

"The Cause of the Greeks": Philadelphia and the Greek War for Independence, 1821–1828

IN THE SPRING OF 1821, after nearly four hundred years of Turkish rule, the Greeks of the Morea (Peloponessus) rose in rebellion. In the United States the drama of the Greek revolution evoked strong emotions. Americans were drawn to the Greeks for a number of reasons. For one, the Greeks were fellow Christians engaged in a veritable "holy war" of survival against their Moslem oppressors. National pride—which fueled a burgeoning commitment to the dissemination of republican ideology—formed another source of pro-Greek thought. Having themselves risen from tyranny, Americans were not indifferent to another people striving to achieve the same liberties they had fought for and maintained. Prior to 1821, no revolution captured the public imagination or aroused U.S. sympathy and benevolence more than the Greek uprising of 1821–28. Since their own revolutionary struggle a half century earlier, Americans had seen their own example emulated by the French, the South Americans, and even the Serbs, all with varying degrees of success. Only the Greeks, however, were able to elicit widespread humanitarian assistance from the United States. For instance, few Americans seemed to care about the Serbian Revolution of 1807–17, even though the Serbs, like the Greeks, were Christians fighting for similar principles. Unlike the Serbs, however, the Greeks were perceived as the heirs to the classical culture of antiquity.¹

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¹James A. Field Jr., *From Gibraltar to the Middle East: America and the Mediterranean World, 1776–1882* (Chicago, 1991), 121; and Edward Mead Earle, "American Interest in the Greek Cause, 1821–1827," *American Historical Review* 33 (1927), 44–45. In general, Americans welcomed antimonarchical revolutions, such as those in France and South America, but recoiled when those uprisings lapsed into

That many Americans, especially the classically educated elite, would manifest such deep concern for Hellenic independence should not be surprising given their reverence for classical Greece. The romantic idealization of the Greek roots of Western civilization comprised an important element in pro-Greek sentiment. By the time of the Greek revolution, Greece had become the center of attention for classical studies as scholars began to reinterpret ancient literature and the arts. Americans in these years designed their homes and public buildings to resemble Greek temples and named their towns and cities after those of antiquity. This veneration for all things Greek in turn fostered a passionate anticipation for the regeneration of ancient Hellas, seen by many intellectuals as the "real cradle of liberty in which the earliest republics were rocked."²

Nowhere was this sentiment more evident than in Philadelphia, which was at the time in the midst of its own Hellenic renaissance with the building of the Second Bank of the United States between 1818 and 1824. Modeled on the Parthenon in Athens, the Second Bank was regarded as the first truly Greek Revival building in the United States. Often styled the "Athens of America," the City of Brotherly Love might well have been expected to lend its moral and material support to the embattled Greeks. As in a number of other U.S. cities, the friends of Greece in Philadelphia organized an ad hoc committee to raise money and supplies to meet the Greek crisis.³

But a growing rift soon developed between those who favored aid to expedite the Greek war effort and those who wanted to confine the effort

"repression, Bonapartism, and deep social change." In the case of the South Americans, most commentators, while sympathetic, did not believe that the southern rebels possessed the qualities necessary for self-government. In any event, few Americans proposed that the nation extend military or financial support to them. See Bradford Perkins, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations. Volume 1: The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776-1865* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 12-14, 155-56.

² Cited in Parke Godwin, *A Biography of William Cullen Bryant* (2 vols., New York, 1883), 1:187. For more information on this nascent American Hellenism, see Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit, 1984), 184-85, 214-19; and Stephen A. Larrabee, *Hellas Observed: The American Experience of Greece, 1775-1865* (New York, 1957), especially chap. 1.

³ For a more detailed account of Philadelphia's architectural Hellenism see Roger G. Kennedy, *Greek Revival America* (New York, 1989), 167-74; Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (New York, 1944), 75-80; and William H. Pierson Jr., *American Buildings and their Architects: The Colonial and Neoclassical Styles* (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), 434-38. Among the most notable structures in Philadelphia, besides the Second Bank, were the Naval Hospital (or Naval Asylum), the Philadelphia Exchange, and the principal building of Girard College, now Founder's Hall.

to the relief of private distress. Initially, many philhellenes sought to enlist the support of the federal government, and some even attempted to send military assistance themselves. As it turned out, few Philadelphians cared to contribute money for purposes of war. Such a course, most individuals believed, threatened to violate the country's "traditional" policy of political and military nonintervention in European affairs as affirmed in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. As a consequence, Grecophiles shifted their focus. Emphasis was placed on obtaining subscriptions strictly for the relief of private distress. What is more, proponents of the Greeks no longer appealed on behalf of classical recollections or alluded to ancient heroes. Such arguments, it seemed, failed to have much impact with most middle- and lower-class citizens. Making more effective use of Christian and humanitarian pleas, sponsors were able to elicit a more universal response.

This development towards a more humanitarian policy is indicative of the growing importance of moral, religious, and humanitarian concerns for a large number of Americans during the early nineteenth century. During these years Americans witnessed a proliferation of benevolent, charitable, and religious organizations formed for the express purpose of spreading "personal, political, intellectual and moral improvement." Imbued with a special sense of destiny and mission, many philanthropists believed they had a duty to lead, by example and instruction, toward a better world.⁴ The significance of the Greek revolution was that it plunged American benevolence into an international arena. As humanitarians began to address social problems at home, they were naturally drawn to the idea of helping to alleviate similar hardships abroad. That the Greeks professed Christianity and sought to establish a government based on similar democratic principles, only enhanced the worthiness of their cause in the eyes of American philanthropists. The relief work carried on in Greece during the 1820s was a practical expression of sympathy for a distressed people—one that would establish a precedent for American philanthropic endeavors overseas.⁵

Popular sentiment and widespread enthusiasm for Greek independence was slow in forming. Supporters were unsure of how to properly channel

⁴ Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815–1840* (Baltimore, 1995), 147.

⁵ The methods of fund raising first incorporated in the campaign for Greek relief would be applied in later drives to alleviate the plight of famine-stricken peasants in Ireland and Russia. Nearly a century would pass before relief workers pushed beyond the methods and goals tested in Greece in the 1820s. See Merle Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1963).

their expressions of sympathy for the Greeks into measures that would help to ensure their success. During the period 1821–22, little was done in Philadelphia to assist Greece. An important factor contributing to this apparent apathy was the often unreliable and scanty news accounts of the conflict. In February 1822 the editor of the *United States Gazette* admitted that it was “difficult to give anything like a connected series of events.” News traveled through the German, French, and English press before it reached the United States, often in a “state of confusion.”⁶ Moreover, there were those who questioned whether Americans could do anything at all. One Philadelphia citizen, signing himself “Sacred Name of Washington” while entertaining the hope that Greece might someday be “emancipated from her thralldom,” believed that the sheer distance from the scene of hostilities prevented Americans from providing the Greeks with tangible assistance. In his opinion, all that Americans could hope to offer was the example of their own revolution.⁷

Yet another important consideration that contributed to the passivity of the citizenry was the uncertainty surrounding the role the European powers might play in resolving the conflict. There were those who felt that by reason of proximity the governments of Europe should be responsible for bringing order to Greece. Contemporary observers, such as the well-known Philadelphia author, publisher, and philanthropist Mathew Carey, looked upon European disregard for the “oppressed and magnanimous Greeks” with great indignation.⁸ Carey and others, however, were not confident that the European powers, particularly Russia, were capable of acting selflessly. Citing Russia’s historic territorial ambitions in the region, many felt that Russian intervention would ultimately bring about Greece’s incorporation into the Russian empire. Thus, with the Greeks seemingly “destined to lay their trophies at the feet of [Czar] Alexander for his disposal,” any assistance to the Greek cause would be folly. Some Americans became resigned to the fact that Greece would be simply exchanging one form of dictatorship for another, albeit a more Christian and supposedly more humane one.⁹

For Carey, the only chance to stave off Russian territorial aggrandizement

⁶ *United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), Feb. 6, 1822.

⁷ Letter published in the *United States Gazette*, Mar. 1, 1823.

⁸ Diary of Mathew Carey, Mar. 11, 1823, Rare Book Collection, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

⁹ *United States Gazette*, May 7, 1823.

rested on the intervention of England; but he was skeptical that Britain would align itself on the side of liberty. There were those who accused the British of secretly aiding the Turks in order to ensure the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and thus maintain it as a bulwark against Russian expansion. Philhellenes soon came to the unhappy realization that Greece could expect nothing from the "heartless" European governments because of their "entangling alliances and chimerical balance of power." But while the European cabinets were content, for the moment, to remain aloof from the struggle in Greece, there were certain voices in the United States that were not ready to abandon the "Christian Greeks to massacre and murder."¹⁰

In September 1822 the *National Gazette* of Philadelphia took the lead in outlining "a Romantic project for Congress." The paper's editor, Robert Walsh, called for Congress to issue a declaration in support of the Greeks and to send to their aid "all that portion of the naval force of the United States, which can be spared from the pursuit of pirates in the West Indies." He predicted that a U.S. fleet consisting of "ten, fifteen, or twenty sail composed of frigates and ships of the line" would be sufficient to destroy the Turkish navy and enable the Greeks to achieve their independence. Walsh argued that having proclaimed their own neutrality at the Congress of Vienna, the European powers could not object to U.S. intervention "on the side of Christianity and Civilization."¹¹ Other newspapers throughout the country expressed similar sentiments.¹² Later that year 138 citizens of Washington and Georgetown signed a petition requesting Congress to "appropriate two or three millions in provisions, and whatever may be necessary to the Greeks."¹³ Clearly, philhellenes sought to put pressure on the U. S. government to respond in some positive manner with respect to the Greeks.

¹⁰ Carey had immigrated from Ireland where he had opposed British oppression of the Catholics in that country. He had even been charged with sedition. See Carey, Diary, Mar. 11, 1823; *Address of the Committee Appointed at a General Meeting Held in Philadelphia, December 11, 1823 For the Relief of the Greeks to their Fellow Citizens*, reprinted in the *Philadelphia Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 19, 1823. Hezekiah Niles of Baltimore also shared this sentiment. See *Niles' Weekly Register* (Sept. 28, 1822), 49–50.

¹¹ *National Gazette and Literary Register* (Philadelphia), Sept. 23, 1822.

¹² In Oct. 1822 the *Boston Patriot* issued a call to "save the Greeks," and the *Daily Advertiser* of New York openly called for a cargo of munitions for Greece. Cited in Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 67, 304 n. 22.

¹³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annals of Congress of the United States*, 17th Cong., 2d sess., Dec. 24, 1822, 457–60.

On August 15, 1823, President James Monroe's cabinet discussed a request from Andreas Luriottis, agent of the Greek provisional government, for aid and recognition, as well as a proposal by Albert Gallatin, the U. S. minister to France, for Greek assistance. In one of his last dispatches, Gallatin proposed that the United States send a naval force to the Mediterranean and lend money to the Greeks. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams alone opposed Gallatin's plan. He believed that any military or financial assistance extended by the United States would place the country in a state of war with Turkey, and possibly with the Barbary powers. Adams wrote Luriottis that while Americans cheered "with their best wishes the cause of the Greeks," they were "forbidden by the duties of their situation, from taking part in the war to which their relation" was "that of neutrality."¹⁴

During November 1823, as Monroe was preparing the annual message to Congress that became the Monroe Doctrine, he seriously considered recognizing Greek independence. Adams quickly became alarmed at this prospect and advised the president to reconsider. The secretary opposed projecting even the appearance of American entanglement in European politics, especially when the administration was facing the possibility of European intervention in South America in order to restore the former Spanish colonies to Madrid's rule. Adams advised Monroe to balance a stand against European interference in South America with a repudiation of American involvement in European affairs. In the end, Monroe accepted his secretary's advice; the final draft of his message contained no recognition of Hellenic independence.¹⁵

Not satisfied with the contents of President Monroe's message to Congress, philhellenes revived their pressure on their representatives to do

¹⁴ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary, 1795-1848* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-77), 6:173, 194-99; Adams to Luriottis, Aug. 18, 1823, U.S. Congress. *Message from the President of the United States transmitting a report of the Secretary of State upon the subject of the present condition and future prospects of the Greeks* (Dec. 31, 1823), 18th Cong., 1st sess., H. Doc. 14, serial 93, vol. 1. See also Lawrence S. Kaplan, "The Monroe Doctrine and the Truman Doctrine: The Case of Greece," *Journal of the Early Republic* 13 (1993), 13; Ernest R. May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 214-18; and Paul C. Pappas, *The United States and the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1828* (Boulder, Colo., 1985), 50-51.

¹⁵ C. F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 6:197-99; see also Kaplan, "Monroe Doctrine," 12-13, 20; May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 216-18; Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 57-60; Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1969), 388-89; and Edward M. Earle, "Early American Policy Concerning Ottoman Minorities," *Political Science Quarterly* 62 (1927), 346-51.

more for the Greeks. One individual, writing under the pseudonym "Harmodius," wrote to the editor of the *National Gazette* proclaiming that it was the "duty of our government as a democracy to yield the Greeks effectual assistance." Possessing a patriotic and nationalistic spirit, Harmodius believed that the United States, as the champion of human liberty, had the obligation to continue the struggle for freedom and support others in their quest to win the same liberties that Americans themselves had achieved. Noting a similarity between the revolutionary generation of 1776 and the Greeks, he was convinced that if Greece succeeded in its struggle it would establish a republican form of government resembling America's and added that a liberated Greece would be beneficial to the United States since the parallels in political institutions would make Greece "our friend and ally."¹⁶ Other pro-Greek supporters in the city expressed corresponding sentiments.¹⁷

At this time, various lawmakers, probably influenced by the appeals made on behalf of Greece by some of their fellow citizens, began to take a renewed interest in the subject of Greek independence. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Adams, Albert Gallatin, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and Edward Everett were just some of the country's leading statesmen who voiced their desire for the creation of a Greek national state liberated from Ottoman domination. Some of the nation's governors included an appeal for recognition in their messages to their legislatures. Referring to Greece as the "mother of republics," Pennsylvania's newly elected governor, J. Andrew Schulz, expressed scorn for the European powers, who looked on "with folded arms" while the "Turkish barbarians" inflicted untold atrocities upon a Christian people who were struggling for freedom. Meanwhile, pro-Greek supporters found a sympathetic ear within the halls of Congress as the House of Representatives finally entered into a debate concerning the situation in Greece.¹⁸

On December 8, 1823, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts brought the

¹⁶ *National Gazette*, Dec. 23, 1823.

¹⁷ An editorial in the Dec. 16, 1823, issue of the *Franklin Gazette* proclaimed that the "cause of the Greeks" was "the same as that for which our fathers fought in 1776," but the paper's editor added a disclaimer when he wrote that the Greeks were struggling "against an oppression far more bitter than . . . unjust taxation."

¹⁸ Kaplan, "Monroe Doctrine," 10; Earle, "Early American Policy," 352; and Myrtle Cline, *American Attitude Toward the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1828* (Atlanta, 1930), 60. Governor Schulz's remarks were reprinted in the columns of the *National Gazette*, Dec. 19, 1823.

Greek issue before Congress by introducing a resolution calling on the president to appoint an agent or commissioner to Greece whose sole objective would be to obtain firsthand information on the state of affairs in that country. Webster's resolution was supported by a number of prominent congressmen, including Speaker of the House Henry Clay. Clay believed, as did Webster, that the United States, as the great exemplar of republican government and as the "last depository of human hope and human freedom," had an obligation to lend its moral support to the Greek cause.¹⁹

Despite the support of such luminaries, the Greek cause encountered severe criticism from many quarters. Boston merchants were particularly anxious over the prospect of the federal government sending an agent to Greece. Such a measure, they believed, would disrupt American trade in the Mediterranean and jeopardize the lives and property of Americans residing in the Ottoman Empire. But foremost among the resolution's critics was John Quincy Adams who, as previously mentioned, was instrumental in dissuading Monroe from formally recognizing Hellenic independence.²⁰

Lobbying with members of the House, Adams maneuvered for the defeat of Webster's resolution. Adams intended the administration only to express its wishes for the success of the Greeks. For Adams, the role of the United States as "moral leader" of the world did not oblige the government to assist other nations struggling for independence. He was simply not prepared to jeopardize U. S. national interests for the sake of other nations.²¹ John Randolph of Virginia best captured the sentiments of a number of anti-Greek critics when he proclaimed that the duty of Congress was to "guard the interests of the people of the United States, not to guard the rights of other people."²² Ultimately, the participants involved in the debate sided with Adams's view that involvement in European affairs carried inordinate risks for America. After a week of deliberation, the House as a Committee

¹⁹ *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Dec. 8, 1823, 805-6; Jan. 19, 1824, 1086-87, 1092-93; and Jan. 23, 1824, 1173-78. Among those who endorsed Webster's resolution were Henry Dwight and Francis Baylies of Massachusetts, Daniel P. Cook of Illinois, and Samuel Houston of Tennessee. See also Kaplan, "Monroe Doctrine," 15-16; and Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 68-70.

²⁰ Cline, *American Attitude*, 83-85; and *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Jan. 24, 1824, 1199.

²¹ *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Jan. 20, 1111; see also Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 69-70; Kaplan, "Monroe Doctrine," 16; and May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 234.

²² Other critics of Webster's resolution included Silas Wood of New York, Ichabod Bartlett of New Hampshire, and Christopher Rankin of Mississippi. See *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., Jan. 20-22, 1824, 1111-12, 1132-34, 1153, 1159.

of the Whole voted 131 to 0 to table Webster's resolution.²³ But this did not mean that Greece was forsaken. Positive action in support of Greece could be taken through private initiatives. The various philhellenic societies which sprang into being in the fall of 1823 soon took the lead abdicated by the federal government.

Not satisfied with the government's stance on the Greek issue, supporters questioned whether U.S. sympathy for the suffering Greeks should be confined to "sighs and wishes."²⁴ In Philadelphia, Robert Walsh expressed in the columns of his *National Gazette* his considerable regret over the lack of interest in Hellenic independence on the part of U.S. officials.²⁵ And the editor of the *Aurora General Advertiser*, Richard Penn Smith, declared that he was sickened to find so much "want of American feeling, of manliness, of humanity, among so many of our great men of the land." He could not believe that the "dastardly, cold, calculating sentiments" emanating from Congress "could ever find refuge in a single American bosom, or could ever dare issue from American lips." As far as he was concerned, a nation's liberty should be valued more than a "cargo of figs."²⁶

Even as the Monroe administration was considering the possible recognition of Greek belligerency and independence, Grecophiles launched a spirited campaign to arouse public sentiment. Prior movements had lacked

²³ Kaplan, "Monroe Doctrine," 17–20; May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*, 228–40. What is surprising about the results of the congressional debate is how Greek supporters within the House seemingly conceded defeat without a fight. Kaplan argues that pro-Greek congressmen like Clay were more interested in taking a stand on a popular issue than in pursuing the Greek cause. May postulates that the outcome can best be explained in terms of domestic politics, particularly a preoccupation with the upcoming presidential election. Clay, for example, was a leading candidate for the presidency in 1824; his principal adversary, other than Andrew Jackson, was Adams. Recognizing that the secretary was dubious about recognition, Clay and other rivals might have hoped to paint Adams into a corner on the issue. In any event, when the Greek issue ran into opposition, they were more than willing to forego Greece for other causes.

²⁴ *United States Gazette*, Dec. 9, 1823.

²⁵ *National Gazette*, Jan. 29, 1824.

²⁶ *Aurora General Advertiser*, Dec. 29, 1823, and Jan. 30, 1824. Not everyone voiced displeasure over the defeat of Webster's resolution. In an editorial for the *Philadelphia Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (a pro-Adams daily), the editor, while sympathetic to Greece's plight, was not ready to abandon the "traditional" U.S. policy of neutrality in foreign affairs in favor of quixotic adventures. Calling on members of Congress to act like "statesmen," he hoped Congress would not "shift the responsibility of its own acts, from itself to the people." In other words, he did not believe that public opinion should influence government policy. But the editor of the *Philadelphia Gazette*, while opposed to direct government involvement, did acknowledge that individuals were still free to indulge their feelings as men and contribute to aid the embattled Greeks.

a crusading leader. Edward Everett, the eminent professor of Greek language and literature at Harvard College and editor of the influential *North American Review*, filled the bill admirably. Having made the pilgrimage to Greece in 1819, Everett was considered to be the "foremost American Hellenist."²⁷ His eloquent article in the October 1823 edition of the *North American Review* outlined a course of action for all Americans who wished to aid the Greeks. Everett spoke passionately of the tremendous suffering inflicted upon the Christian inhabitants of Greece, comparing their struggle to that of the revolutionary generation of 1776. The Greeks had a right to freedom, he said, because they were the heirs of the ancient Greeks to whom Western civilization owed a great deal. For Everett, the Greek revolt presented an opportunity for Americans to repay that debt. He suggested that Americans in their private capacity could render substantial assistance to the Greek cause in the form of money and supplies.²⁸

Everett's appeal generated a warm response among Greek sympathizers. In Philadelphia, Robert Walsh reprinted the Harvard professor's entire article and recommended that his readers give it careful consideration. Soon thereafter, other Philadelphia newspapers began advocating a policy along the lines proposed by Everett. The *Franklin Gazette* considered it "impossible for the sincere republican or the true philanthropist . . . to avoid sympathizing with those gallant sires, who are now devoting life and property to the redemption of their liberty and fame." The paper envisioned a generous solicitude for Hellenic liberty and expressed "an active anxiety to alleviate their distresses."²⁹

Within weeks of Everett's appeal, public meetings in virtually every American city and town passed resolutions of sympathy and appointed committees to call upon the people for monetary donations. On December 10, 1823, the *Franklin Gazette* issued an invitation to those Philadelphia citizens interested in the "glorious cause of the Greeks," to meet at the Masonic Hall on December 11 "to devise means for the emancipation of that brave and suffering people." At the meeting a committee was named to prepare resolutions expressing sympathy for "our Christian brethren, the

²⁷ Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 41.

²⁸ Everett's article was printed in the *North American Review* 17 (1823), 392-423. For more information concerning Everett's activities on behalf of the Greeks see Earle, "American Interests," 47-48; Cline, *American Attitude*, 30-37; and Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 34.

²⁹ *Franklin Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1823; see also *National Gazette*, Nov. 7, 1823.

Greeks, heroically struggling for their lives, liberties, and religion."³⁰

The meeting attracted some of the city's most prominent and respected citizens. Foremost among them was Mathew Carey, an Irish immigrant and publisher whose efforts in promoting the Greek cause, most historians agree, ranked second only to Everett. Having fled from political and religious persecution in Ireland in 1784, Carey found a strong kinship with those fighting for freedom in Greece. To his biographers, Carey's benevolence toward the Greeks was in character with his other philanthropic efforts. In the early 1790s, he formed the Hibernian Society for the relief of Irish immigrants; and in 1829, the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor was founded following Carey's suggestions. Carey was also a proponent of improved working conditions and better pay for women. Indeed, for many years he had been actively engaged in charitable work in Philadelphia, getting behind any good cause that came to his attention.³¹

Carey was instrumental in forming a committee to solicit aid for the Greeks. Besides appointing Carey secretary, the committee nominated Bishop William White, a leader of the American Episcopal Church, to serve as chairman. Prominent lawyer and president of the Schuylkill Bank, William Meredith, was chosen treasurer. Among the rank and file membership of the Greek committee were renowned Philadelphia politicians: George M. Dallas, who later served as vice president of the United States under James K. Polk; Thomas Pettit, city solicitor and future deputy attorney general of Pennsylvania; and the future mayor, Joseph Watson. Nicholas Biddle, later the president of the Second Bank of the United States, was an honorary member. Other noteworthy members included the renowned local poet and author, James N. Barker, considered the best American dramatist up to his time; and well-respected merchants and philanthropists Samuel Archer and Paul Beck Jr. Clearly, these men represented Philadelphia's political elite and intellectual aristocracy.³²

At their inaugural meeting, philhellenes sought especially to enlist the city's clergy to preach sermons and to take up special collections for "the liberation of the Greeks from the yoke of Mahometan [sic] servitude."

³⁰ *Franklin Gazette*, Dec. 10, 1823; see also *United States Gazette*, Dec. 11 and 13, 1823.

³¹ Cline, *American Attitude*, 55-57; E. L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey, Editor, Author and Publisher* (New York, 1912), 69-78.

³² For brief biographies of several committee members see Henry Simpson, *The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians Now Deceased* (Philadelphia, 1859).

Some, like Bishop White, became prominent members on the Greek committee. Given the Christian versus Moslem nature of the conflict, it is not surprising that religious leaders would join in the crusade. The committee found a particularly strong advocate in the Reverend Gregory T. Bedell, rector of St. Andrew's Church in Philadelphia. For the Philadelphia pastor, there was more at stake in Greece than the national regeneration of the people. The struggle was one of life and death in which a Christian people, oppressed by "barbarians," faced extermination if subdued. In his opinion, the very fate of Christianity hung in the balance in this war between the "crescent and the cross." Bedell unequivocally believed that should the Greeks succeed, the door would open to the diffusion of Christian knowledge throughout the entire Near Eastern region.³³

At the time of the Greek revolution, Protestant missionary societies were already laboring in the eastern Mediterranean, a territory consisting of millions of nominal Christians who had fallen into spiritual "ignorance" and "superstition." "Imagine the flood of light," Bedell exclaimed, "which may be poured upon this land through the medium of Bible and missionary exertions!" The thought that "some servant of the Lord" might once again preach on the "hill of Mars," the site where St. Paul had delivered his sermon on "Jesus and the Resurrection" to the Athenians, appealed to the Philadelphia minister. Bedell, like many other evangelicals, believed that the United States possessed a special Christian destiny and mission to bring about the moral and spiritual regeneration of the world through conversion to Christianity. For Bedell the key to bringing the "pure doctrine" of Christianity to the Old World rested on the revival and reformation of the historic Greek Orthodox Church, which was considered the largest and most important church in ancient times. Greek independence represented the first step toward this end, setting an example for other Christian minorities under Turkish subjugation to imitate. The end result would be nothing short of the entire evangelization of western Asia. Surely, Bedell thought, Americans would "do something liberal in this sacred cause."³⁴

³³ Rev. Gregory T. Bedell, *The Cause of the Greeks. A Sermon Preached in St. Andrew's Church, Philadelphia, January 18, 1824, on the Occasion of a Collection for the Greek Fund*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, HSP), 10, 17–19. See also Cline, *American Attitude*, 101–2.

³⁴ Bedell, *Cause of the Greeks*, 23–25. For more information concerning the activities of Protestant missionary societies in Greece and the Levant see Theodore Saloutos, "American Missionaries in Greece: 1820–1869," *Church History* 24 (1955), 152–74; Gerasimos Augustinos, "Enlightened' Christians

This compulsion to spread the gospel was an outgrowth of new developments in Christianity and theology that took place in the United States following the Second Great Awakening of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The old Calvinist doctrine of predestination—in which God arbitrarily chose some people for salvation and others for damnation—was thrust aside in favor of the belief that anyone could obtain the Kingdom of Heaven. Coupled with the prevalent millennial thinking that mankind could help usher in God's kingdom on earth, the new theology contributed to a renewed sense of morality and set the stage for a bold new release of energy for missionary activity at home and abroad.³⁵

This millennial vision was in tune with the secular republican impulse to promote freedom and the advance of liberal principles throughout the world. Many secular and Christian reformers conceived of the United States as the "New Israel," destined to lead in the dissemination of Christian and democratic influence around the globe and in combating all forms of oppression and injustice. Together these national and religious impulses contributed to a newfound "spirit of optimism, a sensitivity to human suffering, and a boundless faith in humanity's capacity to improve social institutions."³⁶ During the 1820s unprecedented numbers of Americans joined together in a dense and far-flung network of benevolent and religiously oriented associations that aimed to improve society. Some sought to abolish slavery, others to suppress liquor or to improve the treatment of criminals and the insane. And many Christian philanthropists endeavored to evangelize the nation and the world.³⁷

and the 'Oriental' Churches: Protestant Missions to the Greeks in Asia Minor, 1820–1860," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 4 (1986), 129–42; P. E. Shaw, *American Contacts with the Eastern Churches, 1820–1870* (Chicago, 1937), especially chap. 1; William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago, 1987); and Field, *Gibraltar to the Middle East*, especially chap. 3.

³⁵ For more information on these new Christian impulses of the early nineteenth century, see Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore, 1995); Field, *Gibraltar to the Middle East*, 68–84. See also Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989); and Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).

³⁶ Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, 16–17. See also Hutchinson, *Errand to the World*, 44–45.

³⁷ The literature on these movements is extensive. Clifford S. Griffen, *Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800–1865* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1960); Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815–1860* (New York, 1978); Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, 1994); Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform* (New York,

Headquartered in the major eastern cities, these voluntary associations established affiliates across the country. Many, like the American Bible Society, operated out of New York with branches in Philadelphia and elsewhere. But the City of Brotherly Love did not lag behind in philanthropic endeavors. Philadelphia was a major center for Christian philanthropy. It was headquarters for the American Tract Society (founded in 1824), the American Sunday School Union (1825), and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (1820).³⁸ During the 1820s, Philadelphians also attempted to discover and abolish the causes of pauperism. In 1829 these efforts coalesced into the formation of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, which set the pattern for urban poor relief. Mathew Carey served as the society's first president, while several well-known evangelicals, such as Gregory T. Bedell, were among the officers.³⁹

As in the case of the Greeks, there were both secular and religious reformers in the group. In general, there was little formal or institutional connection between what was done on these occasions. Americans met each crisis in an ad hoc way. During the period 1810–30, the primary instrument for reform, whether at home or abroad, was the voluntary society. Over time, however, American philanthropy became more institutionalized and bureaucratized.⁴⁰ In any event, the same energy and sympathy that Carey, Bedell, and other Philadelphia reformers expended in trying to relieve the suffering poor at home was also applied to the relief of the distressed Greeks abroad.⁴¹

What drew these men to associate in these instances may be gleaned from an examination of their social backgrounds. The leaders of many benevolent

1957); and Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), are a sampling of books that describe benevolent Christianity. Many evangelicals were at the forefront of a number of major reform movements, including temperance and antislavery.

³⁸ For more information, see Marion L. Bell, *Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1977).

³⁹ For a more detailed account, see Priscilla F. Clement, "The Philadelphia Welfare Crisis of the 1820s," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter, *PMHB*) 105 (1981), 150–65; and O. A. Pendleton, "Poor Relief in Philadelphia, 1790–1840," *PMHB* (1946), 161–72.

⁴⁰ Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers*, xix; and Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 619–20.

⁴¹ During the 1820s Philadelphia reformers, like Carey, were moving away from helping the poor through a system of doles. Many contended that the poor were growing dependent on public relief. Instead, Carey and other opponents of the contemporary welfare system emphasized relief in kind (free food, clothes, fuel), a measure that would be incorporated in relief to the Greeks, especially during the fund-raising campaign of 1827–28. See Clement, "Philadelphia Welfare Crisis," 158–59.

groups, in the words of Clifford S. Griffen, were mostly "wealthy men and men becoming wealthy through business, finance, and the law."⁴² They tended to be professionals, bankers, merchants, or manufacturers. Having recently attained wealth, and in some cases social prominence and influence, these men, as Stuart M. Blumin persuasively argues, regarded benevolent and reform societies as opportunities to exercise the "kind of public responsibility that their wealth and evangelical beliefs required."⁴³

Reform was a defining characteristic of the rising middle class. But the emergence of the *bourgeoisie* alone does not explain the rise of humanitarianism. As Thomas L. Haskell contends, the development of a "market-oriented form of life" induced a higher level of conscientiousness and expanded the range of "causal perception" and inspired people's confidence in their ability to intervene in the course of human events. In other words, the variety of goals that individuals pursued and the resources available for attaining them rose with the advent of capitalism. This contributed to a sense of individual and collective ability which made all existing institutional constraints seem malleable. Modern techniques of mass communication, propaganda, and statistics, which characterized people's dealings with the market, were applied to many reform movements. These new techniques, together with the new moral sensibility, with its strong infusion of religious ideals and aspirations, contributed greatly to the creation of a situation in which aid to the Greeks and other humanitarian reforms could be enacted.⁴⁴

The campaign to afford the Greeks moral and material support, which first emerged in 1823, came in the midst of this early-nineteenth-century period of intense "association building" for an assortment of worthy causes. The Greek affair was an extension of this trend into the international arena. Like many other benevolent crusades, the Greek drive was quasi-national in scope and shared many characteristics, such as the promotion of Christianity, government lobbying efforts, propaganda campaigns, and, of course, fund-raising activities. Committees were established in almost every geographic region of the republic. New York was a major center, coordinating the

⁴² Griffen, *Their Brothers' Keepers*, xii.

⁴³ Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 194.

⁴⁴ Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985), 547, 556-58.

collection of funds throughout the nation. Ranking second behind New York, the Philadelphia committee chose to act independently and sent its collections directly to Greece.⁴⁵

Philadelphia philhellenes faced several obstacles in their initial attempts to solicit aid for the Greeks. Almost from the outset a growing division developed among those citizens who sought to assist the Greeks in their military struggle for freedom and those who wanted to limit their beneficence to the relief of private distress. Philadelphia's strong Quaker tradition of pacifism prohibited a number of individuals from supporting measures that promised to aid military operations in Greece. The well-known Philadelphia Quaker merchant, Thomas P. Cope, when invited by the New York Greek committee to accept an honorary membership, explained that the religious society to which he belonged prevented him from participating in "measures of a warlike character." The various Greek committees, it must be noted, sought to provide aid not only in the form of food and clothing, but also in munitions. This may be the reason why the Philadelphia committee tried to distance itself from its New York counterpart. To help allay the concerns of people like Cope, the Philadelphia committee, unlike those in other cities, informed the public that two separate collections would be undertaken, thereby allowing citizens to choose how their donations were to be used. One set of "books" would be reserved for donations from citizens who wished their aid to go exclusively to the relief of the suffering civilian population. The second set was for monies designated for the Greek revolutionaries' war effort.⁴⁶

Greek supporters also had to combat the voices of those like Samuel Breck, Federalist congressman from Pennsylvania, who questioned whether the Greeks were worthy of U.S. aid, especially when there were so many social ills at home that needed attention. Breck wrote to his friend William Meredith to dissuade him from forwarding a "treasury full of money" to Greece. He advised the treasurer of Philadelphia's Greek committee to use the fund for some "American purpose."⁴⁷ Breck believed that the Greeks

⁴⁵ For a sampling of the activities of the various Greek committees in other cities, see Cline, *American Attitude*, 39–51; Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 34–35.

⁴⁶ Letter by Cope reprinted in *National Gazette*, Dec. 15, 1823; see also *United States Gazette*, Dec. 20, 1823.

⁴⁷ Samuel Breck to William Meredith, Dec. 22, 1823, Meredith Papers, Correspondence, HSP.

were "no more entitled to our money or sympathy than the Hindoos [sic]." Citing the accounts of European travelers who depicted the Greeks as a "vindictive, cruel, cunning, lying, thieving race," he expressed doubt about whether the modern Greeks were as virtuous as their glorious ancestors. Breck firmly believed that the Greeks knew nothing of their classical heritage, and that their traditions went back no further than the Byzantine Empire. What is more, the Greeks, contrary to what Grecophiles liked to believe, had no sincere wish to become republicans; they preferred to establish a monarchy. In the end, Breck was astonished that so much was being done on their behalf.⁴⁸

Breck's opinions were shared by many of his fellow citizens, as indicated by the amount of time and effort Greek supporters spent in trying to dispel those "misconceptions." Toward this end the Philadelphia Greek committee issued a public address. Like similar propaganda documents in other cities, it approached the Greek issue from a variety of viewpoints. Classical analogies were drawn, as were comparisons between the Greek Revolution and the American. In addition, philhellenes capitalized on the Christian-Moslem nature of the conflict to increase public sympathy for the Greeks. Greek supporters often portrayed the Greeks as a brave Christian people fighting a despotic foe. For ages, committee members proclaimed, the Greeks had been "trampled under the feet of their enslavers." They had witnessed the devastation of their soil, the destruction of their churches, and the massacre of their children.⁴⁹ News reports of Turkish atrocities, such as the massacre at Scio (Chios), where the entire male population of the island was executed and the surviving women and children sold into slavery, lent credence to the claim that this was a war for survival. The *Aurora General Advertiser* asked, "where is the American whose bosom does not swell with indignation at such barbarity? Whose hand would not strike in such a cause?"⁵⁰

By portraying the struggling Greeks as a persecuted and enslaved people, sympathizers challenged the notion that the contemporary Greek was fundamentally distinct from his ancient ancestors, and thus less worthy of

⁴⁸ Breck to Debates in Congress in Relation to the Greeks, Jan. 22, 1824, Famous Merchants, Dreer Collection, HSP. Breck was a staunch Adams supporter. His family also had extensive commercial dealings in the Levant which he did not want to disrupt.

⁴⁹ Address reprinted in the *United States Gazette*, Dec. 20, 1823.

⁵⁰ *Aurora*, Dec. 15, 1823.

financial assistance than the growing number of impoverished citizens at home. The debased condition of Greece, many argued, was a result of the atrocious brutalities associated with Turkish rule. Almoners for the Greeks called on Philadelphians to help relieve the sufferings of these people, who were "houseless, friendless, and in misery unparalleled." Here in the United States, there was "no danger of slaughtered sires, no wives, no daughters dishonored," and no leading people into captivity.⁵¹ While conceding that the modern Greeks were not what they were in the days of "Themistocles, Leonidas, or Philopoemon," Grecophiles were convinced that the Greek people possessed the same "spirit, genius, enterprise, and patriotism." All that was needed to throw off the accumulated vices of their long degradation was a restoration of their freedom. Then, they argued, the Greeks would reassume their former rank, refinement, and virtue.⁵² Consequently, the purpose of Greek relief, declared the friends of Greece, was not only to release the Greeks from the burdens of poverty, but also to "lift them up into the envied station which every beggar in our own country enjoys a right to say that he is a denizen of a free land."⁵³

Steps were soon taken to solicit aid for the Greeks in the form of money and supplies. Fund-raising efforts in Philadelphia throughout the winter and spring of 1824 ultimately took on the trappings of a "drive for charitable purposes."⁵⁴ A special benefit performance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was given at the Philadelphia Theater on January 7, 1824, netting a balance of \$618 for the Greeks. A week later the Masonic Hall held a "Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert for the sole benefit of the Greeks."⁵⁵ Colleges also launched campaigns for Greek relief. The Union Philosophical Society of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, contributed \$43 to the cause.⁵⁶ In addition, special collections were taken up in the churches. Bedell delivered a fiery sermon calling upon his fellow citizens to heed the appeal of their fellow Christians, the Greeks. The discourse proved effective, as the congregation contributed \$251 to the cause. Fund-raising activities of this

⁵¹ Bedell, *Cause of the Greeks*, 31.

⁵² *Franklin Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1823.

⁵³ *United States Gazette*, Jan. 29, 1824.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Earle, "American Interests," 51.

⁵⁵ See *Aurora*, Jan. 7, 9, 15, 1824.

⁵⁶ Letter by Committee on Behalf of the Union Philosophical Society of Dickinson College to William Meredith, Dec. 17, 1823; and letter by Meredith to Dickinson College, Dec. 21, 1823, William Meredith Papers Correspondence, Charities, Greek Relief Fund, 1824-1827, HSP.

kind in Philadelphia and elsewhere, produced significant financial aid for the Greeks.⁵⁷

Like the Greek committee in New York, the Philadelphia committee sent its collections directly to the banking house of Baring Brothers in London, requesting that the sum be transferred to an "accredited agent of the Greeks, in England." On May 5, 1824, Meredith, as treasurer of the Greek fund, purchased 638 pounds sterling, which at the prevailing rate of exchange cost nearly \$3,000. By November the total remitted by Meredith had reached nearly 800 pounds, or just under \$3,900. The overall total in the United States exceeded \$40,000. Meredith also asked the Baring Brothers's representative to instruct the agent of the Greeks to see to it that twenty dollars, the sum collected from those citizens whose religious convictions precluded aiding the war effort, go to the "relief of private distress." Though it cannot be determined whether the twenty dollars actually reached those for whom it was intended, the committee unquestionably attempted to uphold its promise to the pacifist elements in the city. That only the meager sum of \$20 was collected for the relief of private distress indicates that almoners for the Greeks were generally unsuccessful in allaying the concerns of people like Cope and other philanthropists who feared their contributions might be applied to the furtherance of warlike operations in Greece. Later Greek sympathizers were careful to limit their beneficence to the relief of the noncombatants. But in the meantime, the enthusiasm that characterized the philhellenic movement in 1823–24 quietly waned.⁵⁸

After the active campaign for funds in the winter and spring of 1824, nothing was done for more than two years. The apparent loss of interest may have been due to the discouraging prognosis for the Greek revolution. Reports from the Levant during 1825–26 represented the prospect of Hellenic independence as hopeless, maintaining that the Greeks were more disposed to prey upon one another than to unite in common cause.⁵⁹ One

⁵⁷ Bedell, *Cause of the Greeks*. The fund-raising activities of the various Greek committees are described in Earle, "American Interests," 51; and Cline, *American Attitude*, 89–120. The most successful of these was a ball sponsored by the New York Greek Committee on Jan. 8, 1824. Organizers sold over 2,000 tickets at \$5 each for the occasion.

⁵⁸ Meredith to Baring Brothers, May 5, 1824; and Baring Brothers to Meredith, July 24, and Nov. 29, 1824, Meredith Papers Correspondence, Charities, Greek Relief Fund, HSP. See also Cline, *American Attitude*, 114–15, 120; and Earle, "American Interests," 52.

⁵⁹ See for example, *Aurora and Franklin Gazette* (Philadelphia), Aug. 30 and Dec. 21, 1825, and June 13, 1826.

individual, signing himself "Scotsman," voiced his disillusionment with the entire Greek affair. The writer, citing a letter written by an Englishman who had just returned from the Peloponnesus, complained that the Greek rebels were "destitute of union and organization." Moreover, the most mortifying circumstance, in his opinion, was that the fund remitted to the Greeks had been grossly misapplied. In the end the writer questioned whether the Greeks would have been in a worse condition had no money been forwarded to them.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the combined Turkish-Egyptian forces had unleashed a wave of destruction in the Peloponnesus, and in August 1826 the base of Messolonghi in western Roumeli fell to the Turks. Many feared that the Greeks would succumb or be forced into acts of desperation. The *Aurora and Franklin Gazette* announced in December 1825 that privateers, wearing the Grecian flag, had committed several "depredations" upon U.S. merchant vessels. Though the paper acknowledged that the pirates had acted without the authority of the Greek government, it also admitted that the Greek senate had very little power to control the privateers. Reports from the Mediterranean, however, were often contradictory. Perhaps to gather reliable information on the situation, the Adams administration decided to send an observer to Greece. Unfortunately, the government's appointed agent, William C. Sommerville of Maryland, died en route.⁶¹

Reports depicting the misapplication of the Greek fund, the disunity among the Greeks, and the attack of pirates on U.S. commercial vessels, adversely affected subscriptions. What must have been most disturbing was that these reports tended to validate the accusations of earlier anti-Greek spokesmen that the warriors of modern Greece possessed none of the virtuous and heroic qualities of their illustrious ancestors and were thus not worthy of U.S. assistance.

While the general public appeared to have lost interest in the Hellenic cause during the mid-1820s, private efforts to assist the Greeks continued. In the spring of 1825 two of New York's most respected naval contractors, the houses of Le Roy, Bayard and Company, and of Gardiner G. and Samuel Howland, were hired by the Greek deputies in London to direct the construction of two first-class frigates of fifty guns for the Greek

⁶⁰ *National Gazette*, Dec. 20, 1825. See also Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 28.

⁶¹ *Aurora and Franklin Gazette*, Dec. 21, 1825; see also Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 83-93.

government. For reasons that need not concern us, the actual cost of constructing the two ships far exceeded the amount specified in the contract. The Greek deputies made their grievances known to the public, and the resultant publicity given to the affair in the autumn of 1826 reached scandalous proportions. A prolonged controversy ensued in the U.S. press concerning the degree of culpability of the U.S. shipbuilding firms. Despite the unfavorable attention the episode received, it seems to have stimulated a revival of interest in the Greek cause.⁶²

In Philadelphia Robert Walsh, the philhellenic newspaper editor, again took the initiative. In the inaugural issue of the *American Quarterly Review*, which he edited, Walsh wrote that the general sentiment of the country over the Greek frigates was one of "disapprobation and regret." The only instance in which America could render the Greeks any substantial assistance, he lamented, "had manifestly been perverted by private cupidity to unwarrantable emolument."⁶³ Another individual, signing himself "An American," expressed his indignation in the *United States Gazette*. The author was mortified to learn that at a moment when many Americans were professing sympathy for the state of Greece, such warm regard for its interests, and such anxiety for its success, there were persons who would exploit Greece's plight. For this "American," the actions of some of the most respected houses in New York had disgraced the United States.⁶⁴

Members of the Philadelphia Greek Committee shared this sentiment. For example, prominent Philadelphia attorney James Ronaldson proposed that the city of Philadelphia "should do something to save it from being identified with New York."⁶⁵ One way to redeem the honor of America, some thought, was to make up for the wrongs committed. On December 7, 1826, pro-Greek sympathizers met to discuss measures for assisting the Greeks. Ronaldson, who chaired the meeting, expressed considerable regret over the apathy manifested by prominent Philadelphians over the past several months. Only seventy persons attended the meeting. Not discouraged, Grecophiles scheduled another general meeting for December

⁶² The controversy over the Greek frigates is discussed in Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 95–115.

⁶³ *American Quarterly Review* 1 (1827), 254–86.

⁶⁴ *United States Gazette*, Nov. 3, 1826.

⁶⁵ James Ronaldson to Roberts Vaux, Dec. 27, 1826, Vaux Papers, HSP.

16.⁶⁶ In the meantime, Mathew Carey appealed to the public to reawaken the “slumbering sympathies of this great and rising empire in favor of the Greeks.” The appeal included a copy of a letter Carey recently received from Edward Everett. This letter, based on reports from American and Greek friends in Greece, claimed that the amount of suffering in Greece “for want of food” was equal to that produced by the direct operations of the combined Turkish and Egyptian forces. Everett informed Carey that a great deal of suffering might be relieved by the dispatch of a vessel loaded with provisions. Everett averred that the cost would be far less expensive than the furthering of the war effort.⁶⁷

In his appeal to the public Carey set forth multiple reasons why Americans ought to aid the Greeks. He observed that many Americans every year contributed tens of thousands of dollars for the support of missionaries to convert the Hindus and Chinese to Christianity, often with limited success. He argued that it would be more practical to direct “this zeal into another channel for a year or two, and let its overflowings be devoted to interpose a shield for the preservation of the Greeks from impending destruction . . . Should the effort prove successful, we might rescue more worshippers of Christ from the scymitars of the infuriated Turks in one year, than all the converts to Christianity that might have been made in a century by all the missionaries of Europe and America, and at the tithe of the expense[.]” Carey then appealed to the female segment of the population, calling upon them to sway their influential and wealthy husbands. Unlike the Greek soldiers who faced exile, imprisonment, or death, the “helpless sex,” Carey maintained, awaited an incomparably worse fate—slavery in the harems of the “sensual Turks.” Though Christian and humanitarian arguments for relief were not new, what distinguished this appeal from those made previously in 1823–24 was the lack of attention given to the “noble warriors” of Greece.⁶⁸

On December 16, 1826, the Philadelphia Greek committee reconvened after a hiatus of over two years. Carey replaced Bishop William White as chairman, and James N. Barker succeeded Carey as secretary. William Meredith remained committee treasurer. The committee proceeded

⁶⁶ *Democratic Press*, Dec. 8, 1826. See also Dec. 6, 1826.

⁶⁷ Mathew Carey, “The Case of the Greeks,” in *Miscellaneous Essays* (1830), 297–300; see also Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 29–31.

⁶⁸ Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*, 297–300.

unanimously to resolve "that supplies to be furnished the Greeks through them should be confined to provisions and clothing, to the utter exclusion of everything connected with warfare." Influenced by past failures, philhellenes now sought to provide exclusively for the noncombatants of Greece. Committee members informed the public that as far as the war was concerned the Greeks were able to meet and withstand their assailants on their own. The great danger at present was famine, a danger which Grecophiles felt was within their power to repel. They were hopeful that this change in tactics would encourage those who had previously been averse to contribute.⁶⁹

Several days later the Greek committee issued a formal address to the citizens of Philadelphia that expanded on Carey's earlier appeal. This address, followed by equally fervent ones, set forth reasons why Americans ought to contribute aid for the suffering Greeks. The committee took great pains to differentiate between their current appeals and those made previously:

We, do not, fellow citizens, address ourselves to your fancy, but to your heart.—We do not endeavor to revive your classic recollections, nor awaken your fruitless chivalry . . . We do not invoke you, by the names of ancient philosophers, or of modern martyrs—by the past glories of Marathon and Salamis, or to the recent horrors of Scio and Messolonghi; but we appeal to you as Americans, as Christians, as men—as husbands and fathers, as sons and brothers. We ask you to succour and save from famine the women and children of Greece . . . Can your sending bread to the famishing children of Greece involve your government? Will it not relieve, extensively relieve them? And we ask our esteemed fellow citizens, who shrink from the slightest connection with anything of war, is there war in this?⁷⁰

The rationale for aiding the Greeks was framed differently than when it was first presented in 1823. Philhellenes no longer spoke to the public about Homer, or "Sparta and her gallant sons," or Marathan and Thermopylae. They now told of how the women and children of Greece were suffering the hardships of famine. They were naked and starving with no means to shelter and clothe themselves, their crops were ruined, and their homes pillaged and

⁶⁹ See *Democratic Press*, Dec. 13, 1826; *Philadelphia Gazette*, Dec. 20, 1826; and *United States Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1826, and Jan. 1, 1827.

⁷⁰ Reprinted in the *United States Gazette*, Dec. 22, 1826.

burned. Citing reports and letters from U.S. observers in Greece, Greek supporters brought home to the U.S. public, for the first time, the abject suffering of the civilian population. This plea on behalf of the women, children, and old men of Greece, designed to appeal to human nature, apparently struck a receptive chord.⁷¹ The editors of the *United States Gazette* observed that these new "ideas" were "operating with the effect of truth upon the public mind in favor of the Greeks."⁷² And the *Aurora and Franklin Gazette* announced that the efforts to supply the Greeks with provisions and raiment were rapidly gaining in popularity.⁷³ Given the reluctance of many Philadelphians to contribute to measures of a warlike character, which could be interpreted as compromising U.S. neutrality, this emphasis on humanitarianism would prove remarkably successful.

In many instances, the private relief efforts of the Philadelphia committee followed the general pattern of the earlier fund-raising drive of 1823–24. Theatrical performances and benefit concerts were held. The Reverend Gregory T. Bedell again delivered a sermon. In many respects Bedell's discourse did not differ much from his previous one. The images of the "barbaric" Turks seeking to annihilate the Christian Greeks were still incorporated. But where this discourse differed was in its reluctance to call upon Philadelphians to finance the war effort. Instead, Bedell stressed that it was not for the warrior sons of Greece he was pleading, but for her "matrons, her virgins and her children . . . who, if unrelieved will perish by famine." The reverend passionately urged Philadelphians to enlist in "this cause of suffering humanity," and help clothe and feed their naked and starving brethren in Greece, who were bound to them by the tie of common religion. As in the committee's public address, humanitarian arguments superseded all others. Bedell's discourse helped raise \$372 for the Greeks.⁷⁴

⁷¹ See *United States Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1826, and Jan. 18, 1827; *Philadelphia Album and Ladies Literary Gazette*, Mar. 14, 1827. In the Jan. 1, 1827, issue of the *United States Gazette*, the editors published a letter from Samuel G. Howe, one of several Americans who had made their way to Greece to fight on the "side of liberty." Howe was therefore in a position to provide his countrymen with reliable information on the situation in Greece, which he did repeatedly.

⁷² *United States Gazette*, Jan. 18, 1827.

⁷³ *Aurora and Franklin Gazette*, Jan. 11, 1827. Other cities soon followed Philadelphia's lead. For a sampling of their activities, see Cline, *American Attitude*, 124 ff; Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 117 ff.; and Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 34–40.

⁷⁴ Rev. Gregory T. Bedell, *The Cause of the Greeks: A Discourse Delivered in St. Paul's Church (Philadelphia)*, Feb. 26, 1827, HSP. See also Cline, *American Attitude*, 128.

A few weeks had passed since the Philadelphia committee's address to the public, and among contemporaries at least, it seemed that enthusiasm for the Greek cause was languishing. Even members of the committee expressed pessimism about the success of the relief efforts. James Ronaldson communicated privately to Roberts Vaux that "all that is likely to be done here, I fear will not go far to mitigate the suffering of this devoted people."⁷⁵ In many respects the fund raising campaign of 1826–27 was plagued with the same prejudices as the previous campaign of 1823–24. Reports of piracy and disunion among the Greeks made it difficult for philhellenes to glorify the Greeks as worthy recipients of U.S. beneficence.

To help counteract this negative image, the *Aurora and Franklin Gazette* published an extract from a letter written by the Reverend Jonas King, who had been a missionary stationed in the eastern Mediterranean. As someone with firsthand knowledge of the situation, King undertook the task of redeeming the Greek character. Though he conceded that a number of Greeks resorted to acts of piracy, he excused their actions as the logical consequence of nearly four hundred years of Turkish rule. Moreover, King argued, the Greeks possessed the "genius and talents" of their glorious ancestors, and he believed that they were ready and willing to receive the sacred scripture and to establish schools for the instruction of their children. King asked, "is there nothing noble in such a nation?" "What might be expected from such a nation in twenty or thirty years?" he wondered.⁷⁶ The friends of Greece in Philadelphia concurred. While admitting that the Greeks were only a little less barbarous than their oppressors, Grecophiles took exception to those who were unwilling to make allowances for the "debasement effects of ages of the most galling and grinding tyranny."⁷⁷

By March 1, 1827, the Philadelphia committee had collected \$11,177 in subscriptions for the relief of the Greeks. While this sum was nearly three times the amount collected in the fund-raising campaign of 1824, pro-Greek spokesmen like Mathew Carey remained unsatisfied. He was particularly disappointed that only \$5,824 had been raised in the city. To his chagrin only twenty-two individuals contributed thirty dollars or more. Undaunted, Carey and other committee members renewed their efforts, issuing twenty

⁷⁵ Ronaldson to Vaux, Dec. 27, 1827, Vaux Papers, HSP.

⁷⁶ *Aurora and Franklin Gazette*, Jan. 27, 1827.

⁷⁷ Mathew Carey, *Sir, The annexed resolution and the appended papers, are respectfully submitted to your consideration* (Phila., Apr. 26, 1827), 1–7. See also *U.S. Gazette*, May 1, 1827.

thousand copies of forty-three different appeals and arguments to spur their fellow citizens into raising a fund "creditable to the liberality of its citizens."⁷⁸

The *United States Gazette* was among the first to respond to Carey's appeal. While acknowledging that Philadelphia's Greek fund was smaller than the funds of some other cities, the paper's editors maintained that "our zeal has not abated, nor have we yet slackened in our exertions: and before the generous rivalry be terminated, if we shall not be able to shoot ahead of our competitors, we hope, at least, to over take them, and convince those who have charged us with apathy, that they have done us an injustice." The paper then called for more musical concerts, balls, and other benefit performances, and for clergymen in both city and suburbs to address their congregations on the subject of the Greeks. The *Gazette* also called on the Philadelphia committee to appoint more collectors to canvass the city for private contributions. The editors were convinced that if these measures were properly applied, Philadelphia would show that it was inferior to no city in America.⁷⁹

The renewed efforts by the Philadelphia committee were successful. By April 26, 1827, the fund swelled to just under \$19,000. A month later the total approached \$23,700. The second campaign to aid the Greeks far out-gained any previous efforts. Part of the success lay with the unexpected contributions from the surrounding counties. Several counties in the state established their own Greek committees to collect money and provisions. The smaller committees subsequently remitted their collections to the larger Philadelphia committee. Philadelphia philhellenes solicited the postmasters in each township and county to forward to Meredith "without delay" whatever collections their localities had raised, and implored them to use their "endeavors to increase the subscription, by appeals to the benevolence of such of your neighbors as have not yet contributed."⁸⁰ By the end of April, Chester County contributed collections amounting to about \$3,362, and Pittsburgh reported nearly \$1,800 in collections. Not to be outdone, Delaware County donated \$485 in money and provisions; Bucks County added \$485; Lancaster contributed \$350; York sent \$432; Montgomery

⁷⁸ Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*, 304–5, 307. See also *U.S. Gazette*, May 1, 1827, and Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 31.

⁷⁹ *United States Gazette*, Mar. 16, 1827.

⁸⁰ A copy of the circular sent to various postmasters in the state is found in Meredith Papers Correspondence, Charities, Greek Relief Fund, HSP.

reported \$400; and North Cumberland an additional \$500. The Philadelphia committee also received donations from outside the state, from such places as Spartansburg, South Carolina, and Greenville, Kentucky.⁸¹

No longer appealing on behalf of classical recollections or alluding to classical heroes, but instead relying exclusively on humanitarian arguments, Greek supporters found the right key to unlock the strongboxes at home. This emphasis on humanitarianism had universal appeal. In the case of Pittsburgh, for example, it was noted that a large portion of that city's contribution came from mechanics and factory workers, who had raised \$450 to aid the Greeks. An important aspect of the propaganda efforts of the friends of Greece was to underscore the donations of those with limited means. Although members of the Greek committee were still motivated by a romantic vision of aiding Greece to revive the glory of its halcyon days, they knew they had to alter their strategy to arouse greater public sympathy. Not everyone had been exposed to a classical education and was thereby familiar with Greece's classic past. But anyone could sympathize with a people suffering the hardships associated with famine, sickness, and death. As it turned out, philhellenism was never entirely a movement based on the "classical" nature of Greek civilization. It also contained a sizable infusion of Christian and humanitarian concerns for another people, not totally out of character with other benevolent and charitable causes. By completely disassociating Greek relief from the political and military affairs of Greece, Grecophiles were finally able over the decade to link their movement to broader patterns of benevolent, religious, and humanitarian concerns.⁸²

Having collected a robust fund of nearly \$24,000 by the end of May, the Philadelphia committee now faced the task of ensuring that the relief fund reached Greece. This presented a dilemma, as members of the committee were inexperienced in administering relief abroad. Given the problems associated with the previous relief campaign of 1823–24, the committee was especially unwilling to trust Greek officials with distributing the aid to those it was intended to serve. This time cargoes of food and clothing were purchased with the money from the Greek fund. They were then placed in the charge of a trusted American representative who accompanied the goods

⁸¹ Carey, *Sir, the annexed resolution . . .*, 3–4. See also *United States Gazette*, May 1, 1827.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1–7.

to Greece and distributed them. This change in the practice of administering relief had tremendous implications for future relief efforts.⁸³

Several American philhellenes had made their way to Greece during the initial phase of the "Greek fever" in 1823–24. Two of the most prominent were Samuel Gridley Howe and Jonathan P. Miller. Howe, a recent graduate of Harvard medical school, and Miller, a veteran of the War of 1812, served the cause of the Greeks in many ways besides fighting—though they did a little of that as well. They were to prove useful agents in distributing supplies collected by the various Greek committees to those in need.⁸⁴

The first of the cargo ships to arrive in Greece was the *Tontine*, sponsored by the Philadelphia Greek committee. It left Philadelphia on March 23, 1827, with a cargo valued at \$13,856.40. Joseph Worrell Jr., who was appointed agent of the Philadelphia committee in charge of distributing the supplies to the needy, was instructed by the committee upon arrival in Greece to call upon Miller, who served as an agent of the New York Greek committee. Committee members thought Miller's prior experience in Greece could be of great value, and instructed Worrell that he should "keep in mind that this cargo is intended for the relief of the old men, the women, and children of the Greeks, to minister to their wants, and not to be diverted on any account, or in any manner to any other purpose."⁸⁵ Miller, however, had not yet arrived to assist Worrell when the *Tontine* reached Greece. As a result, Greek officials were able to seize the ship's cargo. Instead of distributing it according to the instructions of the Philadelphia committee, they sold it for their own benefit and "at a most shameful price," getting only \$2,500 for a cargo worth five times as much. Subsequently Howe, Miller, and other Americans in Greece used all possible means, including the aid of U.S. naval officers, to restrict the relief supplies to civilians.⁸⁶

The second and last supercargo sponsored by the Philadelphia committee fared better. On May 20, 1827, the *Levant*, under the charge of

⁸³ Robert Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820–1960* (Athens, Ohio, 1970), 8.

⁸⁴ The exploits of American philhellenes in Greece are described in Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, especially chaps. 4 and 5.

⁸⁵ Committee to Captain Harris and Joseph Worrell Jr., 1827, Meredith Papers Correspondence, Charities, Greek Relief Fund, HSP.

⁸⁶ Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 8; and Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 34; and Cline, *American Attitude*, 139–41.

James Ronaldson Lieb, left Philadelphia for Greece with a cargo valued at \$8,547.18. This time, both Howe and Miller were present when the *Levant* arrived. As before, Greek officials tried to persuade the American agents to distribute a portion of the supplies to the soldiers, but Lieb resisted. He and the others then distributed the supplies "among the miserably poor, those who were absolutely starving." They made catalogues of families with "no ostensible means whatever of living," and dispensed tickets that entitled the families to receive a specified amount of bread and flour. A few barrels of flour, under the charge of Howe, were also sent to a hospital in Aegina, although some of the flour had to be sold in order to cover the expenses of storage and transportation. On the whole, this procedure was duplicated with the other cargo ships sponsored by the Boston and New York committees. In all, eight such ships were sponsored by the various Greek committees with a total estimated value of \$138,000. In each case, Miller and Howe supervised the distribution of supplies. Lieb wrote Mathew Carey that "every ounce [of relief food] has been eaten according to the intentions of my fellow citizens by the starving old men, women, and children of Greece—the suffering noncombatants of Greece."⁸⁷

On April 2, 1828, the Greek Committee of Philadelphia reported that the supplies forwarded to Greece had arrived safely, proclaiming that "hundreds on the verge of the grave, through actual famine, have been rescued from the horrors of starvation, and impending death." In the interval between the *Levant's* departure and this last public address by the committee, very little in the amount of aid was collected. By April 1828 the committee reported having a balance of \$1,785 remaining in the treasury, with \$23,700 having previously been expended.⁸⁸

A factor that contributed to the evaporation of interest was the European powers' decision to intervene in the summer of 1827. On July 6, England, France, and Russia signed the Treaty of London, whereby the three signatories offered to mediate between Greece and Turkey. The treaty also called for the establishment of Greece as an autonomous but tributary state under Ottoman suzerainty. In addition, a secret article provided that if the Ottoman government refused mediation after a month, the allies

⁸⁷ Extract of Lieb's letter to Carey reprinted in the *National Gazette*, Jan. 8, 1828. See also Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 149–56; and Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 34–40.

⁸⁸ Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*, 306–9.

would exert pressure on the Turks to comply.⁸⁹ In Philadelphia, news of the treaty evoked a cold response. Zachariah Poulson, editor of *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, expressed considerable grief and sorrow over the prospect of European interference. After all the sufferings and hardships Greece had endured in six years of fighting, Poulson felt that the Greeks were to become again a "nation of slaves" and remain subjects of the sultan.⁹⁰

There were those, however, who took a more optimistic view of the treaty. One individual, signing himself "Phil-Hellenist," wrote Poulson not to be discouraged. He reminded him that though the Greeks were to consider the sultan as a "Superior Lord" and pay tribute, they would be allowed to govern themselves through authorities of their own choice. Thus the Greeks would learn the "art of self-government—the art of union and unanimity," the absence of which contributed to most of "their disappointments and defeats." As a consequence, this arrangement was seen as a remedial course to prepare the Greeks for self-government.⁹¹

When the Ottoman government refused the allies' offer of mediation, the European powers decided to intervene to end the war. On October 20, 1827, the Turkish-Egyptian fleet was routed by the combined allied fleets off Navarino harbor. The news of the destruction of the Turkish navy met with a joyous response among American philhellenes.⁹² But while the Battle of Navarino ensured that the Greeks were rescued from further scenes of "bloodshed and massacre," the friends of Greece in Philadelphia were quick to point out that their sufferings were not at an end. Members of the Philadelphia Greek committee continued to appeal to their fellow citizens to help alleviate the famine, sickness, and misery to which the Greeks were still being subjected. Miller and Howe repeatedly reported from Greece about the abject sufferings of the Greeks. The committee argued that while the Greeks had all but achieved their independence, their suffering for want of food and shelter would persist for some time. Therefore, the committee implored, "whatever sympathy or aid their cause called for last year, is especially required at present."⁹³

⁸⁹ Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 23.

⁹⁰ *Poulson's Daily American Advertiser* (Philadelphia), Aug. 27, 1827.

⁹¹ *Poulson's*, Aug. 29, 1827.

⁹² See for example, the *Aurora and Franklin Gazette*, Sept. 3, 1827; *Poulson's*, Dec. 27, 1827. See also Pappas, *United States and the Greek War*, 23–24.

⁹³ Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*, 306–9.

Apathy set in, however, exacerbated by the preoccupation with the upcoming presidential election of 1828 and other domestic concerns, and with the eventual recognition of Greek independence. Also, the incident involving the *Tontine* may have had an adverse affect on future subscriptions. On April 2, 1828, the Philadelphia Greek committee officially folded its operation. But this did not mean that efforts to assist the Greeks were at an end. At this time, missionary societies, just entering the Mediterranean, would continue the humanitarian policy of the various philhellenic organizations, establishing schools of instruction in Greece following independence.⁹⁴

The relief work carried on in Greece in 1827 and 1828 was a practical expression of sympathy for suffering humanity, representing an important episode in the history of American benevolence. As Americans became more conscious and concerned about social ills at home during the 1820s, they sought also to alleviate similar hardships abroad. More importantly, the Greek case would establish a precedent for American philanthropic endeavors overseas. According to historian Merle Curti, the aid given to the Greeks represented the "first example of popular American enthusiasm and widespread support for a distressed people overseas."⁹⁵ This pioneer undertaking in overseas philanthropy was in response to a situation that awakened the empathy of romantic philhellenes. Failing to secure government involvement, the friends of Greece in Philadelphia organized an ad hoc committee to raise funds for military aid to meet the Greek crisis. The shift to a more humanitarian policy in foreign affairs on the part of private individuals was slow in coming since many citizens were not willing to contribute money for purposes of war. Only by focusing on private relief efforts—while disassociating themselves from the political and military affairs of Greece—were Greek supporters able to elicit a greater contribution.

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⁹⁴ In 1830 the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, at the insistence of Bishop William White and Reverend Gregory T. Bedell, established a missionary presence in Greece. White and Bedell, we have seen, were staunch supporters of the Greek cause. Once independence was assured they naturally saw an opportunity not only to aid in the physical reconstruction of the country but to minister to its deeper spiritual needs. See Field, *Gibraltar to the Middle East*, 129–33; and Shaw, *American Contacts*, 16–17.

⁹⁵ Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad*, 22.

