

# THE UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

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## I. LITERARY.

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UNION SEMINARY has been called again to mourn the loss of one of her able and accomplished teachers. On the 2nd of October, 1893, Dr. Thomas Ephraim Peck, Professor of Systematic theology, passed into the everlasting peace, after months of suffering from Bright's disease of the kidneys and an attendant failure of the functions of the heart.

Dr. Peck was born in Columbia, South Carolina, on the 29th of January, 1822. He was the son of Ephraim Peck, a native of Connecticut, and Sarah Bannister Parke, daughter of Thomas Parke, LL. D., Professor of the classic languages in the College of South Carolina. His father, a man of delicate constitution, had come south for his health, and opened a small mercantile establishment in Columbia. After a few years residence he united with the First Presbyterian Church, and developed a strongly marked and active Christian character. On the 4th of January, 1821, he intermarried with a daughter of Professor Parke, and after a married life of somewhat over eleven years, died leaving four living children, two sons and two daughters. Thomas, the oldest child was ten years old at the time, and William, the youngest just two months old. The daughters Mary, Susan and Ann Catharine grew to womanhood and married, the first Rev. Samuel H. Hay, the second Rev. Lucius Simonton. After the death of her husband Mrs. Peck lived with her father until his death in 1840. She opened a school for small children and soon her school-room was full. For many years she pursued this business for the support of her children. Mrs. Peck was a remarkable

## PERSIA, ITS RELIGIONS AND MISSION WORK.

Mr. Isaac M. Yonan, the writer of this article is a native of Oroomiah, Persia, and the son of a native preacher in connection with the mission of the Presbyterian church, North, to the Nestorians of Persia. After receiving the best educational advantages that could be afforded in his own land, he came to this country two years ago to complete his education with the view of returning and devoting his life as a missionary to his own people. He has been a student in this Seminary during the session which is now drawing to a close, where he has prosecuted his studies with great assiduity and marked success. Mr. Yonan has spoken in many of our pulpits and his graphic pictures of Mohammedan tyranny and of the sufferings of the native Christians under persecution have awakened deep and prayerful interest in the mission work in Persia wherever he has gone. I trust this may be the effect of the article which he contributes to the columns of the Seminary Magazine.

Louisville, Ky.

T. D. WITHERSPOON.

The very name of Persia, that old historic land, cannot fail to awaken the interest of every cultivated mind. Dismissing the mythical feature, which might interest but not profit us, we are confronted with a number of historic personages; Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes whose handwriting still remains to perpetuate their fame in the halls where once they ruled and feasted. A succession of heroes with whom every reader is familiar, with their bloody trails, pass before us at different epochs. It is difficult for Americans to realize that the nation founded and ruled by these bloody sovereigns, centuries before Christ, is still a living power. If Persia had no other claim to respect, at least a continuous history for twenty-five hundred years is a distinction which few countries can exhibit. The Persians as a people are open hearted, generous, hospitable in their homes; bright and highly cultivated in intellect, and may appropriately be called the "French of the East." I believe if the Persians only had the Bible, they might in many respects be put above Americans and Europeans.

The country of Persia is supposed to contain about six hundred thousand square miles, with a population of about nine millions of people. There are several races represented in this population. (1) The real Persians are Aryans. They are most numerous in the central provinces of Irak, and south-western Persia. They are a handsome and intelligent race, speaking the sanskrit language with a mixture of many Arabic words. (2) The Guebres, who are fire-worshippers, are the remains of the race that Cyrus led to victory. They are found

now chiefly in Yezel and Teheran. (3) The Koords are descended from the Ancient Carduche with whom Xenophon and the ten thousand had so long a struggle. They seem to have no relationship to any other people. Their language is called Koordish. They are ignorant, wild, and murderous, inhabiting the mountain fastnesses, and living by robbing and thieving. Like Cain, their hand is against everybody and everybody is against them. (4) Turks who live in the province of Azar Bajan, in north western Persia. They are an ignorant class of people as compared with the Persians. (5) Arabs with their fast flying steeds are found in the sandy desert of southern Persia. (6) The Armenians are scattered throughout the country, chiefly in the cities, where they live by merchandising. (7) The wandering tribes of Nomads, who move constantly from place to place. (8) The Nestorians, ancient Chaldeans, who in days of old studied the stars from the towers of Babylon. Their lineal descent, like that of most Eastern peoples, is veiled in uncertainty. The common tradition among themselves claims the Jews as their ancestors. As evidence of this they urge the resemblance between their language, Syriac, and the Hebrew, and also their great abhorrence of images and pictures in their worship. Their conversion to Christianity they attribute to Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, with whom Adai (Thaddeus) and Mari, two of the seventy, are said to have been associated. Oral traditions and ancient writings of the Nestorians are united in support of this opinion. Nestorius from whom this sect derives its name, was made Bishop of Constantinople in A. D. 428. As a bold reformer he attempted to correct some of the popular superstitions among Romanists of his time and because he refused to apply to the Virgin Mary the epithet, Mother of God, was persecuted and charged with heresy. His cause was warmly espoused by his countrymen in the east, particularly in the school of Edessa (Orfa). Since that time all the Syrian Christians have been called, from his name, Nestorians. The history of these people as a Christian nation is worthy of study. They were the first Christian sect in the world, being called Christians at Antioch, and the first who took steps toward evangelizing the world. In the third and fourth centuries their patriarchs sent missionaries as far as China, and in the sixth century, as appears from unquestionable documents still existing, they had missionaries in all parts of Persia, in India, Arabia, Syria and

other countries. They then had also schools of theology, and possessed many volumes of manuscripts on theological and philosophical subjects. But in the seventh century when the sword of Mohammed arose, their persecution commenced. Thousands of them were martyred and their religious books and churches burned; more in 1086 A. D. when Gengiskhan came like a hurricane through the country, than in any other year. For centuries they suffered under the oppression of Mohammedanism, until finally, though still known as Christians, they lost their pure Christianity, their Bibles being destroyed save a few copies, and became a poverty-stricken and ignorant people with only an outward formal worship. Such was their condition when visited by modern missionaries. At present the Nestorians number about one hundred and forty thousand. Of this number a colony of thirty thousand live in Oroomiah, Persia, and the rest in Koordistan and the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates.

My purpose in this article is to study Persia as a theatre of religious beliefs, where great prophets have arisen, and where bloody battles have been fought and thousands martyred for the sake of their religion. The Persians, like all Indo-European races are monotheistic. The great religions of the country are as follows:

*Zoroastrianism.*—The exact time of the appearance of Zoroaster is not known, but the old Nestorian writers and learned men say that he was a servant and disciple of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel. This, however, is uncertain. He expounded his doctrines first in Media where the captive Israelites then resided, and it is generally believed that he made the city of Oroomah his headquarters. This is probably true for three reasons: (1) The name of that city as given by ancient writers was Ormus, changed to Ormi, then Urmi, then Ormia, which may have come from Ormisda, the God of light, or from *Or*, light. (2) There are several mounds of ashes in the plain of Oroomiah which are supposed to be the remains of Zoroastrian worship. (3) The name of the province in which Oroomiah is situated is called Azar Bajan, the fire-keepers. They swept over the most of Persia for many centuries until they were driven out of the country by the flaming sword of Mohammed. A few of them yet remain in Persia. An intelligent Guebree denies that he worships either the sun or fire, but claims that he worships the one deity or principle symbolized by those

objects. But the lower classes are too ignorant to realize that.

*The Yezidees* (Devil worshippers.)—The Yezidees live in the valley of the Tigris. They are a remnant of Sabianism, or the ancient Fire-worshippers. They believe in one supreme God—the God of darkness.

There are evidences that the Yezidees are descended from the Ten Tribes. We have the following proofs of this fact :

1. Their practice of circumcision, the remarkable rite of the Abrahamic covenant.
2. Their practice of offering sacrifice.
3. Their observance of the Passover on the twenty-fourth day of the month Nisan.
4. Their abstinence from meats prohibited the Jews.
5. The testimony of ancient Nestorian authors.
6. They dwell in the country to which the Ten Tribes were carried captive.
7. Many of their names of places and men are like the original Hebrew names. At present these people number only a few thousand.

*Mohammedanism.* Mohammed was born in the year 570 A. D. After a career of forty years as a student under Sergises, a Nestorian monk, and as a successful merchant, he claimed inspiration as a prophet and as a reformer of idolatry. After some wild struggling and warfare with the people of Mecca, he lifted up his standard over Medina. It was at that time that Mohammed dictated at intervals his sacred book, which he then named Koran (Reading). And now the bloody battles commenced when he took his sword in one hand and Koran in the other, followed by thousands of wild Arabs. In this way his religion was propagated. After his death the great work was carried on by his twelve holy Imans. Millions of souls have been destroyed by their mighty sword. That bloody flag has been waving against the skies of the East for about twelve hundred years ; and the voice of Koran has been sounding through the ears and hearts of millions of men, and will continue sounding until it be cut off by the power of the cross. If it were not for the bravery of Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours, all Europe would to-day be groaning under the absolute power of Koran.

*Different Sects of Mohammedans.* Setting aside for the present the minor subdivisions of the followers of the Prophet, they are first of all divided into two great bodies, viz : The Sunnees, and the Sheahs. The Turks and the Afghans, the Arabs and most of the Moguls of Northern India are Sunnees. They claim that Caliph descended from the Prophet through

Omar, Abou Beker, Osman. But the Persians are Sheahs, because they claim that the heritage of the Caliphet was vested in Alie, the son-in-law of Mohammed, and in Hassan and Husen his two sons.

These two sects are great enemies of each other. Very often they have waged holy wars with each other.

But leaving the two principal sects, we meet with seventy-two other minor divisions that are prevailing to-day among Mohammedans. Some of them will be interesting to the readers.

1. *Hokemees*, founded by Omar Khayam. They deny the miracles of Mohammed's career, and reject the material devil, but believe in the spiritual dualism of the principles of good and evil. One of their most celebrated leaders was Seyed Abul Hassan Djelveh.

2. *Sufees*. They spiritualize everything and consider all material objects as simply symbols of the ideal or spiritual, which is the only real substance. They believe in immorality.

3. *Alee-Olla-hee*.—These are believers in the divinity of Alee, and believe that he is more worthy of direct worship than Mohammed.

4. *Dahree*. These are essentially pantheists and believe in the equality of woman with man, but they do not practice it to any great extent.

5. *Oorphee*. These believe that God is manifested in the existence of every man. They also believe that there is no necessity of any kind of law. Everything will come from God through the intellect.

6. *Baber*. This is a new sect, who do not deny that Moses, Christ and Mohammed were great prophets yet they maintain that God has inaugurated a new era with the advent of Alee Mohammed as John the Baptist, and Behav-Allah, his disciple after him, as Christ. Bayan is their Bible, which teaches that there is no hell after death, but that unbelief is hell and that belief is paradise. They have a higher regard for woman than Moslems.

7. *Zoheebee*. Fatalists.

8. *Shah-namat-Allahee*. These believe that by works a man must be saved. They practice beating their breasts, fasting, crying, and making themselves sorry.

9. *Moshrekee*. Polytheists.

The above named sects with the remaining almost sixty sects

will show in what condition Mohammedanism is to-day.

#### SOME OF THE LEADING ELEMENTS OF MOHAMMEDANISM.

1. *Isooliddun*. Creed—"There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet." Three times a day this creed must be proclaimed on the top of their mosques.

2. *Fast*. The month of Ramazan is devoted to fasting. During this month they are not permitted to eat anything from sunrise to sunset; but it is very easy for the rich classes, that can afford not to work, to fast, because they can eat all night and sleep during the day. But the poor classes of people that must live by their daily work, have no time to eat during the night, so they faint for want of food in day time. The majority even of them do not like to fast, but must do so for fear of the law.

3. *Alms*. Every Mohammedan is required to pay one-tenth of all his income to religious purposes and one-fifth to Seyeds and Dervishes (the holy beggars), the descendants of Mohammed.

4. *Pilgrimages*. There are several cities considered holy by Mohammedans, the most prominent of which are Mecca, Carbella, and Mashad. Every year millions of Mohammedans spend a great deal of money in pilgrimages, for the purpose of carrying the bones of their dead to these cities.

5. *Circumcision*. They practice the old Jewish rite of circumcision.

6. *Polygamy and Divorce*. Mohammed himself had nine wives. His High Majesty, the Shah, has four hundred wives to-day. They practice polygamy as a religious rite and divorce themselves whenever they please. The Koran says, "Take in marriage as many women as you please, not over four by ceremony, but as many as you want from those women you have acquired as slaves." Poor unfortunate woman is trodden under foot as dirty, degraded and unworthy of equality with man. They claim that she has no immortal soul.

7. *Prayer*. The Mohammedans have only one prayer and it must be repeated at five different times each day. Before praying the toes and fingers are washed, then with open eyes and face turned toward Mecca, the prayer is uttered in a monotone. While going through with this operation, the head is bent to the ground several times.

8. *Reunion of soul and body at the resurrection*.

9. *They believe in prophets and honor them.* Mohammed taught that there have been one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, but only five of them had a direct revelation. These five are, Noah, the Prophet of God ; Abraham, the Faithful in God ; Moses, the Speaker with God ; Jesus, the Spirit of God ; Mohammed, the Apostle of God.

The Mohammedan's *hell* contains seven doors, each of which leads to seventy thousand districts, in each district are seventy thousand cities of fire, in each city seventy thousand houses of fire, in each house seventy thousand boxes of fire, in each box seventy thousand scorpions, each scorpion has seventy thousand stings, and God has appointed ten thousand angels of each of the gates to throw fuel on the fire and keep it burning. Thus will be punished all unbelievers.

The *paradise* of Mohammed is the abode of the faithful in the presence of the Highest. This shall infinitely transcend all other joys. The heavenly salutation shall be *salam*, "Peace." The saints shall sit on seats facing each other, and all grudges shall be taken out of their hearts, and love shall reign supreme. Above all, God has created the *hori pari* (the woman of paradise), divinely beautiful, and each saint can take as many of them to wife as he may choose. Thus will be marriage in heaven, and a polygamous people can scarcely picture to themselves a heaven without polygamy.

Mohammed's idea of *liquor* is a marked characteristic of his system, and is about the only feature that is worthy of commendation. The greatest Prohibitionist that ever lived was Mohammed. He said, "Do not touch or taste liquor, nor associate with those that drink." He gave his followers the following example to illustrate what he meant by total abstinence : "If a single drop of wine should fall into a cistern which is one hundred yards deep, and if afterwards this cistern should be filled with earth and the grass grow on its surface, and be eaten by a sheep. I do not allow my followers to touch that mutton." It is a great pity that the jails, penitentiaries and assylums are crowded with drunkards in this great Christian country.

#### MISSIONS IN PERSIA.

Joy fills the heart of the oriental traveler when the watchman from his tower announces the approach of morning. Greater joy fills my heart to see the beams of the rising sun over the desolate mountains and valleys of my native coun-



try after a lapse of centuries of darkness. It was in the spring of the year 1831 that Messrs. Smith and Dwight reached Persia, and they were joined three years later by Rev. Justice Perkins and A. Grant, M. D. Soon these four organized an established station at Oroomiah among the Nestorians, that interesting branch of the primitive church, which, under centuries of persecution, had sunken into the darkness of ignorance and superstition. We can well say that they had "a name to live" while they were "dead." These early missionaries were soon followed by others, among whom was Miss Fidelia Fiske, a noble consecrated woman. The printing-press was introduced, the Bible was translated and published, schools were established, churches were organized and the lasting foundation of a ground work was thus laid by these consecrated men and women. Most of them have passed into their eternal rest and their silent graves in a foreign land are the witnesses of their labor. They are remembered with tears of affection by all who were converted under their teaching.

Mission work in Persia at present is among the Nestorians, Arminians, and Jews. The Mohammedans not being allowed liberty of conscience, there is very little active work carried on among them as yet, though we hope soon to see a better day dawning for these benighted millions who follow the False Prophet. The American missionaries in Persia number eighty-five, and are settled at Mosul, Oroomiah, Selmas, Tabreez, Hamadan, and Teheran.

The Gospel is propagated through different channels :

*First, Evangelistic Work.* The Evangelical church has about 2500 members in about eighty-five regular congregations, the attendance on Sunday averaging over 5,500. Their preachers are educated in the mission schools and are supported partly by the people and partly by the mission board. The contribution last year by the church members amounted to \$2700.

*Second, Education.* Christianity and education are not to be separated. Education follows as a natural result upon the introduction of true christian evangelization. The greatest mistake in some modern mission fields is the attempt to make converts and then leave them with little or no training of the mental faculties. Before the arrival of the missionaries none of the Nestorians could read except some of the clergy, who were acquainted with the old Syriac, in which language, then extinct,

were written the manuscripts of the Bible. As soon as portions of the Bible were translated into the common vernacular the first school was opened with six students, one of whom was the father of the writer of this article. Discouragement was at first met with on account of the natural laziness of the people and the superstitions they entertained regarding the missionaries. The pupils at first had to be paid to attend school. But things have wonderfully changed, gradually the love of learning has increased until to-day we have a flourishing institution at Oroomiah, called Oroomiah College, with an attendance of one hundred and twenty students. Near the same place is a female school, Fiske Seminary, with an attendance of nearly ninety. This was founded by Miss Fidelia Fiske, who during her life did such a grand work among the women. There are eighty-six preparatory schools in the surrounding Nestorian villages, having an attendance of nearly two thousand. All of the above mentioned schools are for the Nestorians, but in the other mission stations there are institutions for Armenians, Jews, and Mohammedans.

*Third, Medical Work.* This is a most important, successful and interesting feature of mission progress in Persia for a number of reasons.

The medical missionaries are very highly honored. When they go into the streets they are surrounded by crowds of sick, lame, and blind waiting to be cured. The native physicians are exceedingly ignorant and the masses of the people are losing confidence in them. The physician is the only one admitted to the Mohammedan harems, thus these poor women are reached, and many sin-sick souls are healed by the blood of the Great Physician through the medium of the medical science. In all of the mission stations are dispensaries where medical aid is furnished at a nominal cost. In Oroomiah there are two hospitals. Last year, during the cholera epidemic, all classes of the people sought refuge in these hospitals and God used this terrible visitation of his divine providence as a means of spreading the gospel truth.

*Fourth, Colportage.* The great need of the world is the Bible in such a form that all may read and understand. The Book has been translated into all of the Persian dialects, and each year evangelists or colporteurs are sent on long tours to distribute the Word of Life.

## CLOUDS.

Although there is very much bright sunshine in connection with the work in Persia, yet at times dark clouds of persecution arise. The Mohammedans are bitter enemies of the Christians, and in a country where the government is very bad, open outbreaks are of not infrequent occurrence. The Persian Christians boast of their martyrs for the faith. In 1892, Mirza Abraham, a convert from Islam, was arrested for preaching Christ, brought before the authorities and cruelly beaten, yet confessed his Savior in the midst of all. For three weeks he was imprisoned in Oroomiah, then taken to Tabreez, where he was cast into an underground dungeon and loaded with heavy chains. For eleven months he suffered torture in this damp, dark prison, then he was choked to death, his last words being "*Isah! Isah!*" (Jesus, Jesus). He has done more good for the glory of Christ by his death than he could have done by his life. Last fall, only a few months ago, Baron Aghajan was falsely accused by Mohammedan priests, was dragged to the Mosque court by a mob, and upon his refusal to reject Christ, his living body was driven full of nails and then his head was mashed with stones. His bleeding corpse was dragged through the streets and thrown into a muddy pond. At the same time other Christians were wounded and still others robbed. His Majesty, the Shah, has made investigation to find the perpetrators of these foul deeds, but, of course, they have not been detected. At the present time mission work among the Moslems is absolutely forbidden, and the Christians are in almost constant danger of their lives. The great consolation is that the sun shines behind the clouds, and Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is walking on the stormy sea. All that poor old Persia needs is liberty of conscience, then thousands would join the banner of the cross.

I ask the prayers and the sympathy of all who may read this article for my poor Nestorian nation and the perishing millions of my native country, that more young men and women may offer their lives, that more money may be given, and that a great outpouring of heavenly light may burst in soon upon these benighted oriental people, trusting all the while in the great promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."