



Living in an “Isle of Safety”: The Sidon Female Seminary in World War I and the Constraints of Compassion

Ellen L. Fleischmann

In 1915 Charlotte H. Brown, the principal of the Sidon Female Seminary, an American missionary school in Lebanon, described how the staff and students were living

dual lives – one the quiet life of teachers among pupils whose thoughts were bounded by the schoolyard walls and with minds mainly intent on the work near at hand. The other was that connected with the rumors and excitement of the war as news that filtered in ... reminded us that though we might be living, as it were, in an “isle of safety,” many connected with us by tier of friendship were in the stress of great and terrible events.¹

This isle of safety was fleeting, however. Within less than a year the protective shield the missionaries had erected around their charges

Façade of the school. *Source:* Foreign Missionary, vol. 38 (Dec. 1879).

was pierced. The wolves of starvation, disease, fuel shortages, locusts and increasing lawlessness were howling at the school's door. On top of this, the uneasy neutrality of the American presence was shattered when the Ottoman government briefly closed down the American mission schools in Lebanon in 1916. By 1917, the school's "connection with the needy became an intimate one," and the school had been largely transformed into a soup kitchen, refuge for the starving, and workshop to produce garments for the poor.² But there were also not quite as intimate aspects of disconnection as well.

Recent scholarship on World War I in the Middle East has begun to relocate the experiences of civilians on the home front from the periphery to the center.³ The present article contributes to this project, utilizing a microscopic lens, through examining one small community's experience with suffering during World War I. It is deliberately crafted around the school reports, which depict a distinctive portrait of a complex and very local community. Although the Seminary's reports do provide valuable information about the suffering of the civilian population and – perhaps most valuably, about the experiences of women and girls – the discursive narrative that can be constructed from them is both evocative and distant.⁴ The reports reveal both connection and disconnect toward the sufferers in Sidon on the part of the missionaries who were in charge of the school, and bring to the foreground both the dilemmas of empathy and the constraints of their compassion. The missionaries' reports hint that the intimate relationship between the school and the "needy" contributed to different outcomes for people who suffered

Writers on the ethics of care posit (among other things) that it is "personal and social relations – [one's] feelings of connection and responsibility" that motivate humans to "respond morally to the suffering of others ... the ability to care with commitment about another can emerge only through sustained connections among persons and groups of persons."⁵

This is not an account of suffering qua suffering. The Mission's *Station* reports, written by the male missionaries who always constituted the leadership of the local stations of the Mission, eloquently record the details and intensity of the suffering and horror on the ground.⁶ The Station was quite active in providing aid to the larger Sidon community.⁷ The missionaries at the school also responded to the misery and tragedies around them, but within the confines of their own school compound. And yet the tone that emerges from these seminary reports lead one to ask: was the "isle of safety" a sanctuary or actually a citadel erected by a foreign institution to protect its "own" needy to the neglect or indifference to others' fates? The Sidon school missionaries' connection to the local school community among whom they lived played a role in determining the kind of aid they provided and whom they chose to help.⁸

The reports also reveal how the school's ambivalent position as a foreign institution embedded within, and closely connected to, a local community affected its relief work. The missionaries did not think of themselves first and foremost as relief workers or as providers of "humanitarian" assistance; instead, they attempted to maintain their identities as messengers of spiritual salvation, as well as their role, in part, as *in loco parentis* to their students. The Gospel, always their primary concern, was not abandoned or forgotten. The students, local teachers, and their families, on the other hand, sought to rely on the



General view of Sidon, with Mr. Eddy's house and the boarding school indicated. *Source: Foreign Missionary, vol. 30 (Aug. 1871).*

“intimate” relationship more for physical than spiritual salvation, and increasingly turned to the school for aid during the dark war years.

Ultimately, this article tells a story about the qualities, limits and constraints of compassion and empathy on the part of this specific foreign community, and, along the way, demonstrates the link between aid, power and privilege.⁹ The story of the Sidon Seminary demonstrates that who and what constituted the local was often at the heart of the humanitarian response to the trauma of World War I in the Middle East, determining who received aid, and thus survived.

Below I discuss the following: 1) how the war affected the school community; 2) the response of the missionaries to the suffering in this community; and 3) what this response tells us about relations between one local institution and the suffering community. Finally, I address the question: did the “isle of safety” protect or isolate sufferers?

War Comes to Sidon Seminary

Sidon Seminary was part of the network of tens of schools established by the American Protestant Syria Mission in the mid-nineteenth century, and was one of three premier girls' schools located in the coastal cities of Beirut in the center, Sidon in the south and Tripoli in the north that each included a boarding department along with their day schools.¹⁰ The students and local teachers at the Sidon school tended to come from families of relatively modest incomes and rural backgrounds, often from the surrounding villages in the mountains above the city. The school recruited both students and teachers from these villages, and also provided graduates to teach in village schools. The missionary staff frequently visited the rural areas – traveling by donkey – and developed its “tier of

friendship” with the families associated with the seminary, both in the villages and Sidon itself.¹¹ The Seminary had servants who both lived on the school premises, and nearby. From the late nineteenth century until 1928, the school, which consisted of a rambling building some four stories high, along with several smaller houses, was located in the heart of Sidon, occupying high ground that overlooked the harbor.¹² Needless to say, in this small and somewhat compact community, the missionaries were “on an intimate footing” with the young girls in their charge, be they boarders or day students.¹³ Thus the school community was constructed of a web of connections comprising the students and their families in the villages and Sidon itself: the servants and their families, members of the local Protestant community, and the families of the Mission, which included missionaries at the nearby boys’ school, the Gerard Institute. It is worth noting that this was by no means solely a Protestant community, although Protestants held a special place within it; most of the students at the school were not Protestant, and, in fact, during the war years the number of non-Christians in the schools rose.¹⁴

According to the missionaries, initially the war affected the school hardly at all. Writing retrospectively in 1914, Assistant Principal Dora Eddy described the year as “very uneventful,” and, comparing it to the “stormy year” through which they were (now) passing, “preceded by a dead calm.” This, of course, was not to last. Before the year was over, the “dead calm” was shattered when the winds of famine, which had already arrived in Beirut, swept into Sidon, along with the coming of the locusts and a flood. Finances were tight; some of the students whose families were unable to receive remittances from relatives had to stop coming to school, and the missionaries worried that they would not be able to pay the full salaries of their teachers.¹⁵ “All over the country people [were] under a cloud of anxiety and fear.”¹⁶ The school’s “tier of friendship” began to suffer personal tragedies that were to continue during the course of the war. In 1915, the school community lost two of its members to the illnesses that began to spread throughout Greater Syria. One of the school’s most faithful teachers, Mesooda Haddad of Judayda, died from a “severe illness,” and the little eight-year-old daughter of one of the school’s servants, “an unusually sweet, attractive and intelligent child,” fell sick, languished for months, and, after a brief, hopeful respite, ended up dying after being attacked by a second disease.¹⁷

Things got more grim as the war ground on. By 1916, the students were experiencing “increasing want and hunger in [their] homes,” where their families were in “great distress.” The school began to support students from some of these families, feeding those who were “pitifully thin and poorly nourished.” The school community was increasingly “burdened with anxiety as to the fate of fathers, brothers and husbands, and the problem of how to obtain the wherewithal to provide for their families.” A sister of one of the Seminary graduates walked for two days from her village to beg for food for herself and her family, who were in “desperate straits.” Beggars began to appear at the school in large numbers. The school initially gave food (pieces of bread and leftovers) directly to “those who seemed worthy,” reimbursement coming from “private sources.” As food supplies became scarce, the school gave money to beggars, limiting the amount as the number of vagrants grew. Eventually, with the arrival of typhus, all beggars were turned



The port of Sidon. *Source: Foreign Missionary, vol. 40 (Apr. 1882).*

away from the school's doors.¹⁸

A cause of gravest concern to the community, despite the fact that the actual community *in* the school was female, was the situation of male family members, who were vulnerable in an entirely different way than the young girls who were their daughters, sisters, and nieces. As Melanie Tanielian has observed, “an extraordinary number of families lost their male heads of household in the war.”¹⁹ The loss of these men was one of the most devastating effects of the war.²⁰ The death in the spring of 1916 of the only brother of two teachers, whose mother was dead and father was elderly, was a “crushing blow” that “cast a shadow” over the entire school for the rest of the year. Men died of the famine in disproportionate numbers. In one village near Sidon, missionaries reported, there was “not one man living.”²¹ Although the effects of deprivation and exposure to disease from their being conscripted also took an enormous toll, men were also susceptible to other perils such as arbitrary detentions. When the father and uncle of three girls were arrested and taken under guard to a Court of Inquiry in Aley, the entire school was in a state of intense fear, particularly since this court had tried and condemned traitors, but “nobody knew just what type of acts were considered traitorous.” Thus, the mere “fact of anyone’s being summoned was the cause of greatest anxiety.”²² (The men were eventually released.) By 1917, death toll from smallpox, fever and starvation had hit the community hard. One observer called this the “the year of horror.”²³ Utter deprivation prevailed, although by some accounts, Sidon had easier access to food than Beirut and the mountains.²⁴ By this time, the school, whose enrollment had decreased from one hundred and twenty-eight at the start of the war to twenty-two, no longer had boarders and had converted the

dormitory into a wool room where women were paid in food to card, spin and crochet. The school's dining room was transformed into a soup kitchen. Later the "wool room" became a dormitory for several "destitute and half starved people." By the end of the war the school had become a Red Cross orphanage, taking in one hundred and sixty-five orphans. Up until 1920, the school's buildings were still being used for charitable purposes.²⁵

There is no way to reconstruct the actual death toll of the school community during the war. The reports provide some stories of individual deaths, mentioned above, but by and large illnesses, deprivation and death are frequently referred to in passing, and in general terms, such as the missionaries' remark that when the girls left school for the year they returned to "homes saddened by sickness and death, and burdened with want."²⁶ In fact, the school community, although it experienced its share of suffering during the war, was ultimately resilient. Considering that some estimates of the number of civilian dead in Syria are as high as half a million, it is extraordinary that the school community was not hit harder than it seems from this limited data.²⁷ By 1926 the school had re-invented itself, moving to a new location away from the center of Sidon, constructing a new "plant," and creating a home economics program for which it became renowned in the Arab world.²⁸

The Missionary Response to Suffering at Sidon Seminary

It is in examining the discursive response of the missionaries, who, privileged and empowered as members of a foreign community, played an undisputed leadership role in the school community, that we get at the discordances and disconnects in the reports. Their tone vacillates between self-righteousness, compassion, and judgment. In places they write ironically, humorously, and almost sarcastically, with detachment and a notable lack of empathy. There are self-absorbed, and almost petulant qualities to the reports. Frequent mention of the darkness which teachers and students endured due to shortages of matches and oil evoke a sense of almost Gothic claustrophobia in the physical and emotional confines of the school. "Our souls often rebelled against the dimness or absolute darkness in which we had to walk between the few lighted rooms," complained Charlotte Brown.²⁹ The darkness in the school perhaps mirrored the gloom of the times.

One could analyze all of this as the natural, complicated human response to a world turned upside down. However, the portrait is one of a community that was simultaneously isolated from that wider world, yet at the same time, deeply affected by and responsive to it.

Gender complicates, and is an important part of, the story in several ways. Although the school, obviously, was not a cloister, yet its identity as a female residential community on the high ground made it a shelter and sanctuary that was isolated from the poverty and pestilence of the city streets in Sidon above which it stood. At the same time, being a "female" institution, led by religious missionary women, the school represented a complex amalgam: "America," "Protestant Christianity" and "women." Feminist ethicists tell us that "women throughout history have been associated with care."³⁰ Undoubtedly, the school, a female community, must have signified hope and the possibility of compassionate

humanitarian assistance to the beleaguered, suffering people in Sidon. This is borne out by people flocking to its doors for help.

Were the sufferers seeking compassion, along with material, bodily support? What were the limits and extent of compassion at Sidon Seminary?

Let us briefly look at compassion. Michael Barnett describes one of the three distinctive markers of modern humanitarianism as “compassion across boundaries.”³¹ It is worth noting that, in the “isle of safety” the missionaries attempted to construct for their community, many were offered compassion and aid, and survived as a result. The missionaries were especially attuned to their own “girls,” who were among the most vulnerable in their community, and with whom they had the most intimate connections. The young students were particular objects of the missionaries’ tenderness and sympathy. The missionaries were relieved that their charges were, initially, “far removed from the suffering world outside,” and “hardly conscious of its existence.” They were “thankful when [they] saw [the girls] so carefree and happy, that a few young lives were being spared the sorrow so pressing outside.”³² As noted above, as the girls’ families began to experience hardship and deprivation, the school provided aid. To my knowledge, none of the schools’ students died during the war.³³

As the situation grew increasingly dire, the school became more involved in relief efforts. Some of this work is movingly described. Brown recounts the rescue of a young seamstress, Miriam, who had been found “sitting in the corner of an almost empty room slowly starving while her mother in another room had already died of disease and privation.”³⁴ The school took in Miriam and her sister, feeding them, providing them with medicine and restoring them to health and “renewed courage.”

Not everyone who entered the school’s premises was as fortunate as Miriam, and compassion was sometimes in short supply. One particular story that illustrates this lack of compassion vividly is worth recounting in detail:

One wild, stormy night in February occurred one of the most exciting events of the year. The premises were invaded by an invalided soldier a former tinsmith who was well acquainted with the intricate passages and the weak and antiquated locks of the school. He made his way into the Principal’s room who, rising in the dark to attend to a window, placed her hand suddenly on a man’s arm. When discovered, he had evidently just abstracted from the wardrobe a bag of buttons which he no doubt supposed were piastres, bichlier [bishlik] and even liras! An alarm immediately followed and a scuffle ensued, help coming in time from our stalwart cook who in her wild rush in the dark to the rescue, knocked over a bench, but succeeded in reaching the man before he could make his escape. Our man servant & our neighbor, Miss Doolittle, aroused by the noise & the ringing of the servant’s bell, also came in and the man was bound and guarded to prevent his picking a lock and escaping. The next morning the excitement & elation of the night before were turned into consternation when we learned that the man had died suddenly but not until he had told the story of how he had entered the

building. Illness, semi starvation for months and his wild efforts to escape when discovered, resulted in his death. The whole occurrence made some of us very nervous and as afraid of the dark as if we had returned to the days of our childhood.³⁵

The narrative of this poor man's escapade, death and condition is recounted with dramatic flourish and even humor, but the missionaries and staff, in ignoring his condition and reasons for invading the school, essentially allowed him to die. Instead of expressing regret, or eliciting horror over the man's fate, they describe the fearful effects of the incident on themselves.³⁶ The isle of safety for the school community had become a citadel, and the death of a man crazed by hunger was reduced to an "exciting event."

Elsewhere in these reports one can discern disconnect, distance and even a kind of callousness. Brown describes the mission's work sewing shrouds for the dead and garments for the poor as "fascinating ... puzzle[s]" to be solved, and, similarly, the work of housing orphans at the end of the war as "fascinating as a Chinese puzzle."³⁷ In the paragraph that recounts the story of Miriam, Brown adds parenthetically and somewhat laconically that "the dreadful part in all these transactions was that we did not have enough money ... to go round and so some had to be taken and the rest left to die or survive, as the case might be."³⁸ Accompanying the account of the girl who walked for two days to beg for food is a drily rendered description of how she fell down before the principal in an attempt to kiss her feet. "She was a girl to whom great leniency had been shown in the matter of payment of tuition and in some way she had been made to realize ... how very much she had for which to be grateful." The "amount of food consumed" by four pupils who were taken in and fed by the missionaries "was a matter of surprised comment among the other diners and a real pleasure to all."³⁹ Such descriptions carry mixed messages, seem almost grudging, and are not exactly redolent of tender compassion.

In another incident, the missionaries reluctantly agreed to take in Hiline [Hilaneh or H  l  ne] a little girl whose parents were in Egypt and whose uncle, under whose care she had been left, was "in hiding and deadly afraid of conscription," and too nervous to keep her. Although her food was provided by their relief fund, she proved to be too "full of tricks" and "overflowing vitality"; when she was caught "thieving," the missionaries self-righteously "felt it was quite fair to send her home."⁴⁰ The sympathy and concern the missionaries felt for their own girls did not extend to this small child, far from her parents during a terrible war, and unwanted by her relatives.

The missionaries did, however, look out for their own, including the women of their community. They continued to hold their women's meetings at the school into the worst of the war years; however, when they "found that it was neither agreeable nor sanitary for the well-to-do to have their unwashed sisters of the very poor sitting too near them in those days of typhus fever and with soap beyond the reach of many, [they] quietly let the cleaner people go upstairs to one meeting and had a second gathering on the ground floor for the unmended, unwashed and underfed, some of whom were practically beggars."⁴¹

No doubt, as the war wore on, the missionaries suffered from "compassion fatigue." But there were other factors at work as well that contributed to isolation and detachment

in the isle of safety. The missionaries were able to literally retreat behind the schoolyard and maintain a barrier between their small community and the “unwashed,” “motley crowd” of sufferers and conveyors of disease when they so chose. But they also lived behind a wall of privilege that shielded them from the horrors experienced outside of these walls. While members of the community outside experienced increasing hunger, want and destitution, the missionaries had little difficulty obtaining food for themselves, nor did they lack the “exorbitant” amounts of money to buy the requisite necessities to survive. (They actually raised their tuition fees in the first year of the war.) They were not hungry, or without a roof over their heads. They did indeed provide aid to many. None of the missionaries in Sidon, however, died of starvation or disease.⁴²

“Isle of Safety”?

My final question is: how can we understand the experience of this community through analysis of these accounts? In other words, what accounts for the accounts? And if the missionaries existed in an isle of safety what does this tell us about the limits of humanitarianism within this local context?

The emergence of the kind of international (read: Western) “humanitarianism” that had developed on the eve of World War I involved “dissolving boundaries of indifference,” in order to “create new forms of community” and connection, but was also strongly influenced by and permeated with discourses of a Western Christian civilizational mentality.⁴³ Of course, these missionary women’s expressions reflected this discourse and colored their responses to the community and its suffering. The comment about beggars “deemed worthy” enough to receive aid reveals the not uncommon belief (now as then) that charity could “bring out the worst in people,”⁴⁴ and thus only good people deserved charity when there was too much suffering and not enough aid to go around. “Outsiders” – be they small, rambunctious girls, desperate former soldiers, or beggars at the door – could, perhaps, receive aid, but only to an extent, or under certain conditions, or, in some cases, not at all. Perhaps as important as worthiness – or what also defined it, for the missionaries – was the sufferer’s closeness to, and being a part of, the “school community.” This had much to do with whether or not one received aid and empathy from the Sidon Seminary. Compassion sometimes did not travel far enough to cross certain boundaries.

The missionaries’ identity as foreigners in an institution that was embedded within the local community raises further questions about the reach of humanitarianism. Barnett’s second characteristic of modern humanitarianism is its “vow to help strangers in distant lands.”⁴⁵ The missionaries, however, were “of” the community and “from among” it,⁴⁶ yet the distinctions between the Americans and the community ultimately contributed to the imbalance of power and privilege that limited their ability and will to help everyone equally. Distinctions between “their” people and the “others” could result in deciding who would live or who would be “left to die.”

Ellen Fleischmann is the Alumni Chair of Humanities and a professor of history at the University of Dayton in Ohio. She is the author of The Nation and Its “New” Women, 1920-1948 (University of California Press, 2003), and numerous articles on women and gender and missionaries in the Mashriq. She is working on a book about women, gender and American Missionaries in Lebanon.

Endnotes

- 1 Sidon Seminary, Oct. 1914-1915, from a bound volume of reports (dated 1880-1922) held at the library of the National Evangelical Institute for Girls and Boys, Sidon, hereafter referred to as NEIGB. Unless otherwise indicated, all of the school reports come from this volume. I use the titles for the reports that the various authors utilized. The reports from 1911-1920 were written by Anna Jessup, Dora Eddy, Charlotte H. Brown, and Selwa Hilu. I thank Principal Jean Daud for making these available to me. Anna Jessup and Dora Eddy came from what I call missionary “dynasties” – families with long roots as missionaries of the Syria Mission. Jessup was the daughter of Henry Harris Jessup, one of the most prominent members and great chronicler of the Syria Mission for more than 50 years (1856-1910). Eddy’s grandparents, father, and aunts were all missionaries. (She was the niece of Mary P. Eddy, mentioned below.)
- 2 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1916-1917, NEIGB.
- 3 Melanie Tanielian, “The War of Famine: Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon (1914-1918),” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2013, 1.
- 4 We do not have the students’ direct perspectives, other than as reported by the missionaries. This is a particular problem with trying to uncover the historical experiences of the most vulnerable of the vulnerable: children and the young. As Robert Fernea points out “children never do have control of their lives.” Robert Fernea, “Introduction,” in *Remembering Childhood in the Middle East: Memoirs from a Century of Change*, collected and edited by Elizabeth Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 1-2. Young girls’ and women’s perspectives on the war are particularly scant. Most of the collective memories of the war and suffering are recounted in memoirs written by men; in some cases, they provide the missing children’s voices (in retrospect, not surprisingly), but rarely that of female children. See Najwa al-Qattan’s “Eating Grass in WWI Syria: Animals and Identity in the Discourses of the Famine,” in which female experiences – such as women cannibalizing their own children – are described by men. Unpublished paper presented at annual Middle East Studies Association conference, Oct. 12, 2013. The women are objects, not subjects in these accounts. Children’s experiences are always mediated, either through adults speaking/writing for them, or by time.
- 5 Fiona Robinson, *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory and International Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 157. Thanks to Marilyn Fischer for drawing my attention to Robinson’s work. See Marilyn Fischer, “Caring Globally: Jane Addams, World War One, and International Hunger,” in *Global Feminist Ethics*, edited by Rebecca Whisnant and Peggy DesAutels (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). Robinson is professor of political science at Queen’s College, and specializes in feminist ethics.
- 6 The horror and suffering people in Greater Syria endured during the war are vividly evoked in Aaron Tylor Brand, “Suffering in the Eye of the Storm: The Emotional Toll of the Famine in World War I on Relief Workers in Beirut and Mount Lebanon,” unpublished paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association conference, Oct. 12, 2013; Najwa al-Qattan, “Eating Grass,” Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier’s Diary and the Erasure of Palestine’s Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), and Melanie Tanielian, “The War of Famine.”
- 7 The “school community,” a phrase I use below, consisted of the American missionary staff and local Lebanese students, teachers, staff, and their families – who were associated with the school. Not surprisingly, the Station and school worked in conjunction with each other, but the school was careful in maintaining its own identity and mission. For example, at one point the school released the head teacher, Almaz Hourani, to help the Station head, George Doolittle, distribute remittances sent to local people from relatives in the U.S. But when the work increased so much that it “promised to be continuous employment, the school felt that they could not dispense with Miss Hourani’s services” and called her back to

- work. 1915-1916 Report. This incident seems to support Christine Lindner's observation in n. 9 about tensions within the community.
- 8 This is also true, to a certain extent, about the Station and the entire Syria Mission in Lebanon.
 - 9 It is worth mentioning that there was a great deal of diversity in the approaches of the American missionary community in Lebanon to providing aid in their localities. I owe this insight to Christine Lindner, who writes, "it seems as [if] each station and even each school operated under its own rules in regards to relief—breaking whatever unity there was ... this caused a lot of tension." Personal communication, Oct. 6, 2013.
 - 10 For more about the American missionary schools for girls, see Ellen Fleischmann, "The Impact of American Protestant Missions in Lebanon on the Construction of Female Identity, c. 1860-1950," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 13, no. 4 (2002), 411-426; "Evangelization or Education: American Protestant Missionaries, the American Board, and the Girls and Women of Syria (1830-1910)," in *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Heleen Van der Murre (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 263-280; and "Lost in Translation: Home Economics and the Sidon Girls' School of Lebanon, c. 1924-1932," *Social Sciences and Mission*, vol. 23 (2010), 32-62.
 - 11 Sidon Seminary, 1914-1915, NEIGB, written by Charlotte H. Brown.
 - 12 Sidon Seminary, 1862-1902, NEIGB, written by Charlotte H. Brown. (This report was read at a special meeting of the Mission in 1902.) The building was "one of the highest structures in the city" and "its tiled roof—the second of the kind in Sidon [was] a most conspicuous object, catching the eye of the traveller at an hours [sic] distance in either direction." Report of Sidon Seminary, 1880, NEIGB, n.a.
 - 13 Report of Sidon Seminary, Oct. 1911-July 1912, NEIGB, written by Anna Jessup.
 - 14 In the course of the war, as overall enrollment dipped, the number of Protestant students dropped to an all-time low, while the number of Muslim students rose to an all-time high.
 - 15 Sidon Seminary, 1914-1915, NEIGB, Charlotte H. Brown.
 - 16 (Mrs. W.K.) Elizabeth N. Eddy, "Back Among the Women of Syria," *Woman's Work*, no. 12, vol. 29 (December, 1914), 268.
 - 17 Sidon Seminary, 1914-1915, NEIGB, Charlotte H. Brown.
 - 18 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1915-1916, NEIGB, Dora E. Eddy.
 - 19 Tanielian, "The War of Famine," 57.
 - 20 See Nicola Ziadeh, "First-Person Account of the First World War in Greater Syria," in *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, edited by Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kopp, Stephan Dähne (Beirut: Orient-Institut and Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2006). See also al-Qattan, "Eating Grass."
 - 21 The writer of the Sidon Station's 1916-1917 report writes: "The men in particular seem utterly unable to withstand the famine, and even in the Lebanon where there was no military conscription, the death rate among the men as compared with the women and children is simply unbelievable." Report of the Sidon Station, 1916-1917, Presbyterian Historical Society (hereafter PHS) 90-12-2. Thanks to Tylor Brand for drawing my attention to this.
 - 22 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1915-1916.
 - 23 Margaret McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era in Syria* (New York: Revell, 1920). (This was the title of a chapter in her book.)
 - 24 "Message From Syria," *Woman's Work*, vol. 32, no. 10 (October, 1917), 222.
 - 25 Selwa Hilwu, the teacher who wrote the 1919-1920 report, states that the school building "was offered as a home to the run away people from Marjeoun" [Marjayoun] and the school was moved temporarily into another building, Report of Red Cross Orphanage in Sidon Seminary, 1919-1920.
 - 26 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1915-1916.
 - 27 L. Schatkowski Schilcher, "The Famine of 1915-1918 in Greater Syria," in *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honor of Albert Hourani*, edited by John P. Spagnolo (Oxford: Ithaca College Press, 1992) 229. The numbers of civilian deaths are a problem for historians.
 - 28 See Fleischmann, "Lost in Translation."
 - 29 Sidon Seminary, Oct. 1914-Sep. 1915.
 - 30 Fischer, "Caring Globally," 66.
 - 31 Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 19.
 - 32 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1915-1916.
 - 33 A report from the head of the Sidon Station mentions that "in Kanaa [a] whole family of seven died, one of the children the most promising pupil in our school." This was probably one of the boys from the mission's boys' school, the Gerard Institute. Report of Sidon Station, Syria Mission, Summer 1915,

- to summer 1916, by George Doolittle, PHS RG-115-17-19. Thanks to Tylor Brand for this reference.
- 34 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1917-1918.
- 35 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1917-1918.
- 36 These reports were written for internal consumption (sent back to the home board), so this issue needs further exploration – i.e., the question of audience and purpose. Articles written for publications such as *Woman's Work*, a women's magazine published by the Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. tended to be more poignant in style and use of language (and self-serving, touting missionary heroism) than the reports, which leads to the not surprising conclusion that the former were more oriented toward fundraising and external promotion. Many *station* reports to the board strongly advocate for and petition the board for additional missionaries, new buildings, etc. The *school* reports written by women, however, are much less direct in tone, language and outright demands than the station reports.
- 37 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1916-17 and Report of Red Cross Orphanage, 1918-1919.
- 38 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1917-1918.
- 39 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1915-1916.
- 40 1917-1918 report. The missionaries were particularly concerned about “thieving.” They mention having to guard against “the thieving that was and still is, so common during these days of distress and starvation, when our oranges & lemons have been a temptation to hungry boys.” One cannot help imagining the desperation of the starving children being denied this fruit. 1916-1917 Report.
- 41 Report of Sidon Seminary, 1916-1917.
- 42 Sidon Seminary, Oct. 1914-1915; Report of Sidon Seminary, 1916-1917.
- 43 Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 55-56.
- 44 Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 52.
- 45 Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 20.
- 46 This is a paraphrase of missionary Dr. Mary Eddy, the famous “first woman physician” in the Ottoman Empire. The Imperial Council of Medicine in Istanbul, during her examination to obtain her medical license, asked her “who are you?” She replied in Arabic, “I am of you and from among you.” She was born and raised in Sidon. See Ellen Fleischmann, “‘I Only Wish I Had a Home on This Globe’: Transnational Biography and Dr. Mary Eddy,” *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 21, no 3 (Autumn 2009), 116.