

THE LEGACY OF THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION IN IRAN

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Introduction

The American Presbyterian¹ Mission, originally known as the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was organized in 1789 under the leadership of John Witherspoon in the wake of the American War of Independence. Generally, Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation of Europe. The early Presbyterians in America came from Scotland and Ireland. The American Presbyterian missionaries originated from prosperous middle class families, mostly from the northeastern America. They were highly educated and two thirds of them were female. The American Presbyterian Mission has been a leading US denomination in mission work, and involved in operating many hospitals, clinics, colleges and universities worldwide. A vital part of the world mission emphasizes the

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1 The term “Presbyterian” refers to a representative style of church government. Each congregation elects elders from among its members. The elders, together with ministers of Word and Sacrament, are called *presbyters* (derived from a Greek word for “elder”). Presbyterian simply means “government by presbyters”. Presbyterians are Christians who affirm Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and Savior and through him worship the one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are Reformed and their roots are in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. They are evangelical who believe that the essence of the faith is the good news (evangel) that Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose for the salvation of humankind. They affirm the unity of all Christians as a gift of God, and share with believers of every denomination the worship and work of the Church “catholic” (meaning “universal”). Presbyterians insist that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and therefore welcome diversity and open inquiry. As Reformed Christians, Presbyterians also stress God’s sovereignty as Creator and Redeemer of all. This theme puts special emphasis on: human responsibility -- the election of God’s people for service, not just for salvation; a proper stewardship of all the gifts of creation which celebrates simplicity and shuns ostentation; the insistence that ultimate allegiance belongs to God alone; a call to work for the transformation of society in obedience to God’s Word.

denomination in building and maintaining relationships with Presbyterian, Reformed and other churches around the world, even if this is not usually considered missions.

The missionaries were responding to early 19th century evangelical revival, which called on American Protestants to preach the Gospel to all humankind.² The American Missionary activity in Iran began in December 1830, when Eli Smith, Harrison Gray and Timothy Dwight came to Azerbaijan, (previously an Iranian territory) and explored the area for the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions under the banner of Presbyterian Mission.³ However, the Presbyterians officially renamed the enterprise in 1870-“The Mission to Persia”.⁴ The mission was sent mainly with the aim of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all mankind. Under the direct authority of the Iranian government, the Presbyterian Board expanded their mission throughout the country. A new Evangelical church was organized in 1855. By 1862 the first presbytery was organized and in 1872 Presbyterian work began in Tehran. Over time, their multi-dimensional activities and stations were expanded to Tabriz, Rasht, Hamadan, and Mashhad, Qazwin, Kermanshah, Azerbaijan (Urmiah, Khosrowa) and parts of Kurdistan, Caucasus, and Armenia.⁵ They established schools, hospitals and Evangelical Church. In this way, the American missionaries engaged themselves into missionary and other charitable activities in many parts of Iran.

2 For more about the issue see: Frank Joseph Smith, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in America*, USA, 1985, pp. 13-17; Lefferts A Loetscher, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, New York, 1983, p. 22; Donald K. McKim, *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers: Exploring Christian Faith*, Louisville, Kentucky, USA, 2003, pp. 1-9.

3 The first American Protestant Missionary group in Iran was called the Congregationalists and since 1870 the group was called the American Presbyterian Mission in Iran.

4 Robin E. Waterfield, *Christians in Persia: Assyrians, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Protestant*, First Published in 1973, (this edition first published in 2011), Routledge, United Kingdom, p. 111; A. Reza Arasteh, *Educational and Social awakening in Iran, 1850-1968*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands, p. 116; Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin (ed.), *Women, Religion and Culture in Iran*, Curzon Press, Great Britain, 2002, p. 51.

5 Robert Benedetto and Donald K. McKim, *Historical Dictionary of the Reformed Churches*, Scarecrow Press, USA, 2010, P. 303; Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin, *op. cit.* p. 51; In 1934 the evangelical churches of Iran joined to create a single Protestant church by the name of the Evangelical Church of Iran which turned out to be the largest Protestant church in Iran. The church adopted a constitution in 1963. The 1979 Islamic Revolution largely impacted church life.

Unfortunately, in course of time, proselytizing mission lost its momentum and in 1939, all the properties (of the American Presbyterian Mission) except the Girls' Middle School in Tehran were sold to the government for \$1,200,000 and thus over a century's educational work by American Missionary school was at an end.⁶

However, the fact is that before facing the nationalist onslaught of Reza Shah the American Presbyterian Mission was able to leave indelible legacy in Iran. This article will shed light on the legacy left by the American Presbyterian Missionaries in Iran.

American Protestant Mission in Iran and Iranian Response

It was reported that there were twenty thousand Nestorian Christians in Urmiah (later renamed Razeh in 1935) of Tabriz (earlier a place of northwestern Iran). The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions hoped that the city of Urmiah would provide a base for future mission. Under this consideration, the Board finally approved plans for sending and establishing of a permanent mission in the area. The first American missionaries (that included Harrison Gray, Eli Smith and others) arrived in Tabriz on December 18, 1830. They all were considered the first Americans to call Iran their home. In 1834, Presbyterian missionary leader Reverend Justin Perkins D.D. (1805-1869) and his wife arrived in Tabriz. There Justin Perkins founded the Persian mission. Other American missionaries joined the work before long. In this way the first permanent missionary centre in Urmiah came into being in 1835. The centre included a library, hospital, school and a print shop.⁷ Gradually more missionaries arrived and between 1834 and 1871 the Board sent some fifty-two missionaries with several physicians including Dr. Asahel Grant (1807-1844) and his wife to Iran.⁸

The missionaries were sent with an uphill task of converting Iranian Shi'i Muslims (though covert in nature but through periodic attempts) from Islam to

6 Robin E. Waterfield, *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

7 Joseph J. St. Marie and Shahdad Naghshpour, *Post-Revolutionary Iran and the United States: Low-intensity Conflict in the Persian Gulf*, Ashgate Publishing Company, USA, 2011, pp. 34-38; In 1870 the work of the missionaries was transferred to the Board of Missions of the American Presbyterian Church.

8 They were later joined by Dr. W.W. Torrance and the first woman doctor ever to be seen in Tehran, Dr. Mary Smith and Dr. J. G. Wishard.

Christianity and the Assyrian and Nestorian Christians to Protestantism as the primary objective as well as to provide medicine and education to the community (especially the Christian minority) in its development as secondary objective.⁹ Therefore, the American Protestant Missionaries came to Iran with a social agenda: to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to establish for Iranians a life-style which might be expressed in the following way:

1. All boys and girls should be educated in modern schools;
2. There should be adequate, modern housing and clothing for all;
3. Modern medicine should ease pain and sufferings;
4. A major part of educated, modern women was to keep house, for the benefit of all society;
5. Gender relationships should be modernized in this way:
 - There should be no child marriage, no polygamy, no easy divorce;
 - Marriage should be by 'romance', that is, by choice of the marriage partners, not simply arranged by families;
 - Women should have the possibility of remaining single and following careers;
 - In marriage the role of the wife was to be a partner and help-mate of her husband and the mother of their children.¹⁰ In brief, this programme amounted to 'a campaign to advance the freedom' of Iranians.

With the arrival of more missionaries in Iran, the evangelization programme got an impetus. As has been stated that the missionaries opened a Church in 1855 in Iran for their religious purposes, however, the missionaries found difficulty to convert Shi'i Muslims to American-style Protestant Christianity. Therefore, they confined their efforts of proselytizing to non-Muslims, especially the Assyrians or Nestorians. In addition, they involved in several humanitarian activities by opening schools and hospitals in Iran. Justin Perkins, the founder and leader of the mission established the first boys' school, called the Male Seminary at Urmiah in 1835.¹¹ The school adopted Persian as its language of

9 James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, Yale University Press, London, 1988, p. 15; Michael P. Zirinsky, "A Panacea for the Ills of the Country: American Presbyterian Education in Inter-War Iran", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1/2 (Winter-Spring), 1993, p. 120.

10 Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin, *Op. cit.* p. 53.

11 Mehdi Heravi, *Iranian-American Diplomacy*, Ibex Publishers, Inc. USA, Third Printing 1999, pp. 9-14; In 1846, the school was moved to a village about six miles away named. In 1878, the school was recognized as a college and by 1895 it began to grant academic diplomas.

instruction. This move of the mission school helped to draw the attention of the Iranians. Later it was reorganized into two separate institutions. One was Qalla College for boys and the other was Fiske Seminary for girls under the leadership of loving-natured Miss Fidelia Fiske.¹² By 1841 the mission was able to open about seventeen schools in sixteen different villages. In 1851 it is reported that a total of 871 pupils of whom 203 were women were studying in 45 schools.¹³ As time passed, American missions began to send Assyrians to America to obtain education in colleges and universities.¹⁴ In 1841 Perkins has put: "... our education efforts hold out the cheering prospect, in connexion with our other labours, of furnishing the Nestorians with an intelligent and pious ministry; and with their aid, of gradually raising the whole mass to an intelligent and various people."¹⁵ Dr. J. Perkins and his colleagues organized classes in their mission for the instruction of English. They operated the printing press and spent years translating old Assyrian religious books into the modern language and published them at a new mission publishing press. The number of published books stood about 30. Since 1849, the Presbyterian Mission began to publish "The Rays of Light" periodical. As the time went by the missionaries built more than forty village schools and secondary schools in Urmiah. Similar institutions were also established in Iranian cities of Tabriz, Hamadan, Kermanshah, Rasht, Mashad and Tehran. The missionaries also opened first girls' school in Tehran on April 24, 1874. At the beginning the school was called Iran Bethel. However, finally it was named Noor Bakhsh. By 1895 there were 117 mission schools in Urmiah and by 1926 the mission established 13 more schools in northern Iran, including both boys' and girls' schools in Tehran, Hamadan, Rasht, and Tabriz. In 1936, the long-planned-for Sage College for Women had been opened. In the year 1938-1939 no less than 2,000 Iranian students were being educated in the Presbyterian mission schools in Iran. However, by 1940 all but one of the mission schools was turned over to the Iranian government.¹⁶

12 According to Robin E. Waterfield, She took up the school work amongst girls which had been started by Dr Grant's wife (d. 1939).

13 Robin, *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

14 Vasili Shoumanov, *Assyrians in Chicago*, Arcadia Publishing Charleston, USA, 2001, p. 10.

15 Lyle L. Vander Werff, *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record: Anglican and Reformed Approaches in India and the Near East, 1800-1938*, William Carey Library, USA, 1934, pp. 116- 117.

16 Zirinsky, Michael P., "Render Therefore unto Caesar the Things which are Caesar's: American Presbyterian Educators and Reza Shah", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 26, Nos. 3-4, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 337, 356.

These activities were followed by the medical and hospital works which was obviously a desirable line for missionary work in Iran. As Iranian medicine was at this time was very primitive, therefore, the missionary doctors who were serving with modern medical facilities were much in demand. According to James A. Bill, during their first twenty-five years in Iran, the missionaries made fundamental contributions to the health, education, and overall social well-being of the Iranians they served.¹⁷ In 1879, Dr. Joseph Cochran who had settled himself in Urmiah as a missionary, founded as Iran's first modern medical school. It later became the Medical College of Urmiah. To influence the culture and the minds of the Iranian people attempts were also made by establishing hospitals after the name of western pattern. Example of this was the "West Minister" hospital, which was established by a physician named David W. Torrance in Tehran. Before long these schools and hospitals became centres for the diffusion of western culture in Iran and began to create reputation for America. Dr. Justin Perkins and his medical assistant, Dr. Asahel Grant, were the pioneers of the American Mission in Iran. Rev. Austin Wright, M.D. developed the plains dispensary while Grant began work among the scattered Nestorians, Kurds and Yezidis in the mountains. The mission's tackling of a serious cholera epidemic that broke out in Iran in 1891 won wide appreciation in the country.¹⁸

Iranian response to the American Protestant mission was of utmost importance. The Qajar ruler Muhammad Shah (1834-1848) granted Reverend Justin Perkins the authority to establish the first American school in Urmiah in 1835 to educate the people of the region in history, geography, arithmetic and geometry.¹⁹ Muhammad Shah's successor Nasiruddin Shah (1848-1896) entertained liberal views towards the Christian and Jewish minorities. He showed special appreciation to the USA missionaries and authorized them to establish churches and distribute their religious tracts and books among the people in Urmiah. In 1842 his predecessor outlawed proselytizing among the Nestorian Christians but in 1851 Nasiruddin Shah repealed the edict. He went further and made legal conversion of the Jews to Christianity in 1878. In actuality, the Iranian government, in line with its policy of trying to persuade the political and economic support of the USA, did everything possible within

17 Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

18 Robin, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

19 Badi Badiozamani and Ghazal Badiozamani, *Iran and America: Rekindling a Love Lost*, Published by East-West understanding Press, USA, 2005, pp. 1-2.

its limited powers to accommodate the American missionaries in Iran.²⁰ And with some exceptions Iranian were impressed by the missionary activities. When Iran's first girls' school was established in 1874, Iran welcomed it. Nay, in 1889, Nasiruddin Shah issued orders for payment of the sum of 100 *Tomans* annual subsidy to the school. He also paid a visit in the morning of November 4, 1890 and encouraged the Muslim girls to attend the school. Originally most of the students in the mission schools were from Christian minorities: Assyrians and Armenians. Gradually the students' base expanded to include Jews and Muslims. The Muslim girls from government officials, royal families, landowners, and business class dressed in the fashion of American girls began to attend the school. Although the Shah of Iran put some restrictions on the dress of Muslim girls, it would have lifted after the fasting month of Ramadan. In this way the school helped greatly to improve the social standards of Iran.

Realizing the benefits of the services rendered by the missionaries, the Shahs of Iran also took considerable interest in the missionary activities particularly in founding schools and hospitals which were dispensing education and providing health services among the people of Iran. The Iranian Shahs were subscribers to the schools of the mission and used to appoint physicians connected with the mission hospitals as their personal physician.²¹ When Nasiruddin Shah (1848-1896) was assassinated Dr. John G. Wishard from the American Presbyterian Mission was summoned to confirm the shah's death and to sign the death certificate. Nasiruddin's successor Muzaffaruddin Shah (1896-1907) appointed Dr. George Holmes his personal physician.

Positive Aspects of the Mission

There is no denying the fact that the American Protestant Missionaries left a long-lasting legacy on Iranian society as well as on the Iran-US relations. It was the American Protestant mission that initiated the interchange of culture

20 In the early years of 1890s, when the Kurds living in the Ottoman Empire tried to cross into Iran through the province of Azerbaijan caused a great alarm for the American missionaries in Iran. The Iranian Prime Minister assured the American Minister at Tehran Alex McDonald that Iran itself was anxious about the issue and he was going to protect the Iranian people including the Christians of that region by sending a regiment of soldiers to the Azerbaijan Province. Iranian government also agreed to accept the Christians refugees who were fleeing from the Ottoman Empire during that time. Thus Iran offered a shield within its territory for the Christian missionaries of the USA who were going to be crushed at the hands of the Kurds. The then American Secretary of State Richard Olney appreciated these Iranian initiatives.

21 Heravi, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

between Iran and America. The work of the missionaries was the sole factor that heightened American image and reputation in Iran in the early days of Iran-US relations. Many of the missionaries lived and died in Iran in the service of the people. They dedicated their lives to the humanitarian cause in Iran. Some of them even dedicated their lives to the national cause of Iran. This finally helped to develop “a vast ocean of good will between Iran and the United States.”²² George Lenczowski has aptly put that these missions in Iran created uncontested good will and respect for the US which gave the Americans the additional advantage of spreading the light of their civilization in Iranian territory.²³

Moreover, with the beginning of the missionary activities both the Iranians and the Americans were exalted by the possibility of mutual cooperation. By providing the Iranians with skills, game of life, and vision of the world the USA missionaries ultimately laid the foundation of subsequent Iran-USA cooperation.²⁴ It is beyond doubt that the American Presbyterian missionaries played an important role in establishing friendly relations between Iran and the USA even when two countries had no diplomatic ties and thus pioneered the origin and development of Iran-USA relations, which was later got impetus under Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979). Mehdi Heravi in his famous book “*Iranian-American Diplomacy*” has argued that by the actions of the missionaries the two countries were coming closer in a primitive diplomatic sense.²⁵

The missionaries also gave the Iranians a grand view America. Being impressed by the missionary activities Iran’s boy-Shah by the name of Ahmad Mirza once exclaimed: “Of course I like Americans. They fought for freedom, doing ... many heroic things. They are inventors of wonderful machines...America is the land where everything is done with electricity...and where the people are...very free.”²⁶ Indeed, the Presbyterian mission did much to transform Iranian society largely along American lines, introduce modern Western medicine and

22 Badi Badiozamani and Ghazal Badiozamani, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

23 George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948: A Study in Big-Power Rivalry*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1949, p. 281.

24 Zirinsky, “A Panacea for the Ills of the Country: ...”, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

25 Heravi, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

26 Kamyar Ghaneabassiri, “U.S. Foreign Policy and Persia, 1856-1921”, *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1/3 (Winter-Summer, 2002), p. 150.

education, and encourage the Iranian government to adopt laws protecting women and children from exploitation. Their benevolent activities, schools and their lives presented Iranians with a cultural image of the USA based on altruistic American capability and good will. American culture began to penetrate into Iranian society through the missionary schools, colleges and hospitals. Living in Iran and studying in that missionary schools and colleges many Iranians acquired western education got acquainted with the American values. According to Michael P. Zirinsky, the USA Presbyterian mission was important to the development of Iranian and American perceptions of each other. Missionaries represented America to Iran, and they transmitted perceptions of Iran back to the United States. For Iran's part the country always turned to the USA and favored its initiative in finance, commerce, and even politics because of the favorable view of America presented by the missionaries. Michael P. Zirinsky even went further and commented that the Pahlavi-US partnership of 1953-1978 developed on the basis of goodwill created in Iran by the American Protestant missionaries during the early history of Iran-US relations.²⁷ Barry Rubin, a Middle East scholar wrote that the hell of America's post-1978 relations with Iran was paved with good intentions. The base of that pavement was laid by the US Presbyterian missionaries. That is, the missionaries created bond of goodwill between Iran and the USA.

Now we turn to some prominent American individuals (except Justin Perkins and Dr. Asahel Grant) who undertook life-long mission to work for modernizing Iranian education and to promote cultural linkage between Iran and America.

Dr. Samuel Jordan (1871-1952)

Dr. Samuel Jordan is generally considered as the most renowned and respected American among the Iranians. He came to Iran along with his wife Mary as a missionary in 1898. He started learning Persian and devoted 43 years of his life to the cause of education in Iran, which won him the epithet "the Father of Modern Education" in Iran.²⁸ Although Jordan came to Iran as a missionary, his principal job was to assume the leadership of the American School for Boys of the country. Under him the School grew into a full twelve-year elementary and

27 Zirinsky, "A Panacea for the Ills of the Country: ...", *Op. cit.*, pp. 119-137.

28 Badi Badiozamani and Ghazal Badiozamani, *Op. cit.*, p. 14-16; Heravi, *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

high school in 1913, and finally evolved into a full college in 1925, which was known as the Alborz College of Tehran. Soon the College became a demonstration of the success of diversity. The student body of the College contained representatives of all racial and religious groups including Muslims, Armenians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. They came from both rich as well as poor families. They worked and played together and made their friendship regardless of distinctions. Thus the College helped develop secular culture in Iranian society. The College also made great contribution by providing English-speaking assistants to the American advisers for the Ministry of Finance, who were brought by the Iranian government beginning with Morgan Shuster in 1911, and during two administrations of Dr. A.C. Millsbaugh in 1922-1927 and 1943-1945. Many Iranians, trained and placed in responsible positions that continued to hold after the American left were also products of the College. Faculty members of the College were highly regarded graduates of Lafayette College, Yale, Princeton, University of Chicago, Syracuse, and Indiana University. A number of Iranian scholars including Dr. Rezazadeh Shafagh, a Ph.D. from Berlin University and Dr. Yahya Armajani, a Ph.D. from Princeton and many more also served as faculty. In 1940 the institution was purchased by the Iranian government and incorporated it into the national school system.

Dr. Jordan brought a revolutionary change in the lives and the mindsets of Iranians and their society through the College. His service to the Iranian people in every area of life was undoubtedly commendable. His legacy with the Alborz College also included the transmission of some American values such as the dignity of work, the virtue of community service, democracy and equality, equality of women, and love of country.²⁹ Justice William O. Douglas in his book entitled *Strange Lands and Friendly People* described him as “The man who did more to create goodwill between Persia and America than any other man.”³⁰ During Mr. and Mrs. Jordan’s stay in Iran, a Boarding School was established in 1910, Summer Camps and Boy Scouts were formed in 1911, a bilingual school paper (Persian-English) was established in 1921, a famine relief group was formed, and an International Relations Club in affiliation with

29 Ramin Asgard, “U.S.-Iran Cultural Diplomacy: A Historical Perspective”, *al-Nakhlah*, The Fletcher School Online Journal for issues related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization, Spring 2010, p. 3.

30 Quoted in *Iran and America: Rekindling a Love Lost* of Badi Badiozamani and Ghazal Badiozamani, p. 17.

Carnegie Endowment For International Peace was established. For his service and contribution to the Iranian nation the Iranian government awarded Jordan the First Scientific Medal-the highest honour in education of the country. The government also named one of the principal streets in northern Tehran after him. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979 the street was renamed *Afrika* (Africa) to show the revolution's sympathy with the oppressed (*mustazafin*) of the world.

Howard Conklin Baskerville (1885-1909)

Howard Conklin Baskerville is often called "the American Martyr" in Iranian constitutional history was another American who came to Iran in the missionary group but dedicated his life to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-1909). A Nebraska-born American missionary-turned-educator, Baskerville fought and died on the side of Constitutionalists on April 19, 1909, at Tabriz.³¹ A graduate of Princeton University, then a teacher at the American Memorial School in Tabriz in the Province of Azerbaijan Baskerville actively participated in the latter part of the Constitutional movement. He supported the group, which was fighting for reforms and a return to constitutional government. He helped them organize their military actions. Finally, he led 150 constitutionalists and died in a bloody battle. A question is asked, what did impress Baskerville to get involved in the revolution? Needless to say, the spirit of Iran, its people and culture inspired Baskerville a lot. He first became interested in Iranian politics, then established relations with some leading nationalists, and finally made commitment to serve the national cause of Iran. For this he had to resign from his teaching position to devote full time to the cause of reform of Iranian politics, which he supported whole-heartedly. He joined the Revolutionary Movement despite the warning of the USA's diplomat in Iran.³² Consequently, Baskerville's actions were jeopardizing American neutrality in Iran, but to the Constitutionalists he was regarded as a hero. He took up arms with his students

31 Abbas Milani, *The Myth of the Great Satan: A New Look at America's Relations with Iran*, Hoover Institution Press Publication, USA, 2010, p. 42.

32 Baskerville had no support for this from the US government or the American Mission and Legation at Iran. Therefore, his actions in Iran were in no way the reflections of the US government. Even when he was killed in Iran, the US government did not move to protest his death chiefly due to the official non-interventionist diplomatic policy toward Iran. However, the important point is that Baskerville, though carrying out the espoused American ideals of freedom and democracy for all nations, was reprimanded and disavowed by the US government.

and revolutionaries in support of the Iranian Constitutional Movement and gave his life on the battlefield.³³ The American Consul preferred a private funeral, but the Constitutionalists arranged a public gathering where around 3000 persons attended for giving him a public hero's funeral. His sacrifice for the Iranian people won him great admiration and love. He is regarded as an Iranian hero from America till today. There is a bust of him in Tabriz's Constitution House bearing the legend "Howard C. Baskerville—Patriot and Maker of History."³⁴ Baskerville has had a permanent place in the memory of the Iranian public ever since 1909 for his self-sacrifice for the cause of the Iranian constitution.³⁵ Iran still regards him as their "Yankee Hero". In 2005, Iran's President Mohammad Khatami unveiled a bust of Baskerville at the Constitutional House of Tabriz.³⁶

Annie Stocking Boyce (1880-1973)

Among female missionaries, Annie Stocking Boyce, a pioneering educator and journalist woman missionary began her missionary career in Iran from 1906. She served as teacher and principal of the American Girls' School in Tehran, as teacher and house-mother at the American (Alborz) College of Tehran, and as founder, manager and editor of *Alam-i-Nesvan*, a durable and influential magazine dedicated to uplifting Iranian women. Being an engaged observer of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1909, Annie regularly wrote to New York. At the end of the summer of 1908 she wrote about the fighting in Tabriz that: "The last word we had was that the Revolutionists were victorious. I hope so for I can't bear to have the Shah have everything his own way and it does my American blood good to know that there are Persians who are willing to fight to the bitter end for liberty."³⁷

Under direct influence of the missionary activities particularly under missionaries like Annie Stocking Boyce and others, women in Iran became conscious about their rights and position in the society. They felt urgent need to publish their own newspapers and to form woman's club. The bi-weekly

33 Badiozamani, Badi and Badiozamani, *Op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

34 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Baskerville

35 Badi Badiozamani and Ghazal Badiozamani, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

36 A. Christian Van Gorder, *Christianity in Persia and the status of non-Muslims in Iran*, Lexington Books, USA, 2010, p. 92.

37 Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-55.

Zaban-i Zanan (Women's Tongue) was published in 1919.³⁸ And by 1920s Woman's Club (*Kanun-i-Banuan*) became a fact. Every Thursday afternoon the teachers of the government elementary schools for girls are required to attend lectures on marriage, and other important social issues arranged for them at the Woman's Club. Muslim women were seen very anxious to understand foreign ways of doing things including correct social procedure.³⁹ These newspapers and women activities through the Woman's Club paved the way for Reza Shah's social reforms including the end of the use of the Islamic dress code, the *hijab*.

Negative Aspects of the Protestant Mission

During their stay and work in Iran the American Presbyterian Missionaries also left some negative legacies. According to Michael P. Zirinsky, the Presbyterian missionaries were Christian evangelists. They failed to distance themselves from the millennium-old conflict between Islam and Christianity. Therefore, they engaged themselves in conflict with Iranian people to win over their hearts and minds for Christianity. This tinged their whole work, even their beneficent secular work, with proselytization or a church-militant aura which conflicted with Iranian aspirations.⁴⁰ This was one of the negatives of the missionary activities. However, there were other negatives legacies left by the American Protestant Mission in Iran. The Iranians did welcome the American mission and they did applaud their many humanitarian activities that radically transformed Iranian society in education and healthcare. But equally they resented the activities of the missionaries who were telling them that their religion was wrong. Initially, the proselytizing mission was confined to two communities: Nestorians and Jews. Later on, the missionaries tried to teach them Christianity; generating negative publicity about Iran and labeling them as barbarians. Whenever the missionaries tried more aggressively to convert Muslims, inter-faith tensions flared up. In that case the Iranian government forbade establishing schools which were operating under the umbrella of spreading education and science but were actually proselytizing. This prohibition, however, was not total. Ignoring the Shah's decree, the missionaries often established schools and kept continuing their activities. However, throughout this period the

38 The publisher of the newspaper was Sadiqa Daulatabadi (b. 1882).

39 Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin, *Op. cit.*, 64.

40 Zirinsky, "Render Therefore unto Caesar the Things which are Caesar's: ...", *Op. cit.*, p. 355; James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion, Op. cit.*, p. 15.

predominant problem was that the American citizens and missionaries were somewhat disrespectful of Iranians, their traditions, values, and religion. The main mistake that the USA government committed during this time was that it had focused its effort on supporting the USA citizens in spite of the troubles they were causing by aggressively promoting religious conversion of Iranian Muslims and Christians. Although Iranians had admired strongly the USA abilities and technological advances, they did not appreciate being looked down upon. Thus the American cultural contacts were heavily tinged with ethnocentric strains of superiority. In some cases the missionaries were assigned by the US government to collect political-economic intelligence about Iran using the charity as a cover. Therefore, the early missionary activities were to some extent mixed with political interests.⁴¹

Conclusion

There is no denying the fact that the American Protestant Missionaries came to Iran with a social agenda: to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to modernize Iranian society through imparting education, providing medical services and thus establishing Iran- the USA bilateral political relations. The relationship between the two countries, which thus began remained positive and cordial up until the onset of World War II in 1939. This War found the USA well-entrenched in Iran as the Iranian always welcomed it. This was because the Americans in missionaries created a good image for America and for Americans in Iran. Despite ethnocentric strains of superiority and proselytization of the early years, the USA enjoyed the psychological advantage of the humanitarian, sympathetic, and wholesome friendliness which the American missionaries created in Iran. The early activities of American missionaries in Iran created bases for subsequent educational and cultural relations between Iran and the USA in spite of Reza Shah's nationalist onslaught against foreign schools during the inter war period. The missionaries were the harbingers of cultural ties between Iran and America. While at the same time they provided the Iranians with skills and vision of the world. They came to Iran with an ever-increasing zeal of upholding the humanity and establishing and strengthening cultural ties between Iran and the USA. They played life-long role in the growth and development of Iranian society and Iran-the USA cultural relations during the

41 Marie and Naghshpour, *Op. cit.*, pp. 39-53; James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion, Op. cit.*, p. 15.

early years of these two country's interactions. Although the legacies of the American Missionaries were mixed with some negatives, the positive aspects of their activities are still remembered in Iran despite historical wounds of the later periods. They are remembered for their educational work and medical works and social development through imparting knowledge to women community.