

The Orient.

Sept. 14, 1910

BIBLE HOUSE, CONSTANTINOPLE

No. 22

REFORMS IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH.

SUGGESTIONS FROM ADRIANOPLE.

After receiving the Armenian Patriarch's circular calling a Council on Sept. 27 for the consideration of the proposed reforms in the National Church the religious Council of the Armenian Community in Adrianople held a meeting and drew up the following memorial, embodying certain suggestions, and forwarded it to the Patriarch.

In view of the fact that in the past the introduction of changes in the ritual and traditional customs of the Church has been the cause of internal quarrels, and in view of the necessity of delivering our nation from its present state of disruption, consideration must be given to the fact that hastily undertaken reforms are likely to bring fresh causes for discord. Therefore, anxious as we are for the removal of rites and customs which are foreign to the National Apostolic Church and of others which are anachronisms and eager as we are for reforms in the litany, we nevertheless regard the call for a General Council for the purpose of deciding weighty matters connected with the organic system of the Church as wholly inadequate for the fulfilment of the great object in view. But, as the call has been issued, it seems to us that it would be more logical to regard this Council simply as preliminary to another, that the suggestions made at this preliminary meeting should be summarized in a pamphlet and distributed among all the clergy and among those laymen who are regarded as authorities in Church affairs, that they should be asked to forward their criticisms and suggestions to a special committee which shall put the material thus gathered into shape for presentation at a General Council made up of the *Arachnorts* of the various sees, representatives of the Catholicate of Sis, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and of such distinguished lay authorities as shall be specially invited by the Patriarch.

In order to facilitate the work of the preliminary Council we would offer the following as our suggestions.

1. To do away with those hindrances to marriage created by godfatherhood and relationship by marriage, and to modify those created by blood-relationship.

2. To perform the marriage ceremony at all times without exception in the Churches and in the houses, whenever necessary.

3. To prepare a new code of regulations controlling divorce, dowries, and allowances.

4. To allow the widows of priests to remarry.

5. To allow priests to remarry without depriving them of orders.

6. Not to refuse ordination to the priesthood to a man who has married more than once, or who has married a widow, or who has had no issue of marriage.

7. Not to reserve the high offices in the Church for the celibate clergy but to give to the married clergy the right to occupy the Chair of the Catholicos even, provided they are otherwise worthy to do so.

8. To permit those of the celibate clergy to marry if they express a wish to do so, and not deprive them of orders but only of the cowl.

9. To determine the maximum and the minimum duration of the litanies, the rites, and the ceremonies, leaving each congregation to choose the longer, or the shorter for themselves.

10. To leave to the individual believer to determine the time and the nature of his fasts.

11. To require a careful examination of the candidate offering himself for ordination.

12. To classify the sees and dioceses in such a way that the clergy may pass through degrees of promotion according to their fitness and experience.

13. To prepare laws and regulations for the punishment of the clergy who violate the laws and requirements of the Church.

14. To oblige the celibate clergy to go to the more distant dioceses before they are given positions as *Arachnorts* of the sees.

15. To license worthy priests to preach and give them the right to bear the crozier (symbol of authority to preach) reserving to the celibate clergy the right to wear the cowl.

16. To remove the restriction against marrying more than three times.

17. To require medical certificates from those who ask for licenses to marry.

18. To perform the regular burial service for the unbaptised children of believing parents.

19. To allow clergymen to officiate at the funerals of suicides but outside of the sanctuary.

After having made these suggestions we consider it important to add that any changes in the litany, in the rites, in saints days, and, in brief, any proposed change whatever should be left to each community to adopt, or not, as it chooses, so that no occasion may be given for divisions and schisms. It is necessary to respect the customs of each community and allow any change made to be voluntary, because a custom, which may appear strange to the great majority of the nation, may have a vital importance for one of its small parts and its compulsory removal would be "an occasion for stumbling."

THE MORNING WATCH AND THE DAWN.

AN APPEAL.

One of the editors of the *Avedaper*, a mission weekly published in two languages at Constantinople for more than half a century, has been writing a series of articles for the *Inner Life* department under a title which might correspond to *The Morning Watch*. He received a letter from an Armenian priest, an extract from which we are permitted to publish below. This clergyman became interested in the *Avedaper* through the Bible Society Agent at Marsovan. At the priest's earnest request two copies of the paper were sent to him for use among the young people of his community. During Lent he was accustomed to read selections from the *Inner Life* columns for the benefit of the congregation assembled in the Church. The last part of his letter is as follows and begins with a prayer to Christ.

"Oh! beloved Saviour Mine, when will that day come when we priests, who have entered on the sacred pastoral calling in the Holy Armenian Church, will not think that we have fulfilled our whole duty solely by our performance of the ritual? How many Armenians, mothers, fathers, sisters and brethren we have, who, though they do not understand the Gospel, by their faith have given proofs of renouncing a vain and temporal world, and who, we have not the least doubt, are worthy of the gift of eternal life. But why should not we enlighten their minds with the light of the Gospel? Why should not the salt of the vitalizing words of the Holy Gospel be present in every Armenian christian home? Who is to do this work? We, the priests more particularly. We are responsible before God. Just six years ago I was ordained a priest. In the services I translate the New Testament and the Prophets from the *kurapar* (ancient Armenian) into Turkish (so that all present may understand) and the prayers of our thrice blessed Church Fathers. I do not think our priests would do wrong if they should make it their motto to understand and make understandable what they read.

The Prophet of Islam won thirteen converts in three years, and by virtue of his indomitable will, millions of people have become his followers. Why should our Faith, which at Pentecost won 3000 through the influence of the Holy Spirit, grow weak before the puny forces of scepticism? Why should not we Armenians share in the World's Sunday School Conventions, such as that held at Washington? Why should we not open Sunday schools in our communities? Why should we not cultivate our now rocky fields and sow the seed? Let us pray, my brother of the *Morning Watch*, you for us and we for you, that the Lord may prepare laborers for his harvest. I pray the Lord that, before I die, I may be permitted to open a Young Men's Christian Association Bible Study School among my people.

To all your associates on the *Avedaper* my greetings and blessing from afar.

Your Co-laborer in Christ."

This personal letter is a strong testimony to the effectiveness of the quiet leavening work of mission periodicals, work which can not be done through any other agency. It is also one of those many signs which herald the coming of a new day in the venerable Church of Armenia.

As readers of the *Orient* are aware, a Com. of the W.T.M. was appointed at its last annual meeting, to correspond with the several missions in Turkey and with Boston, with the object of collecting and formulating opinions touching the proposed plan of uniting Theological Seminaries in this country. The Committee addressed a letter to Dr. Barton on the 18th of July. In his brief reply Dr. Barton associates himself with us in the desire of fully canvassing this question by correspondence, in the hope of presenting the whole matter before the proposed conference to be held next year, in a shape ripe for intelligent discussion and final decision.

From all concerned we desire answers to the following questions, with such additional remarks as any one may choose to give.

1. Can the five existing Theological Schools be united in one central institution?
2. If not the five, can those now at Marsovan, Marash and Harpoot be so united?
3. Where should the one seminary be located?
4. Kindly give your judgment, under confidence if you prefer, touching the constitution of the Faculty of the proposed Institution.

We deprecate any form of public discussion of this question till the initial steps now proposed to be taken have yielded the result expected from them.

For the Committee,

GEORGE F. HERRICK

EMPIRE NEWS.

The Capital.

It is said that a group of British capitalists have formed a syndicate for the purpose of connecting Pera, Stamboul and Scutari by tunnels under the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus.

The Governor of Pera has finished his investigation of the attack on the Italian Ambassador. Three persons are charged with being the instigators. The trial will be conducted before the Military Tribunal.

The *Jeune Turc* says that Hakki Pasha has had satisfactory interviews with the French Ministers and that France has accepted in principle the requirement that foreigners be subjected to the income tax.

The Sublime Port is receiving daily despatches giving details of the military preparations being made on the Greek frontier, especially in the region around Ellassona. The Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs has called the attention of the Ambassadors to this fact and has pointed out that grave incidents are likely to follow.

The question of the Bulgarian refugees from Macedonia has been finally and satisfactorily settled between the Ottoman Ambassador at Sofia and the Bulgarian Ministry.

The negotiations between the Constantinople Tramway Company, the Municipality, and the Ministry of Public Works to arrange for the construction of electric tramways in the city have been finished. The terms of agreement will be signed within a few days. The company will spend 130,000 liras in widening the streets. The fares are to be reduced.

Next week the Ministry of Public Works will give its final decision with reference to installing a system of electric lighting for the city.

An Imperial Iradeh sanctions the decision of the Council of Ministers to dissolve the Mahsousseh Company and form a Steamship Company under the direct control of the Government. After certain preliminary steps have been taken a board of managers will be appointed.

At the meeting of Greek Mixed Council on Saturday, the members were informed that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Religious Foundations had addressed a communication to the Patriarchate forbidding the meeting of the National Assembly. Kosmidi Effendi, Greek member of Parliament, was present at the meeting to explain that the Minister of Justice had promised to do all in his power to secure permission from the Government for the National Assembly to meet, provided the meeting called for Sept. 14th is postponed.

A Committee was chosen of two ecclesiastics and two laymen to draw up a reply to the Government and consider a way to postpone the meeting of the Assembly and at the same time insure its ultimate meeting.

THE PROVINCES.

The Governor of Yemen has informed the Minister of the Interior that absolute quiet prevails throughout the province and that the reforms are being put into operation.

The campaign against the Druzes in the Hauran is about to begin. The commander, Sami Pasha, is waiting for the arrival of four regiments of reserves from Aleppo.

Cases of cholera continue to be reported from Erzeroom. The disease has made its appearance among the soldiers. Some cases are reported from Harpoot.

Progrès de Salonique writes that the fast of Ramazan is being very strictly observed and that those who, contrary to the holy precepts of the Koran, satisfy their hunger in public are imprisoned. Seven Moslems were found to have broken their fast. Four of them, two of whom were Egyptians, were drinking *raki* in a wineshop, the others, who were cab drivers were breakfasting in a restaurant. These offenders will not be released before the feast of Bairam.

Operations on the Samsoun-Sivas Railway will be begun within a month. Twenty Ottoman civil engineers have been appointed for the work of construction and are waiting for the arrival of the head engineer of the Hedjaz Railway.

NOTES.

On Saturday and Sunday the American colony in Proti enjoyed the privilege of a visit from the Rev. F. E. Hoskins, D.D. of Beirut, Syria. Dr. Hoskins was a delegate to the Edinburgh Conference and made a flying visit to America during the summer. On Saturday evening he gave an exceedingly interesting account of his recent journey from Cairo to Sinar and thence to Palestine, following the route of the Israelites as verified by the best of modern scholars. On Sunday morning he preached a helpful sermon on the work of the missionary as summed up in the precept of training minds and hearts in their relation to the unseen. In the evening Dr. Hoskins gave an informal talk on the Decapolis and particularly about Petra, on which he is an authority. Those who had the pleasure of listening to his illuminating descriptions of this wonderful and unique city of the past will be eager to possess his two volumes on Petra and read them, if they have not already done so.

Rev. Robert Chambers, D.D., Mrs. Chambers, Mr. and Mrs. Lawson Chambers and Miss S. Newnham arrived in Constantinople on Tuesday and left the same day for Bardizag.

The *Orient* takes this occasion to offer its congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Lawson Chambers, and to extend to them a hearty welcome as they enter on their missionary career.

Rev. H. S. Barnum, D.D., and Mrs. Barnum returned on Monday from their vacation spent in Switzerland.

In a review of Mr. Papazian's Illustrated Anglo-Armenian Dictionary, after speaking very highly of the work, the editor of the *Puzantion* expresses his satisfaction that the book is dedicated to Mr. Peet, who has won the gratitude of the Armenian people by the assistance he has rendered them during their seasons of calamity.

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