

EDITORIAL

AN INCAUTIOUS PARSON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

CHARLES STELZLE, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Department of the Church of Labor, has launched upon the troubled waters of modern society a book entitled *The Church and Labor*, which, if ministerialdom, especially that portion of the brotherhood that is militant against Socialism, know what is good for them, they will quickly recall.

It is not that the Rev. Stelzle's book is directly in the interest of Socialism. Not that; "quite to the contrary and otherwise." Indirectly, however, the work gives mighty aid and comfort to the Socialist in that it knocks down the underpinning of the aforementioned militant reverend brotherhood.

What is the principle upon which the capitalist pulpit takes the field against Socialism? It may be condensed in a few words: "Socialism does not hew to the line of God." A posture like that has its strength. There is a deal of strength in a position that is negative, and mystical, to boot. Spooks are proverbially invulnerable to blows: Tho' the strength of such positions can only be transitory, so long as anyone shoots from behind such shelter he is pretty safe himself from return shots. It should seem that the capitalist parson would be the last to tear down so convenient a breastwork; time enough when the breastwork dissipates by virtue of its own flimsiness—one should think. The Rev. Stelzle incautiously thinks otherwise.

The Church and Labor handles "the church," meaning, of course, the deity, in a way that leaves nothing for the capitalist parson to stand upon, nothing behind which to shelter himself. The book declares that, if the Church is to hold its place with Labor, it must take its place in the Industrial Democracy. When that is said, what is left of the allegedly sacrosanct principle behind which these gentlemen are in ambush? Nothing.

A deity that must adapt itself is a contradiction in terms. The essential feature

of deity is that all things must adapt themselves to it—or be forever lost. A deity that changes its base is a misnomer; and when such a deity is itself declared to be in danger of “losing hold,” what the declarer does in fact is to admit he was an impostor when he presumed to speak in the name of the deity, and, in the name of that deity, uttered his anathemas.

No doubt the Rev. Stelzle’s conduct is symptomatic. No doubt he acted obedient to that evolutionary law, which he probably denies but which he unconsciously renders homage to. No doubt the evolutionary process is eating up the ground from under the Rev. Stelzles. All the same, such an utterance as that of *The Church and Labor* is incautious. With no mysticism behind which to shelter their grossly material interests, what is there left for the capitalist parson but to surrender at discretion to Socialism?

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