

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 299.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER TO W.W. PRESCOTT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

W. W. PRESCOTT,
Editor *The Protestant Magazine*,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:—

We hope you will excuse the tardiness of this acknowledgment of your favor calling our attention to the article, “A Dangerous Proposal,” in this year’s fourth number of your magazine, *The Protestant*, and expressing the hope that the article may not cause us to consider you an alarmist.

Whether you are an alarmist by ringing the note of warning at the action taken by the Columbus, 1911, Convention of the Federation of Catholic Societies in endeavoring to enlist the services of the National Post Office Department to exclude from the mails “obscene literature, including under this title books, papers, writings, and prints which outrage religious convictions of our citizens and contain scurrilous and slanderous attacks upon our faith,”—whether you are an alarmist for doing so depends upon. It depends upon whether your diagnosis of the issue is sound or unsound.

The moment Religion organizes into specific creed it becomes a political force. From Moses down to Brigham Young, every creed founder has been a State-builder. Creeds being in their essence political, they fatedly reflect economic and social, in short, material, conditions—and straggle for the same. As a final consequence every creed, like every political party, naturally and sincerely holds all others wrong, itself alone the one entitled to survive. This fact is greatly blurred by the term “bigotry,” generally applied to the self-centered manifestations of creeds. The term is a misnomer. As well say that a Free-Trade Democrat is “bigoted,” or a Protection Republican, or a Populist Free-coinagist of silver, etc. No more than these are creeds “bigoted.” They all are :partisan”; and justly so, from their premises, from the law of their existence—all being political entities.

It is important to realize this great historic fact. It tears away the mask of religion behind which political aspirations love to conceal themselves. The tearing away of the mask serves the double purpose of thwarting deception, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of promoting a spirit of intelligent fair play on the part of any one political body toward all others, including, of course, the unmasked political bodies as well.

Proceeding along these lines and from these premises, so far from feeling indignation at, the dispassionate mind will buckle down to ascertain the cause of “present increasing strength” of the Roman Catholic political body. The inquiry is vigor-imparting.

Wherever, in the course of social evolution, the cleft between a Ruling Class and a Ruled Class deepens and widens, the necessity for keeping down the Ruled becomes more urgent. The measures to this end will ever be found accompanied with counter measures, measures to throw off the yoke of the ruler. Once the fact is grasped that the Roman Catholic hierarchy is what the Modernists in Catholicism themselves recognize, but politics ambushed behind religion, the fact of its increasing power in the country, as shown by the “conversions” of world millionaires, accompanying the worldwide phenomenon of the gigantic rise of the Socialist political Movement, will both be better understood. Each of the two facts will illumine the other—and they will cast luminous sidelights upon minor events.

Ruling Classes are at best veiled autocrats. So long as the corresponding Ruled Class does not yet feel its historic mission to overthrow the Ruling Class throb in its veins, the veil of democracy is kept unlifted from the face of Rulers. In the measure that the Ruled Class does begin to feel its historic mission throbbing in its breast, the veil begins to be lifted. The nearer to a crisis the stronger is the need felt by the Rulers for autocratic measures. Thus we see Colonel Roosevelt advocating Executive “control” regardless of lawsuits, in short, the monarchy; thus we see his fellow class adversary, Taft, advocating Court supremacy, even against “good laws,” in short, an oligarchy;—and thus we see the one and the other subservient to, and ever more millionaires rushing into the Roman Catholic political regime of intellectual despotism.

The subject is broad enough for an essay of large size. Summing up—the long and short of the story is that the great political conflict that is coming to a head is wiping out all intermediary political expressions and is bound to leave extant just two—the two types of the two opposing forces—the Socialist political body as the type of the forces that makes for progress, hence, Freedom, and the Roman Catholic equally political body as the type of the forces that make for Retrogression, hence Slavery. These two political

bodies will attract, each its own affinities. The capitalist Protestant, Jew, Catholic and what not will be Romanized—forget not the attitude of the Protestant A.P.A.¹ in 1886 when Father Edward McGlyn turned his face revolutionward. Those A.P.A. scraped the earth with their foreheads at the Pope's feet when he excommunicated the noble-minded prelate; and this very month, the news comes from Baltimore that a wealthy Jew donated \$25,000, for the suppression of Socialism, to whom?—to a Jewish Rabbi?—No; to Cardinal Gibbons. On the other hand, the proletarian and intelligent Protestant, Jew, Catholic and what not will be Socialistized;—and thus the great final debacle which has been brewing through the Ages, for the final overthrow of Class Rule, accordingly, for the final emancipation of the human race from the subjection to Property, will take place.

We ourselves, and all the members of the Socialist Labor Party, were not always militants in the political body of Socialism. All the Party's members were at one time or other, directly or indirectly, affiliated with some other political body—Republican, Democrat, Populist, Protestant, Jew, Catholic, or of whatever other name. The dawn of the coming day having revolutionized our heads we see with no alarm the “gradual increase in strength” of the Roman Catholic political movement in this country. We see the development with no alarm for two reasons—first, because simultaneously the new political body of Socialism is gaining in strength, and gaining faster than the representative political body of Retrogression; secondly, because in older countries, where the political body of Roman Catholicism started with a decided lead of power, it is now steadily losing ground to the Socialist.

We recommend to you that you feel no alarm.

Sincerely, etc.,

ED. DAILY PEOPLE.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2013

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¹ American Protective Association.—*R.B.*