

THE CHURCHMAN

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Protestantism.

PROTESTANTISM was the subject considered at the Islington Clerical Conference in January. The papers read have been issued in book form and present a statement of the fundamental features of Protestantism which Evangelical churchpeople will find useful. It has become the fashion under the influence of the biased misrepresentation of those who wrongly assume for themselves the title of "Catholic" to decry Protestantism as negative and colourless. The Islington Conference papers show that on the contrary Protestantism is the only really progressive form of Christianity. It presents a great vision of the future of the Christian Faith in its power to win the world. But this can only be achieved when the trammels of ecclesiastical institutionalism foreign to the whole spirit of Christ are rejected. The "Catholic" conception of Christianity leads to narrowness and exclusiveness. It creates unnecessary divisions among Christian people. It sets up unlawful terms of communion, and tends to produce a deadening formalism. Protestants must rise to the height of the vision which is presented to them by the ideals of Christian teaching contained in Protestantism when rightly understood and seen in its true light as the proper interpretation of the New Testament.

The Thirty-Nine Articles.

Canon Brooke Gwynne, in his interesting article on "The Mentality of Newman" in the present number of *THE CHURCHMAN*, refers to the treatment of the Thirty-Nine Articles in Tract Ninety. Since that time the Articles have been the subject of attack from many quarters. New life has been given to the attack by recent statements to the effect that they are one of the chief causes of the hesitancy on the part of numbers of University men to enter the ministry of the Church. But this is just as stoutly denied as it is affirmed. Another ground of attack upon the Articles is the outcome of the negotiations for intercommunion with the Orthodox Eastern Church. The Easterns object to some of the statements in the Articles, and they are practically told to pay little attention to them, as the Articles are not taken seriously by Churchmen.

They merely represent a sixteenth-century phase of religious thought, and will soon be completely ignored. In any case they are told that they are to be interpreted by the Book of Common Prayer. Whatever differences there may be in sixteenth-century phraseology from that of our own day, the Articles are still the recognized standard of doctrine in our Church, and represent in the main our Church of England position to-day as clearly as ever.

Relations with the Orthodox Eastern Church.

The Report of the Joint Doctrinal Commission on points of agreement and difference between the Anglican and the Eastern Orthodox Churches does not alter the situation and cannot help forward intercommunion. The Orthodox representatives laid down as firmly as ever that there can be no intercommunion until there is complete agreement in doctrine. The Metropolitan of Thyateira laid it down that "Sacramental Communion will follow as the last step of the process when complete dogmatic agreement has been established and unity has taken place." As there are grave divergences of doctrine between our Communion and theirs, there can be little hope of intercommunion as long as the Orthodox Church maintains the necessity of holding tradition as of equal authority with Holy Scripture, and teaches that there are seven Sacraments necessary to the spiritual life of the Christian and consequently to his salvation. There are other points of doctrine and practice indicating a wide divergence in spirit which it is impossible to regard as mere matters of detail unaffecting the general position. Evangelical churchpeople have already expressed their views on the demands of the Eastern Church.

Relations with Old Catholics and Nonconformists.

At the sessions of Convocation held in February, intercommunion with the Old Catholics was accepted under certain conditions. The chief of these is that "intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith." This is quite a different matter from the relationship with the Eastern Orthodox Church, but it raises the question of our relationship with the Non-Episcopal Churches. When this subject came up, it was relegated to a Committee for further consideration, and the representatives of the Free Churches are naturally indignant. They hold that there is no ground for different treatment to be meted out to them, and point out quite clearly that they have not come as suppliants to be admitted to Communion with us. The difficulty arises from the conception of the ministry which the Anglo-Catholics are seeking to fasten upon our Church, although it is not found in any of our formularies.