

**Chapter 1 : Gorgias Press. Dr. Grant and the Mountain Nestorians**

*Dr. Grant and the Mountain Nestorians by Thomas Laurie relates the biography of the eminent American missionary physician, Dr. Asahel Grant. Born in , he studied medicine as a young man and became a Presbyterian missionary in*

The history of the Nestorians and of their connection with Theodore of Mopsuestia is less known than it should be. In like manner, the history of their connection with the destinies of humanity through the Arabians is less understood than their merits require. Indeed, there is not a more interesting and important chapter in the development of human destiny than this. We have exhibited in contrast the principles of Origen and of Theodore of Mopsuestia. We have seen that, although they agreed in the doctrine of the final restoration of all beings to holiness, yet their systems were based on very different fundamental principles. It should now be added that the range of their influence was very different. The followers of Origen were chiefly in the Greek and Latin Churches. Those of Theodore in Central and Eastern Asia. They are commonly known as the Nestorians, and are by the so-called Catholic Church reckoned among the heretical sects. The Church "What? But, in order to understand the relations of the Nestorians to Christianity and the Church, it is of special moment to know what the Church was by which they were condemned, and by which Theodore was anathematized. In our history before Christ, the geographical scene of our investigations was limited. It was mainly confined to Palestine, and to the scenes of the captivities in Egypt and Babylon. After the coming of Christ, it was enlarged until it included large portions of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Beginning in Palestine, Christianity extended its conquests until, in the sixth century, there were three great geographical divisions of the Christian body, two of which were sometimes called churches. Its centre was Rome, and it was called sometimes the Latin Church. This was also called the Greek Church, whose centre was Constantinople. East of this, and without the bounds of the Roman Empire, there was a large body of Christians, not united around one centre. They were, to a great extent, Christians who had been driven out by the other two churches because they did not agree with the Ecumenical Councils, so called, in their decisions as to the person of Christ. Those thus driven out were organized as separate, independent, dissenting churches, not centralized by one government, but called heretical sects by those from whom they dissented. Prominent among these independent bodies were the Jacobites and the Nestorians, called sometimes the Chaldean Christians. It is a matter of indispensable necessity to form a clear idea of the condition and extent of all these churches at the sixth century, in order to obtain a vivid conception of the early history of the Church, for that history lies to us in a kind of world beyond the flood. By the flood, I mean the great Mohammedan invasion and conquests. Of Christendom, as it then was, the greater part came under Mohammedan control, and to this day Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch "in short, all the great centres of the Christian world as it then was, except one, Rome "are under Islamic sway. Moreover, every one of the great ancient centres of theological study is at this hour in the hands of Islam. To understand the history of those six centuries, we must go back beyond that Mohammedan flood, and think of Christendom as it then was, and not of Christendom as it now is, for what is now the most powerful part of Christendom was not then included in it at all, but was under the sway of German barbarism and idolatry. It is of more importance to do this, inasmuch as statements are often made of the Church, collectively, that will fall asunder at once when tested by an accurate and comprehensive view of geography and of history. Although, according to common parlance, The Church, had condemned these independent churches as heretical sects, yet two of them, the Nestorians and the Jacobites, soon became so numerous in Central and Eastern Asia that they outnumbered both the Greek and Latin Churches united. Of this fact Gibbon gives a statement, based on authorities, in his great history chapter xlvii. To give some idea of the extent of the Nestorian Church, it is sufficient to say that, at the time of the capture of Bagdad by Hulaku Chan, the Nestorian Patriarch was recognized by twenty-five metropolitan bishops as the head of the Eastern Church. Of them, he says: The sees of these metropolitans were scattered over the continent, from the shores of the Caspian to the Chinese Seas, and from the most northern boundaries of Scythia to the southern extremity of the Indian Peninsula. Indeed, these Oriental churches did not hesitate to charge on the Church that excommunicated them, and truly, that it was not a free Church, but he slave of the emperor. Nestorian Church

and Theodore. We shall at this time consider only the Nestorian churches, inasmuch as they stand in a peculiar relation to Theodore of Mopsuestia, the father of Nestorian views as to the person of Christ. As we have seen, Theodore and Diodore of Tarsus held and taught universal restoration. We have given an outline of the views of Theodore. To what extent these views were positively adopted by the clergy of the Nestorian churches, it is impossible to say. Certain great facts only are sure. These views were introduced by Theodore into the liturgy which he drew up for the Nestorian Churches. Of this Renaudot says that it was generally used in the Nestorian Church, and is found in all the manuscripts, and that it was translated for the use of the churches of India. Moreover, there was no protest against these views ever issued by any of the Nestorian churches or clergy. On the other hand, Theodore is spoken of at all times and everywhere as the great interpreter of the Word of God. Neander says that the seminaries of the Nestorians were conducted in the spirit of Theodore of Mopsuestia. It cannot be denied that the doctrine of universal restoration is an essential part of his system, and is inwrought [sic] into its whole development. Yet, besides Theodore, and his confession and liturgy, I can find the doctrine expressly stated in no other Nestorian creed and no Nestorian writer. They adhered to the general councils up to the condemnation of Nestorius. Layard gives their creed as it was up to that date, and it differs very little from the Nicene creed. In this creed no reference is made to eternal punishment. After this they seem to have issued no additional creed of their own. Laurie, a missionary to the modern Nestorians, says of them: Influence of the Doctrine. It is a matter of great interest to ascertain what was the influence exerted by the declaration of this doctrine by Theodore. Were those who came most under his influence injured thereby? Were those who held the doctrine of eternal punishment elevated thereby above the followers of Theodore? Universalism in America has generally been connected with a denial of the Trinity and the evangelical views of atonement, depravity, and regeneration. It was not so with ancient Restorationism. Its advocates were in all other respects orthodox. Were they less imbued with the spirit of active, self-denying missionary Christianity? Reply As To Nestorians. Account for it as we may, the fact is beyond denial, that the Nestorian churches were the most distinguished for a missionary spirit of any of those ages. They, too, were most inclined to reform the leading errors of the Church. They were the providential channel through which Europe was aroused from the ignorance and torpor of the dark ages. Of them in the fifth century Gieseler says: Of the extent of their missionary enterprises, Dr. They had celebrated schools for theology and general education. For centuries they maintained missions in Tartary, China and other Eastern regions. Anderson, in a note on p. About the same time Acacius, also from Edessa, established a school at Seleucia. It was revived in , and was in existence as late as A school was established at Dorkena, A. At Bagdad were two schools in , and two others were in its neighborhood. There were also schools in Elam, Persia, Khorassan, and Arabia. Of the anathematized Nestorians Dr. While their leader Nestorius was tormented in an African oasis, many of them emigrated to the Euphrates, and founded the Chaldean Nestorian Church. Under its auspices the college at Edessa, with several connected schools, arose. It was the Nestorians who, in connection with the Jews, founded the medical college of Djondesabour, and first instituted a system of academical honors which has descended to our times. It was the Nestorians who were not only permitted by the khalifs the free exercise of their religion, but were intrusted [sic] with the education of the children of the great Mohammedan families, a liberality in striking contrast to the fanaticism of Europe. The Khalif Alraschid went so far as even to place all his public schools under the superintendence of John Masue, one of that sect. Of the expulsion of the Nestorians from the Church by Cyril, Dr. Cyril was the representative of an illiterate and unscrupulous faction that had come into power through intrigues with the females of the imperial court, and bribery of eunuchs and parasites. The same spirit that had murdered Hypatia tormented Nestorius to death. Of the contending parties, one was respectable and had a tincture of learning; the other ignorant, and not hesitating at the employment of brute force, deportation, assassination. Unfortunately for the world, the unscrupulous party carried the day. Schaff as recognizing this obligation of the Arabs to the Nestorians, and of the world to them through the Arabians. He says of the Nestorian school of Edessa: When it was dissolved by Christian fanaticism under Zeno, the Isaurian, the Nestorians scattered toward Persia, where they soon attained political importance, and established a new and thronged medical institute at Dschondisapur, in Khusistan. They succeeded in spreading their science and their faith to China. What gives the Arabian epoch the universal importance which we must

here insist upon, is in great part connected with the trait of national character just indicated. The Arabians, we repeat, are to be regarded as the proper founders of the physical sciences in the sense which we are now accustomed to attach to the word. In addition to the merits of the Nestorians thus far indicated, we ought to mention another. We will express it in the words of Mosheim: At first all the clergy were allowed to marry. Afterward the patriarch and bishops were forbidden. In view of these facts one thing is plain. The belief of the doctrine of eternal punishment, as it was held, did not save the so-called Church from the dark ages of intellectual and moral degradation. On the other hand, the full and firm belief and earnest advocacy of universal restoration by Theodore of Mopsuestia did not prevent those churches who revered him as the great interpreter of the Word of God from unexampled missionary enterprises, from establishing wide-spread systems of education, from illuminating the Arabs, and through them the dark churches who had sunk into a midnight gloom. As to the real efficient causes in each case, those who can must judge. It is a field for deep thought and careful inquiry.

**Chapter 2 : Gorgias Press. Dr. Grant and the Mountain Nestorians**

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Ottoman affairs[ edit ] The Ottoman Empire had been significantly weakened by the 19th century, which resulted in the loss of central control over Upper Mesopotamia and Kurdistan. It seemed as if the Empire was on the brink of collapse when Muhammad Ali revolted in Egypt and took control of Syria. It was then that Kurdish Emirs found an opportunity to assert their independence. Among them was Ibrahim Pasha, a Kurdish Emir whose dominion included a region extending from Diyarbakir to Aleppo , and who fought alongside Muhammad Ali against the Ottomans and their allies from the Arab Shammar tribe in Jazira. They generally showed great sympathy to the Assyrian Christians. After a later massacre in , the Turks who were in a midst of re-centralization policy of gaining the power back from tribal leaders and peripheral principalities, were further pushed by the western powers into intervening in the Kurdish region. The interaction between the missionaries, the Kurdish chieftains, and the Assyrian Patriarch, at this critical time, had been important to the understanding of the subject discussed in this volume. Already in , from the American mission in Urmia, the American missionary Justin Perkins wrote the Assyrian Patriarch in Kochanes, expressing an interest to act amongst his people. Three years later, Dr. Asahel Grant, the partner of Perkins, vested the patriarch for the first time. During his visit he treated Mir Nurallah Beg and managed to cure him of an illness. At that time Nurallah Beg resided in Bashqala while his nephew and rival, Suleyman, lived in the fortress of Julamerk. Mar Shimon sided with Suleyman, because he was an ally of his late father. Consequently, he won the hostility of Nurallah. According to Yonan "The arrival of the foreign missionaries disturbed this delicate historical balance. While the native Christians viewed their Western counterparts as a source of strength, the Kurds considered them a harbinger of decay for their autonomous feudal power. He also counted on the support of several Christian Maleks, who were against the concentration of power both spiritual and temporal within the patriarch family. However, in , on his fourth journey, Dr. Grant visited Nurallah and negotiated with him the establishment of several mission stations in the tribal region of Tiyari, in Ashita. It should be noted that Grant did not bother to ask they did not officially recognize the approval from the Ottoman authorities, as the Nestorian millet. They planned a campaign against the Turkish governor Mohammed Pasha of Mosul, from whom Ismail Pasha of Amadiya won his town back in the summer of These occurrences happened during the time that the Turkish authorities had been engaged in re-centralization campaign that aimed at re-claim the power from the princes of the principalities. Several Christian chieftains supported the Kurdish alliance, as they were in rivalry with Mar Shimon, who preferred to seek support from the Turkish Pasha. Grant that he would assist the Assyrians against the Kurds in case of an invasion. In the meantime, the American mission station was opened in Ashita in September in a building constructed more as a fortress than a mission station. Meanwhile, the Kurds lost out to Mohammed Pasha and were forced to retreat. As a result, their hostility towards Mar Shimon grew, while Mohammed Pasha did not feel oblige to protect him. In the fall of , the English missionary G. During his visit, a letter from Nurallah Beg arrived, asking a meeting with the patriarch. Mar Shimon refused, apparently on the advice of Badger. He was determined to depend only on the Ottoman government and its allies. Nurallah Beg decided to set out on a punitive expedition against the Nestorian tribes, and he came to an agreement with Badr Khan of Bohtan, having obtained the approval of the Turkish governor of Mosul beforehand. Though he was supposedly obliged to Mar Shimon, at least morally, for the defeat of the Kurds, Mohammed Pasha gave no second thought to keeping his promise to him. Grant played a bizarre part in this conflict. He was in the company of none other than Nurallah Beg during the preparations of the attacks on the Nestorians. He looked at himself as a "neutral mediator" who should not mingle in local affairs. Yonan thinks that he "was not even aware that he himself had brought on the conflict. A year later, Dr. Grant died of cholera in Mosul and his mission fort in Ashita was destroyed. Mar Shimun Abraham, the contemporary Patriarch from to , would spend a decade in exile in Persia. He returned embittered towards the foreigners and hostile to foreign missions. He cautioned his bishops in Jilu, Gavar, Berwar and Shamsdinan

against working with them, but his influence on the diocese in Persia was too weak to prevent this. The details of the clashes and massacres of the Assyrians had been depicted by contemporary observers. The following passages are from a report of the English missionary G. On the 4th of June I received another letter in which the Patriarch thus describes the execution of this long-projected scheme: Moreover, we learn that they are preparing for a second onslaught, when they intend to burn, kill, destroy, and if possible, exterminate the Christian race from the mountains. From this you may see that what befell [sic] Job has fallen to our lot: He saw the ruins of the school and dwelling house, built by the American missionaries during their short sojourn in the mountains. These buildings had been the cause of much jealousy and suspicion to the Kurds. They stand upon the summit of an isolated hill, commanding the whole valley. A position less ostentatious and proportions more modest might certainly have been chosen; and it is surprising that persons, so well acquainted with the characters of the tribes among whom they had come to reside, should have been thus indiscreet. Reportedly, one-fifth of this Nestorian population was killed, about 10, out of a total population of 50. Two American missionaries, Edward Breath and Austin Wright, estimated the casualties at 7, while the Anglican missionary George Percy Badger, who compiled a list of losses in each Assyrian village, indicated the number at 4. Originally, the Kurdish emirates were territorial based tribal entities. These emirates had been based either on a single tribe, whose Mir was the hereditary chieftain of the tribe, or it had been based on an agglomeration of tribes, as was the case in Hakkari, where the Mir was the chieftain of a tribe that was tied with others, through intermarriage and tribal agreements. As noted above, during the first half of the 19th century, the Turks adopted a policy aimed at terminating all semi independent principalities in the peripheries. Even so, for a short period, two Kurdish principalities - Bohtan and Soran - grew stronger and benefited from the decline of the other principalities. His reign could be the dream of some Kurdish nationalists who wish to unite all parts of Kurdistan into one free and independent country. Bader Khan Beg was not just another tribal ruler. He had an ammunition factory; he struck his own coins; and more symbolically, the khutba. Ar. Thomas Laurie who wrote a biography of Dr. But he in fact stood at the head of an alliance of tribes, who acted against the Nestorians at this critical time. This vote reflected a disagreement within the Nestorian leadership. These conflicts have weakened the Assyrian unity prior to the clash with the Kurds. Wigram, a keen observer of the Assyrians, expressed his view about Assyrian disunity, in light of the consequences. Had the Christians held together, they might have been able to resist the attack. Kurdish chiefs were concerned with the leaning of the patriarch towards independence. This demand is indicative of the political participation and split within the Assyrian tribal leadership. It could insinuate as well on the real-politic, more practical approach of the Maliks in comparison to their Patriarch. The missionary physician Dr. Grant visited the Kurdish camp just before the attack on the Nestorians. First, the Turks decided to terminate the rule of Bader Khan. Second, the American Board of Commissioners as well as the Anglicans decided to suspend the mission to the mountain Nestorians, therefore actually admitting their failure to prevent blame in the tragic events, if not their partial blame in the occurrences. As in any war in this region at the time, there was booty looting and captive taking, especially young women that were taken to be slaves and perhaps later wives of the chieftains. The following is from a report of Layard: But it is perhaps not generally known, that the release of the greater part of the captives was obtained through the humane interference and generosity of Sir Stratford Canning, who prevailed upon the Porte to send a commissioner into Kurdistan, for the purpose of inducing Bedr Khan Bey and other Kurdish chiefs, to give up the slaves they had taken, and advanced, himself, a considerable sum towards their liberation. Rassam also obtained the release of many slaves, and maintained and clothed at his own expense, and for several months, not only the Nestorian Patriarch, who had taken refuge in Mosul, but many hundred Chaldeans who had escaped from the mountains. The Assyrians were also split in their allegiances, according to their distribution. This led to a permanent rift in relations between the Kurds and Christians in general. However, not all Assyrians allied themselves with the Patriarch, some took advantage of his weakness to join Nurallah. The three formed an alliance and called Assyrians to join them. The Patriarch however refused to do so after receiving promises from Mosul to protect them in case of the Kurds decided to retaliate again. War between the Kurds and Ottomans broke out in summer. Rumours spread that Grant built a castle to be used against the Kurds, and Nurallah protested to the vali of Erzurum. In addition, Ibrahim Pasha of Mosul was also

alarmed by the rumours and the increased missionary activities in the region. He described in a letter to the Porte how Grant and the Christians built a huge building containing rooms at least. It seemed that the Patriarch made his decision after being convinced by Badger to distrust the Kurds and to request assistance from the English or the Porte if the Kurds were to attack. Hormuzd Rassam tried using his influence with the Vali of Baghdad Najib Pasha to pressure Badr Khan for the release of prisoners which included close relatives of the Patriarch of the Church of the East who had in the meantime taken refuge in Mosul. Then the invaders had turned "against the district of Tiyyari, where they had succeeded in occupying the villages and indulged in the cruelest acts against its people". Even "those who had not opposed the Kurdish invasion had been treated in the same way as the fighters. Many women and young children "were taken captive to be sold as slaves. The Kurdish tribes were "marching in large numbers directly to the Assyrian provinces. The surviving men and women were forced to carry unbearable loads of booty for very long distances, while being lashed all along the way until they fell from torture and exhaustion". The tribes "were all but encircled and left with no safe route to escape" the slaughter. Those that tried to flee had to take a route that passed through the hostile Kurds of Berwar. One group after another was caught and slaughtered "while trying to escape". This massacre received international attention through western press; it also woke European politicians and public opinion to the plight of Ottoman Christians. This led the European countries to pressure the Porte to intervene and stop the massacres. The Kurdish massacres were a precursor to the later Ottoman incursions which ended both the semi-independent status which the Assyrian tribes enjoyed in the mountainous areas, and that which the Kurds had as well.

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*Tragically, Grant could not or did not effectively dispel their fears. The result was the massacres of the Assyrians by the Kurdish chief Badr Khan Beg. Dr. Grant did not survive long after the start of the massacres, dying in at the early age of*

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*Asahel Grant (August 17, - April 24, ) was one of the first American missionaries to Iran.. Asahel Grant was born at Marshall, New York, studied medicine at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and practiced in Utica, New York.*