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**REVIEW OF THE**  
ARGUMENTS AND THEORIES OF ANTITRINITARIANS,  
BEING THE SECOND SECTION OF  
**FLATT'S DISSERTATION**  
ON  
**THE DEITY OF CHRIST.**

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[Translated from the Latin.]

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BEFORE I proceed to examine in detail the particular tenets of conflicting sects, it may be well to take a preliminary view of some *general* arguments, which have been urged in opposition to the Deity of Christ, though not in support of any definite hypothesis. These are of two sorts, *philosophical* and *scriptural*—both of which have been the means of misleading many candid, acute, and so far as we can judge, sincere inquirers after truth, in relation to this subject.

I. Those of the first class may, for the most part, be reduced to this one objection, that the doctrine of the Deity of Christ involves an evident contradiction, or, to say the least, is utterly incomprehensible. And it must be confessed, that some ground has been given for this cavil by the manner in which *personality* and *consubstantiality* have been defined by many orthodox divines. But surely, it is most unfair to charge upon a church the imperfections or absurdities of individual theologians. That the doctrine of our church upon this subject, as set forth in her

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THE Druses, or as they call themselves the Unitarians [*Mowahhidûn*], of Mount Libanus, have, for several hundred years, been the subject of much curious speculation among European travellers and antiquaries. The attention of the Christian world was first attracted to their character and history, towards the close of the fifteenth century, when one of their hereditary chiefs took refuge in Italy from the storms of his own country. An opinion was soon broached by some fanciful theorist, and propagated throughout Europe, that the Druses were the remnant of the Christian colonies established in the Holy Land at the time of the Crusades; a hypothesis countenanced, and perhaps suggested, by the coincidence of the name with that of Dreux in France, and the traditionary story of a Count de Dreux who had actually made a settlement not far from Mount Libanus. There was something romantic in this supposititious pedigree which awakened the sympathies and amused the fancy of all Christendom, an effect greatly heightened by the conduct of the Syrian refugee, who, with the singular complaisance peculiar to his nation, professed a strong attachment to the Christian faith, and a firm belief in his own European extraction. And here it may be observed, that much of the misconception and erroneous theory which have prevailed in relation to this people, has arisen from the strange trait in their character and manners just alluded to, a remarkable facility in conforming externally to the rites and opinions of those with whom they come in contact. Whether this policy has been adopted from motives essentially connected with their religious system as requiring

strict secrecy in relation to their creed and ritual, or whether it has been suggested altogether by a dread of the persecuting spirit which characterizes all orthodox Mohammedans, and especially the Turks, is a doubtful and disputed question. It is a fact, however, that they do not hesitate in practice to humour, as it were, the prejudices of their neighbours. An intelligent traveller informs us, that the mosque at Deir-el-Kamr, though sedulously garnished and well filled, whenever visited by a Turkish officer, is for the most part totally deserted, the minaret being only used to proclaim lost cattle and announce the current value of provisions.\* We learn from the same authority, that the hereditary chiefs are circumcised and carefully instructed in the forms of prayer prescribed by the moslem ritual, while on the other hand, they do not scruple to drink wine and eat pork, very often go to church when one is within reach, and sometimes by way of a compliment to a Maronite monk or bishop, suffer their children to be publicly baptized. This compliance with the forms of Christianity, it must be owned, seems to be suggested less by a dread of persecution than a wish to elude investigation, and may indeed be regarded as a circumstance unparalleled in the history of other sects. In view of such an anomalous spirit of toleration and conformity, we can scarcely wonder at the discrepancy which appears in the various opinions that have been prevalent in relation to this people, both in Europe and the East. By some they have been classed as a society of Mohammedan schismatics, by others as a spurious variety of Christians, while many have regarded them as nothing else than a race of disguised idolaters. To the same cause we may perhaps ascribe the exaggerated statements which their own immediate neighbors have in past times propagated with respect to their moral character as a community, and the

\* Niebuhr's Voyage. Vol. II. p. 353. Amst. 1780.

impure rites performed at their religious celebrations. There can be no doubt, it is true, that the moral principles established in their system, and the moral practice thence arising, are by no means unexceptionable. But the inquiries of enlightened travellers have clearly proved from the testimony of unbiassed Mohammedans and Christians, that the dark shade of the descriptions often given of their moral character, is attributable, in a good degree at least, to the malignity of hatred or the credulity of ignorance.\* That their real sentiments and character are as little known to the other oriental sects, as to the inhabitants of Europe, may be gathered from the fact, that the native Christians of Aleppo, on observing the private and mysterious meetings of the English masonic lodge established there, immediately concluded that the Druses were no less than an order of Free Masons.† It is, therefore, not at all surprizing, that the history and character of this peculiar race, though so long the subject of inquisitive research, have been involved in such impenetrable mystery, and are even now so little understood. Mere obstinate refusal to disclose their secret would probably have failed of accomplishing the end, particularly if combined with an austere and fastidious separation from every other sect. But this singular practice of assuming any garb and professing any creed which convenience or interest recommends, without, however, giving up their own distinctive system of belief, has served as an impervious veil for the concealment of their mysteries. We shall endeavor to assign some reasons for this characteristic anomaly, after a brief review of the authenticated facts which constitute the history of the Druses so far as it is known. The authentic information on this subject, though it amounts to very little, is scattered through a number of miscel-

\* See the travels of Niebuhr, Volney, and Burckhardt, in Syria and the Holy Land.

† Niebuhr. Vol. II. p. 356.

laneous books of travels, geography, and history. Nothing more will be here attempted than a connected exhibition of these facts, with some additional illustration derived from Mohammedan authorities.

It is a remarkable circumstance, though one which can scarcely be disputed or denied, that almost all the heterogeneous and conflicting heresies, which have mangled the religious system of Mohammed, since the time of its foundation, may be traced to their primary source, in political divisions and commotions. As might have been expected from the character of the system itself, a multitude of fanatical separatists and metaphysical neologists arose, even before the death of the false prophet. But the seeds of total and radical disunion were first sown in the violent dissensions which arose on the choice of the first Khalif or *successor* of Mohammed. The claims of Ali, as the first who had espoused the new religion, and as a kinsman and confidential friend of the impostor, were so obvious and imposing, that the preference given to another could not fail to create a powerful and zealous party in his favor. His death and the abdication of his son, instead of allaying this violence of feeling, served only to enlarge the breach, so that the whole series of Khalifs posterior to Ali had to encounter a perpetual opposition on the part of these malcontents, more or less formidable in proportion to their strength and the weakness of the government. When the family of Abbas obtained the supreme power, the number and influence of the followers of Ali were felt to be so great, that an attempt was made to deduce the pedigree of Al Abbas from one of Ali's sons. This genealogy, however, was so obviously strained, that the pretension was abandoned by the reigning family; but the tacit acknowledgment which had been given of the prior right of the Alides fixed forever the division of the two great parties of Shialis and Sonnists, the former maintaining the divine right of Ali, and the latter the legitimacy

of the first three Khalifs. This, however, by no means continued the only matter in difference between them. A marked diversity of character was soon exhibited and constantly increased; and though each of these great sects was, in process of time, subdivided by a multitude of petty schisms, the same generic character pervaded all. Nor is the state of things, in this respect, materially different at the present time. The Shiahs, even now, have a manifest leaning towards wild speculation and fanatical enthusiasm, and the Sonnites towards the opposite extreme of blind or hypocritical formality. This fact admits of an easy historical solution. The sect of the Shiahs, though its date is for the most part referred to a later period, had its origin, no doubt, in the party heats with which Islam was inflamed on the death of the false prophet. The zeal of the partisans of Ali, originally warm, and fomented by the successive elevation of three pretenders to the regal and pontifical authority, gave a character of violent extravagance to the sect which perpetuated their sentiments and feelings, and this characteristic spirit soon infected their doctrinal opinions. As the fundamental principle upon which they built, was the priority of Ali and his offspring to all other families and individuals, their great object naturally was the exaltation of his merits and claims to pre-eminence of rank. In the prosecution of this end, they were not contented with asserting the advantage which his peculiar relations to the Prophet gave him over his competitors. They soon began to call in the aid of the marvellous and preternatural—ascribing to Ali a super-human nature, and ending at last in a direct apotheosis. This last doctrine, it is true, has never been espoused in all its length and breadth by the great body of the Shiahs, but it has always prevailed extensively among the members of that sect, and is indeed nothing more than their avowed opinion carried out to all its consequences. It is easy to imagine the effects of such a spirit, when once it

became prevalent among the Arab sectaries. No extravagance was thought too wild, no absurdity too gross to be pressed into the service of the son of Abu Taleb. By degrees Mohammed seemed to lose the supremacy to which his prophetic character entitled him, and to yield the first place in the eyes and hearts of the Shiabs to his son-in-law and Vizir. The eternity of the Koran was denied by pontifical authority in the reign of Almamun, the *Sonnah* or canonical traditions were rejected, or to speak more properly, gave way to a new traditionary code of a different complexion; the names of the first three Khalifs were recited in the mosques only to be cursed by the officiating priest, and in a word, the Shiabs and Sonnis learned to regard each other as worse than heretics, idolaters, and infidels. The policy of the Sonnis obviously was to fly to the opposite extreme—to reject all mystical interpretations and visionary theories, and by adhering strictly to the *letter* of the Koran and the *Sonnah*, to counteract the licentious extravagance of the schismatics. In this course they have persevered unto this day, counting the letters of the Koran, while the Shiabs converted them into cabalistic symbols, and illustrating the text by puerile traditionary comments, while the Shiabs enveloped it in the smoke of their mystical metaphysics.

We have already said, that the great subject of contention between these sects, was the divine right of Ali to the Khalifat—the Shiabs considering the claims of his family to pontifical authority as unalienable and exclusive, the Sonnis maintaining that the office was purely elective, and denying the existence of any hereditary right. There are two Arabic words which are used to denote the head of the Mohammedan religion—*Khalif* and *Imâm*. The first meaning merely a *successor*, has been applied indifferently to all who have united the spiritual and temporal authority. The other is exclusively appropriated by the Shiabs to the



legitimate princes of the house of Ali. Of these they reckon twelve, the first and second being Ali and his first-born Hassan who renounced the Khalifat about the fortieth year of the Hegira. The last of these twelve Imams, whom they call all *Al Mohdi* or the great director, is, according to the prevalent opinion of the Shiah, still alive, and living in concealment, but is to reappear at some appointed period, not yet arrived. This wild conceit has been the fruitful source of many impositions, usurpations, and destructive wars throughout the west of Asia, as nothing could be easier among a people so disposed to believe things marvellous and new, than to personate this mysterious character who is constantly expected by the Shiah to appear and restore the honor of the house of Ali. We find accordingly in oriental history innumerable instances of bold attempts to represent Almohdi for the purpose of corrupting the allegiance of the Faithful to their Khalifs and transferring their affections to some rival dynasty. The majority of these attempts were unsuccessful, though they assisted to shake the throne of Bagdad during the decline of the house of Abbas. In some instances, however, the results have been more serious, as in the case of the Fatimites who reigned in Egypt for above two hundred years, and whose history is the more deserving of attention, as it leads directly to that of the Druses.

About the close of the tenth century, Abu Mohammed Obeidallah assumed the title of Almohdi, and created a strong party in the African provinces against the reigning Khalif, Al Moktader Billah. The rank which he claimed at first, was that of Sultan or Khalif of Khairwan; but in a few years he assumed the style of Emîr Al Mumenin or Commander of the Faithful, and declared himself a lineal descendant of Ali, by his wife Fatimah, the daughter of Mohammed. From this circumstance, was derived the name of Fatimites, ever afterwards applied to him and his successors. After a protracted period of sanguinary conflict, he succeed-

ed in laying the foundations of an independent monarchy, which the third of his successors, Al Moezz, established finally in Egypt, A. H. 362, (A. D. 972,) where it remained unshaken amidst the repeated and violent attacks of the Bagdad Khalifs, until ultimately and completely overthrown by Saladin. Whether Obeidallah the founder of this dynasty, was really of the house of Ali, is one of the most doubtful and disputed points in oriental history, The Mohammedan historians have given such contradictory accounts of his parentage and extraction, that it seems impossible to separate the truth from the mass of exaggeration with which political and religious prejudice has adulterated and disguised it. But be that as it may, it is agreed on all hands, that from the time of his first asserting these pretensions, he fully espoused and uniformly promoted the temporal and spiritual interests of the followers of Ali. To this, merc policy would have impelled him as a means of widening the breach between him and the reigning family, and we find accordingly, that from the first foundation of the Fatimite Khalifat in Egypt, the Shiah doctrines were zealously professed, and established by authority, in the capital of Egypt. We have already seen how propitious the principles and spirit of that sect have always been to fanatical extravagance, and wild theological speculation. And we now find in perusing the contemporary annals of the Eastern and Western Khalifats, that while heretic after heretic was strangled in the dungeons, or burnt in the streets, of Bagdad, for maintaining the incarnation of the Deity in Ali, or preaching the mystical pantheism of the Sufis—the propagators of the self-same doctrines were in Cairo revered as prophets, and rewarded as public benefactors. From the time that Al Moezz made his entrance into Egypt, the extravagance of the Shiahs was allowed full scope. So many heterogeneous absurdities had been propagated and exploded, and the popular credulity burdened with so many

conflicting novelties of faith and practice, that the minds of the vulgar began to be unsettled and the people seemed disposed to throw off the trammels of religion altogether, when at length under the auspices of Hakem Biamrillah the chaos was reduced in some degree to order and wrought into the semblance of a system.

The notorious prince just mentioned, was the fifth Fati-mite sovereign after Obeidallah, and the third who reigned in Egypt. He ascended the throne A. H. 386,\* at a very early age, and after some years of fickle and inactive government, began to exhibit symptoms of the wildest madness, combined with the most extravagant impiety. His official acts at this period of his reign, as recorded by Makrizi, are pitiable specimens of mingled folly, insanity, and wickedness. In one of his edicts he commands all the dogs of Cairo to be massacred; in another he forbids the women of the city to leave their homes on any pretext or at any time. On one day he required that the names of the first three Khalifs should be cursed at public worship, and on the next revoked the order. In one decree he would regulate with minuteness and precision the distinctive dress to be worn by Jews and Christians, and before the change could well be made, would issue another altering the fashion and requiring strict obedience upon pain of death. As his malady increased, he grew restless, and passed whole nights in pompous marches through the streets of Cairo, requiring the bazars to be kept open and the shops to be illuminated. With an intellect thus crazed, and under the influence of the wild speculations of the wildest Shiahs, it is not surprising that the unhappy monarch became a tool in the hands of ambitious and fanatical impostors, who availed themselves of his insanity, to forward their own schemes of proselytism or aggrandizement. Of these the most conspicuous were Mo-

\* A. D. 996.

ammed Ibn Ismail El Durzi, and Hamza Ibn Ali. The former, who also bore the name of Darar, is supposed to have been an emigrant from Persia, whence he imported into Egypt the mystical jargon of the Sufis, who, then as now, prevailed extensively in the former country. He is considered the founder of Ismailis, a sect still existing in the west of Asia, and is said by modern writers to have given name to the Druses of Syria themselves. Hamza was the coadjutor and successor of El Durzi, and is regarded by the Druses as the prophet or apostle of their faith. Under the influence of these two men, the impiety and madness of the Khalif reached its acme. In the year of the Hegira 408, he went so far as to deify himself, declaring that he was God incarnate, and forbidding the use of the customary phrase *God be propitious to him*, on account of its obvious impropriety when applied to God himself. In the same spirit, he changed his surname *Biamrillah*, (*by the appointment or command of God*,) into *Bidhâtihi*, (*by his own essential nature*,) and in short laid claim without reserve, limitation, or exception, to the honors of the Most High. By degrees, the confused and incoherent doctrines connected with and flowing from this absurd apotheosis, were reduced by Hamza into something like a systematic form and clothed in the mysterious garb of an unintelligible jargon. The doctrine of the metempsychosis, which was already common to many of the Shiahs, was set forth in prominent relief, the true believer being taught to trace the transmigrations of certain high intelligences immediately subordinate to Hakem or the Deity, though almost all the prophets recorded in the scriptures, to the person of Hamza and some five or six of his devoted satellites. The ceremonies of the new religion were performed with great solemnity, the Faithful being frequently assembled to receive instruction in the doctrines of their creed and moral exhortations from the Da'is or public teachers. And it may be remarked as a

singular feature in the system, that its privileges were extended to both sexes, particular provision being made for the instruction of the women, and some sacred writings still preserved being specially addressed to them. But besides these assemblies, which had necessarily something of a public character, there were secret meetings held, of a more mysterious nature, to which none could gain access but by passing through certain initiatory rites. The initiated too were divided into various ranks, each successive gradation enjoying its own privileges and maintaining its own order, holding for that purpose separate meetings, and performing diverse acts. At these nocturnal meetings, the tradition of the East affirms, that the decencies of life were scandalously outraged, a promiscuous and incestuous communion of the sexes being not only allowed, but enjoined as a religious duty. How far these imputations may be explained away as the results of malignant prejudice, or of vulgar credulity excited by the mystery which shrouded these assemblies, it is by no means easy to determine. Suffice it to say, that even allowing all that ought to be allowed in such a case, the acknowledged character of the men who prompted and regulated these proceedings, is by no means such as to justify the expectation of unspotted purity in any of their acts, particularly those performed in secret, and under the influence of blind fanaticism. In the meantime, the mad monarch continued to enjoy his arrogated honors, and to preside over the rites of his false religion with insane complacency. He was not, however, long permitted to continue the exhibition of this impious farce. In spite of his magnificent pretensions to perfection and omnipotence, a successful attempt was made to cut short his wild career, and the deluded wretch was slain with his vicegerent and prophet, by the emissaries of a party created by the influence and arts of his own sister. This catastrophe may be added to the many proofs which history affords of the utter impossi-

bility of giving permanence and general diffusion among common people, to a system of over-strained and ultra mysticism. All the patronage of Hakem, all the intrigues of El Durzi, all the jargon of Hamza, were unable to force the absurd extravagance of the new doctrines upon the lower classes. They preferred the cold emptiness of orthodox Mohammedanism, with all its restrictions and formalities, or at least the more moderate varieties of the Shiah heresy; and accordingly, they not only rose in opposition to the Khalif when the signal of revolt was given by the Benu-Korra, but resisted all attempts made after the death of Hakem to resuscitate the suppressed ceremonies and reorganize the abandoned lodges. Nor has any success attended such attempts at any subsequent period. The great mass of the Mohammedans continue to adhere to the religion of the Koran; and though a tincture of the spirit which characterized the worshippers of Hakem has been imparted to some unimportant sects, it has never since been popular or diffusive. The only community that is known to have preserved the system of Hamza and El Durzi, in its principles and details are the Druses of Mount Libanus, and even among them it is a secret at this day.

The circumstances which attended Hakem's death are enveloped in extraordinary mystery, rendered more remarkable by its contrast with the minuteness of detail, which for the most part characterizes the Arabic historians. An attempt was made by the high priests of the new religion to inspire a belief among the people, that he had only disappeared, like Al Mohdi, his progenitor, and like him would reappear at some convenient season. It was the less difficult to fabricate this tale, from the fact, that the Khalif was assassinated, in a private place, to which he retired at stated periods, to hold secret converse with the prophets and apostles. But subsequent events completely falsified this pious fraud, except in the eyes of the

most credulous among his blinded worshippers. The political changes which succeeded, sufficiently evinced that the unhappy monarch had undergone the process which all oriental sovereigns have reason to expect, and which most of them actually experience. Among these changes one of the most important was the abolition of the public, and suppression of the secret, rites connected with the worship of the murdered Khalif. The dispersion of the priests and devotees was a necessary consequence, and as Eastern revolutionists do nothing by halves, Hamza and his adherents who continued faithful, soon found themselves compelled to betake themselves to flight as the only means of safety, so that few months had elapsed before Egypt was completely cleared of every vestige of the obnoxious heresy.

At this point, a considerable chasm occurs in the history of the fanatics, which is only supplied—and that very imperfectly—by detached and confused traditionary anecdotes. The circumstances of their overthrow in Egypt might indeed lead us naturally to expect the absence of any continuous authentic record of their subsequent migrations. Persecuted, as they no doubt were, by the orthodox or less heretical believers, wherever they were found; hated at home, and suspected elsewhere, they were compelled to make their movements cautiously and in secret. The same circumstances would, of course, induce them to prefer the society of one another to that of the indifferent or persecuting multitude; a feeling strengthened probably in most of them, by the same spirit of fanatical enthusiasm which made them refuse to abandon their new faith. These facts, considered in connexion with the fragments of traditionary information already mentioned, give no small degree of probability to the opinion which identifies the Druses with the Egyptian refugees. Another circumstance, which adds to this probability, is the derivation of the name by which the sect is known, from the surname of Mohammed Ibn Is-

mael. An etymology suggested and maintained by a native of Syria\* no doubt on good authority. Whether the fugitives immediately organized a separate society, or whether they amalgamated with another race, at that time occupants of Mount Libanus, we have no historical means of ascertaining. There is so much confusion and obscurity about the statements of the Mohammedan historians in relation to this period, that they furnish no satisfactory results. The first mention which we find of the Druses, as an organized community, is in the *Itinerarium* of Benjamin of Tudela, who travelled to the East in the 12th century, while the Europeans had possession of the Holy Land, a circumstance which clearly disproves the assertion, that they were a Christian colony. It may be thought extraordinary, that a society so singular in its character and habits should have attracted so little attention during such a lapse of time, and still more, that a sect of proscribed and persecuted heretics should have been suffered to reside in the midst of Mussulmans unmolested, and for several centuries almost unknown. This phenomenon, however, is sufficiently explained by a reference to the history of the Ottoman Empire, and the date of the first Turkish conquests. Though Mohammedans in their religious faith and practice, the Turks are of an origin entirely diverse from that of the other Moslem nations. It is generally agreed, that the first Turks were a horde of migratory Tartars, who penetrated into Asia-Minor through the Persian territory, and it is by no means an improbable conjecture, that they picked up the religion of the Koran in the progress of their march. They had consequently, at first, none of the same deep-rooted prejudices, one way or the other, which at that time characterized the Arabs and their colonies, and if at the present day they are the strictest and most bigotted of all the Sonnis, it has arisen

\* M. Mitchel, French dragoman at Saïde.



in a great degree, from a spirit of political animosity towards the Persians, who are Shiah. The invasion of Syria and the Holy Land, therefore, by the Ottomans, wrought a change in the character of the whole population. The strangers, feeling none of the instinctive prejudices cherished by their predecessors, and disregarding probably, the vague traditions respecting the origin and character of the Druses, suffered them to remain in quiet possession of their territories, and in fact, seem to have wholly overlooked them, till the Druses emboldened by this tolerant contempt, committed such depredations on the adjacent regions as effectually roused the attention of their masters. A series of petty wars between the Turkish soldiery and the mountaineers terminated at length in the subjection of the latter, near the end of the fifteenth century. They were not, however, exterminated or even expelled. The only important change which was made in their condition, was the substitution of a monarchial form of local government, for the somewhat republican system which prevailed before—the numerous Sheikhs or petty chieftains of the Druses, being united under a single Emir. They soon, however, renewed their depredations with different degrees of impunity and success, and their history from that period till 1770, so far as it is known, consists of little else than a succession of revolts and conflicts with the Turks. It was at one of these stormy periods, that the prince, before alluded to, who had fought with great success against the provincial Turkish troops, and raised the power of his nation to its highest pitch, fled to Italy to escape the more formidable preparations which the Sultan was making to destroy him. In the year last mentioned, the famous rebel Ali Bey having been expelled from Egypt, renewed his disorganizing measures in Syria, where he had taken refuge, and as the war between the Porte and Russia required nearly all the Turkish troops upon the Northern frontier, the Pasha of Tripoli was forced

to have recourse to the Druses for assistance. They accepted his proposals, but in order to render their aid more efficacious, he compelled the reigning Emir, Al Mansur, to resign, and appointed in his room the Emir Yusuf, a nephew of Al Mansur, who had made himself conspicuous as a military chieftain, in several of the petty wars, so common in the east. Under his command, they marched upon Ali Bey, who, meeting them with a few small pieces of artillery obtained from Russian ships, routed them entirely, and wasted a considerable portion of the Emir's territory. The loss sustained in property and men, was serious to the Druses, and though we know few authenticated facts, in relation to their subsequent condition, there is reason to believe that they have never since been possessed of any great degree of power. It would even appear, that the Turks have in latter times, directly interfered in the local government of Mount Libanus, by assuming the right of nominating the Emir or chief Lord. It is stated by Mr. Jowett, in his Christian Researches, that the present Emir is neither a Moslem nor a Druse, but a Christian, who only complies with the outward form of the Mohammedan religion, to secure himself from injury. It is probable, however, that this is a misconception arising from the illusive practice of external conformity already mentioned as a characteristic of the nation in all ages. We have now given as full a view of the most probable opinions respecting the rise and progress of this people, as our means of information would permit. It remains to collect some of the scattered, and by no means perfectly consistent, statements which have been given in regard to their religion. The reader will recollect, that the educated Druses have always refused to impart information on this subject, and that what is known has been discovered by fraud or accident, or guessed out from the mystical jargon of their sacred books.

The Druses call their own religion *Tawhîd*, a word de-

noting *unity*, or rather a relief in the doctrine of Unity. This term is of common use among the Mussulmans, who apply it to their own faith as contra-distinguished from Christianity on the one hand, and polytheism on the other.

It is by no means certain, whether this is the sense in which the Druses employ it as descriptive of their system. It may, indeed, have allusion to their notions respecting the metempsychosis and the kindred doctrine of successive incarnations, and be intended to imply the Deity, though so frequently revealed in different forms, was, notwithstanding, *one*. But from some expressions which occur in their sacred writings, it seems more probable, that this appellative is founded on another peculiar dogma of their creed—to wit, that all the religious systems which have ever existed, however heterogeneous or contradictory, are sealed, consummated, and centred, in the religion of the Druses. Their prophet Hamza, and the other authors of their sacred books, delight in representing the new system as a grand universal medium between all extremes, and at the same time as the topstone of some mighty edifice, which had been building from the beginning of the world. This doctrine runs through all their writings, and serves to explain more than one of their peculiarities. It is on this ground, that they are so completely tolerant, never offering any opposition, nor expressing a dislike to the doctrines or services of any other sect. It is on this ground too, that they wholly abstain from all attempts to convert or proselyte their neighbors, nay, peremptorily refuse to receive any other than a native Druse into their communion. These two peculiarities, which are wholly unparalleled in religious history, can only be occasioned by a belief, that their system is the sum and substance of all other creeds, and an expectation that it will at some future day be universal. If this supposition is correct, the *Tawhid* properly denotes the unity of all religions, rather than the unity of God,

though the latter may, indeed, be included in the former. The truth is, that the doctrine just described is the only one which seems to be consistently and uniformly taught from the very beginning, in their sacred books. In other respects the system appears to have been formed gradually and at random. The earliest of Hamza's writings which have seen the light, are very moderate in their tone and spirit, and seem removed to no great distance from strict orthodoxy. The Koran is quoted or alluded to, in almost every sentence—a blessing is pronounced as usual, upon Mohammed, as the seal of all the prophets—and Hakem himself is represented as merely the vicegerent of the Deity. By degrees, however, this character is changed—Mohammed is forgotten, and Hakem is advanced till his Deity is explicitly asserted. For this change the books themselves account, by declaring that the deity did not enter into Hakem, until the year 400 of the Hegira, a chronological fiction, contrived, no doubt, to correspond with the change of plan or feeling in his fanatical advisers. After the deification of the Khalif, the sacred books are all confusion. Long, desultory, moral lectures, are intermingled with mystical personifications, transmigrations, and allegories, exhibiting very few, if any, indications of a uniform consistent system. To one of the most intelligent, and accurate observers among modern travellers\*, we are indebted for the substance of a book purporting to contain a true account of the religion of the Druses, and to be itself the composition of a Druse. Though the circumstances in which the MS. was first brought to light, argue little for its perfect authenticity,† yet as it fur-

\* Carsten Niebuhr.

† “ On me disoit qu' un *Jesuite* qui possédoit parfaitement l'Arabe, qui avoit logé une nuit chez un Druze, qui étoit fort hospitalier, avoit trouvé ce livre dans un coin de sa chambre à coucher et qu' il l'avoit d'abord copié la même nuit.” Niebuhr's *Voyage*, Tom. II. p. 354.

nishes a more connected view of the doctrines of the sect, than is easily found elsewhere, and is probably of modern origin, we shall content ourselves with borrowing its statements, and adding a few others from later authorities.

With respect to the Deity, they hold, according to the MS. just mentioned, that he has been ten times incarnate, first under the name and form of Ali—and last under the name and form of Hakem. Among the ten persons who are thus supposed to have been God incarnate, are several of the Fatimite Khalifs, who preceded Hakem on the throne of Egypt. The date of the Deity's first entrance into Hakem, we have already stated to be about the year 400 of the Hegira, or 1009 of the Christian era. They believe, however, that this incarnation was concealed from men, until 408, the year in which Mohammed Ibn Ismail began to preach his doctrines. In the following year, which they call the year of affliction, they say that the divinity abandoned Hakem, but returned to him again in 410, and continued in him until he disappeared.

Immediately subordinate to Hakem, the system recognises five intelligences or spiritual beings, who bear a great variety of titles in the books, though they are generally known under those of, the Mind or Intelligence—the Soul or Spirit—the Word—the right Wing—and the left Wing. These, like the Deity himself, are supposed to have dwelt successively in various human forms, migrating from one body to another, like the souls of men. Of these five beings, who are called the ministers of the Tawhid, or Religion of Unity, the first above mentioned, also bears the names of the *Will*—the *Command*—the *Cause of Causes*—and many others equally appropriate and significant. He is said to have appeared eight times in the flesh; 1. in the time of Adam, under the name of *Shat*. 2. In the time of Noah, under the name of *Pythagoras*. 3. In the time of Abraham, under the name of *David*. 4. In the time of Moses, under the name

of *Jethro*. 5. In the time of Christ, under the name of *Eleazar*. 6. In the time of Mohammed, under the name of *Salman* the Persian, (who is supposed by many to have aided the impostor in the fabrication of the Koran.) 7. In the time of Said, under the name of *Saleh*. 8. Last, and above all, in the time of Hakem, under the name of *Hamza* and the official title of *Kaim-el-zeman* or Lieutenant of the age. In like manner, the other mysterious essences, above enumerated, are traced, though a series of migrations to the persons of four followers of Hamza, the most eminent of whom is *Boha-eddin*, the author of many of the pieces which compose their sacred books. It is observed by Niebuhr, that the book from which he gathered the statements, which he gives in relation to the Druses—and the same is true of their more ancient writing—makes little mention of Mohammed Ibn Ismael, as the founder of the sect, but speaks often, and in high terms, of Hamza. This circumstance may be explained upon the supposition, that Mohammed Ibn Ismail was not properly the founder of the sect, though he may have been the first who breathed its peculiar sentiments, but an easier explanation is afforded by the fact, that most of the books in question were composed by Hamza himself. Be that as it may, it is certain that the Druses pay extravagant respect to the memory of Hamza, even supposing him to have written the New Testament, and to be himself the true Messiah, in consequence of which, says Neibuhr, they regard Christianity with peculiar favor. The doctrine of a future state is distinctly taught by Hamza in his early writings, and pretty much in the language of the Koran; but as he also recognized in the same compositions, the divine legation of Mohammed, and the subordinate rank of Hakem, it is hard to draw any definite conclusions from expressions which would seem to have been used merely as words of course, or to have been abrogated by posterior revelations. Certain it is, that the Druses do anti-

cipate a second advent of the vanished Hakem, to destroy his enemies, and elevate their sect above all false religions. In that day of retribution they believe, that most favor will be shown to Christians, and least to the Mohammedans—and it is remarkable, that they look forward to the triumph of Christianity over Islam as a sure prognostic of the great and glorious catastrophe.

As to their practical or moral doctrines, so far as they are known, they may be summed up in few words. The positive requisitions of their law are: 1. A belief in the divinity of Hakem. 2. A belief in the metempsychosis. 3. A blind submission to the Akils in spiritual matters. 4. Alms and benevolence in general towards their brethren. 5. The instructions of their wives in the doctrines of their faith. They are forbidden, 1. to swear. 2. To reveal the doctrines of their faith to strangers. 3. To eat with strangers or with those of a lower caste among themselves. 4. To commit adultery. Polygamy is allowed, but seldom practised by any but the Emirs. It is also said, that they consider marriage lawful between the nearest relations. Murder seems not to be prohibited; and indeed it would seem from Niebuhr's statements to be their ordinary mode of adjusting differences, and revenging insults.

A few observations will be necessary on the internal polity of the Druses, so far as it has reference to their religious peculiarities. They are divided into the two great classes of *Akils* or Ecclesiastics, and *Jahils* or Seculars. The former word properly means *wise*, and the latter *ignorant*, but usage has applied the one exclusively to those who devote themselves to a religious life, and the latter to all others, not excepting even the hereditary chiefs of the highest dignity. In many respects, the Akkal of the Druses bear a strong resemblance to the Christian priesthood, of the Roman church. Like them, they are the sole depositaries of the mysteries of faith and spiritual authority, and like them

they form a society distinct from the body of the people. In some points, however, the resemblance fails. The Akils of the Druses regard even the highest of the Jahils as their inferiors, and consider themselves polluted by merely eating with a Jahil, though he be the chief Lord or Emir of the tribe. In fact, there seems to be as broad a line of demarcation between the Akils and the Jahils, as between the Jahils and other sects. There are three *Sheikhs-ul-akkal*, or superiors of this privileged order, whose authority they acknowledge. Of the secular chiefs, though politically the most powerful, they are independent. Their pride is, indeed, so great, that they scorn to act as secretaries to the chiefs, or as instructors to their children, offices filled exclusively by Christians, a circumstance which accounts for the number of Maronites residing on the mountain and apparently amalgamated with the Druses. But even this is not all. The Akils are not only thus independent of the Jahils. They are the sole depositories of the secret doctrines handed down by tradition, or in writing, from the days of Hakem and of Hamza. One of the duties most strictly enjoined upon the Jahils, is entire confidence in all the declarations of the Akils on religious subjects. They are all, therefore, considered as infallible, and deal forth their stores of spiritual knowledge, more or less profusely at their own discretion. It appears too, from the statements of some travellers, that the ignorance of the seculars, not excepting the nobility, upon these subjects, is scarcely less than that of total strangers. They have, indeed, no opportunities of gaining information. The meetings of the Akils for religious purposes are altogether private and exclusive. It is true, that like the founder of the sect, they admit their wives to a free participation in their own peculiar privileges. But then it must be recollected, that they never intermarry with the Jahils. In a word, the distinction between these classes is as great, and as scrupulously perpe-



tuated, as that between any of the castes in India. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Druses, with whom travellers for the most part come in contact, are unable to give any satisfactory intelligence respecting the faith which they profess to follow. And when we consider that the great mass of them are excluded altogether from religious worship, we can scarcely be surprised at Burckhardt's statement, that they are mere deists, with few sentiments or feelings, and no exterior forms, of a religious nature. In the opinion of the same traveller, we must also be content to acquiesce, that little can be known with certainty, respecting their religion, till some of their ecclesiastics shall be prevailed upon to make a full disclosure. In consequence of this exclusive appropriation of religious knowledge to a single order, the character of the nation at large has been formed by political, rather than religious, circumstances. In language, and in many of their habits, they strongly resemble the Arabs. Like them, they are hospitable, generous, vindictive, adepts in horsemanship, and fond of military exercises; while the comparative liberty which they enjoy, and their total exemption from the capricious tyranny which grinds the faces of their miserable neighbours, has given them a character of frankness, dignity, and independence, which is equally unknown to the oriental Christians and their Moslem masters. They are all tillers of the ground, but are able to raise on an emergency a militia of forty thousand able-bodied men. Their manners are characterised by primitive simplicity combined with a delicate politeness, occasioned probably by their elevated notions respecting the female sex. In a word, in whatever light we view this singular race of men, we cannot but regard their history and manners as among the most interesting objects of inquiry which the Eastern world presents.