

WALDENSIAN MISSIONS IN ITALY.

Two events of recent date increase the interest taken in the efforts to leaven Italian society with the Gospel. First, the alliance of the Pope with the Jesuits has alarmed the thinking classes, and aroused determined opposition. Again, the movement of which Count Campello is the leader, by means of which the Gospel is being preached to crowded meetings of the poorer classes, has produced manifest uneasiness among the Roman priests. At present I confine myself to a brief sketch of the work accomplished by the missionary labours of the Waldenses during the past years in Italy, outside the Valleys. Italy, for mission purposes, has been divided into five districts, each of which is presided over by one of the five members of the commission of evangelization. Regarding each a few sentences.

I. PIEDMONT.

This district includes what was formerly called the Kingdom of Sardinia. In this division are fourteen churches, nine stations, sixty-two localities visited, 2,680 hearers, 1,536 members, 273 admissions during the year. Four of its churches contain more than 200 members each. One station is particularly named as giving encouragement—that of La Salle, eighteen miles from Aosta, on the road to Courmayeur. Work began there only two years ago, and thirty-three members have been received, and twenty-five are preparing to follow. The majority of the people are in comfortable circumstances. At one of the stations—Verres—the priest uttered strong anathemas against the Protestants, declaring them to be lost without remedy. One evening a man, putting his large Bible (Diodati's) under one arm, and giving the other to his wife, went to this priest, and asked him to show him what was false in it, and he would burn it at once. The priest now said Diodati's Bible was obscure, insufficient, dangerous! "I have lived thirty-eight years in your religion," said the man, "and I remained ignorant and vicious. This Bible, which you tell me is false, has made another man of me; what will not the true one do? Show it to me, then." Of course the priest could show nothing, and had the sense in his subsequent sermons to make no allusions to the Protestants.

One of the churches in this district—Pinerolo—ceases to be a mission church, having been admitted by the Synod as a Waldensian parish of the Valleys. Pinerolo is near the entrance to the Valleys, and the congregation is chiefly composed of Waldenses by birth. Of course it is self-sustaining.

II. LOMBARDO-VENETO.

This district contains eleven churches, seven stations and seventeen places visited. Milan occupies the first place, having 291 members, who contribute 7,908 francs. Venice has 180 members. In this district the clerical party are very bitter, and yet the evangelicals not only maintain their position, but gain yearly from the ranks of Romanism. "We are no longer," says the report, "in the times of the brave Pio Nono, who, with his sallies of wit and his anathemas on Italy, so well served the cause of evangelization. Leo XIII., more fox than lion, directs the crusade against all that is liberal in politics, or evangelical in religion, with an ability worthy of a better cause."

III. TUSCANY

has six churches, three stations, seventeen localities visited, 688 communicants, sixty-six being admitted during the year, and forty catechumens. Florence has two churches—the Oratorio, with 214 members, and Salviati, 105 members. The Waldensian School of Theology being here gives Florence a great advantage. The number of students this winter is thirteen, of whom twelve are natives of the Valleys and one from Sicily. Pisa last year lost a noble man, Dr. Chiesi, an elder of the Church, and the first Tuscan who embraced the Gospel, some time before the Madiati, who became so well known to the Christian world through their imprisonment by the Grand Duke. Leghorn and Rio Marina, in the island of Elba, have the best attended school in the whole field of evangelization, 206 pupils being in the one and 205 in the other.

IV. ROME AND NAPLES.

This district has five churches, fourteen stations, fifteen localities visited, 495 members, seventy-four admissions in the course of last year, ninety-four

catechumens, 332 children in the Sabbath schools. Though the largest of the districts, the number of churches is few. On the shore of the Adriatic there is but one church, at Ancona; and a small station at Brindisi, with fourteen members. New churches have recently been built both at Rome and Naples. The church at Rome is on the Via Nazionale, and has 130 members. The Sabbath school at Naples has 140 pupils.

V. CALABRIA AND SICILY.

This district has eight churches, all in Sicily, the largest being Messina, 131 members, and Catania, 107. There are five stations supplied, fifteen localities visited, 498 members, sixty-eight catechumens, 487 scholars in the Sabbath school. Contributions during the year, 8,846 francs. Colporteurs and Bible carriages visit the towns and villages, and prepare the way for the missionary. Schools too are a real help in the work of evangelization, by sowing the seed in young hearts before they are given over to superstition and infidelity. The work of the year in the mission field will be seen from the following figures:

	1885	1886
Communicants	3,926	4,061
Admissions	544	606
Workers	120	131
Churches	43	44
Stations	36	38
Localities visited	171	126

The decrease in the number of places visited is due to restricted funds.

T. H.

Toronto, March, 1887.

HELPS TO BIBLE STUDY.

The blood of the martyrs has ever been the seed of the Church. So too has hostile criticism ever been productive of wider study and higher appreciation of the Bible. Our own day is remarkable for the number of good books in aid of this movement, in which devout scholars give to the multitude the results of laborious study and research. Two of these are before us.* The first is the kind of book every Bible student has longed for—one which would give in brief space and popular style the historical evidences of the genuineness of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. This Dr. Blake has done with as much clearness and fulness as is consistent with the popular character of the work. The course followed lends a fresh charm to the study. Beginning at the Council of Nice (A.D. 325), he finds about that time the New Testament accepted by the Church at large in its present form, and proceeds to trace backward evidences of the existence and general acceptances of its component parts to the very days of the apostles themselves. These days, as well as ours, were full of jealous criticism, earnest enquiry and intense controversy. As a result we have voluminous writings for and against the religion of Christ, in which are embedded historical evidences, scriptural allusions and quotations so numerous as not only to put the existence of the books, and their acceptance by the Church as inspired, beyond a doubt, in the days of men who studied under the personal companions and pupils of the apostles themselves. Thus, Irenaeus, born within a hundred years of Christ, and living to the close of the second century, writes to a friend of his youth of their common and precious memories: "When I was yet a boy I saw thee in Lower Asia with Polycarp; . . . for I remember the events of those times better than those recurring lately; so that I am able even to tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp was accustomed to sit and discourse; . . . also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord; how also he used to recount their words. Whatever things he had heard from them concerning the Lord, also concerning His miracles and teachings. Polycarp, as receiving them from eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, related all in harmony with the Scriptures." The significance of the last word becomes clearer when we learn that the works of this writer contain 763 quotations, or undoubted allusions, ranging over all the books of the New Testament, except Philemon and 3 John, and every chapter except fifty-four. That these books were the same as now is confirmed by the fact that when "the question was raised by a number of English gentlemen whether

*The Book; or, When, and by Whom, the Bible Was Written. By Rev. S. Leroy Blake, D.D. (Boston: Congregational S. S. and Book Publishing Society.) 283 pp.

the New Testament could be recovered from the writings of the first three centuries, one of them, Lord Hailes, who had these writings, at once began to make a collection of all the quotations from the New Testament which he could find in them. In two months he actually discovered the whole New Testament with the exception of eleven verses. These he was satisfied could be found also." Dr. Blake's valuable work will reward careful study.

Every Bible student wants a good dictionary, cheaper and less voluminous than Smith's and Fairbairn's, yet containing the very remarkable results of modern antiquarian and historical research. Such has just been given to us by the American Tract Society,* in a new edition of an old standard, scarcely recognizable in its recast articles illustrated with a profusion of fine engravings and fresh maps. Such a book, a manual of excellence and cheapness, within the reach of every family, is a real boon to the Bible-reading public.

WHAT CONSTITUTES CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

MR. EDITOR,—In glancing over the numerous annual congregational reports which have appeared in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN I have observed one statement which almost invariably occurs in them, and which I think deserves some attention. It is to the fact that so many were added to the membership of the congregation during the year. What is meant by it? Is it intended to include all born of professed Christian parents as well as those received from other congregations? If not, it is surely very defective. Or is it intended to mean communicants? If so, the statement is calculated to teach that the visible Church is composed only of communicants, and to lead the young and others to believe that they have no place as members in the congregations, and no responsibility as members until they become communicants. This doctrine is widely spread in the Church, and is doing much mischief among the young. To read these reports, and to listen to much of the language of many ministers and others about the children of professing parents "joining the Church," "connecting themselves with the Church," and being "received into the Church," one would suppose they never had a place in the Church as members, and that the Good Shepherd has no lambs in His flock. This is the general impression produced upon the minds of the young, and hence so many of them feel no responsibility resting upon them to discharge the various duties incumbent upon them as members of Christ's visible Church. Those who use such language I know profess to believe "that the visible Church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion together with their children," but they are practically teaching another doctrine. Perhaps this is another of the places in the Confession of Faith which is not considered to be "sufficiently supported by Scripture," and hence may be left in abeyance, and the doctrine of Congregationalism may be preferred and taught. But if not, and the Confession is right in teaching the membership of little children, of whom Christ said they are "of the kingdom of heaven," by all means let the language employed in relation to them, and the statements made in reports respecting the membership of the Church, be consistent with the doctrine professed.

A. W.

March, 1887.

THE RELIGIOUS PRESS.

There is great apathy in the Church in reference to the value of the religious press, and the duty of promoting its circulation. There is no profound or general conviction that it has a place in the economy of God for the circulation of the truths of the Gospel, and promoting the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. There seems to be a general impression that, when Jesus told His apostles and disciples to preach the Gospel—to disciple all nations—he referred to oral instruction only, and that He had no reference to the epistles they afterward wrote to individuals and churches, though it is true that we have from them tenfold more of the written Gospel than of their sermons.

*Bible Dictionary. American Tract Society, New York. New edition.