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EDITORIAL

FIRST EPISTLE AT THE LAMBERTIANS.

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THE New York *Freeman's Journal and Catholic Register* of April 16 contains a four-column article by its Editor, Father L.A. Lambert against Socialism. The article is in answer to the letter of a critic, who found fault with a previous assault of Father Lambert's upon Socialism. The Editor takes his critic's letter subject by subject. So shall we now the Rev. Editor, though not in one continuous, but in a series of articles—epistles, of which this is the first.

Father Lambert having in his original assault on Socialism claimed that Socialists would lodge the ownership of the instruments of production in the State, his critic found fault with the term, and called that the setting up of a man of straw. Meeting the charge, Father Lambert says:

“Had we said ‘the State as now constituted’ there would have been reason for the charge of straw.”

If these eighteen words, constructed as they are above, mean anything, they mean:

First, that the State “as now constituted” is essentially, fundamentally different from the State as proposed by Socialism,—so different that if a critic were to say that Socialists would lodge the ownership of the instruments of production in “the State as now constituted,” even so serious a charge as that of setting up a man of straw would be justified against him;

Second, that a critic of Socialism, addressing an audience, that is uninformed upon Socialism, may with propriety use a term that his audience understands in one way—the common, everyday prevalent way—while himself is understanding it in another way—a special way;

Third, that ownership of the means of production, even if vested in that new

organism contemplated by Socialism, and which the critic would designate, simply for the sake of designation, as “the State,” would fail to bring the beneficent results expected by Socialism.

We shall take up to-day the first of the above three inferences from Father Lambert’s sentence.

No doubt the Socialist “State” is essentially different from the capitalist state—as essentially different as would be the Russian battle ship *Petropavlovsk*, recently sunk off Port Arthur, if it were raised and turned into an excursion boat to give the thousands upon thousands of foundlings, spewed up by the pillar-of-the-family capitalist system and crowded together in unsanitary barracks, a chance to inhale some ozone. So different would the new ship be that the ugly charge of setting up a man of straw would stick to the person who were to say that the new ship was just as the other.

But, lo, what sentence is that that assails the eye on the very next column? Father Lambert there says:

“The conception, then, of the present State and of the Socialist State is not entirely or essentially different.”

!!!

First one is told that so essentially different is the State as projected by Socialism, from “the State as now constituted” that it would be like putting up a man of straw to assail Socialism by claiming that the Socialist State was a State “as now constituted,” and the very next column one is told that the two States are not essentially different!!! The latter dictum may be true, but then the first, together with the whole sentence in which it appears, is false—there would be no “man of straw” charge applicable. The two can not go together.

We shall not in this first epistle at the Lambertians enter upon the question of which of the two views is the correct one. That will come later. For the present it is enough to be aware of the irreconcilable contradictions in Father Lambert’s exposition. The dose must be a bull’s dose of that “deference and submission” to the priest, even upon worldly matters, as Father Kress and the Father Kresses demand, for one to fail to realize that the person who can reason as incoherently as Father

Lambert is here convicted of, whatever else his opinions may deserve, they surely are undeserving of “deference and submission” upon so important a subject as social institutions. Upon that vital subject to man, Father Lambert shows himself mentally disqualified to argue.

The disqualification will be further illustrated in the next epistles at Lambertians, and the illustrations will help to illustrate the soundness of Socialism.

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