

PROTESTANT AND DISSENTER.

IT is somewhat anomalous that these two words which are so closely allied in meaning as to be practically equivalents should be regarded by those to whom they are specially applicable with such opposite feelings.

The Protestant who is ever parading this title is simply one who dissents from the teaching of the Church of Rome. The Dissenter, who however, never parades this title, is simply one who dissents from the teaching of the Church of England. Why the former should be vain glorious over his conventional and exceedingly imperfect and purely negative designation, and the latter be ashamed of his equally conventional, imperfect and merely negative designation, is indeed curious and unreasonable. Why the same man boasts of being styled a Protestant while he is annoyed at being called a Dissenter, when both words mean practically the same thing, is mysterious. That there is some occult power of offence in the very syllables of the word Dissenter we are inclined to think. Why should the Wesleyans resent being classed among Dissenters? In England no person speaks of a Methodist as a dissenter who knows anything of social usages. Yet surely one of this body is as truly a dissenter as a congregationalist? If not, if a Wesleyan does not dissent from the Church, why does he refuse to worship at her altars or receive the Sacrament at her hands? But it is so, that an English Methodist regards it as an affront to be styled a dissenter. Our theory is that there is a latent and oftentimes a very acute consciousness felt by the higher order of dissenters, the few who are not merely political enemies of the Church, and who use religion as the best weapon of attack, the few who are by family inheritance the possessors of a dissenting creed, that there is in their antagonistic attitude to the Church something also antagonistic to the teaching of Christ. The name *dissenter* irritates because it touches a sore spot in the conscience. These men feel that their dissent is not the outcome of their spiritual life, but is a jarring element therein. They feel as they cannot but feel being christian men, that the attitude of dissent to their church brethren is *painfully contrary to the spirit of brotherhood*. They know as they cannot but know being disciples of the Master, that He did not sanction dissent personally or by His apostles approve of dissent, they feel and they know that upon them rests the terrible responsibility of thwarting the desire of their Saviour, "that they," all His people, "may be one," and are fighting against the Apostolic injunction to be of one mind and to avoid division and division makers. Hence the sensitiveness of the pious "dissenter" when called by this title, it is a reproach solely because it awakens in him an uneasy sense of guilt.

In one of his interesting and able letters to the daily press, Dr. Carry quotes some passages from an article in the "Church Quarterly Review," for October, 1884, which we had

marked for use in these columns. That article demonstrates that "the word dissenter was not invented by Churchmen, it was the invention and choice of non-churchmen." The title Dissenter was invented by the Nonconformists not by the Separatists. Had it not been for the Dissenters England would have been made nonconformist by Act of Parliament. The few Erastians, who had seats in the Westminster Assembly called their Independent co-assessors "Dissenters," meaning no offence by the title. The title Dissenter thus given originally by Nonconformists to the Independents or Separatists, and shared by Presbyterians when they became Separatists, was accepted in turn by both and was held to be honourable."

It is abundantly manifested by the history of the days when the terms Dissenter, Nonconformist, Separatist, Independent, came into use that the word 'dissenter' was not used as a general term to include all those who dissented from and were organized as sects apart from the Church. Now that the troubles, the political and social troubles of those miserable days are over, dissent is an utter anachronism, as a phase of religious life. Hence the dreadful spectacle of a body of Christians, organized as a so-called Church of Christ, being "honeycombed with scepticism," as Mr. Spurgeon declares, being also the vehement champion of Mr. Bradlaugh, an avowed atheist, and being as is notorious in England, to a very large extent, passionately devoted to the politics of the day, seeking not souls for Christ but votes for a party leader! Hence, on the other hand, the shame felt by the remnant who have not bowed their knees to the Baal of modern dissent, at the very title "Dissenter," speaking to their consciences as it does in reproof and reproach, and reminding them of the judgment which in God's Providence has fallen upon a body which went on from dissent to sinful separation, from Nonconformity to schism, from being independent of certain church forms and discipline to being "Independent" of Christ's teaching, which is the sole cause of their separation from and organic independence of Christ's Church. Let Churchman thank God, that there is no titular word in use of which they are ashamed, or one which causes them irritation. But let them learn to avoid using any name which speaks of a mere negation which is common to all sorts of men, Christian, Mormon, Turk or Infidel, which tells not of our faith, our history, our life or our hope, but merely tells our relation to a Church from which we dissent. The less we share with unbelievers the better—a common name is for us a source of danger. When we stand before our Maker, in His temple, in His presence, and before all His people proclaim our belief, we tell out that we believe in "One Catholic and Apostolic Church." If glory in a title we must, let us glory in a grand one like that to which we have exclusively an unchallenged right. Whoso takes the lower status, common as we said to Christian, Mormon, Turk or Infidel, is not worthy the dignity which comes of the right to use the noble title—A Catholic Churchman.

NOTES ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.
No 8.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

IT has, we trust, been made clear that, in order to communion with God, we must know who and what God is. We must see that He with whom we are holding communion, is verily the God who is revealed in Christ. And then the true ideal of communion further involves the desire to hear his voice, to make known our thoughts and desires to Him, and to conform ourselves to His Holy image. All this is so simple, that it might seem hardly worth while to say it; yet so important and so often forgotten, that its reiteration becomes an absolute necessity.

We begin then with the Life and Mind of Christ. We must know this—purely, intimately, deeply, comprehensively, if we would know the God with whom we should hold communion. Let us not be too sure that we do thus know Him. We know much of Him—of His words, His deeds, His sufferings; but we are apt to be ignorant of His very thought and mind just in those points in which it is most necessary that we should be acquainted with Him. It is so easy not to see that which we don't want to see. It is just there we most need that Holy Scripture should afford us doctrine and reproof that we are apt to let our eyes pass lightly over its pages.

It is well, therefore, that we should examine ourselves as to our willingness to receive the truth, to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Do we want to know that God is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right? Do we want—are we willing to know what this means—to see it illustrated in the deep unselfishness, the absolute self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ?

In holding communion with God, we must listen to His words. He must speak before we can do so. And he has spoken, and it is for us to hear. He has spoken by His Son. He has spoken by those whom that Son appointed to be His representatives here on earth. In the Gospels and in the Apostolic Epistles we have God speaking by His incarnate Son and by holy men who are taught by the Holy Ghost.

Now, is this what we read in Bibles for. To hear God speaking to us, or merely to fulfil a duty which we think it will be inconvenient or injurious to neglect? Do we go to the Bible, and especially to the New Testament, saying, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth?" This would be a real communion with God.

Then we must speak to God. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." We have this right, for He has sent forth the Spirit of adoption into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. It is that we may ask and receive, that we may seek and find, that these encouragements are offered to us. And we cannot hold abiding communion with the Most High, unless we go to Him and hold converse with Him, and offer up our spiritual sacrifices before Him.

What is the meaning of this approach unto