ARTICLE VI.

DR. JONAS KING'S EXPOSITION OF AN APOSTOLICAL CHURCH

This brief but lucid and, to us, satisfactory exposition of an Apostolic Church, is designed for such Greeks as are more or less convinced that the religion of their church is not the religion of the Bible, the source, and the only source, of all true religion. The following summary will give the reader a good idea of its contents.


It is now more than twenty years since Dr. Jonas King settled as a missionary at Athens, the capital of that small and unhappy portion of Greece, usually known as Greece Independent. Like a servant faithful to his Master, he has labored hard for the spiritual welfare of the people among whom he lives, and his rewards have been, constant disappointment, anathemas, and curses fulminated against him by the heads of the church, insults, persecution, and many other vexations which bigotry, superstition, unprincipledness, envy and malice could devise. A Protestant missionary in Greece is, by the bigoted, hated and shunned as an accursed heretic, the enemy of the Mother of God; by the infidels, that is, by the majority of those who are

1"Βιβλιονική Αποστολική Εκκλησία. Την Ιωάννη Κίγ. Βυ. Κανναβρυγία της Νίκαι Αγγλας. ΑΩΜΑ. [An Exposition of an Apostolical Church. By Jonas King. Cambridge, New England, 1851.]"
more or less educated, he must be prepared to be regarded as a hypo-
crite or fanatic. Protestantism in that country is, by a singular con-
fusion of ideas, confounded with Freemasonry, which, in its turn, is
imagined to be systematic atheism. And because the Protestant mis-
sionaries who first settled there, were Americans, the term American
is now synonymous with Freemason (Φαρμακίσιας,) or Atheist. We
should not be surprised, therefore, if this publication subjected its
author to new trials. Still, we cannot but hope that the successors of
Annas and Caiaphas will profit by his advice, “not to employ
against him their usual weapons, namely, anathemas, curses and in-
sults, but to refute his errors by the Word of God,” if they can.

It has often been asserted that the Greeks are very violent in their
opposition to the Bible, and numerous facts have been adduced in
support of this position. We would suggest, however, to those who
make this statement, that hostility to the Word of God, is not peculiar
to the Greeks as a nation. In Greece, the blind lead the blind; the
masses are like πρόβατα πομίνα μη ἐχαρτα, and the individual is like
κάλαμος ὑπὸ ἀνίμου σαλεύονος, too ignorant to oppose anything.
The head-quarters of the opposition are at Constantinople, τὸ κατοι-
κτήμενον τῶν δαμασών, ὄπου ὁ θόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ, the residence of
the most influential High Priests and other sons of those who cruci-
fied the Great Missionary. The causes of this apparently
obstinate resistance to divine truth are numerous. We submit the
following:

First. The natural depravity of the human heart, διότι τὸ φρόνημα
τῆς σαρκὸς ἤθος εἰς Θεοῦ· τού γὰρ τόμον τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐχ ὑποτασσε-
tαι, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται. This indeed would be enough of itself to ac-
count for all hostility to revealed truth; but we must add,

Secondly. The religion of the Bible requires natural honesty, re-
flexion, and sobriety, qualities of rare occurrence in Greece, where
unfortunately, thoughtlessness passes for genius, sincerity for hypo-
crisy, honesty for stupidity, and where adulation, lying, and meanness
are believed to be necessary to success. How can religious knowl-
edge make much progress in a country where lying and speaking the
truth are regarded by most of the instructors of youth as in them-
selves indifferent things, good when they benefit, bad when they in-
jure? The fountain-head of lying, however, is the church, in other
words, the higher clergy, who, in fact, constitute the church, the com-
mon people having no voice in its government. Among other kinds
of deception, it almost daily causes pictures of saints, and especially
of the virgin, to perform extraordinary cures, which are adduced as
Irrefragable proofs in favor of the orthodox faith. The most remarkable of these pictures, are those painted by Luke the Evangelist, who, according to Paul's testimony, was a physician, and if so, he might have been also a painter, and therefore he was a painter. Besides, say the hierarchs, if Luke did not paint these miracle-working pictures, who did paint them? As to their number, he might have painted seventy, for the Bible speaks of three score and ten palm trees, and of seventy disciples; therefore, he did paint seventy, three or four of which have already been discovered, and are doing wonders. Such arguments are very conclusive in the East, although to some of our readers they may appear nonsensical. The church, moreover, has sanctioned many of the popular errors, such as the effects of the evil eye (βασκανία,) for which she has provided appropriate prayers.

Thirdly. We have already intimated that the chief opposition to the spread of Biblical knowledge, comes from the higher clergy, whom the ignorant masses believe to be the lineal successors of the Apostles. And although they may despise their character, yet they dread their anathemas, and consequently they dare not disobey their impious mandates. They are early taught to distinguish between the character of the man, and that mysterious power supposed to reside in him; the result of which illusion is, that the clergy in general, and the higher clergy in particular, are looked upon as a superior order of beings, having the power of binding and loosing (τοῦ δο-μείν και λίθον,) by which the ignorant understand, that when a man has been anathematized or otherwise cursed by a Bishop or Priest, his body remains unchanged after death, which shows that his soul is, in an inexplicable manner, bound to its tabernacle, and is consequently miserable, until the same, or any other ecclesiastic causes the body to be loosed, that is, decomposed, by reading over it the prayers entitled, Ἐάνηι συγχρητικαί εἰς πάσαν αὐρά καὶ ἀφορισμὸν εἰς τεθννωτα ἀναγινώσκομεν παρὰ ἄρματες ἢ ἐν ἀνάργυρῃ παρὰ πνευματικοῦ πατρὸς; εἰ οὐ πάρουσιν ἀφικαίνης, for which he charges a pretty round sum of money. And here the classical scholar will naturally be reminded of the Homeric verses, (II. 28, 71-74):

Θάπτε με ὅτι τάχιστα, πιλᾶς Ἀίδαο περίσσω,
Τῆλε με εὐρωπάι ψυχαί, εἰδώλα καμάντων,
Οὐδὲ μὲ καὶ μισγόθαι ύπερ ποσαμοῦ εἶναι.
Ἀλλ' αὕτως ἀλάλημα αὖ εἰρυπνίλες Ἀίδος δει.

Let my pale corpse the rites of burial know,
And give me entrance in the realms below:
Opposition of the Greeks to the Bible.

Till then, the spirit finds no resting place,
But here and there the unbounded spectres chase
The vagrant dead around the dark abode,
Forbid to cross the irremovable flood.

Pope's Translation.

Fourthly. In Greece and Turkey, religion is, with the individual, a point of honor. If the missionary intimates to a Greek, directly or indirectly, that his church is in error, especially if he attempts to confirm his position by a quotation from the Bible or the early Fathers, the person thus addressed is apt to take it for a personal as well as national insult. When a Moslem intends to offer the highest insult to a Greek, he aims at his cross; the Greek, under similar circumstances, abuses his Mohammed. The technical terms used in theological disputes of this nature, are too gross to be mentioned here; besides, they are fortunately untranslatable.

Fifthly. The illusion of the restoration of the Byzantine empire, has been one of the most serious obstacles to the progress of Scriptural religion among the Greeks. And as the church in its present form is the only thing that can bind them together as a nation—for, as soon as a Greek changes his religion, he loses his nationality—all their politicians are systematically opposed to religious controversies of any kind whatsoever. In view of the realization of this dream, even the disciple of Voltaire is heard to talk loudly about his holy religion.

Sixthly. The Greek church virtually, if not formally, regards the Canons of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, as the highest court of appeal in all religious matters. The bare text of the Scriptures is looked upon as an obscure oracular response, having no meaning without the explanations of the divinely instructed (σώσορος) Fathers, the only legitimate expounders of the Word of God. This is one of the most formidable enemies the Evangelical missionary has to contend with. He must convince the Greeks, that the rules of the Bible alone are binding upon Christians, before he can make the least progress in his work. And the book before us, we hope, will do considerable towards accomplishing this object.

For the benefit of those who wish to know something about the leading peculiarities of the Greek church in its present state, we add the following remarks. In its external form, it is a compound of Heathenism and Judaism, the former being the basis of it. Its religion consists of little else than a series of bodily motions, including the motion of the tongue, and abstinence from certain kinds of food on certain stated days. The chief object of worship, in a practical
point of view, is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who although a historical personage, is the latest phase of Rhea, Athene, and Artemis united into one being. The progress of Mariolatry in this church seems to be this: “The blessed among women” was a virgin when she became the mother of the Son of man. About the early part of the third century, some persons, confounding her probably with Athene, imagined that she remained a virgin after the birth of the Anointed. About the latter part of the fourth century, the second Ecumenical Council contrived to have her name inserted in the creed, usually but incorrectly styled the Nicene Creed. This, however, does her but little honor, since in the same creed, Pontius Pilate also figures. By the third Ecumenical Council, held about fifty years after the second, she was most solemnly declared to be the Mother of God (Θεοτόκος). After that, she continued to gain glory very rapidly, until finally she has virtually supplanted the worship of God in Christ. The God of the Bible is indeed still regarded theoretically as superior to Mary, but for all human purposes the latter is all-sufficient. Is a Greek in distress? he usually cries, Παραγια Θεοτόκε, θείθει μοι. God, in fact, belongs to a religious system now become obsolete. He is to Mary what, with the ancients, Kronos was to Zeus. She is now Τεταργία Θεοτόκος, Αειπάρθενος, Νύμφη ἀνύμφευτος, Μήτη τῶν Θεῶν τοῦ Τυφώτου, Τιμωτήρια τῶν Χρυσίμων, Ευδοξιότερα τῶν Σωφρίπης, Ἡ μόη ἐλικτι προστασία τῶν πιστῶν, and an endless variety of similar absurd and blasphemous titles. Protestants are commonly shocked at the heathenish expression, “The Mother of God,” but what will they do when they are informed that the Greek church has provided also a Grandmother and Grandfather for him? We are aware that very few will be disposed to credit our statement, and therefore refer those who doubt its accuracy to the Greek Calendar (Ὑπολόγισμος), where they will find under September 9th, Τῶν ἀγίων καὶ δικαίων Θεοπατόρων Ἰωάννης καὶ Ἀννης, The feast of the holy and just parents of God Joakeim and Anna, they being the traditional parents of Mary. Under July 25th, Ἡ κοίμησις τῆς ἁγίας Ἀννῆς, μητρὸς τῆς Θεοτόκου, The feast of the sleep (death) of Saint Anna, the mother of the Mother of God. Anna is called also Θεοπρόμητος, The Grandmother of God!

The language of the “Exposition” is now spoken, or rather written, by such Greeks as are more or less acquainted with the authors of ancient Greece. This language resembles the ancient in most of its forms, but the meaning of many of its words is not to be found in the classical authors, and its syntax and versification are entirely modern;
and the more it approaches the ancient as to its exterior, the more it departs from its spirit. It is in fact little else than modern ideas, chiefly French, in Greek dress. As a specimen take the following extract from one of the leading Journals published at Athens:

'Ἡ κοβέρνησις μας σήμερον φέρει διὰ τὰ σημεία καὶ ὅλας τὰς ἀθλόστητας τῆς παρακμῆς. Ἡ παρατήρησις αὐτὴ ἔφυγε, νομίζομεν, νὰ πιάνῃ τοὺς διευνότητας τὰ πράγματα μας ὧν τὸ σύστημα τοῦ Κολέττου ἦν αἱ ὀλέθρων καὶ ἢ αὐτοὺς καὶ διὰ τὸν τόπον. Ὁ μηχανισμὸς τοῦ Συντάγματος δὲν ἐκπληρῶν πλέον τὰς λειτουργίας του. Ἡ Βασιλεία ἠτακευθήθη, ὃ λάθος ἠπέβαλεν εἰς χαμένην, ὃ μηχανισμὸς τοῦ Συντάγματος ἐκπληρῶν ἔργασιν δυσώδη, καὶ ὄπωραν, ἀνακάμηκε καὶ σκονίσας βορβοροφάγος, π᾽ ἄλλους λόγους, τὸ Σύνταγμα κατήγετο ἀληθῆς βορβοροφάγος.

To the uneducated, that is, to the mass of the nation, this dialect is almost unintelligible, partly because its words are often different from those in common use, but much because the vocabulary of the illiterate is as meagre in Greece as in any other country. For philological purposes, however, the language of the common people is infinitely more important than that of the educated. Add to this the fact that the most valuable portion of Romaic literature has appeared in this dialect.

We observe here that the inhabitants of Boeotia, Attica, Megaric, Argolis, Poros, Hydra, and Spetsais are mostly Albanians, and speak a language as different from the Romaic, as the Slavonic is from the Greek. Further, in Tsakonia, a small district of Lakonia, a curious jargon is spoken by the common people. Some learned Germans regard it as a branch of the Doric; we have no doubt it is a barbarous Romaic. Take this specimen:

Τὸν τοιοῦτον μᾶς ἴψαγε τὸν πόλεμο μὲ τὰ κοσμονομαχίωρον, τὰ μυστικώνα σου δὲ στράτευμα. Χωρίς ἐσοῦ τότε, τοῖς ἑδωραῖς ἔτη τοῦ μᾶς ταραγοῦμεν; Οὐ! τὰ χαῦτητα, οὐν! That is, in common Romaic: Τὸν καίρον ὑπὸ τῆς εἴρημα τὸν πόλεμο μὲ τὸν τεύτρον τους Τοῦρκους, τὰ μυστικά σου δὲν τα εἴδαμε. Ποῦ ἦσας τότε, και τώρα μᾶς ἠλέθης καὶ μᾶς κοντέσασ; Οὐ! τὰ χαῦτητα, γάδαρε!

It is more than probable that in a few generations both jargons will disappear from Greece.