

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

PROTESTANTISM IN FRANCE.

Dr. Charles Salmond, of Edinburgh, has published a very timely pamphlet on the religious question in France. It is timely because the French Chamber has passed the measure disestablishing and disendowing the Churches—a measure which only awaits the sanction of the Senate. Dr. Salmond deals with Protestantism in France in three eras—from the Reformation (1611) to the Revolution (1789), from that to the fall of Napoleon III. at Sedan (1870)—thence to the present day. There are chapters also on the movement "Away from Rome" in its various aspects. Having travelled extensively and inquired accurately in the country the writer is qualified to speak with knowledge and authority. In a lively and readable manner Dr. Salmond tells his story—how at the Restoration France was well-disposed towards Protestantism, and might now have been one of the Protestant States of Europe; but the Papacy by bloody persecution and intrigue tried to stamp out the Reformed faith. The Protestants, called "Huguenots," which means "sworn comrades," included some of the best blood of France, and many of the highest characters, yet were hounded to death like criminals.

Next we are told of the Revolution which suppressed all religion, till Napoleon decreed the Concordat of 1802, establishing and endowing Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. During the first half of the nineteenth century the French Protestants fell apart into two sections—an Evangelical and a Rationalistic—which, of course, was a cause of weakness. Then came the Franco-German war, the fall of Napoleon III., and the establishment of the Republic in 1870, which order of things has continued till now, 35 years, and appears to be the most stable government France has possessed since the Revolution.

Dr. Salmond then tells clearly and succinctly the story of the Republican Government and its constant enemy, the Roman Church and Curia, or rather the power behind the Pope—the Jesuit Order. He shows that the hostility of the Papacy drew the Republic towards Protestantism, at least towards liberalism and toleration, so that the Protestant cause has been gaining of late, while Rome has been losing. Still great disabilities hampered the Evangelical movement and hindered much progress. Yet there are now in France 1,067 permanent congregations, besides some Independent Churches, the M'All Missions, and many smaller centres of religious life in villages. The unhappy presence of a Rationalist section is recognised, yet Dr. Salmond holds that it is not growing at all, while the Evangelicals are full of life and hope. He also holds that the alliance with the State tended to paralyse and deaden the Church.

This leads to the recent action of the French Government, and their resolve to denounce the "Concordat" and sever the connection between Church and State. The Religious Orders were known to be antagonistic to the Republic, and as they had in their hands the education of the Army officers, the Government felt compelled to "pare their nails." From 1901 on to the present this struggle of the secular power against the Catholic Church and priesthood has been going on. The State has put down its foot, the Orders have been sent adrift, the Church separated from State support, and France has broken with the See of Rome. As regards the Protestants, Dr. Salmond says:—

"As regards the effect of separation on the Protestant churches, the Eglise Re-

formee and the Lutheran Church have, between them, enjoyed an annual State subsidy of nearly 1,000,000 francs and the Jews of about 134,000 francs. The withdrawal of State aid will, therefore, mean a considerable money loss, which may tend to hamper certain missionary operations for a time, and may even mean the suppression of some weak congregations. Some of the pastors will also regret the loss of prestige and influence associated with the position of a State functionary that is dear to a French heart, and to other hearts besides. But it is hoped and believed, that the money difficulty will be got over, through the enlargement of Christian liberality consequent on self-dependence; and the relative value of State prestige will be reduced, when the Roman Catholic priests are also shorn of it."

Regarding the Catholics he says:—

"The Roman Catholic Church, however, will evidently be the heaviest loser through Disestablishment. As regards money, it receives 35 1/4 millions of the 43 millions of francs paid annually from the 'Budget des Cultes.' The withdrawal of this subvention in days of declining Peter's Pence, is itself a serious consideration. It will doubtless mean the extinction of the congregations in many parishes, and the uniting of parishes where, as has been true in too many cases, not more than a dozen persons can be got together at Mass."

There are three sorts of Catholics in France—(1) The Ultramontanes, or whole hoggers, who stand for the infallibility of the Pope and the Syllabus, a small party. (2) The Galileans, who are the majority, who make use of the Church and the priest only at Christmas and Easter; for baptisms, marriages, and burials. (3) The Intellectuals or Freethinkers, who are theists, or at best very Broad Church Christians, caring nothing for priest, sacrament, or dogma. This party are forming alliance with Socialists, and are causing alarm to Evangelical Protestants. Meanwhile many priests are leaving the Roman Church, and the Pope and Curia are not very happy about France, once the "Eldest son of the Church." It is said that out of the forty millions of French people only two millions are practising Catholics. Unless, therefore, the vast majority can be made earnest Catholics, it is hard to see how the priesthood and the Churches can be supported, unless they take a hint from Ireland, where the priests can extract from their people, and from Protestants, and from the government as much money as they want.

As for the outlook Dr. Salmond is hopeful on the whole. He thinks the new order of things will lead to a union of the Protestant Churches, and to an increase of Evangelical sentiment among Frenchmen generally. He has little faith in a creedless Rationalistic Protestantism, but earnestly desires the restoration of the early type of French piety—that of the Huguenots of the sixteenth century. Now that French and England are on such close and kindly terms, it touches us very nearly how far our Faith is likely to advance and gain influence in that country. It is to be hoped that out of the present revolution (for it almost is a revolution) true Christianity will emerge with added force and vitality. Dr. Charles Salmond, a man of wide culture, and an ornament to the Presbyterian Church, has done good service by issuing in the present crisis this well-informed and well-written brochure.—Belfast Witness.

— A disruption of one's belief in the Bible as the Word of God, is a disruption of one's hope in immortality.

NOTES AND NEWS OF MISSIONS.

The wonderful revival in Wales has had echoes in many places, but perhaps none more characteristic than the revival in the Khasia Hills of Assam, the field of the Welsh mission. There to wot after town has been stirred to repentance and new consecration, many have joined the church, a marvelous movement has begun among the children in the schools, and everywhere the chapels are filled with enquirers.

An eccentric philanthropist, Mr. Arthington, of Leeds, England, left a will which has been a hard nut to crack in the English courts during four years. Impossible conditions of the legacy have at last been interpreted away and their intention authoritatively declared. The London Missionary Society and the Baptist Missionary Society (England) will divide nearly \$4,000,000 under the decision of the judges. The money can be used for new work only.

The Presbyterian Church of England Jewish mission in Aleppo, Turkey, has a school in which one-half of the 250 pupils are bright and progressive Jews. Every now and then the Jewish pupils are scared away by the curses of angry Rabbis, and the school is left half empty. But they come dropping in one by one again as soon as they are sure that the Rabbis are tired of cursing. Then the school room is left half empty. But they come dropping in one by one again as soon as they are sure that the Rabbis are tired of cursing. Then the school booms until a Rabbi remembers it again.

The Scottish mission to the wild Angoni robber tribes west of Lake Nyasa, in British Central Africa, was begun some twenty years ago because the savages must be tamed or they would break up the mission on the Lake. In 1903 a Glasgow lady gave \$3,500 for the building of a new station among the Angoni. When these former savages heard of the gift 7,000 of them gave two weeks' labor apiece as the ir contribution to the work. That gift of \$3,500 has built a store, a boarding house, a hospital with living rooms for the nurses and separate wards for men and women, and a church to seat 3,000 people with school rooms under the same roof. The reason the money lasted like the widow's cruise of oil, was because the wild Angoni have learned to want missionaries among them.

In the Reformed Mission at Takhing (Tetzang) Kwangtung, China, the way the heaven works has been actually visible to the eye. A little village two days distant is occupied by one family—an old woman of ninety being at the head, and her descendants to the fourth generation living about her. A man of the third generation went away to work and was converted. When he came back he was punished. But he stood firm and told his friends what the Lord has done for him and prayed for them steadily. Then one of the fourth generation went away and was converted. There were now two to testify and to pray. Next two more of the third generation were converted and there were four to pray. Last of all two more only was still an idolator and she was the Out of the forty persons living there one vided missionaries to visit the village. ration were converted. These then inged mother of all. In April of this year some of the ladies of the mission succeeded in coaxing the old woman to learn the Lord's Prayer, and while the volume of intercession grows there is reason to hope that she, too, will yield her proud will.