American Philhellenes, Protestant Missionaries and the “Orphans” of the 1821 Hellenic War of Independence: The Case of Christodoulos Evangelides

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1. Cultural Background

When the Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821, it was heralded by enthusiasts and romantics in both Europe and America. Philhellenes in both continents rallied campaigns of support and fund raising to aid the uprising of the descendants of Ancient Greece and devout Christians who had been living under the Muslim “barbaric” joke for centuries. In order to understand the enthusiasm with which Americans embraced the Greek efforts for liberation and their involvement in it, one must take into consideration the diverse complexities and factors which formed a convoluted nexus and determined politics towards the Greek struggle and the request for support. Briefly, the most significant factors which were intrinsically related to one another were the following:

- The American infatuation with antiquity, partly out of genuine admiration or maybe out of strong dislike for everything British, apparent in the architecture of the time, in the university curricula, in the naming of cities, even in the building and decoration of the Capitol itself. Ancient Greek language and grammatology was a major field of study in American universities acknowledging the debt of the western world to the ancient Greek philosophy and classical culture. Moreover, American philhellenes, who had already visited Greece at the beginning of the century, had described the dire situation prevailing on the land of democracy and had strongly demonstrated the diachronic
value of classical education in the articles they published and the speeches they delivered, thus predisposing their audiences in favor of the “Greek Cause.” It was, therefore, to be expected that modern Greeks who were “contending in favor of their liberties” would take hold of the sentiments of Americans.2

3 - The American brotherhood: Many Americans viewed the Greek war as a mirror of their own recent revolt from tyranny, “a republican struggle against absolutism” sponsored by the classical democratic models (Hatzidimitriou, “Observations Concerning American Philanthropic Contributions,” n. p.).

4 - The fervent religious revival: The strong religious sentiments which dominated the American society as a result of the Second Great Awakening. Americans, in their majority, approached the Greek uprising as an attempt for religious freedom. While the United States was trying to define its external policy with the other sovereign nations, a major development was taking place within its borders: a significant religious and social reform in the aftermath of the Second Great Awakening, which advocated moral, religious and social reforms, a Covenant of Works as well as protestant expansion. These reforms had a wide appeal to all social strata, especially since they advocated the abolition of slavery, social advancement through education, the emancipation of women and the ability of all people to receive saving grace through their actions. In addition to its social impact, this religious movement was also intimately related to both commerce and politics. It pertained to territorial expansion and mercantile policies, and, by nature, to the propagation of the Gospel to the world.

5 - The American policy during President Monroe’s presidency concerning both internal affairs and international relations: The Greek War for Independence in 1821 took place at a time when the United States of America was trying to define its national identity. Having recently emerged triumphant from their own revolution, the Americans embarked on a venture to become an influential power in the world. However, to avoid any unpleasant complications with the European nations, the American government negotiated a mutual agreement of non-intervention, the Monroe doctrine, which was signed at the end of 1823 and would preclude them from any intervention in the European military affairs and, therefore, from open interference in the revolutionary Greek war. This agreement appeared to be important for the United States, especially for the powerful mercantile states as it was expected to provide speedy commercial developments with the outer world to replace the privileges which had been lost upon departure from the British Empire. In their attempt to achieve free and uninhibited trade, the Americans had also been working on a treaty with the Ottoman Empire concerning the long awaited and cunningly denied settlement for easy access to the markets controlled by the Ottomans in the Mediterranean, the Near East, the Black Sea, and beyond.

6 - The European ideological context of the time: Still powerful at the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the philosophical and intellectual principles of the Age of Reason, which had inspired the American and the French revolutions, were still an inspiration for European radicals who acclaimed all national and ethnic attempts for autonomy and disputes against absolutism. Actually, the American substantial support and the American philhellenes’ personal commitment to the Greek cause begins with the death of Lord Byron in 1823 who had embraced the Greek struggle for liberty with his works, his actions and his death.
2. The “Greek Cause” and the Philhellenic Support

That was the cultural context of the United States in 1821 when the Messenian Senate of Calamata, the first “formal Greek government,” dispatched a letter-declaration-petition to the American government and the American people, in which it proclaimed its “resolution to live or die for freedom.” The petition addressed the United States as a kindred nation, “fellow citizens and brethren,” who the Greeks appealed to for help by “a just sympathy since it [was] in [their] land that freedom [had] fixed her abode.” The petition referred to the United States as an exemplar of civil and religious liberty, and pleaded for the American support in the name of liberal republicanism and Christian brotherhood. The petition was carefully structured so as to allude to the American Declaration of Independence in both form and argumentation. Soon, the “Greek Cause” became almost a household word not only among the New England elite but also among the members of the middle and lower classes in the New England states and gained a central role in the political and social discourse of the time. It turned into a “Greek fire/fever” as politicians, university professors and congressmen became advocates of the requested support and defended their view in fiery speeches. The petition itself, which reached the United States in late May 1821, was publicized and copies circulated among all American elite and eventually among all Americans of the northeastern states. The letter-declaration of the Greeks became immediately the basis of all appeals on behalf of the Greek cause. Philhellenes reminded Americans of the fundamental constituent of their tradition and identity, that of the nation’s pre-ordained divine mission to become a “beacon upon a hill,” and, at that time, an exemplar of civil and religious liberty. Edward Everett, perhaps the most fervent advocate of the requested support, reminded Americans of the divine role prescribed to them by God Almighty: “such an appeal from the anxious conclave of self-devoted patriots, in the inaccessible cliffs of the Morea, must bring home to the mind of the least reflecting American, the great and glorious part, which this country is to act, in the political regeneration of the world” (qtd. in Earle 46). And, by supporting the Greek cause, the Americans felt destined and obliged to act according to their prescribed role as leader for all other emerging republics (Jacanove 14). Philhellenes spoke to the nation’s ideologies of classical liberalism, classical republicanism and protestant heritage.

Considering the context of the American ante-bellum philosophical thought and protestant legacy, Americans realized that they should partake of the “Greek Cause” as a gesture of gratitude for their newly acquired liberty. American eagerness to assist Greece in its struggle for emancipation from domination and enslavement was not only prompted by the American spirit of liberalism and the protestant heritage or the European enlightenment. Philhellenes promptly evinced the obligation and commitment all humanity owed to Greeks, the descendants of the ancient Hellenes. Truth be told, however, almost nothing substantial was done in the United States for the Greek cause, despite the Philhellenes’ enthusiasm and emotional speeches at Congress and before the American public for almost a year. It took Americans some time to organize considerable fundraising for the “Greek Cause,” which did not start before the end of 1823.

The American political administration was very cautious not to prove itself inconsistent with the terms of the Monroe doctrine, which it had been negotiating for a
long time and was eventually signed at the end of 1823. Neither did it wish to jeopardize the pending commerce agreement with the Ottoman Empire, which was expected to give impetus to the American trade and to procure significant economic dividends for the tradesmen of the north-eastern states. Their vote and arguments were strong and the “Greek Cause” came second to their political orientations. Some of them were even held responsible for the “frigate scandal” and the embezzlement of thousands of pounds of the Greek order for two frigates and six smaller ships. Yet, others assisted American people’s efforts to raise funds for the support and relief of Greeks and funded the living and educational needs of small refugee children, as will be discussed below.

But, beyond any doubt, American philhellenes would not have succeeded in their efforts if they did not have the support of the American people who became engaged in the Greek cause on many levels and who should be regarded as the true philhellenes. The first fundraising campaign, including donations of 40,000 pounds, was meant to cover the military needs of the revolutionaries and was made in the name of Ancient Greece and the Protestant legacy which had been rekindled after the Second Great Awakening in 1806.

But, the fundraising campaign, after 1826, was accomplished in the name of humanitarianism and was the work of pure charity, non-political and neutral. During 1827 and 1828, eight shiploads of relief supplies, valued at nearly $140,000, were sent to Greece consisting entirely of food and clothing. The American humanitarian sentiments were genuinely stirred by the sufferings of the helpless Greek population and the American common people offered handsomely out of their substantial or slender means to the Greek civilians’ relief. Moved by their antislavery and abolitionist sentiments, Philhellenes managed to make the cause of the Greeks a reminder of social and historical responsibility. In this way, they set the foundations for a “tradition” of Greek-American friendship and long-lived alliance (Field 189). After all, the Messenian appeal pointed out that the interests of the two countries “[were] of a nature more and more to cement an alliance founded on freedom and virtue” (qtd. in Earle 45).

By rekindling the desire of the people to assist Greece in its glorious struggle for liberty, the philhellenes tried to bypass the limitations imposed by the Monroe doctrine of non-intervention and the tradesmen’s objections. Over the whole duration of the war and long after its end, the American government remained “neutral” under the pretext of the Monroe doctrine. Yet, it could be argued that all efforts for military assistance and humanitarian relief, and despite Ottoman displeasure, were conducted with the tacit agreement of the United States government. As a grateful ally in the Mediterranean, the Greeks, should they gain their freedom, might prove invaluable as a counterbalance to the whimsical High Porte, curtail the dominant presence of Great Britain in the area in favor of the American navy and trade, expand the American sphere of influence, and promote the American culture abroad. In its diplomatic relations with the other powerful nations, the American government appeared to honor the Monroe agreement; in its relation with the American people, it also appeared to promote the precepts of their protestant legacy and identity and honor the public sentiments for social and political responsibility.
3. The Missionary Contribution to the “Greek Cause”

If admiration for antiquity was originally the springboard for American Philhellenism, theological aspirations of protestant expansionism were the springboard for the American brotherly support of the destitute civilians in revolutionary Greece. It was contextualized in the covert religious and national expansion in the Near East, the Mediterranean, Greece, and gradually in the Balkans. After all, John Winthrop, as early as 1630, in his *Theory of the State and Society*, noted that the ideal administration, defined by divinity, was the combination of theocentricism with ethnocentricism, a “due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical” (qtd. in Miller 45). And, John Adams notes in a diary entry in 1765 that he had always considered the colonization of America as the opening of a huge stage and a divine plan of the Holy Providence so that all over the earth the ignorant are enlightened and the slaves are unchained (Nasioutzik, Secret Commissions 51).

Within this context of religious and national expansionism, Protestant denominations – Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Neobaptists, Evangelists, Methodists, Dutch reformed Church believers—to name a few, cooperated closely with the philhellenic laymen, many of whom were active members of these religious sects, and worked hard for the “Greek Cause.” There was a strong competition between the various sects and all protestant missionary aspirations and activities were organized by religious organizations which cooperated closely with a nexus of European affiliates. The most important of these organizations was the ABCFM (American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions), a semi-religious, semi-political organization, one of the most influential in the United States. The Board had funded all missions to the Near East and mainly Greece, in order to “spy out” the land. The missionaries’ duty was to set the scene for future action and possibly to begin the evangelization of the “heathens” and of “the ‘nominal’ Christians of Western Asia” who, according to them, had departed from the Bible as a result of the long Muslim enslavement. Missionaries had been supported by merchants partly because many of them belonged to the same religious denominations and partly because the Second Awakening’s tenets served the merchants’ earthly and spiritual aspirations. Moreover, missionaries provided merchants with inside invaluable geographical information and cultural details necessary for their business enterprises. After all, the American confederate republic, as James Field notes, was founded on civil, political, commercial and religious liberty which functioned together for man’s welfare since they all derived from the unalienable rights of human nature (137).

Missionary work in Greece was mainly limited to the islands of the Archipelago, and the big cities of Constantinople, Smyrna and later Athens rather than mainland Greece, Morea, or Roumeli where the main hostilities were taking place. Wherever they travelled, missionaries made friends and offered assistance and comfort to the Greek people. The apparent disinterested aid of the missionaries made them popular among Greeks who accepted with pleasure the translated tracts missionaries lavishly distributed for free; all reading material was translated and printed in protestant publishing houses, created by the European protestant nexus mainly in Malta, London, as well as in Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens and Syros. Yet, despite the abundance of all this religious propaganda material printed in the newly-established publishing houses, missionaries soon realized that their efforts to convert Greeks to Protestantism...
were unavailing. Oddly enough, American missionaries did not realize that, at the time, Orthodoxy and Hellenism had been engaged in a mutual relation almost as inseparable as that of Americanism and Protestantism. And, therefore, Greeks would have hardly considered conversion to the western theology; to be non-orthodox would have meant to be non-Greek (Thanailaki 89).

The American missionaries, having noticed the Greeks’ ardent desire for learning and educating their offspring, promoted their religious expansion plans through the establishment of all kinds of missionary schools, originally adult schools, soon to be followed by elementary schools for boys and girls. The students who attended these schools were mostly members of the Greek elite, or of the Greek diaspora, who could afford the tuition fees, as well as a few grant-aided gifted students. Their schools were popular among eminent members of the Greek society especially since, with the exception perhaps of a few institutions, Greek schools as noted before lacked in premises, in teaching material, and educated staff. This long-term enterprise aimed at introducing not only the American teaching methods to the Greek educational system, but also at initiating future Greek graduates into the American spirit and eventually proceeding to their acculturation. Protestant schools, however, soon faced the reaction of the Greek Church which, after 1828, exercised all its influence to limit the protestant school establishment project.

As early as 1823, the ABCFM launched another enterprise, that of educating young boys in the USA. Levi Parsons and Joel Fisk were two of the first missionaries to promote this acculturation plan by taking several Greek boys to the United States. Although researchers do not agree on the exact number of children who were finally taken or sent to the United States from 1823 to 1828 under the auspices of this program, there is evidence that only thirty-six reached the United States and were educated there. Among them were Ioannis Zahos, Christophoros Platon Castanis, and Christodoulos Evangelides, who later became the school principal of an innovative Lyceum in Ermoupolis, Syros, a prosperous island in Greece, and whose life has only recently been researched. Some boys were adopted by compassionate Americans, such as Miltiadis Lucas Miller who was adopted by Jonathan Miller, the famous philhellene, or Photios Fisk, also adopted by Joel Fisk the missionary. Others made a career in the United States, as the famous Evangelinos Apostolidis, or Sophocles as he was known for his great knowledge of the classics, who later became a Harvard University professor, Gregory Anthony Perdikaris, the first American Consul in Greece after 1856, and finally George Moussalas Colvokesesis, a famous United States army officer. The age of these children, who had been called “orphans” for reasons of compassion, and some of them in fact were, varied from eight (Zahos) to twenty-four (Perdikaris). Most of these children came mainly from the islands of Archipelago and mainly from Chios, Psara and Hydra. Lazos notes that out of the thirty-six children, twenty-six stayed in the States and only two or three out of the six who returned to Greece proved an asset to their home country. During the first years of their stay in the United States, most of these children lived in extreme poverty and faced discriminating behaviour by those who objected to the American relief policy for the Greek “orphans.”

The experiment of the Greek “orphans” proved very expensive as the annual expenses for each boy were estimated to 150 “talira,” a considerable sum, for tickets and tuition expenses plus the fact that most of the beneficiaries, being completely assimilated, chose to remain in the United States and pursue a career there, instead of returning to
Greece and contributing to the protestant expansionism and cultural indoctrination of the Greeks as initially planned. Soon the policy changed in favour to educating the Greek children in the country of origin, which had already started to pay off. The missionary work briefly described could be considered as a philhellenic act of compassion and support for the non-combatant Greeks and later a contribution to the Greek government’s efforts to reform the Greek education. Ioannis Kapodistrias (Capod’Istria), the first governor of the new Greek nation, knew only too well both the terrible condition Greek education was at the time, and mainly the lack of funds for its improvement. He was also aware of the protestant expansion plans and the growing, but subtle, religious propaganda and acculturation attempted in the newly founded missionary schools. After a friendly meeting with the Secretary General of ABCFM, Rufus Anderson, Kapodistrias asked for American financial support to spend on the development of a modern system of education in Greece. Anderson promised to discuss the matter with the Board but neither an answer nor a penny was granted to Kapodistrias. While the missionaries’ work was genuinely philanthropic and essentially conducive to the establishment of a modern system of education in the new nation, yet, their motives emanated from their protestant expansive ambition and their vision to create an ecumenical protestant empire which would have been endorsing the American cultural identity.

4. Christodoulos Miltiades Leonidas Evangelides

Almost a year before Kapodistrias was appointed the first governor of Greece, a young boy at the age of 12 left Smyrna in a ship to Malta, probably originally under the safekeeping of Samuel Gridley Howe and later when in New York, of P.H. Vandervoort. It seems that Christodoulos Evangelidis, the Macedonian youth from Thessaloniki, who found himself in Smyrna under clouded circumstances, reached the United States on the same ship with one of the greatest American philhellenes Samuel Gridley Howe and another three orphans, Christopher Platon Castanis, Ioannis Zahos and Sappho, a girl from Theba. Upon arrival in the United States in 1828, Evangelides seems to have rallied along with Howe and other philhellenes the north-eastern states of New England wearing his traditional Greek costume, his only clothes for a long time. It cannot have been a pleasant experience for young Christodoulos. Although we do not have such information from his own diary, the other boys comment that they resented the fact that “we were shown around in our traditional costumes and people were gazing at us as if we were a pair of little monkeys” (Lazos 560). Castanis also notes in his autobiographical narrative that, soon after their arrival with Dr. Howe, all three boys participated in fund-raising events. Castanis describes one of these events in his autobiography:

The three boys, dressed in their native costume, were present and placed on a conspicuous place on the platform. One of the generous contributors, having dropped two hundred dollars, took by the hand Christopher [Castanis], and accompanied him around the hall to receive the donations of the friends of his country. The collection was a generous index of the praiseworthy zeal and active humanity of the citizens of New York. A great sum of money was collected that night; the hat which I passed around was full of bills. (Castanis 133)

Evidently, the boys’ most unfortunate condition was used by the philhellenes to familiarise the American public both with the contemporary Greek culture and the
miserable conditions of young children in an attempt to arouse public sentiments and procure donations and relief funds for the fighting Greeks and the destitute Greek civilians. Public sentiments were reflected in American literature and arts and young Evangelides became an inspiration for poet William Cullen Bryant who wrote “The Greek Boy” and nourished a warm friendship with him which lasted until the end. Moreover, Evangelides acted as a model for the famous painting by Robert W. Weir, which accompanied Bryant’s poem. Like most “orphans,” Evangelides spent the first years of his education at Mount Pleasant Classical Institute at Amherst, Massachusetts, a school founded to accommodate refugee children from various places but mainly from the Orient. In this school, Evangelides met with other Greek young “orphans” and made life-long acquaintances and friendships. We do not know exactly how long young Evangelides stayed at Mount Pleasant Institute. We do not have any information on how these first years were spent, but they must have been shared between fundraising campaigns, learning and acculturation. Young Christodoulos must have been initiated into the protestant spirit during the years of his studies there. Being the favourite grandson of an orthodox devout priest in Thessaloniki, Evangelides must have been undoubtedly influenced by a deep sense of piety and devotion even before his acquaintance with the protestant beliefs.

21 Yet, while in America, his religious sentiments were channelled towards Protestantism, as it is implicitly stated in his diary entries, especially in those from his Syros diary. In it, for example, Evangelides often complains that Christians in Hermoupolis do not observe the holiness of Sabbath, a basic tenet of Protestantism (Sept. 20th 1859), or do not read the Bible on daily basis (17th 1859).

22 In 1834, he returns to New York for the second time, attends the University of the City of New York, (now New York University), and begins to write in his diary. He studies humanities and works at the college library for fee waiving and subsistence, yet, living in utter poverty. He is poorly dressed in the bitter New York winters and sparsely fed. His good looks, his amiable character and socializing skills make him very popular among his classmates and teachers, and he makes numerous friends. As he notes in his diary, he feels happy and grateful and is often invited to spend the night at a friend’s house. His teachers appreciate his efforts and often offer him small presents (an old pen, a used watch, used books for his studies, a notebook) or some money in exchange for minor errands. In his entry on February 23, 1834, he notes: “This morning while I was in the Sunday school, Mr. Fanshaw, that very good man, made me a present of other five dollars. ‘He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord’” (Diary Mss).

23 Evangelides was popular among philhellenes, classmates and teachers mainly for the enthusiastic speeches he delivered promoting the “Greek Cause” and emphasizing the Greek heritage. On April 1834, he notes: “This morning I delivered an oration on Greece before my dear [fellow] students and beloved President Duer. Great signs of approbation being given by clapping and shouting.” As proud as he was of his Greek heritage, Evangelides was as grateful for his host country, the United States of America: “Blessed be God my Father for today is the sixth year since I came to this happy country…. Therefore, the name of Lord God be greatly praised” (Diary Mss, March 21, 1834). The speech he gives as the recently elected president of the “Philomathian” society is a celebration of his cultural identity and an example of his pride for being Greek as well as of his gratitude for the host country and his American benefactors:
For the present you have a Greek president and a Greek name. And may I not be permitted to hope that some scion of this beautiful tree which I have aided in nourishing may find its place on the Parnassus or on the top of Areopagus of my native land, and there whilst drawing life from its own mother earth feeling forever a sympathy with the parent tree, and growing more strong and producing richer fruits because mingling the influence of America with those of Greece. (Diary Mss, January, 1834)

A year later, Samuel Ward, a genuine philhellene, becomes his patron and Evangelides continues his studies at Columbia University. He is happier in his new environment, but still extremely poor. The incident of the big hole in his coat is indicative of his utter penury:

This morning as I was called to declare before the class, being Friday, I went to speak, and also my turn, I went to speak without having thought of any speech before hand. I commenced ‘on Linden when the sun was low’ which I done very well, but on lifting my arm to make a gesture I saw some of the students looking under my arm laughing. But I discovered immediately what it was that caused them to laugh. Because I had a big hole in that part of my coat. (Diary Mss, March 1833)

Yet, his pleasant manners and his determination to make ends meet as well as his love and respect for the education made available to him, his thirst for learning and his unabating love for Greece make him dear to most people around him. He felt that his education was very important and something he owed not only to himself but also to Greece. He thought that he should share with young people in his country what he had learned in the United States: “I wish to become the greatest benefactor to my dear Greece and the World... o my country... I sigh, I long, I pant for thee (April 1834). Evidently, what Evangelides became famous for, and charmed everybody, with was his unparalleled and incessant love for his country. An eloquent and strong supporter of the “Greek Cause” and an eloquent speaker, he fascinated his audiences who burst into warm applauses every time he made a speech. Evangelides was scheduled to become a missionary in Greece and contribute to the protestant vision after his studies at Greenwich seminary (Gregoriadis 607). But, between missionary work and education, Evangelides chose education.

He returned to Greece and became a renowned educator and teacher as he had dreamed of during his stay in the United States. He founded the famous Evangelides Lyceum in Hermoupolis, on the island of Syros, picking up from where Josiah Brewer, one of the first American missionaries in Greece, had left off. His school became famous because he introduced a Hellenized American curriculum. He combined the innovative American teaching methods and teaching objectives with the Greek antiquity and the Greek spirit. Students were given a broad humanities education and other subjects such as algebra, geometry, geography, science, history, design and painting, and instrumental music which he considered essential for young promising men in a fast changing world. Drawing upon his experience in the United States, he believed that the main objective of his school was to prepare his students to become good citizens. He believed that “civic education” was what the new state needed most. The teaching of foreign languages by native speakers was also introduced as well as a rich program of extracurricular activities such as acting classes, physical education dancing, swimming, forensics, rhetoric, debate and impromptu and encouraged his students to publish a student newspaper The Bee. Evangelides claimed that the “fundamental principles of his Lyceum were: Love, Truth, Industriousness and Repentance from Sin” (Gregoriades 620). All in all, Evangelides' educational emphasis was on superior “civic education,” on
the Hellenic moral development of his students and on providing them with a broad cosmopolitan outlook which would not go unnoticed by administrative cycles in Athens when they became of age.  

Sons of the most eminent Greek families studied at his school, future politicians such as Andreas Syngros, Nikolaos Kanaris, the son of the well-known Independence veteran, future famous Greek authors such as Emmanouil Roides, Dimitrios Vikelas, and the sons of many eminent merchants, politicians, intellectuals, and men of influence. Truthful to the Protestant tenets of gratitude and compassion, he did not hesitate to share his good luck with the less fortunate. In a letter he wrote to his teacher, Evangelinus Apostolides, or Sophocles, he notes that several of his students, were boys of talent who came from poor families and studied at his Lyceum for free.  

Evangelides’ contribution to education, to the local community of Hermoupolis and to the developing Greek nation was acknowledged by his students, and by his fellow citizens who elected him municipality councillor. At the recommendation of King Otto’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Andronikos Paikos, and of Jonas King, an American missionary acting as the King’s consular agent in Athens, Evangelides was nominated Greek spokesperson to the Americans when Greece needed to rekindle the American sympathy and procure support during the Crimean war in 1854.  

Evangelides was an asset to both Protestantism and Hellenic orthodoxy. He loved America, but he loved Greece more, he appreciated the tenets of Protestantism but he had a deep love and respect for Orthodoxy. Among the Hermoupolis people, he was known as the Greek Yankee and, paraphrasing Christopher Castanis, he “was Protestant in feeling and orthodox in church.”

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NOTES

1. For a discussion of the popularity of the principles and importance of classical antiquity in both high and popular culture, see the published MA thesis of Jared Jacavone, “The Paid Vote: America’s Neutrality During the Greek War for Independence.”

2. Earle notes the American reaction to the Serbian uprising between 1807 and 1813 to indicate the importance of the Ancient Greek heritage and its impact on the Americans. Although the Serbians were also Christians fighting for their freedom, in the American public consciousness the Serbian war did not create any “passionate attachments” as the Greek cause and was dismissed as an “uprising of a semi-barbarous Balkan peasantry.” Evidently, reverence for antiquity had played an important role in the sentiments Americans nourished for modern Greece (44-45).

3. The full text of the Messenian Senate petition can be found in translation in North American Review XVIII (Boston 1821) (415-416).

4. Earle gives an example of the various “contributions” by Americans who were caught in the “drive” to participate in fund-raising: “special benefit performances were given at the theatres; special sermons were preached and special collections taken up in the churches; prominent men debated public questions and charged an admission fee to be donated to the local Greek committees; merchants were persuaded to assign a percentage of their profits to Greek relief; objects of value were offered at public auction and sold at inflated prices; school children handed up their pennies; laborers gave up a day’s wages; ship owners donated space on their ships for supplies destined for Greece; innumerable balls and fairs were held” (51). See also Larabee for similar descriptions.

5. Field notes that Capudan Pasha and many other Turkish officials had great difficulty in “comprehending the dual nature of American policy and in making the distinction... between acts of citizens and acts of government” (135).

6. Protestants believed that the Greek Orthodox Church had departed from true Christianity as a result of the long Muslim enslavement and were in need of reform, which they were willing to provide. Edward Everett in his review of Koraes’ new edition of The Ethics of Aristotle notes: “America has done something for Greece. Our missionary societies have their envoys to the Grecian church, with supplies of Bibles and tracts for their benighted flocks” (Earle 48, my emphasis).

7. Protestants had noticed the Greeks’ insatiable desire for reading material unavailable at that time, and so the distribution of the Bible, of pamphlets with religious context, and other material
of didactic nature was used to subtly involve Greeks in religious discussions and social gatherings.

8. Nasioutzik notes the speech J. L. Dilman made some years later in which he establishes the relation between Protestantism and republicanism: “The educated people of a country provide the most invaluable service as both the proponent and the exponent of the spiritual forces on which society depends. It has been the protestant pulpit which created the most noble and righteous example of republicanism” (Secret Commissions 50).

9. Of all the children who arrived in the United States between 1823 and 1828, one reached the New World on his own, nine with their parents’ consent, who even agreed to pay for their tickets and their tuition, and the remaining twenty-four were either saved from death, or purchased from slave markets by benevolent American tradesmen. The issue of the Greek unattended young refugees in the US has been discussed by many scholars and historians. See, Simopoulos, Larabee, Lazos, Nasioutzik, Papageorgiou, Field, Malafouris, Hadzidimitriou (“Observations Concerning Orphans.”)

10. There are two different diaries by Evangelides. The first one covers the period he spent in New York between 1834 and 1838 while still studying at New York University and Columbia University. The second one covers a period of his stay in Hermoupolis, Syros, in Greece (Smyrnaos & all, Νυκτερινά Σκαλαθύρματα). There has been an attempt by John Gregoriadis to transcribe the “Diary” but he died before completing his task (“The Greek Boy”). For a detailed report of the history of the two diaries kept by Christodoulos Evangelides, see Μιχαήλα Καραμίνη-Ιατρού (Mihaela Karabini-Iatrou), Introduction in Smyrnaos & all, Νυκτερινα Σκαλαθύρματα 28-31.

11. It is interesting to note that the information available concerning these refugee boys focuses on those who were totally assimilated and although they may have nourished deep love for Greece, they are mainly known as prominent American citizens of Greek origin. Little, if any, information is available for the great majority of the other Greek refugees.

12. The exact date of Evangelides’ birth is not known. Whenever he was asked, he was evasive. To justify his ignorance, he claimed that where he came from, people were not interested in one’s date of birth. There are different dates: 1808, 1812, 1815 and 1824. The last one is totally false as we have evidence on the basis of his diary and on the basis of Castanis’ autobiographical narrative that he left Smyrna in late 1827. Neither is 1808 a plausible date as it cancels later events which are chronologically specific. So either 1812 or 1815 must have been the year of his birth.

13. Information relating to his departure conditions from Smyrna and his arrival in the US is rather obscure and contradictory, as most information concerning the “orphans” is. The Americans involved in his return trip to the States are Samuel Howe, Nicholas Stuyvesant, Daniel Jepson, captain R. E. Grover and P. Vandervoort. Evangelides refers to the last three in his diary with gratitude but makes no references to the other two. Yet, research in other sources has shown that both Stuyvesant and Howe were upon Jane, the ship which sailed from Smyrna to other Greek islands, to Greek mainland ports, then to Malta and later to the US.

14. The comment is attributed to either Photios Karavasilis Kavassalis or Karavellis (-vellas) Anastasios as noted in Lyman F. Hodge, Photius Fisk: A Biography, Boston 1891, qtd. in Lazos 560.

15. Hatzidimitriou also gives examples of fund-raising events in which Greek “orphans” participated actively (“Observations concerning the Greek Orphans”). Castanis’ The Greek Exile is a third person narrative. So, when he speaks of “the three boys” present on the stage, he probably refers to himself and the other two, Zahos and Evangelides. Sappho was adopted by Thomas L. Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts and Chairman of the Boston Greek Committee, but there is no other information available. The term “adopted” must not be taken literally. In the texts on Greek “orphans,” it is used broadly, meaning “taken under one’s care.”
16. We do not know what may have triggered his desire to start keeping a record of his everyday activities. It may have been a New Year resolution, an attempt to improve his writing skills, a traditional way of protestant self-examination, or even encouragement by Julia Ward who had given him a notebook for Christmas.

17. Initial spelling of the manuscript has been maintained in all quotations from Evangelides “Diary Mss.”

18. He must have been good-looking, too, as he had had some platonic affairs with eminent citizens’ daughters, such as Major David Bates Douglas’ Sara, and the daughter of his patron and benefactor, Samuel Ward, Julia. Despite the fact that Julia Ward married Samuel Gridley Howe a few years after Christodoulos, or Christy as she called him, left for Greece, they remained life-long friends and exchanged letters.

19. For an extensive discussion of the education offered at Evangelides Lyceum, see Smyrnaios, Μετέωρος Ζήλος, Στα Ίχνη της Ουτοπίας. For a discussion of the Evangelides’ innovative teaching program in comparison to traditional Greek private schools in Hermoupolis, see Smyrnaios, “An Early controversy over educational innovation: Christos Evangelides vs. John Valettas in Syros (1851-1852).” For a book discussion of the private protestant schools’ activities in Greece, see Sophie Papageorgiou and Poly Thanailaki.

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ABSTRACTS

The declaration of the Greek War of Independence and emancipation from the long Turkish enslavement was heralded by enthusiasts, romantics, abolitionists and philhellenists in both Europe and the United States of America. Eventually, most of them assumed the role of philhellenes, and contributed to the success of the Greek cause either by their actual presence, or by their fund raising campaign, or by the personal influence they exercised on hesitant American governments. American Philhellenism took many forms, one of which was that of the protestant denominational committee support whose endowment, although open to interpretation, contributed significantly to both the civilians’ relief and to the development of the Greek educational system. The particular paper discusses the role the American Protestant missionaries played within this wider atmosphere of support and their Greek “orphans” project pertaining to several boys being taken by American missionaries back to their homeland to be given a new home, education and job opportunities either in the United States or in Greece. In my discussion of the American Protestant contribution to the Greek War of Independence in 1821, I have chosen to discuss Christodoulos Evangelides’ American experience as he is one of the very few “orphans” who left a diary behind shedding light to the conditions of the particular project.

INDEX

Keywords: Greek independence, American philhellenes, Protestant missionaries, “orphans,” Christodoulos Evangelides, Hellenic Lyceum, Syros
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