

family, with whom I remained some ten months, diligently studying the Turkish tongue and forming acquaintances among the people. I soon learnt sufficient of the language to be able to bear my testimony of the truth of the Gospel to the Armenians. I was not long in finding, however, that the people of Constantinople possessed very little sincerity, and that they had no great desire for religious truth. But having become acquainted with some of the dwellers in the interior of Asia Minor—chiefly through the medium of correspondence—I learned that the missionaries were wanted in that quarter. Accordingly I communicated with the home authorities of the Church, recommending that more Elders be sent out to assist us. As a result we were joined by Elder James Clove. During the next season we arranged for a trip through Asia Minor, in order to present the Gospel to the people, and so that we might become better acquainted with their wants and manner of life.

I left Constantinople in the latter part of August and journeyed to Samsoon, a port on the Black Sea, whence I proceeded to Sivas, the capital of the State of that name. Here I was generously welcomed by Brother Dekrau Shahabian, who was not, however, at that time a member of the Church, but who joined it soon afterwards. I continued at Sivas for about a month, bearing my testimony to the people, next started for Palestine, and there landed on December 20th, having passed through a great many cities in the course of a travel of over five hundred miles, and bearing my testimony to the Gospel as opportunities offered.

I found the people somewhat religiously inclined and rather inquisitive, their great desire being to learn the objects and belief of the Latter-day Saints. I had no difficulty whatever in getting before the people, because so soon as they heard I was in their midst they would at once flock together, come to me in a body, and in this way, after a few days' labor, I was enabled to place before them the first principles of the Gospel.

I discovered the Armenians to be a rather unstable race, of a decidedly enquiring turn of mind. When the subjects which we discussed appeared to have been exhausted, they would turn leisurely away, and our conversation was seemingly of but little profit. But I found some really good men among the number, and some of these embraced the Gospel. In fact, throughout the entire mission about thirty persons were baptized into the Church. The missionaries likewise meet with a great many very staunch friends, who are looking forward to the day of deliverance, when they will be able to accept the truth.

Although there is religious liberty in that country according to Mahomedan laws, yet it exists only in a very contracted degree, because every denomination has to be recognized by the government; hence a certain form of

home rule. The churches become responsible to the government for the payment of taxes, and for the good order of their community. In this way, men who change their religious opinions are sometimes subjected to very severe persecution. Excessive taxes are imposed upon them, and in various ways they are annoyed by the older denominations. The government recognizes no individual except in a church capacity. Hence as we could offer no temporal protection to anyone who was willing to join us, it was exceedingly hard for men to sever their connections with the old churches and embrace the "Mormon" faith. But I may here say that I conversed with many who are looking forward to some change whereby they may be liberated from their present state of bondage and be made free in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I found a great deal of good among the people. They possess many virtues which others might adopt with profit. The great fault with the people—especially among the Christians—is that they are given to lying, and, on this account, are unreliable. You can hardly ever depend upon what they say, and this often produces a feeling of discouragement among the Elders who go among them.

In Palestine I had the privilege of traveling through the greater part of the land in company with Brothers Sjøhdal and Grau, and together we visited many of the ancient places of interest mentioned in the scriptures. I observed that there was a good deal of land untitled and unoccupied which, with proper energy expended upon it, could be made productive and capable of sustaining a much larger population than at present. The fact is, the Arabs do not understand land cultivation; and I may here remark that about the only thing I can see that the German colonists (known as the "Temple Society.") have accomplished beyond the Jews is that in the cultivation of the land they have shown the possibility of making agriculture a success in that country.

Speaking of the Jews at present located in Palestine, I cannot say that they are doing much to redeem the land. They are full of hope that at some future day they will be able to enjoy to the full "the land of their fathers" and have the blessing of God. There are already seen indications of the fulfillment of the prophecy as to the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. It is my firm belief that so soon as God has established a people there that that "Land of Promise" will well sustain them, whether it be the Saints or others. Whenever the Latter-day Saints obtain a hold in Palestine, to preach the Gospel and otherwise bring a reforming influence to bear upon the nations, it will furnish a new key and introduce a very interesting feature in the great Latter-day work.

Going on to speak of Jerusalem, Elder Hintze said: It was once called "The Holy City," but it may now properly be termed "The wicked city." It is certainly being

troddeu down by the Gentiles, as the Savior said it should be. It is filled with all manner of wickedness and abomination. Idolatry is practiced in its most glaring form. The Catholics, Armenians and Greeks have set up convents and churches on every prominent spot in the city, and filled them with images and pictures. To these the poor pilgrims pay solemn homage. It is doubtful in my mind whether idolatry exists in any part of the earth to a more open and unblushing extent than here.

Some of the greatest impostures are practiced upon the pilgrims who visit these holy shrines, the most prominent of which is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Here, in a sort of panoramic form, is exhibited the entire history of the crucifixion. Among the many "curiosities" shown what are declared to be the stocks—two holes hewn in a huge piece of rock—in which Christ is represented as having been placed just previous to His crucifixion; the spot upon which He was judged, and the sepulchre wherein He was laid. The sepulchre itself is in its rude state, but the building by which it is enclosed is a magnificent specimen of workman ship. Above a sarcophagus, which is said to have contained the Savior's dead body, lamps of gold and silver are kept perpetually burning, day and night. There is likewise the stone slab upon which it is supposed His body was embalmed. This is one of the first objects that meets the eye as the visitor enters the church, and which all good pilgrims stoop to kiss. Again, there is the actual spot upon which it is asserted Martha, Mary, and other women stood during the operation of embalming the Savior's body; and the very ground which was occupied by the three crosses, on which our Savior and the two thieves were crucified. Several graves are likewise pointed out in the edifice, including those of Mary Magdalene and Joseph of Arimathea. As a sample of the many traditions related by the priests, one is that Christ was crucified right over the grave of Adam, and that drops of His blood reaching Adam's skull, Father Adam was thereupon resurrected. This absurd statement is often accepted as a fact by credulous pilgrims.

At Bethlehem we were shown the "Church of the Nativity," wherein is pointed out what is said to be the manger in which Christ was born; also what is known as the "milk stone," said to have been hewn out of a piece of solid rock, which was formed by the dropping of milk from the breast of Mary the mother of Jesus, while nursing her infant Son. The Catholics have a large and handsome Church in Bethlehem.

In January, 1888, Elder Sjøhdal arrived at Haifa, and was appointed to labor in Palestine and learn the Arabic language. He has since been successful in the baptizing of some of the Christian Arabs, and the gospel is thus being opened up among that people.