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EDITORIAL

FATHER GASSONIANA.

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IV.

WALT Whitman is said to have answered a quizzer on a certain occasion: “Do I contradict myself? Well, then, I contradict myself.” The retort is legitimate on the lips of a poet, especially a “pathfinder poet.” Logic is not the specialty of such minds; preciseness of expression is not their characteristic. The very charm of their performances lies in their butterfly-like erratic course. Otherwise with the statesman, he who undertakes to handle social questions, and formulate canons by which society is to be ruled. The latter is the posture assumed by Father Thomas I. Gasson in his anti-Socialist Boston address of February 6th. Walt Whitman’s retort is barred from such a posture. Contradiction is fatal to the statesman’s reasoning. It is a case of self-rout. And this is the plight of Father Gasson.

In the address aforementioned, Father Gasson—whether quoting Socialism correctly or not matters not just now; that will be considered in due time;—stated the purpose of Socialism to be the placing of “the ownership of production and distribution of all goods in the hands of one body, the State,” and he condemned the purpose as an unqualified evil. Father Gasson branded Socialism as “immoral.” Father Gasson stigmatized Socialism as un-Godly. Father Gasson frowned upon Socialism as a perverter of manhood and womanhood. In short, Father Gasson’s presentation of Socialism was that of a sort of pestilence—none the less a pestilence because of the good intentions of some of its misguided apostles.

If all this is so, the only logical conclusion admissible is that no good man or woman, if intelligent, no intelligent woman or man, if good, ever was, is, or could (world without end!) be a Socialist. And those declarations he made as a spokesman of the Roman Catholic Church. All this notwithstanding, Father Gasson declared, in the same breath, that “if every man and woman was perfectly made and every man and woman of the highest character and intended to live for others then we might possibly come to a Socialistic world.” The two sets of pronouncements are violently

at fisticuffs with each other. They involve the Father in a double contradiction.

First of all, a teaching that poisons manhood and womanhood; a teaching that is an unqualified evil; a teaching that is impious; a teaching that, in short, is inherently a pestilence;—such a teaching can not possibly ever be a working system for “perfectly made” men and women, and for men and women of “the highest character.” On the contrary, in the exact measure that men and women reached perfection and highest character they would spurn such teachings. Either Socialism is the thing worthy of anathema that Father Gasson thinks it is—and then no “perfectly made” man and woman, or woman and man of “the highest character” would touch it with a pair of tongs; or, only men and women “perfectly made” and of “the highest character” are fit for Socialism—in which case Socialism could not possibly be the pestilential thing that Father Gasson makes it out to be.

Secondly, if the circumstance of a teaching’s being fit only for men and women “perfectly made” and of “the highest character,” and the further circumstance that, so far from all men and women being of that high type, the large majority of them are “quite otherwise and to the contrary,”—if these combined circumstances are a justification for opposing such teachings, for even fighting them “tooth and nail,” as another dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church recently declared his policy to be towards Socialism, by what title in Common Sense does Father Gasson preach, to an admittedly unregenerate world, the teachings of Roman Catholic Christianity, held by him as the ideal? One of two things: either the preachings of Roman Catholic Christianity to a sinful world is the proper thing to do—and then the promulgating of teachings acceptable to “perfectly made” men and women, and of “the highest character” is a commendable act on the part of Socialists; or, the teaching of Socialism to a generation of men and women that are far from “perfectly made,” or of the “highest character,” is censurable—in which case Father Gasson, devoted as he indicates he is to teaching what he holds ideal, Roman Catholic Christianity, to a world composed of sinners mainly, puts the extinguisher upon himself.

Father Gasson is self-impaled on one horn or other of the dilemma. Such are the wages of false reasoning.

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

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