

FOOTPATH AND HIGHWAY

BY THE PEDESTRIAN

PROTESTANTISM — DEAD OR ASLEEP?

CANON HANNAY, in the April FORUM, presents a vivid picture of the breakdown of English Protestantism, at least in the Anglican Church. He assumes the rôle of reporter, moreover; not of propagandist. He observes recent Church history and writes down the facts and the explanation of the facts as he sees them. He's "not argufyin"; he's "just a-tell-in'" us.

That's all to the good. Mr. Chesterton, "argufyin'," had almost persuaded us to thank God we were Protestants. Now Canon Hannay, if his picture is a true one, if this be Protestantism, or even one important phase of it, fairly persuades us to thank God for its demise. The only trouble is, the corpse isn't Protestantism. It is a large part of external Protestantism, to be sure; and many Protestants themselves mistake it for the real thing, — just as a good many Americans mistake a complexity of laws plus a total disregard of laws for Democracy.

Not that I question Canon Hannay's statement of fact, nor yet his inferences from the facts he selects. My contention is merely that he omits the really important facts. He appears to assume that the choice must be between old priest and new evangelist, just as a good many people of Milton's day supposed it must be between "old priest" and "New Presbyterian"; but it is difficult to see just where Dean Inge, or any genuine Protestants, fit into that picture.

The breakdown pictured by Canon Hannay has come, he says, in three steps: first, a theological debacle; then, a ritualistic; finally, a devotional. Well, you don't have to go to England to find plenty of evidence for his statement. Witness the frantic propaganda among the churches; there is evidently so little virtue in make-believe Protestantism that its adherents must "sell" it with advertising campaigns. Or observe the wholly un-Protestant attempts of various sects to establish temporal power, either as sects or through political organizations devilishly or-

ganized in the name of God. The violent intolerance prevalent is another confession of failure; desperate sects, losing ground, are making laws and fighting to preserve their prejudices precisely as Rome did before them in the fifteenth century. Then there are the worldlings, often Protestants in their own esteem. Indeed, little reveals the breakdown of fustian Protestantism more than the following advertisement of a well known railroad:

This is the Lenten Season at Atlantic City and Asbury Park. . . .
The recreations and entertainments are delightfully diverting. . . .
Fashion in her latest modes holds court with her most brilliant and loyal devotees.

So this is Lent! These railroad people are not advertising for fun; they know whom they are addressing, — new-rich Jews, pagans, and that great body we loosely and erroneously term Protestants.

The failure of so called Protestantism is obvious enough. Analyzed, it no doubt amounts, among the more serious, to theological, ritualistic, and devotional breakdown, all in the proper order, just as Canon Hannay points out. That would account for a large defection. But this defection, large as it may be in numbers, doesn't touch the heart and the only true hope of Protestantism. If it clears the ground by taking the defectives to Rome or Atlantic City, — so much the better for Protestantism.

Protestantism, if it has meant anything worth living and dying for during four centuries, has meant a state of mind which refuses temporal authority in spiritual matters. It is true that historical Protestantism has concerned itself greatly with ritual, doctrine, and secular power, with what L. P. Jacks calls "carnal logic", and with what Jesus called "the things of Caesar". Protestant sects have denied their life-principle over and over again by doing the very things they essentially protest against. They have done their best to destroy one another with one hand while they were strangling themselves with the other. But surely their perversions have not kept them going. Rather, Protestants have kept going in spite of their carnal logic (and latterly in spite of what among the Anglicans may be called a sort of vegetarian logic); they have endured because the best of them were not really interested in doctrine or ritual or temporal power, but in what John Milton called "liberty of conscience". They have appeared to protest against transubstantiation, but at bottom

they have been protesting against autocracy. To them *any* "forcers of conscience" (Papist, Anglican, Calvinist, Wesleyan) are fundamentally tyrannical.

Luther, for instance, was a genuine Protestant when he stood up on the Scala Sancta and protested in favor of a free conscience. He was merely an ingenious heretic when he quibbled about the sacrament. Wyclif, similarly, played both rôles. At a time when doctrine seemed to matter tremendously it was difficult to keep clear of theological controversy. It was just as difficult, a short time after, for the followers of Knox to avoid organizing for temporal power. Among the founders of Protestant sects, George Fox was perhaps the first Englishman to refuse both fashions, — that of organizing a water-tight doctrine and that of organizing for temporal power. Even the Wesleyans, with the examples of Romanist and Puritan before them, have gone more or less the same road, till now, in the twentieth century, they are doing crudely what the Catholics have for centuries done well. "The Methodist Church," Bishop Hughes said the other day in Philadelphia, "God saw fit to create in appropriate time in order that it might be ready when this Country was born. . . . We have the spiritual responsibility for the United States of America." Surely no one discerns any vestiges of real Protestantism in *that*!

Genuine spiritual heirs of Luther the Protestant, as distinguished from Luther the Theologian, have frequently been identified with no church. Milton, not Hooker, for example; Coleridge, not Wilberforce; Emerson and Carlyle, not Pusey. These men have not been contentious over creeds and rituals; they have not turned to secular authority for religion; they have not put faith in a stampeded and short-lived ecstasy miscalled devotion. They have not been religious in any of the ways Canon Hannay appears to think necessary, yet they have been the great Protestants, its driving force, the faithful guardians of the lamp of religious liberty. For they have kept always before them the essential principle, — freedom of conscience. To them, as Carlyle puts it, make-believe sect-religion is futile and "may go and dwell among the Brahmins, Antinomians, Spinning Dervishes, or where it will; with me it shall have no harbor." Or as Emerson: "We are now men, — not minors and invalids in a protected corner, — advancing on Chaos and the Dark."

The same alignment, moreover, still continues. On the side of Luther the Protestant, men like L. P. Jacks, Dean Inge, Rufus Jones, Dr. Fosdick; on the side of Luther the theologian, — well, in Milton's phrase, those "timorous and flocking birds" who "in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms".

It is easy, to see, of course, that this sort of Protestantism, perhaps the only Protestantism worth having, may not number many conventional Christians. Self-reliance easily turns to arrogance, and arrogance makes new tyrannies. Its principle, moreover, is by nature centrifugal; it is in its healthiest state when it is breeding heretics. It is quite as likely to produce a Voltaire as an Archbishop Laud. Further, it must always lack the popular appeal of wordly organizations, for its only possible bond is one of spiritual sympathy. In considering the demise of Protestantism, however, this central heart of it cannot be blithely ignored. It is, in fact, the only thing about Protestantism that is really Protestant. To leave it out is to omit the leaven, to rest content with a sour and sodden loaf.

The defection of a large number of Anglicans to Romanism, in other words, is not significant because it satisfies some doctrinal, ritualistic, or emotional-devotional urge. A Pedestrian mind finds it difficult to see why two sacraments are better than seven or why the ritualist should not have "Reservation" and "Benediction" to any extent he wishes. As George Fox said to William Penn, "Wear thy sword as long as thou *canst*." The really significant question is whether liberalism in religion is dying. Are these Anglicans merely adopting Roman forms of worship or are they accepting the Papacy? That's one phase of the important question. The other is: How many, in proportion to those turning Romewards, are turning in the opposite direction? — not always, by any means, into this or that sect, but perhaps into the growing body of earnest people who, like the Chinaman, want to see Christianity tried.

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Death Comes for the Archbishop

A Novel in Six Instalments — VI

WILLA CATHER

FATHER Jean Marie Latour, a young French priest, had been consecrated Vicar Apostolic of New Mexico and Bishop of Agathonica, and with Father Joseph Vaillant, a boyhood friend, had been sent as a missionary into the Southwest, not long after the Mexican War. After his year's journey to Santa Fé, the young Bishop had first to overcome the refusal of the local clergy to recognize his authority. The first four instalments have recounted the strange adventures which came to the two priests in that sparsely settled land. There the Bishop became the friend of Kit Carson, escaped a murderer, traveled countless desert miles, visited abandoned missions, dwelt impartially in the haciendas of the rich and in the adobe houses of the Pueblos or the hogans of the Navajos. The instalment immediately preceding has narrated how Bishop Latour was at length forced to give up the companionship of his boyhood friend, Father Vaillant, who went northward as a missionary to the newly discovered gold-fields, and of the Bishop's presentiment, as his companion left him, that their labors would no longer lie in the same field. — *Editorial Note.*

Death Comes for the Archbishop

WHEN that devout nun, Mother Superior Philomène, died at a great age in her native Riom, among her papers were found several letters from Archbishop Latour, one dated December, 1888, only a few months before his death. "Since your brother was called to his reward," he wrote, "I feel nearer to him than before. For many years Duty separated us, but death has brought us together. The time is not far distant when I shall join him. Meanwhile, I am enjoying to the full that period of reflection which is the happiest conclusion to a life of action."

This period of reflection the Archbishop spent on his little country estate, some four miles north of Santa Fé. Long before his retirement from the cares of the diocese, Father Latour bought those few acres in the red sand hills near the Tesuque pueblo and set out an orchard which would be bearing when the time came for him to rest. He chose this place in the red hills spotted with juniper against the advice of his friends, because he believed it admirably suited for growing fruit.