

T H E

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THE MINISTRY OUR AGE AND COUNTRY DEMAND.*

Members of the Board and Students of the Theological Seminary—
In accordance with established custom, it devolves upon me to address you upon this occasion, which is to me so solemn, and to all of us important and interesting. In the remarks which I am about to make, it is my purpose to endeavor to give some expression, however inadequate, to my conception of the work, which the Head of the Church, by the voice of her highest judicatory, has called upon me to perform.

All agree that to provide an earnest, pious and well furnished ministry, is the first and most important work of the church. This obligation rises above all others; this work ranks all others which she undertakes, for all efforts in other directions will be in vain if this is neglected—this must be done whatever else is left undone.

With a humbling sense of my own insufficiency, with fervent supplication to the God of all grace for the necessary endowments, but with the most profound conviction that it is the highest service to which the Master calls any of his servants, I enter to-night upon the toils, responsibilities and duties of a teacher in the Theological Seminary of our venerable and beloved church.

In accordance with these views, I have painfully torn myself away from an affectionate and attached people; a people endeared to me by the kindly intercourse of a pastorate of nearly thirteen years; a people whom I shall bear in my heart, and whose kindness I will never forget while the tide of life courses in my veins, to devote the remainder of my days and energies to the severe, but as I anticipate, pleasant duties of this school of the prophets.

My conceptions, however, of this entire subject, and the ends at which I shall aim in the discharge of the duties of the professorship,

* Inaugural Address of Professor Sloane, delivered on the opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Allegheny City, Wednesday evening, November 4th, 1868. Published by request of the Students of the Seminary.

from one whom you cannot fully trust; and will disoblige him, and so keep him off from you. These, so far as they prevail, will occasion a mutual distance and estrangement, which will not stand with near and mutual fellowship.

When you find anything too hard and difficult for you—sin, the world, temptation, any spiritual duty, any service—he calls you to commit your way to him (Ps. 37 : 5). When you find anything too heavy for you—any want, affliction, suffering—when it prove too burdensome, cast it upon him. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Ps. 55 : 22). He will show the part of an intimate friend, and put his shoulder under, and not suffer thee to shrink, to be moved, much less to sink. When you are apt to be troubled, perplexed, solicitous about anything, cast that care upon him (1 Pet. 5 : 7 ; Phil. 4 : 6).

Those who have lived most in communion with God have lived most in the exercise of faith; trusting him with all they have, in all they fear, for all they want. Walking in communion with God is a walking by faith, not by sense; not making sensible objects, persons, or things, their support and confidence; but renouncing all confidence in the flesh, or in the arm of flesh, or in those things which a carnal heart has recourse to for support. Rely on, and stay yourselves upon God (Isa. 1 : 10), else you will walk in darkness, not see your way to communion with God, nor discern the comfort of it. There is perfect peace and repose in this communion; but how may one come by it? (See Isa. 26 : 3.) While you stay yourselves on God, and go leaning on him, you are near him, he is near you, you are in fellowship with him. This is the posture of intimate friends; thus they enjoy one another; herein their communion shows itself.—*Clarkson's Sermons*. A. D. 1596.

MISSIONARY.

SYRIA MISSION.

ALEPPO, January 22, 1869.

MR. EDITOR :—If I remember rightly, my last letter in the *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* was mere gossip hardly worth reading; and perhaps this may turn out to be but little better. However, what I wrote then, and what I am writing now, will shed some light on the character of large classes of the people with whom we have to do. Take an instance of a different type of character from that exemplified in my last, but not a better.

One day when I was coming in from a walk in the country before breakfast, I was met by a man, who accosted me, and told me that he was just returning disappointed from my house, where he had called to see me upon an affair of importance. I invited him to go back with me to the house, which he did; and then after salutations and coffee, he set forth the object of his visit as follows :

He said that he had some three or four years ago married a wife, he being at the time prosperous and possessed of ample means, and that while his prosperity lasted they lived together very cordially and affectionately; but that he afterwards lost by a reverse of fortune, all his property, and then his wife's friends, taking advantage of a long absence to which his business called him in Tarsus, alienated her affections from him and persuaded her to abandon him and return to her father's house. Upon his return home, he, with much ado, prevailed on her to come and live with him; but after some time she left him again, and went to her father's. He succeeded in reconciling her a second time, but several months ago she left him a third time, and has never since returned. Since this last desertion he has made no further effort to reclaim her, but on the contrary he has been applying to the ecclesiastical authorities—he is a Greek Catholic—for a release, *a vinculo matrimonii*, that he may be at liberty to contract marriage with another. Having been unsuccessful in his application, he was seized with a strong desire to become a Protestant; and his errand with me was partly to offer himself as a candidate for admission into our connexion, and partly to know what law we had for cases like his.

In reply to his proposals and inquiries, I gave him to understand that our church was not an asylum for discontented persons, nor an expedient contrived for the relief of people in worldly distress, but the house of God, the condition of admission into which was an intelligent avowal of belief in the truths of God's word, and a life of obedience to its precepts, with an ability in the applicant to purge himself of all worldly motives; that what he wanted most of all was to be born again, cast himself upon God's mercy in Christ for the salvation of his soul, and repent of and forsake his sins; that if he counted on getting any benefit by becoming a Protestant, he must first become a Christian, and that if with that view he desired to wait on the preaching of the gospel, he knew where to find it, and would be welcome as often as he chose to come. Then as regards the difficulty between him and his wife, he was made to understand that in the absence of that crime, which is the primary and only explicitly stated ground for the dissolution of the marriage relation, it would be time enough to inquire how far her desertion of him might work the same effect, after it had continued for ten or twelve years; and that with regard to the merits of their quarrel, I could form no judgment unless I heard her story as well as his.

He then surmised that I was afraid he was seeking connexion with a Protestant church only till such time as he should have gained his ends, and having gained them he would then desert us and return to his old connexion; but he assured me that I might feel easy about that, for he had quite made up his mind; and that if he once professed Protestantism he would be a Protestant for life, and that in fact he had formerly waited on Dr. Wortabet's ministry for a couple of years, and was prepared to make an intelligent profession of Protestantism; to which I replied, that in all probability his troubles with his wife came upon him as a divine judgment, for returning to the idolatrous ministrations of the Greek Catholic church, after he had heard the gospel for so long a time; and that I had no desire that he should become a Protestant, either

temporarily or permanently, unless he first became a Christian. Finally, after hearing some other words of warning and counsel, he asked me where we went for public worship, and upon being informed, took his leave; and, as I expected, I have not seen him since. Inquirers of this type are generally very importunate while the fit is on them; but I have never known any of them come to any good.

But all are not such as this man. There are others with whom it would be wicked to deal so harshly. To exemplify: we observed the week of prayer after a fashion; that is, I met every evening through the week with two or three persons—the largest number of Arabic-speaking people in Aleppo who care enough about prayer to meet for it at uncanonical times—for prayer and religious conference. At two of these meetings there were strangers present, only one however at a time, not led to them by a love of prayer, but rather by an impulse of sociability; and we seized the opportunity to press very earnestly on both of them the claims of the gospel, and to urge on them the necessity of timely attention to the eternal interests of their immortal souls; at the same time making plain to them from the scriptures the only way of salvation. Of these men one is a member of the Greek and the other of the Greek Catholic church; and although I have never seen them since, it is a satisfaction to know that each of them, if he ever receive the spirit of all grace, has already heard enough to be the means of his salvation. One evening since then, a young man, an Armenian Catholic, came to my house, or rather was brought by one of the teachers in our school, to learn my views of the way of salvation. For two or three hours he listened with great attention and with manifest signs of interest and intelligence, while I unfolded to him the cardinal doctrines of the gospel, in opposition to the heresies and impieties of the church of Rome, and made an earnest appeal to him in relation to his own personal salvation. Such opportunities as these we consider very precious; I mean our opportunities of meeting thus privately with persons not drawn into our presence by hopes of worldly gain or relief from worldly difficulties, who will give a respectful and intelligent hearing to the gospel message addressed to them directly and personally, earnestly and pointedly, and take their full part in the discourse, replying, inquiring, and, it may be, objecting and disputing. Such a sermon in private to one man may sometimes do more good than a sermon from the pulpit to fifty formal and listless hearers; although in either case the fruit will not be reaped till God's set time for the harvest. Let these examples suffice to illustrate our guerilla operations.

At New Years we had quite an accession to our boys' school. We had previously limited the number of scholars to thirty, having but one teacher. At that time we employed an assistant teacher, who was up till then engaged in teaching a school under the patronage of the Greek Church. By his desertion of the Greek school it was quite broken up, and about fifty of the pupils came to us, suddenly, increasing our school from thirty scholars to eighty, at which latter figure it has stood ever since. Notwithstanding that our school is so large, the amount contributed in the way of tuition fees is very small; still it

nearly pays the salary of the assistant teacher, that is, within about two dollars per month of his whole wages. In fact, we have not yet been able to apply the pay system to all, nor to apply it to any with so much effect as we could desire; but we hope as time passes on to make it more and more productive.

Since the commencement of winter the girls' school has been reduced to about one-half of what it was in the autumn, so that for the last two months it has not averaged more than about fifteen. This is wholly owing to the bad weather. The desire for female education here, although it is not altogether absent, is not so strong as to induce parents to make their daughters attend school through rain and mud and cold. The attendance of girls was equally low last winter, but in the spring and summer rose to between forty and fifty, and so continued till, at the close of the summer vacation, we refused to admit more than thirty, because we had only one teacher. In the autumn we employed a second female teacher, but the time was then too far advanced to gain by this much increase to the school. Here, as in the boys' school, the fees taken for tuition pay the wages of the second teacher all but about two dollars per month.

I have frequent letters from Isa, our catechist and school teacher in Idlib. The state of the work there is much the same as when I wrote last. The Protestants there—or, as I should rather call them, inquirers, for although counting themselves Protestants, and so accounted by others, they have neither been received into Protestant communion, nor been recognized by the Turkish authorities—as Protestants—have recently suffered some petty persecution in the way of being burdened with quite a disproportionate share of the usual taxes levied by the Turkish government. To understand how this happens, you must know that in the Turkish empire taxes are not, as with us, levied on individual tax-payers, but on the different religious sects, and then the quota apportioned to each sect, is by the acknowledged representatives of the sect apportioned among its several members. This is the half of what Blaque Beg meant in his speech last year at Washington, when he said that the Turkish, like the American government, allowed great liberty to the different populations under its rule—or something to that effect. The other half of what he meant was, that to every religious sect in the empire was left the adjudication of all civil and criminal cases arising between its own members, with little more control or restraint from the supreme government than is exercised by the federal government at Washington in like cases arising between citizens of the same State—Pennsylvania, for instance, or New York—and this is perfectly true, although not well understood by some of his excellency's critics. Well, to illustrate the former of these features of Turkish administration, when last year's taxes were due, a certain amount was assigned to the town of Idlib as its quota. The people of Idlib are of two sects, nine-tenths Muslims, and the other tenth of the Greek Church. So nine-tenths of each tax is to be paid by Muslims, and the other tenth by the Greeks. Now the representatives of the Muslim community in Idlib apportion among its members the amount that falls to the share of that community as they

please; and in like manner the representatives of the Greek community apportion among the members of their community the quota assigned to the Greeks, as they please. The Turkish government does not in the least meddle with this matter. All that it wants is the taxes of Idlib, and if they are paid—and in fact whether they are paid or not—it never inquires how they are divided among the individual taxpayers. Now, if there were a recognized Protestant community there, the same rule would be applied to them; but as those who are called Protestants there, although for the last few years attending only Protestant worship, were brought up in the Greek church, and have not yet got an order from the Turkish authorities for the removing of their names from the roll in which its members are registered, in order to be registered as Protestants, each of them has to pay, as his share of the taxes, whatever sums the representatives of the Greek community, instigated by malicious and revengeful Greek priests, whose ministrations they have slighted, may assign to them. So it has happened that this winter they have had to pay exorbitantly—so exorbitantly that one of them named Jirjis Karnub refused to pay till after he had been imprisoned for nearly two weeks.

I have been thus particular in explaining the method of assessing taxes hitherto followed in the Turkish empire, to show you how much power the anti-Christian sects here have to persecute, in a quiet and perfectly legal way, any of their members who show a disposition to leave them, from the hour that they begin to manifest such a disposition till the time (if it ever comes) when they make a complete separation from them, and obtain the recognition of this separation in Turkish law as a *fait accompli*. It needs no more words to show that these heavy liabilities of the transition state is a mighty engine of Satan to repress at the outset all inquiry after gospel truth. At the same time, I am thankful to be able to say that in our Redeemer's adorable providence this engine of oppression is on the point of being taken out of the hands of these apostate Christian sects; for by a recent law of the empire all taxes (except one, viz, that paid in commutation for military service,) are henceforward to be assessed by the Turkish authorities on the subjects individually, and not as heretofore in the several sects. This new law has already taken effect in Aleppo, and will probably take effect in Idlib before the next season of tax-paying comes around.

Although I interchange letters with Muallim Isa, our helper at Idlib, at intervals of two or three weeks, he has not for a good while explicitly informed me of the number of scholars in the school there, but I think I may safely take them for granted to be not less than twenty-five, which added to eighty, the number in attendance on the boys' school in Aleppo, and, say fifteen, the average attendance on the girls' school, gives an aggregate of one hundred and twenty as the number of children under instruction in the Aleppo field. But I have no time to write any more at present.

We have just received the first number of the *Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanters* for the present year. We are pleased with it and wish it all success.

Yours in the Gospel,

R. J. DODDS.