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***Self-Righteous Beneficence: American Diplomat and  
Missionary Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914***

*by*

***Ella M. Fratantuono***

***Honors Thesis***

*in*

***Department of History  
University of Richmond  
Richmond, VA***

***April, 2008***

***Advisors: Woody Holton and Yücel Yanıkdağ***

Special thanks to my family and friends for their support, my fellow honors students for their criticism, Dr. Woody Holton for patient editing, and most of all Dr. Yücel Yanıkdağ for wisdom and advice in every step of the process.

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## INTRODUCTION

His majesty Mohamed V, Sultan of Turkey, recently sent to this country a special embassy to announce his accession. The quick transition of the government of the Ottoman Empire from one of retrograde tendencies to a constitutional government with a parliament and with progressive modern policies of reform and public improvement is one of the most important phenomena of our times...In that quarter the prestige of the United States has spread widely through the peaceful influence of American schools, universities, and missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

-William Howard Taft

At first glance, President Taft's praise of the Ottoman Empire's transformation seems to reflect optimism about the state of the Turkish Empire and America's role in the world. Still, the very source of this optimism, Turkey's evolution from "retrograde" to "constitutional," reveals Taft's assumption that progress for Turkey was based on adopting the "modern policies" of what he believed to be a superior culture. Taft was not alone in thinking that the event he described, the inauguration of the second Constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire, signified a tremendous improvement in the world or in linking that change to the influence of American missionaries. He and Americans like him were informed by a recurrent tenet of American identity and ideology, believing in the nation's divinely granted mission to spread the sentiments of liberty and democracy to the wide world. While this ideology appealed to a notion of universal humanity, in reality America's civilizing impulse gave way to the belief in American superiority and power at the expense of other cultures.

The "quick transition" that Taft refers to began with the Young Turk Revolution of July 23, 1908. The Young Turks successfully overthrew Sultan Abdul Hamid II and reinstated the Constitution of 1876, which had suffered at the hands of the Empire's reactionary leader. While

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<sup>1</sup> William Henry Taft, quoted in G. Bie Ravndal to E.F. Baldwin, 24 January, 1910, *Records of the United States Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1910-29* (hereinafter RODOS), National Archives microfilm publications, microcopy no. 353, 88 microfilm reels (Washington 1961), reel 4.

the Young Turk movement was a culmination of years of intellectual and cultural change in the Ottoman Empire, America received the news of July 23 as a striking example of a new era in the Near East and as a possible example of how the United States could change the world.

Americans' belief that their culture was inherently superior was further informed by a transnational racist discourse of the cultural West. This discourse is what Edward Said has called "Orientalism," a multi-layered notion of the East that produced Westerners' (mis)understanding of the Orient. This notion of the East was based on stereotypes that not only reduced the Easterner to an unchanging essence but also reinforced Western identity. Orientalism was pervasive and limiting, and it determined how Westerners would perceive the East.

Although Said's landmark work, *Orientalism*, paved the way for analyzing Western communication about the East, it has been criticized as presenting too monolithic a view of the West and for minimizing Eastern agency in the development of Western thought. While writers like Ania Loomba credit Said with the development of a method of analysis, they also urge that this fixed sense of Western thought must be dissected, examined, and categorized according to various actors, times, and locations. Since 1978, when Said first published *Orientalism*, these steps have been undertaken by many scholars, and this paper will continue this trend by examining American Orientalism. While Americans were informed by European thought on the East, they self-consciously carved out a separate identity for the United States, and as they did not harbor colonial inclinations in the Middle East during this time, they developed a discourse notably different from those prevailing in England, France, and Germany. Within the still formidable concept of an American position on the East, this paper investigates the perceptions of two specific groups, American diplomats and American missionaries, at a specific time, the

second Constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire. As a multi-layered and ubiquitous system of thought, Orientalism adopted different characteristics over time. This paper explores the contrasting judgments between and within the missionary and diplomatic ranks, exposes the importance of Western identity and authority in American perceptions, and demonstrates ways in which non-Europeans' threat to that authority played a role in the creation of Western stereotypes.

While this paper draws on a variety of primary sources, the two main archival resources used were the *Records of the Department of State Related to the Internal Affairs of Turkey*, a collection of papers from what was then the newly created Near Eastern Division of the State Department, and the *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Unit 5: Near East*, the records of the largest missionary agency in the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. These sources comprehensively document the activities of the two key groups of Americans that lived in the Ottoman Empire at this time. Not only were these groups important, but they shared a special relationship. By the mid-nineteenth century, American missionaries were the most numerous group of Americans in the Ottoman Empire. They demanded the assistance of American diplomats and in turn encouraged the diplomats to pursue particular policies. Likewise the diplomats were sympathetic to missionary goals. This overlap in purpose yielded similarities between the two groups, which make the differences between them all the more compelling. The documents used focus roughly on the years between 1908 and 1914, a period of great change for the Ottoman Empire and of culmination of new trends in goals and methods for both diplomats and missionaries.

The intention of this paper is to explore how American impressions were formed, informed, and reformed in the Ottoman Empire. Its purpose in establishing a more nuanced

understanding of Western ideas informs its organization, which follows a discussion of American Orientalism that moves from the comprehensive to the specific. The first chapter lays the groundwork for further analysis, providing theoretical background and a concise history of the ideologies and experiences of each group.

The second chapter compares the approach of diplomats and missionaries in regard to Ottoman society in general. The type of contact each group had with the Empire's population determined its understanding. The missionaries relied on an individualized style and felt direct motivation to create change, while the diplomats viewed the Empire in the aggregate and distanced themselves from its people. Consuls and missionaries agreed on the notion that the Turkish government was inept, and yet missionaries carried this discussion further, describing a government that was fanatical and anti-Christian. Conversely, consuls believed that Ottoman society was relatively static, but missionaries frequently depicted its people as either changing or on the brink of change.

Chapter three examines Americans' perceptions of the Young Turk Revolution and the Constitutional era. In some ways, their reactions to this particular event contrasted with their general judgments of the people and the government. For example, despite their view that the new government was dangerously fanatical, missionaries publicly encouraged the people to obey its representatives. The missionaries' ideas were once again informed by their personal contact with the Empire's inhabitants, but in this case personal contact with disobedient students threatened missionary authority.

The conclusion of this paper continues the discussion of identity, power, and Orientalism. Americans, especially missionaries, embodied the tension of attempting to cause change while relying on the inherent differences crystallized in Western stereotypes. Personal



contact undermined ideas of the stereotypical Oriental, yet this confrontation also threatened Americans' previously unquestioned superiority. The inconsistencies of missionary thought were caused by a constant sense of dominance over and separateness from the Other.

This thesis examines the formation and manipulation of discourse. Just as specific experiences and contacts with individuals could overturn underlying assumptions and stereotypes for the American abroad, so too can examination of a distinct group challenge the concept of an entirely monolithic encounter for the historian. Western notions about the East served to reinforce authority and identity, and became most important when the Ottoman people challenged Americans' belief in their own superiority. American and Western perceptions of the Other adapted to specific circumstances and contexts. These adjustments highlight the role of the East in the formation of Western ideas. The East did not passively receive this discourse. Through their continued threats, the Easterner forced the Westerner to constantly re-assert their Orientalist assumptions.

# 1

## BACKGROUND

### Theory

“Orientalism [is] a way of coming to terms with the Orient.”<sup>2</sup> This oft-quoted definition of Orientalism extends the term’s breadth beyond its traditional significance as the discipline of Oriental studies. Not only political policies, histories, and literature, but all experiences between a Westerner and the “Orient” fall within this expansive umbrella of Orientalism. This process of coming to terms with the Orient derived from centuries of encounters between the East and the West. Rather than true geographical boundaries, East and West are constructions that are merely imaginary. They serve as foundational pillars of Western identity.<sup>3</sup>

Orientalism is not limited to one aspect of social thought. In its pervasiveness it functions as a lens or a filter, and ultimately it circumscribes what a Westerner who studies or visits the Orient is capable of learning and experiencing. Said draws on the work of Michel Foucault as he discusses the power of discipline in limiting one’s ideas. According to Foucault, knowledge does not emanate solely from the center of power, rather it diffuses through many channels and is present at all levels of society.<sup>4</sup> Even areas of life that appear separate from the realm of political power respond to its language and ideas.

The task of categorizing the East led Westerners to develop multi-layered stereotypes, all of which served a dual function. First, representation was a means to control the Orient. Stereotypes are a method of processing information that gloss over the complexities of a

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>4</sup> Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London, 1998), 50.

situation. They serve as shorthand in understanding something that is too large to grasp. The fear of the unknown and Europe's anxiety about the East could be waylaid by these stereotypes. The process of accumulating knowledge to create stereotypes was also an exertion of power over the Other; knowledge obtained about the Other provided the justification for colonialism. The West became convinced that it possessed more knowledge about the Orient than its inhabitants, and thus Westerners believed they held a better idea of what was suitable for the East than Orientals themselves.

Second, and just as importantly, stereotypes were instrumental in the reinforcement of identity. Europeans relied on a binary opposition between the "us" of Europeans and the "them" of non-Europeans, and this contrasting relationship fortified their cultural identity. Essential to this identity was the European belief that the culture of non-Europe was categorically inferior to its own. The attributes that Europeans cast upon the Other were always negative and in opposition to Western qualities. If the West was rational and masculine, the Orient was necessarily irrational and feminine. This application of negative traits to the Orient reinforced the power of the West over the East.<sup>5</sup>

Said describes the Orient as having a special place in Western imagination. It was "the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, sources of its civilizations and languages, [and] its cultural contestant."<sup>6</sup> Orientalism's stereotypes and the constant source of the Orient as the Other, created for the West the sense of an unchanging entity. Individual or personal experience was not sufficient to overthrow such ossified characterization, and qualifying encounters that contradicted stereotypes were seen as anomalies that sustained rather

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<sup>5</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

than undermining existing thought.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, contradictions or changing conceptions of the Orient reflected not an increased understanding or interest in new information, but rather changes in the power-based relationship. The Orient adopted different attributes to fulfill its multifaceted role as Europe's foil.<sup>8</sup>

Some critics believe *Orientalism* perhaps "suggests that a binary opposition between East and West has been a more or less static feature of Western discourses from Classical Greece to the present day."<sup>9</sup> If so it adheres to the notion of essential differences between East and West and deemphasizes the important fact that stereotypes of the Orient changed through time. Despite acknowledging the falseness of such a monolithic view of Western perceptions, Said's work stressed a unifying characteristic. "To be a European in the Orient *always* involves being a consciousness set apart from, and unequal with, its surroundings."<sup>10</sup> While Orientalism as a system of representation adapted with the identity and circumstances of a particular situation, its purpose in reinforcing differences between self and other remained a constant. When this discourse was contradictory and varied through time it revealed its foundation in false stereotypes, its purpose in power maintenance, and its response to changes in the individual. "The line that separates inside and outside, the 'self' and the 'other' is not fixed but always shifting," Ania Loomba writes, but such a line always exists.<sup>11</sup> Its function for Orientalists was to highlight the positive attributes of the Europeans through separation from the Other and displacement of negative qualities likely to be found within their own culture. The line moved in

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>9</sup> Loomba, *Colonialis/Postcolonialism*, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 157.

<sup>11</sup> Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 71.

order to continually justify the colonial relationship even as changing circumstances revealed its questionable foundation in an unjustified sense of Western superiority. In response to Said's critics, "misrepresentations or constructions need to be unraveled over time and not just attributed to some timeless, unchanging notion of racism or Orientalism."<sup>12</sup> One way to do this is to closely examine particular groups, locating them within Said's analytical framework.

Orientalism is an essential factor in understanding how the West has perceived the East. While scholarship on this discourse has shown that Western thought was not monolithic, its application to a wide variety of circumstances has lent the term imprecision. Thus, rather than attribute the American experience to a vague sense of Orientalism, it is helpful to examine how issues of power and identity affected American thinking in a particular circumstance. It is beyond the scope of this project to exhaust such a subject, but this paper explores ways in which the goals and methods of each group contributed to the formation of Americans' feelings of authority over and distinctiveness from the East.

Comparison of State Department records and missionary documents provides a way to determine how two groups of expatriate Americans formed their thoughts about the Ottoman people. Moreover, highlighting the differences between the two groups supports the notion of a more flexible Orientalism. These differences are most relevant when understood in relation to common assumptions these two groups shared as Americans.

### **The American Mission**

National ideology is complex and never entirely hegemonic, but American historians tend to agree that America's sense of its uniqueness and mission formed a perpetual component of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 110.

national philosophy of the United States. In defining its place in the order of the world, America both depended on its European heritage and sought to define itself as something new. The United States, they believed, was the culmination of European ideas of liberty, freedom, and humanism, a new republic that flourished because it had broken away from a corrupt and decayed Europe. The unique place they occupied in human history imbued them with a responsibility to inspire like movements among the world's people.<sup>13</sup>

Early Americans believed they had made a special covenant with God. The Pilgrims and Puritans presumed they had a divinely assigned role. They shared a feeling that their escape from Europe was part of a providential plan, in which God had called them to the New World to create a civilization that they could then spread around the globe. Such idealistic tendencies encouraged a “superior, sometimes racist, attitude” towards the rest of the world.<sup>14</sup>

The sentiment of early American Christians contributed to the later conviction that Americans had developed a particular way of life dependent on freedom and the constitution.<sup>15</sup> The people of the United States were not always united over the extent of their responsibility in spreading this way of life. Some feared that exporting American culture and becoming involved in the affairs of other nations would threaten foundational domestic freedoms. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, the consensus was that the country should be involved to some extent in actively spreading its special society around the world. This ideology played a role in American foreign policy and helped inform the American missionary movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT, 1987), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Fuad Sha'ban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: The Roots of Orientalism in America* (Durham, NC, 1991), 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Just as the Orient has a special place in the Western imagination, so does it play a particular role in American thought. Though Americans inherited material from Europe, they also relied on their own experiences and ideology in creating their conceptions of the East. They believed that resurrecting Christianity in the Holy Land and fighting Islam were essential duties, especially for missionaries who believed such steps were necessary before the second coming of Christ.<sup>16</sup>

There is an inherent contradiction between colonial stereotypes and colonialism's ostensible goal to civilize the world. While a converted, educated native represented a colonial "achievement," he also represented an impurity threatening to Western identity. Although Western Christians were informed by the Biblical notion of a single human species created by God, colonizers also clung to the idea of absolute difference between themselves and the colonizers.<sup>17</sup>

Americans, although they continued to use the dichotomies of Muslim/Christian, and advanced/backward, claimed to be intent on blurring the lines of Easterner and Westerner by making the Easterner more like themselves. America's political position in the world contributed to their feelings of moral superiority. Since the United States was not one of the Great Powers and had little control over the lands of the Orient, Americans saw themselves as different from European colonizers who were hungry for political power and commercial wealth. Despite Americans' feelings of uniqueness and morality, their blurring of the lines was rooted in the same notions of Western superiority that justified the colonialism of other states. Homi Bhabha has discussed how creating a copy of the West contributes to rather than dissolves the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>17</sup> Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 173.

sense of immutable difference. As the Oriental becomes caught in the category of “almost the same, but not quite,” the ways in which he fails to perfectly mimic the Westerner reinforce his status as an artificial replica.<sup>18</sup> The East mimicking the West exhibits Western influence, but its threat compels the West to emphasize difference in order to maintain power.<sup>19</sup> Americans, especially missionaries, experienced the ambivalence of attempting to create a copy while accentuating its limitations. The tension of relying on racist stereotypes while seeking the fulfillment of their aspirations of change yielded inconsistencies within their thought toward the Ottoman Empire in the final years of its existence.

### **American Foreign Policy’s Coming of Age**

As methods and goals contributed to the diplomats’ perceptions, it is important to trace the key developments in American Foreign policy at the turn of the twentieth century. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, diplomatic strategy and administration of policy became more coherent as American leaders looked to advance specific interests abroad. Prior to this era, “diplomats of the United States were inexperienced, unprofessional, and often astonishingly clumsy,” and their politics embodied “passivity and drift.”<sup>20</sup> The lighthearted tone of Samuel Sullivan Cox’s 1887 memoir, *Diversions of a Diplomat in Turkey*, which covered the year he spent as ambassador to the Empire, supports the notion that prior to the last century diplomats did not have the professionalism or interest in their jobs of later consular agents. Cox hoped his book would “impart something of the relaxation, if not the amusement, which furnished the

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<sup>18</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), 122.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1975), 9.



pastime of a sojourn of unequaled refreshment and entertainment.”<sup>21</sup> While Cox realized that a travel memoir would have wider appeal than a detailed account of experience in the “esoteric art” of foreign policy, perhaps the year long vacation Cox portrayed was a common experience for men deployed to an area where missionaries claimed to work as their own diplomatic representatives.<sup>22</sup>

Still, by the end of the nineteenth century, diplomats had become concerned with what they saw as their primary role in the Ottoman Empire, which was providing security to Americans living abroad. Policy became more organized, as did the State Department itself. Secretary of State Philander C. Knox reorganized the department into geographical and topical fields and created the new Near Eastern Division to control policy in that area.<sup>23</sup>

Also in place by the turn of the century was the idea that America’s future would be based on an active quest for national greatness tied to the promotion of liberty abroad. The extent to which policy was devoted to this goal differed according to the individuals in charge. The period between the Young Turk revolution and World War I spanned both the Taft and Wilson administrations. These two leaders had different ideas about the ways to define and pursue America’s interests in the world. Whereas Taft advocated “dollar diplomacy,” or the use of American capital to further policy interests, in 1913 Wilson broke sharply from this precedent.

Taft’s policies constituted a major change in the responsibilities of American diplomats in Turkey, but even more importantly they revealed the extent of Great Power control over the

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Sullivan Cox, *Diversions of a Diplomat in Turkey* (New York, 1893), v (accessed at [http://books.google.com/books?id=GbRR9IEp\\_0wC](http://books.google.com/books?id=GbRR9IEp_0wC)).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.; Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy 1810-1927* (Minneapolis, MN, 1971), 39.

<sup>23</sup> Knox served as Secretary of State from 1909-1913. The Assistant Secretary at this time was Huntington Wilson. Knox was succeeded by William Jennings Bryan on 19 March 1913.

Ottoman Empire, reinforcing for the Americans the lack of authority the Ottoman government had over its internal and external affairs. Prior to this time the diplomats' key responsibility had been to protect the lives and property of Americans living abroad, and in Turkey this protection was most frequently extended to missionaries. Policy commentator Frank H. Hinkley wrote in 1906, "upon no other subject is the printed diplomatic correspondence of the United States so voluminous as upon that of the protection of missionaries in oriental countries."<sup>24</sup> One reason for this apparent preoccupation with the missionaries was simply their numeric dominance: missionaries were the largest group of Americans living in the Ottoman Empire. Consuls worked closely with missionaries to protect their lives, rights, and property. Taft's new policies meant that occasionally Washington, and thus the consular corps, pushed commercial interests to the detriment of missionary interests.

Ambassador Oscar S. Straus particularly resented the policy change. In 1909 Straus embarked on his third deployment as the American ambassador to Turkey. In his previous tours of duty, Straus had proudly emphasized his successes in defending Americans' personal rights.<sup>25</sup> This time, while Straus argued that missionary rights and property were in danger of government infringement, Knox advised him that "American educational and missionary interests in Turkey are in fact receiving treatment in substance entirely satisfactory...the chief influence should at present be...a substantial advancement of our prestige and commerce."<sup>26</sup> Straus had taken pride

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<sup>24</sup> Frank E. Hinkley, *American Consular Jurisdiction in the Orient* (Washington, DC, 1906), 108 (accessed at <http://books.google.com/books?id=Yug9AAAAIAAJ>).

<sup>25</sup> Naomi W. Cohen, "Ambassador Straus in Turkey, 1909-1910: A Note on Dollar Diplomacy" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45.4 (March 1959), 633.

<sup>26</sup> Oscar S. Straus, *Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft* (Boston 1922), 297 (accessed at <http://books.google.com/books?id=9QsMAAAAYAAJ>).

in protecting the assets of American missionaries and found supporting commercial endeavors less satisfying.

Straus argued against commercially minded diplomacy not only because it altered diplomats' traditional role, but also because he believed that it would involve the United States in the intrigues of Great Power politics in the Near East. Taft believed that the Young Turk Revolution would open up the Ottoman economy; however, the consuls enlisted by Taft to encourage trade soon encountered resistance from European powers with strong economic and political holds on the Ottoman Empire.

Straus and the other diplomats sought Ottoman concessions for American shipbuilding companies and pushed for a large railroad deal known as the Chester Concession. While the men of the State Department worked to make deals with the Ottoman government, they also attempted to encourage investors at home to send their capital. For instance, in his 1910 letter to *Outlook* magazine of New York, Consul-General Gabriel Bie Ravndal urged editor E.F. Baldwin to write an article that would stress Turkey's recent transformation in order to link "together more closely the great trans-Atlantic Republic and rejuvenated Turkey."<sup>27</sup> Ravndal sought to "invite the attention of capitalists and manufacturers American to the wonderful revival in the Near East," because the new Constitution insured "a freer and fuller development of the country's resources along modern lines."<sup>28</sup>

Advancing these aspirations was not as easy as Taft and Knox had hoped. Straus noted that the European powers used "their political interests to push their commercial interests."<sup>29</sup> He

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<sup>27</sup> Ravndal to Baldwin, 24 January 1910, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. For more information on the fate of the Chester Concession, see John A. DeNovo, "A Railroad for Turkey: The Chester Project, 1908-1913," *Business History Review* 33.3 (Autumn 1959), 300-329.

<sup>29</sup> Straus, quoted in Cohen, "Ambassador Straus in Turkey," 638.

realized that the Europeans guarded their control of the Ottoman Empire. Americans seeking to make investments there would necessarily involve the United States in the political maneuverings of the other countries. Straus argued that such participation was against America's best interest, but the chief of the recently created Department of State Division of the Near Eastern Affairs, Evan E. Young, believed commercial benefits could be more easily obtained if the State Department took advantage of Turkey's dependence on foreign advisors. Young circulated a memorandum that stated the constitutional regime offered increased opportunities and not just because it had "opened the door" to investors. He suggested as the new government searched for foreign advisors, a well-placed American could "enthusiastically endeavor to forward by any means within their power the commercial as well as the political interests" of the United States. He believed it was incumbent upon the consuls to "obtain special advantages for American interests," including the appointment of some such advisor.<sup>30</sup>

Straus was reluctant to follow the new policy, and William W. Rockhill replaced him in 1910. Though other diplomats might have shared Straus' reluctance, they followed directions from Washington. In a dispatch from 1910, Consul George Horton wrote from Macedonia that he had collected the information in his report because he was expected not only to report the political conditions of his district, but also "because the tranquility or otherwise of the district has a direct effect on its commerce and industries."<sup>31</sup> Whether or not other diplomats shared Straus's reluctance, they accepted their new duties.

Prior to the Taft era, diplomats had tended to shy away from encroaching on the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, seeing their role as observers rather than active participants. This

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<sup>30</sup> Evan E. Young, [Memorandum] to Department of Near Eastern Affairs, 28 April 1910, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>31</sup> George Horton to Philander C. Knox, "Conditions in Macedonia," 11 December 1910, RODOS, reel 4.

change in policy toward the Empire was motivated of course by evolving interests at home, but it was encouraged by changes within the country. Straus noted that with the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 there was “hope for the gradual development of a parliamentary government,” but he concluded it was more likely “the jealousy between the Great Powers” would present an insurmountable obstacle to “rehabilitation.”<sup>32</sup> While the Taft administration urged diplomats to gain economic privileges for American business, Americans eventually realized they could not gain a steady foothold in the Ottoman commercial and political arenas.

This episode highlights not only the changes of a new era in American diplomacy but also the power of the European countries. This political situation would prevent diplomats from attaining the commercial investments Washington desired, but even more importantly it would present the new government in Turkey with tremendous obstacles to transforming society. Ultimately, the American’s realization of the control of the Great Powers contributed to their belief that the government lacked agency in making change.

### **America’s Cultural Envoys**

Though missionary activity is hardly particular to the United States, the American concept of its particular destiny informed the American missionary movement. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the evangelical fervor of the Second Great Awakening and a growing awareness of the rest of the world prompted missionaries to take their religion beyond their own continent. The Second Great Awakening emphasized “preaching, soul saving, and sudden conversion.”<sup>33</sup> It also popularized the doctrine of premillennialism, which advocated

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<sup>32</sup> Straus, *Under Four Administrations*, 280.

<sup>33</sup> Sushil M. Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism: A Study of Their Contacts from 1813-1910* (Delhi, 1967), 28.

spreading the gospel to every person on earth in order to prepare the kingdom for the second coming of Christ. In the wake of the Second Great Awakening, American Protestants founded their first missionary society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, in 1810. The stated aim of this Board was to “devise, adopt, and prosecute ways and means for propagating the gospel among those who are destitute of any knowledge of Christianity.”<sup>34</sup> The American Board would soon grow into a large network, and it developed practically exclusive representation of American missionaries in Anatolia and the European portions of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>35</sup>

American missionaries in Turkey worked with a Muslim government. The Ottoman government permitted missionaries to proselytize Jews, Orthodox Christians, and other groups within the Empire but refused to allow missionaries to try to convert Muslims. When missionaries arrived in the Empire in the nineteenth century, apostasy from Islam was punishable by death. Shut off from Muslims, missionaries found that even native Christians were at times resistant to American efforts. In part this was because of the *millet* system, the Empire’s system of social organization. *Millets* were semi-autonomous, non-territorial groups defined on the basis of religion. Marriage, divorce, tax collection and other legal matters within the empire were handled through the millets. Leaders of the Greek and Armenian churches obstructed missionary work because they believed its influence threatened the power and the cohesiveness of their respective groups.<sup>36</sup> The *millet* system was also problematic because when the first missionaries arrived in 1818, Protestants did not have a *millet*. Until their *millet* was established

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 12.

in 1850, converts were rendered outsiders in society.<sup>37</sup> Although they met resistance, missionaries had the greatest early success with the Armenians.

The missionaries realized that methods such as condemning other faiths and solely preaching the Bible would alienate the groups they wished to convert, and so they attempted to work in close contact with the people. They translated evangelical literature and the Bible into Turkish, Arabic, and Armeno-Turkish, and they published thousands of Bibles and over 21 million pages of religious material. They sponsored medical missions, founded orphanages, and undertook social work for the people. Perhaps their most widespread and influential endeavor was in the field of education. In the 1820s, missionaries opened schools for Armenians, Jewish, Greek, and Arab students. Missionaries soon expanded their educational offerings beyond primary school. In 1863 American missionaries opened the first institution of higher learning in Turkey, Roberts College. They also introduced schools for the blind, vocational schools, and schools for women.<sup>38</sup>

Though missionaries realized that should be more subtle in their approach, they were often abrasive to Ottoman people. They criticized indigenous Christian churches for various practices, and refused to incorporate Armenian music into their worship services.<sup>39</sup> The 1870s ushered in a new movement in American Protestant thought. The Social Gospel movement fostered a new determination to uplift society as well as to save individual souls. Adherents to the Social Gospel believed battling “poverty, disease, filth, and immorality” in society would not

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 50, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 12, 20, 23.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 10, 18.

only help believers maintain their Christian faith at home but would also attract new converts abroad.<sup>40</sup>

The Social Gospel movement relied not only on individual commitment, but also on institutions capable of transforming society. Missionaries of this tradition introduced Sunday Schools, the Y.M.C.A., and the Salvation Army. They instituted training in medicine, nursing, engineering, and business under the assumption that improvement in these areas would bring society closer to the ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. They also encouraged native Christians to join them in this social change, expressing hope that they would develop self-supporting churches and begin to undertake their own evangelical work. The apogee of the Social Gospel movement, The World Missionary Conference of 1910, revealed the missionaries' dissatisfaction with their slow progress in converting Muslims. The Empire's constitutional movement granted missionaries more freedom to work with Muslims, and the religious workers were frustrated to find success continuing to elude them.<sup>41</sup>

Missionaries' underlying goal to overthrow Islam in the Ottoman Empire lent complexity to their relationships with native Christians, especially Armenians. Missionaries were not consistent in their descriptions of Armenians, variously praising the Armenians' virtues and lamenting their shortcomings. Though their agenda may have seemed at times contradictory, missionaries maintained their goal of gaining converts and their belief that society informed by Christianity was superior to any other type. The missionaries' relationship with the Armenians reveals the fact that their underlying priorities proved consistent and determined the way they evaluated the Ottoman people.

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<sup>40</sup> Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore, MD, 1991), 5-7; Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32, 11.



The missionaries described the Christian Armenians as an ethnicity superior to Muslim Turks. The Armenians were an ancient Christian sect and early inhabitants of the “old Bible Lands.”<sup>42</sup> The religious workers believed Armenians were better because they were Christians; however, they also argued Eastern Christianity had stagnated as its followers suffered from “centuries of oppression, fanaticism, ignorance, and cruelty” at the hands of the Muslim majority.<sup>43</sup> Their belief in the rottenness of Armenian religion served as a point for further conclusions for the missionaries. By portraying Eastern Christianity as based in tradition and otherwise inferior to Protestantism, missionaries attempted to establish their own importance in saving the Armenian. The missionaries had to create a niche for themselves as something new in order to appeal to an already Christian population.<sup>44</sup> Though the Armenian was Christian, missionaries argued that his Christianity was only nominal. While the evangelicals described the peoples’ Christianity as a positive quality, its benefit was more to prepare the Armenian for the true word of Christ as supplied by the missionaries rather than to prepare them for entry into heaven.

Criticizing Eastern Christianity also provided a tidy excuse for why Islam was the dominant religion of the area. Missionaries believed that as Christianity was the one true religion and the Christian God the only true God, inevitably Christianity would triumph over Islam; however, the centuries of interaction between Eastern Christians and Muslims had not produced such conversions. “Centuries of oppression” had contributed to the stagnation of

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<sup>42</sup> A.N. Andrus, “The Mission to Eastern Turkey,” 29 February 1904, in American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Unit 5, The Near East, 1817-1919* (hereinafter PABCFM), 219 microfilm reels (Woodbridge, CT, 1984), reel 505.

<sup>43</sup> Herbert M. Allen, “The Strategy of Christian Missions,” *The Orient* 16, 3 August 1910, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ussama Makdisi, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” *American Historical Review* 102.3 (June 1997), 691.

Eastern Christianity to such an extent religious workers believed it could not be referred to as “true” Christianity.<sup>45</sup> As Muslims had only contacted Christianity through this supposedly flawed Eastern form, missionaries believed it was not surprising that Muslims had not converted, and subsequently they went so far as to argue that “one of the greatest obstacles to the winning of Moslems...is the native Christians.”<sup>46</sup> The Americans believed changing Armenians was the key to winning the missionaries’ crusade against Islam throughout the Ottoman Empire. Despite their sympathy with the Armenians, the missionaries’ goal of converting all of the Ottoman Empire determined their reaction to Armenian nationalism.

The main political party in the national movement was Dashnaksutun, or the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. It was founded in 1890 in Russia but soon established itself within the Ottoman Empire. By 1907 its membership was 165,000. The group allied with other revolutionary societies, and was involved in an assassination attempt against Sultan Abdul Hamid II. After the 1908 Revolution, the Dashnaks allied themselves with the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), advocating autonomy within the Ottoman Empire; however, the government’s repressive tendencies compelled the Dashnaks to eventually break away from the CUP.<sup>47</sup>

The missionaries saw Dashnaksutun as a threat to their work. They believed that nationalism distracted Armenians from Christianity, and they decried the socialist, atheist, and anarchist tendencies of the group’s members, frequently labeling them “infidels.” While

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<sup>45</sup> Allen, “Strategy of Christian Missions,” *The Orient* 16, 3 August 1910, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Lucile Foreman et al., “American Mission: Evangelistic, Educational, Industrial,” 29 January 1913, PABCFM, reel 628.

<sup>47</sup> Roderic H. Davidson, “The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914,” *American Historical Review* 53.3 (April 1948), 448; Fatma M. Göçek, “The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms,” in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. Fatma M. Göçek (Albany, NY, 2002), 52-53.

Dashnaksutiun's tendency toward atheism was damning enough, the religious workers were even more infuriated by its strategy of holding meetings in Armenian churches. For the missionaries, undermining the church would damage the strongest characteristic of an Armenian organization. The mentality of the Social Gospel was "religion is necessary for the highest welfare of nations"; thus, missionaries labeled the atheistic tendencies of the movement as nothing more than "false patriotism."<sup>48</sup>

The missionaries believed the Armenians were susceptible to the influence of outside ideas. While on the one hand this meant Armenians had great "receptiveness for western ideals...particularly those of America," it also meant they could be manipulated by false prophets.<sup>49</sup> While the Dashnaksutiuns and the nationalist movement tended to cross the Russian-Ottoman border, missionaries who referred to outside influence implicated not only Russian Armenians but Armenians who had been corrupted by ideas of socialism and anarchism while living abroad in Europe. One writer for *The Bosphorus News* believed that as the Armenians searched for answers to social problems like persecution and poverty, they could be manipulated by movements comprising "a small section of people" pursuing "their own ends."<sup>50</sup>

Apparently the irony of this statement was lost on its author, as his description just as adequately characterized the missionaries. For this author the implicit difference between himself and this "small section of people" arose from his belief that missionaries knew what was "right" for the Armenian people, whereas a group of socialist Armenians did not. While the status of outsider was problematic for Armenians who had travelled abroad, in the missionaries'

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<sup>48</sup> Ernest W. Riggs, "Report of the President to the Board of Trustees of Euphrates College Funds for 1911-1912," 5 August 1913, PABCFM, reel 712; L. Levonian, "College Ideals-Brief Addresses to Students of Central Turkey College-Ideal of Religious Life," 26 September 1913, PABCFM, reel 668.

<sup>49</sup> Allen, "Strategy of Christian Missions," *The Orient* 16, 3 August 1910, 2.

<sup>50</sup> *The Bosphorus News* 1.5 13 April, 1910, PABCFM, reel 505.

eyes it was the source of their virtue. The Armenians who had been in foreign lands had adopted negative ideas, convincing missionaries that their own leadership was still necessary. As outsiders the missionaries believed they brought the beneficial aspects of the West to the Ottoman Empire, and they thought that until Armenians had truly embraced these Western ideas missionaries would have to continue to lead them down the correct path.

Missionaries frequently voiced their hopes of inculcating a sense of independence and self-sufficiency among native Christians, and yet they continued to behave as though Armenians were not capable of leading their own churches and colleges. Missionaries were reluctant to give up control because they were afraid of outside influences. They were not willing to admit that the Armenians should even be independent from missionaries, much less from the entire Ottoman Empire.

Though the article in *The Bosphorus News* criticized the nationalists for pursuing “their own ends,” the missionaries’ alternative to nationalism reveals the fact that missionaries’ “own ends” always defined their relationship with Armenians.<sup>51</sup> According to the missionaries, the young evangelical pastor who would promote the notion of “self-support” among his parishioners was the ideal Armenian nationalist. As an evangelical, he would take advantage of “the providential nature of the position of the Armenian people in the Moslem world.”<sup>52</sup> This argument for “nationalism” was nothing more than the restatement of the missionary goal of promoting self-sufficiency among Armenians, and it reveals how missionaries were unable to divorce the leadership of society from Christianity. The connection of nationalism to evangelism

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Fred F. Goodsell, “Living Ideals of Pastors in Central Turkey,” November 1914, PABCFM, reel 668.

reveals that for the missionaries, the goals of Armenians were secondary to the goal of spreading Christianity worldwide.

Like the missionaries' own national identity, the nationalism the Americans suggested for Armenians was to be outwardly focused and centered on an imported evangelical Protestantism connecting the Armenian and Muslim worlds. The missionaries believed Eastern Christians were essential to their battle against Islam. They despised the nationalism of the Dashnaksutians because it could threaten their goal of converting Muslims. It was irreligious, usurped missionary power, and encouraged an exclusive nationalism that exacerbated ethnic tension.<sup>53</sup>

The missionaries found themselves in a difficult position. Through years of work the missionaries had gained a reputation as the ally of the Armenians, but if Americans disappointed the Armenians they could yield to the influence of socialist, atheistic nationalist groups. Nevertheless, appearing to be too supportive to the Armenians would bind the missionary to Armenian nationalism, which would threaten their relationship with the government and limit their interaction with Turks. If Armenians had separated from the Ottoman State, the missionaries would have lost more than just the opportunity to create a corps of native evangelicals working in the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, if the missionaries' schools were in contested Armenian territory, they could lose contact with Muslims, but on the other, if the schools stayed in Ottoman territory, missionaries could lose the Armenian pupils along with the fees they paid to sustain the colleges.

Thus, even as missionaries believed Armenians had faced "centuries of oppression," they did not support an Armenian nationalism that aimed to break away from the Ottoman state. The

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<sup>53</sup> Ironically, the educational institutes of the missionaries themselves encouraged nationalism and widened the gap between the Turk and the Armenian. See Fatma M. Göçek, "Ethnic Segmentation, Western Education, and Political Outcomes: Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Society," *Poetics Today* 14.3 (Autumn 1993), 507-538.

multi-layered aspect of their goals pulled the missionaries in diverse and sometimes contradictory directions. Despite this incongruity the religious workers consistently focused on converting Muslims, believed in the value of institutions as promoted by the Social Gospel, and remained convinced that as Westerners only they could cause the Ottoman Empire to progress. Their priorities differentiated them from the men of the State Department, who were motivated to defend American interests, and evaluated the Ottoman Empire with that purpose in mind.

## **GOVERNMENT AND PROGRESS: APPREHENSIONS OF OTTOMAN SOCIETY AT LARGE**

Despite a shared tendency to compare Ottoman to Western society, the particular goals, experiences, and methods of the diplomats and missionaries determined how they understood elements of the Empire's government and its potential to "progress" through adopting the elements of Western civilization. Their distinct perceptions of Ottoman society reveal how each group came to terms with the Orient in different ways. One dissimilarity between the groups was that the missionaries felt directly motivated to change the people. A second distinction is between macro and micro conceptions of Ottoman society. Diplomats comprehended the Ottoman world through a general sense of the entire Empire, but missionaries typically conceived of this society in terms of the individuals in their areas.

### **The Government: Fanatical vs. Inept**

Both the consular agents and the missionaries believed the Ottoman government was inherently flawed, and yet each group perceived the government's flaws in different ways. The diplomats assumed the government was inept and inefficient. While missionaries agreed with that view, they also tended to characterize the government as fanatical and malevolent. Missionaries arrived at this moral condemnation because of the impact the Ottoman government had in the realization of their goals.

Missionaries tended to personalize and individualize their experiences with the government. Consuls, especially diplomats working in Constantinople, were in constant

communication with various and far-reaching areas of the Ottoman Empire, but missionaries had access to little information from beyond their region. The discussions of individuals in the mission fields of Anatolia did not frequently include mention of events in Syria, Lebanon, or other areas in the Middle East, but consular agents throughout the empire were required to share information with the capital. The rationale for the *Bosphorus*, a missionary weekly later renamed *The Orient*, demonstrated the missionaries' lack of awareness of events outside their locales. The newspaper's founder, Herbert Allen, justified the need for such a newspaper with the statement, "we missionaries of Turkey live in a most pitiful state of isolation so far as our related interests are concerned. Now and then we hear some of the more important items of news from the stations, but as a rule we are ignorant of what is going on."<sup>54</sup> Even if *The Orient* helped to link missionaries to events of Anatolia and the European Turkey, it did not focus on events of the Arab lands. *The Orient* printed digests of the Turkish parliament's major decisions, and its focus tended to be on actions of the central government in Constantinople.

Distance from the central government and an insular focus on a particular field allowed missionaries to construct an understanding of the Ottoman government that was smaller in scale than that of the consular corps, and so the missionaries tended to focus on individual experiences with the government as opposed to its larger workings. Religious workers drew conclusions about the authority in Constantinople based on their encounters with local administrators. The central government appointed and approved the local leaders, and thus encounters with one vehemently anti-Christian governor could convince missionaries that many government officials were anti-Christian.

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<sup>54</sup> Allen, "Scheme of Issuing the 'Bosphorus News,'" 19 March 1910, PABCFM, reel 630.



The missionaries depended on the cooperation of the government to achieve their objectives. At times the missionaries struggled because the government was understandably unsympathetic to their aspirations. During the reign of Abdul Hamid II, missionary publications were censored on the basis that they might contain propaganda against Islam. Religious workers began to view their relationship with the government as antagonistic, and their feelings ranged from mere resentment to the fear that officials had singled them out for attack. The connection of missionary schools to Armenian insurrections caused the arrest of missionaries and damage to several colleges during the 1890s.<sup>55</sup> Even after the CUP deposed Abdul Hamid, a 1909 Armenian nationalist movement was violently stifled. The missionaries saw these occurrences as unjust and perceived the problems as inevitable in a country with a Muslim government. As they became frustrated, they attributed the government's actions to "narrow-mindedness" and "bigotism."<sup>56</sup> In fact the missionaries' own close-minded and intolerant attitudes contributed to their judgment of the government's anti-Christian mentality.<sup>57</sup>

Obviously the missionaries were surprised when this "anti-Christian" government was cooperative. The missionaries distinguished times when the government was responsive and helpful as exceptions, the rarity of which signified both a blessing and an opportunity. For instance, when the Governor of Adana promised a permit for a large hospital, William Nesbitt Chambers, the head of the Adana mission, wrote, "It is an opportunity which we felt we ought not to miss. A Moslem Governor challenges us to do the work which we ourselves are anxious

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<sup>55</sup> Cagri Erhan, "Ottoman Official Attitudes Toward American Missionaries," Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 17, 22 (accessed at <http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/cmcs/publications.htm>).

<sup>56</sup> Edward P. Case to James Barton, 15 September 1912, PABCFM, reel 505.

<sup>57</sup> Missionaries failed to see the irony in using labels like fanatical or anti-Christian. Some might argue that traveling thousands of miles to attempt to convert others to one's religion was in some ways over-zealous or fanatical, and the Ottoman Government could have applied justly the characteristic of "anti-Muslim" to a group intending to overthrow Islam.

to do.”<sup>58</sup> Portraying these incidents as surprises helped reinforce rather than dismantle religious workers’ feelings about the government. Instead of observing indications of government support or flexibility, missionaries interpreted such events as gifts granted from God.

The diplomats criticized the government on different terms. While missionaries saw the government as an obstacle to the methods they would employ to achieve their goals, for the men of the State Department, the government was the channel through which they pursued their various responsibilities. Additionally, consular agents, though they discussed individuals, were more likely to conceive of the government as an institution. The dialogue among the diplomatic corps in different areas allowed them to determine broad patterns across the Empire. Consuls believed certain individuals were particularly anti-Christian and uncooperative, but their conceptualization of the government as a bureaucracy lessened the significance of such individuals in the creation of their overall opinion. Thus the diplomats were less likely than the missionaries to attribute a fanatical quality to the government as an institution. When consuls used the word fanatical, they typically referred either to individual officials, or to the Ottoman Empire’s large mass of uneducated Muslims.

While they did not view the government as fanatical, members of the State Department criticized the fact that the government did not attempt to diminish this attribute in its people. Certain consular agents even claimed the Ottoman government used the fanaticism of its people to maintain power. In the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire’s loss in the First Balkan war, Consul John E. Kehl accused the government of encouraging this characteristic in the city of Smyrna. Kehl reported that the government had armed a “horde of irresponsible and fanatic” Muslim refugees. According to Kehl, these weapons were intended to prevent a massacre by the

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<sup>58</sup> William N. Chambers, “Adana Report Letter No. 4,” 30 June 1911, PABCFM, reel 666.

Greek population and to “defend the city against invasion by the Greek army.”<sup>59</sup> Two years later another consular agent in Smyrna, George Horton, described the use of this tactic as a strategy employed by the government not to prevent invasion by a foreign power but to protect itself from internal threats. He wrote, “The Young Turk Party is pursuing an aggressive policy and attempting to cement its power by appeals to race hatred, religious prejudice and high-handed measures with reference to those differing from it politically.”<sup>60</sup> State Department workers may have found it despicable that leaders would use the ignorance and fanaticism of the people, but they attributed the government’s actions to rational motives as opposed to the senseless acts of a demented and malevolent power.

Consular agents may have believed that such political strategies were part and parcel of a government they viewed as impotent, inefficient, and useless. The consul general in Constantinople, William M. Rockhill, voiced this conviction in a 1912 dispatch. He wrote, “The ‘Jeune Turc’ of today, with perhaps accurate insight into Turkish character and idiosyncrasies, finds the ultimate cause of the Government’s downfall was ‘its weariness, disgust, lack of courage, [and] exhaustion of energy.’”<sup>61</sup> Rockhill assumed the Ottoman government lagged behind the healthy governments of its European counterparts. In January of 1912, he reported that the diplomatic representatives “hope, as I do, that some little time will now be given to their business by the minister of Foreign Affairs, who has not had a diplomatic reception since November!”<sup>62</sup> Though Rockhill, like the missionaries, was frustrated by a government that

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<sup>59</sup> John E. Kehl to Knox, “A Further Report on the Situation in Saloniki Resulting from the State of War Existing Between Turkey and the Balkan States,” 30 October 1912, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>60</sup> Horton to William Jennings Bryan, “Political Report on Condition in Vilayet,” 9 February 1914, RODOS, reel 5.

<sup>61</sup> William W. Rockhill to Knox, July 9 1912, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>62</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 19 January 1912, RODOS, reel 4.

complicated his work, his writing suggests he attributed this to inefficiency and poor organization instead of purposeful sabotage. Rather than attacking the moral values of the Ottoman Government, he waited impatiently for the sick man of Europe to “put [his] house in order.”<sup>63</sup> According to Rockhill, the Ottomans would struggle to do so both because of the “inferior” nature of the Turks and the Great Power’s interest in expanding at the Empire’s expense.<sup>64</sup>

Of course, missionaries were also aware of what they saw as the Turkish government’s failings and inefficiency. A letter from James Barton, Secretary of the American Board, quotes William Nesbitt Chambers as saying, “There seems to be a general feeling throughout Turkey that the Government at Constantinople is exceedingly weak.”<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the missionaries’ interpretation of the policies of the government as being pointedly antagonistic took precedence over their considerations of its alleged incompetence. The State Department men were inclined to forgive a government they viewed as entirely backwards, but missionaries continued to hold the government culpable for the actions of its members. Emphasizing the government’s supposedly antagonistic and cruel nature highlighted the challenges that missionaries faced, excusing their failures and making their successes seem almost miraculous. Painting the administration as a strong adversary inspired patience and renewed faith in the missionaries themselves while boosting the sympathy and support they received from Americans back home.

Another difference between the consuls’ and missionaries’ relationships with the Ottoman officials was that the diplomats derived some sympathy for the government through

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<sup>63</sup> Rockhill to Bryan, 24 May 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> James Barton to Knox, 29 November 1911, RODOS, reel 4.

their status as fellow bureaucrats. This sympathy perhaps allowed Rockhill to note that the CUP had come into power with “portions of the empire in a state of chronic unrest as a result of years, or rather, of centuries of misrule and foreign intrigues.”<sup>66</sup> In this quotation Rockhill has described what he believes are the Empire’s two great obstacles: the shortcomings of the country’s leaders and the obstructing involvement of the Europeans. In another dispatch, Rockhill agreed with some Armenian criticisms of the government, but observed that “it must not be forgotten that the situation in question is one whose difficulties would appal even a more efficient and more universally effective Government than that of Constantinople.”<sup>67</sup> The CUP presented a break from the years of Sultan rule, but Rockhill believed its inefficiency would render it unable to overcome the two enormous impediments to Ottoman success: the legacy of previous rulers and the continued interests of the Powers. Though he reduced the harshness of his commentary, his concession revealed his belief in the limits of the CUP’s abilities. Just as missionaries viewed assistance from the government as an exception to the rule, the consular agents described government accomplishments as individual incidents of “unexpected success” and deviations from the standard behavior.<sup>68</sup> A telegram from a naval officer stationed at Smyrna mentioned that though the government had managed to oversee the vast number of immigrants from the Balkan war, it did so “in its own peculiar, inefficient way.”<sup>69</sup> For these Americans, the government was inherently flawed, so even their compliments contained a note of criticism. The naval officer made an unwritten comparison between the Ottomans and his

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<sup>66</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 24 January 1912, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>67</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 21 January 1913, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>68</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 1 March 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

<sup>69</sup> H.A. Field to U.S. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, “Local Conditions and Situation, Smyrna, at Time of Departure,” 6 May 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

own presumably normal, well-organized government. He believed the Ottomans were successful despite their natural limitations, which in his mind reduced an Ottoman achievement to luck rather than effective management. The notion of luck removed the government's agency. Viewing the bureaucracy as inherently weak excused its mistakes, and yet seeing it as unconditionally backward removed its ability to improve. Occasionally the consuls might write optimistically of an opportunity for change; however, they did not often set their hopes high that such a change would ensue. Rockhill wrote in 1913 that he hoped there could be "a strong and well-governed Turkey" in the future, but concluded it was "highly improbable" the "Turks" were able or willing to avoid recommitting their previous errors.<sup>70</sup>

The great difference between the consular officers and the missionaries was the moral judgment the missionaries applied to the government. Consuls removed moral condemnation from the regime they saw as inept and removed from power. The missionaries found the government was at times unsympathetic, and, just as importantly, they used what they saw as a lack of sympathy to explain the slow increase in their number of converts.

## **Progress**

Just as consuls and diplomats had diverging conceptions of the government, so did they differ in their perceptions of how the Ottoman people could adopt Western characteristics, a process they conflated with progress. The missionaries had faith they could cause this progress to occur, but the consuls linked their belief in an unchanging government to their view of a mostly static Ottoman society. Essential to this difference was the missionary fixation on the

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<sup>70</sup> Rockhill to Bryan, 24 May 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

individual and his or her self-appointed responsibility to make change. While change within an individual is relatively easy to gauge, change in society is much less appreciable.

The foundation of the missionaries' point of view was their motivation for being in the Ottoman Empire: to alter the people there. Since the missionaries' goal was progress, they searched for cases of it to lend credence to their presence in Turkey. Their examples ranged from gaining converts to improving morality, sanitation, and education in their hospitals and schools. These anecdotes attested to their success, reinforced their resolve to work, and helped to confirm that missionaries were fulfilling God's plan. George Washburn was one of the first missionaries in Turkey, and he worked there for nearly sixty years. An obituary written by a fellow missionary after his death in 1903 focused on the vast changes for which the author felt Washburn was responsible. The writer described Washburn as a missionary who contributed to "the forces that have irresistibly compelled the Turkish Empire to break from her traditional lethargy," and promoted Washburn as a man who had helped produce "a new social order, a new intellectual life, a new Christian civilization, new national ideals, a New East."<sup>71</sup> The writer of this obituary distinguished Washburn as the archetypal missionary because of his ability to enact change. This quotation also encapsulates the missionaries' belief that prior to their arrival the Ottoman Empire and the East were unchanging. In their view, change always came from the West, and thus the slumbering East had been catalyzed by the missionaries. This portrayal emphasized the significance of any change, no matter how small, because if not for the missionary the alteration would not have occurred.

The religious workers' idea that they were contributing to change not only reminded them of their purpose in being abroad, but provided them with solace as they faced challenges.

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<sup>71</sup> "George Washburn, D.D., LL.D.," PABCFM, reel 505.

The 1910 report from the Harpoot station of the Eastern Turkey Mission revealed this attitude by suggesting that a missionary who complained was “unmindful of the fact that...these very things were...his greatest blessings.”<sup>72</sup> Conversely, such a missionary should focus on positive episodes that would “gladden” the heart and promote “faith in the triumph of the Truth.”<sup>73</sup> The author, and missionaries like the author, believed they were doing a job that God had called them to do. They reinforced this idea through recognizing encouraging changes, which allowed them to endure many setbacks, including a lack of society-wide transformation.

The missionaries focused on progress not only to provide themselves with self-confirmation but also to encourage support from home. Their reports were aimed at audiences who provided them with moral support, sponsorship, money, and potentially more workers for their mission. Thus John Holbrook, a missionary at Sivas, might acknowledge that according to some standards the “cause of evangelical Christianity in Turkey would seem to be in desperate condition,” but he would ultimately conclude that if it was measured by less tangible factors such as “spirit” and “influence,” it was “unquestionably the greatest force at work for the regeneration of this creed, ignorance, and poverty-stricken land.”<sup>74</sup> Likewise, missionary Lucille Foreman wrote of her “hope and courage for the future,” but commented that she would have to count on the cooperation of the American Board and its supporters to assist her in carrying out “the Lord’s command.”<sup>75</sup> The best method to gaining this support was by encouraging the optimism of people at home.

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<sup>72</sup> “Report of the Touring Work of Harpoot Station for 1909-1910,” 6 May 1910, PABCFM, reel 712.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Stanley Holbrook, “Sivas Station Report for 1911-12,” 30 April 1912, PABCFM, reel 628.

<sup>75</sup> Henry T. Perry, “Report of Sivas station for 1910, Survey and Outlook for the Centennial Year of American Board Missions,” 24 May 1910, PABCFM, reel 628.



While the missionaries depended on the idea of progress, the State Department agents were pessimistic such development could ever truly occur. They focused on the government, and although at times they could be optimistic, they typically saw the state as unchanging. The consuls' rejected the possibility of improvement because they could not always observe individual changes. In December of 1911 Rockhill discussed his belief that popular dissatisfaction indicated the imminent dismissal of the current government. Rockhill believed there was no one fit to govern the Empire because the "political parties were just as weak as the Government," and thus there was "little probability of a change for the better in the near future."<sup>76</sup> Rockhill saw a shift in political parties as little more than a surface modification because he assumed it was unlikely the government would alter its course substantially.

Rockhill attributed "weak" political parties to the immature politicians he believed ran them. He doubted the government could succeed because of the "mediocre ability" of its personnel.<sup>77</sup> Consuls had frequent contact with administrators, whom they would have thought of as leaders of the Empire. Their view of the mediocrity of the men in power contributed to their theory that inferiority was symptomatic of the general populace. Rockhill concluded that a country with neither strong leaders nor political parties had no real future, especially when its people were in a backward "stage of political development."<sup>78</sup>

While both missionaries and diplomats were united by the American desire to export its culture abroad, for the religious workers this was an explicit rather than an implicit responsibility. Many missionaries did not separate their culture from their religion, and so they

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<sup>76</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 12 December 1911, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>77</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 30 January 1913, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>78</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 18 November 1912, RODOS, reel 4.

attempted to export not only Christianity but their American customs as well.<sup>79</sup> The Social Gospel expanded the role missionaries played in the societies they visited, and led them to expand their agenda to include the promotion of education, health care, and other cultural “improvements”.<sup>80</sup> It may not have been their conscious intention, but the broadened goals of the Social Gospel methods created a wider range of criteria along which to chart individual and societal progress.<sup>81</sup> While the number of converts may not have greatly increased, missionaries could spout statistics about the growth in colleges and hospitals to support the idea of advancement. They sought to export American moral values, combat superstition, and increase understanding of democracy among the people of the Ottoman Empire. Development of an individual in any one of these areas contributed to the missionaries’ notion of continuously occurring progress.

For example, despite only affecting a small number in the population, it was heartening for missionaries to note the gradual changing of “character” in a school as a triumph. In her report of the Girl’s Department of Euphrates College, Mary L. Daniels noted the lack of a general “spiritual awakening,” but she was more eager to focus on increased enrollment and an encouraging growth in number of individuals that had “become more Christ-like.”<sup>82</sup> Daniels knew the entire student body might not technically convert, but she took comfort from these other successes. Obviously the missionaries would have preferred a “spiritual awakening,” but they believed general development would pave the way to eventual societal transformation.

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<sup>79</sup> William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, 1987), 12.

<sup>80</sup> Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 92.

<sup>81</sup> Grabill *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Mary L. Daniels, “Report of the Girls’ Department of Euphrates College 1909-1910,” 1 July 1910, PABCFM, reel 712.

The Ottoman laws against attempting to convert Muslims and the initial resistance of native churches made seeking the conversions of large groups of people impractical, so missionaries found it more effective to lavish attention on students in their schools, patients in their hospitals, or people in the villages they toured. This focus on the people contributed to their belief that they could create change in Ottoman society from the bottom up. Missionary workers tended to have more day to day contact with the common people of the Ottoman Empire. Through these interactions they conceived of a string of continuous individual improvements, such as learning to read. They even had success in bringing patients, at least temporarily, to declare their faith in Jesus. Missionaries shared stories of individual conversions, which inflated their hopes and confirmed their belief that Christianity would overthrow Islam.

Ultimately missionaries hoped to change society at large, and the confidence they gained through individual and other avenues of progress gave them high hopes for incipient large-scale advancement. Just as they extrapolated personal experiences with officials into a notion of what the government as an entity meant, the missionaries projected their successes with individuals onto an idea of modification of the entire society. The basis of their excuse for the lack of substantial change was their belief that society was progressing even though it was currently in the beginning stage of its metamorphosis. Missionaries throughout the empire echoed comments like "the seed is being sown and God will give the increase," a metaphor that confirmed the effectiveness of their actions and encouraged their patience.<sup>83</sup> The phrase boosted hopes that actions whose results could not be seen immediately, such as enjoying limited contact with Muslims, would soon eventually reap significant rewards.

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<sup>83</sup> H.K.W., "Annual Report of the Cesarea Station. June 1913-June 1914," 27 July 1914, PABCFM, reel 628.

Planting the seed entailed teaching people to adopt a new way of life, one which would make them more receptive to the Gospel. Missionaries characterized the knowledge they brought as "Christian light" that would shine over a spiritually darkened, shadowy Ottoman lands.<sup>84</sup> As it was only a matter of time before they reaped the harvest of their metaphorical seeds, missionaries could believe they were on the eve of a great breakthrough, which they referred to as daybreak or dawn.

While missionaries and diplomats agreed the Orient was a static entity, the religious workers' evangelical purpose compelled them to emphasize the possibility of altering the East. Their status as Westerners determined the way they approached change. They believed it was through their influence, rather than the agency of the East, that society would be remodeled, and so power not only to make change but to determine its characteristics continuously lay in the hands of the missionary. In the interest of reinforcing their control, missionaries sought out examples of development.

While the diplomats removed agency from the Ottoman government, they did not displace that agency onto themselves. Consular agents looked and hoped for change, but they ultimately concluded it would not occur. They believed that progress would have to stem from good government and a strong democracy, and their criticisms of Ottoman bureaucracy were ultimately a commentary on what they believed differentiated the leadership of a country like the United States or Great Britain and an Eastern Empire. The diplomats believed that in an "Oriental Empire" the government would not improve, and thus Rockhill and other consuls were willing to accept the Committee of Union and Progress as the "minimum of bad government."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> James Barton, *Daybreak in Turkey* (New York, 1908), 30 (accessed at <http://books.google.com/books?id=muldMW-OU9AC>).

<sup>85</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 24 January 1912, RODOS, reel 4.

The goals, methods, and experiences of the missionaries and diplomats differed as they worked in the Ottoman Empire. These differences not only determined their descriptions of the Empire's government and people, but also informed their understanding of a particular event in Ottoman history, the Young Turk Revolution.

## THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

In July of 1908, the 2nd and 3rd Armies of the Ottoman Empire demanded that Sultan Abdul Hamid II reinstate the constitution of 1876. In its immediate aftermath, this event, known as the Young Turk Revolution, prompted "joy by all elements" of the population other than royalist supporters.<sup>86</sup> American missionaries and diplomats initially saw the revolution as evidence of a new spirit of liberalism and democracy in the Ottoman Empire; however, within a few years, many citizens of the empire were unhappy with what had become another repressive government, and Americans openly discussed the problems they found in Ottoman society.

Whereas diplomats interpreted the efforts of the government as anti-Christian, the missionaries' understanding of Ottoman society allowed them to believe their religious goals would be best forwarded not by publicly critiquing the government but rather through supporting its authority. While this seems to contradict their approach to the government and society in other respects, in truth it reinforced the way their particular goals and methods impacted Western perceptions.

### The Young Turk Revolution and the CUP

In 1876 Sultan Abdul Hamid II agreed to rule as a constitutional monarch if reformers supported his bid to depose Murad V. The compromises of this deal lent weakness to the Constitution. By 1898 the reforms had fallen by the wayside, and the document served only to legitimize the Sultan's authoritarian rule.<sup>87</sup> Underground organizations developed in response

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<sup>86</sup> Horton to Knox, "Conditions in Macedonia," December 11 1910, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>87</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York, 1998), 235.

not only to the reactionary regime but also to pervasive social difficulties and the fear that the Empire was in danger of dissolving. When these fears reached a peak in 1908, an army revolt in July convinced Abdul Hamid to reinstate the constitution. In the elections held soon afterwards, the CUP solidified a position of power in the new government.

Although the revolution had been based on the belief that a new government would save the Empire, internal and external complications worsened after the restoration of the Constitution. The greatest problem was an immediate loss of territory. In 1908, Bulgaria declared independence, Crete declared its union with Greece, and Austria annexed Bosnia. The Empire lost Tripoli after a 1911 war with Italy, and in 1912 an alliance of the Balkan states united for the First Balkan War, which pushed the Ottomans almost entirely out of Europe. The revolutionaries, who had taken power under the assumption they were saving the Empire, soon faced the reality that the Ottoman Empire was continuing to disintegrate under their rule.<sup>88</sup>

The Empire was losing land, and not always to external enemies. Groups who had lived within the Empire for centuries had now begun to declare their independence. The CUP believed the solution to nationalism was to promote a supra-nationality, Ottomanism. Ottomanization endorsed loyalty and patriotism to the state. All citizens would have to be treated equally, and the *millets* would have to be dismantled to reduce division within society. Still, as the Committee searched for a common identity, it endorsed Turkish symbols and relied on Islam to legitimize its rule, which continued to alienate other ethnicities within the Empire.<sup>89</sup>

As it faced continual problems, the government encountered an opposition that had now been granted the freedom to voice its discontent. The CUP dealt with this and other resistance

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<sup>88</sup> William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO, 2000), 135.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

by silencing the unfriendly press, imprisoning oppositional leaders, and adopting reactionary policies that in some ways made it nearly as repressive as the previous regime. These tactics encompassed nationalist groups but aggravated rather than overcame discontent.<sup>90</sup>

The CUP also struggled to assert its authority against the power held by the European countries. As the United States found through its bid for the Chester Concession, these countries controlled aspects of the Ottoman Empire's internal affairs. They benefitted from extraterritorial rights, economic advantages, and control over Ottoman debt administration. Through various treaties the Great Powers established protectorate status for different religious sects in the Empire. They extended their privileges, such as reduced tariffs, to these protected groups, which created class differences that exacerbated ethnic tension. These countries had no actual interest in encouraging the CUP to save the empire.<sup>91</sup>

Though the Young Turk Revolution was not doomed at its outset, it faced many obstacles. While Americans had believed the revolution augured great changes in the Ottoman Empire, they eventually realized the changes they hoped for would not occur. They strove to explain this failure and its ramifications, and their explanations grew out of their goals and expectations of Ottoman society.

### **Critiques of the Constitutional Era**

The root of missionary and consular responses to the Constitution lay in their belief that ideas of democracy, liberty, and equality had been introduced by the West. On the one hand,

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<sup>90</sup> Naim M. Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London, 1999), 151, 143, 148.

<sup>91</sup> Mustafa Aksakal, "Imperialism, War, and Ethnic Conflict in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century," paper delivered at "From Empire to Nation State: The Ottoman Great War and Post-War Politics" (conference, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA, 28 April 2008).



both missionaries and diplomats credited American influence for a constitutional movement they believed would advance the lives of the Ottoman people. On the other hand, their experiences with and observations of the new Constitutional regime suggested to them society had not improved. They attributed what they viewed as a lack of success to their belief that the people of the Ottoman Empire, because of their status as non-Westerners, did not understand what liberty meant. For the diplomats, this idea contributed to their complaint that CUP used “unconstitutional” means in elections to keep itself in power and that the government unfairly treated Christian subjects of the Empire. This same notion led missionaries to support the government in the face of what they perceived as a widespread disdain for authority both in their schools and in the society at large.

Both the missionaries and the diplomats glorified Americans as having a tremendous influence on Turkish society, and both narcissistically saw the Constitution as evidence of the success of the American mission. In a speech entitled “The Impending Struggle in Western Asia,” given at a student missionary conference in Rochester, New York, Reverend Samuel M. Zwemer boldly claimed that American-founded Robert College of Istanbul had “made possible the present new era in Turkey.”<sup>92</sup> Diplomats eagerly reinforced the idea of America’s role. A consul in Syria bragged America was doing more “for the uplifting of mankind than any other five countries under the stars.”<sup>93</sup> Americans could not ignore the changes in the Ottoman Empire that led to the constitutional movement. Rather than suggest the transformation had

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<sup>92</sup> Samuel M. Zwemer, “The Impending Struggle in Western Asia,” in *Students and the Present Missionary Crisis* ed. Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (New York, 1910), 75 (accessed at <http://books.google.com/books?id=CYFCAAAIAAJ>).

<sup>93</sup> Ravndal to Baldwin, 24 January 1910, RODOS, reel 4.

originated within Ottoman society, they assumed the West, and particularly America, had brought new ideas.

Even as they credited the Ottoman Empire's transformation to their home country, members of both groups found flaws within the political situation of the post-revolution years. Consuls critiqued the failure of the new government to provide material improvement. Diplomats realized the government struggled to maintain power after 1908 and in some ways failed to improve life in the Ottoman Empire. In a report on the political situation in Macedonia, Consul George Horton argued the CUP had "sowed a crop of hate and vengeance." The question of whether they could overcome this to rule as a constitutional government was one both the Turks and "all of Europe" considered.<sup>94</sup>

This was not the first time Horton wondered about the potential success of the government. In his description of a celebration of the second anniversary of the Constitution, Horton included two newspaper articles with opposing viewpoints on the worth of the Committee of Union and Progress and the value of the Constitution. Horton argued that with such "major discords" at work in Turkish society, the government would only succeed if it could remove those "obstacles ... built into the very foundation of the state."<sup>95</sup> These fundamental complications and the discord within the Empire compelled the Ottoman government to adopt policies meant to keep itself in power and the Empire intact; diplomats critiqued these procedures as "non-constitutional and arbitrary." The party was flawed because of its

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<sup>94</sup> Horton to Knox, "Conditions in Macedonia." Though all of Europe considered this question, the Great Powers clearly hoped the answer to the query was "no."

<sup>95</sup> Horton to Huntington Wilson, "Celebrating 23<sup>rd</sup> of July," 28 July 1910, RODOS, reel 4.

“intransigent spirit, authoritative methods, and strong centralizing and domineering tendencies.”<sup>96</sup>

The diplomats recognized governmental structure had converted from dominance by an autocrat to rule by a constitutional monarchy, but they saw continued repressive, anti-democratic policies despite the supposed changes. The Ottoman Empire had not yet become a more just society, and so consuls concluded that in some ways the constitution was merely a paper reform. Diplomats concluded from this failure to change that the influence of America was still necessary to help the Ottomans progress to a true democracy.

The missionaries focused their critique less on the government and more on the constitution's supposed effect on society. Though “Western Asia” was supposed to be “through and through religious,” missionaries within the Ottoman Empire complained the people had begun to focus less on the spiritual aspect of their lives.<sup>97</sup> As they struggled to explain this new mentality, missionaries pointed to the most obvious examples of social change, such as the revolution. In 1909, an annual report for International College described the “general state of unrest” in the country as not “conducive to religious growth and activity.”<sup>98</sup> The upheaval of the previous year had lent itself to a lack of stability in society that distracted people from their religious concerns.

The volatility of Ottoman social life continued in ensuing years through the Empire's wars with Italy and the Balkans. A 1911 report from the Central Turkey Mission shows the missionaries continued belief in the Empire's diminishing religious fervor. The writer of this

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<sup>96</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 13 February 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

<sup>97</sup> Zwemer, “Impending Struggle in Western Asia,” 80.

<sup>98</sup> “Sixth Annual Report International College,” 21 July 1909, PABCFM, reel 628.

report was encouraged by what he saw as general improvement in the “religious atmosphere” of Central College. For him, this development in the school was significant because after the proclamation of the constitution he was convinced “the general tendency in the other direction all through the country [had] been strong.”<sup>99</sup>

Not only did the missionaries observe that the Constitution encompassed instable times, but also they suggested a shift away from religion was an attribute of the movement itself. Their conclusion was influenced by the fact that after the revolution, anti-constitutional groups were often composed of conservative religious elements.<sup>100</sup> The writer from International College reported a distinct “spirit of irreligion” was characteristic of the reform movement, although he qualified this statement by remarking that this did not endanger “religious liberty” or threaten the increased persecution of the religious workers.<sup>101</sup> The missionaries benefitted from the Constitutional movement, which gave them more freedom to pursue their religious activities as the government attempted to remove the societal emphasis on religion in order to promote equality among different groups within the Empire.<sup>102</sup> Though missionaries appreciated this development, they were disappointed by what they saw as an increasingly secular society.

The writer of this report believed the worst aspect of the irreligious quality to the movement was that it could have an effect on the “distinctively religious work” of the college, as Muslim students could determine that a “right of choice” applied to whether or not they attended

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<sup>99</sup> “Central Turkey Mission—Aintab—Educational Work,” 24 August 1911, PABCFM, reel 666.

<sup>100</sup> For example, religious students fomented the anti-revolution of 1909. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Army marched into Istanbul to put down the uprising, and Abdul Hamid, seen as figurehead of this movement, was deposed in favor of his brother, Murad V.

<sup>101</sup> “Sixth Annual Report of International College.”

<sup>102</sup> Erhan, “Ottoman Official Attitudes Toward American Missionaries,” 22.

the College's religious meetings.<sup>103</sup> This missionary adhered to a double standard when it came to freedom of religion. Though he may have enjoyed the greater freedoms he found after the constitution, he did not want to extend spiritual options to the students in schools. Missionaries' fear that the Muslim students would avoid religious assemblies reveals the evangelists' dependence on their schools in their strategy of conversion. The missionaries believed the schools were primarily evangelical units and that they were an essential institution in reaching Muslims; therefore, the religious workers searched for ways to safeguard their methods against potential obstacles.

### **Liberty and Freedom in the Other**

Diplomats and missionaries criticized the Constitutional era's shortcomings; the explanation they chose for these flaws was the Ottoman people's misunderstanding of the notion of liberty. For diplomats, the Easterner was incapable of grasping the true meaning of the constitution. In 1911, a consul from Trabzon sent a series of reports to Constantinople regarding some unlawful behavior of boatmen. He believed this behavior was directly related "to the growth of a misguided spirit of 'liberty and equality' which [was] really disrespect for law, order and authority."<sup>104</sup> A Consul-General, W. Stanley Hollis, stationed in Beirut, described Syrians as "disorderly and insolent in their conduct," which he believed indicated their misinterpretation of the true meaning of the liberty granted by the Constitution.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> "Sixth Annual Report of International College." Though religious rules became more relaxed after the reinstatement of the constitution, it is interesting that missionaries ever expected Muslim students to attend their religious meetings when missionaries knew that openly attempting to convert Muslims had been against the law.

<sup>104</sup> Milo H. Jewett to Wilson, "Disorderly Conduct of Boatmen and Deck Passengers," 23 January 1911, RODOS, reel 4.

<sup>105</sup> W. Stanley Hollis to Knox, "The Political Situation of Syria," 16 August 1911, RODOS, reel 4.

Missionaries echoed the diplomats' discussion of social problems, and they also attributed disorderly conduct to the Constitution. They believed that after 1908 they faced not only a spirit of irreligion among the people but a new lack of obedience among the students. Several college administrators mentioned that students of all nationalities were less disciplined in the aftermath of the Constitution. Echoing the writer from International College, Ernest W. Riggs wrote that at Euphrates College, after "the declaration of the Constitution...[a] spirit of license had to be suppressed with drastic measures."<sup>106</sup> Though Riggs did not specify what those measures were, he attributed the improvement in student behavior in the next school year to the fact that students had to sign a "statement of loyalty to the College and its authority," which had encouraged a "wholesome regard of rules."<sup>107</sup>

As Riggs and other missionaries confronted disobedience, they attributed it to the students' "wrong impression of liberty" in the constitutional era.<sup>108</sup> For Riggs, this "wrong impression" was the idea that students could behave as they pleased, with little care for the authority of the missionaries in their own schools. Riggs spoke only of students, but in a report from Sivas in 1910, missionary Henry Perry extended this attribute to the rest of Ottoman society. Perry wrote, "True liberty is not freedom from all restraint, or license to do wrong."<sup>109</sup> The alternate definition of freedom his writing suggests is conditional, and according to Perry, the "Oriental" had not yet realized this distinction.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Riggs, "Report of the President to the Board of Trustees of Euphrates College Funds 1911-1912."

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Perry, "Report of Sivas Station for 1910."

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Perry's use of the word "Oriental" reveals that missionaries did not reserve their judgment merely for the Turk or the uneducated Armenian, but rather generalized about all the people of the Ottoman Empire. Even as they conceived of and differentiated between individuals they encountered in their schools and hospitals and during their village tours, when missionaries saw a concept that they believed to be purely Western, such as democracy, working differently among non-Western people, they relied on a discourse that reduced the people to essential types and erased individual characteristics. Missionaries applied their concept of the non-Westerner's inability to grasp the true implications of liberty to all people of the area.

This essentialist trend is also discernible in a separate critique of the misunderstanding of freedom. Robert Stapleton, a missionary from Erzurum station, believed people misunderstood freedom not because they broke laws but because they lacked enterprise. In his 1909 report from the station, Stapleton argued "the people of all Eastern countries [look] to the Government to do things."<sup>111</sup> It is unlikely Stapleton spent significant time stationed outside of Turkey, and yet he was comfortable making a statement applicable not only to the whole of the Ottoman Empire, but to all people in "Eastern countries." Stapleton believed the changes which brought about increased freedom were meant to give the people the "liberty to do things for themselves," but the people did not have the "initiative" or "the spirit of continuance" required to improve their own conditions.<sup>112</sup>

Stapleton's belief highlights another component of missionary thought: the argument that Islam was incompatible with democracy. Some blamed Islam for the failure of democracy to take root in the Ottoman Empire. The speaker who credited Robert College for creating

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<sup>111</sup> Stapleton, "Report of the Erzroom station for 1909," June 1910, PABCFM, reel 712.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

tremendous change in the Ottoman Empire also claimed “there [could] be no real liberty in any department of life, under Moslem rule.”<sup>113</sup> His speech, intended to call young evangelical students to become missionaries in Turkey, connected democracy to Christianity and authoritarian rule to Islam. Even if the thrust of his argument was the importance of changing governmental leaders, his premise was that “Moslem rule” was irreconcilable to liberty. Numerous missionaries went still further, ignoring religious distinctions to argue liberty was not yet attainable by any non-Westerner. The people of “Eastern countries” could be Christians, but the missionaries judged them by their geographic location rather than the people’s beliefs. Their status as Eastern meant that they categorically lacked the qualities necessary to make democracy work without the missionaries’ assistance.

Missionaries professed the goal that ultimately the native Christians would develop independent evangelical churches, and yet they had neither the confidence nor the desire to leave the people to their own devices. Stapleton’s view that the people lacked certain qualities supported the idea the people were far from ready to function independently. By writing that all people of Eastern countries lacked initiative, Stapleton promoted the missionaries’ continued presence, casting them as necessary to the effective organization of the churches.

By agreeing that the Ottoman people were not capable of understanding liberty the diplomats and missionaries continued a long tradition in Western thought about the Orient.<sup>114</sup> As colonialist discourse developed, Europeans came to believe it was their responsibility to teach this ideal to the Orient. Americans accepted this; thus, what is more interesting is the fact that

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<sup>113</sup> Zwemer, “Impending Struggle in Western Asia,” 79.

<sup>114</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 172.



although the State Department men and the missionaries both adhered to this idea, it had different effects on the two groups.

While State Department men mentioned the inability of the people to grasp the meaning of liberty, they did not feel threatened by this spirit of "licentiousness," nor did they think they had to correct the erroneous interpretation. The diplomats, though they believed American could influence the people of Turkey, were not eager to involve themselves in the domestic affairs of another country, and they shied away from the responsibility to instill a true sense of the term in the people of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast, Henry Perry of International College believed that it was up to the Westerner, the American, and specifically the missionary to help the Oriental grasp the meaning of true freedom, which was, according to Perry, "understanding and following the laws of God."<sup>115</sup>

Perry's definition of freedom was echoed by other missionaries who emphasized Christian obedience and who intended to encourage the respect for authority they felt was wanting in the student body of their schools. The "College Ideals" of Central Turkey College, a series of addresses given to the students of the school, discussed the vision of liberty the College hoped to instill in its students. The College was meant to show students how to "use rightly their freedom, understanding that freedom is voluntary obedience to the highest law."<sup>116</sup>

Even as missionaries stressed obedience, American diplomats were not reserved in their judgment that certain minority groups, including Christians, within the Ottoman Empire faced trouble from the repressive tactics of the Committee of Union and Progress. In a description of life in European Turkey, Consul George Horton discussed the fate of those whom the

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<sup>115</sup> Perry, "Report of Sivas Station for 1910."

<sup>116</sup> Z.A. Bezjian, "College Ideals-Brief Addresses to Students of Central Turkey College-Ideal of Patriotism," 26 September 1913, PABCFM, reel 668.

government described as resisters. Citing non-Muslim authorities as his sources, he reported that directly after the constitution was adopted, both Christians and Muslims had formed political discussion clubs. His sources told him that while the government soon suppressed the Christian clubs, similar groups of Turks were not disbanded. This move by the government aroused the anger of the people of Macedonia, who began to resist the regime.<sup>117</sup> Horton's report is somewhat inaccurate. The CUP feared that nationalistic groups threatened the Empire. Horton reported that only Christian clubs were closed, but the government's concern that these organizations would seek independence was not necessarily discriminatory on the basis of belief. Authorities disallowed meetings of Albanians, who were both Christians and Muslims, because of their ethnic characteristic rather than the religion of a portion of the attendees.

Horton also described murders of former chieftains and leaders in Macedonia and the saga of people who had had to seek refuge in the hills. Horton dubbed the situation as a "reign of terror," and noted that these were unlikely "proceedings in a Constitutional Country."<sup>118</sup> Despite the inaccuracy of Horton's report, several other consuls echoed his conviction that the government did not adhere to the constitution, and they focused on what they believed were the particular problems of non-Muslims. These consuls believed the Government had failed to "grant equal constitutional rights to all" and to give Christians and Jews the "absolute justices and protection" that Muslims received.<sup>119</sup>

Despite the fact that consuls assumed the government was unfair to Christians, missionaries, at other times quick to note the hostility of the ruling class, promoted obedience as

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<sup>117</sup> Horton to Knox, "Conditions in Macedonia." Horton's use of the word "Macedonian" as synonymous with "Christian" is in itself somewhat problematic as "Macedonians" would have included both Christians and Muslims.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>119</sup> Kehl to Rockhill, 26 June 1912, RODOS reel 4; "Confidential Dispatch to the Embassy at Constantinople," 15 April 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

an essential value in a “free” society.<sup>120</sup> The religious workers could have endorsed the government and the law for several reasons. First, some remained optimistic about the new regime, and hoped the government would eventually relax its repressive measures. An article from the March 23, 1910 issue of the *Bosphorus News* discussed the future of the Albanians. While the Constitution had supposedly granted Albanians certain freedoms, the government was repressing the teaching of the Albanian language in schools, part of a CUP move to counteract Albanian nationalism. Rather than suggest the situation was hopeless and the government would continue along this repressive path, the writer described the situation as a “critical point” for the Albanians. The chance for “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” to determine the acts of the government was not yet past, and so it was not yet necessary for the Albanian people to “fear the future.”<sup>121</sup> While State Department officials had already given up hope that the government would hold true to the constitution, some missionaries could have believed that in time the situation would improve.

While the missionaries felt the rhetoric of religious freedom promised improvements, they remembered the past pressures they had felt from the government. Missionaries encouraged their students to respect the government because they worried about their own fate under a more repressive regime. In March of 1909 administrators of Central Turkey College closed their school because of student troubles. The bulletin of the college explained that upon reopening the school had refused admission to one-third of the student body, an act necessary for “stamping out sedition.”<sup>122</sup> In 1909, this decision had seemed a major blow to the College, but in reality “the

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<sup>120</sup> As already discussed in this paper, missionaries were not ignorant of problems various groups, especially Armenians, faced under CUP.

<sup>121</sup> *Bosphorus News*, 23 March 1910, PABCFM, reel 505.

<sup>122</sup> “Bulletin of Central Turkey College Aintab, Turkey-In-Asia,” 24 April 1910, PABCFM, reel 668.

decisive action of the college ... was understood and appreciated by the local authorities" who had now become supposedly convinced of "the loyalty of the college ... to the Constitution."<sup>123</sup> During the reign of Abdul Hamid II, the government viewed missionary schools as hotbeds for nationalism and revolution among minorities.<sup>124</sup> Encouraging Christian identity frequently contributed to the platforms of national groups. Though missionaries were often seemingly oblivious to the extent of their threat to the government, they were aware of the potentially subversive role their work could play. As the missionaries had learned previously, if they or their students were cast as disloyal, the government could decide to shutdown their institutions or otherwise harass them.

The policies of the new government offered some potential benefits to the missionaries. One policy they may have appreciated was Ottomanization. While diplomats believed the policies of Ottomanization were resented by the people, missionaries saw these movements as trends to be used to their advantage. In a report to the Board of Trustees, missionary Ernest Riggs noted that since the Constitution, there had been "a steady effort to fuse the races into one people."<sup>125</sup> He lamented that Euphrates College had not yet echoed the movement, as it was a college with an almost exclusively Armenian student body. Riggs believed ethnic tension would reduce the likelihood of Muslims forming a larger percentage of the student body.<sup>126</sup> This tension had been fostered by the divisions of the *millet* system, and one of the first acts of the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, 40.

<sup>125</sup> Riggs, "Report of the President to the Board of Trustees of Euphrates College Funds. 1911-1912," 8 August 1912, PABCFM, reel 712.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

new government was to abolish the *millets*.<sup>127</sup> In theory such policies were designed to erase ethnic tension and create a unified polity, benefits that may have increased the number of Muslims missionaries could reach.

The most important factor in the missionary focus on an obedience-based liberty was their eagerness to embrace a potentially stabilizing societal force and their desire to promote authority beyond the walls of their schools. Missionaries believed the unrest in their institutions and the general public promoted irreligion, and so it is not surprising that they preferred the continued power of the government over sustained revolution. Missionaries and diplomats realized the CUP had many problems. Nevertheless, State Department officials described it as Turkey's best option. For example, Consul-General William Rockhill outlined the CUP's many flaws and yet concluded it was Turkey's only "party of political organization."<sup>128</sup> If missionaries agreed with Rockhill that the CUP was the only viable political group, they may have been eager to support its continued power. Their emphasis on the importance of their societal changing institutions encouraged them to adhere to the status quo of the current administration. Additionally, the missionary belief that the people lacked the necessary qualities to create self-dependent churches and schools allowed the missionaries to cast the government in a role parallel to their own. Just as the religious workers were necessary to oversee native churches, the government's structure was necessary to reinforce stability in the country.

While both missionaries and diplomats shared the belief that non-Westerners did not properly understand democracy, their perceptions of the Young Turk era of the Ottoman Empire diverged. The missionaries experienced firsthand the frustrations resulting from an unruly

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<sup>127</sup> Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 134.

<sup>128</sup> Rockhill to Knox, 13 February 1913, RODOS, reel 5.

student body, and through this experience they could sympathize with the government's need to control a disorderly populace. Missionaries' eagerness to teach obedience enforced their positions in their Colleges, detracted from upheaval in society, and supported the political system of the Ottoman Empire. On the surface, the missionary support for the government was surprising given the antagonistic relationship they had at times with its officials. The reasons underlying this support reinforce the primacy missionaries gave to achieving their goals. Missionaries focused on making converts, and they believed the institutions they had developed were essential to doing so. The missionaries' antagonistic conceptions of their relationship with the government were based on that government's understandable reluctance to cooperate with the evangelicals' goals, but nevertheless the religious workers felt compelled to encourage loyalty to the Ottoman government. The missionaries were concerned with the fate of Eastern Christians, and they realized along with the diplomats that Christians continued to face trouble in the Ottoman Empire. Still, the missionaries were not revolutionaries; they hoped to change Ottoman society through the institutions they had already created. Missionaries encouraged loyalty to the government because they believed its presence was necessary to ensure the survival of their particular place in Ottoman society.

## CONCLUSIONS

“Misrepresentations or constructions need to be unraveled over time and not just attributed to some timeless, unchanging notion of racism or Orientalism.”

-Ania Loomba<sup>129</sup>

As American diplomats and missionaries differed both in their descriptions of general issues of the government and the possibility of change and the specific issue of the Constitution, they revealed distinctions that undermine a monolithic conception of their Orientalism. With the particular event of the Young Turk revolution, missionaries not only differed from the diplomats, but revealed inconsistencies within their discourse. Just as it is important to “unravel” misrepresentations and constructions, it is useful to analyze such contradictions.

Missionaries were similarly incongruous in regards to the Armenian nationalist movement. In this case, while missionaries lamented the troubles of Armenians, they felt their purpose in the Ottoman Empire was to “make the Christian populations thereof more loyal to the home of Othman, more law-abiding citizens...in short, genuine...Christian men, and....Christian women.”<sup>130</sup> Just as missionaries disliked elements of the second Constitutional era because they believed they distracted the Ottoman people from their spirituality, the American evangelicals criticized nationalism as an irreligious movement. When missionaries supported their own particular type of nationalism they did so because they did not want to lose their followers to other nationalist groups, and they hoped to maintain their authoritative role in the development of the Armenian people. While their response contrasted with their writings on the government

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<sup>129</sup> Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 110.

<sup>130</sup> Andrus, “Mission to Eastern Turkey.”

and the ability of the people to progress, it shared continuity with their reaction to the constitutional era in which they supported the state and its authority as well as their own. The root of the missionaries' contradictions was the tension between their belief that the East could be changed for the better and their belief that only they knew the secret of how to improve it. While the religious workers sought to promote independence and self-reliance for the people, they were not willing to relinquish control.

Contrastingly, the diplomats remained consistent. They mostly adhered to the notion of the invariable Orient, and they felt only peripherally responsible for the change that did occur there. They believed in America's mission and the importance of its influence, but as diplomats they did not think they were meant to spread its effects. In fact, some felt that America would suffer if it became inextricably wound up in the Great Power politics that roiled the Ottoman Empire. Even if U.S. officials had felt that America should become politically involved, the failure of the Chester Concession reinforced that this was not truly a possibility. Just as importantly, the experience of the Chester Concession revealed to the diplomats the extent to which Europe inhibited the CUP's power.

The diplomats' detachment and their belief that Europe limited the Ottoman political system's ability to change encouraged them to take a pessimistic view of Eastern progress, but it also prevented them from arguing that the government itself was fanatical. Furthermore, it limited the extent to which they could feel that their authority was threatened, and they never felt the need to stamp out a spirit of "licentiousness." Their detachment prevented them from developing the same inconsistencies as the missionaries.

Though they were not part of a colonial power, American missionaries embodied the contradictions of colonialist discourse. While they believed that the Oriental could change, they



allowed only one way for that change to occur. As they believed that only they held this answer, they failed to grant the Oriental the independence that they tried to cultivate. When unruly students threatened missionary authority in their schools, the missionaries resorted to the Orientalist point of view that Easterners were not ready to understand true liberty.

Exploring the inconsistencies in missionary thought lends agency to the “Oriental” because the missionaries would not have intensified the Orientalist discourse if they had not felt that their control over the Other was diminishing. The people of the Ottoman Empire undermined the missionaries’ authority, which diminished the religious workers’ ability to fulfill their vocation. The Americans responded to this threat by reinforcing their power through misperceptions.

Other variations of discourse by other players may reveal times when the West felt the need to reinforce its power. Though power consistently remained in the hands of the West, Westerners did not always feel that it was secure. If Orientalism were strictly a notion of political power, such contradictions would not be as frequent. Because Orientalism goes beyond mere political power to serve as a component of Western identity, a changing Oriental was problematic and threatening even to Americans, despite their belief that causing such change was the nation’s purpose.

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