AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE BAHÁ'Í STUDENTS AND AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

by
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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to shed light on a virtually unexplored chapter in the history of the American University of Beirut (AUB): the formation of a small but distinct minority group of Bahá'í students during the first two decades of the 20th century. AUB's history, in particular its roots in the long-running debate among American Protestants on the proper sphere of activities for foreign missions, is first traced in order to depict the milieu into which this group of students entered. Under President Howard Bliss (1902-1920), the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) – as it was called until 1920 – was revamping its objectives as a missionary institution. The College now promoted cosmopolitanism and social reform, and conceived of itself as an experiment in religious association.

Next the contribution of the Bahá'í students to this change in culture is assessed in some detail. The missionaries had first encountered the Bahá'ís in Iran not long after the emergence of the Bahá'í religion there in the mid-19th century. Seen as a uniquely like-minded group by "liberals" at the College like Bliss and Bayard Dodge, these students were provided a ready venue in which to express the values, ideals and interests that constituted their Bahá'í identity. Of particular significance is the period immediately preceding and including World War I, a time marked as well by the growing intervention of the Ottoman authorities in the operations of the College. In studying the activities of the Bahá'í students, I have used a variety of archival materials, including student publications, College minutes and reports, personal letters and also Masters' theses. Secondary sources have included historical accounts as well as memoirs written by former students. This thesis suggests that the Bahá'í students were a distinctive, active and disproportionately influential group on campus, significantly contributing to the transformation of the College during this critical period in its history.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to shed light on a virtually unexplored chapter in the history of the American University of Beirut (AUB): the formation of a distinct minority of Bahá'í students at the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) during the first two decades of the 20th century. The Bahá'ís entered the College in modest, though not insignificant, numbers at a time when, under President Howard Bliss (1902-1920), it was redefining its missionary goals. Under Bliss, for example, the goal of harmonizing the religious and national diversity of the student body was established as an important *raison d'etre* for the College. This objective was itself the corollary of an equally significant change in perspective: a newfound tolerance and legitimization of other faiths, in particular Islam. By 1941, Bliss's successor, Bayard Dodge, could quote the Prophet Muhammad in his annual reports. Three generations earlier, the first missionaries to the region had arrived with strikingly different expectations. What accounts, then, for this transformation? After discussing the establishment and development of the SPC, this thesis then turns directly to the subject of the Bahá'í students and their experience at the College.

Chapter II surveys the history of the American Protestant missionaries in the Levant, telling the story of the founding of the SPC in 1866. The first missionaries to the region in the early 19th century had always negotiated the expectations of the missionary establishment back home with the realities on the ground. The College was itself a product of this, often contested, negotiation and experimentation. The decision to start up the College had its roots in the long-running debate on foreign missions in the American Protestant community, but was at the same time a departure for the Syria Mission.

Chapter III looks at the evolution of the College from its beginnings under Daniel Bliss to its transformation under Howard Bliss and Bayard Dodge. The College had always been a social and religious experiment, but under Bliss and Dodge it acquired new dimensions. Among the aims of this study is to elucidate the nature of this experiment. As already mentioned, harmonizing the diverse groups at the College became an important new missionary objective; social service also gained increasing prominence. As will be seen, the College engaged in a kind of *soft power*, attempting to win hearts and minds among the local populations. To be examined as well will be the relationship between the College and the Ottoman authorities, the importance of which grew considerably in these years.

Putting the founding of the College and its subsequent development into the proper context provides considerable insight into the milieu of the Bahá'í students. Chapter IV provides an overview of this group of students at the College. Who were these students? How did the Bahá'í religion emerge in 19th century Iran? What was the relationship of the Bahá'ís with missionaries in the region? How did this affect their reception at the College? This chapter also charts their enrollment at the College in increasing numbers during the opening years of the 20th century. By the 1910s they came to form a distinct minority group on campus. The effect World War I had on the Bahá'í students, and the SPC students in general, is also examined.

Chapter V looks into the social, religious and educational background of the Bahá'í students. How did the values, ideals, and interests of this group of students find expression at the College at this particular historical moment? The Bahá'ís became a distinct presence on campus -- circa 1914 -- at a time when the College was entering into a crisis brought on by intensifying Ottoman pressure. In this context, the activities of the Bahá'í students in the Students' Union are explored. Initial research has suggested that the Bahá'ís were

disproportionately active participants in the Union and that the activities in which they engaged were consonant with their identity as Bahá'ís.

Chapter VI focuses on three particular areas which the College emphasized as central to its revamped mission: cosmopolitanism, good citizenship and reform, and religious unity. How did the Bahá'í students contribute in these three areas? How was their contribution received at the College? It is suggested that the activities of the Bahá'í students were welcomed at the College and therefore amplified. Were the Bahá'í students, therefore, disproportionately influential?

In researching the activities of the Bahá'í students, student life in general, as well as the perspectives of key figures like Howard Bliss and Bayard Dodge, I have relied heavily on primary sources available in the Archives and Special Collections Department of Jafet Library. These sources include the alumni newsletter and magazine *Al-Kulliyyah*, the student-run publication the *Students' Union Gazette*, the *Annual Reports of the President,* and the *Minutes of the Faculties, 1867-1940.* I have also consulted personal and official letters written by Bliss and Dodge during the period in question. Two Masters' theses written by Bahá'í students in 1917 and 1918 were particularly useful in revealing the motivations and ideals of this group of students.

Secondary sources have included various books and articles written on the missionaries in the Levant, the history of AUB, the history of the Bahá'í religion, as well as the social and political milieu of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I have also benefited from several memoirs written by Bahá'ís, including some AUB students, which cover the period in question and shed light on the background and interests of this group of students. The only other work that directly addresses the phenomenon of the Bahá'í students in Beirut is by Hollinger (2006), which proved a useful overview and starting point.

CHAPTER II

FROM MISSION TO COLLEGE

The American University of Beirut (AUB) has always been an enigma, an anomaly. As a product of the *cultural transplant* of Puritanism to the Middle East, the "College" from the beginning was a complicated operation. To push the metaphor a bit further, it was an experimental procedure executed by somewhat maverick envoys. In often trying circumstances, the founders and their successors seized the opportunity to implant their particular brand of Christianity in, for them, a strange new setting. They were imagining a Utopia, a "miniature world," in which they could wield decisive influence over their charges, supplanting at once both parents and society. Yet the transplant involved not just the austere religiosity of the missionaries but also their cultural baggage -- mindsets, customs and so on. The Levantine body reacted to these two elements of the transplant in different ways. As Khalaf (1994, 79) has suggested, the elements that most fruitfully took root may have been the ones capable of assuming "emancipatory and liberalizing tendencies." For example, the increasing space given to the students for critical discussion and free association eventually led to increasing social and political activism to a degree and of a character the founding fathers of the University would have found astonishing.

The College, as will be shown, was a hybrid of both religious and secular (scientific and academic) forces. It was indeed an experiment in the instrumentality of modern education for religious purposes. A reaction to the realities on the ground in the Levant in the mid-19th century, its formation was neither the result of a long-term strategy, nor was it actively supported by the sending agency of the College founders, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). It was in the main a radical departure from the ascendant policies of this Board. At the same time, though, the College was very much a

child of the Syria Mission, albeit an unexpected and unplanned one, but one that clearly reflected the evolving and divergent views within American Protestant thought on foreign missions and their proper function and sphere of activities.

The story of the American University of Beirut begins with the idea of *millennialism* – that is, the general enthusiasm of New England Protestants, who in the 18th and 19th centuries believed themselves to be living at a time when an "upturn in history" involving, in some order or another, cataclysmic events and the Return of Christ, was close at hand (Hutchinson 1987, 53). This enthusiasm was deeply rooted in the belief that America, the New World, was a sort of incubator for the development of Christianity in its pure form (ibid, 40). What was novel here, though, was not this enthusiasm, as it had cyclically waxed and waned in New England over the past few centuries, but its translation into a program for "world evangelization" in the early 19th century. American society, particularly in New England, was by this point equipped to sustain such an effort. The American Revolution despite bringing in its wake "an attitude of indifference to religion" also brought about a newly independent nation, gaining in political and economic security and giving free rein to the idea of expansion in general (Tibawi 1966, 10). The "Second Awakening" of the late 18th and early 19th centuries both envisioned the millennium to be imminent and demanded evangelical action in order to hasten its arrival (Khalaf 1999, 6-7). Often encapsulated in Samuel Hopkins' term of "disinterested benevolence," the mood of the times was dominated by a new interest in and compassion for the unredeemed peoples of the world (Hutchinson 1987, 49). This, it should be noted, marked a sharp break with traditional Calvinism, which did not place much, if any, hope in the ability of human action to change human conditions (Khalaf 1999, 4-5). By the 1820s, the idea that Christianity was inherently expansionistic and that supporting foreign missions was to be seen as a natural outgrowth of an individual's

faith had become firmly embedded in the popular consciousness; it has even been dubbed a kind of "spiritual imperialism" (Hutchinson 1987, 60).

This general "benevolence" driving the missionaries was compounded by a special fervor when the ABCFM, which was founded in 1810 and dominated by New Englanders, decided to send missionaries to the "countries of Western Asia" (in Tibawi 1966, 14). The attraction of Jerusalem and the lands figuring in the Bible was, naturally, irresistible. And even if the peoples inhabiting those areas were not "heathens" as usually defined, they were equally unsaved as Jews, Muslims, and "nominal" Christians. The first missionaries to the region, Levi Parsons and Eli Fisk, who sailed from Boston in 1819, were ordered to "learn languages, circulate tracts and Bibles, not offend laws and customs and instruct in private" (Grabill 1971, 6). Consistent with their initial evangelical zeal, they hoped to directly reach followers of all the religions in the area. They soon, though, had to abandon such proselytizing geared toward Muslims and Jews (it was illegal for a Muslim to convert in the Ottoman Empire and they found the Jewish community particularly hard to penetrate). Instead, by 1831 the plan became to provide "spiritual enlightenment" to the so-called nominal Christians who were then to perform the same service for their Jewish and Muslim neighbors (Grabill 1971, 8). How this spiritual enlightenment was to be delivered was not so clearly spelled out for the missionaries. While in close contact with the ABCFM and obedient to it, their actions on the ground would always be marked by experimentation and negotiation with the Board's expectations. Parsons and Fisk were asked to constantly bear in mind: "*what good can be done"* and "*by what means"* (Tibawi 1966, 15).

As Tibawi (1966, 168) points out, although the Syrian Protestant College upon its formation in 1866 was conceived as a "missionary institution" aiming to raise up indigenous church leaders and workers, it was also, most importantly, a "literary institution." The fact that the American missionaries would be the impetus behind the founding of a proper college,

rather than a theological seminary, would have come as a great surprise to the likes of Fisk and Parsons, and indeed the first missionaries to Beirut, Isaac Bird and William Goodell, who arrived in 1823. Even if the Mission had always been awash with "literary" activity, focusing most of its energies on establishing a network of primary schools and starting up and refining its printing press, the SPC was indeed an unintended consequence of the Mission. The founding of the College, as will be outlined below, was by no means an "inevitable" or natural outgrowth of the Beirut-based mission itself, as suggested by Penrose (1970, 7), Dodge (1958, 10), Hanna (1979) and others. Instead, as for example Tibawi (1966) shows, it was virtually an act of desperation, and cut sharply against the grain of the well-known policies of the Boston Board, most particularly those of its long-time senior secretary, the influential mission theorist Rufus Anderson.

Indeed, the popular histories of SPC/AUB tend to leave out a seminal debate that not only puts the founding of the College in its rightful context but also sheds light on the series of crises that the College would endure as long as it self-consciously retained an evangelical identity. This Christ/culture, or evangelize/civilize debate is impossible to understand without considering the views of Rufus Anderson, whose thinking largely determined its policies for many years, particularly during the mid-19th century. The majority experience of Protestant missions as early as the mid-17th century was that "civilizing was a prerequisite for converting" (Hutchinson 1987, 24). In practical terms, "civilizing" had primarily meant educational, printing press, and medical activities (Harris 1999, 3). Since Puritan Christianity highly prioritized reading and writing, attaining basic levels of literacy became a prerequisite to experience it. Hence, primary schools were an essential anchor of the evangelical work. Furthermore, the Congregationalists and Presbyterians who made up the ABCFM, unlike other Protestants such as Methodists and Baptists, stressed the importance of higher education in raising up a capable and "learned ministry" (Harris 1999, 39). Yet, as Anderson

and others were aware, such education, often involving English-language training, was a powerful force that could not always be controlled. For one, it granted students access to the wider, West-dominated world in ways the mission did not necessarily appreciate. As Harris (1999, 39) puts it, "The question then becomes, What form of mission education really was most effective in controlling indigenous clients, and what form could be bent most effectively to indigenous purposes?"

Anderson's answer must be understood in the context of his vision for missions in general. By the 1840s his thinking crystallized in the concept of a "Three Self" program by which native churches would emerge which were "self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating" and which allowed an "indigenous Christianity" to develop (Harris 1999, 4). Anderson's policies have been accordingly interpreted as containing the seeds of culturally relativist and anti-imperialist arguments, yet they were also very much the "lessons of experience" (Harris 1999, 5). The experiments in which the Board had engaged up to that point (with the Native Americans, and also in Hawaii and Ceylon) were therefore formative ones for Anderson and the mission enterprise in general. Different lessons were drawn from these experiences, but Anderson's and the Board's conclusions were decisive for the course the missions would take for decades. Certain presumptions were universal. Above all else, Anderson and his fellow mission workers shared an unquestioned faith in the "expected triumph of Christian religion and civilization" (Hutchinson 1987, 79). It was simply assumed that "white man's civilization" would overrun all other cultures and that adopting Western ways was necessary, in the case of the Native Americans for example, for their very survival (Hutchinson 1987, 64). For many of the early missionaries, their encounter with the Native Americans meant their complete assimilation -- to the extent even of encouraging intermarriage.

This was quite radical, and the hostility with which elements of the missionary community and the general public reacted to the idea left the Board squeamish on the subject, evidently not ready for such a far-reaching experiment (Hutchinson 1987, 65). From the Board's perspective, the civilizing project had assumed unsustainable proportions; the operation of schools (especially boarding ones) and instruction in farming and crafts proved "costly, troublesome, and not especially fruitful" (Hutchinson 1987, 68). As early as 1838, the Board, gloomily admitted to "little else than disappointment" and had begun to shift resources to overseas missions (in Hutchinson 1987, 69). The Christ/culture question here had been answered in a resounding way, with serious implications for missions everywhere: English-educated, "civilized" natives became fish out of water, more curiosities than models for their compatriots and unaccepted as equals by white frontiersmen.

Although the mission's experience in Hawaii from almost the beginning seemed a conspicuous success, underneath the surface lurked the same unresolved evangelize/civilize dilemma. There, as with the Native Americans, the pressures of "civilization," of Western imposition, soon obscured the evangelical motives of the missionaries. The "West" in the form of European adventurers and traders had arrived long before the missionaries did, and so from the beginning these young Americans sought to redress the apparent damage inflicted upon the society by this encounter – which was marked by the introduction of intoxicants, diseases and new modes of labor (Hutchinson 1987, 70). (Incidentally, the mission in the Levant did not face such problems, as the missionaries for many years were the predominant group of Americans.) Native Hawaiian leaders, for whatever reason, embraced Christianity starting only six years after the arrival of the first few missionaries, and by 1837 the Board could claim the impressive conversion rate of around 18% of the population, or 18,000 out of a population of 100,000 (Hutchinson 1987, 70). So great was the influence of this relatively small band of missionaries that it became seemingly impossible for them to avoid direct

involvement with political and other secular concerns. The charismatic Hiram Bingham served essentially as a counselor to the Hawaiian kings and chiefs, much to the chagrin of the Boston Board which in fact cut short his Hawaiian career in 1840.

Yet the Board had been sending their charges mixed messages all along. While calling for a "Christian Civilization" on the islands replete with "fruitful fields, and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches," they also warned their Binghams against political involvement (Hutchinson 1987, 70). But beyond being a mixed message it was an incomplete and incoherent one. Evangelical efforts were naively considered sufficient to bring about wide-ranging societal change, without any thought as to the parameters of engagement on societal and political levels. The missionaries' experiences in the field illustrated the difficulty inherent in maintaining sharp divisions between religious activities and socio-political ones. The time had come, it seemed to the Board, to considerably scale back their efforts and to make a fine distinction between those activities that were directly evangelical and those that were "civilizing." Reliance on the Holy Spirit and the Gospel were considered, as Rufus Anderson repeatedly insisted, sufficient, and like a well-planted seed could be entrusted to bring forth the appendages of civilization. Anderson and his cohorts were of the view that the missionary should not squander his/her time and resources on *directly* working toward these secular outcomes, like agriculture and education. Anderson advocated Occam's razor as it were: the Gospel was the "simpler, cheaper, more effectual means of civilizing the savage" (Hutchinson 1987, 82). The influence of financial restrictions on the formation of Anderson's thinking, indeed, should not be overlooked. The Board was hard-pressed for funds and personnel in those years, and, making a virtue out of necessity, Anderson became a staunch spokesman for economic efficiency and "apostolic simplicity in missions" (Harris 1999, 7).

Anderson's influence on the mission to Syria, as elsewhere, was immense, and his policies irreparably defined and constrained its course. At the same time, the missionaries' activities on the ground had always been experimental and opportunistic. Printing and disseminating pamphlets (which were contentious and offensive) as well as schools staffed by native "mouthpieces" were necessary evangelical substitutes for the missionaries, who had yet to develop proficiency in Arabic (Tibawi 1966, 48). Schools, including one for women, seemed particularly useful instruments, even if the pool of applicants was initially limited to the Greek Orthodox community – which was largely due to the fact that that community had no established patron as the French were for the Maronites (Tibawi 1966, 65). The various communities, Christian and Muslim, were not without their own schools, but these were seen as not "adequate" to the task, both in terms of quality and quantity (ibid, 67).

By the mid-1830s direct preaching still posed difficulties more because of local opposition and it anyway was largely restricted to indigenous Christians. In its preaching efforts, the mission had always seen itself as having two options: revitalizing the host churches or establishing their own, Protestant one (Tibawi 1966, 99). However, the early missionaries' frontal assaults on the rites and practices of the indigenous Christian communities and their overall arrogant attitude rendered the former approach increasingly impractical. Influencing these churches from within would have required internal allies and sympathizers but because of the antagonistic atmosphere created, such sympathizers were not allowed to play such a role. They were instead ostracized from their community and flung into the arms of the Protestants, becoming converts and inevitably, given the sectarian societal structure, dependents (Tibawi 1966, 99). After much pleading from these converts, who had been thrust into an identity vacuum, the Board finally consented to establishing a native church in 1848 (Makdisi 1997, 698); the Ottoman authorities also recognized Protestantism as a separate millet in 1850.

Anderson himself supported the above-mentioned second option and encouraged the Mission to abandon, if necessary, its educational and printing endeavors if opportunities for mass conversion availed themselves. The Mission was most hopeful about the Druze during these years, but after two significant experiences which seemed to suggest the Druze were more interested in political protection than religious conversion, it was forced to abandon the field. This experience also taught the Mission the same lesson being learned in Hawaii: as a group perceived to be "representing" a foreign power (in this case the English), and given the societal implications of mass conversion, the enterprise was fraught with complications. The Mission was, willy-nilly, becoming embroiled in those secular, civilizational entanglements it had so sedulously sought to avoid.

The Mission faced a crisis. Closing shop in Syria was seriously considered. The missionaries were themselves divided into two camps, the dissenting one frustrated with the seemingly diminishing opportunities for "doing good" as Anderson's policy of deemphasizing educational and other outreach activities was enforced. For his part, Anderson remained unimpressed by the progress in the evangelical work, decrying the purported material dependence on the Mission of the precious few converts (only twelve by 1842). Incidentally, the unworthiness he ascribed to the native converts would also be a recurring pattern in the Mission (see Jessup 2002). Native helpers were to be considered a class below foreign missionaries, so that their education would not lead them to feel "entitled to the same privileges and lifestyles as the missionaries" (Harris 1999, 8). Most revealing perhaps of the sense of disenchantment that overcame the Board at this time was the decision to abandon the Jerusalem station altogether; evangelizing Jerusalem, it is recalled, was the original and ultimate goal of the Mission (Tibawi 1966, 101). But despite the depressing circumstances, the Board did not shut down the operation in Syria. Tibawi (1966, 104), rather cynically, avers that this may have been simply because the Board had just ended the

mission in Greece and doing likewise in Syria would have meant closing two of out three missions, leaving only the rather more successful one to the Armenians in Asia Minor.

When the missionaries got back on their feet, it was very much on Anderson's terms. Most importantly for our purposes, Anderson's reorganization of the educational system in place highlights the sense in which the founding of the SPC two decades later was more departure than continuation. If the Board had never encouraged the Mission to engage in education on a large scale, now it made schools strictly auxiliary to preaching; within a year almost half of the schools were closed (Tibawi 1966, 106). The elementary schools were to be seen as instruments through which to funnel recruits to the Mission Seminary, which became the crown jewel of the enterprise upon its reopening in 1846 (Tibawi 1966, 107). The Seminary was the means by which the chief concern of Anderson's could be realized: the development of an "able evangelical native ministry" (ibid).

The Mission Seminary had previously been located in Beirut and had been closed in 1842. It was reopened, however, not in Beirut but in Abeih, in the mountains, a decision that underscored another main plank in Anderson's policy. Beirut was already cosmopolitan enough that it exposed the students to "Frank habits" (Tibawi 1966, 114). The Seminary would also teach in Arabic and no longer offer any English instruction at all. The effect of teaching in English was for Anderson enough to make the students "foreign in their manners, foreign in their habits, foreign in their sympathies; in other words, to denationalize them" (Hutchinson 1987, 82). Indeed, knowledge of English led to high-paying jobs with British forces and exposure to other lifestyles, cultures etc.; and in Anderson's eyes it "demoralized" them (Tibawi 1966, 114). Most importantly, it left them "unfitted…for doing good to their people" (Harris 1999, 75). Up in Abeih the education would be intensive and selective. They were now in the strict business of producing a native Protestant workforce. Put another way, they had become fully committed to "Protestant sectarianism" (Hanssen 2005, 184).

Other schools were viewed as "rivals," and the teachers in the village schools now had to be Protestants (Tibawi 1966, 117, 124). The fear of "civilizing" influences fired a vision of a "self-sustaining Christian community sealed off from the corrupting influences of 'the world'" (Harris 1999, 37). So focused did this Protestant education become that, according to the Americans themselves, the Lazarists and Jesuits now offered a much broader liberal education adapted to the growing commercial importance of Beirut – for example, by offering courses in foreign languages and bookkeeping (Tibawi 1966, 119; Kedourie 1966, 89). Once the pioneers in education for girls, the Americans had even been surpassed in that area as well (Tibawi 1966, 119).

To say, then, that the decision taken in 1862 to start up the SPC was inevitable is somewhat misleading. Naturally, the College was not a total flight of fancy, and it is obvious that without the system of elementary and secondary schools, however rudimentary, the Mission had initiated, the idea of a college would never have been possible. Anderson was a man of his times in believing strongly in the "transformative power of schooling" (Harris 1999, 76). It should be noted in this regard that it was only after much reflection on the missions' experiences that he lost his faith as it were in education. Higher education, for him, had not proved effective as a means of mass conversion. It was a "top-down" strategy (Harris 1999, 7), whether in the way it attracted to its schools an already existing elite or through its actual creation of an elite (the English-speaking dandies Anderson had derided). Anderson wanted the missionaries to directly engage the lower classes instead, though his approach to encouraging an ostensibly "grassroots" movement was more patronizing and colonialist than, say, liberationist (Harris 1999, 9). Yet the ABCFM missions had always relied on starting schools, reflecting the above-mentioned cultural disposition that greatly valued education, secular as well as religious. Indeed the first donors to the SPC "gave freely," in Daniel Bliss's words because they "knew that Syria and the East needed an

education equal to the best" (Khoury 1992, 18). The instrumentality of higher education, then, was always in the cultural toolbox of the missionaries, even if Anderson had come to distrust it. This perspective complicates the picture presented in Makdisi (1997) and echoed in Hanssen (2005, 183-4) that the founding of the SPC was so radical a move for the missionaries that it amounted to an embrace of secularism.

There is also a link between the Abeih and SPC experiments in the way they both sought to provide total experiences for their charges. This approach had in fact been tried and tested in Ceylon, where missionaries turned to boarding schools as a way of extricating their protégés from their cultural environments in a kind of conversion by adoption (Harris 1999, 45). Appropriately, the SPC was located well outside of the old city, and it would be decades before it became truly part of Beirut. The SPC in fact largely created its own neighborhood, Ras Beirut -- one of the "new quarters" of Beirut that styled themselves "beacons of enlightened urbanity" as part of the post 1860 "educational revolution" (Hanssen 2005, 221). The students were mostly boarders at a time when traveling back and forth to one's hometown was not at all easy. As with the Seminary there was a sense that the College would provide a molding environment, encompassing the students' every need. By the 1910s at least, the College was justified by other missionaries in terms of its indispensability in the effort to create firm Protestants. As one Mission worker of the American Press put it:

> When they graduate from the College they are men, and their opinions are formulated with more or less permanency. The graduate of the American High School (sic) is still a callow youth, and unless he continue under the influence of mature minds in some more advanced school, he may surrender himself anew to the intolerant prejudices of his own sect (McGilvary 1920, 45).

Yet the SPC was in the main a radical departure from Anderson's policies. He himself minced no words on the subject, writing on behalf of the Board that the College's "apparent necessity" was to be seen as an "evil"; and that the Mission's "*virtual control*" of

the College could become a distraction, "a fruitful source of mischief" to the Mission's chief occupation of raising up a native ministry (Tibawi 1966, 162). Anderson had remained unimpressed by the Mission's progress in Syria, tagging it as little more than a bookmaking and educating mission (Tibawi 1966, 130). The Mission was in fact losing ground fast to not only Catholic missions but also other Protestant ones, and the concern by the 1860s was merely to maintain its hold on the students it already had (Tibawi 1966, 162). Furthermore, the Mission had received the double shock of civil war in America (felt mostly in their pocketbooks) and in Mount Lebanon, which utterly changed conditions on the ground. For one, the Mission became heavily involved in relief efforts as refugees flooded into Beirut from the war-torn mountains. In the process, the Mission, its dwindled ranks based almost entirely in Beirut, began to gain the trust of Christian communities, like the Maronites, who previously had been virtually their mortal enemies (Tibawi 1966, 151). Even after the hostilities ceased, the work of the Mission remained completely disrupted -- its schools mostly closed, its stations greatly reduced, and its financial situation dire (Tibawi 1966, 159). The Mission was overwhelmed by the refugees, who were mostly Christians, and their desire for a broader education, namely in foreign languages and bookkeeping, which would be useful for obtaining gainful employment (Khalaf 1994, 81; Tibawi 1966, 160).

Only from the perspective of the local people, perhaps, is it possible to perceive any kind of "inevitability" to the College's opening. The list of reasons the Mission itself provided for the decision to start the College, found in the minutes of its 1862 annual meeting, indeed starts with the great demand for such an institution among the local population (Tibawi 1966, 161). The missionaries had not been overly accustomed to granting much weight to local public wishes and desires, yet the war had created a new dynamic on the ground. In the West, public conscience had been stirred by the reports of the Christian victims of the civil war. The monetary offerings that followed constituted "one of the first

examples of organized international charity" (Hourani 1991, 301). In this context, the idea of expanding the Mission's capacity for outreach must have seemed a natural and almost unavoidable step. Indeed, the influx of Christian refugees to Beirut has been identified as the single most important cause of the College's founding (Khalaf 1994, 81). The Mission next affirmed that the College was necessary just to keep up with the Catholic advances. The other two reasons listed were apparently meant to reassure the Board that the institution would be "guided and guarded" by the Mission yet financially independent of it (in Tibawi 1966, 161), if not self-supporting since it could only come into being as a result of foreign financial assistance.

Years later, the writer of the above minute and the SPC's chief fund-raiser and first president, Daniel Bliss, claimed another reason for the College's founding: the denationalizing and demoralizing effect of education in foreign locales on local "young men" (in Penrose 1970, 8). This was a complaint of Anderson's which, as already seen, he did not restrict to studying abroad, but leveled as well at exposure to cosmopolitan life in Beirut and mere instruction in English and non-religious subjects. Bliss seemed to be motivated here by a desire to underplay the Mission's sudden break with Anderson's ever-hardening policy on education. In admitting, however, that the Mission's school system had become "even less adapted to meet all the demands of the country than it was at an earlier period" (in Penrose 1970, 9), the break with Anderson is unmistakable. Kedourie (1966, 90) even speculates that Bliss and his colleagues would have wanted English to be the College's language from the beginning (it did replace Arabic in 1882) but were somehow "overruled" by Anderson and company. The founding of the SPC, in any event, was certainly an unforeseen development, indeed an unintended consequence of Anderson's unpopular vernacular-only policy, as a long-time member of the Syria Mission, Henry H. Jessup (2002, 222), himself pointed out.

As the long 19th century wore on, missionary initiatives like the SPC were very much in the mainstream. "Evangelization of the world in this generation" was the watchword. The great optimism that it could be realized increasingly came to be based on the concrete evidence for the "civilizing" activities Anderson had derided – that is, the number of schools, hospitals and other social services rather than actual conversions (Hutchinson 1987, 91). Funds were now plentiful, and it was the heyday of Progressive reform, imperialism, and growing U.S. involvement in the world (Harris 1999, 162). The West, with all its cultural baggage, was regarded as unstoppable at this point, and the Mission could only work to somehow tame these influences. The missionaries were engaged now in a "fine spiritual imperialism," implying they could act as grand arbiters and sift through the undesirable cultural imports for the more acceptable ones (Hutchinson 1987, 92). The SPC was correspondingly started with a relatively liberal curriculum, recognizing the people's desire for secular and scientific training, notably in medicine. At the same time the College instituted a regimen of Bible classes, chapel and a strict set of rules and regulations aiming to modify the behavior of the students. The harshness of the measures, like denying *halal* food to Jewish and Muslim students, can be seen as part of the College's "attempt to uproot non-Protestant students from their previous socialization in community schools and families" (Hanssen 2005, 184).

The founders, all of whom had of course been missionaries, were not simply supplying a demand for education that had arisen. Indeed, they were using the College as a new means of reaching both familiar and, as we shall see, quite unfamiliar objectives. As early as 1874 Daniel Bliss could reflect that "the College *is* a power now – and the Mission will be glad yet to avail itself of our influence" (Bliss 1994, 244). For Makdisi (1997, 700), however, the experience of the 1860 conflict was so traumatic that it led the missionaries to "reevaluate their relationship with secular power." In seeking a "clean break with the past"

they in fact abandoned their evangelical objective of "Christian brotherhood" and embraced secularism (Makdisi 1997, 707). Makdisi, in my view, goes too far in this assertion. The founding of the SPC was indeed a rupture with the prevailing Mission policies but certainly not a repudiation of evangelism. While the move constituted an accommodation to secular instrumentality, the ends were still evangelical. It is, therefore, seriously misleading and even teleological to portray, as Makdisi (1997, 712) does, Daniel Bliss and his colleagues as the "reluctant architects of a secular venture," though of course the SPC did eventually become the American University of Beirut and increasingly shed its religious identity

It could be said that the "civilize/evangelize" dichotomy over which Anderson and others fretted was a false one all along. The missionaries, after all, never hesitated to export what they found salubrious from their New England milieu (much attention has been paid to their popularizing the use of tables and chairs and so on) but could always restrict native access to what "embarrassed" them from their culture (Harris 1999, 163). Moreover, as we have seen, Anderson preached simplicity in place of grander civilizational make-overs. Accordingly, he was evincing no doubt great faith in the Gospel though not so much in the ability of the local population to chart their own course of development. In this light, the missionaries' eventual concession to the machinery of "civilization" did not signal a new sensitivity to indigenous aspirations -- a faith in their empowerment as it were. It rather revealed a certain ambition, even arrogance, in the missionaries' faith in their own ability to tame the beast. Nor were the missionaries throwing in the towel to a secularizing world. The SPC was still very much a missionary initiative, and attempted to remain one well into the 20th century. Latourette (1944, 46), in his history of the expansion of Christianity, proudly claimed the SPC as one of its own, telling of its "leavening influence upon a wide constituency." A few pages earlier, the author states that by 1908 there were 2,744 converts in the Syria Mission (ibid). Clearly the "wide constituency" he mentions is meant to imply a

larger sphere of influence than this rather modest sum. The SPC, of course, proved an effective way to transmit the missionaries' ideology to students who otherwise would not have been reached. This ideology did not remain static but underwent a transformation, particularly during the tenure of Howard S. Bliss (1902-1920), the SPC's second president, and was increasingly experienced as more ecumenical and spiritual than ecclesiastical and evangelical.

CHAPTER III

THE COLLEGE AS RELIGIOUS EXPERIMENT

As the College committed itself to becoming a full-fledged academic institution, its original missionary identity was in a state of flux. The College, indeed, can be seen as a kind of religious experiment. Accordingly it becomes necessary to characterize the College in terms of its changing approach to missionary work, which in turn is closely related to how it viewed the religious minorities it dealt with. The College clearly found it a struggle to maintain its identity as a Christian missionary institution while also being one dedicated to scientific pursuits. The well-documented 1882 "Lewis affair" seemed to show the incompatibility of these two ideals. In the Commencement Address of 1882, Dr. Edwin Lewis, a man described as both "pious and liberal," caused a major controversy by praising for their scientific inquiries the geologist Sir Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin, men considered "heretics" by many in the College and Protestant community at-large (Munro 1977, 29-30). Amidst the uproar, Lewis resigned under heavy pressure. This was followed by student boycotts and suspensions, the resignation of key faculty members like Dr. Cornelius van Dyke, and even a "brutal" violent incident among the students – an attack against the ones who had been suspended apparently because they had apologized to the College in order to be allowed to return to school (Kedourie 1966, 86). The College's response to all this was to tighten its evangelical screws, requiring all faculty to sign a "Declaration of Principles" that affirmed the primacy of the College's Christian ideals.

However, the College was also taking steps in new directions. For example, it had been pushing English as the language of instruction perhaps all along but certainly as early as 1873, though there was no implementation until 1878 (Munro 1977, 36). The entire College became "English-speaking" in 1882 partly because of the controversy surrounding Lewis

after which the medical faculty had been compelled to replace much of its staff with expatriates who were more "professional men" than missionaries and, new to the region, did not know any Arabic (Munro 1977, 37). English had become a more important language around this time, as Britain's influence in the region had spread with its occupation of Cyprus (Khalaf 1994, 71). In *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, originally published in 1910, Jessup (2002, 588) defended this move to English by arguing that times had changed; Syrian merchants had "discovered" America, the British had occupied Egypt and so the English language had become an essential part of the local students' education. Yet with English becoming the language of instruction, the College decisively broke with previous Mission policy, as it had been assumed that it would provide teachers trained in Arabic for the village school system. By 1914, the College and the system of Mission schools were not at all harmonized, such that, as Dodge related, the students from these schools "undergo a complete change of religious ideas, when they come to College" (YMCA Report, 1914, 9).

Crucial to the College's capacity to transform during this period was the fact that it was no longer under Anderson's Board but its own Board of Trustees, represented by a local Board of Managers. It was therefore quite free to chart its own course in terms of how it presented Christianity to its students. Daniel Bliss set the tone for the College's approach to its religious education in his much-quoted statement avowing that while the College neither makes its students' enrollment or matriculation from it conditional upon any kind of religious litmus test, it does actively endeavor to make known its religious ideals to its students. Hence, attendance at morning and evening prayer services and the Sunday preaching service was mandatory for all. Boarding students were also required to attend Sunday Bible classes as well as a mid-week prayer meeting. In addition to classes in moral philosophy and metaphysics, the curriculum was designed to emphasize Christian principles as much as possible (Penrose 1970, 46). Finally, the Declaration of Principles was drawn up to serve as

a filter against unevangelical influences. The intent was clear: the College was determined to maintain a certain missionary zeal and wished to grasp every opportunity it could to reach its students.

A. The Innovations of Howard Bliss

When Howard Bliss assumed the presidency of the College in 1902, the Declaration of Principles was officially abandoned upon his request, though it had long been ignored in practice; he reportedly opposed it on moral grounds (Munro 1977, 47; Dodge 1958, 35). Long-time faculty member Laurens Seelye (304) wrote in 1922 that Bliss in fact conditioned his acceptance of the presidency on the "free[ing]" of the college "from what little sectarian control existed." This appears to be referring to the dissolution, during Bliss's "inauguration period," of the local Board of Managers. This Board, which was composed of "experienced missionaries and laymen," functioned as a supervising body since direct communication with the Board of Trustees in America was slow and difficult (Penrose 1970, 98). Penrose (ibid, 99) here does not mention any such demand made by Bliss at all, though he does seem at pains to point out that the Board itself took the "initiative" to dissolve itself.

Howard Bliss was intent on setting a new course for the College. He is commonly considered to represent the "liberal" wing of the Syria Mission. In addition to, if not in actual place of, direct evangelizing, liberals were unabashed supporters of the "Social Gospel" (educational and social service activities) as part of their adherence to the goal of Christian world conquest. They also deemphasized attention to doctrines and creeds (Hutchinson 1987, 103). This liberal strand of thought was marked too by a new openness to other religions; in Bliss's own words "authentic echoes of God's voice" could be found in their holy books (in Penrose 1970, 184). In justification for this appreciation of the "partial truths" of other religions, liberals like Bliss often cited the Biblical injunction that Christianity came "not to

destroy, but to fulfill" (*Annual Report* 1906-07, 6; Hutchinson, 1987, 106; Grabill 1971, 30). The very organization of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, to which was invited representatives of a number of religions, reveals a sea-change in Protestant attitudes to other faiths. The belief in Christian uniqueness or exclusivity had been eroded, which necessarily resulted in an abatement of evangelical zeal (Hutchinson 1987, 105). Incidentally, at the end of a speech penned by Henry H. Jessup read during the Parliament, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í religion, is publicly mentioned for probably the first time in the Americas. Jessup, in fact, ends his address with a statement on the importance of religious unity made by Bahá'u'lláh to the well-known Persian scholar Edward Granville Browne.

There is no doubt that the liberality of Howard Bliss contributed greatly to changing the face of the institution and set the stage for further alterations down the line. Yet liberals like Bliss had not disavowed conversion as a goal, but had lost faith in the effectiveness of direct approaches. They hoped, instead, to accomplish the task through a "kind of spiritual osmosis" (Hutchinson 1987, 103). Bliss's was a religious experiment about which he and his colleagues were quite deliberate. The Professor of Bible and Ethics, J. Stewart Crawford, for example, was a fellow "progressive" and proponent of "Higher Criticism" of the Bible (Dodge 1958, 35; Dodd 1931, 380). The College experience was designed to radically shape the students' intellectual and spiritual horizons. In this Bliss was following in the footsteps of his father, who repeatedly emphasized the intellectual and religious marriage of the College: "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good" was his repeated refrain (in Khoury 1992, 21). In the words of the younger Bliss, scientific training was not contradictory to religious instruction as they were living in a time when "a flood of light had been thrown upon God's processes of creation" (in Penrose, 1970, 181).

That the College made this dual impression on its students there can be little doubt. There is evidence that SPC graduates were distinguished as much, if not more so, for their "moral integrity" as for their professional abilities (Munro 1977, 69). The Ottoman state in fact recognized the success that foreign "non-Muslim schools" had had in instilling moral principles in their students (Fortna 2000, 376). It was only in the 1880s that the Ottomans began to change the curricula of *Tanzimat*-era schools to include moral and religious education derived of course from Islamic teachings (ibid). Following in the footsteps of the SPC as it were, they also made schools much more holistic experiences, monitoring the students' behavior outside the class and mandating religious activities (Fortna 2000, 377-78). Finally, showing that the SPC students were at least aware of the fact that the College was in earnest about the religious component of its education, one returning student, a Muslim, in registering for the year is reported to have answered the question of his religious affiliation by saying that his was "the religion of the SPC" (Khoury 1992, 51).

Whether such a student, assuming he was not being completely facetious, could be considered a convert was an important point for the College. The local Protestant community was apparently divided on this point. While "conservatives" like Jessup, out of their antipathy toward Islam, wished as many Muslims as possible to openly change their religious affiliation, others disagreed. This liberal view was expressed to Bayard Dodge by the head teacher at a Mission-run girl's school in Beirut in 1914. As Dodge related in a letter of 22 June 1914, she explained that though her students are taught "all about Christ and influenced to adopt Christian principles in their lives," she did not allow them to be "publicly baptized, even when they want to, because…it just stirs up hatred and makes the converts themselves regard Christianity as a nominal, rather than a spiritual and practical thing."

By 1914 at least, the College's philosophy was much closer to the latter view. Indeed earlier that year the Presbyterian Board had written two letters to the College, hinting

at its dissatisfaction with the lack of evangelical focus at the College and asking if more "aggressive efforts" could not be undertaken by the Christian students and teachers, especially with regard to the Muslim population, with whom opportunities were purportedly growing (General Faculty Minutes No. 3, 327). The College's response was equivocal, stating its "hopefulness…that opportunities might arise for enlarging the scope of general usefulness of the college…outside its own student body yet along lines so intimately and vitally associated with college purpose," promising as well to set up a committee which was to meet with one to be appointed by the Syria Mission (ibid, 331-2). After this meeting was held, the SPC committee conveyed its ideas to the Board on how it could best channel its students and faculty into this kind of work -- such as encouraging student and faculty participation in the Beirut chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), assisting in the "organization of evangelical but non-sectarian work in the towns and villages of Lebanon where members of the teaching force pass the summer," and helping teach minor courses at the Theological Seminary (ibid, 343).

The Syria Mission, for its part, seemed unimpressed by the College's commitment. In a letter Dr. Nelson asked the SPC to "formulate its position on certain points" (ibid, 344). The faculty's response was telling and sent a clear message to the Board as well. After holding a "sympathetic discussion" on the subject, it had concluded that it would be best to continue on their present course "without diverting the efforts of the college or other missionaries from the broad work of advancing Christianity into mere discussion of theological statements" (ibid). The College, it is clear, had its own evangelical agenda and while interested in widening its scope of activities, had its own ideas for how, and why, this could be done.

Howard Bliss took pains to articulate the College's evolving conception of "conversion," and in one annual report after another, especially the early ones, he made it

clear to his Board that though "progress in morals and religion" is the "most important phase of the College's growth…we should not dare to analyze it in figures or in statistics" (*Annual Report* 1902-3, 6). Characteristically, Bliss defended his position with a Biblical quote: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (ibid). It is interesting to note here that around this same time, Ottoman state schools did in fact dare to explicitly quantify the results of its "moral and religious education" (Fortna 2000, 378). "Score" was kept of the students' "moral instruction and behavior…and performance of religious obligations," with the "aggregate sum" appearing on their diplomas (ibid). Revealing the pressure Bliss was apparently under for this kind of measured progress, he, on an almost annual basis, reiterated the College's particular approach to the missionary work:

> The College is a Christian missionary Institution, but it does not seek to proselytize, and therefore it cannot use ecclesiastical statistics in estimating its success in pursuing its object. It seeks to influence the hidden springs of conduct, to shed light upon the troubled darkness of men's spiritual gropings, to fortify the will, to enable men to evaluate life in its true proportions, and to do all this under the inspiration of the religion of Jesus Christ. It cannot make public or even conscious conversions to a creed or church organization or even to a name the measure of its progress in this endeavor (*Annual Report* 1911-12, 27).

Statistics of Mission progress abroad had long been eagerly devoured by the concerned public back home, and the College did not necessarily disappoint, despite this disavowal of statistics for measuring conversions. Indeed, the College had always kept meticulous records of its students' religious affiliations. It was under Bliss, however, that these statistics were invested with the enthusiasm previously reserved for conversions. Bliss seized upon the notion of religious diversity as an important new criterion of progress in the religious life of the College (the Bahá'ís were consistently among the religious groups listed) very early in his tenure. It was important to him for two reasons. First of all, such diversity seemed to show widespread "confidence" in the College (*Annual Report* 1910-11, 6). The second reason constituted more of a departure in terms of the prominence it would assume in the rationale for the College's mission. Namely, this very diversity was to be seen as an

opportunity for the College to demonstrate that the religious atmosphere and education it provided was capable of unifying and harmonizing the student body. In his view, the "equal treatment for men of all religions" produced

> an atmosphere of good will and moral sympathy among men of the most divergent religious belief, an experience hitherto almost unknown in the Near East. Under such conditions it has gradually become possible for earnest men in the student body to attain a degree of religious fellowship unique in its provision for freedom of view along with a genuine cooperation of their moral and spiritual activities…There has been born among thoughtful men…a new special ideal of practical righteousness and of spiritual earnestness which can be shared by both Christian and non-Christian wherever the spirit of the Gospel has molded their educational development (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 6-7).

Bliss and other liberals would not have been able to take such an approach without a newfound respect for other religious traditions, in particular Islam. The passage above expresses a novel orientation: there is nothing evil or perverse to be ascribed to adherents of non-Christian faiths. While accepting all comers was nothing new for the College, the flavor and tone of their acceptance, however, was. In his Baccalaureate Sermon of 1911, Bliss (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1911, No. 8, 272) criticizes self-serving, patronizing, and prejudiced attitudes to other religious teachings, relating how as a young man he was present while a group of missionaries were debating whether Confucius had "enunciated" the Golden Rule or not. Bliss characterizes their deliberations as first approaching the question in a "grudging" and "jealous" manner and then resolving, "with a sense of satisfaction," that Confucius had put the Rule negatively rather than positively, contrary to Christianity. Furthermore, Bliss's *Atlantic Monthly* article "The Modern Missionary," which was written in 1920 shortly before his passing but which should be viewed as a summary of his approach throughout his tenure as SPC president, contains some quite remarkable statements regarding the legitimacy of other faiths: Christianity is not the "sole channel through which divine and saving truth has been conveyed" and these other channels should be approached with "humility" and an attitude of learning (in Penrose 1970, 182). Forswearing pejoratives like "heathen,"

"infidel," "heretic" and "pervert," as well even as the idea of a "crusade," he avers that men from other faiths should be taken "seriously" (in Penrose 1970, 183; *Annual Report* 1911-12, 28). This was radical stuff and marked a decided break with traditional mission thought.

Bliss's thinking in fact drew on sources that his missionary predecessors would have found anathema. Increasingly he began quoting people like Emerson and Coleridge – the latter in reference to not loving Christianity "better than truth," which would have sounded a lot like heresy only a few years earlier (in Penrose 1970, 184). By "other faiths" of course is chiefly meant Islam. For a Protestant to acknowledge Judaism or other sects of Christianity as containing at least partial truths would be obvious and unremarkable. His view, then, of Islam marked a rupture. It seems fair to conclude that he was influenced by writers like Gibbon and Carlyle who praised the Prophet for his "sincerity" and expressed admiration for his accomplishments. In the study and treatment of Islam, a new approach had emerged during the Enlightenment. While Mohammad was ultimately considered to be an "imposter" as usual, his life and works were examined to reassess the received wisdom about his perceived defects, resulting in newfound respect for him and his religion. As George Sale, the well-known translator of the Quran and one of Gibbon's main inspirations for his chapter on Islam and the Arabs in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, put it: "the praises due to his real virtues ought not to be denied him" (in Irwin 2006, 121). Otherwise, the literature on Islam in the West, emanating almost exclusively from Christian writers, had been largely negative, equating it with a satanic force and as a kind of scourge visited on the Christians, in particular the Eastern ones, for their waywardness and schisms (ibid). Although the new, Enlightenment-driven literature was potentially available to the early missionaries to the Middle East, the latter "Canon" was the only kind they actually seem to have read (Khalaf 1997, 216).

In some respects, Bliss was simply adapting his ideas of Christianity to the modern mood. With Carlyle's influential mid-19th century lectures on the Prophet as one of his "Heroes," the idea of Muhammad as an "Imposter" is said to have been dispelled (Smith 1975, 244). A "new spirit of tolerance" was pervasive in the latter part of the 19th century, informed by the realization, as one commentator on Carlyle put it, that "all creeds, parties, sects, have existed in this world rather by virtue of what truth there is in them, than by the falsehood or error they hold" (George Dawson, in Smith 1975, 243). In Bliss's words, the focus of missionaries should be on the "kernel of truth" in all religious traditions (in Penrose 1970, 183).

That there was a qualitative difference between the tenures of the two Blisses is beyond doubt. Indeed, the younger Bliss sought at times to distance his administration from his father's, providing in effect a criticism of the College in order to justify the new directions in which he was leading it. In the *Annual Report* for 1911-1912, Bliss (28) reminds the Board that the non-Christian students (whose percentage of all students had increased to 30% by then) had come to the College "not because it is a Christian Protestant Institution, but in most cases in spite of the fact." Daniel Bliss was not without affection for his students, as perusal of letters (Bliss 1994) he wrote during the College's early years reveal, yet his overall attitude towards the local population was patronizing. He saw the SPC students as at best blank slates to be written on, mere putty to be molded without any inherent value. His emphasis often seemed to be on the "destroy" rather than "fulfill" side of the verse his son would later quote in almost every annual report. For example, in comparing the College's mission with that of the Abeih Seminary, Bliss writes that the College is "the most powerful instrument in this land for breaking down superstition" (Bliss 1994, 136).

His son, quite consciously, chose instead to emphasize the positive in his students, the "fulfill" side of the equation. In explaining the "spirit of appreciation, of sympathy" with

which the College approaches its students, his negative assessment of them is bracketed as an aside: they are "-- ignorant, often prejudiced and misled, and sometimes embittered and fanatical men--" yet are "for the most part earnest and conscientious seekers after truth" (*Annual Report* 1911-12, 28). The second SPC president also directly repudiated the Mission's previous approaches to preaching. In characterizing the visit to campus of the famed theologian Dr. John R. Mott, who was a defender of educational missions (Hutchinson 1987, 120), Bliss focused on the non-proselytizing and uncontroversial spirit of the presentation on the "claim of Christ" (*Annual Report* 1910-11, 17). There was no "slur at other forms of belief, or belittling of creeds precious to other men" (ibid, 17-18). Furthermore, Bliss showed an empathy for the locals sadly lacking in his predecessors, acknowledging that the local people are justified in their suspicion of foreigners, who "whether…merchants, diplomats, or missionaries, have not always come with disinterested motives, or with the outstretching of a helping hand" (ibid, 18-19). Indeed, Bliss's interest in building unity among the different groups is ironic to the extent it is true that the Mission and the College had actually exacerbated sectarian differences in Mount Lebanon and Beirut through its competition with the Catholics in educational initiatives (Makdisi 2000, 90; Hanssen 2005, 185). In this light, Bliss's tolerance of other religions was, to some extent, merely redressing the damage many of his predecessors had done. Jesuit missionaries had indeed gone so far as to actively discourage the friendly relations between Christians and Muslims they encountered (Makdisi 2000, 92). In another implied criticism of his father's administration, finally, Bliss suggested that the College had been unduly restrictive for many years. In a president's message sent out to the students upon their enrollment, Bliss immediately clarified that the "spirit of the college" is not that of a "prison" even if there are rules and regulations to be followed (*Annual Report* 1907-08, 8). It is interesting to note here

that Mohammad Abduh, when he was working to reform the Ottoman state schools, referred to them as prisons as well (in Hanssen, 2005, 176).

Bliss's policies do not, however, amount to secularism; far from it. He "passionately" believed in the "Christian Ideal," and far from lessening the claims of Christianity, his conception in fact magnified its purported uniqueness. In admitting the, at least, partial legitimacy of other faiths, Christianity is described as the "best interpretation of all the mysteries of life" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1911, No. 8, 271), the "true spiritual religion" (*Annual Report* 1902-03, 7) and "as the typical experience of the human soul wherever it enters into vital relation with God" (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 6). There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his beliefs, or to conclude that his various statements were made merely for the benefit of the missionary public. Christianity, for Bliss, clearly was at the apex of religious experience. But the fact that he could dub other religions, especially Islam, as "authentic echoes" was for its time a generous appreciation.

Students were expected to "absorb and assimilate" (in Penrose 1970,181) the College's Christianity by a kind of osmosis, and though Bliss did not break with missionary thought so far as to disavow the goal of actual, conscious conversions, he conceded that the latter had remained elusive. This came through in a somewhat paradoxical statement he made at the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh. At a conference in which one missionary complained that the "new education" being offered at places like the SPC was "not Christ-oriented and would lead to skepticism and secularism," Bliss wrote in a report that "missionary enterprise can be best advanced through the establishment of a Christian missionary system of education," at the same time admitting that "almost no one at the Syrian Protestant College had developed a Protestant church affiliation through that means" (in Grabill 1971, 32).

Above all, Bliss displayed extreme flexibility and was willing to experiment with any approach that would, in his mind, serve the "object for which the College was established [which was] the promotion of the Kingdom of God as set forth by Jesus Christ" (*Annual Report* 1908-09, 16). Therefore the College, the Board and community back home should, he wrote, "keep hearts and minds open to the signs of the times" and remember that "any given means for attaining that great end may be, must be, indefinitely altered, or dispensed with, or re-established according as such action promises to secure more effectively the end in view" (ibid, 16).

As previously alluded to, Bliss fastened upon the idea of religious brotherhood as a missionary aim of the College. Indeed, this "inter-religious fellowship and sympathy" was considered at the SPC to be "of the utmost significance for the growth of the Kingdom of God" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, July 1920, No. 9, 68). Bliss was willing to go to some lengths to promote his religious policy which his successors at the College dubbed "unique in the history of missionary institutions" (ibid, 67). When he exhorted the Board of Trustees to keep its heart and mind "open" to new approaches, it was in reference to one of the major crises that threatened the SPC's autonomy during his tenure.

The College had improved academically under the second Bliss, and with a liberalization of its religious requirements as well, the College began to attract greater numbers of non-Christians – Muslims, Jews, Druze, and also a few Bahá'ís for the first time. This change in student population coincided with the Young Turk revolution of 1908, which, among other things, trumpeted the ideas of religious freedom and equality. The immediate effect of the new sense of liberty may well have been to bring "into the open social and political divisions throughout the empire" (Kayali 1997, 61). In the context of the SPC, this translated into Muslim (and later Jewish) criticism of and disobedience to the College's religious policies. On 8 January 1909, the majority of Muslim students refused to attend

chapel and Bible classes, presenting a petition to the faculty a few days later requesting that such attendance become voluntary (Penrose 1970, 134-35). As a sign of the times, the protest came after the students and some faculty members attended a public meeting in Beirut on religious freedom (Munro 1977, 52-53). The Board had, in past years, repeatedly insisted on keeping attendance to the religious services mandatory, even at the expense of preventing Jewish and Muslim students from entering the College in greater numbers (Penrose 1970, 52). In refusing to make attendance voluntary, the College was defending its Christian identity and the religious component of its education. But on this occasion, as the local press and the general public weighed in on the controversy, assailing the College for its abandonment of religious toleration, Bliss was aware that the most important issue at stake was that of the College's autonomy to operate in Ottoman territory. This perception would be borne out in future conflicts with authorities during World War I. It is true as well that giving in to the students may also have led to the alienation of Protestant fund-providers (Munro 1977, 57).

But Bliss also gave a religious explanation: that the mandatory religious exercises served to unify the student body, and without them it would be difficult to appeal "to the College as a College to realize the unity of the race" (*Annual Report* 1908-09, 14). This "lesson can best be taught in a gathering which consciously and in set terms seeks to establish this spirit of unity by making use of the great unifying influences of religion" (ibid). The College, ironically perhaps, took every opportunity to underscore the prior disunity among sects in the area so as to highlight its unity-building role:

> In the cosmopolitan environment of the Near East, with its ancient heritage of diverse races and tongues and of hostile religious divisions, the Syrian Protestant College introduced a new bond of unity based on loyalty to scientific methods of study and on the principles of a common manhood (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 6).

Bliss was flexible about the means and instruments to reach his and the College's goals. In this case, however, he stood firm on the question of compulsory attendance for all

to the daily religious service. He was not satisfied in reaching only the Christian students, a point he seemed intent on making both to the Ottomans and his own Board. Although the reason for his stand can largely be explained by the need to hold the line on the College's autonomy of action, his religious explanation should not be discounted. Bliss (4), in reflecting on the "religious difficulty in the college" in his *Annual Report* of 1908-09, expressed regret at the apparent illiberality of obligatory attendance. He (ibid, 15) was not reticent about asserting the "need" for attendance to be mandatory, but explained that it ideally should be an inner, "*spiritual"* compulsion rather than an outward "mechanical" one. Compulsory attendance for non-Christians to the daily service was, however, ended in 1915 due to pressure exerted by the Ottoman government. The College was nevertheless determined to include all its students in some way or another and instituted non-religious "Alternate Exercises" held in parallel with the religious service (Penrose 1970, 144). Students were obliged to attend one of these services. Compulsory exercises were done away with in 1959, replaced altogether now by the voluntary chapel services, with their more indirect and ethics-driven approach (Munro 1977, 136). Revealing how much importance it placed in being able to directly reach its students, in 1915 the SPC began as well a "College Assembly" in which the "whole student body could unite" on Friday afternoons (Penrose 1970, 144); attendance was compulsory, becoming voluntary in 1945 (Hanna 1979, 7). Indeed, Bliss ended his lengthy summary of the crisis by urging the Board not to overlook the importance of reaching students from all backgrounds, in particular, the Muslim community. Other prominent members of the College, like Dr. George Post, were openly derisive of the Muslim students (Munro 1977, 55). Bliss, rather, defended the Muslim students rather than reviling them and pointed to their alleged faith in the institution to become the "greatest force in molding the citizens of the new Empire" (*Annual Report* 1908-09, 9). Bliss virtually pleaded with the Board:

> We must put ourselves in the place of our non-Christian students,--our Moslems, our Tartars, our Jews, our Druses, our Bahais…We must not dishonor his sense of honor; and we must not feel that the work of the College has fulfilled the mission until these men and their fellow religionists who form a great majority of the Empire's population are touched and molded by the College influence (ibid, 16).

In 1922 Laurens Hickok Seelye (303-304), a member of the SPC faculty, published in *The Journal of Religion* an article entitled "An Experiment in Religious Association" in which he presents the College's (now University's) religious policy as a "radical step" for a "Christian institution." Howard Bliss, he writes, had redefined the "faith of the missionary" which was not to "urge upon others conformity, but a gracious invitation…to learn together of the progressing revelation of God" (ibid, 303). Bliss "put into actual missionary achievement the belief of every scientific student of religious experience" (ibid). Seelye (1922, 304) highlighted as a concrete sign of Bliss's success the number of Muslims and other non-Christians the College had attracted. In 1920-1921, they in fact outnumbered the Christians by 511 to 490, with 382 Muslims, 66 Jews, 41 Druzes and 22 Bahá'ís (*Annual Report* 1920-21, 15). Seelye (1922, 305) goes on to relate how the students of these different religious backgrounds "*mingle, play, converse, study* and *work* together" at the University whereas normally they would not have. Indeed, he goes one to remind the reader that their great-grandfathers would probably have been massacring each other.

Notwithstanding the hyperbole, there is evidence to support Seelye's claim that a sense of ésprit de corps existed among the SPC students. Hanssen (2005, 182), however, contrasts the ésprit de corps of the SPC students unfavorably with that of the Ottoman College students. The Ottoman College was a high school so he seems to be comparing it with the SPC's Preparatory Department. His main point is that the SPC created a harsh and initiative-crushing environment in its attempt to radically transform its students while the Ottoman College, though also providing a stifling atmosphere, respected and nurtured the students' innate capacities to a far greater degree (Hanssen 2005, 182-83). Of course, ésprit

de corps, or a certain brothers-in-arms mentality, is easily generated against a common nemesis, and both schools had apparently been quite restrictive. Hanssen (2005) seems determined, however, to exalt the indigenous Ottoman College at the expense of the missionary SPC. Yet in the process he has conflated the administrations of the two Blisses. The time period (circa 1913) he singles out for comparison was in fact one in which the SPC displayed a particularly vibrant student life, as will be explored in subsequent sections.

Indeed, Seelye (1922, 305) identifies the war years on campus as facilitating even greater association among the students, particularly in religious worship: "the association in worship became freer than ever." As will be argued later, the experimental activities of the students in the context of a College that was undergoing a radical liberalization in its religious life had already been moving the SPC in this direction; Ottoman pressure on the institution to relax its religious regulations served to accelerate and formalize the process. From its opening in February 1914, West Hall had become the locus of the students' "social, recreational, and religious activities," such as those, for example, of the Students' Union (ibid). During the war it became a refuge for the students as well. After the war the building inspired the naming of a religious society that in effect replaced the YMCA. "The West Hall Brotherhood" was formed in order to "make explicit the faith of the College in a liberal, non-proselytizing association of students and faculty" (ibid). The YMCA, Seelye (1922) implies, had become an unsatisfactory instrument for this kind of association, with its distinction between "full" and "associate" membership. The ultimately Christian identity of the Brotherhood was, not surprisingly, defended such that *"religious association constitutes the true nature of Christianity"* (ibid, 309). The Brotherhood was not, Seelye is careful to note, merely a "society for the cultivation of ethical emotion" or deriving from some "general, universal religious philosophy." The Brotherhood, nevertheless, was established to promote "inter-religious cooperation" for the moral and practical benefit of each of the different

religious communities and the attainment of a "world of righteousness and human brotherhood" (ibid, 307). Such were the lofty aims of the Brotherhood, very much the result of Bliss's religious policies. If there was any truth to the comment of his father's student who said he subscribed to the "religion of the SPC," during the younger Bliss's tenure the SPC had certainly become a quasi-religious movement in its own right.

The extent to which moral and religious education was fundamental to the College in these years can easily be overlooked in the teleological rush to perceive its secularization. The phrase the "spirit of the SPC" – a synonym for the "religion of the SPC" -- was almost a mantra for the College, and, as will be shown later, had a definite impact on the students. Yet as noted earlier, Makdisi (1997) and others see the very founding of the College as a secular transformation. Accordingly, the various "religious problems" the ostensibly secular SPC would face are portrayed as stemming from the lingering vestiges of evangelical influence – they are seen more as atavism than attribute. The National School of Butrus al-Bustani can more justifiably be regarded as a secular venture. Born out of Bustani's Ottoman patriotism and desire for a social order that transcended religious differences, the school was known for its "tolerance" and did not attempt to impress upon its students any kind of religious program (Hanssen 2005, 167). Although the school, which was started in 1863, was supposed to function as a preparatory school for the prospective SPC, the Mission as well as those involved with the establishment of the College, including Bliss himself, disassociated themselves with the school for this very lack of religious instruction (ibid).

As for the Ottoman state schools, they in fact became more religiously-oriented during these years. The earlier *Tanzimat* period of reform had involved heavy cultural borrowing from the West, including, in 1869, a new system of centralized schools taken largely from the French model. These schools were viewed as instruments to foster modern citizenship and loyalty to the state. Under Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, education's importance

swelled as it was increasingly viewed as a "defensive weapon" against perceived threats to the Empire's integrity, such as missionary activities (Deringil 1993, 17). Accordingly, the state schools were given a much more Islamic stamp. This instrumentalist approach to the use of Islam in these schools is not the only way of viewing the phenomenon, however. Fortna (2000, 370) argues that contrary to the received wisdom, this Islamic emphasis was not designed simply to oil the gears of secularization and Westernization. Rather, a more complex picture emerges in which it becomes possible, as well, to understand these schools as "modern" and secular vehicles to convey an ostensibly reinvigorated Islamic and "traditional" message (Fortna 2000, 370). The SPC, as we have seen, can be described in much the same hybridized way.

Figures like Howard Bliss had high hopes for their ability to create a "psychological climate" conducive to the transformation they wished to see in the students (in Penrose 1970, 193). Contrary to received wisdom again, Bliss and his colleagues did not lack the missionary zeal of their predecessors. Indeed, the claims made on behalf of the College's influence have reflected their ambition. The Mission and College's dominant role in the "awakening" of the local population to notions of political liberty and self-expression and even Arab nationalism was for many years an unquestioned assumption, one perpetuated by people close to the Mission itself (Frederick Bliss in Kedourie 1966, 81). This thesis, however, has been greatly diluted in subsequent scholarship (Zeine 1973; Kayali 1997, 6). The College and Mission, of course, certainly made some kind of impact on their students, both intended and unintended. The SPC experience has been described in fact as a kind of branding, marking off the students as a "special breed" (Munro 1977, 124). This general subject will be more fully explored in the following sections in the context of the Bahá'í students, yet a word here is necessary.

The SPC students' "specialness" did not derive from their academic credentials so much as from their qualities of character, as mentioned earlier. They were reputed for their moral integrity, capacity for work, and professionalism (see *Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1920, No. 4, 30; Munro 1977, 69). Many of their qualities can be seen, in fact, as the unintended consequences of missionary zeal. Khalaf (2002) argues that the "Puritan ethics" of the New Englanders left a more lasting mark than the evangelical dictates in which they had been encased. These secular "virtues" and their "precepts" owed much to the utilitarian influence of Benjamin Franklin and his famed thirteen virtues such as frugality, moderation, industry, cleanliness and so on (ibid, 44). Corroboration for this perspective is indeed ample. For example, Bliss (in Penrose 1970, 193), in a typical statement, asserted that the College is characterized by the habits of "straightness, frankness, and good will" – an authentic echo, in this case, of Franklin and transmitted by the "religion of the SPC." This "religion" was not limited to the College but exerted an influence beyond its walls. The neighborhood which the College virtually created was made in its image as it were, and its inhabitants became known as the "Protestants of Ras Beirut" (Khalaf 1999, 22). Hence the College and the community reinforced each other in the cultivation of a common culture.

Indeed, the SPC/AUB has always played a unique role in the broader community. Relief efforts in the wake of the 1860 civil war laid the groundwork for its establishment in the first place. Subsequently, the College assumed the role as a "refuge" and "safe-haven" during times of war and epidemics (Khalaf 1994, 84). Furthermore, during World War I it seemed clear to Bliss that the SPC had a role to play in Ottoman and international politics, and Bliss wanted the College to take this new role seriously. Indeed, Bliss's boldness in seeking out contacts with the Ottoman authorities, most importantly Cemal Pasha, and the diplomacy and tact with which he presented the College as a kind of ally and well-wisher -- and which he backed up with concrete action such as medical missions -- was a major reason

the SPC was allowed to continue its operations during the war. Writing his final extant annual report, in 1917, not long after the College's brief closure due to America's entrance into the war, Bliss (18) alludes to the need for the College in its missionary work to wield an influence in "deeper waters" than it had hitherto dared to venture.

Missionaries throughout the region had become variously embroiled in political debates during this time. Since they had been most closely working with the minority populations of the Empire, many missionaries transformed themselves into political advocates for these groups (Grabill 1971, 187). One missionary in fact became the official Albanian representative to the Paris Peace Conference (ibid). Such developments were not greeted with enthusiasm by many in the evangelical community. Accordingly, Bliss was aware of the delicacy with which he would have to treat his and the College's anticipated entrance into the political realm. Earlier in the same hand-written annual report, in a slip-of-the-pen, he strikes the word "political" from the phrase "political and religious attitude of College," referring later only to its "its supposed interest in political questions…" (*Annual Report* 1916-17, 2-3). Bliss's own political moment came two years later with his participation at the Paris Peace conference. He attended the conference in the first place at the urging of Cleveland H. Dodge, the industrialist and philanthropist who beyond being a college classmate and close friend of President Woodrow Wilson, served as his influential though informal advisor on Ottoman/American relations by virtue of his family's experience and vested interests in the region. His grandfather, William E. Dodge, Sr., was an important figure in the founding of the SPC, while his father, William E. Dodge, Jr. was a trustee of the school; his uncle, D. Stuart Dodge was president of the Board (Grabill 1971, 88-89). Wilson and Dodge, and Bliss as well, were cut from the same spiritual cloth; their Christianity was "more pragmatic than theological and more ecumenical than denominational (ibid, 86). Dodge and Bliss were also, in fact, physically related, with the former's son, Bayard, having

married the latter's daughter, Mary. At the conference, Bliss became one of the main voices calling for Arab and Syrian self-determination, though it should be added that this call was predicated on the widely-held assumption that the Greater Syrian public would opt for an American mandate as opposed to a French one.

B. Bayard Dodge Continues the Experiment

The third president, Bayard Dodge, largely followed in his father-in-law's footsteps, though he more completely rendered the internal religious experiment a public and, in a sense, political one as well. Dodge, it should be noted, played an integral part in the College during Bliss's tenure, arriving in town a year before WWI broke out. As Executive Secretary of the Beirut chapter of the YMCA, he had much to say about the religious work at the SPC. In the 1913-1914 report on the YMCA activities, Dodge echoes Bliss's vision:

> What the land needs most is a strong, dynamic religion for young men, a feeling of tolerance and brotherhood for men of other faiths and a practical application of religion to daily life. All of these things the Young Men's Christian Association can supply (4).

The YMCA, however, had its life curtailed in 1916 when all student societies were closed that May due to new regulations imposed by the Ottomans. The faculty, which did not want to risk further Ottoman interference, decided to suspend all societies while they looked into obtaining the necessary official authorization for such voluntary associations (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 23; *Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1920, No. 6, 48). A word now is necessary on the nature of this Ottoman influence. By the time WWI broke out, the Ottoman government had reinvented itself as a propagator and defender of Islam, making this a "main pillar of its ideology" (Kayali 1997, 143). As we have already seen in the context of the Ottoman schools, during the reign of 'Abdu'l-Hamid the Ottoman state bore an increasingly Islamic stamp. The Empire, in fact, had become more homogenously Muslim under his reign with the loss of most of the Balkan provinces following the 1877-8 Russo-Ottoman war (Deringil

1993, 12). The so-called Young Turks who ended his rule sought to maintain the integrity of the weakened Empire and promoted an "Ottomanism" which has been defined as a "supranationalist ideology" that aimed to "creat[e] state patriotism and allegiance to the ruler who embodied the state" (Kayali 1997, 207). This secular ideology, however, involved increased centralization and intruded upon the rights and privileges of local communities in unprecedented ways. In particular, the Arabs perceived the measures taken as amounting to their attempted "Turkification" (Kayali 1997, 211). In order to counter the backlash generated by its unpopular policies and as a last-ditch effort to keep the Empire together, the Young Turks, in an ironically Hamidian move, turned to Islam as a way of cultivating loyalty to the state. As WWI wreaked further havoc on the Empire's internal organization, Islam was mobilized with even greater intensity as a would-be cohesive force, pitting the Muslim Empire against its infidel enemies (Kayali 1997, 187). What all this meant for the SPC makes for an interesting story, with Howard Bliss and one of the most dominant Young Turks, Ahmad Cemal Pasha, playing lead roles. This story will be told later on in the context of the Bahá'í students, but the net effect of the Young Turk/SPC encounter was to dramatically alter the religious face of the College.

After WWI and the end of Ottoman rule, the YMCA was not restarted but replaced with the West Hall Brotherhood. As we have already seen, West Hall had become a center for all manner of activities during the war. The students who remained at the College during these years were largely stranded on campus, and so the brand-new, electrically-lit West Hall, with all its impressive facilities, was a kind of refuge within a refuge. As will be elaborated later, the students involved each other in various activities and were in fact engaged in the kind of experiment of association which motivated, we are told, the starting up of the West Hall Brotherhood. The non-sectarian Students' Union was a pivotal player in the cultivation of this general pattern of trust and cooperation among students of diverse backgrounds.

Bayard Dodge, in fact, was intimately connected to the developments within West Hall, as he was its very active Director during the war. His experiences during these years constituted his first impressions as it were of the students at the College, and must have greatly influenced his thinking on the capacities of the students and the potential of the College. The incipient outreach and service activities he oversaw during the war years were greatly expanded under his administration, with the establishment of the Civic Welfare League and the Institute of Rural Life, not to mention the West Hall Brotherhood.

The major post-war development was, of course, the name-change of the SPC to the AUB in 1920. Yet the Brotherhood's replacement, as it were, of the YMCA could be seen as the College's first major name-change, coming as it did shortly before the more well-known one. In fact, the SPC had been known as the "American university" for years -- on official Ottoman documents, Baedeker maps, and even by Howard Bliss himself in a letter to the Ottoman authorities (Munro 1977, 73; Hanssen 2005, 102; Bliss 1917a). To formally drop any reference to their Protestant Christianity in the naming of the Brotherhood, and of course the University, reflected the extent to which the College's view of religious cooperation had broadened. The College had become so open-minded that in its 1920-21 statistics of the students' religious affiliations, it included the category "Agnostic," doing so for only one student no less (*Annual Report* 1920-21, 15).

The liberal religious views of Howard Bliss were very much Bayard Dodge's as well, and it is true that the seeds for many of Dodge's policies can be found in those enacted under Bliss. Dodge (*Annual Report* 1926-27, 5-6) followed Bliss in his attention to "encourag[ing] mutual understanding between different sects and nationalities," listing it as one of three "functions" of the University. The other two were providing the region with a well-trained and reliable workforce and contributing to scientific research. It is telling that elsewhere during the same year Dodge (*Al-Kulliyyah*, July 1927, No. 9, 262) listed

"community service" as the third function of a university, along with teaching and research. Bliss had encouraged service activities as a practical expression of the sense of student brotherhood which he had made it his mission to cultivate. It could be said that with this pattern of brotherhood established under Bliss, Dodge's more exclusive concentration on the service and outreach activities was made possible. Echoing Bliss's view that the College should remain flexible as to its means, Dodge, in 1937, explained that nationalism, which was the "fashion" of the day, was to be used to foster social service (in Penrose 1970, 271). Nationalism was valued, according to Penrose (1970, 270), inasmuch as it could be "sublimated into sacrifice for the welfare of the country." This appeal to sacrifice is the key to understanding how nationalism could be so enthusiastically supported by the likes of Dodge and Penrose. In their view, social service was the logical outcome of religious faith, but without this faith service was ultimately ineffective. Movements like nationalism, then, if invested with a certain religious feeling, were useful. Otherwise, they "lose that warmth of emotionalism" without which one has "nothing to spur him on to make sacrifices, to resist temptation, and to endure hardships" (Dodge 1933, 370). Having perceived a general loss of religious faith in the East, Dodge (*Students' Union Gazette* 1927, 35) saw social service as one of the ways of building it back up, along with freedom of worship and its "discussion" and the example of teachers who live and not only preach their faith.

Dodge's use of nationalism and social service, then, was very much part of religious experiment of the College; indeed, his policies reflected the *zeitgeist* of the liberalizing Protestant world. The meaning of missionary work had certainly undergone a transformation by this time, such that during the 1920s the Presbyterian Board did not expect its missionaries to attempt to convert the local population at all, leaving that to those already converted. It focused instead on strengthening the indigenous evangelical churches and on social outreach activities to the community at-large (Grabill 1971, 304). Indeed, Dodge's religiosity was

expressed in a markedly more restrained manner than that of his father-in-law. He emphasized, even more than Bliss, the positive effects of living a religious life in general, rather than the particular benefits derived from following a particular creed. For example, he warned of the "danger of atheism and social unrest" and commented on the "relaxing of morals" and "spread of venereal diseases" in the country (*Annual Report* 1924-25, 31). Grabill (1971, 298) characterizes Dodge's approach in this way: "he dropped most of the symbols but not the spirit of Protestantism." Dodge's rhetoric, indeed, became increasingly shorn of Biblical allusions and themes while retaining a focus on morality. Illustrative of this phenomenon is how under Dodge's immediate predecessor, acting President Nickoley, the annual reports did not include a separate section on the religious life of the College; either a mere paragraph was devoted to the topic or no mention was made of it at all. Under Dodge the section was resurrected as "Spiritual and Moral Influences" (*Annual Report* 1924-25, 31). His presentation of religious activism could also, at times, have a somewhat passive, non-committal ring to it. He asserted, for example, that "to us Protestantism means religious freedom" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1923, No. 8, 128). However, to be fair, and as already mentioned, he also saw religious freedom as an instrument for encouraging inquiry into matters of faith.

Despite the toned-down rhetoric and the greatly relaxed restrictions on the students, throughout the 1920s at least the SPC staff reiterated the missionary identity, experimental though it was, of the institution. Nickoley (in *Al-Kulliyyah*, July 1923, No. 9, 159), for example, asserted that AUB is a Christian missionary institution; Crawford (in *Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1927, No. 7, 192) referred to the ongoing "experiment" in religious work. Even as late as the 1960s a popular professor was fired primarily because of his avowed atheism, prompting the University to confirm that AUB indeed still "emphasizes a religious outlook" (in Munro 1977, 151).

Although the religious life of the SPC/AUB became less and less overt, the University indeed retained this dimension as an important part of its policies. While its academic reputation steadily improved over the years, AUB was still equally committed to its dual focus: that is, as an academic and missionary/service institution. As I have attempted to trace above, the missionaries who first came to the Levant, and later founded, ran, and developed the SPC were always engaged in experimentation and negotiation with the realities they faced on the ground. They channeled their missionary zeal into whichever line of action seemed promising. The SPC was no different. It in fact constituted a religious experiment which was carried out hand-in-hand with its more obvious secular and scientific one.

Some writers indeed have taken the SPC/AUB to task for this dual role. The service and activist orientation of the school has been seen as deferring its full development as an academic institution (Munro 1977, 91). Kedourie (1966, 82), for example, takes issue with the notion that the College's activism under Dodge, which he characterizes as a "dogma-free religion of social service," has anything to do with a university at all. Universities are about transmitting learning, he asserts, and not about "religious tests and political preoccupations" (Kedourie 1966, 83). It should be noted, however, that Dodge did not allow the University to get involved in political affairs of a more partisan nature (Munro 1977, 91). Kedourie's idea of a university reflects the status quo conception of a secular, liberal arts institution; that is, while important parts of their communities, universities are not primarily concerned with reforming them. His criticism of the University, therefore, throws in stark relief the extent to which SPC/AUB was not simply a secular establishment engaged in academic pursuits but also a religious and social experiment striving to awaken the population.

So far the perspectives, attitudes and actions of the College establishment have been concentrated on in order to arrive at an understanding of the environment in which the

students operated. So far, as well, only scant attention has been paid to the students' own agency, in reference to the student protests of 1909. The following sections will explore the activities of the students at this time, most particularly during the period immediately preceding and including the war years which, as mentioned, marked a kind of turning point for the College. In particular, of course, the activities of the Bahá'í students will be examined. This group of students, it can be suggested, exerted a disproportionate influence on student affairs at this time, negotiating the space and opportunities provided by the College with their own worldviews and religious training. First, however, the way in which the SPC viewed the Bahá'ís will be briefly outlined. In later chapters, the background and interests of the Bahá'ís will be reviewed before their activities and influence on campus are examined in the context of the College's own preoccupations and transformation.

CHAPTER IV

THE BAHÁ'Í STUDENTS AND THE COLLEGE: AN OVERVIEW

This chapter tells the story of how the SPC came to include a group of Bahá'í students in the first place. How did members of a religious movement originating in Iran in the middle part of the 19th century end up studying, in increasing numbers, at the College? To answer this question, the emergence of the Bahá'í religion itself needs to be briefly surveyed. Another issue to address is the relationship Protestant missionaries in the region had with the Bahá'ís, first in Iran and later in the Levant. How did this developing relationship shape the College's views of the Bahá'í students, once they began to form a distinct and recognizable minority on campus? What accounted, furthermore, for the apparent distinctiveness of this group of students? Their relative statistical strength in the student body will also be assessed. Finally, the various ramifications which the outbreak of World War I had on the College and its students will be explored -- in particular the story of how the College very nearly ceased to exist and the Bahá'í students very nearly became Ottoman soldiers.

A. The Emergence of the Bahá'í Religion

Bahá'í students first entered the SPC in the early 1900s. The first student, an Egyptian, reportedly entered in 1901 (Hollinger 2006, 101). The next reference to a Bahá'í student was perhaps in 1904-1905, a "Babbite," or "Babi" but who was probably in fact a 'Bahá'í' (*Annual Report* 1904-05, 40). "Babis" were followers of "the Bab," the name assumed by Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad of Shiraz, Iran who, beginning in 1844 up until his

execution in 1850, announced himself to be the awaited *Qa'im*, the return of the Hidden 12th Imam and thus the fulfiller of Shiite messianic expectations (Smith 1987, 15). Within but a few years, his followers grew to number in the thousands, the converts initially being drawn from among the adherents of the Shaykhi school of Shi'i Islam. The Bab's claims and the sudden appearance of the Babis on the scene led to conflict with the powerful clerical establishment, which eventually concluded that the movement was heretical. The other locus of power in Iran, the Qajar state authorities, for their part came to view the Babis as a threat to the social and political order and joined the clergy in attempting to stamp out the movement. The Babis, meanwhile, were defensively prepared for violent encounters and would indeed be engaged in some protracted and deadly battles with the state's forces. Out-manned and under-equipped, Babis numbering in the thousands were killed in these episodes. The state's reaction culminated in fact with the execution of the Bab himself in 1850; he had been held as a prisoner, in virtual isolation, since 1847. But then in 1852 a small number of Babis attempted to assassinate the Shah, resulting in another severe crackdown and large-scale executions. With these events, the state's goal of defeating the movement seemed to have been accomplished.

The surviving Babis went underground, many into exile to the Ottoman Empire. By the 1870s most of these Babis had become "Bahá'ís" as followers of Bahá'u'lláh, or Mirza Husayn Ali, after he declared himself to be *Manyuzhiru'llah* (He whom God shall make manifest) in 1863; such an occurrence had been foretold by the Bab. Born to an influential nobleman and recognized as an important leader of the Babi community, Bahá'u'lláh had been imprisoned in Tehran for four months after the failed attempt on the Shah's life. Eventually cleared of all charges, the authorities nevertheless ordered his exile, with Bahá'u'lláh choosing the Ottoman city of Baghdad as his destination (Smith 1987, 58-9). He and his family and a group of followers spent ten years resident in Iraq before the Ottoman

authorities, spurred on by the Iranian government who in fact had requested Bahá'u'lláh be delivered into their hands, ordered his move to the capital, Constantinople, or Istanbul. Four months later he and his family and a small group of followers were again exiled to Adrianople, or Edirne. With this latter move, the tenor of Bahá'u'lláh's status under the Ottomans changed. Now he and his fellow exiles were more or less state prisoners rather than guests. This trend was definitively confirmed when the Ottoman authorities in 1868 sent Bahá'u'lláh, his family and a small group of followers to the prison city of Acre, in Palestine. He would remain in Acre and its vicinity until his passing in 1892, nominally at least a prisoner of the state until the end of his life.

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings for the community included, first of all, the abandonment of violence, even of the defensive variety (Smith 1987, 79). His varied teachings on religious, ethical and spiritual subjects would be spread, he repeatedly proposed, in non-violent ways. Bahá'u'lláh himself addressed numerous letters to a number of kings, rulers, and religious leaders calling on them to establish world peace through such means as a "Union of the nations of the world" (in Smith 1987, 77). Indeed central to the purportedly new religion was this emphasis on the unity of God and religion and the oneness of humankind: the world was "but one country and mankind its citizens" (in Smith 1987, 83). As will be shown later, the importance of this concept in the Bahá'í teachings had significant implications for the way Bahá'ís understood their place in society.

In Bahá'u'lláh's Will and Testament he had named his eldest son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or Abbas Effendi, as his successor. 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself remained a prisoner until 1909 when the Young Turk Revolution set him, among other "political prisoners," free. While still nominally a prisoner (it had in practice been a form of house arrest for many years, his movements at various times restricted to the city of Acre), he had maintained contacts with a wide range of people in Iran, Ottoman provinces, India, Europe, the United States and

elsewhere. At less restrictive times, he received visitors. He also visited Beirut on more than one occasion. After being released in 1909, he established his residence in Haifa, traveled to Egypt, Europe and the United States, where he gave numerous talks, and oversaw the expansion of the his father's religion to countries throughout the world.

B. The Bahá'ís and the Missionaries

As a post-Islamic religious movement that had suddenly burst onto the scene in Iran, the Babi and then the Bahá'í religion attracted a considerable amount of missionary attention, initially British. While American missionaries had been active in Iran since 1834, their activities were confined to the Nestorian Christians in the northwestern parts of the country until 1870 (Momen 1982, 50). For the same reason as their brethren in Syria, they chose to work with the Eastern Christian groups first before attempting to reach the Muslims. British missionaries, who were more widely-distributed in Iran, came across Babis, and later Bahá'ís, quite early on. At first, both the British and the Americans, when the latter started to target Muslim and other non-Christian populations after 1870, were enthusiastic that they would become firm converts to Christianity. Such conversions would have been particularly notable since the missionaries considered the Babis and Bahá'ís a divergent sect of Islam. The missionaries had had very little success in converting Muslims, though, as noted earlier, doing so was their initial objective in going to the Middle East.

But only a negligible amount of Babis in fact converted. Those who did seem to have done so mainly because of the refuge their conversion provided during a time of intense persecution and also famine (Momen 1982, 61-67). The missionaries' enthusiasm soon waned, however, as their hopes for large-scale conversions proved elusive. Instead, the missionaries would witness the rapid growth of the Bahá'í community starting in the 1870s. The expansion of the Bahá'í community seems to have been the main reason for the

dampening of the previously warm relationships between the missionaries, American and British, and the Bahá'ís (Momen 1982, 68-73). The Americans, in particular, seemed to be quite resentful. The warm relationship had been possible, in the first place, largely because of Bahá'í openness to the missionaries. Unlike Muslims in Iran at that time, Bahá'ís had discarded the notion of the ritual impurity of non-believers. Bahá'u'lláh had counseled them, therefore, to "consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship" (Smith 1987, 82). This injunction had important consequences for how the Bahá'ís, who were of predominantly Shiite background, reached out to members of other religious groups, such as Jews and Zoroastrians, who normally would have been considered beyond the pale. Indeed a significant number of Jews and Zoroastrians converted to the Bahá'í religion in the period between 1877 and 1921 (Maneck 1990-91). The Bahá'ís had relatively little contact with Iran's Christian groups – Armenians and Nestorians -- partly because of a linguistic and cultural divide; the Christians, in general, spoke little Persian, maintained strong group boundaries and had well-established ties to the West (ibid). The Protestant missionaries, of course, were actively seeking contacts, and the Bahá'ís did not hold themselves aloof. An English missionary in Isfahan, Persia, one Charles H. Stileman (1898, 646) wrote in the *Church Missionary Intelligencer* about

> …the exceeding friendliness, and even brotherliness of these dear people...The Christian missionary is freely invited to their homes to share their meals and meet their friends, and above all to take with him the Word of the Living God, to explain its truths and even to lead in prayer.

Bahá'ís were also known for their interest in the Bible, in acquiring copies of it and discussing it, marking them off from Muslims. As Stileman (ibid) put it, "I have never known them resort to the stock Muhammadan arguments that our Holy Books have been corrupted, or abrogated, or have in any other way lost their authority."

This same pattern of initial enthusiasm followed by a sense of disappointment was repeated with the Syria Mission. The Bahá'í community in the Beirut area was miniscule

compared to the ones in Iran and even in Palestine. Hence missionaries like Jessup initially acquired knowledge of the Bahá'í religion through correspondence, books and missionary reports. As noted earlier, Jessup included the scholar Edward Glanville Browne's recorded encounter with Bahá'u'lláh in a talk he prepared for the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. Jessup's talk, which was delivered by George A. Ford, a long-time missionary to Sidon, was titled "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations" and was one of a day's full of addresses on the theme "Criticism and Discussion of Missionary Method" (Barrows 1893, 1122-1126). In asserting the preeminence of the Anglo-Saxon race, Jessup (ibid, 1125) stressed its mission and responsibility to bring the Gospel to the world. In what he apparently took as a hopeful sign that their efforts were viable and indeed bearing fruit, he wrote:

> In the Palace of Behjeh, or Delight, just outside the Fortress of Acre, on the Syrian coast, there died a few months since, a famous Persian sage, the Bábí Saint, named Beha Allah -- the 'Glory of God' -- the head of that vast reform party of Persian Moslems, who accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the deliverer of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as brothers. Three years ago he was visited by a Cambridge scholar and gave utterance to sentiments so noble, so Christ-like, that we repeat them as our closing words:
>
> "That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled. What harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come. Do not you in Europe need this also? Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

Jessup, then, initially considered the Bahá'í religion to be a reform movement within Islam, one that was sympathetic to Christianity. A word here is necessary on the nomenclature of the movement. As previously explained, the vast majority of Babis had become Bahá'ís by the 1870s. Jessup, however, seems to have been influenced by Browne in continuing to designate them as Babis long after they themselves ceased doing so (Browne 1987, 7). Browne wrote and translated numerous books and articles on the Babi and Bahá'í

religions, particularly in the late 1880s and early 1890s. His favorable impression of the new religious movement was formed after spending a year in Iran during which he sought out encounters with Bahá'ís and gathered written materials and anecdotal information on the history and teachings of the religion. He would develop a passionate interest in the subject that lasted his entire life. Indeed, Jessup seems to have derived his initially sympathetic view of the religious movement, in part, from Browne (Jessup 2002, 637). Jessup's attitude, however, would be modified as he began to see the movement as rivaling the American missions. Unlike in Persia, where the interest shown by the local people to the new religion was what vexed the missionaries, in Greater Syria the reason for their change in attitude seems to have been the interest shown by fellow Westerners, who started traveling to the region in the late 1890s in order to visit the leader of the movement, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or Abbas Effendi in Acre, often making stops in Beirut. By 1911, 108 American Bahá'ís had made the trip (Smith 1987, 206). It seems to have been this concern that motivated Jessup to write passages like the following:

> I can understand how an intelligent Moslem might be attracted to Babism, on account of its liberality towards other sects, as contrasted with the narrow conceited illiberality of Islam. But I cannot understand how a true Christian can possibly exchange the liberty with which Christ makes us free and the clear, consistent plan of salvation through a Redeemer, for the misty and mystical platitudes of Babism. It has helped in breaking up the solidity of Islam in Persia, but is becoming more and more of a "sect." It may result in good of it spreads among the Sunni Moslems of Turkey and Egypt as it has among the Shiahs of Persia (Jessup 2002, 687).

As this quote makes clear, Jessup was sympathetic to the religion inasmuch as it ostensibly contributed toward bringing Muslims to Christianity. Yet he was hostile when he dwelt on the movement's self-definition as an independent religion, or "sect," claiming that it "started out as an attempt at a reform of Islam" but was later transformed into a "delusion" and "'incarnation' fraud" (Jessup 2002, 637). He did have first-hand knowledge of the Bahá'ís, having visited "Abbas Effendi" in Haifa (Jessup 2002, 636). Describing him as

"elderly and venerable" and as "almost a Christian," he goes on to disparage the religion as "nothing new" and merely the "essence of New Testament ethics" (ibid, 687, 636).

C. The Bahá'ís at the College

It is interesting to note how, two generations of missionaries later, Bayard Dodge echoes much of Jessup's views in what is most likely his first account of the Bahá'ís, as part of a letter dated 26 November 1913 and written during his first months working at the College. This seems to suggest that a certain missionary conventional wisdom had developed on the subject of the Bahá'í religion, as expressed in Dodge's letter. Yet Dodge was clearly struck by the Bahá'ís, singling them out for prolonged discussion, indeed dwelling on them, in what was a letter to "Bub" back home otherwise filled with various and sundry topics related to his new life in Beirut. Dodge wrote:

> It is most interesting coming in close contact with so many different kinds of boys, all of them holding absolutely different ideas as they do. Most of the fellows here are very up to date in their ideas, especially the Greek Catholics and the Bahais and Zionists, as well as many of the Protestants, progressive Moslems and even some of the Catholics. However, there are quite a number of very bigoted Moslems and Catholics who are especially interesting to deal with. I like the Bahais very much indeed. Their leader, who is the son of the man who turned old Persian Babism into the more modern and enlightened Bahaism, is a fine old man, who has made a great impression even in England and America. They try to take the best out of all religions and uphold all sorts of good reform movements. Certainly the Bahais in the College are fine men, but they make too much of the founder of their religion, which leads to superstition, and they have a peculiar idea of the Holy Spirit, as well as Old Testament Prophecy and numerical signs, etc. However, they are much better than Moslems and often form a stepping stone between Persian Mohammedanism and Christians.

In reference to Dodge's final comment, it should be recalled that the Mission to Syria had always had one single, admitted failure -- its general inability to reach the Muslim population. Howard Bliss was reminded of this at the World Missionary Conference in 1910, prompting his defense of the College and its particular missionary methods (Grabill 1971, 32). As previously discussed, the College and other Mission schools had pioneered more

indirect means of reaching Muslims, that is through an educational process that purported to "fulfill" rather than "destroy" the students' existing belief systems. Bayard Dodge was clearly of the same mind, and attributed his own liberality to his graduate training in comparative religions at the "radical" Union Seminary where he learned to perceive the similarities between Islam and Christianity (Starkey, 1972). Dodge was also impressed by the example set by Howard Bliss, whose trusting relationship and rapport with the Muslim students he emulated. Dodge characterized the attitude of many of the other missionaries towards Muslims as dominated by fear (ibid). He was intent on working with Muslims, and it is worth repeating that the Bahá'ís were seen by the College, to some degree or another, as a movement within Islam, and, more particularly, an Iranian one.

Indeed, the Bahá'ís themselves, most of whose families would have been of Iranian and Muslim backgrounds, did not necessarily actively disassociate themselves from the Muslim community in the Ottoman territories. Their standing within Ottoman society was, in a word, precarious. The leader of the community, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was, after all, nominally a state prisoner until 1909. As small groups of expatriates in Palestine, Iraq, Egypt and Greater Syria they sought, therefore, to establish good relations with their new communities. They had grown accustomed to charting a generally discreet course in their religious practices. The community also followed the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in adhering to certain outward Islamic practices like performing the *salat* in mosques and celebrating Muslim feasts. In a sense, the Bahá'ís did not wish to appear to be rejecting their Muslim heritage in a society in which they were outsiders and, to varying degrees of intensity, seen as threats. In this context, it comes as no surprise that the Bahá'ís are mentioned in SPC sources as celebrating Mohammad's birthday, along with the Muslims and Druze (in Penrose 1970, 179; Dodge 1915c). In Iran, however, where the Babis and then the Bahá'ís constituted a considerable minority and their separate identity had been well-established, they were not circumspect in

this same way. There the conditions were markedly different, with the authorities intermittently attempting to stifle the movement by trying to induce its members to recant their faith. Thousands had chosen to be imprisoned and executed rather than do so (MacEoin 1983, 236).

When Bahá'í students started attending the SPC in the early 20th century, they had to contend with the tacit opposition of Ottoman society as well as considerable entrenched opposition from the local missionary community. Zeine N. Zeine (in Hollinger 2006, 110), the long-time AUB Professor of History and a 1929 graduate, recalls that the Bahá'ís had to meet discreetly on campus during the 1910s and 20s. As late as 1907 Bahá'í students may have allowed themselves to be registered as Muslims to avoid the hostility of the missionaries (Hollinger 2006, 101). As previously mentioned, the first Bahá'í student to attend the SPC according to a Bahá'í source enrolled in 1901, though he does not seem to have graduated. In fact, during this period and into the 1930s a considerable number of Bahá'ís, and students in general, would attend the SPC and/or its Preparatory Department for a few years but not actually graduate from the College (Dodge 1933, 371; indeed, my great grandfather-in-law was one of these Bahá'í students).

Bahá'ís are mentioned in the SPC statistics for the first time in the 1904-1905 *Annual Report*. The lone student is called a "Babbite," which, as we have seen, probably refers to a Bahá'í (40). By 1908 there were reportedly six Bahá'ís at the College, but as previously noted, there may have been more. After the Young Turk Revolution and the formal liberation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, these students were presumably much more free to assert themselves as Bahá'ís. As we have seen, during these years the College under Howard Bliss had increasingly liberalized its approach to its missionary work. It was becoming quite responsive to expressions of religious diversity on campus. It was also meticulous about its

statistics, and consistently kept a separate category for its Bahá'í students, even under Ottoman pressure, as will be shown below.

During WWI, the Ottoman state was actively interfering in the operations of the SPC, demanding that Muslim students be exempt from religious services and that Turkish language lessons be obligatory for Ottoman subjects (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 9). In response to an appeal made by Bliss, Turkish language classes were introduced gradually, beginning with the lowest class. Indeed, when Cemal Pasha, Minister of Marine and Commander of the Fourth Army, and also the supreme civilian authority in Syria, visited the College in 1917 and addressed the students, they needed a translator to be present (Al-Kulliyyah, Spring 1969, 21). A year earlier Cemal Pasha had asked Howard Bliss to regard the Druze and Bahá'í students as Muslims in the annual statistics (General Faculty Minutes, No. 3, 493). The Ottomans were at this point desperate to stifle all minority claims and sought to emphasize Muslim unity (Kayali 1997, 211). Bliss did in fact comply with his request, though not as completely, perhaps, as Cemal Pasha would have hoped. While the Druze and Bahá'í students were counted among the Muslims, Bliss included sub-categories as well for the two groups (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 11).

SPC as well as Bahá'í sources show that the Bahá'í population at the College grew during these years. This was generally true of the "non-Christian students." In 1911-12, this grouping, which was composed of "Moslems, Jews, Druzes [and] Bahais," accounted for 30% of the total (*Annual Report* 1911-12, 28). This was its largest such proportion up to that time. It would only increase in the following years, reaching 41% in 1915, which, as Bliss pointed out, was an increase of 100% over a period of ten years (*Annual Report* 1915-16, 11). In 1919 and 1921 the number of non-Christian students, in fact, exceeded that of the Christian students, but in general the Christians outnumbered the non-Christians, though only barely, throughout the 1920s. The Bahá'ís became a distinct group on campus during the

1910s. Although there were only six students reported for the 1910-1911 year, there were twenty-one by 1915-1916 (these figures include the Preparatory Department).

Their distinctiveness on campus owed quite a bit to the presence of an at least equally sizable group of Bahá'í students in Beirut attending the Universite Saint-Joseph (USJ). The first Bahá'í student attended the USJ in the 1890s. AUB seems to have eclipsed the Jesuit College in popularity only by the late 1920s and early 30s (Hollinger 2006, 101). It is in fact difficult to determine the exact numbers of Bahá'í students attending the two schools. Many of the Bahá'í sources from the period do not attempt to do so precisely (I have not attempted a search of the USJ archives). An Iranian medical student who attended the USJ between 1905-1909 recalls at least ten other Bahá'í students in the city around that time, it not being clear to which institution they belonged (Afroukhteh 2003, 381). Indeed, any discussion of the Bahá'í students at the SPC/AUB must include their fellow students at the USJ. Together, they constituted a single coherent group, meeting together, visiting each other and sharing their vacations and summers together in Acre and Haifa in the vicinity of the holy shrines of their faith. They collaborated, furthermore, in the activities of the "Society of the Bahá'í Students of Beirut" which was formed in 1906 by Badi' Bushrui, who entered the SPC's Preparatory Department that year. Bushrui, besides being one of the unofficial leaders of the Bahá'í students, would also become, as we will see, a prominent figure on campus.

Another major reason for the group's distinctiveness was its national identity. The vast majority of the Bahá'í students, and Bahá'ís in general at that time, were Iranians; conversely, almost all of the Iranian students until the 1920s were Bahá'ís (Hollinger 2006, 112; Yazdi 1988, 54). In 1923-24, for example, there were twenty-two Iranians but only eight Bahá'ís; the next year the ratio was thirty-six and fifteen; and then forty-three and seventeen, and so on. Therefore, in the early years their national identity, alone, was a

distinguishing mark that set the Bahá'í students off from others in the College community. That the College identified them, in part, as Iranians is quite clear. Howard Bliss, himself, in a letter written to the students dated 14 April 1913, addressed it to the "Persian Students" (in Sohrab 1929, 388), suggesting that they may have identified themselves as such too. Bliss was *en route* to the United States at the time and was replying to a farewell letter written by this group of students. They apparently shared his letter with other Bahá'ís while visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt in the summer of 1913 since it was later published in a book recording the happenings of that summer (Sohrab 1929). The President's letter is copied in full below:

> To the Persian Students:
> Dear Friends:
> Before landing in New York, which we hope to do to-morrow, I wish to send you a special word of greeting and thanks for your very kind letter of farewell. I appreciate your thoughtful kindness very deeply and it has been a great pleasure to re-read your letter. We have had a long but pleasant journey. We are now eager to see land and to receive word from loved ones in Syria. Of course this includes the College and all the students. I hope that the Persian students will have a prosperous ending to their years and all may be planning to return. I hope also that you may have addition to your numbers and that the good record that you have had during the past may be continued. I always look forward to returning to the campus which we love so ardently. My love goes to each one of you. Your president
> (Signed) "Howard S. Bliss" (in Sohrab 1929, 388-89)

Besides their religious and national distinctiveness, the Bahá'í presence at the SPC became during this period statistically significant as well. According to one Bahá'í source, there were around thirty Bahá'í students at the SPC by 1913 (Sohrab 1929, 253). This source also lists the names of twenty-one of these students (Sohrab 1929, 271, 326), though at least one of them was about to be enrolled at the USJ (Chehabi 2006, 121). Another source, however, cites thirty as the total number of Bahá'í students in Beirut circa 1913, which seems more likely (in Hollinger 2006, 117). One of these former students remembered in an interview years later there being thirty-five students at the SPC circa 1914 (in Khadem 1999, 12). It seems probable that this figure, if accurate, would have included students from the

USJ as well. SPC's annual reports show, and Bahá'í sources confirm, that the number of Bahá'í students, as with the number of students in general, decreased during the war, with twenty-one in 1915, nineteen in 1916, sixteen in 1917 and eleven in 1918. After recovering to a high of twenty-two students in 1920, the number plunged to eight in 1923. The rest of the decade, however, saw steady growth, and by 1929 there were thirty-three Bahá'ís at the SPC and sixty-three in Beirut altogether (*Annual Report* 1929-30, 16; Hollinger 2006, 117).

Yet these numbers must be seen in the context of the total student population at the SPC. In 1910, for example, there were 875 total students on campus. The breakdown by religious affiliation was as follows: 312 Greek Orthodox, 170 Protestants, 128 Muslims, 91 Jews, 39 Greek Catholics, 32 Druze, 29 Maronites, 27 [Armenian] Gregorians, 14 Syrian Jacobites, 6 Bahá'ís and several other students from various Christian denominations (*Annual Report* 1910-11, 6). In the preceding years, the number of Muslim students had been rising steadily and in the coming years it would continue to do so, while, most strikingly, the number of Greek Orthodox declined significantly. During the war years the Muslims indeed surpassed the Greek Orthodox as the single largest group of students. In 1915, for example, there were 244 Muslims and 309 Orthodox and Catholics put together, whereas a decade earlier, when the total number of students was comparable (764 in 1905 and 780 in 1915), there had been only 100 Muslims and 300 Greek Orthodox, along with 100 students of various Catholic affiliations.

The only other group that significantly grew or declined in number during these years in proportion to the student body was the Bahá'ís, who were no more than a handful in 1905 but reached twenty-one in 1915. The Bahá'ís had grown from constituting less than 1% of the student body to reaching 3%, a percentage, in fact, they would never exceed and only equal again for a few years in the late 1920s. Indeed, there were years during the war and again in the late 1920s when the Bahá'ís constituted the sixth largest religious grouping on

campus out of as many as fifteen such groups. The Muslims, Greek Orthodox, Protestants, and Jews, in that order, were the top groups in this period, and by the 1920s the Gregorian Armenians were regularly part of the top five as well. When the Bahá'ís were the sixth largest group, they exceeded in number Druze, Greek Catholic, Maronite as well as students from other Christian denominations; Maronite and other Catholic students, it is true, generally attended the USJ. In 1931 Bahá'ís ranked fifth in the number of graduates, with seven, including one woman (*Annual Report* 1930-31).

D. The War and the College: Students to Soldiers?

World War I naturally upset the plans of many of the SPC students, and the total population dropped from an all-time high of 976 students in 1913 to 817 in 1914 and 780 and 690 the next two years. Many of the College's Ottoman subjects were enlisted into the armed forces. Those with medical training were particularly prized recruits. Seniors in Commerce were also called to duty (Penrose 1970, 156). Although the Preparatory Department suffered a precipitous decrease in numbers the first year, for the remainder of the war it grew by leaps and bounds at a time when the other departments were on the decline (ibid, 164). The war also altered the face of the College by forcing the departure of many students, such as some Greek ones, from countries that had suddenly become the Ottoman state's enemies; the remaining Greeks were deported in August 1917 (General Faculty Minutes No. 3, 631). All Jews from enemy countries were also sent home (Dodge 1915a). Egyptians were in a kind of no-man's-land after the British, who had been in effective control of their country since 1882, formally declared it a protectorate at the start of the war, ending Egypt's nominal allegiance to the Ottoman Empire (Penrose 1970, 151). Suddenly, then, they had become enemy aliens while also remaining fearful of conscription into the Ottoman army. Their plight, and the similar case of the Cypriots, presented the College with "difficulties" (Al Kulliyyah, January

1920, No. 2, 16). A total of seventy-two such nationals remained at the SPC at its encouragement, so confident was the College, according to Dodge (1958, 38), that the Allies would soon be occupying the Levantine coast. This was not to be of course, and in December of 1914 the Ottomans ordered all subjects of France and Great Britain into inner Syria, though it eventually exempted three British professors at the College. It also declared that students from countries at war with the Ottomans would be regarded as "prisoners of war in the custody of the College" and confined to its grounds (Al Kulliyyah, February 1920, No. 3, 21). These actions were seen as signs of Ottoman "favor," though interning the students was also a source of "anxiety and expense" for the SPC (Dodge 1958, 38).

The Bahá'í students, meanwhile, were also in a state of limbo. Iran, occupied by Great Britain in its southern and Russia in its northern regions, was officially neutral during the war. However, in 1915 a number of Iranian parliament members and political leaders abandoned Tehran and formed a pro-Central Powers provisional capital in the western city of Kermanshah. By 1916, if not earlier, the Iranian ambassador in Istanbul had apparently agreed to allow Iranians residing in the Ottoman Empire to be conscripted into the war effort (Chehabi 2006, 128). As a result, the governor of Beirut, Azmi Bey, asked the Iranian Consulate and the SPC for the names of all the Iranians of whom they were aware (ibid, 129). The USJ had already been closed down, along with all of the other French and British institutions, but some sixty of its students had transferred to the SPC after the College, in what was seen as a magnanimous gesture, had offered shelter to the suddenly homeless Jesuit fathers (Penrose 1970, 150). Among their number was an Iranian Bahá'í, Qassem Ghani, who had entered the USJ as a medical student the year before. He recalls many Iranians leaving Beirut when hostilities broke out, though many students also chose to stay on in order to complete their studies; some presumably transferred with him from the USJ to the SPC (in Chehabi 2006, 123). From the very beginning of the war, the Bahá'ís in Haifa had been

approached regarding their possible conscription as well as being asked to provide the names of their family members studying in Beirut, even though many of them would have been quite young (Blomfield 1956, 189). Ghani (in Chehabi 2006, 128-9) recounts how circa 1916 "great anxiety" was felt by the Iranian Bahá'í students, who "did not dare leave campus, for fear of being drafted into the Ottoman army by the police." As part of the United States policy of defending smaller states, the American ambassador in Istanbul had petitioned the government to exempt the Iranians from conscription (in Chehabi 2006, 129). However, when the United States and the Ottoman Empire severed their diplomatic ties in April 1917, their sole protector, in Ghani's eyes, seemed to have vanished (ibid). Ghani's memory seems to have been playing tricks on him here, for the decisive event that would keep the Iranian students out of the war in fact occurred a few months earlier, on 29 January 1917, when Cemal Pasha paid his third and final visit to the College.

It was largely Cemal Pasha's emergence as patron of the College which kept the SPC open in the first place; his three visits to the College, two of them official, established his good-will towards the institution and provided Bliss and the SPC with a sympathetic ear at a time when the political climate militated against the College continuing its operations. The Ottomans were not surprisingly skeptical about the presence of a Western and Christian institution in their midst and before Cemal Pasha had even arrived on the scene, they had, as previously discussed, become more intrusive in the affairs of the College. The new educational law imposed a variety of regulations, including religious and financial ones, which threatened its ability to function as usual (Penrose 1970, 152). The war greatly challenged its resources and resourcefulness; supplies were hard to come by as the economic situation worsened, and the suspicion of the authorities towards the College dogged its daily functioning (ibid, 159). Windows facing the sea had to be blacked out, for example, and use of all and any telegraph and wireless instruments was prohibited (ibid, 152). The College's

observatory dome was never opened at all during the war, while one woman was reportedly told to take down her washing as it might be construed as a signal to the enemy (McGilvary 1920, 181).

The College, however, was eager to prove its usefulness to the Ottomans in terms of war relief efforts, opening up its hospitals to wounded soldiers and sending medical missions to the front in southern Palestine (Penrose 1970, 153). Cemal Pasha had opened up this front early in the war in an attempt to take Egypt (Dodge 1958, 39). The Red Cross-sponsored medical mission, which included fifteen seniors studying medicine, pharmacy and dentistry, cared for the wounded for just over two months in the beginning of 1915, yet their services had much wider ramifications for the College (Penrose 1970, 153-4). While the College's relief efforts on campus during the Italian bombardment in 1912 had done wonders for the SPC's reputation in Beirut, this mission deeply impressed the general Muslim public as well as the Ottoman authorities. Dodge (1958, 40) relates how the Mufti of Beirut, after personally witnessing SPC doctors and students haul heavy boxes of supplies from a train car to camels in Nablus in 1914, had a complete change of heart in regard to the College and became its staunch supporter. Indeed, the upsurge in enrollment of young Muslims in the Preparatory Department over the next few years clearly reflected this newfound trust in the College.

The College's willingness to accommodate Ottoman demands set it apart from the Syria Mission in general. Mary McGilvary (1920, 140-1), a missionary working at the American Press, in her book *The Dawn of a New Era in Syria* characterized the College's approach with the Ottomans as "ingratiating" and "over-cordial" and even seen by some as "border[ing] on treachery to their own government and disloyalty to their Syrian protégés." The College was aware that its "interpretation" of the "Educational Regulations," for example, would be seen as overly submissive and as ceding too many prerogatives in its

religious life. Accordingly, it sent out a circular letter in October 1915 to all members of the Syria Mission defending its actions in this regard. The question, the letter read, was how "the missionary opportunity of this Christian Institution [could] be best conserved under a situation of peculiar difficulty and delicacy" (General Faculty Minutes No. 3, 448). In this light, the faculty's chief consideration" was as follows:

> …their unwillingness to sanction any arrangement that would divide the student body, emphasize sectarian differences, weaken the sense of individual responsibility and give a setback in the College to the growth of a spiritual conception of religion (ibid).

With this letter, the College once again confirmed its independence from the Syria Mission and reiterated its particular approach to its missionary work. Religion as such was deemphasized in favor of a notion of spirituality, and maintaining the unity of a diverse group of students was seen as a primary aim.

Yet the College would remain in a precarious position. The Ottoman authorities were determined to impose their will on the College, while the Germans were also not favorably disposed to the American school and, according to some, actually looked forward to seizing it (McGilvary 1920, 165). Cemal Pasha, for his part, shared the general Ottoman attitude toward the College but was also curious about it and appreciative of its medical services. His first visit to the SPC came on the day he arrived in Syria as its governor-general, on 3 April 1915 (General Faculty Minutes No. 3, 398). What he saw satisfied him, as his subsequent actions bore out. Besides reversing the decision to deport the three British doctors, he also sent the director of the fledgling Saladin University in Jerusalem, Jamil Bey, to visit the College in order to learn from it and discover the "secret of [its] success" (in Penrose 1970, 178). Despite this mark of good favor, Howard Bliss was wary of the intentions of many of the Ottoman officials in Beirut, such as the governor, Azmi Bey. He therefore sought and received Cemal Pasha's special permission to visit Istanbul and solicit the support of the highest possible officials there (Behmardi 2002-3, 141). His August 1915

meetings were quite successful and the minister of public instruction evinced a positive and moderate attitude to the implementation of the new regulations (ibid). Upon Bliss's return to Beirut, however, Azmi Bey made several exacting demands regarding the SPC's religious policies and the teaching of Ottoman history and geography. Meanwhile, SPC's medical expertise had again proved its worth when the dentist Dr. Dray performed a successful operation on the jaw of a high-ranking German official who had been shot in an assassination attempt (ibid, 142). In late 1915, though, the so-called "geography incident" embroiled the College in another controversy. A textbook used in a geography course in the Preparatory Department contained "statements disparaging to the Turkish government" (ibid, 143). The authorities, including Cemal Pasha, were only mollified when the College agreed to send the principal of the Preparatory Department, Professor William Hall, out of the country.

The College, then, had proved willing to compromise with the Ottomans if they allowed it to keep functioning in a manner that maintained its core identity as a missionary institution. Yet the authorities, including Cemal Pasha, continued to impose added pressure on the College. Some of the demands made on it seem to have been maximalist, such as calling for "Muslim students to be studying Islamic ethics under a Muslim instructor" and for a prayer room to be set aside for these students (in Behmardi 2002-3, 145). Others, such as Cemal Pasha's "request" to count the Druze and Bahá'í students as Muslims rather than separately, were easily handled, albeit rather sneakily, as we have already seen. The Board of Trustees did not comply with the more drastic kinds of demands for the same reasons they failed to do so in 1909. Such compliance would have, in their eyes, altered the identity of the College beyond recognition. At the very least it would have set a dangerous precedent for Ottoman involvement. But in 1916 the College was on much more slippery ground. Indeed, the faculty voted to delay passing on the Board's decision to Cemal Pasha (Behmardi 2002-3, 145).

The conditions in the country had become severe, with starvation becoming a widespread occurrence (Penrose 1970, 159). The population had long become estranged from the Ottomans due to the various shortages and Cemal Pasha's "draconian rule"; as of May 1915 he had been granted emergency powers in Syria (Kayali 1997, 192). When the authorities discovered the secret archives of the French Consulate, they purportedly found evidence of the complicity of a number of prominent local citizens in plots against the Empire (Dodge 1958, 42). Cemal Pasha's reaction was harsh but typical of his war-time rule. Over fifty prominent citizens in Beirut and Damascus were executed at his orders in 1915 and again in 1916. It is for these actions that Cemal Pasha became known as the "Butcher" in the Levant and for which he is chiefly remembered. The Arab Revolt which started in June 1916 further exacerbated tensions and suspicions. The Americans in Beirut, too, were on edge -- by the start of 1917, if not earlier, it was clear that the United States was sooner or later going to enter the war on the side of the Allies (Knock 1992, 116; Behmardi 2002-3, 147).

Although the Ottomans were quite dependent on the medical services provided by the SPC, they had little recourse but to close down the College on 22 April 1917 after the United States and the Ottoman Empire severed their diplomatic relations (Penrose 1970, 161). Yet the College was allowed to reopen just two weeks later due to the intercession of Cemal Pasha (Dodge 1958, 43). If the United States had actually declared war against the Ottomans during that two week period, the College would have remained closed, as Azmi Bey informed Bliss (in Behmardi 2002-3, 158). That the United States never did declare war makes for an interesting story in itself. According to Penrose (1970, 162), one Stephen Panaretoff, the Bulgarian minister to Washington and a graduate and former administrator of the Robert College, was "gravely concerned" about the implications of such a declaration on the fate of American institutions in the region like the Robert College and the SPC. In April 1917 he paid a visit to Cleveland H. Dodge, Bliss's father-in-law and also the president of the

Board of Trustees of Robert College, to see if anything could be done. Dodge, apparently uncharacteristically, made a personal appeal to his close friend, President Woodrow Wilson, urging him against declaring war and reminding him of the educational institutions' "vital importance to American influence in the Near East" (Penrose 1970, 163). Crucial as this intervention was, it is clear that Cemal Pasha, with his sweeping powers, could have closed down the College and appropriated its properties when he chose, retaining the valued medical services at the same time.

Why he allowed the SPC to remain open, and indeed reopen, has a number of explanations. One view is that Cemal Pasha was motivated by a strong anti-German streak, that he favored the SPC in order to "spite the Germans" (McGilvary 1920, 165). He was not part of the small group, led by Enver Pasha, of the ruling party's leadership which signed a secret treaty with the Germans at the beginning of the war (Kayali 1997, 185). Cemal Pasha was, rather, a Francophile and in fact maintained contacts with Britain and France throughout the hostilities (in Behmardi 2002-3, 159). As already seen, Ottoman reliance on the SPC's medical staff combined with Howard Bliss's astute leadership are major reasons for the survival of the SPC. Yet an entirely fortuitous event occurring as if on cue proved pivotal for both the fate of the College as well as that of the Bahá'í students. In January 1917 a close friend of Cemal Pasha, an official in Damascus named Asghar Pasha, became seriously ill. A German military doctor and a well-regarded physician from Istanbul were unable to cure him. Despairing, Cemal Pasha telegraphed Howard Bliss to send the College's Dr. Harris Graham to Damascus without delay. Graham diagnosed Cemal's illness to be a local kind of malaria, to the derision of the German doctor, and was given free rein to treat the patient accordingly. Asghar Pasha made a full recovery. Cemal Pasha was greatly impressed, viewing it as a kind of miracle (in Behmardi 2002-3, 151).

Traveling to Beirut a few days later, Cemal Pasha scheduled another visit to the College. Just as he had done in March of the previous year for Cemal Pasha's first official visit, Bliss planned carefully. During that visit, Bliss had made a welcoming speech in French, playing to Cemal's predilections (Behmardi 2002-3,146). For his part, Cemal Pasha had expressed his appreciation for the College's war-time services, adding that the "greatest enemy of humanity is ignorance, and this College is diffusing knowledge, not merely serving this country but all humanity" (in Behmardi 2002-3, 147). Such effusiveness had been backed up by concrete action. For example, in November 1916 Cemal Pasha agreed to a petition allowing five Lebanese teachers to remain at the College rather than be taken for military service (ibid, 150). Now, in January 1917, pressure had been mounting on the Iranian students to be brought into the war. Ghani's (in Behmardi 2002-3, 152-7; in Chehabi 2006, 130-2) depiction of the day of Cemal Pasha's visit, 29 January 1917, is quite dramatic.

At 11 AM Ghani encountered Bliss and his top hat dashing across campus to have an initial meeting with Cemal, and Bliss assured Ghani that he would raise the issue of the Iranian students and military service. Bliss and the College had taken steps throughout the war to thwart Ottoman attempts to conscript its Iranian students. When, for example, in late 1915 Beirut's Chief of Police had requested the names of all non-Ottoman Muslims, mentioning especially "Persians, Chinese and Tunisians," Bliss had proposed to the faculty to "delay handing in names to enable word to be received from the Persian Ambassador in the matter" (General Faculty Minutes, No. 3, 407). After the meeting with Cemal Pasha, Bliss reported that he was insistent on the Iranians joining the war effort: the Ottoman Empire and Iran had common interests, and the students would be treated well and given suitable posts. But Bliss had pressed the point and requested that the students, who anyway had no military training, be allowed to finish their studies. Cemal Pasha agreed to consider it and give his final decision that afternoon when he visited the College. Bliss did not rest there, however,

and choreographed a meeting between the Ottoman leader and the Iranian students. Cemal Pasha was expected at Assembly Hall at 4 PM, where he was to be greeted with an official reception. At 5 PM he would be taking tea at Marquand House in the presence of all the professors and their wives. In the meantime, Bliss advised Ghani and his friends to write Cemal Pasha a petition in Turkish requesting their exemption from military service, and to find one of the older Iranian students to present it to him at the tea party. The petition was written in Persian and translated into Turkish by Professor Haroutunian. One of the Iranian students, Azizullah Bahadur, a Bahá'í, then wrote out the petition in *nasta'liq* script, and was also the one chosen to present it to Cemal Pasha.

But first came Cemal Pasha's talk and reception in Assembly Hall, which was not without its own theatrics. Bliss's welcoming speech is not extant in the AUB archives, but Ghani (in Behmardi 2002-3, 154) has summarized it. Bliss was himself effusive in the talk, telling the assembled students that Cemal Pasha was giving them a "great lesson" in the midst of a war being "fought for material interests…by the forces of greed," showing how the Ottomans and Americans were maintaining "mutual peace" in their shared belief in "science and morality." Cemal Pasha's speech, an English translation of which exists in the AUB archives, stressed the importance of education and admits that while "at first [he] considered this College too a foreign University...[he] find[s] that though this is an American institution, yet it includes all humanity…I am ready to give any help which is in my power" (in Behmardi 2002-3, 155).

According to James Somerville (*Al-Kulliyah*, Spring 1969, 21), an SPC student at the time (1916 B.A.; 1919 M.A.), during the middle of Cemal Pasha's speech President Bliss suddenly jumped up from his seat, begged the pardon of Cemal, who "did not take offense," and turned to address the "astounded audience" with words of praise for the Ottoman ruler, after which the latter finished his talk. Somerville's (ibid) recollection, on which Munro

(1977, 65) is reliant, seems a bit faulty since, in his account, Bliss says that Cemal Pasha would be reopening the College when, of course, it had not yet been closed; it would be shut down in April, three months later. He also mentions that Cemal Pasha promised to provide the College with Turkish language professors and wheat from Damascus, two pledges that the Pasha had in fact made and carried out during the course of the previous year (Behmardi 2002-3, 149). Somerville, then, is either mixing up the 23 March 1916 visit with the 29 January 1917 one, conflating them, or in a way compressing the history of Cemal Pasha and the SPC into one intriguing incident. Indeed, his story is a kind of summary of Cemal Pasha's relations with the SPC, with Bliss's blend of audacity and tact on fine display. And it is true that Cemal Pasha was ultimately responsible for the SPC's reopening; Bliss (1917b) dispatched a letter to him the very day of the closing, informing him of the situation and adding how "deeply appreciative [they were] of all [he has] done for the College."

Bliss still had a few more tricks up his sleeve, though. As soon as Cemal Pasha was finished with the talk, Bliss had it typed up on official SPC stationery, making several duplicates of it as well. At the Marquand House tea party Bliss then presented Cemal with a copy of the speech he had just finished making. Bliss also asked him to sign it so that a copy of the speech could befittingly serve as a souvenir of the day's historic events. As Ghani (in Behmardi 2002-3, 156) points out, in so doing Bliss was also securing an insurance policy against any future encroachments by lesser Ottoman officials. When the SPC was preparing its American faculty for evacuation in December 1917, moreover, it recommended that they each carry a copy of Cemal Pasha's speech with them at all times (McGilvary 1920, 178).

While at the tea party, the Iranian students' representative, Azizullah Bahadur, presented Cemal with the petition as planned. Ghani (in Behmardi 2002-3, 153) summarized the contents of the petition as follows:

> We, the group of Iranian students at the American College, fully realize that the Ottoman government has embarked on war for defending a holy cause. This is a

> common objective of all Muslims including Iranians. However, due to the fact that our studies are still unfinished, we request permission to accomplish our education so that we would be more qualified to serve that cause afterwards.

Its content and calligraphy apparently had their intended effect, for after reading it, Cemal Pasha called Bahadur over, held his hand and told him to

> Go and on my behalf shake the hands of all Iranian students at this university, and assure them that they are my spiritual children. I like the spirit of this petition very much, tell them that they can pursue their studies with full confidence and trust in me, and I hope they will be able to render great services in the future (in Chehabi 2006, 131-2).

Indeed huddled outside Marquand House were the Iranian, predominantly Bahá'í, students waiting for Bahadur to deliver them the news. The next day the faculty recorded that Cemal Pasha had, as a "special favor," exempted the Iranian students and also "any two of the Lebanon servants" from military service (General Faculty Minutes No. 3, 573). Ghani (in Behmardi 2002-3, 132) attributed Cemal Pasha's change of heart to two things: Dr. Graham's medical skills and "the magic of Dr. Bliss's oratory." It was indeed an historic day for both the College and its Iranian/Bahá'í students, establishing Cemal Pasha as SPC's patron and keeping the students out of the war. The day's events also underscored the close relationship that had developed between Bliss and this group of students students. Bliss clearly exerted a considerable amount of effort in their defense. He also mentioned the episode in the 1916-17 *Annual Report*, which was a hand-written and especially concise document that year: "[Cemal Pasha] has allowed our Persian students, summoned to military service, to remain undisturbed at the College" (*Annual Report* 1916-17, 4).

Indeed as early as 1913 Bliss had expressed his esteem for this group of students. They had certainly become a distinct minority on campus. Hollinger (2006, 116) estimates that some 300 Bahá'í students attended the College between 1906-1940. Before 1929 only thirty Bahá'ís actually graduated from University, but more than 20% of all MA holders before 1918 were Bahá'ís (five out of twenty-four). As further evidence of the well-

established ties between the Bahá'ís and the University, in 1926 a "Bahá'í scholarship" was started, in the name of Mrs. Harold Esty, in the amount of 5,000 USD (reported in *Annual Report* 1926-27, 29).

CHAPTER V

THE BAHÁ'Í STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE: THEIR ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

With the Bahá'í presence at the College well-established, it is now time to explore their own interests and concerns. What was the background of this group of students? What attraction did the SPC hold for them and what were their educational expectations? In turn, it becomes necessary to further explore the milieu into which they were entering. The Bahá'í students became numerically significant by around 1914, at the same time as the Ottoman government was pressuring the College to -- from its perspective -- radically alter its religious identity. How were the Bahá'ís received by the College at this critical time? What were the activities of these students at the College? Did they reflect their religious interests and concerns as Bahá'ís? Perusal of the records of student activities during the period immediately leading up to and including the war years, makes it possible to suggest that this highly cohesive group of students wielded an influence on campus life disproportionate to their statistical strength, which itself was not insignificant.

A. The Background of the Bahá'í Students

But who were these students? Where did they come from and why did they choose to attend the SPC? It is true that by 1910 the College was avowedly interested in the possibilities of recruiting more Iranian students and assumed a certain responsibility to work with them. In a SPC pamphlet "The Expansion of the SPC," it is asserted that with Iran's Constitutional Revolution of 1906 a "new era" had dawned and that "until Persia has its own Christian college and universities our college ought to minister and powerfully minister to its

needs" (1910, 5-6). The increasing number of Bahá'í students enrolling at the SPC, however, had little to do with this sudden interest in Iranians.

Though predominantly Iranian, almost half of the ninety-seven students whose birthplaces are known were born in Palestine, Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon (Hollinger 2006, 105). Most of these families would have left Iran primarily due to violent persecution against Bahá'ís which, though its intensity waxed and waned over the years, was a constant threat. This Bahá'í diaspora of sorts to places like Alexandria, Baghdad and Acre then attracted others to establish themselves in these and other cities in the region. Indeed, the SPC's proximity to the cities of Haifa and Acre in Palestine, where the Bahá'í leadership was located, was an important reason the Bahá'í students were attracted to the SPC in the first place (Hollinger 2006, 98). The students were able to spend their spring and summer vacations in Haifa and Acre, visiting the holy sites of their faith, meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá' and other Bahá'ís, and studying their religious teachings. They would, for example, give each other talks on the history and principles of the Bahá'í religion.

Fundamentally the students' families had chosen modern and Western educations for their sons, and increasingly daughters, as well. With the emergence of the Bahá'í religion in Iran, its adherents were anyway no longer resorting to the educational opportunities available to their source communities – that is, for the most part Shiite but also Zoroastrian and Jewish. Bahá'ís desired education of a "modern" and practical variety, not just religious. The relationship of the Bahá'ís with modernity has been analyzed in several publications. For example, according to Velasco (2001): "the Bahá'í teachings opened an avenue for a new, post-Islamic identity that promised to overcome and finally resolve the cultural (and by implication political and social) tensions of the day."

The "tensions" experienced in three main source communities for the Bahá'ís can be explained in terms of a divide between "traditionalist and modernist interpretation of their

beliefs and practices" (Smith 1987, 94). Explaining in part the appeal of the Bahá'í religion to members of these three communities was no doubt its apparent fusion of tradition and modernity. It would also have been seen as offering a similar kind of fusion with regard to social and economic concerns. It could be said that the religion "function[ed] as an 'ideology of modernization'" indigenous to Iran and freed of the excesses of Western influence (Smith 1987, 96). As for what Iranians at the time would have specifically found "innovative" in this new religion, Velasco (2001) summarizes an explanation made by an eminent early Bahá'í scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl in 1911. Incidentally, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl made his case in response to articles written by the Reverend Peter Z. Easton, who had written derisively about the Bahá'í religion. Living at the time in Beirut, Abu'l-Fadl was made aware of one of the articles by students at the SPC (Balyuzi 1973, 149). In Beirut and later in Egypt, Abu'l-Fadl would also speak to the Bahá'í students on various subjects such as their religion's history (Sohrab 1929, 302). As Velasco (2001) relates:

> One testimony comes from a Bahá'í convert from the later period of Baha'u'llah's ministry, a former cleric, writing in 1911 when the Bahá'í community had been securely established in the East and had begun to penetrate into the West. The features he highlights as the most significant innovations of Baha'u'llah include: abstaining from crediting verbal traditions; prohibiting individual claims to authoritative interpretation; abrogating conflict and controversy on the basis of differences of opinion; the prohibition of slavery; the obligation to engage in allowable professions as a means of support, and obedience to this law being accepted as an act of worship; the compulsory education of children of both sexes; the command prohibiting cursing and execration and making it obligatory upon all to abstain from uttering that which may offend men; the prohibition on the carrying of arms except in time of necessity; the creation of the House of Justice and institution of national parliaments and constitutional governments; the exhortation to observe sanitary measures and cleanliness, and to shun utterly all that tends to filth and uncleanness; and the provisions of inheritance laws designed, in his view, to prevent the creation of monopolies.

The way was clearly paved for Bahá'ís to attend schools that could provide training consonant with such ideals. Some Bahá'í students attended the Presbyterian mission schools in Iran. These schools would have served as feeder schools for the SPC, there being no comparable college in Iran (Hollinger 2006, 100). The upsurge in enrollment of Bahá'ís in

the SPC during the war can be partially attributed to the closure of the French schools in the region – in Beirut, as we have seen, and also in Egypt (Yazdi 1988, 24). SPC would have been preferable to Robert College in Istanbul due to the former's geographical proximity to Haifa and Acre, for the reasons already mentioned. When the Iranian Bahá'ís began establishing their own schools in 1898, which were open to all comers (thirty-six were formed in various parts of the country by the 1930s), the Bahá'ís used Western curricula which included instruction in the English language (Hollinger 2006, 100). 'Abdu'l-Bahá' favored this kind of educational orientation, and personally supervised such initiatives in Acre. In 1903, for example, about twenty children from the Bahá'í community were assembled for classes in English, Persian, math and other subjects including practical instruction in trades like carpentry, shoemaking and tailoring (Afroukteh 2003, 159-160). There were also classes for young men who had not had any previous education; they were taught Arabic, literature, calligraphy, and penmanship (ibid, 160). 'Abdul-Bahá paid weekly visits to the classes encouraging the students in their studies and reminding them of its significance (ibid). The students were also given exams on a quarterly basis. Many of these students would also have continued their studies at local schools, such as a French one in Haifa (Khadem 1999, 2). It is probable that among these students were members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family whom he would later send to Beirut to study at the SPC.

'Abdu'l-Bahá indeed praised the SPC (Sohrab 1929, 272). Part of the reason he favored it was because of its location; he preferred that Bahá'í students receive their preparatory and undergraduate training in a more culturally familiar environment like Beirut before pursuing graduate studies abroad (ibid). He himself had personally visited the College, perhaps during his first trip to Beirut in 1878 (Balyuzi 1973, 37). He had also met with SPC staff members in Egypt and Palestine (Sohrab 1929, 314; Balyuzi 1973, 228, 401). Howard Bliss paid him a visit in Haifa on 15 February 1914, and reportedly sought his ideas

on education (Balyuzi 1973, 228; Zeine in *Al-Kulliyyah*, Winter 1973, 15). 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, in part, as follows:

> In this age the college which is dominated by a denominational spirit is an anomaly, and is engaged in a losing fight. It cannot long withstand the victorious forces of liberalism in education. The universities and colleges of the world must hold fast to three cardinal principles.
>
> First: Whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the unfolding of the mysteries of nature, the extension of the boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evils, a standard universal system of instruction, and the diffusion of the lights of knowledge and reality.
>
> Second: Service to the cause of morality, raising the moral tone of the students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtue…
>
> Third: Service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The thoughts of universal peace must be instilled into the minds of all scholars, in order that they may become the armies of peace, the real servants of the body politic – the world. God is the Father of all. Mankind are His children. This globe is one home…(Sohrab 1914, 98).

As we have already seen, the direction that Howard Bliss had been taking the College was quite compatible with the approach to education expressed above – including intellectual, moral and practical service strands. Howard Bliss's visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, besides being part of the College's policy of meeting with local and regional dignitaries, was also acknowledgment of the fact that a distinct Bahá'í minority had established itself at the SPC.

B. The Bahá'ís and the College at a Critical Time

The College and the Bahá'ís had struck up a cooperative, even warm, relationship. The question Bliss posed in the meeting, however, was not entirely a philosophical conversation piece. At the time, the SPC was actively engaging the general, predominantly Muslim, public in the face of intermittent criticism in the press, some of which were virulent

"attacks" (Dodge 1914b). The month before, on 12 January 1914, Bliss had written a letter to Fehmy Pasha, the minister of education, defending the College's practice of Bible instruction; he asserted that it is done "in the spirit of widest toleration and not with any sectarian or propagandist motive" and that its Muslim students have attested to the benefit they have received from it. During the Easter vacation a couple of months later, Bayard Dodge also visited Palestine on a public relations tour; he too stopped in Haifa but missed "Abbas Effendi" who was in Acre (Dodge 1914a). A few days later, in Jenin, Dodge relates how despite the negative press coverage, the "Head Sheikhs" at the Hebron Mosque expressed to him their intention of sending their sons to the SPC (Dodge 1914b). The College had been winning hearts and minds as it were, and indeed, as we have seen, the Muslim population at the College would mushroom in the next few years.

Indeed, this increase in Muslim students can be attributed in the main to the trust the local population placed in the College and its envoys like Bliss and Dodge. In October 1914, the marked rise in Muslim students, particularly in the Preparatory Department, which Dodge mentioned in a letter of 19 October 1914 to "Bub," served to partially offset the College's overall war-related drop in numbers that year (*Annual Report* 1914-15, 5). It should be recalled that the College had always known it could attract more Muslim and Jewish students if only it liberalized its religious policies, yet had resisted this move. Even after the 1909 student protests, the College's regulations were much the same, although Bliss, as we have already seen, had been taking the SPC in new directions and pioneering a much more open and receptive approach to Muslim and other non-Christian students. Moreover, the relaxing of the religious regulations brought about by Ottoman pressure had not yet occurred, though this pressure would make its presence felt soon enough. In fact, that same month, in October, the Ottoman "Educational Law," as part of the abolition of the Capitulations, was promulgated for implementation in December (*Annual Report* 1914-15, 10). The

enforcement of the new law was delayed, however, until September 1915 thanks to the good offices of Ambassador Morgenthau (ibid). Bliss, in his meetings with the authorities in Istanbul in August that same year, did, however, win permission to mandate the attendance of all the Christian students -- and not just Protestants as had been indicated -- at the College's religious exercises (ibid). That Bliss's arrangement with the Ottomans and the College's particular interpretation of this new law was unpopular among some segments of the missionary community has already been seen.

To be sure, the law was a source of considerable anxiety at the College as well. Both Dodge and Bliss expressed their concerns over its ramifications. In a letter to his father dated 26 October 1914, Dodge expressed the hope that compulsory chapel services would not be ended because "more than anything else" it makes for "toleration" and "broaden[s] the students' point of view." It also became apparent that the relaxation of the religious policies would end up attracting more Muslim students, which was perceived as both a threat and an opportunity; Bliss welcomed the challenge but was also worried. In a 28 November 1914 letter to Cleveland H. Dodge, he related a recent interview he had had with the postmaster general of Beirut, a Muslim, who had expressed interest in sending his son to the College. Although he was "strongly averse" to the school's religious policy, and wanted his son to "learn science and not religion," he was also confident that the abolition of the Capitulations would mark an end to the College's compulsory religious services. Indeed, a few weeks later he showed up at the College with his son. For his part, Bliss had addressed the students soon after the provisions of the new law were published, appealing to their sense of "loyalty," just as he had in 1909, that "this was the time to *get together* and to keep together" (ibid, emphasis his). The next year, after the law was enforced and the explicitly religious services had become voluntary, Bliss (1915a) expressed his happiness with the loyalty shown by the students. However, his anxiety over the law's potential effect on the College's

"psychological climate" was unabated. In particular, he worried about the large group of Muslims in the Preparatory Department who "have not the traditions of the place" (ibid). There was a tradition of "spiritual solidarity" that the College believed it had nurtured and which now seemed imperiled (Bliss 1915b).

The College was eager, then, to safeguard its religious identity and it was only natural that it sought out like-minded groups with which to work. The College, of course, had always attracted, and been attracted to, groups without established patrons – such as the Greek Orthodox, Jews, and Armenians. The Protestants were obviously a natural fit and the Druze, as well, had long been affiliated with the English (and so, by association, the Americans). As we have seen, Muslims enrolled in increasing numbers. The student body by and large reflected the local demographics, with the exception of the underrepresented Maronites as well as apparently the Shiites. The College only started consistently reporting the number of Shiite, as distinct from Sunni, students in the late 1920s, and in 1918 there were only five (*Annual Report* 1920-21, 15). As we have also seen, the College used its diversity as a measure of its success in the missionary work, making virtue out of necessity perhaps. It also, however, exploited it as an insurance policy in its dealings with the government. When the Ottomans were pressing the College with its most extreme demands in 1916, calling for the institutionalization of Muslim religious worship on campus, the Board of Trustees objected, in part, as follows:

> The College has on its roll representatives of at least ten different sects and nationalities. If special privileges are granted to one religion, they cannot be denied to others. This would subvert the foundations of the College and destroy any orderly continuance of its regular exercise (in Munro 1977, 64)

As a religious and national group, the Bahá'ís added to the diversity of the SPC on both counts. Cemal Pasha had indeed objected to their classification as a separate religious group, and so the College's threat, as it were, of extending further freedoms to them and other groups would have had its desired effect on a division-wary Ottoman state. Of course the

College held its "Persian students" in high esteem and looked favorably on their numbers increasing, even though their presence on campus in the first place was not in any way the result of a deliberate recruitment effort.

The Bahá'ís in fact had already received the College's unofficial consent to hold their own meetings on campus. As previously mentioned, the Society of the Bahá'í Students of Beirut had been formed in 1906, though it was not officially recognized by the College. Its members would "gather under the trees in the university [the SPC] or in their private rooms, chanting prayers and talking over matters of religious concern" (Zeine n.d.). The Iranian Bahá'í medical student mentioned earlier, Youness Afroukhteh, recalls as well that during his time in Beirut (1905-9) the Society's activities were "encouraged" by the College:

> Every week on Sunday afternoons we came together in a large meeting in a corner of the gardens of the American School, which we referred to as Mashriqul-Adhkar. The school authorities were sympathetic towards the Bahá'í youth and encouraged such meetings (Afroukhteh 2003, 381).

As mentioned earlier, however, there would have been many members of the SPC and broader missionary community to some degree opposed to such activities. Zeine N. Zeine (in Hollinger 2006, 110) recounts how in the 1910s and 20s the Bahá'í students were not permitted by the College to form an official association and met "alone by themselves, away from the mouth of the slanderer and the eye of the evil-teller." This comment could be alluding to the local non-missionary community as well. By 1914, the Ottomans had indeed become much more intrusive. The fact that they were not allowed to form an official association in the 1910s, however, was in keeping with College policy. In general, associations based on national and linguistic differences were allowed, while ones based purely on religious and political differences were not. The policy was as follows: "Discussion of all general questions in a liberal, tolerant spirit is encouraged but the consideration of partisan questions, whether in religion or politics, is strongly discouraged" (SPC Catalogue 1914-15, 17).

In addition to the two "long-standing" organizations, the Arabic Literary Society and the YMCA, many student societies were formed in the first decade of the 20th century, with the faculty's apparent encouragement (*Al-Kulliyyah*, December 1912, No. 2, 37). By 1914, there were, among others, the Flower of Culture Society, the Gymnastic Club, the Chemical Society, the Egyptian Union, the Turkish Society, the Armenian Students' Union, the Hellenic Society, the Hebrew Literary Society (Kadima), the Damascus Brotherhood, the Palestine Club, the Iraquian Society, and the Preparatory Department Brotherhood (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1914, No. 6, 187). In the 1920s the policy apparently relaxed, and the Muslims were allowed an association (*Al-Kulliyyah*, December 1921, No. 2, 24), but the Bahá'ís still do not appear to have been allowed one officially. Despite its congenial relationship with the Bahá'ís, the College perhaps did not want to appear to be publicly supporting a minority religious movement. A Persian society in the 1920s was formed but, as we have seen, the Iranian students were no longer predominantly Bahá'ís during this period. The Bahá'í Students' Society nevertheless went on with its activities, its members giving each other talks on Bahá'í history, principles and related subjects. However, it was not through these activities that the Bahá'í students made their mark in the College and attracted such favorable attention. It was, rather, their activities in the Students' Union and its *Gazette* as well as other nascent inter-faith activities that were pivotal.

C. The Students' Union

The Students' Union, which was founded in 1906, was not the Student Council. The College was in fact without one during these years, though the students petitioned for the formation of such a Council in 1914. While the faculty looked favorably on the idea, the onset of WWI seems to have buried this particular agenda item (General Faculty Minutes Vol. 3, 333). In its first few years, the Union put on plays, organized a Social Service

Institute and a Research Club, besides holding meetings. The most important ones were its weekly Saturday night meetings at which various topics were discussed and debated, and the business meetings at which "parliamentary rules are observed and practiced" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, July 1910, No. 6, 229). There were also speaking contest meetings, election meetings and reception meetings (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 104). The twin aims of the Union were "to cultivate and develop public speaking and parliamentary discipline in its members" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 65). Published every two months was the *Students' Union Gazette*, an illustrated newspaper which was "the only one of its kind in the college" (ibid). As of July 1910, it had one hundred members, including ten "Life Members" and five "Honorary Members" (ibid). The Union operated "exclusively" in English (ibid), and indeed in his history of AUB Bayard Dodge (1958, 33) refers to the Union as an "English society." Dodge and other faculty members, as well as President Howard Bliss, played active roles in the Union and frequently gave talks at its meetings; Dodge even contributed to the *Gazette*.

Such intimate involvement would not have seemed strange to the students. James Somerville (*Al-Kulliyyah*, Spring 1969, 20) recalled the "influence of daily contacts with the faculty, and in particular with the President," as the "most prominent factor" in contributing to the "happy family" atmosphere at the College during this period. The students and faculty shared a "strong feeling of belonging" (ibid); "life was taken more seriously" and student activities were characterized by "enthusiasm" and "zeal" (ibid). Romanticized or not, the College was a total experience to a degree it would be difficult to imagine possible today.

The College faculty and staff encouraged the students to think of the SPC as a "miniature world," as a self-sufficient training ground. Dodge, for example, in his article "Life in College and Life in the World" written in the fall of 1913 during his very first semester at the SPC, encouraged the students to be "well rounded" and take full advantage of the liberal arts college experience through entering into extra-curricular activities, including

athletics, strengthening one's moral character, and also forming friendships. "College friendships" are "not limited to one religion, one race, or one social class" allowing one "to learn to know mankind in a great number of forms" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 50-51). The College certainly saw the Students' Union as making possible such an ideal. In 1926, when Occidental College conferred on President Dodge an L.L.D., he responded to a congratulatory letter sent by the Union, saying that "the Students' Union is one of the agencies on our campus that has been most active in keeping alive the high principles for which our University is so well-known…" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1926, 6). Indeed Howard Bliss in a meeting with the Union on 25 February 1914 had urged it to include the "establishing of universal peace" as one of its missions (*Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1914, No. 5, 151).

The students were themselves aware of this would-be larger role of the Union. In December 1913, its president, Musa Nasr, attested to the Union's uniqueness. While "several societies" involved public speaking, it was

> the only society which aims at uniting representatives of different sects and nationalities into one united body…furthering the chief aim of the College itself, and training the future leaders of this country to be liberal, open-minded, sincere, and, above all, united in one common aim, the welfare of the country (*Al-Kulliyyah*, December 1913, No. 2, 52).

Such aims would have appealed to the Bahá'í students, given the ideas about education and expectations for college life with which, as Bahá'í's, they would have been instilled. Perusal of the records on student activities available from this period, chiefly *Al-Kulliyyah* and the *Students' Union Gazette*, makes it possible to trace the Bahá'í participation in the Union and, therefore, their contribution to campus life. It is in fact only possible to track the student activities in any detail after 1910 when *Al-Kulliyyah* first appeared that February. *Al-Kulliyyah* was conceived as an "organ whereby Trustees, Alumni, and friends of the College may be kept in close touch with the manifold phases of our College life"

(*Annual Report* 1910-11, 20). After little over a year of circulation, it had 400 subscribers and was sent as well to Ottoman newspapers and reading rooms. The College saw it as serving "a most important purpose, not only in keeping the Alumni in close touch with their Alma Mater, but in enabling the College to interpret its policy in a semi-official way to a much wider circle of readers" (ibid).

The *Students' Union Gazette*, lacking this imprimatur of semi-officiality, was conceived as an internal organ focusing more on the affairs of the Union, and provides a more unvarnished picture of the students themselves. By 1912 it had apparently branched out into international current affairs, according to an editorial deriding this attention to subjects such as "Poland's Politics" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1912, 3). Yet for the most part the *Gazette* had a more inward focus during these years, attending to the students' own development and preparation for the outer world. As the mouthpiece of the Students' Union, it naturally concentrated on the various activities and concerns of the Union, including articles written for the benefit of its members and the prize-winning talks from the debate contests. These talks addressed a variety of topics, which in general had more of a general and holistic focus than local and particular. It is telling that in 1913 the Union passed a motion calling for "local political questions" to be discussed (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913-14, 99). There is no evidence that such questions were taken up subsequently. The students were anyway not encouraged by the College to weigh in on "partisan questions." The onset of World War I would also have further prevented such discussions.

The students were asking, or encouraged to ask, the big questions: what is civilization and what makes society tick. Some of the topics for the speaking contests were: "Is action the test for character?"; "Is reputation an index for true greatness?"; "What is civilization and how can it be brought about?"; "What the religious hindrances to the progress of this country are?"; "The greatest need of our age." Religion figured prominently in all

such considerations. While its positive contribution was usually assumed, religion's precise role was open to debate. The students also explored issues related to modernity and differences between the East and West. The subject of one speaking contest was on the "the cause of the rise of Japan." Issues of war and peace increasingly gained importance in the Union. Another popular subject was education, including the sensitive topic of coeducation. The students also wrote and discussed in a philosophical vein, pondering new scientific discoveries.

The earliest editions of the *Gazette* have not survived; the earliest number extant appeared in the fall of 1912. The *Gazette* seems to have continued to appear on a regular basis, every three months or so, until May 1916 when the College, under Ottoman pressure, closed down all student societies, including the Union. Not all of the numbers from this period have survived, however, including all the ones, for some reason, that may have appeared in the second semesters. Nevertheless, the extant numbers of the *Gazette* constitute the only substantial record of student activities during the war. *Al-Kulliyyah* essentially halted its operations during this period, coming out as usual in November 1914 but again only in July 1915 to report on that year's graduates. Both publications provide detailed evidence of the activities of the Students' Union, and it thus possible to trace the activities of the Bahá'ís students themselves during these critical years.

D. The Bahá'ís and the Students' Union

As a non-sectarian society that self-consciously sought to promote unity, the Students' Union would have been seen as an appealing outlet for the Bahá'í students. Most obviously, it would have been viewed as a means of improving their public speaking and English language skills. These students had been encouraged in both areas, devoting time during their vacations to giving each other talks in English (Sohrab 1929, 348, 352, 364). Learning English was important as well for becoming Persian/English and Arabic/English

translators (ibid, 331). The students would have valued this skill, however, for much more than its usefulness on the career track. Indeed, they would have seen such training as instrumental in their development as Bahá'ís.

Understanding what their Bahá'í identity consisted of is impossible without reference to the example and instruction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Several memoirs attest to his powerful influence (Afroukhteh 2003; Mu'ayyad 1961; Yazdi 1988). It has already been mentioned how the Bahá'ís students in Beirut visited him and their holy shrines during summer vacations, as well as during the long Easter vacation. During these visits, 'Abdu'l-Bahá' spoke with them on a variety of topics. With regard to their language training, for example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeatedly emphasized the goal of "the union of the East and West" (Sohrab 1929, 291). In a sense, the students were encouraged to see themselves as cultural brokers. Indeed, along with their capacity to serve as translators, many of these students would also travel to Western countries for short trips or pursue graduate studies abroad; some of them also married Westerners and settled in the West.

The first students to study in Beirut had grown accustomed to regular visits with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Acre and Haifa. In addition to the four month-long summer vacation, some of the students would also see him on as many as three other occasions throughout the year. An especially detailed account of the interactions of such students with 'Abdu'l-Bahá' is contained in a book chronicling the latter's stay in Egypt during the summer of 1913 (Sohrab 1929). 'Abdu'l-Bahá had in fact been out of Palestine since August 1910, when, no longer a prisoner and free to travel abroad, he had left for Egypt with plans to continue on to Europe. He ended up spending a year in Egypt, partly for health reasons, before travelling to the continent (Balyuzi 1973, 135). Incidentally, while in Egypt he received favorable press coverage in what was seen as a marked shift from previously critical treatment (ibid). He spent three months in England and France, predominantly in London and Paris, giving talks

and meeting with a wide range of people. On 1 December 1911, in his last talk in Paris before returning to Egypt, he reiterated a typical theme:

> I in the East, and you in the West, let us try with heart and soul that unity may dwell in the world, that all the peoples may become one people, and that the whole surface of the earth may be like one country -- for the Sun of Truth shines on all alike (Balyuzi 1973, 167-8).

After staying a few more months in Egypt, in March 1912 he and a small entourage took a ship to America, where he would stay until December of that year, visiting a number of cities and making it, even, to California. Upon his arrival in New York City several newspaper reporters asked him about the purpose of his journey. He replied as follows:

> Our object is universal peace and the unity of humankind. I have traveled to Paris and London and now I have come to America to meet with those who seek universal peace and I hope that the peace societies of America will take the lead in promoting this end (in Sobhani 1998, 35).

Indeed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (1982) gave scores of talks at a variety of locales and to a variety of audiences: to peace societies and women’s groups, at churches, synagogues, and universities as well as to various “spiritualist” groups (such as the Theosophists), and at hotels and private homes. He also expounded on subjects presented as central principles of the Bahá’í religion and necessary components of its goals of world unity and universal peace, such as:

> the equality of men and women, the harmony of science and religion, the need for universal education and a universal language, the independent investigation of truth, the oneness of God, the oneness and continuity of the Prophets of God, the oneness of mankind, and the elimination of prejudices of all kinds (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1982, xii).

He was very well-received in his travels, attracting considerable press coverage. As Bayard Dodge (1913a) himself put it, he made a “great impression.” He would stay in Europe until June 1913, taking up temporary residence again in Egypt. He finally returned to Haifa that December.

In September 1913, two groups of Bahá’í students, twenty in total, spending their summer vacation in Haifa visited Ramleh (a suburb of Alexandria), Egypt where ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá was temporarily residing. For many of the students it was a long-awaited reunion; for some of them it would have been in fact their first meeting with him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá' addressed the groups on a number of occasions during their visits. The students also obtained copies of the talks he gave in America, reading them together (Sohrab 1929, 303). That the encounters in Egypt, and the previous ones in Palestine, significantly influenced these students is clear. As will be shown, the students took the ideas and principles with which they were being instilled and attempted to spread and implement them in the space allotted to them back at the College, most particularly in the Students' Union. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also took an active interest in their education, inquiring even about their teachers and whether or not they "took pains to instruct the students" (ibid, 281). He repeatedly exhorted them to persevere and excel in their studies. More specifically, they were encouraged to pursue education that would be of practical benefit to society, which for most of the students meant Iranian society. At least two students attributed their studying of medicine to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's direct encouragement (Mu'ayyad 1961, 89; Afroukteh 2003, 330). He also advised the students to specialize in agricultural science (Sohrab 1929, 293). While in Paris, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged another group of Iranian students to engage in commerce and industry as well, specifically mentioning "iron-smelting plants" since both agriculture and industry depended on foundries (Balyuzi 1973, 374). Many of the students also studied the liberal arts; translation was a valued skill. It is important to reiterate, however, that he focused equally as much, if not more, on their "conduct" and adherence to moral and ethical principles (Sohrab 1929, 384). They were exhorted to live lives of uprightness and spirituality.

There is considerable evidence to support the statement that these students exerted effort to wield a certain influence on campus; among them was certainly a core group of highly-motivated individuals. As early as 1912, this group was playing an active role in

campus life. Indeed, the editor for the very first extant number of the *Gazette*, published in the fall of 1912, was the previously mentioned Badi' Bushrui. Furthermore, in this same number, another Bahá'í student, an Aflatun Mirza from Hamadan, Iran, contributed a piece entitled "The Beauty of Speech." The article discusses effective communication, or the refinement and control of speech: "there are certain airs, tunes and manners that render speech agreeable, pleasing or offensive" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1912, 12). The Bahá'í's participation in the Students' Union in the first place, then, attested to their interest in the finer points of speaking in public.

From the time when the Bahá'í students began to form a recognizable minority group on campus, they indeed became active members of the Union, being elected to the Union's Cabinet, contributing to the *Gazette*, participating in and winning prizes in debate contests, and also proposing subjects for debate at the Saturday night meetings. From 1912 until 1916, when all student societies were closed down, Bahá'í students were almost continuously represented in the Students' Union Cabinet, elections for which were held twice a year. Twice Bahá'í students were elected its president; twice its vice president; at least once its secretary; once its associate secretary; twice the editor of the *Students' Union Gazette*; once the president of its Scientific Department; and several times as members-at-large. In the elections held in the beginning of 1913, for example, several Bahá'ís were nominated for office, as it were, by an outgoing Cabinet member. The *Gazette* ran "Election Numbers" which usually included editorials on the coming election and a prominent member's suggestions on the make-up of the new Cabinet. Badi' Bushrui was the editor of the *Gazette* at the time and was now nominated as a suitable candidate for secretary, his "increasing effort to improve the *Gazette*" being noted (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 6). After nominating two students to be president and vice-president, the writer then listed eleven "promising members" to fill the remaining vacant positions. Three out of the eleven were

Bahá'ís: Azizullah Bahadur, who would later present the petition to Cemal Pasha on behalf of the Iranian students; Aflatun Mirza; and 'Abdu'l-Husayn Isfahani. These four students were all among the two contingents which made the trip to Egypt in September 1913 (Sohrab 1929, 271, 329).

They, and a few others, constituted a core group of Bahá'í students. As previously mentioned, Bushrui had started at the Preparatory Department in 1906, and helped to found the Bahá'í Students' Society. In 1910 at his Preparatory Commencement, he delivered the "Class Motto Address" which was titled "The Star of Hope is Our Guide" (Al-Kulliyah, July 1910, No. 6, 209). Elected to serve as secretary of the Students' Union for the spring of 1913 and again for that fall, Bushrui was then elected president of the Students' Union his final term at the College, in the spring of 1914. At the same time, he was given an "Honorary Membership." To put it into context, such memberships were also conferred on the wife of a faculty member and one other especially active student, a former president and vice president, Musa Nasr, whom we encountered earlier (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1914, 149). Bushrui was an accomplished public speaker, giving numerous talks and doing well in the debates. He won second prize in the Students' Union "Annual Speaking Contest" in January 1914 (*Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1914, No. 4, 115). Bushrui graduated with a B.A. in 1914 and returned to the College as an instructor from 1916-18, receiving an M.A. in 1917. As an "Honorary Member," he continued to participate in Union meetings and even contributed an article to the *Gazette*.

Azizullah Bahadur (B.A. 1916; M.A. 1917) in being suggested as a good candidate for vice president in the spring of 1914 was said to have shown "earnest interest" in the activities of Union (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 115). Yet he was not elected vice president on that occasion, nor were some of the others "nominated" for offices in the same article, showing that such recommendations were not virtual appointments to positions. He

was elected vice president in the next election, for the fall of 1914, also serving as the associate editor of the *Gazette*.

Aflatun Mirza (M.D.1916; B.A.1917) served as president of the Students' Union in the spring of 1915 and earlier as a member-at-large. He was also a repeat contributor to the *Gazette*. He achieved distinction as well by accompanying a Red Cross unit headed by Dr. St. John Ward to Istanbul in May 1915 along with several nurses and a student nurse (*Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1920, No. 3, 21). In an article written for the *Gazette* about his experiences, he notes that other medical students had planned on joining the trip but were detained in Beirut, for "certain well-known reasons" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1915-16, 249). As we have seen, students were virtual prisoners at the College. The port of Beirut being a closed one, furthermore, the expedition was doubly dependent on the special permission of Cemal Pasha (ibid). Mirza was also apparently among the leaders in his class, writing a letter dated 1 May 1917 to the General Faculty of the College on behalf of the members of the Arts and Sciences Class of 1917 regarding their apparently truncated final year of study. The College having been closed, they asked to be allowed to take their exams early with their diplomas sent to them later on, a privilege the medical, dental and pharmacy students had already been accorded.

'Abdu'l-Husayn Isfahani (B.A. 1916; M.A. 1917) was editor of the *Gazette* in the spring of 1914 (*Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1914, No. 5, 151). At the start of the fall term of 1914, he became the president of the newly-founded Scientific Department of the Union, replacing in a by-election one Yeznig Terzian, who, like so many other students, did not return to the College that year due to the onset of the Great War (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1914-15, 15). Isfahani was an accomplished speaker, taking third place in the annual speaking contest as a freshman (*Al-Kulliyyah*, December 1912, No. 3, 87). He also won the freshman prize in the public meeting debate later that year (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1913, No. 8, 226); he was named the

best sophomore debater in the second term of 1913-14 as well (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1914, No. 7, 234). Isfahani was one of the five Bahá'í students to write Masters' Theses between 1913 and 1918. The first M.A. was awarded only in 1905 and by 1918 a total of twenty-four were granted. Four out of these five Bahá'í M.A.'s were completed during the war: three in 1917 and one in 1918. He also wrote an article of interest in the *Gazette*, "The Orient and its Natives," in which he emphasized the need for unity in the East to decide on the intelligent and culturally-appropriate adoption of elements of "Western" civilization (1914, 163-68).

As has been previously noted, the Bahá'í students generally stayed on at the College during the war rather than returning to their homes in places like Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Palestine. The volume of their activities on campus, already disproportionate to their numbers, was probably magnified by this state of affairs. For example, when Isfahani replaced Terzian on the Students' Union cabinet, the Bahá'í representation rose to almost 50%, or three out of seven. It should be noted, however, that for the first term of 1913-14, the Bahá'í representation in the Cabinet was the same (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1913, No. 8, 226).

Along with Isfahani and Bahadur, the other fall 1914 Cabinet member was Shawki (Shoghi) Rabbani (B.A. 1917) who was the associate secretary. Rabbani was also "nominated" and may have served a term as secretary. Rabbani was the eldest grandchild of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and entered the SPC's Preparatory Department in 1912. Prior to that, he had attended a French school in Haifa for his primary education and the Jesuit College in Beirut for at least a year (Khadem 1999, 2-3). In 1921 he was named in the will and testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as his successor and, as Rabbani himself conveyed to the College, as the head of a universal Bahá'í council (Rabbani 1969, 15; *Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1922, No. 4, 64).

It is worth noting that many of these students were distinguished by another factor that offers perhaps a partial explanation for their activities: their age. At that time, each class contained a wider range of students' ages than would be found today. Nevertheless, it could

be argued that as a single group of students, the Bahá'ís had a disproportionate amount of older students. For example, Bahadur would have been thirty-one and Isfahani twenty-five when they graduated in 1916, when most of the students were around twenty-one. Habiballah Khudabakhsh, or Dr. Mu'ayyad (M.D. 1914), was twenty-six, though it is true that the medical students were in general slightly older. The students named above had all come from Iran, which seems to be a major reason for their relative maturity. Since they would have had lesser access to Western schools than students in the Levant, they seem to have started their formal educations later on.

As will be shown below, the Bahá'í students contributed uniquely perhaps to the campus discourse. When their concerns overlapped with those of the College, moreover, it had a kind of multiplying effect, with the provision of a ready venue in which to express them and the active support of faculty members and administrators. The College would also have been aware of the values and ideals with which they were being instilled as Bahá'ís. Indeed, besides Bliss various members of the academic staff at the College paid 'Abdu'l-Bahá visits over the years, in both Egypt and Haifa (Balyuzi 1973, 401). One teacher of Arabic (either Jebr Mikhail Dumit, Daud Kurban or Jurjus Khuri al-Makdisi) visiting him in Egypt, "spoke with him about the unification of religions and the principles of the Bahá'í movement" (Sohrab 1929, 314). As previously noted, during Bliss's February 1914 meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá', the latter emphasized as "principles" of education the furthering of the "oneness of the world of humanity" and "universal peace". A word here is necessary on the relationship of these two concepts from the Bahá'í point of view. In a talk given in Eliot, Maine on 7 August 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1982, 264) pointed out that universal peace would only be possible once the oneness of humanity was realized:

> If the oneness of the human world were established, all the differences which separate mankind would be eradicated. Strife and warfare would cease, and the world of humanity would find repose. Universal peace would be promoted, and the East and West would be conjoined in a strong bond.

As we have seen, concepts such as unity and peace were certainly of the moment at the College during those years. Indeed, it was a mere ten days after this meeting that President Bliss encouraged the Students' Union to work for "universal peace". It is clear that such professed goals and principles would have resonated deeply with the Bahá'í students.

CHAPTER VI

MOMENT OF CONVERGENCE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE BAHÁ'Í STUDENTS

This chapter aims to focus on the most salient of the areas of overlap between the Bahá'ís and the College. As we have seen, cosmopolitanism, or the interest in harmonizing diverse elements of the student body, had become a central concern of the College. As we have seen as well, the Bahá'ís also advocated a cosmopolitan approach. How, then, did the active group of Bahá'í students contribute to this particular discourse on campus? It is anticipated that the convergence of College and Bahá'í interests served to amplify the latter's contribution, rendering it more visible and influential than it otherwise would have become. This same dynamic will also be explored with respect to the notions of good citizenship, patriotism and reform which the College and the Bahá'ís alike championed. The final, and perhaps most crucial, area of overlap to be examined will be the Bahá'ís' involvement in the religious life of the College. What role did the Bahá'ís play in the religious experiment of the College, which included the increasingly important dimension of social service? In particular, how did the Bahá'í students contribute to the transformation of the College's YMCA chapter into the West Hall Brotherhood?

A. Cosmopolitanism: Unity in Diversity and Universal Peace

By the 1910s the ethos of cosmopolitanism, of unity in diversity, had become a pervasive mantra of sorts at the College, appearing in speeches and articles written by faculty, students and special visitors to the College, and also cropping up in Students' Union

discussions and debates. As part of its goal of promoting the policies of the College, *Al-Kulliyyah* emphasized this cosmopolitanism in the opening pages of its very first issue, affirming that "the feeling of unity and the cosmopolitan interest, which have characterized the life of the College, can only be increased by such an enterprise as this" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1910, No. 1, 2).

Reporting on the student enrollment, "the usual variety of races and religions" were said to "make the College world as cosmopolitan as ever" (ibid, 6). In an article in the November 1912 issue of *Al-Kulliyyah*, Philip Hitti, who later became the renowned Princeton historian, wrote ecstatically about a day-long picnic fifty "College men" shared with President Howard Bliss along the Damour River. He began the article as follows:

> "Unity through variety" is a distinctive characteristic of SPC gatherings whenever and wherever they take place. Representing many nationalities and speaking many languages SPC men always meet on the common ground of humanity and education. The momentum of the repellent forces afforded by race, tongue, or creed is always more than overcome by the bond of union provided by the spirit of the College…
>
> Here again the atmosphere of good-fellowship was well marked in contrast with the cosmopolitan nature of the party. The Armenian partook of the same loaf as the Bulgarian, while Persian had one shoulder against that of the Tartar and the other against that of the Syrian. All distinctions of rank and age were waived; every man helped his neighbor… (*Al-Kulliyyah*, November 1912, No. 1, 15-16).

The cosmopolitanism of the College was not simply a celebration of the great variety of religions and nationalities represented in the College. Rather, as Hitti stated, the College spirit purportedly bound the community together. This "spirit" was defined in various ways, and, as we have seen, had both religious and secular manifestations. In an early number of *Al-Kulliyyah* (June 1910, No. 5, 169) it was described as "the spirit of good fellowship, of good sportsmanship, of good orderliness, and enthusiasm." We have already seen how Bliss had touted its primary unifying role – "good fellowship" -- as the College's major success story.

Besides Bliss and faculty members like the young Phillip Hitti, special visitors to the College also chimed in on the subject. Lord James Bryce, a veteran British politician who had just finished a stint as ambassador to the United States, gave a talk at the SPC in West Hall on 2 May 1914. President of the British Academy at the time, Bryce addressed the students on the importance of their education and experiences at the College (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1914, No. 7, 205-212). Bryce was "struck" by the College's diversity: "I suppose that it has hardly ever happened that there have been gathered together in one institution under one roof, so many men of diverse races and diverse religious opinions" (ibid, 206). Yet the "great service" rendered by the College was the common experiences it offered it students, the opportunity it provided them to realize "how much greater are our common grounds for unity than all the differences that separate us" (ibid).

While it is impossible to divine the overall student response to such enthusiasm, it seems clear that a segment of the population embraced it, including the Bahá'ís. The Class of 1913-14 was especially supportive, taking "Unity in Variety" as its Class Motto (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1914, No. 8, 252). During a Senior Class Reception as part of Commencement Week, one of the graduating members, Sami Haddad, explained the motto:

> Our class has certain peculiarities which distinguish it from all the other classes who have graduated from the Collegiate Department. It contains the greatest number of students, the greatest variety in nationalities and religious beliefs, and the most marked difference in age and physical appearance…[yet we are] firmly united together with the bond of truth and culture…and social welfare (ibid).

The rest of the speech was devoted to tracing how this unity could be established and what the results of it would be. Haddad named four requirements: "submission to true leadership"; the setting of a "common ideal"; social justice; and sympathy and good-will. The fruits of this unity would be greater social cohesion and a stronger, more vigorous Ottoman Empire:

> All of you know that the essential need for the Ottoman Empire at the present time is the unity of its members, and the lesson of working in harmony with one another.

> Our Empire needs men who can, by their authority and personality, bring men together and make them work for the common good. We need men who can unite the Moslem with the Jew, the Druze with the Christian, and all of these together to follow what is right, not caring a bit for opinions, creeds or interests (ibid, 254).

The "principle of unity in variety" was a natural "law" that if followed would do "wonders" for the Empire (ibid).

There was an earnestness about these students, who placed much confidence in their education and their capacity to become agents of change in society. As previously mentioned, their campus life was a "miniature world," a training ground for their future endeavors. Accordingly, they took their student activities quite seriously. Prior to Haddad's talk, Badi' Bushrui had given the "Class History." The president of the class, Burhan Habib (a "Tartar" from Kazan, Russia), reported on the class activities for the year. In addressing the Alumni Luncheon, Habib conveyed this sense of seriousness, relating how he once encountered one of his classmates "weeping because he had missed one of [their] class meetings" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1914, No. 8, 255). It seems fair to conclude that such students would have considered themselves to be the spearheads of the cosmopolitanism the College encouraged.

Typical of this kind of encouragement was an article appearing in the February 1914 number of *Al-Kulliyyah* written by faculty member Robert B. Reed entitled "Internationalism Among Students." Reed pointed out that with the "opening up" of the world through advancements in communication and transportation, one of the "social consequences" has been the "evolution" of the "international mind" – the "tendency to regard affairs not simply from our local, but rather from our world environment." Acknowledging that this "habit of mind" is by no means a widespread reality but rather "an unrealized ideal," Reed affirmed that "some of the greatest strides in this direction…have been made by the students of the world." Yet it is not merely this shared cosmopolitan outlook to which Reed (ibid, 106) was referring but rather the way in which "this somewhat vague feeling has in recent years been

crystallized into actual organizations for the cultivation of the spirit of fraternity among the students of the world."

Concrete expressions of internationalism became, indeed, an established feature of College life during these years. One such expression was the initiation of the "Tour Around the World" in 1914; this event was continued in the 1920s as "Inter-Racial Night" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1922, No. 4, 59) and "Cosmopolitan Night" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1923, No. 8, 141). Planned and organized by a committee of students and faculty (and held under the auspices of the travel agency Thomas Cook & Sons), the 21 November 1914 event used the months-old West Hall to its advantage, with a room assigned to each represented nation. A guide escorted each group from room to room where shows were put on illustrating characteristic scenes from the various "countries" – Syria, Egypt, Greece, India, Abyssinia, China, Armenia, Palestine, Holland, Persia and the United States of America (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1914-15, 31-36).

Returning to the Class of 1913-14 and its contribution to the theme of cosmopolitanism, Badi' Bushrui, in his capacity as president of the Students' Union, offered some final thoughts as the school year came to a close:

> Let the Union, as often suggested by President Bliss, stand for universal peace and the oneness of the world of humanity. I am glad that the spirit which the college tries to infuse into her students is finding expression in the life of the Union. Racial and religious differences play no part there. The President for the first term this year was a Christian, the last President was a Bahai and the new President is a Moslem. I believe this is the biggest stride the Union has taken to be able to choose the best man without regard to religious or racial affinity (Al Kulliyyah, June 1914, No. 8, 269).

In this one passage was expressed the shared vision of the Bahá'í students and the College: "the universal peace and the oneness of the world of humanity" which 'Abdu'l-Bahá' and Howard Bliss had discussed a few months earlier. For their part, Bushrui and other Bahá'í students had been contributing to the propagation of these ideals throughout their stays at the College. As indicated in the above passage, participation in the Students'

Union was seen as a way of putting them into practice. For one, Bahá'í students lent their voice to the conception of the Union as a unifying force. In the January/February 1913 election number of the *Students' Union Gazette*, Bushrui (7-9), the editor at the time, introduced an untitled poem written by Aflatun Mirza. This introduction, titled "A Simile," takes the rather unusual step of explaining the dominant metaphor of the poem: the "mother" referred to is the SPC and her "children" the various students of the university. The poem begins with the speaker's first meeting with the mother/College:

> As I was roaming in this world,
> Now up a mount, now down a vale,
> I hap'pd (sic) to meet a woman bold,
> On Syrian shore, without a veil.

This "mother" is described further in glowing terms: having a "fair and tender look…kind and gentle to all…majestic." The mother feeds her "score of children" and receives their obedience, counseling them to

> Adorn your hearts with handsome flowers,
> From that e'er beautiful orchard
> Of true love: and spend sweet hours
> In Union's Bower and there abide.
>
> Be kind to your brothers who are
> Or may to you all unknown be:
> An ornament richer by far
> Than ornaments of the deep deep blue sea.

She goes on to advise them in submission and self-sacrifice. If one is to be a "prey" and submit before some higher authority, then it is better "fall before the lion with glee/than the wolf – oh so mean…" The "lion" here seems to represent the worthy and legitimate authority, and the "wolf" the rapacious and illegitimate one. As will be further explored later, the question of legitimate authority and the related one of good citizenship were ones that had been exercising the minds of students and the population in general ever since the Young Turks had seized power. This unity is equated in the poem with "true happiness"; otherwise, "life is but a dream." The mother is so nurturing that the "babies who were once so

weak/sans teeth, sans eyes, sans anything,/became so sturdy in a week/that praising her they went to sing/THEIR ALMA MATER."

Such an enthusiastic expression of College spirit certainly belies the notion that the SPC was still experienced by its students as something of a prison. There was certainly a group of students who viewed the total experience of the College, their "uprooting" in a positive light. Yusuf M. Abs, the Editor of the *Gazette* in the fall of 1915, contributed an article that term on "Our Needs" (185-187). Abs immediately declared that Eastern students are at a "decided disadvantage in competing with Occidentals" at college. He listed four reasons: the latter's more enriching home life; their greater exposure to lectures by important writers, thinkers and so on; the fact that Westerners study their subjects in their own languages; and their more comprehensive school system and their far earlier entrance into it (the average starting age of Syrians, he says, is fifteen). Abs offered two ways to compensate for the Easterners' purportedly inadequate home life. The first, more long-term, solution was the education of women; as mothers they can create a more beneficial environment for their children, which included concerns about basic sanitation. The second solution was immediate: joining student societies as a substitute for the intellectually challenging home life experienced by the Western student who is able to "discuss what he has learned with his parents, sisters, and companions." By attending societies, they are "at least" given "practice" during the school year in "debat[ing] matters that are of vital importance to every up-to-date man." The College, then, was seen as an idealized educated mother, and the student societies like surrogate families.

The interest of the Bahá'í students in questions of unity was apparent in their particular debate proposals in the Union. As we have seen, the students tended to debate more holistic questions, addressing society's larger, more endemic problems. One example is a proposition presented by Aflatun Mirza that "a universal language is essential to the

progress of the world" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1912, No. 7, 227). The Bahá'ís had already voiced their support for Esperanto in accordance with the principle that in addition to the various mother tongues of the world, a second, shared auxiliary language would facilitate world unity and peace ('Abdu'l-Bahá 1995, 155-56). In the 1920s many Bahá'ís became active members of the world-wide Esperanto movement. As a student, Zeine N. Zeine (B.A. 1929) was one such enthusiastic promoter of the language on campus, giving talks on it, including, on at least one occasion, a short one in Esperanto itself (*Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1929, No. 1, 99).

As we have seen, universal peace was a stated long-term goal of the Bahá'ís. Judging from the proposals made at the Students' Union, issues of war and peace were much-debated topics at the College. The Ottoman Empire was indeed embroiled in hostilities during these years. First was with the war with Italy over Libya which reached the Beirut coast in 1912, followed by the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Nevertheless, many of the students shared the enthusiasm felt by those involved in the international peace movement during the years leading up to World War I. The Bahá'ís were conspicuous in voicing anti-war arguments. Badi' Bushrui proposed the debate topic for one of the Union meetings in the fall of 1913: "war must inevitably stop"; the motion was carried by the fifty or so members in attendance, of whom fifteen or twenty debated it (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 99-100). In the 1912-13 *Gazette*, another Bahá'í student, Husayn Afnan (B.A. 1912; M.A. 1913), contributed an article titled "Towards International Peace" (15-17). Despite the rapid increase in armament expenditure by the world powers, Afnan noted as "promising" the activities of peace societies and the increased number of people who perceive "the folly of war." Another student, Gordon Butaji, not a Bahá'í, wrote in a similar vein about "International Arbitration" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 144-7). While expressing hopefulness about the conflict-resolving ability of arbitration and the vigorous peace

movement, Butaji was realistic about the various "barriers" to peace, including national ambition and inequality among nations. Voices less sanguine about the prospects for peace were also raised in the Union. Subjects debated in the first term of 1911-12 included "Malthusianism to be the ultimate condition of man," "Sparta [a militaristic state and society] contributed more to Greek civilization than Athens," and "War not likely to be done away with" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, February 1912, No. 4, 127). All of the above motions were dropped, but it would not be long before Beirut would "taste the horrors of war" with the arrival of Italian warships on 24 February (*Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1912, No. 5, 139). Not surprisingly perhaps, during the next term one of the propositions made to the Union was that "preparation for war is at present the best safeguard against the outbreak of war" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1912, No. 7, 227).

For the Bahá'ís, however, peace was only possible after the attainment of several other conditions, notably unity. It is in this context that 'Abdu'l-Husayn Isfahani's proposal to the Union in April 1914 that "racial differences do not exist" should be seen (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1914, No. 6, 192). Earlier that month the College was addressed by Edward C. Moore, D.D. from Harvard University on the topic "East and West." Moore perceived a new rapprochement between East and West after centuries of mutual suspicion and division: "A unity of the world is preparing, nay in many respects already exists…[and] is the prevailing sentiment of our time" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1914, No. 6, 173). The "barriers" among people previously considered "insurmountable" have been removed and "the things which unite men, even of the most different races, are so much larger and so much more significant than those which divide them" (ibid). Moore went on to tentatively speculate that there "will be no more East and West in the prohibitive sense" and the "immemorial distinction will sometime vanish away" (ibid). As already seen, the Bahá'í students had already been

instilled with notions of the oneness of humanity and the unity of East and West. Isfahani's proposal, then, affirms Moore's hope for the dissolution of such reified boundary markers.

As a central feature of its cosmopolitanism, the College encouraged expressions of such harmony between the East and West. In the Phillip Hitti article referred to earlier, Howard Bliss is dubbed the "ideal of an SPC man" -- a "happy combination of what is best in the Oriental as well as in the Occidental" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, November 1912, No. 1, 16). In an article in the *Gazette* titled "Who is the True Gentleman of the SPC?," Yusuf Abs asserted he should be of both the East and the West (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1915-16, 397). While all SPC students, and especially those who had gone through a mission-run school system, had had numerous contacts with Westerners, the Bahá'í students had had arguably unique experiences in this regard. Those among their number who had grown up in Acre would have met the American Bahá'ís who started visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the turn of the century; some of them would have had an American Bahá'í woman as an English teacher (Balyuzi 1973, 95). Others would have met American Bahá'ís for the first time during the summer of 1913 in Egypt (Sohrab 1929, 286). Some of the students also encountered and assisted such travelers passing through Beirut on their way to Palestine (Mu'ayyad 1961, 83). These were significant encounters for the students. That their religion, which had originated in Iran and been confined to the Middle East for several decades, should now have attracted converts from the West would certainly have been seen as a concrete step in the realization of its lofty principles.

The College accommodated and indeed encouraged the Bahá'ís along this line. Even as alumni, the Bahá'ís represented a cosmopolitan influence on campus. In the 1920s, the core group of Bahá'í students repeatedly referred to were also regular alumni correspondents. For its part, the University (AUB since 1920) actively promoted the idea that its graduates should serve as East/West cultural brokers, or "*agents de liaison*" (*Al-Kulliyyah*,

October 1922, No. 1, 8). Accordingly, the University amplified all instances of cosmopolitanism of which it would receive reports. The Bahá'ís offered numerous such instances. For example, the February 1921 number of *Al-Kulliyyah* recorded the marriage of Badi' Bushrui in Haifa, the wedding being attended "by Bahá'ís from America, France, Italy, Constantinople, India and Persia" (No. 4, 64). In reporting on a meeting the Haifa alumni held with Phillip Hitti, who was the general secretary of the Alumni Association, the semi-official University publication underscored the "striking spirit of harmony and sympathy" among the "Bahá'ís and Jews, Moslems and Christians…united by the common tie – the love of the University by the sea" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1924, No. 7, 109). Bushrui was for several years the president of the Haifa branch of the Association and also continued his role as secretary of the class of 1914. In one of the earliest numbers of *Al-Kulliyyah* issued after the war, Bushrui wrote his classmates an open letter, asking them to share their experiences of the conflict and suggesting holding a class reunion. Reminding them as well of their class motto, "Unity in Variety," he allowed that "on account of the war, we have not had the chance of realizing the motto" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1920, No. 5).

A particularly apposite example of this dynamic of amplification was the report of another wedding in the December 1926 number of *Al-Kulliyyah* -- that of the 1918 graduate Ali Yazdi, whose memoirs were referred to previously. It seems that Yazdi did not himself inform the University of his nuptials but that the editors of *Al-Kulliyyah* were alerted to a notice published in a Santa Paula, California newspaper. The following passage was quoted from the newspaper: "Kipling has said, 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet' but the fallacy of this statement was demonstrated in the marriage, at Santa Paula, of Miss Marion Carpenter to Sheikh Ali Yazdi of Berkeley" (No. 2, 63).

It is clear that the Bahá'í students had carved out a niche for themselves on campus. The University establishment had certainly amplified the cosmopolitan contribution of this

relatively small group of students. In this regard, the relationship of the University and the Bahá'ís had reached perhaps its zenith with the publication of an article written by President Bayard Dodge in the 1930-32 volume of the *Bahá'í World*, a biennial yearbook. The article, "Education as a Source of Good Will," outlined the University's mission, confirming its strong relationship with the Bahá'ís and its view of them as a like-minded group. Writing in 1930, when there were three Bahá'ís on the University staff and twenty-six students, Dodge (1933, 370) listed the twenty-eight graduates of the University (there were in fact thirty) up to that point, adding that they had "become a great credit to their Alma Mater." The list included two women trained as nurses and midwives (women were first admitted to the University in 1921). Dodge (ibid, 371) himself noted that the list did not include the many Bahá'ís who spent time at the University but never graduated. After mentioning the scholarships established for Bahá'í students and the collaboration the University enjoyed with Shoghi Effendi (Rabbani), Dodge (ibid) detailed three distinguishing qualities of the Bahá'í students:

> In the first place, they have acquired from their parents an enviable refinement and courtesy. As far as I can tell, all of them have been easy to get along with, good natured with their friends, and polite to their teachers. Their reputation for good manners and breeding is well established.
>
> In the second place, the Bahá'í students have been marked by clean living and honesty. The older men have had a good influence on the younger ones, so that it is a tradition that they avoid bad habits. Every Sunday afternoon they meet together for devotional and social purposes at the house of Adib Husayn Effendi Iqbal [Two of his sons, Abbas and Ishaq, worked at the College; the third Bahá'í mentioned above was Zeine N. Zeine]. The older students are able to keep in touch with what the younger ones are doing and their influence is worth as much as a whole faculty of teachers.
>
> In the third place, the Bahá'ís intuitively understand internationalism. They mix with all sorts of companions without prejudice and help to develop a spirit of fraternity on the campus. They carry this same neutrality into active life and it is largely because of their freedom from partisanship that several Bahá'ís have been entrusted with great responsibility in Palestine.

"Internationalism," or cosmopolitanism was one of the University's main calling cards in the 1920s, attracting it wide renown. In an October 1928 speech given upon his return from an extended fund-raising trip in the United States, Dodge told the AUB community that he had met many people interested in the University because it is "one of the best laboratories that they know of, in which to try out the experiment of internationalism" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, November 1928, No. 1, 8). As we have seen, the Bahá'ís were an active element of this experiment.

As for the "great responsibility" Dodge mentions, this appears to refer to the positions held by Badi' Bushrui and Tawfiq Yazdi (B.A. 1921), who, as Dodge reports, were the governors of the Nazareth and Nablus districts, respectively.

As pointed out by Dodge, the Bahá'í students paid considerable attention to their own group identity and internal harmony, encouraged to do so by other Bahá'ís (Sohrab 1929, 303). As also previously noted, the Iranian Bahá'ís themselves originated from a diverse array of religious backgrounds (Maneck 1990-91). By the 1910s a considerable number of Jews and Zoroastrians had converted to the Bahá'í religion. These conversions were an important factor in the religion's emergence as an independent religion, distinct from Islam (ibid). Yet these conversions are best understood as part of a process; they did not entail an immediate break from their customary laws and social institutions. The Bahá'ís' place in Iranian society was far too precarious to offer a comparable community life (Stiles 1984, 77-8). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Bahá'ís were often subjected to persecution, extending at times to multiple executions. For example, in 1891 seven Bahá'ís in Yazd were seized from a home by a mob, executed, and their bodies dragged through the streets and subjected to various ignominies before being dumped in a well (Stiles 1984, 77). In this context, the Zoroastrians of Yazd, for example, who identified themselves as Bahá'ís did not immediately leave their source community. On the contrary, they were leading

members of reforming elements within it, challenging the traditional leadership by establishing new institutions and developing close relations with other Bahá'ís outside of the Zoroastrian community (ibid, 90). As Stiles (ibid, 90) concludes, the Zoroastrian Bahá'ís only separated from their source community when that community "itself ceased to recognize them as Zoroastrians." A similar process occurred with the Bahá'ís of Jewish background (Maneck 1990-91).

By the 1910s, this process was well underway. There is evidence, furthermore, to support the assertion that the composition of the Bahá'í student group in Beirut reflected this internal diversity of the Iranian Bahá'ís. While most of them were of Shiite ancestry, some appear to have been of Jewish and/or Zoroastrian background. For one, Aflatun Mirza, the aspiring poet, seems to have been of Jewish background. In the "Alumni News" section in the November 1928 number of *Al-Kulliyyah* he appears as "Aflatoun Yacoub" (No. 1, 30). Another Bahá'í, the medical student Habiballah Khudabakhsh (Dr. Mu'ayyad), whose memoirs have been referred to in this study, also appears to have been of Jewish extraction (Sohrab 1929, 353). That the Bahá'í students were conscious of and prized this diversity is clear. Writing in his M.A. thesis about the effect the Bahá'í religion had had on his country, Iran, 'Abdul-Husayn Bakir (B.A. 1917; M.A. 1918) comments how "men of all faiths, who have embraced the new religion, met each other as brothers and regarded one another as members of one great family worthy to be loved" (26).

In addition, since Jews and Zoroastrians along with Shiites shared in common a strong identity as Iranians, unlike the Christians, this too would have added to their group cohesion (Maneck 1990-91). As we have already seen, the "Persian" identity of the Bahá'í students contributed to their other-definition as a distinct group at the SPC as well.

The challenges and uncertainty of the war universally experienced in the Levant added to the unity among the Bahá'í students, and the student body as a whole. A 1918

graduate, Ali Yazdi (1988, 54) recalled how the Bahá'í students were "marooned" at the College during the war; even those students who would have wished to travel home for the summer were unable to do so due to the blockade of the Coast. Instead, as Yazdi (1988, 56) related, they spent their summers in Haifa together, further intensifying their group feeling. While at the College, the Bahá'í, and other, students mostly kept to the campus. Before the war, SPC students were not in the habit anyway of frequenting downtown Beirut and its coffee houses, "moving picture shows" and "resorts of immorality" very often, according to Dodge anyway (YMCA 1914, 5). The students, who if they did not live in the dormitories tended to live near the campus, were quite cut-off from the city center at night since the unpaved, cactus-lined roads were still poorly lit (ibid; Dodge 1958, 38). However, as Dodge (1914, YMCA, 5) warned shortly before the war arrived in the Levant, the street light situation was improving and an increasing number of students were now venturing out at night. The war certainly would have stymied this trend, especially as conditions grew severe. In this respect, Yazdi's (1988, 56) experience was probably typical. He remembered witnessing "women dying on the streets" of starvation without anyone "pa[ying] any attention to them". Henceforth he avoided downtown and stayed on campus. As we have also seen, the Iranian students' fear of conscription into the Ottoman army also kept them within the College walls. As a result, student life became even more centered on the campus, and acquired a new vigor in spite of the war. Indeed Dodge, writing his father on 2 December 1914, initially found the war a "blessing in disguise," even for Europe, since "suffering" tends to inspire a newfound seriousness. Dodge found the effect on campus life quite promising:

> The College is really more cheerful and lively than ever before. In our daily life we hardly think of the war and the campus has a beautiful atmosphere of calmness and ease. The men are studying and playing very normally and the religious life of the College is splendid.

In another letter written on the same day to "Julia, Jim, Bill and Cleve" Dodge elaborates: "We are trusted by all and the College is a center of confidence and hope. The students are behaving wonderfully and religious and national barriers are dwindling away as never before, as the College spirit and fellowship grows".

It was not long, however, before Dodge became less sanguine about the war. Less than two months later, on 21 January 1915, Dodge wrote "Bub" admitting that "never before [had he] realized what a horrible thing war was." Widespread food, and other, shortages threatened a large-scale famine, and people would soon be literally dropping dead in the streets. As Dodge related, though, the College was active in the relief efforts, helping to dispense supplies to the needy. A dormitory on campus was used as the official headquarters for its sector of the city, and students served as translators and ushers -- holding back crowds and assisting elderly women. Despite the depressing circumstances, such relief efforts were the direct precursors of the social service work which, in the 1920s, became a recognizable feature of student life.

Although the students largely stayed on campus, which had itself become a refuge as well for the greater community, they also continued the SPC tradition of walking trips. One such walk took thirteen hours (from the campus to Shweir and back), including only two hours of rest (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 87). During the war, walking became less exercise than necessity, as there were no carriages to be had and horses were rare (Dodge 1918b). As Anna Jessup wrote in a letter dated 3 November 1918, "some of the community did wonders in walking."

B. Good Citizenship and Patriotism: The Bahá'ís as Persian Reformers

A central concern of the students in general was the notion that society, and indeed civilization, was in a transitional phase. The tumultuous happenings in the Ottoman Empire

had prompted much debate on issues of citizenship and reform. The College certainly encouraged the students to see themselves as playing active roles in this transition. One such example of this encouragement was the setting of "The Cause of the Rise of Japan" as the subject for a speaking contest in 1913. One participant arrived at the kind of conclusion the College would have wanted to hear: "…in the rise of Japan, the Ottoman nation can find a splendid illustration of the right way to success…and attain the so much needed reforms" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 154).

As we have seen, the College itself was to be a model for the Ottoman nation, a "miniature world." The Students' Union, in particular, was explicitly conceived of as a "miniature republic" and a "training ground for parliament" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 125, 105). When West Hall was opened in 1914, it had pictures on its walls of "Cathedrals, Mosques and Temples" and also of "the Parthenon, the Forum, the Houses of Parliament, and Capitol at Washington" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1914, No. 5, 135). The students themselves were self-conscious about being engaged in an experiment in democracy, while admitting their inexperience in its processes. In an editorial in the January/February 1913 number of the *Gazette*, the author assured prospective members of the Union that they are perfectly "justified" to wonder about elections, "for one who has not been in [a] democratic country or who has not been a member of the Union cannot clearly form a picture" of what they are (3). Elections were to be carried out with a "public spirit" that extended to a certain discipline after the results are known in "obeying the rules of the majority" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 105). The Union tended to divide itself into two parties. The factionalism and division this often created, however, was much criticized in the *Gazette*. Decrying the "cheating and playing of tricks" that was "often" encountered, one writer warned against "factor[s] of jealousy or hatred and enmity" in the dealings of the parties with each other: "the result of the elections should not cause so much disgust or disappointment as to make one party try

and disturb or ruin the Union" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 126). Later that year an election for which two main parties had been formed was declared illegal and a second round of voting required, after which the minority purportedly submitted to the majority (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1914, No. 7, 234). In the fall of 1915, the editor of the *Gazette* intentionally omitted any articles on the coming election so as not to cause "party feeling in the Union," appealing to the reader/member "not to be excited about the election but to keep his head" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1915-16, 229). The "excitement" of the members in Union meetings was mentioned frequently in reports. One member wrote about the authoritarian tendencies of some Union presidents, one of whom he remembered chiefly for repeatedly saying "Mr. Member, sit down" at business meetings (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1915-16, 309). Besides elections, parliamentary procedures were to be studiously followed in business meetings. One student, in fact a Bahá'í, contributed an article defining the most important parliamentary terms and explaining the "rules of order" (Shoghi Rabbani, *Students' Union Gazette*, 1915-16, 192). Bahá'ís supported the establishment of parliamentary democracies, and so the Bahá'í students would have gravitated toward the Union for this reason as well. We have also seen how Bahá'í students were elected, disproportionately so, to various Cabinet positions in the Union during these years.

Yet the Students' Union was not just interested in parliamentary procedures; it was concerned with content too. As we have seen, its members were intent on addressing issues of far-reaching import. Notions of citizenship and patriotism were increasingly encouraged at the College. Dodge himself wrote a long article in a 1914 number of the *Gazette* titled "The Cost of National Prosperity" in which he warned against the social "costs of commercial and industrial success" (99). The working poor faced severe challenges to their physical and moral health and family life, while the nouveau riche will "lose all interest in the serious things in life" (ibid). Dodge called for greater social responsibility among both

groups: the former should press for their rights and the latter should work for the welfare of society as a whole (ibid, 100). There were also other articles and talks on the theme of citizenship and patriotism (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1915-16, 317-20; *Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1914, No. 6, 175-79). It is instructive to note that when in 1915 the Ottomans made attendance at chapel services voluntary for non-Christians, among the secular themes that were taken up in the alternative exercises was "good citizenship and patriotism" (Dodge 1915d).

Reform, therefore, was a central issue: whether women should be educated alongside men; whether religion played a positive or negative role; whether socialism offered the "best solution" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, May 1912, No. 7, 227); whether "money is the greatest force in society" (ibid); the role of the press in modern society. The Bahá'ís' support for unity and peace also included a role for religion. Isfahani proposed that "Universal Reformation in all the different phases of life can never be effected except through religion" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1914, 60); the motion was carried. More concretely, the Bahá'í students had trained their sights on Iran and ways to better its condition, having been encouraged as Bahá'ís to see themselves as "the means of this reformation" (Sohrab 1929, 332). In a letter to his father dated 22 June 1914, Dodge commented on this mission of the Bahá'í students, having attended with his wife Mary a reception held by the Iranian students as part of Commencement week. Most of these students travel to the College from three to four weeks away, he related, and "speak in a most serious way of getting an education here and then returning to help their unfortunate land." As we have already seen, Dodge's initial encounters with the Bahá'í students in 1913 led him to state that "they uphold all sorts of good reform movements" (Dodge 1913a).

Two Masters' theses written during the war years exemplify the reforming spirit of the Bahá'í students. Azizullah Bahadur's 1917 thesis, "Social Evils or Hindrances to Persia's

Progress," starts out by asserting that a moderate balance of optimism and pessimism is necessary to distinguish between his nation's virtues and its disease-like defects (2). Bahadur attends to three areas of purported national deficiencies: political, religious and individual. He then details the various inefficiencies and instances of corruption in the country's government administration and financial department before attending to the unsanitary practices involved in its sewage system, baths, garbage disposal and more. His solutions to these problems generally involve increased administrative organization, honesty and transparency. As he repeats throughout his thesis, writing "pamphlets as this" are also necessary to affect the "public consciousness" by making it "sensitive to the pain and search in quest of remedy" and "teach the people the qualifications of good citizenship" (2, 6). Repeatedly as well, he emphasizes the advisability of imitating beneficial foreign practices and the use of foreign advisers (6).

In explaining the development of Islam within an Iranian context, Bahadur derides "the dogmas and the nonsensical traditions and superstitions" that resulted, asserting that "the present religion in Persia has nothing to do with Islam and the Quran" (22). Bahadur does not disparage Islam itself. On the contrary, he upholds the achievements of the Arabs in their "solidarity" and knowledge production (20). In doing so, he articulates the Bahá'í concept of 'progressive revelation' according to which religions are of "the same fundamental truth" while more recent religions provide teachings suited to the specific needs of the present day (ibid). His remedy, then, was for Persians to be properly instructed in their religion, with the *Quran* to be translated into the vernacular and the "tract of the highest priest" at Samarrah to be turned into textbooks and taught to the students (24). Religious education, however, should also be accompanied by scientific education. Indeed, a major wide-ranging solution for Bahadur rests in such educational reforms. Bahadur then points out a major obstacle in all such reforms: the religious establishment. He does not shy away from asserting that the

Shiite clergy actively resists any steps made by "the people toward advancement and enlightenment" as this would vitiate their own power (24). He also places the blame for the disastrous unwinding of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (the Russians' bombing of Parliament) squarely on the shoulders of the clergy, whose interference in political affairs should end. Those who joined the pro-Constitution side did so cynically, in order to maintain their sway over the people (25). The Revolution will be discussed further in the context of the other Masters' thesis.

Bahadur goes on to criticize religious traditions which result in wasteful spending by Wakfs, such as on the upkeep and staffing of tombs for the supposedly hundreds of thousands of children of the Twelve Imams (29). Instead, funds should be used to build hospitals and schools and so on (30). What is lacking among the people, Bahadur concludes, is, first of all, a "sense of national life" (31). Even when well-educated men acquire power, they do not make long-term plans but seek only short-term gains, which is owing to their lack of patriotism (ibid). Furthermore, the people do not see themselves as active participants in "civilization" but only passive recipients of its creations; they wear watches but are not curious about how they were invented (32). Bahadur ties this lack of patriotism and "progress," in turn, to their lack of religious feeling, which prevents them from displaying the necessary "altruism and self-sacrifice" (ibid). In this respect, Bahadur and Dodge spoke much the same language. Bahadur would have welcomed the comparison, for he repeatedly urged his countrymen to "imitate" the West in "seriously" attending to the education of both their sons and daughters and "spend[ing] their life and money in what contributed to the welfare of their nations" (35). Bahadur concludes by detailing and criticizing the traditional practices of arranged marriage, veiling and polygamy; all lead to weak family relationships, characterized by a fundamental lack of love and trust, which, in turn, is reflected at the national level.

‘Abdu’l-Husayn Bakir’s (B.A. 1917; M.A. 1918) “Persia in Transformation” covers much the same ground as Bahadur’s thesis. Bakir too is intent on “expos[ing] to the reader a true picture of Persia” in order to demonstrate its potentialities (1). Ruinous wars and invasions, the largely negative role played by religion, misgovernment and foreign intrigues had brought the nation to its knees. Most of his thesis, however, concentrates on the “revolutionary era” which Bakir traces from the late 19th century (15). The Russian and English influence in the country had grown to such an extent that it eventually led to widespread resistance. The Tobacco Concession of 1890 was the last straw and sparked widespread protests, resulting in its repeal the next year. Bakir charts the “national awakening” of the people from these events (22). Iran’s opening up to the West had also allowed some of its citizens to acquire “a sense of nationality and patriotism” and to attempt to promote liberal reforms in Iran (ibid).

Bakir then devotes a section to the “Babi-Bahá’í Movement” which, he claims, was “another force…at work” to bring about reforms (24). He lists “some of the essential teachings of Bahaism” which had made the movement such a force of change. Many of these have been mentioned earlier. For one, the Bahá’í religion staked its own claim to modernity by being “in conformity with the demands of the time.” The Iranians who had become Bahá’ís had adopted a new identity that admitted “men of all faith.” Children of both sexes should be educated in “useful arts and sciences” – it was no longer “antireligious” to do so. Useful professions should be acquired. Women, furthermore, were to be seen as equal to men. The authority of religious leaders was capped and power was to be vested in democratically elected bodies (ibid). Bakir claims that the Bahá’ís, themselves part of a reforming community, played an important role in the broader reform movement.

This was for many years an under-acknowledged and understudied phenomenon. In “Academic Irrelevance or Disciplinary Blind-Spot? Middle Eastern Studies and the Bahá’í

Faith Today," Velasco (2001) explores the reasons for the marginality of Bahá'í studies. Arguing that the Bahá'í community's place in modern Iranian history has been particularly neglected, Velasco writes:

> Finally in this review of, to me, puzzling silences, is the place of the Bahá'í community in the drive towards modernization that ran through Iran in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Bahá'í community of Iran at the turn of the century was closely linked to agricultural reform and elementary education at the village level (Velasco 2001).

We have already seen how the Bahá'í students had been impressed with the importance of agricultural reform and education. As with others, this concern was reflected in a proposal to the Union – this one by Husayn Afnan, "that the greatest need of Syria is agriculture" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1913, No. 6, 170). It is interesting to note here that the students attempted to put their ideals into practice after graduation as well, and thus would have been part of the "drive towards modernization" mentioned by Velasco. In 1923, Bakir and Bahadur appear in *Al-Kulliyyah* as "doing good work in Persia, establishing schools and otherwise promoting the good of their people" (April 1923, No. 6, 107). Bakir, on a visit to Beirut in 1927, was reported to be a "land owner in Teheran" and "actively engaged in agriculture" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, November 1927, No. 1, 53).

The political culmination of this period of reform was the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911, on which Bakir focuses in detail. Afari (1996, 29) has pointed out that the reforming role played by the Bahá'ís during the Revolution, in particular, has been "often ignored". As she notes too, Bahá'ís made up as much as 1% of the total population of Iran at the turn of the century – 100,000 out of 10 million – making their own internal debates certainly of some consequence in the broader community (ibid). This was especially true because the ideas expressed in the Bahá'í community would have been considered reformist and progressive. For example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá' argued in his 1875 *Risalah-yi Madaniyat* for a "representative form of government, for modern schools, and for world peace and

disarmament." Earlier, in 1873, Bahá'u'lláh had voiced support for constitutional monarchy. Such works, Afari (ibid) continues, would have been read and discussed by Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike and entered the discourse of the Constitutional Revolution even while the Bahá'ís maintained their neutrality.

Bakir concludes his thesis by expressing hope at Iran's progress in 1918; the Russian Revolution was an "unmixed blessing" allowing his country a degree of independence. Like Bahadur, Bakir fastens on "the social problem of the unveiling of women" as among Iran's greatest challenges (53). Both perceive the education and elevation of women as incompatible with veiling. The rights of women, veiling, coeducation and so on continued to be popular subjects of debate at AUB into the 1920s and 1930s (see the February and May 1931 issues of the *Students' Union Gazette*, for example).

As Bahadur's and Bakir's theses demonstrate, their time at the College provided them with space in which to articulate a progressive vision for their country. The College was also a training ground for them to experiment with elements of their reformist vision. The heterogeneous make-up of the student body furnished invaluable experiences for the kind of unity in diversity they championed. The Students' Union provided training in parliamentary procedures and democratic elections. As we have seen as well, the College certainly encouraged them in their pursuits. That their vision was a distinct one among the many voices clamoring for reform at that time is also clear. Indeed, other Iranians in Beirut, who had been exiled for their pro-constitution activities, took exception to the Bahá'ís neutrality during the Constitutional Revolution, viewing it as unpatriotic (Afroukhteh 2003, 395). 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his own words, "from the very beginning of the Revolution" repeatedly advised the Bahá'ís that they "should stand aside from this strife and struggle and war and contest, and should seek to reconcile the Court and the Nation…for safety and success are unattainable and impossible without [such] reconciliation" (in Browne 1910,

429). Such neutrality, then, was not to be seen as unpatriotic but rather in the country's best interests.

C. The Emergence of the West Hall Brotherhood: The Bahá'ís as Religious Experimenters

As we have already seen, the Bahá'í students played a distinct and influential role in promoting cosmopolitanism and were also conspicuous for their sense of patriotism and responsible, that is reformist, citizenship. More importantly perhaps, in terms of the transformation the College was going through at the time, they also played the role of religious experimenters. As a matter of religious principle, the Bahá'ís were interested in religious unity and reaching out to followers of different faiths. Indeed, the College provided innumerable opportunities in which to do so.

Another word is necessary here on the general student outlook toward religion. It is fair to conclude that they were religiously-minded and that their identities were largely formed by their sectarian background. In his memoirs, Afif Tannous (2004, 121) recalls "the intangible spiritual quality of life on the campus." He (ibid, 119) adds as well that "sectarian affiliations and differences were deeply rooted in the backgrounds of the student body." He goes on to praise the role played by the West Hall Brotherhood in "cutting across those barriers in its devotional approach" (ibid). He also recalls the "shock and demands" that greeted him in the mid-1920s, reflecting the experience of many students thrown into the cosmopolitan mix of the University (ibid, 108). A decade earlier the circumstances would have been, in many respects, more challenging. There was no Brotherhood then, only the YMCA – which accepted non-Christians but only as associate members. In 1913-14, there were 177 members in total, of whom only twelve were non-Christians. By Dodge's (1914, YMCA, 6) own admission many other such students attended "most of the meetings, but feared to have the name 'Christian' in any way associated with them." It should be recalled

here that up until 1915 non-Christian students, whose numbers were steadily increasing, were forced to attend religious services. Despite this formidable Protestant stamp on campus life, however, we have noted how the likes of Bliss and Dodge sought to promote a certain communal religious spirit at the College. In 1914, Bliss (*Annual Report* 1913-14, 27) characterized the students' "attitude toward religion" as follows:

> Many evidences have revealed the growing sense of sober intelligence among our students in their attitude toward religion. Of free inquiry there is an abundance, but it is earnest as it is free. Thoughtlessness is not wanting, but there is little irreligion, and students are being brought face to face with the great spiritual realities in an atmosphere of frankness, intelligence and faith.

Bayard Dodge, who was hired in the fall of 1913 as director of the yet-to-be completed West Hall and executive secretary of the local chapter of the YMCA, would have agreed with this assessment. After a year of working closely with the students, Dodge (1914, YMCA, 8) affirmed that "certainly the men are interested in discussing religious subjects and they are very open minded to new ideas." He continued by adding:

> This winter about fifteen men used to gather every Sunday morning to discuss the five different types of religion which they represented. They took a keen interest, but never were intolerant or even hot-headed, so that they showed what an easy matter it is to talk over differences and reforms, without any fear of unpleasant feeling.

It is evident that the "five different types of religion" included the Bahá'ís, along with Christians, Muslims, Druze and Jews. We have already seen how in one of Dodge's earliest letters from the College, dated 26 November 1913, he singled out the Bahá'ís for their interest in such activities: "they try to take the best out of all religions." In another letter to "Bub" dated December 1913, Dodge mentioned seven different meetings held on Sundays, the first of which included three Muslims, three Bahá'ís and one "Modernist Catholic." It is this meeting to which he seems to be referring in another letter dated December 1913 written to his father: "On Sunday morning I meet a group of Moslems and

Bahais, who discuss all sorts of religious questions in a most broadminded way and are intensely interesting."

In the same letter, Dodge added a revealing explanation to the religiosity of such non-Christian students. Although they are not "acknowledged Christians," he wrote, "the more thoughtful ones respect Christ as a teacher and example and try to reinterpret their own principles of life, so as to make them coincide with Christian ideals."

While inter-faith activities were encouraged, they were seen to take place under the umbrella of the College's Christianity. Despite the disinclination felt by many students toward being part of a Christian association, however, Dodge did not yet perceive any conflict with the fact that the YMCA was the only formal organization for these kinds of activities. As he wrote in the YMCA report in 1914,

> What the land needs most is a strong, dynamic religion for young men, a feeling of tolerance and brotherhood for men of other faiths and a practical application of religion to daily life. All of these things the Young Men's Christian Association can supply (4).

The YMCA, indeed, was about to be given its own building: West Hall. That West Hall was conceived as a YMCA building is clear. In the 1907-08 *Annual Report*, Bliss (9) referred to the need for the

> YMCA building – the projected Robert H. West Hall…[to] produce that homelike and family atmosphere so essential to the work of developing a spirit of intellectual and spiritual solidarity and unity in so heterogeneous a company of students.

After its opening on 24 February 1914, Dodge, the director of West Hall and the son of its main financier, was explicit on this point: "Although the atmosphere of West Hall is one of absolute religious freedom, the building was very largely planned and given for the members of the Young Men's Christian Association" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, March 1914, No. 5, 139).

The College keenly anticipated its opening, which was greeted with much fanfare. In a sermon given on 8 February 1914 titled "God's Plan for West Hall," Bliss outlined the

building's purpose. West Hall was the embodiment, as it were, of the totalizing experience that the College sought to provide: it was to bring "life…more abundantly" (Al-Kulliyah, March 1914, No. 5, 135). This "life" was provided on three levels: physical, intellectual and social. There was a bowling alley, handball courts, a billiard room, and a skating rink. The library and reading and writing rooms satisfied intellectual needs, while the "Common Room" provided for "College Friendship." However, as Bliss continued, "God's Plan for West Hall" extended beyond such "recreation" and had as its "supreme purpose the awakening in the men who make use of West Hall of the spirit of service, of 'the struggle for the life of others'" (ibid, 136). In answering "how" this purpose could be realized, Bliss proposed "a West Hall Brotherhood" for the students, though "no badge will mark them, no grip will distinguish them." Although Bliss was clearly not calling for a new student organization to be established, it is interesting that he did not mention the YMCA in his sermon at all. It seems fair to conjecture that Bliss's long years of experience and his liberal theology had given birth to a different vision for the ongoing religious experiment of the College.

By the end of the war, Dodge seems to have come around to Bliss's way of thinking. In a letter to his father dated 25 November 1918, Dodge reported: "This year we are starting our YMCA work on a new basis. We call it the Brotherhood and we are trying to choose a picked lot of members, so as to form a sincere and reliable lot of men to act as a nucleus for future work." In an earlier letter to his father on 5 October 1918, Dodge had mentioned that "those of us who are sympathetic with other religion and progressive in our ideas" have many opportunities provided for them, implicitly in such areas.

The war, of course, had changed many things. The College's religious regulations underwent dramatic changes. The subsequent, and in part consequent, upsurge in enrollment of Muslim students to the College who would now be exempt from mandatory religious

exercises had caused deep anxiety in Bliss, Dodge and others. West Hall, however, became a refuge for the students from the increasingly harsh war-time conditions outside the College walls. It was also a venue for the experiment in religious association, long-practiced by the SPC, to break new ground. The closing of the YMCA, along with the other student societies, in May 1916; the continuation of the informal inter-faith discussion groups started before the war during which time "the association in worship became freer than ever" (Seelye 1922, 305); and the much-vaunted sense of solidarity that the war seemed to intensify – all of these had created an opening for the formal creation of the Brotherhood of which Bliss had spoken in more symbolic terms.

The West Hall Brotherhood did not properly get on its feet until 1920 when Laurens Seelye Bixler arrived to become the director of West Hall; Dodge had been away from the College on furlough. As we have seen, Seelye had written an article in *The Journal of Religion* titled "An Experiment in Religious Association" in which he explained the emergence of the West Hall Brotherhood. Deriding the policy of associate membership for non-Christians in the YMCA, Seelye (305-6) discussed the delicate balance they tried to achieve in making the Brotherhood "non-Christian" even while the University remained a "Christian missionary institution." Important to membership in the Brotherhood was the belief that, as stated in its Preamble, "a thoughtful, sincere man, whether Moslem, Bahai, Jew or Christian can join this Brotherhood without feeling that he has compromised his standing in relation to his own religion" (ibid, 307).

A few Bahá'ís would have been among the twelve non-Christian members of the YMCA in 1913-14, as these twelve were "very equally divided amongst men of the different sects" (Dodge 1914, YMCA, 6). Yet, as with the other non-Christians, joining the Brotherhood would have been a far more acceptable alternative for the Bahá'ís. The Brotherhood's "Pledge" did not name any single religion but only "this united movement for

righteousness and human brotherhood" (Seelye 1922, 308). In 1921, Dr. Philip Hitti, now a faculty member, wrote that the Brotherhood's "watchword shall be 'unity through diversity'" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, November 1921, No. 1, 4).

The Brotherhood's inclusive approach would have resonated deeply with the Bahá'ís own beliefs. Indeed, in April 1914, Azizullah Bahadur had proposed in the Union that a "universal religion is possible" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1914, No. 6, 192). In another example, 'Abdu'l-Husayn Isfahani in a January 1913 speaking contest on "Is reputation an index of true greatness?" in which he came in third, based his argument on the transcendent universality of the founders of major religions – their "creative and inspiring power" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1913, 35). Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Buddha, he argues, through their "brilliant commanding genius" accomplished what they did in the face of societal opposition. Thus, their reputations do indicate true greatness.

The nature of the Bahá'í contribution to the campus discourse in the 1920s and 30s was no different. Zeine N. Zeine's talk on "Mental Disarmament" won the Rasem Khalidy Speaking Contest on 21 March, 1929, beating out Emile Bustani among others. Such disarmament was more "necessary to peace and happiness of the world than the disarmament of the sword." Attitudes, he continued, such as "intolerance, ignorance, hatred, prejudice" and so on "play more havoc than the cannon, and bring about strife and war" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1929, No. 6, 153). Hasan Balyuzi (B.A./M.A. 1932) wrote articles extolling the virtues of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in the *Gazette* (February 1931, 87-91; May 1931, 21-26). He also gave a talk in a speaking contest on the "religion of the future," which would be characterized by "plasticity, absence of hypocrisy, and spirit of universal brotherhood" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, June 1929, No. 8, 238). In 1923, a Bahá'í student, Habiballah Khudabakhsh (Dr. Mu'ayyad) left a permanent marker in West Hall: a Persian rug on which

was written "Long Live Al-Kulliyyah [the College]" and which hung "in a place of honor at the head of the grand stairs" into the 1950s at least (*Al-Kulliyyah*, April 1953, No. 4, 28).

In the 1920s, the Bahá'í students certainly appear to have become mainstays of the Brotherhood as well. Their mention in the preamble had, in a sense, enshrined their participation. When Tannous (2004, 119), for example, recalls his days in the Brotherhood in the latter part of the decade, his listing of the various religions represented has a certain formulaic air to it: "Its motto was 'The Realm in Which We Share Is Vastly Greater than the Realm in Which We Differ.' Faculty and students – Muslims, Druze, Christians, Jews and Bahais – joined in a serious endeavor to make that motto a reality."

The Bahá'ís were similarly listed in a speech given by the president of the Students' Union at the Brotherhood's year-opening reception in October 1926. The speech was notable as well for the way it clearly positioned the Brotherhood as a more religiously-focused spin-off of the Union. According to President Labib Fuleihan, "the Druze, the Moslem, the Jew, the Bahai, the Christian all unite together to oppose others of the same religion for the welfare of the Union" (*Students' Union Gazette*, 1926, 7-8). The Bahá'ís had become an established presence at the University, granted almost automatic mention whenever the religions of the AUB were listed.

The Bahá'í students, however, had certainly played a unique role in this transformation of the YMCA into the West Hall Brotherhood. It is clear that key figures like Bayard Dodge (1933, 370) saw the Bahá'ís as like-minded: the University's "interpretation of the gospel of Jesus and the teachings of the prophets" is "similar to that proclaimed by the great Bahá'í leaders," and so there has "naturally been a bond of sympathy" between the University and the Bahá'ís. As we have seen, the Bahá'ís' active involvement before and during the war in the inter-faith discussion groups made quite a deep impression on Dodge. It could be said that the Bahá'ís' contribution was thus amplified. They ended up wielding

far greater influence than their limited, though not inconsiderable, numbers would otherwise have suggested.

As we have seen, an important aspect of the College's religious experiment was its social service activities. The concept of service as an integral part of the College experience, and a necessary outcome of its education, was repeatedly emphasized by Bliss and others. The kind of service Bliss envisioned was for the College's graduates to "respond to the call where there is need and opportunity, irrespective of whether they gain wealth or fame" (*Al-Kulliyyah*, December 1912, No. 2, 40). In practice, this would mean more teachers and doctors plying their trades in villages and towns rather than in the cities (ibid). Rufus Anderson's anxiety over "denationalizing" the Mission's converts is echoed here in this concern about rendering the students unfit for service to their own people. By 1914, the College YMCA members had evidently increased their service activities -- conducting three night schools (one for College "servants," one for "poor boys in the neighborhood," and one for city errand boys), providing diversion for hospital patients and also, on an individual basis, attending to their home villages (Dodge, YMCA, 1914, 7). We have already seen how during the war the students became active in relief efforts.

Another example of such a service activity during the war was shared by Badi' Bushrui in an article titled "A New Experience" in a fall 1915 number of the *Students' Union Gazette* (246-248). Not long after the war broke out, most of the Bahá'ís in Haifa and Acre at the time, including the newly-graduated Bushrui and Dr. Khudabakhsh (Dr. Mu'ayyad), were received as guests in the Druze/Christian village of Abu-Sinan (Balyuzi 1973, 411). Bushrui related how Khudabakhsh started a medical clinic in the village, performing many operations and treating a variety of conditions over a period of eight months. Bushrui and an American Bahá'í lady acted as nurses and assistants; Bushrui also taught some of the children. This experience, of course, would have been received very well by the College, providing a

suitable example of graduates applying their skills and knowledge in the field of social service.

In the 1920s, social service was institutionalized with the establishment of the Civic Welfare League and the Institute of Rural Life, not to mention the West Hall Brotherhood, which included service as one of its central activities. In 1927, such activities included regular assistance to three schools – a Muslim, a Greek Orthodox, and a Maronite one – deputations sent to villages like Nabatiyeh with the "gospel of hygiene, recreation and cooperation" in tow, and also a night school in Ras Beirut run by the Youth Service Club (*Annual Report of the Chairman of West Hall Committee* 1927-28, 8). Indeed, Dodge (*Al-Kulliyyah*, July 1927, No. 9, 262) listed "community service" as the third function of a university, along with teaching and research. As previously noted, such social service was an integral part of the nationalism Dodge also championed.

By the late 1920s, finally, the West Hall Brotherhood was a well-established institution, emblematic of the kind of religious activism the College promoted. A marker of its success for the College was that a significant percentage of non-Christians had joined it (*Annual Report of the Chairman of West Hall Committee* 1927-28, 7). The Bahá'ís were established members of the Brotherhood. As we have seen, they had been instrumental in its very creation – helping to set patterns of inter-faith and social service activity. Fittingly, upon his graduation in 1929, Zeine N. Zeine was hired as assistant director of West Hall and also as instructor in Sociology as part of a new experiment conceived of by Laurens Seelye and Stuart Dodd, who was a new professor of Sociology. The prospective director/instructor was to coordinate the social service activities originating from West Hall with the studies of the sociology students; each student was required to do "practical work" (*Annual Report of the Chairman of West Hall Committee* 1927-8, 19).

Zeine also assisted Dodd in the 1931 publication of *Social Relations in the Near East: A Civics Textbook of Readings and Projects for College Freshmen*, of which two subsequent editions would appear, the last in 1946. In the chapter on "Sects and Other Religions," two pages were devoted to the history and principles of the "Bahá'í Movement" (Dodd 1931, 381-82). The section also included a three page essay on "Religious Unity" (ibid, 383-6). The essay began with an unattributed quotation of Bahá'u'lláh -- that the "Religion of God is for the sake of love and union; make it not the cause of enmity and conflict" (ibid, 383) – and continued with a call for religious cooperation, citing several contemporary examples of such collaboration leading to concrete action "for the purpose of serving the humanity of the world" (ibid, 384). The West Hall Brotherhood was one such example (ibid, 385-6).

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, the Bahá'í students certainly became an established presence at the College during the period on which this thesis has focused – the 1910s and 20s. By 1940 some 300 in total had attended the school. Over the following two to three decades, however, the number of these students markedly decreased, for reasons that are beyond the scope of this study. During the first half of the 1970s, though, the enrollment of Bahá'í students, especially from the Gulf region, grew considerably. Then, with the onset of Lebanon's Civil War in the middle part of that decade, their numbers, naturally, again dropped. Since that time the small number of Bahá'í students who have attended the University have generally represented local Bahá'í families.

It was during the period covered in this thesis, however, that the Bahá'í students were most distinct on campus and therefore of most interest. During this period, they first acquired a certain statistical significance; in some years, they made up as much as 3% of the student body. This is indeed a significant figure if compared with the miniscule proportion of the local and regional populations which the Bahá'ís formed -- not including, of course, in Iran. Their distinctiveness, though, did not rest in these admittedly modest figures. Rather, the Bahá'í students were unusually distinct as both a national and religious group. In the 1910s, they were, by and large, the only Iranians on campus at a time when the vast majority of students were of Arab background (the Armenians were another notable exception, but they were also Christians and well-established Ottoman subjects). Besides being part of a

non-Christian minority, the Bahá'í student group represented a modern religious movement that was closely associated with reform, which distinguished it from other religious minorities on campus. As this study attempts to show, key figures at the College like Howard Bliss and Bayard Dodge showed significant interest in the Bahá'í students and ended up amplifying their contribution on campus. It is this congenial, if also instrumental, relationship that has made it possible to focus on the contribution of the period's thirty Bahá'í graduates and indeed the smaller core group of especially active students.

As has been examined earlier, the Bahá'í students' arrival at the College had coincided with a significant change of culture within the campus walls. Howard Bliss, Bayard Dodge and others were liberalizing and, arguably, transforming the missionary objectives of the College. While the missionaries had always sought new ways and means to reach their goals, the establishment of the SPC was a departure for the Syria Mission, which was itself on the verge of collapse. Its success had been defined by its number of conversions, which it sorely lacked. At the same time, the founding of the College had its roots in the long-running debate among Protestants on foreign missions. Higher education as a "civilizing" activity was certainly part of the cultural toolbox of the missionaries in the Levant. The emergent liberal approach allowed for a Social Gospel defined by educational and social service activities. Indeed, the sudden absorption of these missionaries into humanitarian work in 1860 played a major role in the decision to start up the College. Along with being a nod to secularism, as it were, the SPC represented a religious and social experiment.

Under Bliss, this experiment took on new dimensions. The College employed a kind of soft power, redefining its core goals as a missionary institution in order to win the hearts and minds of the diverse religious and national groups from which it drew its students. The watchword of the College's experiment was cosmopolitanism, defined as cultivating unity

out of diversity. This promotion of cosmopolitanism entailed a radical shift in the way other religions were perceived, in particular Islam. Another key element of this experiment was that of good citizenship, or reform-minded patriotism. The College furnished ready venues for its students to explore these concepts, such as the Students' Union and other student organizations.

In this context, it may be suggested that the significance of the Bahá'í students, in the first place, lay in their demonstrated ability to take advantage of the free space provided for them at the SPC. It had become apparent that their interests and concerns dovetailed nicely with those of the College, which, in these years, was facing severe crises to its normal operations. The many activities of the Bahá'í students on campus, particularly in the Students' Union, affirmed their striking compatibility with the concepts that were central to the College's new mission. A core group of Bahá'í students were indeed leaders in promoting cosmopolitanism and issues of citizenship and reform on campus. This convergence of the interests of the Bahá'í students with those of the liberals at the SPC rendered the two groups complementary.

The College's encouragement of minority groups, of course, had always been part and parcel of its mission; it created an atmosphere of relative freedom in which such groups could flourish. The case of the Bahá'ís offers an intriguing example of the empowerment of one of these minority groups. As discussed earlier, the relationship of the Bahá'ís with the missionaries in the region had evolved over the years. The missionaries in Iran had initially perceived the Bahá'ís as potential converts, but such hopes proved to be illusory. The missionaries in the Levant and at the SPC inherited this generally positive opinion of the Bahá'ís, viewing them as religious modernists and reformers. Some Mission and College workers also developed amicable relationships with the Bahá'ís in Haifa and Acre, most particularly with 'Abdu'l-Bahá'. Although the more conservative members in the missionary

community grew critical of the Bahá'í religion as it began to attract interest in the West, the more liberal approach was in the ascendant at the College. An important part of this approach was that groups like the Bahá'ís were to be engaged in a spirit of collaboration rather than competition.

Doubly distinctive as Iranians and Bahá'ís, this group of students was also highly cohesive; their Bahá'í identity was clearly reflected in the values, ideals and interests they conveyed in student activities. Their unified approach, in turn, rendered their contribution to campus life particularly effective. For the College's part, the Bahá'í identity of these students set them apart from other students and made them uniquely-suited collaborators. Most importantly, perhaps, to the College's purposes, the Bahá'ís were seen as willing religious experimenters. The incipient inter-faith meetings in which they were active participants played an important role in the College's recasting of its social and religious mission. While Ottoman pressure on the College resulting in the relaxing of its religious requirements served to sharply accelerate this ecumenical turn, collaborators like the Bahá'ís made such changes possible. This process could be said to have culminated with the replacement of the YMCA by the West Hall Brotherhood after World War I. It is in fact a conclusion of this study that this transformation of the College's religious life deserves far more attention than it has traditionally received. By deciding against restarting the YMCA, when they would have been entirely free to do so, and instead establishing the Brotherhood, the College showed to what lengths it would take its experiment in religious association. The main conclusion of this study, then, is that in this area, and in others of vital concern to the College, the Bahá'ís wielded disproportionate influence.

The Bahá'ís would not have been allotted the same latitude in neither their home country, Iran, nor perhaps anywhere other than the SPC within the Ottoman provinces. In this sense, the College's conception of itself as an experimental society-in-miniature, in

which minorities were encouraged to actively contribute, was successfully realized. The case of the Bahá'ís has demonstrated that when such a group is empowered it can have significant results for society as a whole – in this context, AUB's common culture. The case of the Bahá'ís has also demonstrated that a minority group united around a set of beliefs and doctrines does not necessarily have to remain closed or static. On the contrary, such groups can be open to the broader society and contribute to progressive movements.

The role of minority groups at AUB is certainly a fruitful area for future research. Indeed, recent scholarship has focused much more on minorities and their contributions than was previously the case. This trend answers, in part, the question of why such a study on the Bahá'í students at AUB has only recently been attempted. Hollinger (2006) published the first major study of the phenomenon of Iranian Bahá'í students in Beirut during this period. His article provided a general overview and history of the phenomenon, for which this thesis owes it a debt of gratitude. My study has focused more narrowly on a particularly critical time period in the history of the AUB -- the 1910s -- and has made much more extensive use of the AUB archives to trace the activities of the Bahá'í students. Another reason why more studies of this minority group have not hitherto seen the light of day may be explained by the relatively low profile the Bahá'í community in the region has maintained in past years – which has for the most part been due to external religious and political factors.

This thesis has by no means exhausted the subject of the Bahá'í students and AUB during this general period. Studies which further exploit the AUB archives and concentrate on subsequent decades such as the 1930s, for example, could also be attempted. More detailed studies as well could be made on the contribution of the Bahá'í students in Iran upon their return. As previously discussed, after the 1906-1911 Constitutional Revolution, Iran had undergone dramatic social and political transformations. Furthermore, with the resurgence of the concept of cosmopolitanism in recent years through the works of Appiah

(2006), Beck (2006) and others, another study could also more intensively explore this concept in the context of the Bahá'í students and the College.

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