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EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

XII.

THE second of the general propositions, not expressly stated, but expressly implied in the anti-Socialist address delivered by Father Thomas I. Gasson in Boston last February is the proposition that the Roman Catholic polity is entitled to unquestioning submission, being tried by experience.

There are propositions so glaringly untenable that their only chance of acceptance is to be advanced with what in gambling parlance is the “bluff.” The present proposition of Father Gasson’s is of that nature.

The Roman Catholic polity rejects the materialist conception of history. While the materialist conception of history plants society’s social institutions, its practical, concrete conceptions of Right and Wrong, its judicature, its movements, etc., etc., upon material conditions, the Roman Catholic polity, in common with most other polities, makes the moral, or, call it the religious, sense the foundation of social institutions, and of all that thereby hangs. The practical bearing of the two propositions is of prime magnitude.

Proceeding from its premises that material conditions are the foundation and the shapers of mass-conceptions of Right and Wrong, hence, of social institutions, Socialism deliberately withholds its efforts from preachments of abstract Right and Wrong, upon the principle that such preachments, being left without the material foundation without which they are impracticable, can only lead to failure, hence, to disappointment, and hypocrisy. The modus operandi of Socialism is, accordingly, to direct its efforts towards and center them upon bringing about the material conditions from which the mass-conceptions of Right and Wrong are not warped by material necessities. The Roman Catholic polity, on the contrary, proceeding from its premises that Right and Wrong are foundation principles, centers its efforts upon that, holding that Morality is above, and independent of, Matter.

Which of the two theories is correct?

It so happens that, if in this year of grace there is any question as to which of

the two theories is CORRECT, the facts are too numerous and crushing to leave any doubt upon which is INCORRECT. These facts are furnished by the Roman Catholic organization itself.

Beginning with Father Gasson, what is that he says in his address under consideration? Let's see. Almost the very opening sentence of the Father's address is the following: "There are colossal fortunes and there are depths of poverty. There are those who know not what to do with their wealth, and those who have to cry out for a mere pittance only to keep body and soul together." The picture drawn by Father Gasson is true to life. Surely it is not overdrawn. And what is the tale the picture tells? What the sermon the picture preaches? It tells the tale that an immoral state of things prevails to-day in society—notwithstanding fully a one thousand and seven-hundred years' application of Father Gasson's theory, during fully eleven hundred of which the Father Gasson theory was in complete, undisputed, supreme command. It preaches the sermon that there must be some serious flaw in the principle that Morality is above and independent of Matter.

But, perhaps, Father Gasson is of too low a rank in his hierarchy for his testimony to be controlling. Let us ascend the steps. What was it that Archbishop John Ireland said in the course of his address before the Creve Coeur Club of Peoria, Ill., on last Washington's birthday, that is, only a little over a fortnight after Father Gasson's Boston effort? He said: "Has the day come of such eminent prepotency of the principle of arbitration that a great nation such as the United States of America may safely turn all its swords into plowshares and all its spears into sickles? No one will make the affirmation." A companion picture to the picture drawn by Father Gasson is here presented by an Archbishop. The testimony of the Father is confirmed by one "higher up," one, moreover, who is a standing candidate for the Cardinalate. Nor does the tale told from the canvas of Archbishop Ireland, and the sermon that canvas preaches merely re-tell the tale and re-preach the sermon told and preached by Father Gasson's. So far, the tale and sermon give testimony to a principle the opposite of Morality's being above and independent of Matter in the present and the past. The Archbishop went further than on the occasion of his last Washington's birthday address. After attesting to the immoral state of things now prevailing the world over, the Archbishop proceeded: "No, the day of assured and lasting international peace has not arrived—*if ever ambitions and pride of nation permit it to arrive.*" Not in the present and the past only, after the more than a thousand years trial, has Morality disproved its independence from

and priority to Matter, the Archbishop correctly doubts its disapproval in the future.

And, should even an Archbishop's testimony be deemed insufficient, let us climb to the top of the ladder and place the Pope himself in the witness stand at the bar of the philosophy of history. Bemoaning the loss of its temporality, and stating the reason for its striving to recover the same, the papacy itself announces that "without its temporal power, it can not attend to its spiritual functions," and the argument is echoed and re-echoed everywhere, here and abroad, by the upholders of the Roman Catholic polity. Temporal powers are material, spiritual functions are moral.

From top to bottom, and from bottom to top, the spokesmen of the Roman Catholic polity testify with facts and reasoning to the incorrectness of their own, the theory that Morality is above, or even independent of Matter.

The materialist conception of history may or may not be true. However that might turn out to be, and it will subsequently be taken up, the more than millenary test of the opposite, the Roman Catholic polity's conception stamps it false—wholly unentitled to submission, unquestioning submission least of all—entitled only to rejection.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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