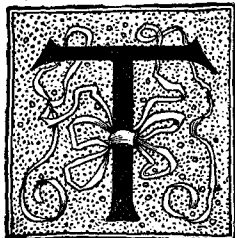


## Creeds of the Ottoman Empire

By the Rev. S. T. Willis



THE Turkish Government officially recognizes the following forms of religion: The Mohammedans, the Greek Church, the Armenians, the Maronites, the Druses, the Jews, the Nestorians, and the Protestants, including the missionaries. And still others might be mentioned, for this classification does not adequately represent the religious situation of Turkey in detail; yet it will serve to indicate the complexion of things religious in the Land of the Unspeakable Turk. These creeds, excepting Mohammedanism, are unwillingly tolerated in the Ottoman dominion, and for this reason much of the present strife and persecution are brought about. And because the recent massacres of Armenia and elsewhere in the Sultan's Empire have a *religious* rather than a political origin, they serve to call renewed attention to this strange mixture of rival creeds. This, however, is not a new thing, for all the wars against the Turk for the last half of a century have been religious wars; and the pulse-beat of Oriental times certainly indicates that when the Ottoman Empire goes down in final ruin (as surely it must), it will be in struggles provoked by the animosities and conflicts of rival creeds. Just as some of the sects now in the Eastern Church became the cause of such internal weakness that the Byzantine Empire was made an easy prey to the aggressive hosts of Islam, many centuries ago, and just as Mohammedanism was established by the sword and scimitar, so it must perish by the sword. Certainly it is an interesting fact that Armenia, the seat of the present trouble, is the very soil on which Othman, the son of Orthugrul, first of the Ottoman dynasty, founded the empire that has borne his name through succeeding centuries; and from it, as a center, this gigantic power has spread, until now its scepter is swayed over almost fifty millions of people.

The Orthodox Catholic Greek Church, itself by no means a unit of faith and discipline, plays an important part on the stage of Eastern religions. Each country where this Church exists has its own national form of organization, as the Russian, Bulgarian, Servian, Roumanian, Montenegrin, Austro-Hungarian, Greek, and United Greek, each of which differs from all the others in some particulars of more or less importance. But these different national phases frequently overlap political and national lines, so that the national religious organization is not necessarily confined to any one country. In 385 the elements which afterward composed the Orthodox Catholic Greek Church began to be estranged from the Roman See, when the latter began the enforcement of certain innovations, such as clerical celibacy and the use of unleavened bread in the eucharist; but the actual rupture did not occur until 484, when the Western wing insisted on putting the word *Filioque* into the creed, which expressed their belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*, and not from the Father alone. From this opinion the Greeks dissented, and were excommunicated by the Pope; and though reunion has been attempted a number of times, it has always failed. The Greek Church teaches seven sacraments, differing in administration from the Church of Rome in many points. Baptism is administered always by triple immersion, which is followed immediately by confirmation. In the eucharist leavened bread is used, and both the elements are given to all communicants alike and not to the priests alone. Penance is a sacrament, but it does not require auricular confession. Unction is administered, but not *in extremis*. Marriage is dissoluble on certain conditions. The holy orders do not require celibacy, but, on the contrary, the patriarch and clergy must be married; marriage after ordination is forbidden, however. Monasticism, organized in the Eastern Church according to the rules of St. Basil, is practiced by both men and women.

Instrumental music and graven images are forbidden in the churches; but the crucifix is used freely, and the Scriptures in the spoken language of the people are placed in their hands, and the devout study of them is encouraged by the priests.

The Nestorians, generally regarded as the Protestants of Eastern Christianity, are among the oldest sects of the Ottoman Empire. Nestorius, a Syrian of the early part of the fifth century, is generally supposed to have been their founder; but as a sect they claim an origin earlier than the age of Nestorius, dating their conversion as far back as the preaching of the Apostle Thomas. For this reason they are sometimes called St. Thomas Christians. In Syria they are known as Chaldean Christians, in Egypt as Copts, and in Abyssinia they form the Ethiopian Church, where, in a strange intermingling of religious elements, they blend Jewish and Christian rites into a curiously interesting union. The Nestorians proper reside, however, in Armenia and Kurdistan, claiming Jewish dissent, and trying even to establish their identity as the lost tribes of Israel. Through the prosecution of Cyril of Alexandria, the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 accused, condemned, and deposed Nestorius from the patriarchate of Constantinople because of his Christological views. According to the late Dr. Shedd, "The Nestorian Christ is two persons, one human, one divine; by which is meant that there are two separate selves in Christ, with only a sympathetic union between them." As a result, the acts of each nature derive no character from the quality of the other. Therefore there can be no divine humiliation or human exaltation in Christ. There is God and there is man; but there can be no God-man in Christ Jesus. For these views Nestorius was expelled from the Empire and his followers were ostracized and forbidden safety in the dominion of Rome. Like the Jewish Christian Church, when scattered abroad by persecution they went everywhere preaching the Word, until they planted missions more or less all over the East. The Jacobites constitute an important branch of the Nestorians, whose patriarch is always named Ignatius, and resides at Diarbekir, where horrible massacres have occurred recently. Two centuries later Nestorianism was rent in twain by schism. One faction formally united with the Church of Rome under the name of Chaldean Christians, subject to a patriarch of their own, who first resided at Bagdad, then at Mosul, and finally at Ormuz in the mountains of Persia, where they are now known as *Simeonites*. The other wing retained their ancient creed and independent organization; their successors form the Nestorian Church of to-day, which numbers at the present time about one hundred and fifty thousand communicants, who, as a class, are a poor, ignorant, and degenerate race. They are very much oppressed and persecuted by the Kurds, among whom they live; though once an educated and cultured people, they have lost their refined and aggressive spirit altogether. Excepting the priests, none of the people can read. They accept seven sacraments. Their services are exceedingly simple; no symbol is used except the Greek cross; they have no relics, and reject the doctrine of transubstantiation. Their bishops are celibate, but their patriarchs and priests marry at will. Marriage is dissoluble by the sentence of the patriarch. Their fasts are unusually long and severe, covering nearly half of the year. They are a people of strong religious convictions. Many Nestorians would rather die than violate the law of their fasts; yet the standards of daily life are extremely low among them; lying, profanity, and intemperance are common vices.

Among the creed elements of the East no one is attracting more attention in all Christian lands at the present time than the ancient Church of Armenia. Native legends assign a very fanciful origin to the religious community of Armenia, running back to our Saviour's time, saying: The King of Armenia sent a letter to Jesus, who in response

sent a letter to the king, and also one of his disciples to preach the Gospel of the kingdom in his realm. Others assert that Gregory the Illuminator preached throughout Armenia, converted the king, and was consecrated first Bishop of Armenia by the Primate of Cæsarea, for which reason the Primate of Armenia is called *Catholicos*. At Artaxata three churches, built in triangular form on the spot where two early saints died as martyrs for Christ, and where the Illuminator saw heaven opened and the "Only Born coming down" (calling it Eschmaidzin), are the most revered shrines in Armenia to this day. But, as a matter of historic fact, the Armenians gradually separated from the Greek Church in the fifth and sixth centuries; and, becoming independent, have remained so to the present time. In 1439 a portion of the scattered Armenians united with the Roman Catholics, and became the United Armenian Church, of which there are about eighty thousand communicants; but they retain their peculiar forms of worship. Thus the Church became divided into factions, fanatically opposed to each other. Besides these there are about twenty thousand Armenian Protestants who differ essentially from both factions. But the non-Roman division which constitutes the Armenian Church proper adheres to the Nestorian notion of the Trinity, and maintains the seven sacraments, but with some peculiarities of administration. They baptize by triple immersion and triple sprinkling—not either, but both. The eucharist is celebrated by dipping leavened bread into pure wine. Extreme unction is administered to ecclesiastics only. The worship of saints is practiced; but the notion of purgatory is rejected altogether. Mass is celebrated in the ancient Armenian tongue, but the sermon is delivered in the spoken language of the people; and in prayer the Armenian always turns his face towards the sun. In killing an animal for food they invariably turn its head to the east and make upon it the sign of the Greek cross. They have many fast-days, but not so many feasts as the Greeks. Many asylums for the helpless attest their abounding spirit of charity; while chief among their glories as a people is, and ever has been, their universal toleration of other religions. They have a national history, founded upon and supported by their religious belief, of which they are justly proud. The Armenian Bible, translated from the Septuagint and Peshito versions, is not without great literary merit. By the terms of the Unkiar Skelessi treaty of 1828 a large part of Upper Armenia, including the *Catholicos* of Eschmaidzin, was ceded to Russia, and therefore the head of the Church is subject to the Czar. Since 1848, however, the Church has been somewhat relieved of the dangers of this peculiar situation by putting her temporal affairs under an elective council of twelve lay primates, the Patriarch having only the right of presidency. For hundreds of years this people have suffered untold persecutions from the Roman Emperors, the Persians, the Huns, the Mongolians, and the Mohammedans; but the five millions of Armenians in different parts of the Ottoman dominions who revere Eschmaidzin are steadfast in their faith, and will not abandon the Cross for the Crescent.

The Maronites are a peculiar Christian sect residing in the Lebanon Mountains of northern Syria, and are therefore under the Sultan's scepter. Although their origin is enveloped in much obscurity, history records that the sixth Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in 680, condemned the doctrine of the singleness of Christ's will, whereupon the Monothelites seceded from the Council. These were chiefly from the Lebanon district, where this doctrine was accepted by the Christians generally. From these as a seed the Maronite Church grew up, and maintained its independence against Mohammedanism until the Crusaders established the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, to which they vowed fealty, renounced their Monothelite views, and acknowledged the supremacy of the Roman See. This obedience, however, was only nominal until the year 1445, when they formally became a part of the Church of Rome; and again in 1736 fully subscribed to the Council of Trent. Yet, by special permission of the Pope, they retain their peculiar rites and customs. In the liturgy they use the ancient Syriac instead of the Latin; their

priests, if married before ordination, are permitted to keep their wives. Convents and nunneries, organized and maintained after the order of St. Anthony, are numerous among them, having more than forty thousand members. They also have many saints and festivals not recognized in the Roman calendar. The Maronites number about two hundred and fifty thousand, and are a sturdy, warlike people, between whom and the Druses, living in the same region, an implacable enmity has long existed. In the hideous butcheries that culminated in 1860 they certainly showed themselves a fierce and cruel people. The Patriarch is elected by the bishops in secret conclave; he resides usually at Kesruan in winter, and at the Convent of Canobin, in the valley of Tripoli, in summer, and has an income of about \$25,000 a year. The eight bishoprics of the Maronite Church are Aleppo, Tripoli, Jebail, Baalbek, Damascus, Cyprus, Beirût, Tyre, and Sidon; their incumbents also are possessed of stated revenues, and live in comparative affluence.

The Druses, a religious sect inhabiting the slopes of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains, numbering perhaps seventy-five thousand souls, are considered the most peculiar cult in the Turkish Empire. Their race is a mixture in which the blood of Kurds, Arabians, and Persians blend. But their religion is an even stranger intermingling of elements than their race, for it is curiously interwoven with Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Mohammedanism. Hakem, a Fatimite Calif of Egypt, in 1029 proclaimed himself the representative of God and strove to found a new social order; but both he and his confessor, one Davazi, were repudiated. In the end, however, the order of Druses took their name from Davazi, and accepted his disciple, Hamzé of Persia, as their Prophet. Since the seventeenth century their history has been one continuous record of butcheries and crime, until the interference of the European powers in 1860, when a Christian Governor was placed over them. Yet they are independent of Turkish rule, pay no taxes to the Government, and are not liable to conscription. They have a number of cardinal doctrines, among which are (1) Monotheism, (2) Demiurges, (3) Incarnations, (4) Individual and unchanging number of souls, (5) Transmigration, (6) Fatalism, and (7) The Coming One; and he will be Hakem, who, when he comes again, will trample under foot all who reject him, and subdue all who oppose his authority. The Seven Practical Points of the Druses, as opposed to Islam, may be summed up as:

1. Veracity (only to one another).
2. Mutual protection and resistance.
3. Renunciation of all other religions.
4. Profession of the unity of Hakem as God.
5. Contentment with the works of God.
6. Submission to the will of God.
7. Separation from those in error and from demons.

They are a brave, industrious, handsome, self-possessed, proud, and mysterious people, and are unreliable time-servers in policy and practice. Prayer (in the sense of supplication), fasting, and polygamy are unknown among them. Illegitimacy and immorality are exceedingly rare with the Druse people. But, as is to be expected, their influence is almost nothing; and because their esoteric teachings are so shut up among themselves, they are not in any sense a missionary people, and for this reason Christian missionaries have made almost no impression upon them.

The Jews have large colonies in Constantinople, Adrianople, Salonica, Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, and other places, and get along much more smoothly with the Mohammedans than do the Christians, and for this reason they play no part in the politico-religious agitation that now convulses the Turkish Empire.

## Her Secret of Popularity

By Mary Allaire

I am sure you would not call her pretty. There was nothing remarkable about her, except that she impressed you at once with the idea of health. At first you would perhaps say of her, "She is a healthy girl," speaking only