



Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

**IN THE LIGHT OF OWN SOURCES THE ACTIVITIES OF PROTESTANT
MISSIONARIES IN DEMIRTAS AND COUNTERMEASURES OF NATIVE
ORTHODOX ELEMENTS**

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Abstract

In the 19th century, Protestant missionary activities in Anatolia were carried out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) which was found in Boston in 1810. However, missionaries had to struggle with serious problems during this process. The most important of these troubles was the opposing attitudes of the other Christian elements towards Protestantism which was a very new movement for Anatolia during the 19th century. This can be interpreted as a conflict of interest in the direction of becoming the dominant non-Muslim element in the region. Accordingly, this article mentions the fight for existing of Protestants against the native Orthodox elements in Demirtas, an outstation in Bursa. Another issue that this study urges upon is the approaches and attitudes of the political agents involved in the conflict process between the two parties. In addition, this article was written mainly by considering the point of view of the Protestant missionaries conducting activities in Demirtas. The reports and documents of the members of the organization are the main sources of the article. As a result, although there was no absolute winner of this struggle, the loss of Protestants was greater than that of the native Orthodox elements.

Keywords: Demirtas, Protestant, Orthodox, Missionary

**KENDİ KAYNAKLARI IŞIĞINDA PROTESTAN MİSYONERLERİN
DEMİRTAŞ'TAKİ FAALİYETLERİ VE YERLİ ORTODOKS UNSURLARIN KARŞI
TEDBİRLERİ**

Öz

19. yüzyılda Anadolu'daki Protestan misyonerlik faaliyetleri 1810 yılında Boston'da kurulan American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) adlı teşkilat tarafından yürütülmüştür. Ancak misyonerler bu süreçte ciddi sıkıntılarla boğuşmak zorunda kalmışlardır. Bunların en önemlisi 19. yüzyıl itibariyle Anadolu için çok yeni bir hareket olan Protestanlığa yönelik diğer Hristiyan unsurların muhalif yaklaşımlarıdır. Bu durum bölgede egemen gayrimüslim unsur olma yönünde bir çıkar çatışması şeklinde yorumlanabilir. Bu doğrultuda bu makale, Bursa'ya bağlı bir dış istasyon olan Demirtaş'ta Protestanların var olma mücadelesine değinmektedir. Bu çalışmanın üzerinde durduğu bir diğer husus da iki taraf arasındaki çatışma sürecinde olaya müdahil olan siyasi aktörlerin yaklaşım ve tutumlarıdır. Bunun yanı sıra bu makale ağırlıklı olarak Demirtaş'ta faaliyet yürüten Protestan misyonerlerin bakış açısı göz önünde bulundurularak kaleme alınmıştır. Örgüt mensuplarının rapor ve belgeleri makalenin temel kaynaklarıdır. Sonuç itibariyle her ne kadar bu mücadelenin mutlak manada bir kazananı olmamışsa da Protestanların kaybı yerli Hristiyan unsurlardan daha fazla olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demirtaş, Protestan, Ortodoks, Misyoner

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Introduction

Missionary activities, presumed to have a background equivalent to the history of Christianity, are often attributed to the following directive that Jesus Christ gave to his disciples: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mathew, 28:19/20). However, in a systematic sense, the missionary activities started with St. Paul (Cilacı, 2005: 21). Without a doubt, an activity with such a deep-rooted background was considered important by all Christian sects. Therefore, the conflicts and strife experienced in the reform process of Christianity made itself felt more on the subject of the missionary. In this respect missionary work is not just a religious case; it is intertwined with political and social issues (Aydın, 2005: 130).

As in many fields of Christianity, there is a distinct superiority of Catholics in relation to missionary work. It was much later that Protestants were included in this system, which was based on the principle that the clergy commissioned by the Vatican would disperse around the world under the name of the missionary (Bosch, 1991: 227-229). In this context, the Protestant missionary began with British William Carey in the modern sense (Mason, 1916: 321). Carey was appointed to India as a member of the Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1792 (Yücel, 2017: 14).

At this point, it is useful to give brief information about the Catholic missionary activities towards the Ottoman State. Catholics were the first Christian congregation engaged in missionary activities in Anatolia. The beginning of the mission movement towards the Ottoman State dates back to the 16th century (Yetkiner, 2010: 38). The first group of Catholic missionaries who came to Istanbul was Jesuit priests. The clergymen arrived in Istanbul as a group of five on 8 November 1583 (Taş, 2006: 12). The primary goal of Catholics was to bring Orthodox elements of the Ottoman Empire and Eastern Christians, especially Armenians, to their sect. During this period, the Catholics had twelve churches in Istanbul (Ay, 2007: 40). In addition, the first missionary school on the Ottoman lands was opened by the Catholics. This school, named Saint Benoit and opened in 1583, is important for the formation of the educational activities of the missionaries in Anatolia (Satılmış, 2006: 36). In light of this information, it can be assumed that Catholics had a partial success in Anatolia.

For Ottoman State, the process in which Protestants were most effective corresponded to the 19th century. But it was not the British who had made this impact. However, this situation does not change the fact that the first organized struggle on behalf of Protestantism was initiated by Great Britain in the Ottoman territories. In this sense, the United Kingdom's first official contact with the Ottoman Empire occurred during the reign of Henry the seventh at the beginning of the 16th century. This contact was through the Levant Company established to have a say in the Mediterranean and Near East trade. The British merchants of the period arrived in Ottoman territory in competition with the merchants of other European states that had imperialist tendencies and pursuit colonialism (Schulz, 2018: 29). Ottoman-British relations, which developed rather in the commercial area until the end of the 16th century, shifted to the political field from this date. In this direction, firstly, William Harbourn was sent to Istanbul as a trade agent (Aydın, 2015: 1404). About a century after the first contact established by the British, who carried out a kind of penetration movement to Anatolia, especially near East and Mediterranean, through trade, the relations between the two states reached a peak point (Beck, 1976: 171).

Just then the British missionaries used this opportunity and headed for the Ottoman lands. The missionary activities, which began initially with personal endeavors, grew stronger over time and

served imperial purposes in line with the political, social, cultural, commercial, and economic activities of Britain (Aydın, 2015: 1408). In this direction, members of the British Church Missionary Society initiated the first serious Protestant missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire. The society was also the largest British Protestant missionary organization carried out activities in the Ottoman Empire. The first activities of the society towards the Ottoman lands were from the island of Malta, which was dominated by the British in 1800 (Turan, 1999: 1548). The United Kingdom started this movement from Malta and eventually moved it to Bulgaria. Indeed Benjamin Parker, a missionary to the British and Foreign Bible Society, reported in 1826 that the Bulgarian translation of the Bible was strongly needed (Turan, 1994: 1099).

The United States, acting in alliance with Britain on many issues, may be said to have a similar tendency on missionary activities. In this direction, the Protestant missionary activities conducted in Anatolia in the 19th century were guided by an organization that was established under the name of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Boston in 1810 (Açıkses, 2003: 35). Initially, the sole desire of this organization was to preach the Bible to the infidels (Danacıoğlu, 2000: 132). In fact, the first Protestant missionary to set foot in Ottoman territory was a British pastor associated with the Church of Missionary Society. He was sent to Egypt in 1815 (Kocabaşoğlu, 2000: 15). However, the British missionaries could not impress the Ottoman people as much as the Board members. In the beginning, the American Board Organization predominantly carried out activities within the borders of the United States. Once the organization had achieved enough experience and success, the time came to disperse to the outside world. This "*blessed and auspicious*" task was undertaken by Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons (Barrett, 2012: 34). The chosen route was to reach Palestine through Izmir. Parsons (1821) preached a sermon at Park Street Church in Boston before setting off and tried to explain how legitimate the journey was. Similarly, Fisk (1819) made the last speech before launching his trip. But his preference was Old South Church (Fisk, 1819: 41).

Two missionaries reached Izmir on 15 January 1820 (Alan, 2001: 183). Within this scope, it is worth noting that the first educational institution established by American missionaries in Turkey was also located in Izmir. The school was opened in 1826 by Miss Mary Reynold (Şahin, 2005: 187). In the first place, the missionaries tried to learn the languages of the region then they moved to Jerusalem and carried out missionary activities in the vicinity of this region. However, attempts in this aspect were interrupted by Parsons' death in 1822 (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [ABCFM], 1908: 12). The date of Fisk's death was 1855. This death did not lead to the decline of American missionaries' interest in the Middle East and married couples were sent to this region (Dalyan, 2011: 342). Afterward, they gradually moved to Anatolia. In this manner, the activities of the American Board Organization in Anatolia began in 1831 with the arrival of William Goodell to Istanbul (Prime, 1876: 112). Goodell sailed from America on 9 December 1822 and arrived in Malta in October 1823. From here, he passed to Beirut and carried out activities in the Middle East until 1828. On that date, he returned to Malta and came to Istanbul after three years in Malta (ABCFM, 2004c). As a result of this move, activities of Protestant missionary started in the Anatolian part of the Ottoman lands called Asia Minor by the Westerners. Accordingly, Izmir station was established in 1833, Bursa and Trabzon stations were in 1834, consecutively (Dwight, 1854: 44-45). Similarly, Arapkir, one of the Eastern Turkey Mission stations, was established in 1853. Harput and Maras stations came into activity in 1855 (Dalyan, 2010: 83).

The main goal of the American Protestant missionaries, who were engaged in activities aimed at Jews in the first place, was undoubtedly the Christian elements of other sects. No doubt, the missionaries would secretly try to influence the Muslims as well (Şahin, 2019: 145). Even in the early days, there was a serious excitement that Muslims could be evangelized. It was claimed

that the Turks showed interest and respect for the doctrines and principles of Protestantism. Even more important, there was a rumor circulating in Istanbul that 15 or 20 Turks had been baptized. It was said that in the summer of 1864, ten adult Turks had accepted Protestantism at one time (Richter, 1910: 173-174). A similar incident was witnessed in Bursa. Although they did not fully accept Protestantism, the two Turks, who were described as influential and liberal, were deeply sympathized with the missionaries. These two people, Nesah and Haji Vahap were constantly acting together with American missionaries and always followed up with them (Schneider, 1835b: 301). The most important influence towards the Turks was manifesting itself in the missionary schools. The contribution of the schools to Turkish language education and the success they achieved in this regard were remarkable (Alan, 2007: 468). However, these were isolated events, and Muslims in general had no interest in Protestantism.

In the last instance, this article will focus on the efforts of missionaries who are the members of the American Board Organization, to gain influence in Demirtas, a town located right next to Bursa. Missionaries reached this region through Bursa. However, the native Christian elements, that is to say, Orthodoxes strongly opposed missionaries because Protestants were objecting to many essential elements of Christianity that are considered sacred by other sects. Therefore, they were considered heretic. Struggling with the Protestants was almost perceived as a religious duty. They made every effort to prevent the Protestants to affect the non-Muslims of the town. Another purpose of the article is to reveal that the Protestant missionaries focused on other Christian sects rather than Muslims. In addition, the article will indicate that opposition towards Protestants was not welded from the Muslim population. During this process, the intervention of European countries to this harsh struggle will be another subject of the article. On the other hand, this strife and conflict between those who belonged to different sects will be mainly cited on the basis of the archive records of the American Board Organization.

1. The Demographic and Religious Structure of Non-Muslims in Bursa and Demirtas during the 19th Century

At this point, it will be useful to give some information about the non-Muslim Christian inhabitants in Bursa and Demirtas. Bursa was the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the city has a great deal of importance in the relations of non-Muslims with the Ottoman State and in the determination of their status. Before the conquest, the non-Muslim elements of Bursa consisted largely of Greeks. There were also some Jews in the city (Galanti, 1995: 11). With the conquest, Bursa became an important city in a short period of time, in which Muslims were the majority but non-Muslims were also present who came and settled from other regions. Besides, the date of the arrival of Armenians in Bursa coincided with the period of Mehmet I. On the mentioned date, an Armenian group of ten households came to the city. Within a short time, they had become crowded enough to form a few neighborhoods of their own (Karataş, 2005: 83).

In order to analyze the demographic structure of the city better, it is also necessary to look at population data. According to an Ottoman archival record during the period of Mehmed the second, the population of the city was nearly 30.000 (Ünal, 2011: 199). In the first half of the sixteenth century, there were 6.351 households in Bursa, including 6.165 Muslims, 69 Christian, and 117 Jewish. This corresponded to a population of about thirty-two thousand people. Most of the Christian population especially the Greek ones were Orthodox (Behar, 1996: 6). There is also some information about the population of Bursa in the 16th century in Ottoman archival records. According to a Tahrir from the aforementioned century, the population of the city was over 60.000. Of this figure, approximately 55.500 were Muslims, and 3.000 were Christians and 1.500 were Jews (Aslan, 2006: 80-81). In 1675, 40.000 Turks, 12.000 Jews, and a small number of Greeks and Armenians lived in the city (Aybet, 2010: 540). In the 18th century, the population of Christian elements exceeded Jewish ones. According to Tournefort (1717, cited by Lowry,

2003), Muslims had 12.000, Jews 400, Armenians 500, and Greeks 300 households. An Ottoman Tahrir dated to the 18th century the population of the city was more than 60.000 (Ünal, 2011: 199).

In the 19th century, which is in the scope of the article, there were various kinds of information about the population of Bursa and Demirtas. According to the first official census that was carried out in 1831 the male population of Bursa was 16.118 in total. Of this population, 10.532 were Muslims. The remaining 5.586 were non-Muslims (Karpas, 1985: 110). On the other hand, missionary records have different information about the population living in Bursa. A document dated 1834 mentioned that 85.000 people lived in the city (ABCFM, 1834: 5). However, Schneider (1835a) stated that the city had a large Muslim population in addition to 6.000 Orthodox Greeks, a large number of Armenians, and a few Catholics. In his words, the population of elements other than Muslims was between 50.000 and 60.000. James I. Good (w.date) said that approximately 80.000 people lived in Bursa and that two-thirds of this population was Muslim. According to Good, approximately 10.000 Armenians, 8.000 Greeks, and 2.000 Jews lived in the city.

The only record related to the population of Demirtas in the missionary documents was dated 1865. In regard to this document penned by Greene (1865, cited by Yıldız, 2007) the town had a population of 2.525. On the other side, 35.096 people lived in the city center. Greene also provided information about the elements that constituted the population both in Bursa and Demirtas. According to the missionary in Demirtas Greeks were mostly Orthodox. There were only 25 Protestants in the town and all of them were again Greeks. Besides, 3.500 Greeks were living in the city center and they were predominantly Orthodox.

In accordance with the annual of Hudâvendigâr (1871: 151), the population of Bursa was 35.709. It was the same in 1872 (117) and 1873 (112). Of this population, 22.826 were Muslims, and 12.883 were non-Muslims. According to the annual of Hudâvendigâr dated 1879 (181), the population of the city center was 34.674. The same information was repeated in 1880 (173). There were 22.822 Muslims, 8.782 Greeks, and 3.070 Armenians in those years in Bursa. The annual of 1885 indicated that (cited by, Gürsakal, 2009) the Greek population in Bursa was predominantly Orthodox. As the document stated there were 62.552 Greeks in the city and only 1.987 of them were Catholics. Similarly, in 1895, it was repeated that very few of the Greeks living in the city were Catholics (Bursa Hâkimiyet, 1987: 154). In consequence in the 19th century, Bursa was a city with Orthodox Greeks, Gregorian and Protestant Armenians, and Catholics as well as Muslims. Demirtas on the other hand was a small town that nearly all the non-Muslim elements were Greeks and Orthodox (Şeker, 1999: 118).

At this point, it is necessary to mention the places of worship and clergy of non-Muslims residing in Bursa in the 19th century briefly. The number of churches and synagogues in Bursa was stated by the travelers who visited the city. Simeon (1608/1999) said that there was a small wooden church belonging to Armenians in the city at the beginning of the 17th century. John Covell (1675, cited by Lowry, 2003) who gave information about Bursa towards the end of the same century, just like Simeon, stated that there was a church of the Armenians in Bursa, and also mentioned that there were three churches belonging to the Greeks. Tournefort (1717, cited by Lowry, 2003) on the other side said that at the beginning of the 18th century there were three churches of the Greeks, one church of the Armenians, and four synagogues of the Jews in Bursa. Carsten Niebuhr (1766, cited by Karataş, 2011) similar to the previous travelers emphasized that the Armenians had one and the Greeks had three churches in the city. Pujolat (1830, cited by Günaydın & Kaplanoğlu, 2000) stated that the Greeks had three and the Armenians had two churches. Only one of these churches in Bursa belonged to Catholics. In 1831, after the adoption of Catholics as a nation, one of the Armenian churches was allocated to the followers of the

Papacy (Karataş, 2005: 92). Besides, in Demirtas there was only one sanctuary in the first half of the 19th century and it was an Orthodox church. This church named '*Koimesis Tes Theotokos*' was built in 1834 (Yıldız, 2018: 282-283).

The demographic and religious structure of Bursa and Demirtas in the 19th century reveals the fact that the Greek population throughout the city was largely a member of the Orthodox sect. In the mentioned age only one of the eight churches in the city belonged to Catholics. Moreover, this was an Armenian church. However, another issue presented by these data was the reality that Demirtas was a Turkish town. Although there was a serious non-Muslim population in Bursa and Demirtas compared with many other parts of Anatolia, Demirtas was a Turkish settlement. As stated above, missionary documents also confirm this fact. However, there was no doubt that it would be the Greeks who would direct the opposition towards the missionaries in this town. The Greek population in Demirtas was largely Orthodox. This situation would reveal another aspect of the struggle among the Christian congregations in Demirtas. Indeed, Protestant missionaries conducted activities in Anatolia were generally in competition with Catholics. Furthermore, their rivals were Armenians rather than Greeks. At Demirtas, incidents took a different course. Protestant missionaries had to fight with the members of the Orthodox congregation in the town.

2. A Small and Strategical Town in the Shadow of Bursa: Demirtas

In order to understand the Demirtas journey of the Protestant missionaries, it is necessary to have brief information about how they reached Bursa. First of all, the missionaries divided the regions into stations and outstations. The stations were settlements where the missionaries resided and had a high population. In addition, for the Board members, a city had to harbor a significant non-Muslim Christian population in order to become a station. In other words, Protestants did not care about the general population of the regions but about the number of non-Muslim elements they had. (Önal, 2019: 157) In this respect, Bursa with its Christian population would offer important and remarkable opportunities to missionaries. Both Armenians and Greeks would be important congregations for Protestants. Demirtas on the other side became prominent with its Greek Orthodox population. In fact, the population of the town in the 19th century was approximately 2.500 and the almost whole population of non-Muslim elements was consisting of Orthodox Greeks (Demiryürek, 2016: 217). Outstations were generally controlled by native helpers, and the work carried out here was regularly reported. These documents were sent to Boston where the headquarters of the Board Organization was located, via stations. (Yıldız, 2007: 19) In this sense, Bursa was a station, Demirtas was an outstation connected to Bursa.

The first missionary who visited Bursa was William Goodell. Goodell set out from Istanbul in May 1832 and came to the city (Richardson, 1868: 001). However, missionaries would have to wait two more years for Bursa to become a station. With the arrival of Benjamin Schneider to the city in 1834, they achieved their aim. Schneider was also one of the missionaries who conducted activities in Anatolia for the longest time. He spent forty years in Anatolia away from his country (ABCFM, 2004a). Meantime Philander O. Powers was the second missionary sent to the city. Powers reached Bursa on February 13, 1835 (ABCFM, 1835: 5; ABCFM, 1836: 7). Philander was engaged in Bursa until 1843. He was appointed to Trabzon on the said date and resigned in 1862 (ABCFM, 2004b).

Although it was an outstation, the first visit to Demirtas coincided with the journey of Bursa. Probably the most important reason for this was that the town is located on the Bursa-Istanbul road, that is, in a strategically important position. In this respect, the first official record of the American Board Organization regarding Demirtas belongs to 1833. Considering that even important cities such as Ankara, Eskisehir, and Balıkesir were visited after the 1860s, it will be understood that Demirtas attracted the attention of missionaries at a very early date (Yıldız, 2007: passim). On the other hand, Goodell (1833) wrote his impressions about the town quite

widely that he visited during his return to İstanbul. As previously stated, he reached Bursa actually in 1832, but since the Board records were kept annually, this visit was reflected in the documents a year later. Goodell's impressions of Demirtas are worth conveying in his own words:

After leaving Bursa we reached a small but wonderful town that is called Demirtas, Iron Stone in English. This is a Greek town and approximately two hours to the city. As it is known Bursa is famous for silk. And the best quality of silk is produced in this town. The residents of Demirtas are in better condition. This is easily understood from the people's clothing and the structure of the houses. I think Demirtas is one of the best regions I have ever seen all around the Anatolia. The favor and kindness of people towards our mission and principles were unique. We came together with some of the natives around a breakfast table. There were clergy among us. We were particularly surprised and excited by their interest in our Holy Book and other publications that we brought. (p. 190)

As these sentences indicate, Goodell's first impressions towards the town were pretty favorable. Following these positive and impressive developments in Demirtas, the strategic importance of the town was emphasized more than before. Undoubtedly this prominence was related to the distance of the town to Bursa. In terms of the Board Organization, Bursa was a kind of headquarters, and having an outstation near this city would make it easier to control one of the oldest capitals of Ottomans. Accordingly, an archive document dated 1851 emphasized that Demirtas was a "*Greek town*" and located two hours away from Bursa (Lenep, 1851: 406). Similarly, with respect to a record dated 1854 Demirtas was a "*Greek town*" and six miles north of Bursa and reformation had begun in this region. More importantly, missionaries had been struck with the evidence of progress since their last visit three years ago (Riggs, 1854: 374). Another document published in 1856 stated that the Protestant community was greatly encouraged; its school was prosperous; the church was harmonious and united. All these evolvments increased the hopes and excitement of missionaries. The Protestant Greek community of Demirtas remained faithful and firm, though without a spiritual guide (Hamlin, 1856: 260). In 1863, the statement that Demirtas was a large "*Greek town*" next to Bursa was repeated. (ABCFM, 1863a: 269) In another document belonging to the same year, the following expression was included: "Demirtas is an outstation connected with Bursa" (ABCFM, 1863b: 53).

All these statements were emphasized once more in 1870. The station report of the mentioned year announced that Demirtas was a "*Greek town*" even the church congregation was wholly Greek (Schneider, 1870: 010). These sentences revealed an important truth. Protestant missionaries were trying to prove that Demirtas was not actually a Muslim land, and in this way, they were endeavoring to make their presence in the region more legitimate. Despite all these positive developments, there were also some kinds of annoying incidents in the town. Especially the failure of the silk crop, upon which the townsmen mainly depend, rendered them incapable of paying their dues to the preacher. It was a demoralizing situation and affecting the course of Protestantism negatively (Schneider, 1870: 010). Nothing has changed in silk production since a year later. The records reflected the experienced troubles, as follows:

It is very desirable that the present preacher would be ordained by the church; but their inability to pay one half of the salary of the pastor, prevents any efforts being made in that direction. The failure of their silk crops for several years' past, on which they mainly depend, is their apology. The preacher says that if their silk crops this year, also, prove a failure, many people will become objects of charity. But while this is so, it is also true, that they have done whatever they can towards

their own institutions. Preacher measures over this state of things as much as we do and we have no concerns that he is ready to do whatever he can. (Schneider, 1871: 006)

In addition, the town's proximity to an important station and having a non-Muslim population would increase the courage, to carry out activities in that region. In this respect, a document dated 1875 stated once more that the town belonged to the Greeks (Richardson, 1875: 007). In another record published three years later; this situation repeated. In regard to the document, Demirtas was an outstation and located next to Bursa (ABCFM, 1878: 34).

In light of all this information, the reasons for missionaries' preference for Demirtas come into sight. In the first place, this town was providing a significant part of the silk production in Bursa. The possibility that missionaries might desire to get a share of such a rich source should not be overlooked. In addition, the town is located very close to Bursa. The establishment of an outstation right next to a city that was the old capital of the Ottoman Empire would offer the missionaries significant opportunities. Another reason is that Demirtas is on the Istanbul road. The town would be an important stopping place for missionaries traveling from Istanbul to Western Anatolia. On the other hand, Demirtas had a significant non-Muslim population, the target group of missionaries. As a result of all these reasons and insistent efforts, the following words were almost a confession and inviting the missionaries to Demirtas: "While brethren of the character of these in Demirtas are left to themselves, as they have been, all progress becomes backward" (Baldwin, 1880: 013).

3. The Balance Policy of Sublime Porte towards the Non-Muslim Christian Elements

In this context, it is worth mentioning the relations between the Ottoman State rulers and the Protestant missionaries both in the general sense and at the local level. The Ottoman Empire was treating all non-Muslim elements living within its borders with great tolerance regardless of origin, culture, and belief, especially during the period of its rise. The security, social rights, educational and linguistic autonomy of non-Muslims and their economic well-being were assured. More importantly, the Ottoman Empire was very advanced in, tolerance, especially when compared to Europe at the time. The state maintained a balanced policy and remained neutral among Christian sects. The rulers were only involved in the events in an environment of chaos or turmoil between the Christian congregations. Another issue that forced them to take precautions was threats that could disrupt public safety (Günay, 2008: 62).

There are a lot of records in the Ottoman archives regarding the approaches of the state rulers. Presenting some of these examples will provide information about the approaches of the Sublime Porte to different non-Muslim elements. First of all, it is necessary to state that the rulers of the Ottoman Empire believe that those who wish to change their sects with their own consent should not be interfered with. Indeed, an order issued in 1855 on complaints is noteworthy. Accordingly, the incitement of Armenians to intervene in the trade of Protestants and to cause difficulties to those who wanted to change their sects was investigated and it was stated that this claim was not true (A.DVN, nr. 114/45). On the other hand, the edict issued on the grounds that the Greeks should not be allowed to engage in offensive and actual actions against Protestants is remarkable (A.MKT.UM, nr. 140/21).

Some examples can be also given from Bursa that Protestant citizens can live a life in accordance with their sects by complying with the laws and regulations. The notification that Toros Kendigan, an Armenian Protestant priest in Bursa who was withheld for mentioning the red cross (salib-i ahmer) in a letter, should be released if he has no other crime is an important example in this regard (A.MKT.MHM, nr. 655/28). Another example of the rights that Protestants possessing, was related to an incident witnessed in Demirtas. Hereunder, the collection of the cizye taxes of the Protestant people in the Demirtas town of Bursa by the

Armenian nation created discontent among the Protestant Greeks. For this reason, the Ottoman State ordered that one of them be appointed as Kocabas in order to conduct on the business of the Protestants and collect their taxes (HR.MKT, nr. 42/42). This is an important example of the Ottoman Empire trying to treat equally to all non-Muslims. Another example concerns Protestant youth in Bursa. It is important that Protestant youth in the city be allowed to gather on the lower floor of the church in order to prevent them from killing time in coffee and clubs (DH.TMIK.M, nr. 268/27).

As long as order and rules were followed, there had been similar practices in the distribution and sale of books, which constituted one of the most important forces of missionaries. Similar expressions can be used for educational activities. There are numerous examples in the Ottoman archival records stating that many Protestant books were allowed to be printed unless there were expressions that would threaten the security of the state or provoke other Christian elements. A similar situation exists in the distribution of books. A notable example is that the booklet called *Lessons on Sunday*, which was intended to be printed by the American missionary George F. Herrick was allowed to be printed because it did not contain any threats (MF.MKT, nr. 1053/41). Another document stating that a religious book with Armenian notes to be read in Protestant places of worship was allowed to the publication supports this issue (MF.MKT, nr. 993/67).

There is similar freedom in terms of sales as well as printing. Especially the edict, which was issued after the rumors that there was an obstacle about selling the Protestant Bibles in Trabzon and Ankara, is a good example to be given in this regard (BEO, nr. 2454/184030). Another example in this regard can be given from the province of Hudâvendigâr, where Bursa was located. While the bookseller Begos, who was a Protestant, was selling Torah and Bible, he was prevented by local administrators due to complaints. However, the books in question were examined and found that there was no harm in their sales. After that, all the books were returned to Begos (HR.MKT, nr. 183/72).

In terms of education, it is also clear from archival documents that Protestants had sufficient opportunities. The salary of the Ottoman teacher appointed by the state to the Protestant school *Darüşşafaka-i Şarkiye*, located in the Mollaarap neighborhood of Bursa, was paid from the local budget (MF.MKT, nr. 185/89). Also, the thirty orphans that the American missionary Barnum wanted to send from Harput to Bursa and Izmir to receive education were allowed to change cities on the condition that they were not taken abroad (DH.TMIK.M, nr. 18/14). In the early 1900s, the Board organization continued its work on the Greek nation in the fields of religion and education. In this direction, the Ottoman State helped the Greek subjects and allocated 14.652 piasters for their schools in 1328 (MF.MGM, nr. 8/79).

In some cases, when considered in the context of official relations, some decisions were also made against Protestants. But these were measures that were taken to maintain public order. These decisions were often taken against the struggles of American missionaries to convince those who belonged to other Christian communities through propaganda. Because clearly promoting Protestantism could shake the balance between non-Muslim elements. In addition, this could increase hostility among Christian congregations. A notable example of this was the prevention of American pastors who resided in Bursa and went to Erzurum and Trabzon and engaged in activities for Armenians there to enter the Protestant sect. In fact, this measure was not considered sufficient, and it was decided that the missionaries should be removed from Erzurum (HR.MKT, nr. 4/18). In another archival document, similar statements were repeated and a notification was published about the prevention of American priests in Erzurum, Bursa and, Trabzon from encouraging Armenians to Protestantism (C.HR, nr. 83/4111).

Similar measures have been taken on the sale of books in an uncontrolled and inappropriate manner. Banning the sale of religious books at the various part of the country is one of the

important examples in this regard since the American Protestant community openly invites the public to change religion by selling such books (BEO, nr. 2448/183576). Here, the aim was not to interfere with the sale of books. It was to prevent propaganda activities that occurred unconsciously. As a matter of fact, the decision to prevent Protestants from selling their books by wandering around villages other than shops also reveals this issue (DH.MKT, nr. 1903/37). Another document revealing this situation is the decision to take the necessary measures as a result of the determination that the Protestant congregation used shops opened in some provinces to invite people to change their sects instead of selling religious books (MF.MKT, nr. 843/28).

Considering Bursa in particular, it is observed that some measures were taken from time to time in relation to educational activities. The decision to do what is necessary in relation to the Protestant school, which was opened in Bursa without a license and moved near to a Muslim one, is a good example in this regard (MF.MKT, nr. 54/26). A similar practice was carried out for the Protestant churches in the Hudâvendigâr district. Accordingly, an order was issued to take the necessary measures upon notification of the addition of bells to rented households and turning of these houses to Protestant churches (HR.TH, nr. 45/64).

Similarly, in the missionary documents, there is some information about the attitudes of the local rulers in Bursa to help the Protestants against the other Christian sects. The following statements in a letter written by missionary Schneider confirm this situation:

The archpriest continued to struggle decisively to get me out of the house I rented. He was constantly putting pressure on my host about it. He was trying to scare me by making threats. However, the Turkish authorities intervened and took us under their protection. In this case, the archpriest had to step back (Schneider, 1837: 153).

In another letter, Schneider said that he and his friends were under the protection of the government in Bursa. The missionaries expressed eternal gratitude to God for this support. In the face of the hostile attitudes of other Christian sect members in the city, state officials took a position to protect the rights of missionaries (Schneider, 1838: 468).

Both Ottoman archival records and missionary documents reveal that the Sublime Porte and local rulers did not take any negative attitudes towards the Protestants. As long as the American missionaries did not threaten public order and cause turmoil and sedition, they were able to carry out activities in Bursa with ease and peace of mind, just like other Christian elements. As long as the laws were followed, the Ottoman State's approach to all Christian congregations was within the limits of tolerance and endurance. But activities aimed at changing sects by force or secret propaganda were not strictly permitted. In addition, books printed without permission from the state were confiscated. Again, churches and schools that do not have a license are also not allowed to conduct activities. Some exaggerated comments and impressions of missionaries in subsequent sections should be evaluated taking into account the above information.

4. The Hatred of Orthodox Elements towards Protestants in Demirtas

The interests and expectations of the Protestant missionaries towards Demirtas have undoubtedly disturbed the non-Muslim elements of the town. The members of the Greek Orthodox Church went to take measures when they faced the threat of losing their influence in the region. Another point in this regard was that a similar competition and conflict also took place in the city center of Bursa. The local clergy especially Orthodoxes tried every way to remove the faith of Protestantism and the members of the Board from the region (Önal, 2013: passim).

In reference to the missionary documents, the opposing attitude towards missionaries and Protestantism in Demirtas started in 1837. As stated in the records, the teacher of the school at Demirtas offended the bishop and vicar by some remarks as to the error of their church. The

negative propaganda was so impressive that the “*poor teacher*” was being threatened with imprisonment or even exile. Upon this, the teacher wrote a letter to the bishop and requested the forgiveness on the condition that he left the school. Then he appeared before the bishop to make some statements. But his fault was too great. Although he took steps backward and stated his endless loyalty to the church, he could not escape being fired from the school. According to the missionaries hereafter it was forbidden for this “*poor teacher*” to teach at school. The missionaries claimed that the townspeople asked a favor of the bishop to stay the teacher on task. But the bishop insisted on his decision and instructed the townspeople to fire the teacher immediately. This instruction was fulfilled irremediably. Classes should not have been idle. They chose one of them as a teacher. However, this “*ignorant townsman*” was not capable of fulfilling this task for missionaries. The books belonging to the Protestants were also thrown from the school. These books were thought to be useless and harmful. Despite all these adverse events, missionaries did not lose their hopes. They still thought they could turn the situation in their favor. Even if not from Demirtas, they could find a teacher from nearby villages (Schneider, 1837: 153).

Nevertheless, the resistance of the people led the bishop to step back, and the teacher returned to his duty. Moreover, this time, there were also things that would encourage missionaries. Thus, he called Benjamin Schneider, the missionary of Bursa, and informed him about the books he had delivered to the townsmen. There was also a priest among those who received the books. He had read the books without hesitation in public after receiving them. The favor and kindness shown by the people around him were remarkable. Missionaries believed that the attitudes of the priest also proved that he was really an “*intellectual and enlightened person*”. He even said that he was questioning many of the things that he had believed so far (Schneider, 1838a: 468).

After all, the priest invited Schneider to Demirtas. The missionary never had the opportunity to meet him before. And this meeting delighted Schneider profoundly. It seemed that the priest was supporting the beliefs of Protestantism. It was even very exciting that the priest had such “*accurate information*” about the Bible. He regularly preached on the Sabbath. Sometimes he was also reading various passages from the Scripture. According to the missionary, this reverend was the only Greek priest whose name was worth mentioning, given the entire diocese. Although not exactly Protestant, he was a priest to be respected (Schneider, 1838b: 468-469).

A teacher and a priest's interest in Protestantism infuriated native Christians in the region. The Greek clergy started to sermon virulently against missionaries, their activities, and their publications. Contact with missionaries was forbidden. Those who insisted on this would be subjected to the most severe religious sanctions. People were instructed to deliver doctrinal books of Protestantism to the ecclesiastics. Orthodox clergy made a special endeavor to get rid of everything that belonged to the missionaries. In fact, a priest was assigned to collect books and similar publications from the Greek school. More importantly, the copies distributed to the Greek people were also confiscated. All of these were destroyed by the order of the bishop by being thrown into the fire that burned in front of the Greek Church (Schneider, 1839: 405).

Within this scope, the teacher of the Greek school, who had been suspended from his duty before but was soon returned to his post, was once again dismissed. Even this school was closed. According to the point of view of missionaries' other schools continued to “*spread ignorance*”. Additionally, one of the priests in Demirtas was dismissed too. He was informed that he would not be allowed to fulfill his duty anywhere within the field of bishop's deacon. Missionaries claimed that the only reason for such a decision was that the priest in question opposed “*prevalent superstitions*” and freely defended the Bible's convictions. In the meantime, the pressure of the local clergy was also directed to the Armenians who supported Protestantism. The “*two pious and God-fearing Armenian teachers*” who were the disciples of missionary

Philander O. Powers did not leave their school. But both were severely rebuked for their behavior. More importantly, they were despised in the church by the bishop. They would no longer be allowed to act on their own. They were also being ordered to hand over the books that they had received from missionaries. Both of them had been warned about this before but they did not feel the need to change their attitude. However, they were not dismissed. In fact, despite all the threats, no sanctions were imposed against them. Missionaries defended that with “*God's grace and favor*” they survived such a “*troubled process*” effortlessly. After all, they both suspended their relationship with Powers for precautionary purposes (Schneider, 1839: 406).

One of them was also helping them with translations. Board members tried to fill this gap with a young Greek from Athens. But the troubles were not limited to this much. Missionaries were being threatened to be evicted from the houses they rented. Their homeowners would be excommunicated and exiled if they did not impose this sanction. In fact, the necessary steps were taken and the bishop's instructions were communicated to the hosts. There was no other solution for the missionaries in the face of the events except applying to the Bursa governor, that is to say, Pasha. Pasha replied in the affirmative to the missionaries' expectations. He also convinced them that he would mediate in securing their rights (Schneider, 1839: 406).

According to the missionaries after all, partly due to the “*troubles*” that were mentioned and partly due to other reasons, the activities in Demirtas were interrupted. However, the hopes were not over. Because the missionaries thought that the conditions would change and the activities would start again in a short while. Undoubtedly, the main reason for these hostile acts was to eliminate the missionaries completely. In this way, the influence of Board members would be quenched, people's contact with them would be eliminated and they would be removed from the region. But nothing was going to destroy the hopes of missionaries because Protestantism “*was a grace that God bestowed on them*”. Missionaries asserted that they were seeking “*truth and sanctity*”. Therefore, no one could give an end to their struggle and case absolutely. Besides, the public ignored and did not take into consideration this propaganda. In particular, the poor did not lose their interest in missionary activities (Schneider, 1839: 406).

However, their troubles would not be limited to this much. More difficult conditions were awaiting them each passing day. Nothing changed in a year after 1840. The Orthodoxes did not oppose only missionaries. In the words of missionaries, they were also “*oppressing and tormenting*”, those who helped them. Despite all these negative events, Board members were trying to reinstate the teacher who was dismissed. The notables of the town asked a favor of the bishop to forgive the teacher. The bishop precisely and decisively turned down this demand. When the townspeople realized that their expectations would not be met in this respect, they sought other solutions. Accordingly, the new teacher would be a young Greek. This young teacher was as interested in Protestantism as his former colleague. He was also acting in cooperation with the missionaries. However, the bishop soon realized this situation. He therefore strongly opposed this preference. When the teacher asked the bishop the reason for his opposition the answer was quite significant: “The previous teacher filled the town with harmful books and washed the people's brain” (Schneider, 1840: 496).

Regarding the situation of Protestants in Demirtas, there had not been a serious change in the period of approximately ten years from 1840 to 1851, since there was no information reflecting the situation about the town in the Board records. In the mentioned year, Van Lennep (1851) who was working in Istanbul as a missionary, visited Demirtas and shared his impressions as follows:

On the way back, I spent two nights and one day in Demirtas, a Greek town located two hours from Bursa. There are two Protestants living here. There is also an Armenian shoemaker who was persecuted in Bursa a few years ago and exiled

to this town. On the night I arrived at the town, we had a talk and prayed until late with the most enlightened people of the region. One of them amazed me with its intelligence and understanding. This person also educated himself greatly in matters of religious aspects and science. He was very knowledgeable about the Scriptures. He was doing researches on mathematics, geography, and astronomy. He has never been out of town all his life. He was living off by silkworm breeding. Despite this, it was astonishing that he had such an advanced level of experience and knowledge. (p. 406)

Lenep's first impressions about the town were encouraging. The next day he wandered from house to house and watched people while they were wrapping their silk on the rollers. In fact, his goal was to tell them about "*great salvation*". By evening, twelve people came to visit him. The missionary and his visitors had a conversation until midnight. One of them was the doctor of the town. According to Lenep, he was being "*discerned immediately by his fluent speech and knowledge*". But he had a desire to defend his church. However, he said, he believed that the missionary was walking on the "*path of the truth*". Another of the visitors was a teacher. Lenep had the opportunity to discuss many issues with both. The missionary thought that he defeated his guests. Withal, as they lost, they became "*more and more peevish*" and were constantly trying to change the subject. Lenep declared that he did not like disputes and controversy. But that night he thought it was necessary (Lenep, 1851: 406).

When Lenep (1851) ended his short but "*quite fruitful*" visit, he penned the following lines:

The truth has secured a good foothold at Demirtas. Two of our seminary pupils are from that place, one of them being a youth of uncommon promise. There are two others who would like to join the institution; and their parents would be glad to send them. And this is true of several at Gemlik. But we have already as many as we can take care of with our present teacher, and we have been compelled to refuse them. (p. 406)

Lenep left the region contentedly. But this atmosphere of "*peace and tranquility*" was not permanent. In fact, it only involved a two-year period because there were not any adverse incidents in the region one year after the missionary's visit. On the contrary, there was new participation in the Protestant community. According to the Board records, five families in the "*Greek town*" of Demirtas had enrolled themselves as Protestants; and they were very wishful to have a preacher, as well as a teacher (ABCFM, 1852: 194). All these events, which satisfied the Protestants, would soon come to an end. The members of the Board would face the familiar problems again and the distressing circumstances would continue. Moreover, this time, the Sublime Porte would get involved. At the same time, foreign powers tried to protect non-Muslim elements by using the events as an excuse. In other words, the incidents would gain a new dimension and the problems experienced would be evaluated on a political basis. In the next section, a different aspect of the struggle of the Board members against the members of the Greek Orthodox Church in Demirtas will be addressed.

5. The Liberation Theology of the Protestant Movement: Seeking Refuge in Secular Authority

It can be understood from the missionary documents, after a two-year stagnant course about the "*opposition campaign*" towards Protestants in Demirtas, a partial calmness was provided and it had continued in the following years. The statements of Mr. Riggs (1854), who had the opportunity to visit Demirtas, are important in terms of showing the extent of the change in the Ottoman State, one of the most powerful states in the world despite all the turmoil and disorder. In the words of the missionary, at least some of the Greeks under the administration of the Sultan were seeking refuge in a different worldly authority for a "*better future*".

While Riggs was drawing up these lines, he was also providing clues regarding the fate of the Board missionary in Demirtas. The missionaries felt themselves alone in their struggle against the native non-Muslim elements from the first day they set foot in Demirtas, that is, from 1833 to the 1850s. Whereas, members of the Board who came to Anatolia from the United States to carry out missionary activities had a very important protecting power that was Britain. Although the influence and intervention of Great Britain did not make itself felt in Demirtas for a long time, important steps would be taken in this regard at short notice.

At this point, it is important to take a glance at Riggs' (1854) impressions about the town. In his words, Demirtas was six kilometers from Bursa. It was also a "*Greek town*" where Protestantism began to come to life a short while ago. The developments that were witnessed and the fact that the people were in the "*right direction towards the realization of the religious revolution and reformation*" deeply affected the missionary. Back then, the "*supporters of the truth*", the Protestants, were in fear and had to be cautious. They were "*being booed and stoned*" at every turn. However, while Riggs was in town things were starting to get better. The brethren could come together publicly and freely and they did not hesitate to read hymns at their meetings. It was almost impossible to find more than twenty attendees to these meetings the previous year. But during his visit, he observed that thirty-four people came together at a time. Three of them became members of the Protestant Church in Bursa within the year. In addition, a small school backed by the Board was launched in the town. As missionaries said, "*pious young man*" who was raising the hope of missionaries was teaching at the school. He was a native of Demirtas. He was also a student at Bebek Seminary. He used to hold meetings for adults on the Sabbath. Missionaries believed that the school assumed a very strategic role and formed the core of the "*religious revolution*" (Riggs, 1854: 374).

However, after a while, the missionaries met with a bitter surprise in Demirtas. This surprise showed that the calm before the storm came to an end. Although it was not explicitly stated in the documents of the Board how the incident occurred, the school backed by the missionaries was closed. This unexpected incident revealed that the achievements of the missionaries did not go beyond a huge dream. The teacher had also disappeared. Nobody knew where he was. Even though there was no clear evidence, missionaries were concerned about his life (Dwight, 1855: 331).

Obviously, the Greek clergy was more determined this time. They understood that, without external support, it was not possible for them to remove the missionaries completely from the region. Accordingly, they have appealed to different authorities for help. The following statements reflected in the memoirs of missionaries make this clear:

The Greeks clearly hope that soon the Emperor will set the things right. This belief comforts them and causes them to brag. So, there will be nothing left of the Protestants and all traces, they left will be removed. Sympathy devoted to Russia is no longer hidden. In fact, this is being much more obviously confessed than I thought. The Greeks and Armenians living around Demirtas thought that sooner or later the Russians would triumph and they would eliminate Protestantism without wasting any time. Specific to Demirtas, there are some promising events. Fortunately, our brothers in Istanbul began to take into account the opposition campaign of local rulers in Demirtas. An English deputy will appear before the Grand Vizier and explain the British feelings and sensibilities about the emerging developments. In addition to this, a representative will be sent to Bursa, and it will be seen whether justice has been established on the Protestant Greeks in Demirtas, who had previously been subjected to oppression and persecution because the Greek bishop was asserting a claim in this direction. (Dwight, 1855: 331)

These lines reveal the beginning of a very critical process in terms of missionary activities in Demirtas. The year 1855 could be regarded as a turning point in the context of the existence of the Protestant community in the town because both the Greek clergy and the Protestants were in search of secular authority. Orthodox Greeks, first of all, believing that the Sublime Porte “*would support them*”, hence they tried to reach the Sultan by using a whole bag of tricks. At this point, they did not get the attention they desired from the Ottoman State. Therefore, they requested support from Russia. The year 1855 coincided with a period when the Crimean War occurred between the Ottomans and Russia. The expectation of the Greek clergy was that Orthodox Russia would achieve a decisive victory over the Ottoman Empire and Protestantism would be eliminated. This expectation actually reveals another fact that Protestantism, which was considered “*heretic*” by native non-Muslim elements, was not perceived in a different way by the Orthodox world. Indeed, in regards to the history of Christianity, Protestantism, which emerged through the reformation process, was considered “*radical and heretical*” by other sects in terms of the values it espoused and the claims it carried. Therefore, the elimination and destruction of the traces of a “*heretical sect*” that is claimed to do nothing but harm for the world of Christianity should not be something that only Catholics would desire. Just like the adherents of the Papacy, the Orthodox congregation was of opinion by acting in a similar manner; the Protestant conception should have been destroyed. On the other hand, members of the Board found refuge with the British in the face of the “*assault of the other sect members*”. From the very beginning, Britain took the role of the protectorate of the Protestant missionaries and protected them in all situations and circumstances. This relationship between the two states was reinforced by a historical connection that dates back to very old times.

According to the Board records, nothing changed in 1856. The Protestant Greek community of Demirtas remained faithful and firm, though without a spiritual guide. “The Pasha who was the governor of Bursa did little for their protection, but Divine Providence chose another instrument to affect their release from long and annoying persecutions which they had endured”. The French Vice-Consul, having to provide for the keeping and feeding of immense numbers of cattle for the French army and wishing to find a “*faithful and competent*” overseer to whom he could in trust for such an important and critical duty. He made the choice of the principal Greek Protestant of Demirtas, empowering him to employ and pay the necessary number of men. This brought all Demirtas at his feet, and those who had sometimes beaten him, and even used weapons of death against him, came bowing down to this man and seeking employment. “He had freely employed them, and paid them faithfully and honestly, thus returning good for evil to the astonishment of his enemies and in testimony for the truth” (Hamlin, 1856: 260). At the same time from the perspective of the missionaries this document ends with a very meaningful wish: “May this faithful and long destitute flock not always remains without a spiritual guide” (Hamlin, 1856: 260).

There is much to say about this incident, which has transiently relieved the small but highly influential and excited Protestant community in Demirtas. First of all, after the Sublime Porte, Russia, England, and France were became involved in the Orthodox-Protestant conflict. As it is known, France is the protective power of Catholics all over the world and undoubtedly in Anatolia. However, this time France took an attitude other than the approach expected of itself, and even indirectly, it partially relieved and strengthened the Protestants in Demirtas. France was an ally of the Ottoman State in the Crimean War. Therefore, it should be seen naturally to try to obtain what it needs from Anatolia. But what is bizarre here is the identity of the chosen person and the faith he follows. Although there is no information available in the records of the Board about the reasons of such an inclination, it is possible to make some inferences. In the first place, the Catholics in the region could not be considered worthy of such a task. Also, there were not enough Catholics to fulfill this duty because Demirtas was basically a Greek Orthodox town. On

the other hand, the fact that the chosen person was a “*truly trustworthy individual*”, and everyone agreed he could do the job properly may have been forced the French to make such a choice. For all that, this incident which took place involuntarily and unconsciously included France in the Protestant-Orthodox conflict and provided partial relief to the Protestants.

As for the patronage of the Orthodoxes, It is known that Russia has taken on this role in general. In this regard, the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, signed as a result of Russia's victory on the Ottoman State, represents an important turning point. By this treaty, Russia obtained a concession that meant interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman State and gained the privilege of patronizing Orthodox Christians within the imperial borders. Although this concession was lost with the Crimean War, which took place almost eighty years after this treaty, there was no change in Russia's ambitions on the Orthodoxes (Önal, 2012: 42-43). In this direction, it is highly normal for Russia to engage in Protestant activities in Anatolia in order to establish influence over the Ottoman Orthodox. Accordingly, it is very meaningful that Russia sent Colonel Potiyata to the Ottoman State to observe the impact of the activities of American missionaries, especially on Armenians, and to provide a detailed report on this issue. In his report, Potiyata states that Protestantism used schools, orphanages, and hospitals as strategical instruments to penetrate Anatolia. He reveals the success that American missionaries have achieved by addressing the historical course of their activities. As a matter of fact, the number of missionaries, which was 34 in 1845, increased to 177 in 1890. The increase in the number of students is even more remarkable, as this figure increased from 135 to 16.990. On the other hand, while there were no Protestant churches on the Ottoman territory in 1845, this number increased to 117 in 1890 (Aydın, 2014: 186-187). All these statements actually revealed the severity of the situation on behalf of Russia. But this did not mean that Russia is completely desperate in the face of Protestants. Hence, Russia has carried out serious activities aimed at reviving the Orthodox sect in the Southern and Middle Eastern parts of the Ottoman State, especially in Palestine and Syria. The girls' school, which opened in the Nazareth region of Palestine and in a short time reached 120 students, is an important example in this regard. By 1895, the number of Russian schools in Syria had increased to 12 and in Palestine to 23. (Çetinkaya, 2016: 130). Even just the example of schooling is enough to show the influence and importance of the Russian missionary institutions in the Ottoman territory in the 19th century. All these developments are also the most obvious indicators of Russia's efforts to gain influence over the Ottoman Orthodoxes.

On the other hand, the above-cited relief continued in the following year. In a document dated 1857, this situation is disclosed as follows: “Demirtas is the same as last year” (Dwight, 1857: 002). On the other hand, a document dated 1858 demonstrated that nothing changed in the town and the conditions of the Protestant congregation were getting better each passing day:

On our way back to Bursa, we stopped at Demirtas for two or three hours and had the opportunity to talk with our Greek brethren there. I was stunned by their perception and intellect. Their relevance to the truth, and the way they expressed it, was also impressive. For them, too, the good news from a faraway country about the American revival was gratifying. Our brethren in this town was so happy because of getting rid of oppression in these days. But they needed a teacher who would teach them and, of course, their children. Currently, there was no one among them who could undertake this duty. (Bliss, 1858: 250)

The atmosphere of partial peace and quiet in Demirtas had continued until 1866. The following statements in a document penned on the said date are important in terms of showing that things were once again starting to get worse: “In connection with the work in Demirtas, while there are

many things which gratify and encourage us, there are also some things which try and sadden us” (Greene, 1866: 002).

This process of uncertainty and unsteadiness continued for a while. As of 1873, it was seen that “*the harassment of native Greeks against Protestants*” started again. In fact, the Greek clergy became bolder in their opposition, even venturing to stone the chapel and broke the windows. Moreover, the indifference of the authorities to their requests for help increased the courage of the attackers. The missionaries began to think that it was a miracle that the congregation survived in Demirtas because missionaries claimed that there was an “*unconscionable lawless opposition*” above the Protestant community (Richardson, 1875: 006). The following lines, which were written at a time when the activities of opposition were re-intensified, are very important in terms of demonstrating the “*faith and trust*” inherent to the missionaries:

If we have been called to take possession of the Greek towns and villages around Demirtas in the name of our Lord, the position gained at the town is of vast importance to our sacred strategy. One thing is plain we should do more much more or nothing at all for the Greeks. Let us ourselves enter the open door, or have the magnanimity to say to the Christian world, come, brethren, come who will enter in, and may the master bless you in a work which cannot undertake. It is certainly time to abandon dog in the manger policy. (Richardson, 1875: 006)

Despite all these efforts and persistence, the expectations of the missionaries could not be met. Moreover, in the face of the experienced incidents, the staunchest ally England was maintaining its silence. There was not much that changed until 1875 in the events developed in such a complex and distressing process. In other words, there had been no information about Demirtas in Board records until the mentioned date. Another characteristic of 1875 from the perspective of the missionaries was, in the context of the 19th century, the last information reflected on the Board documents related to Demirtas belonged to the said date.

The aforementioned document was about what happened to a Protestant girl living in the town. This girl was the youngest child of one of the Protestant Greek brethren who died in 1871. Also, she was baptized by missionaries. After the death of her father, she came to Egyptiades' house, one of the members of the Protestant congregation at Demirtas, and stayed with his family for about a year. However, at the end of the year, her mother, who was quite poor, took her from her foster parents. She started to work in a factory with her siblings. They were reeling silk from cocoons. As it is known those who belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church considered Protestant baptism “*heretic*”. According to the claim of missionaries, the poor girl “*suffered an affront*” constantly by the managers of the factory and other employees. She was “*being mocked mercilessly*”. Everyone was watching her. “*She was being scolded for no reason and at length threatened with dismissal unless she would change her religion and be re-baptized in the Greek Church*”. On the other hand, his relatives and friends made a commitment that if she followed the instructions, they would protect and take care of her and in the end, would marry this girl with a successful and brilliant man. Her mother was aware of what was going on. She advised her child to be patient and careful not to be deceived. Finally, on an August morning, while she was on her way to the factory, a woman stopped her and persuaded her to go to the Greek Church. At first, the doors were closed in the church. Then, in the face of two women, one of whom acted the role of godmother, the “*poor girl*” was dipped in a barrel and removed and baptized. Of course, the missionaries thought that it was with the sanction and by the express order of the Bishop of Bursa (ABCFM, 1875: 23).

Although she was thought to have been persuaded, the fact that a Protestant was baptized against her own will and forced to change her sect did not only attract the attention of missionaries. In a short period of time, this incident was announced from street to street throughout the town. Large

crowds of women and children gathered in front of the doors to see the girl who disappeared first and then found. There was a great deal of joy throughout the day all across the town. Because they believed that “*a soul was saved from hell*”. Many people were shedding tears of joy. Others burned frankincense and incense for God in their homes as a sign of their gratitude and thankfulness as a result of the “*conversion and salvation of a heretic*”. But this was not enough. According to the custom of the Greek Orthodox Church, the communion ceremony should have been held immediately after baptism to those who converted. The young girl was taken to her godmother's house. The mother, who was unable to make a special effort to prevent these experiences, finally learned what happened to her daughter. After a short confusion and sadness, she started to look for those who inflicted these unpleasant events for her child. But she had trouble even finding out where her daughter was. This “*heretic woman*” was no longer being accepted as her mother. According to church canons henceforth the godmother would take care of this young girl. The mother went to the godmother with her son-in-law but was not allowed to see her daughter. They were even insulted. Worse still, they were fired from the house (ABCFM, 1875: 23).

In relation to all these experiences, the desperate mother had no choice but to seek help from the authorities. Accordingly, she appealed to the government. Pasha commissioned an officer to arrest the perpetrators of the crime. But the criminals were on the alert. These people left the town at midnight and took refuge in the Russian consulate which was five miles away. Since the parties were all Turkish subjects, the Russian consul did not have jurisdiction over them. The important thing here was Pasha's effort to establish justice. More importantly, two months after the incident took place, the young girl was together with the mentioned Russian consul (ABCFM, 1875: 23).

As stated previously, what happened to the young girl was the last incident reflected in the archives of the Board regarding the opposition campaign towards Protestants in Demirtas. The hero of this incident that caused a Protestant to change her religion was Russia. In this context, the members of the Board and the Protestant congregation in the region were abandoned to their fate.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the Protestant missionary activities carried out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which was established in Boston, the USA in 1810, in Demirtas, one of the smallest but important and strategic towns of Anatolia, are discussed. Protestant missionaries reached Ottoman territory via Izmir. The primary target was the Middle East rather than Anatolia. After a period of conducting activities in Palestine and its vicinity, the capital was determined as a target, and the missionaries dispersed from Istanbul to various parts of Anatolia.

Demirtas attracted the attention of missionaries at a very early date and founded as an outstation. In fact, the town was the first outstation established under the control of Bursa. Bilecik and Kutahya, two of the outstations connected to the city were established in 1856. Similarly, Ankara Eskisehir, Balıkesir outstations were founded in 1860, 1863, 1874, consecutively (Yıldız, 2007: passim). However, as an outstation, the establishment date of Demirtas was only 1837. Although Demirtas was a small town, it had attracted the attention of missionaries earlier than the other big cities or towns. This demonstrates the importance attributed to the town. Undoubtedly, the geographical location of Demirtas was one of the most important factors that triggered this situation. Demirtas was a very strategic town located right next to Bursa. The fact that the town was on the route connecting Istanbul to Bursa made its position very important. At the same time, the best quality products of Bursa, which stands out with its silk production, were processed in Demirtas. Therefore, the economic situation of the people was good enough. In

addition, it was founded on a wide plain and this situation put forward the town in terms of agricultural production. In this regard, the region had agriculturally fertile lands. This was another important point that made the town stand out. Another aspect that put forward the town in the context of enabling Protestant missionary activities is that there was no “*serious opposition*” from the native clergy during the first visits. Normally, according to missionary records, members of the Board faced “*serious objections and pressure*” from the clergy in the regions they reached to carry out activities. Even, “*these objections*” sometimes reached up to “*actual intervention and missionaries faced with violence and brute force*”. Moreover, local pastors often declared Protestants “*heretic*” using their ex-communication authority. However, especially in the early periods, a positive atmosphere was aimed at Protestant missionaries in Demirtas. Important names from the clergy met with members of the Board and bounced the ideas off each other. This unusual situation was a serious factor that increased the courage of the missionaries and whipped up their desire to move to the region. But over time, the situation changed, and the “*troubles*” witnessed in other regions also appeared in Demirtas. In light of the above information, the reasons for the Board members to penetrate Demirtas as early as possible will be understood more easily.

Besides Greeks, a small number of Armenians and Muslims were living in the region. Greeks were predominantly Orthodox. In the context of Protestant missionary activities, the ethnicity of the people of Demirtas was also remarkable. The Board members carried out activities mainly aimed at Armenians in Anatolia. This was not a conscious choice. The circumstances had led to this result. In fact, when the missionaries reached Anatolia, their first target was neither the Muslims nor the Eastern Churches. They wanted to get in contact with the Jews (Strong, 1910: 80). But the fact that the Jews had religious integrity in terms of practicing their worship and traditions in the Ottoman State order failed the missionaries' activities on the Jews. The missionaries, who could not achieve a result on the Jewish community, later turned towards Greeks and Muslims. Greek Orthodox Church was supporting the Greeks, and Russia seriously was protecting them due to their sects. Among Muslims, the conversion was considered as a sin and was denigrated by society. These issues negated the hopes of the missionaries on these two communities (Küçük, 2009: 154).

On the other hand, one of these reasons was that the Armenians in the Ottoman lands inhabited more dispersedly than the Greeks. Not being together prevented acting shoulder to shoulder and having a strong national and religious tradition. Moreover, the lack of social ties of Armenians was also an important factor. Another reason that led missionaries to act in this manner was the low literacy rate among Armenians (Kılıç, 2008: 141). Therefore, every incident experienced by the missionaries at Demirtas had a different meaning for the course of their struggle because they had taken on a much more difficult task in comparison with the various regions of Anatolia. Their rivals were Greeks, not Armenians.

In addition, there was an important danger waiting for Board members in the region that were the influence of the native clergy. Indeed, in Demirtas, the member of the Orthodox Church came to the fore as a very powerful congregation. They were the dominant Christian community of the region. Therefore, they strongly opposed the prominence of those who belonged to other Christian sects in Demirtas. This was another distinctive feature of Demirtas as compared with the various regions of Anatolia. Quite a lot of times the rivals of Protestants were Catholics in Anatolia. But in Demirtas missionaries had to struggle with the members of the Greek Orthodox Church. In this respect, Protestants were forced to face stiff and fierce opposition while carrying out missionary activities in the town. Moreover, this opposition had reached actual intervention, which moved far beyond verbal abuse and defamation. This conflict, which turned into a kind of clash of interest, began to calm down after a period of time as a result of the intervention of foreign powers.

Indeed, as the events got out of hand and reaching an unendurable point for Protestants, Sublime Porte, France, England, and Russia were engaged in. The Sublime Porte preferred to remain predominantly neutral and maintained a kind of balance policy. On the other hand, England naturally and inevitably had a duty to stand with the Protestants, whom it considered novice apprentices. Russia had a decided tendency. Inherently, it had a stance close to the Orthodoxes. The strange thing was the attitude of France. During all periods of history, France, which has been prominent as a protectorate of Catholics in different parts of the world and especially in Anatolia, involuntarily and indirectly was on the Protestants' side in the Orthodox Protestant struggle in Demirtas.

In light of all this information, it will be possible to evaluate the Protestant missionary activities in Demirtas in four stages. These can be considered as the beginning, constant term, decline, and collapse processes. The year 1837 can be considered as the beginning phase. The part up to the first half of the 1850s can be called the stable period, despite "*partial opposition and occasional troubles*". From the point of view of the missionaries, the decline period and "*severe persecution*" in the town began in 1855, and this process continued until 1874. After 1873, there was no change "*in the degree of violence*" and the process of the collapse was started.

As a result, it is obvious that neither the native Christians nor Protestants achieved what they desired after the uphill struggle. Although the winner of this fight is not entirely clear, the fact that native non-Muslim elements were in a more advantageous position should not be ignored. It was also interesting that the essential element in the rise of the conflict in Demirtas and in the conduct of the opposition movement against Protestants was not Muslims but Orthodoxes who were Christians, just like Protestants.

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