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CONGREGATIONAL/ METHODIST CHURCH IN MACEDONIA

By Paul Mojzes

Paul Mojzes is professor emeritus of religious studies at Rosemont College in Pennsylvania. He received his education at Belgrade University Law School, Florida Southern College, A.B. and Boston University, Ph.D. This article and several others that will be published in some of the following issues are excerpted and adapted from his doctoral dissertation, *A History of the Congregational and Methodist Churches in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia*. It was submitted for a conference on the 500th Anniversary of Protestantism in Skopje, Macedonia, November 1, 2017.

Preliminary Remark

Prior to the end of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and during portions of World War I, the territory of Macedonia was served by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (hereafter ABCFM) with headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts. The form of Protestantism promoted by ABCFM was Congregationalism but in the Balkans, they called their churches Evangelical, which is often used as a synonym for Protestants. After the end of World War I, the ABCFM was unable to continue to financially support and staff this mission field outside of Bulgaria as proper and turned their work in Macedonia (which had become part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and later renamed Yugoslavia) to the Methodist Church, whose Board of Foreign Missions was located in New York, NY. The Congregationalists and Methodists have worked exceptionally harmoniously on the mission field in the Balkans, which was unusual among Protestants of that time.

Due to the author's location in the United States at the time of writing the doctoral dissertation, it was not advisable for him to travel to Yugoslavia to do the field work. Therefore, he relied on the archives of the two churches plus materials supplied by his mother based on oral reports by local church members and pastors. The archives, naturally, contained mostly materials and reports written by the American missionaries and much less so by native pastors and church workers, hence the reader should be aware that the work by those native Protestants are under-represented.

The reader should also be aware that the American missionaries of that time were unaware of the existence of a Macedonian nationality and considered the Slavic population living at the time in European Turkey as Bulgarian. In order to faithfully reflect the nature of the original sources, I rarely departed from their conventional impressions. The American missionaries had limited contacts outside of their mission area. This author is convinced of the authentic and separate existence of a Macedonian nation and language. I also used the names of cities as used by the missionaries rather than their present names. I used a phonetic spelling of Balkan places and names in order to help English speakers pronounce it closer to the original.

The reader will note an overabundance of details. When I wrote his dissertation *A History of the Congregational and Methodist Churches in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia* (Boston University, 1965) mostly during 1963 and 1964, it was not assured that these small churches in the two countries may survive the communist persecution and pressures. Therefore, I was eager to preserve their story for posterity. It is a great joy that my fears did not come true.

THE CONGREGATIONAL MISSION TO MACEDONIA FROM 1873 TO 1918

A. The Time of Aspirations: The Establishment and Progress of the Mission in Macedonia Until 1895

1. Evangelization in Macedonia up to 1873

Missionary effort in this area could hardly have had a more glorious origin. Act 16: 8-10 tells how the apostle Paul received the call for help when he was in Troas. It was Paul who made the first convert in Europe, a woman named Lydia in Philippi, the capital of the Roman colony of Macedonia (Acts 16: 12-16). Here he established a congregation in Thessalonica to which he later wrote his two great epistles. The name Macedonia has ever since exerted a special charm upon Christendom, not the least upon various Protestant missionaries. To missionaries in that country, the association has meant identification with the original apostolic movement. But great obstacles now loomed in Macedonia. The Macedonians sought to throw off the Turkish yoke; yet they, with the Albanians, were the last ones to obtain liberation. In periods when the Turks relaxed their harsh measures in other provinces, this was not experienced in Macedonia. Therefore, Macedonia became a center of revolutionary activity, with brigandage, lawlessness, misery, poverty, and extreme insecurity, as well as a singular preoccupation with liberation for which no price was held too big to be paid.

Because distinctive national consciousness developed here more slowly than in Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia, these countries tried to count the Macedonians as part of their own peoples. Claims of this nature were made easier by a fantastic mixture of nationalities and languages.¹ In regard to that situation, E. W. Jenney wrote:

There is but one drawback and that is language. One needs to know Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish, Wallachian and Albanian, at least, to be very successful here. The language is a

¹ Quoted in Elias Riggs, *Reminiscences for My Children*.(no place, no publisher,1891) p.45.Printed for limited circulation.

compound of all these, with a little French and German. The people will use words 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 have been Hellenized and vice versa; and Serbs, Vlachs, Albanians and others have inter-mingled most inextricably.²

Most of the Macedonians spoke a language which differed little from the Bulgarian which the missionaries spoke. Through their close associations with Bulgarians, they shared almost unanimously the view that Macedonians were essentially Bulgarians.³ They felt that the term Macedonians was referring only to their geographical location and did not connote a Macedonian nationality.⁴

2. The Opening of the First Station in Macedonia

A church was organized in 1871 in the village of Bansko, located in the Razlog district in the northern part of the country. The Protestant influence spread throughout the Razlog, a favorite field from the missionary viewpoint, where they were welcomed. In 1873, a new station opened at Monastir (Slavic form Bitola or Bitolia).⁵ The missionary families of John William Baird and Edward W. Jenney were the first residing there.

Monastir was a government center of a whole Turkish *vilayet* (district), including parts of Macedonia, Albania and Greece. It was a multilingual commercial city from which work might

² C. H. Haskell, "Istoricheski Pregled na Evropeisko-Turskata Misiya za Poslednite Pedeset Godini" in *Skazkite Derzhani na Yubileiniya Sobor*, Vol. I (Samokov, Bulgaria Evangelsko-Uchilishtna Pechatnitsa, 1909), p. 20. Also Annual Report of the American Board, from now on abbreviated to Ann. Rep. ABCFM., 1874, p. 8.

³ The exceptions being E. W. Jenney and Mary Matthews, missionaries in Monastir (Bitola), Macedonia. In a letter of Miss Matthews from Oberlin, Ohio of May 2, 1941 to Miss Mabel E. Emerson of the American Board, Miss Matthews expressed the view that there are Bulgarian Macedonians, Greek Macedonians, Rumanian Macedonians, Serbian Macedonians, Turks, Jews, and Albanians living in Macedonia, and that the mission found most response among the Bulgarian Macedonians.

⁴ Tzvetko S. Bagranoff, *The American Mission's Share in the Regeneration and Defense of Bulgaria*, (n.p.: American Bulgarian Good Neighbor League, 1947), the whole book is mainly devoted to such questions. Even more so is Vladimir A. Tsanoff, (edit.) *Reports and Letters of American Missionaries Referring to the Distribution of Nationalities in the Former Provinces of European Turkey*, (Sofia: n.a., n.p., 1919).

⁵ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1873, p. 9.

be spread to at least three language regions. Moreover, it was a healthy place.⁶ The services in Monastir were conducted by a native helper, while the missionaries studied the language. At first they had as many as 60 people in a service, but as the novelty wore off, the attendance fell to 20 or 25.⁷ The native helper was a licensed preacher. By 1875, they had obtained an additional helper, and started a Sunday School. Although attendance did not increase, it was observed that people in the market and streets were discussing "the relative merits of the Greek and Protestant faith."⁸ The possession of Bibles by many people helped the cause of Mrs. Baird who conducted Bible readings with a small number of women. Personal contact was one of the most important avenues of communication, as many shunned Protestant worship services. A significant step was the conversion and assistance of a former priest and teacher who now preached in his native village.⁹

In 1877, the station had cause to rejoice, despite war conditions, in that the difficult times made people more responsive to preaching.¹⁰ In 1878, the station reported its first outstation in which one of the two licensed preachers was located. In Monastir, the attendance was reported at 30 to 40 with almost no active anti-Protestant opposition. The war of 1877-78 really bypassed Monastir, which seemed like an "earthly paradise" to the missionaries who toured war-ravaged regions.¹¹ Converted members in Monastir spoke several languages. The sermon was preached in Bulgarian or the Macedonian dialect which was understood by the majority, but the prayers by laymen were at times offered in Bulgarian, Serbian, Albanian, Greek, Wallachian, English,

⁶ Ann. Rep . ABCFM, 1874, p. 8.

⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸ Ann. Rep .ABCFM, 1875, p. 14.

⁹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1876, p.14.

¹⁰ Ann. Rep ABCFM, 1877, p. 19.

¹¹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1878, p. 27.

German, as well as in Gypsy languages.¹² Yet no disunity resulted. Progress was made in the Razlog district, with the center in Bansko, which had no resident missionaries but was visited by the Samokov and Philippopolis missionaries, and in western Macedonian work, with the station in Monastir.

Evil days descended again upon Macedonia a few years later. It is surprising that the Mission had not enlarged its missionary force here to give stability to the native impetus. With more missionaries and native preachers, they would have better weathered the storm.

3. Missionary Work in Revolutionary Fermentation

The disappointment of the Slavic population in Macedonia after the Treaty of Berlin was enormous. Their last beam of hope that Christian Europe would intervene in their behalf against the Turks was lost. Macedonians and Bulgarians became determined to gain liberation without regard to method. The missionaries shared in these aspirations, although they did not approve of the steps intended to achieve this goal. They shared, though not equally, in the general suffering of the population inflicted both by the Turks, who were fighting to preserve the status quo and by the revolutionaries who fought to upset it.

The Internal Macedonian Organization (I.M.R.O.) was organized in Resen in 1893 to work for an autonomous Macedonia.¹³ It consisted of a network of revolutionary bands whose members were called *komitadi*, a derivative word based on the name of the leadership as an organization formed of a committee. Dissatisfied with the goals and methods of this

¹² C.H. Haskell, op. cit., in SDYS, p. 20. Also *Missionary Hews from Bulgaria*, No. 8, (1886), p. 3.

¹³ Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History*, p.718.

organization, a group of men headed by Boris Sarafov organized the External Macedonian Revolutionary with headquarters in Sofia, aiming to annex Macedonia to Bulgaria.¹⁴ The main weapon of this group was sudden raids into Macedonia, attacking the Turks, then pulling back. In 1902, a group headed by Stojan Michailovski and General Souchev split away from the Central Committee of E.M.R.O. and organized the Superior Committee, with which the partisans of Sarafov were in bitter enmity.¹⁵

I.M.R.O. incited the famous linden Rebellion in 1903¹⁶ with the help of other revolutionary groups. This rebellion was put down by the Turks. As a consequence, the population suffered greatly. The mission did not fare well either, for the effects of the rebellion and its suppression were all-encompassing. It was not until the First Balkan War in 1912 that Macedonia was freed from the Turks through the joint action of four Balkan states, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece.¹⁷

During this period, new missionaries continued to arrive. Resident missionary families of the Monastir station were the J.W. Bairds, E. W. Jenneys (from 1873), Lewis Bond, Jr. (from 1882), W. E. Locke (from 1885), Edward B. Haskell (from 1893), and William P. Clarke (from 1904). Beside the missionary couples, the following single women were also stationed in Monastir: Sophia Crawford, Lillian Spooner (from 1883), Mary Haskell, (from 1910), and Delpha Davis (from 1911).¹⁸ There were never more than two missionary couples and two missionary teachers in Monastir at the same time, and often the number was reduced to one of

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ J. F. Clarke, "Macedonia and the Capture of Miss Stone," Samokov, Bulg.: typed manuscript, December 13, 1902, p. 15. In ABLib files on Ellen Stone.

¹⁶ Robert L. Wolff, *The Balkans in Our Time* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 88. Wolff is not in agreement with Langer on the dates of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organizations insisting that the "External" was organized in 1895 and the "Internal" in 1906 (p. 87.) The actual formation of the two major wings is not crucial for the work of the mission, but their activities were.

¹⁷ Ruben Markham, *Meet Bulgaria* (Sofia, Bulg.: Published by the Author, 1931), pp. 70-73.

¹⁸ Compiled from the various Ann. Rep. ABCFM.

each. Since some stayed but a few years in Monastir, the result was a relatively small force, ministering to a large geographical area, containing at least two million people.¹⁹

The Monastir station was fortunate in having a Bible woman, named Mariyka Raičeva, educated at Samokov, who succeeded in breaking down the prejudice of the local women. The attendance at the worship services increased to over 40 by means of Bible reading, personal interviews, and talks on the street and the market.²⁰ After the disturbances of 1878 when the missionaries were again free to travel, Bond and Jenney toured 160 days including frequent visits to the only outstation during this period, the village of Vataša.²¹ They were received by good audiences in Prilep and Resen. The tranquility of the Monastir congregation was broken by lack of unity among the faithful, yet no serious damage occurred.

4. The Monastir School

It is striking to observe that at this place and time due to the general level of ignorance and superstition, the younger people alone realized the value of education. The missionaries felt that they should attack the problem squarely and help the younger generation. Since the women, being the most uneducated group, expressed the greatest opposition to education, the school was operated primarily for girls, although at first boys attended also. In 1881, a building was purchased and the permission was obtained from Constantinople to open a private school.²² By 1882, a building for the school and a missionary residence were erected, which was later used in 1897 as an annex to the school. The directresses of the school were a Bulgarian teacher, Mariyka

¹⁹ J.W. Baird, *Sketch of Monastir Station; European Turkey*, (n.p., n.d. and no pagination); and *Missionary Herald*, Vol. LXXXIX (1892), pp . 386-398.

²⁰ Ann. Rep .ABCFM, 1879, p. 19.

²¹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1880, p. 31.

²² Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1881, p. 31.

Raičeva from Sliven, from 1878 to 1880,²³ then Mrs . E. W. Jenney from 1880 to 1881, Sophia Crawford from 1881 to 1884, Lillian Spooner during 1884, Harriet L. Cole, from 1884 to 1909, and Mary L. Matthews from 1909 to 1920. Delpha Davis acted as principal in 1913 and 1914 when Mary Matthews was on furlough.²⁴ These missionary teachers were aided by native teachers who were mostly graduates of the Samokov Girl's School or the Monastir School. Outstanding among them was Rada Pavleva who served for over 26 years.

Until 1895, the school also had a boys' day department and was therefore considered co-educational, but after that time the school became a girls' school.²⁵ Then boarding was exclusively for girls, with boys received in the day school. A great variety of nationalities was involved in the school: Macedonian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Austrian, Serbian, Gypsy, Jewish, Romanian, Armenian, Greek, etc. Most of the 35 graduates of the school became teachers in elementary schools for a period of at least five years. These schools were in some way connected with the Evangelicals of a particular village. The preachers were often teachers in such elementary schools, and often the school, parsonage, and meeting places were located in the same building. Nearly 75 teachers were involved in the Monastir Boarding School and in the various elementary schools in the territory of Macedonia, including the Razlog district.²⁶ Participating also in the teaching process were Lewis Bond, his daughter Violet, Mary Haskell, and William P. Clarke.

²³ H. C. Haskell, *op. cit.*, in p. 21, and Ann. Rep . ABCFM, 1879, p. 19. Also two lists of workers of the Congregationalists in Macedonia, sent in 1962 by the oldest minister, Rev. Pane Temkov, to the author. Also ABAR, Balkan Missions, 1910-1919, No. 24.

²⁴ Report of the Girls' Boarding School, April 28, 1910, ABAR ., Balkan Mission 1910-1919, No. 24, p. 24 and Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1913, p. 57.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Among the women teachers were included Marijka Raičeva, Rada Pavleva, Dobra Pelaševa, Paraška Stamenkova, Efa Velkova, Donka Panajotova, Efa Bouševa, Ljuba Kodžobabova, Estira Mladenović, Marika Zrneva, and Evangelina Joveva . Men teachers included Georgi Kyrias, Vladimir and Dobre Daskalov, Georgi Pop Ilijev, Mišo Andov, Kostake Izev, Ilija Kjutukčiev, and Pane Temkov.

5. The Spread of the Mission

The first four adherents in Monastir were taken into full communion in 1881 although they were ridiculed by the priests, who with others held it a shame to change faiths.²⁷ The next year it was felt that "decided progress" was made when another outstation was established in the town of Strumica. Persecutions by the Greek Orthodox bishop ensued, but were restrained by the Turkish government, and the small congregation managed to buy a house for worship.²⁸ The Strumica outstation had an interesting origin. A young teacher was imprisoned in Constantinople for teaching Bulgarian against the orders of the bishop who wanted to Hellenize the Strumica people. Turkish prisoners of this kind had some freedom and he could attend evangelical services in Constantinople. Here he became converted. Upon the expiration of his term of exile, he returned to Strumica and initiated worship services.²⁹

At Monastir, the students organized a missionary society and were active in the church.³⁰ But the missionaries felt that they had not achieved any marked results, although they were welcomed in neighboring villages. The towns of Isteep (Štip), and Ūskŭb (Skopje) seemed to be open for their work, even though one preacher left Ūskŭb under the pressure of persecution.³¹ Mr. K. Petkančen, who was the colporteur for Macedonia,³² found his work delayed when he was required to have all his books censored by the Turkish authorities. The colporteurs³³

²⁷ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1881, p. 31.

²⁸ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1882, p. 24.

²⁹ From a letter from Paula Mojzes of Novi Sad, Yugoslavia to the author in which she related the statements of eyewitnesses or oldest members of the Strumica, Kolešino, Murtino, and Monospitovo churches sent for the purposes of this study. Paraphrased from the Serbian by the author.

³⁰ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1882, p. 24.

³¹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1883, p. 31.

³² Sleeper, Samokov Station Annual Report, 1886, p. 14. ABLib.

³³ From the list of workers supplied by Rev. Pane Temkov to the author. Among the more noted colporteurs were.

represented both the British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Bible Society, and they played a very important role in Macedonia since this mission never displayed such strength in the number of native pastors as did Bulgaria. The unwillingness of young ministerial candidates to go into Turkish territory was the main reason for the relatively restricted development of Congregationalism in Macedonia. Therefore, the colporteurs played the important role of the evangelist as well as the educator.

6. Monospitovo and Murtino: Samples of the Work of Outstations

In 1885, a new outstation was formed in Monospitovo which progressed despite persecutions.³⁴ Progress made in these outstations during years of war, brigandage, and persecutions, as well as of lack of support, is difficult to account for except as the result of a singularly strong determination to follow convictions, come what may. The number of dedicated people was never great, and thus the new churches never experienced a boom in numbers, but their history is rich in heroic deeds. The twin villages of Monospitovo and Murtino, only about a mile from each other according to the story of the oldest members, may be taken as example.³⁵

Around 1877, the *komitadis* killed some of the Turkish population including children. When the culprits were not apprehended, the Turkish authorities sentenced some of the villagers to prison terms in Salonica and Constantinople. From Monospitovo, Koce Valkakov, Goce Retsev and Georgi Siljavski were thus imprisoned. In the prison, they were converted by the

Mladenović from Priština, Naum Stojkov of Monastir, the brothers Kyrias from Monastir who were in charge of the Depot of the British and Foreign Bible Society there, Tetov of Salonica, Ziko of Monastir, Janaki Vrosto of Salonica, Nikola Tenchev from the Razlog district, Hristo Znev from Jenidje Vardar, Ivan Česmedžiev of Skopje, Eftim Vinarov of Gornya Džumaja in the Razlog, Dimiter Karadelev, K. Momirov, M. Dmitriev, etc.

³⁴ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1885, p.27.

³⁵ A compilation of statements by oldest members of the Murtino and Monospitovo churches made by Paula Mojzes, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, in 1962 and sent for the purpose of this study.

missionaries and received Bibles. When they eventually returned home, they told the villagers of their spiritual experiences, and later held meetings and invited missionaries to meet with them.

The Murtino outstation was formed in a similar manner by innocent ex-convicts. Having been converted in the prison, they returned home, gathered in private houses, and as a result, several families became Congregationalists. In a period of 20 years, some 20 families joined.

In both villages, the Evangelicals opened primary schools. Before that, all schools were parochial. The Turkish authorities interfered but little, but pressure came from the Greek clergy who resented the teaching in the Bulgarian language by the graduates of Samokov Schools, who often taught English also.

The Turkish authorities provided military protection against such persecutions, and often guarded the pastors and missionaries on their trips and during services. In 1900, the missionaries noticed a slackening of activities, except in the new station Radoviš, where an increase from 20 to 40 was reported.³⁶ The Monospitovo and Murtino members had succeeded in erecting church buildings in the 1890s. On this occasion, the first General Conference of Protestant churches and communities in Macedonia was held there.³⁷ The conversion of a policeman sent to keep order during the conference did not preclude persecutions, but it made the evangelicals jubilant. Later, someone set fire to a gasoline container and the fire damaged the church beyond repair. A new church was built in 1912 and 1913.³⁸

7. The Progress of Other Macedonian Congregations

³⁶ Ann. Rep..ABCFM, 1890, p. 34.

³⁷ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1899, p. 48.

³⁸ From the collection of eyewitness reports by Paula Mojzes .

In the Razlog, a number of churches were organized in the 1880s. The people of Isarovo were a source of some satisfaction to the missionaries for their willingness to side with the Evangelical cause.

The people of the village Isarovo at this time are very poor, but they are working nobly to build their church and the parsonage. When I was there before in the spring of '81 the meeting house was up and partly enclosed, now [1883] it is finished sufficiently to be occupied. There is now a neat little pulpit and benches fill the auditorium: the men sit upon one side and the women upon the other—the floor is of earth, the walls likewise, the mud-plaster having never yet been covered with lime for the reason that they could not afford. From one corner a flight of steps lead up into a tiny tower from which the brethren ring out the summons to the place of prayer; but alas! the handbell which he rings is hopelessly broken, and sends out a weak, cracked summons, which is not in the least cheering and can be heard but a few steps away.³⁹

Mehomia, which had for a number of years only one wavering Protestant, had congregated some 50 adherents and communicants by 1886.⁴⁰ Six new members, all women, were accepted by Ivan Sitčanov in Bansko with the help of the Bible women, Ralu Georgieva and K. Uševa.⁴¹ Preachers were stationed in Veles (Kuprilli), Skopje (Úskúb), Strumica (including Monospitovo and Murtino), Radoviš, and Kafadar.⁴² Three of them were trained at Samokov and two were untrained. In 1886, Monastir had 47 members (but no organized church), Kafadar and Vatasha had four, Strumica nine, and Skopje two.⁴³ In 1887, the Bulgarian Evangelical Society planned to hold its meetings in Monastir but was unable to do so because the political disturbances of that year were particularly severe.⁴⁴ The group in Monastir was greatly embarrassed by one incident. A vagrant claiming religious persuasion turned up from Samokov. They learned he had been in the United States preaching as a Baptist, a Free Methodist, a Seventh

³⁹ *Journal of Extracts from the Letters of Miss Ellen M. Stone, Missionary to Bulgaria and Turkey*, No. 1, (May 24, 1883-January 1, 1884), n. p.

⁴⁰ *Missionary News from Bulgaria*, No. 10 (December 20, 1886), p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Missionary Hews from Bulgaria*, No. 8, (July 10, 1886), p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Missionary Hews from Bulgaria*, No. 13, (May 10, 1887), p. 2.

Day Adventist, and a Perfectionist, all the while exploiting the naiver of his hearers with financial schemes. On return, he had been offered the pulpit of the Congregational Church in Sofia, but instead attempted to start a splinter-group of evangelicals. In Monastir, he proclaimed his views "with screaming, and stamping and jumping . . . He styled the Congregational Church 'the abominable sect of the devil,' and begged the Lord to permit a few of the neighboring mountains to fall on the missionaries, one of whom he proclaimed the biggest liar in the place." He attracted only four members to his following, but not for long.⁴⁵

When work in Resen, Kruševo, Prilep, Veles, and Skopje did not bring hoped-for results, missionaries concentrated on the more distant villages, such as Kavadarci, Veljusa, and Radoviš, where there were 52 members in 1887 in a new building housing the church, the parsonage and the school. Lewis Bond was asked by a deputation of men from Veljusa to preach to the women of Veljusa. A group of Rakliš men "almost forcibly" took Bond and the native preacher, Anastasov, to preach in their village "as they did earlier Mr. Baird."⁴⁶ At the outset in Strumica, the wives were in great opposition to their husbands' evangelical tendencies. One wife abandoned her home and four small children because her husband became a Protestant. But by 1887, many women started attending Evangelical meetings, and the congregation soon numbered 30 communicants. Two students from Samokov were allowed by the authorities to preach in some 17 places in Macedonia.⁴⁷

A Missionary Society in Monastir had 75 members although until 1892, there was no church organization there. These communicants were poor and lived far away. Mrs. Bond was held in high esteem in the vicinity because of her medical work and ability as a lecturer. She had

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁷ *Missionary New from Bulgaria*, No. 15, (Oct. 6, 1887), p. 1.

cared for many typhoid fever victims at the time when they were stationed in Eski Zagra in 1875 and thus gained nursing experience.⁴⁸ Harriet Cole led the Girls' School almost singlehandedly from 1884 to 1888 with such success that she was regarded as "one of the best workers ever sent out to the Mission."⁴⁹

Striking out from Monastir, which had five outstations in 1888, the missionaries became interested for the first time in evangelistic work among the Albanians.⁵⁰ They were led by Baird, who hoped for the help of native young men. The European Turkey Mission met in Monastir in 1890.⁵¹ This event brought about a religious awakening at the Girls' School. Otherwise the years went by in routine work and steady solidification of the work. The Balkan peninsula is an area in which Protestantism found it impossible to achieve startling successes but its very presence is to be considered a success.

In 1893, Edward B. Haskell, the son of Dr. Henry C. Haskell, was stationed in Monastir. He was born in Plovdiv and raised in Bulgaria so the Bulgarian language constituted no problem. The Haskell, the Clarke, the Bond, the Marsh, and the Baird families all gave to the Balkan mission a second generation of people who felt that this area was as much their homeland as the United States. They understood the Balkan situation better than any new missionary could hope to. For many of them, Monastir was one of their earliest assignments. They brought youthful enthusiasms, which compensated for their lack of missionary experience. They were able also to rely more and more upon native pastors, through the latter's agency, the Bulgarian Evangelical Society. The role of the missionary was undergoing a change, especially in Bulgaria. "They came to view themselves as aides to the native pastors rather than the other way around as it had been

⁴⁸ Mrs. Bond to Mrs. Haskell, Eski Zagra, October 2, 1875. The letter is in the files of ABLib

⁴⁹ C. T. Riggs, *History of the Works of the ABCFM in the Near East and more Especially Turkey, 1819-1934*, Typescript, p. 45a.

⁵⁰ Ann. .Rep. ABCFM, 1889, p. 36. The Albanian work will be considered separately, but only briefly.

⁵¹ Ann. .Rep. .ABCFM, 1890, p. 32.

with their parents.⁵² In Macedonia however, few native pastors were willing to serve. Therefore, Baird and E. B. Haskell devoted much time to touring and by 1894 the Monastir station had nine outstations.⁵³ They were convinced that more would have been done if there had been more missionary or native assistance.

8. The Foundation of the Salonica Station

In 1894, the most productive people of the Monastir station, Haskell and House, were transferred to Salonica. Bond and Baird remained in Monastir. Salonica had the commanding position because of its geographical location and its railroad and road connections. The mission here administered the area of the Razlog Plains, with Bansko as the center, and of the Maritsa and Struma Valleys with Strumica as the center, formerly supervised from Monastir. In these sections indeed, they had much more success than in Salonica itself. The Monastir station was in fact declining. The congregation in Monastir was divided and unable to grow, even after a measure of unity was restored, as the prerequisite of Bond 's acceptance of the Monastir pulpit in 1895.⁵⁴ The only organizations doing well were a Woman's Christian Endeavor Society and a Missionary Society formed primarily from the pupils and alumnae of the Girls' school. Nearly all outstations of any consequence were taken away from the superintendence of the Monastir station. It was said that "the work outside of Monastir is in its infancy, and the people are poor and are growing poorer. The station has been able to secure and employ but a few native helpers."⁵⁵ Only the school, popular and enlarged, including accommodations for the primary

⁵² Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1893, p. 32.

⁵³ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1894, p.30.

⁵⁴ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1895, p. 36.

⁵⁵ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1896, p. 36.

department and the kindergarten,⁵⁶ which was one of the first in Macedonia, seems to have been well off.

The Time of Troubles: 1895-1912

1. The Environment

The period of Macedonian history from 1895 to 1912 was dark and turbulent. Monastir, being the main city of a *vilayet*, which included most of Macedonia, was particularly the focus of revolutionary activity although most of the fighting was closer to the Bulgarian border in the mountains between Strumica and Bansko. For this and for geographical reasons, Monastir always had a large Turkish garrison, and was on the route of the Turkish army whenever it had a conflict with Austria-Hungary, Serbia, or Montenegro. Since every army subsists on the local population, this situation was a burden not easy to carry, and more and more people joined the armed revolutionary brigands. There was hardly anyone who was not at least in sympathy with the goals of the revolutionary brigands, if not with their methods. It is small wonder that the mission in Macedonia found it almost impossible to carry on.

Most of the missionaries of the nineteenth century were the product of the Christian Endeavor Movement, under the influence of Dwight L. Moody's methods of evangelism.⁵⁷ They believed in the infallibility of the Bible, the sinful nature of man, a real hell, efficacy of prayer, the saving mission of Jesus Christ, the necessity of conversion, and the visible manifestation of the fruits of this conversion with love toward all men.⁵⁸ The missionaries made use of the revivalist methods long since discarded in the United States. Although such methods did produce

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Hall, *ABMB*, p. 137.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

a wave of revivals in the European Turkey Mission in the 1880s⁵⁹ the methods had little appeal to the Slavic temperament. The Eastern Orthodox tradition of non-emotionalism in religion, love of ritual, and basic feeling of assurance that salvation is guaranteed if all the obligations of an individual to the church are carried out loyally, made an environment which was not conducive to crisis experiences which would result in conversion.

2. Touring and Revivals

The spiritual fruits of missionary labor were most evident in the Monastir Girls ' School where the pupils were exposed to the continuous pious influence of their teachers and missionary couples. Nine out of 24 boarders became church members. This school in Monastir increasingly relied upon its own graduates for teachers, who led an earnest religious life, together with the students whom they led in morning and evening prayer and Bible reading.⁶⁰

Much touring and native evangelism bore some fruits if in no other form than in the "exceeding interest" displayed by many villagers.⁶¹ The Salonica station had 20 outstations, with two ordained pastors, four preaches and 24 other natives associated with the mission. At one time, there were 442 communicants and an average attendance of 887, beside 715 Sunday school students.⁶² Monastir had only three outstations, 11 members, and no ordained native pastors. The Monastir communicants contributed something toward Bond 's salary.

Bond visited Strumica and Radoviš although they belonged to the Salonica station. Among the Salonica missionaries, Haskell drew large audiences everywhere. A revival was also held in Razlog. M. Anastasov, who died in 1899, spent 27 days touring during a year. Anastasov,

⁵⁹ William Strong, *The Story of the American Board* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1910), pp. 385 - 386.

⁶⁰ Ann. Rep .ABCFM, 1898, p. 40.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

one of the first Macedonian pastors, was from Strumica, where he encountered much opposition. The Orthodox sought to accuse him before the Turkish authorities. This effort succeeded and in 1885, he was brought to the governor in the presence of the Orthodox bishop who accused him of preaching without any ecclesiastical permission. Anastasov answered, "Jesus Christ sent me." When the bishop insisted that Macedonia was under the sultan's rule rather than Jesus', Anastasov said "I beg your excellency to note that I claim that Jesus Christ does govern here and I regret that the bishop ignores his allegiance."⁶³ While this statement could hardly have endeared him to the Turkish governor, he was not entirely displeased with Protestant opposition to the Orthodox ecclesiastical authority. Anastasov was sent to prison in Constantinople, but was released through the intervention of a high Turkish official.

On other occasions, pastor Atanas Hristov spent eight days in touring, Gračanov 30 days, Daskalov 74 days, and a Bible woman named Kerafinka Uševa, 65 days. Kerafinka Uševa was from Bansko where she "has been a mother of the flock—a physician to both body and soul, and, with a loving heart has labored for all in the village, both Bulgarians and Turks, so that she has gained universal respect and many outside of the evangelical friends come to her for aid."⁶⁴ Her daughter Anitsa was also a Bible woman.

The more prominent workers in Macedonia in 1895 were the preachers Sedloev in Mehomia, Ivan Isakov in Bansko, and Gračanov in Elešnica. They all joined the missionaries in their revival efforts which consisted of a series of meetings lasting from two to 10 days in the five outstations of the Razlog district, in Radoviš, Strumica, and Veljusa.⁶⁵ Noteworthy were also the colporteurs Ivan Marko Bojadžiev and Eftim Venarov .

⁶³ *Missionary News from Bulgaria*, No. 2, (April 30, 1885), p. 4.

⁶⁴ F. Kingsbury, Samokov Stations Annual Report, May 18, 1888. Filed in ABLib.

⁶⁵ Ann .Rep. ABCFM, 1898, p.41.

In 1901, the Salonica station was reinforced by Theodore T. Holway who just came from the United States, and with Ellen M. Stone, who was earlier stationed in Samokov and Plovdiv and where she also used to be in charge of the Bible women. Political disturbances were increasing with insurrections, bad harvests, and financial stringency, but "the dark clouds that have overshadowed the land seem to have turned some hearts toward God, the refuge of troubled souls."⁶⁶ Religious interest was discovered in Doran, Upper and Lower Todorak, Elešnica and Golešovo, while in Murtino, despite the disturbances a parsonage was built.⁶⁷ "The Servian work in Prishtina, and Mitrovitza, and surrounding towns, is an interesting and growing work. The first Servian School of the Mission has finished a successful year in Prishtina."⁶⁸

Nor did the disturbances drive many people to God. The Monastir station had only four ordained native preachers and one organized church with 69 members.⁶⁹ In all likelihood, the Monastir church sought to establish itself as a distinct church organization in 1900. "The evangelical work in this district seems to meet with more difficulties than in any other station."⁷⁰ Many listeners attended but few decided to make the final step and join the Evangelicals, a drastic break with one's former religion and country, which involved a stigma of unpatriotism.

3. The Capture of Ellen Stone, and Katherine Tsilka

For exciting events, hardly anything in missionary annals can match the capture of Ellen Stone from Roxbury, Massachusetts and Katherine Tsilka, the wife of an Albanian preacher.⁷¹

Katherine Tsilka was educated at the mission schools in Monastir and Samokov and later

⁶⁶ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1901, p. 42.

⁶⁷ Ibid .

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ A Yugoslav film was made on the subject of this capture. Although the investigation may belong more properly in a novel, it is not altogether inappropriate to describe it here.

attended the Northfield Academy in Massachusetts and the training school for nurses at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York where she met and married Gregory Tsilka. Her husband studied at Union Theological Seminary, and after his return, took up missionary work in the Albanian town of Kortcha.

Mr. and Mrs. Tsilka attended a meeting in Bansko, led by Miss Stone. After the meeting, the three with five Bible women and three young students from the Samokov Boys' School started toward Samokov together with three horse drivers. When they were about 12 miles from Bansko and 15 miles from Džumaja, still some 20 miles away from the Bulgarian border, they were held up by armed brigands. All the others were released having been robbed of their valuables, except Miss Stone and Mrs. Tsilka who were made captives.⁷² The date was September 3, 1901.

This was not the first time that missionaries were attacked. J. F. Clarke was threatened with his life twice in 1900, unless he would make money payments, which he refused to do. J. H. House was arrested and threatened with beating in 1901.⁷³ So these people were well aware of the dangers of traveling. At first, the supposition was that these were armed robbers seeking money, but soon the suspicion arose that the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was behind all this.⁷⁴ The Protestants of the Razlog plain including the pastors of the Bansko church were indeed deeply involved in insurrectional activities. It seems likely that several members of the Bansko church knew of the plans to kidnap Miss Stone and were even accessories in the act.⁷⁵

⁷² J. F. Clarke, "Miss Ellen M. Stone's Captivity" in *The Congregational and Christian World*, January 25, 1901, p. 121.

⁷³ William W. Hall, Jr. *Puritans in the Balkans* (Sofia, Bulg.: Studia Historico-Philosophica Serdicensia, 1938), p. 57. This is the published form of his Ph.D. dissertation.

⁷⁴ Clarke, "Miss Ellen M. Stone's Captivity," p. 121.

⁷⁵ Hall, *PB*, p. 166.

Miss Stone and Mrs. Tsilka were, happily, well treated. Mr. K. Petkančen from Bansko acted as a liaison to deliver a message to Henry C. Haskell of Samokov and then to William W. Peet, the treasurer of the Mission in Constantinople, to whom Miss Stone communicated her situation by letters written in Bulgarian.⁷⁶ An initial demand was made for 25,000 Turkish gold liras, to be delivered within 18 days without the knowledge of either the Turkish or Bulgarian governments.⁷⁷ That was an amount of \$110,000, which was about twice the weight of Miss Stone in gold. Opposition of missionaries against the payment of ransom was unanimous. It was felt that this would make such kidnapping a profitable business. In the meantime, the brigands threatened to abuse the two captives if the pursuit by the Turkish soldiers and *bashibazouks* (irregulars) did not cease.⁷⁸ Upon learning that collection of the money had been started by Miss Stone's friends in the United States, the brigands extended their deadline.

The American Minister to Constantinople, Leishman, the Dragoman of the American Legation in Constantinople, Mr. Garguillo, William Peet, and John Henry House, especially the latter three were most responsible for the eventual liberation of the two captives.⁷⁹ Of the sum of \$77,432.56 collected by 2,264 voluntary subscriptions in the United States,⁸⁰ \$66,200 was delivered by Peet, House, and Garguillo in secret negotiations with the brigands, escaping the observation of over 200 watchful Turkish soldiers.⁸¹ During the captivity, Mrs. Tsilka gave birth to a daughter whom she named Ellenča in honor of Ellen Stone. They were finally released on

⁷⁶ Ellen Stone to W. W. Peet from Macedonia, September 20, 1902, and Ellen Stone to Henry C. Haskell from Macedonia, September 20, 1901 and October 8, 1901. The first letter written by Stone to Peet was probably lost. The photostatic copies of the three letters are included in the appendix.

⁷⁷ E. Stone to W. Peet, September 20, 1901. The letters were written in Bulgarian.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ A letter of Grace H. Knapp to Mrs. Gould on file at the ABLib .

⁸⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, Sixty-First Congress, Third Session, 1910, Report No.1792..

⁸¹ Louise Jenison Peet, *No Less Honor: The Biography of William Wheelock Peet*, (Chattanooga, Tena.: Privately Printed, 1939), pp.SS-104. This is the best first-hand report of the complex payment delivery process.

February 23, 1902,⁸² at Gradašorci near Strumica.⁸³ Miss Stone and Mrs. Tsilka were presumably bound by oath not to reveal the identity of the kidnappers, or of the places to which they were taken, in order to avoid reprisals by Turkish authorities upon the inhabitants of those villages.⁸⁴

Missionaries later tried to find out just who was responsible for all this and who was behind it. For the most, they were satisfied that it was the work of one of the Macedonian revolutionary organizations of which there were three in existence at that time.⁸⁵ Many missionaries attributed the capture to the Boris Sarafov group,⁸⁶ usually referred to as the External Macedonian Revolutionary Committee, and it was believed that the highest Bulgarian statesmen had knowledge of the capture and of the culprits.⁸⁷ It is quite possible that the Bulgarian people as a whole were sympathetic to the aims of this group, which seems to have used the money to replenish its treasury toward financing the insurrection of 1903. The missionaries could not agree on what measures should be taken to recover or repay the ransom money, or who should be held liable. Some blamed the Bulgarian government, as it gave support to the I.M.R.O., E.M.R.O., and others blamed the Turkish government because it happened on

⁸² Fred F. Goodsell, *They Lived Their Faith*, (Boston: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1961), p. 65.

⁸³ Letters of J. W. Baird of Samokov to William Barton of the American Board in Boston of November 28, 1902. On file at ABLib.

⁸⁴ Miss Stone's story appeared in *McClure's Magazine* of May to October 1902 (Vol. XIX, pp.3-16, 99-109, 222-231, 464-471, 562-570, and 587). For other details of this incident one may consult Hall, *Puritans in the Balkans*, pp. 157-167; M.M. Popoff, "With the Brigands of Bulgaria; the Views of a Native Bulgarian Pastor," in the *Commercial Advertiser*, New York, Dec.28, 1901; "How the Release of Miss Stone was Effectecl" in *The Congregational and Christian World*, Boston, March 22, 1902; Letter of W. W. Peet to Miss Florence A. Fensham of the American Board in Boston, Constantinople, March 6, 1902; Grace K. Boyton, *An Expert in Humanity: William Peet and His Remarkable Work in Turkey* (n. p. n. n., 1916). Also a typed manuscript of J. F. Clarke of Dec. 13, 1902, from Samokov entitled "Macedonia and the Capture of Miss Stone," letters of J. W. Baird from Samokov to J. Barton of Boston of Oct.30, 1902, and Nov. 28, 1902, letters of J. H. House from Salonica to W.W. Peet, May 27, 1902, Ann. Rep. of the Am. Board, 1902, pp. 40-41, *Missionary Herald*, Vol. XCVIII (April and May, 1902), pp. 40-41, *Christian Herald*, Vol. XCVIII (April and May, 1902), pp.181, 143-146, and great number of letters by missionaries in the ABAr, Vols .II, III, and IV.

⁸⁵ J. F. Clarke, "Macedonia and the Capture of Mias Stone," Samokov, typescript, Dec. 13, 1902. At ABLib.

⁸⁶ J.W. Baird to J. Barton, Samokov, Oct.30, 1902, and Nov.28, 1902. At ABLib.

⁸⁷ J.H. House to W. Peet, Salonica, May 27, 1902. At ABLib.

Turkish territory.⁸⁸ In the end none of the kidnappers were tried or punished, and world public opinion turned its attention to the plight not only of the kidnapped women, but the Macedonian people. This was after all the goal of the organization!

Miss Stone was given an immediate furlough. In the United States, she tried to raise the money given for her ransom by writing and lecturing. She became so involved in this task that she never returned to the mission field.⁸⁹

4. The Disturbances of 1903

Touring was almost completely curtailed in 1903. At this time in Monastir, an able native pastor was attracting large congregations with his preaching, but both Salonica and Monastir had become centers of the so-called "Ilinden Revolt" (Elias Day Revolt) of the same year. Meanwhile, the insurgents fought Turks on the street, bombed, burned, and killed.⁹⁰ Though the sympathies of the missionaries were probably on the side of the insurgents, they could not conscientiously approve of their methods, so they posed as impartial in the struggle, while sharing the sorrows of the people and administering relief.⁹¹

These combats with the Turks were costly in lives and property. The missionaries of Bulgaria, Salonica, and Monastir, distributed the money sent by *The Christian Herald* of New York,⁹² and other agencies and individuals. J. H. House and E. B. Haskell formed the

⁸⁸ Hall, *PB*, pp. 163-164.

⁸⁹ The incident had a happy end, but an ugly *post scriptum* was written by an over-commercialization of her lectures and some embarrassments to the American Board and herself through the actions of her brother and some of her on mistakes. A voluminous correspondence on this aspect is kept on file at ABLib .

⁹⁰ The premature death of Mrs. E. B. Haskell (Martha B. Miller) was caused by the fighting near their house while she lay gravely ill after childbirth (From "Biographical Notes about E. B. Haskell,") by an anonymous author. Now at ABLib.

⁹¹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1903, p. 39.

⁹² Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1904, p. 38.

Agricultural School in Salonica to which they brought orphans from Monastir.⁹³ The ordinary affairs of the Monastir church and the Girls' School were not affected. In several other places, the church activities were interrupted by the insurrection.⁹⁴ An orphanage was opened in 1905 with the help of the Bible Land Mission Aid Society from Great Britain, in which 20 girls and 14 boys were placed.⁹⁵ It was named the Essery Memorial Orphanage after receiving a \$2,200 home for 40 children as a gift from the United States. In 1906, the stations experienced a setback because of financial problems resulting from the American Board's inability to appropriate more than 63 percent of the mission's estimate.⁹⁶

5. The Work in the Outstations

The work in the outstations was progressing. In Mitrovica, Serbia, "several young men recently consecrated themselves to God, organized a Christian Endeavor Society, and hold regular meetings after the sermon."⁹⁷ Mitrovica had five communicants and 23 adherents, but their children were expelled from public schools in the attempt to compel them to recant the "Protestant heresy."⁹⁸ In Priština, the only school supported by the American Board in Serbia had 10 students.⁹⁹

Prejudices were gradually broken down. The congregation in Drama developed rapidly into the strongest outstation in Salonica. In Mežidurk, there were now nine Protestant families, with a total of 11 communicants and 29 adherents. In Strumica, the number of communicants

⁹³ Ibid. The school first served the Macedonians, but later, when Salonica became Greek territory, it served Greeks living in the vicinity.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ann Rep. ABCFM, 1905, p.38.

⁹⁶ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1906, p.52.

⁹⁷ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1904, p.44.

⁹⁸ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1907, p. 51.

⁹⁹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1906, p. 60.

increased to 30, and after 11 years, their elementary school received government recognition.¹⁰⁰ "The work in Skopje is hindered by the fact that the young men are inclined to flee from the difficulties besetting them at home and take refuge in America."¹⁰¹ In Tetovo, a married pastor was requested for whom they offered to provide a parsonage and chapel and a contribution toward his salary. The preacher in Prilep was assailed because of his faith, but was in time freed after a 95-day confinement.¹⁰² Prilep had its first communion service in 1907, at which a young, persecuted teacher was baptized. A school and a Sunday School were established in Jenidje.¹⁰³ An unusually able pastor, Luka A. Mirčev, the secretary of the Bulgarian Evangelical Society, came to Monastir in 1907, where he held services with an average attendance of 118 and a Sunday School of 96, and opened a preaching place in Jenimahala with 72 attending.¹⁰⁴ Monospitovo "suffered terribly in its spirituality from the implications of its members in revolutionary work."¹⁰⁵

6. The Kolečino Church

Even when a church showed progress, as in Kolečino when they bought land for a chapel in 1906,¹⁰⁶ conditions remained unfavorable. The *komitadi* killed two Turkish soldiers in the vicinity of Monospitovo and Murtino, and three local men were accused and sentenced to imprisonment at Hellen Batum, Asia Minor.¹⁰⁷ There they were converted. Upon their return,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1907, p.48.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Ann .Rep. ABCFM, 1906, p.59.

¹⁰⁷ This whole account is based on the collection of memories of the oldest members of the Kolečino church in 1962 by Mrs Paula Mojzes, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia.

they persuaded the *psalt*,¹⁰⁸ Mane Isev, from Kolečino to read and discuss the Bible with others in Kolečino. Isev then initiated a polemic with the priests as to the Orthodox Church customs. He gathered young people about him to study the Bible, often meeting secretly in the woods. At the feast of St. Spas in Kolečino on May 15, 1899, the Greek Bishop required all the people to surrender their Bulgarian Bibles to him, under the pain of anathema. A discussion evolved in which several men declared themselves to be Evangelicals. Reacting to the attacks of the bishop, they labeled him Belzeebub, and said that they would rather follow Mane Isev. Chaos ensued and the men were terribly beaten. The bishop tried to persuade Mane Isev to give up his beliefs or to keep them to himself, but Isev refused. In 1899, he went to Strumica and declared to the Turkish authorities that he wanted to become a Protestant. He invited the local preacher from Strumica, a native of Radoviš, Kosta Kimov, to preach in Kolečino, and in May, some 15 or 20 persons gathered for the first service.

The bishop encouraged people to persecute the families of the brothers, Mane and Kite Isev, and the villagers forbade them to feed their livestock on the collective pasture, burned their rice on the field, and destroyed their gardens and fields. In 1905, Mane Isev, still in conflict with his neighbors, received a letter from a Greek woman teacher demanding that he either renounce his Protestantism or be murdered. His friends took the letter to the authorities in Strumica and the Greek teacher was imprisoned. But so was Mane Isev. Only after diplomatic intervention from the American Consulate in Salonica, after an involved process was he acquitted. The teacher was sentenced to two years in prison but Isev spoke in her behalf because he knew that she was led into her acts by the Orthodox bishop. Thus she was released. But in 1906, the whole family of

¹⁰⁸ A layman of the Orthodox Church who chants at the services.

Isev was again threatened by a group of seven *komitadi*, seeking for their lives. The Protestants believed that these men were paid by the bishop.

Meanwhile, House and Haskell came to see if they could help. In Strumica, they were told that the trouble was caused by the bishop. When the Kolečino villagers burned the small Protestant chapel built there by the old Protestant families, these missionaries were able to intervene. The arsonists had been taken to court by Isev where they were each fined 80 gold liras, but the culprits subsequently refused to pay. House and Haskell succeeded in arranging a retrial and the criminals were sentenced to 100 years in prison! This too was later commuted, and they were freed in 1912. Some of these men were from the group of the *komitadi* who tried several times to kill Mane Isev and who did kill a Protestant called Vasil Kitanov. For all this, a new chapel was built in 1912, which is still in use at the present and Mane Isev remained the lay leader of the Kolečino congregation until his death in 1926.

7. Missionary Work in Albania

Before 1905, people of various nationalities worshipped together in Monastir and elsewhere. But as the Balkan wars approached, they became more nationally conscious. One missionary wrote:

The efforts of the extremists lately are succeeding to some extent in causing friction in mixed evangelical communities which up to this year ignored political factions and lived harmoniously as brethren.¹⁰⁹

In 1908, the Monastir station suffered further loss when Phineas B. Kennedy and C. Telford Erickson opened the Kortcha station in Albania.¹¹⁰ Activities here go back to preaching by a Greek (or Albanian?) Protestant, Gerasim Kyrias, and A. Thomson of the British and

¹⁰⁹ Ann .Rep. ABCFM, 1907, p. 51.

¹¹⁰ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1908, p. 48.

Foreign Bible Society.¹¹¹ With the support of the American Board, Kyrias' sister, Sevasti Kyrias, opened a school for girls in Kortcha, the first girls' school in Albania to use the Albanian language.¹¹² J. W. Baird and Mary Matthews studied Albanian to be able to meet this challenge more effectively. The Albanian people were generally friendly and open-minded, and the missionaries felt that much could be done in Albania once the nation shook off the Turkish overlords. One of the first Albanian pastors was Mr. Sinas who initiated the translation of the Bible from Greek into Albanian.¹¹³

This school was however closed by the authorities more than once because of the use of Albanian, and Kyrias decided to invite regular missionaries, hoping thereby to find a measure of protection. The Kennedys and Ericksons worked primarily in Kortcha and Elbasan with preaching outstations in Tirana, Durazzo, and other places. They had the help of the able Gregory Tsilka and a number of native pastors. The work developed slowly and after the wars, it was abandoned entirely because of the financial inability of the American Board to support it.¹¹⁴

C. The Time of Wars: 1912 to 1918

1. The Balkan Wars (1912-1913)

The years before the Balkan war passed rather quietly. The missionaries expected much relaxation after the Young Turk Revolt of 1908, a hope that proved to be exaggerated. The Macedonian mission was enforced by William Cooper but this addition was not sufficient to bring radical improvements. Very little work was done in the extreme eastern part of Macedonia,

¹¹¹ *Missionary Herald*, Oct. 1892, p. 398.

¹¹² Mrs. Edward W. Capan, "Violet Bond Kennedy," May 1953, Photostatic copy filed at ABLib.

¹¹³ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1900, p. 42.

¹¹⁴ Discussion of this work of the American Board in Albania does not belong under this topic, though clearly related to it, and interesting in itself.

while the Monastir station was altogether too weakly staffed with missionaries and native workers to be of consequence in the coming years.

The term "European Turkey Mission" was no longer applicable after the Balkan Wars. In 1913, it gave way to the title "Turkey and the Balkan Mission"¹¹⁵ without formal action. Macedonia was divided between Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia. Greece occupied the cities of Salonica and Körtcha in which the American Board had stations. Bulgaria was forced to confine itself to the Razlog district of Macedonia, rather than annexing all of Macedonia as they had hoped. Serbia occupied Skopje (formerly Üsküb) and Bitola (formerly Monastir) and other territories of Western Macedonia.

Both the Greek and Serbian governments followed an anti-Bulgarian policy, which greatly affected the mission. The Greeks tried to naturalize the Slavic Macedonians and the Albanians. When Phineas Kennedy was arrested in Körtcha and forcibly taken to Greece, the work of the Salonica station in the Bulgarian language was almost completely suspended.¹¹⁶ The Serbians, who also occupied a large part of Albania, arrested Erickson and Tsilka. Anxious to retain parts of Macedonia, they maintained that Macedonians were southern Serbians, and took measures to enforce the use of Serbian language in the Bitola Girls' School and in the churches.¹¹⁷

When Delpha Davis became the acting principal upon Miss Matthews' furlough, the school was allowed to continue and to hold graduation exercises, except that compulsory Serbian language teaching was introduced. Neither teachers nor students were allowed to use Bulgarian. By that time, the school had nearly oriented itself to the use of English. They were permitted on

¹¹⁵Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1913., p. 57.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 64-65. The Salonica Station was forced to re-orient itself to work with Greek people, although it served Slavic people in the vicinity as much as possible. Because of this re-orientation the station ceases to be within the scope of this study..

¹¹⁷ Letter from Monastir, ABAr., Balkan Missions, 1910- 1919, No. 31.

rare occasions to use what the Serbians called the "Balkan language" (Macedonian).¹¹⁸ The Serbians maintained an outwardly friendly and courteous approach, while tightening their bureaucratic controls. Being suspicious of pro-Bulgarian feelings, they put a Serbian teacher on the staff, ostensibly to teach the Serbian language, but whom the missionaries suspected of spying.¹¹⁹ They were now prevented from crossing the borders, and although the Monastir station was allowed more relations with the American Board Mission in Bulgaria than the Greeks had allowed to Salonica, it was clear that the idea of maintaining one mission was breaking down, despite the rising idea of Balkan federalism.¹²⁰ In Serbian Macedonia, only W. F. Clark and Delpha Davis remained. Their labors were concentrated in educational work as the day school enjoyed an increase of 185 percent in enrollment due to the discontinuance of the Bulgarian and Greek schools, while the parents also requested the organization of a kindergarten.¹²¹

2. World War I (1914-1918)

Although near the place of origin of the World War in 1914, the town of Bitola (Monastir) was not affected until later. In 1915, Mary Matthews returned and Delpha Davis went on furlough. Relief work became a major concern, as it had been during the Balkan wars. The school was doing so well that they contemplated making the smaller boys 'department into a separate school. The total enrollment in the school was 144; of this, 77 were girls, many of whom were boarders, and 67 were boys, who were all day students.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1914, p. 70.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Monastir, ABAr, Balkan Missions, 1910 1919, No. 31.

¹²⁰ *Missionary Herald*, Vol. CXVII (June 1921), p. 197.

¹²¹ Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1914, p. 92.

¹²² Ann. Rep. ABCFM, 1915, p. 97.

But in October 1915, the Serbian government closed the school and all Serbians left the city, fleeing toward Salonica, in advance of the Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, and German armies. On December 2, 1915, the Bulgarian army occupied Bitola and Delpha Davis and Rada Pavlova left for Sofia *en route* to the U.S.¹²³ The staff was now reduced to William Clarke and Mary Matthews, and they continued on during the Bulgarian occupation. Evangelism or touring was impossible and church work was restricted to the older members. Yet services were overcrowded, and the Bulgarian soldiers, of whom some were Protestants, took part. New members were received into membership.¹²⁴ The Bulgarians had become more liberal and tolerant through their acquaintance with missions for over half a century and work under their occupation was easier.

The Bulgarian occupation lasted less than a year. Serbian, British, and French troops occupied Bitola in November 1916. Clarke was told to leave for the United States as soon as possible, but Miss Matthews stayed in Bitola throughout the whole war sharing the suffering of the people. She and the girls and a few of the women teachers undertook any relief work they could find, no matter under what flag they served,¹²⁵ sick at heart to see so much needless suffering. During the Bulgarian occupation of Monastir, the French bombarded it; when the French-Serbian forces took the city, the Bulgarians bombarded it from the surrounding hills. The mission school was used as headquarters by the French General Dessort who left only after a long and effective shelling.¹²⁶ This was not the first time the school had been requisitioned. The Germans used parts of it to quarter their horses and maintenance men.¹²⁷ The Bitola church

¹²³ Letter from Monastir, ABAr, Balkan Missions, 1910- 1919, No. 31.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Delpha Davis, *Christmas under Three Flags*, (Chicago: Woman's Board of Missions of interior, n.d.), *passim*.

¹²⁶ Mary L. Matthews to Mabel E. Emerson of the American Board in Boston, Lancaster, Wisc., Nov.1, 1948. On file at ABLib .

¹²⁷ Ibid.

building was used as a hospital under Anglo-Serb control. Teachers of the mission school flocked here for jobs, as the school was not functioning.

The services continued in private houses. With the return of the Serbians, Pastor Mirchev was interned in France, while his family was cared for by Miss Matthews at the school. One of her main forms of relief work was the care of Macedonian women whose husbands or sons worked in America, and sent money to their families. She arranged to receive the money through the American Consul-General in Salonica and exchange it into local bank notes. This sort of effort had the effect of opening doors which had previously been closed. The churches in the area of Strumica and Bansko belonged to Bulgaria after 1913, and enjoyed the toleration of the government. Much of the same good care was enjoyed by the missionaries and the native pastors as those of other Bulgarian churches.

At the end of World War I, Macedonia became part of the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Major changes were to take place including the transfer of the Protestant churches from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregational) to the Methodist Episcopal Church's Board of Foreign Missions. This is the subject of a forthcoming article.