

## Religious and Educational Activities Of American Protestant Missionaries in Bursa

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Since ancient times in history, Bursa has been a city of political, social and commercial prominence. Understanding the prominence of Bursa, American missionaries started to get organized in Bursa only 14 years after their missionary acts started in Anatolia by establishing a station in Bursa in 1834.

Missionaries carried out many activities in Bursa. The most important ones of these activities are in the field of education and religion. They have excelled in their activities in religious field by establishing the Bursa Protestant Church on 25 July 1848. They expanded their activities by distributing Bibles (Yıldız, 2007a).

### Religious Activities of American Missionaries in Bursa

As the aim of the American Missionaries in Bursa was to convert Armenians and Greeks into Protestantism, they went all lengths. They opened schools and hospitals and carried out missionary activities in orphanages (Yıldız, 2007b). Religious activities cover all Protestantism-related activities in churches and small fanes in Bursa city centre and in outer stations.

A Christian theologian named Martin Luther opened red flag against the Catholic Church by placing a ninety-five item of objective thesis on the door of Wittenberg Church. This movement, which was started by Martin Luther and pursued by Jean Calvin and Aultrich Zwingli caused the Protestantism sect to come into being (Erbaş, 2004:40).

Protestantism is one the main three branches of Christianity. It came into being with reformist movements in the 16th century. The most common movement is Lutherism. The name “free churches” used for the 19th century Protestant communities against state churches is now used to identify the churches completely alienating especially from Catholic services and principles in the U.S. (Öztürk ve Yıldız, 2007:12).

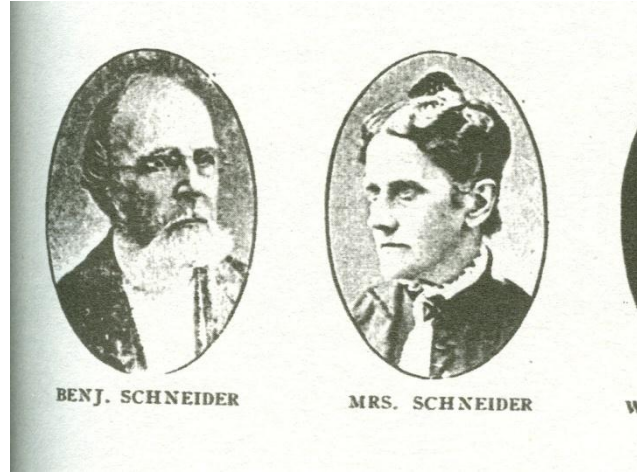
American protestant missionaries carried out effective religious activities on Armenians. In this period, Armenians dwelled in Russia, Iran, India, Chinese, Europe and America, and Protestants started to get interested in Armenians as of the year 1813. British Bible Communities translated the whole Bible into Armenian and published the New Testament into Armenian. The American Board founded its first mission in Palestine in 1820 and Missionary Parsons started activities by visiting Jerusalem. As of 1822, American Board missionaries came to be influential on Armenians and the New Testament was translated into Turkish. In 1829, ABCFM established a mission among Turkish Armenians and thus American Protestants get through with Armenians in the field (Dwight, 1854:13-31).

In 1830, Protestants started to study Gregorian Armenians profoundly. The missionaries conducted studies on other Christians and Armenians in Turkey, which is a Muslim area, and translated Protestant literature into Armenian Turkish and printed it in Armenian alphabet thanks to Harrison Dwight and William Goodel (Grabill, 1971:11-12). With an aim to be influential, American Board Organization founded stations everywhere in Anatolia (Yıldız, 2007c). Activities of American Protestants rapidly increased all over Anatolia, including Bursa. While there were 4 churches and 105 members in 1846, these figures raised up to 112 churches and 12.109 Protestant church members in the early 1900 (Güler, 2005).

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When Benjamin Schneider came to Bursa, there were 3 Greek priests in Bursa. One of these priests went to Mudanya and worked there. Armenians had 1 bishop, 2 priests and 16 preachers. The bishop changed frequently. Protestants could not carry out their activities in Bursa freely until a bishop supporting Protestants came to Bursa. Missionaries first started religious services at school: they gave away books to people and told them Protestantism (Schneider, 1846:131-139).



**Schneider's Family Photos (Yıldız,2007d)**

Missionary Schneider held meetings in Bursa and managed religious activities in person. He arranged Sunday masses. Mrs. Schneider recited the Bible to women attendees after Sunday masses. Tuesdays were allocated for the recitation of the Bible to women members and the Bible school was open for men on Wednesdays and religion classes were given on Fridays. Small books and articles were translated and missionaries gave away them in their home visits, thus they started to introduce Protestantism sect in Bursa (Schneider, 1846:201).

After missionary Benjamin Schneider founded Bursa Outer Station, he worked to found a church. He established the Bursa Protestant Church on 25 July 1848 (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 594, No: 16). The Bursa Protestant Church was founded with 7 members and a Bible class was opened and they held prayer meetings once fortnight (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 582, No: 449).

It is generally believed that priests directly administer missionary activities but in the Board organization assigned missionaries conducted missionary activities whilst the priests were engaged in religious affairs. The duties of the priests in Bursa were specified as follows (Yıldız, 2007a):

1. Sunday: Two preaching services and evening prayer meeting
2. Monday: A general invocation every week and a special invocation with Protestants all over the world
3. Wednesday: Preach to women members
4. Thursday: Special invocation to women at day time and a class open for people in the evening
5. Friday: Business meeting for the Church committee
6. Saturday: Meeting and reciting a hymn under the administration of the priest
7. Besides, priest are to make spiritual visits, conduct weddings, baptize and funeral service every week.

The priests routinely conducted wedding, baptize, funeral services and missionaries attended preaches. Missionaries preached to people everywhere they travelled and tried to convert them into Protestantism (Schneider, 1846:145-146).

In 1851, the number of churches increased up to 17 and weekly Bible meetings for women continued. Thus, the number of members in the Bursa Church increased steadily in this period (Station Reports, 1851:288; P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 582, No: 481).

While priests were directly assigned by the American Board organization in 1848, the local Protestants wanted to elect their own priests as their population increased. In this period, the Board Organization took views from Armenians when they were founding churches for Protestant Armenians. It was decided that Protestant Armenian churches were to feature the following properties (Dwight, 1854:334-336):

1. Protestant Armenian churches bishop (or Priest) and priest assistants are to be chosen by male members
2. The number of bishop and two priest-assistants in the first Armenian Protestant Church in Istanbul are to be increased upon request.
3. The discipline rules are to be based on the Bible's principles and Priests and church workers are to have managerial discipline
4. The church members are to be chosen by the committee. Elections are to be held at regular intervals
5. Bishop, Priest and Priest-assistant are to be chosen by the church. American Board Missionaries and other Christians are to help the church
6. Each Bishop and Priest is to be able to manage his own preach, religious ceremony, teach the religion and be sympathetic. Priest assistant is to help the poor in the church. They are to collect charity for them. The priest is to be present in all meetings in the church.
7. The priest is to be able to do baptize
8. The candidates are to be carefully tested, and taught the doctrines of the Bible
9. The members of the church are to be regularly tested
10. The members are to be registered to the church and their addresses are to be noted down

Missionaries attached special importance to Sunday masses. In Bursa, every sect conducted their ceremonies freely: Jews attended these ceremonies on Saturdays and Christians attended them on Sundays. It is known that Armenians and Greeks attended Sunday masses of Protestants (Schneider, 1846:148-151).

The Board Organization appointed priests to stations and outer satiations and paid their salaries from its own budget. In 1858, Missionary Bliss visited Bursa and informed the community about the restoration of the Small Protestant fane and Protestantism works. In this period, as the Protestant community in Bursa enlarged, the Priest needed to have a worker to conduct Sunday masses (Bliss, 1858:248-249).

*As missionary Barnum stated on 29 April 1859, the Bursa Church is made from stone and very clean. There is a school room on the ground floor. The church is not very busy Average number of members is 30. If missionaries distribute books more intensively, Protestantism would spread. The seeds of these church works were planted over the past 20 years. Male members of the church are generally active. They tried to infuse Christian unity and love in the church".* In the same year, Priest Stepan continued to work. Mr. Stepan and Mr. Barnum communicated via letters and methods about Protestantism were told to the Bursa priest by the missionary (Yıldız, 2007a).

During the years without missionaries, Protestantism works in Bursa were stagnant. In 1860, the number of members increased to 36 in spite of the fact that there was not a priest (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 582 No: 5). The Bursa church stood on its feet and in 1862, a Priest was appointed and the priest tried to recruit new members by making visits to home (Trowbridge, 1862: 220).

In the period mentioned, Protestant Church was founded and stated activities, in the period when there was not a missionary religious activities continued, the priest of the church and members carried on Protestantism activities.

The priest had been influential in religious studies in 1881 (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 596, No: 539) and the report for the same year was presented in detail (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 598, No: 19, 20).

### **Report Released in 1881 by Bursa Protestant Church**

1. The number of church 84 (28 males, 56 females).
2. The number of people recruited throughout the year: 20 ( 3 males, 17 females)
3. Managerial occasions like death and marriage
4. The community came together 5 times
5. 8 children were baptized
6. 8 people died
7. The total budget of the church  
Income: 7846  
Expenses: 7846  
Priest salaries: 4800 Piaster

In 1897, a remarkable point in religious activities in Bursa Station was the increase in the number of empty churches in the area. The church became vacant due to such reasons as death, transfer and digression and missionaries needed the help of other preachers in order not to cease religious services. Besides, it was necessary that the bell of the church be ringed regularly for Sunday masses and the expenses of the church be met by charity.

Missionary Baldwin visited places 3 to 4 day-distance twice and with visits missionaries created a better atmosphere. During the visits, the performances of priests in holy practice originated from the Christ Jesus and performed by the priest and their performances in wedding ceremonies were assessed and missionaries trained priests.

In this period, preaches in Sunday masses continued and the missionary helped the priests and attended weekly preach meetings. Preaching services regularly continued in the fane in the western Bursa but the old preacher was employed back to this position without any support from the Board. The salary of the preacher was met by a community of 70 to 80 people and the same community also supported orphans (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 606, No: 740, 741, 743).

The Bursa Protestant Church was administrated by Priest H. Arabian, who graduated from the Merzifon Clergy School until September 1906. As the priest contracted pneumonitis, he could work there only for a short period of time (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 617, No: 623).

After 1908, missionary acts continued in spite of the lack of missionaries. In 1909, the American Board Organization made new decisions about churches and Bible House fane (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 616, No: 868). According to the year-end report released in 1909, the community was composed of 428 people and 11 new people were recruited during the year and average number of associates was 960. The Bursa Preacher died after a long period of illness (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 628, No: 263).

In 1912, the number of Bursa community decreased, Mr. Otto Baghdasarian's going to Scotland was an important cause for the decrease in the number of community. Due to immigrations from other provinces, the community changed a lot. When Priest Baghdasarian went to Scotland, Priest Kawme Aclahadian was tentatively appointed to the church (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 628, No: 115, 120, 121).



**Photo: A Current Photo of the Bursa Prot 1**

On 10 August 1913, a regular preacher was appointed to the Bursa Church and Mr. Adanalian started his duty as a preacher. Children were also brought to Sunday masses. In 1914, Mr. Adanalian worked in the area and the preacher was supported by Armenians living in London (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 630, No: 26, 29, 30, 32). During the National Struggle Period, the Board Organization decided to appoint priest to Bursa on October, 1922. In the end, Mr. Haroutun Karnigian was appointed to the Protestant church (Riggs, 1922: 467-468).

After Bursa American Girls' Collage was closed down in 1928, no religious activities of the Board Organization in Bursa were seen. Today, the Bursa Protestant Church was reopened in April, 1996 and recently the church has started a very active propaganda. The supports Bursa Protestant Church received from British missionary organizations appeared in the media from time to time (Bayzan, 2000). Today Protestants conduct religious acts by giving away Bibles in Bursa and around.

### **Educational Activities Of American Protestant Missionaries In Bursa**

Education is one of the activities to which missionaries attach great importance. Immediately after American missionaries stepped in Anatolia, they started educational activities. They opened schools almost every region in Ottoman State. As in all other activities, the aim of educational activities is to influence Armenians and Greek minorities and attract them to their side. Americans initiated educational activities in this field to take care of Armenians (Öztürk ve Yıldız, 2007:60).

The first American missionary school in Ottoman Empire was opened in Beirut in 1824. In Istanbul, missionary Goodell started many school in 1831. The Girls' school opened in Goodell's house had 28 students (Kocabaşoğlu, 2000:49-50).

A school was opened for Armenians in Beyoğlu district of Istanbul in 1834 by American missionaries. American missionaries sank themselves into great effort to convert Armenians into Protestantism. In 1848, when Ottoman State recognized Protestants as a separate community, Armenians were divided into three as Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant. After this incidence, American missionaries increased the number of education institutions significantly and tried to convert them into Protestantism (Haydaroğlu, 1993:121; Ertuğrul, 1999:32).

Principally, Ottoman government officially identified the programs of American schools in the country. They determined which schools worked with license and which without license. It is important in that it showed that these schools were scattered all around the Ottoman land. Therefore, it is possible to show the distribution of American schools in the Ottoman State as follows (Mutlu, 2005:299-309; Vahapoğlu, 1992:172-175; Ertuğrul, 2002:27):

1. Adana, American Protestant Girls' Junior High School,
2. Adana, American Protestant Primary School,
3. Adana, Armenian Protestant People's School,
4. Tarsus, Pavlos Protestant School,
5. Tarsus, Armenian Protestant Girls' School,
6. Haçin, American Protestant Girls' and Boys' School,
7. Haçin- Kozan, Art School,
8. İzmir, American Protestant Boys' School,
9. İzmir, American Protestant Girls' and Boys' School,
10. Manisa, American Protestant School,
11. İzmir, Nursery School and Facilities,
12. Bursa, American Boarding Girls' School,
13. Bursa American Boys' School,
14. Bandırma American Protestant School,
15. Mardin, American Protestant Girls' School,
16. Mardin, American Protestant Boys' School,
17. Erzurum, Girls' Boarding School,
18. Erzurum, Boys' Boarding School,
19. Kayseri, Talas, American Protestant Boys' School,
20. Kayseri, American Protestant Boys' School,
21. Kayseri, American Protestant Girls' School,
22. Kayseri, Nursery
23. Yozgat Sungurlu County, American Protestant Girls' and Boys' School,
24. Kırşehir, Keskin County, Protestant Boys' School,
25. Van, American Protestant Girls' School,
26. Van, American Protestant Boys' School,
27. Mosul, American Protestant Boys' School,
28. Mosul, American Protestant Girls' School,
29. Antep, American Protestant Boys' School,
30. Antep, American Protestant Girls' School,
31. Maraş, American Protestant Girls' School,
32. Maraş, American Protestant Girls' and Boys' School,
33. Zeytun, American Protestant Girls' School,
34. Zeytun, American Protestant Boys' School,
35. Beirut, Syria Protestant College,
36. Beirut, American Women's Seminar,

37. Beirut, Theology Seminar,
38. Beirut, Boys' Barding School,
39. Beirut, American Protestant Boys' School,
40. Beirut, American Protestant Girls' School,
41. Bitlis, American Protestant Boys' School,
42. Bitlis, American Protestant Girls' School,
43. Muş, American Protestant Girls' School,
44. Muş, American Protestant Boys' School,
45. Syria, American Protestant Boys' School,
46. Syria, American Protestant Girls' School,
47. Adapazarı, American Protestant Girls' and Boys' School,
48. Manastır, American Protestant School,
49. İstanbul, Robert College,
50. İstanbul, Üsküdar American College,
51. İstanbul, Girls' College,
52. Sivas, American Girls' College,
53. Merzifon, Anatolian College,
54. Jerusalem, Girls' Boarding School,
55. Jerusalem Boys' Boarding School

As it can be understood from the list, American missionaries opened schools almost in every province and state. This is a proof of how the Board Organization was spread in the Ottoman State. The educational activities they started with their establishment yielded more fruits than they expected. Americans became well-known for their education institutions in Anatolia and the Middle East.

Bursa became an important center for American missionaries in a very short period of time. The missionaries founded a college in Bursa after the 1860s. This school served for a tentatively. There are two boarding girls' schools. This boarding girls' school had 85 students. In Bursa, the most influential American institution was Bursa American girls' college. Besides, there are joint schools. These schools are in the center of Bursa Station. There are similar schools in outer stations in Bursa as well. Total number of students was 458, which is an important number for Protestant missionaries. With the coming of missionary Mrs. Rapleye to Bursa, American Board Organization, they began to get interested in the education of Greek girls in Bursa (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 588, No: 477). The Bursa American College was founded with Mrs. Rapleye's arrival in Bursa (Missionary Herald, 1923:135).

In 1880, Mrs. Rapleye worked for American College and 14 students out of 20 students were boarder. The church supported school studies and the priest cared for the school teachers' activities. On Wednesday afternoon 1 December 1880, the local priest Aristedes and his spouse visited the school and listened to preachers talks in the classroom, shared reading passages, missionary activities were done in the school and in the evening the priest recited invocations with Greek girls and read passages from the Bible. According to missionaries, the girls liked the preacher's invocation and preach a lot. Missionaries made great efforts to convert small children into Protestantism (P.A.B.C.F.M., Reel: 588, No: 501 and Reel: 593, No: 750, 751).

In a short period of time, the school turned into an institution which provided modern education. American Girls' School curriculum in 1893 indicated that modern education was given in the school (Kocabaşoğlu, 2000: 132-133).

**First year**

- Greek or Armenian
- Arithmetic ( Greek or Armenian)
- Geography ( Greek or Armenian)
- English

**Second Year**

- Greek or Armenian
- Algebra
- Physical Geography
- English

**Third year**

- Greek or Armenian
- Geometry
- Botanic

**Fourth year**

- Greek or Armenian
- Physics
- Astronomy
- History (English)

English intensive courses were given and language was taught. As the teachers in the school were American, language courses were successful. In this period, the principal of the school was American Missionary Theo. A. Baldwin. This educator missionary contributed to the development of the school.

The school is an institution which used modern methods and taught positive sciences. Besides, it was also effective in missionary activities. In this school, Armenians, Greeks and Turks were educated. It is known that hymns were recited and courses teaching principles of Protestantism were given. The reason for the closure of this school was due to the missionary activities by teachers.

The Bursa American College founded in 1876 continued its activities in the Republican Period. The number of the students in this school was 47, 38 of whom were Turkish in 1923 and it rose up to 120 in 1924, to 195 in 1927 and decreased back to 120 in 1927. Since the National Struggle period, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk approached Foreigners' Schools cautiously. The aim of Unification of Education Law aimed to control foreign schools as well as madrasah (Ortaylı, 2005:7). A national education was advocated and schools were affiliated with Ministry of National Education. Only 3 years after the Republic was founded, it changed History and Geography courses foreigners teach in their own languages. It was decided that Turkish be given close attention in Foreigners' Schools after this year (The Akşam Newspaper, 5 Mart 1926).

In 1926 again, the followings decisions were made with regard to these schools (The Akşam Newspaper, 6 Mart 1926):

1. These schools are to be inspected by Education Directors.
2. Education will be given in Turkish in schools.
3. Turkish History and Geography shall be taught.



4. Turkish, History and Geography subjects, which are taught in Turkish schools, shall be taught in Foreigners' Schools.
5. Teachers are to be speakers of Turkish.
6. Turkish is to be given place in the program. With these decisions, schools were followed closely.

The frequency of inspection of foreign schools was increased after 1926. The article 4 of the law dated 22 March 1926 and numbered 789 are closely related with these schools. This article stated that "*no school can be opened in Turkey without permission and consent of Education Agency*". Thus, Ministry of Education held the first degree liability in the supervision of schools (Sezer, 1999:24).

In 1927, the school carried on its activities, educated Turkish girls and Mrs. Jillson continued to be the principal (Bursa Vilayet Salnamesi, 1927:437). However, Mrs. Sanderson, who was a teacher at this school in this period, engaged in missionary activities on girls, which tolled the death knell for the school.

Religious inculcation and coercion was only restricted to students Turkish teachers working for the Bursa American College were also subjected to religious inculcations. Behice Hanım who worked for the Bursa American Girls' College got fired when she did not submit such coercion (Tozlu, 1991:282-283).

While there were 47 students, 38 of whom were Turkish, in 1923, this number raised up to 120 in 1924. The number of students which rose to 195 in 1926 decreased to 120 in 1927. At the beginning of the year 1928, problems aroused when the school carried on school activities to teach Protestant principles. "*The students at the school were inculcated that their wishes would be realized if they prayed for Jesus the Christ*" (Sezer, 1999:51).

With closure of the school, Pakize Tarzi one of the graduates of the school told that although the missionaries did not tell them to be Protestant they took the students to the church and tried to make them love Protestantism.

Missionaries and communities mentioned the closure of the school as a desperate incidence. They wanted to prevent the closure of the school by creating public opinion abroad. In spite of all efforts, the school was closed in 1928 (Ergün, 1997:73). The series of event that lead to the closure of the school started on 22 January. American Ambassador Grew presented a report on how incidences started. In Grew's telegraph it was distorted to be a very innocent incidence Again according to in this telegraph, it is seen that American Ambassador was refrained from Ministry of Education Necati Bey because Necati Bey followed a very decisive attitude in these issues (Hopkins, Moore, Halidi, and Ferruh, 2006:461).

At the beginning of the year 1928, problems aroused when the school carried on school activities to teach Protestant principles. As the girls named Madelet, Nemika, Kamran and Seniha converted, the school went under investigation. "*The students at the school were religiously inculcated that their wishes would be realized if they prayed for Jesus* (Sezer, 1999:50- 51).

Muslim Turkish teachers were also forced to convert to Christianity. Behice Hanım who worked for the Bursa American Girls' College got fired when she did not submit such coercion.

On 26 January, news appearing in the Cumhuriyet Newspaper reported the following for the Bursa American Girls' College.

*Not a School but a Home of Converts  
What plots and traps were laid to our girls' to convert them into  
Protestantism in American School in Bursa?*

*As the father of convert Kamran Hanım, Rıza Bey was considered to be object for defense, he was employed as the manager in the factory next to the American school. The daughter of Rıza Bey, Kamran Hanım worked as a clerk.*

*In this way, Kamran Hanım gradually converted as a result of her constant contacts with the school administration and then she got her small brother registered to the school for a small tuition.*

*The school administration that did not give weight to Turkish religious and national holidays, they made children wear new clothes and children attended religious ceremonies. The spouse of Abdühamit Bey who was an engineer in Maraş was officially offered to convert into Protestantism.*

*The school administration asked financially weak students to pray Jesus Chris and they were gradually instilled with the conviction that their wishes would be realized if they prayed to Him.*

*After that books including the principles of Christian doctrine of Trinity were given to students as present and remembrance. The students realized that the hymns they were made to listen to during meals and at other times are passages from the Bible (The Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 26 Ocak 1928).*

As it can be understood from this news, they did not give weight to religious and national holidays of the country. On Sunday and Christmas, Turkish children were made to wear new clothes and adopt their ideas. These incidents caused the school to be closed down. In this period, the school was closed down as a result of probe opened upon four Muslim girls' announcement that they converted into Christianity. The news appearing on 31 January 1928 announced the Bursa American College. In the news appearing in the *Cumhuriyet* Newspaper on this date read as follows:

*"The American School in Bursa was closed down. It is known for sure that four Turkish girls converted into Christianity". (The Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 31 Ocak 1928). News reporting that American teachers were sued against appeared.*

When the Christianization incident occurred, the incident came to the fore in Turkey's agenda. The public opinion showed great interest into this incident. The press reported these incidents in the headlines. They emphasized the political and cultural aspect of the incident. It is not just a matter of school but it turned into a national identity (Tozlu, 1991:282-288). Turkish press "Why is there a school in Bursa, where is not an American family?" (Haydaroğlu, 1993:138).

The teachers who were found to be guilty after a long period of trial and sentenced to three days in prison and 3 liras of amende. When the school was closed, American Ambassador Joseph C. Grew followed the incident in Bursa day by day. In an interview, Grew told " *Before talking about other issues, I requested the news about American Schools in Turkish newspapers to be stopped and these news gave the wrong impression that the same behavior was done in not only in Bursa American School but in all American schools I told that if a campaign against all American schools was started, it would be possible to find incidents of the same character in almost every school because in every school shrewish and unpleased teachers and students were ready to make every kind of groundless accusations*" (Hopkins, Moore, Halidi, and Ferruh, 2006:466).

American Ambassador also knew that missionary activities were carried out in most of these schools. He was concerned that all the American schools in Turkey would be closed down. In spite of initiatives taken by the American ambassador, the school was closed. In the period after this incidence, American schools engaged in missionary activities were also

closed down. Mustafa Kemal Government pursued a very stable attitude in this issue. The public opinion also supported these decisions by the government.

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