Dear Bishop of Gibraltar

Bucharest. April 15. 1909

Dear Bishop of Gibraltar,

The sad news from Georgia of the persistent persecution of the ancient Ibrerian Church and its clergy has moved me to appeal to you. I do not know if you personally are in touch with the Russian Synod but, in any case, no doubt you are acquainted with English churchmen who are. I feel sure that you will use your influence to interest them in the pitiful state of their Georgian brothers and to try and obtain justice for them.

Bishop Kirion after suffering degradation and exile has been imprisoned in a distant Russian monastery. Although he is well up in years and in feeble health he was forced to travel in the depth of winter and his request to be allowed to go to St. Petersburg to answer any accusation which might be brought against him was refused, He fell ill in Moscow but was dragged from the hospital by the police and made to continue his journey. He is the author of several literary works of merit and much beloved by the people.

Bishop Leonid, perhaps the most esteemed of the Georgian clergy, was subjected to a domiciliary search and removed from his see.
Archimandrite Amrobse, an eloquent preacher has been degraded and exiled to a Russian monastery and many of the local clergy have been dismissed and punished.

The only reason for this persecution is that the Georgian clergy unanimously support the autocephaly of their church, which has existed for fifteen centuries. The accusation of instigating the murder of Ecarch Nikon, brought against them by the notorious Russian reactionary, Purishkevitch is too fantastic and infamous to be [pg 2] considered.

The great enemy of the Georgian Church, the missionary archpriest Vostorgoff, was in Moscow, heard to declare that he would “drown” Bishop Kirion and “flood all Georgian with blood.” He has recently received the order of St. Vladimir from the Tsar.

This persecution of their church is alienating the people from the Orthodox faith. Many even discuss the advantages of changing their religion. Two villages in Kakheti have become baptists. This is a curious symptom in a people whose church has never known heresy or sectarianism.

The whole Georgian nation is naturally roused to indignation. Meetings of the nobles have been held in which the fear was expressed that the mass of the people would be alienated from the Orthodox Christian faith if the highest hierarchs of their church continue to be arrested and exiled without trial. At Kutais, in the beginning of March, some of the most notable men in the country were imprisoned and threatened with exile for taking part in such a meeting, but I see from the latest Tiflis papers that several of them have now been released.

From the enclosed translation of an article by Prof. Tsaragelli of St. Petersburg University, a Privy Councilor of the Empire, you will see what an expert has to say about the autocephaly of the Georgian Church.

This Christian nation which has held fast faith and freedom through centuries of invasion by Mongols, Arabs, Turks, and Persians is now likely to lose both under the protection of the great Christian power to whom she voluntarily united herself a hundred years ago.

I fear that these few facts give but a poor idea of the state of affairs, but I do not wish to weary you. Please forgive me for troubling you. I realize my utter helplessness, but I feel that I must do what I can for the brave Georgian people whom I so must admire and love. My brother sends his kindest regards. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again soon.

Yours sincerely,
M.W.