

Who Woke Up Turkey?

THE JUDGMENT OF AN EXPERT NEWSPAPER
CORRESPONDENT

A Letter of William E. Curtis to the Chicago Record-Herald

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[NOTE.—Mr. Curtis is in the foremost file of special correspondents. His work is known throughout the journalistic world, for keenness of insight, fulness and accuracy of information, and balanced judgment. He has traveled widely, studied many lands and peoples, observed much, weighed, compared, and reviewed his opinions, until he is to-day one of America's most cosmopolitan men,—a trained and experienced investigator whom a leading journal sends on difficult or responsible tours of inquiry. Mr. Curtis's testimony to what the missionaries have done for Turkey may be accepted as absolutely unpurchased and unprejudiced: the witness of a capable reporter who sees and tells the thing as it is.—OFFICERS OF THE AMERICAN BOARD.]

CONSTANTINOPLE, Sept. 11, 1910.—Nowhere in all the world, not even in China or Japan, are the results of the labors and influence of American missionaries more conspicuous or more generally recognized than in the Ottoman Empire. They have not confined themselves to making converts to Christianity, but their intelligence and enterprise have been felt even more extensively and effectively in the material than in the spiritual improvement of the people. The first electric telegraph instrument in Turkey was set up by missionaries. They introduced the first sewing-machine, the first printing-press, and the first modern agricultural implements. They brought the tomato and the potato and the other valuable vegetables and fruits that are now staples; they built the first hospitals; they started the first dispensary and the first modern schools. Before they came, not one of the several races in Turkey had the Bible in its own language. To-day, thanks to the American missionaries, every subject of the Turkish sultan can read the Bible in his own language, if he can read at all.

But a large volume would be necessary to tell what I would like to say on this subject. Mr. Bryce, the British ambassador to Washington, in one of his books, says:

“I cannot mention the American missionaries without a tribute to the admirable work they have done. They have been the only good influence that has worked from abroad upon the Turkish Empire.”

Sir William Ramsey, the famous British scientist, who has spent much time in Turkey, is quite as enthusiastic; and I could quote a dozen other equally competent authorities as to the character of the men and the results they have accomplished.

The American missionaries have over four hundred schools, one hundred and thirty or more large churches in the centers of population, with congregations numbering as high as 2,000, besides a multitude of outstations in the villages of Asia Minor. In the division of territory the Presbyterians have Syria; the United Presbyterians, Egypt; while European Turkey and Asia Minor are occupied by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, affiliated with the Congregational Church, with headquarters at Boston. There are several Church of England missions, but no central organization. The Swedish, German, and Swiss Lutherans have schools, churches, and orphanages. The French Roman Catholics have schools and hospitals in Asia Minor in charge of Capuchin and Franciscan monks; but the chief missionary work in Turkey — educational, benevolent, and evangelical — has been done by agents of the American Board since 1820, when two pioneers, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, landed at Smyrna and began to prepare themselves for preaching and teaching by learning the native languages.

The headquarters from which the campaign of evangelization and civilization is directed is called the Bible House in Stamboul, the native section of Constantinople, which was built in 1871 and is today the most far-reaching lighthouse in all the East. Its rays penetrate to every corner of the Ottoman Empire. Here are the offices of administration; the depository of the Bible Society; the printing-plant and publication house; the treasury, the library, the information bureaus, and other branches of the work. If you ever want to know anything about missions or missionaries in the near East, individually or collectively, their personnel, their purposes, or the results they have accomplished, or anything about American education and charitable work in Turkey, write to the Bible House, Stamboul, Constantinople; and if you have any money to contribute toward the expenses of the great work that is going on, send it there to Dr. Peet, the treasurer.

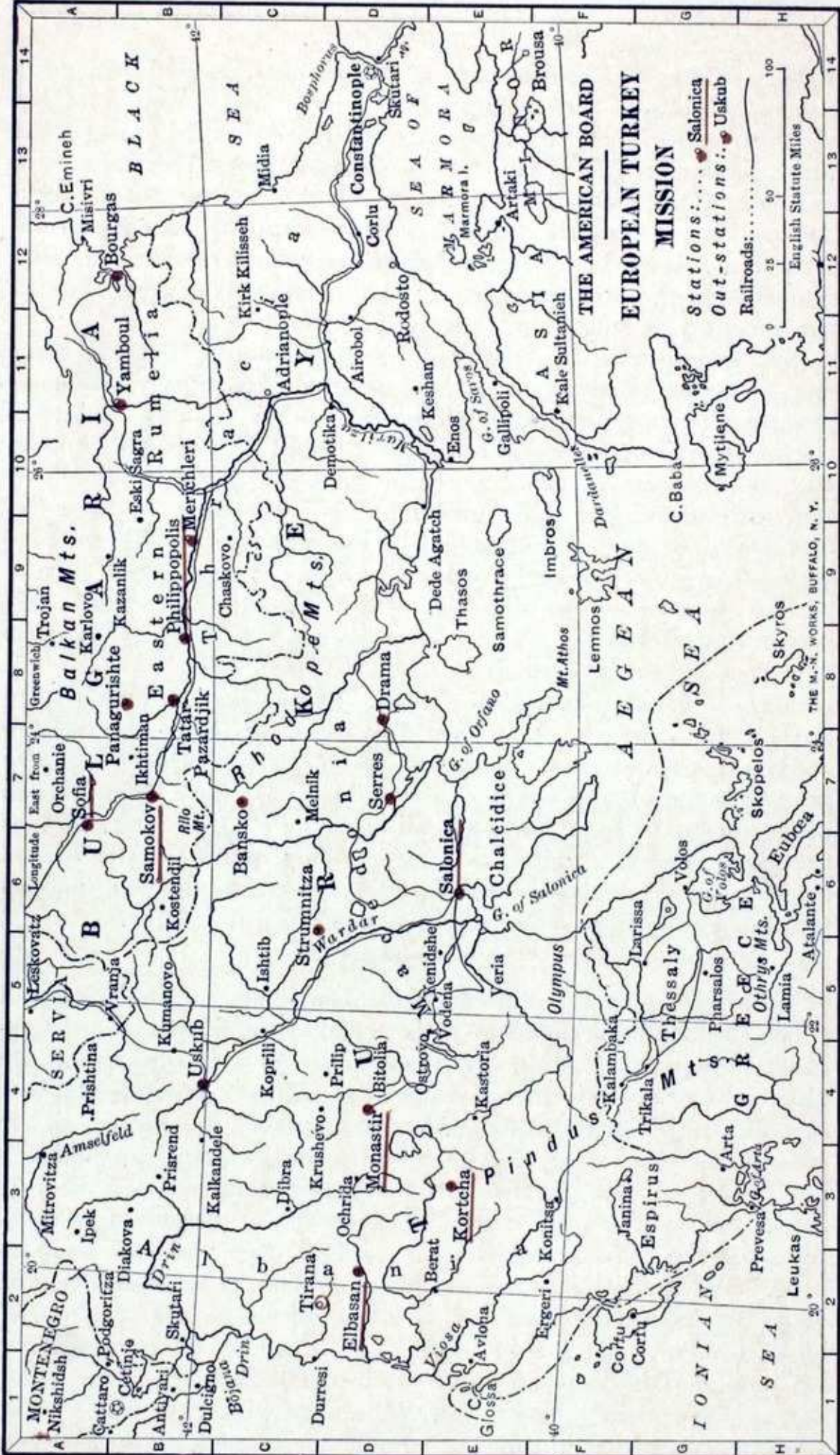
The most far-reaching work of the American missionaries is educational, which comprehends all races, all religions, and all languages. They are educating representatives of every one of the many different races of which the Turkish Empire is composed, regardless of

religious faith — Turks, Arabs, Egyptians, Armenians, Kurds, Persians, Macedonians, Bulgars, Druses, Nestorians, Greeks, Russians, Georgians, Circassians, and others too numerous to mention. Their influence is thus extended to every community, because no student leaves an American institution without carrying with him the germs of progress which must affect the family and the neighborhood and all of the inhabitants with whom he may thereafter come in contact. This influence has been working for half a century or more, and has been preparing the minds of the people for the great change that has recently come over them. The missionaries do not teach revolution; they do not encourage revolutionary methods; but they have always preached and taught liberty, equality, fraternity, and the rights of man.

The congregations of the American churches, and especially the pupils of the missionary schools, are usually reduced from 25 to 30 per cent every year by immigration to the United States. Having learned from their teachers of the advantages and the opportunities that exist across the water; having acquired the English language; and being able to get good advice as to location and often letters of introduction, they have decided advantages over ordinary emigrants, and for the same reason they make the best sort of citizens when they reach their new homes. It had been very difficult for an emigrant to leave Turkey until two years ago; but somehow or another, there has been a constant stream running that way for a quarter of a century.

A dozen missionaries have told me that the brightest and most promising young men and women in their districts, and especially the best teachers in their schools, have emigrated. Many of them go to Massachusetts, Chicago has thousands, and there is a large colony in Troy working in the shirt and collar factories. For example, the churches at Harput had 3,107 members one year and 2,413 the next. The balance had gone to America. One-fourth of the congregation of the mission church at Bitlis emigrated, almost in a body, last year. It would be a great deal better for Turkey if these people would stay at home and use the knowledge and the principles they have gained in the regeneration of their country; but it cannot be denied that they are among the most valuable immigrants of all the aliens that go to the United States.

Most of the mission churches are small, like those in the villages of the United States, with congregations of only twenty-five or thirty or fifty members. Those in the cities are larger, several having more than a thousand members. They are organized just like the Protestant churches in the United States, with native pastors and native church officers. They have Sunday schools, prayer meetings, Christian Endeavor societies, and other organizations, and they



Greenwich
 East from 24°
 Longitude
 20° 25° 30° 35° 40°

Regions: MONTENEGRO, SERVICIA, BULGARIA, ROMANIA, GREECE, TURKEY, IONIAN SEA, AEGEAN SEA, BLACK SEA, MARMORA B.

Mountains: Balkan Mts., Rila, Rhodope Mts., Kopete Mts., Pindus, Thessaly Mts., Othrys Mts., Parnassus, Mt. Athos.

Cities and Towns: Nikshidsh, Gattaro, Podgoritza, Cetinje, Antivari, Skutari, Dulcigno, Brijuni, Durrresi, Elbasan, Tirana, Berat, Koritza, Korce, Monastir (Bitolia), Prilip, Koprilik, Koprivica, Strumnitza, Voden, Veria, Kastoria, Thessaly, Larissa, Parnassos, Trikala, Kalambaka, Volos, Euboea, Skopelos, Mytilene, C. Baba, Imbros, Lemnos, Paros, Naxos, Ios, C. Esmineh, Misivri, Bourgas, Yamboul, Rumenetia, Eski Sagra, Kazanik, Panagurishte, Ichtiman, Samokov, Kostendil, Rilo Mt., Pazarjik, Tatar, Chaskovo, Demotika, Serres, Drama, Dede Agatch, Thasos, Samothrace, Enos, Keshan, Rodosto, Corlu, Airabol, Midia, Kirk Killiseh, Adrianople, Artaki, Marmora I., Brousa, Kale Sultanieh, Gallipoli, G. of Saros, G. of Orfakio, G. of Salonica, G. of Volo, G. of Thessaly, G. of Euboea, G. of Corinth, G. of Patras, G. of Argolis, G. of Peloponnese.

Other Labels: Trojan, Orchanie, Sofia, Kumanovo, Vranja, Prishtina, Amsel'feld, Pristend, Kalkandele, Dibra, Krushevo, Ochrida, Glosa, Avloha, Viossa, Ergeri, Konitsa, Janina, Espirus, Prevesa, Leukas, Atalante.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

study the same Sunday-school lessons as the Protestant children in the United States.

Most of them are self-supporting. Sometimes the newly organized congregations get a little help from the United States at the start, but the great majority of native converts pay more for their religion and make greater sacrifices than the Christians of the United States. For example, thirteen out of twenty-seven churches in the Central Turkish mission are not only entirely self-supporting, but contribute substantial aid to weaker churches in their neighborhood. In the entire Turkish Empire last year the native churches paid five-sixths of all the expenses of education, worship, and charity.

The board pays the salaries of the missionaries, but the effort is to bring the native churches to a condition of pecuniary independence, for the reason that it stimulates their pride and their ambition; it gives them confidence and self-respect, which, as everybody knows, are the strongest elements in the formation of national as well as individual character. Notwithstanding the extension of the work, the amount of money contributed by the United States for the support of native churches has been growing smaller every year. I picked up a report the other day which showed that whereas the board contributed \$54,585 to assist native churches twenty years ago, last year it gave less than \$20,000.

The vital need, however, is chapels. Every congregation ought to have a home and its own place of worship. It is not necessary to explain the advantages. They are obvious. It is just ten times as important for a native congregation in Turkey to have its own house of worship as it is for a congregation in the United States, and for the same reason. And, as a rule, the congregation in the United States has ten times the financial ability to provide its own house of worship as the little circle of native believers in Turkey.

There are about one hundred and fifty American missionaries in Turkey to-day, and each has a district like the diocese of an Episcopal bishop, with a dozen or twenty churches under his care. He visits them regularly, advises with their pastors, superintends their schools, and exercises a paternal authority over the people. They consult him concerning their temporal as well as their spiritual welfare — not only the members of his congregation, but men of every class. No class of people in all Turkey are so trusted by the officials and the public and by every race as the American missionaries. All classes accept the word of a missionary without question. Money is intrusted to him for safe keeping or for transmission to other hands without asking a receipt, and it is a common thing for officials of high rank to seek counsel of missionaries when they are in doubt or in danger. As a well-known writer has said:

“They know that in times of trouble the missionary is their best friend, no matter how much they may have abused him in times of

prosperity. They know that he will always do what he believes to be for their best good, even though there may be a difference of judgment as to what is the best thing. In the midst of Oriental duplicity the missionaries have established a reputation for speaking the truth. At first this was one of the severest puzzles to the Turks in the dealings of the missionaries with the government. They could conceive of no reason for telling the truth under such circumstances, so they were completely misled."

It is the policy of the missionaries to make the natives do everything for themselves so far as practicable, and native pastors relieve them of much of their labor except supervision. But at the same time the missionary must drive new stakes and plow new ground and plant new seeds all the time to extend his sphere of influence. And he travels about for this reason, holding religious services in the native languages and drawing believers together until he gets enough material to start a church. I know a man who preaches three times every Sunday in three different languages in different places to different congregations — Turkish, Armenian, and Greek. And they have all kinds of schools to look after, from kindergartens to theological seminaries. The latter are especially important because they furnish pastors for the native churches. The faculties in the American colleges are nearly all natives, but the presidents, the deans, and the treasurers are always Americans, and the boards of trustees are mixed.

If you would attend a gathering of native pastors in Turkey you would find that they compare favorably in appearance and manners and intelligence and education with the members of any conference or presbytery or ministerial association in the United States, and that is one of the reasons why their work has been so successful. The Moslem priests and the clergy of the orthodox Greek and Armenian churches are almost universally uncouth and illiterate men, and the public in Turkey is prompt and keen in detecting the difference.

President Angell of the University of Michigan, who was United States Minister to Turkey for seven years, once said:

"So far as Americans are concerned the missionary work in European Turkey and Asia Minor is and long has been almost exclusively in the hands of the American Board. In no part of the world has that board or any board had abler or more devoted representatives to preach the gospel, to conduct schools and colleges, or to establish and administer hospitals. Wherever an American mission is established, there is a center of alert, enterprising American life, whose influence in a hundred ways is felt even by the lethargic Oriental life."

WILLIAM E. CURTIS.

IF any reader of Mr. Curtis's letter is moved to adopt its suggestion and entrust a gift for the work thus highly rated to the hands of Dr. W. W. Peet, Treasurer of American Board Turkish Missions at the Bible House, Constantinople, he may be glad to learn that the inconvenience of transmitting money to a foreign country can be avoided by sending the gift to Frank H. Wiggin, Treasurer of the American Board, 14 Beacon Street, Boston, who will see that it is promptly forwarded, without expense, to Dr. Peet, and used for the purpose desired.

A GRAPHIC account of the American Board's enterprise in Turkey since 1819, portraying the events and the actors through which the remarkable history has been wrought, will be found in *THE STORY OF THE AMERICAN BOARD*, a finely illustrated and attractive volume of over 500 pages written by William E. Strong, the Board's Editorial Secretary, and just issued. The price of the book is \$1.75 net; postage, 18 cents. It may be obtained of

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ANOTHER recent book bearing on the subject of Mr. Curtis's letter is *DAYBREAK IN TURKEY*, by Secretary James L. Barton, a story of the Turkish Empire, its people and religions, with an account of the development of modern Christian institutions in the country, which have made a New Turkey possible. *Seventh Thousand.*

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