CONGREGATIONALIST AND ANGLICAN MISSIONARIES IN OTTOMAN HAKKARI AND TUR ABDIN

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By

Michael B. Sims, B.A.

Georgetown University
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MICHAEL B. SIMS, B.A.

MENTOR: YVONNE Y. HADDAD, PH.D.

ABSTRACT

Despite centuries of stable Christian-Muslim relations in Southeast Anatolia, the 1840s marked a wave of interreligious violence, culminating in the massacre of ten thousand Assyrian Christians in the region of Hakkari. These events, part of the Bedr Khan Rebellion which engulfed the greater region, were brought about by a number of factors. In the decade prior to these events, the Ottoman government had initiated a series of centralization reforms, bringing previously autonomous regions under direct government control. Additionally, beginning in the 1820s an influx of Protestant missionaries began working amongst Christians in the lands of the Ottoman Empire. This work explores the causes of this violence, focusing on the roles of Congregationalist, Anglican and Episcopal missionaries. First working in the Holy Land, this wave was led by American Congregationalist missionaries affiliated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Adopting a millenarian framework through which they engaged local Christian populations, these Congregationalist missionaries began to see the Syriac Orthodox and Assyrian Christians of Southeast Anatolia as key to converting the region’s non-Muslims and bringing about the Second Coming. As a result of their misguided efforts, these
missionaries would create anxiety amongst local Christian communities, and play a significant role in instigating Muslim-Christian conflict. In contrast, contemporary Anglican and Episcopal missions to the region operated through a framework more sensitive to local political realities. This work examines the history of these missions, the ideologies which drove them and their culpability for the violence of the 1840s. In doing so, this author seeks to establish Congregationalist missions’ aggressive posture and millenarian worldview, along with Ottoman reform policy, as a primary cause of the breakdown of Muslim-Christian relations in this region. Through engaging directly with missionaries’ own accounts, this work presents a framework for how Anglicans and Congregationalists engaged the Assyrian and Syriac Orthodox Christians of Hakkari and Tur Abdin. It provides a background of the region, then explores in depth the development of the Congregationalist, Anglican and Episcopal missions, focusing on the ideological frameworks within which they operated. It then explores the relationship between the various missions, and their actions during and after the massacres of the 1840s.
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NOMENCLATURE

This work uses the Anglicized forms of terms employed by its various subject communities to describe themselves. The term “Assyrian” is used to refer to the Assyrian Church of the East and its members. This Eastern or Oriental Orthodox Christian community is often referred to as the “Nestorian Church” and its members “Nestorians,” a term seen as pejorative by Assyrians. The term implies that the members of this Christian community were either founded by or are followers of Nestorius, a 5th century Patriarch of Constantinople whose controversial views resulted in his being removed from his position. As will be explored in greater detail, Nestorius can be seen as one of many figures involved in the early history of the Assyrian Church of the East. Assyrians, however, do not consider their ideology to be of a purely “Nestorian” origin.

The term “Syriac” is used to refer to the Syriac Orthodox Church and its members. Similar to use of “Nestorian” to describe the Assyrians, the Syriac Orthodox Church and its members have typically been referred to as “Jacobites.” Often used to refer to all Miaphysite churches, meaning those who hold that Christ’s human and divine nature became united in a single hypostasis, Jacobite refers to a 5th century purveyor of this belief, Jacob Baradaeus. Another term used within this work is “Chaldean,” referring to the “Chaldean Catholic Church.” This group represents an Eastern Christian community formed initially by Assyrians brought into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Additionally, the term *miaphysite* is used in favor of
the archaic term “monophysite” when referring to the Christology of the Syriac
Orthodox Church. Like “Jacobite,” the term carries pejorative connotations, implying a
belief of Jesus being composed of only one nature, rather than the unity of divine and
human nature implied by the term *miaphysite*. 
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INTRODUCTION
In the 1820s and 30s, the American Board for the Commission of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established missions within the Ottoman Empire, seeking to reinvigorate the “nominal Christians” of the empire with a new religious zeal.¹ Rather than focusing on converting Muslims, they sought to bring about a “New Jerusalem” by first bringing these Christians in line with their vision of Christianity, characterized by reverence for scripture, austere lifestyle and an emphasis on spirituality. As stated by Congregationalist missionary Asahel Grant (1810-1844), the conversion of these ancient Christians would itself spark a “spiritual resurrection” of the world.² Within a decade, the ABCFM had organized missions to various Christian communities throughout the Empire, including Greeks, Armenians, Arabs and the various Syriac-speaking groups living in North Mesopotamia and the Levant. Although a number of groups were targeted by ABCFM missions, the mission to the Assyrian Church of the East, or Nestorian Church, held the greatest impact for the Christian communities of southeast Anatolia. This mission, established in 1839, quickly began viewing itself as being in competition with both Catholic and Anglican missions, and as a result promoted a platform antagonistic towards rivals and seeking rapid results, much to the detriment of the local political situation.

² Asahel Grant, Nestorians or the Lost Tribes (1841, reprint, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Pres, 2002), 116.
Simultaneous to this wave of missionary activity were a series of reforms initiated by the Ottoman government, collectively referred to as *Tanzimat* (reorganization), which sought to modernize and centralize the Ottoman state. Although the Ottoman reform policies of the early 19th century were initially beneficial to some minority populations of Southeast Anatolia, the results of their application proved disastrous to the region. Though a careful balance between the region’s various faith communities had developed over thirteen centuries, the political implications of the state’s reform efforts would drive a wedge between them. Christian-Muslim relations in the region were permanently changed, and the political autonomy which both Kurdish Sunni and Assyrian Christian tribes had enjoyed was ended.

These various factors resulted in a series of massacres conducted against the Assyrians of Hakkari beginning in 1843. The Christian and Kurdish Muslim communities of Hakkari, a mountainous, autonomous region along the Ottoman-Persian border, had for centuries maintained a delicate balance of power. However, within four years of the outbreak of violence, roughly ten thousand Assyrians had been killed, with the survivors fleeing east into Persia or south to Mosul, including the Assyrian Patriarch. Additionally, these events gave rise to the Bedr Khan Rebellion, a Kurdish, anti-Ottoman rebellion which engulfed Southeast Anatolia and devastated the Christian communities of neighboring Tur Abdin.

These events were the result of a number of factors, ranging from Ottoman reform policy, concern of European encroachment and agitation of local rivalries by Christian missionaries. However, this work assigns primary culpability in instigating
this series of events to one such missionary, Dr. Asahel Grant, a Congregationalist working on behalf of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Although other factors were at play in precipitating this violence, evidence indicates that Grant’s efforts, as a result of his millenarian ideology and insensitivity to local political considerations, inadvertently increased Kurdish-Christian tensions, undermined the Assyrian Patriarch, and eliminated the possibility of preserving peace between these factions.

Contemporary to Grant’s missionary activity were Anglican and Catholic missions. However, these missions, most significantly the Anglican mission, engaged in a far more politically sensitive manner, a result of the imperial considerations of the powers which they represented. The result was a stark contrast in the approaches taken by Grant and his Anglican counterparts, with Grant having demonstrated a lack of consideration for the Assyrians’ temporal circumstances to better his religious aims, even undermining the Assyrian Patriarch when necessary. The Anglicans, however, sought to preserve the unity of the Assyrian community through top-down engagement, recognizing the need to preserve local leadership structures. Scholarship on this topic often obscures the ideological differences between the Congregationalist mission and its contemporaries in the region. This work seeks to provide greater depth to this topic by exploring the missionaries’ own writings in order to frame the ideological and political foundations of these rival missions and how these factors manifested in their activities. Additionally, it seeks to provide greater depth towards understanding the relationship
between missionary factions, how they viewed one another, and how the Assyrians and Syriac Christians of the region responded to them.

**Literature Review**

Works by scholars such as John Joseph, Hirmis Aboona, J.F. Coakley and Salahi Sonyel note Grant’s responsibility regarding these events, although the degree of both his and his Anglican colleagues’ culpability is varyingly described. Joseph, who has written extensively on the Assyrians and Christian-Muslim relations in the region, portrays Grant as employing a “principle of noninterference in local politics,” reflected by his unwillingness to act as a negotiator for Assyrian-Kurdish peace talks and his cordial posture towards Kurdish chieftains.³ This work argues that his neutral stance was in fact a result of his lack of consideration for local politics, and should be seen as contributing towards these events. In Joseph’s work Anglicans are portrayed as holding greater culpability, with the Anglican mission led by George Percy Badger as not possibly being “more injudiciously conceived and carried out.”⁴ Although this and other works by Joseph do not go into great detail regarding the framework of Badger’s approach, they assign blame to his explicitly political aims, which this work seeks to assert was in fact a means of preventing sectarian violence through preserving the integrity of the Christian community.

J.F. Coakley’s work takes a similar stance towards the Anglicans, and explores in greater depth the role of Anglican missionary George Percy Badger. Coakley

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⁴ Ibid., 84.
presents insight into the relations between various missionary factions, providing information about their contentious relationship and ways these groups sought to assign blame within various missionary newspapers. However, he claims that Badger was the instigator of the conflict, stating “perhaps the missionaries, and even specifically Badger, precipitated this disaster by interfering in the delicate balance of civil power in Eastern Turkey.”

Although Badger was partially responsible, my work asserts that his mere presence in the region, rather than his particular activities, was an impetus for Grant’s overzealous approach.

Hirmis Aboona, in his work *Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans* provides a rich view of Kurdish-Assyrian relations in Hakkari and Tur Abdin. Aboona notes that the Assyrians’ self-preservation was dependent upon internal unity and that the greater community’s peaceful relations resulted from “mutual understanding of each party’s rights” amongst Muslims and Christians. Both these elements, he notes, were challenged after the arrival of missionaries in 1834 in Urmiah, the Assyrian region of Persia bordering Hakkari. Aboona notes Grant’s movement between factions and mentions his views regarding Assyrian independence as a cause of concern for local Kurds, shedding light on the link between religious affiliation and foreign interference.

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7 Ibid., 207.
Turkish scholar Salahi Sonyel, quoting William St. Clair, presents both Anglican and Congregationalist missionaries alike as “storm troopers of cultural imperialism.”

Violence between groups is portrayed as the result of Western interference. Salahi also presents Assyrians as aggressors, rather than simply victims, commenting that reports after the massacre, “typical of Western scholars… does not mention how many Kurds the Assyrians had killed.” Fear of Western interference played a role in these events, but, as this work explores in depth, the ABCFM did not espouse a political agenda, although they were, as Protestants, associated with the British.

This project will shed further light on these issues by engaging directly with missionaries’ own writings as well as other missionary primary source material such as board reports and travel writings. Through doing so, it establishes Grant’s culpability as a result of his application of the millenarian framework through which he operated engaged the Assyrians. This ideology formed as a result of the ABCFM’s strong focus on restoration of the Jews as precursor to the conversion of Muslims and the Second Coming, as well as Grant’s own faulty understanding of the Assyrians, seeing them as the Lost Tribe of Israel rather than as an ancient and unique community. This project will explore the development of Anglican and Episcopal missionary activity to demonstrate their sensitivities towards these topics such as their focus on engaging Christian communities as unified bodies, an approach facilitated by the ecclesiastical hierarchies shared by the Assyrian, Syriac Orthodox and Anglican churches.

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9 Ibid., 30.
Outline

Focusing on these missionaries’ activities amongst the Assyrian Church of the East in Hakkari and the Syriac Orthodox Church community of Tur Abdin, the narrative which emerges from this study demonstrates the impact of missionary activity and Ottoman reform policy, which together resulted in a breakdown of long-standing systems of Christian-Muslim interaction. Chapter one of this work focuses on the background of the Christian communities in Hakkari and Tur Abdin, providing a brief narrative from the origin of these groups from Late Antiquity to the late 1830s. This narrative demonstrates the complexity of interfaith relations in these regions, exploring the manners in which these religiously diverse regions maintained peace, providing a framework for intercommunal interaction at the time of missionaries’ arrival. Chapter two explores the development of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, their ideology and their early activity within the Ottoman Empire. It explores the creation of the “Nestorian Mission” in Persian Urmiah as well as the development of the mission to the Independent Nestorians led by Asahel Grant.

Chapter three examines the contemporary development of Anglican and Episcopal missions in the Ottoman Empire, focusing on their ideological foundations and the political framework, influenced by British foreign policy, within which they operated. Chapter four explores in depth the work of Horatio Southgate, the most significant Episcopal missionary in the region during this period, whose respectful approach serves as a counter to that of Asahel Grant. This chapter also explores the development of rivalry between the various missions, and the effect of this rivalry on
their behavior. Chapter five explores the outbreak of violence in the region, discussing Ottoman policy as well as the actions of missionaries during the period. Chapter six discusses the wake of the massacres, attempts by missionaries to blame one another, and the significant change in Assyrians’ attitude towards missionaries, reflected primarily by outward hostility towards Congregationalists.
CHAPTER ONE

HAKKARI AND TUR ABDIN IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Hakkari

Fig. 1 Map of Kurdistan with Hakkari Indicated

Hakkari refers historically to a mountainous region lying between the Armenian region of Lake Van to the north and the Nineveh Plain. In this study, it refers to the region historically inhabited by the Independent Assyrian Tribes. Hakkari itself is divided into a number of tribal districts, including the tribal districts of Tekhoma, Baz,

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Jelu and Diz. Furthermore, the region may also be referred to as “Tiyari and Hakkari,” with Tiyari referring to the district west of the bifurcating Greater Upper Zab River, and Hakkari referring to the region between the Zab and the Persian border. Early missionary writings from the region characterized it as dangerous and inaccessible, largely a result of the 1829 murder of scholar Friedrich Eduard Schulz, the region’s first Western visitor. The region was home to the Assyrian Patriarch, the spiritual and temporal head of the Assyrian Christian community.

Tur Abdin

![Map of Tur Abdin](http://www.aina.org/maps/turabdin/turabdin.htm)

Fig. 2 Tur Abdin Area

Tur Abdin has been geographically defined by Syriac Orthodox Church Patriarch Ignatius Barsoum as “a plateau that stretches north from the Tigris River until the plain of Nisibis [Nusaybin] south and west from Mardin” to the Gazarta (Syriac

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 2-3.

13 *Reports from the American Board of Foreign Missions, 1840-1843* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1843), 107-108.
Gzirto/Turkish Cizre).\textsuperscript{14} Mardin has traditionally been seen as the center of the region, a result of longstanding history of a Christian community in the city as well as its close historical proximity to the monastery which housed the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate.\textsuperscript{15} For this study, it is best considered in terms of its use by the Syriac Orthodox community as an autonym representing the spiritual stronghold of their community. The name Tur Abdin is of Aramaic origin, the language of use by the region’s early Christian community, which has today evolved into the Turoyo dialect of Neo-Aramaic still in use in the area. Literally meaning “Mountain (Tur) of the Servants (Abdin),” the term, according to scholar Mark DelCogliano, originally referred to the ascetics who populated the area beginning in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{16} The region represents one of the oldest continued Christian communities, a population which adopted Christianity during its early expansion out of Edessa (modern Şanlıurfa).\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Development of the Various Christian Communities of North Mesopotamia}

Although local tradition places the adoption of Christianity in the region as occurring during the lifetime of Jesus, historical record establishes the arrival of Christianity to the area during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century.\textsuperscript{18} According to the 7\textsuperscript{th} century chronicles

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ignatius Aphram Barsoum I Patriarch of Antioch, 1887-1957, \textit{The History of Tur Abdin} (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 3.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 3-4.
\item \textsuperscript{17} John Joseph, \textit{Muslim-Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East: The Case of the Jacobites in an Age of Transition} (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983), 4.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Barsoum, \textit{The History of Tur Abdin}, 5.
\end{itemize}
of Misha-Zhaka a Christian diocese had been established in Edessa by the year 120. By the 3rd century the city had become a major center of Christianity, which according to scholar L.W. Barnard was “deserving to rank with Rome, Ephesus, Alexandria and Antioch.”

Christianity rapidly spread throughout the surrounding areas, and by 224 the region claimed twenty bishoprics. Although Christianity enjoyed rapid growth in the region, ideological conflicts of the 5th century would split the Christian communities of North Mesopotamia. The region’s first major spiritual division was the Nestorian Schism following the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus called by Byzantine Emperor Theodosius II in 431. This council, which pitted Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople against Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, sought to address an emergent trend within the Assyrian Christian community to view Jesus as “only the son of Mary as a man” rather than son of Mary as God. Nestorius, who sided with this developing belief, was denounced as implying Jesus should be viewed as two figures, and formally anathematized. He found support amongst Christians living in Persia under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, who represented Syriac Christians of Persia. This led


20 Ibid., 174.


22 Ibid.
to the splitting of his diocese from the greater church community.\textsuperscript{23} The newly independent Assyrian Church of the East also had strong support in Edessa, including in its theological School of Edessa, but following persecution and expulsion from the city in 457 it found refuge in Sassanian territory east of the Tigris. There, the Sassanians promoted them as an anti-Greek expression of Christianity, and through support by the state the Assyrian Church established missions throughout Central Asia.\textsuperscript{24} This movement east of the Tigris would establish boundaries still reflected during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, with Assyrian communities concentrated in Hakkari.

The second major schism, which established the religious character of Tur Abdin, occurred as a result of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The council, which reaffirmed the church’s position on the Nestorian “heresy,” also focused on the emergent miaphysite trend within Eastern Church communities. Establishing a Christology which saw Jesus as of one person but two natures, the Council of Chalcedon placed the church in theological opposition to the Miaphysite view of Christ as possessing one nature, his humanity having been dissolved into his divinity.\textsuperscript{25} Although this did not immediately establish a break with the Orthodox patriarchates, the developing Miaphysite community continued to grow in Syria and Anatolia, emboldened in part by the large network of ascetics who began to flock to the region.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 52-53.


\textsuperscript{25} Aboona, \textit{Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans}, 58.
In 518 another council was called by Emperor Justin I, resulting in full condemnation by the Byzantine state of Miaphysite communities, the removal of Miaphysite Patriarch Severus of Antioch, destruction of monasteries and imprisonment or banishment of Miaphysite bishops. However, after some intervention on the part of Emperor Justin’s wife Empress Theodora, the Miaphysite community was granted a reprieve from persecution. Jacob Barradai, a Miaphysite bishop, returned to Antioch where he established a new patriarchate in Antioch which would become the political foundation for the Syriac Orthodox Church. Known alternatively as the Jacobite Church after its founder, the new Syriac Orthodox Church thus became centered in Antioch. However, the Miaphysite community remained intact within Tur Abdin during the period, and Tur Abdin became a stronghold for the Syriac Orthodox community. Their establishment as a new Miaphysite church fully independent of the Greek or Latin Church would play a significant role throughout the Syriac Orthodox Church’s history. It would provide a benefit to the community, seen as an anti-Greek expression of Christianity by Muslim rulers, as well as make them a target of hostility by Christians, expressed during the Crusades and by 19th century missionaries.

Over the next thirteen centuries the Syriac Orthodox community of Tur Abdin endured a series of devastating conflicts and invasions, including the Crusades, the

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27 Ibid., 19.

28 Ibid., 18.

Mongol and Timurid invasions and the Ottoman-Safavid wars. During these events the Syriac Orthodox community sought to avoid antagonizing the new powers, often negotiating a recognized status within the new polity. Additionally, the community developed strong relations with its Muslim and Jewish neighbors. Despite some later missionaries’ assertions to the contrary, Muslim-Christian relations in Tur Abdin were typically cordial. The Arab invasions of the 7th century, welcomed by the Syriac Orthodox Community, began this relationship. Reflected in a statement by the contemporary Syriac Patriarch Michael, the Arab conquest was seen as “an act of the ‘God of Vengeance’” to deliver the community from the persecutions of the Byzantine authorities.  

In the 11th century, Metropolitan Eliyya would praise the Muslims for their treatment of his community, which he believed was a result of Muslims viewing their favorable treatment as a “manner of religious duty.”

The Syriac Orthodox community maintained political representation under Muslim rule, including representation through a Patriarchal residency in Baghdad during the reign of the Abassids. They pursued positive relations with their Muslim rulers even during the Crusades, evidenced in part by a gift of church bells to Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Michael by the Zengids after their reconquering of Edessa. The Crusaders’ attitudes towards the Syriac Orthodox community were poor, with Eastern Church

30 Ibid., 11.
31 Ibid., 17.
traditions typically seen as heretical. For example, a twelfth century letter sent to Pope Eugenius II states that though Crusaders “defeated the atheist Turks,” they were unable “to use violence against the infidel Rums [Orthodox], Armenians and Syrian Jacobites,” requesting the Pope’s assistance in destroying “all the infidelity.” The turmoil and persecution brought by the Crusades to Antioch resulted in the movement of the Patriarchate to Mor Hananyo, also known as Deyrulzafaran (Saffron Monastery), a late fifth century monastery built atop an ancient temple dedicated to sun-worship. Mor Hananyo, located on the outskirts of Mardin, thus became the spiritual center of the Syriac Orthodox community, elevating Tur Abdin’s status. The Patriarchate remained here until shortly after the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

During this post-Crusade period however, Tur Abdin became isolated from other Syriac Orthodox communities, due to libelous arguments and debates over succession, according to church records, the Tur Abdin region split in 1364 from the Apostolic See. As a result, the ecclesiastical realm of the Patriarch based at Mor Hananyo was reduced mostly to Tur Abdin. The position of the Syriac Orthodox community in Tur Abdin thus became more precarious, and although it initially enjoyed strong relations with the rulers of Hasankeyf, its status was challenged in the late 14th and early 15th century by the Timurid invasions, which the community narrowly survived through

34 Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans, 64.
35 Barsoum, The History of Tur Abdin, 96.
36 Ibid., 95.
37 Ibid., 96.
negotiations between the Patriarch and Timur. It remained in this schismatic state until 1839, and as such was soon incorporated into the Ottoman polity.

The Tur Abdin region was taken from the Akkoyunlu dynasty by the Saffavids in 1507 and placed under the administration of Saffavid officials. However, this territory was shortly thereafter taken by the Ottomans following the Battle of Chaldiran. Under Ottoman administration, the Tur Abdin region was incorporated into the Diyarbakir vilayet, initially as part of the Hasankeyf Sancak. By 1530, however, the Mardin Sancak was established, creating a local administrative unit which would continue until the 19th century. During the 16th century Mardin Sancak grew to include Nusaybin and elements of Armenian Harput, placing Mardin as the center of a significant portion of the region’s Christian community.

The population of Mardin Sancak, which included the entirety of Tur Abdin except Cizre during the 16th century, was highly diverse, including Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and non-dhimmi Shemsiyye and Yezidi populations. According to figures presented by Nejat Göyünç, at the time of its incorporation into the Ottoman state the population of Mardin was 41% Muslim and 48.7% Christian with the small remainder

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38 Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslâm Ansiklopedisi, s.v. “Mardin,”
39 İlhan Çetin, Midyat’ta Etnik Gruplar: Kürtler, Mhalmiler (Araplar), Sıryaniler (İstanbul: Yaba Yayınları, 2007), 101.
40 Ibid., 101-102.
41 Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslâm Ansiklopedisi, s.v. “Mardin.”
42 Shemsiyye is a term referring to a no-longer existent religious community whose practices involved praying towards the sun. The Yezidis are a Kurdish-speaking monotheist religious minority who were not granted dhimmi status within the Ottoman Empire.
mostly consisting of Shemsiyye and Jewish families.\textsuperscript{43} Although these records do not indicate a breakdown of population by Christian denomination, they still place the Syriac Orthodox community as a Patriarchal seat within a Christian majority. These same records indicate an increase in the proportion of Christian populations within Mardin Sancak during the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, growing to 62\% by 1564.\textsuperscript{44} This increase of proportion may be the result of a number of factors, including the inclusion of elements of Armenian Harput into the region, or manipulation of population figures to increase cizye tax output from the Christian community. The Syriac Orthodox Church was thus centered within an administrative district characterized by religious diversity, necessitating maintenance of intercommunity relations.

Following the Ottoman conquest of North Mesopotamia the Assyrian communities of Hakkari, Tur Abdin’s eastern neighbor, maintained a great deal of independence. Benefiting from Ottoman policy of creating buffer districts along the Ottoman-Safavid border, the Assyrians and Kurds of the frontier maintained independent states, some of which lasted through the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. A result of this policy was the development of a power-sharing agreement amongst powerful independent tribes within the border region, including Christian and Muslim groups. Christians and Muslims of the region owed taxes to their local leadership alone, and had firmly established their own districts. Assyrians and Sunni Muslim Kurds of Hakkari had established a nearly equal ruling status in the region by the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, reflected in

\textsuperscript{43} Nejat Göyünç, \textit{XVI. Yüzyilda Mardin Sancağı} (İstanbul : Edebiyat Fakültesi Basimevi, 1969), 97.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 97-102.
Sharaf al-Din al-Bidlisi’s claim in his Sharafname that these groups were “equal partners sharing the privilege of the common emirate of Hakkari.” The first travelers to the region, visiting in the 1830s, made similar comments. For example, as late as 1840, on the eve of chaos in the region, one traveler noted that full administration of the region, including its Muslim inhabitants, would be granted to the Assyrian Patriarch in the absence of the Kurdish chieftain. According to William Ainsworth, Patriarch Mar Shimun “had always seemed on good terms with the Meer of Julemerik, Noor Allah Beg… so much so that on one occasion… he delegated his authority to the Patriarch who administered the district until his return.” Even Asahel Grant, who would contribute to the Patriarch’s misery, described him in their first meeting as adorned in Kurdish headgear, consumed with “anxiety” over maintaining Kurdish-Nestorian harmony and carrying a rifle at all times, rather for fear of Hakkari’s wildlife rather than his Kurdish neighbors.

Although independent Assyrian and Sunni Kurdish tribes maintained independence in Hakkari, the neighboring Mardin Sancak was under the direct control of the Ottoman state. Located within the vilayets of Diyarbakir during the 16th and 17th centuries and temporarily moved under the authority of Baghdad in the 18th century, the Christian populations of Tur Abdin were ultimately controlled by the Ottoman political

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45 Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans, 98.


47 Asahel Grant, The Nestorians or the Lost Tribes (1841; reprint, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 82.
structure. This policy, while not abusive towards the Syriac community, did not offer
direct representation of the Syriac Orthodox Church to the Sublime Porte. Although
they represented a significant portion of the population in the region, perhaps a majority
within Mardin, the Syriac Orthodox population was represented by the Armenian
Patriarchate from the 16th to the 19th century. According to the millet system developed
by Yavuz Sultan Selim, communities were represented by one of two patriarchs, each
being that of the most populous community from either the Dyophysite or Miaphysite
traditions. As a result, Dyophysite communities such as the Antiochian Orthodox,
Melkite and Eastern Orthodox Church were placed under the authority of the Greek
Ecumenical Patriarchate. Miaphysite communities, such as the Syriac Orthodox,
Assyrian and Coptic Church were placed under the authority of the Armenian
Patriarchate. 48 Although the Syriac Patriarchate represented the local authority over Tur
Abdin’s Syriac Orthodox community, representation to the Sublime Porte was carried
out through the Armenian Patriarchate, which could potentially misrepresent
subordinate churches’ interests to increase its own standing. This system of
representation did however provide a stable, organized system of representation to the
Ottoman government for the various local Syriac communities. The Armenian
Patriarchate was perhaps better able to represent the unique interests of the divided
Syriac Orthodox community, which remained fractured during the first three centuries
of Ottoman rule over the region, having reunited in the early 19th century.

48 Ibrahim Özoşar, Bir Yüzyıl Bir Sancak Bir Cemaat : 19. Yüzyılda Mardin Süryanileri
(Cağaloğlu, İstanbul : Beyan, 2008), 56.
An influx of Catholic missionary activity to the region would challenge this system of representation. As a result of 1535 agreement between Sultan Suleiman and the French, Catholic missionary activity was permitted within the Ottoman Empire. French Catholic missionaries soon arrived in Ottoman lands, first encountering Assyrian and Syriac Orthodox communities in Cyprus and the Levant. Focusing their activities on the Christian population rather than Muslims, the network of independent missionaries enjoyed some limited success in creating Catholic communities, no doubt aided by the special protections and tax exemptions provided to Catholic converts. This resulted in emergent merchant communities of converts, able to undersell their Muslim and non-Catholic dhimmi competitors, and decreasing the income of the Ottoman state. A concentrated effort organized by the Vatican was established in 1622, which would penetrate into Mesopotamia by 1750, resulting in Catholic communities developing from amongst Syriac Orthodox and Assyrian populations. These efforts quickly proved fruitful, with an estimated 75 percent of Aleppo’s Syriac Orthodox population converting by the 1660s. Although gains were made within the Tur Abdin region, the Syriac Orthodox community maintained its majority, and many converts would later return to the Syriac Orthodox church due to pressure by the Syriac community. However, Catholic missionaries would divide the Assyrian community,

49 Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans, 72.
50 Ibid.
51 Joseph, Muslim-Christian Relations, 40.
52 Ibid.
establishing a new Chaldean Catholic Church out of the Assyrian Church of the East. With the conversion of the Patriarch of Diyarbakir to the Chaldean Church (the Catholic offshoot of the Assyrian Church of the East), the Assyrian community was largely divided, further isolating the Assyrians of the borderlands. Seen as a threat to their political authority, Catholic missionaries reported harsh treatment in the Assyrian lands of Hakkari, but found further success in the conversion of the Bishop of Mosul in 1778, establishing a new Chaldean community which would oversee Assyrian populations migrating from Diyarbakir into the Ninevah plains.53 As a result of these Catholic missions, both the Assyrian communities of the Safavid frontier and the Syriac Orthodox community of Tur Abdin became further isolated from their coreligionists. Subsequent insecurity by patriarchs regarding their control over their communities and increased political infighting slowly diminished their influence and fueled rivalries.

These new religious groups not only caused division within existing religious communities, but they also raised the concern of the Ottoman state regarding the potential development of fifth column among a community partially protected by foreign governments. In order to impede conversion, and thus prevent damage to the state through increased tax exemptions, the Ottomans would sometimes confiscate the property of converts which in doing so, according to 17th century missionary Friar Joseph, the Ottomans were “most assiduous.” 54 Additionally, although these new groups were represented and protected by the French, their local administration was

53 Ibid., 80.
54 Ibid., 38.
often placed under the authority of their previous tradition’s millet. For example, Syriac and Armenian Catholics were still identified as Syriac or Armenian, and remained under the control of the Armenian Patriarchate, prompting political infighting amongst these communities. Despite their support by the French, Catholic communities were often abused by their own coreligionists, whose local patriarchs were able to extract taxes from them at inappropriate rates as a means of punishment. However, these new communities were eventually recognized by the 19th century as their own independent millets.

During the 19th century Catholic missionary activity declined in the region, leaving a gap which was filled by an increase in Protestant efforts. The Ottoman state, concerned with French interference via Catholic convert communities, began to impede Catholic missionary efforts in the region. As a result of decades-old hostility towards the French following Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt, Sultan Mahmud II issued a decree in 1817 limiting Catholic missionary activity in the region. As a result, Protestant missionary activity rapidly increased. The two main Protestant missions relevant to the region were those of the American Congregationalist Church and the Anglican and Episcopal Churches. These missions and their convert communities were as Protestants represented through the British Consulate, replacing fears of French interference with British interference.

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 50.
Although there were overlapping mission activities between Anglicans and Congregationalists, by the 1830s delineation grew between the Protestant efforts in the region. The Congregationalists, largely focusing on the Assyrians of Persian Urmiah and Hakkari, wished to bring the community “out of their heresy,” and in doing so bring the community from their “state of obscurity,” reconnecting them with the global Christian community. The chief of this mission, American Asahel Grant, saw this effort as a fight against the “Mohammedan delusion,” and identified the Assyrians with the Lost Tribe of Israel, ignoring both the Assyrian church’s legacy and presenting an antagonistic position towards Islam.

The Syriac Orthodox Church of Tur Abdin, however, primarily received the attention of Anglican and Episcopal missionaries. The primary figure of this mission, Horatio Southgate, demonstrated a realistic, pragmatic view in his approach to the community. Rather than taking an antagonistic attitude towards Islam, he saw its power in having preserved local Christian communities from “unbelief and schism.” He also recognized the threat presented by Western interference in the region, both in terms of spiritual and political well-being. Stating the danger of Western influence bringing with it “inroads of infidelity,” he also recognized the apprehension of the Ottoman state towards its subjects’ “foreign ecclesiastical allegiance.” Premature action, he thought,

57 Grant, The Nestorian or the Lost Tribes, 3.
58 Ibid., 56.
would “bring in an endless train of evils” which would threaten to “mar, if not wholly prevent, the great blessings of religious liberty” which the Syriac Orthodox community to some extent received.\textsuperscript{61} Such sensitivity was unfortunately absent from his Congregationalist contemporary, Asahel Grant, and Southgate’s words would foreshadow the disastrous events of the 1840s. Horatio Southgate also sought to reconcile Syriac Miaphysite beliefs with that of his own tradition through dialogue with church leaders. In doing so he confirmed that Latin and Syriac Orthodox beliefs in the nature of Christ did in fact overlap, and as such the Syriac Orthodox Church should not be seen as a heresy.\textsuperscript{62} Although both efforts enjoyed some limited success, the Congregationalist mission to the Assyrians would prove disastrous. By seeking to perpetuate a narrative of Christian oppression under Muslim rule, it failed to recognize the political dynamics of the region.

**Pre-Tanzimat Tur Abdin**

As will be discussed later, the activities of these missions led to increased hostility amongst Assyrians and Kurdish Muslims, and eventually played a direct role in the disastrous Bedr Khan Rebellion. The travel diaries of the influx of Protestant missionaries in the region beginning in 1831 provide valuable information regarding interfaith interaction in pre-Tanzimat Tur Abdin. According to missionary accounts, the

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 17-18.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 106.

Syriac community was in “good temporal circumstances” in the region, able to exercise free practice of its faith.\footnote{Joseph, \textit{Muslim-Christian Relations}, 25-26.} The Syriac Orthodox and Muslim communities had through centuries of interaction developed a system of intercommunity tolerance, one which at times blurred the distinction between religious practices. According to missionaries in Tur Abdin, Christians and Muslims visited one another’s shrines, and Christian priests often prayed over sick Muslim children, or were seen as holding other intercessory abilities to aid Muslims.\footnote{Ibid.} The practice of \textit{kivrelik}, an inter-communal circumcision ritual, was another institutionalized form of preserving relations amongst community members, one which greatly benefited non-dhimmi communities in the region such as the Yezidi and Shemsiyye through establishing life-long bonds between members of different communities.\footnote{Paul J. Magnarella and Orhan Turkdoğan, “Descent, Affinity, and Ritual Relations in Eastern Turkey,” \textit{American Anthropologist} 75, no. 5 (Oct., 1973): 1626-1633, 1631-1633, http://www.jstor.org/stable/674052 (accessed February 14th, 2012).}

The various groups of Tur Abdin also joined together during periods of economic or military crisis. The region, located within raiding distance of the independent Kurdish tribes, was often subjected to attacks from tribes from the east. During these periods, communities would band together in military defense, ignoring their current local arguments.\footnote{Özçoşar, \textit{Bir Yüzyıl Bir Sancak Bir Cemaat}, 207.} During periods of warfare or famine, communities also shared supplies with one another. For example, early 19\textsuperscript{th} century local Muslim leader Ali Agha was noted for having provided 10\% of his harvest to local Christians during a

\footnote{Ibid.}
time of war, ignoring sectarian differences in order to provide mutual assistance.\textsuperscript{67} Additionally, members of the various communities interacted on a daily basis, working on the same farms and even living intermixed in villages, where, according to Christian missionary William Ainsworth, they lived happily together, despite their differing belief systems.\textsuperscript{68} Unlike the independent Assyrian tribes of Hakkari who lived separately from Muslim Kurds, the Christian communities of Tur Abdin were integrated with Muslim communities, reflecting a balance of interfaith harmony developed over twelve centuries of Christian-Muslim relations in the region. These observations, made by Western missionaries in the 1820s and 1830s, reflected the positive relations found within Tur Abdin. However, by the end of the 1830s a series of events were set in motion which eventually resulted in the collapse of this balance and the persecution of Tur Abdin’s Syriac Orthodox population.

**Ottoman Decline and the Creation of Reform Policy**

The early 19\textsuperscript{th} century brought the Ottomans a number of shocking military crises, beginning with a series of domestic uprisings which began in the Balkans, Egypt and Syria, eventually spreading to the Greek Peninsula. Although the goal of previous rebellions, such as the Celali rebellions of interior Anatolia, was typically to address a grievance or injustice against the Ottoman government, these uprisings often sought independence from the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{69} Additionally, these uprisings were often

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
  \item\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 210.
  \item\textsuperscript{69} Joseph, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, 55.
\end{itemize}
supported by European powers, whose assistance was necessary for their success. In 1804 an anti-Ottoman government rebellion erupted in Serbia, with rebels seeking redress for abuses by the local Ottoman administration. The Serbs quickly turned to Russia for assistance, and as a result were granted autonomy within the Empire.\(^{70}\) However, the Greek rebellion which began in 1821 achieved full independence from the empire, a result of an increased level of foreign interference in Ottoman affairs, with Britain, Russia and France each intervening on behalf of the Greeks.

According to scholar Donald Quataert, the success of the Greek Rebellion and the ceding of Ottoman territory to the Russians following the 1828-1829 Russo-Turkish war led to increased European concern over the “Eastern Question,” or how to address the problems posed by the contracting Ottoman Empire.\(^ {71}\) Recognizing concerns over this contraction and the threat of foreign influence on its frontier territories, the Ottoman Empire quickly began to assert central authority over these regions. In 1831 the central government began implementing new means to ensure the allegiance of provincial rulers. These measures included removing the Mamluk dynasty from power in Baghdad and the Karamanli dynasty in the Barbary States, forced displacement of powerful local families and manipulated local succession to promote obedient nobles over those viewed as holding suspect loyalty.\(^ {72}\)

\(^{70}\) Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), 55.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 79.

The Greek Rebellion also marked an increase in European concern regarding Ottoman rule over its Christian subjects, and became a model for the “internationalization of local grievances.” However, European intervention and interference with provincial territories was not always a matter of protecting local Christian populations. In 1830 the French occupied Algeria, an action against which the Ottomans were so powerless that they could “do no more than lodge an official protest.” This action reflected European willingness to breach Ottoman territorial integrity and the Ottomans’ inability to prevent these actions.

Still, the Ottoman Empire was not without its advantages in European diplomacy, and its control over the Bosporus Straits connecting the Black and Mediterranean Seas was an important point of concern amidst Europe’s rival empires. The Ottomans assumed British and Russian interest in preserving the stability of Ottoman control over the straits vis-à-vis French-allied threats such as Muhammad Ali of Egypt. As a result of the outbreak of the first Ottoman-Egyptian conflict in 1831, which brought Egyptian armies into the heartland of Anatolia, the Ottomans requested assistance from the British, who rejected their petition. Sultan Mahmud II, who stated that “a drowning man will clutch at a serpent,” then requested assistance from the

73 Ibid., 69.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 66.
Ottoman Empire’s recent adversary, Russia, who provided the military relief needed to end the conflict.\textsuperscript{76}

Despite a necessary – albeit brief – alliance with Russia, Ottoman foreign policy still focused on forging alliances with the British to counter Russian and French threats. At the end of the 1830s, the Ottomans drew upon British assistance during another conflict with the Egyptians, who were this time led by Muhammad Ali’s son Ibrahim Pasha, who received some support from the French. The British, who chose not to intervene in the first Egyptian-Ottoman War, saw the very realistic threat of Ottoman defeat and recognized the crisis which would be caused by the resulting power vacuum. British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston, noting his concern, stated:

\begin{quote}
If the Sultan is beat his empire may tumble to pieces, and the way in which the fragments may be disposed of may essentially affect the balance of power in Europe; Russia would profit by the scramble, to a degree which might be highly inconvenient to her neighbors. It is true that if we repel Mehemet’s [sic] advances & the French receive them, and he should hold his ground, French influence will gain strength in Egypt, but after all that would not do us any great harm till we went to war with France, and then our naval superiority would bring us back the friendship of Mehemet who would not like his navy to be sent to an English port.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

The greater threat to the British was thus seen as Ottoman defeat, and the British carefully sought to protect Ottoman authority while preserving Egypt’s independence. The conflict reached a climax in the 1839 Battle of Nezip, in Northern Syria, at which a French and German-officer assisted Egyptian army routed an Ottoman force. The

\textsuperscript{76} Ib\textsuperscript{id}.

\textsuperscript{77} Quote taken from Khaled Fahmy, \textit{All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt} (Cairo; New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 295.
Ottomans, led by Hafiz Pasha and assisted by German officer Helmuth von Moltke, were routed as a result of divided Ottoman command and a weak conscript force in comparison to the Westernized Egyptian army.\(^{78}\) Through British and Russian support a treaty was negotiated with Egypt, known as the *Convention of London* (1840), which ceded control of Egypt to Muhammad Ali’s dynasty,

As a result of territorial loss, military weakness and Western influence, the Ottoman government recognized the need for further restructuring. After identifying a number of obstacles to defending the empire’s integrity, the Ottoman state began a process of reform which sought to modernize the military, increase economic output and tax collection and provide a more efficient network of bureaucrats to administer the empire.\(^{79}\) Continuing on the reform movement initiated in the 19\(^{th}\) century, Sultan Mahmud II began to reorganize the empire, beginning with the elimination of the Janissary Corps, his primary adversary in initiating reform. A new vision of reform, building on the efforts of late 18\(^{th}\) and early 19\(^{th}\) century attempts, was organized by Ottoman official Mustafa Reşit Pasha. This new plan focused largely on methods for eliminating corruption and unjust land confiscation, as well as improving administrative methods of the empire.\(^{80}\) In 1839, an Imperial Rescript (*Hatt-i Hümayun*) was signed by the Sultan and read in Gülhane Square by Mustafa Reşit Paşa, initiating the Ottoman

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 296.


\(^{80}\) Ibid., 59.
Tanzimat reforms. The rescript was a declaration of the reform movement’s intent and its goals of guaranteeing Ottoman subjects’ “security of life, honor, and property,” establishment of a regular system for tax collection, and “new methods to assure a fair system of conscripting, training, and maintaining” a new military.\(^\text{81}\) The primary means for achieving these goals was a reorganization of the administrative apparatus, which sought to remove authority from the local ruler and replace it with the authority of the state.

In order to administer this system, a Ministry of the Interior (Nezaret-i Dahiliye) was created from the existing Office of the Grand Vizier.\(^\text{82}\) The responsibilities of this office included direct administration of internal provinces, the implementation of which required subjugation of the independent border kingdoms. According to scholar Walter Weiker, in order to achieve this, the traditional network of local independent rulers was eliminated and replaced with loyal Ottoman bureaucrats.\(^\text{83}\) These new administrators created a “clear line of authority” between the local sancaks and the central government, and sought to eliminate the manipulative practices of local tax collectors, including local patriarchs such as the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch.\(^\text{84}\) Though they included a continuation of the existing Council of Elders system through which local millet populations were represented, the new policies sought to end the autonomy of the eastern provinces,

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 60.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 72.


\(^{84}\) Ibid., 463 and Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire, 2:84.
replacing it with centralized Ottoman authority. Although based on European models of modernization, the Ottomans were unable to appropriately apply it to a vastly different context.\textsuperscript{85} The result was heavy handed application of reform in the Kurdish and Assyrian provinces of the Ottoman-Persian border and insensitivity to the political dangers the policies presented in the region.

Additionally, British and French rivalry found itself manifested within these reforms. In 1838, prior to the Tanzimat reorganization, the British and Ottomans had signed the Anglo-Ottoman Convention, greatly expanding British merchants’ rights and access in Ottoman territories.\textsuperscript{86} These changes also facilitated greater French investment into the Ottoman Empire. Although the treaties of the 1830s developed stronger Anglo-Ottoman bonds, the French still maintained a significant economic presence in the Levant and Syria. According to scholar Michelle Raccagni, France was also the administrative model which Ottoman reformists emulated.\textsuperscript{87} French schools were by the 19th century the premiere educational institutions of the Ottoman Empire, which educated many of the Ottoman elite. French merchants and investors had a long-standing presence in Istanbul, but increasingly French merchants portrayed their economic agreements as means of spreading progress within the Ottoman Empire. For example, in the 1830s, French merchants interested in banking projects gave Ottoman

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 457.

\textsuperscript{86} Alexander Mikaberidze, Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: a Historical Encyclopedia (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 110.

officials lessons on industry and finance, and a promoter of a Suez Canal project preached women’s emancipation. These reform-minded French scholars proved influential, reflected by Mustafa Reşit Pasha himself having noted the French influence on the Hatt-i Hümayun, stating that for guidance “it is always to France that we turn.”

Just as European powers sought to prevent their rivals from gaining an upper hand through Ottoman military alliances, they now had new economic markets to protect for rivals’ monopolies. The French and British quickly dispatched surveying missions throughout the Empire, often employing scholars to conduct both scientific research and gather information about the material wealth of the Empire. By the late 1830s, such teams had begun exploring regions such as the Ottoman-Persian and Russian borderlands as well as Mesopotamia. Coupled with the wealth of new scientific and economic information made available through these efforts was an increased awareness of the empire’s Christian populations. As will later be explored in detail, missionary activity became a part of this process, although Ottoman policies limiting Catholic missionary activity provided the British a greater opportunity to exploit this. Although British missionary activity did focus on reviving the Ottoman Empire’s Christian communities, it also became a means for seeking political presence within these newly opened regions, a factor which provided restraint in how missionaries engaged with these groups.

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88 Ibid., 354.
89 Ibid., 341.
90 Ibid., 342.
Unlike the French or British, America did not have explicit economic or political interest in the Ottoman Empire. As a result, American missionaries employed strategies focused on spiritual considerations rather than political ones. Although this allowed them to focus on the religious aspect of their work, a lack of political restraint proved disastrous in the case of American involvement with the Assyrians of Hakkari. Unlike the British or French, who ultimately sought to preserve stability, Congregationalists engaged indigenous Christian communities with a millenarian worldview, antagonistic towards Islam and dismissive of political sensitivities. These actions, combined with the disruptions of Ottoman reform, created an inevitably disastrous situation in which long-standing power sharing agreements devolved into sectarian violence.
CHAPTER TWO
ASAHEL GRANT AND THE ABCFM

It would be in the midst of the challenges and transformations of the 1830s that the first permanent American Christian missions arrived in Hakkari and Tur Abdin. Fascinated by rumors of an isolated Christian community in the region, members of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established the “Mission to the Mountain Nestorians” in 1839, an offshoot of a similar mission in Persia. Although the long-standing Urmiah-based Persian mission was slightly successful, the insensitivity of the Hakkari mission’s leaders towards the local situation would prove disastrous. By ignoring the precarious inter-communal balance of the region, Dr. Asahel Grant, chief of the mission, would overzealously apply the ABCFM’s model of evangelization at the cost of the political status of local Christian communities. While the mission provided spiritual rejuvenation to the local community, it had a permanently negative effect on the Assyrian population of Hakkari.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, America’s first sponsor of overseas Christian missions, was officially founded in September, 1810 in Farmington, Connecticut. Its early members, responding to commission of Matthew 28:19, which states “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name

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of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” interpreted this as a call to increase American missionary activity.²

The ABCFM was a product of the Second Great Awakening, reflected by both the Commission’s social and educational goals. The Second Great Awakening had by the late 18th century led to the creation of domestic missionary societies, such as the Missionary Society of Connecticut, organized to evangelize and educate European immigrants and Native Americans.³ Also drawing upon Jesus’ call to evangelize, members of such newly formed societies, such as the Massachusetts Missionary Society (1799) declared their goal of spreading “knowledge of the Gospel among the heathens, as well as other people in the remote parts of our country, where Christ is seldom or never preached.”⁴ Although limited to domestic efforts, these new societies had organized missionary activity within New England’s various Protestant churches, joining together Congregationalist and Presbyterians in a new wave of evangelization.⁵

The ABCFM found its origins in an 1806 meeting held by five students of Williams College. In an event referred to as the Haystack Prayer Meeting, the group of students, taking shelter from a thunderstorm under a haystack, declared an intention to engage in foreign mission, a venture that was previously seen as impractical or

² Ibid., 5.
³ Ibid., 6.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., 5-6.
financially impossible.\(^6\) In 1808, this group organized a society called “The Brethren” to promote their vision of foreign mission, and in 1810 the society moved to Andover Theological Seminary, where it was led by member Samuel Mills, establishing a close link between the seminary and the ABCFM.

In 1812 the ABCFM was incorporated by the Massachusetts Legislature, drawing upon cross-denominational membership for support.\(^7\) Adopting as its motto Mark 16:15 “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” it had within seven years established foreign missions to India (1812), the Sandwich Islands and Palestine (1819).\(^8\) Initial reports from the Palestinian mission sparked the ABCFM’s interest in engaging Christians within the Ottoman Empire. Using language often repeated by later ABCFM missionaries, members of the board stated:

In Palestine, Syria, the Provinces of Asia Minor, Armenia, Georgia and Persia, though Mohammedan countries, there are many thousands of Jews, and many thousands of Christians, at least in name. But the whole mingled population is in a state of deplorable ignorance and degradation, destitute of the means of divine knowledge, and bewildered with vain imaginations and strong delusions.\(^9\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., 6-7.

\(^8\) Ibid., 7.

\(^9\) *First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions with Other Documents of the Board*, (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 230, [http://www.archive.org/details/firsttenannualre00amerrich](http://www.archive.org/details/firsttenannualre00amerrich) (accessed on December 8, 2012).
Here, descriptions of the Christians as believers “at least in name” and as in a state of ignorance are introduced, setting the tone for future engagement with these populations. Additionally, the language of other initial reports introduced a millenarian theme regarding evangelization of communities in the Middle East. Upon recognizing the potential of the Palestinian mission, missionaries began to see conversion of local Jews as a precursor to the Second Coming. One such statement by an Ohio evangelical newspaper stated:

The glory of the Lord will return. The Jews are to be gathered in from their dispersions, and acknowledge that Jesus, whom their fathers crucified, to be their Saviour and their God. I consider this mission a grand link in the chain of events… preparatory to the second coming of our blessed Lord.\(^\text{10}\)

In a notable sermon written by Palestinian mission member Levi Parsons entitled *The Dereliction and Restoration of the Jews*, the Jews of the Middle East are described as having endured centuries of hardship, but, “like the bush of Horeb,” are “yet not consumed” by their oppression.\(^\text{11}\) According to Parsons, through charity and evangelization the Jews may be brought out of their circumstances.\(^\text{12}\) Although such language would be used by other missionary groups, it reflects a lens through which missionaries of the ABCFM engaged local communities, such as the Assyrians, whom they would seek to link with the ancient Israelites. Although they would see little success, the millenarian fascination of Jewish restoration would lead to Eastern

\(^{10}\) Doğan, “From New England into New Lands,” 11.


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 19-20.
Mediterranean missions receiving the Board’s greatest financial contributions.\textsuperscript{13} Additionally, according to scholar Hilton Obenzinger, this fascination with the Middle East’s Jewish communities, coupled with the wide circulation of the ABCFM’s \textit{Missionary Herald} led to broader American interest in the Holy Land and Middle East, reflected by an outpouring of funding for such missions.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{ABCFM Missions in Asia Minor and Persia}

In November 1820, Pliny and Fisk, the heads of the Palestinian mission, traveled into Anatolia to research a potential mission in the region. Finding local Greek Christians readily accepting of books, they noted a “great desire of knowledge” amongst the community, and postulated “the enlightenment of that part of the world… by means of the press.”\textsuperscript{15} Fisk’s request to the Board to provide more material and missionaries for a mission in Asia Minor was well received, with the Board noting the importance of such an endeavor, and its potential to provide “access… to the descendants of Abraham.”\textsuperscript{16} The Board pledged greater assistance, and discussed the possibility of providing education for Greek youths.\textsuperscript{17}

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\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 243.
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\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1821} (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1821), 90.
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\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 94.
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\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 95.
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Although the ABCFM was pushing further into Ottoman territory, Catholic missions had enjoyed a long-standing presence in the region. However, an 1824 decree forbidding the distribution of European religious literature significantly restricted Catholic activity in western Anatolia, allowing the ABCFM a greater share of the market.\footnote{Doğan, “From New England into New Lands,” 18.} However, this promoted antagonism between the Catholics and Protestants, with Catholic activity now becoming clandestine in many regions.

The late 1820s and early 1830s also marked a transition to missions organized by target community rather than region, for example missions to Greeks, Armenians, Georgians and other specific communities. This enabled the ABCFM to fund missions more attuned to individual groups, and allowed for missionaries to focus on developing language skills which would enable better communication with locals. Additionally, it marked an emphasis on production of scripture in the vernacular of the local population, something which had been forbidden by the Catholic Church, which, according to one missionary “forbids the people to have Scriptures in a language they can understand.”\footnote{Eli Smith, \textit{Researches of the Rev. E. Smith and Rev. H.G.O. Dwight in Armenia: Including a Journey through Asian Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas} (Boston, New York: Crocker and Brewster, 1833), 2:252.} As a result, the ABCFM was able to implement missions focused more on individual spirituality, aided by the development of schools in the regions.

**Finding the Lost Tribe of Israel: Initiating the Mission to the Nestorians**

As a result of continued interest in increasing the number of missions in the region, the ABCFM funded a series of fact-finding expeditions to research the
communities of the Middle East and North Africa. Just as Fisk and Parsons had traveled into Anatolia to research the land of “the Seven Churches of Asia,” other missionaries conducted research to explore the status of Christians in the region. These expeditions made contact with the Coptic, Maronite and Greek communities of the region, initiating interaction between ABCFM missionaries and these groups.

However, the ABCFM was interested in engaging Christian communities in the interior of the region, specifically the Armenians, Georgians, Assyrians and Chaldeans. In doing so, they hoped to establish better grounds for engaging Persian, Turkish, Turkmen and Kurdish Muslims who shared territory with these Christian communities. The first ABCFM missionaries to explore these groups were Eli Smith (1801-1857) and Harrison Gray Otis Dwight (1803-1862), both graduates of Andover Theological Seminary. Selected for their linguistic abilities, Smith and Dwight interacted with each of these communities, the reports of which were published by the ABCFM. The Committee became interested quickly establishing new missions, and began organizing mission work to these groups, with a primary interest in the Assyrians of Persia.

In his reports, Smith presents an overview of the Assyrian Church of the East, along with their ideological foundations and the views of Nestorius, largely focused on demonstrating the Assyrians as receptive to the ABCFM’s spiritualist vision. Smith stated that if “Nestorius was innocent, I am not disposed to contend; but if he was chargeable with guilt, I should search for it elsewhere than did the council,” referring to

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20 Ibid., 1: iii.
the Council of Ephesus.\textsuperscript{21} Seeking to relate Nestorianism to Protestant ideology, he stated that of Nestorius rejection to Mary as \textit{Mother of God} in its contemporary understanding “no protestant would… have charged him with heresy.”\textsuperscript{22} This may be seen in light of criticism of veneration of Mary, a charge leveled by Protestant missionaries against Catholicism. Additionally, he presents Nestorius’s belief of diaphysite Christology as perhaps seeking to explore and “correct a popular superstition,” presenting this as an attempt to resist ideological impositions by Constantinople, seen as a parallel of Catholicism.\textsuperscript{23}

Smith’s description of their religious practices also emphasized commonalities between Congregationalist and Assyrian forms of worship. Expressing his pleasure to a bishop at “observing no images or pictures” in the church, he states that their mutual aversion to religious images is a shared result of following the second commandment.\textsuperscript{24} Referring to a conversation of the afterlife, Smith was pleased in the bishop’s laughter at “the fires of the papal purgatory,” again emphasizing a common ideology in opposition to Catholicism.\textsuperscript{25}

Smith was informed by his Assyrian hosts of the independent Assyrians of Hakkari, where the Patriarch resides. Described as \textit{ashiret}, a term used by the Ottomans which is explained as meaning “a people who do not pay tribute,” or “independent

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 2: 201.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 202.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 203.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 213-214.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 214.
tribe,” Smith is informed that the Assyrians of Hakkari not only “pay no tribute
themselves, but exact tribute from the Kurds who live among them.”26 He is
additionally informed that they are “by far the most powerful people of Hakkari,” and
“that they are much feared by the Kurds.”27 Here, the Assyrians of Hakkari are initially
presented as the dominant group in the region. Although their portrayal would later
change, this initial presentation reflected a different narrative than that of Muslim
domination of Christian subjects.

Although Smith wished to visit the Assyrians of Hakkari, he was advised against
doing so by his English missionary counterparts in Tebriz. Describing the area as
“entirely inaccessible,” they informed him that “the Kurds which surround” the
Assyrian communities “are treacherous and blood-thirsty,” reflected by the recent
murder of the region’s first European traveler, scholar Friedrich Eduard Schulz, killed in
1829.28 As a result, Smith proposed a mission limited to the Assyrians of Urmiah.
Although they indicated opposition to Catholic doctrine, this community was seen as
having gone astray, with Smith stating that “religious instruction is needed” for their
proper worship.29 The rewards of missionary activity, according to Smith, will be to
plant “one truth after another in the mind of an ignorant Nestorian,” allowing faith in the

26 Ibid., 218.
27 Ibid., 219.
28 Ibid., 253.
29 Ibid., 264.
region to “take root and bear fruit,” and restore “the oldest of Christian sects.” Doing so, Smith states, will result in the “conquests of Christianity in a kingdom where it has never triumphed,” and will create the “lever that will overturn the whole system of Muhammedan delusion.” As such, Smith promotes a spiritual revival of the Assyrians as key to converting Muslims, an important aspect of how the ABCFM would subsequently approach the Mission to the Nestorians. However, it also presented such a mission in inappropriate terms of Christian-Muslim antagonism, failing to recognize the specific power dynamic in Hakkari, and viewing the Assyrian community as a unified group.

The ABCFM readily accepted Smith’s proposal, stating that a mission to the Assyrians “would encounter fewer obstacles among them, than in any other of the old churches of the East.” Encouraged by their “views of open communion” and rejection of “auricular confession,” the committee agreed to send missionaries “as soon as the suitable men are found.” A year later, the board chose to send Justin Perkins, another Andover Theological Seminary graduate. Accepting Smith’s reservations regarding Hakkari, the board sent Perkins to engage with the Assyrians as well as to conduct research of the Syriac church. Perkins was first educated in Syriac in Malta, then sent en route to Persia. However, the Board acknowledged the usefulness of a physician for

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30 Ibid., 265.
31 Ibid.
32 Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1832 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1832), 69.
33 Ibid.
gaining the approval and conducting service to local populations, and they sought out a suitable figure to accompany Perkins in his mission.  

In 1835, the committee selected Dr. Asahel Grant to join Perkins in his mission. The two men, including their wives, met in Tabriz in October of that year, departing one month later for Urmiah. Welcomed by both local Assyrians and Persian administrators, the group quickly established a positive reputation in the area, and Grant was met with “hundreds of patients” of “all classes” seeking his medical care. Grant was able to ingratiate himself to multiple Kurdish and Persian nobles through his medical work, resulting in one local prince to issue a firman promising their protection. Encouraged by their reception in the area, they established a printing press, producing documents in various Syriac fonts. Additionally, the two conducted educational outreach to local Muslims in order to quell their concerns and avoid perceptions that they were there only to serve the Christian population. 

The pair began conducting their mission of spiritual renewal of the population, first through translating hymns into the local vernacular and by conducting Bible study, both of which were readily accepted by the local population. A school was quickly established, and soon the mission was teaching dozens of students, utilizing the printing

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34 Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1834 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834), 59-60.

35 Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1836 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1836), 54-55.

36 Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1837 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1837), 64.

37 Ibid., 55-56.
press to teach religion, geography and arithmetic. Perkins and Grant were repeatedly frustrated at the Assyrian’s lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible, with Perkins stating the challenge of rooting out local ecclesiastics’ “puerile theology,” seen as a result of rote memorization of religious texts.\(^{38}\)

In 1836, the Urmiah mission was visited by a Kurdish chieftain from Amadiah, a city located on the southern edge of Hakkari, a region referred to as Badinan. They were informed in detail of the Assyrians of Hakkari by the chieftain, who discussed their strong independence, and willingness to defend their territories through organized military action.\(^{39}\) Furthermore, he described his positive relations with the Assyrians, whom he “always dismissed with presents” after their visits, and for whom he possessed a “very high respect.”\(^{40}\) However, he also informed them of Catholic missionary activity in the region, conducted by physicians who have “gained the attachment” of the people and have adopted local manners of dress.\(^{41}\) Soon Catholic missionaries would begin proselytizing in Urmiah, reportedly promising large sums of money to locals for their conversion.\(^{42}\) Although locals rejected their attempts, the Urmiah mission became

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 66.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 67.

\(^{42}\) Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1838 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1838), 59.
alarmed, and decided to increase their mission to the whole of the Assyrian community, including that of Hakkari.\textsuperscript{43}

The Urmiah mission continued to increase its success, having by 1838 established a rudimentary seminary, a girl’s boarding school and group of three public schools, totaling 126 students.\textsuperscript{44} According to Perkins, “those ecclesiastics who come directly under our influence are improving in the knowledge of the Bible, and their interpretation of it is becoming more and more evangelical.”\textsuperscript{45} The mission was thus beginning to achieve its intent, no doubt further increasing interest in conducting similar work in Hakkari. Furthermore, new rumors were spreading that “the pope is designing immediately to send one hundred Catholic missionaries” into Persia and other “eastern countries.”\textsuperscript{46} The Urmiah mission then took a more anti-Catholic posture, including actively warning local Christian nobles about Catholic proselytization, aided in part by distribution of a Syriac-language tract entitled “Twenty-Two Plain Reasons for not Being a Catholic.”\textsuperscript{47} It was then decided that Grant, whose wife had recently passed away, would depart to research the potential for a new branch of the mission.

Grant arrived in Hakkari in October of 1839, where he was given a warm welcome by Patriarch Mar Shimun. Grant, no doubt struck by the groundbreaking

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 80.

\textsuperscript{44} Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1839 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1839), 92.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 96.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 98.

\textsuperscript{47} Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1840 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1840), 105.
nature of his endeavor, and the potential for success in new territory, immediately requested additional aid. Stating that “the portentous signs of the times in these lands indicate some momentous crisis,” referring to concerns of Ottoman encroachment, he claimed the importance of giving the independent Assyrians the highest priority, that “a host of faithful soldiers of the cross should bind on their armor and prepare for the approaching conflict.” Presenting the region as a spiritual battleground, he stated the need to gain the approval of the Patriarch to prepare for defense against Catholic encroachment. According to Grant, “the enemy will strengthen its forces by delay. The papists are preparing for a vigorous struggle… and no effort will be spared to obtain access” to the mountain population.

After his initial ten day visit to the region, Grant returned briefly to the United States with his son. During his travels he composed a book which outlined extensively his ideology and expectations in regards to the new Assyrian mission which he proposed. The work, divided into three sections, first details his interactions with the Assyrians and his return journey through Anatolia. The bulk of the work, however, is dedicated to promoting Grant’s understanding of the Assyrians as the “Lost Tribe of Israel,” who have been protected by a special covenant with God who through Providence have “been kept in so much safety” from Islam.

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48 Ibid, 110.

49 Ibid.

Grant, who through historical narrative of population movements connects the Assyrians with the ancient Israelites, asserts that they “are indeed the representatives and lineal descendants of the Ten Tribes,” a claim he states is understood by the Assyrians themselves.\textsuperscript{51} Categorizing them as 	extit{Nazarenes}, which according to Grant means “Christians converted from Judaism,” he relates their austere practices to a continuation of Jewish rites, free from improper innovations (i.e. Catholic) added during the development of Christianity.\textsuperscript{52} However, he claims that “only a part of them may have Hebrew origin,” which he limits to those living in the mountains.\textsuperscript{53} Claiming that although they are surrounded by Kurds, Armenians, Persians and Yezidis, their isolation prevents interaction with other groups, precluding the influence of other traditions, either through cohabitation, intermarriage or routine interaction.\textsuperscript{54} This understanding rejects information provided previously to Perkins and Grant, who were informed of routine interaction between groups vis-à-vis tax collection. Additionally, other elements, such as local Kurdish proverb “haceta sergînan diçine gundê mexînan” (in need of dung cakes they go to the village of the Assyrians) reflect a greater deal of interaction than Grant assumes.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., iv.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 165-166.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 203.
Still, Grant asserts their isolation and direct continuation from the tribes of Israel. Additionally, their spiritual renewal, according to Grant, will bring about a renewal of the Gentiles.\(^\text{56}\) As a result, Grant sees mission to the independent Assyrian community as “the principle field” of the ABCFM’s future labors.\(^\text{57}\) Having established this assertion, he closely examines the Book of Hosea to support his millenarian understanding of the Assyrians. Drawing upon the Townsend Bible, which relates the first three chapters of Hosea as “Hosea’s appeal to the Ten Tribes,” he asserts that the Assyrians have been “betrothed’ to God, but have not yet fully consummated their bond.\(^\text{58}\) This bond with God has been their source of protection over the centuries, allowing them to “lie down safely” amidst the threats of Islam.\(^\text{59}\) He even claims that the region in which the Patriarch resides, \textit{Tiyari}, which he translates as “sheepfolds,” reflects their relationship with the Great Shepherd, who has provided them a barrier (fold) against “the wily thief and devouring wolves.”\(^\text{60}\) Additionally, their fearsome reputation amongst their Kurdish neighbors it itself described as the result of a special covenant made between God and Muslim rulers in order to preserve them.\(^\text{61}\)

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\(^{56}\) Grant, \textit{The Nestorians: Or the Lost Tribes}, v.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 246-247.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 249.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 251.
However, their removal to Hakkari is seen by Grant as punishment by God for former idolatry. Although they have rejected their idols, they are still in a state of partial removal from God, and as such have not received their full glory of becoming a powerful nation. However, they remain a “light shining in a dark place,” and live as the “erring daughter of Zion, purified from her idolatry, waiting in her espousal covenant to be received into perfect fellowship with her Beloved.” From Hosea, through which he establishes the relationship between the Assyrians and God, Grant moves on to Revelation, through which he explores the rise of Islam and their role in the Second Coming. As prophesied, an angel “is seen ascending from the East,” seen a reference to the Assyrians. Furthermore, Grant sees the rise of the Muslims as the “fifth and sixth trumpets” of Revelation, which have brought about the destruction of a third of mankind, and brought “woe to the inhabiters of earth” through the “sanguinary sword of Mahmoud.” This point, Grant states, is “so generally conceded, and withal so clear, that it is quite unnecessary… to enter upon a formal proof of it.” Furthermore, the “holy city” mentioned in Revelation 11:2, which has been “trampled upon” by the nations of Islam, denotes either “literal Zion, or the Eastern Church.”

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62 Ibid., 254.
63 Ibid., 263.
64 Ibid., 265.
65 Ibid., 267.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 269.
Grant states that the Assyrians have served as one of the “two witnesses” mentioned in Revelation, who are granted the right to prophesy, connected to their early missionary activity in Central Asia. However, their era of proselytizing has ceased, and their scattering and loss of influence are related to the rise of the “Eastern Antichrist,” or Muhammad, which Grant relates to both Revelation and the apocalyptic vision of the Book of Daniel.\textsuperscript{68} The Independent Assyrians, Grant states, are currently under their greatest threat, manifested by both the continued threat of the “Eastern Antichrist” and an ever-increasing interest by the Catholic Church, or the “Western Antichrist.”\textsuperscript{69} Despite previous evidence to the contrary, Grant states that the Assyrians’ Kurdish neighbors now intend to invade, subjugate and convert the independent tribes, which will occur if God removes his special protection over them, which would be caused by their affiliation with the Catholic Church.

Despite his pessimistic views of Muslim domination of local Christians, Grant believed that “the arm of Mohammedan power is soon to be broken,” a downfall which God will hasten.\textsuperscript{70} In its place will rise the “Kings of the East,” or the Assyrians. Having remained free from idolatry, and having suffered centuries of abuse by Muslims, according to Grant, they will “rise to exert an important agency in the conversion of the world.”\textsuperscript{71} This rise and influence will itself be either the “millennial Sabbath,” or at

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 282.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 283.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 294.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 311.
least the “preparation before the Sabbath,” destroying the Antichrist and bringing about
the Second Coming.\textsuperscript{72}

Armed with this millenarian view of the Assyrians, including an exaggerated
sense of Christian-Muslim antagonism in the region, Grant returned to implement his
mission. As will be explored later, his brief mission met with little success, quickly
agitating rivalries between rulers and providing the spark for the occupation of Assyrian
territory by the Patriarch’s Kurdish rivals. For Grant, the mission to the Assyrians was
of utmost importance, and represented a spiritual battleground between Christianity and
Islam as well as Protestants and Catholics. Contemporary to Grant’s mission, however,
was that of a branch of the Anglican Society for the Promoting of Christian Knowledge
(SPCK), which began outreach to the Christian communities of Tur Abdin, who were
seen by Grant as the next endeavor of the ABCFM’s Assyrian mission.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 312.
CHAPTER THREE
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANGLICAN AND EPISCOPAL MISSIONS TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Contemporary to the ABCFM, Anglican interest in the Syriac Orthodox and Assyrian churches began as a result of the Royal Geographical Society’s 1835-1837 Euphrates Valley Expedition led by F.R. Chesney. The Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Church of England’s primary missionary organization, had for two decades been in contact with the Syriac Orthodox Church of southern India, beginning in 1813. The first information exchange between the CMS and the Assyrian Church of the East came in 1822, when Bishop Mar Shevris, Chaldean Bishop of Cizre, met with British Foreign Bible Society representative Henry Leeves in Constantinople. Informed of the large number of Assyrian Christians in Hakkari and Urmiah, Leeves first attempted contact with Patriarch Mar Shimun by dispatching Syriac copies of the Bible via the Chaldean bishop. This effort would prove fruitless, with the Bibles never reaching their destination. Furthermore, Mar Shevris was deposed by the Vatican for his association with the English missionary effort, but due to his unique background his employment was sought by the CMS. As a result, he became a valuable asset to future

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3 Ibid.
activities in Kurdistan, providing the CMS-affiliated Bible Society with translations in various Syriac and Kurdish scripts.\textsuperscript{4}

In 1825, Joseph Wolf, a Jewish-born Christian convert, encountered the Urmiah Assyrian community while exploring the Middle East. Calling upon the Church Missionary Society to send aid to independent Assyrians, he states his own intention to lead the effort in preaching to this community the “pure doctrine of Christ, without adulterating it with Popery.”\textsuperscript{5} Wolf, who interacted with both the Syriac Orthodox Christians of Mardin and the Assyrians of Persia warned of the gains Catholics were in a position to make amongst these communities, largely as a result of financial incentives offered by Catholic missionaries. Wolf was informed by a local deacon of recent conversion amongst the Syriac community to the Catholic Church, whose wealth and comparatively lax food prohibitions made conversion an attractive option.\textsuperscript{6} Wolf believed that well-informed adherence to the Bible would be the defense against Catholic encroachment, stating to a local leader “read this Gospel diligently with your flock, and they will never turn Catholic… and they will soon perceive that the whole system of Popery is nothing but a lie.”\textsuperscript{7} Despite his overtures, which resemble the influential reports made by Grant, there was no immediate effort to establish a mission amongst these groups.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 19.


\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 2: 244.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
A decade later, Col. F.R. Chesney was tasked with finding a water route to India through Mesopotamia, an expedition which would prove fruitless. However, two members of the team, surgeon and geologist William Ainsworth and Arabic interpreter Isa Rassam, would return to England with an interest in the Christians of Hakkari and Tur Abdin. Rassam, a Chaldean-born Mosul native, had at age sixteen been sent to Rome to attend seminary. However, according to Rassam, an encounter with an anti-Catholic uncle and a German CMS missionary led to his rejection of Catholicism and instilled a desire to promote evangelical Christianity amongst his home community.\(^8\) Ainsworth, however, presents his interests as research-oriented, desiring to become “better acquainted with the actual condition of the mountaineer Chaldean Christians,” referring to the Chaldean and Assyrian communities as one.\(^9\)

Of Ainsworth’s proposal, only one of the five goals was religious in nature. Listed last in order, Ainsworth stated his intention to “open a communication between the Church of England and the Nestorian Christians.”\(^10\) Additionally, he also proposed establishing education systems in the region, although the bulk of his mission proposal focused on conducting surveys and artifact collection in North Mesopotamia. The SPCK was limited in its interest, stating that negotiations for unification between churches could only be handled by bishops, and provided instructions focusing mostly

\(^8\) Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, 20.


on researching the Assyrians’ conditions, needs and religious practices.\textsuperscript{11} Rassam was placed in charge of opening channels for ecumenical dialogue, but was instructed by the SPCK that “the Society does not seek to interfere in any way with the affairs of the Chaldean Christians, or of any of the branches of the Church of Christ.” \textsuperscript{12}

Ainsworth and Rassam set out in the spring of 1838, and began their long expedition in September of that year, departing from Constantinople. The group first explored the Greek communities of western and inner Anatolia, eventually spending a year and a half doing so. However, their expedition was nearly ended during the Battle of Nezip, a dramatic defeat of Ottoman forces by Egyptian Ibrahim Pasha. Present as guests of the local Ottoman administration, Ainsworth and Rassam, fleeing with the routed Ottoman forces, lost their property, fell ill, and returned to Constantinople.\textsuperscript{13} They were again provided new equipment and funds by the SPCK, and departed once more for Assyrian lands spring of 1840. They arrived in Hakkari in June, 1840, one month after Asahel Grant’s visit to the region. However, their previous delay enabled them only a brief stay, and limited their interaction to the Assyrians of Hakkari, having been unable to visit the communities of Urmiah.\textsuperscript{14}

Aware of Grant’s recent visit, as well as of his reports on the Assyrians, Ainsworth would focus much of his attention on presenting his own understanding of

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 29.


\textsuperscript{14} Coakley, The Church of the East and the Church of England, 28.
the community, characterized by respect for their history and desire to preserve their integrity and avoid political or theological conflict. Their arrival was met with suspicion by both local Kurds and Assyrians, the latter of which were concerned with the pair’s possible affiliation with the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{15} Immediately struck by the civility and knowledge of the local Assyrian clergy, Ainsworth would take a measured approach into his discussions with Assyrian clergy regarding religious topics, presenting himself as less interested in engaging in discussion of doctrine than his Congregationalist counterpart. Additionally, in his reports he would present the community as not being “in total want of spirituality,” which he states is assumed by “some persons,” referring to Grant.\textsuperscript{16}

Local clergy engaged with Ainsworth and Rassam in topics of purgatory, church structure and practices, with both parties seeking to find common points of belief between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Anglican Church. Ainsworth also discussed issues of nomenclature within the community, accepting their rejection of the term Nestorian, quoting a local bishop as stating “Nestor was the patriarch of the Greeks and not of us,” that their church existed long before the schisms, and that the term “has been imposed upon us by a depreciatory ill-will.”\textsuperscript{17} As a result, Ainsworth refers to them as “Chaldeans” or “Mountain Chaldeans,” choosing, as with the Catholic Church,
to link them with the historical Chaldean community from which they were believed to originate.\textsuperscript{18}

Unlike Grant, who seemingly ignored the region’s complex political arrangement in favor of a narrative of oppression, Ainsworth presents Assyrians as unquestioned in their control of their territory, including the presence of Kurdish villages which paid tribute to their Assyrian rulers, and their ability to inflict punishment on neighboring Kurdish tribes for infractions.\textsuperscript{19} However, he notes an increased fear of outside encroachment into the area, both by Christian and Kurdish leaders, who saw Ainsworth and Rassam as “fore-runners of those who come to take this country.”\textsuperscript{20}

Upon meeting Mar Shimun, described as dressed in Kurdish garb, Ainsworth and Rassam are told of the Assyrians’ fears of becoming subject to an outside power, be it political or religious.\textsuperscript{21} The missionary pair then set out to explain the goals of the SPCK, which, as reported to the Patriarch, did not wish to “make the Chaldean Church subject to the Church of England.”\textsuperscript{22} Rather, Ainsworth stated that their intention was “to help them, by educating youths, by printing books, and by endeavoring to restore to its primitive purity the knowledge and civilization possessed by the followers of the Chaldean Church,” and that “the Church of England would be very sorry to interfere in

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 223.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 236.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 247.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 247-248.
the modes of worship in the old Church."23 Unlike Grant, who presented the Assyrians as in a state of spiritual depravity, Ainsworth acknowledges the heritage of the Church of the East, and presents an agreement which seeks to benefit – but not alter – the Assyrian community. Additionally, he informed the Patriarch of the number of commonalities between churches, presenting the communities as sharing similar attitudes towards the practice of Christianity, including ecumenism, hierarchy and liturgy, which both reportedly claimed were central points of their traditions.

The Patriarch was surprised at this fact, stating that he had been led to believe that the American Congregationalists, who “had no liturgy, no express form of prayer, and acknowledged no apostolic succession,” had claimed to be representatives of the Church of England, likely in order to link their efforts with the potential political gains brought by the British government.24 However, in a warning to the Patriarch about Grant and his colleagues, Rassam stated that “there were… many zealous Christians who seemed to have read the Bible, rather to invent new doctrines and rebel against the Church than to give them increase of wisdom and holiness.”25 The Patriarch would provide an initial indication of his negative attitudes towards Congregationalist practices, stating “we do not know what kind of Christians” they are since “there cannot exist a Church… that remains divested of all ecclesiastical rites.”26 He also feared the

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23 Ibid., 248.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 249.
26 Ibid., 251.
promulgation of their doctrine, stating that although he had agreed to allow the ABCFM to open schools, “the children must go to church and learn our doctrine.”

The Patriarch, interested in the opening of schools, agreed to begin correspondence with the Church of England. However, he was fearful of any political engagement. Described by Ainsworth as, at a young age, “already gray with the care and anxiety attending upon the labors” of temporal and spiritual leadership, he was constantly preoccupied with preserving harmony both internally amongst Assyrian tribes as well as with Kurdish neighbors. For example, prior to agreeing to begin negotiations for an alliance, he held a consultation with his brother, discussing the possible ways in which his Kurdish neighbors might view such an agreement, and was convinced that it was “not of a nature to interfere with local politics.” Stating shared fears of consequences of foreign encroachment, he presents the death of researcher Schultz as having been the result of fears of invasion caused by Schultz’s discovery of gold deposits in the region, information which would increase foreign attention towards the area. However, as will later be explored, the rapid succession of Christians taking interest in alliance with the Patriarch would hold severe consequences for the Assyrian community, adding to a rapidly increasing climate of political rivalry and intrigue.

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27 Ibid., 251.
28 Ibid., 252.
29 Ibid., 253.
30 Ibid., 295.
Ainsworth discusses at length both Grant’s activities in the region and his false understandings of the Assyrian community. Stating that Grant had been given instructions to reach Hakkari before the SPCK, he states his opinion that the ABCFM was interested in the region solely as a result of Anglican plans to explore it.\(^\text{31}\)

Rejecting Grant’s assertion of the Assyrian tribes’ Jewish origins, Ainsworth states “when all circumstances in connection with the subject are taken into consideration, it really possesses little more intrinsic value than if it were applied to any of the other nations dwelling in the same land.”\(^\text{32}\) Rejecting the millenarian narrative promoted by Grant, Ainsworth instead saw Assyrians as possessing a unique heritage, connecting them with the ancient Chaldean communities of the region. Grant, according to Ainsworth, was interested in finding locals who would attest to his already formulated understanding of the Assyrians, claiming that they have only rumor and no written fact to attest to Jewish origins.\(^\text{33}\)

Criticizing further Grant’s narrow understanding of Assyria and its historical territory, he rejects the place-name associations Grant makes to assert his claim, and states that Grant neglects the diversity of the region’s various peoples, instead “seeing a Jew in every face.”\(^\text{34}\) Furthermore, he states that Grant’s understanding of the region does not account for cultural exchange, specifically linguistic exchange and shared

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 254.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., 257.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 259.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., 263.
religious rituals. Rejecting both the Congregationalists’ understandings of the
Assyrians, as well as the nomenclature used to describe them, Ainsworth sought to
promote an understanding of the community which allowed them to speak for
themselves. Ainsworth further recommends that future efforts shouldn’t seek to
increase the power of the Assyrians vis-à-vis their Kurdish neighbors, but rather should
focus simply on uniting “the Church throughout the world in brotherly love and sound
doctrine.”

Grant became aware of Ainsworth’s activities, and perhaps of his negative
attitude towards Grant’s intentions. While reporting on his second visit to the area,
Grant informed the ABCFM that Patriarch Mar Shimun had been visited by “Doct.
Ainsworth, an agent of the English ‘Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,’” who
was accompanied by Rassam, whom he characterized as “Nestorian.” The pair
reportedly offered “in behalf of English national church to establish schools among
them and… aid them in other ways,” causing apprehension by Grant and the
Committee. However, the Committee, upon Grant’s information, claimed “that it is
not the intention of their English brethren to attempt a mission among the Nestorians,”
but rather to provide material, and not spiritual aid. Additionally, the Committee
claimed that there had been negative consequences as a result of their visit, and stated


37 Ibid., 115.

38 Ibid.
their fear that the presence of other Protestant groups would “awaken the thought among
the Nestorian ecclesiastics” of rival Protestant communities.\textsuperscript{39}

Unlike the Committee’s assumption, the SPCK was highly receptive to
Ainsworth’s suggestion of a mission to the Assyrians, and in 1842 it sent George Percy
Badger to initiate a permanent mission to the Assyrians based in Mosul. As will be
discussed later, Badger in many ways mirrored his American counterpart, Grant, seeing
Hakkari as a land of spiritual competition between missionary groups. As a result, he
would quickly be removed from his position. However, simultaneous to Ainsworth’s
SPCK-funded mission to Hakkari was that of Horatio Southgate to Tur Abdin, an
American Episcopal missionary who shared Ainsworth’s view of the need for political
sensitivity and the dangers of antagonizing rivalries. Southgate, often referred to by
Ainsworth in his writings, shared similar awareness of political sensitivities of the
regions, and provided perhaps the most detailed account of the complexity of interfaith
relations in the region.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 116.
CHAPTER FOUR

HORATIO SOUTHGATE, THE EPISCOPAL MISSION AND TUR ABDIN ON THE EVE OF REFORM

Horatio Southgate was born in Portland, Maine in 1812 into a Congregationalist household. Like his counterparts Perkins and Grant, Southgate attended Andover Theological Seminary. However, in 1834 he entered the Episcopal Church and began his process of ordination, which he eventually received in 1844.\(^1\) During the interval, Southgate served as “Missionary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America to Persia,” primary between the years 1839 and 1844. He began his first long journey in the spring of 1839, traveling from Constantinople to Baghdad, and then returning the following year to establish a relationship between the Syriac Orthodox and Episcopal Churches. At the onset of his mission, Southgate received aid directly from the Episcopal Church’s Foreign Committee. However, he soon turned his attention towards the SPCK, seeking funding from them as well as attempting coordination of the Anglican and Episcopal missions in the region. Southgate, whose initial rhetoric reflected that of Grant, eventually developed a nuanced view of the region, often commenting on the presence of oppression of Muslims by the hands of Christians, a rejection of the narrative promoted by Grant.

In an 1836 sermon delivered by Southgate in New York prior to his departure, he called for mission to the Middle East, stating the need to properly spread the Gospel to the region, while blaming “corrupt and contentious Christianity” as the reason for the

rise of Islam. Southgate quotes historian Humphrey Prideaux, stating that the fracturing caused by early Christianity’s dogmatic issues “divided and subdivided them into endless schisms and contentions… so that they lost the whole substance of their religion,” and promoting political rivalry and violence over unified faith.³

Unlike his Congregationalist counterparts, Southgate promoted a mission directed towards Muslims within Muslim lands, which would not only bring the Gospel to Muslims but also aid in “enlightening and purifying the corrupt Christian Churches of the East.”⁴ Southgate, who here draws heavily upon Eli Smith’s work on the region, has no doubt been influenced by his Congregationalist contemporaries’ views of Christianity in the region. However, he stated that promoting pure Christianity amongst the ruling Muslim elite would result in its being reintroduced to Christian communities, avoiding the potential conflicts which would result in seeking to reform Christians who were politically dominated by Muslim rulers. Southgate also believed that the “character of Mohamedans,” characterized by intelligence and fond of religious inquiry, was suitable for their receiving pure Christianity, which they had not yet been exposed to due to the degeneration of Eastern Christian Churches.⁵ Additionally, Southgate states that an emergent reformist trend in the Ottoman Empire will provide an opening for Christianity to be promoted. Southgate states that Muslims of the Ottoman Empire

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³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.
are increasingly “adopting the customs and imitating the manners of Christians,” in order to reorganize the state, which will no doubt result in the eventual examination in the tenets of Christians’ faith.\(^6\) Furthermore both Southgate and the Foreign Committee were in agreement on the prospects of liberal social reform in the empire, prompted by that of Muhammad Ali in Egypt, whose policies were seen as allowing for easier missionary access to Egyptian territory.\(^7\)

The Foreign Committee readily accepted Southgate’s proposal for direct mission to Ottoman Muslims, sending him on Easter Sunday, April, 3\(^{rd}\), 1836. Their instructions to him were to tour Persian and Ottoman territory and make note of the possibility of mission to the Muslims of various regions. First he would travel to Constantinople where he would receive language training in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, knowledge of which would “justify entrance” into conducting direct mission to Muslims.\(^8\) However, he was instructed specifically to avoid any contention with other Christian missions which might encounter, with his instructions stating that “in the tie which binds you to the Episcopal Church, there is nothing which places you in an attitude of hostility to men of any other Christian denomination.” Furthermore, he was told to avoid contestation of points of faith amongst either Western or Eastern Christian communities, who would see such contestation as “repulsive.”\(^9\) Southgate would employ this attitude,

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\(^6\) Ibid.  
\(^7\) Ibid.  
\(^8\) Ibid.  
\(^9\) Ibid.
promoting an inclusive view of Christianity during his mission, and seeking to coordinate with fellow Protestant and Catholic missionaries, a significant difference from his anti-Catholic Anglican and Congregationalist colleagues.

Following travels to Syria and Egypt, Southgate arrived in Constantinople in 1838. Upon his arrival he decided to engage primarily in the study of Turkish, rather than Arabic, which he felt would be prohibitively lengthy. Furthermore, Southgate appears to have recognized the limitations which his preconceptions of the Muslim world presented, stating “I saw that my first judgments had been inaccurate, because they had been formed from a false position. I had begun to study the East with a Western mind.” He rejected “those antipathies which the Christian world has too freely cherished against the followers of Mohammad,” and acknowledged the lack of depth in Christians’ knowledge of the “Mussulmans of Turkey.” Although he unsuccessfully sought accommodations with a Turkish family, he spent two years in Constantinople learning Turkish and engaging directly with Muslim communities. He rejected the stereotype of Muslim oppression, presenting it as symptomatic of mechanisms of authority rather than as a result of religious convictions. Additionally, Southgate adopted a positive attitude towards Turkish culture as well as Islam and its practice, stating that he has “never known a Mussulman sincere in his faith… in whom


11 Ibid., 72.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 77.
moral rectitude did not seem an active quality and a living principle.”

He even introduced his travelogue with a detailed presentation of Islam, describing the beauty of the Qur’an and the role Muhammad played in combatting pagan worship and promoting monotheism.

Southgate first traveled to via Turkish Trebizond and Bitlis to Persian Kurdistan, where he encountered members of the Assyrian community, who complained of routine attacks by Kurdish tribes. However, the villagers with whom he met lived alongside Kurds who shared in this oppression. Still interested primarily in mission to Muslims, Southgate payed little attention to local Christians, but instead sought to identify characteristics of Islam as practiced in Kurdistan. He did visit the ABCFM mission in Urmiah, where he met both Perkins and Grant, who assured him of their intent to avoid the “overthrow of the Nestorian Church.” As if he was predicting Grant’s later interference in the region, Southgate commented on the central importance of avoiding the creation of new communities or of engaging in a political manner with these groups, stating that such actions would result in “horrid schism” which will “rend and scatter the quivering members of the Body of Christ.” In a criticism of the spiritualism-driven mission work of the ABCFM, Southgate states “preservation must be an end” in addition to purification of practice, and that missionaries must ”abstain from bold and

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14 Ibid., 78.
15 Ibid., 7.
16 Ibid., 290.
17 Ibid., 303.
18 Ibid., 305.
hasty denunciations, even of what is wrong,” reflecting concern with the criticism and reform promoted by the Urmiah mission.19

Following his encounter with the Urmiah mission, Southgate turned his attention towards the Christians of North Mesopotamia, particularly “those who had not been visited by Protestant missionaries,” presumably referring to the Syriac Orthodox Church.20 Although he initially sought to work amongst Muslims, Southgate had halfway through his initial journey turned his attention towards Eastern Christians, influenced by the impact of German, American and English missionaries in Persia.21 As a result, Southgate first sought out the Chaldean communities of Baghdad and Mosul. Acknowledging Rome’s wisdom in keeping Eastern churches’ rites intact, he criticizes Catholic missionaries’ tendencies towards creating division and confusion amongst the region’s Christians. In their politically oriented mission, new converts, brought en masse by their Christian tribal leaders, are unable to differentiate between present and past belief, including no change in understanding amongst Assyrian converts.22

Southgate then traveled to Mardin via Sinjar and Nisibis, where he met Hafiz Osman Pasha, who the following year led the Ottoman forces against a victorious Egyptian Army at the disastrous Battle of Nezip. Noting the diverse religious makeup of Mardin, he stated that the Christian population, which made up the majority of the

19 Ibid., 305.
21 Ibid., 40.
22 Ibid., 227.
population, is composed of roughly equal numbers of Armenian and Syriac Orthodox families, along with a number of Syriac Catholic families who share churches with their Miaphysite coreligionists. 23 He also notes the presence of a Shemsiyye group in Mardin, stating that they had been brought recently from a nearby village and given the option of conversion to Islam or death by the local governor. Upon the intercession of a local Syriac bishop the community was given another option of nominally converting to Syriac Orthodox Christianity, although they allegedly maintained their previous practices.24

According to Southgate, significant animosity existed between the Orthodox and Catholic Syriacs, a result of heavy-handed Catholic missionary activity which led to mistrust by the Syriac Orthodox community, culminating in violent clashes between them.25 According to Southgate, the process of mediation between groups led the Orthodox community to believe that the Ottoman government was siding with the secessionist Catholics, a result of French influence and Catholic funds, causing an even greater number to secede. Often, according to Southgate, conversion to Catholicism has come about on an individual basis, resulting in new members “more zealously and intelligently attached to their new faith,” and as such potentially influencing other Syriac Orthodox Christians.26

23 Ibid., 276.
24 Ibid., 284.
25 Ibid., 277.
26 Ibid., 281.
In his brief initial visit to Mardin, Southgate met with the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch. As with Ainsworth, the Patriarch was interested in differences between Anglican and Protestant beliefs, and both similarly recognized a number of shared commonalities across traditions. Additionally, he recognized a sincere interest by the Patriarch and his clergy to better promote knowledge and faith amongst their community. Although his visit with the Patriarch was brief, and his time in Mardin totaled only a few days, the visit made an impression on Southgate. Upon his return to Constantinople he arranged for another journey to the region, where he discussed in greater details the possibility of establishing a permanent mission amongst the Syriac Orthodox Christians.

Southgate, now fascinated with the Syriac Church, prepared a detailed theological comparison between their “monophysite” beliefs and those of the Anglican Church. Through doing so, he establishes that the Syriac Orthodox community does not hold a Christological belief opposed to that of Western churches. The perception that they do, according to Southgate, has merely been the result of “logomachy” over interpretations of the words person and nature across communities, but does not amount to any actual difference in understanding.\(^{27}\) Additionally, he discusses the use of the term “Jacobite” as appropriate only for differentiating between Catholic and Orthodox groups, stating that it is akin to calling himself a “Parkerite,” perhaps referring to

Anglican theologian Matthew Parker, and that he had in fact been admonished for using “Jacobite” by the Patriarch himself.  

Southgate received new guidance for his mission, including the suggestion that he should address the Syriac Orthodox Church in a sense of friendly dialogue between Eastern and Western churches, and be open to “receive any such light from them” during this discourse. During this new expedition, Southgate changed his approach to focus only on engaging with Christian communities, hoping to make Muslims “think better of Christianity by thinking better of a Christian” through increasing individual piety and commitment to Christianity. Additionally, repeating the rhetoric used in his sermon prior to departure from the US, Southgate states the imminence of Ottoman Westernization, and the eagerness of Ottoman Christians to Westernize through formal engagement with European and American churches. Unlike Grant, who saw these communities as in a state of despair, Southgate presents them as “already awake,” and seeking revitalization and strengthening of faith, a process perhaps to be sped up as a result of the Ottomans’ recent military defeat.  

Southgate also maintained his awareness of the country’s complex political situation, rejecting a simple narrative of oppression of Christians or of clear divides across communities. For example, he noted that many Muslims whom he had

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28 Ibid., v.
29 Ibid., 14.
30 Ibid., 42.
31 Ibid., 16.
encountered acknowledged their ancestors’ practice of Christianity, stating that some were even aware that conversion to Islam was a result of pressure during times of persecution.\textsuperscript{32} Many Muslims, according to Southgate, maintained a great deal of respect for the religion of their ancestors, and still at times practiced rites associated with local Christian traditions.\textsuperscript{33}

Additionally, a brief visit by Southgate to Diyarbakir indicated not only the complexities of interreligious interaction but also changing attitudes towards Western influence. Arriving in Diyarbakir during a great famine, he described at length how this event reflected the social hierarchy of the city. Within the city were a large number of ill, dying Kurdish Muslim beggars, whose requests for aid were reportedly ignored by both Muslims and the city’s wealthy Armenian population, who sought only to aid their coreligionists, with even priests refusing to help.\textsuperscript{34} Additionally, when asking a local Turkish noble as to why Kurds were being ignored, he was told “we have had enough trouble with them,” referring to recent uprisings against initial Ottoman reforms.\textsuperscript{35} He noted that locals had become fearful as a result of the Battle of Nezip, and many had held local Christians and Ottoman elite as responsible for the defeat due to their, support

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 98.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 99.
for reform. As a result multiple mobs had attacked Christian districts and driven out Ottoman garrisons, necessitating a reserve force being brought in from Mosul.\textsuperscript{36}

However, shifts in Ottoman policy, to be detailed later in this paper, were already increasing the rights enjoyed by the Christian populations of Ottoman-held territories such as Diyarbakir and Tur Abdin. Aware of the complications these changes could cause, Southgate warned of the risks of a too-rapid increase in Christians’ rights, stating that “it would be vain to say that our Eastern brethren are fairly prepared to govern themselves,” and a series of new schisms and rivalries would emerge.\textsuperscript{37} It was with such an attitude that he engaged the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, Mor Ignatius Elias II.

Southgate’s second visit to the Syriac Patriarch focused on finding ground for the community’s spiritual growth within the increasingly sensitive political environment. The Patriarch, then seeking to reconnect the Syriac communities of Kerala and the Middle East, was interested in arranging for aid for creating a group of non-seminary schools to educate the region’s Christians. As a result, he inquired into the availability of such aid from the Church of England or American Episcopal Church. Southgate agreed that the Church of England could provide useful service to the Syriac Orthodox Church, and that dialogue between the two churches, which hold many common characteristics, would be fruitful.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 103.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 106.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 231.
that “there is no church on earth which has the power for good among the Eastern Christians” compared to the Anglicans, he was apprehensive about the consequences of such dialogue. Rather than any formal union, he suggests a slow process of building the community, stating that there should be “no hasty and unauthorized amalgamations” or new sects, but rather the security and unity of the Syriac Church and its community should be paramount. 39 While Southgate promoted such a careful approach to engaging Eastern Christian communities, Grant, his contemporary in Hakkari, sought to make rapid gains. As will later be discussed, Grant’s zeal and haste, in addition to changing Ottoman policies, resulted in the massacre of Hakkari’s Christian community. Additionally, these same events enabled the occupation of Tur Abdin and the devastation of that region’s Christian communities.

39 Ibid., 230-231.
CHAPTER FIVE

OTTOMAN REFORM AND THE OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE

In 1839, the Ottomans formally initiated a series of changes to Ottoman administration and policy, announcing them through an address given in Gülhane Park outside of the royal palace. Although the 1839 Gülhane Rescript enunciated the intent of the Ottoman reforms, the process of centralization had already been initiated at the beginning of the decade. In order to subjugate the network of independent Kurdish and Assyrian territories, North Mesopotamia was placed under control of the Mosul vilayet, whose governor was given free rein to subjugate these territories. The first groups to face the Ottomans were the Yezidis of Jebel Sinjar, located south of Tur Abdin, and Sheikhan, north of Mosul. Their fate would be an early example of the Ottoman’s ruthlessness in executing their plans. According to a description of the events by a western traveler, “several hundreds were totally massacred, and the ears of a large number were cut off and hung up before the gates of Mosul.” The Ottomans would quickly subdue many of these kingdoms through playing upon inter-Kurdish rivalries, only later to turn on them. For example, the most powerful local Kurdish chief, Mir Koor of Rawanduz, was used to defeat neighboring Kurdish chieftains, including the Yezidis, only to be eliminated in 1836. Through organized military effort and skillful exploitation of Kurdish rivalries the Ottomans subjugated many of the independent

1 Hirmis Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 172.

2 Ibid., 174.

3 Ibid.
kingdoms by the end of the decade. However, following fierce initial resistance from
the Kurdish and Assyrian tribes of Hakkari and the Kurdish tribes of Badinan, bordering
Tur Abdin, the Ottoman advances were halted.

By 1839’s Gülhane Rescript, Mardin Sancak remained under the control of the
Diyarbakir vilayet, having been reassigned in the 18th century from Baghdad. However, a small scale rebellion began as a result of Kurdish resistance to changing
state policy, leading to occupation by Ottoman forces and reassignment to the Mosul
vilayet, events similar to those reported by Southgate in Diyarbakır. The administrative
changes initiated by the central government then began to be applied. Perhaps most
immediate significant for the region’s Christian population were the significant changes
made to the existing millet system. Tanzimat policy, which sought to provide equal
status to the various religious groups and madhab (mezhep) communities, increased the
number of recognized religious groups, creating independent millets of both preexisting
and newly formed religious communities.

In 1834, the Syriac Orthodox Church reconciled its various factions, divided
since 1364, with the Deyrulzafaran-based Patriarchate as its spiritual authority.
Although they would remain tied to the Syriac Catholic population, new Syriac
Orthodox and Assyrian millets were created in 1839, removing the Syriac population
from under the Armenian millet. Referred to as the Yakubi (Jacobite) or Kadim Süryani
(Ancient Syriac) millet, they gained new political independence through the expansion

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4 Türkiye Diyanet Vakıf İslâm Ansiklopedisi, s.v. “Mardin.”
5 Ibid.
of the millet system.\textsuperscript{6} The Assyrians, including their patriarch, who now lived mostly in the isolated independent region of Hakkari, were also provided their own independent millet.

The Syriac Orthodox community, the largest single Christian community within Mardin, maintained a population balance in which Christians held a slight majority, one which fluctuated according to various population figures of the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{7} In one population count Mardin Sancak in 1840, the Syriac Orthodox population of the region was estimated at 10,455 families, with an additional 1,365 Syriac Catholic families.\textsuperscript{8} This same figure estimates the total Syriac Orthodox population at 64,000, and other figures claim the second largest Christian community to be the Armenians at 18,655.\textsuperscript{9} These figures were compiled from their various sources and presented in İbrahim Özoşar’s work on the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Syriac Orthodox community, \textit{Bir Yüzyıl Bir Sancak Bir Cemaat} (One Century, One District, One Community). Although discrepancies amongst the numbers make them somewhat unreliable, they do uniformly indicate the dominance of the Syriac Orthodox community in the region.\textsuperscript{10} The community, newly made more independent, had a tremendous amount to gain from the Tanzimat reforms.

\textsuperscript{6} İbrahim Özoşar, \textit{Bir Yüzyıl Bir Sancak Bir Cemaat: 19. Yüzyılda Mardin Suryanileri} (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Beyan, 2008),139.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.

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At the time of these reforms, the Syriac Orthodox community already maintained control of many of the urban trades within Mardin and Midyat. ¹¹ Many Syriac Orthodox villagers had fled for the cities during the early 19ᵗʰ century in search of greater stability and protection from Kurdish raids, further increasing the Christian populations of the cities. ¹² Controlling much of the urban trade, handcraft and metalwork production as well as portions of the rural farming sector, the Syriac Orthodox community had already achieved a level of prosperity by the implementation of the reforms. ¹³

A facet of reform which greatly benefitted the Syriac Orthodox community was the implementation of a local trade court (ticaret makhemesi). ¹⁴ This court system worked alongside the Shariah court system in administration of financial matters in the region and raised the influence of Christians in the economic aspects of governance. The Syriac Orthodox community still paid a cizye tax in lieu of conscription, but was granted greater control over tax collection within the community as a result of their independence from the Armenian millet. ¹⁵ This increased control over their local finances no doubt assisted the prosperous Syriac Orthodox community, enabling them greater control of their economic situation.

¹¹ Ibid., 435.
¹² Ibid., 171.
¹³ Ibid., 435.
¹⁴ Ibid., 156.
¹⁵ Ibid., 315.
One of the intents of Mustafa Reşit Pasha’s reforms was to equalize the status of the various religious communities within the Ottoman Empire, and in doing so eliminate the influence of foreign powers on minority populations. Pushing for this equality he stated, “I distinguish my Muslim subjects in my mosque, my Christian subjects in the church, and my Jewish subjects in the synagogue, but there is no other difference among them.”  

Although the goal was equal status amongst communities, the perception in the region was of a favoring of non-Muslim populations over Muslims. Military conscription quotas initially implemented by Mahmut II were seen as favoring non-Muslims, who were able to maintain exemption after their inclusion into the new political system, whereas Muslims conscripts were initially drafted for a twenty year term of service.  

Although the conscription system was altered by Sultan Abdulmecid, who claimed it to be “harmful and ruinous,” it was still seen as favoring non-Muslims over Muslims.  

Additionally, financial reforms and tax systems were seen as favoring non-Muslims, particularly the integration of the Kurdish Agha land holdings into the state economic system. Whereas Kurdish Aghas had previously maintained absolute control over their land holdings, the new land reforms initiated by the Sublime Porte instituted ultimate ownership of all land by the state.  

Additionally, education reforms and the banning of certain Sufi religious orders were condemned by the Ulema,

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18 Ibid., 119-120.

prompting resistance by the empire’s religious elite. Although these reforms would not immediately affect the independent Kurdish regions, they did raise frustration amongst the Anatolian Muslim population towards Christians. This frustration combined with the fear of Christian domination was perpetuated by migrating Kurdish populations fleeing into inner Anatolia following the Russian invasions into Ottoman territory in the 1820s. As a result, Muslim-Christian tensions rose in the region, but were not to reach a boiling point in Tur Abdin. Fueled by the misguided efforts of the Congregationalist missionary Grant, Christian-Muslim tension would instead lead to war in Hakkari, a conflict which would engulf Tur Abdin and permanently change power relations in the region.

Following the gradual Ottoman occupation of the region’s various independent Kurdish kingdoms, the remaining independent tribes of Botan and Hakkari sought methods to preserve their political status. The subsequent siege mentality fostered hostility both between various religious communities as well as internally within these groups. Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimun and Kurdish chief Noor Allah Beg, the two main political figures of Hakkari, still maintained close relations, for example the previously mentioned episode of Mar Shimun administering the entire district during Noor Allah Beg’s absence in 1840.

However, Congregationalist efforts in the area and continued Assyrian conversion to the Chaldean Church led Mar Shimun to fear that his authority was being

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20 Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans, 144-145.
21 Özcsoşar, Bir Yüzyıl Bir Sancak Bir Cemaat, 207.
eroded. This caused Mar Shimun to take a more authoritarian attitude towards the Assyrian tribes, and raised his fears of losing power to his Kurdish rival.\textsuperscript{22} Despite the changing political climate and growing siege mentality which had developed after his second visit, Asahel Grant returned to the region in 1841 and immediately sought rapid gains in order to combat Catholic efforts as well as a newly forming Anglican mission led by George Percy Badger. As a result of Ainsworth, Rassam and Southgate’s work in the region the SPCK quickly organized a permanent mission to the region led by George Percy Badger, a young scholar familiar with the languages of the region.\textsuperscript{23}

Badger focused his efforts primarily on the Syriac Christians of Mosul, working through the British consulate in the city in which Rassam now worked. His plan was to focus on the Chaldean Church in Mosul, who would eventually influence the Assyrians of Hakkari, stating that “the reformed Chaldean Church would… eventually bring in the Old-Church people of Hakkari.” Badger would receive the Assyrian Patriarch’s request for schools in the region, but he was unable to initiate these plans in Hakkari. However, Grant, who had recently begun his permanent mission, became aware of Badger’s plans, resulting in his overly hasty implementation of his mission.

Grant returned to Hakkari on July 8th, 1841, where, mindful of increased political tension, he sought to ingratiate himself with each of the region’s tribal leaders. Writing in August of that year, Grant stated that he had “formed a more extensive acquaintance with the people and with the most influential of the surrounding Kurds,”

\textsuperscript{22} Aboona, \textit{Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans}, 174-175.

\textsuperscript{23} Coakley, \textit{The Church of the East and the Church of England}, 54-55.
largely a result of a twenty-day visit to Kurdish chieftain Noorallah Beg.”

Grant, having established himself with Mar Shimun’s Kurdish chieftain, then travelled to Julamerk to treat a medical condition afflicting another Kurdish chieftain, an action looked upon negatively by Mar Shimun. During this period Grant became aware of Badger’s activities, noting that “nothing but disaster to the cause could be expected” if an Anglican mission gained ground, rivaling that of the ABCFM. Apprehensive, Grant reported that “the effect of Mr. Badger’s visit and influence upon the Nestorian clergy… is not yet known.” However, this, combined with the arrival of Catholic missionaries from Mosul continued to increase tension, and Grant continued to seek dominance in the region through gaining support of each of its tribal leaders. The Committee itself would note the increased tensions, stating “the uncertainty which hangs over the external relations of the mountain community of Nestorians” was reflected in fears of Turkish government arrival as well as “advances of different sects of protestant Christians.”

Patriarch Mar Shimun removed his support of the Congregationalist mission, fearful of the effects of the Protestant mission on the integrity of his community and

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24 Missionary Herald Containing the Proceedings of the ABCFM Vol. XXXIX (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1843), 110.
25 Ibid., 112.
26 Ibid., 113.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
distrustful of his relationships with his political rivals.  The Patriarch, who had become increasingly apprehensive about Grant’s interests and religious reforms, confided to Rassam and Badger that he held the ABCFM missionaries to be “cheap as an onion,” and not interested in the real benefit of the Assyrian community. Injecting himself into the emerging political rivalry, Grant began to seek support from Noor Allah Beg in his mission activity towards the Assyrians, further leading Mar Shimun to believe his authority was being threatened. Following the Ottoman occupation of nearby Amadia, located on the southern edge of Hakkari, local Kurdish leaders requested assistance from Mar Shimun in retaking the city. Although he initially pledged 3,000 fighters, he quickly retreated after being informed by the governor of Mosul, Muhammad Pasha, that any effort to reinstall Kurdish authority would be seen as a declaration of war against the Ottomans. Noor Allah Beg, infuriated by his retreat, conducted a series of punitive raids against Mar Shimun, who then began to openly support Noor Allah Beg’s rival Suleiman. A permanent wedge was thus driven between these communities.

Following this episode, Grant built a large hill-top mission house atop a strategic point within Assyrian territory. Although built for religious purposes, rumors quickly

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29 Ibid., 174-175.
33 Ibid., 184.
spread that an Assyrian fortress had been built for use against the Muslim community.\textsuperscript{35} Even contemporary travelers questioned the design of the building, which was built with high stone walls “loopholed as though for musketry.”\textsuperscript{36} This event prompted a Kurdish alliance which sought to eliminate Assyrian influence in the region, an alliance eventually led by Bedr Khan Beg of Botan, the region between Hakkari and Mardin, with whom Grant had also established a relationship.

Bedr Khan, emir of Botan, came from a prominent Kurdish family, one which claimed descent from Muhammad’s general Khalid ibn Walid.\textsuperscript{37} Ruling Botan with a heavy hand, his realm became a haven of security, with peace maintained by his loyal standing army.\textsuperscript{38} Following the defeat of the Ottomans by the Egyptians at Nazip in 1839, he began to make plans for extending his authority, seeing the Ottomans as too weak to prevent his expansion.\textsuperscript{39} He began to expand west, retaking Cizre from the Ottomans, who were unable to adequately respond. In June 1843, he led an invasion eastward into Hakkari, which had become fractured by rivalries and sectarian conflict. Ignoring a call for an organized defense, the weakened Assyrian community quickly fell, and the male population of Diz, the Patriarch’s home region, was massacred.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 46.


\textsuperscript{37} Van Bruinessen, \textit{Agha, Shaikh & State}, 177.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 179.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Aboona, \textit{Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans}, 199.
population, rather than just those who supported the Patriarch. Following failed efforts to dislodge Bedr Khan, he invaded the Tekhoma region, declaring his intention to “finish with the Christians” and “not make slaves for the consuls and Turks to liberate.”\textsuperscript{41} Additionally, Bedr Khan began to promote his rebellion as an act of jihad, likely to gain broader support from the Kurdish community.\textsuperscript{42}

During this period Bedr Khan also began to assert his control over Tur Abdin, first through occupying the greater Cizre region, framing his conquest as jihad and implementing mandatory conversion, according to the British consulate.\textsuperscript{43} Following his occupation of the entirety of Tur Abdin, Bedr Khan continued his policy of forced conversion, which resulted in the nominal conversion of some 360 villages.\textsuperscript{44} Additionally, Bedr Khan sought to disrupt to population balance by encouraging Muslims living under Ottoman rule to relocate to his dominion, particularly Tur Abdin, undermining the population majority the local Christian population narrowly held.

Contemporary Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal records list many of the abuses suffered by the Syriac Orthodox community by Bedr Khan’s forces during the period. At the onset of his rebellion, Bedr Khan’s forces attacked the village of Arbo, destroying the local church, torching the village and killing the priest.\textsuperscript{45} In Midyat they

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 240.
\item Ibid., 245.
\item Ibid., 259.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 84.
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attacked the monastery of Mar Sharbil, taking captive the notables of the city.\textsuperscript{46} Western travelers mentioned the plight of the community, whose fortunes had so rapidly changed. According to George Percy Badger, Tur Abdin’s Christian population was so demoralized that they “were hardly able to open their mouths and could only whisper when they wished to talk.”\textsuperscript{47} In a positive reflection of a continuation of pre-Bedr Khan relations within Tur Abdin, Kurdish nobles from the region appealed to the Mosul governor for assistance, stating the atrocities being perpetrated against the Christian community.\textsuperscript{48} However, the Ottomans failed to respond, and within a few short years the Syriac Orthodox population had gone from prosperity to devastation.

It was not until 1847 that the Ottomans would make a concentrated effort to eliminate Bedr Khan. The first efforts to remove Bedr Khan were made in February of that year, with Asaad Pasha, new governor of Mosul, attempting to meet with Bedr Khan and bring about an end to his rebellion.\textsuperscript{49} Alarmed by the potential threat of an organized Ottoman attack, Bedr Khan brought his realm under tighter authority, and under the guidance of the Mufti of the Jazirah increased his persecution of local Christian and Yezidi populations. According to the British Consular representative Rassam, fanatical local religious leaders of Bedr Khan’s emirate claimed that “the time


\textsuperscript{47}Aboona, Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans, 259.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 259.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 260.
of the Christians on earth is over and killing them is a pious act.”

Local Syriac Bishop George was himself murdered after appealing to Bedr Khan for reprieve for his community. These events prompted the British Consulate in Mosul to further press the Ottomans to eliminate Bedr Khan, and after a series of attempts to secure his peaceful surrender a massive force was sent to eliminate him. In a continuation of previous policy, the Ottomans exploited rivalries amongst Kurdish leaders, causing his ally Noor Allah Beg to side with them against Bedr Khan. In July 1847 Bedr Khan surrendered to Ottoman forces, ending 8 years of rebellion which left the Christian populations of Hakkari and Tur Abdin devastated. The newly gained privileges and improved status of the Christian population of Tur Abdin had been removed under Bedr Khan, and the population left subjugated in the region.

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 263.
CHAPTER SIX

TUR ABDIN AND HAKKARI IN THE WAKE OF MASSACRE

Reports by missionaries and travelers to Tur Abdin following the Bedr Khan rebellion paint a vastly different picture from the “good temporal circumstances” of the Syriac Orthodox community prior to these events. Travelers to the region would later report the continued plight of the Syriac Orthodox community in Tur Abdin, who quietly mentioned their fears of persecution to them.\(^1\) Additionally, many in the community had either converted to Islam to avoid persecution or to Protestantism to place themselves under the protection of the British.\(^2\) Population figures provided in 1876, while limited to Mardin, indicate the dramatic change in population, with the Syriac population listed as less than a fifth of the total, a distant second to Muslims with whom they previously shared an equal status.\(^3\) As a result of the Kurdish rebellions in the region, Mardin was again tied to Diyarbakir, along with Cizre and Botan, and reinforced with an Ottoman garrison to prevent insurrection.\(^4\) Still, the Ottomans were unable to fully pacify the region, and conflict between local Kurdish chieftans continued for decades, preventing full implementation of the reforms which had previously benefitted the Syriac population. Instead, Christian populations lost many of the

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\(^2\) Ibid., 159-160.

\(^3\) Ibid., 167.

privileges they briefly held earlier in the decade, and were relegated to a subjugated status vis-à-vis their new Kurdish overlords. Traveler Israel Joseph Benjamin would comment shortly after the rebellion that the Christians were now “oppressed in the same way as are the Jews,” subject to routine harassment from local authorities.\(^5\)

The situation was perhaps even bleaker in Hakkari, where nearly the entire the Christian population had either been killed or had fled following the Bedr Khan massacres, with the remainder left under heavy pressure from Chaldean proselytizing.\(^6\) British scholar and politician Sir Austin Henry Layard provides an account of Hakkari contemporary to the period between the Tiyari and Tekhoma massacres. Finding “nothing but ruins,” he describes the devastated and depopulated villages of the region, dotted with crumbling buildings, including churches, schools, and the missionary dwelling which had “been the cause of much jealousy and suspicion to the Kurds.”\(^7\) Where had recently been populated Christian villages in Tiyari now stood a mass of “stones, skulls and rubbish,” and the banks of the Zab River scattered with the remains of Christians thrown from the overhanging mountains.\(^8\) Visitors would also note that the Assyrian-rich region of Julamerk lost its entire Christian community, and that the few who remained in neighboring regions were isolated from the outside community.\(^9\)

\(^{5}\) Israel Joseph Benjamin, *Eight Years in Asia and Africa from 1846-1855* (Hanover: Self-Published, 1859), 96-97.

\(^{6}\) Henry Austen Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1849), 157

\(^{7}\) Ibid., 178.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 191.
Neither Grant nor the ABCFM acknowledged the cause of these massacres. Rather than recognizing the impact of Grant’s political intrigue, they instead reported this as the potential final blow in a centuries-old Muslim program of anti-Christian attacks. While maintaining that the Persian branch of the mission to the Assyrians “continues to enjoy the smiles of heaven,” they stated the following regarding the Hakkari community:

The scimitar of the followers of the false prophet, which many centuries since destroyed the great mass of the Nestorian Christians, then scattered over the plains of Persia, and drove the remnant into the mountain fastnesses, has at last reached them there.\(^{10}\)

Rather than stating the political or social causes of these events, they are portrayed within the framework of “spiritual battle” which had characterized the ABCFM mission’s approach since its foundation. Furthermore, they insisted on the need for their continued presence in the region, stating their unwillingness to do “anything which shall even bear the appearance of the abandonment of the spiritual welfare of this portion of the Nestorian people.”\(^{11}\)

However, these events had permanently changed the attitude of the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimun towards missionaries. Rather than turning towards the ABCFM mission for help, Mar Shimun immediately called upon the British for assistance. In 1843, following the first massacre, Mar Shimun wrote a letter from Mosul, his place of

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\(^{9}\) Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1846 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1846), 55.

\(^{10}\) Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1844 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1844), 46

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
refuge, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, imploring him not to recall George Percy Badger. He requested additional assistance from the British, hoping for their aid in preventing the destruction or fragmentation of the church. Mar Shimun refers to the British as his brethren, claiming that his “spiritual enemies” have mocked him for having placed his dependence upon them.\textsuperscript{12} Within this same letter he opposes any willingness to seek aid from Catholics, who “rejoiced when they saw what had befallen” the Assyrians.\textsuperscript{13} Although he had not at this point explicitly rejected or blamed Grant and the ABCFM mission, his later interaction with the Urmiah-based mission indicated his attitudes towards them. Grant died in 1844 after having fled to Mosul, where he still hoped to maintain a mission to the Assyrians, at no point acknowledging his responsibility in the events.

Meanwhile, Ainsworth, Badger and Southgate sought to understand the causes of the Bedr Khan massacres, as well as seeking to assign blame. Southgate would be the most directly apologetic, stating “I extremely regret that the mission I was engaged in should have hastened a catastrophe” even prior to the final wave of massacres.\textsuperscript{14} However, Southgate would issue a lengthy defense and explanation of the causes of these events, primarily concerned with exploring the responsibility of George Percy Badger and Asahel Grant while maintaining his own innocence, a position supported by available evidence.


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} Southgate, \textit{Travels}, 33.
Quoting the November 18th, 1843 New York Observer, Southgate relays the Congregationalist-promoted narrative which stated that “the recent slaughter of the Independent Nestorians, and its known connection with the efforts of Mr. Badger… to drive the Missionaries of the American Board from that interesting field” were a direct result of Anglican incursion into ABCFM missionary territory.\textsuperscript{15} Claiming his “open and decided hostility to the American Missionaries,” the Observer stated Southgate’s open collusion with Catholic missionaries and his having demonstrated the “same hostility to any movements in favor of evangelical religion as they do.”\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, as with the ABCFM, the Observer claimed that Southgate had “cooperated with Mr. Badger in all the opposition made to the Missionary operations of the board, and has… coincided with the Papal Missionaries.”\textsuperscript{17}

Southgate presents his rebuttal, providing a narrative of the Assyrian massacres and of his difficulties with the missionaries of the ABCFM. In regards to the first of these points, Southgate discusses at length the role of Congregationalist missionaries in promoting schism in the region, which although not always intentional was an inevitable result of their activities, which drew individuals away from their parent community. Specifically, Southgate refers to the September, 1842 monthly Missionary Herald newsletter published by the ABCFM, which stated in regards to the Persian Assyrian


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
mission the existence of “a separation of those who truly believe, from the rest of the Church.”

Although according to Ottoman policy evangelical Christians were tied to their parent group, the ABCFM desired that “an evangelical Christian sect should be acknowledged in Turkey, and be represented by its own Patriarch.”

Unlike the Anglican and Episcopal missions, which sought only to deal with the communities as a whole, the policies of the ABCFM reflected a concern focused on individual spiritual health rather than the security of the entire community. Additionally, while acknowledging that such communities would be persecuted, there was hope that “Providence may hasten this most desirable consummation” and the creation of a separate millet.

Such insensitivities and promotion of schism, according to Southgate, made the Congregationalists alone responsible for the massacres, brought about finally as a result of Grant’s construction of the mission-fortress. However, Southgate states that the charge that “it arose from the jealousies of rival missionaries” is a “groundless slander,” and was not the cause of the massacres. These charges, according to Southgate, were a result of the ABCFM’s desire for exclusive control over missionary activity in the region, despite the wishes of the Assyrians themselves. As had been mentioned by Grant, any presence of rival missionaries, even Anglicans, was seen as potential

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18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
interference, which, according to the ABCFM “will make our influence more or less anti-Episcopal, whatever may be our wishes and endeavors to the contrary.”

However, the Patriarch himself preferred the Anglican and Episcopal missionaries, evidenced by comments to them, the ABCFM and his overtures towards the Anglicans in the wake of the Bedr Khan massacres. Fundamentally, the problem of the Congregationalist approach was a failure to engage the community and its leaders, instead seeking to influence individuals, promoting schism and apprehension. Unlike the ABCFM, the SPCK missions sought to engage the Assyrian community as a whole, recognizing “what was ancient and excellent of these churches” and their practices, and seeking to enable their renewal through their own systems, rather than imposing outside systems upon them. Although affiliation with Protestants, whether American or British, allowed for British protection, the Congregationalists had not presented a suitable structure for engagement. Recognizing the benefit of the SPCK’s system, the Patriarch himself had directly requested clergy from the Anglican Church, who could engage the Patriarch as representatives of another hierarchical church structure. The Assyrians, according to Southgate, “can no more conceive of a church without a Bishop than of a man without a head,” and that the Congregationalists’ failure to recognize the inherent connection between political hierarchy and religious life doomed their attempts in Hakkari. In fact, Southgate claims that the Congregationalists, recognizing the

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23 Southgate, “Vindication.”
Assyrian’s reservations about engaging a non-hierarchical church group, began presenting themselves as bishops in order to gain their approval, an accusation perhaps supported by Grant’s having at other times portrayed himself as an agent of the British consulate. Reflecting the Congregationalists’ self-presentation to other groups, Southgate quotes an Armenian priest who stated “what a singular Church theirs must be, when all their Ministers are Bishops.”

The ABCFM, seeking to deflect blame, stated that the multitude of missions, as well as the division between the Urmiah and Independent Nestorian missions was the cause of confusion and disunity amongst the Christians of Hakkari, leading to assumptions of political intrigue. In retrospect, the Committee also acknowledged the complexity of the region, ignored by Grant, stating that “subsequent researches have developed greater difficulties in the social state of the mountain communities, than we anticipated… even before the ravages of their Koordish enemies.” Additionally, perhaps seeking to assign some blame to a deceased Grant, the Committee acknowledged Grant’s foreknowledge of Bedr Khan and Noorallah’s plans to attack Tiyari, but that they promised “safety and protection to the mission-house and property.”

The mission houses and the villages surrounding them were in fact spared,

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24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1844 (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1844), 140.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 145.
attributed to Grant’s close relationship with the Kurdish leaders.\textsuperscript{29} However, the Committee did not directly acknowledge the impact of the mission upon these events, but rather presented them as an inevitable result of Muslim aggression, ultimately stating that the massacres should be seen as a result of Muslim anti-Christian aggression, rather than a result of political fragmentation aggravated by Grant.\textsuperscript{30}

Although the Urmiah mission continued to find some success amongst the settled Assyrian tribes, those of Hakkari, along with their Patriarch, afterwards rejected the overtures of subsequent Congregationalist missionaries. Left “virtually a prisoner in Mosul,”\textsuperscript{31} the Patriarch became indignant at later attempts by Congregationalist missionaries to engage with him, and instructed his still loyal followers not to aid them. The Patriarch, after a few years in such a situation, would formally reject the Congregationalists, and would himself blame Grant for the calamity which befell his people. In a conversation with Mosul mission representative George Coan, the Patriarch stated “what has He (God) committed to me? The Papists have come in on one side, the Jacobites on the other, the Chaldeans on another, and have taken a great part of my flock away from me, and now you are taking what is left.”\textsuperscript{32} Coan responded by assuring him of their intention to keep the community intact, telling him “we only desire your good

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{29} Ibid., 146.
\bibitem{30} Ibid., 141.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: 1846} (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1846), 118.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Letter to the ABCFM from George Coan, Missionary Herald: March 1853}, in \textit{Missionary Herald Containing the Proceedings of the ABCFM Vol. XLIX} (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1853).
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and that of your people, as our works testify.”\textsuperscript{33} Patriarch Mar Shimun rejected this assertion, stating “what is your kindness to me, compared with mine to you,” reflecting his anger at the results of his support of the Congregationalists’ mission.\textsuperscript{34} He then states directly that the massacres of “ten thousand heads of his poor people… offered on the bloody altar of Bedr Khan Bey’s cruelty… was instigated by Dr. Grant’s attempt to build in Asheta,” providing the jealousy of the Kurds.\textsuperscript{35}

Coan then provided a rebuttal which placed the blame firmly on the Patriarch, rather than the rival missionaries. Coan stated to him “you know, and the world knows, that you prompted the men of Tiary [sic] to rebel against paying their accustomed tribute to Noorallah Bey.”\textsuperscript{36} He then states “you know that it was your own desire to receive the tribute, rather than that the Kurdish chief should have it, which was the cause of all this loss of blood and treasure,” further asking him “why do you impute to Dr. Grant, who loved you and your people with a martyr’s love, the dreadful massacre of the poor Tiarians?”\textsuperscript{37} Indignant, the Patriarch replied by stating:

Who are you, that you should come preach to us? Go to the heathen. We first received the Gospel, and you received it from us. We are the root, the source, the beginning of the way of the kingdom of God. We are the fathers, you are the sons. Why do you come and seize your father by the beard?\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
He then directly attacked their spiritualism-centered practices, which had brought people out of the traditions of the Assyrian Church, stating that their preaching had caused people to break their fasts and become disorderly, bringing spiritual discord amongst the Assyrian population. After Coan criticized the morality Mar Shimun’s people by stating “your people, as a result of your teachings, practice concubinage,” the Patriarch issued an order to expel Congregationalist missionaries from territories loyal to him. Although he would later call off the order, Mar Shimun, now blamed by the Congregationalists for the massacre of his own people, had not only acknowledged their role in these events, but also rejected their religious vision.

Congregationalist missionaries outside of the Urmiah mission were then subjected to threats of violence by leaders and were rejected by villagers. Upon later visits, missionaries would be told by residents that they were not allowed to stay in the village overnight, or that their leaders forbade the villagers to speak with them. Elsewhere, Christians would carefully reject their advances, making statements about the insignificance of their spiritualism compared to their pressing issues. In one such encounter, between a Congregationalist missionary, Assyrian convert and Assyrian villager, the convert told a villager “you are on the brink of hell. Repent,” to which the villager said, of the Congregationalists, “they do not give me needles and thread to

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
mend my clothes. I cannot but revile. I am unable to repent.”  

Elsewhere, when told to change their habits and associate with the Congregationalists, villagers would reply with statements such as “the Koords are around us, and we cannot do otherwise.”  

Another post-massacre exchange marked a more careful rejection of Congregationalist spiritualism, with an Assyrian stating that although they acknowledged that they “only desire and labor to turn men from sins,” Congregationalist practices “will not allow us to drink as much wine as we want.”  

Although this last episode reflects a less sinister reason for their rejection, the massacres, political upheaval and brutal rule by Bedr Khan had devastated the region, and had driven a wedge between the Congregationalists and the Assyrians of the Ottoman Empire. 

Conclusion  

A variety of factors brought about these events, evidence points towards the culpability of Asahel Grant in their precipitation. As indicated even by the Assyrian Patriarch himself, Grant and the Congregationalists had come not to improve the community’s temporal circumstances, but rather to criticize and reform their expression of Christianity. Although Grant’s intent was the spiritual betterment of the Independent Assyrians, his ideology and approach precluded any lasting success. Instead, his millenarian view, grounded in the early rhetoric of the ABCFM, saw the Independent Assyrians as key to converting Muslims and bringing about the Second Coming. This, 

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42 Ibid., 60.  
43 Ibid., 59.  
44 Ibid., 57.
combined with concern over rival missionary presence, led to Grant’s hasty and overzealous actions, which were insensitive to Hakkari’s delicate political balance.

Still, Grant’s actions were not the sole cause of this catastrophe. For decades, European powers had been exerting their influence within a weakening Ottoman state, supporting anti-Ottoman rebellions, forming alliances to prevent rivals’ gains and increasing their economic presence inside the empire. The Ottoman government, which sought to improve the administration, economy and military of the contracting empire, initiated a series of reforms which brought significant political and social changes. The long-standing autonomous regions of the empire were placed under direct Ottoman control, often through violence and exploitation of rivalries amongst Kurdish rulers. Additionally, many became concerned about Christians’ improved status, fearful of Western interference and protection of non-Muslims.

Although these factors created the volatile environment in which the massacres occurred, evidence indicates that it was Grant himself who finally instigated them. Although finally provoked by Grant’s construction of the hilltop mission house, the invasion of Christian territory and subsequent massacres were mostly a result of Grant’s having increased tension both between Muslims and Christians and within the Assyrian community itself. Whereas other missionary figures working in Hakkari and Tur Abdin possessed an awareness of the importance of discretion and of maintaining church hierarchy, Grant’s efforts seem to have possessed no such consideration. As a result, not only was the Assyrian community of Hakkari devastated, but also the Syriac Orthodox community of neighboring Tur Abdin.
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