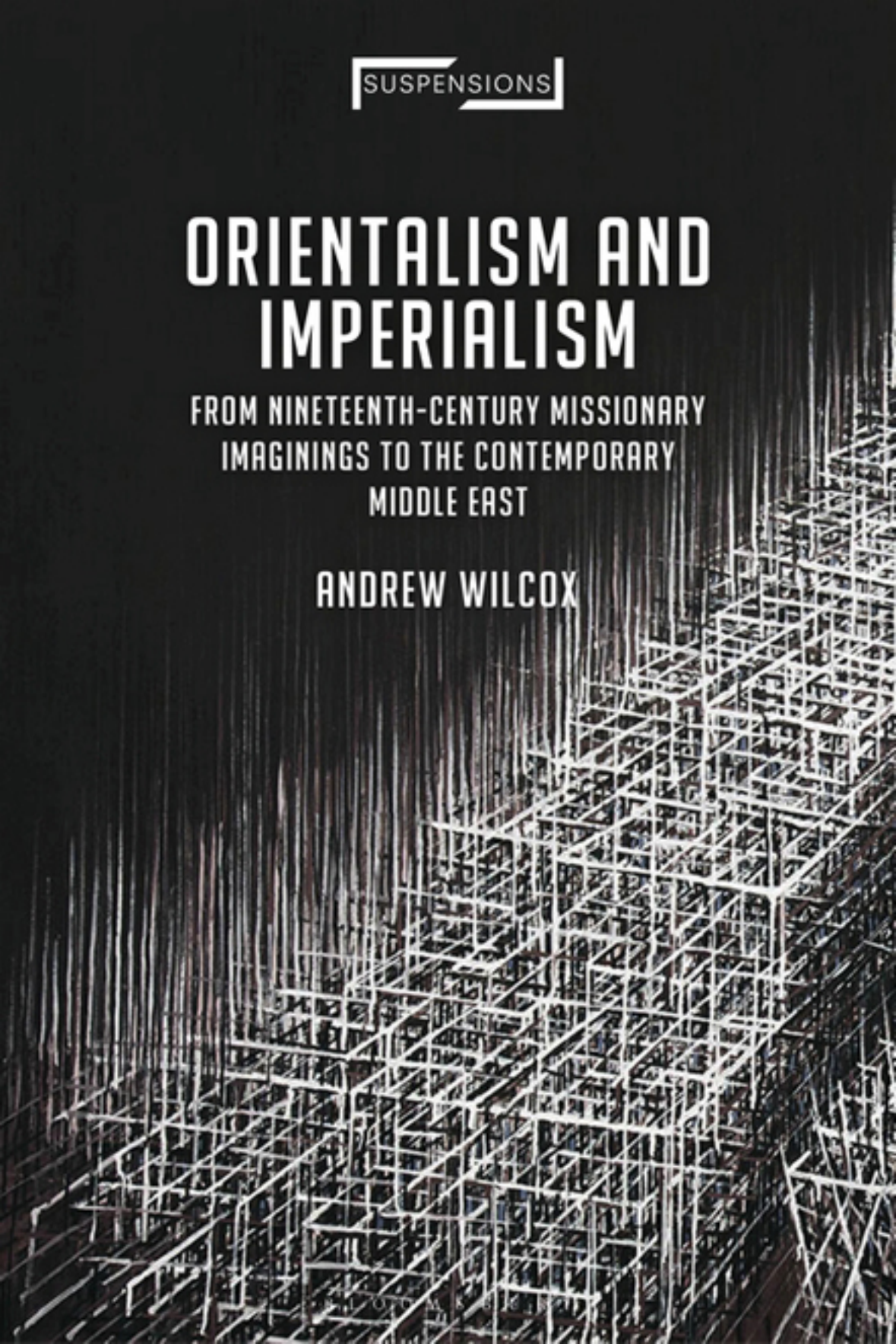


SUSPENSIONS

ORIENTALISM AND IMPERIALISM

FROM NINETEENTH-CENTURY MISSIONARY
IMAGININGS TO THE CONTEMPORARY
MIDDLE EAST

ANDREW WILCOX



Orientalism and Imperialism

Suspensions: Contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamicate Thought

Series editors: Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh and Lucian Stone

This series interrupts standardized discourses involving the Middle East and the Islamicate world by introducing creative and emerging ideas. The incisive works included in this series provide a counterpoint to the reigning canons of theory, theology, philosophy, literature and criticism through investigations of vast experiential typologies – such as violence, mourning, vulnerability, tension, and humour – in light of contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamicate thought.

Other titles in this series include:

Gilles Deleuze, Postcolonial Theory, and the Philosophy of Limit, Réda Bensmaïa

Against Moderate Islam, Farhang Erfani

The Qur'an and Modern Arabic Literary Criticism: From Taha to Nasr,
Mohammad Salama

Hostage Space of the Contemporary Islamicate World, Dejan Lukic

On the Arab Revolts and the Iranian Revolution, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam

The Politics of Writing Islam, Mahmut Mutman

The Writing of Violence in the Middle East, Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh

Iranian Identity and Cosmopolitanism, edited by Lucian Stone

Continental Philosophy and the Palestinian Question, by Zahi Zalloua

Sorcery, Totem and Jihad, Christopher Wise

Traces of Racial Exception, Ronit Lentin

Revolutionary Bodies, Kristin Soraya Batmanghelichi

Plural Maghreb, Abdelkebir Khatibi

Orientalism and Imperialism

From Nineteenth-century Missionary
Imaginings to the Contemporary
Middle East

Andrew Wilcox
University of Exeter, UK

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain 2018
Paperback edition first published 2020

Copyright © Andrew Wilcox, 2018

Marilyn Dunn has asserted her right under the Copyright,
Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

For legal purposes the Acknowledgements on p. vii constitute
an extension of this copyright page.

Series design © Catherine Wood
Cover image © Before Light, Walid Siti

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,
including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval
system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given
in this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher
regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have
ceased to exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3500-3379-5
PB: 978-1-3501-4652-5
ePDF: 978-1-3500-3378-8
eBook: 978-1-3500-3380-1

Series: Suspensions: Contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamic Thought

Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

To find out more about our authors and books visit
www.bloomsbury.com and sign up for our newsletters.

Contents

Series Foreword	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
1 Introduction	1
A spiritual conflict	1
The Orientalist Critique	9
Imperialism: an ambiguous concept	19
Missionaries and their imperialist credentials	25
Methodology	29
Use of sources	32
2 A Lack of Consensus	37
Agents of the Great Powers	37
Individual agents of personal conscience	44
Missionaries as ambiguous actors	48
3 Orientalism Through a Lens	61
An Oriental realm of Mohammedan domination	62
Restoration and <i>Essential Difference</i>	81
Proselytization and <i>Circumstantial Difference</i>	97
4 Agents of Imperialism?	119
Cultural quarantine – the Anglican mission	120
Sharing the message – the American mission	145
5 Conclusion	165
Summary	165
Impressions	175
Notes	185
Bibliography	223
Index	231

Series Foreword

Poets, artists, theologians, philosophers and mystics in the Middle East and Islamicate world have been interrogating notions of desire, madness, sensuality, solitude, death, time, space, etc. for centuries, thus constituting an expansive and ever-mutating intellectual landscape. Like all theory and creative outpouring, then, theirs is its own vital constellation – a construction cobbled together from singular visceral experiences, intellectual ruins, novel aesthetic techniques, social-political-ideological detours, and premonitions of a future – built and torn down (partially or in toto), and rebuilt again with slight and severe variations. The horizons shift, and frequently leave those who dare traverse these lands bewildered and vulnerable.

Consequently, these thinkers and their visionary ideas largely remain unknown, or worse, mispronounced and misrepresented in the so-called Western world. In the hands of imperialistic frameworks, a select few are deemed worthy of notice and are spoken on behalf of, or rather *about*. Their ideas are simplified into mere social formulae and empirical scholarly categories. Whereas so-called Western philosophers and writers are given full leniency to contemplate the most incisive or abstract ideas, non-Western thinkers, especially those located in the imagined realms of the Middle East and Islamicate world, are reduced to speaking of purely political histories or monolithic cultural narratives. In other words, they are distorted and contorted to fit within hegemonic paradigms that steal away their more captivating potentials.

Contributors to this series provide a counterpoint to the reigning canons of theory, theology, philosophy, literature and criticism through investigations of the vast experiential typologies of such regions. Each volume in the series acts as a ‘suspension’ in the sense that the authors will position contemporary thought in an enigmatic new terrain of inquiry, where it will be compelled to confront unforeseen works of critical and creative imagination. These analyses will not only highlight the full range of current intellectual and artistic trends and their benefits for the citizens of these phantom spheres, but also argue that the ideas themselves are borderless, and thus of great relevance to all citizens of the world.

Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh and Lucian Stone

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped me in the process of turning an initial idea into a coherent theory and then of turning theory into a book, but there is one person without whom this simply would not have come about and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ilan Pappé for his encouragement, support and insightful criticism in the long process of writing and re-drafting my manuscript. My thanks also go out to Professor Christine Allison of the Centre for Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter for her guidance and criticism. Equally, the tireless efforts of Lizzie Sherwood at the Disabilities Resource Centre in proof reading my manuscript seem to me to have been the least of her contribution, whereas the encouragement she gave me and the opportunity she provided to bounce ideas around had a far greater constructive effect upon all of my work while at Exeter. I need also to add that without the support of the Centre for Kurdish Studies, in providing me with a grant and a world class environment in which to conduct my research, I would never have been able to have achieved the first step in this long process; thanks to Professor Gareth Stansfield for his understanding and in holding the award open when the whole project seemed to me to be on the rocks. Finally, I need to thank my good friends Sue and Phil for providing a calm working environment at a difficult time and for their patient tolerance in endlessly listening to my ideas as they took shape, and similarly to Marc and Evie for their input during the earlier phases of the process.

Introduction

A spiritual conflict

Throughout the nineteenth century and up until the outbreak of the First World War, a protracted struggle was fought between two Protestant missions over the fate of a supposedly Oriental people. This was not a conflict of guns and swords but of words and ideas the import of which was the anticipated spiritual transformation of an Oriental realm. The protagonists in this dispute were two organizations, each articulating its own understanding of this Oriental space and each imagining the nature of the Oriental soul in relation to their own beliefs. On one side were the American Presbyterians of the West Persia Mission whose millennialist calling impelled them to teach and convert others to their understandings of the world. On the other were the Anglicans of the Assyrian Mission whose aspiration to protect and nurture an Oriental people from the ravages of Westernization led them to oppose the activities of the American missionaries. It is true that the rhetorical battle is itself of interest but its true importance to this book lies in the opportunities it offers to examine attitudes towards the Orient. Through their justifications of method and the denouncements of their opponents these missionaries express in some detail how they perceive the Orient to exist. As a textual body, therefore, the archives of these two missionary organizations present a treasure-trove of data illuminating the study of Orientalism. Of particular interest to this work is the juxtaposition of these opposing missionary portrayals of the Orient which allow for a closer examination of Orientalism as a critique. In this way, the divergence of their contradictory explanations of Oriental nature reveals the scope available for free thought within Orientalist discourse and thus permits an examination of how we should consider Orientalism to operate when considered as a textual practice governed by discursive forces. Furthermore, as Orientalism is considered within the Orientalist critique to be intrinsically related to aspects of power, the conflicting world views of these two missions present an ideal opportunity to

interrogate the relationships which may exist between these missionaries and imperialism. More generally, the ambiguity of the missionary objectives of both missions with regard to the formal interests of empire and the projection of state power offers an interesting exploration of an old conundrum – that of the ambiguous position of missionaries with regard to the consolidation of imperial interests. Before outlining my understanding of Orientalism as a critique, it will be helpful to specify the particular boundaries of the Orient of this study and to introduce the two missions that form its context.

It is true to say that, in the parlance of nineteenth-century Europeans and Americans, the idea of the Orient could allude to so broad a concept as all of those lands which were conceptually not the West. The Orient of this particular missionary conflict, however, was constituted more specifically by those lands and peoples governed by the Islamic states of the Ottoman Empire and Persia, a conceptual space which these missionaries systematically referred to as a 'Mohammedan' realm.¹ The importance of this Orient is that it represented to the missionaries an opposite to the symbolic realm of Christendom which at that time seemed to them to be in the ascendant due to the grace of God's approval. The two missions of this study were united by an underlying goal, the spiritual overthrow of this realm through the conversion of its peoples to Christianity, but the burning question which formed the centre-piece of their disagreement was by what means should the local populations be converted. On the one hand, the Presbyterians asserted that the 'light and truth'² of their Gospel message should be directly administered to the 'dark minds'³ of every Oriental. While on the other, the Anglicans eschewed such direct proselytization claiming that, in order to avoid the creation of some dreadful chimera, one had to respect 'the genius and sympathies of the Oriental mind.'⁴ This latter idea meant that, in the view of the Anglican mission, an Oriental mind required an Oriental form of Christianity and only an Oriental Christianity had any chance of achieving the conversion of the Muslim majority. Where these opposed Orientalist views collided most forcefully was in the struggle over who had the moral right to assist the Christian communities of the Old East Syrian Church; communities known to the missionaries by the interchangeable epithets of Syrian, Assyrian or Nestorian. This people, who were often conceived of by the missionaries as a nation, comprised a loose coalition of communities affiliated by their religion and, to varying degrees, under the leadership of the Patriarch Mar Shimun. These communities were, however, dispersed into both tribal and non-tribal groupings across a wide territory which straddled the border between Persia and the Ottoman Empire, an area which these missionaries knew as Kurdistan.

The definition of Kurdistan in academia has been and remains a notoriously difficult and highly politicized issue. In the present day, there exist within the borders of the four nation-states of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, geographical regions where the majority of the population identify themselves as Kurdish. This geographical region is frequently, although not without contestation, considered to be Kurdistan.⁵ What is of primary significance to this book, however, is the usage of the term by the missionaries themselves and, importantly, during a period before the crystallization of these nation-states.⁶ To the missionaries of the Assyrian and West Persia Missions the term 'Kurd' referred to a Muslim people, described usually but not always as tribal and semi-nomadic, and frequently used as a synonym for wildness and lawlessness. It might be added that the missionaries frequently projected themselves into the role of advocate for the welfare of Christian communities in the region, and that this regularly put them in a position of antagonism towards the Kurds, whom they consequently perceived as raiders and oppressors. To the Anglican and Presbyterian missionary writers, therefore, the region where the Kurds predominated was Kurdistan. This also correlated with their understanding of official Ottoman and Persian usage of the term to indicate the largely mountainous provinces of the border regions between the two states. This rather fluid definition leads to an indistinct delineation of the region in geographical terms, but for the purposes of this work it certainly included the regions within the Ottoman Empire known as Bohtan, Bahdinan, Hakkiari (Hakkari) and as far north as Lake Van. On the Persian side of the border this area included the mountainous regions which surrounded the fertile plains enfolding Lake Urumia (Urmia⁷) with Soldooz (modern-day Naghadeh) to the south and Salmas to the north.

The sole target of Anglican missionary effort was, as its name implies, the Assyrian Church and its people to whom they generally referred as Syrian, but the latter term should in no way be confused with the nation-state of Syria. This modern political entity, the name of which derives from the Roman province, was the creation of the Great Powers after the First World War and has little historical continuity except as a Roman and later as an Ottoman administrative district. The name Syrian applied to the Christian community on the other hand refers to their usage of Syriac as a language and it should be noted that their demographic distribution in the nineteenth century in no way corresponds to the boundaries of the modern nation-state.⁸ The aim of the American mission, by contrast, was the conversion of all Orientals to their particular form of Christianity. However, in the words of the American missionary Robert McEwan Labaree 'no other nationality in this part of the world has furnished more loyal

laborers in Christ's vineyard than the Syrian.⁹ Therefore, to both the Anglican and the American missions, the Syrian community was of prime significance and thus a focus of their disagreement as to the nature of the Orient.

The term Syrian, therefore, is used throughout this book as an adjective to describe the Syriac speaking Christians inhabiting the Kurdish region.¹⁰ More specifically, it is used to refer to those Christians who adhere to the form of worship and social organization known as the Old East Syrian Church or Church of the East.¹¹ Although this dispersed community was essentially ecclesiastical in origin, Heleen Murre-van den Berg suggests that there is good reason to suppose that by the nineteenth century they had for some time begun to think of themselves as an ethnic group distinct from their neighbours in race and culture.¹² Broadly speaking they dwelt in tribally organized communities in the mountains of Hakkari in Ottoman-governed Kurdistan and as non-tribal agriculturalists or town dwellers in the fertile Urmia Plains of Persia. This division of communities is often referred to by the missionaries as that between *ashiret* (tribal) and *rayat* (non-tribal). The Anglican missionary Rev. Wigram explains the terms as follows, '*ashiret* is a word that strictly means "tribe" or clan; but as descriptive of status it is contrasted with *rayat* or subject, and means that the bearers of the name [*ashiret*] pay tribute [...] and not taxes.'¹³ This distinction usually correlated with those Syrians living on one side of the border or the other, with the *ashiret* largely on the Ottoman side and *rayat* on the Persian side, but this was not without exception. The missionaries would also refer to this divided people as separated into mountaineers and plains dwellers, with the majority of the former on the Ottoman side of the border and the majority of the latter on the Persian side; there is thus a certain correlation between *ashiret* and mountaineers and between *rayat* and plains dwellers.¹⁴

Anglican interest in the Kurdish region took its missionary form in the shape of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrian Christians and can be traced back to the first half of the nineteenth century. Following an 1835 Royal Geographical Society (RGS) expedition to the Euphrates valley,¹⁵ a second expedition was organized in 1838 funded by a coalition of the RGS and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK).¹⁶ The SPCK's interest was in expanding knowledge about the hitherto almost unknown Mountain Nestorians,¹⁷ while the RGS pursued a more political/economic interest in the discovery of alternative overland routes to India.¹⁸ This material fact points to the heart of the debate on the ambiguity of the missionary relationship with imperial power. On the one hand, the religious mission was directed and funded by private subscription and interest, but on the other, it was a political interest

which opened that possibility in the first place. It points to the fact that missionary activity did not take place in a vacuum but was to some extent a by-product of growing Western dominance, and this is a subject I will explore in detail in chapter four. The initial foray was followed, in 1842, by the Rev. George Percy Badger's expedition to assess the feasibility of a permanent mission.¹⁹ The mission was curtailed, however, by the 1843 Bedr Khan rebellion (where certain Kurdish tribes were responsible for the widespread massacre of Syrians) and the controversy this caused in terms of perceived missionary culpability in these events.²⁰ It was thus not until April 1876 that a subsequent expedition of enquiry led by the Rev. Cutts was dispatched in response to a petition purporting to be from 'the Nestorian people'.²¹ Formal mission was tentatively commenced in 1881 with a single missionary worker and was later put on a more permanent footing in 1885 with the dispatch of additional missionaries.²²

The overarching aim of the Anglican mission was to achieve some degree of ecumenical union between the Church of England and the Church of the East as associated branches of a broadly conceived apostolic Church.²³ This sentiment was in line with the High Church tone of the mission and embraced the Oxford Movement's hope that the various branches of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church would be united in ecumenical union.²⁴ Perhaps the most significant obstacle in the pursuit of this objective was the perceived heretical status of the Oriental Church which was known to the Anglicans, among other names, as the Nestorian Church. The particular point at issue was that Nestorius, the fifth century bishop of Constantinople, was considered by the Western Churches to have been anathematized, whereas within the Old East Syrian tradition Nestorius was held as one of the fathers of the Church.²⁵ Furthermore, two particular forms of address attributed to Nestorius and condemned by Cyril the Archbishop of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus 431,²⁶ were in common usage in the Old East Syrian Church at the time of the mission. Within the Western Churches, Cyril is considered to have been victorious at the Council of Ephesus and is thus held as one of the doctors of the early Christian Church while Nestorius was branded a heretic. The form of words championed by Nestorius which refer to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ was also condemned, and in its place the epithet Mother of God became the required doctrine. Furthermore, in terms of the nature of Christ it has been assumed that Nestorius proclaimed Christ to have been possessed of two distinct persons with two separate natures (one human and one Divine) instead of one person with two natures. To put the case in rather simplistic terms, the position of the Western Churches is that Christ should be considered as one Person but with two Natures

– Divine and human – whereas, according to Paul Clayton, the Nestorian theological speculations which are ascribed to the Patriarchal seat of Antioch led to the idea of Christ as two Persons. Clayton says this of Nestorius and Antioch, ‘Its fundamental philosophical assumptions about the natures of God and humanity compelled the Antiochenes to assert that there are two subjects in the Incarnation: the Word himself and a distinct human personality.’²⁷ It is not the object of this book to discuss the rights and wrongs of these two apparently opposed formulas, but it is necessary to state that the Anglicans perceived the Nestorian heresy as endemic within the Old East Syrian Church and that this heresy was a serious obstacle to ecumenical union.

Throughout its period of service, the Anglican mission remained a small-scale endeavour, with around half a dozen unmarried male missionaries and five nuns from the Sisters of Bethany in Urmia at its most numerous, until it was disbanded at the outbreak of the First World War.²⁸ The official Anglican archive web-site describes missionary work as ‘intended to regenerate and reform the Assyrian Christians, focusing on the education of both clergy and laity. A college for priests and deacons was established, as were five high schools and forty village schools.’²⁹ A further aspect of the Anglican mission was that the missionaries dispensed medicines and humanitarian aid, particularly in times of crisis, and so when considering imperialism one should not overlook the charitable spirit which formed a large part of the mission’s ethos. This is also true of the educational work which was the principal aim of the mission and which, according to Archbishop Tait, sought to ‘influence them for good and to promote such progress, educational and other, as shall conduce to them real advancement & Christian Civilisation.’³⁰

As for American missionary interest in the Kurdish region, this can be traced back to the exploratory efforts of Eli Smith and Harrison Dwight in 1829.³¹ These preliminary sorties were then consolidated in 1834 through the creation, by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), of a mission to the Nestorian Christians of Urumia in northwest Persia.³² A formal mission was established that year by the Rev. Justin Perkins who was joined, a year later, by Dr and Mrs Asahel Grant.³³ The mission remained a relatively small affair until it became, in 1871, a solely Presbyterian endeavour after which it underwent a vigorous expansion to include the whole of Persia within its remit.³⁴ The focus of this book falls upon the West Persia Mission³⁵ and its main mission stations of Urumia and Tabriz which, lying on the eastern edges of the Kurdish region, had the Syrian and Armenian Christians as its main targets but also attempted the proselytization of Persian and Kurdish Muslims.³⁶ The size, in terms of missionaries, of these two combined mission stations was usually

somewhat larger than that of the Anglican mission, but was never much in excess of around twenty individuals.³⁷

The object of the Presbyterian mission was essentially evangelical, to bring to all who would listen to their message a personal knowledge of the Gospels in the belief that such a knowledge would bring forth the action of the Holy Spirit upon the individual. Prior to 1871 it was hoped that the American missionaries could work within the Old East Syrian Church but the activities of the Americans and their converts soon met with hostility from the Old Church hierarchy and a new policy of proselytization out of the Old Church was deemed expedient.³⁸ The hostility generated by the missionaries was perhaps unsurprising given the Presbyterian tradition of deemphasizing hierarchy and patriarchy.³⁹ Amanda Porterfield suggests that these ideas disrupted traditional cultural assumptions about authority and aggravated the relationship between indigenous Christians and Muslims.⁴⁰ On one level, she explains, the representation of Muslim repression 'struck many Muslims as offensive and combative, and [itself] contributed to their persecution of the Nestorian community.'⁴¹ But perhaps the most contentious issue was that of gender differentiation and the role of women, a cause which was promoted by the mission and in particular by the activities of the Female Seminary set up in Urumia by Fidelia Fiske.⁴² Porterfield explains that 'the American ideal of Republican Motherhood nurtured fundamental changes in Nestorian concepts of womanhood, and these changes figured centrally in the increasingly strained relationship between Nestorian and Muslim culture as well as in the polarization of Nestorian culture.'⁴³ These ideological standpoints elicited hostility from the traditional institutions of authority within the Nestorian Church and ultimately led the missionaries to abandon their original policy of working to 'restore' the Church from within. It should be added that the expanded scope of the West Persia Mission, which included proselytization from other groups such as the Armenian and Muslim communities, required a separate local Protestant body to accommodate proselytes from outside the Old Syrian Church.⁴⁴ Consequently, the method of proselytization to a new Evangelical Syrian institution became mission policy, and it is this approach which the Presbyterians inherited in 1871.⁴⁵

The archive of the Presbyterian Historical Society describes missionary work in Persia as 'three-fold in nature: evangelical, medical and educational'.⁴⁶

Numerous local churches were organized and placed in the hands of native ministers within the central Evangelical Church of Iran. Medical work began as early as 1835 and was extended in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Formal hospitals were built in Kermanshah in 1882, in Teheran in 1890, and in Tabriz in 1913, followed by similar openings in Meshed, Hamadan, and Resht.⁴⁷

For some reason this overview ignores a hospital which was already well established in Urmia by 1913, but it does nonetheless emphasize the enormous humanitarian work which was being performed by the Presbyterian missionaries for no apparent ulterior motive other than service to mankind and the visible example of virtue that might perhaps lead to voluntary conversion.⁴⁸ Equally, the educational work performed by the missionaries provided the sole means of formal education available to many Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the region, and formed the basis for future schools. The Presbyterian Historical Society states that schools were initially established for the children of missionaries but that ultimately 'these grew into multi-national institutions such as the Alborz Foundation (Armaghan Institute), Iran Bethel (Damavand) College, the Community School of Teheran, [and] the Mehr Jordan Schools.'⁴⁹ In Urmia, the missionaries established a seminary school for the training of native pastors, a higher school for both Muslim and Christian students, and sponsored numerous village schools administered by native teachers. So, while these educational activities may have included religious, ethical and even political principles which would prove to be contentious and even divisive, we should not overlook the apparent altruism of the missionaries' intent.

In terms of doctrine, American Protestant missionaries during this period tended to hold to a millennialist hope that looked towards the second coming of Christ and the establishment of a thousand-year reign of peace on earth. This was true of the Presbyterian missionaries of this study whose aspirations conform to what Hans-Lukas Kieser refers to as Postmillennialism.⁵⁰ 'Postmillennialism was millennialism plus modern Enlightenment; it entrusted missionary America with the task of preparing the Kingdom, in inter- and transnational cooperation, using to this end all pacific means: science, technological progress, and historical opportunities.'⁵¹ Postmillennialism is contrasted to Premillennialism in which the arrival of Christ presupposes the transformation of the world. In the postmillennialist imagining, therefore, the preparation of the world preceded the coming of Christ and consequently necessitated a vision of Orientals as redeemable and equally imagined the geographical Orient as perfectible.

Beyond the activities of the Anglican and American missionaries in the region, their work had a broader effect upon the culture of their home countries. Throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, the Near East presented a source of fascination to the supporters of mission back home.

Therefore, part of the importance of missionary narratives lies in their role in presenting an image of the Orient which fed back into a broader societal discourse. Couched in a biblical framework, the region seemed, throughout the nineteenth century, to provide evidence for many Orientalist fantasies such as the lost greatness of biblical civilizations which were presented as newly accessible through the application of new scientific methods. The sciences of philology and archaeology were seen to be decoding the remnants of an ancient past, and the fate of the lost tribes of Israel was a popular theme of 'scientific' speculation.⁵² Within the context of a nineteenth-century popular European and American understanding of the Orient these enquiries tended to look beyond the contemporary cultures of the East, which were perceived to be largely irrelevant to the grandeur of past civilizations. Alternatively, the contemporary cultures of the Holy Lands were seen as a means of decoding the Bible as a historical document.⁵³ This treatment of Oriental cultures nonetheless reduces the region and its peoples to something of a living fossil whose only significance lies in its value in illuminating the past within a Christocentric world view. Robert Irwin, in his repost to the Orientalist Critique, gives an account of the predilection within academic Orientalism for studying early Islam and classical Arabic as a vehicle for approaching subjects of biblical interest rather than representing a particular interest in the Orient itself.⁵⁴ Thus a dominant public perception was that what remained in the East was a degeneration from past glories which had left the Orient in a state of decline and with an ethical and moral spirit which seemed to deny the very possibility of redemption.⁵⁵ It is noteworthy, however, that missionary endeavour is predicated upon the redemption of the Orient and thus their narrative productions must surely present the Orient and Orientals in a different light to this common perception. This in turn demands questions as to how missionaries could defy the pressures of Orientalist discourse and how their own textual output might have disrupted stereotypical images of the Orient. This, therefore, is the context of the study contained within this book, but before turning to an analysis of the missionary texts themselves I need to explain in more detail my understanding of the Orientalist critique as a theoretical model and of imperialism as a concept.

The Orientalist Critique

Two basic questions have driven the research of this book; one relates to Orientalism as a textual practice, the other focuses upon the relationship between

missionaries and imperialism. The first question asks whether the knowledge production of the missionaries studied exhibits an Orientalist style, and if so what form does it take? The second asks whether they can be considered as agents of imperialism in one form or another? It is crucial therefore that, before trying to propose an answer to these questions, I state clearly what constitutes an Orientalist style within the terms of my analysis.

The concept of Orientalism is absolutely central to this study but the term is potentially ambiguous. On the one hand the word itself can be taken as indicating the esteemed profession of those who simply study the Orient, and whose work does not necessarily conform to the dictates of discursive pressure. On the other, it can be taken as indicating the presence of a discursive tradition which controls or influences the representation of the Orient in a manner that supports the underlying thesis of Western superiority. It is this latter point of view which constitutes the starting point of my theoretical model and to which I shall refer as the Orientalist Critique.

So, what is meant by a discursive tradition? Jäger and Maier, who have written on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), define a discourse as ‘an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power.’⁵⁶ A discursive tradition by extension indicates something more attenuated over time and constituting a practice that perpetuates a particular *status quo*. Orientalism, as an institutionalized way of talking about the Orient, is thus a discursive tradition which regulates and reinforces thought and action on the subject of the Orient. To develop this idea further I need to turn to the seminal work of Edward Said who, building upon Michel Foucault’s concept of the discursive formation, popularized the notion of Orientalism as a discourse.

While Edward Said has stated that ‘Orientalism is a partisan book, [and] not a theoretical machine’⁵⁷, it is nonetheless possible to extrapolate a theoretical model from his work. Firstly, it is my understanding that Said himself would have frowned upon rigid and dogmatic definitions of Orientalism as a phenomenon, for it is not to be conceived of as an ideology or project but rather as an operating force or process active in society. An idea that is most helpful as a starting point in understanding this process is that ‘Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident.”’⁵⁸ This style of thought takes as its basis the *a priori* notion that both East and West are in some real sense homogenous geographical units which differ from each other in their very nature. Consequently, the rules and standards which govern the representation of the Orient, it is argued, differ from those which are used to

represent the Occident. The Critique further suggests that this double standard is a crucial tool, though not necessarily a conscious one, in both creating and maintaining the 'otherness' of the Orient. Orientalist textual style frequently results from the reification of an abstract concept into a supposedly real object the nature of which embodies Oriental inferiority: for example, perceived Oriental dishonesty is seen to be something rooted in an Oriental nature. A striking feature of this process of 'othering' is that, not only does it allow for the easy compartmentalization of a diversity of individuals and groups into a single homogenous and malleable unit, but it also facilitates the consolidation of a Western self-image. Through comparison with the 'otherness' of the Orient, the Occident is itself defined, and this style of thought is in part a way of looking at objects of knowledge and talking about them in terms of the value system of the narrator's own culture.⁵⁹ In this sense, the focus is less upon what the Orient is, than upon what the Occident should be. This is, however, not to say that either the Orient or the Occident actually exist in terms beyond the realm of ideas, but neither should it be dismissed as purely imaginary.⁶⁰ Orientalism as a system of representing the 'other' has real effects, not least in the justification of inequality by recourse to a perceived *essential difference* between the Oriental and the Occidental.⁶¹

This brings us to a concept that I would like to emphasize, that of *essential difference*. This is a style of representation which portrays the differences separating the narrator from the object of description by suggesting that they result from the presence of an intrinsic nature that is forever fixed.⁶² In this way, the Oriental is rhetorically rendered irrevocably different from, and usually inferior to, the Occidental. The word irrevocable is central to the notion of *essential difference*: not only does this style of representation imagine an essentialized Oriental but this essence is perceived as immutable. The importance of highlighting *essential difference* in Orientalist narratives is that it represents the point at which meaning is attributed by the narrator to the perception of difference, where difference ceases to be mere observation and acquires an altogether more judgemental character. In the context of missionaries, the problem arises, however, that when one considers the desire to convert the Oriental, one is also faced with a belief that such a distinction can be eradicated. This suggests perhaps that something outside the essentialism of the Orientalist discourse is at play in the construction and maintenance of a distinct proselytizing missionary world-view. It begs the question as to whether proselytizing missionaries could see and articulate a view of the Orient from the perspective of another discourse.

The manner in which discourses operate, both within society and upon the individual, is an important point which must be addressed in any discussion of Orientalism. In this respect, Said recognizes his debt to Michel Foucault and the notion of the discourse as both a constraining and a compelling pressure, in the realm of culture, upon what can and cannot be said (and by whom) concerning a field of knowledge.⁶³ These rules of inclusion and exclusion should not be confused with overt censorship but rather understood to exist as a kind of, frequently unconscious, self-censorship. Furthermore, Said states that 'so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that [...] no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by [the discourse of] Orientalism.'⁶⁴ This assertion, however, seems to suggest that discourses in general and the Orientalist discourse in particular are deterministic in the regulation of thought and action within society. Robert Irwin, one of Said's most formidable critics, suggests that this is a central flaw in his theory. While Irwin's refutation of *Orientalism* focuses upon some indisputable factual errors contained within Said's book, his criticism also attacks its theory.⁶⁵ Irwin argues that Said could not seem to choose between Michel Foucault's ideas of the Discourse as an irresistible force which determines the narratives produced by Orientalists, and Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemonic narratives which are the conscious product of elites to regulate the thought and action of subordinates.⁶⁶ Irwin accuses Said of playing fast and loose with these two theoretical positions to make his point. The weakness of Irwin's attack, however, is that it is not an illegitimate activity to make use of some aspects of a particular theory while selectively dropping others. Jeffrey Guhin and Jonathan Wyrzten argue that throughout Said's seminal work 'one sees a constructive tension between Foucault, who argues that the authoritative power structure is unavoidable, and Gramsci, who is more optimistic about the possible uses of positive knowledge.'⁶⁷ Their evaluation of this tension is that in 'Foucault's model, culture of any sort is fed into a sausage factory of power-knowledge, allowing an ever-deeper consolidation of power. In Said and Gramsci's model, the sausage factory still exists, and culture can contribute to it, but it doesn't have to.'⁶⁸ They conclude by asserting that within the Saidian model a producer of knowledge does have the potential to stand 'outside of power.'⁶⁹

Later scholars have adopted and adapted the Foucauldian concept of discourse, and the discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has emerged in recent decades. In the field of CDA, definitions vary but that elaborated by Jäger and Maier corresponds closely to my own understanding and is worth quoting in full at this juncture. To reiterate, they state that 'a discourse can be

defined as an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thereby exerts power.⁷⁰ Furthermore, this definition 'can be illustrated by the image of discourse as a flow of knowledge throughout time. Different discourses are intimately entangled with each other and together form the giant milling mass of overall societal discourse.⁷¹ The image of culture as a milling mass of autonomous discourses which interact with one another through the agency of the individual allows one to break free from the determinism implicit in a shallower reading of Said's discourse theory. Said himself is reported by Guhin and Wyrzten as saying that while he was writing *Orientalism* he 'was already aware of the problems of Foucault's determinism' in which 'everything is always assimilated and acculturated'.⁷² Said continues by stating that the 'notion of a kind of non-coercive knowledge, which [he came] to at the end of his book, was deliberately anti-Foucault'.⁷³ To emphasize this point and to highlight the importance of individual volition in the spirit of Said's work one need only point to the introduction to *Orientalism* in which he states that 'unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism'.⁷⁴

The idea of agency is further extended by Abdelmajid Hannoum who demonstrates that not only do individual authors leave their personal impression upon a discourse but that discourses can be co-opted to further the objectives of competing social groups within a heterogeneous culture. Speaking of the French colonization of Algeria in the mid to late nineteenth century, Hannoum relates how the knowledge production of the Arab Bureau with its specific political agenda was co-opted by opposing groups with differing ideas as to the nature of colonization. He relates that:

for those who later changed their political position, it was already too late, for they established a discourse that they no longer controlled. In fact, it is this same discourse fabricated by the Arab Bureau that was soon appropriated by their opponents, namely the Church and the settlers. The first sought to justify an agenda of religious conversion; the second sought to defend that same policy of containment that the members of the Arab Bureau had once defended so vehemently.⁷⁵

This account suggests that a discourse, while canonizing certain data and representations as authoritative, is nonetheless open to modification and redirection. It also underlines the agency of individuals and groups who can use and redirect an existing discourse for their own purposes. On an allied point, in

the field of cultural psychology, Hubert Hermans argues that cultures are neither homogeneous nor externally distinctive.⁷⁶ They are instead, he argues, a dynamic network of individual *identity positions* which are in a state of constant negotiation. I would add that, as a consequence of this, the influence of discursive pressures cannot be uniformly exerted throughout a culture and must give rise to individual variance both between and within various discourses. Here can be seen, in the disciplines of discourse analysis, cultural psychology and historical analysis ways of explaining the collective phenomenon of culture in a manner which also emphasizes the agency of the individual; and this, whilst not eliminating, must nuance the discursive pressures latent within society, culture and the group.

Therefore, throughout this book I consider a discourse to be a collective influence, both constraining and creative, which is exerted unevenly throughout a culture upon the production of knowledge within a particular domain. It is not, after all, possible for human beings to make socially meaningful statements about anything without situating those statements within an accepted framework of understanding, and importantly these frameworks are not neutral in terms of the values they promote and prohibit. While a discourse in this context can be understood as a system of rules which govern the creation of mental objects from the raw materials of the world we experience, these rules themselves should in no way be considered as fixed or immutable. In a somewhat organic sense, the very rules constituted by a discourse can be envisaged as being constantly renegotiated, through acts of communication, with the changing environment in which individuals find themselves. The agency of the individual thus negates to some extent the determinism implied by discursive pressure (which has a merely *influential* presence in my view), and what is of prime significance to this work is that access to alternative discourses can facilitate divergence from dominant norms and so produce considerable variation within the textual output of Orientalists.

As an example of the collision of discursive pressures through the agency of the individual, the work of Daphne Dessler provides a useful insight. In her article 'Fraught Literacy', which concerns missionary involvement in the education of the colonized population of Hawaii during the nineteenth century, she speaks of the inconsistencies produced by a confusion of discourses.⁷⁷ Her thesis focuses upon the 'dynamic of competing desires for connection and separation'⁷⁸ felt by female missionary educators towards the Hawaiian objects of their mission. This tension is expressed as a conflict between an ideology based upon biblical texts, which 'foster real and imagined Christian communities

that supposedly would transcend race and nationality,⁷⁹ and the racist ethnocentrism of nineteenth-century American culture.⁸⁰ An intriguing observation made by Desser is that the competing and often contradictory values of the two discourses are not necessarily neatly and logically divided. She argues that a 'clean binary between connection and separation does not exist. A desire for connection, for example, can be shot through simultaneously with a desire for separation.'⁸¹ This suggests that individual missionaries were actively negotiating, not necessarily consciously or coherently, the conflicting dictates of different discourses through their ability to choose between divergent sets of norms in the construction of unique identity positions (to use Hermans' phrase). Therefore, in the presence of competing discourses, individual narratives may not necessarily conform to the collective voice of the group. What is important in methodological terms is to attempt to gauge a consensus but also to reflect the seemingly aberrant, partly because the very presence of divergent thought goes a long way to erode the notion of discourses as hopelessly deterministic.

To turn to the question of the domain of competence over which the Orientalist discourse is theoretically supposed to exert its influence, it can be stated that within the Saidian model this domain is not simply knowledge of the Orient but also the relationship between the Orient and its seemingly natural opposite the Occident. This relationship takes its most concrete textual form as pronouncements upon the nature of the Orient made by those believing themselves to be Occidentals (most of the time) whose authority is emphasized by the disequilibrium of power between East and West. This is not to say that authority is always dictated by the use or even the threat of force, but rather that the association between the locus of power and the institutions of knowledge production asserts the authority and veracity of the discourse itself. In this way, the power of the West is seen to demonstrate the veracity of its knowledge about the East. In a sense, that is the central point to Orientalism, that the moral and intellectual qualities of the West are understood to have brought about the disequilibrium of power in the first place, and thus it is evidently useless to envisage the equality of the Oriental when it comes to explaining the realities of their existence. These pronouncements upon the Orient frequently take the form of a 'true' understanding of the East which is presented as being beyond the capacity of the Oriental to articulate. This perceived incapacity for logical self-representation not only allows for but demands that the Orientalist must speak for the Oriental. This in turn produces a style of representation of the 'other' which Said calls *exteriority*, a technique in which the Orientalist narrator must speak for the Oriental as the only acceptable interpreter of an otherwise illogical