

## American Protestant Missionaries and Monastir, 1912-17: Secondary Actors in the Construction of Balkan Nationalisms

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Over the past decade and a half, a large and growing number of studies of ethnicities and nationalisms have examined and emphasized the socially-constructed dimensions of identities. In such processes of nation-building (and in counter-vailing processes of nation-destroying), lessons in literacy, language and tradition have proved themselves to be crucial, if not thoroughly integral.<sup>1</sup> In most accounts and studies, the actions of construction/deconstruction are witnessed as occurring at the hands of the identity groups themselves who are in the act of construction and/or contestation, or at least through them at the instigation of colonial/imperial powers. Rarely, however, is the conduct of third parties examined in such processes. This article demonstrates the potential for such actors through an examination of American Protestant missionaries in Monastir in the early twentieth century.

While the activities of missionaries are often widely generalized as simply being tools in the employ of states imposing their wills abroad, consideration of the missionary documents in this case reveals intentions, motivations, and courses of action that are not so easily dismissed. Rather, while missionary activities may be viewed as subordinate to wider political forces and interests, they themselves reflected individualized agendas and orientations. Given their positions in providing lessons in languages and literacy, the experiences of these actors were vital in the processes of social construction that resulted in identities of the late- and post-Ottoman Balkans.

This article analyses American Protestant missionaries' activities in Monastir, their evaluations of events in the city, and the conduct of their relations with the nationalities and governments in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It draws on material found in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archive, kept in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Documents upon which this work is based consist of: the Annual European Turkey (later, the Balkan Mission) meeting reports to their headquarters in Boston; letters to friends and relatives;

diaries and notes; and, the American Board's periodical *The Missionary Herald* published in Boston.

While the documents of the missionaries provide interesting and vital information concerning Monastir at this time, they also reveal courses of action in the construction of national identities of the region that were quite significant. Through their religious duties, and especially in the course of their providing instruction in languages and literacy, the missionaries could be seen to have promoted the interests of early Bulgarian nationalism. At the same time, their actions taught against messages promoted by Serbian nationalists, and they simply functioned to deny the existence of a Macedonian language and nation – projecting the notion that Macedonia and its peoples were little more than localized variations of a larger Bulgarian whole.

During Serbian occupations of the city, in-coming and out-going letters were read by officers. The missionaries, therefore, did not write all their feelings and opinions about the matters at hand. They also warned their headquarters not to write anything to which the Serbian government would object, especially in the letters of W.P. Clarke, who often confided that he could not communicate everything by mail. In those letters sent by foreign posts, communication was more relaxed but – as they were letters – they still did not convey everything.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in a few letters, some paragraphs were blocked – probably by the Board – before their transfer to the Library. This is not to say that the letters were not subjective and even personal; they sometimes emphasized the most minute details of some topics while keeping entirely silent on others. Despite their limitations, they yield a wealth of vital information regarding one of the most interesting periods in the histories of Monastir and Macedonia.

Six wars took place in the Balkans between 1877 and 1918: the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877–78; the Serb-Bulgar War of 1885; the Greco-Turkish War of 1897; two Balkan wars in 1912–13; and the First World War. Despite wars, large-scale insurrections, and localized revolutionary episodes, church struggles did not end. The wider objectives behind most of these conflicts involved the ownership/control of Macedonia. All these wars and disorders directly or indirectly affected Macedonia and its urban heartland, Monastir.

Probably the most difficult time for Monastir during this period was the second decade of the twentieth century. On the day after 8 October 1912, when Montenegro declared war against the Ottoman Empire, Martial Law was imposed in the city. Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece entered the war on 18 October 1912. By the end of October, it was rumoured that Monastir was to be relinquished to the Greek army which came as far as Keliderven, a location very close to the city; but this Greek army was compelled to retreat by Turkish forces. However, a Serbian army soon came from Prilep to capture Monastir. The battle began on 15 November, and three days later the

Turkish army retreated. The day after the Turkish departure, the Serbian army entered the city. This transfer marked the end of a period of Turkish rule which had lasted about 550 years.

According to a Bulgarian-Serbian agreement, Monastir was to be given to Bulgaria, but this did not come to pass. As the Balkan allies could not reach an internal agreement to share the lands gained from Turkey (especially territories in Macedonia), the Second Balkan War began on 30 June 1913. Bulgaria alone fought against Serbia, Greece and Romania and quickly lost. According to the Bucharest Peace Treaty, signed on 10 August 1913, Monastir and surrounding territories were left to Serbia. Yet the tensions had not diminished, and one year later, the First World War began. On 27 July, Martial Law was re-imposed in Monastir, and two days later, Austria declared war against Serbia. On the same day, the consular seal and flag were taken down from the Austrian Consulate by the Serbians. The following day, the Austrian Consul left the city. At the end of October and through November, Serbians and foreign representatives left Monastir. Bulgarian and German armies entered the city on 4 December 1915 without fighting. In the spring of 1916, a Macedonian front was established along the Greek border, and Monastir became the general headquarters of the Bulgarian and German armies. On 19 November 1916, the Bulgarian and German forces left the city and the Serbians and their allies captured it again; Monastir remained under Serbian rule until the end of the Second World War.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (frequently known and discussed simply as 'the Board') was organized in 1810 at Bradford, Massachusetts. They began to work in the Ottoman Empire in 1820. Their first stations or missions were opened in Istanbul, Smyrna, Syria, and Cyprus. By 1850 they were recognized and designated as a *millet* by the Ottoman Sultan.

At the Mission Annual Meeting of 1857, it was decided that it would be a worthwhile endeavour to send missionaries to Bulgaria and to the other Slavonic peoples inhabiting European Turkey. They requested from the Board headquarters seven missionaries for Adrianople, Philippopolis, Monastir, and Skopia. As the first step in this programme, a missionary family was stationed in Adrianople in 1858. In the following years the Stara Zagora, Philippopolis and Samokov stations were opened.<sup>3</sup> Until 1870, American Protestant Missionaries worked as part of the Western Turkey Mission. In that year, they were organized as the European Turkey Mission until 1910, when their name was changed to the Balkan Mission.

Monastir station was opened in 1873 by Baird, Jenny, and Marsh. Bond, Writer, Clarke, and Matthews were among the dominant figures in the

station. Monastir was the only station in Macedonia until the Salonika station was opened in 1894. The Monastir missionaries were in charge of almost all the work in Macedonia, including that which was conducted in northern Albania.

American Protestant missionaries who worked in Monastir station had always wanted to convert all the inhabitants of Macedonia, without regard to ethnicity or race; Turks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians, Greeks, and all others were viewed as potential converts to 'Evangelical Christianity'. Although they never forgot the Turks, they experienced little or no success in converting them. In practice, they mainly worked among the Bulgarians and Macedonians, both of whom they considered to be and referred to as Bulgarians. Calling most inhabitants Bulgarians was not common only in Monastir but in all of Macedonia, including Skopia, Prishtina, and Salonika. Moreover, all work in the church, with the public, in schools, and elsewhere was conducted in Bulgarian. In the schools, however, English was also encouraged as the language of instruction.

After the First Balkan War, a major geopolitical problem developed; Salonika became a part of Greece, and Monastir, Skopia, and the Kosovo region became parts of Serbia. The Serbian government forbade the use of Bulgarian and ordered all missionary work to be conducted in either Serbian or English. Since American missionaries had nobody in their organization to carry on their work in Serbian, their projects stopped in many places. In the schools, they taught increasingly in English. Among the lower classes, they taught in spoken Macedonian and written English. In the church, the sermon was in Serbian and the preaching in Macedonian. None of the parties involved were satisfied with this situation. American schools had been closed by the Serbian government, but under the influence of British and American consuls they were reopened. When the Bulgarians occupied the city during the First World War, all activities switched back to Bulgarian again, but this reversion did not last more than one year. With the Serb recapture of the city, all American missionaries – except for one – were expelled from Monastir and both church services and schools were closed.

As it was the only station in Macedonia, the territory of Monastir station, without Salonika and its surrounding Greek villages, comprised an area of at least 40,000 square miles and was home to about 2 million people in 1892.<sup>4</sup> Because of the opening of new stations, as well as political conditions, the combined field populations of Monastir station and outstations was recorded as 1.2 million in 1909–10 and 1 million in 1912–14. Monastir station's field population was listed as 80,000 in 1910–12; 60,000 in 1913 and, 40,000 in 1914–15.<sup>5</sup> In following years, although neither annual reports nor population figures from the field were given, the population was obviously decreasing.

In the first years of their work in Monastir, the missionaries and their indigenous helpers tried to organize a Protestant community in some towns and villages. Besides Monastir, churches or preaching stations were established in Resen, Prilep, Vodena, Vardar Enidje, Kafadartsi, Velles, Skopia, Prishtina, Radovish, Raklish, and Strumitsa and its villages Velusa, Murtino and Monospitovo. Most of these sites did not last long. Krushevo and Velles were two other places in which attempts were made but also failed.<sup>6</sup> In 1896, after the opening of a railway to Salonika, this city became another missionary station in the region. The field between Mitrovitsa, Mehomia, and Drama was transferred to this new station. Preaching stations were established in Koleshnitsa, Doiran, and in Koukoush and its villages Todorak and Mezhdurek, in Grumen of the Nevrokop district, in Drama, Tetovo, and Mitrovitsa.<sup>7</sup> Kortcha, in northern Albania, was an outstation of Monastir until it became its own station.

According to the reports of the Monastir Station in 1909, 1910 and 1911, Monastir had three substations, Voden, Vardar Enidje and Prilep. The work in Vardar Enidje was encouraging, with 18 communicants, 54 adherents, and an average attendance of 43 in 1911, but followers were few in Voden. Prilep outstation was closed in the spring of 1911 for lack of followers.<sup>8</sup> Voden and Vardar Enidje were still substations of Monastir in 1912 and 1913, but were situated in Greece after the First Balkan War. When the preacher Zurneff went to Voden in February 1914, he was called to government headquarters and told to return to Vardar Enidje. Finally, these places were transferred to Salonika station.<sup>9</sup>

Before the wars, American missionaries worked in at least five different places within the boundaries of New Serbia. The Monastir Station Annual Report of 1914 indicated that six new substations of New Serbia were transferred to Monastir, Skopia, Prishtina, Tetova, Doiran, Radovish, and Raklish. However, there was no direct communication between the Monastir

TABLE I  
STATISTICS OF MONASTIR STATION, 1910-15

	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915
Population of Field	80,000	80,000	80,000	60,000	40,000	40,000
Missionaries	3	4	4	4	4	4
Native Labourers	6	6	6	10	8	9
Communicants	87	90	90	94	93	99
Adherents	87	90	93	86	86	86
Average Attendance	82	70	72	80	92	106
Sabbath School Members	58	63	59	66	99	133
Under Instruction	48	57	81	184	144	155

Source: ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, v.1, No.9, 10, 11, 12, 13; v.2, No.401, 402.

station and its outstations, because of geopolitical conditions. In Skopia, the mission had a house which functioned as the residence of the pastor and had its one-room chapel. However, Pastor Papeff was arrested in August 1914, and church services were forbidden until the end of the war by the Serbian government. In Prishtina, a church building was partially erected but not completed. In the other outstations, there were no longer any regular services. There was no one in the station and substations, and preaching was in Serbian – Bulgarian was certainly still forbidden. Since no one from Monastir could do any touring in those regions someone from Greece had to.<sup>10</sup>

According to statistics kept by Monastir station from 1910 to 1915, there were usually four missionaries. In December 1916, after recapturing the city, the Serbian government expelled the Clarke family and Pastor Micheff from Monastir. Miss Matthews stayed on as the only missionary until mid-1919, for about two and a half years. During that period, the number of adherents remained about ninety. In spite of the difficulties created by the Serbian government, the number of communicants slightly increased in these six years.

During the Bulgarian occupation, Bulgarian generals and administrators were quiet sympathetic to the Protestant activities in the city and generally encouraged them. However, after the recapture of the city by Serbs, missionary work became increasingly difficult. Some members of the Protestant community of Monastir were forced to sign a paper affirming that, if they again entered any Protestant missionary service, their property would be confiscated.<sup>11</sup> The Serbian government stationed armed guards at the Protestant Church gate in order to prevent non-Protestants from going to church services on three of the Sundays of August and September, 1913.<sup>12</sup> Matthews wrote that 'this practically ended all evangelistic work' in Monastir.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, in the summer 1915, the Serbian government did not accept the marriage documents prepared by Protestant preachers and sentenced the preachers to be imprisoned and fined. The couples were forced to be remarried by an Orthodox priest or to divorce.<sup>14</sup> According to the diary of Monastir Station written by Clarke and Matthews, very few people (mostly station compounds) attended the church service on Sundays until it finally closed. After recapturing Monastir, there were no Protestant church services and only one led by a French Protestant military pastor.<sup>15</sup> Because of the difficult conditions of 1917, the Protestant community of the city consisted of only a few people related to the Orphanage and Girls' Boarding School.

American missionaries' basic ways of propagating 'Evangelical Christianity' were through touring their field. In the towns and villages they visited, they were preaching and speaking to them about their truths and distributing the gospels and religious tracts in their own language, mainly Bulgarian. For instance, in 1909, 108 days were spent touring.<sup>16</sup> In 1910 no

missionaries, only native workers toured for a total of 183 days. Enedji, Voden, Prilep, Resen, and Embroy were each visited.<sup>17</sup> There is no record concerning touring in 1911. Owing to the war, the number of touring days decreased to 71 in 1912, and to just seven in 1913. Bansko Banya, Eleshnitsa, Jakoruda, Belitza, Mehonia, Dobrivistha, Djuma Bala, Voden, Vardar Enidje, Vudrishte, Gumendje, Resen, and Krushee were visited in 1912, and only Voden in 1913.<sup>18</sup> In the Annual Report of Monastir Station of 1915-16, it was stated that 'at no time during the Serbian regime was it possible to do any touring or to hold any public meetings in the outstations'. It was also impossible because of the war.<sup>19</sup> The following years were even worse in terms of touring.

After the Ilinden insurrection of 1903, American missionary E.B. Haskell went to the Resne region to offer relief. During that visit he selected ten orphans who were first taken into the Girls' Boarding School of Monastir. An orphanage was later opened.<sup>20</sup> In the second decade of the twentieth century, there were ten to twenty girls and boys in the orphanage. For instance, in 1913, the number of girls was 13. They also had four boys, but they were enrolled in the Salonika Agricultural and Industrial Institute. Just before closing the Orphanage in 1917, there were 17 girls, but because of the bombardment in the summer of that year, some of them were sent to their relatives and some to Vodena in the hope of placing them beyond the reach of the shells.<sup>21</sup>

The Girls' Boarding School of Monastir was their most important institution in the city besides the church.<sup>22</sup> It was their first school in Macedonia, opened as a day school in 1878, with a Bulgarian teacher and eight pupils. The school was supported by the Women's Board of Interior, a branch of the American Board. The following year, the number of teachers was raised to two and that of students to 34. In 1880, a boarding department was established. During the academic year 1887-88, the school had five teachers, 112 day-pupils, 41 boarders, and its first three graduating students. Since 1888, the curriculum was raised from three to four years, and a fifth year was added in 1911. Until 1895, they received both boys and girls as pupils, but that year it was decided that they would accept only girls.

According to the annual reports of the Girls' Boarding School of Monastir, the number of teachers was a maximum of three and a minimum of one. The rest were native teachers who graduated mostly from the missionary schools of Monastir and Samokov. Until the Serbian occupation of the city, the average number of boarders was 27 and the average number of students was 50 each year. During the following academic year of Serbian occupation, the number of boarders was halved because those students from further Salonika could not come. However the number of day pupils doubled. The reasons for this increase were the new conditions; the Bulgarian and Greek

TABLE 2  
GIRLS' BOARDING SCHOOL OF MONASTIR, 1910-16

Years	Teachers	Students		
		Boarders	Day Pupils	Total
1909-10	7	29	18	47
1910-11	7	28	20	48
1911-12	7	25	33	58
1912-13	7	25	30	55
1913-14	10	13	102	115
1914-15	10	27	77	104
1915-16	7	17	90	107

Source: ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, v.1, No.25, 27, 30, 32, 35; PP, Mary L. Matthews.

schools in the city were closed. The only schools allowed by the Serbians were the American Girls' Boarding School and the Serbian, Jewish and Romanian schools.<sup>23</sup> The Serbian schools were not ready for education. It was known that in the Missionary Primary School of Monastir, Bulgarian had always been used in connection with English. Some students came for this reason and a few boys also came to learn English in order to go afterwards to America. As a result, people who did not want to go to the Serbian schools chose the Girls' Boarding School of Monastir.

Before the Serbian occupation of the city, at least half of the boarders were from the Salonika vilayet; the rest were mainly from Monastir, a few from Skopia, and one from Bulgaria. After the change of political borders, the great majority of boarders came from New Serbia and just a few from New Greece.

According to their custom, the boarders shared the housework, including cooking, under the supervision of a teacher. Their duties changed from time to time, so that each girl could acquire a general knowledge of housework. Principally, all pupils from the city as well as boarders were charged tuition according to their means. This made the attendance more regular and classroom work more satisfactory. Since it was a missionary school, they were not very strict about tuition; in the report of the Girls' Boarding School of Monastir for the academic year 1913-14, it was stated that they had just five full-paying pupils for the first time that year.

After about forty years, Bulgarian, Albanian, Greek, Romanian, Turkish, Jewish, Armenian, Gypsy, Maltese, Levantine and American pupils had all enrolled in the school. However, the vast majority of the students were either Bulgarians or Macedonians (who were viewed as Bulgarians). For instance, according to their reports for the academic year of 1911-12, there were 58 students; 51 of them Bulgarian, three Albanian, two Jewish, one



Greek and one American. Until 1912, of 40 girls who graduated, 33 were Bulgarian, two Albanian, two Romanian, two Serb, and one Greek.

Many graduates went on to teach in the towns and villages for the mission. Serbian graduates ran a Serbian missionary school at Prishtina. Albanian graduates conducted the first school for Albanian girls in Albania. Of the 40 graduates, 38 taught in American mission schools and/or out-stations. In 1912, 15 were teaching under the mission, and eight graduates continued their education in the US or Canada, three in the American College of Uskudar (Istanbul), and seven in Samokov, Bulgaria.

In the early years of the school, Bulgarian was the common language. More and more, however, English became the principal language, and in the five classes of the High School, pupils used American textbooks and recited in English. Sometimes, exceptionally, Greek and Albanian were taught to those pupils desiring to learn them. All students were taught the Bible in English.

After the first Serb occupation of the city, the government prohibited both the teaching in Bulgarian and the use of Bulgarian textbooks. English and Serbian were the only options, and the Serbian government sent a teacher from Belgrade to teach Serbian and paid her salary. They did not accept foreign teachers, except for American and British ones, as they aimed to prevent Bulgarian teachers from working in the Monastir Girls' School. During the Bulgarian occupation American missionaries freely taught in Bulgarian again in their schools, but this lasted less than one year. After the Serbs came back to the city, in November 1916, they closed the school.

According to the missionaries' appeals to the Serbian authorities 'the sole object of preaching and school work was to help the people of every race to a higher moral and spiritual life by giving them the pure gospels.'<sup>24</sup> In another report they stated that 'the purpose of the school is to raise up such women as shall be blessings to their own problem, whom they will influence as teachers or as wives and mothers in their own houses.' However, 'it was the hope of the teachers that in [the] future the number of workers going out from the school, as teachers or Bible women, may be greatly increased, and that this institution may radiate more light and blessing over all this land.' In addition, they were proud of the fact that 'every graduate has been a professing evangelical Christian, and with very few exceptions, have continued in the faith of their choice.'<sup>25</sup>

Besides the Girls' Boarding School, the American Board had a combined primary school and kindergarten, four preparatory grades and a Boys' Department as a branch of the Girls' Boarding School in Monastir. Later, the Boys' School separated completely. Even though most of these institutions did not remain operational for very long, American missionaries also opened several primary schools in Macedonia, such as those in Todorak and

Mezhdurek (both in Koukoush district), Vardar Enidje, Koleshino, Monospitovo, and Strumitsa, Drama, Bausko, Banya, Mehomia, and Eleshnitsa in the Razlog district. In all these schools, the language of instruction was Bulgarian.<sup>26</sup> In 1913 the Primary school in Enidje continued to function, but the territory was left to Greece and that outstation to the Salonika station.

American missionaries described Monastir as the chief city of western Macedonia.<sup>27</sup> According to the first census taken in 1831, the total population of Monastir was 33,141.<sup>28</sup> An American missionary reported the population of the city as 40,000 in 1894.<sup>29</sup> The official number, given in the Ottoman year books (Salname), was 40,461 before the Balkan wars.<sup>30</sup> M.L. Matthews, another American missionary, estimated about 90,000 for the population of the city before the Balkan wars because of the refugees who fled from their villages in the insurrection of 1903.<sup>31</sup> During the wars, however, thousands of Turks, Macedonians and Greeks left the city and its surroundings. After the wars, the population of the city was reduced to 13,000.<sup>32</sup> In 1921, the population of the city was 28,418.<sup>33</sup>

The missionaries who came to the city realized that there were ethno-linguistic and nationality problems. The American missionary Jenney reported that 'there is but one drawback, that is language. One needs to know Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, Wallachian and Albanian, at least, to be very successful here. The language is a compound of all these, with a little French and German. The people will use the words of from three to seven of these languages in one sentence, and call it Bulgarian. Many of the people could hardly tell whether they were of one nationality or of another; for Bulgarians had been Hellenized and vice-versa; and Serbs, Vlachs, Albanians and others had intermingled almost inextricably. Our missionaries went there, not for any one group, but for all, irrespective of their races and language.'<sup>34</sup>

In 1894 they described Monastir as 'a Turkish city with white minarets and crooked streets full of dogs... it has long been a strong military station, a Babel of tongues and a circus of customs beyond imagination. The 40,000 inhabitants consisted of Turks, Bulgarians, Wallachians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, Gypsies and 'scattering'. ... The official language is Turkish, the language of trade Bulgarian, and the 'upper ten' language French. For the highest efficiency here a missionary should learn the above three beside his own. Should he add Wallachian (Roumanian) or Albanian it would increase his usefulness.'<sup>35</sup>

American missionaries did not consider Macedonian a distinct nationality or language. Missionaries believed that Macedonians were really Bulgarian and that their language was simply a dialect of Bulgarian. However, in some cases they admitted that Macedonian was different than Bulgarian. When M.L. Matthews reported on a missionary who studied

Bulgarian in Monastir, she noted: 'Miss Davis has a very good start in Bulgarian, already, and I believe she can learn it here quite correctly, though the feeling of many in the mission is, that is necessary to learn it in Bulgaria. There is so much difference, that is almost like learning two languages...'<sup>36</sup>

Even though they had not seriously considered that the Macedonian language was anything more than a variety of Bulgarian, during the Serbian occupation they took full advantage of the different situations challenging them. After the occupation of Monastir, for the first time the Serbian government demanded that the missionaries give up the use of the Bulgarian language in the Girls' Boarding School. If they wanted, they could use Serbian instead of Bulgarian. Neither students nor teachers were ready for such a change as none could understand the Serb language. Finally, they achieved an agreement reported as follows: 'Fortunately for us the government claims that 'Macedonian' is the southern dialect of Serbian so we claimed the right of Macedonian in all explanations and oral teaching. Our primary teachers are all of them 'Macedonian' girls so thus easily was the matter of the language spoken in the school room solved.' The school books in the Bulgarian language were abolished but the Bible lessons continued in Bulgarian and were not interfered with.<sup>37</sup>

In the summer of 1915, the Serbian government realized that the church service of the American Protestants in Monastir was still in Bulgarian. They ordered it to be changed to Serbian immediately. W.P. Clarke answered that none of them were fluent enough to conduct the church service in Serbian but that they were searching for someone who could do it: 'A compromise was made by agreeing that the scripture reading should be from the Serbian Bible, but the sermon should be preached in the local Macedonian dialect which is a Slavic speech, neither pure Bulgarian nor pure Serbian, more nearly resembling the former, but claimed by the Serbians to be 'Southern Serbian'.<sup>38</sup>

However, both sides were aware that this was a temporary arrangement. The missionaries had to accept it in order to continue their work, for it was better than Serbian. The Serbian government accepted this, because it was better than Bulgarian. Nevertheless, it was known by both sides that when the government would gain more power they would enforce the use of the Serbian language.<sup>39</sup>

Besides the Balkan wars, Monastir suffered from the continued invasions of the Balkan states during the First World War. Fifty days after the Bulgarian occupation of the city, French aeroplanes began to bomb on 23 January 1916. This bombardment caused considerable damage and continued until the Serbs came back to the city on 19 November 1916. The Central Powers who established themselves in the surrounding mountains then began to bombard the city for 22 months. Almost every building was hit and some of them twice. Twelve shells fell on the missionary compound itself. Most of the city was essentially demolished.

TABLE 3  
SHELL ATTACKS ON MONASTIR CITY (NOVEMBER 1916–DECEMBER 1917)

Months	Number of Shells
November 1916	795
December 1916	995
January 1917	402
February 1917	523
March 1917	3,700
April 1917	1,500
May 1917	694
June 1917	747
July 1917	831
August 1917	1,972
September 1917	166
October 1917	983
November 1917	100
December 1917	6

*Source:* ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews. (From the wall of the Mayor's office, Monastir).

Monastir received at least 13,415 shells from between November 1916 and the end of December 1917. March 1917 was the most difficult month, 3,700 shells fell in that month; some of them were even gas shells. The months of August and April 1917, followed as the worst months in terms of bombardment. In these 400 days, approximately 33 bombs a day fell on the city. Before the war, there were 6,586 houses in the city, and by the war's end 3,195 of them were damaged or destroyed.<sup>40</sup> Five hundred civilians were killed, and 739 wounded. Bombardment of the city continued until the end of September. M.L. Matthews wrote to Board on 25 September 1918, 'We are happy today in being free from shell-fire and gas'.<sup>41</sup>

More than one year after the Serbian occupation, on 30 January 1914, W.P. Clarke described the situation in Monastir: 'We had just 'celebrated' the annexation of the new Serbian territory; as Serbia came to 'free' these people we ought to have rejoiced at that time and ever since. But unfortunately that not the case; most every one would be glad to welcome the Turks back again and welcome them as liberators. Many have moved away; others, as well as Turks, and many more will leave if conditions don't improve. Duties are exorbitant, prices very high, business is dull, work is scarce. Those in possession at present seem to be greater bribe-takers than the Turks, ... according to what people say, they are not as easily satisfied as the Turks but want larger amount.'<sup>42</sup>

About six months later, Clarke reported that these conditions were the same even in Skopia: 'Here in Monastir trade has greatly fallen off but I had supposed that it was good in Skopia, being on the direct line of railway connection with Belgrade and Serbia in general; but I was surprised to find that in Skopia too business is dull.'<sup>43</sup>

During the wars, many villages and places around Monastir were destroyed and burned, and their inhabitants filled the city. Obviously, they were in difficult situations and everything was needed but in decreasing supply. M.L. Matthews wrote on 23 December 1912 that food had become very expensive. The refugees were staying at mosques and in people's houses. Their villages had been burned, they had no livestock left, and there were many Turkish women and children whose husbands or fathers went to war but did not return. Matthews first assumed that the number of refugees was about four to five thousand, but three days later she corrected that number. There were ten thousand needy people, of whom six thousand were refugees from the burned villages! The demand for help was much greater than she assumed earlier, and people had already starved to death.<sup>44</sup>

The British, Austrian, American and French consulates, the Macedonian Relief Fund, and the American missionaries began to provide bread for the refugees. Clarke wrote in early February that, 'Prices are going up again on account of duties, put on by Serbia on goods coming here in addition to custom charges in Salonika'. The former city hospital was given to the representatives of the Macedonian Relief Fund, and they administered it. While these bodies were distributing relief, hundreds of people were still out of reach (as many as 5,000) and much more money was needed. Clarke was quite afraid that the need would not end by the end of March.<sup>45</sup>

The conditions of refugees were no better in April 1913. As reported by W.P. Clarke: 'Even though Spring has come, very few refugees have gone back to their villages or somewhere. The prospect was not bright that most refugees would have gone. Aside from the need for shelter, etc. in the villages, it apparently was not safe for them in many places.' Moreover, the money which had been collected for distribution to the refugees was nearly finished and there was not much hope of finding more.<sup>46</sup>

Bread distribution by the American missionaries closed on 20 April 1913, as was expected. Although a few refugees later received a small amount of money to feed their families, most of them were begging door-to-door. Some of the refugees had departed and were returning to their villages. W.C. Clarke visited five burned villages around Monastir, four Turkish and one Christian. Each village had only three to five houses still standing. While in the Christian villages most of the houses were being rebuilt and most of the inhabitants had returned or were housed in neighbouring villages, no houses were rebuilt and only a few people came back in the Turkish villages.<sup>47</sup> The following autumn and winter, the condition of refugees was no better than before. According to W.P. Clarke's letter to their headquarters, there were still eight or ten thousand refugees in Monastir in the spring of 1914. Some of them received relief occasionally, yet there was no progress in rebuilding houses of villagers so that they could

return to their homes. It seemed even in the coming winter, they were going to remain in the city.<sup>48</sup>

The severe conditions of the First World War in Monastir did not affect only the refugees but the whole population. Young men were conscripted into the army, exorbitant taxes had been taken, and some people were not allowed to reap their grain because they could not afford to pay their taxes. While some people were starving to death, food was left in the fields. Clarke continued in the fall of 1914 witnessing, 'Three liras taxes demanded on a sod hut; property taxes an amount almost equal to its own value; and so on. No wonder many look back with longing to their condition under the Turks'.<sup>49</sup>

The beginning of the First World War made conditions more difficult for the refugees in Monastir. Since Turkey declared war, the Serbian government began drafting Muslims into the army. Many of them were refugees and had to leave their families in even more destitute conditions. Clarke reported on 20 January 1915 that, 'It seems as though there must be deaths from starvation'. He had to refuse so many people and could only give ten cents each a week for a hundred families.<sup>50</sup>

Besides the endless wars, refugees, severe political and economic conditions, the population of Monastir also suffered from epidemic diseases between 1910 and 1920. In mid August 1911 cholera broke out in the city and continued until October. In order to avoid panic, the authorities tried to hide the real number of deaths. Yet reported numbers of deaths per day were as high as 39. A policeman told the missionaries that in 43 days, ending on 9 September, the total fatalities had reached 527; this figure only reflected the mid point of the epidemic. All schools were also kept closed during the epidemic.<sup>51</sup> Another great epidemic was typhus. It occurred mainly among the wounded and other soldiers and the prisoners of war in March 1915. The mortality figures ranged from ten, twenty, thirty, to fifty and even eighty a day. In the first week of March, even four doctors died of the dreaded spotted typhus. The schools were again closed for six weeks.<sup>52</sup>

The American Red Cross Sanitary Commissioner began to work in Monastir with two doctors. The Board also decided to find and send a missionary doctor to remain in the city in April 1915.<sup>53</sup> The request was made again and confirmed by W.P. Clarke in the spring of 1916, but it could not be realized any way.<sup>54</sup> In mid April 1917, the British sisters opened an Anglo-Serb hospital for civilians in the cellar of the old Turkish Military School. Since they could not teach – the school had been closed – three assistant teachers of the Monastir Girls' Boarding School went to help them regularly.<sup>55</sup>

Industrial relief work, carried out by the wife of W.P. Clarke, was the other charitable activity of the American missionaries in Monastir during the wars. She began in the spring of 1913 by donating many looms and supplies for weaving, lace making and sewing for the women,<sup>56</sup> most of whom were

Turkish. Aside from this industrial work, food was also given in small quantities to the most needy, especially those with babies and small children. The supplies were exhausted by the spring of 1916, but she managed to obtain more from the Queen of Bulgaria and continued to help a few of the most needy through the summer of 1916.<sup>57</sup> Owing to the deportation of Mrs Clarke with her husband from Monastir on 4 December 1916, industrial relief work was continued by M.L. Matthews in 1917. However, it was thereafter limited to crocheting lace or knitting socks, and reduced to encompass a smaller number of people; many women had to be refused.<sup>58</sup>

Another sort of relief work for women whose husbands and sons worked in the US and sent money to their families was provided mostly in 1918, by the last American missionary in Monastir, M.L. Matthews. Because of wartime conditions, sending money from the US to Macedonia was very expensive and almost impossible. Women who had husbands or sons in the US gave her their addresses. She gave these to the US Consul in Salonika. The Consul sent a letter to each man in the US telling him how to forward money to him. The Consul sent the forthcoming funds to M.L. Matthews and she passed this money on to the women, returning their receipts to the Consul. At the beginning of March 1918, there were 160 women on Matthews' list, and there were 454 by the end of August. In total, about 900 women from forty towns and villages received a hundred thousand dollars from their husbands and sons via the Monastir station. This assistance broke down much of the prejudice harboured against Protestant missionary work and opened many homes which had been closed to them.<sup>59</sup>

American missionaries simply could not accept Turkish rule in Macedonia. For instance, during the First Balkan War, the Turkish army did not leave the city on the first day. They instead tried to defend the city for three or four days. In her diary, M.L. Matthews criticized the Turks for not leaving immediately, so that the city had to be bombarded by the Serbians. However, when the others did not leave the city for months and even years, and the city had been bombed continuously, she did not say the same. The Turkish authorities did not interfere in their church or school matters, or regarding their language during Ottoman rule. The missionaries at least admitted that in the time of the disarmament (October–November 1910) in Voden, the Turkish authorities did not even search the houses of Protestants.<sup>60</sup> Whatever privileges the Turkish government allowed them, the missionaries considered that these were their entitled rights and the obligation of the Turks to afford them. Despite these accommodations, they did not feel comfortable under Ottoman rule. Following the Turkish retreat from Monastir, American missionary D. Davis wrote to Boston that until that time she did not feel free to go into the market alone; now that the Turks were no longer there she would be freer.<sup>61</sup>

They preferred any Christian rule in Macedonia (Bulgarian, Greek, or Serbian) to that of the Turks. In spite of the fact that the Greeks and Serbs tolerated them less than did the Turks, and that the Serbians even closed their schools and the Greeks burned their churches, the missionaries still preferred them to Turks because, probably, they were at least 'Christian'. There were few sentences underlined by M.L. Matthews in her Monastir Girls' Boarding School diary, but two of them were those relating General Allenby's entrance into Jerusalem. Nonetheless, the Greeks and Serbs both were clearly less preferable than the Bulgarians.

Certainly the Bulgarians were the missionaries' most favoured nation in the Balkan region. Years later, M.L. Matthews even mentioned in a letter to one of her friends that during the Bulgarian occupation of Monastir, while 'Bulgarian officers were arrogant' and part of the Girls' Boarding School compound was requisitioned for their horses for three weeks,<sup>62</sup> generally the 'Bulgarian soldiers, officers and even the generals ... have been on most friendly terms with Americans' and that 'the advent of the Bulgarians ... was a most welcome change'.<sup>63</sup> Fellow American missionary D. Davis expressed her feeling about the Bulgarian occupation of Monastir to the Board; 'It is a joy to live under our new government. We feel that we are in the hands of good friends at last. God grant there may be not much change for a long time.'<sup>64</sup>

American missionaries did not consider the Macedonians to be a distinct nation from the Bulgarians and thought their language was simply a dialect of Bulgarian. In this view, all of Macedonia was merely a part of a greater Bulgaria. There is no doubt that American missionaries in Macedonia were pro-Bulgarian. They were convinced that within the Macedonian territory, 'extending from Scopia and Ochrida to Drama, the great bulk of the population is [of] Bulgarian origin, language and customs, and forms an integral part of [the] Bulgarian nation.'<sup>65</sup> Sending telegrams to US President Wilson and a US senator in December 1918, they expressed this view<sup>66</sup> and seemed to act according to Bulgaria's ambitions. They insisted that the Treaty of San Stefano would have been better for all peoples of European Turkey if it had been allowed to stand.<sup>67</sup> Actually, by teaching in the Bulgarian language in their schools in Macedonia, the missionaries took an active part in the Bulgarization of Macedonia. Naturally, the Bulgarian authorities were sympathetic to their activities.

American missionaries were capable and possessed much self confidence; they had money (at least they were richer than the locals), they had prestige and power, they had good relations with non-governmental, international organizations – mostly those of Protestant Americans or British and they had access to consuls, governors and generals. Their privileged positions thus afforded them a large measure of freedom to express their views. Governors, consuls, and other prestigious persons of



Monastir were present at their schools' graduating ceremonies and at their other events. The missionaries were under British and American protection and closely connected with them, their diplomats gave advice on how to act and handle problems with local authorities, and they could rely on the influence of these contacts to a certain extent if they had difficulties with the local governments. When problems were most serious, the Board could make the American government in Washington DC, back them.<sup>68</sup>

## NOTES

1. The classic works in studies of identity formation and development, by authors such as Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, 1966); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), have provided conceptual building blocks that underscore the malleability of identities in terms of the medium of their communications (languages, print media, histories, and so forth).
2. *Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission* (ABCFM). Houghton Library, Harvard University, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.267, 281.
3. James F. Clarke, *Bible Societies, American Missionaries and the National Revival of Bulgaria* (New York, 1971), p.299.
4. *The Missionary Herald*. Vol.LXXXVIII, No.10, Oct. 1892.
5. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission. Vol.1, No.9, 10, 11, 12, 13; Vol.2, No.401, 402.
6. *The Missionary Herald*, Vol.LXXXVIII, No.10, Oct. 1892.
7. V.A. Tsanoff, *Reports and Letters of American Missionaries Referring to the Distribution of Nationalities in the Former Provinces of European Turkey, 1858-1918* (Sofia, 1919), p.72.
8. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.29.
9. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission. Vol.1, No.31.
10. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.401, 402 and 406.
11. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission. Vol.2, No.270.
12. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.31; *Personal Papers* (PP), Mary L. Matthews. *Journal of Monastir Station* (Journal).
13. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission. Vol.1, No.36
14. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, Journal.
15. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, File No.1.
16. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.26.
17. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.28.
18. ABCFM, *Biographical Collection* (BC), Individual, Box 40, No.40:37.
19. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.36.
20. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews.
21. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, Journal.
22. They found that Monastir was the best city in Macedonia for their purpose, and the place of the Girls' Boarding School was in the best part of the city. Before the Serbian occupation of the city there were four such schools around the Girls' Boarding school, one for Romanian boys, a large boarding school for Bulgarian boys, a large Greek boarding school for girls, and the Greek Primary school. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.25.
23. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.31.
24. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, File No.3.
25. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews; ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.27.
26. Tsanoff, *Reports and Letters*, pp.72-3.
27. Monastir (Bitolia) is on a plateau 200 ft in elevation, surrounded by high mountains, and dominated by Mt. Peristeri (altitude 8,000ft). Turkey ruled there for five and a half centuries.

- The slopes had been denuded for fuel (mineral coal had either not been discovered or was not significant), and the people were mostly poor and life was difficult. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, File No.3.
28. Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İlk Nüfus Sayımı 1831* (Ankara, 1943), p.199.
  29. Tsanoff, *Reports and Letters*, p.121.
  30. Mehmet Tevfik, *Manastır Vilayetinein Tarihçesi* (Manastır, 1327), p.36.
  31. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, File No.3; ABCFM, BC, Box 40, File No.37.
  32. ABCFM, BC, Individual, Box 40, File No.37.
  33. Bernard Lory and Alexandre Popovic, 'Balkanlar' in Kavşağında Manastır, 1816-1918', in Paul Dumont and François Georgeon (eds.), *Modernleşme Sürecinde Osmanlı Kentleri*, Trans. Ali Berktaş, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), p.77.
  34. ABCFM, Manuscript Histories of Missions, C.T. Riggs, Near East, No.31:4.
  35. *Missionary News*, No.47, 19 March 1894.
  36. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.4, No.131.
  37. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.32.
  38. Another missionary, D. Davis, while reporting the above mentioned case to the Board, still referred to that "'Macedonian" dialect which he called 'Southern Serbian' but which we know to be almost pure Bulgarian.' ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.406.
  39. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.36.
  40. In one day, 20 Aug. 1917, 1,000 houses were burned. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, Journal.
  41. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.4, No.178.
  42. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.271.
  43. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.273.
  44. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, File No.1.
  45. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.265.
  46. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.29, No.266.
  47. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.267. At the end of June, Clarke reported that comparatively little had been done concerning the rebuilding of burned villages and that much money was needed. ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.265.
  48. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.31.
  49. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.275.
  50. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.278.
  51. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.29; PP, Mary L. Matthews.
  52. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.33; Vol.2, No.279, 281.
  53. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.282.
  54. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.90.
  55. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, Journal.
  56. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.31.
  57. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.36.
  58. ABCFM, PP, Mary L. Matthews, Journal.
  59. ABCFM, BC, Mary L. Matthews, Box, 40, No.40:37.
  60. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.28.
  61. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.402.
  62. ABCFM, BC, Mary L. Matthews, Box 40, No.40:37.
  63. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.1, No.36.
  64. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Balkan Mission, Vol.2, No.408.
  65. Tsanoff, *Reports and Letters*, p.86.
  66. *Ibid.*, pp.85-90.
  67. George Washburn, *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), p.132.
  68. ABCFM, ABC, 17.8, Vol.2, Balkan Mission, No.269, 403.