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The Day the “Brave Sons of Mohamed” Saved a Group of Mormons

David P. Charles

On March 13, 1899, a small number of Latter-day Saints visited the Armenian cemetery of Aintab (modern Gaziantep), a then-provincial town in what is today southern central Turkey. In this group were two American missionaries, Philip S. Maycock and Joseph W. Booth, and several Armenian converts. Many of the area’s Christians were observing Shrove Monday (the first day of Lent), and the cemetery, following Armenian tradition, was crowded with people picnicking and commemorating the loss of loved ones. Recognizing the situation as an opportunity to preach the gospel, the Saints gathered with some friends in a small ravine nearby, where they could discuss matters of faith in an undisturbed setting. Within minutes, however, the little gathering drew the attention of large numbers of curious onlookers. Initial acts of mischief grew more serious, and before long, stones were flying. A group of Muslim soldiers, patrolling the grounds to ensure peace among the festive crowds, intervened and began to defend the Mormons. The battle continued until the Saints were escorted home under the guards’ protection. (See pp. 251–54 for Booth’s March 13th journal entry.)

The events just described took place in the near-final days of the Ottoman Empire. In an atmosphere of international tug-of-war and local ethnoreligious conflict, dozens of Protestant missionary groups labored among the empire’s Eastern Christians, promoting education and seeking converts. These missionaries focused their efforts primarily on the Armenians living in Constantinople and the peninsula of Asia Minor. The field was already heavily contested when the first Latter-day Saint missionaries arrived in the 1880s. Yet their presence added a different and confusing element to the already diverse constellation of religions. The Protestants did not appreciate competition from these newcomers with strange doctrines, while the Mormons did not appreciate the Protestants’ dissemination of anti-Mormon propaganda. Amid the struggles of building a Mormon congregation among the Armenians, several Latter-day Saint missionaries—Joseph W. Booth especially—found unexpected friends in the followers of Islam. Drawing on contemporary diaries and correspondence, this essay will search for the reasons behind the stone-throwing episode. In the process, it will also seek to illuminate the specific patterns of interaction between Protestants, Mormons, Muslims, and Armenian Christians.
The Turkish Mission and Joseph W. Booth

Mormon missionary work in the Ottoman Empire began in Constantinople on the last day of 1884. Early scattered efforts in Constantinople, Egypt, and Palestine resulted in a few baptisms among the German colonies of Palestine and among various ethnic groups in the cosmopolitan Turkish capital. But the mission lacked focus and struggled without success to establish a body of committed converts anywhere in the region. In fall 1888, the president of the Turkish Mission, Ferdinand F. Hintze, set out on an eleven-month, three-thousand-mile journey. After taking a boat from Constantinople to Samsoun, on the southern shore of the Black Sea, he traveled southward through Asia Minor toward Palestine. In each of the twelve towns he visited, Hintze found the Armenians (the largest Christian group in Asia Minor at the time) to be the most receptive to his message. He felt particularly welcome at Aintab, where “the people flocked around me by scores, and from early morning until late in the evening asked questions concerning the Gospel.”

As a result of this exploratory journey, Hintze decided to move the mission headquarters eastward, from the empire’s capital to the towns of Asia Minor. He rented a house in Aintab, which served as the Church’s base
of operations from 1889 until 1907. Initial progress was slow; seven years after the house contract was signed, church attendance at Aintab still numbered, on average, only twelve. But conditions improved over the next several years, with the adult membership of the Aintab branch increasing to around sixty by 1898.

One of the greatest difficulties of the Turkish Mission—at Aintab and elsewhere—was poverty. Unemployment ran high among the Armenian population of Asia Minor, and converting to Mormonism made it even more difficult to find and retain employment. Throughout the duration of Latter-day Saint missionary activity in the Middle East, mission leaders sought to form a self-supporting “colony” of Saints. As a step toward this goal (which was never realized), President Hintze and the elders organized a small weaving business for the Armenian members. At Aintab the enterprise—later known as the LDS Weaving Works—was started in January 1899, with sashes as the main product. Up to eight male weavers worked in a small shop with five looms. The shop was also intended to be a place where conversations about the Church could take place.

The month of January 1899 also saw the arrival of Joseph Wilford Booth (fig. 1) at mission headquarters in Aintab. A graduate of the Brigham Young Academy, Booth worked as a schoolteacher in Alpine, Utah, and Montpelier, Idaho, prior to being called to the Turkish Mission in 1898. His extensive journals record in great detail the life of a missionary in the Middle East, where he served three missions over a thirty-year period. Booth was a skilled writer and speaker; his prose is lucid and rich and combines detailed description with opinionated commentary.

Although Booth described the cemetery incident in some detail, his account leaves one question entirely unanswered; in fact, it is never raised. Given the elders’ sympathetic attitude toward the Armenian people and the fact that they were accompanied by several local Armenian converts, it is surprising that their presence should cause such antagonism. Their intentions and actions were entirely peaceful; for what reasons did the

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**Fig. 1.** Joseph W. Booth (1866–1928). Booth served three missions in the Middle East: as an elder, 1898–1902; as president of the Turkish Mission, 1903–09; and as president of the Armenian Mission, 1921–28.
crowd—or certain elements of it—react with such hostility? The answer appears to lie in the composition and structure of Turkish society at the end of the nineteenth century. Underlying the interaction of daily life was a delicate balance of ethnic, religious, and political forces. This balance could easily be upset, and when that occurred—as when Mormons established a presence in Aintab—the disruption often resulted in violence.

The Ottoman Millet System and Western Missionaries

By the end of the nineteenth century, the region around Aintab had long been home to diverse and competing political and religious powers. Antioch, where Jesus’ followers were first called Christians, lies near both Aintab and Aleppo (a large town south of Aintab that also became a center of Latter-day Saint missionary activity). Muslims conquered the area in the seventh century and subsequently settled there among the Jews and Christians. The following centuries, marked by the Crusades and a host of other complex factors, brought changing fortunes to each of the region’s three monotheistic faiths. In 1453, Constantinople was captured by the Ottomans, who proceeded to establish a vast Islamic empire, reaching at its height from Budapest to the Black Sea and from the Caspian Sea to North Africa.8

Following earlier Muslim Arab practice, the Ottoman Turks recognized Christians and Jews as ahl al-kitab, or “people of the book.” This status afforded these minority groups a degree of protection and self-governance. Non-Muslim subjects of the sultan were subjected to “discrimination but by and large without persecution.”9 In practice, this came to mean that each religious community (millet) enjoyed relative autonomy in civic and religious affairs. Millet status was conferred upon three groups—the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian Orthodox communities—in the early years of Ottoman rule. The head of each community answered to the Turkish authorities. Jurisdiction extended to a large number of activities, including betrothal, marriage and divorce, wills and inheritance, education, and church property. The millet system kept each social group in its place and thereby facilitated the functioning of a society as diverse as that under Ottoman control. It also led to a stratification and formalization of religious and social patterns.10

Both the millet system itself and the social order it was meant to maintain were challenged by the arrival of Western missionaries. From the seventeenth century, Roman Catholics proselytized among the Oriental (or non-Chalcedonian) churches, seeking to bring converts into the Roman “Mother Church.” Inroads were made among each of the Oriental churches; those who broke away formed “Uniate” churches (that is, churches in union with Rome).11 Because the millet system generally did not distinguish between civic and religious affairs, conversion posed a serious problem.
The Armenians who formed an alliance with Rome obviously no longer wished to be under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Orthodox Church leaders. This situation led, in 1830, to the recognition by the Ottoman government of the religious autonomy of the Armenian Catholic community. There were now two separate millets for the Armenians: one for the traditional, Orthodox Church, the other for the Armenian Catholic churches.12

The Catholics were not alone in seeking converts among the Armenians. Indeed, as the nineteenth century progressed, Protestants (overwhelmingly from America) became the dominant missionary force among the Armenians and in the Middle East in general. This period was, as historian K. S. Latourette famously called it, the Great Century of Missions.13 By the end of the nineteenth century, “every nominally Christian country and almost every denomination had begun to take its share in the support of the missionary cause.”14 Of the missionary societies founded during this period, one is of particular importance here: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, established in 1810 and composed primarily of Congregationalists and Presbyterians. This organization sent the largest number of Protestant missionaries to the Middle East.15 Early hopes of success among Jews, Muslims, and Christians faded within a decade of the arrival of the first missionaries in the Levant. By 1830, the Protestants focused almost exclusively on the Eastern Christians.

American Protestants and the Oriental Churches

American Protestantism at the time took a strongly negative view of the state of Oriental Christianity; the latter was considered degenerate, corrupt, and “Christless.”16 Accordingly, the missionaries’ task was to “restore the Oriental churches to their original purity and vitality.”17 Until a “spiritual renovation” of Eastern Christianity had been accomplished, it was argued, there could be no hope that Muslims would convert.18 Yet opinions differed as to how to bring about this “spiritual reconquest” of the “lost provinces of the Church.”19 While early missionaries sought friendly cooperation with the Oriental churches and their leaders and specifically avoided establishing a new church, this approach was later challenged by Rufus Anderson and other leaders of the American Board.20 Anderson defined the “leading object” of the Board’s missions as raising self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing churches with permanent congregations. The missionaries lost the struggle for control over the mission’s direction; in the future, success would be measured in terms of the number of converts won and of new churches established.21

Although the missionaries had struggled from the beginning to avoid a split with the Armenian Church, the Board’s new, more aggressive approach made a break inevitable. In 1846 the Armenian patriarch, who
had for years been warning his congregations to avoid “fellowship with such heretics,” issued a bull of excommunication against all Evangelical Armenians. (“Evangelical” and “Protestant” were used interchangeably.) Because of the combined civil-ecclesiastical structure of the Armenian millet, this move essentially denationalized them. Ten days later, forty Armenians formally organized the Evangelical Armenian Church. In 1850, operating under pressure from Western powers, the sultan issued an edict officially confirming the Protestant community as a separate millet.22

The 1850 edict (firman) increased the pace of Protestant expansion. By that date, around ten Protestant congregations had already been founded with a total of over two hundred members. One of these early churches—the first formed in the highlands of Asia Minor—was established at Aintab in 1848 with eight members. This location, with its large Armenian population (about ten thousand), was among the mission’s most fruitful fields. A permanent station was set up in 1849, and two decades later, membership had grown from eight to 350. The missionaries later referred to the work there as a “wonder.”23 With the geographical expansion of the Armenian mission largely completed by 1870, other developments began to claim the missionaries’ attention. Education remained an important aspect of the Protestants’ presence throughout the Middle East. In 1874 the Central Turkey College was founded at Aintab, the first of several Protestant colleges established in Asia Minor.24 Medical missionary work was also conducted in Turkey in the 1870s, initially on a small scale. A hospital was built in Aintab, which is still in use today (though under state ownership).25

The numerical success of the Protestant mission among the Oriental churches was accompanied by troubling and paradoxical consequences. The shift in the Board’s approach toward the establishment of Protestant Armenian churches led to a rupture of the initially cooperative relationship between Protestants and Eastern church leaders. The ideal of partnership gradually faded into mutual denunciation and a fierce battle for Armenian souls. The Board’s original goal for the Middle East had been, “first, to revive the knowledge and spirit of the gospel among [the Eastern Christians]; and secondly, by this means to operate upon the Mohammedans.”26 By the end of the nineteenth century, however, both of these goals were overshadowed by present realities and abandoned (or at least deferred). The missionaries conceded that the conversion of “the Mohammedan race” was still a distant goal toward which little progress had been made. The spiritual “reform” of the Oriental churches had likewise not come to pass; all efforts were now placed on conversion.27

The grim effects that Protestant (and, earlier, Catholic) expansion had on the Eastern churches are summarized in the following observation:

In the end, by an ironic turn of events, it was from these Eastern Churches that almost all the Eastern Protestants were to be wrested, so that the great
mission aimed at the conversion of non-Christians was not only diverted from its objective, but it even contributed to the still further weakening of the ancient Churches which it first had wished to support.²⁸

This was understood by the early Protestant missionaries: to establish an Evangelical Armenian Church and encourage conversion would—because of the combined civil-ecclesiastical nature of the Armenian millet—necessarily have far greater consequences than a mere realignment of an individual’s religious affiliation. Indeed, many were “under the impression that they would cease to be Armenians, Greeks or Assyrians if they became Protestants.”²⁹ The foreign churches intended to divide what had previously been a dual but integral Armenian identity, grounded in the nation and the national church. Even those sympathetic to the lasting benefits of the Protestant presence—such as increased educational opportunities and improved relations with the West—had to admit that it contributed to the “enfeeblement of the nation.”³⁰

The Ambiguity in the Legal Status of LDS Missionaries

In 1830 the Armenian Catholics became the fourth millet in the Ottoman Empire, and in 1850 the Protestants became the fifth. Vigorous missionary activity by the Catholics resulted in the conferral of millet status on a number of Uniate churches, so that by 1914 the total number of millets had risen to over fifteen.³¹ One confessional group, however, was never granted millet status: the Mormons.

Being outside of the protection offered by millet status was a severe hindrance to missionary work. Quite early in the history of the Turkish mission, Hintze lamented:

We have no rights, and one being baptized is liable to imprisonment and banishment indefinitely; taxes are also increased. . . . We need to get upon sure footing as soon as possible. About the first question asked by the natives is, “Have you a government license?”

He later added:

All churches in the empire must be recognized by the government, otherwise they are put to endless inconvenience, even in the burying of a dead person, which is all done under church direction. If a man’s church be not recognized he finds no 2x6 for his dead easily.³²

Other aspects of the “endless inconvenience” experienced by Latter-day Saint missionaries included restrictions (usually temporary) against public preaching, traveling, publishing books or tracts, and holding public meetings.

The failure of the Mormons to achieve millet status reflects their condition of legal and theological ambiguity among the religions in the empire. The Latter-day Saint missionaries could not comprehend why they
of all religions should be denied government recognition. The Ottoman government, on the other hand, could not understand why the Mormons kept pressing for recognition, which in effect would have meant millet status of their own, separate from the otherwise unified Protestant community. On one occasion, Booth’s tezkerä, or local travel passport, was confiscated because it contained the word “Mormon,” which the officials did not recognize as a legitimate confessional category. Booth was informed, he wrote to the Millennial Star, that he could not “have it back unless I strike out the word ‘Mormon’ and insert therein the name of some other sect”—which, of course, he was not about to do.33

All these difficulties could have been avoided years earlier when F. F. Hintze learned, after some investigation, that the empire’s entire Protestant community was legally represented by one Mr. Boyadjian, the president of the Bible House in Constantinople. Hintze was informed that he could apply for the Mormons to be grouped among the Protestant community. Should he wish to do so, Boyadjian told him, then “we must investigate your faith and if it is so that we can embrace it in our code, all right”—meaning that henceforth The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would be officially recognized as part of the umbrella of Protestant communities (unless the bid was rejected, as it was for the Seventh-Day Adventists). Hintze gave the matter some thought and sent a carefully worded response a few days later:

Rev. Sir. . . . Upon mature thought of the whole subject upon which we talked a couple of days ago, I feel convinced that we should not ask you to be numbered in your community as Protestants. We are not Protestants, we are a distinct church differing from all others in many points of doctrine. We are protestants only in this, that we are not Catholics. I have arrived at this conclusion upon a thorough consideration of what you said to me. That is that you would have to be personally responsible for the doctrines and religious practices of all who are numbered as protestants. I therefore conclude it unfair to ask you to do that which you cannot do for us consistently.

The price for government recognition being too high, Hintze chose legal limbo over security and protection. He rejected the implications and consequences of sharing Protestant millet status, despite the enormous benefits this might have had on his publishing and other mission efforts. Hintze did not end the letter on a note of rejection, however:

But if [he continued] we can enter upon some understanding whereby we may be relieved of unfair taxation and other grievances of which our people complain, I should be very much gratified. That may we the better understand one another and be tolerant toward one another as Christians ought to be, and that you may fully know our doctrines, I ask you respectfully for an interview with the committee of which you spoke that we may not be
misunderstood nor misrepresented. Thanking you in advance for this favor I remain, Very Respectfully, Yours Obediently, F. F. Hintze. 34

There is no record that the proposed meeting ever took place.

The Aintab Cemetery Incident

The foregoing considerations help illuminate the cultural and religious milieu of Asia Minor at the end of the nineteenth century. When the Mormons moved their headquarters from Constantinople to Aintab in 1889, they joined an already complex mélange of ethnic and religious identities. In the course of their missionary activity and travels in Asia Minor and other areas of the Middle East, they crossed paths with a large and bewildering variety of peoples: Jews, Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, Armenian Protestants, Maronites, Copts, Coptic Catholics, Nestorians, Chaldaean Catholics, Latin Christians, as well as Protestant missionaries from a number of different persuasions.

The cemetery incident of 1899 can be understood only in the context of this intricate “religious tangle in the Middle East at the turn of the century.” 35 For Protestants worldwide, this was “the golden day for missionary expansion.” Many believed in the literal fulfillment of a popular slogan of the time, “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation.” 36 In distant Turkey, the goal to spread Protestantism meant fierce competition for converts from the Armenian and other Eastern churches. Furthermore, feelings of mutual mistrust existed between Muslims and Christians, Catholics and Protestants, between the now-divided groups of Armenians, and between different Protestant groups. Armenians of all denominations continued to be persecuted by the Turkish government, and foreign missionaries were suspected of seditious and treasonous activity (their educational work contributed, if unwittingly, to the Armenian nationalist cause). 37

How might one explain the crowd’s unruly behavior toward the peaceful Mormon gathering? Several possibilities seem plausible in consideration of the factors discussed thus far. Assuming that the “Christian mob” was composed exclusively of Armenians, the agitators might have been one of these groups: Armenian Orthodox objecting to the threat posed by Western missionaries and their divisive influence on the Armenian Church and Armenian people; Protestant Armenians incited by anti-Mormon rumors circulating at the time; a mixed crowd simply protesting against these Mormon trespassers (because burials were under the jurisdiction of each millet, cemeteries generally were segregated according to religion); or any combination of these.

In spring 1899, only four Mormon missionaries served in the entire Turkish Mission. (The number fluctuated between one and ten; four was
typical.) The year before, Elder Hintze had returned to Turkey (with Apostle Anthon H. Lund) to investigate the condition of the mission. Hintze remained for two years, working mostly in Constantinople on administrative matters. The mission president at the time was Philip S. Maycock, who had come to Turkey from the Swiss and German Mission along with Andrew L. Larson. The fourth missionary was Joseph W. Booth (fig. 2), who had been in Aintab just over two months when the stone-throwing episode occurred. With him in Aintab was President Maycock; Elder Larson was in Aleppo and Elder Hintze was traveling between Alexandretta and Smyrna, on his way to Constantinople.

Six years after the cemetery incident, Booth, again in Aintab, returned to the Armenian cemetery with his wife, Reba. He described the event in his journal:

Reba & I took a walk through the Cemetery where there were multitudes of People. I estimated them at from 15,000 to 20,000 people. [See fig. 3 for a related scene.] We . . . wandered around through the tombs and met many friends and held conversation with some of them. . . . What a difference of
feeling among the people towards us from what there was about 6 years ago when Elder Maycock and I were driven from these grounds under a shower of stones. Now we have hundreds of friends among them. During the day a number of Friends called to see us.41

It is a tribute to Booth and his fellow missionaries that this “difference of feeling” had come about. Booth was known as a “very congenial person who impressed all those who came in contact with him as a Christian and gentleman of the highest character.”42 Years of constructive interaction with leaders and members of other faiths led to much-improved relations between the denominations. The Latter-day Saints, it would appear, had become an accepted feature on the heterogeneous religious landscape of Asia Minor.

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1. See James A. Toronto, “Early Missions to Ottoman Turkey, Syria, and Palestine,” Out of Obscurity: The LDS Church in the Twentieth Century (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 339–62; David P. Charles, “‘You Had the Alps, but We the Mount of Olives’: Mormon Missionary Travel in the Middle East (1884–1928),” Mormon

Fig. 3. Throughout the Middle East, people of differing faiths follow the time-honored custom of visiting the graves of loved ones and esteemed religious figures. Photographer Charles Ellis Johnson, 1903.


3. See F. F. Hintze, “The Turkish Mission,” *Deseret Weekly*, September 28, 1889, 418; George Teasdale to Elder F. F. Hintze, July 7, 1887; George Teasdale to President F. F. Hintze, July 26, 1888; and Journal of F. F. Hintze, June 20, 1887, and August 21, 1888. Typescripts of Hintze’s journals, as well as all the cited letters that were written by or addressed to him, are in the author’s possession.


7. See Lindsay, “A History of the Missionary Activities,” 72–74; and Journal of Joseph Wilford Booth, January 5, 1899.


10. W. H. C. Frend, “Christianity in the Middle East: Survey down to A.D. 1800,” in *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, ed. A. J. Arberry, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1:256. The exact origins and early development of the millet system are not clear. It appears, at this point in the scholarly debate, that the system was not, as has often been assumed, a uniform system of Ottoman practice. The term *millet* held a variety of meanings over the centuries, and only in the nineteenth—as it came to mean a nation and no longer a religious community *per se*—does it seem to have settled into its modern meaning. In previous centuries, Ottoman relations with its non-Muslim subjects varied widely according to time, place, government, and community. See the essays collected in Braude and Lewis, *Christians and Jews*, especially chapters 1, 3, and 8.


13. Latourette applied this phrase to the period 1800–1914, “the age of the most extensive geographic spread of Christianity.” Others have the “Great Century” beginning as
The Day the "Brave Sons of Mohamed" Saved a Group of Mormons


Appendix:
Account by Joseph Wilford Booth, March 13, 1899

Mon 13 [...] It was the first day of the Great 50-day fast of the Armenians, that is for that length of time they abstain from meats and oil.1 While we were at our reading Bro. Garouch2 came in and told us of the event and called our attention to the multitudes of people out among the tombs on the hillside south of the city, and winding their way to the top of the gently sloping elevator on the summit of which stately stands the residence [>& school] of the late Mr. Moiten.3 Frequently we glanced through our windows and over the flat roofs of ruder and moor humble dwellings than our own,4 to watch the motly crowd far out in the distant hills, but little dreaming that ere the sun went down we would be the center of attraction for all that mighty host, and not only this but the very objects of their ignorable and wicked ridicule.

Soon after noon we “spruced up” a bit and first made our way to the Shop where the brethren were at work and there held a lengthy discussion with a number of callers among whom were some we had before talked with.

A number of the brethren left their work and accompanied us out through the sémétery where people could be seen in all directions, singly and in groups seated around the grave of some loved one with bowed heads and, I suppose weeping hearts for some of their cries and moans were piteous to hear as we passed along.

But we had scarcely entered the “City of the dead” before the people from all sides began to set the gaze on us appearantly forgetting, for the time, those over whose ashes they had come to utter their lamentations and pour their tears of mournful remembrances.

1. It is the first day of Lent, a six-week period followed by Holy Week (culminating in Easter Day). Together, these seven weeks constitute the forty-eight-day “Paschal abstinence”; during this time, “only nourishment of a vegetable kind is permitted, for everything which belongs to the animal kingdom is regarded as meat diet; honey is the only exception.” Altogether there are 160 days of abstinence each year. Ormanian, The Armenian Church, 153–64. See also N. Adontz, “Les fêtes et les saints de l’Église arménienne,” Revue de l’Orient Chrétien 26 (1927–28): 74–104, 225–78.

2. Garouch Bezjian belonged from the start to the Aintab weaving business. He and his wife, Dudu, were members of the Aintab branch, and Booth was a frequent guest at their home. See “Discourse By President F. M. Lyman,” Millenial Star 61 (March 23, 1899): 189–92; Journal of F. F. Hintze, January 7–9, 1899; and Journal of Joseph Wilford Booth, January 12, 1899, April 28, 1899, and May 25, 1899.

3. Identity unknown.

4. In March 1898, a house was rented in Aintab from a Mr. Vartan Nuradernian[?]. It included “4 rooms in the upper story & 4 rooms in the lower story with
Higher up the hill side and beyond the main part of the necropolis could be seen groups here and there seated around their meal boards enjoying picnic, such as it was, and as we passed along we were frequently invited to dine with them which we declined with thanks. Reaching near the top of the hill which is perhaps five or six furlongs from the edge of the city, we met a number of friends with whom Bro Maycock had conversed before and who now desired to hear more of our doctrine. It had been suggested [before] that we hold a meeting and preach to the people but some of the local brethren deemed it not wise and so it pass on. Now came a opportuity to present the gospole to a few of our friends and in order to attract as little attention as possible we repaired to a spot a few hundred yds. away from the great conourse of people and there quietly sat among the rocks and little ledges of a small ravine. Our presence was soon detected and one after another, group after group came stringing along until we were entirely surrounded by a army of bright red caps beneath which grim, dusky, dirty, as well as fair and smiling faces greeted us in every direction.

The Conversation began mindly between Bro Maycock and his friendly antagonests. It waxed warmer and warmer though not reaching undue excitement. By request of Pres. M, Bro Samuel arose and taking his kitchen and out house conveniences.” The elders and some of the Saints lived there for around two years. When Booth decided to move to a different building, Vartan “made strong objections and claimed that we were bound by an agreement of Bros Hintze & [Apostle Anthon H.] Lund to remain here three years longer.” The dispute was eventually settled in court, where “one officer said to Vartan, We have great confidence in Americans for their truthfulness. They may steal, commit adultery, murder and rob, but they will not lie and we can not be trusted like them.” Journal of Joseph Wilford Booth, March 14, September 7, 1900, February 11, 1901, April 6, 1901, May 15, 1901.

5. Philip S. Maycock, president of the Turkish Mission.

6. Booth refers here to the fez, once a common sight throughout Turkey. This red hat is “the traditional Turkish headgear, which took its name from [the city of] Fez in Morocco. It is a brimless red felt cap shaped as a truncated cone, with a flat crown to which a tassel is often attached. It was abolished by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1925.” E. Van Donzel, comp., Islamic Desk Reference (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 101.

7. President Maycock.

8. Samuel [or Shamuel] Küchük Keorkian [or Kevorkian], a member of the Church at Aintab. Booth described in detail the funeral of Samuel’s young daughter, who died shortly after Booth’s arrival at Aintab. Samuel apparently moved to Aleppo afterwards. He is rarely mentioned in Booth’s journal until the spring of 1901, when Booth wrote:

A very sad event occurred during the night and the news came to us early and filled our hearts with sorrow. For several months our Brother Shamuel... has been on the wayward track and many are the pityful stories of his
position on the edge of little precipice began his discourse. Interruptions soon followed and ere long he was pushed off from his rock rostrum which created a roar of laughter.

Resuming his position he continued a few minutes when the mobish listeners? drew the attention of Mus[s]ulmen soldiers who werr out to keep peace among the great gathering.11

They [rushed up &] dispersed the crowd, but on learning that we were only indulging in a peacable meeting they gathered about and bade us proceed.

The crowd returned with increased numbers and Bro. Samuel continued his remarks but with difficulty as the soldiers themselves were unable to keep the rabble in order.

Soon small stones began to light about him, tossed by some from the outer rings of the crowd, and the opposition soon grew to hatred.

shouts of derision came from the throats of the maddening throng and the officers perceiving the situation again dispelled them and warned us to go while they were there to protect us. The tumultous roar of all those hundreds as we moved away was interesting to say the least. We were closely followed by these impious servants of satan but the mussulmen kept them from touching us. Larger stones were hurled over our heads and several struck us but with no harmful effect.

disobedience that have come to us from Haleb [Aleppo]. We have talked to him much and at times he would exhibit a good spirit . . . and brighten our hopes. Some 10 days ago he came to Aintab on business and has been here since in town but calling very little on us. Now we hear that during the past night while in a drunken state he drew his pistle and shot a man, whose recovery now is doubtful. Samuel has escaped but the officers are on the watch for him. The affair places us and the church here in a very embarassing condition as our enemies are glad to make it appear that the church is responsible. (Journal of Joseph Wilford Booth, January 7, 24, 1899; February 12, April 9, 20, 1899; March 15, April 14, 1901)

9. The midsentence insertion of question marks is a regular feature of Booth’s journals, a rhetorical gesture meant to highlight a blatantly ironic word or phrase.

10. Muslim.

11. Both Booth and Maycock make special mention of the fact that the cemetery guards were Muslim. Assigning Muslim guards was common practice throughout the empire. This practice was both a visible demonstration of Turkish authority and a preventive measure against the very real possibility of hostility among Christians. Christian holy sites, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, were also guarded by Muslim soldiers. See Maycock’s letter, “Shows the Gospel Plan,” Millennial Star 61 (April 20, 1899): 246–47. Elder Joseph M. Tanner wrote in 1886 during a visit to Jerusalem:

It is a sad comment on Christianity when the Turkish government is forced to put guards in some of the churches held as common property by different
The brave sons of mohamed returned the compliment for us, and though their aim was poor the size [>] of the stones and [>] the force with which the missiles were sent flying at our persecutors told of the earnestness of those who freely offered their service in our defense. What a picture to see the followers of the great founder of Islam guarding a few humble advocates of "Peace and good will" from the desperate attacks of a Christian mob. No wonder the intolerant wretches are designated as "dogs" by their more liberal and high minded superiors, whose religion, though less elevating in its precepts, is still lived up to more closely by its adherents. I am afraid these poor self righteous pharisaical bigots when they come into that "blessed rest"—that house of many mansions will find themselves crowded into the basement longingly looking up the cellar steps at their mohedian friends enjoying the comforts of the first floor. If their treatment of us to day is any criterion on which to base a conclusion I am not far wrong in my decision. Through the curious crowd we made our way home while all along the way we were the center of attraction of thousands whoop[>] and yelling like a hoard of heathens [>] just let loose from prison. The officers accompanied us to the door for which we thanked them and gave them a "backshish" for their trouble. The city is in an uproar over the affair and we rejoice in the fact that "This sect is everywhere spoken against" We trust that a few honest souls at least will be led to further investigate the truth and that our days outing will not be in vain.

Christian denominations to keep riots down and preserve peace. No wonder the Mussulman looks with contempt upon the hypocrisy of modern Christianity. (J. M. Tanner, "In Syria," Millennial Star 48 [May 24, 1886]: 333–34)

12. Ethnic and religious groups used a variety of epithets to characterize one another. Christians were often called "dogs." See Richter, A History of Protestant Missions, 414.

13. The Turks.


15. Muslim.

16. A small amount of money given as a gratuity for services provided or as an alm to the sick and the elderly. (The line between gratuity and bribe was very thin.) See Charles, "You Had the Alps, but We the Mount of Olives," 96 nn. 23–28.

17. While the events of the day certainly made the Mormons better known in Aintab, Booth does not mention any direct results of the occasion during the month that followed.