

creed and their places of worship. They are governed, at least in the mountain regions, by village chiefs who bear the title of "melik," king, and seem in this to have perpetuated the form of government common in the east at the time of Abraham. The most influential ruler is the patriarch residing at Kotchannes, who bears the title of "Mar Shimun," or Lord Simeon, evidently after the Apostle Peter. The patriarchal dignity is hereditary and includes civil jurisdiction over the independent tribes.

The controversy that separated these Christians from the main body dates back to the violent days of the fifth century. Nestorius, a native of Syria, held the office of patriarch at Constantinople from 428 to 431 A. D., appointed by the emperor. He commenced by appealing to the head of the state for aid in putting down heresies, and proceeded vigorously against the Arians. The strife between the various factions of Christians had already at this time assumed the nature of a stain upon the honor of the church, mobs, riots, incendiarism and assassination being among the features of the controversy.

Then the question arose whether it was in accordance with Scripture to designate Mary as the "mother of God." Nestorius declared against this expression and deemed it necessary to apply the lash to some of his opponents. Finally the bishop of Rome declared in favor of the expression in controversy, and Nestorius was enjoined to retract on pain of excommunication. So far from yielding to this pressure, he replied with counter anathemas, and the case was brought before a stormy council which condemned the Constantinople patriarch and his doctrines, a decision which the emperor was induced to confirm. Nestorius was banished to Arabia and later to Egypt. His followers soon became extinct in the Roman empire, but those in the east found protection under the rulers of Persia, and it is believed that they at one time spread from there into India, Arabia and even to China.

The present movement of the remnant of this once powerful sect is chiefly important for its political significance. The Russian emissaries who conducted the negotiations have promised the people the protection of the government at St. Petersburg, on condition that they purge their creed from the peculiar doctrine of Nestorianism and add to their liturgy a prayer for the czar. In other respects they are to be allowed to retain their own service-books, hierarchy and customs. The Russians further promise to provide schools and defend the settlements against the Turks, Kurds and Persians. The terms are said to have been accepted, and if they are ratified by the holy synod of Russia, that country has obtained a protectorate over an important territory as well as healed a breach of long standing in the oriental church.

BOUNDARIES OF THE UNIVERSE.

Prof. Newcomb's announcement in the Mining and Scientific Press, San Francisco, that there is strong evidence to support the supposition that modern telescopes have actually brought the utmost boundaries of our part of the universe to view is, to say the least, startling. The probability is, he declares, that the small stars recently discovered look small, not only because of their vast distance from us, but because of their inferior size. There is no more beyond. They are the uttermost worlds in the large system of which our earth is only a small part.

The general outline of this universe—using the word in a limited sense—is known. It encloses an enormous disc in which our solar system is not far from the center. This disc has a diameter four or five times its thickness, but the length is only a matter of conjecture because the distance to many stars has not been measured. The distance from one side of the universe to the other is given as from 20,000 to 30,000 light years, that is to say, it is as many miles as a ray of light can travel in from twenty to thirty thousand years at a rate of 168,000 miles a second. Some idea of the immense length of this road may be formed from the statement that the diameter of the earth's orbit, 90,000,000 miles, would from one of the most distant stars appear so small that the most delicate appliances would fail to measure it.

There is probably not a more overwhelming proof of the incalculable power and the inscrutable wisdom of the Designer and Constructor of this world, than that furnished by astronomy. Among its devotees have always been found the greatest exponents of that faith which is the opposite of agnosticism both in its ancient and modern forms.

A GOOD WORD FOR ISLAM.

Father Hyacinthe, or Charles Loyson, attracted much attention many years ago because of his glowing eloquence and liberal views, the latter finally causing him to be suspected of serious heresy. He was first censured by the Catholic press for acknowledging the existence of "three great religions of civilized people," the Jewish, the Catholic and the Protestant, and later for fraternizing with various sects in the United States and Great Britain. Finally he was released from his monastic vows and made a "secular priest" with the title of abbe.

It appears that Mr. Loyson's wife is not less liberal in her views, nor less courageous in expressing them, than her celebrated husband. During a two years' sojourn among Mohammedans in north Africa, Palestine and Syria, she mingled with the natives and made their modes of life a special study. Some of her impressions are given to the Westminster Gazette. The lady takes a decidedly favorable view and pronounces many of the ideas prevalent among Christians to be prejudices. The fact deserves notice in the interest of fairness and truth.

Mme. Loyson does not justify the massacres, the sickening details of which are sufficiently well known to the world, but she maintains that notwithstanding these occurrences no creed is more tolerant of other monotheistic beliefs than the Mohammedan. Idolatry the Mussulmen hate; it is the idolator that must be converted, even at the point of the sword. A Mohammedan accepts the belief in God and a future judgment as the essence of religion and cares but little for dogmatic differences; as a proof of this is mentioned that the Mohammedans still maintain with reverence the holy sepulchre and permit Christians to worship there and erect their churches in the vicinity; if the Mohammedans were left to themselves they would not persecute anyone; they believe in government by God but are indifferent to the incidental forms it may assume.

On the question of the status of Mohammedan women Mme. Loyson has also formed an opinion not generally held. These women, the distinguished author says, are satisfied with their position and on no condition accept the "freedom" of their Christian sisters.

They want seclusion. This is essential to their happiness. It is in fact founded upon a lofty appreciation of the virtue of chastity. To the Mohammedan woman the harem is a sacred place; the Christian conception of it as the scene of debauchery is absurd. To quote verbatim:

"I have visited many harems, and can testify that polygamy, which, remember, was only tolerated by Mohammed, is rarely practiced, and when practiced does not involve that demoralization or abasement of the wife which we commonly attribute to it. The position of women in Christian countries is in many respects horrible to them. They say: 'We have a legal and limited polygamy; with you it is illicit and promiscuous.' Remember, however, that the harem among the middle and upper classes almost always contains only one wife. And what material devotion and domestic happiness we everywhere find! The youths are as shy and as chaste as the maidens. As to flirtation, that is absolutely unknown. A man seldom sees the face of his wife until after his marriage. We have an idea that Mussulwomen are merely pretty playthings—ravishingly beautiful they often are, but they are also intelligent, knowing the Koran by heart, and the most exquisite embroidery in the world comes from the harems. A striking characteristic of the women is their complete freedom from curiosity; even a mirror is seldom found in the women's apartments."

Mme. Loyson is no convert to Islam. She admits that the Christian religion as it should be is perfect, "but," she adds, "we are apostates; we do not live our faith, and we cannot, as things stand, claim any great superiority in practical morals over the Moslem world."

A RACE PROBLEM.

The race problem in the South, says the Medical Record, seems destined to be settled by natural laws, unless something be done speedily to save the negro from the results of his own vices. This view is supported by recent investigations into the matter by a colored physician, Dr. R. H. Johnson of Brunswick, Ga. He gathered vital statistics from nearly 300 towns in the South and found that the death rate of negroes is double that of the whites, and that the birth rate is smaller among the colored than among the white population. Furthermore, the younger generation of the race make but a poor showing, he says, as regards size and physique, compared with their ancestors. These facts are attributed to the carelessness and dissipation of the race. In the days of slavery the negroes were looked after by physicians and taken care of, and the result was a race of giants; but with liberty, coupled with ignorance of sanitary laws, came licentiousness and the enervating vices to which they are now yielding.

That the colored race is capable of great improvement when placed under proper restraint is proven by the report of Surgeon General Sternberg in his annual report on the health of the colored soldiers. The Record quotes the following:

"Great improvement has taken place in the past few years in the sanitary condition of the colored troops. The white troops have participated in the improvement, although their rates have not fallen so rapidly as those of the colored men. During the past year the total hospital admission rate for all causes among the colored troops was 868.88 per 1,000 of strength, as compared with 1,132.49 among the whites, and as compared with 915.88 among themselves in the previous year, and with