

tations placed by the Church upon the divine revelations, have learned for themselves just what constitutes the great heresy, and are withdrawing in great numbers from a faith which compels them to a blind belief in the ridiculous cosmogony, however poetical, of an ancient savage tribe, and to an unquestioning adherence to dogmas which insult their intelligence.

The Fundamentalists and the Modernists have thus done greater harm to Protestantism than all the writings and speeches of all the atheists, agnostics, and free-thinkers who ever lived. All men can see and understand the spectacle of a divided church snarling and scrambling for political mastery and the power to employ the secular arm to enforce its doctrinal promulgations, whereas the devout church member will not listen to an atheist or read his arguments, for he has been taught for centuries that anyone who opposes organized religion is a lewd wretch living only in the hope that circumstances will afford him opportunities for loot, rape, and murder. This is a common religious argument and is generally effective, but it would be much stronger were it not for the fact that the worst lootings and murders in the history of the world have been committed by devout Christians in the name of the Prince of Peace. And the outlook is very good for more.



II — PROTESTANTISM STANDS FIRM

S. PARKES CADMAN, *President of the Federal Council of Churches*

MR. ASBURY tells us he was once a Methodist but that he abandoned his ancestral faith fifteen years ago. After reading his article on "The Decline of Protestantism," one can readily believe that its author never had an intimate knowledge of the church John Wesley founded, still less of its sister communions of Reformation origin. His attainments as a journalist suffice to raise his censures from the insignificance of sheer stupidity to the level of boredom. Taken at their proper valuation, they reveal an acquaintance with a few well-known phrases and familiar formulas, the frequent reiteration of which

characterizes a certain species of smart writing prevalent since the World War. Those who are susceptible to rhetoric and immune to the restraints of reason and accuracy may fall under the spell of his rhapsodic indictment. But it is safe to say that none who are even measurably aware of the historic relations of Protestantism to the making of great states, their lawful freedom, and their civilization can be misled by the crudities, exaggerations, and excrescences of this essay. Its title is as misleading as its treatment. Protestantism as a whole is neither defined nor discussed, nor are its diversified branches dispassionately estimated. The gravamen of my complaint is not that Mr. Asbury's strictures are unduly severe, but that they are essentially superficial, lacking in insight, and indicative of a woeful ignorance on his part of the genius of the religious revolt of the sixteenth century, and of its outworkings, whether in Europe, America, or the world at large. These outworkings range from its lower emotional types, to which this author formerly belonged, to the severely intellectual caste of its advanced liberal groups. Yet these are not differentiated as they should be, nor are their reciprocal influences set forth. It is the voice of repressed vindictiveness rather than of scientific criticism which assails the reader's ears. What could have been in more helpful hands an illuminating examination of a complex and difficult situation here degenerates to a diatribe.

Its general tone suggests that Mr. Asbury is unaware of the frequent recurrence of predictions of religious collapse in past eras. According to writers of his kidney, and not a few of acknowledged reputation, the Christian religion has hovered on the verge of irretrievable ruin for at least a thousand years. During the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries prophecies of its speedy extinction dismayed the saints and delighted the sinners. Then the beatific figure of St. Francis appeared, and the golden age of which he was the bright particular star confounded the foes of the Faith. But they could not be permanently silenced. In the seventeenth century, when all England became a Church and the one book adored and studied was the Bible, John Howe, the foremost Puritan doctor of the time, declared that religion was on its death-bed. Nevertheless, in its weakness and decay it had life enough left to turn to the New World that it might redress the balance of the Old. In the early eighteenth century, Joseph Butler, the famous Bishop of Durham, lamented the infidelity of his dissolute period and said that few if any educated men referred to super-

natural things except in terms of patronizing contempt. I may say that the bishop lived to witness an almost unparalleled revival of this despised religion, in which "the ragged regiment" of Deists was utterly routed and the English-speaking nations recovered their God-consciousness. During the late eighteenth century the Revolutionists of Paris insisted that in less than fifty years not a priest would be found in France. According to latest reports, scores of thousands of priests are still serving that Republic. So runs the tale of fancied woes awaiting believing men and women and their institutional religions; tales often told by renegades who insist on interring Christianity wholesale, despite its tenacious hold on life.

Meanwhile it survives, assumes fresh enterprises, and displays astonishing vigor. Neither the attacks of open foes nor the more perilous defenses of mistaken friends have yet canceled the strength of Protestantism, nor, it may be added, of Catholicism. The former organization has recently summoned two world conferences, one at Stockholm, another at Lausanne. These assemblies approximately represented thirty churches, eighty States, and four hundred million Christians. The first mapped out programmes of Christian life and work for an indefinite time to come. The second laid bare the agreements and the differences — which Mr. Asbury decrees impervious to reconciliation — in a spirit of candor, amity, and sympathetic comprehension unexcelled in the annals of their common religion. Both conferences were mainly originated in America by the very Protestantism which, as he thinks, should behave decently by dying and not being too tardy about it.

Let us turn, however, to certain specific accusations with which this lurid arraignment abounds. For a leading example, Protestantism is said to be "so vociferous and greedy for power." If this vocal emphasis is laid on the Evangel of the New Testament, its legitimacy is assured and its use honorable. We crave a trumpet voice to call on all mankind and bid its heart exult in the inwardness and power of Christ's regenerating message. If the phrase, "greed for power," were but an elementary way of expressing our craving for spiritual predominance, the past vindicates this holy ambition. But unless I misunderstand him, Mr. Asbury means that group consciousness of Protestantism is fixed on a social control which would make it the dictator of the nation's policies. The exact opposite is the true version. As President

of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, I am reminded daily of the incurable individualism of my fellow Protestants concerning questions relating to politics alone. They have little or no collective interest in these, and they would quickly resent any attempt to commandeer them for such an interest. I continually hear lamentation that the constituent Churches of the Federal Council fail "in looking after their own people," and that their Hebrew and Catholic brethren set a pace in this respect which Protestants should follow. As it is, they divide on major and minor partisan lines and vote as Republicans or Democrats in nearly equal numbers. Even with reference to the vexed question of Prohibition, on which, in contrast with other issues, Protestants recently achieved a high degree of practical coöperation, they manifest considerable difference of opinion. Ardent supporters of the Eighteenth Amendment inveigh daily against the lethargy and inefficiency of the opposition of Protestantism to the illicit liquor traffic. This attitude is not due, in my judgment, to any marked change in the convictions of the great majority of Protestant churchmen, but to a reassertion of their traditional reluctance to participate directly in political conflicts. The church agencies that aggressively participate in such conflicts are the exceptions, not the rule, and any behavior of this sort is deprecated by the general body of Protestants.

Not that they believe conflicts of this nature to be intrinsically reprehensible. Quite contrary to Mr. Asbury's reactionary intimations, and turning his allegation end for end, I affirm the sacred duty of the Christian Church, Catholic or Protestant, to intervene in any political controversies which deeply involve public morality and welfare. The constant charge that churchmen meddle mischievously in politics emanates from well-known groups which for various reasons fear religious intervention in the realms of social justice, national integrity, lawfulness, and international goodwill. By allying himself with these groups, Mr. Asbury allows his professed liberalism to suffer an eclipse which I trust is but temporary. By implicitly denying the right of visioned Protestants to challenge the foul fiction that what is ethically evil is sometimes politically expedient, he calls the Protestant churches to the "other-worldliness" he elsewhere derides. Prolific invective does not conceal his wobbly logic nor his inconsistency. He cannot have his cake and eat it, and the decision as to which horn of the dilemma he will seize must be left to him.

Again, Mr. Asbury dwells at some length upon the lack of education and culture among the clergy. Here he detects a real infirmity, which is by none more sincerely deplored than by Protestants of intelligence and foresight. To be sure, he does not mention the pulpit giants and clerical guides of light and leading abroad in the land, except for a sparse reference to a Unitarian editor and his kindred spirits. Nor does he even hint at the monumental works of Christian philosophy and learning which dignify and enlighten our supposed intellectual destitution. But taken by and large, it must be conceded that the preacher is not the outstanding figure he was fifty years ago. Moreover, the churches which repudiate a perfectly articulated system of doctrinal belief and practice are indefeasibly obligated to maintain high standards of pulpit scholarship and compelling expression. This they have not done. Notwithstanding that rural pastorates are the sources of desirable pastoral supply, they have been beaten down and starved out by sectarian competition and the little souls it breeds. Likely candidates for the ministry will not heed its summons to a noble service until certain palpable hindrances are removed and parochial overlapping and mismanagement are readjusted. While the grass grows the steed starves, warning us that there is no more urgent religious need than the development of a competent spiritual leadership. Wealthy laymen who lavish their means on cathedral-like structures in which to worship at their ease and yet begrudge the modest endowments requisite for ministerial education resemble a nation which builds a navy and trains no officers to command it. If the clergy are to rank with other men of enlightenment in their parishes and coöperate with other agencies for general culture, they will have to be placed from first to last on a new basis of preparation, maintenance, and churchly consideration.

But something more remains to be said. I am less impressed with current animadversions against ministerial incompetence than I should be if in my travels to and fro I did not encounter moronic minds in nearly every walk of life. Placemen whose passports to emoluments and honors are insolence and demagogism; competitive business men whose failures at important points are patent; the bunglings of notable industrialists in dealing with labor problems; the meretricious smartness of not a few pressmen; the painful ignorance of countless habitués of Main Street, to say nothing of the stench of present legal procedure in criminal cases,

or the dearth of real statesmanship in the nation — these do not excuse the shortcomings of my calling, but they render me less apologetic for them. After all, the stupidities of the pulpit spring from those of the pew. "Like priest like people" can be read both ways. As for Mr. Asbury's complaint about "the clownishness" of the Protestant clergy — who, knowing the temper of our towns and cities, can doubt that if this were a faithful picture of them church attendance would at once increase? Here and there a clerical mountebank exhibits qualities which befit the low comedy stage rather than the pulpit, and he is usually able to secure congenial crowds which applaud his gasconades. But not even the author of this article would maintain that Protestant churches in general are flooded by the curious or the frivolous. They minister in the main to groups of earnest people who offer to God the homage which the world so often forgets to offer for itself, and endeavor to make amends for the want of home discipline by instructing children committed to their care in the ethics of Christ.

The contrast is apparent between these reverent and thoughtful worshipers and the hectic throngs who gather to hail the latest outpourings of sensational notoriety seekers and vulgarians, whose motto would seem to be "keep the hell fires burning." It may console Mr. Asbury to know that commercialized evangelism is rapidly diminishing and that the mediæval ideas of future penalties and rewards on which it flourished have been supplanted in nearly all Protestant churches by an interpretation of the Christian Gospel which more closely harmonizes with the spirit and teaching of its Giver.

Some may inquire how this assertion squares with Mr. Asbury's description of the quarrel between Fundamentalists and Modernists. The answer is that this, his *bête noire*, is hopelessly out of date. There has seldom been a clearer instance of fishing behind the net. The scientific point of view is accepted to-day by a substantial majority in nearly every great Protestant communion. I hold no brief for "isms" within or without Christianity. But when the question turns on the acceptance or rejection of the verified results of modern learning, Protestantism leads the van. The enacting of anti-evolution legislation in belated States chiefly indicates their anæmic educational condition. Churches local to these States can hardly be expected to reach a higher degree of intelligence than the public schools have created. Until the educators are equal to the emergency, why heckle the clergy, save for

the propensity to heckle them about pretty much everything — with the proviso carefully respected that only the Protestant clergy shall be heckled! The reactionary eruptions at Dayton, Tennessee, were meticulously reported in two continents. But the magnificent work of Vanderbilt University in the same commonwealth was not mentioned, so far as I can learn, during the Scopes trial. Why not? Because abnormalities of any kind have a news value which the steady attempt of Protestant education to upraise universal social conditions does not have.

Inevitably our censor's attention has been drawn to the statistical phase of the subject, but speaking personally, this leaves me cold. Quality rather than quantity is the thing in religion: the rest is often leather and prunella. Nevertheless, if we must number Israel, it is germane to say on the authority of Doctor H. K. Carroll that America's Evangelical Protestantism has grown 191 per cent in forty-six years, or from ten millions in 1880 to nearly thirty millions in 1927. The "alarming falling off" in Protestant membership on which Mr. Asbury dilates was publicly explained a few weeks ago by the Reverend Doctor Charles S. Macfarland as not a net loss at all. The figures then reported did not pretend to include the more than compensating gains after accounting for uncertificated removals, deaths, and other causes by which churches lose many members each year. This loss, however, is more than offset by gains in membership. The very recording of the losses as well as gains is due to a healthful concern on the part of the churches to free their membership rolls from "dead wood" — a concern which Mr. Asbury would have us think non-existent.

But there is a real membership problem and I would be among the last to conceal it. The relative changes in Protestant church membership from 1800 to 1925 were set forth by Dr. Charles Stelzle in the *World's Work* for September, 1927. The ratios of church membership to population he has computed tells the story.

Protestant Church Membership

1800-1925

1800— 7 in each 100 of population	1900— 24 in each 100 of population
1850— 15 " " " " "	1910— 24 " " " " "
1870— 17 " " " " "	1915— 24 " " " " "
1880— 20 " " " " "	1920— 25 " " " " "
1890— 22 " " " " "	1925— 26 " " " " "

The net gains in the last quarter century appear to have come entirely in the last decade, but they have been substantial gains. There is, however, a challenge in these figures, and an attack built upon them, however crudely and unfairly, is worth reading if it provokes serious thought.

Not that the future of the Church depends on its membership rolls. It may well be argued that the Church was more virile when she was seemingly insignificant and without material resources. If the small net gain in the past twenty-five years means that she is summoning men and women to an heroic allegiance which is too hard because it is too high for nominal Christians who cannot be distinguished from actual worldlings, what is this statistic but an evidence of her fidelity to divine realities? I am convinced that many souls hold aloof from the Church on account of her drafts on their moral courage and loyalty to spiritual ideals, and also that this group exceeds in size those who shun her because they deem her claims to power exorbitant. But Mr. Asbury makes these facts and figures dance to his own piping.

Finally, I yield to none in my regret over "bickerings of sects." They are a part of the price we have to pay for the freedom which we esteem essential to the good of everything. If Mr. Asbury's rather morbid speculations spur on the movement toward a federalized unity, many will forgive him for them. Yet he should know that sectarianism is on the wane, and having served as well as disserved its day and generation, it is now giving way to the reintegration of institutional religion. Symptoms which he deems the heralds of approaching death are in reality the birth pangs of a rejuvenated Protestantism careless of its very name, and willing to lose its life for mankind in order that it may save it unto the Life Eternal. Nearly every great conflict that has trampled down the human race has been followed by an era of materialism in which the things of the spirit were either defied or caricatured. Our period obeys this process, and Mr. Asbury's unfair and jaundiced presentation of Protestantism is one of its products. He transgresses one of the first canons of criticism by quoting remarks attributed to me by the press which are torn from their context, incorrectly reported, and contrary to the general tenor and purpose of my addresses. His criticism of these it is therefore needless to discuss. But if what he and I have written here calls us back to the principles of true religion and the eternal truths they contain, the results may prove beneficial to all concerned.



LONESOME WATER

Drank lonesome water:
Warrit but a tad then
Up in a laurel thick
Digging for sang;
Came on a place where
The stones were hollow.
Something below them
Tinkled and rang.

Dug whar I heard it
Dripping below me;
Should a knowd better,
Should a been wise;
Leant down and drank it,
Clutching and gripping
The over hung cliv
With the ferns in my eyes.

Twarnt no tame water
I knowd in a minute;
Must a been laying there
Projecting round
Since winter went home;
Must a laid like a cushion
Whar the feet of the blossoms
Was tucked in the ground.

Tasted of heart leaf
And that smells the sweetest,
Paw paw and spice bush
And wild briar rose;