

Demagoguism Orestes A. Brownson

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INTRODUCTION

(demagoguism, or demagogism, n. The principles or practices of a demagogue: one who plays an insincere role in public life for the sake of gaining political influence or office; a poser in politics; esp., one who panders to popular prejudice or seeks to inflame reasonless passions in the advancement of his personal interests. — Webster's *New International Dictionary*)

Our day, our age, our political order, differ from that of Orestes Brownson, when, in 1844, he wrote the essay "Demagoguism", only in the magnitude of the modern moral disaster, in the profoundness of the spiritual and social rupture, and in the comprehensiveness of the collapse of all enduring political values. Brownson, in eloquently addressing the first principles of an ordered republic, wrote of those dangers which he perceived as being peculiar to the American political system and the urgent need for manly greatness in courageously addressing those problems which, to him, had a kinship in the social and political orders to cancer:

"We want a man of high moral integrity, of a high order of intellect, of great firmness, decision, and energy and character, who shall look more than four years ahead; a man who is above all party trickery, and who disdains all appeal to party machinery as the means of his elevation. . . . We want a man at the head of the government who is a man, feeling his accountability to his Maker, and his duty to sacrifice himself, if need be, for the good of his country, and the moral and social elevation of his countrymen . . ."

Nearly one hundred and fifty years later we still seek such a man for the office of the presidency. The "cancer" of which Brownson wrote so manfully, has, in our modern age, metastasized and broadcast a mortal sense of distrust, cynicism, dis-ease, and despair throughout the breadth of our land shrouding in palpable doubt not only government and those holding positions of the highest civic trust but upon the very institutions the soundness and integrity of which our country most sorely depends. The source, the heart, of the spreading malignancy, as in Brownson's day, infinitely moreso in our own, lies in the sapping of the vital spiritual and moral springs of eternal truth which has enabled men of the basest, most selfish character to rise to the highest offices of "trust" in our country. The taproot of

this plague of infidelity is founded in those tendencies and principles in intellectual, religious, political, and economic life, which imply a partial or total emancipation of man and society from the primacy of obligation to the supernatural order and from all responsibility to the divine authority of God. It is founded upon the anarchic assumption of man's independence from any authority or rule of conduct or belief outside himself in the objective order.

Where is the president, the public figure, possessed of an heroic manhood, of the most exalted sentiments, of an integrity beyond question, who could say:

"Mine honor is my life; both grow in one;

Take honor from me, and my life is done?"

Is it not true that in our day the term politician has become for many synonymous with prevaricator? Is not everyone aware that oath-taking in America confers the license to partake as "spoilsmen" of every ideological and financial interest to the very detriment of the integrity of the nation and the well-being of our people? Are not these sectarian interests a true canker despoiling the irreplaceable spiritual and moral foundation of our country? Is it not more true today, than in Brownson's day, that in the political order "popularity has become the leading object of ambition, and popular opinion the standard of morality?" Where is the leader in government, willing to stand alone before a howling mob, shrouded in "the imperishable glory of waging a noble fight for a righteous cause?" Where is the public figure of surpassing moral majesty that instinctively draws the hearts, minds, and souls of honest men, women, and loyal patriots in every age?

It is now ten months before the presidential election of 1992. More appropriately, one should say the quadrennial bribery of 1992, rather than presidential election; for we have entered upon a four year cycle of distortion, false promises, popularity seeking, and wanton untruth, which, by any standard of common decency and propriety, is a national disgrace and yet another mortal wound inflicted upon our country. One must ask in the interest of the children, in the interest of posterity, if our country has been so morally wounded that men possessed of ennobling traits of honesty, decency, valor, love of God and country, are no longer to be found for the highest offices of trust? Or have our political institutions fallen to such depths under the weight of accumulated turpitude to preclude the rise of good men to such positions of responsibility?

A government cannot be considered good in the absence of moral men: no government can endure without individuals possessed of intelligence, virtue, a spirit of self-sacrifice, love of God and country, and

a genuine interest in the common good. These provide the keystone to the arch; without them everything loses its integrity and vitality, and collapse becomes inevitable. In truth, the great need of the hour is not social, political, educational, or economic, it is rather moral in character. As all can see, when immorality, duplicity, time-serving, irresponsibility, corruption, and scheming, are allowed to weave a malignant web around partisan interests which can only divide and poison the unity of nationhood, such despicable conduct can only insinuate itself into the mind, thought, and outlook of the people, corrupting all that comes under its influence.

What law preserves the majesty and grace necessary to make a people morally good and the nation great? What law has the inherent power to purify the heart of man? What law possesses the innate force needed to call forth disinterested valor and nobility? What is the law which incorporates the inherent beauty capable of bestowing upon man the comeliness of a glory and refinement beyond human description? What is this law which ought to be the pervading spirit of all people, of every clime, of every age, within which is indelibly inscribed the vital principle of every virtue, of every moral law, of every good, of every reverence, and of every sanctity?—

"The eternal or natural law of God is emphatically *the* law. It is the one and only basis of all law: human law in all its ramifications, is at best a sort of superstructure. All national communities—all governments—all families—all persons necessarily lie under its rule, as so many parts of the one world-wide confederation, over which God is the supreme Lawgiver. This divine law, therefore, is the principle of moral unity, of order, of true civilization. . . . Without it there is no true authority of government: without it no true sanction to the acts of legislation. It is the light of the family, an unerring rule for the individual conscience. Wherever and whenever there has been foreign or civil war—revolution and anarchy—sin and social misery, there and then has its voice been stifled, and daring revolt broken out against its rightful supremacy."

The enemy of good government, of our nation, of the American people, is the plague of irreligion, pantheism, atheism, and immorality, which threatens to reinstitute in this country the abominations of the ancient pagan world, if the immutability of the divine law and the supernatural order are not restored to their rightful primacy of place in government, society, and the family. In logic, science, and philosophy one seeks in vain a correct solution if one's premise is flawed. The twentieth century is but one prolonged dolorous litany of

* T. Harper, S.J., *Peace through the Truth*, 2nd Series (London, 1874), p. 19.

tragedies beyond human calculation and comprehension; perpetrated by governments which first abandoned the eternal and divine premise. If we would put an end to the inhuman cycle of depravity, men must rise up and accord public honor and renown only upon him who publicly acknowledges almighty God, and the necessity of religion and morality in all things. All power comes from God, not from the state as Communism has maliciously asserted. We sorely need men in government possessed of the concept of right, honor, honesty, love of God and country, who will manfully carry these ennobling attributes into the highest councils of government, if order is to be restored and the choking poison of deceptious government dispelled from our land.

We must create anew an age in which high places in government, the presidency, all public institutions, are reserved for "genius adorned by disinterestedness, integrity, truth, and every manly virtue." A time when deceit, dishonor, and malignant interest are no longer a constituent part of government; when the ambition for public office, if an infirmity, is truly "an infirmity of a noble mind," seeking a position of public trust,

"Not only to keep down the base in man,
But to teach lofty thoughts and kindly words,
And gracious courtliness, and true honor of country,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

We have been given the great grace to live in these days, to live in this country. But we would be fools indeed to be impervious to the many ills which men of the meanest character, unmanly men, scheming men, men dedicated to sectarian interests, have inflicted upon our national government and our country. Until men of obligation, men of honor, men of integrity, assume offices of trust in government we shall continue to be swept along the myriad paths of interest which have caused irreparable damage to our nation.

The concept of the "rights of man," as with the concept of the malefic "New World Order," is reducible to the "right" of man and government to publicly revile God, to blaspheme Him, and to make war upon Him through the different facets of society. It is assuredly not religion, not Christianity, rather militant atheism, rampant infidelity, and religious indifferentism, which have turned the twentieth century into the bloodbath of the ages. Man divorced from God becomes a tyrant in government, and call his system by whatever name you would—Communism, National Socialism, Fascism, Liberalism, Modernism, or "New World Order," all share the same hatreds in

common,—hatred of God and His Incarnate Son, hatred of country, hatred of man, hatred of family, hatred of truth: from such preternatural hatred, from such nihilism, the progeny is ever the same.

There shall be no peace in this world, no order in government or society, no true national greatness, until man recognizes, and publicly affirms, that it is almighty God Who solely possesses the sovereignty of "right" in this His created world, and that as our Creator we are bound to obey and honor Him "because we are His and not our own." Everything that we possess He has given to us, soul and body, reason and will; the eyes by which we miraculously look upon His creation; the voice with which we offer prayerful homage; the legs upon which we kneel in humble adoration before a God Who has spared His creature, creation, nothing of His gratuitous Providence: a Providence forever solemnized and silhouetted against a darkened sky upon the hill of Calvary where the Precious Blood of a martyred God crimsoned the earth manifesting a Love beyond human comprehension; a Love which is the Cause, Medium, and End of every created person; a Love which shall be consummated at harvest time, when the faithful and loyal soul shall return upon the eternal years to the bosom of the Blessed Trinity from whence it first came.

Francis Conklin, *February 10, 1992*