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EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

II.

THE second of the general statements, made by Father Thomas I. Gasson in his anti-Socialist address, delivered in Boston on February 6, that requires preliminary handling, is the statement that “Socialism is rather a shifting name.” The context of the passage in which the statement occurs implies that a critic of Socialism has so shadowy a subject to operate on, and that he must be excused if the “Socialism” he objects to is not the “Socialism” that others hold dear.

This reasoning is vicious. It consists in applying a principle, applicable enough to a certain order of facts, to an order of facts to which the principle is inapplicable. For instance:

The serious man, who would treat of the Roman Catholic Church, is expected to approach his subject equipped with a fund of information sufficient to distinguish between incidentals and essentials, and with a mental training that will enable him so to distinguish. Such a man will not pronounce “Roman Catholicism” a “shifting name” however numerous the instances of the name’s being applied to different and even opposite thoughts and acts. Such a man will not be confused by the fact that there were once two rival popes, with their respective warring Roman Catholic supporters; such a man will see nothing “shifting” in the fact that history records bloody wars between Catholic countries, with Roman Catholic prelates in the opposing armies, each set blessing the arms of its own and imploring the destruction of the opposite army “for the greater glory of the Roman Catholic Church”; such a man will not be puzzled at the sight, seen only twenty-five years ago in this country, of one set of Roman Catholics denouncing and another set extolling Father Edward McGlynn; such a man will not be blinded at the recent spectacle of Roman Catholics chasing nuns and friars out of Portugal, while at the same time Roman Catholic organizations in America were denouncing the deed; the sight of one set of Roman Catholics in America anathematizing, as Roman Catholics, the American non-sectarian system of Public schools, while another set,

likewise as Roman Catholics, enthusiastically praising the system, will not dethrone such a man's judgment. A mentally well equipped and serious man will not allow such superficial phenomena to cause him to be set at sea with regard to the Roman Catholic Church. His knowledge of facts and his analytic mind will cause him to distinguish between authoritative and unauthoritative statements. He will recognize the Roman Catholic Church as a clear cut distinct political organism, in all essentials unaffected by what is designated in natural science with the technical term of "freak manifestations."

Identically with Socialism—

A serious, well trained and well posted man, who undertakes to treat of Socialism, knows he has no shadowy subject, but a very concrete and well defined one in hand. Being well posted, such a man will not be affected by the freedom exercised in numerous quarters with the name of Socialism. He will know to distinguish between authoritative and "freak" utterances and acts. He will know more. He will know that authoritative Socialist literature—authoritative because flowing from the organized International Movement to which alone "Socialism" owes its standing—is ample and vast, yet, despite the various shades of opinion that such vastness breeds, has but one central and dominant feature.

The order of facts, to which Father Gasson's reasoning of calling Socialism "a shifting name" applies, is not the order of facts to which Socialism belongs. The order of facts to which Socialism belongs is the scientific order of facts—hence everything but an order of facts from which shifting names flow—as the uphill efforts of Father Gasson's organization to combat Socialism sufficiently prove. No serious man fights spooks.

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

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