

Jerusalem
October 13. 1897.

No. 51.

Sir,

Having noticed in the "Egyptian Gazette" of the 1st instant a telegram dated Constantinople, September 30th, stating that the Sultan has accorded autonomy to the Abyssinian Church in Jerusalem, I have the honour to report that I caused enquiries to be made on the subject, but have been informed that the Local Authorities have, up to the present, received no instructions

Yours faithfully,
His Excellency
The Right Hon^{ble}
Sir Philip Currie, G.C.B.
&c. &c.

with

General Rickson

No. 50

Rec^d Gov^{rn}

By Post

Wt. 6/20/97. No. 48.

Dr. Bliss' observations -

stating number 1 note 1

which sent to Ministry 1/4

Public Justice 1/4 5.

Draft

to send for issue of permit

see Mr. Hymans' note No. 103 of Aug 24/97

SA

with reference to this question.

I would, however, venture to submit to your Excellency a few observations on the status of the Abyssinian Church in this city.

The number of Abyssinians now residing in Jerusalem is about 150, most of them being monks attached to the Church and Monastery belonging to their sect. The superior of the Monastery is a more intelligent and somewhat better educated monk, but the Abyssinians have no bishop, and they are, taken altogether, an exceedingly poor and ignorant community. They are

are stated to have had considerable possessions in Jerusalem in former times, amongst which there was a library containing many valuable manuscript books, but this was burnt by order of Ibrahim Pasha, the Egyptian, about the year 1838, during a visitation of the plague, after the last Abyssinian had fallen a victim to the disease. The Abyssinians, however, seem to have been deprived of most of their possessions by the Copts and Armenians, and now there only remains to them the convent of Beir-el-Sultan (their right to which is also disputed), within
the

the city, in the vicinity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and, outside the city walls, a fine Church built principally by contributions from the King of Abyssinia with a small monastery attached to it, in which about thirty monks reside.

On the meeting of the Council of Chalcedon, in the middle of the fifth century, the Armenians, Syrians, and Copts, of which last the Abyssinians form a part, refused to obey its summons or to accept its dogmas, but have always adhered to the Eutychian, Monophysite, and Monothelite doctrines, which form a bond of spiritual union between

between them. This community of belief, taken together with the small number of Copts, Abyssinians and Syrians usually resident in the Holy City, induced the Porte from early times to place these sects under the supervision of the Armenian Patriarch. In a conversation which I have had with Monsig^r Véhabedian, the present Patriarch, he informed me that as far back as the reign of the Sultan Saladin, of Crusader times, the Syrians, Copts and Abyssinians are mentioned in the Firman granted to the Armenian Patriarch as being under his superintendence, and their affairs have always been treated with the Authorities through the

the Armenian Patriarchate. The
Syrians, or Jacobites, in recent
years appointed for themselves a
bishop in Jerusalem who is
recognised by the Porte, but their
position, with regard to the Armenian
Patriarch, remains unaltered, as they
are still referred to in his Firman
as under his spiritual supervision.

The Abyssinians have always
shown very great veneration and
respect for Jerusalem and the Holy
sites, as the Royal Family of
Abyssinia claims direct descent
from King Solomon, and their
Chiefs and headmen frequently
visit the Holy Land as Pilgrims.
Should, therefore, the Sultan accord
them

them an independent position in
this city, like the other principal
Christian sects, the measure would
be extremely gratifying to both the
King of Abyssinia and the nation.
It is asserted that this step, if actually
taken by the Sultan, has been decided
upon at the initiative of Russia, who
of late is reported to be making
efforts for the conversion of the
Abyssinians to the Greek Orthodox
faith, and to bring them under her
influence, and she would probably
later on ask that the Abyssinians
in Jerusalem should be placed
under her protection. Under any
circumstances this move on the
part of the Sultan, if correctly
reported

reported, will not only be very
flattering to the Abyssinian nation,
but would, at the same time, by
withdrawing the Abyssinians
from under the superintendence
of the Armenian Patriarch be a
blow aimed against the power
and influence of the Armenian
Community in this city.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect
Sir,
Your Excellency's
Most Obedient
Humble Servant.
John Dickson

1897
Jerusalem, Oct. 13th

Cousul Dickson

No. 51

Rec?

By Post Oct 28

Abyssinian Church in

Jerusalem - concerning

an report that Sultan has

granted autonomy to -

Home

to send in my
Care *H.*

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