from the Phonician, Grecian, and Roman tombs found on that Island.”

Henry Jessup, a Syria Mission member, “gave his valuable cabinet of the Geology of Syria, in which are specimens of nearly all the known fossils found in this country.” David Stuart Dodge, the on-site liaison from the Board of Trustees, bought tables and glass cases and started working to put these items on display. By 1877, these collections had expanded spectacularly. The “conchological,” or shell collection alone included “over 1500 species illustrated by over 3000 specimens.” They also held “1500 Mineralogical specimens named and arranged according to Dana,” a geological collection with “a suite of about 200 selected specimens of Aqueous Rocks, about 175 specimens of Igneous Rocks, … typical specimens all named and classified of the

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410 For a little more information about Cesnola’s career, see Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 160.
411 Daniel Bliss, “1869 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
Pliocene, Miocene, Eocene, Cretaceous, Jurassic, Triassic, Permian, Carboniferous, Devonian, and Silurian formations,” 2000 fossils, 300 pieces of ancient pottery from Cyprus, “several sarcophagi” from Beirut, a Herbarium “perhaps the most complete existing for Syria and Palestine,” which also included “several thousand foreign species principally from America Europe India and South Africa,” a collection of stuffed animals, “a few skeletons, mounted and unmounted, the commencement of a collection on comparative Osteology,” and a set of papier maché models “representing in gigantique the organs of digestion, respiration, circulation, and innervation of the Animal Kingdom.” The assembly and display of this enormous collection of artifacts would have required hundreds of hours of labor from the College’s faculty, as well as its students, who often catalogued specimens and assembled display-cases in exchange for scholarships. The resources invested in this project hint at its importance for the College’s overall goals.

The “cabinets” probably played an important role in the College’s course of instruction. As Steven Conn argues, 19th century American educators saw the museum as a key site for the production and acquisition of knowledge, especially in the taxonomy-oriented fields of natural history, botany, zoology, geology, archaeology, and anthropology. They served as what Bruno Latour describes as “centers of calculation,” places where observers could gather a multitude of information or observations (in this case, embodied by “sample” artifacts) in a single location and synthesize them into a thicker, richer picture of the world. In this role, they helped teachers like Van Dyck, Wortabet, Ford, Sarruf, and Nimr to explain botany, zoology, anatomy, and other such sciences to their students. The school’s American donors, who might only see the “cabinets” if they

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412 Daniel Bliss, “1877 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
413 Daniel Bliss, “1871 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
visited Beirut themselves, would have found their very existence a source of pride and prestige. Just as importantly, they offered distinguished Syrian visitors a tangible representation of the knowledge that the College could confer to its students. The cabinets, with their extensive collections of local minerals, flora and fauna could connect the abstract canons of natural science to objects and landforms that Syrians might encounter in day-to-day life, turning trees, rocks, and animals into evidence of the teaching staff’s knowledge. They enlisted the land itself as an advocate for the College’s reputation as a font of useful scientific knowledge.

Students and faculty also represented the school’s knowledge base by providing low-priced medical care to the people of Ras Beirut and its environs. In the October of 1867, Van Dyck and Wortabet opened a “dispensary” where they, assisted by the College’s medical students, offered treatment to local patients. In a report, Daniel Bliss claimed that in its first year, this dispensary saw 1,000 patients and that “at least fifty persons have been rescued from becoming blind by this department of our work.”416 In 1869, Van Dyck used donations from American doctors to establish the “Brown ophthalmic hospital” to house patients who had come longer distances for treatment.417 A year later, the Medical Faculty added a pharmacy to the dispensary, and a year after that, they agreed that they and their students would provide care at a nearby charity hospital funded and administered by the Prussian branch of the Knights of Saint John.418 These charitable medical efforts were not always particularly benevolent. According to Maria Abunassar, a historian of Ras Beirut, George Post’s local “reputation for arrogance and duplicity” persisted long after his death. Posthumous oral accounts suggest that he would reverse surgical procedures for patients who failed

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416 Daniel Bliss, “1868 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
417 Daniel Bliss, “1869 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
418 Daniel Bliss, “1870 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” June 24, 1870, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives; Daniel Bliss, “1871 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
to pay, and withheld care from locals who refused to sell their land to the College. However, the “charity” patients that these institutions served for less than the cost of their treatment supplied useful practice to medical students, and served as living advertisement for the Medical Faculty’s skill, and the skills of their students. Each person cured of trachoma offered proof of their competence and distinction, even if he or she might also curse their caretakers’ hard-hearted stinginess.

From 1872 onward, students and faculty also made their learning visible through public examinations. To obtain their diplomas, the College’s medical students had to weather a barrage of tough written and oral queries in front of a live audience. These examinations were comprehensive and difficult; three of the nine students who participated in the first iteration failed. The College’s quest for credibility informed the examinations’ structure and setting. Before they could participate in this public event, students “were examined by the Medical Faculty upon the studies of the entire course of four years,” and those who failed, who were most likely to embarrass the College before external witnesses, were instructed to take another year of study. The board of examiners included two physicians from outside the College, a Beirut-dwelling Italian physician named “Pestalozza,” and a “Murad Bey,” whose name and noble title suggest that he was an Ottoman military officer. These external examiners precluded the possibility of collusion between the College’s students and its faculty, and as a representative of the state, Murad Bey lent the whole affair pomp and gravitas through his presence. Students participated one by one; after each had concluded, these “outside” examiners and the medical faculty would use a secret ballot to determine who passed and failed, so that observers would have no reason to doubt the exam’s integrity. Bliss judged this ritual, which sacrificed three students’ ambitions so that six others might appear worthy, a success, writing:

“Those, who did not obtain a 'Diploma,' were for a time sorely disappointed and indignant, but the College has risen in popular estimation; it is now felt that we are rigid and impartial in our requirements and will confer the honors of the Institution only upon those who deserve them.”

His words, and his colleagues’ actions and efforts, suggest that the College’s reputation among Beirut’s, and the Eastern Mediterranean’s, elites remained a paramount concern, and one which they understood was essential to the school’s success. Indeed, they were willing to make Beirut’s people, which they had characterized as ignorant in appeals to American donors and Ottoman doctors, who they had characterized as quacks in the same pamphlets, the ultimate judges of their own educational work.

The College’s efforts to make itself credible, as well as its day-to-day functioning, imposed enormous costs on its students. Without their labor, boxes of fossils would remain un-sorted and un-displayed, patients at the charity clinics would remain un-treated, “preparatory department” boys would remain un-tutored, meals would remain un-served, and floors un-swept. These were all tasks that the College assigned to its scholarship students, who were mostly boys in their teens or early twenties. Like its contemporary, Cornell University, the Syrian Protestant College compelled its “charity” pupils to work for their education. Bliss argued that this labor had a salutary effect on student learning, stating that “Experience teaches us that, as a general thing, those students who are compelled to struggle and labour hard to meet their expenses make the greatest progress in their studies.”

The shrewd and pragmatic President probably also had his eye on the College’s bottom line and his former Mission’s goals. The College often granted scholarships to pupils hand-picked by the Syria Mission’s members, helped their missionary colleagues strengthen their ties with local

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420 Daniel Bliss, “1872 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” June 27, 1872, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
421 For information about the Cornell model, which other American colleges and universities of the period imitated, see Geiger, The History of American Higher Education, 204–5.
422 Daniel Bliss, “1871 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
communities, and the free labor these students could provide was icing on the cake. Students who paid their own way also faced heavy burdens. By 1878, full tuition at the College cost 17 Turkish pounds per year, the equivalent of about half the amount that the College paid its skilled Syrian instructors ten years later.

The course of studies itself also made students struggle. In 1877, eleven years into its existence, the College had graduated 77 students and lost 150. Some of these students may have entered seeking specific pieces of knowledge or the ‘ijaza (certification) of a reputed teacher rather than a formal credential which, in the school’s early, experimental years, might not ever offer all that much value. However, the difficulties and psychological stresses of study also seem to have taken a toll. Pleading for funds to hire additional instructors, Bliss stated that “the youth of Syria unaccustomed to severe mental discipline require much instruction, direction, and assistance.”

The true source of these students’ struggles might have been a difficult curriculum or inadequate instruction rather than intellectual unpreparedness, but it’s clear that whatever the cause, students suffered. A year into its operations, the College had already lost a student, Jirjis Sasin, because he “found it impossible, with his habits of study and discipline of mind, to sustain himself in the recitations, especially in Arabic Grammar and Algebra.” In most subsequent years, the Faculty would ask several students to leave because they struggled so much with the work, removing them from their institution so they would not compromise its credibility. Students who took the College’s examinations also faced the possibility of failure, with the added injury of public

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423 For details of this program, see Daniel Bliss, “1878 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” July 18, 1878, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
424 Daniel Bliss, “1888-1889 Annual Report of the Faculty,” July 4, 1889, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
425 Daniel Bliss, “1877 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
426 Daniel Bliss, “1870 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
427 Daniel Bliss, “1867 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” 1867, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
428 See, for example, the brief discussion of expulsions in Daniel Bliss, “1871 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
humiliation. Every student who left the College, or was forced out, lost part of the distinction they sought to accomplish with their tuition and toil. The school, which imposed hard work and high fees in exchange for uncertain rewards, had a fragile, delicate moral economy, and its pupils had plenty of reasons for resentment.

To continue operating and building its reputation, the College had to keep its potentially unruly student body under control. The methods it used were, Bliss claimed, a departure from local practices. In a report to the Board of Managers, he explained that “At first neither students, patrons or even Tutors could understand our method of control. Native schools follow the principles instituted by Monks in the dark ages, keeping their pupils in subjection by penances, petty flagellation, imprisonment, deprivation of food, standing in disgrace in conspicuous places, etc, all devised to degrade the student in his own estimation and that of others.” In its stead, they deployed three key disciplinary techniques. The first was a set of tasks and obligations that would keep students busy, and, it was hoped, cast their character in a missionary mold. These included the difficult schoolwork and manual labors that I discussed above, but they also included mandatory religious services, Sunday school lessons, and Bible study sessions for students of all religious backgrounds, including those who were Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, or Druze.

The second major technique was surveillance. Daniel Bliss’s memoir suggests that he frequently dealt with student offenders by subtly hinting that he knew their transgressions. In one of the anecdotes that his son, Frederick, gathered from former students and used to illustrate his father’s practices, Bliss encountered a student breaking school rules by smoking on campus. Seeing him thrust his hand, and the cigarette with it, into his pocket, the President asked the youth to shake his hand, and continued shaking it, while asking after his family, until the burning but had simmered

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429 Daniel Bliss, “1872 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
430 Daniel Bliss.
through the pocket and onto the ground. At that point, “the President saluted, and passed on with no further word.” This technique might have relied on Bliss’s personal moral authority; if a student respected him, he might be shamed by the President’s teasing display of trust. However, these performances probably drew much of their bite from the third, and sharpest prong of the College’s disciplinary trident: the expulsion. In the 1870s and 1880s, the Faculty expelled one or more students almost every year (remarkable given the relatively small size of the student body), and, as Bliss acknowledged, it was a pillar of their authority.

However, some students contested these methods and strictures. A report from Beirut’s mixed court, which resolved disputes between Ottoman and foreign subjects, states that on April 11, 1871, a disgraced former student named Salim gathered a band of 20-30 men and women and marched on the College. Cornelius Van Dyck came out and the crowd to disperse, probably hoping that his standing in the community and command of Arabic would help his words hit home. Instead, the crowd snatched his walking stick, at which point, “the friends and sons of the school came down to protect it from harm,” and drove off the attackers, who continued, for some time, to stone the College buildings from a distance. Salim and three other ringleaders stood trial before the mixed court. Cornelius Van Dyck, Mikhayil Gharzuzi, and Rahim al-Bustani (the US Consul’s Dragoman) presented the College’s case. The court declared them guilty, and Suleiman Ağa, the Ottoman Qadi, or chief judge of Beirut, sentenced Salim to 45 days’ imprisonment and three other ringleaders to 30 days each, and paid the College twice the estimated damages.

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432 See the discussion of expulsions in Daniel Bliss, “1870 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
433 Beirut Mixed Court, “Reply of the Beirut Mixed Court to LM Johnson’s Petition of April 12, 1871,” April 14, 1871, AA 2.3.1 Box 10, Folder 10, American University of Beirut Archives. The direct translation from Arabic is my own.
434 LM Johnson, “April 29 Letter to Daniel Bliss,” April 29, 1871, AA 2.3.1 Box 10, Folder 10, American University of Beirut Archives.
This violent episode reveals a “hidden transcript” of students’ frustration with the College’s regime. Salim’s “disgrace” suggests that the College expelled him. His anger, and the anger which he managed to inspire in the twenty-odd comrades who marched to campus with him, suggest that he saw this expulsion as an unfair recompense for his study, labor, and tuition fees. If, as Bliss claims, the College’s policies went against many Syrians’ expectations, Salim and his comrades probably perceived the faculty’s decision to substitute surveillance and expulsion for corporal punishment as harsh and unforgiving rather than “manly” or character-forming. It’s also possible that Salim understood education as a fundamentally interpersonal, rather than institutional, and saw his expulsion as a personal attack rather than a matter of policy. His rejection of the College’s disciplinary order threatened its campus’s buildings and its faculty’s bodies, and exposed the shallowness of the authority it exercised over its students.

Indeed, this episode suggests that the College could only wield disciplinary power with the support of the local community and the Ottoman state. The court report’s use of the phrase “friends and sons of the school” suggests that both students and Ras Beirut residents leapt to the College’s defense and repelled the attackers. The College’s local reputation shielded it from further harm. The mixed court’s harsh and swift punishment of the perpetrators suggest that the College’s efforts to insinuate itself into the Ottoman state’s priorities, projects, and political system had earned it some modicum of protection. The Faculty’s power to expel students rested on their power to control a piece of land which they did not actually own. In Arabic, they identified the campus as a birm, or enclosed space, and marked that enclosure by erecting walls around it and hiring a watchman to oversee its gate. However, without local supporters and officials willing to use

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435 I borrow the concept of the “hidden transcript,” a subaltern narrative about social relationships usually hidden from the historian’s gaze, which occasionally erupts into view during moments of conflict and rebellion, from James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990).

violence to defend it, this spatial claim was a mere fiction. The College’s local reputation was key to its bare survival as well as its long-term success.

If Salim’s march on the school showed how the College’s survival depended on its reputation, another event a decade later shows how thoroughly its reputation rested on its adherence to local systems of distinction and its systematic public relations efforts. This event, the so-called “Lewis Affair,” began in 1882, when Edwin Lewis, a Professor at the College, praised Charles Darwin in an Arabic-language commencement speeches. The College’s overseers, the Board of Managers, relayed news of the speech to New York, where it outraged several of the Trustees. When Lewis refused to recant, they demanded his resignation. Wortabet, Van Dyck, and Van Dyck’s son William all resigned in protest, and many of the College’s medical students went on strike. Bliss allowed the strikers to recant their positions, and permanently expelled a number who refused to submit. A year later, Fares Nimr and Yaqub Sarruf, two of the College’s most important instructors, also resigned their positions. This dramatic incident has drawn the attention of several historians, including AL Tibawi, who saw it as the death knell for Arabic-language instruction at the institution, and Marwa Elshakry, who argued that it revealed the limits of the College’s scientific educational project.437 These accounts explore the strike’s effects, but leave its causes obscure. Bliss himself was baffled by the course of events; his account of the “Lewis Affair” characterizes the students’ demands as arbitrary justifications for revolt and expressions of insensate anger.438 Why did students care so much about an intra-faculty squabble that they would jeopardize or voluntarily abandon their membership in the institution?

438 Daniel Bliss, “1882-1883 Account of the Lewis Affair,” 1883, AA 2.3.1 Box 18, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
A close reading of the students’ petitions shows that the “Lewis Affair” and the subsequent strike were inextricably entangled with students’ concerns about the College’s ability to confirm academic distinctions which their compatriots would find meaningful. Students feared that their degrees might no longer effectively mark them as learned Ottomans, and expressed anger at the prospect that the scholastic labor they applied to mastering difficult material, the manual labor they provided to sustain the college, and the public scrutiny and potential humiliation they had to endure to bolster the institution’s credibility might come to nothing. This anxiety pervades their petitions, which raised three major grievances. The first was Lewis’s departure. They argued that Lewis was a good Christian, good professor, and good servant of Ottoman Syria whose conduct had never merited dismissal. More intriguingly, they also argued that they had matriculated with the understanding that Lewis would serve as their examiner in the natural sciences and sign their medical diploma, and thus, that his firing would violate their implicit contract with the College. Bliss described this contractual argument as “absurd,” but it was consistent with contemporary Syrian concepts of educational distinction. In a society that viewed verified relationships between individual teachers and students as key signs of learned status, the firing or resignation of a widely-respected professor, and the disappearance of their documented approval could easily undercut a college diploma’s prestige. The resignations that followed Lewis’s departure dealt even harsher blows to students’ confidence in their degrees. Cornelius Van Dyck and John Wortabet held more local markers of learning than most of the College’s faculty. They, and Lewis were key participants in the College’s publication and publicity projects. Much of the school’s reputation rested on the respect they commanded. Many students even prioritized their imprimatur over the institution’s,

439 SPC Student Strikers, “December 2, 1882 Student Petition Against the Firing of Edwin Lewis,” December 2, 1882, AA 4.3.1 Box 1, Folder 3, American University of Beirut Archives.
440 SPC Student Strikers, “December 5, 1882 Student Petition Against the Firing of Edwin Lewis,” December 5, 1882, AA 4.3.1 Box 1, Folder 3, American University of Beirut Archives.
and opted to study privately under Van Dyck and Lewis rather than recanting their positions and returning to the College. Unsurprisingly, then, the students saw these professors’ departure as a shoddy recompense for their contribution to the institution.

A harsh blow from outside further shook the foundations of the College’s Syrian reputation. The Imperial Medical Faculty in Constantinople chose to cease administering its examinations in Arabic, in part because of the expense and difficulty of finding examiners or medically competent interpreters, and in part because the Faculty wanted future officials to adopt the Ottoman Empire’s de facto official languages, French and Turkish. In their second petition, the students complained that the Imperial Medical Faculty in Constantinople no longer administered examinations in Arabic, the Medical Department’s language of instruction, potentially cutting off their path to administrative positions. The College offered French and Turkish, the Imperial Exam’s official languages, but had not required them for medical students, and they probably had not taught the specialized scientific and medical terminology that would appear in the examination. This objection suggests that SPC’s students, like the College’s faculty, saw state recognition, or at least, the possibility of achieving it, as a key source of their education’s social value. These students believed that if the College no longer served as an Ottoman medical military academy, their diplomas’ shine would be tarnished. This severe loss, coupled with Lewis, Van Dyck, and Wortabet’s departures, constituted a breakdown of the school’s moral economy. The striking students believed that their scholarly burdens had become unfair. In their third major complaint, they pointedly asked why they had to continue preparing for and taking examinations, and continue facing the possibility of public humiliation and expulsion from the College, when a passing grade and a diploma no longer offered a clear pathway to distinction and wealth. The strike reflected students’ concerns about the College’s

441 Daniel Bliss, “1882-1883 Account of the Lewis Affair.”
442 SPC Student Strikers, “December 5, 1882 Student Petition Against the Firing of Edwin Lewis.”
ability to make them recognizable as intellectuals and bourgeois professionals in Ottoman Syria’s broader social context, as well as an awareness of the personal costs they incurred by playing a part in public reputation-building rituals like examinations. When both internal and external events threatened to make an SPC education socially useless, many students decided that their sacrifices were no longer worthwhile.

The “Lewis Affair” was a terrible blow to the College. The loss of Lewis, Wortabet, and the Van Dycks, all among the most locally “learned” faculty, left the College unable to teach Medicine in Arabic with a professoriate that would please its Anglo-Saxon backers. An attempt to fill the gap by making Yaqub Sarruf and Faris Nimr adjunct professors failed when the two men refused a subordinate position in the institution and left for Cairo, where they became prominent journalists.443 The Board of Trustees demanded that the College require a Protestant profession of faith from its instructors, so the College could no longer shore up its reputation with Greek Orthodox or Muslim talent.444 The Imperial Medical Board continued to offer examinations in French and Turkish, but not in Arabic or the College’s new language of instruction, English. However, the school continued to survive, and even flourish, throughout the late Ottoman period.

In part, this success stemmed from the College’s refusal to abandon the adaptations and projects that had helped it gain credibility during its first decades. Daniel Bliss’s report to the Board of Managers in 1888 shows continuity. George Post, a strong fusha scholar, if not quite Wortabet or Van Dyck’s match, as well as a scientific translator and writer, led the school’s medical department and lent graduates his credibility. Classical Arabic grammar and rhetoric remained central to the College’s curriculum, and the Faculty hired gifted scholars from among their own graduates, like the

444 Tibawi.
accomplished philologist Jabir Dummit, to teach it. The College offered French to all the students in its preparatory, Collegiate, and Medical departments, restoring graduates’ path to Ottoman government posts. A remark about the tragic drowning of ‘Abd al-Qadir Shihab, the son of Emir Najif Shihab, the current head of Mount Lebanon’s one-time ruling family, suggests that Bliss had persuaded members of the local Sunni and Druze aristocracy to patronize the school and lend it their cachet. The College continued to expand its “cabinets” of coins, plants, fossils, minerals, anatomical curiosities, and laboratory equipment, as well as its library. In doing so, it continued to make its stores of knowledge visible and tangible to Syrians.\textsuperscript{445} In short, the College managed to bring its previous reputation-making projects back on track.

The College’s credibility-building projects and the curricular adaptations that came with them also positioned its faculty and graduates to take advantage of the enormous political, social, cultural, and economic changes that transformed the Eastern Mediterranean in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. One of these shifts was British imperial expansion in the region. The College, a training school for military medical bureaucrats which also taught all its graduates English and French, proved useful to both British colonial administrators and Levantine social climbers who wanted to curry their favor. In 1878, the British took Cyprus from the Ottomans, and in 1882, they occupied previously \textit{de facto} independent Egypt.\textsuperscript{446} Young men from these territories immediately flocked to the SPC, where they could get credentials from men who shared their new overlords’ language and religion. In 1879, ten ethnic Greeks from Cyprus enrolled.\textsuperscript{447} By 1889, over a tenth of the College’s student body came from these two territories’ mercantile and artisan middle classes.\textsuperscript{448} The British Empire

\textsuperscript{445} Daniel Bliss, “1888-1889 Annual Report of the Faculty.”
\textsuperscript{446} K\textsuperscript{ò}nstantinos Spyridak\textsuperscript{ò}s, \textit{A Brief History of Cyprus} (Chicago, IL: Argonaut, 1964), 64; Panayiotis J. Vatikiotis, \textit{The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 160–62.
\textsuperscript{447} Daniel Bliss, “1879 Annual Report of the SPC Faculty,” 1879, AA 2.3.1 Box 18 Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
\textsuperscript{448} Daniel Bliss, “1888-1889 Annual Report of the Faculty.”
also provided careers for the College’s civilian graduates. By 1891, thirty-one of the 272 students who had received diplomas from the school already lived and worked in Egypt. In 1906, Evelyn Baring, or the Earl of Cromer, Britain’s fiduciary viceroy in Egypt, described Christian Syrians, who he saw as morally and intellectually superior to Egyptian Copts and Muslims, and more able to communicate with British officials in English or French, as a “godsend” to the British administration there. The College’s graduates would have no trouble finding employment as administrators in his service.

Another major shift was the beginning of the mahajjar, a mass migration from Ottoman Syria to the New World sparked by both a sudden crash in the price of silk (Mount Lebanon’s most important cash crop) and an ongoing decrease in the cost of trans-oceanic steamship travel. Between 1887 and 1914, over a third of the Mount Lebanon region’s population had moved to Australia or the Americas. The College’s students, with their knowledge of English, soon joined this migration, often before they had finished their studies. In 1889, Bliss mentioned that “Five or six students left at the close of the winter term for the purpose of going to America.” The College’s graduates were more likely to stay home than its dropouts; by 1891, only nine had made the journey across the Atlantic. However, those who had made the journey found plenty of opportunities for profit. Ibrahim Khairallah, who spoke at the school’s first commencement, was one of the College’s first immigrants as well as its first graduates. In New York City, he opened a boarding house where many of his migrant countrymen would make their first stop. He recruited

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449 Daniel Bliss, “1891 Report of the SPC Faculty,” 1891, AA 2.3.1 Box 18 Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
452 Daniel Bliss, “1888-1889 Annual Report of the Faculty.”
453 Daniel Bliss, “1891 Report of the SPC Faculty.”
these migrants to peddle silk all over America’s east coast, and this wholesale trade made him rich.\(^{454}\)

Using both his Arabic and English language skills, as well as an education that both Syrians and Americans could respect, he became both American merchant and a Syrian-American community leader. The College’s graduates were well-positioned to profit from the mabajar.

The College’s graduates also played an important role in the Eastern Mediterranean’s emerging print industry and literary public sphere.\(^{455}\) Its graduates’ contributions to the sciences and belles lettres in the Eastern Mediterranean play a prominent role in the intellectual and literary historiography of the Arabic-speaking world. Marwa Elshakry highlights Yaqub Sarruf and Fares Nimr’s scientific newspapers, \textit{al-Muqtatam} and \textit{al-Muqtataf} as important early vehicles for scientific and political thought in Syria and Egypt, and also celebrates another graduate, the physician Shibli Shumayyil, as an early champion of evolutionary and materialistic social thought in Arabic.\(^{456}\) Jurji Zaydan, who attended but did not graduate, wrote the first modern-style novels in Arabic and published the pioneering journal \textit{al-Hilal} in Cairo.\(^{457}\) Ibrahim Hourani, who both taught and studied at the College, edited the Protestant missionaries’ gazette, \textit{al-Nashra}, in Beirut, and wrote “treatises on Arabic grammar and physics.”\(^{458}\) These men’s combination of “modern” Western knowledge and skill in fusha grammar and rhetoric, a product of the College’s incorporation of local forms of knowledge, made them both authoritative and effective writers. They contributed to major cultural and intellectual developments throughout the Arabic-speaking world, and, in doing so, cemented the College’s academic reputation and its place in the Eastern Mediterranean public sphere.


\(^{455}\) The late 19\textsuperscript{th} century saw the emergence of Syria and Egypt’s first mass-market newspapers and commercial presses. For more information, see Ayalon, \textit{The Press in the Arab Middle East}.


\(^{457}\) Allen, \textit{The Arabic Literary Heritage}, 295.

The College’s graduates played a less well-known, but equally important, role in the administrative transformation of Syria and Mount Lebanon. In the late 19th century, these regions came under the surveillance of an increasingly bureaucratic and powerful Ottoman state and developed closer commercial connections with Europe.\textsuperscript{459} Among these modernizing administrations’ priorities was the preservation of public health. By the late 19th century, the Ottoman Empire developed an extensive quarantine system to manage the outbreaks of plague and cholera that followed the era’s steam-powered \textit{hajj}.\textsuperscript{460} In 1890, the region’s administrative medical system was sophisticated enough that John Wortabet, who still resided in the area, could coordinate with government physicians and produce a complete account of a cholera epidemic that ravaged Homs, Hama, and Aleppo.\textsuperscript{461} As I mentioned earlier, Daniel Bliss’s 1888 survey of graduates revealed that SPC alumni held key administrative medical positions throughout Syria. Their work bolstered the Ottoman government’s public health projects in Syria, and secured their future fellow students’ place of prestige in the new administrative and commercial middle class of a modernizing state.

So, the College’s prominence and success grew from its roots in a pre-existing order, whose values it promoted and propagated. It trained Ottoman functionaries, who would strengthen the Sublime State as it re-established control over its Arabic-speaking provinces, and taught \textit{fusha}-speaking intellectuals who helped to build the \textit{nabd}, or Arabic literary renaissance, and the pan-Arabic nationalist movements which followed it, on the foundation of an Islamicate cultural and

\textsuperscript{459} Again, I explore this transformation, and its effect on the Syria Mission and the Syrian Protestant community, in much greater depth in the previous chapter.


intellectual heritage.\textsuperscript{462} In \textit{The Last Ottoman Generation}, a book about the Ottoman state’s legacies, Michael Provence notes that SPC graduates like future Syrian Prime Minister Faris al-Khūrī closely cooperated with graduates of official Ottoman civil and military academies to oppose the French mandate over Syria and Lebanon, and played similarly influential roles in Mandate-era politics.\textsuperscript{463} This should not surprise us. SPC served many of the same functions and interests as its government-sponsored counterparts. This proudly American institution and its graduates helped to carry the Ottoman world’s legacy into the twentieth century, where it shaped both regional politics and US imperial practices. There was a veritable forest of competing versions of modernity in the late Ottoman empire, cultivated by gardeners with wildly differing visions, but to survive and flourish, they all had to take root in common social, political, and intellectual soil. Today’s American University of Beirut is a working relic of an Ottoman social and intellectual order which still shapes the Middle East’s societies.

\textsuperscript{462} This is the characterization embraced by Hourani, \textit{Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939}, chap. 1.

\textsuperscript{463} Provence, \textit{The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East}, 157.
Chapter 4: A Mission’s Material and Moral Economies

In the six decades between 1830 and 1890, the American missionaries in Syria and and their local allies had created a rich collection of institutions which nurtured Syria’s Protestant community, provided services for many other Syrians, and smoothed the missionaries’ relationships with both local communities and representatives of the Ottoman central state. The Syria Mission’s members believed that these institutions were authorities essential to the practice, propagation, and survival of their faith. Human labor (manual, emotional, and intellectual) created and sustained all of these institutions. The Mission’s Syrian laborers, like workers everywhere, made decisions about what sorts of work they were willing to do under what conditions on the basis of both economic incentives and ethical values. Like EP Thompson, we can speak of a “moral economy” which governed the sorts of labor which the Mission’s different groups of workers performed and how they expected to be compensated. That moral economy, and the material underpinnings which made its smooth functioning possible, constrained and directed the sorts of work the Mission did, how they did it, and who they needed to please by doing it. Both the material and moral economies were embedded within the broader social and economic contexts of the United States and the Ottoman Empire in the period, so conditions like the state of the US’s financial markets or the migration patterns of Syrian workers played a major role in shaping what the Mission actually did.

Like many historical structures, the Mission’s moral economy and its material foundations (capital and labor) were most conspicuous in periods of crisis and change. The 19th century’s final decade shook the economies of the United States and Syria. The great financial panic of 1893 in the

United States and the *mabajar*, a mass migration which brought hundreds of thousands of Syrians to the New World between 1890 and 1925—threatened Syrian missionary workers’ subsistence and led them to question and challenge their relationships with the Mission’s American masters. Many of them became disillusioned and either left the Syria Mission’s service or publicly protested the conditions they faced. The Mission’s American managers responded by embracing a new set of practices which helped them to secure new forms of cheap labor and draw fresh capital from both wealthy Americans and Syria’s rising commercial middle classes. This choice irrevocably changed the institutions the Mission operated, in ways which cemented the missionaries’ connections with both American capital and wealthy Ottomans, at the expense of poorer Syrians who the missionaries had long employed and served.

Let’s begin by understanding the sorts of work the Mission did between 1860 and 1890, and what sort of workers performed them. We might start with missionaries’ basic survival needs and domestic desires. To perform their work, the missionaries needed to travel from the US to Syria and move about within their mission field. They also needed food and shelter to survive. Because most of the mission’s members were members of America’s middle and upper classes (by birth, education, or marriage), they expected to travel, eat, and sleep with some level of comfort. Most of the missionaries were married and either had or planned to have children, who would need to be cared for. The types of work that sustained the Mission at this subsistence level included cooking, cleaning, child-care, shipping, hauling, animal care, land-purchasing, and house-building. Once they arrived in Syria, the Mission’s Americans learned about their country, a process which required labors of translation, language education, seeking information, and knowledge codification. The Mission worked toward evangelization as well as orientation. That process required the labors of preaching, disputing with local clergy, translation and printing of religious texts, Bible-selling, and pastoral care. Literacy in Ottoman Syria was low throughout the early 19th century, so the Mission
also needed a system of education to make Bible readers and evangelists. These efforts rested on the labors of curriculum design, textbook-making, and of course, teaching. The Mission also sought to preserve reproduce its community of converts and the broader social communities which they depended upon. This required its own set of labors; childbirth, child-care, healthcare, orphan-rearing, and, in times of war and crisis, disaster relief. The Mission and its community existed in a broader world, whose political and economic potentates it often depended upon for funding and protection. This called for promotion, fundraising, community outreach, governmental lobbying, and diplomatic negotiation. Finally, all of this labor, and its outcomes, needed to be planned and managed. The work of administration included statistics-gathering, long-term planning, accounting, oversight, and labor discipline. These forms of work were interdependent, and they were all necessary for the Mission to survive and to create the set of institutions it believed were necessary for the spread of Protestantism in Syria.

What sorts of people did all of this work? What sort of power did they have to determine their working conditions? How were they compensated? The Mission’s principle spokesmen, who were mostly Anglo-American male missionaries, deliberately obscured the Mission’s actual division of labor. Their reports and published accounts usually left Syrian workers nameless and downplayed their agency and importance by referring to them as “native helpers” or “native assistants,” implicitly marking Anglo-Americans as the missionary struggle’s true protagonists. Missionary spokesmen also frequently concealed their female colleagues’ work; the Mission’s most prominent spokesman and historian, Henry Jessup, only spoke in depth about one woman’s work in his hagiographic account of the Mission’s earlier accomplishments. That woman, Mary Eddy, likely merited an extended description because she was a physician (and the first woman licensed to practice medicine

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465 These formulations frequently appears in nearly all of the missionaries’ memoirs and annual reports.
in the Ottoman Empire) and thus, a formal member of a traditionally male profession. Anglo-American missionary men's writing did not accurately represent the Mission's actual division of labor, but in one important respect, it did reflect it. Until the 20th century, the Mission's rules excluded both Syrians and American women from holding official governing positions in its institutions. Although Syrians made up the vast majority of the Mission's workforce, they were not among the “members” who attended its annual meeting and voted on its potential courses of action. Until the early 20th century, the Syrian Protestant College similarly excluded Syrians from its governing faculty and Board of Managers, with a single exception, the American-credentialed physician John Wortabet. Women only began to attend the Mission's annual meetings as official members in 1890. In 1891, they gained the right to vote in meetings, but they could only cast ballots on matters concerning work among Syrian women, and they could not hold the office of treasurer or secretary for either the Mission as a whole or any of its substations. For the remainder of the 19th century, the Mission's Anglo-American male members retained near-complete control of official decision-making and those two critical offices, formal communications with its sponsoring Board (the Secretaries’ task), and the disbursement of its finances (the Treasurers’ prerogative). From this commanding position, the Mission's Anglo-American men represented themselves as the main agents of education and evangelism in Ottoman Syria.

This depiction did not even accurately describe the division of labor among the Mission’s

466 Henry Harris Jessup, Fifty Three Years In Syria Volume II, 597.
468 For information about exclusions from the Board of Managers, see Ch. 3. For similar information about the faculty, see AUB Archives AA 3.4.2, which contain the College’s faculty minutes from its inception to the end of the Great War.
469 The first record of any woman’s attendance at one of the Mission’s annual meeting appears in Syria Mission, “Minutes of an 1890 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission,” April 30, 1890, Record Group 492 Box 4, Item 1, “Syria Mission Minutes 1889 to 1904,” Presbyterian Historical Society. Before that, their names are absent from both the list of attendees and any description of the proceedings.
Anglo-American workers. American women participated in most aspects of the Mission’s work and managed many of its schools and hospitals. Many of the first American missionary women in Syria were male missionaries’ wives and were officially appointed as “assistants” to their husbands. In that capacity, the Board wanted them to focus on supporting their husbands’ evangelistic and educational endeavors by taking care of their families’ household chores and childcare needs. In practice, they took on a much wider variety of tasks. Evidence from letters and memoirs suggests that American missionary women in Syria did do a great deal of domestic work, although in keeping with their relatively affluent origins, they typically did so as household managers rather than manual laborers, spending their days purchasing supplies and managing Syrian servants. Some of them felt self-conscious about the degree to which they worked to maintain an upper-class lifestyle overseas. In an 1834 letter to her parents in the United States, Sarah Lanham Smith, who had come to Syria with her husband Eli, wrote frankly about this domestic managerial work, its relevance to both the Mission’s regular operations and its relationship with its British patrons, and her own misgivings:

“In Beyroot, we have some English society, and the etiquette of life must necessarily be preserved. Indeed, those questions which I supposed would be forever put to rest when I became a missionary, are even more essential than ever; and temptations to pride and aristocracy are increased. What degree of conformity to style, and how much time may conscientiously be devoted to household cares, on the part of missionaries, are questions that require to be prayerfully considered by us; also how far we may indulge ourselves in the comforts and accommodations of life; for many are within our reach.”

Smith’s anxieties about time spent on housework and the potential moral corruptions which might come from an over-indulgent home life may have stemmed from the fact that missionary women in general (and the Syria Mission’s in particular) were usually better-educated, more

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471 Christine Lindner, “Negotiating the Field: American Protestant Missionaries in Ottoman Syria, 1823 to 1860” (University of Edinburgh, 2009), 169–70.
472 Hooker, Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith ..., 104.
spiritually motivated, and more ambitious than other American women of their social class. Soon after arriving in Syria, Sarah Smith expanded her labors beyond the domestic sphere by learning about the area and taking charge of a school for girls which two of her colleagues, Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Dodge, had established in 1833. The early Syrian Protestant church's predominantly male demographic skew, which jeopardized the young religious community’s ability to reproduce itself made educational and evangelistic work among women especially vital. Both missionaries’ assessments of gender norms in Syrian society and common American Protestant beliefs that appropriate forms of spirituality and religious duties were gendered led both the Mission's members and its sponsors to believe that only women could effectively carry out this work. In the 1840s and 1850s, the Mission continued to operate and expand its girls’ schools and other evangelistic and social institutions for Syrian women. Over the 19th century’s course, they employed an increasing number of unmarried American women to staff and manage these institutions. These single women, like their male counterparts, worked primarily as educators, evangelists, and administrators (and in the case of Mary Eddy, as medical doctors). Like American men, they helped Americans donors with inflexibly racist suspicions about Syrians’ managerial abilities to feel comfortable funding missionary schools and hospitals in Syria. Following the prevailing gender norms of the period (and exploiting an unfair labor market), the Syria mission paid American women considerably

474 Hooker, Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith …, 282. The fact that even an American missionary woman’s memoir refers to these other women only by their surnames and marital status is typical of the patriarchal social norms which governed missionary writing about women’s work.
475 As I mentioned in previous chapters, education was an important precursor to evangelization, both because it drew in potential proselytes and because full participation in the Protestant community required high levels of literacy in fusha Arabic. I discuss the early church’s demographic skew, which stemmed from both discrepancies between Ottoman Syria’s male and female literacy rates and male missionaries’ difficulty proselytizing among Ottoman women in earlier chapters.
476 See Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages.”
477 Lindner, “Negotiating the Field: American Protestant Missionaries in Ottoman Syria, 1823 to 1860,” 170–75.
less than it offered their male colleagues. In 1873, it gave the new male missionary Gerald Dale 13,500 piasters (according to the missionaries’ own conversions, about $636.79 per annum, approximately four times the annual wage of a contemporary US farmworker) but paid his female colleague Mary Kipp, a new teacher at the Beirut female seminary, only 9,900 piasters, about a third less. Missionary wives, meanwhile, drew no salary at all. Because their labor was relatively cheap, women made up a supermajority of the Mission’s American personnel throughout the late 19th century. In 1882, for example, they made up 20 of the Mission’s 33 American workers. They also helped to raise money from the Women’s Board of Missions—a critical contribution to the Mission’s finances in an era when, one of the Presbyterian Board’s secretaries bemoaned, most donations came from “dead men and living women.” Missionary women’s labor was essential to the Mission’s functioning, and its relatively lower costs were a boon to its finances.

The well-educated Syrians whom American writings condescendingly labeled “native helpers” made up another key segment of the Mission’s workforce. In fact, these men and women performed the vast majority of Protestant educational and evangelistic work in Syria. They furnished the small corps of pastors and the much larger body of lower-paid and lower-status “native evangelists” and “Bible-women” who conducted most of Syria’s Protestant church services, Sunday school classes, and Bible meetings. They also furnished all the teachers for the Mission’s day-schools and Sabbath schools, most of the faculty in its high schools, and key instructors in Arabic literature and writing at the Mission-affiliated Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. Except at

479 Syria Mission, “Annual Tabular View No. 1 For the Year 1882, Totals of All the Stations,” 1882, Record Group 115 Box 12, Item 6, Presbyterian Historical Society. Other statistical reports from the 1880s, stored in the same location, reveal much the same picture.
480 Arthur Brown, “August 1902 Letter to the Syria Mission,” August 8, 1902, Archives Item 102, Near East School of Theology Special Collections. This letter is from the start of the 20th century, but it’s clear in context that Brown is referring to a longstanding state of affairs.
the College, they dramatically outnumbered the Mission’s American personnel; in 1882, the Mission employed four ordained Syrian pastors, 31 “licensed preachers,” 160 Syrian schoolteachers, and 10 “other helpers,” but just 33 Anglo-Americans.  

When new missionaries learned to speak, read, and write colloquial and classical Arabic, these workers instructed them. They shouldered most of the work of translating textbooks, pamphlets, and religious texts, including the Bible itself, which the Mission misleadingly attributed to an American overseer, Cornelius Van Dyck. They edited the Mission’s newspapers and furnished most of their contents. A few of them, like the Mission’s M. Mosuli and the SPC’s Mikhail Gharzuzi served as land agents, attorneys, and general procurers, or “secular agents.” The Anglo-Americans, who controlled the missions’ revenue streams from the United States, relegated these workers to a subordinate status. They formally excluded Syrians from the Mission’s decision-making process by denying them attendance rights at its annual meetings and faculty positions at SPC. The Anglo-American missionaries only recognized a small number of Syrian workers as full professional equals by ordaining them as pastors. Most “native evangelists” held lesser status of “licensed preacher.” With very few exceptions, the Anglo-Americans paid their skilled Syrian “helpers” only a small fraction of their own annual incomes. When they assigned Gerald Dale a salary of 13,500 piasters and Mary Kipp 9,900, they offered a new helper at the Zahleh station, Girgis Musawwar, only 500. These workers’ meager compensation belied their

481 Syria Mission, “Annual Tabular View No. 1 For the Year 1882, Totals of All the Stations.” For information about the SPC’s employment of Syrians instructors, see 
482 See Chapter 1
483 See Chapter 1
484 Womack, “Conversion, Controversy, and Cultural Production,” chap. 3.
485 The Mission’s minutes often mention its relationship with a “secular agent” who helped them with procurement; for example, a mention of their discussions with him about the advisability of purchasing property in Syria Mission, “Minutes of an 1872 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission,” February 14, 1872, Record Group 492 Box 1, Item 1, “Syria Mission Minutes 1870 to 1887,” Presbyterian Historical Society. The minutes reveal Mosuli’s name and the fact that he served throughout the late 19th century on the occasion of his retirement, see Syria Mission, “Minutes of the 1896 General Meeting of the Syria Mission,” January 1896, Record Group 492 Box 4, Item 1, “Syria Mission Minutes 1889 to 1904,” Presbyterian Historical Society.
486 Syria Mission, “Minutes of an 1872 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission.” Musawwar’s surname means “painter,” which suggests that he was the reformed icon painter Girgis whose conversion the missionaries had celebrated in their
enormous importance in the Syria Mission’s on-the-ground operations. All of the “native helpers” had relatively scarce but absolutely essential formal Arabic linguistic and writing skills. A few of them, with more specialized talents, helped the Mission to create key texts and maintain business relationships with Ottoman officials, landholders, and suppliers. Most of the Syrian Protestant church’s institutions would not exist and could not function without their labors.487

Although the “native helpers” endured demeaning working conditions and meager wages, they sat comfortably above another tier of the missionaries’ employees, the unskilled and usually illiterate workers who American accounts almost invariably refer to as “servants.” Sarah Smith, an early missionary, knew that her own labor management practices would set a precedent for her successors, and reflected at length on what sort of relationships between missionaries and their “native” employees would be both ethical and effective. One of her letters offered this meditation on her own household’s relationship with—and its reliance on—Syrian domestic servants:

The distinction between masters and servants here, resembles that which exists in all old countries, more than it does in America. The latter acknowledge the name, and readily take the place of menials; though a kind of courtesy, even towards them, is demanded by the genius of the people; and if encouraged, they are very free in conversation. Their number can be multiplied with comparatively trifling expense, and as much cleansing of house and clothes obtained as is wished; but all this must be superintended, and much precious time consumed thereby; so that I have determined to keep as small an establishment as possible.488

Despite Smith’s desire to limit her reliance on “servants,” her colleagues came to employ more and more of these Syrian workers, who became a constant presence in their lives. Syrian domestics cared for missionaries’ houses, horses, and children, cleaned their clothes, and cooked

487 I deal with the creation of these institutions in more depth in Chapter 4.
488 Hooker, Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith ..., 105.
their meals. Few of Sarah Smith’s successors gave much thought to the role which servants played in their lives, perhaps because the high availability and low cost of their labor made it easy for Anglo-Americans to take them entirely for granted. In an early 1860s letter to relatives in New England, Abigail Bliss devoted two sentences to her family’s “very faithful” longtime servant Jirjius and his wages, then discussed the price of eggs and milk at similar length. In her reckoning, this loyal retainer was another household implement to budget, track, and manage.489

Anglo-American missionaries typically paid their Syrian servants only a few piasters a month, offering most of their compensation in the form of room and board. Some “servants” were adults simply seeking a living. Others came into the missionaries’ service as children, either orphaned or entrusted by impoverished parents. The missionaries’ reports sometimes listed their servants as church members, but it’s hard to tell how many of them fully embraced a Protestant religious identity.490 Adult converts gained some job security while retaining servant status; their children (as well as servants raised from childhood in missionary households) often received a free or discounted education which allowed them to ascend into the ranks of the Mission’s “native helpers.”491 Servant families’ full integration into Syria’s highly literate and intellectual Protestant community was slow and intergenerational, and in the meantime, the Mission continued to depend upon their cheap labor.

The Mission also hired many manual laborers to perform specific tasks on a contract basis. Sarah Smith, Henry Jessup, Daniel Bliss, and William Thompson’s writings all mention that missionaries hired muleteers to drive the pack animals who carried their possessions when they

489 The letter is excerpted in Bliss, The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss, 120.
490 For example, one is mentioned in “1850 Report of the Beirut Station.”
491 See, for example, the life progression of Saliba Jerwan, Jerwan, “Autobiography of Saliba Jerwan.”
moved to a new station or embarked on exploratory journeys. Daniel Bliss also hired many skilled stonemasons and unskilled journeymen to construct the buildings which became the Syrian Protestant College. These relationships were more temporary and transactional; the workers involved were unlikely to affiliate with the Syrian Protestant Church, but their labor, too, was critical to the Mission’s functioning.

Labor relationships are never merely economic. Those who direct, command, or appropriate the work of others usually embrace ideologies which explain and justify the division of labor and spoils, and often seek to cement their dominant position by spreading those ideologies among those who labored on their behalf. Subaltern workers sometimes embrace aspects of those ideologies, but just as frequently develop their own sophisticated ethics of labor and distribution. These beliefs work alongside material realities to determine what types of labor different groups of workers are willing to perform in exchange for a given wage, and what sorts of compensations and concessions property owners and masters are willing to give their workers. Now, I’ll examine how these ideologies governed the moral economy of labor which linked American missionaries with their skilled “native helpers,” the group of Syrian workers who most explicitly articulated what they expected from American missionaries and, in the 19th century’s final decade, most aggressively contested the Mission’s labor regime.

492 Hooker, Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith ...; Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria; Bliss, The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss; William McClure Thomson, The Land and the Book; or, Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land.
493 Daniel Bliss, “1867 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers.”
495 These subaltern narratives are the subject of classics like James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia (Yale University Press, 1977); Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance. For an intriguing exploration of subaltern appropriation and transformation of ruling-class labor ideologies in the US itself, see Rodgers, The Work Ethic in Industrial America 1850-1920.
Throughout the 19th century, the Syria missionaries’ Arabic-language letters to Protestant “helpers” saluted their recipients as *akhee* or *ukhtee*, meaning “my brother,” or “my sister.” This language echoed missionaries’ letters to one another, which likewise began with “Dear Brother,” or “Dear Sister.” This intimate mode of address suggested that the correspondents were not merely co-workers, or employers and employees, but spiritual kin brought connected by a shared religious identity and shared sacred goals. The sense of mutual obligation that these declarations of imagined kinship implied bound the Syria Mission’s community of laborers of together, but the equality implied by the choice of a fraternal, rather than paternal, salutation was largely absent. In theory, the Syria Mission’s Americans recognized their Syrian proselytes as at least their potential moral and spiritual equals, but both they and their principal donors saw American control over Syrian missionary labor as both natural and just.

There was an uneasy tension between this viewpoint and the 19th century Anglo-American Protestant missionary movement’s declared goals. In the 1830s, Rufus Anderson, the ABCFM’s long-standing and influential general secretary, propounded an official maxim which both 19th century missionaries and later historians called the “three selves”: Protestant missions should aim to create self-propagating, self-financing, and self-governing churches in their fields overseas. Henry Venn, whose stature and import in the history of the 19th century world’s best-staffed and best-funded Protestant missionary organization Britain’s Anglican Church Missionary Society, was equivalent to Anderson’s in the United States, independently adopted the same formula in the same decade. Support from the early 19th century’s two largest and most influential Protestant missionary organizations cemented the “three selves” as a widely shared component of Anglo-American missionary ideology. But unfortunately for the Syria Mission, a self-funding Protestant church in

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their mission field was absolutely impossible throughout the first half of the 19th century. Before 1860, a plurality, and sometimes even a majority of Syrian Protestant convert worked for the Mission as domestic servants, teachers, or translators.497 The classical linguistic and literary attainments which full participation in Syrian Protestantism required severely limited the religion’s growth in a region and era where even the most basic forms of literacy were rare. Syrians who did convert often became economically dependent on the Mission because of the hostility of their original religious communities. As we’ve seen, Orthodox and Maronite Syrians sometimes destroyed new Protestants’ homes and bombarded them with frivolous lawsuits, with local religious leaders’ support and local officials’ active or passive complicity.498 Rising literacy eventually expanded the pool of potential converts, and missionaries’ acceptance of the Ottoman sectarian order and outreach efforts in Syrian communities eventually eased sectarian tensions and gave Protestants some measure of safety.499

However, the main mechanism which allowed the Mission and its employees to build friendly working relationships with other Syrian communities came with costs that made it very difficult for even an expanding Syrian Protestant community to shoulder the cost of its own maintenance and growth. That mechanism was education. As we’ve seen in previous chapters, education was closely entwined with social status in 19th century Syria. People who could read, write, and teach bore honorifics like shaykh or mu’allim, they counted among the söz sabibleri, or “lords of the word,” the Ottoman Empire’s ruling class. By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the expanding Ottoman bureaucracy, the growing state in Egypt, silk-spinning industrialization in Mount Lebanon, and increasing trade with Europe all demanded literate and numerate workers,

497 See Ch 1
498 See Ch 2
499 I talk about both of these developments in my article “American Ottomans,” and I’d like to expand on it at greater length in the book version of this project
further increasing the social and economic value of an education. As Christian Syrians started emigrating to the United States in large numbers in the 1890s, trade and manufacturing flourished in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon and their environs, further driving up demand. Even Syrians of other faiths wanted to study at Americans’ schools, which trained their students in *fusba* Arabic literacy, arithmetic, and, in some cases, English or French, which were valuable languages for traders or emigrants. The missionaries saw an opportunity to spread their ideas without engaging in dangerous direct confrontations. They envisioned their schools as “wedges to cleave asunder the adamantine racks of bigotry” which would divide Maronite and Orthodox Christian laypeople from their clerical leadership. Syria’s Catholic and Orthodox clergy used threats, attempted boycotts, and lawsuits in their efforts to shutter Protestant schools; the landowning Maronite bishops and monks of Mount Lebanon were especially vigorous in their efforts. But even as early as 1865, Catholic and Orthodox Syrians frequently defied their priests’ wishes and sent their children to Protestant schools. Education proved to be an effective vehicle for evangelization. Between 1876 and 1904, the Syrian Protestant community’s membership grew almost nine-fold, from 576 to 4,507.

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500 All of these elements are beautifully illustrated by the autobiography of Abraham Rihbany, a stonemason’s son from Shweir in Mount Lebanon who studied with the missionaries, converted from Greek Orthodox Christianity to Presbyterianism, taught at their schools, migrated to the United States, where put his learning to use as a clerk, then as a newspaper editor, and eventually as a bestselling author. Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, *A Far Journey* (Boston, MA, 1914). See also Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley, CA, 2001). I’ll dig into this more later in the chapter.

501 “1869 Abeih Station Annual Report.”


503 “Facts and Figures of the Syria Mission,” 1905, Archives Item 863, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
The Syria Mission’s boarding and day schools needed money for facilities, teachers, and schoolbooks. To be effective instruments of education and evangelism, they would need them in large numbers, because to make new converts, Protestant schools had to reach and teach students outside the existing Protestant community. For most of the 19th century, the missionaries could only recoup a small fraction of educational costs from students. Syria’s poorer families simply could not afford to pay high fees, and more affluent families could still send their children to free Catholic schools subsidized by “French gold.” Because missionary schools incorporated Bible readings and Protestant religious lessons directly into their curriculum and many teachers doubled as licensed preachers (often providing the only worship services for Protestant converts in their areas), most of the Syria Mission’s teachers were Protestant converts. For much of the 19th century, this labor requirement made it impossible for the Mission to continue operating and expanding its day schools without employing a significant proportion of the Syrian Protestant community’s educated men and women—who would otherwise be its highest potential earners—as instructors. This labor requirement continued to make it very difficult for even an expanding Protestant community to finance its own maintenance and expansion.

So, the Mission had to pay its Syrian workers with American capital. This trans-Atlantic transmission of funds held the Syrian Protestant church together, shaped its social norms, and structured its power dynamics. The broader community which included the Americans and their converts was economic as well as social and cultural, and the missionaries’ payments were as essential to their efforts to recruit allies as their ideas. Some local critics of the Protestant missionary project even argued that the missionaries bought conversions. In an 1875 article in “Sûriyeh,” the

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504 See complaints in “1890 Report of the Abeih Station,” 1890, Record Group 115, Box 1, Item 5, “Abeih Station 1844-1874,” Presbyterian Historical Society.
Ottoman province of Syria's government-issued French and Arabic-language newspaper, Talaat Bey, the son of Jerusalem's Turkish-speaking Ottoman government accountant, argued that capital was the main tool which American and British Protestant missionaries used to bring Ottoman Syrians into their church. He said that “the plan of the Protestants is to incline the hearts of the simple-minded and poor people of Jerusalem towards them by means of the payments of money, and thus to form a Protestant congregation.” He then asserted that the small number of Jerusalem Christians who had “forsaken their mother churches” “now live on money given to them by the English [a term often used to refer to both Britons and Americans] who live here” and that “the sole reason of this change is their desire to live at ease, and there is no doubt that whenever they are deprived of this support they will return to their former churches.”

In their publications, American missionaries hotly disputed this characterization and claimed to reject fiscally motivated converts. In his 1873 polemic The Women of the Arabs, Henry Jessup described an episode in which an Aleppo man asked them for a loan so that he could start a business and keep himself and his daughter in their church even though his former co-religionists boycotted him, and claimed that the Mission turned down his request as a matter of course. Jessup meant to argue that the missionary church only accepted converts with spiritual rather than material moments, but reading his account “against the grain” suggests an alternate narrative. The brazenness and directness of the Aleppo convert’s request suggests that many Syrians expected missionaries to sustain converts’ livelihoods with cash from the US. It’s likely that many converts who elected to join the Protestant church because of their sincere religious convictions shared this expectation; we should note that the Aleppo man in Jessup’s story only asked for support after his

505 Talaat Bey, writing in Şârîyeh, Feb 12, 1875. This translation was probably done by Nassif Meshaka, the Dragoman at the British consulate in Damascus. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find the original article, but in other cases where I've seen both the original Arabic text and Meshaka's translation, the rendering has been faithful, so I believe this one is true. Found in the UK National Archives at Kew, Foreign Office (FO) Series 78, No. 2401.
conversion endangered his livelihood. His community’s decision to ostracize him underscored this expectation’s reasonableness; his conversion, like that of many other Syrian Protestants, endangered his subsistence.

Anlgo-American missionaries’ private minutes and reports suggest that they, too, often worried about the Syrian Protestant community’s economic dependence on American capital, its inability to sponsor its own expansion, and its members’ and employees’ expectation that the Mission would support them with funds from abroad. In an 1876 report, the ‘Abeih station’s secretary, Frank Wood, mentioned that he and his colleagues were doing all they could to urge their converts toward “self-support.”\footnote{Wood, “1876 Report of the Abeih Station.”} Five years later, he complained that the longstanding Catholic and Orthodox practice of compensating priests for weddings, funerals, and other sacraments made Syrian converts less inclined to freely donate to the church because they viewed tithes as transactional payments rather than expressions of individual piety.\footnote{FW Wood, “1881 Report of the Abeih Station,” 1881, Record Group 115, Box 1, Item 6, “Abeih Station 1875-1898,” Presbyterian Historical Society.} Many of the Syria Mission’s annual meetings in the 1870s and 1880s devoted time to figuring out how to encourage Syrians to “self-support” and fund their own churches, without ever addressing the economic realities which made that sort of sponsorship impossible.\footnote{Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes, 1870-1888.”} The same set of minutes show that over the course of the 19th century, the Mission came to apply the logic of capitalism to church governance; like shareholders in a railroad or shipping firm, the Mission’s sponsors would control the Syrian Protestant church through the contributions that sustained it. Anderson and Venn’s “Three Selves” became interdependent goals; the Mission would grant Syrian Protestants self-governance if and only if Syrians members paid for the church’s expansion and upkeep. The mission frequently delayed its plans to develop a governing constitution for the “native” church and establish a locally
elected Presbytery structure to govern it on the grounds that the financially dependent Syrian church was not ready. In general, the Syrian Protestant community and the Syria Mission’s local workforce depended on funds from the United States; Syrian converts and workers expected these payments to sustain them, and the missionaries demanded obedience in return for their contributions. The 1890s brought economic upheavals in both Ottoman Syria and the United States which disrupted this moral and material order, forcing the Mission to adopt new methods of fundraising and labor control.

In Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, the first of these upheavals is remembered as the mahajar, or emigration. In the late 1880s, Syrians, especially those who lived in Mount Lebanon and its environs, began to migrate to the United States, Latin America, and Australia in large numbers. Both local economic trends and the spread of global shipping networks drove this migration. Between 1860 and 1880, both French and Syrian capitalists established silk-spinning factories in Mount Lebanon. They the thread they produced to French merchants in Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, who, in turn, sold it to the fabric-weaving factories of Lyon. The trade helped drove urbanization, economic growth, and a population explosion throughout western Syria. Between 1850 and 1900, Beirut’s population grew from around 20,000 inhabitants to about 120,000. The Mountain’s large landholders and property-holding peasants devoted most of their land to growing the mulberry trees whose leaves fed silkworms. But in the 1880s, Mount burgeoning young industry suffered competition from cheaper producers in Japan, which American warships had forcibly opened to Western trade, drove down silk prices. Because a full 38% of the Mountain’s aggregate income came from silk production, a fall in the commodity’s price, coupled with rising population density,

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510 Fawaz, Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut, 1983, chaps. 7-8. See also a table of historic population estimates, pp. 128-129
511 Khater, Inventing Home, 46.
drove down its people’s standard of living. Steamship routes already connected the Mediterranean with the Americas, and their prices and travel times dropped throughout the late 19th century, so many Syrians chose to emigrate rather than face immiseration. Between 1880 and 1914, a full third of Mount Lebanon’s population made the journey. Much like their contemporaries in Sicily and southern China, the earliest Syrian migrants to the New World and Australia helped to provide funds and information to their family members and former neighbors. Migrants who left Syria were likely to have social ties to earlier migrants, and they disproportionately came from a small subset of Syria’s towns and villages. They re-forged their old social networks in the New World. Many Syrian emigrants established societies or small newspapers specifically for their former co-villagers. By expanding and connecting these local networks, Syrian migrants created a social infrastructure which helped their countrymen avoid social isolation and find work. By the mid-1890s, Syrians arriving in New York City, the US’s most prominent Atlantic port of entry, could find cheap lodging at Ibrahim Khairallah’s boardinghouse on Washington Street, and, from there, quickly find work peddling for Syrian wholesalers based in the same neighborhood. Itinerant pack-peddling, which drew migrants into America’s upper Midwestern interior, was Syrian sojourners’ main occupation in the United States until the late 1920s.

For many Syrian migrants to the United States, peddling brought financial success. Some used their newfound wealth to set themselves up as dry goods merchants or textile wholesalers in

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512 Khater, 57–58.
513 Khater, 48–51.
515 Naff, Becoming American, chap. 6.
516 Jacobs, Strangers in the West.
517 Naff, Becoming American, chap. 4: "Pack Peddling".
their new country. Many others (following the same patterns as Italian, Chinese, and other migrants to the United States) returned to the Ottoman Empire and used their new fortunes to buy farmland, establish new businesses, pay off debts, or improve their houses. Successful migrants who did not return usually remitted some of their earnings to relatives back in Syria, who used their new funds for similar purposes. Returning migrants, remittance recipients, and their families constituted a new commercial middle class, whose members built new, larger houses with tiled roofs, expanded cash-cropping on newly purchased farmland, rebuilt silk factories, and used the recently constructed Beirut-Damascus railroad to conduct an import-export trade with Muslim merchants from Syria’s interior. This new class’s consumption and trading accelerated population growth, trade, and housing construction in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and nearby cities including Tripoli, Sidon, Homs, and Hama. Rising demand drove up the price of housing and other necessities in the city and the region around it.

Those who had not left for the new world sometimes found these costs hard to bear. The mahjar brought new affluence to Ottoman Syria, but it also brought inflation.

The missionaries, based Mount Lebanon and the proximate port cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, observed the mahjar and recorded it in their dispatches. In 1884, Oscar Hardin, a missionary in Tripoli, reported that “In the Centennial Year 1876 Syria discovered America. Since that time reports of the wealth and general gullibility of the American people has been spread through the Maronite regions of Lebanon. In some districts, the excitement may be compared to the gold fever of California and Australia.” This observer, perhaps indulging his prejudices about Syrian Catholics, described this as a “mendicant migration” composed of “imposters and liars,” drawn to a land where “a man had only to hold out his itching palm in the manner of the oriental beggar, mumble a

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518 Naff, 169–74.
519 Khater, Inventing Home, chap. 5.
few cabalistic words, and the silver and greenback stream began to flow into it.” But Hardin and his colleagues would soon realize that the mass migration was not just a movement of mountebanks, charlatans, and Catholics, but a society-shaking event which directly affected the missionaries’ converts and employees. An 1890 report from the Tripoli station noted that “the American fever has touched us at a few points” and mentioned that several of their schoolteachers and a leading member of their congregation in Minyarah, a nearby village, had departed for the US. These departures were only harbingers of a greater migration that came in the following decade. The Mission’s church membership rolls show that by 1905, roughly a third of their congregants in the Presbyteries of Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon had moved to the New World.

This statistic suggests that Syrian Protestants left Ottoman Syria faster and in larger numbers than their neighbors, whose cumulative emigration rate reached 33% only a decade later, in 1914. Their relationships with an American missionary organization offered them some advantages which other migrants lacked. Their Protestant faith and their frequent possession of English language skills eased their adaptation to American society. Leading figures in the Protestant community played prominent roles in organizing migration and commerce between the US and their homeland.

In the 1870s, well before the great migration had begun in earnest, two brothers from Sidon’s Maghubghub family, a prominent group of Protestant converts which supplied pastors, “native evangelists,” and schoolteachers to towns and villages near the port city, traveled around the United States with George Ford, a missionary son who later joined the Syria Mission himself. With Ford, they put on a show which displayed “life in the Holy Land” to excited American audiences.

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522 “Church Rolls 1905,” 1905, Record Group 115, Box 15, Item 15, Presbyterian Historical Society.
523 George Ford, “Fragments of a Handbill,” 1871, Archives Item 37e, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
Ibrahim Khairallah, who ran the famous Syrian Boardinghouse in New York, was one of the SPC’s first graduates; his brother As’ad was the Mission Press’s business agent and manager. Khalil Sarkis, a member of the Beirut Evangelical Church and newspaper publisher who wrote primers for the Mission’s primary school, organized and financed a Syrian contingent at the World’s Columbian Exhibition at Chicago in 1893. The Syrian Protestant community joined the mahja, and the great migration changed both the Church and the Mission forever.

As the mahjar transformed Ottoman Syria’s society in the 1890s, equally momentous shocks struck the United States. In 1893, the bankruptcy of the large and highly capitalized Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad and the Treasury Department’s declaration that the US government’s gold reserves were in decline kicked off a stock market crash and series of bank runs which plunged the United States into a depression. Three major transcontinental railroads -- the Union Pacific, the Great Northern, and the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe -- all fell into bankruptcy, with painful consequences for their investors, their employees, and the US economy as a whole. Contemporary observers believed that the US’s relatively loose bimetallic monetary policy, which allowed Americans to exchange silver for gold at fixed rates, caused the panic. Consequently, Grover Cleveland and Congress repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (which had established bimetallic monetary policy) and returned the United States to the gold standard. This new monetary policy had deflationary effects which made it harder for debtors to repay their loans and accelerated many firms’ and individuals’ plunge into bankruptcy. Businesses’ bankruptcies and an overall drop in aggregate demand for labor left many Americans out of work. The crisis hit hardest in the Northeast and the West. In 1894, local officials in many cities and states tallied grim unemployment.

524 Jacobs, Strangers in the West.
526 White, Railroaded, 393–98.
figures. 20% of all manufacturing and service workers in Massachusetts lacked jobs. In New York City, 80-100 thousand sought work; in Philadelphia, between 75 and 90 thousand. In New Jersey, 33% of Trenton’s workers, 40% of Newark’s, and 50% of Patterson’s were unemployed. In Chicago, the Great West’s expanding metropolis, unemployment rose to 40%. The panic caused an economic depression which lasted until 1897, and the US’s manufacturing output did not recover until 1899. This crisis destroyed much of the US’s wealth, and imposed major hardships on its people.

The Panic of 1893 and the depression which followed it devastated the Presbyterian Board of Missions’ finances as well as the US economy. Many of the Board’s assets lost their value; its stocks dropped and its railroad bonds went into default. As I noted above, the Panic had hit the mid-Atlantic states of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, where many of the US’s largest and most affluent Presbyterian communities lived, particularly hard. The Board’s wealthiest donors lost significant parts of their fortunes; its poorer contributors frequently found themselves on breadlines. Many of those who still had money and labor to give focused on matters closer to home; private and religious charitable organizations, as well as local officials, made unprecedented efforts to provide relief for the US’s unemployed and impoverished workers. Even a year before the crisis, the Board accrued an operating deficit of $272,629, or the equivalent of about 1,756 farm workers’ annual earnings, which it had to sell some of its reserves of capital to pay. In 1894, the Board

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incurred a $110,000 deficit; in 1895, $220,000. In 1896, despite after a wave of savage budget cuts, its expenditures still went $68,000 over budget. In 1897, more cuts followed, but the Board’s deficit rose again, to a brutal $241,631. The Board’s finances only began to stabilize in 1900, and even after that stabilization, the Board spent less, relative to labor and living costs in the mission fields, than in did 1893. By that point, years of crisis had depleted the Board’s capital reserves and sapped its fundraising capabilities; its missions’ operations changed irrevocably.

That transformation began with severe cuts to operating expenses. In 1895, the Board’s secretaries ordered all of the missions they oversaw to cut their budgets by 20%. As the Board’s financial situation continued to deteriorate, they ordered further cuts of 10-15% per annum throughout the 1890s, and an incredibly harsh 31% cut in 1897. The Mission’s Syrian workers and pupils bore the brunt of these austerity measures. Many of the Mission’s buildings were funded by special-purpose donations which the missionaries could not legally repurpose to cover other expenses. Similarly, the funds which maintained the Syria Mission’s printing press in Beirut came from the American Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society, which only allocated funds for the specific purpose of printing Bibles and religious tracts. The mission’s American workers made a pro forma offer to cut their own salaries, but the Board refused, citing their donors’

532 John Gillespie, “May 3 1894 Letter from the Presbyterian Board of Missions,” May 3, 1894, Archives Item 102 Board Letters 1890-1899, Near East School of Theology Special Collections; John Gillespie, “April 4 1895 Letter from the Presbyterian Board of Missions,” April 4, 1895, Archives Item 102 Board Letters 1890-1899, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
533 WH Grant, “May 19 1896 Letter from the Presbyterian Board of Missions,” May 19, 1896, Archives Item 102 Board Letters 1890-1899, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
534 FE Ellinwood et al., “April 15 1897 General Board Letter,” April 15, 1897, Archives Item 102 Board Letters 1890-1899, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
535 Arthur Brown, “April 2 1900 Board Letter,” April 2, 1900, Archives Item 103 Board Letters 1900-1909, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
536 John Gillespie, “April 19 1895 Board Letter,” April 19, 1895, Archives Item 102 Board Letters 1890-1899, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
537 See the Syria Mission Budgets from the 1894-1895 fiscal year to the 1899-1900 fiscal year, Archives Item 341-346, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
538 There are a number of references to such special donations in Syria Mission, “Syria Mission Minutes, 1870-1888.”
539 I discuss these organizations, and the role sponsoring the Mission Press, in a previous chapter.
desire to preserve the missionaries’ standard of living and the impossibility of raising more money to support them from converts in the mission field. Arthur Brown, the Board secretary who oversaw the Syria Mission from New York at that time, wrote that the American missionaries’ salaries were “not in excess of their needs,” even though, as we know, the Americans’ pay considerably outstripped both the salaries they paid Syrian workers and the overall cost of living in Syria, and even allowed them to employ multiple servants to maintain their homes. Brown’s words suggest that the Board recognized bourgeois status, the comfortable standard of living that came with it, and the missionaries’ ability to confer the same status upon their children by sending them to boarding schools and prestigious colleges were important to their ability to function as missionaries. They might have held this perspective because of the traditional high social status of Presbyterian and Congregationalist ministers in the US, a racialized sense of the appropriate relationship between Anglo-Americans and Arabic-speaking Syrians, or an understanding of the missionaries’ needs to build peer relationships with upper-class donors. Whatever rationale motivated Brown and his colleagues’ decision-making, the mission’s Anglo-Americans would not bear the cost of the cuts.

Instead, the Board urged the missionaries to cut their Syrian workers’ pay and their Syrian students’ scholarship funds. The Mission’s 1894-1895 budget achieved a mandated $1,100 cut (the equivalent of about seven American farm workers’ annual incomes) by reducing the wages of its schoolteachers and “native evangelists,” and raising pupils’ fees. Arthur Brown offered the missionaries an ideological justification for this choice, writing that “the native church must be taught to maintain its own churches and schools and ministers, and that pressure must be kindly but steadily brought to bear upon it in this direction.” Syrian Protestants and other mission workers,

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541 “1894-1895 Syria Mission Budget,” 1894, Archives Item 341, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
however, did not see the Mission’s disbursement of funds from the United States as a consequence of any sort of moral failing on their part, but as a necessary compensation for the hardships which came from leaving their established religious groups. Forcing the community to pay higher and higher costs went against the established principles of the Mission’s moral economy as its Syrian workers understood them. The cuts were especially outrageous in a decade when both prices and Syrian living standards rose dramatically; the “native helpers” saw their real incomes collapsing as their emigrant co-religionists and fellow countrymen prospered. Even before the Panic, Syrian missionary workers found their wages insufficient to meet their needs. As early as 1884, the Tripoli station’s report mentioned “discontent” among its Syrian workers: “The wage question, here as everywhere, comes to the front. The cost and style of living is slowly yet constantly rising in northern Syria and the young men and women who our mission has been educating these past years are among the first to see this and to feel that their position demands better pay.” Oscar Hardin, that report’s American author, also mentioned that forty-four of the Tripoli Station’s fifty local employees argued that they were entitled to raises, and that in their discontent, their overall enthusiasm for missionary work had decreased.\(^{543}\) After the savage cuts of the ‘90s, this situation only grew more dire.

In fact, as the Board’s austerity measures persisted into the 20\(^{th}\) century, the combination of falling salaries and rising prices impoverished the Mission’s educated workers and, in doing so, fractured its moral economy entirely. The “helpers” no longer believed that the Americans met their financial obligations or behaved as moral exemplars, and any sense of religious obligation which had led them to choose evangelism or schoolteaching over more lucrative work overseas weakened or snapped altogether. Abraham Rihbany, a convert who worked as a Mission schoolteacher, first in

\(^{543}\) Hardin, “Tripoli Station Report 1884.”
the boys’ high school at Suk al-Gharb, then in a common school in Zahleh, a major town just east of Mount Lebanon, eloquently describes the meagerness of his compensation, the sense of humiliation he felt upon receiving it, and his growing disillusionment with his Anglo-American co-religionists and employers:

> The salary of my new position was three quarters of a Turkish pound (about three dollars) per month and my board, which was provided at the High School. My bed stood in my schoolroom, among the benches of my pupils, and served as a comfortable seat for me during recitations. I do not remember that I ever received my salary at the end of the month without a sense of insult. Mr. Pond [the missionary superintendent of the Suq al-Gharb school] lived in a beautiful residence. He had a carriage, a saddle horse, and three servants. Why was it that I should accept a position whose salary did not enable me to preserve my self-respect?\(^{544}\)

Unsurprisingly, after three years of teaching for the Mission, Rihbany, who felt no compelling economic, moral, or spiritual reason to endure poverty in the service of American missionaries who lived in opulent comfort, emigrated to New York. He was not alone. In 1900, the Syria Mission pronounced the Board’s austerity policy and its efforts to impose self-support on Syria’s Protestant population miserable failures, and made a desperate plea for additional funds:

> “Emigration, stimulated by glittering prospects in Egypt, the Soudan, and elsewhere is constantly depleting the Evangelical churches and drawing away Christian workers. On this account there is no prospect of rapid development of self-supporting churches. In fact, the churches seem to have reached the limit of ability and we dare not anticipate further advance for a long time to come or at most only such advance as the improvement of local work demands... The recent reduction of foreign aid led to a reduction of salaries of preachers and teachers far below any reasonable standards. This was accepted cheerfully, at first, when it was supposed to be temporary. Since it now appears to be permanent and as the men see the inability of their churches to supplement their meager income they naturally shrink from accepting vows which look to devotion of self to this work for life-- turn their attention to secular pursuits in the hope of making

better provision for their growing families. Our best men cannot be retained for Christian work in Syria unless this support can be increased and this increase can only come from abroad.\textsuperscript{545}

The combination of financial and spiritual incentives which bound the Mission and its Syrian workers together frayed and fractured, and the Mission struggled to retain both its workforce and its moral authority.

The savage cuts of the 1890s led the missionaries’ flock to challenge their authority. The most pronounced of these challenges sprung out of a struggle over funding. After the Syria Mission fell under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Missions in 1870s its members gradually imposed a new form of church governance on its converts over the next two decades. They established Presbyteries based in Sidon, Mount Lebanon, and Tripoli; all would eventually fall under the auspices of the Synod of Syria. Because the Presbyterian Board supplied much of the new presbyteries’ funding, the Syria Mission’s members continued to wield significant authority over their flocks. In 1893, the Mission tried to integrate its oldest congregation, the Beirut Evangelical Church, into the Presbytery of Lebanon. Many of its members objected and renounced their formal ties with the Mission-organized church. The Beirut Evangelical Church’s secessionist branch governed itself and raised its own funds, even though its members still participated in other Syrian Protestant institutions and social networks.\textsuperscript{546}

Like other Syrian Protestant congregations, the Beirut Evangelical Church lost many of its members to emigration to the United States. The congregation’s elders saw opportunity in what might otherwise been a crisis, and dispatched Reverend AD Zurub to the United States to raise funds from both the Protestant Syrian diaspora and older US Presbyterian congregations for their

\textsuperscript{545} “Minutes of the 1900 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission,” May 1, 1900, Record Group 492 Box 4, Item 1, “Syria Mission Minutes 1889 to 1904,” Presbyterian Historical Society.

church’s maintenance and upkeep. This alarmed the Presbyterian Board, which considered itself the only legitimate conduit for funds to flow between the US and “native” Calvinist churches in its overseas mission fields. The Board’s secretaries asked Presbyterian pastors in New York, Philadelphia, and other Northeastern cities to refuse assistance to Zurub and discourage their congregants from donating to his church.547 The financial friction between the BEC and the Mission eventually sparked a protest which revealed a hidden transcript of Syrian protestants’ frustrations with American missionaries in the decade of austerity and the mahjar.

In 1902, AD Zurub, writing on behalf of his flock, published a pamphlet in both Arabic and English, for distribution in both Syria and the United States, which denounced the Syria Mission’s policies. He made his case by harshly contrasting earlier Protestant missionaries in Syria with those of his own era. Unlike Cornelius Van Dyck, who was “a father to the fatherless, and adviser to the ignorant, supporter to the needy ones, and doctor to the sick” who “captured the hearts of all the sects in Syria and Egypt,” the early twentieth century’s missionaries were lazy, arrogant, and corrupt. He upbraided them for sowing dissension within the church, engaging in intra-Protestant sectarianism, treating educated “native evangelists” as servants rather than colleagues, and committing adultery with each other and with Syrian converts.

Like Deanna Womack, who also analyzed this episode in her own work, I think that the pamphlet reflects some of the Syrian Protestant Community’s longer-standing grievances about American missionaries’ paternalistic behavior, but a prominent theme in Zurub’s critique suggests that the Mission’s current economic practices motivated his community’s anger. He mentioned that unlike past missionaries who “came down and lived among the natives and became as one of them, by which means they gained their love and confidence,” “the present missionaries lift themselves up

547 Arthur Brown, “January 22 1897 Board Letter,” January 22, 1897, Archives Item 102 Board Letters 1890-1899, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
higher and higher above the natives and live in castles and palaces, not less than those living in the White House.” They also chose residences in “the best localities for their luxury. They spend winter in the cities on the Mediterranean Sea, and summer on the tops of Hermon, Lebanon, etc., where they have built homes greater than those of the wealthiest class of people, and keep Arabian horses, carriages, and servants, which are not found in the homes of the princes of the East. Is the money of charity sent for this purpose?” Zurub also critiqued the Mission’s schools and doctors for charging high fees for their services which their predecessors had provided them for free, or at least more reasonable rates.\textsuperscript{548} His arguments confirm that Syrian Protestants saw missionaries’ material generosity towards them as one of their main sources of authority in the Protestant community’s moral economy, and saw the divergence between the lifestyles of missionaries and their Syrian employees as a serious blow to the legitimacy of the Mission’s division of labor, wealth, and decision-making power.

Zurub’s pamphlet also suggests that the mahjar had begun to undermine the two-faced representational strategy that the missionaries used to simultaneously raise funds in the US and gather allies in Syria. Zurub mentions that several Syrian migrants had seen Henry Jessup and George Ford’s lectures in the United States, and reported that the missionaries lied about both the progress of their own work and Syria’s overall moral and economic state. He also alleged that the missionaries presented a misleading picture of their activities to American tourists who stopped by their colleges and schools on their pilgrimages to the “Holy Land.” The pamphlet also related that when Syrian migrants asked Jessup to explain his deceptions, the missionary spokesman simply said that he told American audiences what they wanted to hear.\textsuperscript{549} Zurub’s account is entirely plausible, and is almost certainly true in its general thrust, if not all of its specific details. The missionaries had

\textsuperscript{548} Asad Zurub, “Syria and the Mission Work,” 1902, Record Group 115, Box 4, Item 4, Presbyterian Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{549} Zurub.
a long history of misrepresenting their relationship with Ottoman society and its elite members so that they could coax additional funding from donors who might be squeamish about their actual activities. They also minimized the agency and capabilities of the Syrians they worked with every day to flatter their audience’s ideas about the relatively capabilities of unambiguously white Anglo-Americans and “oriental” Syrians and maintain the image of the mission as a paternalistic enterprise. The mahjar gave Syrians direct access to the missionaries’ US-focused American publications and allowed Zurub and others to share counter-narratives with reading publics in both the US and Syria. Upper-class Americans’ racialized and class-based understandings of credibility shielded the missionaries from too much scrutiny in the US itself for some time, but Syrian audiences regarded some of the missionaries’ publications as offensive betrayals. One of the Mission’s key tools for managing its relationships with its workers, protectors, and patrons had become far more fraught.

As the upheavals of the 1890s challenged the Syria Mission’s authority over its Syrian flock, they also shook the Presbyterian Board’s authority over the Mission. In the aftermath of the Panic of 1893, the Board tried to prevent the Syria Mission from raising funds on its own, just as the Mission had tried to prevent AD Zurub from soliciting donations from American congregations. Letters from Board secretaries pointedly noted that the Syria Mission’s field’s outsized place in the American imagination, its frequent visits from wealthy tourists on their way to Jerusalem, and the celebrity status of members like Van Dyck, Henry Jessup, and Mary Eddy gave its members unfair fundraising advantages which allowed them to rake in donations which might otherwise help to sustain the bare-bones operations of other, less famous missions if they had been donated through the Board’s regular channels. They also noted that the Syria Mission’s workforce and level of funding were already unusually large relative to both the population and geographic size of its
field. But the Board’s diminished financial resources gave it far less leverage to enforce demands of this sort. Although they never openly contested the Board’s supremacy, the Syria Mission ignored this particular directive. Embracing the model which Daniel Bliss had used to kick-start the Syrian Protestant College in the 1860s, it directly solicited major donations for new church buildings, a hospital and a high school from wealthy donors in the United States. It also marketed its activities more and more directly to wealthy American tourists, printing and distributing brochures of “facts and figures” which summarized the Mission’s operations and accomplishments, and directed visitors to the SPC, the Press, and other places where the Mission was active. The Mission came to depend more and more on its individual direct donors, aligning its policies with their preferences rather than the Board’s directives. At the turn of the 20th century, New York’s upper class at large increasingly displaced the Presbyterian Church as the Mission’s main authority at home—a shift which would help it adapt to the instability of its own authority in the Mission field.

The crises of the 1890s turn challenged the Mission, but did not destroy it. The missionaries adapted to the Panic’s conditions, and in doing so, transformed both their organization and its relationship with both Syrian and American society. One path toward escaping the decade’s problem was to find new sources of funding so that they could deal with rising costs and address their educated Syrian workers’ desire for higher wages. They sought some of those new funds in Syria itself. One strategy the Mission pursued was extracting more revenue from financial transactions they already carried out with Syrian clients. The missionaries already charged fees for at least some of their schooling, medical, and printing services, which they also provided for free or at discounted rates to Protestants and poor Syrians. Returning emigrants’ capital and the flurry of

551 See examples throughout “Syria Mission Minutes, 1889-1904.”
552 See, for example, “Facts and Figures of the Syria Mission.”
mercantile activity which followed it increased Syrians’ interest in education and, for many families, their ability to pay for it. The Mission raised its baseline tuition fees for students at both its common schools and its high schools and reduced the number of places it reserved for discount or scholarship students. Between 1900 and 1910, the Mission’s high schools for boys and girls in the Lebanese villages of Suq al-Gharb and Shweir and the region’s major port, Beirut, which had previously operated at a loss, became net sources of revenue. In 1904, the Mission, responding to residents’ petitions, also established new boys’ and girls’ boarding schools in Tripoli, which also generated incomes which outstripped their costs.553

Making schools profitable required more than just an increase in fees. The Mission’s American managers also changed its boarding schools’ curricula and messaging in order to appeal to a wider and wealthier clientele. Efforts to recruit high-class Syrian students were nothing new for the missionaries, whose high schools had long served the needs and ambitions of Syria’s aristocrats, merchants, and intellectuals as well as the mission’s own need to train a corps of teachers and evangelists. For example, in 1877, the Beirut Female Seminary, whose nominal purpose was training female teachers to run the Mission’s common schools and educated household managers to marry Syria’s middle-class Protestant converts, counted only twelve Protestants among its fifty-three students (although only one of the fifty-three, a Druze girl, was a non-Christian), and offered drawing and piano lessons as well as vocational and religious instruction in literacy, arithmetic, and Bible studies.554 To find new funds after a decade of austerity, the Mission’s schools went even further in this direction. By 1904, the Beirut Female Seminary, now renamed the American School for Girls, made English a requirement rather than an elective, and offered French to almost all of its

553 See the Mission’s budgets from 1896 to 1910; see also William S. Nelson, “1904 Report of the Tripoli Boys’ School,” 1904, Record Group 115, Box 19, Item 6, Presbyterian Historical Society.
554 Everett, “1877 Report of the Beirut Female Seminary,” 1877, Record Group 115, Box 3, Item 1, Presbyterian Historical Society.
By 1911, the school significantly broadened its religious base, offering instruction to fourteen Jewish, ten Muslim, and two Druze girls in addition to twenty-eight Protestants (now almost outnumbered by the non-Christians) and seventy-seven “nominal” (ie: Catholic or Orthodox) Christians. In 1898, the Syrian Protestant College, which had long offered an extensive curriculum catering to upper-class Syrians and ambitious would-be bourgeois professionals, established a new “School of Commerce” which taught investment and bookkeeping. The School of Commerce’s students role-played as members of small, competing trading companies like those which managed trade in the Eastern Mediterranean, preparing them for careers as clerks in Beirut and Alexandria’s import-export houses. The College also found new revenues by expanding its geographic reach. By 1901, the SPC, which had traditionally catered to students from western Syria and surrounding areas, also drew pupils from Greece, Mesopotamia, Persia, Anatolia, Rumelia, and Egypt. This expansion boosted both the College’s enrollments and its finances. That year, 535 students had registered for courses—a total which almost doubled the college’s cumulative number of graduates in 1891. The College only provided scholarships to students recommended by the Syria Mission and nearby missions operated by Protestant colleagues in Latakia and Damascus, so most of its new students paid full freight. Their tuition covered most of the College’s operating expenses. The Mission’s strained finances required its higher schools to matriculate more students who paid a higher tuition, which required their administrators to change curricula and expand outreach efforts.

557 For info about the School of Commerce’s founding, see Daniel Bliss, “1898 Report to the Syrian Protestant College Board of Managers,” December 1, 1898, AA 2.1.2, Box 1, Item 5, American University of Beirut Archives. The activities of the mock companies which the School of Commerce’s students operated frequently feature in the page of SPC student manuscript magazines, where students sometimes took to the editorial pages in character to critique each other’s business practices. See, for example, Moses Saal, “A Bold Defiance to Mr. George Pappayani,” The Commercial Triumvirate: A Tri-Weekly Commercial Review of Commercial, Social, and Economic Discussion, January 29, 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 8, American University of Beirut Archives.
558 Daniel Bliss, “1901 Report of the SPC Faculty to the Board of Managers,” 1901, AA 2.1.2, Box 1, Item 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
to appeal to a wealthier and more geographically and religiously diverse clientele. The Mission’s schools were no longer academies for training “native evangelists” or even a Syrian Protestant middle class; they now served primarily as finishing schools for the children of the Ottoman Empire’s commercial and aristocratic elite.

The Mission also tried to solve its problems by developing new methods for controlling, coercing, and disciplining its labor force. It created a new population of easily exploitable workers by importing manual labor-intensive educational models from the United States. In 1893, the year of the great Panic in the US, the Mission resolved to open a new “Industrial Training School” in Sidon. Despite the financial crisis afflicting both the United States and the Presbyterian Board, the Mission was able to raise capital for this project through one of its members’ personal connections. Before he followed his father Joshua into the Syrian missionary field in 1881, George Ford had a thirteen-year career as a mountebank, pastor, and domestic missionary in the United States. For four years in the 1870s immediately preceding and following his graduation from Union Theological Seminary, Ford served as a pastor in the wealthy New York City suburb of Ramapo, NY. There, he led a revival movement which, he claimed, “gathered in not only the profane and poverty-stricken drunks, but the still more unlikely hoary wealthy aristocratic hardened church-attending capitalists.” One of his converts was Sarah Wood, the “wife of a New York broker” who summered in Ramapo with her husband and children. After the revival, she began secretly channeling her own extensive inheritance to Ford (without her husband and children’s awareness) so that he could use it for charitable or missionary purposes. In the 1890s, Wood gave large sums to Ford without any stipulations or preconditions, and in her letters, urged him to use some of her

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559 “Minutes of an 1893 Intermediate Meeting of the Syria Mission,” June 12, 1893, Record Group 492, Box 4, Item 1, Presbyterian Historical Society.
560 George Ford, “Accounts and Reports from the Plant of the Gerard Institute,” circa 1925, Archives Item 67c, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
561 Ford.
donations to support himself and his wife, so her giving may have been motivated as much by personal affection for the missionary as it was by her charitable ambitions.562

Ford used Sarah Wood and her friends’ donations to fund the Gerard Institute, an orphanage and “industrial school” intended to fulfill the Syria Mission’s labor needs through methods which closely accorded with the racial ideologies of the Northeastern US’s white ruling class. With Wood’s enthusiastic approval, Ford explicitly established the new school on the model of Maryland’s Hampton Institute, a famous “industrial school” which wealthy northern white philanthropists established for African Americans.563 The Hampton Institute, established in 1868, was the brainchild of Samuel Armstrong, the scion of a Yankee ABCFM missionary family stationed in Hawai‘i. Armstrong repurposed missionary ideas about differing levels of “moral development” between societies to argue for a racial hierarchy of moral development within the society of the United States. He believed that African-Americans needed to adapt to an inferior place within America’s social hierarchy until some distant and indefinite future date when they would “catch up” to their white counterparts. The Hampton Institute’s official aim was to train teachers who would educate the rest of the African-American population, but the school also required its students to spend eight hours a day performing manual labor. As James Anderson notes, the “manual education” provided by the Hampton Institute was inferior to that offered by contemporary trade schools or apprenticeships, and insufficient to qualify Hampton graduates as skilled tradesmen. Instead, manual education’s purpose was ideological. Samuel Anderson and his donors believed that manual labor would habituate African Americans to what they saw as an appropriate subservient position in Southern society. Manual labor also furthered this purpose by denying Hampton’s students the time

563 Ford, “Accounts and Reports from the Plant of the Gerard Institute.”
or systemic instruction they would need to acquire the classical languages and other aspects of a
“liberal education” as that term was understood in the late 19th century. Both leading members of
the black community and white elites who worked against their aspirations believed the liberal arts
and the rhetorical skills that came with them were a passport to participation in public political life;
the Hampton Institute’s organizers sought to suppress that outcome.\textsuperscript{564} The Hampton Institute
incorporated industrial training to keep educated African-Americans in a pliable underclass.

Throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the Institute’s model was popular with
both white Northeastern elites and international missionary and colonial observers. Within the US,
white capitalists channeled funds toward other “industrial” schools for southern blacks, including
the famous Tuskegee Institute, and also tried, with varying degrees of success, to use their social and
financial influence to reshape Southern black public schools along Hampton Institute lines.\textsuperscript{565} In the
1880s and 1890s, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the Presbyterian
Mission Board, and the Anglican Church Missionary Society followed the US lead and built
industrial schools in Anatolia, Ceylon, India, West Africa, South Africa, China, Korea, Persia, and
Laos.\textsuperscript{566} British missionaries working in the Great Lakes region of East Africa tried to expand the
industrial education model from schools to entire communities, founding “industrial missions”
which would transform African converts into productive laborers who could support the
evangelization of their continent. Some founders of industrial missions, like the Church of Scotland
missionary Joseph S Booth, rejected the assumptions of racial hierarchy and white supremacy that
accompanied the industrial education project in other contexts, but they still sought to transform

\textsuperscript{564} James D. Anderson, \textit{The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935} (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ of North Carolina Press,
1988), chap. 2.
\textsuperscript{565} Anderson, chaps. 2–3.
\textsuperscript{566} Arthur Judson Brown and Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions, \textit{Report of a Visitation of the
Syria Mission of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions} (New York: The Board, 1902), 49–51,
http://archive.org/details/reportofvisita00brow.
Africans into more productive and industrious workers through manual education. European colonial states, which did not share Booth’s progressive viewpoint, also adopted the model. In the early twentieth century, German colonial administrators and missionaries invited instructors from the Tuskegee Institute to open industrial schools in Togo, hoping to transform their West African colony into a cash-cropping cotton-exporting plantation economy. French and Belgian officials observed this model with interest, and implemented it in their own colonies in the Congo. All over the world, European and North American missionaries, educators, and officials tried to implement this educational model to create non-white workers whose labor would fulfill their economic, political, and religious ambitions.

The Gerard Institute served a similar ideological and economic purpose. Ford’s reflections on the institution confirm that he and his Anglo-American colleagues intended the Institute to be a normal school, training teachers like its inspiration, the Hampton Institute. The students’ manual labors, which included farm work, weaving, and blacksmithing, served two purposes. First, they would provide a source of income that would cover some of the school’s costs, which was very important in the Mission’s years of austerity. Indeed, the amount which students at the institute would work was explicitly tied to the expenses the Mission incurred in educating them; those who paid full school fees only had to perform two hours of manual labor a day, while “charity” pupils (including orphans who had little choice but to cooperate with their missionary benefactors’ demands) had to work for eight. More importantly, in Ford’s view, it would create more subservient workers who would meekly teach or preach for the Mission for low wages. Ford argued

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567 Ewing, The Age of Garvey, 45–47.
569 Zimmerman, chap. 4.
570 Brown and Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions, Report of a Visitation of the Syria Mission of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 54.
that the Syrian Protestant College and the Mission’s other higher schools gave their students
ambitions which were impossible to fulfill in Syria itself, encouraging them to emigrate rather than
serving the Mission in the field. He believed that “manual training” would suppress these
ambitions.  Most Syrians, who did not see themselves as missionaries’ racial inferiors, would have
objected to Ford’s stated rationale. In the early 20th century, America’s Syrians sought recognition as
white people with a full range of citizenship rights, and any scheme openly designed to subordinate
them would probably have generated anger toward the mission. In documents for public
consumption, the Mission’s sponsoring organization, aware that Syrian-Americans were monitoring
their publications and reporting their words to relatives in the Ottoman Empire, offered a more
careful explanation for the new school’s policies. In an extensive report on his visit to Syria, the
Board secretary Arthur Brown offered a different rationale for the Institute. He acknowledged that
many graduates of the SPC and the Mission’s high schools had emigrated, but argued that they did
so because they lacked job opportunities in Syria, and stated that the purpose of the industrial school
would be to create a class of skilled Syrian Protestant artisan workers who could make good incomes
and support the church in their own country. Although Brown’s description carefully avoided the
suggestion of inferiority which inhered in Ford’s critique of ambitious Syrian students, he still made
it clear that the Gerard Institute had a very different sort of class-forming project than the Mission’s
existing schools. To resolve its labor struggles, the Mission instituted a two-tiered educational
system.

571 Ford, “Accounts and Reports from the Plant of the Gerard Institute.” At the time of writing, Ford argued against
changing the Gerard Institute to be more like the Mission’s other schools because he thought it would lose its key
purpose—training more subordinate workers.
572 In the early 20th century, Syrians held an ambiguous, contested place in American racial discourse and racialized law.
For more information, see Sarah Gualtieri, Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora
573 Brown and Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions, Report of a Visitation of the Syria Mission of the
Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 47.
As we have seen both here and in previous chapters, the Syria Mission needed to make Syrians fully literate in *fusha* Arabic to reproduce and expand its religious community, and needed to employ many educated Syrian Protestants in order to spread that form of literacy. This process conferred a middle-class status on many of the Mission’s employees and converts in Ottoman Syria itself, and required the Mission to disburse funds gathered in the United States; the Syrian Protestant Church’s religious institutions were inextricably embedded in the political economies of both the US and the Ottoman Empire. When events in both polities made it difficult for American missionaries to pay their educated Syrian workers a wage which would allow them to maintain a dignified lifestyle and accentuated the contrast between missionaries’ lifestyles and their workers, the underpinnings of those institutions became vulnerable. To resolve that problem, the Mission increased its dependence on donations from wealthy individual Americans, found ways to make more money by providing valuable services an expanding cohort of wealthy Syrian merchants and aristocrats, and used created new institutions intended to turn poorer and more economically vulnerable Syrians into a servile, meek, and pliable class of educated missionary workers.

Ideas about racial and civilizational inequality structured the design of missionary institutions, the narratives which they produced for wealthy white American audiences, the division of labor in the Mission field, and the disbursement and governance of funds transferred from the United States to Syria. However, missionaries’ power to implement those ideas within Syria itself were sharply limited by Syrians’ perceptions of their own status, their geographical and economic mobility, and harsh economic constraints on missionaries’ own resources. Missionaries had already long served as loyal partners to Druze aristocrats and Ottoman officials; now, they aggressively put their institutions in service of all wealthy Syrians’ ambitions, partnering with the Ottoman Empire’s ruling class as well as the dominant capitalists of the United States, forming a permanent bridge between those countries’ elites. They came to treat poorer Syrians not as partners, but workers that
they would control and dominate, using the lower classes’ economic vulnerability to reproduce hierarchies structured by race in the US itself. As we shall see in the pages to come, this strategy of partnering with local elites and coercing the local poor would structure American missionary, philanthropic, and governmental engagement with the Middle East throughout the twentieth century.
Chapter 5: The Surgeon that Binds Up the Nation’s Wounds

As we saw in the previous chapter, mass migration from western Syria to the United States and the long-term repercussions of the US financial crises of the 1890s accelerated the transformation of missionary education from an instrument for forming a Protestant community to an instrument for forming Syria’s middle and upper classes more broadly, strengthening and deepening missionaries’ partnerships with an ecumenical multi-confessional Ottoman Syrian elite which included literate intellectuals, landholding aristocrats, prosperous merchants, returning migrants, and bureaucratic servants of the Ottoman central state. Protestants still made up most of the Mission’s workforce and supplied much of its clientele, but the Mission drew a larger and larger portion of its patronage, revenue, and student body from the region’s Maronite, Orthodox, Jewish, Druze, and Muslim populations. The early twentieth century brought two more major crises which threatened the Mission’s continued operation. These dangers, unlike the shocks of the 1890s, emanated from the domains of political struggle and war rather than the upheavals of the market. The Mission’s responses to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Great War of 1914-1918, like its responses to the mahjar and the Panic of 1893, showed its managers’ awareness of their evangelical work’s material basis and their capacity to change and adapt in response to existential threats to the base which supported the Syrian Protestant community’s superstructure; they also demonstrate the strength and resilience of its existing relationships with both American and Ottoman elites. These relationships (and the extensive adaptations which produced them) positioned the Syria Mission and its members to survive the turmoil of the early 20th century and direct American philanthropic and governmental engagement with the Middle East throughout the post-Ottoman period.
The first of these crises, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, brought a long, stable period in late Ottoman politics to an end. After abrogating a short-lived Ottoman constitution in 1878, Sultan Abdülhamid II had ruled the Empire as an absolute autocrat in the mold of Nicholas II of Russia. To bolster his authority and legitimacy among the empire’s Muslim population, Abdülhamid emphasized his status as the Caliph and the protector of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He supported the construction of a new railway connecting Damascus with the holy cities in the Hijaz, resettled in Muslim refugees fleeing from Russian expansion in the Caucasus and emerging states in the Balkans on the Empire’s lands, patronized the widespread Naqshbandi Sufi order, and cultivated ties with Muslim leaders in India, Aceh, and Central Asia. In doing so, he fought to be recognized not only as the ruler of the world’s most populous and powerful independent Islamic polity, but also as the legitimate leader of the world’s Muslim community. In his domestic policy, the Sultan favored toward his Muslim subjects over the Empire’s Christians and Jews, turning a blind eye toward massacres carried out against the Armenian community of Adana by Turkish-speaking Muslims, allowing Kurdish tribal leaders to raid and seize lands from Armenians living in Eastern Anatolia, and resettling refugees from the Balkans and Circassia on lands owned by Orthodox and Armenian Christians. He and his ministers frequently regarded foreign missionaries and their educational institutions with suspicion, waged controversies with French Catholic missionaries in Lebanon and American missionaries in Bulgaria and Anatolia, and instituted new regulations requiring missionary schools to request and receive official approval before opening and submit their textbooks and course materials for official censorship.

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575 See Feroz Ahmad, The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities: Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs, 1908-1918 (University of Utah Press, 2014); Tusan, Smyrna’s Ashes.
576 Deringil, Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire.
The Syria Mission’s members found many of Abdülhamid II’s policies and attitudes objectionable. They blamed his policies for the massacres in Adana, and in their memoirs and letters home, they frequently complained about his educational regulations. However, a surprising number of affinities and common interests helped them to collaborate with a regime whose ruler they sometimes considered a tyrant. One interest which created possibilities for collaboration was the Sultan’s close relationship with a rising Protestant European power, which emerged in the late nineteenth century and flowered in the twentieth. In the 1890s, Abdülhamid and his ministers recognized that the German Empire, formed in the wake of 1871’s Franco-Prussian War, faced the possibility of diplomatic isolation after its master statesman, Otto von Bismarck, went into retirement. This offered the Sublime State an important opportunity. Over the 19th century’s course, the Empire had lost many of its important European provinces to burgeoning Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian nationalist movements with support from the concerted machinations of Europe’s great powers in addition to effectively losing control over its relatively autonomous provinces in the Maghreb and Egypt, which France and Britain came to occupy. To protect his empire from further partitions, the Sultan cultivated a relationship with Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II. Germany, the Sultan hoped, would help to defend the Well-Protected Domains from British, Russian, and Austrian predation in exchange for military support and access to oil and other natural resources. Wilhelm II visited the Empire and Abdülhamid in both 1888 and 1898. On his second, more extensive visit, he dedicated new churches in Jerusalem and laid a wreath on the tomb of Saladin in Damascus. In the twentieth century’s first decade, Germany also financed the construction of a railroad from Berlin to Baghdad through Istanbul, which gave the Sublime Porte’s bureaucrats easier access to one of the empire’s potentially restive Arabic-speaking peripheries.

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577 Representative examples of these complaints commonly appear in Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty Three Years In Syria* Volume II.
(separated from the capital by deserts and mountain ranges), gave Germany priority access to ‘Iraq’s oil reserves, and potentially allowed the two powers to work together to counter offensives from the Russian Caucasus or British India.\textsuperscript{579} This cooperation laid the foundations for a strategic alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

This developing relationship (and an increasingly important alliance with the Ottoman Empire’s most dangerous historic enemy, Russia) limited the extent to which the missionaries’ longtime protector, Great Britain, could intervene in Ottoman affairs on their behalf. However, this development wasn’t all bad for Ottoman Syria’s Protestant residents. Newly-unified imperial Germany was a predominantly Protestant country, and Protestant hegemony within German society gained strength as Chancellor Otto von Bismarck waged \textit{kulturkampf}, or “cultural struggle” against Catholic institutions and influences in the 1870s.\textsuperscript{580} A shared sense of Protestant identity linked the Syria Mission’s members and many leading Germans. That tie manifested in the institutional sphere. The missionaries and had a longstanding connection with Prussia’s (and later, Germany’s) religious leaders and their aristocratic patrons through their institutional relationship with a Beirut hospital organized and sponsored by the \textit{Johanniterorden}, the German Lutheran offshoot of the a historic religious-chivalric order of crusading monks, the Knights of Saint John (or Knights Hospitaller). The Johanniters, on the initiative of aristocratic Prussian members including the Count of Bismarck-Bohlen and the Baron of Behr-Liebenow, established a hospital in Beirut in 1860 with a donation of 42,000 Marks. The all-female Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth, a German Lutheran organization dedicated to providing care and spiritual comfort to the world’s poor and sick, provided the hospital’s nursing and administrative services.\textsuperscript{581} From 1871 onward, the medical faculty of the

\textsuperscript{579} McMeekin, chap. 2.
\textsuperscript{581} Albert Julius Graf von Zieten-Schwerin, \textit{Worbenblatt Johanniter Ordens Balley Brandenburg}, September 6, 1905, AA 3.9.2 Box 4 Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
Syrian Protestant College served as the Johanniter Hospital’s doctors on staff, and the College’s medical students gained experience working there under their guidance. In 1906, Howard Bliss, SPC’s second president, dispatched George Post to Germany to meet with the orders’ aristocratic leaders and patrons (including the Order’s head, the Count of Lieter-Schwerin, German royal household minister Wilhelm von Wedel-Piesdorff, and the Count of Wartensleben) to ensure the continuity of the College’s relationship with the hospital, which played such an instrumental role in its medical students’ hands-on training. Through this visit and their ongoing institutional relationship with the Johanniter order, the Mission developed a connection with Germany’s ruling elite which was not unlike its older and deeper links with its American capitalist patrons and its aristocratic British defenders; the Sublime State’s new allies were Protestants who they could work with. Henry Jessup identified the Kaisers’ visits to Syria as harbingers of future growth and opportunity for the Mission even though Abdülhamid II, who still reigned in Istanbul, had cultivated Ottoman ties with Germany.

Furthermore, although Abdülhamid sought to maintain traditional forms of religious and political authority, he, like his autocratic Austrian and Russian counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe, sought to achieve technological, economic, military, and administrative modernization without political liberalization or other sorts of large-scale social change. One of his projects, the Hijaz railway connecting Damascus, the traditional Ottoman departure point for the Hajj, with Mecca and Medina, enlisted a quintessentially modern technology for a quintessentially religious goal, and in doing so, epitomized his overall ethos. The Sultan also enthusiastically embraced other technologies, encouraging the expansion of the Ottoman telegraph network, using photography to

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582 von Oertzen, “To the President of the Syrian Protestant College, Beirut,” 1917, AA 3.9.2 Box 4 Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
584 Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty Three Years In Syria Volume II*, 653–56.
survey his realm from inside the Yıldız Palace (where he secluded himself to avoid assassination), and building a network of clock towers across the realm to coordinate timekeeping and Muslim religious obligations. He continued to centralize the Ottoman Empire’s military and expand its bureaucratic apparatus. He also developed the Ottoman educational system, encouraging the growth of common and high schools for Muslims and establishing new imperial military, administrative, and medical schools for training imperial functionaries. As modernizers, both he and his subordinates appreciated American missionaries’ efforts to translate scientific texts and provide medical education, and both he and his appointed representatives in Mount Lebanon, Syria, and the later-established Vilayet of Beirut frequently treated the Mission, the College, and their associates with friendliness and favor. Rüstem Pasha, the mutasarrif or governor of the Mount Lebanon province from 1873–1883 was a close personal friend of the Syrian Protestant College’s president, Daniel Bliss, and sent his son to study there. From 1887 onward, the missionaries regularly called on the mutasarrif of Mount Lebanon at their annual meetings, and at the turn of the twentieth century they began visiting the Vali, or governor of the recently-established Beirut Vilayet, or province. In 1890, Abdülhamid himself awarded Cornelius Van Dyck a medal for what Ottoman officials considered a particularly valuable service to the empire: translating scientific

586 See Evered, Empire and Education Under the Ottomans.
587 The friendship is mentioned in Bliss, The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss, 233. The son’s attendance is mentioned in William Booth, “Letter to Daniel Bliss,” November 27, 1876, AA 2.3.1, Box 10, Folder 5, American University of Beirut Archives.
books into Arabic. A shared interest in modernity and education supported missionaries’ relationship with the Ottoman state throughout the Hamidian period.

Although education helped to create solidarity between American missionaries and Ottoman officials, it also provided opportunities for conflict and harsh words. These conflicts show the unease, anxiety, and mutual suspicion that this partnership brought for both parties, but their resolution shows how extensively the missionaries had become integrated into the empire’s rules, systems, and projects. These tiffs erupted periodically between 1870 and the start of the First World War. They centered on matters like school regulations, building permits, property taxes, and whether or not it was reasonable for SPC’s medical graduates to make the trip to Constantinople to get their licenses. The missionaries resolved their disputes with Ottoman officials with careful correspondence, carried out through the U.S. consul or a local official, or by personally traveling to Constantinople to lobby the Porte directly. These conflicts typically ended with the missionaries complying with a regulation or demand and the Empire issuing a firman (permit) or some other sort of official recognition. They usually focused on minor details rather than fundamental values; threatened the missionaries with expense or annoyance, not violence; and resolved themselves within the framework of the Ottoman Empire’s laws and its treaties with the United States. The conduct of these conflicts shows that the Ottoman state under Abdülhamid accepted the missionaries’ presence and often indulged their requests, and in turn, they accepted its authority.

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590 For an example of this sort of conflict, observe the missionaries’ efforts to certify and obtain tax exemptions for school properties in Syria Mission, “American Consul Correspondence,” 1908 1831, Record Group 115, Box 1, Items 21-22, Presbyterian Historical Society.
This balance of conflict and co-operation allowed the Mission to continue expanding its activities and developing relationships with Ottoman Syria’s elite society throughout Abdülhamid’s reign, but they initially celebrated his downfall as a moment of hope. In 1908, the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), a liberal and nationalist revolutionary organization with a significant following among the Ottoman military’s junior officers, deposed the long-reigning Sultan and chartered a new constitution for the Ottoman Empire. In its heady early days, this uprising, which came to be known as the Young Turk Revolution, was a pluralistic movement which drew support from many segments of Ottoman society. Arabic-speaking Islamic modernist scholars, Greek Orthodox clergy, and Jewish community leaders all initially endorsed and celebrated the revolution.\(^{591}\) The CUP brought the Dashnak party, a liberal Armenian revolutionary organization, into its coalition and both Greek and Armenian Christians won representation proportional to their numbers in the Empire’s new elected parliament.\(^{592}\) The new assembly also gave notables from Syria and the other Arabic-speaking provinces, including several of the Mission’s associates, a voice in the central state. One of the new Arab parliamentary deputies was Suleiman al-Bustani, a modernist Maronite from Beirut and the nephew of the Mission’s famous convert and Bible translator Butrus.\(^{593}\)

In addition to giving a wider range of the Empire’s population a say in the highest levels of government, the revolution abolished some of the longstanding legal distinctions between the Empire’s religious groups. Christians and Jews became eligible for service in all Ottoman military units (prior to the revolution, they were confined to small special regiments like Mount Lebanon’s dragoons), became eligible for conscription, and no longer had to pay taxes based on their dhimmi

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\(^{592}\) Ahmad, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities*.  
status and their exemption from military service. The new constitution also guaranteed religious freedom to all Ottoman subjects. Despite their relatively favorable relationship with the old regime, Beirut’s American missionaries celebrated the revolution. They initially identified the CUP with the US’s own liberal revolutionary founders, and hoped that the 1908 revolution would give them more freedom to proselytize among Muslims, or, failing that, start a process or liberalization which would eventually lead to that result. In the short run, however, the missionaries’ own Muslim students used the new, liberal Ottoman constitution to challenge the Anglo-Americans’ authority within institutions that they directly administered.

The Syrian Protestant College again became the site of a confrontation between students and faculty. In 1909, the year after the Revolution, the SPC still required students of all faiths to attend Bible classes and Protestant services. That year, two of SPC’s Muslim students, ‘Abd al-Jabbar and ‘Abd al-Sattar Kheiri, a pair of brothers from India, argued that this requirement was incompatible with the new Ottoman constitution. Like many of the Young Turks, the Kheiris combined their devotion to Islam with a devotion to liberalism and ecumenicism, and hoped that “Eastern” societies could strengthen their positions and win effective independence from European meddling through education, economic development, and intersectarian cooperation. In 1906, three years before they protested the College’s policies, the Khêri brothers edited and produced an English-language manuscript student newspaper named Light with three Ottoman Armenian Christians named Vahram, Hrand, and Dikran Utidjian. The newspaper’s cover showed a lamp and a quote from Christian scripture, “I am the light of the world,” but its authorship and content had an ecumenical rather than Protestant or Muslim editorial slant. Light’s first issue began with an article by Hrant Utidjian which celebrated and attempted to explain Japan’s late 19th century “reformation”

594 Ahmad, The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities.
595 Henry Harris Jessup, Fifty Three Years In Syria Volume II.
which historians now refer to as the Meiji Restoration) and its recent triumph over a European
great power in the Russo-Japanese War. He presented the Japanese as a model for other “Eastern”
peoples seeking modernity. The student journal’s second issue included the first of a series of
articles by ‘Abd al-Sattar Kheiri which explored India’s history and geography, celebrated both
Hindu and Muslim sources of its cultural heritage, and expressed his deep hope that India’s people,
though divided by language and religion, would come together as one independent, modern
nation. In an editorial column in a later issue, Kheiri spoke to his audience not as a Muslim, but
as an “Oriental,” emphasizing his solidarity with all the people of “Syria… Muscat, Mesopotamia,
Persia, or India” and urged his fellow “Orientals” to “Throw off the slough and be active” and
“Think what you are going to be and persistingly follow your ideal” so their nations might “Live,
Live, Live, and Demand your share of the World.” The Kheiris saw the Syrian Protestant College
as an ecumenical, progressive space where the future “civilized” leaders of emerging “Oriental”
nations could study, interact, and overcome sectarian divisions and limitations. In Light’s pages, they
wrote an affectionate biography of Daniel Bliss, the College’s founder (celebrating his wisdom,
generosity, and industry), celebrated SPC traditions like the school’s Field Day, and mourned the
death of a favorite teacher, SPC’s mathematics professor Robert West. A visit to the college from
the famous American orator, politician, and US presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan also
inspired the Kheiris to establish a pan-religious pan-“Oriental” debating society with Indian,
Armenian, and Syrian officers where the College’s students could argue about the best paths to

596 Hrant Utidjian, “The Awakening of Japan,” Light, January 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives.
597 Abdul Sattar Kheiri, “A Glimpse of India,” Light, February 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives.
598 Abdul Sattar Kheiri, “The Life of an Oriental,” Light, May 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives.
599 Abdul Sattar Kheiri, “Biography of Dr. Daniel Bliss,” Light, April 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives; Abdul Sattar Kheiri, “History of the Field Day in the SPC,” Light, May 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives; Abdul Sattar Kheiri, “A Heavy Loss,” Light, December 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives.
Although the College still formally retained its identity as an evangelistic Protestant institution, and many of its missionary-minded faculty members, managers, and trustees believed that furthering the conversion of Syria remained its primary purpose, the school’s public posture within the Ottoman Empire and the functions that it fulfilled within Ottoman Syrian society allowed both community members and students to interpret the College’s ethos very differently. The school’s officials had long presented themselves to both Ottoman officials and Beirut’s literate public as carriers and propagators of a scientific and literary modernity which would be useful to Syrians of all sects, invited Ottoman officials and local notables from different religious communities to participate in the school’s ceremonies, and deliberately catered to a multi-religious body of paying students. When the Kheiri brothers presented themselves as Muslims participating in a liberal and ecumenical educational community who would reproduce the best parts of its values and virtues in their own homeland, they were largely recapitulating the narrative the College’s American faculty strategically presented to Ottoman society at large.

When the administration refused to honor the Kheiris’ requests for an exemption from school prayers, turned down their following proposal to found a Muslim students’ club, and punted a third petition, for an ostensibly nonsectarian Islamic literary society, to a committee, the Kheiri brothers started a student strike to end the College’s mandatory religious services and Bible classes. They quickly won almost all of SPC’s Muslim students to their cause. They also enlisted the Beirut Muslim community’s support by talking to local religious leaders, publicly petitioning the Sultan to help them in his capacity as the Caliph of all Sunni Muslims, and wielding the pen against the

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600 Abdul Sattar Kheiri, “Note on the Foundation of a Debating Club,” Light, May 1906, AA 4.2.1 Box 10, American University of Beirut Archives.
Their demands were respectful but firm, addressing the faculty as benevolent, respected fathers who needed to be more open to their students’ needs and the Empire’s new political realities. Edhem Bey, the Vali of Beirut, endorsed their struggle.\textsuperscript{602}

Edhem Bey’s decision to support the Muslim students aligned with many imperatives of Ottoman politics. Beirut’s Muslim community and local CUP members, who were relatively loyal and reliable Ottoman subjects, favored the strikers.\textsuperscript{603} The Muslim students demanded relief from foreigners’ impositions, so supporting them offered officials an opportunity to uphold Ottoman prestige and independence. And, although the 1908 revolution had a secular cast, the new CUP-led Ottoman government continued to follow Abdülhamid II’s policy of cultivating relationships with Muslim communities around the world, using the Sultan’s status as Caliph to bolster the empire’s global influence.\textsuperscript{604} The Kheiris were prominent members of British India’s enormous and

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\textsuperscript{601} Franklin Moore, “Address to the Syrian Protestant College Faculty,” January 25, 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 6, Folder 6, American University of Beirut Archives. Moore, an SPC Faculty member, offered a remarkably complete and sympathetic account of the Muslim students’ strike. His description is corroborated by local newspaper articles; see “Translated Al-\textit{Ittihad al-\textsuperscript{U}thmani} Articles about 1909 SPC Student Strike,” 1909, AA 4.3.2 Box 1, Folder 15, American University of Beirut Archives; “Original Language Al-\textit{Ittihad al-\textsuperscript{U}thmani} Articles about 1909 SPC Student Strike,” 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 16, American University of Beirut Archives.

\textsuperscript{602} Edward Nickoley, “Letter to Howard Bliss,” January 20, 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 9, American University of Beirut Archives.

\textsuperscript{603} Contrary to later nationalist narratives, plenty of the Ottoman Empire’s Arabic-speaking subjects supported the CUP, and it would have behooved local officials to take their concerns seriously. See Hasan Kayali, \textit{Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918} (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

\textsuperscript{604} Kemal H. Karpat, \textit{The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State} (New York, NY, 2001), 370. For info about the development of the Hamidian policies the CUP continued, see ch. 7, 8, 12, 13.
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influential Muslim community. Their father was a “Maulvi” or religious scholar who received the title “Khan Bahadur” for his valuable service to the British Empire. After leaving SPC, they went on to found a *Dar al-Ulum*, an Islamic school on the model of Syed Ahmed Khan’s Aligarh College, in Beirut, with the support of the Ottoman government and the Indian Muslim jurist Syed Ameer Ali. During the First World War, the Ottomans and Germans enlisted their help to spread anti-British pan-Islamist revolutionary propaganda among India’s Muslims. They were exactly the sort of elite Muslims that the Empire wished to cultivate internationally. All of these factors gave the Ottoman authorities a strong political motive to make the College comply with the strikers’ demands.

The College’s faculty understood this possibility, seriously considered accepting students’ demands, and even temporarily excused the strikers from services in exchange for a declaration of loyalty. They found themselves in a trickier position when SPC’s New York-based Board of Trustees, which held the college’s purse strings, insisted that the school keep “its Christian character” and refused to countenance a change. Fortunately, the Ottoman government offered them an out. Edhem Bey, after meeting with GE Ravndal, Beirut’s American Consul, agreed to

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605 Henry Arnold Cumberbatch, “Letter to the British Foreign Office,” February 1, 1911, FO 195/2370, TNA.


607 The possibility is discussed in a letter to the College’s major donors and trustees in the US. Howard Bliss, “The Recent Difficulty in Connection with Religious Instruction and Worship in the Syrian Protestant College, Beirut, Syria,” April 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 6, American University of Beirut Archives.

608 Howard Bliss, “Circular for SPC Alumni,” April 10, 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
refer the matter to Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, then the Empire’s Interior Minister. On January 27, the Minister sent an order asking the College to end its practice of compulsion. However, over the summer, after the students went home and the furor in the press died down, the government quietly dropped the matter, and accepted the College’s solution of asking entering students to sign a contract pre-committing them to religious attendance. Indeed, that May, Rifaat Pasha, a high-ranking Ottoman minister, relayed a letter through the American ambassador to the Syrian Protestant College’s faculty communicating the fact that the Imperial Medical Faculty would fulfill one of the College’s longstanding desires and dispatch a group of examiners to the College to offer its medical graduates imperial certification every year. The Empire’s rulers would not endure a highly visible humiliation at the missionaries’ hands, but they also clearly saw value in continuing to let the College operate on its own terms, if the alternative was its closure. Although it was a potential political millstone, it had material value to the Empire’s rulers, and it kept their protection even after a revolution made the Ottoman ruling military bureaucracy accountable to new constituencies in both Anatolia and the empire’s Arabic-speaking provinces.

Just six years after the Young Turk Revolution, a far deeper and deadlier shock shook the Ottoman Empire’s social and political order: the First World War. Four years of bitter struggle against Great Britain, France, Russia, their Balkan allies, and internal rebellions inflicted economic crisis, social upheaval, famine, and genocide to the Empire and its people. Over the course of the conflict, the Ottoman Empire faced a Russian invasion of Eastern Anatolia, a British Indian

609 GE Ravndal, “Letters to Howard Bliss,” January 21, 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 10, American University of Beirut Archives.

610 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Incoming Students’ Parents,” Summer 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 10, American University of Beirut Archives.

611 Rifaat Pasha, “Letter to Oscar Strauss,” May 17, 1909, AA 3.9.2 Box 1 Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
invasion of Mesopotamia, a brutal struggle against Anglo-Egyptian forces for control of the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine, an ANZAC expeditionary force’s landing at Gallipoli in Rumelia, a protracted conflict with Greece, Serbia, and Romania in the Balkans, an Armenian revolt in eastern Anatolia, and a British-assisted Arab nationalist revolt in the Hijaz and southern Syria. By the conflict’s official end in 1918, between a fifth and a quarter of the Ottoman population had perished on the battlefield, in massacres (the most significant of which accompanied the genocide which the Ottoman military and Kurdish militants carried out against Eastern Anatolia’s Armenian population), or in wartime famines and epidemics; the six-century reign of the house of Osman Gazi would come to an end; and half of the Empire’s territories became European colonies. The struggle shattered, or at least shivered, key parts of the Ottoman social, political, and economic order. Throughout most of the war, the Mission, its College, and many of their Syrian associates remained loyal to that order. They continued to provide material and moral support to Syria’s economic elite and to its Ottoman military governor, Cemal Pasha. In turn, these powerful Ottomans helped them to weather the war’s worst privations, even though the conflict’s end would sweep many of them from power.

The war years’ events post several existential threats to the Mission, its workforce, and the Syrian communities which used and paid for their services. The cruelest and most severe of these threats was a wartime famine which afflicted Mount Lebanon and the Western Syrian coastal cities of Beirut, Sidon, and Tripoli. Like many wartime famines, the safar barlik (as the famine is remembered in Lebanon Syria, its name derived from the Turkish word for a military mobilization) had multiple causes. Mount Lebanon and the urban coastal areas immediately abutting it produced little of Syria’s most important dietary staple, wheat. The region’s hills were better suited to growing

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olives, citrus fruits, and, from the 19th century onward, cash crops like tobacco and silk which local and French merchants exported to Europe. Consequently, by 1914, Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon did not produce enough calories to sustain their populations, and depended on trade with other parts of Syria for their survival, frequently purchasing essential supplies with remittances from the United States. After the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War, a British blockade of Syria’s Mediterranean coastline quickly cut off seaborne food imports. Western Syria also lost its land route to Egypt, whose fertile river valley had long supplied grain for both the Arabic-speaking provinces and the Ottoman Empire as a whole. The Ottoman government, whose infrastructure and bureaucracy were ill-prepared for a conflict on the Great War’s scale, commandeered Syria’s major railways, including a crucial route linking Beirut and Damascus, for exclusive military use so that it could effectively resupply and re-enforce Ottoman armies fighting in the Sinai Peninsula, the Hijaz, and ‘Iraq. Syria’s merchants, unable to use the rail lines they had become accustomed to over the previous few decades, found it more difficult and more costly to move grain from the flat and fertile regions of Palestine and the Syrian interior to the Mountain and its surrounding ports. Wartime also brought about a proliferation of brigands and deserters who preyed on travelers and traders making the journey from the interior to the coast, further increasing the cost and difficulty of moving grain. The Ottoman government also inadvertently exacerbated grain shortages with its procurement policies. To keep its soldiers on the front fed, the military bought large quantities of wheat. Beirut and Damascus merchants, expecting that the government’s wartime needs and conscripts’ absence from their family farms would continue driving up prices, began purchasing and hoarding as much grain as they could get their hands on, keeping it off the market so that they could sell it at higher prices in the future. The military quickly realized that the Ottoman government would not be able to afford to feed its troops at the skyrocketing cost of grain, began commandeering crops from Syrian farmers and compensating them at rates well below
the going market price. In response, many farmers withdrew their crops from the market, concealed them from searching troops, and sometimes even stopped farming altogether. In 1915 and 1916, plagues of locusts struck the region, devouring much of the paltry harvest that remained and exacerbating an already awful situation. By the 1918 armistice, approximately half of Mount Lebanon’s 400,000 residents had perished; Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon suffered similar casualties.613

Although they lived in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, and the Mountain, the missionary Americans did not face any immediate risk of starvation themselves. Howard Bliss instrumentalized the College’s historically friendly relationship with the Ottoman state and convinced Cemal Pasha, the CUP military governor of Syria, to allow the SPC’s faculty, staff, and students to purchase food from the government at military rates. The Syria Mission’s members held significant personal wealth and retrained access to capital in the United States; consequently, they enjoyed a fair amount of credit with local merchants, as well as a close working relationship with at least one alleged grain hoarder, As’ad Khairallah, a Protestant convert and mill owner who served as a procurer and business manager for Mission’s press. They, too, avoided any real deprivation during the conflict.614

However, many of their workers, converts and clients; as well as the broader communities they lived and functioned within, risked starvation. The missionaries bore vivid witness to how the famine’s horrors affected the Syrians who they worked with every day. In 1917, Edward Nickoley, a professor at SPC’s School of Commerce, reported that many of the College’s students from Mount Lebanon had lost most or all of their relatives to the famine and the opportunistic typhus epidemics that followed on its heels. Those epidemics also took the lives of the mission’s converts and former students, like Dr. Iskander Zein of Zahla, and one Dr. ‘Alam ud-Din, a Druze convert to

613 There’s been a lot of excellent work about the First World War’s effects in Lebanon and Greater Syria over the past few years, and my account here hardly re-invents the wheel; it’s based on Fawaz; Tanielian, The Charity of War.
614 See Edward Nickoley, “Edward Nickoley’s War Diary” (1917), AA 2.3.3, Box 1, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives.
Protestantism, who perished while treating typhus victims. Nickoley himself saw starving beggars in Beirut every day, and reported that his colleagues in the mountains saw entire villages emptied of their populations; their former inhabitants driven to devour donkeys, dogs, and human corpses. Famine conditions made it significantly more difficult to produce and reproduce the institutions and authorities of Protestant religion in the Mountain; starving people had fewer resources to sponsor and sustain a church, and their environment was less conducive to what even a relatively liberal and ecumenical Protestant like Nickoley saw as ethical and appropriately Christian conduct. He wrote:

“One of the saddest aspects of the situation, however, is the moral degeneration that the famine has brought with it. In the distress for the supply of their daily need all considerations of decency and propriety have been lost. Thieving, robbery and burglary are the order of the day. The Koran justifies theft on the part of a starving man, and perhaps most of us would yield to temptation if we found ourselves in the situation similar to that in which these people are placed by forces over which they have no control. We notice a great increase in dishonesty right in the College. We were always troubled more or less with theft but it used to be watches and other articles of luxury, now the articles that are reported as stolen are shoes, shirts, sheets off the beds and night shirts. In the mountain villages and in the cities too people sell their children. Girls are turned over to the Turkish officers because in that way they will receive for a while the food that they need. When the regiment or the company is moved to another place the girls are left behind and usually end by starving in the road. The demoralization is so complete that it is sad to contemplate the condition of the people even after peace is established and life once more resumes its normal course. It will require generations to bring the people back to the ordinary mode of living which prevailed before the war. It seems that the whole world has suffered a terrific back set in its forward movement towards a better condition of things and towards a higher standard of living.”

Faced with the physical and moral breakdown of both their Syrian flock and the broader society that sustained it, the missionaries quickly implemented aid programs to assist Syrians facing starvation. One of their earliest efforts helped Syrians living in Egypt and the Americas remit cash...
to their relatives in the Ottoman Empire. The war and the British blockade that came with it cut off
the Ottoman Empire’s telegraph connections to the British Empire (including Egypt) and the
Americas. Wire transfers, which allowed expatriate Ottoman residents, diaspora Syrians, and the
firms they managed to instantaneously move funds across national borders, relied on the
international telegraph network. The end of transatlantic telegraph service to the Ottoman Empire
made it impossible to send donations or remittances from the US to Beirut by any of the traditional
channels. However, telegraph communication within the Empire remained possible. Before the
United States entered the conflict in 1917, the missionaries could still send secure communications
to their overseers in New York through Beirut’s American consulate. The US consul in Beirut could
encrypt and telegraph their messages to the US embassy in Constantinople, which could send them
on to the United States by warship, secure diplomatic pouch, or, for communications which were
both particularly urgent and not particularly sensitive, a telegram relayed through Austria-Hungary
and (neutral) Switzerland. Charles Dana, who served as the Mission’s business manager, treasurer,
and Press director, used this back channel to ask the Presbyterian Board and the Mission’s sponsors
(including the prominent merchant and industrialist Cleveland Dodge, carrying on his family’s
traditional support for Protestant missionary work in the Ottoman Empire) to deposit funds with
prominent American banks on the Mission’s behalf, then use secure diplomatic channels to send
receipts for those deposits to Syria, where Dana could use the promise of payment at the conflict’s
end to secure credit from local merchants, who would supply the Mission with the capital it needed
to continue its day-to-day operations. The Press was the Mission’s most capital-intensive enterprise
and had the most complicated set of running costs, so its managers had long handled a sizable
portion of the Mission’s liquid funds and even provided financial services for other missionary
organizations and American travelers in the region, so this complicated set of transactions was a
relatively natural extension of its manager’s duties in a difficult time. Diasporic Syrians living in the United States approached the Presbyterian Board to ask for help sending funds to their relatives in the Ottoman Empire; both the Board and Dana agreed to help, and, as word of the service spread throughout the mahajar, they helped Syrians living in the US, Latin America, and even Egypt, to transfer about $100,000 dollars to their Ottoman relatives who desperately needed food and other essentials between 1915 and the war’s end. This service had some drawbacks. Local merchants discounted Dana’s promissory notes more and more severely as the conflict raged on and their expected repayment date receded further and further into the future. Furthermore, a postwar audit conducted by Paul Erdman, Dana’s successor as the Mission’s treasurer, also found that during the war and its immediate aftermath Dana misplaced and failed to cash in important requests for aid, used the press’s finances to advance his own business interests by advancing credit from the Press’s funds to the Syrian Auto and Electric Company, which he partly owned, on favorable terms, and directly embezzled funds from the Press for his own interest. However, these financial transfers, enabled by both the Mission’s longstanding connections with American capitalists and the managerial financial bureaucratization of its workforce in response to the crises of the 1890s, allowed the Missionaries to raise funds for their own operations and channel relief to their relatively affluent associates and clients with relatives abroad.

The missionaries also quickly set up a branch of the American Red Cross to fund and administer temporary hospitals, breadlines, soup kitchens, and work programs in Beirut, Sidon,
Tripoli, and the Mountain using funds from the US. The first programs, which began operations in 1915, disbursed cash to help starving women, children, and elderly people living in Beirut to purchase food. Over the next few years, the missionaries, working under either their own organizational labels or the Red Cross banner, established a more elaborate group of relief organizations. The mission opened large soup kitchens in Sidon, Tripoli, and the mountain towns of ‘Aleih, ‘Abeih, Brumana, and Suq al-Gharb, and used them to distribute bread to towns and villages near the coast and in the Mountain. The missionaries’ efforts provided consistent food supplies to hundreds of Syrians residing in those villages throughout both the war years and their immediate aftermath. The missionaries also used hospitals which they already owned and operated in Beirut and Tripoli to provide cheap or free medical care to Syrians suffering from starvation and the opportunistic epidemics which flourished in western Syria’s malnourished and immunocompromised population.

The missionaries’ relationship with the American Red Cross, their wartime communications with Ottoman officials and other local actors, their appeals to the US population for support, and their postwar descriptions of their relief efforts all emphasized the universalistic, disinterested, and humanitarian ethos of the missionaries’ wartime and postwar relief work. These documents stress

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620 The American Red Cross was the US’s earliest major humanitarian organization that specialized in providing relief to disaster victims at home and abroad, and its practices provided a model for the operations of other relief organizations. Its local counterpart, the Ottoman Red Crescent, was a branch of Henri Dunant’s international Red Cross organization which had cooperated with Red Crescent organizations in India and other parts of the Muslim world to channel funds to both Ottoman relief and war efforts in Tripolitania and the Balkans during the Young Turk regime’s struggles with Italy and a coalition of Balkan states earlier in the decade. The Red Cross’s prior relationship with both the missionaries’ American donors and their Ottoman rulers made it a natural vehicle for the missionaries to use to distribute relief. For more information, see Julia F. Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nadir Özbek, “Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908–18),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 5 (2007): 795–809, https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200701422709; Jonathan McCallum, “The Anti-Colonial Empire: Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1912” (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018), http://search.proquest.com/docview/2124999332/?pq-origsite=primo.

621 Nickoley, “Edward Nickoley’s War Diary.”

622 Bayard Dodge, “Report on American Relief Activities in Syria,” Circa 1922, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 3, American University of Beirut Archives.

623 Nickoley, “Edward Nickoley’s War Diary.”
that a broad-based compassion for all of Syria’s suffering peoples motivated the Mission’s projects to assist the sick and starving. Bayard Dodge’s writings about the missionaries’ soup kitchens, for example, stressed that he and his colleagues provided assistance without consideration for recipients’ ethnic or sectarian affiliation.\textsuperscript{624} By emphasizing the universal and unrestricted quality of their compassion, the missionaries assured potentially suspicious Ottoman officials, Syrian elites, American donors, and postwar colonial administrators that their work was impartial and apolitical, aimed only at preserving Syrians’ lives and welfare rather than reshaping the fundamental order of their lives. There are plenty of reasons to believe that a sincere compassion for all of Syria’s suffering people motivated missionaries’ wartime and postwar interventions. Throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, an important spiritual and intellectual current within northern US Protestantism emphasized believers’ duty to recognize, empathize with, and remedy others’ pain and suffering. Abolitionists (like many of the Syria Mission’s founders and their relatives) mobilized this set of ideas to argue against slavery in their own country.\textsuperscript{625} As steamship networks, telegraphy, and photography brought increasingly vivid images of distant atrocities to pious American audiences’ awareness, American Protestant audiences increasingly conceptualized this conception of Christian duty as an imperative to improve the material welfare of distant peoples like the victims of British India’s famines and the late Hamidian period’s Armenian massacres.\textsuperscript{626} Many of the Syria Mission’s institutions (especially its schools and hospitals) had long served general humanitarian as well as religiously specific roles. James Dennis, a prominent alumnus of the Syria Mission and advocate for Protestant missionary work worldwide, articulated a sociological and welfare-oriented case for the Protestant missionary movement in his massive \textit{Christian Missions and Social Progress}.\textsuperscript{627}

\textsuperscript{624} Dodge, “Report on American Relief Activities in Syria.”


\textsuperscript{627} Dennis, \textit{Christian Missions and Social Progress}.
American missionaries working in Beirut emphasized humanitarianism over evangelism in their own work. Franklin Graham, a professor at the Syrian Protestant College, made an impassioned case that the College should take its Muslim strikers’ demands seriously because its duty to provide knowledge to the Ottoman Empire’s residents (including Muslims) outweighed its duty to advance the Protestant faith. Another Syria Mission alumna, Mary Carolyn Holmes, published a thinly fictionalized account of her years operating an orphanage in Byblos. This wartime novel constantly emphasized her compassionate care for vulnerable children rather than any effort to convert them to Christianity. The missionaries’ life experiences provided a further impetus to humanitarian altruism which complemented their publicly stated values. To effectively operate in Syria, missionaries needed to work closely with members of the Syrian population who frequently became their mentors or personal friends. Cornelius Van Dyck was said to be so close to Butrus Bustani that grief rendered him speechless at the encyclopedist’s funeral. The late 19th and early 20th century’s Syria missionaries were frequently scions of earlier missionary generations who spent their childhoods in Syria and cultivated personal connections with its people. For example, the late 19th century missionary William King Eddy, son of the earlier prominent missionary William Woodbridge Eddy, was inseparable from a Bedouin convert to Protestantism named ‘Ali Berdan, who was his close friend and hunting companion. This intimacy produced a further impetus to look after Syrians’ overall welfare.

628 See Howard Bliss’s discussion of the matter in Howard Bliss, “The Recent Difficulty in Connection with Religious Instruction and Worship at the Syrian Protestant College,” 1909, AA 4.3.2, Box 1, Folder 6, American University of Beirut Archives.
630 Henry Jessup, Fifty-Three Years in Syria, 1:105.
631 See the memorial pamphlet “Reverend William King Eddy,” 1906, Archives Item 864, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
Although missionaries’ humanitarian sentiments were likely sincere and heartfelt, material constraints put a hard limit on the universality of their wartime charitable efforts. Indeed, in many cases, their work may have made no net contribution to Syrians’ welfare. As Edward Nickoley pessimistically observed in his wartime diary, financial transfers, breadlines, and work programs had little effect on the region’s supply of grain. He privately argued that in essence, the mission’s relief programs fed some Syrians by robbing others of food; they did not save anyone, but simply changed the order in which the region’s people starved to death.  

If grain hoarding was indeed a critical factor, the Mission’s cash transfers may have introduced rewards sufficient to lure at least a little grain from hidden storehouses to the black market where Syrians could eat. But apart from that (likely relatively small effect), Nickoley’s critique is a sound one. In 1917 and 1918, Bayard Dodge’s soup kitchens in Mount Lebanon began efforts to import food from other reasons and mobilize labor for new cultivation, which did affect the food supply, but his efforts were only able to assist a small percentage of Syria’s starving people. If we adopt Nickoley’s perspective and recognize that missionaries’ aid programs served as sorting mechanisms that determined which Syrians lived and died, and analyze who it saved and condemned, we shall see that these programs were not, in practice, neutral. In general, they both echoed and entrenched relationships which the Mission’s members had developed with different segments of Syrian society over their previous century in the region. The missionaries’ wartime relief work, and the institutions which would grow from it in the postwar Mandate era, were legacies of the late Ottoman period.

So, we must ask, who did the missionaries help, and how, and under what conditions? The geographical and logistic structures of missionaries’ relief programs directed most of their benefits to particular subgroups within Syrian society. Consider, for example, the funds which Charles Dana

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632 Nickoley, “Edward Nickoley’s War Diary.”
and the Mission Press borrowed from Beirut banks against New York deposits and disbursed to particular recipients in Syria. The only Syrians who directly benefitted from the remittances which Dana delivered were those who had emigrant friends and relatives wealthy enough to spare some funds for loved ones they had left behind in the Ottoman Empire. Syrian emigrants in Egypt, the US, Latin America, Australia, and other parts of the world were disproportionately likely to be Christians; although Dana did not apply any sort of religious test to determine who could send or receive aid, his program was not terribly useful to Muslim and Druze Syrians. Thus, the Mission’s financial back-channel mostly assisted the communities which had supplied the majority of its students and converts. Remittance-assistance targeted members of particular social classes as well as particular religious groups. The relatives of prosperous emigrants constituted a distinctive stratum in Syria. Literate Syrians were more likely to leave than their uneducated counterparts, and their relatives frequently used remittances to take up administrative or mercantile occupations, buy land, or otherwise gain membership in Syria’s middle or upper class. These economically ascendant Syrians were unusually likely to send their children to missionary schools, and indeed, the Syria Mission and the SPC had changed their curricula to appeal to these new elites’ interests and convert some of their wealth into tuition payments. By processing remissions, the missionaries helped ensure that the wealthy clients whose payments their schools depended upon would survive the war.

Missionaries’ work, food, and hospital programs had different, but likewise important barriers to participation. Because these relief operations required in-person oversight and (in the case of food aid) carried distribution costs, spatial and geographic constraints determined which Syrians would benefit from them. The missionaries, facing both financial constraints and a strong imperative to put their plans into action as soon as possible, mobilized their existing personnel and

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633 See chapter 4
facilities to carry out relief work. Most of their relief operations sprung up in towns and villages where they already operated schools or supported Protestant congregations. These included Beirut, Sidon, Tripoli, Suq al-Gharb, and ‘Abeih, which all currently or formerly hosted one of the Mission’s “stations” or high schools. The geography of relief ensured that Protestant communities (which, because of their origins or their current jobs working for the Mission, were concentrated in or near these centers of evangelistic work) had more access to aid. As another consequence, the Mission would do relatively little to help the predominantly Maronite population of northern Mount Lebanon’s Kesrawan district and its vicinity, where opposition from the local clergy had hindered or prevented missionary operations for most of the nineteenth century; by contrast, it would deliver much more to the region’s Greek Orthodox and Druze populations, which had been more hospitable to the Mission. The geography of relief work helped to make sure that missionaries’ converts and religious communities which had hosted or protected their work during the previous century were more likely to survive.

Missionaries’ geographically-bounded in-kind relief efforts, like their financial transfers, ultimately reflected and reinforced Syrian class hierarchies. This class discrimination manifested itself first and foremost in the distribution of food and aid-in-kind. In order to maintain smooth operations, the missionaries’ relief operations gave their organizers, overseers, and full-time staff priority access to food. The missionaries mostly selected staffers who they already knew and trusted, delegating the day-to-day running of soup kitchens, delivery programs, and satellite operations to their existing employees and to graduates of their high schools. Bayard Dodge’s account of the soup kitchens he operated in ‘Abeih, Suq al-Gharb, and the railroad town of ‘Aleih reveal that he delegated tasks to missionary associates even when they lacked other qualifications to carry out the

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634 Dodge, “Report on American Relief Activities in Syria.”
work, even putting a couple of recent dropouts from Suq al-Gharb’s missionary high school in charge of shifts at a soup kitchen there. This practice prioritized aid to literate, educated Syrians who had graduated from high schools—a high-status group within Syrian society. It also helped the Mission to protect its Syrian workers and patrons from hardship and starvation so they could resume their educational and evangelistic work at the war’s end, protecting the Mission’s labor economy as well as the region’s middle classes. Dodge and his collaborator George Scherer also invited village headmen and other local leaders to help lead the relief effort; this helped them to gather useful information, ensure cooperation from other villagers, and cultivate relationships with local elites which would still be valuable at the war’s conclusion. In brief, the missionaries made Syria’s middle and upper classes partners in their wartime relief work.

They helped poorer Syrians on much more coercive and less generous terms. The manual tasks which Dodge and his associates prescribed to aid recipients were extensive and difficult. They put men to work delivering grain, repairing the soup kitchens and their environs, repairing a road, operating machinery in weaving factories which Dodge established to take advantage of (and meet a need created by) a regional cloth shortage, and planting or harvesting crops on a plot of land which the Mission had rented. They made women who received aid spin thread, knit garments which the Mission sold or distributed, mill flour, cook in soup kitchens, and fatten sheep. Small children had to gather firewood and assist with spinning; older children worked at spinning, weaving, and in one remarkable case, leveling a soccer field for the Mission’s high school at Suq al-Gharb. Most of these workers received no compensation other than the food they ate. Many of these tasks either directly or indirectly helped the relief effort (creating and distributing food and clothing, maintaining facilities for relief work, making silk cloth to sell in exchange for funds that could finance more food

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635 Dodge.
636 Dodge.
purchases), but the missionaries did not use utilitarian or pragmatic arguments to justify their use of unpaid labor to determine who received food aid. Instead, they emphasized the moral and ethical role of work. Dodge, like Nickoley, believed that wartime conditions had impaired Syrians’ ability to lead lives that were morally and religiously appropriate. He also stressed that poor Syrians’ background and situation made them particularly vulnerable to moral corruption and decay, writing:

“Laziness, pauperism, and all kinds of dishonesty became prevalent. Petty thieving, highway robbery and assault grew common. The presence of soldiers and officers offered a never-ending temptation to thousands of starving and despairing girls. The whole people seemed to be affected. Officers and soldiers carried on a regular business of corruption and oppression; priests grew selfish and mercenary, and the poor sank into an extremity of moral weakness which can only be realized at a time of physical breakdown and religious despair.”

For Dodge, this perceived moral decay was an impetus toward compassion. In one particularly intense rhetorical flourish, he wrote that “The problem was something much better and larger than fighting death. There are many things which are worse than death. Teaching the people the great lesson that charity could be administered free from religious prejudice and without any ulterior motive was of inestimable value. In the midst of the hatred and cruelty of war in a land unaccustomed to philanthropy, it was a splendid thing to be able to cheer the dying and encourage the broken-hearted by constant assistance and sympathy. Perhaps to enable a failing person to die under the touch of loving care was even a higher service than to enable a strong person to live in loneliness and grief. Best of all, was to keep people alive and at the same time to influence their lives with hope and friendship.” However, Dodge and his colleagues believed that one of the strongest weapons that he and his colleagues could wield against the collapse of morality was forced labor. In his soup kitchen at ‘Abeih, he made all able-bodied aid recipients work in exchange for food “so that relief work could become a positive moral factor in the community.” He believed that because of

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637 Dodge.

638 Dodge.
their homeland’s history, Syrians “honor[ed] the man who can live by his wits rather than the sweat of his brow,” and that he and his colleagues needed to break down their disdain for manual labor. Dodge, who had spent his entire adult life working as a teacher and manager, and took a leadership role in the missionary community at a young age thanks to his connections with an incredibly rich family, appears to have never recognized the irony of prescribing manual labor which he never had to perform to others. His insistence that Syrians needed to perform manual labor (which would increase their calorie consumption and the amount needed to feed them) reflected an ideology similar to that which governed the Mission’s older industrial schools, which in turn reflected the ideology of institutions for southern blacks like the US’s own Hampton Institute—poor Syrians had cultural pathologies which could only be excised if they learned their appropriate place in the world through unpaid manual labor. By contrast, the missionaries paid wages to its former employees and students who helped to oversee relief work and measure out portions, a Druze sheikh who oversaw the Mission’s farm-work project, and a skilled stonemason and plumber who oversaw other parts of the relief work. The Mission’s relief projects, like its schools a decade earlier, offered a two-pronged approach to Syria’s population, wooing its wealthy inhabitants as valued partners and coercing its poorer people into labor for both ideological and material ends.

The Mission’s wartime relations with the Ottoman state also stemmed from its earlier policies; its leaders continued to actively collaborate with the Ottoman state, and consequently received its protection. Context made this a noteworthy diplomatic achievement for the missionaries. The Great War and the threat it posed to the Ottoman political order made Ottoman officials particularly sensitive to and punitive towards those they perceived as possible domestic dissidents or foreign agitators. In eastern Anatolia, Enver Pasha responded to Armenian nationalist

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639 Dodge.
640 Dodge.
activity with a genocidal campaign of massacres and deportations to Deir al-Zor in the Syrian Desert, displacing and exterminating most of the population the missionaries’ American Board colleagues had worked among for the past fifty years. Cemal Pasha, the wartime military governor of Syria, did not pursue a genocidal campaign of violence against the population in the area he oversaw, but did execute Syrian Arab nationalist conspirators in Beirut and deported French, British, and Russian nationals to the interior. The US did not join the Great War until 1917, and because of Woodrow Wilson’s sensitivity to how the conflict might threaten US missionary interests in the region, never declared war on the Ottoman Empire. However, well before this, the US made extensive loans and sold many weapons and supplies to the Allied powers, which strained the country’s relationship with the Central Powers. And in Syria, American missionaries had a history of association with both the British empire and Syrian nationalists. As we have seen, the missionaries maintained extensive social ties with Britons living in Syria and turned to British diplomats for protection and assistance when they ran into political trouble. The American Syria missionaries, unlike their colleagues in the Balkans and Anatolia, had cautiously avoided expressions of support for anti-Ottoman nationalists throughout their century of operation, earning praise from the Board for their judicious restraint. In 1895, the Board secretary Arthur Brown thanked the Syria Mission’s members for remembering “their commission as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace” and not urging American diplomatic or military action against the Ottoman Empire in the wake of collective violence against Adana’s Armenian community as their ABCFM colleagues had. However, their extensive relationships with Syrian merchants, aristocrats, and intellectuals put them

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644 See Chapter 2.
645 Arthur Brown, “To the Presbyterian Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire,” December 3, 1895, Archives Item 102, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
in contact with a number of the regime’s Arab nationalist critics; graduates of the Syrian Protestant College were among those who Cemal executed for treason.646 The missionaries knew that they needed to carefully negotiate their relations with the Ottoman authorities and mobilize a century of relative goodwill to continue operating and keep their property during the war.

In December of 1914, the same month that the Ottoman Empire entered the war, Howard Bliss, the Syrian Protestant College’s pragmatic and forward-looking president, quickly decided to strengthen the missionary community’s wartime relationship with the Ottoman Empire by sending a favorable response to the German medical officer and administrator Doctor Hoffman’s request for medical assistance at a Jerusalem hospital currently caring for Ottoman soldiers wounded in battle against Anglo-Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsula.647 He convened a full meeting of the SPC faculty, which resolved to send offers of war aid under the banner of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to the German Consul in Beirut and Cemal Pasha, the military governor of Syria, who, along with Enver Pasha and Talaat Pasha, made up a third of the military triumvirate which ruled the wartime Ottoman Empire. Even at this early stage of the conflict, Bliss and his colleagues were thinking carefully about the benefits and protections they could obtain by providing wartime services; when they sent a medical professor, St John Ward, to negotiate with Cemal Pasha in Damascus, they encouraged him to ask Cemal Pasha to exempt the British subjects in SPC’s faculty and student body from deportation and exempt the College’s medical students from conscription so that they could participate in the Red Cross mission.648 In his correspondence with German officers, Bliss also hinted that the missionaries’ participation depended on the continued freedom of

646 Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts*.
647 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Doctor Hoffmann,” December 1914, AA 7.5 Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
648 Howard Bliss, “Summary of Deliberations and Planning for Red Cross Work,” January 1915, AA 7.5 Box 2, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives.
SPC’s students and professors. The missionaries’ decision to send a medical expedition was a calculated diplomatic move.

On December 30 1914, Ward wrote from Damascus that the authorities there had chosen to accept their assistance and grant Bliss’s requests. The SPC president quickly moved to mobilize all the resources at his disposal to make the expedition happen. That day, he sent a dispatch to Starr J Murphy, a co-founder of the Rockefeller Foundation, to ask if the wealthy organization could help the American Red Cross to send funds for both the medical expedition and the missionaries’ relief work in Beirut. The missionaries’ declared humanitarianism and their longstanding connections with the northeastern US ruling class gave them access to plenty of financial resources to call from the United States to support their overtures to the Ottoman Empire. The Syria Mission’s personnel also quickly joined Bliss’s project. On January 8 1915, George Doolittle, a missionary working in Sidon, wrote to Bliss asking to join the expedition. Five days later, Bliss sent a formal request to FE Hoskins, the Syria Mission’s secretary, asking if the expedition could employ Doolittle and two other missionaries, the Friedingers of the Zahleh station. The entire missionary community would support this endeavor, and in doing so, help preserve the Ottoman state’s support and affection.

The expedition, which would include four SPC professors, three members of the Syria Mission, 21 of SPC’s medical students, and several other medical workers for missionary institutions quickly drew an enthusiastic positive response from the Ottoman authorities. In January of 1915, the Syrian Protestant College hosted Senni Bey, a high-ranking local bureaucrat, and Ahmad Hassan.

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649 Bliss, “Letter to Doctor Hoffmann.”
650 St John Ward, “Dispatch to Howard Bliss,” December 30, 1914, AA 7.5, Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
651 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Starr J Murphy,” December 30, 1914, AA 7.5 Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
652 George Doolittle, “Letter to Howard Bliss,” January 8, 1915, AA 7.5 Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
653 Howard Bliss, “Letter to FE Hoskins,” January 13, 1915, AA 7.5 Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.

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Tabbara, the editor of *al-Ittihad al-'Uthmani* (*The Ottoman Union*), a reformist Beirut newspaper which supported the Empire’s ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) throughout the war.654 These voices of the regime spoke there to thank the school’s American faculty and Syrian students for dispatching a Red Cross detachment to care for the Ottoman Army as it battled against Britain in Sinai and Palestine.655 Soon after, *al-Ittihad* printed an article outpouring its “great thanks” to the Americans, who “had seized every opportunity to serve the nation.” Its author named them “the surgeons who bind up our country’s wounds during its redemption in blood.”656 When the American medical contingent reached Damascus, Cemal Pasha, a member of the military triumvirate which then ruled the Empire, gave them a warm reception alongside a number of other Ottoman officials and a cheering crowd.657 This expedition inaugurated a warm wartime relationship between the missionary community and Syria’s military governor.

The missionaries’ displays of loyalty to Cemal Pasha, the Turkish war effort, and the Ottoman State quickly paid dividends. At a time when the army was grabbing all the grain it could find and hundreds of thousands of Syrians starved, the Syrian Protestant College’s food stores remained untouched, and Cemal Pasha permitted its administrators to purchase supplies at military

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654 As a reformist and proponent of local autonomy, Tabbara got himself in hot water with the local authorities only a few years before, in 1913, but during the war himself, he complied with official censors, supported the government, and toed the party line. Melanie S. Tanielian, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East*, (Stanford, CA, 2017), chap. 3.

655 “Untitled,” *Al-Kulliyah*, November 1, 1915, AA 7.5, Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.

656 “The American College and the Red Crescent: 21 Students Volunteer,” *Al-Ittihad Al-'Uthmani*, January 26, 1915, AA 7.5, Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives. The translation from Arabic is my own.

657 George Doolittle, “New Work for a Sidon Missionary,” February 2, 1915, AA 7.5 Box 2, Folder 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
rates to keep their students and workers fed. Bliss recognized that a good relationship with the state was vital to American missionary institutions’ wartime survival and, if the Central Powers won the war, its postwar prosperity. To protect this relationship, he worked to assuage Cemal’s concerns about the College’s loyalty and quickly address his requests and demands. A minor scandal threatened Cemal’s perception of the missionaries’ loyalty in the last days of 1915. It came to light that one of the College’s textbooks, the 1912 edition of McMurry’s *World Geography* included language which alleged that Ottoman rule had delayed the development of the Balkans, that Ottoman Christians lacked rights, that many Ottoman sultans were cruel and absolute despots, that Ottoman rule had impoverished Constantinople and Mesopotamia, and that the Ottoman Empire failed to exercise effective sovereignty over the Arabian peninsula. Bliss quickly leaped into damage control mode, sending a letter to Azmi Bey, the Vali of Beirut, which blamed a former geography instructor for purchasing the textbook and asserting that his replacement, Najib Nassar, quickly reported the offending passages and repudiated them in the classroom. He also held meetings to discuss the issue with the secretary of the Beirut Vilayet, the Chief of Police, the Commandant of the Gendarmerie, and the local *mudir al-ma’arif* (“Director of Education”). He had good pre-existing relationships with all of these officials, who assured him of their continued support. However, Cemal Pasha, who was particularly anxious about both the Ottoman Empire’s international prestige and the potential disloyalty of its Syrian subjects, and who lacked longtime local officials’ familiar and friendly working relationship with the missionaries, was less inclined to be

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658 See the Feb 15, 1917 entry of Edward Nickoley, “Edward Nickoley’s War Diary” 1917, AA 2.3.3, Box 1, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives. For more information about the famine, see: Tanielian, *The Charity of War*.

659 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Henry Morgenthau,” January 14, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.

660 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Azmi Bey,” December 31, 1915, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.

forgiving. Consul Edelman, who represented the United States in Damascus, reported that in a tense meeting, the military governor “exclaimed” to him that “the College is one of those institutions which breeds contempt of the Turk” in Syria and abroad and threatened that he would make the institution “suffer for this failing, which might mean more onerous regulation, fines, closure, or seizure.” In a later meeting with Bliss, Cemal explained that the textbook passage was an affront to national prestige at a time when the Ottoman Empire was particularly vulnerable, telling the College president that “Here, we are fighting for our life. Fighting to be free from all foreign domination and making a desperate effort to throw off the foreign influences that have weakened us.” To illustrate both the Ottoman Empire’s vulnerability to foreign humiliation and the jealousy with which the high imperial world’s great powers guarded their honor, he related an episode in which Azmi Bey, the current Vali of Beirut, had to make a humiliating apology to the Russian ambassador in Constantinople after arresting a drunk and disorderly Russian military officer out of uniform.

Wartime’s pressures, perils, and promises which made Ottoman Imperial honor both particularly important and particularly fragile, magnified missionaries’ missteps into serious offenses.

Bliss appealed for Cemal Pasha’s clemency by invoking his College’s longstanding service to the Ottoman state, asking Edelman to tell that Pasha that “our College has been of real service to the Empire in developing a love of education; in fitting men as doctors, pharmacists, dentists, teachers, and business men to serve their fellow men; in raising the standard of education and in cultivating the spirit of public service.”

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662 D Edelman, “Letter to Howard Bliss,” February 1, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
663 Howard Bliss, “Interview with Djemal Pasha,” March 14, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
664 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Consul Edelman,” February 9, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
Ottoman institution which advance the state’s projects and its people’s welfare, Bliss provided lists of Ottoman officials who had positive relationships with the College (including Imperial Medical Commissioners who administered imperial licensing exams and former Valis of Beirut, including Djelal Bey of Aleppo, who had sent his son there) and a list of officials who had spoken or appeared on campus in recent years. He also asked for an audience with the Pasha on his next visit to Beirut. Cemal agreed, and clarified the nature and depth of his grievance to the missionary. Bliss agreed to help uphold the Ottoman Empire’s honor by sending Professor Hall, the head of geography instruction at the SPC, back to the United States. Cemal, in turn, came to speak at the College, where he praised both the institution’s history of service to the Ottoman people and the valorous wartime service of its medical graduates. In doing so, the commander ratified and confirmed the enduring but sometimes uneasy alliance between Beirut’s American missionaries and the Sublime Porte’s official representatives in Syria.

Cemal’s choice to cooperate with the missionaries served his own interests because of the rich web of alliances and affiliations the missionaries had cultivated with powerful actors in both the US and Syria, and because of the forms of work which they performed to maintain those relationships. The missionaries and the organizations that sponsored them had close ties to the US’s economic and political ruling class; both the ABCFM and the Presbyterian Board successfully lobbied Woodrow Wilson, a devout Presbyterian himself, to help protect their interests abroad. In 1916, cooperating with the missionaries helped Ottoman officials like Cemal to maintain good relations with the United States, the only major world power which had thus far remained neutral.

665 Bliss.
666 Howard Bliss, “Letter to Djemal Pasha,” February 20, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
667 Bliss, “Interview with Djemal Pasha.”
668 Cemal Pasha, “Address to the Syrian Protestant College,” March 23, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives.
during the global conflagration. The missionaries also had good relationships with Beirut and Mount Lebanon’s wealthy, aristocratic, and literary notables, whose choices could influence whether Arabic-speaking Syria would remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire’s Turkish nationalist rulers. By supporting the College, Cemal could begin to repair and strengthen his relationships with Beirut and greater Syria’s commercial and intellectual bourgeoisie, which his executions of Syrian nationalists, Syrians’ resistance to conscription, and the wartime famine’s privations had frayed. The College also could serve the Young Turks’ vision for modernizing and strengthening the Empire after the war’s conclusion. A victorious, ascendant, and expansionist Ottoman state would need well-educated administrators, doctors, scientists, military officers, and business men to prosper and function. The College had long served as a training academy which produced these personnel according to the Empire’s needs and specifications.

To at least some extent, the College and the Mission did everything that their imperial patrons might have hoped for. The United States maintained its diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire, and even after its entry to the war in 1917, Woodrow Wilson declined to declare war against the Ottomans, a decision which several historians attribute to his desire to protect missionary interests. And, as Cemal Pasha’s wartime address acknowledged, the College’s medical students and graduates also provided a variety of valuable modern services to the Ottoman military machine. The 1915 Red Cross expedition was only a small part of the College’s overall service to the Ottoman war effort. An unusual collection of postwar documents gives us a snapshot of SPC graduates’ wartime activities. In 1919, Edward Nickoley, who had temporarily stepped in to replace the recently deceased Howard Bliss as SPC’s president, sent out a circular letter to find out where the war had flung the College’s surviving alumni, and what deeds they had done while the conflict raged.

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669 See Patrick, “Woodrow Wilson, the Ottomans, and World War I.”
A small number served in the Egyptian army (because they lived in Egypt) or fled to join the Arab revolt in the Hijaz. However, those who still lived in the Ottoman Empire at the war’s outbreak almost all served in the Ottoman army, usually as doctors or pharmacists. Some of the College’s Arabic-speaking graduates choose to switch sides and join the Anglo-Egyptian army after being captured during its rapid sweep into Palestine, recognizing that the Empire was doomed and seeking whatever sorts of liberty and opportunity they could find in the new order. However, many remained loyal to the Ottoman regime until the conflict’s bitter end. One alumnus to control typhus epidemics in Bitlis on the Caucasus front before being falling into Russian captivity and caring for his fellow prisoners of war. Another tersely mentioned the two medals he had won for his courageous service to the now-vanished regime. Some graduates of Armenian descent even continued to care for the sick and the wounded even as the Ottoman state and its proxies slaughtered their families in Eastern Anatolia. In Beirut, Howard Bliss gave Cemal Pasha regular updates on his students and their political activities, even providing a list of Armenian students at a time when he knew that Cemal’s fellow triumvirs, Enver and Talaat Pashas, were directing a campaign of genocidal violence against their relatives in Anatolia. Cemal and his subordinates rewarded the missionaries’ general loyalty with protection. Even after the United States entered the war on the Entente Powers’ side in 1917, he allowed the College and most missionary institutions to keep their property, and allowed most missionaries to retain their liberty. The only missionary who faced any sort of government hostility was Charles Dana; Ottoman officials arrested him

670 “Responses to Circular Regarding SPC Students’ War Experiences,” 1919, AA 1.6.1, Box 2, Folder 6, American University of Beirut Archives. This is a collection of letters from SPC students, mostly in English, describing their war experiences.

671 Howard Bliss, “List of SPC’s Armenian Students,” October 10, 1916, AA 2.3.2, Box 18, Item 4, American University of Beirut Archives.

672 Nickoley, “Edward Nickoley’s War Diary.”
because of the suspicions that his financial activities raised, sent him to be imprisoned in
Constantinople (or, as Dana melodramatically put it, “in the vile dungeons of old Stamboul”), and
impounded the Press’s equipment. But by and large, the missionaries made it through the war
unscathed. When Edmund Allenby’s forces seized Beirut and Faisal ibn ‘Abdullah’s army
triumphantly entered Damascus in the autumn of 1918, the missionaries quickly pivoted to adjust to
a new imperial order in Syria. However, they survived to do so because of their close relationship
with the Ottoman ancient regime which the war had swept away.

In the five years between the October 30, 1918 Armistice of Mudros, which officially ended
hostilities between the Entente powers and the Ottoman Empire, and the treaties of Versailles
(1920) and Lausanne (1923), which fleshed out the final postwar settlement in the Eastern
Mediterranean, everyone living and working in the former Ottoman empire knew that the old world
was gone, but did not know the form the region’s future political order would take. The Eastern
Mediterranean partook in what historians generally recognize was a global period of uncertainty,
anticipation, and excitement. In his influential The Wilsonian Moment, Erez Manela argued that anti-
colonial activists around the world seized on Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and their promise
of self-determination to protest and reject the belle époque’s racist imperial order. More recently,
 scholars like Adam Tooze have objected to Manela’s “Wilsonian” formulation, but still argued that
actors around the world saw the war’s end as the beginning of a new global order, in which the
overwhelming political and economic power of the United States, the only great power which
avoided wartime devastation, exhaustion, and hunger, would dictate the future course of commerce
and empire. In the former Ottoman Empire, a variety of actors tried to influence that future

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673 See Dana, “The American Press: One Hundred Years in Arab-Asia.”
through petitions, diplomacy, and force of arms. Well before the war’s end France and Britain’s representatives had already decided to split the Ottoman Empire’s Arabic-speaking territories between them in the secret Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916; at the conflict’s close, their militaries quickly moved to establish colonial control, the British occupying Palestine, Transjordan, and Mesopotamia while the French occupied Lebanon and Syria and made a bid to seize southern Anatolia’s fertile cotton-producing Cilicia region. In this bid, it supported an army of Armenian exiles that invaded Anatolia from Cilicia. Italy, hoping to gain a prize which might make up for some of its catastrophic wartime losses, attempted to claim part of Anatolia as its own. Greece, driven by the irredentist “megale idea” of bringing all of the lands around the Aegean under its control, invaded Rumelia and eastern Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal, a modernizing military officer in the Young Turk mold who had distinguished himself by dealing a crushing defeat to the British imperial landing at Gallipoli, gathered and regrouped the remnants of the Ottoman army (including officers and troops from Rumelia, Anatolia, and the Empire’s Arabic-speaking provinces) so that he could re-establish a strong Turkish state and drive out the occupying powers. Local notables in Syria overtly and covertly supported Kemal’s forces. In Damascus, Faisal ibn Hussein, who had led the Arab Revolt’s victorious forces north from the Hijaz, planned to parlay British promises into support for a unified Arab state under his family’s rule spanning Syria, ‘Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula; developed a case for the Paris Peace Conference; and worked to cultivate mass support for Arab nationalism. Although the Great War was officially over, the old Ottoman Empire’s future was still to be determined at the negotiating table and on the battlefield.

676 Fawaz, A Land of Aching Hearts.
677 Provence, The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East.
The American missionary community in Beirut, its wealthy sponsors in the United States, and its Syrian associates on both sides of the Atlantic all weighed in on Syria’s future and tried to convince the great powers (and the US in particular) to change the region’s fate. Missionary organizations in the United States, their sponsors, and their political allies had begun agitating for American intervention in the region during the war itself, pushing for the US to support and protect new Armenian and Syrian states in former Ottoman territory. Thanks to the 19th and 20th century writings of British and American missionaries and humanitarians, English-speaking audiences already viewed Armenians as a sympathetic population of industrious white Christians suffering under oppressive “Asiatic” and Muslim Turkish rule. Pious and liberal publics in both countries responded with outrage to the Armenian massacres which took place in Adana under the rule of Abdülhamid II and the genocidal campaign of massacres and deportations which the Ottoman military carried out in Eastern Anatolia during the Great War. ABCFM missionaries, who had worked among Ottoman Armenians for generations, informed both their sponsoring organization and popular audiences about the Armenian genocide. Henry Morgenthau, the US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916, who was in constant contact with missionary organizations throughout the beginning of the war and received their accounts of the violence in Eastern Anatolia, added his voice to theirs, encouraging the American press to keep covering the carnage to create public support for American intervention in the region. In 1918, Morgenthau published a polemical memoir, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, which included accounts of how he learned about the genocide and entreated Talaat Pasha and other Ottoman leaders to end it. Missionary associates in the Syrian-American community joined these pro-Armenian voices and also encouraged the US to take intervene in Syria. Abraham Rihbany, a Protestant convert and former mission school teacher

679 See Walther, *Sacred Interests*; Tusan, *Smyrna’s Ashes*.
680 Walther, *Sacred Interests*.
who migrated to the United States, where he published secular newspapers in Arabic and religious books in English, articulated a strident case for long-term US involvement in Levantine in a short 1918 book, *America Save the Near East*. This book advocated that the United States declare war against the Ottoman Empire so that its troops might relieve the Armenian and Syrian populations, and, at the war’s conclusion, help to establish and protect an Armenian state in eastern Anatolia and a unified state that spanned greater Syria.682

Howard Bliss took on an immediate, personal role in the deliberations over Syria’s future and traveled to Paris in January 1919 to share his views with both the US and British delegations to the peace conference. The American delegation was glad to receive him, and his community’s long-term history of favorable relations with the British Empire and his status as an upper-class educated English-speaking Protestant also enabled him to get a hearing with the British delegation. Bliss insisted that he spoke on behalf of Syria’s people, a claim which even the British delegation took quite seriously (J. Mallet, an aide to the British delegation who quickly referred Bliss to his higher-ups, even wrote that “He considers himself almost a Syrian” and “He knows the Syrians as well as anyone and he is in a unique position to represent their wishes.”)683 Bliss argued that Syria’s people wanted to live in a state which included Palestine, Lebanon, and Transjordan and to join a broader Arab federation with ‘Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. He urged the Allies to comply with their earlier public declarations and send a commission to the region to gather its people’s views before disposing of its territories. It’s likely that Bliss most desired to avert a French mandate in Syria and Lebanon, which he probably suspected would favor his organization’s Catholic rivals; when he met with British representatives, he declared his enthusiasm for the British Empire and asserted that the French occupation force was suppressing all petitions which did not support France as Syria’s

mandatory power. He hoped that his words might influence the region’s future, even though he made a more cautious and less strident case than many voices in the United States itself.

Missionary advocates of intervention won one small nominal victory in their struggle to encourage American intervention. In 1919, Woodrow Wilson, making at least a nominal gesture toward the principles of self-determination that he advanced in his Fourteen Points, dispatched a commission led by Henry King and Charles Crane to the “Near East” to investigate public opinion in the “non-Turkish” parts of the Ottoman Empire which might inform the ultimate postwar peace settlement. The Commission had deep ties to the American missionary project in the Ottoman Empire and the denominations that sponsored it. King was a Congregationalist minister and theologian, and several of the commission’s other members were veterans of American Board missions in Anatolia and Armenia. Ongoing fighting between Armenian exiles (supported by the French army) and Mustafa Kemal’s forces in Cilicia and Eastern Anatolia cut the Commission’s journey short; its members were only able to visit Syria and Palestine. However, their survey of public opinion in the region (which they collected by both sampling populations and talking to local elites) offered fairly clear and consistent results. Most Syrians wanted full independence, but, failing that, stated a preference for a unified Syrian state under the protection of the United States. Perhaps, if public sentiment in the US and Great Britain had been different, Syria might have received self-determination or an American mandate.

However, Wilson had relatively little interest in applying the principle of self-determination outside of Europe, and even less interest in establishing American protectorates in the Near East. The leaders of the other Allied powers had even less interest in opening that particular door, which might have spelled the end of their extensive colonial empires and threatened their war gains.

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684 Mallet.
Ultimately, the Paris Peace Conference ignored appeals for self-determination from the Hashemite prince Faisal’s declared Arab state in Damascus as well as delegations from Egypt, China, Vietnam, India, and Korea. The Conference did not even attend to Syrians’ stated preferences for unity over partition and an American mandate, instead splitting the region into the British mandates of Palestine and Transjordan and the French mandates of Syria and Greater Lebanon. Mustafa Kemal’s forces foreclosed any hope for an Armenian mandate in Anatolia during the four years between the armistice and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, by systematically defeating Greek, Italian, and French forces who had tried to claim portions of Anatolia in the postwar settlement, as well as their independent-minded Armenian militia allies. The missionary community’s hopes for the political future of Syria and Armenia came to nothing, and the Syria Mission and the SPC would have to act in other spheres to achieve their long-term evangelistic and humanitarian goals.

They would have plenty of resources to realize at least some of their long-term ambitions. Although the missionaries’, Syrian Protestants’, and their allies’ advocacy did not lead to either an independent Syria under benevolent American protection or a new American colonial empire in the Middle East, it did encourage Americans to donate large amounts of money to help starving Syrians and Armenian refugees. In 1915, James Barton (a former ABCFM missionary in Anatolia) and Cleveland Dodge (a longtime sponsor of missionary work throughout the Ottoman Empire) established the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR), which soon changed its name to the American Committee for the Relief of the Near East (ACRNE), and later to Near East Relief (NER). While the conflict raged, the organization could do little other than raise awareness in the United States and channel some relief funds through missionaries who already lived in the Ottoman Empire. After the Allies occupied Beirut and Constantinople, however, they sprung

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687 See Provence, The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East.
into more dramatic action. They sent hundreds of workers overseas to distribute food and supplies to famine and genocide refugees, gather and care for orphans, provide medical care, reunite families, and, eventually, manage the large-scale population exchanges that moved the former Ottoman Empire’s Armenian population to the USSR, the US, and Lebanon; Orthodox Christians to Greece; and Muslim inhabitants of the Balkans to Mustafa Kemal’s Turkish Republic. As Keith Watenpaugh has argued, Near East Relief, an organization which shared sponsors, facilities, and personnel with the Mission and the College, helped to develop many of the norms and practices which governed modern humanitarianism. He accords special importance to the organization’s activities in Anatolia and the Balkans, asserting that the sheer scale of the problem of resettling refugees forced the NER to develop a more professional and “scientific” mode of humanitarianism (replacing what he considers the sentimental missionary mode of the 19th century) and a set of ideas about how refugees who were members of ethnic or religious minorities fit (or did not fit) into the order of nation-states which emerged from the two world wars.688

I agree with Watenpaugh that NER’s postwar activities helped to shape both private and governmental forms of humanitarian and development aid in the 20th century. Unlike him, I’ll argue that there was a great deal of continuity between the practices of prewar missionaries and postwar humanitarians, and assert that relief efforts helped to entrench the hierarchical structure of existing societies as well as constituting new ones along ethno-nationalist lines. Part of my disagreement with Watenpaugh stems from our differing interpretations of the missionary movement of the high imperial era. He argues that the period saw a transition from a missionary mode characterized primarily by sentiment and emotion to a professional mode characterized by quantification, observation, and a desire to solve concrete problems. I agree with Watenpaugh that the 19th

688 Watenpaugh, Bread from Stones, chap. 1.
century’s missionaries employed plenty of purple prose and, as he eloquently puts it, “sad and sentimental tales” in their communications with audiences in the United States, Great Britain, and other metropolitan sources of funding and personnel, but as I have amply demonstrated in previous chapters, missionaries’ conception of religious conversion required them to create social, economic, and political institutions as well as changing their listeners’ sentiments, and the American missionary community in Syria spent much of its time and effort resolving financial, political, and labor issues. Their “sad and sentimental tales” did not accurately capture the full scope of their work, which included many of the pragmatic activities which characterized later generations of “professional” humanitarians. My analysis of Near East Relief also diverges from Watenpaugh’s because he focuses on Anatolia and the Balkans while I focus on Syria. In both areas, missionary communities guided and directed the organization’s activities; however, the missionaries operating in what would become the Republic of Turkey had mostly ministered to and built close relationships with Greek and Armenian communities which the nine years of warfare between 1914 and 1923 displaced, while the Syria Mission’s members developed close relationships with Arabic-speaking Christian, Druze, and Muslim Syrians who remained in their homelands after the war. In Syria, the organization faced continuity as well as change, and because of that continuity, successfully forged a lasting relationship between American philanthropic organizations and modernizing Arabic-speaking economic and political elites.

The Syria Mission and the Syrian Protestant College played an integral role in Near East Relief’s wartime and postwar activities in Greater Syria. Before the war’s end, they registered relief contributions in New York, convinced local merchants to provide liquid funds in exchange for promises of future repayment, and allocated American philanthropic organizations’ funds in the region. In short, they had near-complete control over the funding and implementation of all US philanthropic aid to Syria during the war. After Entente victories re-opened regular lines of
transportation and communication between the United States and Beirut, the missionaries were the only unambiguously white and upper-class American citizens on the scene who had any sort of serious expertise in providing relief, so their similarly upper-class Anglo-Saxon sponsors quickly granted them a major role guiding and organizing the funds and personnel which Near East Relief dispatched to Syria to assist famine victims, war orphans, and Armenian refugees. The SPC’s professors Brown and Hall chaired the committee managing NER’s Syrian division, which coordinated relief operations in Greater Syria, southeastern Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. Bayard Dodge handled the organization’s communications as its Secretary, and JS Nicol, the former secretary of the Syria Mission’s Tripoli Station, became NER’s treasurer, maintaining the missionaries’ control over the flow of funds into greater Syria. The SPC’s professors Bacon, Ward, Crawford, and Hitti (the Columbia-educated scholar serving as the committee’s token Syrian) and the Syria Mission’s Ms. Horne (its token woman) rounded out the committee.\(^{689}\) In the war’s immediate aftermath, the Syria Mission gave the NER (then still known as the ACRNE) full-time use of its members Nicol and Stuart Dodge Jessup (one of Henry’s numerous missionary sons), and part-time use of members George Scherer, George Doolittle, Charles Dana, WS Nelson, and Bernice Hunting.\(^{690}\) Younger missionary family members who the war had trapped in the region, like Margaret McGilvary, signed on to serve the organization as secretaries or administrators.\(^{691}\) The Mission’s Syrian employees (and former employees who had moved to the United States) also came into NER’s service. After the passage of the immigration-restricting Johnson-Reed Act in 1924, the Mission’s Anglo-Americans petitioned Beirut’s US consul, requesting that the diplomat preserve the US citizenship of several

\(^{689}\) Bayard Dodge, “Letter to Charles Vickery,” Circa 1921, AA 7.5, Box 2, Folder 4, American University of Beirut Archives.

\(^{690}\) “Minutes of a 1919 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission,” May 19, 1919, Record Group 492, Box 4, Item 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

Syrian-Americans. The Mission also put its facilities at Near East Relief’s disposal. The missionary community closely shaped the rollout of “modern” humanitarian relief in the Arabic-speaking Middle East, in ways that cemented its own place in the region’s 20th century history and helped to strengthen and perpetuate the sort of social hierarchies it had aligned itself with in the prewar period.

Most immediately and visibly, missionaries’ close relationship with Near East Relief deepened and strengthened their ties with the Northeastern US upper class. It also gave missionaries access to the patronage of that class’s emerging philanthropic arm, the twentieth century’s major philanthropic foundations. After the Great War, the missionaries needed an enormous influx of cash to repay the debts they had incurred during the war, care for their Syrian workforce, rebuild and expand their facilities, and support Near East Relief’s longer-term projects for improving education, agriculture, and development throughout the region. After Howard Bliss’s untimely death, Bayard Dodge became president of the Syrian Protestant College, which he and the institution’s trustees elected to rename the American University of Beirut. Dodge made an extensive catalogue of the losses the University had suffered during the war and his plans to expand its Medical school; add programs in nursing, engineering, and education; and hire new faculty across all departments, and submitted it to the Rockefeller Foundation, which funded the expansion of the rechristened American University’s work. Meanwhile, the Syria Mission convinced the Russell Sage Foundation to extend funds for the reconstruction and expansion of its high schools in Sidon and Tripoli. These foundations also sponsored the expansion of US higher education and social

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692 See, for example, Nassim Helou, “Explanation of Farid Bustani’s Activities in Syria,” February 21, 1921, Archives Item 165, Near East School of Theology Special Collections.
693 “Minutes of a 1919 Special Meeting of the Syria Mission.”
695 JH Nicol, “Letter to the Presbyterian Board of Missions,” April 28, 1920, Record Group 492, Box 3, Item 4, Presbyterian Historical Society.
scientific research during the same time period. Their sponsorship ensured an enduring connection between the Protestant missionary schools in Greater Syria and the prestigious colleges and universities of the United States. After serving as AUB’s president, Bayard Dodge would return to the United States to teach at Princeton; Philip Hitti, an SPC graduate who returned to teach at the institution in the 1920s after finishing his PhD in history at Columbia University, would make the same circuit; both men contributed to the development of Near Eastern Studies in the United States.

The missionaries’ involvement with Near East Relief also perpetuated the hierarchical approach to education, relief, and development which they had adopted during the depression of the 1890s and extended during the war years. Under the missionaries’ guidance, Near East Relief established facilities to care for six thousand Arabic-speaking Syrian orphans in Ghazir (in Mount Lebanon), Sidon, and Jbeil (Byblos). Bayard Dodge emphasized that these orphanages were to avoid “pauperizing” Syrian orphans or providing them with language instruction which might encourage them to emigrate to the New World. The orphanages were to operate as industrial schools; only “a few picked scholars” would go on to attend the Mission’s high schools, while most would learn “Carpentering, tailoring, mechanics, farming, iron work, shoemaking, sewing, dressmaking, cooking, washing, preserving fruits, weaving and other possible forms of work” as quickly and effectively as possible through Hampton-style industrial education. Dodge and his colleagues still believed that they needed to coercively prepare poor Syrian students for a life of servitude. At the same time, they maintained a partnership with the mandate-era Middle East’s political, economic, and intellectual elites.

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697 See Lockman, *Field Notes*.
698 Dodge, “Letter to Charles Vickery.”
The missionaries’ past experience training the Ottoman Empire’s administrators in Syria helped them to assume a similar role in the colonial mandate quasi-states which emerged in the region after the war. Putting aside their years of service to the Sublime Porte, they quickly developed or renewed favorable relationships with French and British imperial officials. They trained the local personnel who would administrate the mandate regimes’ projects of education, economic exploitation, governance, and repression. The Mission and the Syrian Protestant College quickly established relations with the architects of French rule in Syria and Lebanon, General Henri Gouraud (the commander of the French expeditionary force in Syria and founding high commissioner of the new mandates of Syria and Lebanon) and Robert de Caix (a journalist and diplomat who served as his general secretary). In January of 1920, Edward Nickoley, who served as the Syrian Protestant College’s interim president after Howard Bliss’s sudden death, asked de Caix if French authorities would recognize its graduates as medical doctors, using its accreditation from the University of the State of New York and its curriculum to press the institution’s claim. In doing so, he sought to ensure that its students could continue to take on roles administering public health in the new Mandate colonial administration just as they had under Ottoman rule. The French administrators, busy establishing their new colony’s governing institutions, took some time to answer this request, but they made up for their tardiness with enthusiasm. In March of that year, De Caix agreed to certify SPC’s medical graduates if USNY continued to recognize the institution and if the graduates submitted to examinations before a jury of French military doctors, effectively recreating SPC’s old certifying relationship with the Ottoman state. In July, after a French jury had conducted the first successful round of examinations at the Syrian Protestant College, General

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Gouraud wrote to Nickoley that “In these lands under mandate, we are pursuing a great civilizing labor together, which is destined to bear both intellectual and moral fruits. I am pleased to recognize all the good that your establishment has done in the development of culture and the establishment of sentiments.”

French officials had adopted missionary educational institutions as partners of their own mission civilizatrice, just as their predecessors made the missionaries partners of Ottoman modernity; the region’s Syrian administrative elites would continue to achieve power and high office by attending its schools.

The American missionaries cooperated even more closely with the UK’s colonial administrations in Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, and Sudan. The SPC’s graduates had a long history of colonial service under British-controlled regimes in Egypt and the Sudan, and they came to serve similar roles in Britain’s new colonies. A number of SPC graduates fought in the Egyptian or Sharifian armies throughout the war. Graduates serving in the Ottoman military who were captured by British and Egyptian forces on the Sinai front during the Second World War frequently opted to change sides and fight for the Allies after surrendering. They quickly took up ranks as medical officers in the Egyptian army, and then took on roles in public health administration in towns which the British occupied in Syria. After the conflict concluded, even more of them kept or took roles in British-occupied territories. They were especially important in Palestine, which, as a well-populated area with longstanding connections to Beirut and its environs, was much like home to many of the Syrian Protestant College’s graduates.

That Mandate’s first chief of police was a Palestinian SPC graduate; a circle of Palestinian graduates who worked in and around the administration played a key role in disseminating both liberal and socialist theories of political economy in the mandate’s Arabic-

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701 Henri Gouraud, “Lettre a Edward Nickoley,” July 12, 1920, AA 3.9.2 Box 5, Item 1, American University of Beirut Archives. Translation from French is my own.
702 “Responses to Circular Regarding SPC Students’ War Experiences.”
language periodicals. In 1923, George Antonius (an official in mandate Palestine’s educational ministry who later became a noteworthy Arab nationalist historian) sought the University faculty’s input on the standardized curricula that he had developed for Palestine’s high-school students. Bayard Dodge also quickly agreed to British mandatory authorities’ plans to train ‘Iraqi and Palestinian schoolteachers, who would go on to train more teachers and operate educational institutions in the Mandate states, at the American University.

In addition to serving the Middle East’s new colonial overlords and training their servants in new regional administrations, the missionary community in Beirut continued to cultivate strong relationships with Ottoman Syria’s many surviving political, commercial, and intellectual leaders, including those who rejected French or British authority. In The Last Ottoman Generation, a book about the Ottoman state’s legacies, Michael Provence notes that SPC graduates like future Syrian Prime Minister Faris al-Khūrī closely cooperated with graduates of official Ottoman civil and military academies to oppose the French mandate over Syria and Lebanon, and played similarly influential roles in Mandate-era politics; these officials sent their children to study at the American University of Beirut as well. Missionary schools taught members of the Mandate Middle East elite who rejected the colonial order as well as those who enthusiastically participated in it, as well as nationalists who hedged their bets, working for colonial states while they made plans for independence. Missionary schools (and the American University in particular) were able to play this important role because they had served the Ottoman state, but drew their funding and organization

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704 George Antonius, “Letter to Bayard Dodge,” October 30, 1923, AA 4.3.4, Box 1, Folder 5, American University of Beirut Archives.
705 M Farrell, “Letter to Bayard Dodge from the Minister of Education for Iraq,” January 19, 1922, AA 4.3.4, Box 1, Folder 2, American University of Beirut Archives; Humphrey Bowman, “Letter to Bayard Dodge Concerning an ‘Educational Mission to Beirut,’” November 5, 1923, AA 4.3.4, Box 1, Folder 5, American University of Beirut Archives.
from outside of it; as training schools for elite administrators sponsored by American capital, they were able to survive the war and join the new order. In doing so, they were able to continue working with the elite constituencies they had served during the Ottoman era, many of whom continued to play similar roles in Mandate politics. In doing so, they helped to preserve the remarkable continuity of the new nation-state of Lebanon’s elites (one of the most remarked-upon features of Lebanon’s 20th century history)\textsuperscript{707} and ensured that the middle and ruling classes of the early twentieth century Middle East would have close relationships with institutions which represented the ambitions of America’s capitalist class. In the postwar era, the missionaries continued treating the Middle East’s people as either elite clients to be catered to or potential “paupers” who needed to be disciplined through labor. This dichotomy, which sprung from missionaries’ relationships with Ottoman society, would shape the US’s relationship with the Middle East to the present day.

\textsuperscript{707} See Traboulsi, \textit{A History of Modern Lebanon}.  

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Conclusion:

The missionaries’ integration into the Middle East’s Mandate period social and political order and their sustained and flourishing relationship with the USA’s ruling classes put them and the institutions they created into a strong position to influence the development of American political, economic, and social power in the Middle East throughout the rest of the twentieth century. The conditions, choices, and events which made this integration possible should change how we understand the history of the global Anglo-American Protestant missionary movement, the nature of American orientalism, and the concept of “soft power” and its role in constituting American hegemony in the late twentieth century. Knowing that, our knowledge of the missionaries’ influence on future American policy should change our understanding of the history of American power, intervention, and empire in the Middle East.\footnote{And indeed, I do think that “empire” is a wholly appropriate category for analyzing America’s involvement in the Middle East throughout the 20th century; for a strong case for the analytic, see Paul A. Kramer, “Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World,” The American Historical Review 116, no. 5 (December 1, 2011): 1348–91, https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.116.5.1348.}

The historiography of Anglo-American Protestant missionary work treats the early twentieth century as a period of dramatic change in missionaries’ ideology and practice. As we have already discussed many times, historians characterize the late 19th century as a period of intense missionary exceptionalism and chauvinism, when a deep sense of fundamental difference (whether it was racial, religious, or civilizational) characterized both the theory and practice of Protestant missionary work worldwide. The early twentieth century, by contrast, appears as a period of secularization and liberalization, in which identification rather than opposition came to dominate missionaries’ approach to evangelism, education, humanitarianism, and ethnography. Several scholars have
argued that American missionaries’ experiences abroad gave them an interest in foreign religions and cultures which led them to develop a more ecumenical perspective on religious differences and a more egalitarian perspective on people they saw as racial and civilizational others. Lian Xi argues that Protestant missionaries’ experiences in early 20th century China helped to forge a liberal Protestant religious movement which led believers toward ecumenicism and away from Biblical literalism.709 And in his recent Protestants Abroad, David Hollinger asserts that American missionaries and their children were important founders of 20th century American racial liberalism and liberal internationalism.710 On a similar note, Keith Watenpaugh’s Bread from Stones argues that the interwar period’s challenges generated a new professional and secularized form of humanitarianism which displaced the 19th century’s “sentimental” missionary model. The chronology and interpretation of the early twentieth century’s missionary liberalization which these works assert overlook key aspects of the earlier missionary experience.

Indeed, there’s a strange disjuncture between the set of phenomena which historians have used to explain the missionary liberalization and the chronology they have proposed for it. Relying on writings that missionaries and “mish kids” produced for American audiences, Hollinger, Xi, and others date the liberalization of American missionaries to events in the later decades of the Progressive Era (the 1910s and 1920s) even though the key conditions which they believe liberalized missionaries, including extensive exposure to foreign religious and cultural traditions and close relationships with their practitioners, had been present since the 19th century’s middle decades. Although the scope and intensity of American Protestant missionary expanded over the century’s course, American missionaries were already carefully studying foreign religious and cultural

traditions with learned and influential practitioners as early as the 1820s and 1830s; second-generation missionaries, who grew up immersed in “foreign” societies, began to appear in the 1850s and 1860s and became common in the 1880s and 1890s. The conditions which Xi and Hollinger believe made space for missionary liberals like Pearl Buck existed well before her time, so why did it take so long to arrive?

Fortunately, this paradox of chronology is no paradox at all. As I have argued over the several hundred previous pages, the practices which scholars associate with a liberal moment in the 1920s actually emerged much earlier. Protestant missionaries began adapting their practices to foreign societies, actively seeking knowledge about other religious and cultural traditions, participating in local cultural systems and social hierarchies, and directing sophisticated organized programs toward local populations’ material interests in the nineteenth century. The emotional and intellectual core of the later missionary liberalism or ecumenicism also began to appear in at least some missionaries’ minds as early as the first half of the 19th century. The Syria Mission’s Cornelius Van Dyck, and his son, the SPC instructor William, consistently acted in ways that suggested that their views were similar to those of the Progressive Era’s liberal missionaries; other missionaries maintained a stronger sense of racial, religious, and civilizational exceptionalism, but adapted to the Ottoman Empire and its circumstances in ways that suggest that they held this sense of exceptionalism more lightly and flexibly than most of the other Americans of their era and social class. The missionary liberalization of the nineteenth century was much less visible than its progressive era counterpart. Missionaries’ writings for audiences at home served specific pecuniary and operational functions, helping them to recruit new missionaries and raise funds from pious audiences at home; wealthy, white Northeastern US public opinion constrained what they I would contend that the Protestant missionary liberalization of the Progressive Era and mid-century was not actually a deep structural change in missionaries’ approach, but a revelation and crystallization of
changes which had begun decades ago. This new publicity allowed the missionaries to re-organize some of their endeavors on new lines.

Changes in wealthy American mission-supporters’ attitudes, which gradually accumulated over the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, made this public shift possible. The incredible violence of the American Civil War disillusioned a generation of young American intellectuals and created room for non-religious and otherwise heterodox currents within American thought.\footnote{See Menand, \textit{The Metaphysical Club}.} As Jackson Lears has argued, upper-class New Yorkers began to embrace, or at least become curious about Catholicism and “Eastern” religions while seeking what they saw as romantic solutions to the distinctive sorrows of modernity.\footnote{T. J. Jackson Lears, \textit{No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920} (University of Chicago Press, 1994).} At the same time, mass migration from Southern and Eastern Europe (as well as the Ottoman Empire’s Arab provinces) made Protestants’ religious others, including Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews, significantly more common within the United States.\footnote{This fact is commonly discussed in the literature on immigration, nativism, and assimilation in the United States. For example, see John Higham, \textit{Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925} (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Gary Gerstle, \textit{American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century} (Princeton University Press, 2002).} In the early 20th century, members of these groups became increasingly integrated into American life and politics, and some of them began to join the US’s upper classes. By the middle of the century, they came to be an integral part of mainstream American society, high-level academic and intellectual circles, and the country’s power elite.\footnote{See Kevin M. Schultz, \textit{Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013); David A. Hollinger, \textit{Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).} During the same period, debates about evolutionary theory, German philologists’ “higher criticism” of Biblical texts, archaeological discoveries in the Fertile Crescent, and other recent discoveries in the natural and social sciences prompted many American Protestants to challenge literalist interpretations of the Bible and the work of “natural theology” which attempted to harmonize those interpretations with scientific
discoveries. These disputes led to the emergence of a “modernist” Protestant movement which rejected Biblical literalism and informed the theology and practice of many “mainline” Protestant denominations (including Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Northern Baptists) throughout the twentieth century. And, of course, missionaries’ extensive writings about their work abroad fueled American protestants’ awareness of and interest in foreign religions and cultures, accelerating their turn toward ecumenicism. Returning missionaries and their children absolutely contributed to the emergence of liberal Protestantism, but they gained the opportunity to do so when cultural and intellectual conditions in the United States became more amenable to the sort of learning, adaptation, and perspective-shifting that they had been doing since they began to pursue their quest.

We also need to think more carefully about missionary ecumenicism’s ethical and political implications. Traditionally, scholars tend to present ecumenicism as aligned with liberty, equality, and human flourishing; and against against intolerance, imperialism, and repression. We treat religious liberalism, in missionary or other contexts, as both a cause and a consequence of what we now see as noble, humane, and egalitarian values. However, the missionaries at this study’s heart often embraced Ottoman discourses and institutions which were hierarchical and repressive. They designed their religious texts, services, and school curricula in ways that both reflected and perpetuated Ottoman-era linguistic ideologies about a hierarchical division between a “learned” ruling class and an “ignorant” people. Their college, which embraced local forms of learning and academic prestige, produced personnel for the generally centralizing and un-democratic late

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715 For information about some of these disputes, see Ronald L. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*.

Ottoman state’s repressive projects. Their schools came to reflect and serve the new class hierarchies that emerged as Beirut’s transnational capitalist economy developed in the late 19th century. Their ability to foster close ties with both colonial officials and local elites helped the missionaries to play an important role in the Middle East’s mandate-era imperial order. Later, it helped them to usher in an era of cooperation between American empire and Arabic-speaking authoritarian modernizers. In this case, ecumenicism emerged from missionaries’ need to work within foreign but repressive social orders, and its consequences laid the groundwork for a period of repression. The Other-identification at the heart of missionary religious liberalism was not always universal. Often, the liberal missionary only saw his wealthy, powerful, cultured, and educated counterparts as his peers, viewing the poor and unschooled as a problem to be cooperatively managed with local elites.

We also need to broaden and deepen our analysis of the history of European and Euro-American knowledge production about a constructed or imagined East. For the past forty years, Edward Said’s Orientalism has determined how historians write about this sort of knowledge-making, especially when it concerns the Islamic world. Said’s argument that European writing and art concerning the “Orient” has constituted a singular self-referential discourse which has supported and encouraged European countries’ political domination of the regions they cast as their “East” exposed many of the ahistorical fallacies, stereotypes, and assumptions which misleadingly passed for scholarship about the Middle East and South Asia. It also forced scholars to re-examine how their own work might help to produce and reproduce either imperial practices or hoary stereotypes. Nevertheless, the book’s intellectual framework has significant limitations. Even though it retains a hegemonic place in our scholarship, a number of scholars have productively developed this subfield of intellectual history beyond Said’s conception; if possible, I would like to help contribute to and further their work.
One of these issues stems from Said’s overall intellectual framework. In many ways, *Orientalism* was very much in keeping with the cutting edge of intellectual history and the philosophy of knowledge construction as it existed in the 1970s. Major thinkers from that era, including Michel Foucault and Thomas Kuhn (both of whom Said cites as influences) conceptualized intellectual history (at least as it proceeded in particular subfields) as a series of (relatively) complete and coherent worldviews (Kuhn’s “paradigms” in particular branches of science, Foucault’s more all-encompassing “discourses” and “epistemes”). The driving events in this vision of intellectual history are crises (in Kuhn’s version, discoveries impossible to reconcile with the paradigm, in Foucault’s version, broader societal events) which destroy or overthrow one worldview and enact another. *Orientalism* lacks these moments of crisis and change (although Said perhaps gestures toward one when he argues that Orientalism has a direct relationship with the emergence of European political empire), but it echoes these frameworks. (Indeed, Said asserts that Orientalism is a discourse in the Foucauldian sense, and states that it’s similar or comparable to Kuhn’s paradigms.) *Orientalism* is a product of the top-down, holistic system-focused intellectual history of its era.

However, from the late 1980s onward, most historians of science and intellectual historians have decided to reject or at least deeply qualify these unitary worldview-driven understandings of the history of ideas. Sociologists and social historians of science have rejected the concept of the scientist as an actor bound and directed by a paradigm or worldview and demonstrated how scientific knowledge production was a contingent activity carried out through particular sets of social institutions with their own structure and politics which, in turn, were embedded in their society as a

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More recent scholarship, which brings the history of science together with environmental history and recent theories of embodiment, has explored the ways that scientists’ material constraints and embodied experiences shape their work. Intellectual historians, like their natural kin in the history of science, have embraced frameworks which view bodies of knowledge and particular social orders as co-productive; they, too, see knowledge-making as contingent and socially determined. By adhering to Said’s systemic view, historians of European knowledge about the Islamic world have placed themselves behind the historiographic curve.

A related limitation stems from Orientalism’s reproduction of theories of colonialism and the colonial experience that were particularly common during its era. In many ways, the first postcolonial theorists took the vision of an absolute divide between colonizers and colonized peoples propounded by European ideologues and inverted their moral and intellectual polarity. Theorists like Frantz Fanon conceptualized colonial empire as a wholly alien totalitarian institution which Europeans unilaterally imposed on the rest of the world, which violently obliterated colonized people’s societies, cultures, and identities. Said identifies Orientalism as a body of knowledge with colonial and imperial power, and likewise locates its roots entirely within European societies. In at least some sense, his claims about Orientalism’s antiquity and continuity (which he traces back to Aeschylus’s *The Persians*) serve as pre-emptive denials of the possibility that its canons might have any root or origin outside of Europe. In some sense, this view has persisted over time more successfully than the grand, sweeping conception of knowledge that Foucault and Kuhn embraced.

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719 Perhaps the most pointed articulation of this viewpoint might appear in the title of Steven Shapin, *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as If It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority* (JHU Press, 2010).


Said’s work itself still holds a hegemonic place in our thinking about empire, the colonial, and intercultural encounters; other canonical thinkers like Homi Bhabha have argued for the absoluteness of the division between colonizer and colonized; the latter could only be “almost the same, but not white.”

Many scholars have moved beyond Said’s framework and explored more complex origin stories for the discourses, ideologies, and institutions of colonial empire. Bernard Cohn has examined British appropriation of Indian literary languages and other bodies of knowledge for the purposes of colonial rule. Robert Crews has found that imperial Russia incorporated Islamic law and Islamic scholars into its own forms of governance. Lauren Benton has traced a similar genealogy for the legal systems of some European colonial empires, especially Great Britain’s. Paul Kramer found that US empire’s racial ideologies and governmental practices in the Philippines had origins in the region’s earlier colonial history as well as the US mainland’s. Maya Jasanoff, diving into the world of collecting and art history, has recharacterized British imperial expansion as a “series of collections” of institutions, ideas, and objects from the colonized world. And even scholars whose analytical focus is the epistemic violence which Western forms of scholarly knowledge did to Asian or Islamic bodies of knowledge often focus on how Western thinkers responded to particular intellectual currents and texts. American Ottomans, like these other works, shows that European and North American bodies of knowledge about the “East” had a variety of origins and emerged through an active process of encounter. I would also use its evidence to posit a

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723 Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*.
728 An exemplary work of this sort, which examines the extra-European origins of the humanistic disciplines which flourished in the 18th and 19th century West is Siraj Ahmed, *Archaeology of Babel: The Colonial Foundation of the Humanities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).
new take on orientalism’s relationship to human politics. Because Western travelers relied on elite informants’ accounts, and Western colonizers (or would-be spiritual conquerors like missionaries) co-opted local hierarchies to serve their imperial ambitions, orientalist knowledge reflected and supported the internal power structures of “Eastern” societies as well as the colonial or imperial relationships between East and West.\footnote{Here I depart from the position that say, Maya Jasanoff holds—like her, I think that the project of European colonial empire developed with assistance from local elite participants, but unlike her, I think that this often worsened the violence of empire as colonizers redoubled and re-enforced oppressive structures which already existed.}

The historiography of America’s relationship with the world in the twentieth century frequently addresses types of power that do not grow directly from the barrel of a gun. Using categories including “soft power,” “cultural diplomacy,” and “informal empire,” historians have tried to understand how the US’s policymakers and ruling classes consolidated their global influence using tools other than military force. Many of these historians have posited that these forms of influence preceded and lay the groundwork for American geopolitical hegemony in the second half of the twentieth century. Emily Rosenberg argued that the United States went through a fifty-year period of “economic and cultural expansion” between 1890 and 1945, and that American “financial missionaries” extended the reach of American capital by extending loans throughout Europe, East Asia, and the Global South.\footnote{Emily S. Rosenberg, \textit{Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900–1930} (Duke University Press, 2003); Emily Rosenberg, \textit{Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945} (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).} Ian Tyrrell posited a “moral empire” of missionary institutions and transnational reform movements which allowed Americans (and American women in particular) to expand their global influence during the Progressive Era.\footnote{Ian Tyrrell, \textit{Reforming the World: The Creation of America’s Moral Empire} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).} Victoria DeGrazia asserted that international fraternal associations and the profusion of American consumer goods constituted an “irresistible empire” that captured European culture in the interwar era.\footnote{Victoria De Grazia, \textit{Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).} In general, these
accounts have effectively demonstrated the magnitude and pervasiveness of American cultural and commercial interests abroad. I believe that they have had less success in explaining how those institutions constitute empire by giving Americans a power and influence over the lives of others comparable to that which societies attain through war, conquest, and systematic political integration.

In the past several hundred pages, I have offered a lengthy investigation of one of the constellation of institutions in Tyrrell’s “moral empire” and one of the earlier recognizable sites of American “soft power” in the world. Contemporary writers identified Americans working in Syria and the broader Ottoman Empire as a vanguard of American moral and commercial interests. In the aftermath of the Second World War, American policymakers identified the American University of Beirut and the Near East Foundation as influence-spreading assets in the Middle East and sought to replicate their effects through the Point Four Program and other initiatives. As well as these forms of external recognition, missionaries held many clear and direct forms of power within Ottoman Syria’s society. During their time in Syria, the missionaries gathered an extensive collection of political clients and economic dependents, gained the power to confer important and economically valuable social statuses on their students, and during the First World War, gained the power to determine whether many Syrians lived or died during a devastating famine. I have shown throughout that these missionary extensions of influence depended almost entirely on the relationships which the Mission forged with stakeholders who held much more immediate forms of power within Syria itself. These included European diplomats who wielded threats of military intervention, landowners and merchants whose hold over both concrete and abstract forms of property were constituted by their ability to marshal forceful responses from imperial powers or local toughs, representatives of the Sublime State who wielded its police and juridical powers, and

733 See Khalil, America’s Dream Palace.
local intellectuals who served and influenced all three of these other groups. In essence, the missionaries created and constituted their soft power by persuading and making bargains with different groups of local actors with their own forms of economic and cultural influence or direct recourse to force. The expanding wealth of the Mission’s New York and New England capitalist backers certainly helped the missionaries accomplish this. Because the Ottoman empire had a cash economy which allowed merchants, aristocrats, and ordinary people to pursue capital accumulation in the 19th century, the missionaries’ access to capital helped them to buy lands, erect facilities, hire labor, and provide a variety of services which the leaders of Ottoman Syrian society considered useful.

This approach has the added benefit of helping us to understand the relationship between the high era of European colonial empire and the era of American power which followed it. European powers frequently imposed capitalist cash economies on regions they conquered and frequently created or co-opted local administrative classes who came to share European ideas about modernity, technology, economic accumulation, and social organization. Members of those administrative classes frequently led independence movements or otherwise became the new ruling classes of their countries in the wave of decolonization that swept the world in the late 20th century. In regions like the Ottoman, Qing, and Japanese empires, which Europeans failed to conquer or dominate, local elites, sensitive to European expansion and power, pursued their own modernization projects which adopted European forms of technology, capital, and social organization in order to compete with European empires, protect their own sovereignty, and maintain authority within their own societies. Even intellectuals who rejected both colonialism and the premises of the liberal Western social order frequently understood modernity in terms that were

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commensurate with those that Westerners used; Nate Citino’s *Envisioning the Arab Future* shows how the mid-century Middle East’s nationalists, communists, and Islamists all embraced technological modernity and the paradigm of speed. This gave foreigners who could provide capital, information, or useful advice to these elites a certain amount of leverage to influence and bargain with them, and with that, a degree of influence over the societies which they headed. The 20th century US’s ever-expanding economy, its prominent academic institutions, and its panoply of scientific, technological, and cybernetic experts gave Americans abroad plenty of leverage to bargain with international elites, and the American state was able to use those bargains and connections to its own advantage. American soft power grows from Americans’ capital, prestige, and knowledge, but it manifests in the world through alliances and relationships between Americans and foreign power elites. The hierarchical structures which govern “informal empire” are those of foreign polities and societies, which these alliances and relationships mobilize for Americans’ goals and purposes.

The United States began to take on a role as a major power in the Middle East when Franklin Roosevelt negotiated an alliance and an oil-trading agreement with Saudi Arabia; it consolidated that role in the decade following the Second World War as anti-colonial nationalists rejected British and French domination, the exhausted and war-weary European empires withdrew their forces from overseas, and the US, a rising superpower, actively extended its influence to secure access to oil and prevent popular movements from delivering the region to its communist rival, the USSR. The fact that missionaries and their family members helped to forge the early mechanisms of American Empire in the region is already fairly widely-known and well-understood. What I would like to elucidate here is the content and consequences of their contribution. Osamah Khalil,

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Douglas Little, Zachary Lockman, and Robert Vitalis have all argued that missionaries’ history of exceptionalism and the conceit of superiority that was inherent to their project shaped the emerging projects of US empire; Ussama Makdisi and (in a more colloquial treatment) the journalist Robert Kaplan, by contrast, presents the missionaries as actors whose solidarity with the people of the Arab world was disrupted, as a matter of policy, by US leaders’ embrace of Zionism.\footnote{Makdisi thinks this is a bad thing and Kaplan thinks it’s a good thing, but they roughly agree about what happened.}

I would argue, though, that missionaries’ activities had significant legacies which went beyond their exceptionalism and sense of religious and civilizational superiority. One key aspect of that legacy was a system of relationships which connected Middle Eastern elites with their American counterparts and facilitated the sort of bargaining which translated “soft power” into meaningful control over the region’s politics and economics. Graduates of the Syria Mission’s schools and the American University of Beirut played a remarkable role in the Middle East’s politics during the late mandate period and the early era of decolonization. The University alone counted more alumni among the signatories of the UN Charter than any of the world’s other institutions of higher education, including mainstays like Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard. In Lebanon, the institution’s graduates included influential politicians from across the spectrum, including the pan-Arab nationalist historian Constantine Zurayk, the “social nationalist” pan-Syrian revolutionary Antun Saa’deh, and the Phalangist Maronite-supremacist fascist Charles Malik (who ironically helped to pen the UN Declaration of Human Rights).\footnote{The American University of Beirut’s website proudly lists these illustrious alumni} The University would soon count many other major Lebanese politicians and intellectuals among its ranks. In Syria, Faris al-Khuri, a Protestant and graduate of the institution who had participated in the Syrian Revolt and the interwar nationalist movement, took power as the country’s first prime minister.\footnote{Provence, The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East.} The school’s graduates were also
well-represented in the increasingly independent governments of ‘Iraq, Transjordan, and the Sudan as well as the Palestinian liberation movement. These figures did not always accede to the aims and intentions of American policy; many of them pursued nationalist or socialist projects that, at least in theory, required them to oppose aspects of American influence. However, as Nate Citino has argued they understood modernity in terms that accorded with Americans’ perspectives, and they were willing to bargain with American policymakers for assistance in their projects of changing their countries’ economies and disciplining their populations for labor in accumulation-oriented systems of production.739

The missionaries and their (institutional and biological) descendants connected the network of allies and potential allies that they had cultivated in the Middle East with influential figures in the United States itself. As we have established in earlier chapters, many of the missionaries either came from or married into the Anglo-American Protestant ruling class of the Northeastern United States, which held a hegemonic role in the country as a whole throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and continued to wield disproportionate influence well into the twentieth century. Through their influence, they raised enough capital to make Near East Relief’s work permanent; the organization, rechristened the Near East Foundation, still pursues developmental projects in the Middle East. The American University of Beirut and the Mission’s high schools also continued and expanded their operations with assistance from American philanthropists. AUB’s connections with the American academy ensured that its graduates would have a relationship with America’s influential institutions of higher education and their graduates.740 Missionary family members also led many of the earliest American state and corporate efforts to influence the Middle East. William

739 For examples, see Citino, Envisioning the Arab Future; Sara Pursley, Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).
740 See Khalil, America’s Dream Palace; Lockman, Field Notes.
Eddy and his cousin Harold Hoskins, who were sons and grandsons of missionaries, leveraged their linguistic expertise, cultural savvy, and high social status to lead the Office of Strategic Service’s World War II-era intelligence-gathering and diplomatic missions in the Arabic-speaking world; Eddy set up the meetings which established the longstanding US-Saudi alliance. After the war, they helped to organize and train CIA and State Department personnel who guided the US’s Cold War policy in the region. The American University of Beirut, which these policymakers saw as a “sheet anchor” for American influence in the region, helped the US government to pursue development project in the regions and served as a training center for CIA and State Department personnel, cementing the connection between American policymakers and the University’s local elite patrons.

Bayard Dodge’s descendants served as executives in the Arab-American Oil Company (ARAMCO), which managed and divided the profits of oil extraction, enriching both American investors and Saudi Arabia’s iron-fisted but ambitiously modernizing royal family. During Harry Truman’s presidency, the US government used the Near East Foundation as a model for its “Point Four Plan” for global economic development, giving that organization’s personnel a lasting role in American development policy. Missionaries’ role in these developments is already fairly well-known in the historical community, but the narrative that we’ve explored over the past few hundred pages suggests a new interpretation of their involvement. Missionary descendants did not just contribute a tradition of exceptionalism and orientalism, but a longstanding tradition of cooperation with modernizing local elites and a set of institutions and relationships which facilitated those connections. American empire in the Middle East is built on the back of these partnerships, and by understanding this, we can understand an American political class which consistently presents the region’s people and popular movements as backward and dangerous but builds warm and close

741 Khalil, America’s Dream Palace.
742 See Vitalis, America’s Kingdom.
relationships with theocratic Salafist absolute monarchs (the Saudis), militarist and nominally social-nationalist secular authoritarians (like Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak and Abdel Fatteh el-Sisi), and the capitalist descendants of Mount Lebanon’s old elite families (Lebanon’s political class, which is remarkably continuous with its 19th century counterpart).
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