

The Orient.

Aug. 31, 1910

BIBLE HOUSE, CONSTANTINOPLE

No. 20

REFORMS IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH PROPOSED.

At a recent meeting of the Armenian Religious Council certain definite propositions with reference to the calling of a General Church Council in September and the introduction of reforms in the ritual and polity of the National Church were presented by the Rev. Kunell Kalemkarian, Archimandrite. The Council accepted the propositions in principle and voted to distribute copies of the same among the members of the Council, and, after securing their individual opinions, to present the whole question at the meeting of the General Council.

The reforms proposed are outlined in a letter addressed to the Right Rev. Yeghishé Tourian, Patriarch, and Chairman of the Religious Council. This matter is of such vital importance, as marking the beginning of changes in the oldest National Church in the world, that we venture to give our readers a translation of the whole letter. It reads as follows.

"Our National Church, whose existence is a matter of centuries, has, in the course of its history, been a church of the people in so far as it has comprehended the demands of the times in which it has lived and has endeavored to satisfy the irresistible needs arising from the spiritual longings of believers. This in itself was the result of a conscious conviction since the Armenian Church, as a body of Christian believers, from the earliest times rightly recognized, as an expression of one beautiful phase of its character, the need of giving importance to the practical side of piety; and, in fact, in the order and arrangement of the ritual and of religious matters and in the work of administrative organization a broad place has always been given to the united wishes of believing souls, with the practical purpose in view of strengthening the piety of the people.

Thus, in the course of centuries, our Church, while remaining independent and unshaken in its fundamental creed and doctrines, has accepted, especially in the mode of expression, whatever reflected the morality of the people and has given prompt attention to satisfying their needs and their demands. In illustration of this I would like to bring forward several examples from history.

1. After its foundation in the Apostolic age the Armenian Church, at the beginning of the 5th century, took into serious consideration the absolute necessity of ceasing to use in speech and writing the Assyrian and Greek languages and of speaking to the believing soul in the Armenian language itself in order to produce results by the direct inspiration of the true

spirit of the Gospel. In the face of such a vital requirement the clergy and laity united in love and harmonious cooperation to fill this need of the Church, and, by virtue of the tireless efforts and the strenuous labors of those peerless men, St. Mesrob and St. Sahag, the Armenian alphabet was found and the need of the Armenian Church was completely and successfully met.

2. The wearisomeness of the monotonous repetition of Psalms in the services of the Church had impressed itself so much on the believers that the demand for sacred music originated, and gradually the pens of our theological and literary Church Fathers produced our priceless liturgies, and their soul inspiring music.

3. In the course of time, when the development of thought and the culture of taste had spread among our people also, the oriental custom of celebrating Mass in vestments of skins and in cowls, of which the clergy of the school of Toutia were warm supporters, came to an end; while the comparatively enlightened Armenian clergy of Cilicia, under the leadership of St. Nerses of Lampron, grasped the demand of the time and worthily satisfied the cultured taste of the people by introducing the use of becoming vestments.

4. Every Armenian who knows the history of our Church gratefully admits the great services rendered by Nerses Shnorhali (the Grace-endowed) in the work of ecclesiastical reform and reconstruction. He made felt the need of reforming, at the beginning of the 12th century, the calendar and ritual of a Church which had lived for eleven hundred years, and our illustrious Patriarch brought his plan to perfection, in accordance with the demands of the time, by giving new splendor to the Church and by strengthening the love and religious fervor of the people.

5. Finally the Church Calendar which we use today received its completed form at the end of the 18th century under the leadership of Simeon Catholikos. The difference between the old and the new Calendars is very evident by the fact that the new or Simonean calendar of Church festivals contains mutilations, additions and transpositions. The preceding century gave rise to demands for these changes and Simeon Catholikos, of blessed memory, took them under consideration and tried to satisfy those who called for them.

Now, Reverend Father, these obvious historical facts in truth, illustrate the spirit of our National Church with respect to its commemorative and ritualistic character. It is true that the Armenian Church has made no changes in the fundamental principles of the Christian doctrines; on the contrary it has kept unchanged and always must keep unchanged whatever it received from the Gospels, from the

Apostles and, on the same foundations, from the three General Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus.

But, nevertheless, in truth and with perfect right it accepted certain reforms in its external and organic phases. Therefore there is no reason why, at the beginning of the 20th century, with its greatly multiplied needs, attention should not be turned to several important points which have made the need of reforms seem all the greater and to seek a satisfactory solution, of course with the understanding that the united will of the National Church and all the conditions of legal form are to be conscientiously followed.

Therefore, basing what I have to say on the history of our own Church, in which your Grace is thoroughly versed, and regarding the time as having come to satisfy the popular demands of the day, I humbly present herewith to Your Grace and to the Religious Council the points in which, in my opinion, reforms are needed, begging that a General Council be called to take these matters under consideration and after deliberating on these and other questions, if there should be others, to prepare a memorial for presentation at the Holy Seat of the Catholicate in Etchmiadzin for the consideration of the National General Council which, by the decision of His Holiness the Catholicos of all Armenians, is there to be convened.

My propositions are the following.

A. To abbreviate in a suitable manner the daily morning and evening services, and those of baptism, ordination, marriage, and burial of the dead, whether of the clergy or the laity.

B. To translate into modern Armenian the written sermons and counsels used and also the Scripture Readings of the marriage ceremony.

C. To permit the solemnization of marriage at all seasons, just as the other sacraments are permitted.

D. To remove from the Church Calendar the names of foreign and unknown saints.

E. To commemorate only once during the year the name of a saint whose festival now occurs more than once.

F. To enrich our purely national festivals, setting aside special memorial days for well known Armenian Confessors, Martyrs of the Faith, and those martyred in times of general massacre.

G. To revise the courses of study in the Armenian theological schools, so that together with religious knowledge more importance may be attached to the need of a mental training that shall meet the demands of the time.

H. To reduce the excessive number of ornaments and candles on the holy altars.

In case it is necessary, Reverend Father, I am ready to give oral explanations before the General Council in order to make clearer the details of my propositions.

In filial duty and with deepest respect,

I remain,

KUNEL KALEMKIARIAN,

Archimandrite

Member of the Religious Council.

Several clergymen, who are members of the Religious Council, also signed this letter to the Patriarch.

EMPIRE NEWS.

The Capital.

On Monday a rumor was current in the city that a fatal case of cholera had appeared in Galata, but the Department of Health, states that thus far cholera has not made its appearance in Constantinople.

The Ottoman Deputies of Greek Nationality presented a long memorial, to the Sheikh-ul-Islam, stating the grievances of their people and appealing to him to act as mediator. They were received cordially by the Sheikh-ul-Islam, who promised that the matter would be taken under consideration. It is understood however, that the Ministry will take no action until the return of Hakki Pasha, the Grand Vizier. In the meantime the Greek Patriarchate declares that the work of choosing electors, who are to elect the representatives for the General Council, will be continued.

The Correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* telegraphs that the British Ambassador expressed the wish to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the Sublime Porte would maintain a more conciliatory attitude toward Christian Nationalities. Moreover the British Minister of Foreign Affairs is said to have made the same observation to the Ottoman Ambassador in London. The Vienna paper adds that these expressions produced an unfavorable effect at the Sublime Porte.

It is said that in Young Turk circles an impression prevails that England is responsible for the demand made by Greece for an indemnity to cover the losses occasioned by the boycott.

The Council of State, in reply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, states that even in civilized European countries women are not allowed to practice medicine. Therefore the granting of such permission to women might be injurious. In accordance with this reply it was decided not to give permission to practice medicine to women and to forbid women physicians who are foreign subjects to practice in Turkey.

The *Depesh Ottoman* announces that, the Government has ordered a swift cruiser from an American firm.

The *Chirket Hairié* has decided to run its steamers on the Bosphorus on European time. The new schedule will be put into effect after Ramazan.

The Naval Commission, encouraged by the large contributions made from the provinces for the Navy, has decided to place an order for three more Dreadnoughts.

The *Chirket Hairié* plans to spend 150,000 liras in the purchase of ten new steamers for the Bosphorus service.

THE PROVINCES.

Since the cancelling of the law requiring local passports (*teskeres*) a period of about two months, the railway between Salonica and Constantinople has carried 4,000 more passengers than usual, an increase of 20%. If this rate of increase continues, the additional profit of the railway in one year will be one million francs.

A despatch which appears in the *Boston Transcript* says, "According to the *New York Times*, a group of New York capitalists have completed their plan for the construction of railways in Asiatic Turkey, and are prepared to spend from sixty to one hundred million dollars, which will open to modern development the mineral wealth of Eastern Turkey. The plan, which was in consideration for years, took shape last fall. The Ottoman-American Development Company was incorporated under the laws of the state of New Jersey, with a nominal capital of \$ 500,000. For obvious reasons, the work of organization was carried on quietly. It is understood that representatives of the New York syndicate, will start this month for Turkey in order to complete the details. The Ottoman Ministry has already passed favorably on the agreement by which the Company receives a concession of 1,200 miles of railway together with mining privileges, and, when the Ottoman Parliament reassembles, on Dec. 1st, there is every reason to believe that the action of the Government will receive endorsement."

A despatch from Erzroom, dated the 27 of August, announced a new case of cholera. On the following day a despatch announced that two travellers from Russia were seized with cholera outside of the city. One of them died and the other was isolated. On the same day one person died from cholera in the city.

The sheep taxes up to the beginning of August amounted to 2,160,000 liras. This is the largest revenue yet received from this source.

A group of British Capitalists have come to an agreement with M. Stilianidi to extend his system of insurance on silk culture. This undertaking promises to give a fresh impetus to the silk industry of Turkey, and will be especially beneficial to those of small means.

European capitalists, represented by Nedjib Bey of Beirut, have asked for the concession to develop the 37 million hectares of lands seized by Abdul Hamid. They promise to make a loan to the Government of 100,000,000 francs at four percent.

NOTES.

Dr. Patton of the A. B. C. F. M. is intending to make a visit this fall to the Missions in India and Africa. He will

come via Constantinople and visit Bardezag, Adabazar, Smyrna, Tarsus, Adana, Marash, Aintab, Aleppo, and Beirut.

The last word from Boston spoke discouragingly of the closing of the Board's financial year, August 31st. The receipts for June and July showed a large falling off.

On Saturday Mr. Barstow and Miss Riggs sailed for Samsoun, the former on his way to Mardin and the latter to Harpoot.

On Saturday of this week the Hon. Oscar S. Straus, American Ambassador, is leaving for the United States. On Tuesday he was received in audience by His Majesty, the Sultan.

Miss Jillson left Constantinople on Saturday to take charge of the American Girl's School in Brousa. She reports a cordial reception on part of the people and bright prospects for the School.

On the 20th the *Avedaper* published on its cover page a picture of a large threshing machine made entirely in Adana by an Armenian. The capital was furnished by a Turkish family. The man who made every part of the machine is an artisan of no education. He not only produced a perfect working thresher but introduced an improvement which, if patented, would mean a fortune to the inventor. The name of this natural genius is Levon Marshlian.

The Alumnae Association of the American College for Girls gave a concert on Tuesday evening August 19th, in the Salon of Hotel Tocatljan in Therapia to a large and enthusiastic audience. The concert was given under the gracious patronage of Mrs. Oscar S. Straus and the proceeds are to be devoted to 'The Students' Building Fund'. The artists were Miss Vivian Edwards (Soprano) Mr. Leza Hegyei (Piano) and Mr. Mason-Meyer (Recitations). The proceeds of the concert exceed 30 liras.

THE ORIENT

A weekly, English paper published at the American Bible House, Constantinople.

Terms. Annual subscription for Turkey, Bulgaria, Egypt, and Persia 20 plasters gold.

For America, England, and other Countries \$1.00, or 4 shillings.

Single Copies 20 paras, or 1 penny, Special Numbers 40 paras, or twopence.

Cheques, money orders, cash, or stamps in payment for subscriptions or advertising should be sent to W. W. Peet, Esq., Treasurer, American Bible House, Constantinople, Turkey, (Open Mail, via London.)

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Printed by H. MATTEOSIAN, Constantinople.