

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

CHURCH AND STATE IN FRANCE.

SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES TO THE CHURCH.

Each Session of Parliament, when the budget is introduced into the Chamber of Deputies, a discussion, led by M. Jules Roche, takes place in regard to the payments made to the different churches which receive emoluments from the State, the party of the extreme left having as a chief plank in their platform the complete separation between Church and State. Generally speaking, some progress is made from year to year in the attainment of that object, by the diminution, to a greater or less extent, of the subventions to the clergy. This year the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris was the chief object of M. Roche's attacks. The stipend of the Archbishop was originally 100,000 francs, with an extra 30,000 francs as the salary of a seat in the Senate. After the late war the Cabinet ministers voluntarily resigned half their official salaries, and Cardinal Guibert being asked to do the same, consented to relinquish half his annual income. A few years ago this sum of 50,000 francs was reduced to 45,000 francs, and [this year M. Roche succeeded in the Chamber in still further reducing it to 15,000. The Senate, however, restored the amount deducted, and reduced some other votes regarding bursaries to students, to which reference will be made presently. In this action the Senate was guided by the terms of

THE CONCORDAT,

which is still in force, and regarding which a few words may not out of place. Eighty-three years ago, Buonaparte, for his own ends, agreed with Pius VII. for the payment of some fifty million francs a year to the Catholic Church. In accepting this sum the Church gave up something that belonged to it, so that there were two parties to the agreement. Further, the Church stipulated for certain honours to be rendered to the clergy, as well as pecuniary payments. It was agreed, for example, that bishops on entering their dioceses, should be received by the local garrisons under arms, and that they should be paid at a rate sufficient to enable them to keep up a certain dignity; further, that attacks upon their religion or priestly functions should be severely punished. These enactments, however, were repealed by the Third Republic, and the press law of 1880, which abrogated all edicts against blasphemy, left the clergy exposed to all sorts of attack. It is also to be borne in mind that incomes which in 1801 were considered ample enough can hardly be so regarded in 1884. There are hard-working, honest priests in the communes of France, who are at present receiving not more than £24 per annum. The Communes used to double these miserable salaries, but now some of them refuse to do so, and when the poor priest complains to his bishop, he is told not to make a fuss about it, and being accustomed to obedience, he submits and suffers in silence.

Of course the priests of rich city parishes regard the amount some £90. received from the State, as a mere bagatelle. They have their fees for weddings and masses, for chair rents and funerals, as well as Easter offerings, which amount in all, to between three and four thousand pounds, so that disestablishment would not greatly affect them, and as a matter of fact, many of the Roman clergy advocate disendowment. Bishop Freppel, of Angers, who sits in the Chamber of Deputies, says that a separation between Church and State would greatly promote the religious fervour of the Church. At the same time he himself is not willing to forego any benefits accruing from the State, for he recently appealed to the Council of State against a claim made upon him by the Finance Minister, for some 16,350 francs, which he had received as a deputy—a demand which the Council has confirmed. According to a law of 1872, "public functionaries," becoming deputies or senators, undergo a deduction of stipend equal to twenty-five francs a day which they receive as legislators. The Council decided that Bishop Freppel was a "government official," a "public functionary," and, therefore, on accepting a seat in the Chamber, he had no legal right to the fees of a deputy.

Napoleon not only endowed the Roman Catholic Church, but also

THE REFORMED AND JEWISH CHURCHES

in 1802, these churches receiving about two million francs a year between them. And this connection of

the Protestant Church of France with the State has undoubtedly proved a serious obstacle not only to its development and progress but to its spirituality. If the Church had been left to itself with full freedom of action it would have associated itself with political liberalism, and might have saved many from infidelity and rationalism. By becoming "public functionaries" the pastors soon learned to take matters easily—to avoid conflicts with Roman Catholics—to be cautious—to assume the character and bearing of "officials." They lost the aggressiveness which distinguishes Protestantism. Those who voluntarily came to their churches were taught the truth so far as the official pastors themselves knew it, but no steps were taken to bring in those outside, and to add to the number of the faithful. Matters in this respect are to some extent changing, and should the Concordat be abolished, and full liberty of action be obtained, a still greater change for the better would soon be apparent. The members of the Reformed Church are beginning to realize this, as is seen in many ways. In reading the report for last year of the Central Protestant Society of Evangelization (Reformed Church) I find the president using language to this effect: "The State and the municipalities interest themselves less and less in the financial affairs of our Church. They seem to wish to prepare us for a definitive separation, which, I am convinced, is nearer than many people think. We ought, therefore, to face this contingency without fear, and be ready to meet it. In yearly cutting down the appropriations for our Church, they may think, perhaps, they are greatly embarrassing us, but I affirm that in acting thus they are doing a great honour to the Church. The Reformed Church of France will live by the favour of her Lord and with His help. God will sustain her, if she does not abandon herself. When a General Synod was refused, the Church organized *officious* synods which maintain the bond by which the different churches are united. When the State stopped all religious instruction in the schools, the Church provided for the want by strengthening Sunday-schools and commencing Thursday classes, both of which should be more generally adopted amongst us. If the State appoint no more official pastors to new congregations, the Church must herself appoint *officious* ministers and provide a living for them. The Church must act and prove its vitality by its activity." These are brave words, the meaning of which may be better understood by a few words of explanation.

Primary schools in France are now free, obligatory and laic. All religious teaching in the schools is forbidden if parents desire it, the children have a portion of Thursday each week, free for religious instruction, either in the church or in their homes.

Lycæums and higher schools in which the degree of B.A. is taken, have no religious teaching, except when the young men board in the same building in which they study.

Normal Schools were formerly Protestant and Catholic. The students, who were generally poor, received bursaries from the government, all owing to the result of examinations. These are now all national institutions, in which no religious instruction is communicated. The Protestants have in some cases continued to keep theirs separate, but in such cases they have not only to supply the instruction but the bursaries as well.

Faculties of Theology are also state institutions in France. The students being mostly poor, receive bursaries from the public funds, to maintain them while they are studying. The Chamber of Deputies passed a resolution this session, stopping all payments of this kind. This, however, was not agreed to by the Senate. But it was decided by both Houses, that after three years, all payments to theological students should cease, thus giving time for the Churches to make preparations necessary for supplying the deficit.

Funeral emoluments have been another source of income to the Churches in the past, they having the monopoly of supplying everything needed for the burial of the dead, such as coffins, hearses, black cloth curtains for the doors of the houses and of the churches, etc., all of which had to be paid for by the relatives. A recent law has done away with this monopoly, and compels the Churches to dispose of materials on hand, and this, it is said, entails a loss of 25,000 francs a year, on the Reformed Church, and 30,000 on the Lutheran Church. Lastly, the municipalities have been obliged to provide and keep in re-

pair, manses for all "official" churches. This is no longer compulsory, but depends on the good will of each commune. The Catholic Churches being supplied with presbyteries or manses, centuries ago, the expense will fall heaviest on Protestant Churches where new buildings are to be erected, throughout the departments. From all this, it will be seen how the Protestant Church is at present passing through a rather severe

PECUNIARY CRISIS,

which will test the religious zeal and vitality of its members. It is encouraging, therefore, to know that the official members are waking up and beginning to prepare the people for the change which is evidently not far off. I should here say that the Reformed Church, wholly support some fifty-eight free schools, which are said to be influential means of evangelization in the districts in which they are situated. They find that the teachers in the primary schools scarcely ever maintain the neutrality intended by the law—the Protestant children having to recite the Catholic prayers on entering a class. "If religious neutrality is inscribed in the law," writes Pastor Thouvenot, of Concores (Lot), "it is a dead-letter in many of the communes. To suppress our Protestant schools would be a deadly blow to our Church." But the difficulty is to keep them open and contribute to the commercial schools as well. On the other hand, the laicization of the schools has, in some cases, a benefit to the cause of Protestantism.

CHURCHES VACANT.

Some of the papers seem to regard it as an unfavourable sign that there are sixty churches without pastors in the Reformed Church. On enquiry, I learn that this has been the usual number of vacancies for many years past, and that it is partly due to the removal of pastors from certain congregations, to which aid can be given by neighbouring pastors, to new stations, where their experience is likely to be of greater service to the Church. The scarcity of pastors does not arise from any diminution in the number of theological students, for, as a matter of fact, the attendance this session at both the theological colleges—Paris and Montauban—and at the preparatory theological schools—Batignolle, (Paris), and Tournon, (Ardèche) is larger than usual. These preparatory schools, I should say, are entirely supported by the Reformed Church.

THE CENTRAL SOCIETY

of evangelization, since its organization in 1835 has established 360 stations throughout France, and has erected sixty-one temples. Forty-three of these have been formed into churches, *officially* recognized by the State, that is to say, endowed. One hundred and fifty agents are employed and fifty-eight free schools supported. The Reformed Church numbers at present 101 Presbyteries, 522 parishes and 636 pastors.

"WHAT FRANCE LACKS,"

says M. Reveilland, "is a solid and vigorous public spirit, and this is lacking because she has not a solid and vigorous religious education, because the tempered steel of the Gospel is wanting, and because she has not been in the school of Christ, and has not been emancipated by Him. We dreamt for our French Protestantism the great task and honour of being the inspirer and restorer of this public spirit. Why should we not attract and draw our fellow-countrymen after us to the Good Shepherd? What do we need? To step out firmly before the crowd who would surely follow, for the weak follow strength, instinctively. True, but is Protestantism in France, strong? Before it is in a position to draw others after it, the Church must, itself, be liberated from the trammels of officialism—it must shake off the crushing weight of rationalism. There must be a clear theology taught in its colleges—the teachers of the people must give no uncertain sound as to the way of life. Intestine quarrels must cease, and a holy confederation of all the living forces of the Church be formed—the pastors taking the initiative, directing and concentrating the work of organization. Men with the missionary zeal of a Felix Neff are wanting in the present day—whom neither rain nor snow, nor burning sunshine prevented from making his way amidst the rocks and glaciers of the Alps, and who was ever ready to cut steps in the ice, for the people to reach the chapel in which he was to preach to them. This is the aggressive spirit which would carry pastors throughout the length and breadth of France, bearing aloft the banner of the Cross, alike in the streets and