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EDITORIAL

JUGGLING WITH WORDS.

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THE Rev. Percy Grant of the Christian Socialist fraternity is reported to have preached “a Socialistic sermon,” at the Church of the Ascension, in the course of which he announced the theory that “both Socialism and Christianity are religious movements.”

A sentence like that is nothing but a juggling with words.

Socialism may, or may not be classified among religions. It depends upon what a man means. And he should not leave his meaning doubtful.

The astronomer, whose mathematically true premises have led to mathematically correct conclusions, which the telescope subsequently proves true, feels an exaltation such as Truth only can impart, and such as ever is manifested by cleanliness of conduct, redounding to human welfare. In this sense astronomy is a religion.

A Columbus, who from scientifically precise premises concludes that westward travel from Europe is bound to lead to land, feels a noble exaltation when his conclusion is verified, and his exaltation uplifts, ennobles, purifies him. In this sense navigation is a religion.

In another sense, neither astronomy, nor navigation, nor any other science—all of which establish, and are devoted worshipers of Truth, and exalt—is a religion.

By a religion is also understood an assumed theory of creation through which the particular devotee gratifies his aspiration, or curiosity, as to the origin of his own being, and thereby of all life, and thereby of his own future. It matters little to the subject in hand what the consequences have been to the human race of the conflicting assumptions of the different sets of devotees. It is sufficient to establish that “religion,” in this sense, is a posture of worship towards a differently conceived Unknown. In this sense astronomy is no “religion”; navigation is no “religion”; no

science is a “religion.” And what is more, the application of “religion,” in that sense, would interfere, overthrow and even render them all impossible. They are all founded upon and draw their breath from investigation, criticism, and ascertained fact.

Ditto, ditto, with Socialism.

Socialism can be called a “religion” only in the first of the two meanings just considered. Its carefully ascertained facts lead to conclusions so mathematically exact that daily manifestations daily prove them true. The private ownership of the things man needs to earn the wherewithal for life injures body, pollutes the mind, putrifies the morals; it dwarfs man physically and intellectually; it breeds the tyrant and the slave. So true are the premises and so unshakable the conclusions that they lead to—the Socialist Republic—that Socialism exalts as only Truth can exalt. It renders him better who becomes its apostle, and all better whom it reaches. In the second of the two meanings, Socialism is as far from a religion as astronomy, navigation, or any other science.

In which of the two senses does the Rev. Percy Grant use the word “religion”?

The story is told of a showman who announced an elephant and a giraffe for exhibition in his tent. A little girl paid her admission fee, went in, and, seeing only two old deformed cows, asked: “Mister, which is the elephant and which is the giraffe?” “It makes no difference, my little dearie,” the showman answered, “you pays your money, you takes your choice.”

The hard condition of the times demands better things from those who set themselves up as teachers than to leave people in doubt as to “which is which.” The times demand clear, distinct, unmistakable language. None other can overthrow the nearest approach yet known to the Beast of the Apocalypse—Capitalism—because none other can organize to a purpose.

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