

## THE OLD TURK POLICY OF THE NEW TURK

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*The Orient* of the 23rd December, 1914, under the heading of "New Law regarding Foreign Schools," contains *inter alia* the following, the entire article being a translation of an official communiqué sent out to the Vilayet of Constantinople, and published in the local dailies :

" . . . An ordinance has been elaborated concerning the formalities which are to be applied to foreign religious, educational, and benevolent establishments, schools, and hospitals. . . . Religious knowledge and history, and the teaching of the creed of the denomination to which the school belongs, shall not be given to the pupils who do not profess this religion. Nor must such pupils be made to attend prayers. . . ."

This provision of the new law is a clear and bold infringement of the law of religious liberty. The fact has only to be kept in mind that, on the one hand, no one of these foreign educational, benevolent, or religious institutions ever hides its intention to impart religious instruction according to its own creed, and, on the other hand, that attendance at these institutions is absolutely voluntary on the part of those patronising them, not even any law of necessity forcing them to it, and it will be at once seen that this law simply means religious intolerance. For, put into direct language, the provision enforces nothing less than this : " We forbid you foreigners to use as one of your methods for imparting religious instruction the establishment of any institution of the character above indicated." That is to say, if a foreign mission opens a school, and that school is attended by Turks, Gregorians, Orthodox, Jews, or others, it must

leave these where it found them in regard to the truths of salvation. If it opens an orphanage, a dispensary, or a hospital, it must similarly be silent about Him whose love put it into their hearts and made it financially possible for them to open it. Even a Sunday school or evening classes—except for purely secular purposes—must confine instruction to pupils of the mission's own creed. What further enterprise is intended to be caught in the meshes of the words "religious establishments," it would be hard to say; but evidently Protestant Theological Seminaries could not any more welcome within their halls, as they have not unfrequently done of late in Asia Minor, deacons, priests, and others belonging to the unreformed churches.

Can and will this provision be carried out? On the supposition that there will be a Turkish government at the end of this war holding sway in what is now the Vilayet of Constantinople, there can be no doubt that the provision will be enforced, if exterior pressure does not prevent it. The communiqué opens with the statement that this new law is promulgated "as a result of the abolition, by decision of the Imperial Government, of the foreign privileges known under the name of the Capitulations." Thus evidently the Turkish intention is to get rid of the treaties binding them to grant religious liberty, not by openly denouncing these treaties, but by undermining them, in one important sphere of action, by means of this clause in the educational law which they have framed when taking into their own hands the full and uncontrolled regulation of the designated institutions. Moreover, the clause is directly in line with the well-known aspirations of the Young Turkey Party. Desirous of having all their subjects known simply as Ottomans and nothing else, they aim at closely restricting and, if possible, removing everything that would distinguish any minor section of their people from the dominant section, and, therefore, supremely restricting and if possible removing all such profession and practice of Christianity as would remind the sensitive Mohammedan that all the empire is not of his faith. Unquestionably, therefore, this provision is meant to be an

effective one, and in all probability but the forerunner of others which will similarly sweep away religious liberty in various different spheres of activity.

It will be noticed that the term "missionary" institution, which I have used for the sake of brevity, does not occur in the text of the communiqué. The provision applies to all institutions alike, whether those which never had any connection with a missionary body, or those which once had but have not now. Also, the wording of the provision is so wide and inclusive as to reach, not only to schools and hospitals, but to educational and benevolent establishments, amongst which must be reckoned the various colleges established in the Vilayet. In this connection some interesting reflections are suggested. On the occasion of the inauguration of the splendid new buildings in which the American College for Girls at Constantinople took up its abode last June, the President embraced the opportunity to say, in her speech before the great audience assembled, that the Faculty took pleasure in the thought that in that College every student was left undisturbed in the religion which she professed: all were taught to live together in love, respecting one another's nationality and faith. One would have thought that for a College, which, though not now a missionary institution, yet known as a Christian College and supported by the gifts of Christians, that was a sufficiently broad platform. And from the honour conferred upon the President on that occasion by the Sultan, and the words of profound appreciation and gratitude expressed (as they had also been expressed on other occasions) by high-placed officials and other prominent Turks, one would have concluded that the platform was recognised as sufficiently broad by the Government itself and by Mohammedans in general. But the truth has been far otherwise. Whether it is that the voluntary adoption of this broad platform by the college in question has led the Turks to believe that it and the other colleges may be compelled to accept a still broader one, or simply that the Turks, like so many others here in the East, while highly approving the fruits of Western morals, culture, and civilisation, object to

their growing in their midst on a professedly Christian tree, the fact remains that by this provision the Turks take from that college (and, of course, from the others also) the little left that was relied on for exercising the right influence. All non-Protestants are henceforth shut off from receiving religious instruction, or even attending any religious service, in these colleges, except at the hand of teachers of their own faith. Apparently Young Turkey realises that Mohammedanism must be sheltered, nursed, hedged about by an impenetrable fence against Christianity even in its most colourless and non-aggressive presentation. And what is true of Mohammedanism is true of all other faiths found in the empire: each is to be left, so far as regards the class of institutions mentioned, undisturbed.

In view of this new law, missionary societies and other bodies having institutions of these kinds in the Turkish empire would seem now to be obliged to choose between three courses of action—either quietly to accept the law and allow their schools to become practically secularised, or else give up their schools and spend their money on directly evangelistic work, or else to seek through diplomatic action to have this restrictive provision modified in conformity with the principles of religious liberty.

If diplomatic action is to be resorted to, Great Britain and France are for the present incapable of doing anything. Germany, which is least affected by the law, would certainly refuse to embarrass her Mohammedan ally by raising a question of this character at present. The United States, whose interests in the matter are by far the largest, is the only Power whose hands are free. Is that Government to be asked to interfere, and will it interfere? or must those working in the Turkish empire make their choice between one of the two remaining alternatives?

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## THE MOSLEMS OF PALESTINE AND THE WAR

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MISSIONARIES who elected to remain in Palestine during the three months which elapsed between the outbreak of the European War and the entrance of Turkey into the arena, were able to feel a slow but certain progressive change of attitude of the Moslem inhabitants towards their Christian fellow subjects. Under normal conditions these two sections of the population live together on friendly terms ; the differences in religion do not intrude to any marked extent upon the ordinary relationships of townsmen. Indeed, many villages throughout the land are populated by "fellaheen" of both sections of belief, who work side by side and conduct their affairs frequently in partnership, and when necessary combine to defend the rights of their agricultural lands. Thus Cana of Galilee, with a population of less than one thousand, includes Moslems and Christians of the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic and Latin Churches, who trade freely with each other and mix socially. Not long ago these villagers combined to resist the intrusion of enterprising Jews from an adjacent colony, who attempted to obtain certain fields in the vicinity by illegal means. There can be no doubt that recent endeavours on the part of Jewish capitalists to obtain fertile parts of the country at the expense of the inhabitants have lessened the separation between the Moslem and the Christian.

Doubtless centres of fanaticism do exist all over the land ; but these are generally hamlets inhabited entirely by Moslems, and of such a size and situation that the business affairs can be profitably conducted without outside help. Under such circumstances all the dis-