



Benjamin Mar Shimun, the Present Patriarch and the 138th Catholicos of the Assyrian Christian Church, was consecrated April 12, 1903

He wields his authority from the little Alpine village of Quchanis in the Kurdistan Mountains, bears the title and is the direct lineal representative of the prelate who sat sixth at the Council of Nicea

The Death of a Nation

or

The Ever Persecuted Nestorians or
Assyrian Christians

By

Abraham Yohannan, Ph.D.



With 27 Illustrations and a Map

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
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To
THE AFFLICTED COMMUNITY OF THE
ASSYRIAN CHRISTIANS
I DEDICATE THIS WORK

PREFACE

TO meet the wishes of my friends, I have consented to give the history of the persecutions of the Nestorian Church in general, and to make public some further information on the sufferings and massacres to which, as the result of this terrible war, they are subjected to-day.

The persecutions and sufferings that the Nestorians are undergoing from time to time are similar to those that have been endured by the Armenians and the Jews, and their treatment by the hostile nations is identical. Of the troubles of the Armenians and Jews, however, we hear quite often, while the Nestorians in Persia and Turkey, by reason, probably, of their small number and lack of literary representatives, have excited almost no interest. They have no advocates in the cities of Europe and Asia. In the highlands

of Turkey and Persia, they are without a leader or adviser, and are rarely visited by travelers. Of the world outside the region in which they live they know nothing. They are hemmed in by the fastnesses of the inhospitable mountains.

During a titanic struggle marking the death of nations, while the moral foundations of the world seem to be moved, it is not an easy matter to awaken interest in small communities which heretofore have claimed but little of the thought or concern of the public; but the tragedy enacted against the Syrian Nestorians in Urumia, Persia, in proportion to their numbers and social condition, is hardly equalled, and never exceeded in history. It has brought baleful influence, devastating blight, and hideous crimes in its train. No such issues have ever before confronted Christian states as those raised during this war.

A large part of the material used in this book has been gathered from various sources, and in order to be more accurate in the state-

ment, I have quoted them, sometimes verbally. As Montaigne wrote: "I have made only a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own, but the thread that ties them together."

In preparing this little work I have tried to give credit, with appreciation, to my predecessors; a glance at the footnotes will prove this. I have freely quoted from the able work of Dr. Wigram—*History of the Assyrian Church*—and have often consulted Dr. Labourt's *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire Perse*.

To Dr. Shedd, Mr. Labaree, and other members of the American Mission in Urumia I am indebted for their valuable information on the events that took place in Urumia and its surrounding districts during the Turkish and Kurdish invasion; and for the aid they have given me on special points.

It is a pleasing duty to express my sincere thanks to Professor W. W. Rockwell of the Union Theologica! Seminary, and Dr. Charles J. Ogden, for their generous assistance

rendered in reading and correcting every page of proof as it came from the compositor, and for their counsel with regard to matters of general presentation.

A. Y.

NEW YORK,
September, 1916.

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The Death of a Nation

The Death of a Nation

INTRODUCTION

WHO AND WHERE ARE THE NESTORIANS?

THEY have been known under various appellations, as—

Arameans¹—but the expression was disliked by them, as it seemed to smack of heathenism, and they insist that the term was a misnomer given by the Jews to all who were outside the pale of Judaism.

Chaldeans²—is the name by which they

¹ Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*. Audo, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Chaldéenne*, Introduction, p. 9. David, *Grammaire de la Langue Araméenne*, Introduction, p. 10.

² Assemani, iv., pp. 1, 3. Layard, i., p. 217, new ed. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, i., p. 179. Grant, *The Nestorians*, p. 170. Smith and Dwight, *Missionary*

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have been recorded in certain ecclesiastical documents and rituals, to designate their ancient origin as a race, and their relation to Abraham, who was from "Ur of the Chaldees." They may, therefore, justly lay claim to the title, as the descendants of the ancient Chaldeans, and no valid objection can be urged against the assumption. It is, evidently, in this sense that Assemani uses the term, when he says: "Chaldeans or Assyrians; whom, from that part of the globe which they inhabit, we term Orientals." Ainsworth, in his *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia*, correctly styles them "Chaldeans"; and Mr. Layard, in his *Nineveh and its Remains*, adopts the same nomenclature. On the other hand, certain writers, like Gabriel, Bishop of Hurmizdashir, and Daniel, of Resh Aina, identify

Researches, ii., p. 186. Duval, *Les Dialectes Néo-Araméens de Salamas*, Introduction, p. 3.

According to certain Oriental historians, the ancient Chaldeans inhabited the Kurdistan Mountains. Bar-Kepa, Bar-hebræus, Bar-Salibha, and others maintain that the mountains should be called Chaldistan (the habitation of Chaldeans) and not Kurdistan.

the Chaldeans with astrologers and heretics, and treat them as such. Since 1681, when the Metropolitan of Diarbekir was first consecrated, by the Pope, as the Patriarch of the Chaldeans, the term is confined, almost exclusively, to those members of the community who have joined the Roman Catholic Uniats.

Assyrians¹:—There can be but little doubt that the Chaldeans were of the same family with the Assyrians. And the similarity of the physiognomy of certain tribes of this race to that of the Assyrians and Chaldeans as sculptured upon the ancient monuments, which have been excavated in the ruins of Nineveh, is remarkable.

Syrians²:—It is claimed that the term is merely the shortened form and a Christian adaptation of the word, "Assyrians," which

¹ Badger, i., p. 179. Assemani, iv., pp. 1, 375.

² Wright, *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, p. 15. Nöldeke, in *Hermes*, i., p. 443, and ZDMG. xv., p. 113. David, *Grammaire de la Langue Araméenne*, Introduction, p. 11. Audo, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Chaldéenne*, Introduction, p. 9.

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they may with equal right take to themselves as their most proper name; and that, originally, they are not from Syria proper as the term "Syrians" would suggest, but from Assyria.

Nestorians¹:—This name, which has a theological significance, was applied to them, probably centuries after Nestorius, and was first used by the Roman Catholics to convey the stigma of a heresy, who found it necessary to bestow upon them such a title in contradistinction to the name "Chaldeans" which they applied only to the Assyrian proselytes to Rome.

Notwithstanding the fact that the name "Nestorians" is disliked and disavowed by the people themselves, still, since it has been forced upon them, and since by that name they are best known to the world, they have been obliged to recognize it.

Mar Yohannan,² the Nestorian Bishop of

¹Badger, *Nestorians and their Rituals*, i., p. 178. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, i., p. 259. Assemani, iv., pp. 1, 375.

²Murdock's *Translation of Syriac New Testament*,

Who Are the Nestorians? 5

Urumia, Persia, said to the missionary, Justin Perkins: "We shall soon be at war if you do not cease calling us 'Nestorians.'"

THE HOME OF THE NESTORIANS¹

The original home of the Nestorians is supposed to be in Assyria or Mesopotamia, with its headquarters at Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the twin capital of Persia, on the River Tigris. This beautiful country, as a connecting link between East and West, has been doomed to be the battlefield for the everlastingly contending races of the Eastern and Western empires; first, between the Greeks and Parthians, then between the Romans and Persians, and later between the Turks and Persians. A war between the Eastern and Western states always spelled persecution

Introduction, p. 20, n; Assemani, iv., p. 1; Mosheim, p. 203, n. 1. Badger, i., pp. 178, 181; ii., p. 376. Layard, i., p. 217, new ed.

For the identification of these various appellations, see the author's introduction to his *Modern Syriac-English Dictionary*.

¹ Badger, i., p. 256. Layard, i., p. 204, new ed. Assemani, iv., p. 1.

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for them. A Persian war with Rome and a persecution of the Nestorian Christians had usually gone hand in hand; it made little difference to the persecuted "which caused which." And as the Christians were found both in the Eastern and Western empires, in either empire they were looked upon as suspects, and sympathizers with their co-religionists in the land of their enemies. Consequently, whenever the emperor of either state returned from war defeated, he would wreak his vengeance on the Christians of his own land, and make them pay the bill. The other states, naturally, protected them. During the present war, however, the Turks and Persians, who had always been in arms against each other, forgot their quarrels, and joined hands against Christians. It is a *Holy War*.

Thus, this Christian community formed a buffer between the two antagonistic faiths of Europe and Asia. Consequently, they were exposed to constant persecutions and massacres; their cities were destroyed, coun-

Who Are the Nestorians? 7

try ruined, and the population partly exterminated and partly banished into distant lands; the remnant who escaped the ravaging sword of the Persians and the Romans, in spite of all these vicissitudes still lingered around their ruins, spoke the language of their ancestors, retained the name of their race, and clung with many tenacious roots to the soil of their birth.

This ill-fated community has seen unnumbered woes in its religious and secular history, but its bitterest cup had to be tasted in this twentieth century. They have always turned the cheek, but the enemy is not yet convinced that it is wrong to smite them.

The Muhammadans' hatred of the Christians, in the East, where the religion is determinant of nationality, is unintelligible to the western people. They are dwelling in the same land, and living side by side for generations in peace and quiet; for all that, abating no jot of bitter hatred. And it blazes up like the fires from a long dormant

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volcano at the least opportunity for its indulgence.

After centuries of persecution, however, they were gradually driven farther east into Media and Persia. To-day they are found, roughly, in the district which lies between Lake Urumia, Lake Van, the eastern Tigris, and Mosul, partly under Persian and partly under Turkish rule. So they have always been caught between the upper and the nether millstones. Their number is given as one hundred and ninety thousand; whereas at one time they boasted a population more numerous than all the other Christian bodies combined.

Their present Patriarch, Benyamin Mar Shimun, who was consecrated in 1903, is the one hundred and thirty-eighth Catholicos of the East, and the fourteenth of those who have resided at Quchanis in the Kurdistan Mountains.

For convenience they may be divided into three or rather four general groups:

The first group, numbering about thirty



Village of Quchanis—The Patriarchal Seat
Courtesy of F. N. Heazell and Mrs. Margoliouth

Who Are the Nestorians? 9

thousand, are residing in the villages and the city of the plain of Urumia, Persia, and its environs. These suffered terribly as the tides of war between the Russians and Turks ebbed back and forth over the plain.

The second group, consisting of about ninety thousand, were settled in the central Kurdistan Mountains, Turkey, since the fourteenth century.

The third group, numbering some seventy thousand, inhabited the valley of the Tigris or Bohtan-su region, between Diarbekir and Mosul, close to the ruins of Nineveh.

Besides these three groups, there are also the Syrian Jacobites who claim to have a community of two hundred thousand souls, and live in Diarbekir, Mardin, and other settlements of Armenia.

THE PLAIN OF URUMIA

The alluvial plain of Urumia¹ is the most picturesque and flourishing spot in the western part of Azerbaijan, the northwestern province

¹ Jackson, *Persia Past and Present*, p. 88.

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of Persia; bounded on the east by the salt lake of that name, and on the west by the undulating and grassy slopes of the snow-capped range of Kurdistan or the Zagros mountains, whose imposing ranges sweep down quite to the waters of the lake at the extremities of the plain, and enclose it like a vast amphitheater and give it a salubrious climate. From the mountains descend three meandering streams which feed a thousand irrigation ditches, and give fertility to the innumerable orchards and vineyards, laden with a large variety of fruit. In the summer, the whole plain is half sunk in shrubbery and in the numerous rows of willows, poplars, and sycamore trees planted along the watercourses. The whole scenery is like the "Garden of Eden."

Over three hundred villages are scattered about over the plain, in every suitable spot, and the Christian inhabitants number about forty thousand. In some cases they occupy a village exclusively, and in the others they live together with the Muhammadans.



A Suburb of Urumia
Kindness of Mr. Paul Shimun

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THE CITY OF URUMIA

The compact city of Urumia, which is situated in the center of the plain, contains a population of about thirty thousand; the bulk are Muhammadans, but it also comprises a considerable sprinkling of Assyrians, Armenians, and Jewish families.

The city of Urumia is the reputed birth-place of Zoroaster.¹ In the plain are numerous ash mounds, some of them covering many acres of ground. They are believed to be the fire places or temples of Parsees. Here is also the old church of St. Mary, wherein is the tomb of one of the three wise men, who died in Urumia on his way from Bethlehem. The date of the settlement of the Assyrians in this district is not known, but Urumia is mentioned as the see of one of their bishops called Abhdisho, as early as 1111 A.D.

URUMIA AS THE HEADQUARTERS OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES

Here the American Mission began its work in 1834, under the American Board;

¹ Jackson, *Persia Past and Present*, p. 102.

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and in 1871, the mission was transferred to the Presbyterian Board.

The Roman Catholics had started their work long before that time.

About the year 1872, a Lutheran Mission was established by a native.

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Personal Mission to the Assyrian Christians was established in 1886. The unselfish work of the self-sacrificing members of this Mission, who had devoted themselves to educate and uplift the people, has unfortunately just been discontinued on account of this war.

In 1894 German missionaries settled there, for a short period only, for the evangelization of the Jews.

**THE ASSYRIAN CHRISTIANS AS A PEOPLE.—
EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER OF THE BISHOP
OF GIBRALTAR, WHO VISITED THE ASSY-
RIANS IN 1907¹**

“As to the Assyrian people, I lost my heart to them completely; and I think there can

¹ Heazell and Margoliouth, *Kurds and Christians*, pp. 195, 196.



St. Mary's Church, Urumia (where one of the Magi is said to be buried)

Who Are the Nestorians? 13

be no question that they are a finer race than the Armenian, the Georgian, and indeed any other of the peoples in that part of the world. The defects in races which have long been subject to the Turk, which usually disgust Western observers, are almost inseparable from long-continued oppression; but the poorest Assyrian of the mountains has preserved a natural dignity, courage, and a freshness which are very lovable, whilst he has far more of resourcefulness and 'saving common sense' than most of the people round about. And this, be it remembered, subsists in the face of tyranny and hardships which seem almost to become worse year by year. 'The freedom of their strictures, and the manliness of their moral lessons, will hardly be conceived by those who have been accustomed to annex to Eastern minds the feelings alone of servility and terror.'

“‘Mar Shimun’s people’ struck me much in their ethnic capacity; I was not less struck with them as a Church. That they are still very ignorant and backward goes with-

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out saying; it could hardly be otherwise after centuries of seclusion and persecution. But there is a naturalness, a simplicity, and a spontaneity about their religion which is very attractive. In many ways they seem to me to illustrate the life of Christians of very early days, both in its strength and in its weakness; and again, whilst they have plenty of ethnic superstitions of their own [some derived from Magian sources], there is a remarkable absence of modern 'corruptions' in their religion, or of such a mixture of pagan and Christian superstition as is to be found, for example, amongst the Orthodox in some of the Greek islands."

INFLUENCE OF NESTORIAN MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

There is a constant tradition of the Church, that Christianity was introduced into India by St. Thomas the Apostle,¹ and it continued for many centuries to flourish.

¹ Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, lib. i., cap. iii. Assemani, iv., pp. 4, 25, 32-34, 435 f.



Ruel Mar Shimun, Late Patriarch of the Assyrian Christians

Who Are the Nestorians? 15

One of the bishops at the Council of Nicæa signs himself as the Prelate of Persia and Great India. At length they grew so powerful that they were enabled to elect a king from among themselves. The first of these monarchs was called Baliart, who assumed the title of *King of the Christians of St. Thomas*. His descendants succeeded him for several generations. A recent account puts the number of the Nestorians in India at two hundred thousand, by far the greater part being Roman Catholics now. Their headquarters is at Malabar.

This body, the Nestorians, which, after long struggles in the courts in India, has won definite recognition of its right to exist, and to hold certain not inconsiderable endowments, is that portion of the Church of St. Thomas which still remains loyal to its ancient Patriarch. Anciently, the Church of Malabar was indisputably one of the many provinces whose Metropolitans owed allegiance to the Patriarchs of Baghdad, whose representative is the present Mar

Shimun. Roman Catholic (*i. e.*, Portuguese) interference cut them off in the fifteenth century from all communication with their chief, and these "Nestorians" in consequence became Jacobites in preference to becoming Roman, and submitted to the Patriarch Ignatius of Mardin. They could hardly have given a better proof that their separation from the bulk of Christendom was for national rather than theological reasons. A portion of the Church, however, remained in more or less uneasy subjection to the Pope, and these "Syro-Chaldeans" are a later separation from that portion who split off about 1850, and then sought, and obtained, a Bishop from their original and unforgotten Patriarch, whose seat had in the meantime shifted several times, and was at last at Quchanis.

These Nestorians of India for several years had been anxiously asking Mar Shimun for a Bishop, as the present Bishop was very old. In 1908 he consecrated the Archdeacon Abimelech (now Mar Timotheus), a



Mar Timotheos
Metropolitan of Nestorian Church,
Trichur, India
Courtesy of F. N. Hezell and Mrs. Margoliouth

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member of his family, as a Metropolitan for the Syrian Nestorian Church of Travancore and Cochin, in South India.

One of the settlements of the Nestorian colonies was at Malabar near Madras. Here the Hindus have now a joint worship, partly Hindu and partly Christian. Ramanuja Acharya (11th century), the author of the great protest against the Vedantic pantheism of Sankaracharya, was born and educated within a few miles of Mylapore or Malabar. His doctrines differed widely from those of the orthodox Hinduism of his time, and where they differed from it they agreed with Christianity. His most important doctrine was that the Supreme Deity was a personal loving All-Father, and that the released soul was not absorbed into God after death, but maintained an everlasting personal existence near Him, and became in its nature like Him. From this was derived the doctrine of Bhakti, or of loving personal devotion to a personal God, who became incarnate to relieve the world from sin, and who is now in heaven

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still a loving and personal Deity watching and guarding His followers. In the Puranas there was the extraordinary fact that the ceremonies celebrating the birth festival of Krishna did not agree with the current legends of his birth, but had been altered so as to coincide with the Gospel narratives of the birth of Jesus Christ. The vernacular Bhakti literature was full of reminiscences of Christianity. This dated from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the doctrine was first preached in Northern India, and was very widely adopted, causing the greatest religious revolution which India had seen—a revolution little considered by European writers because the evidence dealing with it was not written in Sanskrit. There were Indian saints of those times who maintained that right initiation meant being “born again.” One plucked out his eye and cast it from him because it had offended him. Another cut off his right hand for the same reason. Kabir’s doctrine of the Sabda, or Word, must have been borrowed

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from the opening verses of St. John's Gospel. The Kabir sect refused to worship any Hindu deity or perform any Hindu rite. In the sacramental meal of Kabir's followers food and water were distributed as Kabir's special gift conferring eternal life, and portions of this food were reserved for the sick. This evidence showed that the great Indian reformation of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was suggested by ideas borrowed from the Nestorian Christians of Southern India.

THE FAITH OF THE NESTORIANS¹

The Assyrian or Chaldean Church accepts the first two Œcumenical Councils of the Christian Church, but it was cut off from the communion of the Catholic Church in the fifth century after Christ for rejecting the third Council, held at Ephesus in 431, which condemned Nestorius and his opinions.

When the Church was free of persecutions

¹ Assemani, iv., pp. 190-203 and 210-223. Mosheim, pp. 199-203. Wigram, p. 132.

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for a while, its internal life was disturbed by a new element—the vexed Christological controversy that brought heresies of various names in its train.

The Nestorians and Monophysites attempted to explain the question in two different ways, which superficially seemed to be opposite but essentially were the same. The former declared the Incarnation to be a mere association of a man with the Divinity, the latter believed the manhood was annihilated by assumption. In either case, the explanation lies in the belief of the incompatibility of the human and Divine. Each side vigorously asserted that the other was teaching a doctrine which the other as vigorously denied that it taught. Monophysites stretched the Nestorians' tenets to their extreme logical conclusion, and presented them as their doctrines. Nestorians returned the compliment to Monophysites. Each called himself "orthodox" and the other "heterodox." It was a battle chiefly of words and names.

Of course every human expression fails

to describe fully the mystery of the Incarnation. The common seek the commonplace explanation of a mystery. But when one seeks to express infinite truth in finite terms, he detracts from its importance. The words can only suggest the idea back of them, rather than accurately explain that idea. In this case each party as a rule only half remembered the inadequacy of their own terms, and quite forgot it as regards those of their opponents. Neither side made any attempt to get "behind the words."

The theological doctrines held by both were essentially almost identical, and only verbally different; at least, they did not differ as widely as one may infer from the rancor of their debates. Of course each word was capable of interpretations that could not possibly be read into the other, but the theological sense of one word, as used by one party, was identical with the theological sense of the word as used by the other.

"The evidence of the sincerity of the Nestorian Christians is not to be sought in meta-

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physical discussions and hair-splitting theology, but in the tears of saints and the blood of martyrs." That they should have withstood all attacks and have kept the faith during the centuries of tyranny and bitter persecution, is no small tribute to their Christian character and to an inspiring fidelity to their Divine Lord and Master. "The love of Christ must sweep away the hollow, shallow distinctions which part men asunder."

The Nestorian Church has always been a Church, in fact, not of cities and villages, but of mountains, and caves, and dens of earth. These were the sanctuaries in which this unarmed and defenseless church entrenched itself against the oppressors in the midst of never-ceasing war.

Out of these sufferings and conflicting elements was formed a type of character in which fortitude, sincerity, and sympathy were blended with the most daring courage, which made the Christians stand fast in the face of death.

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Eastern Christianity was bound by the local peculiarities, from which the Church of the West had shaken itself free. The Nestorian Church had been profoundly influenced by the geographical situation, physical constitution, mental temperament, and the racial characteristics of the Asiatic races who formed the bulk of the Church. And as the Christians themselves were making constant efforts to hold fast their faith, and at the same time to avoid the incessant persecutions, they were constrained to modify some of their teachings, and adapt themselves to their environments and requirements.

Such efforts as these took the shape of the corporate adoption of a form of Christianity, which those in more favorable circumstances complacently call heresy.

It is true there is a real difference between the Church of the East and the Churches of Antioch and of Rome. The Greek theology does not suit well the Eastern mind, nor does it sound well in the Syriac language. Thus, they were divided by the barrier of

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language, which, though it did not estrange them, separated them, so that the Eastern Church grew up under influences different from those which helped to mold the Græco-Roman Church. Nevertheless, the Nestorian Church had an apostolic origin, and was in full communion with all the chief centers of Christianity. Many of their Saints are recognized as Saints by the Church Universal.

Such are the antecedents of these historical Christians, whose remnants the Muhammadans are seeking to destroy root and branch.

A CHURCH MILITANT

This Church has been fighting hand to hand, for almost eighteen centuries, with all kinds of enemies, and never relaxed in its labors. When the legions of Arabs poured out of Arabia to conquer the world, Persia fell before them; Asia Minor and Alexandria also bowed low before the crescent, and

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the Empire of the Cæsars was vanquished and contracted. This Church did not quail before the successive billows of devastation, but rode out the storm; her spiritual power did not stoop to the victor, but won many noble victories for Christ and sacrificed many glorious martyrs for him. The Caliphates rose and fell, the Seljuk dynasty glared for a while and soon became extinct, the Mongolian hordes devastated the East and West, and finally the Turks closed the annals of the Eastern Empire; because their hour had come. But the Eastern Church, hated and persecuted by all, humbled to the dust, survived all and mocked at their destruction.¹

BURNED BUT NOT CONSUMED

It is true that Christianity in the East is being crucified once more, and looking around with dimmed eyes into the dark horizon, she is crying out aloud, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But is she

¹ Neale, *Holy Eastern Church*, i., Introduction, p. 5.

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going to die? No! Crucifixion does not imply the absence of God, but rather the nearness of salvation and the certainty of resurrection.

The faith and prayers of these persecuted Christians have been in time past mighty factors in overcoming the total destruction intended by the cruel persecutors. Who knows but that this gigantic struggle of nations to-day is breaking the dawn of a new day for the world; and if "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," the Christians in Persia have truly made their sacrifice there for nearly eighteen hundred years; they have surely some right to "hope against hope," to have a share in evangelizing the blood-bespattered Persia.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSION IN PERSIA

The influence of a true Christian spirit, earned by long years of the unselfish service of the devoted American missionaries in

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Persia, has won the respect and confidence even of the hostile elements, who have already begun to show their appreciation.

Tuesday, March 9, 1916, during the massacres, a Muhammadan orator made a speech in a garden in Urumia to a crowd of several thousand people, practically all Muslims. He said that Italy and Persia had joined in the alliance with Germany, Austria, and Turkey, and, of course, were in the way of victory. America had taken no part in this war, but was doing good all over the world without regard to race or religion, caring for the sick and wounded, feeding the hungry, and befriending the needy. The American missionaries here, he said, have done and are doing this, and everyone should honor them and stand up for them. At this there was great applause.

That little Mission Ark whose maker and pilot is God, driven on the disturbed sea of persecution, was the only hope of the Persian Church—the tempest-tossed bark, on the waves of the deluge, as the winds were

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fighting against it and the perils were just ready to overwhelm it, and "Jesus slept." The occupants were prayerful and penitent, even the little children seemed to know their Litany. They were striking their breasts and saying: "O Lord, have mercy upon us! O Jesus, save us." Evermore the Church is saved from destruction, because Jesus is in it. Roused by the prayers, the earnest cry of his servants, he rebuked the winds and waves before they quite engulfed it.



A Mansion in Urumia

I
A PERSECUTED CHURCH

I

A PERSECUTED CHURCH

I

FOUNDATION OF THE NESTORIAN CHURCH UNDER THE PARTHIANS (50-225 A.D.)

TIMOTHY I.,¹ the Patriarch of the Nestorians, who wrote at the end of the eighth century, states that the Magi had introduced the Christian religion among them, by proclaiming the message of the Gospel throughout the Persian Empire, after their return from that holy pilgrimage, and that Christianity was established among them about twenty years after the Ascension of our Lord. At about 80 A.D. the missionaries' activity among the flourishing Jewish community at Babylon is well known from the Jerusalem

¹ Assemani, iv., p. 3. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire Perse*, p. 10.

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Talmud, where it is stated that Khanani of Capernaum was sent by his uncle Joshua to Babylon to counteract their influence.² Probably the Christian movement in these regions was started by the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and saw that great miracle mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.³ It has commonly been held by the Assyrian Christians that St. Peter wrote his First Epistle from the real and not from the figurative Babylon (1 Peter 5, 13).

II

EDESSA THE STARTING POINT⁴

It is believed by the Assyrian Christians that Christianity was planted in Edessa in the first century,⁴ by Addai or Thaddeus (who

² Assemani, iv., pp. 7, 435 f. Graetz, *Histoire des Juifs*, iii., p. 51.

³ Assemani, iv., p. 7. Acts ii., 9.

⁴ Assemani, i., pp. 387-430. Duval, *Histoire d'Edesse*.

⁴ Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, p. 1 f. *Doctrine of Addai*, p. 5. Compare Labourt, pp. 10, 18. Wigram,



The Two Great Columns on the Citadel of Edessa
Courtesy of F. C. Burkitt

is variously considered as either the Apostle Thaddeus or one of the "seventy"), who had been commissioned to go there, in response to a letter from King Abgar to our Lord. This legend, as contained in the book called the *Doctrine of Addai*,¹ is as follows: Abgar Ukama or Abgar the Black, one of the kings of the native dynasty, who died in 50 A.D., sent an embassy to Sabinus, the deputy of the Emperor Tiberius in Palestine. The embassy consisted of the nobles Mariyable and Shamshagram, with a scribe called Hannan. On their way home they stayed in Jerusalem ten days, where they saw and heard Jesus. Hannan wrote down everything which he saw that Jesus did. So they returned to King Abgar. When Abgar heard he wished to go himself to Palestine, but was afraid

p. 28. Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, pp. 10 f. Duval, *Histoire d'Edesse*, 1892.

¹ *Doctrine of Addai*, p. 2 f. Cureton, pp. 10-23. *Sources Syriacques*, t. i., Mshikha Zkha, ed. Mingana. Mshikha Zkha was a scholar of the College of Nisibin, and the author of an ecclesiastical history, which he compiled about the sixth century, from the works of the earlier writers. *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne*, I, pp. 87-98.

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to pass through the Roman dominions. He therefore sent a letter to Jesus by Hannan the scribe:

“Abgar Ukama, Amir of the country, to Jesus, the good Deliverer, who has appeared in Jerusalem, Peace. I have heard of thee and of the cures wrought by thy hands, without any medicine or herbs; for it is reported that thou makest the blind to see, the lame to walk; thou cleansest the lepers, castest out unclean spirits and demons; thou healest those who are tormented with chronic diseases and raisest the dead.

“And when I heard these things about thee, I settled in my mind one of two things; either thou art God, come down from heaven, or the son of God. I request of thee that thou wouldest trouble thyself to come to me, and cure the disease which I have. I have also heard that the Jews murmur against thee, and wish to do thee harm. But I have a city, small and beautiful, which is enough for both of us.”

When Jesus received the letter, he replied

to Hannan the scribe: "Go and say to thy lord that sent thee unto me, Blessed art thou, that believest in me, though thou hast not seen me; for it is written of me that they which see me will not believe in me, and they which see me not, they will believe and be saved. Now touching what thou hast written to me, that I should come unto thee—it is meet that I shall fulfil that for which I was sent hither, and I shall go up unto my Father that sent me; and when I shall have gone up unto Him, I will send thee one of my disciples, that whatever disease thou hast he may heal. And all that are with thee he shall bring to life eternal, and thy town shall be blessed."

This famous letter of Christ to Abgar seems to have been translated very early into Greek, and incorporated by Eusebius into his *Ecclesiastical History*.¹ It is contained in some fragments of Greek papyrus, owned by the Bodleian, dating from the

¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, i., p. 43. Assemani, iv., p. 8.

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fourth or fifth century. In 1901 a lintel was discovered at Ephesus with the letter of Abgar to Christ and that of Christ to Abgar inscribed on it in the characters almost contemporary with Eusebius himself (fourth century). Providence in the story of Abgar both shows the need and fills the desire, like the master musician who presses two keys on a piano as he chooses, and makes them respond in a chord. After the Ascension, Addai (the Apostle Thaddeus) came to Edessa, healed Abgar, and christianized him and his people.¹

Thus, Edessa is the traditional starting point and the center of the early Christian life and literature. From the end of the second century on, it was the center of very active missions and a "nursing" mother to the national Churches of Persia and Armenia. Edessa was the capital of a small kingdom east of the Euphrates, the district of Osrhoene or Orrhoene, from which comes the modern name Urhai or Urfa for the town, which in

¹ Assemani, iv., pp. 9-15.

the Bible is known as "Ur of the Chaldees." It had belonged to the Seleucid kings of Antioch, but as that region was divided between the Romans and the Parthians, and Edessa lay on the frontier, its history followed the usual fortunes of a border state. Until the end of the second century of our era Edessa was within the Parthian suzerainty. In the August of 116, however, it was stormed and sacked by the Roman general Lucius Quietus; and in 216, or ten years before the fall of the Parthian monarchy, the Romans took possession of Edessa and it became their colony.¹

III

MISSION OF MARI

The ancient traditions of the Assyrian Christians declare that Mari,² the disciple of Addai (Thaddeus), was sent by his fellow

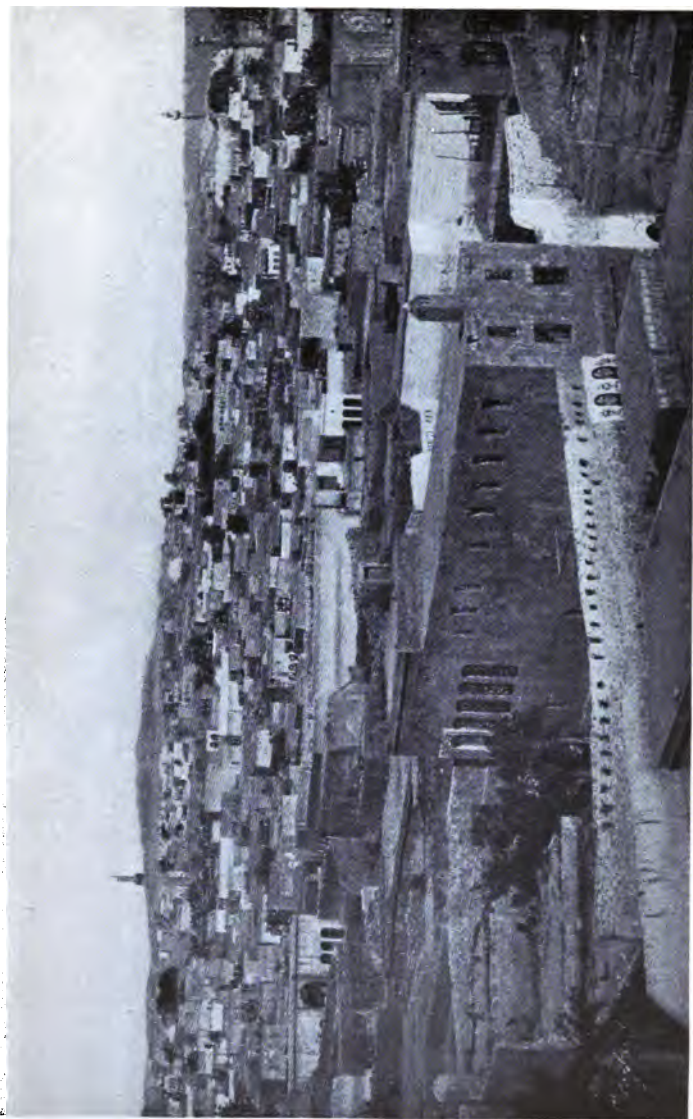
¹ Gibbon, i., pp. 207 f.

² *Acta S. Maris*, ch. viii., ed. Abbeloos. Assemani, iv., pp. 17, 18.

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workers at Edessa to Seleucia as a missionary; he wrote back to them, "this land is like the soil full of thorns and thistles, a land of hills and mountains; its inhabitants are worthless heathen, I am not able to do any good; now, if you say so, I shall return to you or go elsewhere." His fellow-Christians, being very anxious for the salvation of Seleucia, wrote to him thus: "Thou art not allowed to leave the field, but shalt have to climb those hills and mountains, and till and sow them that they bring fruit for an offering unto the Lord." So he did, and his efforts were crowned with success. He worked also in Adiabene and the Aramean province, but chiefly in Khuzistan.

"The most fertile fields for the seed of the Kingdom have been those previously the most barren of good, or desperately fruitful of evil. The tenacity with which men cling to error is a pledge of their tenacity to Christianity when converted. The more fanatic non-Christian people become more enthusiastic Christians." Natural impossibilities



Edessa
Courtesy of F. C. Burkitt

can never be pleaded in view of the commission, "Go ye into all the world."

A writer in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.) notices the spread of Christianity in Parthia, Media, Persia, and Bactria, steadily increasing among all ranks.

Abd-Mshikha¹ of Arbil (190-225) was the last Bishop under the rule of the Arsacid kings of Parthia. At this time the Church extended from the Kurdistan Mountains to the Persian Gulf, and was governed by twenty-five bishops, whose sees were distributed throughout the country named. Mshikha-Zkha, a writer of the sixth century, gives us the names of seventeen of these sees.

Arnobius the African, who wrote in the third century, mentions the Seres as among the Oriental nations who had embraced Christianity, and Mosheim regarded these as Chinese.² The Church among the pagans advanced rapidly. The old faiths were

¹ *Sources Syriaques*, i., p. 27, ed. Mingana.

² Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 97. Assemani, iv., p. 18.

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outgrown, the very force which developed them provided for their decay. Hence it was that they turned so readily to the new light of Christianity, and embraced it with startling readiness.¹

IV

THE CHURCH UNDER THE SASSANIAN KINGS (225-651)

In 225 the rule of the Parthians gave way to that of the Sassanians;² the Arsacid dynasty was replaced by the House of Sassan, whose founder, Ardashir I., was called in Pahlavi, Malkan Malka or Shahinshah, King of Kings, who wrested the scepter from Ardaban.

Christianity at this time was widely spread and well organized in Persia; on that ground the Sassanian rulers had to recognize its legal right to be tolerated, provided that the missionaries' activities should be confined to their own people, and that any con-

¹ Wigram, *The Assyrian Church*, p. 32.

² Wigram, p. 37. Labourt, p. 15.

version from Zoroastrianism to Christianity should be punishable with death. But as it is not in the nature of Christianity to be restricted and limited, here also it could win converts from the strongest and the most prominent Zoroastrians, who became churchmen of the most saintly character. The fertile soil of Persia, that had raised vigorous weeds, now grew robust Christians. Even the marred and hostile elements were made tributary to the final triumph of Christianity. The worst people without Christ become best with him.

It was about this time that the eloquent Bishop of Beth Zabdai preached so vivid a sermon in Seleucia,¹ that it almost produced a general persecution. He called on his hearers not to envy the Shahinshah, for in the days to come he would be burning in fire, but they would be victorious. It was very stimulating to them, but the King was genuinely frightened to think the fire he worshiped would turn into hell, and consume his

¹ Wigram, p. 43 f.

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“divine person.” With great difficulty the enraged King was quieted and the persecution averted.

V

THE EPISCOPATE OF PAPA

In the end of the third century, Papa¹ was consecrated as Bishop of the capital, Seleucia. He organized the episcopate of the Eastern Church. It was here that the reaction came. He attempted to unite all the Christians in Persia under the leadership of the royal city, Seleucia, in other words, claiming supremacy in right of his position as Bishop of the capital.

His project raised bitter opposition, and the first council in the history of the Church of the East met at Seleucia about 315 to investigate the matter. Feeling ran very high when the council met; the opponents accused Papa of disgraceful morals,² intol-

¹ Labourt, p. 20. Wigram, p. 45.

² Barhebræus, *Chron. Eccles.*, iii., p. 30.

erable arrogance,¹ and of little respect for ecclesiastical orders,² for he had ordained two bishops to one see.³ Papa grew indignant and refused to submit to the authority of the council. Bishop Miles of Tehran, a Zoroastrian by birth, who was presiding, put the Gospel in the center, and said: "If you will not be judged by man, be judged by the Gospel of our Lord which says, 'He that is chief among you, let him be a servant.' " Papa was not able to answer, and seized with furious rage, he struck the book with his hand, exclaiming: "Then speak, Gospel, speak! why are you silent at this injustice." The council was shocked at such sacrilege; Miles ran and took the Gospel, kissed it,

¹ Assemani, *Acta Miles*, M. O., p. 72.

² The Nestorian Church has nine orders of ministry, corresponding to the nine orders of angels in three hierarchies, each including three subdivisions, thus: (1) Seraphim = Patriarchs, Cherubim, = Metropolitans, Thrones = Episcopacy; (2) Dominations = Archdeacons, Principalities = Chorepiscopacy, Powers = Priests; (3) Virtues = Deacons, Archangels = Subdeacons, Angels = Readers. *The Book of the Bee*, ed. Yohannan, p. 57.

³ Marl, p. 7. Assemani, iv., pp. 49-51. Wigram, p. 52.

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and put it upon his eyes, but the fury of aged Papa then overcame him—he was struck with paralysis,¹ which was taken as a judgment from Heaven. His condemnation immediately followed as a matter of course. He was deposed from his rank,² and his arch-deacon, Shimun Bar Sabba'i, was consecrated in his room.

VI

THE GREAT PERSECUTION OF SHAPUR II., ZULAKTAF (339-379)

Christianity had already extended its influence far eastward; in 334 bishops were settled at Tus and Mashad, and Barsabha became Bishop of Merv in Khurasan, for fifteen years. But the mission work was interrupted by the terrible persecution of Shapur, which began in 339 and lasted forty years.³

¹ *Acta de S. Miles*, M. O. p. 72. Bedjan, ii., p. 266. Assemani, iv., pp. 49-51. Wigram, p. 52.

² *Acta de S. Miles*, M. O., p. 72. Wigram, p. 53.

³ Assemani, i., p. 16.



Shapur

From Markham, *History of Persia*

As long as the Roman Empire was pagan, the Persian Church was tolerated, but with the Christianization of the Emperor himself and his empire, things were changed. Christians in Persia were looked upon by the Zoroastrians as political suspects and as sympathizers with their co-religionists in Rome. The suspicion became their death-warrant.

Thus, when Shapur returned from the war with Rome, sore at his humiliating defeat, he turned furiously upon Christians, declaring: "At least we will make these Roman sympathizers pay."

A *firman* was issued requiring the Christians to pay exorbitant taxes, as a contribution to the cost of a war in which they were taking no part, the Mar Shimun Bar Sabba'i, Catholicos, being ordered to collect the same. He refused to obey the order,¹ on the double ground that his people were poor, and that tax-collecting was no part of a Bishop's

¹ Assemani, M. O., p. 20. Labourt, p. 46. Wigram, p. 63.

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business. On this it was easy to raise the cry, "he is a traitor and wishes to rebel"; a second *firman* was issued, ordering the arrest and death of the clergy and the general destruction of all the Christian churches. Finally another *firman* was given, commanding that all Christians should be imprisoned and executed. The persecution lasted forty years, during which period men of all ranks suffered martyrdom, among them officers of the King who had embraced Christianity.

The *firman* contained the following accusations: "The Christians teach men to serve only one God and not to honor the sun or fire, to defile water by their ablutions, to refrain from marriage and the procreation of children, and to refuse to go to war with the King. They have no scruple about the slaughter and eating of the animals. They bury their dead in the earth; and attribute the origin of the light and darkness, and of snakes and creeping things to a good God."

Shapur offered freedom, both for Mar Shimun and his people, if he would consent to

adore the sun but once; on his refusal the order of execution was given.

The flock of Bar Sabba'i, five bishops and about one hundred clergy, were gathered together to hear his last words and to receive his solemn blessing. "May the Cross of our Lord be the protection of the people of Jesus; the peace of God be with the servants of God, and establish your hearts in the faith of Christ, in tribulation and in ease, in life and in death, now and for evermore."¹ They sealed their testimony on the morning of Good Friday, 339 A.D. The scene took place outside Karka of Lapat or Susa, where the persecution in this case began, but it soon spread into most of the Christian centers of the kingdom.

Wigram says: "The ascetics were as much the object of persecution as were the clergy; the Zoroastrians regarded the celibate life with horror. Nuns were commonly offered their lives if they would consent to marry;

¹ Bedjan, ii., 154. Assemani, i., p. 612. Wigram, p. 63.

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Martha, as usual, was offered freedom, by the Mobed who tried her, if she would consent to marry. She explained that she was sorry, but that she was betrothed to Jesus, and enjoyed the confusion of the Mobed,¹ who asked after the family and village of the supposed bridegroom, and declared that he would send for him. Later the fearless girl indulged in some similar parley with the executioner. The martyrs were glad at the scaffold, because they were going home.

“Yazdun-docht, a noble lady, cared for one hundred and twenty confessors of Seleucia, during their imprisonment, and only revealed to them the fact that the day of their ‘release’ had come, by the final gift of white raiment that she made to each of them, and the prayer that they would intercede for her before the throne. The bodies of martyrs were as a rule surrendered to their friends, and the lady was allowed to complete her pious task by the burial of these bodies in the great martyrrium.

¹ Zoroastrian priest.

“On one occasion the friends of a martyr having worn the costumes of the Magi, applied to the guards, saying, the governor has ordered us to look after the remains of James, lest you sell it to the Christians, so they took away the body and entombed it in a magnificent martyrium.

“On another occasion, when the right of burial was refused and the bodies left by the roadside, panic was spread among the Magi, and triumph among the Christians, by a mysterious light that hovered above the corpses. It was, of course, some kind of phosphorescence, but was universally regarded as a proof that these were holy men that had been done to death; and the bodies were interred with all honor.”

Up to the very end of his life Shapur continued to persecute relentlessly; and it is only natural that, as the persecution goes on, a bitter and resentful tone should creep into the minds of the sufferers, and should find expression in sayings like, “You accursed King,” or, “I will not worship fire, but you

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will be burning forever in it some day"; these are to be regretted, though one cannot wonder that a generation of suffering should have produced them. A man in a fury is apt to be off his guard.

In the forty years of persecution, sixteen thousand Christians suffered martyrdom whose names were known, and an immense number of unrecorded sufferers, but the severest persecutions were endured with joy. The spirit was always ready but the flesh was weak.

The long-lived Shapur also died at last, August 19, 379 A.D., after a reign of seventy years, despairing of destroying Christianity.¹ The persecution practically died with him. The worst of the storm was past, and the Church which had endured such a severe trial could rest a while, recoup her energies, and repair her organizations.

The persecution, like war, famine, or any other disaster, made no permanent impression at all; the moment the external pressure

¹ Tabari, ed. Nöldeke, pp. 410, 411, n. 1.

was removed the work was resumed. This submission to the decrees of Providence, even when they are not beneficial, has always been the keynote of the oriental mind.

“Persecutions with explosive violence drove disciples from their original home, to the very bounds of the Orient. The Church was shattered that it might be scattered and the fragments were found in Africa, Arabia, Persia, India, and China. And so persecutions became the parent of early Christian missions—strange parentage! Out of the eater came forth meat!”

The martyrs stood fast in the face of death, and refused to take their view of life from its immediate circumstances. Anaxarchus crying out while being beaten to death, “Beat on at the case of Anaxarchus; no stroke falls on Anaxarchus himself,” was undoubtedly a disciple of the wider vision. These early Eastern Christians, dreaming of things to come, refused, in the name of the soul within them, to estimate life, with all its wealth and happiness, in terms of the visible

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and temporal. They convinced themselves of the good purpose in what appeared sheer cruelty, and were enabled to endure any amount of pain. They were willing to spend and be spent for Christ.

They were in the war but carried a charm about them. Their comfort was not the kind yielded by padding. It flowed from the action of the loftiest spiritual energy. Surely, in such a world, theirs is a secret worth knowing.

VII

REORGANIZATION OF PERSIAN CHURCH (379-399)

This long period of persecution had left the Church of Persia in a most shattered and disorganized condition, and almost without any clergy.

A considerable number of clergy were ordained. Bishop Tamuza urged the young people to marry and recoup the loss. Such an experience was repeated in certain parts of Armenia after the massacre of 1896; the

advice was found to be sound and successful under the circumstances.

In recommending such marriage, bishops had to guard against the incestuous unions of Magianism which, due to the influence of Christianity, became a thing of the past.

VIII

CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF YAZDIGIRD I.
(399-420)

Yazdigird in the early part of his reign stood by the Christians; Magians pelt him with epithets as "apostate," "the wicked," "the persecutor of Magi," "the friend of Rome and of Christians." But in spite of all this opposition, he continued to show favor to his Christian subjects.

When Yazdigird fell sick, and the Zoroastrian physicians were unable to cure him, he sent to the Roman Emperor for a skilful doctor. The Emperor sent Marutha of Meipherqat, who was a bishop as well as physician.¹

¹ Assemani, iii., p. 366.

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Yazdigird showed such honor to Marutha, that the Magians began to fear the conversion of their King, who was no strict Zoroastrian, and devised various ways and means to prevent it, and to prove to the King that the fire was angry at his attitude towards Christians. When Yazdigird was at one of the services in a fire temple, a voice was heard from the midst of the fire,¹ "Turn out that apostate." Yazdigird was fairly frightened and hurried away from the temple; he thought of sending Marutha away. But Marutha assured him that it was fraud and advised him to search the ground next time he heard the voice, which he did, and succeeded in finding a man concealed in a place in the

The loss of the physicians in the massacre, like the man who cut off the branch on which he was standing, was painfully felt by the enemies; as it happened in the present massacre in Persia. In their ignorance and frenzied blood-lust they destroyed those whose life was invaluable for the existence of themselves and their community. The influence of the Christian physicians in the East is similar to that of the miracles of old.

¹ *Hist. Eccles.*, vii., p. 9. Wigram, pp. 88, 89. Labourt, pp. 89, 90.

ground under the fire, and trying to utter supernatural messages. Many Zoroastrians were put to death, and Marutha was greatly honored.

IX

PERSECUTION OF YAZDIGIRD

As martyrdom had ceased for a while, Christians made energetic efforts to preach the Gospel freely; and their efforts were crowned by the large number of converts from the Zoroastrians. Many high functionaries¹ of the state and members of the noble families of Persia had embraced Christianity. The alarmed Magian hierarchy soon attempted to check this wholesale apostasy by drastic means.

The King was really moved by the state of things; so far he had protected the Christians from the attacks of their enemies, but now he had to give way to the demand of the great corporation of the Magians.

¹ Assemani, *Martyr. Orient.*, i., p. 234. Bedjan, iv., pp. 253-262.

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In addition to the apostasy, the firmness with which some Christians held their peculiar rights provoked the King to go back on his promise of protection. As an illustration —“one Narsai¹ of Beth Razqayi, or Tehran, was a friend of the priest called Sapor. This priest had converted a nobleman whose name was Aderperwa, who built a church for Sapor, and gave him a regular deed of gift for it to be his legal property. The case was brought before the King. Yazdigird permitted Aderbozi, a Mobed, to use such means as in his opinion would be effective in gaining back the Zoroastrian nobles that had been converted to Christianity. He succeeded in reconverting Aderperwa, and the latter demanded the restoration of the church. Sapor fled by the advice of Narsai. The Mobed took possession of the building and turned it into a fire-temple. Shortly after, Narsai, ignorant of what had taken place, entered the church, and was surprised

¹ Hoffman, *Aussätze*, p. 36. Bedjan, iv., pp. 170-181. Labourt, p. 115.

to find the sacred fire burning in it. He extinguished the fire, an act of sacrilege for which he was beaten, arrested, and taken to the Mobed at Seleucia for trial. The Mobed was anxious to release the prisoner, if he would simply rekindle the fire. Narsai declared himself unable to do so, and declined to purchase his own release by such an act of apostasy, consequently he was imprisoned. At a second trial, it was decided that he should collect fire from 365 places and put it in the temple; again he declined to comply, therefore he was put to death. The executioner was a renegade Christian, who hesitated to act till the martyr bade him 'strike,' for it should not be imputed to him."

X

PERSECUTION OF BAHRAM V., GUR

In 420 Yazdigird met his death from the kick of a horse, probably in Khurasan,¹ and Bahram V.,² his son, succeeded him,

¹ Tabari, p. 71, n. 1.

² Tabari, p. 90, n. 1.

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and continued the horrible persecution with great ferocity and torturous executions. But it showed the true and divinest mettle of the confessors.

St. James "the dismembered,"¹ a dignitary in the Persian court, denied his Christianity to please the King. When he went home his mother and wife refused to recognize him and turned away from him in disgust. Through this attitude, James realized his laxity of conduct painfully. "If my mother and my wife treat me in this manner, how terrible it must be when I appear before the supreme Judge," he said; and he presented himself again before the King, declaring that his denial was null and void, and that he was a Christian. The executioners, by the order of the enraged monarch, cut off his limbs one by one, hence his epithet "the dismembered."

A similar case was that of one Piruz of Beth Lapat, which took place in September of the same year.

¹ Labourt, p. 112.

This persecution of four years' duration was as cruel as any that this Church has ever been called upon to face.

XI

THE PATRIARCHATE OF DADISHO AND HIS
COUNCIL (421-456)

The continuous misfortunes had a baleful influence on the life of the Persian Church. Now that the storm of the persecution had left it in ruins, it was of great importance to reconstruct out of its debris a Church of an independent and self-governing character. Accordingly, a council was called, in Markabta of Tayyayi,¹ a town of the Arabs. Thirty-six bishops were present, headed by their metropolitans. Among the pontiffs, several had come from Merv, Herat, Isfahan, and Oman.

The details of the proceedings are too many to be mentioned here; the council ended with definite proclamation of the

¹ *Syn. Orient.*, p. 676.

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autonomy of the Church of Persia, and its absolute independence of the "Western Fathers,"¹ which process led to irreconcilable schism between the Churches of the East and West.

The decision of this council is fundamentally justified on the following grounds. For almost two hundred years now, they had been always under the shadow of persecutions, and the persecutions had never been separate from the feeling "Rome is Christian, therefore, no Christian in Persia can be loyal." The Westernization always spelled persecution in the East. A Persian war with Rome and a persecution of the Persian Christians had usually gone hand in hand; it made little difference to the persecuted, which caused which. It is true, the Romans would put an end to the persecution in Persia by force, sometimes, but this course always provoked the Persian state to further acts of violence.² Weary of suffering, finally

¹ *Syn. Orient.*, pp. 51-296.

² An illustration of this may be seen in the fact that

they cut themselves off from the Western Church; and showed that they had no relation to the Christian Romans, and need not be persecuted whenever the Emperor and the Shahinshah had a quarrel. In so doing they destroyed the deep-rooted prejudice that cost dear to their co-religionists.

This spirit of independence contained the germ of that deplorable division, which was connected with the everlasting Christological controversy between Cyril and Nestorius, and between the Dyophysites and the Monophysites, for which they paid a heavy penalty.

XII

TRIUMPH OF THE NESTORIAN CHURCH

The new state gave birth to new acts. Barsoma,¹ the great advocate of Nestorianism, and particular favorite with King Piroz, became Archbishop of Nisibin, third see in

the sympathy of the European or Western states with the Eastern Christians caused or occasioned the massacres that are going on now in Persia and Turkey.

¹ Assemani, i., p. 351, and iii., p. 393.

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the Church. He held a council at Beth Lapat in 484, and issued a confession of faith. He forced on the bishops a canon allowing Episcopal marriage.² And, finally, the closing of the famous school of Edessa by order of Zeno the Emperor in 489² afforded Barsoma a splendid opportunity to achieve a most important work for the Church of the East. He set up a great school at Nisibin,³ which was to supply the Church with patriarchs and bishops for future generations, and be a channel for the conveyance of the Eastern culture into medieval Europe.

As the result of these acts "Nestorianism" spread over all Persia; and hereafter the history of Persia included its history.

The Church was growing with singular rapidity in the East, where sixty-six bishoprics had already been established; among them are mentioned those of Registan, Tehran, Isfahan, Herat, Merv, Khurasan.

Such a peaceful period, however, in the

² Labourt, p. 135.

² Labourt, p. 140.

³ Labourt, p. 141. Moore, *The Theological School at Nisibis*.

activity of the Church did not last. Yazdigird II. furiously persecuted both Syrians and Armenians. On August 24, 446 A.D., a general massacre took place; 153,000 [!] clergy and ten bishops, and John, Metropolitan of Karka d'Beth Sluk, were martyred on a mound outside the city of Karka. Local tradition still asserts that the red gravel of the hillock was stained that color by the martyrs' blood, and the martyrrium built over the bodies remains to this day.¹

Among the martyrs of the following day, August 25th, were the woman Shirin and her two sons.² As he was conducting the massacre, Tohm Yazdigird, touched by their courageous attitude at the time of their martyrdom, which he attributed to their faith in God, confessed Jesus Christ and was "baptized in his own blood," on September 25, 446. The memorial church that stands there still, bears the name of Tohm Yazdigird

¹ Bedjan, ii., pp. 510-531. Wigram, p. 138. Labourt, p. 127.

² Wigram, p. 139. Labourt, p. 127.

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or Tamasgird. After the persecutions, a solemn annual memorial of those who perished there was decreed. The Christians of that place still gather year by year to commemorate the event, on the 25th day of September.¹

The details of these persecutions as well as those that occurred in Armenia, recorded by Sozomen, Theodoret, Socrates, and Elisha, in their ecclesiastical histories, are of thrilling interest.

XIII

PATRIARCH MAR ABHA, ANUSHIRWAN AND OTHER PRO-CHRISTIAN KINGS

Mar Abha, the Great, was born in a Zoroastrian family, a man of great talent and versatility and a scholar in Greek and Syriac; he held the office of the secretary in the province of Beth Aramayi. His conversion to Christianity was due to circumstances entirely unforeseen. On one occasion Mar

¹ Bedjan, ii., p. 531. Mshikha Zkha, p. 147.

Abha ordered Joseph, a monk, out, and his baggage removed. Twice they attempted to cross the river and twice the craft was driven back by the fury of a stormy wind, which subsided only when Joseph was admitted into the ferry-boat. Mar Abha implored pardon from Joseph. The latter replied, "A disciple of Jesus Christ must guard against any ill-will." Struck by such gentle spirit, Mar Abha decided to become a Christian, and in spite of the urgent entreaties of his hierarchical superiors, he relinquished his official career and was baptized.¹

He entered the college at Nisibin to spend some time in preliminary study;² here he distinguished himself as an eminent scholar.

He was conscious that his consecration as Patriarch, which took place in 540, would expose him, as an apostate Zoroastrian, to bitter persecution and in all probability would cost his life, but he took no count

¹ Mari, p. 43. 'Amr, p. 23. Labourt, p. 164. Wigram, p. 184. Assemani, iv., p. 75.

² Assemani, iv., p. 93.

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of danger, and immediately became engaged in the work of organization and reform;¹ this aroused the jealousy of the Mobeds, who caused his arrest and accused him as an apostate, whose punishment was death.

Chosroes I. or Anushirwan heard the case, and called on the Patriarch for his answer. "I am a Christian," he said. "I preach my own faith, and I want everybody to join it; but of his own free will, and not of compulsion." "And, if you would but hear him, sire, you would join us and we would welcome you," cried a voice from the crowd. It was a Christian in the King's service. The infuriated Mobeds demanded the death of the man. The King, however, not wishing to lose a good servant, sent him away on some business of his own. But about the Patriarch he was in great difficulty. Anushirwan wished not to condemn him; both because of his respect for his lofty character, and because the Christians were powerful enough to make trouble, the King

¹ Wigram, p. 191.

hesitated to offend them; on the other hand, he was also seeking not to offend the Mobe-
beds and their established hierarchy, as the
law in this case was on their side.

On one occasion the King told him frankly that, as a renegade, he was liable to be put to death. "But you shall go free if you will stop receiving converts, admit those married by Magian law to communion, and allow your people to eat Magian sacrifices." The Patriarch could not accept the terms, and the King, annoyed at his attitude, ordered him to prison for a time, then banished him to Azerbaijan.¹ But he escaped and returned to his work again.

In the autumn of 551, Anushirwan sent him to the disturbed district of Khuzistan, to warn the Christians there not to join the rebellion which his son Nushizad had stirred up against him. Worn out by his toilsome life, Mar Abha fell ill, on his return to Seleucia; the King sent his own physician to tend him, but hardship and imprisonment had

¹ Wigram, p. 203. Assemani, iii., p. 408.

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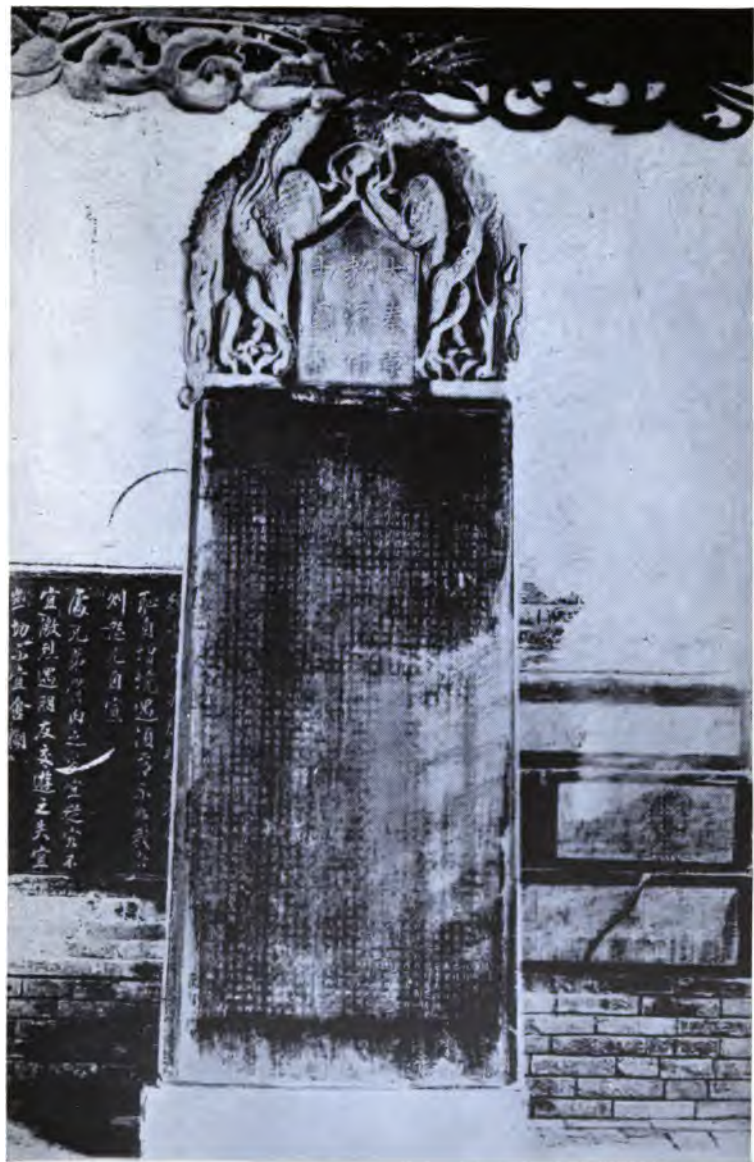
done their work, and Mar Abha the Great passed to his reward on February 29, 552.

Of the reign of Anushirwan, an interesting incident is related. "His queen was a beautiful Christian lady whom no persuasion could prevail upon to forsake her faith. The heir-apparent, Nushizad, was a sincere Christian, having imbibed the faith from his mother.¹ His love for Christianity and contempt for Magianism provoked his father, who threw him into prison. After his father's death Nushizad escaped and rose in revolt. He was slain in battle; his last request was that his body should be sent to his mother, that he might have a Christian burial."

Cosmas,² a Christian merchant and traveler, who wrote about 535, says: "Among the Bactrians, Huns, Persians, Persarmenians, Elamites and in the whole country of

¹ Wigram, p. 207.

² Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographia Christiana*, iv., p. 92. Gibbon, chap. xlvii., n. 116. Mosheim, *Hist. Tart. Eccles.*, pp. 8, 9. Layard, i., p. 205, new ed. Assemani, i., pp. 235-253.



The Nestorian Tablet
Courtesy of Dr. Frits V. Holm

Persia, the churches and the bishops are without number, and the Christian population very numerous.

In this century, Christianity had been propagated in the East so extensively that the Nestorian patriarchs sent metropolitans as far as China, which implies the existence of bishops, priests, and churches, and that Christianity had been established in that country for a long time.

XIV

THE NESTORIAN TABLET

The famous Nestorian Tablet¹—a marble monument, the authenticity of which could not be impeached, discovered at Sianfu,

¹ Layard, i., p. 205, new ed. D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Orientale*, ii., pp. 256, 257, and iv., pp. 538-552. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, p. 246. Mosheim, p. 239. Gibbon, ch. xlvii. Legge, *Nestorian Monument*, p. 50. A replica of the monument, which was made by the undaunted efforts of Dr. Frits Holm of Denmark, is for the present in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City; he did a graceful service that bears a silent testimony to the forgotten works of the Nestorian missionaries in the Far East.

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China, in the seventeenth century—contains the oldest Christian inscription yet found in Eastern Asia, and so far is the only known vestige in China itself of a once prosperous Mission. The sixty-seven Nestorian missionaries whose names and labors are recorded on this tablet must have been residents in some portion of China at a much earlier date than that named upon the tablet, for the eggs of the silkworm were brought from China to Constantinople in 551 A.D. by Nestorian monks. The tablet was erected in the second year of Kien-chung of the Tang dynasty (781 A.D.), on the seventh day of the first month, being Sunday, in the time of the Nestorian Patriarch Khnanisho. Such is the testimony of this silent witness to the faithful labors of the Nestorian branch of the Church in early days.

“The Nestorians,” says Mosheim,¹ “in the fifth century and after they had obtained a fixed residence in Persia, and had located the head of their sect at Seleucia, were suc-

¹ Mosheim, pp. 199–203. Tabari, p. 28.

昔者其疾先走而元元百所宜庶幾而少者有康文編而德信似氣聖以元善者其惟
 路當事而天地間則月進書畫在成或方物居延初冬到歸良和令瑞化海澤元之性虛不礙春
 之少者其國亦故非之內是以三百六十五種有延德初冬到歸良和令瑞化海澤元之性虛不礙春
 氣逆運建精誠亡迷多迷沐復於是 武三十一身身原專強純河飛真處同人出代理天宣飛
 之法法家國竹天能提 三一淨則其言之新衣袍美用於五信則八境之度錄度成其林三常之門
 之聖子舍靈誠是子悅濟能事斯事亭于拜真繼留廿七部張死化以警靈開法浴水風游淨軍而
 之土師之跡存則所修有外行期願所以其內情必當誠懇均者誠於人不聚貨財亦盡道
 於世者大天以何古即及則從試觀中監轉崇家其僧伊斯和和好惠僧進勁行遠自玉舍
 善吟除孫工郭公字休初然式到列也 需宗但之從進數見觀於野內不自其汗新精
 之金師或仍其舊寺或重廣法堂學防廟宇如室斯飛更初廣門像仁施利年歲集四香僧
 之真善而安之清淨建法未開則美白衣黃土金見其人頗利深辨以林沐烈詞目 真
 之真善一持歸文聖道解其工其時振亂執麻仲振明明景教言拜我唐翻經速寺存段升
 日新區建明式封法土人有餘康物是來苦 古宗啓聖竟於真正海揚輝天書前映聖圖
 能事修明益去無河源文津萬城德臨入儒禮飽物邑六令昭蘇百聖取則道信康勞
 大唐建中二年歲在作單大朔月七日大體辰文口召建 時法主僧寧福和東方之
 大春寺僧景淨述

後一千七十九年咸豐己未武林韓

來觀草字畫完整重造碑亭覆焉惜

吳子苾方伯不及同遊也為悵然久

cessful as they were industrious in disseminating their doctrines in the countries lying outside the Roman Empire." It appears from unquestionable documents still existing, that there were numerous societies in all parts of Persia, India, Armenia, Arabia, Syria, and other countries, under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Seleucia.

Hurmizd IV., the successor of Anushirwan (583-591), was a pro-Christian ruler. It is said that the Magi tried to arouse him to persecute the Christians, on the ground that they were a danger to his throne. "My throne stands on four feet, not on two," said the King. "On Jews and Christians as well as on Zoroastrians"; and so the matter dropped.¹

XV

THE ELECTION OF SABHRISHO² (596-604)

Sabhrisho, a native of Piruz-Abad in Beth Garmai and who later had been Bishop

¹ Wigram, p. 214.

² Assemani, iii., pp. 441-449.

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of Lashom, was elected Patriarch on April 19, 596, by the favor of Chosroes II. or Khusrau Parwiz, who preferred him to five other names which were presented to him by the electoral body. Shirin or Mary, according to the Romans, the wife of Chosroes, who is celebrated in Persian poetry for her beauty and varied accomplishments, and was a devout Christian, had the greatest reverence for him.¹ Chosroes himself was accustomed to ask for his prayers; and the Emperor Maurice once sent him a relic, a piece of the true cross, asking him to send his cowl in exchange.²

Khusrau revered him because, during his campaign against Bahram, he had in a dream seen his horse³ led forward by an

¹ Assemani, iii., p. 412.

² Assemani, iii., p. 444.

³ Khusrau Parwiz had a horse called Shabdiz, beautiful and intelligent beyond all others; and so greatly did the King love Shabdiz that he swore to slay the man who should bring the tidings of his death. So when Shabdiz died, the master groom of the horse prayed Bahlabad (Rudagi) to make it known to the King in a song, of which Parwiz listening divined the purport and cried: "Woe unto thee! Shabdiz is dead!" "It is the King who sayeth

aged man, whom Shirin, when he told her the vision, declared must be Sabhrisho. Indeed Chosroes is said to have recognized the figure of his dream, when he met the Bishop, and through those varied influences Chosroes was in favor of the Christian religion, whose Turkish mercenaries had the cross tattooed on their breasts as a charm against the plague.

At the close of the sixth century, the Nes-

it," replied the minstrel and so escaped the threatened death and made the King's oath of no effect. Thus is the tale told by the Arab poet, Khalid b. Fayyad, who lived little more than a century after Khusrau Parwiz:

"He with an oath most solemn and most binding,
Not to be loosed, had sworn upon the Fire
That whoso first should say, 'Shabdiz hath perished,'
Should die upon the cross in torments dire;
Until one morn that horse lay low in death
Like whom no horse hath been since man drew breath.

"Four strings wailed o'er him, while the minstrel kindled
Pity and passion by the witchery
Of his left hand, and, while the strings vibrated,
Chanted a wailing Persian threnody,
Till the King cried, 'My horse Shabdiz is dead!'
'It is the King that sayeth it,' they said.
"Thou sayest."'"

Introduction to Brown's *Literary History of Persia*.

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torian Church was well organized. Its patriarch was one of the great dignitaries of State, ranking apparently next to the Mobed Mobedan,¹ therefore very important. Outside the circle of Magian influence, in Herat and Khurasan, what little we know of the Church shows Christianity as a growing force, able to win Turks and other Mongols. The risk that a Zoroastrian ran in becoming a Christian had much diminished. King Hurmizd IV., when told once of the conversion of a Magian noble, only observed, "Well, let him go to hell, if he prefers it."²

Yazdigird III., a lad of about fifteen years, and apparently of a weak character, became, in 632, the last of the line of Sassanid kings, whose empire was shattered by the Arab invasion. Yazdigird was treacherously slain, the Sassanid dynasty, whose rule lasted over four centuries (A.D. 226-651), was overthrown, the Zoroastrian faith deposed, and Islam took its place as the national religion of Persia, in 651.

¹ Zoroastrian high priest.

² Wigram, p. 231.

XVI

OTHER MEANS OF SPREADING CHRISTIANITY

The three important factors in the spreading of Christianity in these distant lands of the East were captives, commerce, and monasticism.¹ Slaves were not infrequently Christian captives. When they were carried off *en masse* from the Christian empire, as sometimes happened under Sassanian kings, their ecclesiastical leaders were taken with them. The captivity of the Jews in Babylon is an illustration of this.

Commerce was then more than even now the handmaid of the Gospel. The clergy would follow the merchants in order to supply them with the ordinances of the church. And so episcopal dioceses would be established. "Whence has Al-Asha his Christian ideas?" says an Arab poet. "From wine-dealers of Hira of whom he bought his wine; they

¹ Thomas of Marga, ii., p. 506. Barhebræus, *Ecc. Chron.*, p. 125.

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brought them to him.”² Commercial and colonizing enterprises were made to minister to the cause of missions.

The chief aim of the monks was a life of solitude and tranquility, fasting, prayer, and study, but the ascetics of both sexes were moved with the true missionary spirit and lived in communities. The nuns were very often women self-dedicated to a life of good deeds, but wearing plain garments and working in their own homes.

The monks who during the reign of the Arab Caliphs did not enjoy full freedom to work among the Muhammadans, did a great work among the pagans in the most uncultivated regions of the East.

In many instances the patriarchs, bishops, and priests were dragged out of their cells and ordained, almost by force. In some cases they gave up their offices and went back into their cloisters.

Isaac of Nineveh was much against his will consecrated Bishop of that city (660).

² Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, p. 200.

Shortly after his consecration, two litigants brought their complaint to him, one demanding immediate payment of what the other owed him; the other admitted his indebtedness, but wanted time to make the payment. "The Gospel says, of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again," said the Bishop. "Leave the Gospel alone, just now," said the creditor. "If the Gospel will not be obeyed what am I doing here?" said Mar Isaac. Seeing that the episcopal office would interfere with his solitary life, he resigned the office and retired to the desert of Skete, in Egypt, where he wrote his many ascetic works.¹

XVII

ADVENT OF ISLAM

The rise of Islam formed an epoch in the Nestorian mission. The tradition that Muhammad acquired his knowledge of Christian Scriptures, which he embodied in the Koran,

¹ Assemani, i., p. 444. Wigram, pp. 136, 137. See Ishodnach's *Book of Chastity*, ed. Chabot, 1895.

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from the instruction of Sergius, a Nestorian monk,¹ is well known, as at that period the Nestorian missionaries had an extensive influence in Arabia.

Barhebræus informs us that a Christian prince of Nejran, called Sa'id,² interested in behalf of his co-religionists, had procured from the prophet Muhammad himself a *firman*, in which special privileges were granted to the Church and the patriarch. At any rate the Christians were freed from military service; the clergy were exempted from the payment of tribute; the taxes imposed on the rich and poor were limited to twelve and four pieces of money respectively.

The document was preserved till 1843, when it was lost during the massacre of Bedr Khan Bey.

¹ Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammeds*, ii., pp. 367, 380. ZDMG., viii., p. 557; ix., p. 799; xii., pp. 238, 699. Buchari speaks of a Christian who said: "Muhammad knows nothing than that which I have written for him." Gottheil, *A Christian Bahira Legend*, p. 190, n. 1.

² Assemani, iv., pp. 94, 95. Layard, i., p. 207. Labourt, pp. 244, 245. Barhebræus, iii., pp. 115-117.

When in 642 the Arabs invaded Persia, established their supremacy over the whole empire, and spread their faith throughout Asia, they found the Nestorian Church already powerful in the East, with an extensive influence even in Arabia. A bishopric was established in Cufa, and the seat of the patriarchate was later transferred from Seleucia-Ctesiphon to Baghdad, the new capital of the Caliphs.

Almost all of the Christians observed a neutrality that was favorable to the invaders. It is no wonder that the Christians did not assist the Persians against their foes. They were hard pressed for centuries by the violent law of the Achæmenians, Seleucids, Parthians, Sassanians, and the Byzantine Empire, and weary of their persecutions, they welcomed the advent of the Arabs,¹ hoping to enjoy the privileges of the monastic life under their rule.

¹ Thomas of Marga, ii., p. 156. Assemani, iii., pp. 128-129. Barhebræus, *Ecc. Chron.*, p. 474.

XVIII

SYRIAC LITERATURE¹

Syriac literature commences with the most prominent version of the Holy Scriptures, called Pshitta, "the simple" or "plain version," the Syriac Vulgate, which seems to have been on the whole the work of the second century.

"All the Assyrian Christians, whether belonging to the Jacobites or Roman communion, conspire to hold the Pshitta authoritative, and to use it in their public services."²

The beginnings of Syriac literature are unfortunately lost in the earliest ages of our era. It flourished principally in the period between the fourth and tenth century of our era, displaying a wonderful ability of writing with a vast amount of intellectual energy.

The literary catalogue drawn up by the

¹ Layard, i., pp. 207-209. Mosheim, p. 215. Wright, *Syr. Lit.*, p. 2.

² Westcott, *Canon of N. T.*, i., p. 219.



Scripture Quotation, Syriac and Arabic. St. Luke xii., 3-10. Dated 1276 A.D.

learned Mar Abhdisho (Ebed Jesu), as far back as 1298 A.D., contains the names of no less than one hundred and fifty authors, whose works extend over almost all branches of knowledge, and in a special manner over the department of theology. The catalogue acquaints us with at least twenty commentators on the whole or parts of the Bible, many ritualists, controversialists, canonists, ecclesiastical and profane historians, more than one hundred poets, several lexicographers and grammarians, logicians, writers on natural philosophy, metaphysics, geography, and astronomy, besides many learned essayists on miscellaneous subjects.

In the celebrated schools of Edessa, Nisibin, Makhuzā, and Dorqoneh, were taught Greek, Arabic, rhetoric,¹ poetry, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, and medicine.

Mar Ephraim (Ephrem Syrus), "the prophet of the Syrians,"² was one of the most voluminous and widely read writers.³ His

¹ Assemani, iv., p. 493.

² Assemani, i., p. 25 f.

³ Assemani, i., pp. 61 f. Wright, p. 33.

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death took place in 373 A.D. His works have been extensively translated into Greek, Armenian, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic.

Nor did the Assyrians confine the work of their vigorous minds to compositions in their own language; but they carried their investigations into the wider field of Greek ecclesiastical and profane literature. Their plodding diligence has preserved for us in fairly good translations many valuable works of Greek fathers which would otherwise have been lost.

Besides the Greek, the Nestorians seem to have acquired great eminence in the Persian and Arabic languages. "To them belongs the merit of having passed on the lore of ancient Greece to the Arabs."

When the Arabs saw that the learning of the East was chiefly to be found among the Nestorians, they intrusted them with prominent positions, as treasurers, physicians, and scribes. They translated for the Arabs the works of Greek philosophers and physicians like Aristotle and Galen. Assemani

gives a long list of the translators and commentators upon the treatises of Aristotle.

Caliph al-Mamun sent learned Nestorians to Syria, Armenia, and Egypt, to collect manuscripts and translate them. He replied to someone who asked him how could he trust the translation of the books to a Christian, "If I confide to him the care of my body in which dwell my soul and my spirit, wherefore should I not intrust him with the things which do not concern our faith or his faith?"¹ He has eaten my bread and salt."²

¹ Layard, i., p. 209.

² If you are admitted to the tent of the sheikh among Arabs, your reception there is shelter and security. If you partake of food at his table, your person is sacred, and his word is your safeguard. And this Bedouin of the desert will pass you on, with an escort, from camp to camp, unmolested, as if you were one of his tribe.

'Amr ibn el-As (who lived in the middle of the seventh century) entered the presence of 'Omar when the latter was at his table, sitting crossed-legged, with his companions about him in the same attitude, while in the dish before him there was hardly enough for one of the company. 'Amr greeted the Caliph, and the latter returned the salaam, exclaiming: "'Amr ibn el-As!" "Yes," was the reply. Then 'Omar put his hand in the dish and filled it with *therid*, when he reached toward 'Amr, saying: "Take this." So 'Amr sat down and took the *therid* in his left

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Mar Abhdisho has left us an Arabic translation of the Nestorian creed, which for vigor of style, purity of diction, and elegance of arrangement deserves to be ranked with

hand, eating it with his right, while the deputation which had accompanied him from Egypt looked on. As soon as they had come away, the members of the deputation said to 'Amr: "What, pray, was that which thou didst?" 'Amr replied: "He certainly knew well enough that I, coming from Egypt in the way that I did, could have done without *therid* which he offered me. But he wished to try me; and if I had not accepted it, I should have met with trouble from him." "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. xli., 9).

A public robber in Persia broke open by night the treasury of the governor of Sistan. He advanced, and perceived, in the obscurity, an object that sparkled at a distance, as if it might be a gem. He touched it, then applied it to his lips, and discovered that it was salt. Immediately he withdrew from the chamber, without carrying off a single article of plunder. On the following morning, the governor, informed of what was done, published a request, that the invader of his premises should come to the palace, and promised him entire immunity for his deed. Yacoub presented himself as directed, and on being asked how he could break open the treasury, and then retire, leaving jewels and every precious thing untouched, answered: "I had tasted your salt, and thus become your friend, and the laws of friendship would not permit me to rob you of anything you possessed." "As I eat the salt of the Palace" (Ezra iv., 14). Trumbull, *the Covenant of Salt*.

the compositions of those Arabic classics to which is given the first place of genius and glory.

Thus, for their learning and skill, the Christians were tolerated, but not in the sense of religious equality. The restrictions imposed were those found in the so-called ordinance or constitution of Omar bin Khat-tab, in the early seventh century.

This formula is traditionally said to have been the one adopted by the Christian population of the cities, who submitted to the rule of Islam.

XIX

THE CHRISTIANS UNDER ARAB RULE—THE
CONSTITUTION OF OMAR¹

“In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! This is the writing from the Christians of such and such a city to Omar ibn al-Khattab. When you marched against us, we asked of you protection for ourselves, our families, our possessions, and

¹ Arnold, pp. 52, 53. Von Kremer, i., pp. 102-104. Assemani, iv., pp. 57 f.

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our co-religionists; and we made this stipulation with you, that we will not erect in our city or the suburbs any new monastery, church, cell, or hermitage; that we will not repair any of such buildings that may fall into ruins, or renew those that may be situated in the Muslim quarters of the town; that we will not refuse the Muslims entry into our churches either by night or by day; that we will open the gates wide to passengers and travelers; that we will receive any Muslim traveler into our houses and give him food and lodging for three nights; that we will not harbor any spy in our churches or houses, or conceal any enemy of the Muslims; that we will not teach our children the Koran; that we will not make a show of the Christian religion nor invite anyone to embrace it; that we will not prevent any of our kinsmen from embracing Islam, if they so desire. That we will honor the Muslims and rise up in our assemblies when they wish to take their seats; that we will not imitate them in our dress, either in the cap, turban,

sandals, or parting of the hair; that we will not make use of their expressions of speech, nor adopt their surnames; that we will not ride on saddles, or gird on swords, or take to ourselves arms or wear them, or engrave Arabic inscriptions on our rings; that we will not sell wine; that we will shave the front of our heads; that we will keep to our own style of dress, wherever we may be; that we will wear girdles round our waists; that we will not display the cross upon our churches or display our crosses or our sacred books in the streets of the Muslims, or in their market-places; that we will strike the bells in our churches lightly; that we will not recite our services in a loud voice, when a Muslim is present, that we will not carry palm branches or our images in procession in the streets, that at the burial of our dead we will not chant loudly or carry lighted candles in the streets of the Muslims or their market-places; that we will not take any slaves that have already been in the possession of Muslims, nor spy into their houses; and that we will

not strike any Muslim. All this we promise to observe, on behalf of ourselves and our co-religionists, and receive protection from you in exchange; and if we violate any of the conditions of this agreement, then we forfeit your protection and you are at liberty to treat us as enemies and rebels."

XX

CALIPHS INTERESTED IN RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS

The Arabs required the services of the Christians for governmental and literary purposes, and Christians held positions of high influence in the court of the Caliphs.

These also appear to be somewhat interested in Christianity by discovering a similarity between the Bible and Koran in certain points. On one occasion, when Gewergis (George) and Khnanisho, two bishops and candidates for the patriarchal seat, were visiting Mahdi, the governor of Baghdad, they were put to some kind of examination. Mahdi asked Gewergis, in the presence of a large assembly, as to the kind of tree of which the

rod of Moses was, with which he wrought many miracles and signs; Gewergis said, "it is mentioned neither in the Torah nor in the prophets." Mahdi turned towards Khnanisho; the latter said: "It was of an almond tree, because, in the case of Dathan and Abiram, the rod of Aaron budded and yielded almonds." "But what is the proof that the rod of Aaron was the same rod of Moses?" asked Mahdi. Khnanisho answered, because Moses said to Aaron, "Take the rod." Mahdi criticized Gewergis and liked Khnanisho, his old age and his dignified manners. Gewergis was offended and henceforth sought to censure Khnanisho.¹ We read later that Khnanisho was thrown down a precipice by his enemies and was crippled for life.²

¹ Assemani, iii., p. 155.

² The old custom of hastening the death of very old men, by throwing them down a precipice, is still being reported in certain regions of the East. And it was stopped by a kind-hearted son, who was touched, as he heard his father, whom he was carrying on his back to his fate, sobbing. "Why are you weeping, father?" he said. "You know this is a general custom among us." "I am not weeping for myself, my son, but for you, as I am thinking of the day when your son will have to do the same thing to you."

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When the Patriarch fell ill bloodletting was prescribed for him; Abil Abbas of Tus, who was not on good terms with him, said he was greatly grieved for him; and sent his servant to bleed him, the blade of the lancet being smeared with poison; the Patriarch's neck was swollen and he died after three days' illness, in the year 779.

On another occasion, Ali Bar Isa, Vizier in Baghdad, asked the Patriarch Abraham if it was true that the Christians partake of the eucharist with a spoon¹; the Patriarch, embarrassed by the unexpected question, answered, thoughtlessly, "You know well that Nestorians do not commune with a spoon." The Vizier felt greatly disconcerted, for his

¹ In the Nestorian liturgy, both the bread and wine are directed to be given to laymen as well as clergy separately; the bread by the officiating priest, and the wine by the deacon, the bread being put into the hands of the communicants. But in some cases, owing to the ignorance of the clergy, there is a departure from the plain letter of the ritual; they allow, especially the women, to partake only of the bread, and put it in the mouths of the communicants. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, ii., pp. 174, 242. Barhebræus, iii., p. 239, n. 1. Assemani, iii., part 1, pp. 355, 535; part 2, p. 311.

assessors were present; and the answer would convey the idea that the Vizier was not a stranger to the Christian mysteries, but rather in favor of the rite. This intensified his hatred against the Patriarch.

According to Barhebræus, "the Nestorians like other Christian people partook of Holy Communion, during the fast of forty days, early in the morning on Saturdays and Sundays; after the Communion they would go out for merriment and feast in the gardens and vineyards. Patriarch Abraham (905-937), in order to prevent this improper custom, changed the time of the celebration of the Sacraments to the evenings of Saturdays and Sundays, so that the Communicants would stay and eat in their houses."¹

XXI

INFLUENCE OF THE ASSYRIAN PHYSICIANS UPON CALIPHS

The Christians during the reign of the Sasanian kings had attained eminent station

¹ Assemani, ii., p. 441. Barhebræus, iii., pp. 243-245.

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in the court, as physicians. Similarly, in the times of the Caliphs (651-1258) they maintained and increased their prestige in this respect. We are told that the professional income of the court physicians of Harun-al-Rashid amounted annually to over thirty thousand dinars, or fifteen thousand dollars.

Muhammadans have not much faith in medicine and sanitary science.¹

¹ Moslem lands are wanting in common sanitary knowledge. "The French Statistical Department, anxious to obtain definite information on certain matters from Turkish provinces, sent lists of questions to which they requested replies, to the various provincial Pashas. Certain of the questions were addressed to the Pasha of Damascus, a very learned man, and his replies ran as follows:

"Question: What is the death rate per thousand in your city?

"Answer: In Damascus it is the will of Allah that all must die; some die old, some young.

"Question: What is the annual number of births?

"Answer: We don't know; God alone can say.

"Question: Are the supplies of drinking water sufficient and of good quality?

"Answer: From the remotest period no one has ever died of thirst.

"Question: General remarks on the hygienic conditions of your city.

"Answer: Since Allah sent us Muhammad, His prophet, to purge the world with fire and sword, there has been a

This interesting incident is related by Barhebræus. A physician called Sergius,¹ a follower of Arius, one day in the presence of Caliph Mutawakkil, while discussing the question of their faith with the Patriarch, said: "We are better Christians by not accepting Christ as the son of God and equal with him." The Patriarch asked the Arab doctors and scribes that were present, if it was not true that their book, the Koran, pronounced Christians all who believe in the Divine nature of Christ. They said, "Our Book testifies, that Christians believe Christ is the son of God"; the Patriarch proceeded: "You may judge now, whether or not one who does not confess Christ as the son of God is a Christian." They all agreed that the physician Sergius was in error.

vast improvement. But there still remains much to do; everywhere is opportunity to help and to reform. And now, my lamb of the West, cease your questioning which can do no good either to you or to anyone else. Man should not bother himself about matters which concern only God. *Salaam alaikum.*"

Lancel.

¹ Barhebræus, iii., pp. 198-202.

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On another occasion, Honain, a physician, accused Israel, also a physician, before Muta-wakkil, as an idolater and that he was really not a Christian. The Caliph ordered the searching of the house of Israel; an image was found and brought before the Caliph; Honain said, "That is the idol I referred to." Israel asked him if he can spit upon it. Honain showed no hesitancy in doing so. Mutawakkil sent for the Patriarch and asked his judgment. The Patriarch said, "That is not an idol, it is the figure of the mother of our Lord." The Caliph very indignantly ordered the Patriarch to excommunicate Honain.¹

On the Christmas day of the year 768, Abu Jaafar, the governor of Baghdad, presented George, his physician, with three beautiful damsels and three thousand dinars (\$1500). George accepted the money but sent back the rest. Abu Jaafar asked, surprisingly, about the refusal of the pretty girls. "I have one wife," said the physician,

¹ Barhebræus, iii., pp. 198, 199. Assemani, ii., p. 438.

“and we Christians are not allowed to take more.”¹

XXII

PERSECUTIONS BY THE CALIPHS

The Arabs were found to be not as tolerant as was expected by the Christians. The chief cause of the persecutions during the reign of the Sassanian kings were those Zoroastrians who apostatized to Christianity; while the policy of the Arabs or Muslims was to force all to accept Islam, and in order to attain to this purpose, they employed means of a false, treacherous, and insidious character, which are practised in Persia to this day.

Theodosius, Patriarch of Beth Garmai (852-858), was accused at one time before Caliph Mutawakkil of Baghdad, as having communication with the Romans.² The

¹ *Eliæ Metropolitæ Nisibeni Opus Chronologicum*, ed. Brooks, p. 179.

² Assemani, iii., pp. 509, 510. Barhebræus, *Chron. Eccles.*, iii., pp. 191-193.

Patriarch denied the charges, the Caliph ordered him to take an oath to confirm his statement, the Patriarch objected, as being against the sacred law, upon which he was imprisoned for three years; and a decree was issued for the destruction of the monastery of Dorgoneh, and many other churches, the bones of Mar Abraham were disinterred and cast into the river Tigris; religious services were stopped. Christians were not allowed to ride a horse, or wear a dyed garment with open bosom, as Arabs did. They should not appear in bazaars on Friday, their children should not be taught in Arab schools. Their houses were taxed for the benefit of the mosques, and pictures of Satan, made of wood, were put up above the doors of their houses.

An old Arab who used to read prayers in a mosque was in the habit of asking alms at the patriarchal door. He became very indignant when he was refused on one occasion. One day when a funeral procession of Arabs was passing the convent, a friend of

the old Arab threw a stone at the bier, from a covert. The Arabs were furious when someone, probably the old beggar, said that the stone came from the direction of the convent. They robbed the patriarchate, and disinterred the body of Mar Anush, cut off his head, put it on a pole and carried it about the city of Baghdad.¹

Shortly after this, a false report came from the governor of Daquq that, "Christians have thrown the head of a pig into the mosque."² This fanned up the embers of the persecution into a blaze. The Christians gave up all hope of deliverance; "for the elect's sake God shortened those days." But they did not cease. These incidents are typical of what is not infrequent to-day.

Caliph Qadir, in 1015, issued a decree that all Christians should be forced to accept Islam or else they should be expelled from the country, and their property appropriated. The order was carried out to its full extent; many emigrated to Roman territory, some

¹ Barhebræus, iii., p. 211.

² Barhebræus, iii., p. 259.

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accepted Islam, but a large number endured persecution; these were compelled to wear large wooden crosses, weighing four pounds,² around their necks, instead of their gold and silver ones. Resistance was met by capital punishment. The most noteworthy fact in this case was, that Qadir, unlike his predecessors and for an unknown motive, regretted these merciless acts and recalled the decree, allowed the converted Christians to apostatize, those expelled to return, and ruined churches to be rebuilt.

The lust of persecution was not satiated as yet; an Arab, a member of the Hanbalite sect, designed to usurp a piece of land which belonged to the Jacobite church in Baghdad which was attached to the building; when his plan was frustrated he became very indignant, and caused the dead body of an Arab to be carried about the streets of the city, crying out: "The Christians have killed this man." It was enough for the uprising of the whole town against the poor Christian

² Barhebræus, ed. Victor Joseph, Paris, 1890, p. 204.

community; they started to kill and plunder. They robbed the church and set it on fire, burning five hundred persons that had taken refuge in it.¹

To their surprise they found a manuscript of the Gospel undamaged, and they exclaimed: "Verily, this is a true religion, we are doing wrong in not obeying the command of our Prophet who gave these people a *firman* not to be molested."²

XXIII

CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE KARIAT TRIBE³

At this time, the influence of the centuries of persecutions began to show in the life of

¹ Barhebræus, iii., pp. 263-265.

² Barhebræus, iii., p. 270.

³ *Marco Polo's Travels*, lib. ii., ch. ii. Mosheim, p. 324, n. 1. Arnold, p. 188. Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, ch. viii., pp. 209-212. The authority for this account is a letter of Abhdisho, Archbishop of Merv, addressed to John, the Nestorian patriarch, and preserved by Barhebræus, *Chron. Syr.*, iii., p. 280; and thence published by Assemani, ii., p. 444, 445; iii., p. 486, and iv., 487 f. D'Herbelot, iii., p. 418. Catholic Encyc., xii., pp. 400 f.

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the Christians, into whose sound faith there entered some foreign elements of superstition. But still the Nestorians were successful in preaching the Gospel in the farthest parts of Tartary and the regions whose peoples were entirely ignorant and uncultivated. Among them was a tribe of Turks known as Kariat. They accepted Christianity in the early eleventh century; when Mar Abhdisho was metropolitan of Merv in Khurasan, he wrote to the patriarch, probably Yohannan II., thus:

“The king of the people called Kariat, inhabiting the northeast region of Turkistan, lost his way while hunting on the high mountains of his country, in a snowstorm; when he became despondent, and despaired of his life, a saint appeared to him in a vision, who said, ‘If thou believest in Christ I shall guide thee and thou shalt not perish.’ The king promised that he would be a lamb in the fold of Christ, and he was directed out to the open. He called some Christian merchants into his camp and learned of them about the

Christian faith. They told him that he must be baptized. He obtained a Gospel of them which he worships every day. And now, he wants me, or a priest, to go and perform the rite of baptism. Also, he would like to know how to observe the fast as their food consists only of meat and milk. He also says the number of those who believe with him amounts to two hundred thousand."

The patriarch wrote back to the metropolitan ordering him to send a priest and a deacon with church vessels to baptize all who believed and teach them the tenets of Christianity, and to let them use milk during the fast, if, as they said, no ordinary fast provisions were found in their country. At his baptism, the king bore the name of John, and in token of his modesty assumed the title of presbyter, his first name being Unk Khan. His successors are supposed to have retained this title down to the fourteenth century, and each one was usually called John Presbyter, or Prester John.

The Kariat tribe is mentioned in the travels

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of Marco Polo, who visited them in the thirteenth century. Al-Biruni, a Muslim writer who lived at Khiveh in 1000, in his *History of India*, mentions Christians as comprising the bulk of the population of Syria, Iraq, and Khurasan.

The two Christian cemeteries at Pitshepek in Russian Turkistan bear silent witness to the extensive mission work achieved by the Nestorian missionaries, among the Turkish and Mongol tribes of those regions, especially among the Uighur tribes,¹ to whose Christianity the literature of the Mongol period has frequent references. The tombstones are covered with Syriac inscriptions. The oldest of them is dated 858, and marked "the grave of Mengku-Tenesh the believer"; but most of them belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Mongols had a modified kind of Syriac alphabet, which is still in use by certain of their tribes.*

¹ Arnold, p. 247. Mosheim, p. 324. Assemani, ii., p. 257.

* Chwolson, *Syrische Grabinschriften aus Semirjetschie*.

XXIV

THE CLIMAX OF THE NESTORIAN CHURCH

In the beginning of the eleventh century the power of the Nestorian patriarch culminated, there being then over twenty-five metropolitans throughout the countries lying between China and the Tigris.¹ Marco Polo,² at a later date, saw the Nestorian churches all along the trade routes, from Baghdad to Peking. Those metropolitans whose sees were near Baghdad were expected to visit the patriarch every sixth month; while the others whose sees were too far to allow them to go and tender their obedience to him in person were expected to send to him, every sixth year, a report respecting the condition of their flock, and a renewed confession of their faith.³

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries

¹ Layard, i., p. 215.

² *Marco Polo's Travels*, lib. ii., cap. ii. *De Regionibus Orientalibus*, lib. i., cap. iv., and lib. ii., cap. vi.

³ Mosheim, ii., p. 161. Layard, vol. i., pp. 214, 215. Assemani, iv., p. 439.

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the activities and influence of Nestorian missionaries continued to attract multitudes into their Church. There were Christians in many parts of Central Asia, even among the princes and queens of Tartary, who confessed the Nestorian creed and were subject to the patriarch in Chaldea.

In 1111 Elias II., Bar Moqli, was consecrated Patriarch by eight bishops; among them was Abhdisho, Bishop of Urumia. At the same time, one Baladai was also consecrated Bishop for Urumia.¹

XXV

THE DOWNFALL OF THE NESTORIAN CHURCH UNDER THE MONGOL KHANS²

Early in the thirteenth century the Mongol hordes under the leadership of Jengiz Khan, "the terror of the world," began their westward march. It was the old war of "Iran and Turan." It is doubtful if a more blood-

¹ Assemani, pp. 448, 449.

² Howorth, *History of the Mongols*. Mosheim, p. 432.

thirsty person was ever born of a woman. As he swept on from the banks of the Oxus to Asterabad, every town of any importance was reduced to ruins and its inhabitants slaughtered,² with neither age nor sex spared to amuse his monsters. In one week alone at Merv, he massacred over one million human beings. In Nishapur all were decapitated. It has been said that he was responsible for the death of at least twenty millions of people. He found the Mongolians weak and insignificant, but left them the masters of China, Persia, and Central Asia. He made even Europe tremble, for his ruffian warriors spread terror as far as Bulgaria.

In the year 1258, Khulaqu Khan, the grandson of Jengiz Khan, the Emperor of China, led forth his hordes, captured the city of Baghdad, put Musta'sim, the last Abbasid Caliph, to death, with whom the Caliphate also ended. Khulaqu was tolerant to the Christians. His wife, Duquz Khatun, was

² Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, i., p. 92.

a Christian lady.¹ On his return from the conquest of Baghdad, he made Maragha the capital of his dominion. Here the famous astronomer Nasir-ad-Din constructed the astronomical tables known as the "Tables of Ilkhani,"² which still remain. In 1265 the Christians inhabited twenty-five Asiatic provinces and over seventy dioceses. Barhebræus says, in one instance when the Christians of Arbil wished to celebrate Palm Sunday, believing that the Arabs were prepared to make disturbances, they sent for Tartar Christians that were in that neighborhood to come over and help them. The Tartar horsemen, crosses suspended from the points of their spears, led the procession, while the Nestorian patriarch and the people followed them. But still the Arabs mobbed and dispersed them.³

Abaqa Khan (1265-1282), the son of

¹ Markham, *History of Persia*, p. 167. Arnold, pp. 188, 192. Assemani, iv., pp. 108-109.

² Malcolm's *Sketches of Persia*, pp. 273-274. Markham, *History of Persia*, p. 168.

³ Barhebræus, *Chron. Syr.*, pp. 575 f.

Khulaqu Khan, was one of the most favorable Mongol Khans to Christianity. He presented Patriarch Denkha, after his consecration, with magnificent gifts of a diploma, staff, and umbrella.¹ The Patriarch was accompanied by three Mongol amirs and bishops, who rode to the court, and from there to Seleucia-Ctesiphon where he was consecrated. He established schools, built a church, and convents. Abaqa Khan revived and encouraged science and education in general. The great poets, Sa'di and Jalal-ad-Din Rumi, frequented his court. He married a daughter of the Greek Emperor, Michael Palæologus, in Oriental pomp and splendor,²

¹ Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, ii., p. 253. The umbrella or parasol, that emblem of royalty so universally adopted by the Eastern nations, was generally carried over the king in time of peace, and sometimes even in war. It was reserved exclusively for the monarch, and is never represented as borne over any other person.

² Marriage among the Tartars:—Vizier Nizam relates in the following manner some particulars of the marriage of his sovereign, the Sultan Malikshah, with the daughter of the Caliph: "The Sultan was encamped on the west side of the Tigris, and the Caliph's palace was on the east. On the day chosen for the ceremony, the Sultan gave

and is suspected of having been himself a Christian. Just before his death in 1282,

orders that all the great men who were present should go to the palace of the Caliph to solicit his consent: for according to the custom of the Turkomans, at the time of the courtship the bridegroom's people go to the father of the future bride, and in a supplicating manner request him to give his consent to the match.

"In like manner the great men, then assembled from most parts of the earth, went in procession to supplicate the Caliph; and, to show the regard due to his palace, directions were given that they should all go on foot. When they began to march, the Caliph, who had notice of their motion, immediately sent a messenger, who said that the Commander of the Faithful had ordered *Nisam al-Mulk* to come on horseback. So I alone mounted, and all the great men of the world accompanied me on foot. On our arrival at the palace, I was introduced into a most magnificent hall, and seated on an eminent place, and all the rest on my right and left. Then robes of honor were brought for all of us, and on that for me was curiously wrought the following words: 'For the wise and just Vizier *Nisam al-Mulk, Amir al-Momnin.*' And from the beginning of Muhammadanism to this day no Vizier has been dignified with the title of Prince of the Faithful."

Introduction to *Richardson's Persian-English Dictionary.*

Among the nomads of Central Asia, the marriage ceremony is of a romantic character; the young maiden, attired in bridal costume, mounts a high-bred courser, taking on her lap a lamb, and setting off at full gallop. The bridegroom with his party, also on horseback, follows her at full speed. If he overtakes her, she becomes his bride, otherwise the match is broken. But she always tries to be caught.



Tartar Wedding—Pursuit of a Bride
(Kökbüri)

From Vámbéry, *Travels in Central Asia*

he celebrated Easter Day with the Christians at Hamadan.²

XXVI

THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE TARTARS AND KURDS

After the fall of the Caliphs, the power of the Nestorian Patriarch in the East rapidly declined.² But the invasion of the fourteenth century fell with crushing force on the Nestorians. About 1385, came the scourge of humanity, the cruel Timurlang or Tamerlane,³ whose mere nod caused multitudes to abandon Christianity, and whose name struck terror even long after his death. He followed the Christians with relentless fury, destroyed their churches, and forced them to accept Islam or be put to death, or doomed them to perpetual slavery. Four thousand Armenians were buried alive.

² D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Orient.*, i., p. 6. Assemani, iv., p. 3.

² Badger, i., p. 257. Layard, i., p. 257.

³ Badger, i., pp. 257. Mosheim, p. 485. Layard, i., p. 215. Assemani, iv., pp. 135-137.

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He regarded himself as appointed to exterminate the Christians, being persuaded that this was the duty of every true disciple of Muhammad.¹

The Nestorians who could escape took refuge in the almost inaccessible fastnesses of the Kurdistan Mountains,² which during the massacre of Bedr Khan Bey in 1843, were stained with the blood of their children.³

From this time on there were no churches found in Transoxiana, Turkistan, Hyrcania, and Khurasan.

The small number of the Nestorians who had survived were active enough to send missionaries into the world. In 1490, Patriarch Simon sent a metropolitan into China, and Patriarch Elias, in 1502, sent four bishops, Thomas, Yabhalaha, Denkha, and James into India and China, as they were united at this time in one metropolitan see.

¹ Mosheim, p. 485. Layard, i., p. 257.

² This was, probably, the beginning of the emigration of the Nestorians to Central Kurdistan. Badger, i., 257. Layard, i., p. 215, new ed.

³ Grant, *Mountain Nestorians*, p. 363.



Timurlang (Tamerlane)

From a MS. in the Possession of Karl Hiersemann, Leipzig

A Persecuted Church 111

In 1842 and 1843, Bedr Khan Bey,¹ a Hakkari Amir, with combined Kurdish forces, attacked the descendants of the Nestorians who were driven into the Kurdistan Mountains by Timurlang, intending to burn, kill, destroy, and if possible exterminate the Christian race from the mountains. The fierce invaders destroyed and burned whatever came within their reach. An indiscriminate massacre took place. The women were brought before the Amir, and murdered in cold blood. Those who attempted to escape were cut off. Three hundred women and children who were fleeing were seized and killed.² The following incident illustrates the revolting barbarity. The aged mother of Mar Shimun the Patriarch was seized by them, and after having practised upon her the most abominable atrocities, they cut her body into two parts and threw it into the River Zab, exclaiming: "Go and carry to your accursed son the in-

¹ Badger, i., pp. 270, 271. Grant, pp. 348-363. Layard, i., pp. 153-202.

² Layard, i., p. 201.

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telligence that the same fate awaits him.”¹ Nearly ten thousand were massacred, and as large a number of women and children were taken captive, most of whom were sent to Jezireh to be sold as slaves, or to be bestowed as presents upon influential Muhammadans.²

It is the insignificant number that has survived all these massacres, which is now being exterminated by the Turks and Kurds.

¹ Badger, i., p. 270. Grant, p. 349.

² Badger, i., p. 271. Layard, i., p. 153.



Abraham Mar Shimun, 136th Patriarch of the Assyrian Christians

II
A CHAPTER OF HORRORS

II

A CHAPTER OF HORRORS

THE civilized world has been horrified by the monstrous crimes and most pathetic tragedy in history ancient or modern to which the Assyrians and Armenians have been once more subjected.

We are witnessing to-day the greatest and the most ruthless atrocities in modern history. The entire Christian nations of the Armenians and Assyrians are undergoing the process of extermination, by cruel methods of execution which surpass anything that ever preceded them anywhere. The atrocities that are being committed now against these harmless and helpless Christians in Turkey and Persia are of a long standing character. Sometimes the storm has abated its fury, only to start up again with increased energy, and the

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present relentless persecutions and brutal massacres are but the culmination of the generations of terror.

The following statements are based upon various trustworthy sources, such as consular reports, unimpeachable testimonies of eye-witnesses, and official documents, which have been corroborated by the narratives of the missionaries of the neutral countries who have just arrived from the scene of these horrors and have been through them all, and are unquestionably confirmed by men of honorable position, men for whom it would be impossible to misrepresent the facts in the case, and who could have no other motive than the sense of justice and humanity. A large amount of the material has been secured from the Bulletins of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief.

It is one's duty always to avoid exaggeration; in this case, however, there is no room left for exaggeration. How can one exaggerate where the powers of language hardly suffice to describe even the facts!

I

URUMIA THE STORM CENTER

Consonant with the provisions of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907, which was made ostensibly to arrange questions concerning their respective "interests" and to afford protection to Persia, the Shah was assumed to be merely a passive figurehead of authority, lending automatic sanction to the acts of ministers of those Powers. At any rate, Urumia and its neighboring districts in the province of Azerbaijan, which lies within the Russian sphere of influence, were garrisoned by a few thousand Russian soldiers. The presence of the soldiers had a great effect on the morale of the Turks and Kurds; the inroads were checked, life and property protected, and peace and quietude restored.

With the outbreak of the European war, however, things took a different turn; the Kurds began to raid the nearest Christian

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districts and the inhabitants were put to flight.

The month before the declaration of war between Russia and Turkey, in October, 1914, the district of Urumia was invaded by the reinforced Turkish troops and Kurdish irregulars. For a time they were successful in resisting the counter-attack of the Russians, and in plundering and destroying the villages, until the arrival of the Russian reinforcements. By the help of these and some native Christians who were armed by the Russians, the enemy was checked. The slightest defense on the part of the Nestorian Christians against a raid has always been trumped up as a sufficient pretext for their death-warrant and an absolutely unlimited opportunity for plunder and massacre.

Such were the preliminary acts of the terrible catastrophe that took place shortly afterwards.

Matters apparently quieted down for a few days, until the war between Russia and Turkey had actually begun. Then the



Refugees from the Kurdistan Mountains in the Russian Consulate, Urumia, Persia

aggressive Turks amassed overwhelming numbers of soldiers on the Caucasus frontier and tried to cut off the Russian communication and surround the soldiers in Urumia; consequently these were compelled to withdraw. Of the order of withdrawal that reached Urumia on December 30, 1914, Christians knew nothing until three days afterwards. On January 2d the news was flashed like a clap of thunder in a clear sky: "The Turks are coming, the Russians are withdrawing, flee for your life." The Russians' departure was the herald for the Kurds to pounce upon the prey from which they had so long been held at bay.

II

THE FLIGHT

"Then it was that that terrible stampede took place. There was absolutely no human power to protect these unhappy people from the savage onslaught of the invading hostile forces. It was an awful situation. At mid-

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night the terrible exodus began; a concourse of twenty-five thousand men, women, and children, Nestorians and Armenians, leaving the cattle in the stables, all their household goods and all the supply of food for winter, hurried, panic-stricken, on a long and painful journey to the Russian border, enduring the intense privations of a foot journey in the snow and mud, without any kind of preparation. The horrible details of that dreadful flight can never be adequately told.

“The English missionary who left Urumia with the fugitives describes the flight in these words: ‘As far as eye could reach in both directions there was a constant stream of fugitives, sometimes so dense that the road was blocked. It was a dreadful sight, and one I never want to see again, many of the old people and children died on the way.’

“If anyone possessed a horse or a donkey or any other beast of burden, he was fortunate, and if he happened to have ready cash in his home, he was even more so. But well to do as a man may be, cash is not always



A Caravan of the Christian Families Fleeing from the Turkish Massacre

on hand in the villages, and so many who, according to the standard of the country, were rich, started on their long journey with a mere pittance.

“Before the seven days’ hard walking to the Russian border was accomplished, all encumbrances were cast aside, such as quilts, extra clothing, even bread, for it became a question with the poor, tired, struggling crowd which they would carry, their bedding or their babies. A number of women were delivered on the road; the mothers tore off their dresses, wrapped the babies in the pieces, and resumed their tramp. The weaker ones died by the roadside, of exhaustion, exposure, and hemorrhage. Under the severe strain, some individuals became demented.

“The sick and the aged and the wee children fell by the way, and did not rise again. The twenty-five thousand who passed into the Russian border lines were so haggard and emaciated that their own friends did not recognize them. Almost worse than the weary tramping by day in the deep mud,

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were the nights, passed by those who could find no shelter and lay out all night in the wet."

III

THE HOUSE OF REFUGE

All who could flee towards the Russian border did so, though without provision; still many thousands remained behind, simply because they could not flee, their villages being so situated that flight was impossible. These panic-stricken people made a rush into the mission house in the city; a large number of them, however, had been intercepted on the way and murdered; others who had narrowly escaped arrived cold, hungry, and exhausted, with frozen and bleeding feet. They were robbed and stripped on the roads of everything they had. Not far from twenty thousand souls took refuge in the mission compounds; some three thousand of these concealed themselves in the quarters of the French mission. As things moved on with



Syrian Women of the Kurdistan Mountains in Flight

lightning speed, the missionaries were utterly unprepared for this impending catastrophe. But still, they took all in, they cared for them and fed them for nearly five months. They were jammed in the rooms and church like sardines. In some rooms even the sick had to sit up. The only comfortable person in the crowd was found to be a woman with a babe in her arms, leaning against a pillar for months; she laid the infant to sleep on the desk in front of her.

"Children are being born every day," says one report. "We have managed to give two small rooms to these women, many of whom haven't even a quilt. Children were born even in the crowded church. One of the women who was reporting these cases complained in a very aggrieved tone that some were even bringing two, as if *one* wasn't enough to satisfy anybody under existing circumstances."

The problem of feeding these multitudes was difficult; without the wise management of the missionaries hundreds would have died

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of starvation. They were fortunate enough to be able to borrow money for bread, distributing over four tons of bread a day, or fifteen thousand loaves of about ten and a half ounces a loaf, each person getting one loaf a day, and that only dry bread; but man cannot "live by bread alone," week after week.

As the refugees were huddled together in a most unsanitary condition, hungry, ragged, and filthy, a serious epidemic of typhoid, typhus, and dysentery broke out among them, carrying off from ten to twenty-five every day, the breath passing from bodies which had long before been soulless. It was like a nightmare quickened into life.

The terrible disease of dysentery was due largely to the lack of proper food. When the sick became helpless and offensive, it was almost impossible to get anybody to care for them.

From the fear of the enemy outside the mission premises, the dead could not be taken out to the burial ground, they were



A Wedding Procession in Urumia

interred unwept in the mission yard; most of them were just dropped, without coffins, into a great trench of rotting humanity. In some cases bodies of the little ones were wrapped in ragged pieces of patchwork.

Death became one thing to be longed for; the people were exclaiming: "Blessed are the dead," and, "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord and not into the hands of the Kurds." The condition of the living was really more pitiful than that of the dead; they were hungry, ragged, dirty, sick, cold, wet, swarming with vermin.

Finally, of the eighteen adult members of the American mission, who were attending the refugees, thirteen contracted diseases and three lost their lives.

German missionaries in Persia have been fully as indignant at the sight of these horrors, fully as sympathetic with the sufferers as the missionaries of neutral nations.

IV

STATEMENT OF GERMAN MISSIONARIES

The following heartrending accounts are taken from the letters of the German missionaries in Persia; the letters were published in *Der christliche Orient*, and republished on October 18, 1915, in the Dutch newspaper *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, the leading journal of Holland.

"The latest news is that four thousand Syrians and one hundred Armenians have died of disease alone, at the missions, within the last five months. All villages in the surrounding district with two or three exceptions have been plundered and burnt; twenty thousand Christians have been slaughtered in Armenia and its environs."

"On the road," writes another German missionary in Azerbaijan,¹ "I found four little children. The mother sat on the ground, her back resting against a wall. The hollow-eyed children ran up to me,

¹ *Der christliche Orient*, Sept.-Oct., 1915, p. 74 f.



Refugee Girls from Kurdistan Mountains
Kindness of Mr. Paul Shimun

stretching out their hands and crying: 'Bread! Bread!' When I came closer to the mother, I saw that she was dying."

Here is a description from another letter:

"In Haftewan, a village of Salmas, 750 corpses without heads have been recovered from the wells and cisterns alone. Why? Because the commanding officer had put a price on every Christian head. In Haftewan alone more than five hundred women and girls were delivered to the Kurds of Saudjbulak. One can imagine the fate of these unfortunate creatures. In Diliman crowds of Christians were thrown into prison and driven to accept Islam. The men were circumcised. Gul-pashan, the richest village in the Urumia district, has been wholly ransacked. The men were slain and the good-looking women and girls carried away. So also in Babarud. Hundreds of women jumped into the deep river, when they saw how many of their sisters were violated by the bands of brigands, in broad daylight, in the middle of the road. So also at Miandoab and in Sulduz district."

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A large number of captured girls were taken into various cities and sold as slaves to Turks for a nominal price. In the streets of Beirut they were offered for twenty piasters (eighty cents). A man bought one for that price, but he was soon stabbed, and the girl taken from him, because it was discovered that he was a Christian.

V

A HEROIC MISSIONARY

Geogtapa, one of the largest villages of the plain of Urumia, was besieged by the Kurds. Many of the inhabitants of other villages had reached that place on their way to the city, and these, together with the village inhabitants, kept up a fight for days to defend their families and themselves. They were finally driven to their last stand in the two churches situated on a high hill formed of ashes of Zoroastrian fires. The women and children were crowded like sheep in the churches. It was at this time that Dr.



Kurdish Infantry and a Turkish Officer

Packard, the missionary physician, made a valiant intervention, determined to see what his long and intimate relations with many of the Kurdish chiefs would do. At the risk of his life he visited the Sheikh and begged that the lives of the villagers might be given him; the property would gladly be given to the Kurds, and he prevailed. When Dr. Packard arrived, a lively battle was going on, with no hope for the Christians. He had great difficulty in getting to the chiefs without being shot; but he finally reached them, and they knew him. Some of these Kurds had spent weeks in his hospital and had been operated upon by him; so they listened to him while he was pleading for the lives of the people inside, and agreed to let them go with him if they would give up their guns and ammunition. They did, and he brought them with him into the city in the middle of the night, over a thousand men, women, and children, who, but for his mediation, would have been massacred in the usual horrible way. He "plucked them as a fire-

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brand, out of the burning," and he himself had "no hurt."

VI

A GIRL HEROINE

Another incident of thrilling account was that of a girl of seventeen. When her family left Salmas for Russia she stayed with her old father. The Kurds entered the village and came to her house. She, with a boy about eighteen years old, fled to the roof from which she shot the Kurd who killed her father and then fled from roof to roof till she reached the edge of the village and took the road to Diliman. She shot five Kurds who pursued her in the village, and being followed by a horseman, shot his horse so that he desisted from the pursuit. She took refuge with a Karguzar and the Muslims wished her to become Muhammadan, promising her a rich husband, to which she replied she would first kill whoever attempted to make her change her faith and then kill

herself. The Turkish commander sent for her and took her gun away, saying she was braver than any of his soldiers. She went back to the Karguzar's house, and the Turks sent word to have her killed, but the Karguzar hid her, so she was saved by the return of the Russians.

It requires extraordinary courage and fortitude to fight with a Kurd who is a walking arsenal, armed to the teeth with guns, cartridge belts, daggers, and spear.

VII

THE AMERICAN FLAG FEARED

While the people had partly fled to Russia and partly taken refuge with the missionaries, the blood-mad Turks and Kurds had surrounded the mission premises with threats of death against the refugees. They were warded off, however by the American flag, and the refugees were untouched. To them the mission was a heaven in the midst of a hell.

Citizens of the United States unfurled the flag high in the air from their mission gates; neither Turk nor Kurd would dare to break in.

During eighty long years the American mission has ministered to the spiritual as well as the temporal needs of that community found in the plain of Urumia, its neighboring districts, and in the Kurdistan Mountains; but at no time has it performed a more praiseworthy and nobler service than during these massacres. It is a meritorious record that can very seldom be equalled in the annals of missionary work.

If it were not for the assistance rendered by the little band of these devoted American missionaries in Urumia, none of the Christians, probably, could have escaped the sword of those most inveterate foes of Christianity. The protection of those Christians who survived death and destruction was accomplished only by their constant vigilance during the six months of that fiendish massacre.

The Rev. Dr. William A. Shedd, who is thoroughly conversant with the men and manners of the country, through his most unremitting exertion secured the coöperation of the Persian governor and other authorities to save the lives of many. Even the Kurds responded sometimes to his appeals for mercy.

VIII

MASSACRE AND RAPINE WERE THE ORDER OF
THE DAY

Among the villagers who had not fled, the reign of terror took place. The troops were engaged, wholly unchecked, in the work of depredation and murder.

During the last days of February, shortly after the arrival of Reghib Bey, the Turkish Consul-General at Tabriz, about forty persons were taken out of the French mission at midnight, and told that they would be transported to Turkey; they were tied together, and shot at a place about two miles from the city of

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Urumia. The dead and wounded were left piled up. Among the murdered were Mar Dinkha, a Nestorian bishop, and an aged Catholic priest. Every possible means was tried to mollify the officers, but they were obdurate and implacable, and intent to carry out the orders of the Turkish authorities.

IX

THE HEARTLESS ASSASSINS

Dr. Shimun of Sipurghan, Urumia, was captured by the Turks while hiding in the Ganbil Daghi near the lake of Urumia. They saturated his clothes with oil and set him on fire, shot him while fleeing, and cut off his head.

On March 24th, a still more horrible deed was committed at Gulpashan, the most prosperous village in Urumia; fifty men were taken out into the cemetery, the soldiers made them all sit down on the ground, and then shot at them. They then looked them

over, and anyone who was found to be breathing was shot the second time. Similar acts were performed in other places.

X

A COWARDLY SLAUGHTER

A dastardly massacre took place shortly after that. Seventy-five Christians had been employed by the Turks to bring telegraph wire from Gawar, Turkey, a district about sixty miles distant, across the border. They were kept here in confinement with very little food. On the way back they were taken into a mountain valley fifteen or twenty miles from the city of Urumia, and massacred in cold blood. Three of them escaped, after pretending to be dead, and returned wounded and bloody. In the adjoining regions of Turkey, according to reports confirmed by many persons from there, and by the fact that the refugees from Gawar are almost all women and children, similar massacres took place.

XI

STATEMENT OF A MISSIONARY IN URUMIA,
PERSIA

“Yesterday I went to the Kalla of Ismael Agha and from there, Kasha and some others went with me up the road to the place where the Gawar men were murdered by the Turks. It was a gruesome sight! Perhaps the worst I have seen at all. There were seventy-one or two bodies; we could not tell exactly because of the conditions. It is about six months since the murder. Some were in fairly good condition, dried like a mummy, their faces pinched into horrible death masks. Others were torn to pieces by the wild animals. Some had been daggered in several places, as evident from the cuts in the skin. Most of them had been shot. The ground about was littered with empty shells. It was a long way off from the Kalla, and a half hour’s walk from the main road into the most rugged gorge I have seen for some time. I suppose the Turks thought no word could

get out from there, a secret, solitary, rocky gorge. How those three wounded men succeeded in getting out and reaching the city is more of a marvel than I thought it was at the time. The record of massacre burials now stands as follows:

“At Charbash, forty in one grave, among them a bishop. At Gulpashan, fifty-one in one grave, among them the most innocent persons in the country; and now, above the Kalla of Ismael Agha, seventy in one grave, among them leading merchants of Gawar.

“These one hundred and sixty-one persons, buried by me, came to their death in the most cruel manner possible, at the hands of regular Turkish troops in company with Kurds under their command.”

XII

RED HORROR

The worst of all these massacres took place in Salmas, a district to the north of Urumia and adjoining it; it is inhabited by the Arme-

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nians, Nestorians, and Muslims. In March, when all the males above the age of twelve were killed in the village of Haftewan, many of them were hacked to pieces. This was done by order of Jevdet Pasha, the son of Takis Pasha, commander of Turkish forces in that region. He is a man who has studied in the French school in Beirut, Syria. It was he who ordered and planned the massacre here. I will not multiply the monotonous tale of barbarity; these instances will suffice to show the cold-blooded deliberateness and savage barbarity that exceed anything we have ever heard of, even in that part of the world.

The object of all these massacres was to strike a blow that would never need repetition.

Inciting such barbarous troops by the cry of *Jihad*, holy war, against the non-combatants and unarmed people is absolutely unjustified. "The provision of the sacred law of Islam forbids the Christians to possess arms." There is no case in history of human depravity, certainly not since the time of



The Jihad (Holy War) Declared in Constantinople

Tamerlane, in which any crime so hideous and upon so large a scale has been recorded.

Every incident turns upon pillage or murder or rape or torture. The brutal creatures plundered the villages, killed the men, dishonored the women, seized the portable property, and returned leisurely home, conscious of having done a good day's work.

The fact that these acts were often committed by the bloodthirsty Kurds does not exonerate the Turks who issued the orders. The Persian Muslims joined the Kurds to give vent to their everlasting and mortal grudge against their Christian neighbors.

XIII

RAPE

There is, however, something more revolting than the murder, pillage, and torture perpetrated upon these unhappy Christian people of the East, and that is the assault made on women's honor—the women whose chastity and purity are proverbial. When

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the male population of a village were done away with, many of the women were not killed but reserved for a more humiliating fate. The women who were unable to flee or did not succeed in hiding themselves were deliberately dishonored, and the girls deflowered. We weep for them because they were not *killed* by the butcher's knife.

XIV

ABDUCTION

According to the missionary reports "many of the good-looking girls and women were taken captive by the Turks, Kurds, and Persian Muhammadans, to be consigned to harems, a life that is worse than death."

The report goes on: "Lucy —— came in yesterday with her baby from the village to which she had fled, living in terror of Kurds who surrounded the village, by day and by night. There was no avenue of escape. The Kurds came to the roofs and commanded the

people to go down. Lucy, with one Kurd below her on the ladder and two above her, her baby on her back, got down. In the yard she saw her younger sister, Sherin, a pretty girl of about fifteen, being dragged away by a Kurd. She was imploring Lucy to save her, but Lucy was helpless. When she was telling me this with tears and sobs she said: 'Every night, when I try to sleep I hear her entreaties, "Oh, Lucy, I'll be your sacrifice. Save me, Lucy!" I called to her: "Pull your head-kerchief over your face; don't look into their faces." She tried to conceal her face, and daubed it with mud, but she has such beautiful dark eyes and rosy cheeks! The Kurds grabbed her, and peering into her face, they dragged her away. Oh! if they had only killed my sister we could say: "She is dead, like many others." But that she should be in the hands of a Kurd, we cannot bear it.'

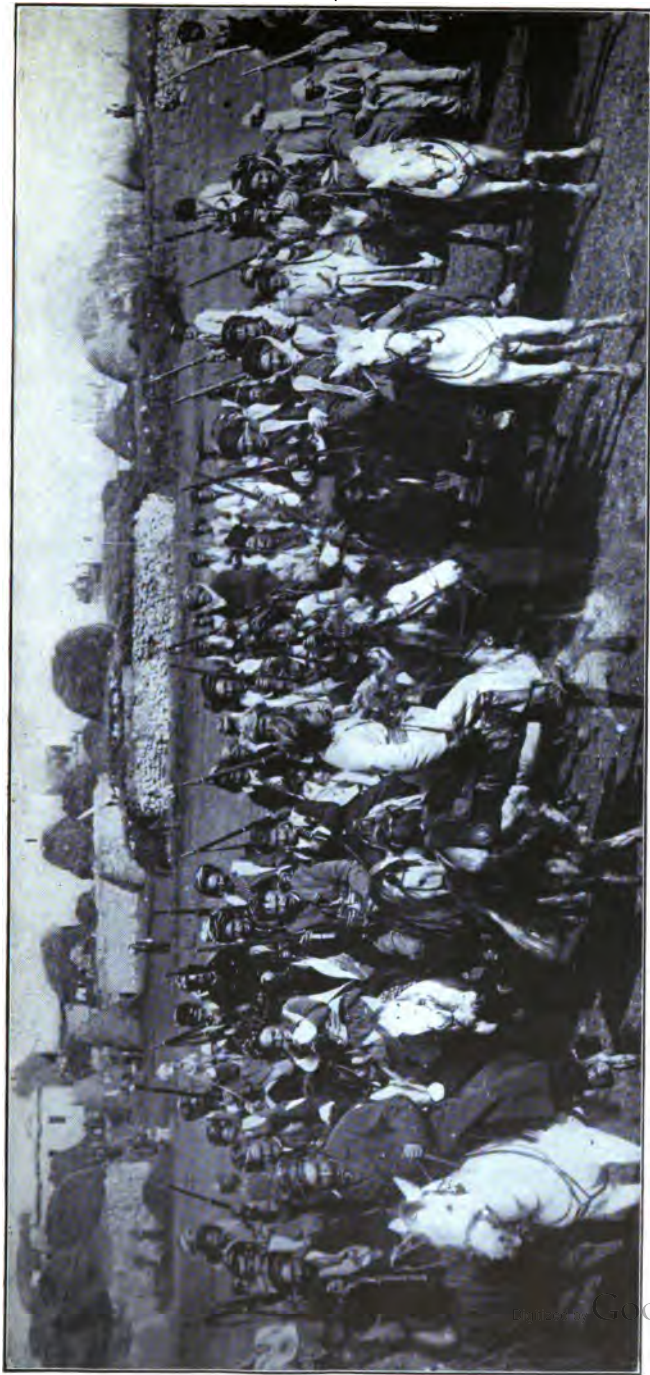
"On Sunday, January 25th, a Jew brought us word from Ushnuk that Sherin is there in the house of a Kurd and that every effort

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is being made by gifts, persuasion, and threats to make her profess Islam, but that she always answers: 'You may kill me, but I will never deny my faith.' Later she was liberated unscathed, by a Kurdish woman. Truly a miracle.

"Another sad case was that of the mother of a girl of twelve, who was being taken away to a life of slavery. The mother protested and tried to save her child, who was ruthlessly torn from her. As the daughter was being dragged away the mother made so much trouble for her oppressors, and clung to them so tenaciously, that they stabbed her twelve times before she fell helpless to save her little girl from her fate. This woman recovered from her wounds. Some people were shot as they ran, and children that they were carrying were killed or wounded with them. In some cases men were lined up so that several could be shot with one bullet in order not to waste ammunition on them."

An Assyrian priest was escaping on horseback with his daughter; he was killed and the girl carried off to Kurdistan, where she was



Kurdish Tribesmen, Urumia
Courtesy of Mr. Paul Shimun

married by force to a Kurd. Four months later came the sad news that she had died. During her illness she had as companion another Syrian girl, also a captive. This other girl relates that the Muslim women came and turned the sick woman's face towards Mecca. The invalid begged her companion to turn her face to the east, that she might die a Christian.

Another pathetic case, a woman, fleeing with her two children—her husband was abroad—met a Muslim mullah in her flight. He took the children, stripped them of their clothing, and threw them both into a stream, which was on the point of freezing. He then offered to marry the woman. On her refusal he left the woman on the road to her fate. She returned to the stream, and, taking her children from the water, carried them to a vineyard near by, where she placed them in a hollow place with some straw over them to try and warm them; both children died in the morning. Later the sorrowing woman found her way to Urumia. Five months

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afterwards the Russians caught this inhuman brute and made him suffer for his crime.

XV

ISLAMIZATION

Many attractive girls and young women were forcibly taken into harems. Many others were promised their lives on accepting Islam, if they would merely pronounce its formula and abjure Christ. But instead of doing so, with a few exceptions, they gave their souls to God and their bodies to the tormentors, defying hell itself by their boundless trust in God and Jesus Christ.

Such martyrdom deserves to be appreciated for the light it throws on the disposition of these people which has characterized them as a martyr nation for almost nineteen hundred years.

The poor people, cut off from all prospect of Christian aid, and deprived, by the fewness of their numbers and the want of arms, of the opportunity of showing any courage in

self-defense, were able to display that still higher courage which consists in facing death for the sake of the faith.

XVI

EXTORTION

Another form of outrage was that of seizing persons and levying fines on them; the refusal was met with death; as intermediates, the missionaries redeemed many, by paying for them and for those who fled to the mission for protection a ransom of several thousand dollars directly to the Turkish military or consular authorities. Prisoners thus held were beaten and incarcerated, to be hung or shot if the money was not forthcoming. The most notable instance was that of a bishop, who was taken out of the mission premises, and for whom the Turks demanded a ransom of fifteen thousand tomans, ten thousand tomans, eight thousand tomans, and finally accepted fifty-five hundred.

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To visualize the villages in that beautiful plain of Urumia, lying in ruins, the homes burned, the men massacred, the girls taken captive, the women, even children, outraged, is so horrible that one recoils, it makes the flesh creep.

XVII

NESTORIANS IN THE KURDISTAN MOUNTAINS

The suffering Nestorians who live in the extreme eastern part of Turkey and in the western part of Persia, adjoining Turkey, have suffered as greatly, and perhaps more generally than those in Persia. They are the remnants of the old Nestorian Church, numbering about ninety thousand, and did not escape the massacre and pillage suffered by the others. They are a sturdy people who, like the Kurds about them, have maintained a state of semi-independence and have been more or less able to defend themselves against attacks. Last summer their turn came and, as the following story indicates, they were



A Glimpse of Urumia

forced to leave the mountain valleys and go over into Persia. Perhaps half of the total number have reached Persia. Some others may have reached Russia; many have perished in the mountain valleys—how many, no one can tell.

For months they had been holding their own in the mountain fastnesses, hoping for succor from the Russians; when this failed and their enemies increased on every hand they had to flee; many perished in the attempt.

The first attack by the combined force of Turks and Kurds was made in June, 1915, and was partially successful. The people were driven out of their valleys into the high mountains. In this movement not many lives were lost, but many villages were destroyed. The hostile forces were for some reason or other withdrawn, and for some weeks there was comparative quiet, broken only by spasmodic attacks by local forces. About three weeks later there was another concerted attack made by the Turks and Kurds on their stronghold in the mountain top, and they

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were driven out. About thirty thousand, with great difficulty, made their escape, part of their road being held by the Kurds. They came down southward to the Tal Valley, followed by the Kurds, and attempted to turn up the Zab to get out by way of Julamerk. They found the Kurds in force at the Julamerk bridge, and were forced to turn downstream. At the border of Tiary they crossed the Zab and went up into the hills, which they found deserted by the Kurds, who had gone to war. They then made their way around back of Julamerk, meeting no hostile force until they reached the ridge between Quchanis and the Zab. Here again they found a force of Kurds waiting for them. They had quite a sharp fight with them and the Kurds were worsted. From there on they had no more trouble, reaching Bashkala in safety, and later coming down to Salmas, Persia. They number about thirty thousand. Among them is Mar Shimun, the Patriarch. They are mainly women and children, the men being massacred.



Highway through which the Patriarch Led the Refugees
Kindness of Mr. Paul Shimun

A Chapter of Horrors 149

With reference to those who were left in the mountains, perhaps a thousand more succeeded in getting through. There are still some thousands shut up there, and their fate is still uncertain. How many were killed in this last attack, no one could give even an estimate, but undoubtedly the number must be large.

A general massacre took place in the third group of this community, which numbered thirty thousand and occupied the valley of the Tigris, close to the ruins of Nineveh. Among the chief settlements of this region, which have been wiped out of existence, are Jezireh Ibn-Omar, Mansurieh, Shakh, Hassan, Sert.

We are told that by order of the government the Kurds and Turkish soldiers put the Christians of those villages to the sword. Among the slain were several Presbyterian preachers and teachers. Some of the men of Shakh were killed by Turkish soldiers who had been stationed in their village by the government. The women and children who

The Death of a Nation

... all were carried away captive.
... were the families of the above
... Many of the women
... threw themselves into the
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Rev. K. Odisho and his Children, Members of the Persecuted Christians in Urumia, Persia

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escaped death were carried away captive. Among these were the families of the above mentioned ministers. Many of the women of Mansurieh threw themselves into the river to avoid falling into the hands of the Kurds.

The massacre was repeated; after the first slaughter, there were Kurds who tried to save some of the Christians alive, but the government would not allow it. The decree was to complete the work or be punished. Of course some must have escaped, but as to their whereabouts no one knows.

The prospect of the forlorn remnant who have escaped the massacre is piteous in the extreme. Some fifty thousand men, women, and children from Persia and Kurdistan are naked, hungry, and homeless.

Such, in outline, is the story of what has happened to the Nestorian community which was dwelling in Persia and in the Kurdistan Mountains.

I have not told the whole story—the whole story is too gruesome and horrible—but have



Rev. K. Odisho and his Children, Members of the Persecuted Christians in Urumia, Persia

confined myself in these statements to the usual course of the crime. I have not mentioned the extravagance of wickedness, the barbarity of tortures, and the details of the outrages against the women, that would make a shameful and terrible page of modern history which is unfolding in Persia and Turkey.

“May God forgive the Turks and Kurds, ‘for they know not what they do.’ May God open their eyes to see whom they are persecuting. They are what centuries have made them. ‘Verily they think they are doing God service.’ Like Saul of Tarsus, may they become some day like Paul of Damascus!”

SYNCHRONISTIC TABLE

OF THE

ASSYRIAN PATRIARCHS, PARTHIAN RULERS, CALIPHS, SULTANS
OF TURKEY, AND PERSIAN KINGS (THE NAMES OF THE
DEPOSED BISHOPS ARE OMITTED)

PATRIARCHS

According to Barhebræus, Assemani,
and other writers, the following eight
bishops administered to the Church dur-
ing the period, 50-226 A.D.

Addai or Thaddeus
Mari
Agai
Abris
Abraham
Jacob
Akha d'Abhu
Shaktufa

PARTHIAN RULE

Arsaces was proclaimed the first king
of Parthia, 250 B.C. Artabanus IV. was
the last of the Arsacid Dynasty. He
was defeated by Ardashir, the first king
of the Sassanian Dynasty, and Parthia
was annexed to the new kingdom of
Persia, in 226 A.D.

Mshikha-Zkha (see page 39) gives the
names of twenty bishops of the same
period.

SASSANIAN KINGS

Papa	300(?)		
Shimun Bar Sabba'i	341	Ardashir	226-241
Shahdost	340	Shapur I.	241-272
Bar Bashmin	346	Bahram I.	272-273
(Vacancy)	346-383)	Bahram II.	273-276
Tamuza	383-395	Bahram III.	276-293
Qayuma	395-399	Narsai	293-302
Isaac	399-410	Hurmizd II.	302-309
Altha	410-415	Shapur II.	309-379
Yabh Alaha	415-420	Ardashir II.	379-383
Ma'na	420	Shapur III.	383-388
Dadisho	421-456	Bahram IV.	388-399
Babowai	457-484	Yazdigird I.	399-420
Acacius	485-496	Bahram V.	420-438
Babai	497-503	Yazdigird II.	438-457
Silas	505-523	(Hurmizd III.) Piruz	457 (459)-484
Narses and Elisha	524-539	Balas	484-488
Paul	539	Qubad I.	488-531
Mar Abha	540-552	(Zamasp	496-498)
Joseph	552-567	Khusrav I. Anushirwan	531-578
		Hurmizd IV.	579-590

PATRIARCHS—Continued

Ezekiel	570-581
Ishoyabh I.	582-595
Sabhrisho	596-604
Gregory	605-608
(Vacancy	608-628)
Ishoyabh II.	628-643
Mar Imeh	647-650
Ishoyabh III.	650-660
Gewergis	660-680
Yohannan I.	680-682
(Vacancy	682-684)
Khnanisho I. and Yohannan II.	685-699
(Vacancy	699-714)
Saliba-Zkha	714-728
(Vacancy	728-731)
Phetion	731-741
Mar Abha II.	742-752
Surian	752-753
Jacob	754-773

SASSANIAN KINGS—Continued

Khusrau II. Parwiz	590-628
(Anarchy	628-632)
Yazdigird III.	632-640

ARAB CALIPHS

TRUE SUCCESSORS OF MUHAMMAD

Abu Bekr	632-634
'Omar I.	634-644
'Othman	644-656
'Ali	656-661
Hassan	661

UMEIYAD DYNASTY 661-750

Mu'awiya I.	661-680
Yezid I.	680-683
Mu'awiya II.	683
Merwan I.	683-685

Khnanisho II.	774-777	'Abd al-Melik	685-705
Timothy I.	778-820	Al-Welid	705-715
Joshua Bar Nun	820-824	Suleiman	715-717
Gewergis II.	825	'Omar II.	717-720
(Vacancy)	825-832	Yezid II.	720-724
Sabhrisho II.	832-836	Hisham	724-743
Abraham of Marga	836-849	Al-Welid II. and Yezid III.	743-744
(Vacancy)	849-852	Ibrahim and Merwan II.	744-750
Theodosius	852-858		
(Vacancy)	858-860		
Sergius	860-872		
(Vacancy)	872-877		
Enos (Anush)	877-884		
Yohannan III.	884-892		
Yohannan IV.	892-898		
Yohannan V.	900-905		
Abraham (Abraza)	905-937		
Emmanuel	938-960		
Israel	962		
Abhdisho I.	963-986		
Mari Bar Tobi	987-1001		
Yohannan VI.	1001-1012		
		'ABBASID DYNASTY 750-946	
		Abu al-'Abbas As Saffah	750-754
		Abu Jaafar Al-Mansur	754-775
		Al-Mehdi	775-785
		Al-Hadi	785-786
		Harun Ar-Rashid	786-808
		Al-Amin at Baghdad, Al-	
		Ma'mun at Merv	808-813, 833
		Al Mo'tasim	833-842
		Al-Wathiq	842-847
		Al-Mutawakkil	847-861

PATRIARCHS—Continued

Yohannan VII.	1012-1020
Ishoyabh IV.	1020-1025
Elias I.	1027-1048
Yohannan VIII.	1049-1057
Sabhrisho III.	1063-1072
Abhdisho II.	1074-1090
Makikha I.	1092-1108
(Vacancy	1108-1110)
ⲉ Elias II.	1111-1132
(Vacancy	1132-1134)
Barsoma	1134-1136
(Vacancy	1136-1138)
Abhdisho III.	1138-1147
Ishoyabh V.	1148-1174
Elias III.	1175-1190
Yabh Alaha II.	1190-1222
Sabhrisho IV.	1222-1225
(Vacancy	1225-1227)
Sabhrisho V.	1227-1257

ARAB CALIPHS—Continued

Al-Muntasir, Al-Musta'in, Al-Mo'tazz and Al-Muhtadi	861-870
Al-Mo'tamid and Al-Muwaffaq	870-892
Al-Mo'tadid, Al-Muktafi	892-907
Al-Muqtadir, Al-Qahir, Al-Radi	907-940
Al-Muttaqi and Al-Mustakfi	941-946

BUWEHID DYNASTY 946-1055

Al-Muji'	946-974
Al-Tai'	974-991
Al-Qadir	991-1031
Al-Qa'im	1031-1075

BAGHDAD UNDER THE SELJUQS

Al-Muqtadi	1075-1094
Al-Mustazhir	1094-1118
Al-Mustarshid	1118-1134

Makka II.	1257-1265	Ar-Rashid	1134-1135
Denkha I.	1265-1281	Al-Muqtafi	1135-1169
Yabh Alaha III.	1281-1317	Mustanjid and Mustaqi	1169-1180
Timothy II.	1318-1359		
Denkha II.	1360	'ABBASID CALIPHATE RESTORED	
Shimun II.	1360-1380		
(Vacancy	1380-1389)	An-Našir	1180-1225
Shimun III.	1389-1419	Az-Zahir and Mustanšir	1225-1242
Elias IV.	1419-1477	Al-Musta'sim	1242-1258
Shimun IV.	1477-1490		
Shimun V.	1490-1502		
Elias V.	1502-1504		
Shimun VI.	1504-1530		
Shimun VII.	1530-1538		
Shimun VIII.	1538-1551		
Bar Mama	1552-1559		
Elias VI.	1559-1576		
Elias VII.	1576-1591		
Elias VIII.	1591-1617		
Elias IX.	1617-1659		
Elias X.	1660-1700		
Elias XI.	1700-1722		
		MONGOLS OR ILKHAHS DYNASTY	
		Khulaqu Khan	1258-1265
		Abaqa Khan	1265-1282
		Nikudan (Nicholas)	1282-1284
		Argun Khan	1284-1291
		Kai Katu	1291-1294
		Baydu	1294
		Ghazan Khan	1294-1303
		Khuda Bendeh (Uijai'tu)	1303-1316
		Abu Sa'id	1316-1335
		Petty dynasties	1335-1385

PATRIARCHS—Continued

Elias XII 1722-1738
Shimun IX. 1738-1750
Shimun X. 1750-1765
Shimun XI 1765-1785
Mukhattas Shimun XII. 1785
Nonah Shimun XIII. 1786-1825
Abraham Shimun XIV. 1825-1861
Reuben Shimun XV. 1861-1903
Benjamin Shimun XVI. 1903-

TIMURIDS

Timur Lang 1385-1403
Khalil Sultan 1405-1409
Shahrugh 1409-1446
Uzbeq rulers 1446-1499

SAFAVID DYNASTY

Shah Isma'el I. 1499-1523
Shah Tahmasp I. 1523-1576
Shah Isma'el II. 1576-1578
Shah Muhammad 1578-1587
Shah 'Abbas the Great 1587-1628
Shah Safy 1628-1641
Shah 'Abbas II. 1641-1668
Shah Safy II. 1668-1694
Shah Sultan Husein 1694-1721
Mahmud of Qandebar 1721-1725
Mir 'Abdallah 1725-1727
Shah Tahmasp II. 1727-1732

Little 'Abbas 1732-1736
Nadir Shah 1736-1747
Petty Rulers 1747-1749
Zend Dynasty 1749-1795

QAJAR DYNASTY

Agha Muhammad Shah 1795-1797
Feth 'Ali Shah 1797-1835
Muhammad Shah 1835-1848
Naşir ed-Din Shah 1848-1896
Muzaftar ed-Din 1896-1907
Muhammad 'Ali Mirza 1907-1909
Ahmed Mirza 1909-

SULTANS OF TURKEY

Othman 1299-1326
Orkhan 1326-1359
Murad I. 1359-1389
Bayazid I. 1389-1402
(Interregnum 1402-1413)

SULTANS OF TURKEY—Continued

Muhammad I.	1413-1421
Murad II.	1421-1451
Muhammad II.	1451-1481
Bayazid II.	1481-1512
Selim I.	1512-1520
Suleiman I.	1520-1566
Selim II.	1566-1574
Murad III.	1574-1595
Muhammad III.	1595-1603
Ahmad I.	1603-1617
Mustafa I., deposed	1617-1618
Othman II.	1618-1622
Mustafa I., restored	1622
Murad IV.	1623-1640
Ibrahim	1640-1648
Muhammad IV.	1648-1687
Suleiman II.	1687-1691
Ahmad II.	1691-1695
Mustafa II.	1695-1703

Ahmad III.	1703-1730
Mahmud I.	1730-1754
Othman III.	1754-1757
Mustafa III.	1757-1773
Abd-ul Hamid I.	1773-1789
Selim III.	1789-1807
Mustafa IV.	1807-1808
Mahmud II.	1808-1839
'Abd-ul-Mejid	1839-1861
'Abd-ul-Aziz	1861-1876
Murad V. (3 months)	1876
'Abd-ul-Hamid II.	1876-1908
Muhammad V.	1908-

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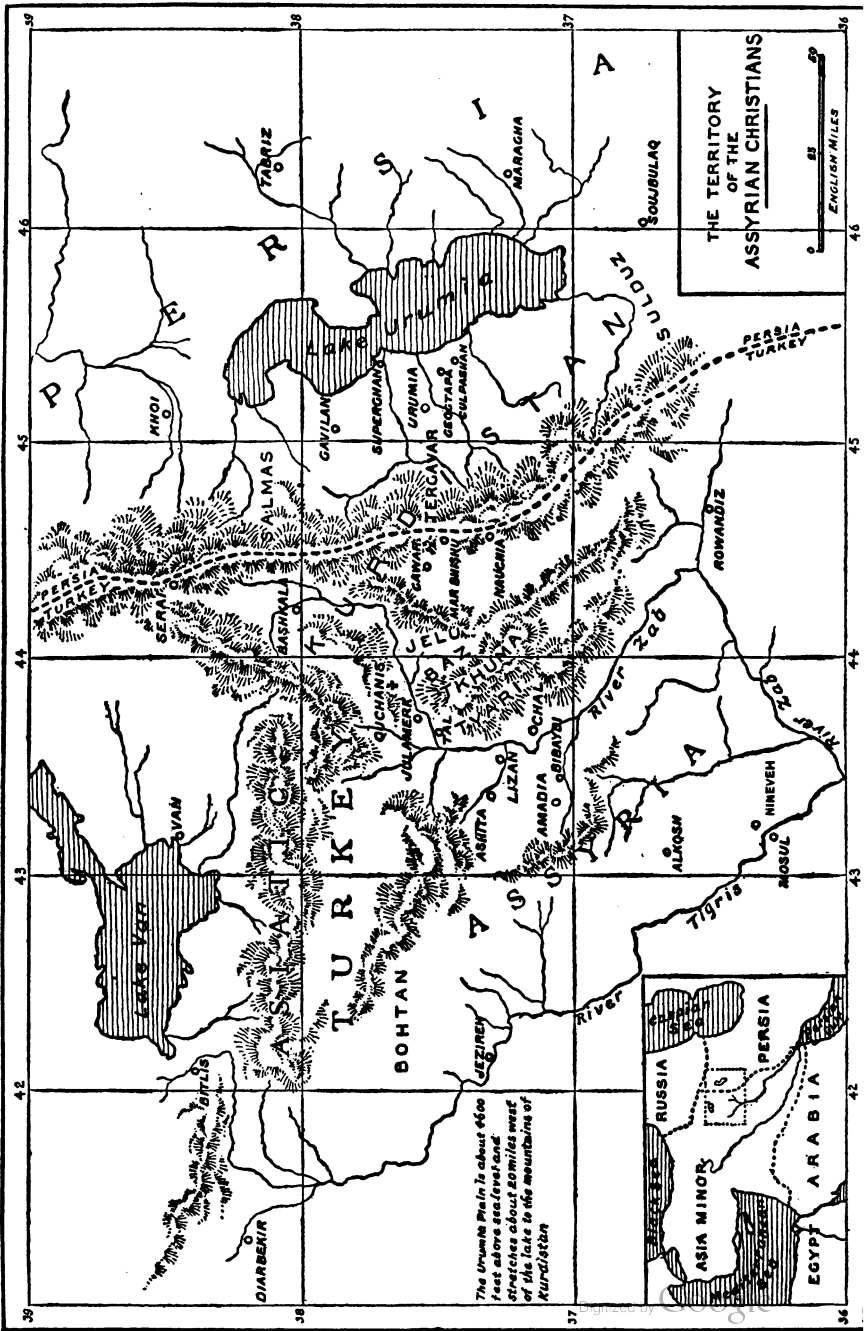
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THE TERRITORY OF THE ASSYRIAN CHRISTIANS



The Urmiye Plain is about 4500 feet above sea level and stretches about 20 miles west of this lake to the mountains of Kurdistan