

Orestes Brownson and Theology in America

(オレスティーズ・ブラウンソンと アメリカの神学)

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SUMMARY IN JAPANESE: ブラウンソン(1803-1876)はニューイングランドがアメリカ思想界で圧倒的優位を保ち、エマーソン、シオドー・パーカーらが活躍していた時代に説教家、文筆家として知られていた。彼はボストンの有力な雑誌に寄稿したばかりでなく、みずからも『ブラウンソンズ・クォーターリー・レビュー』を刊行した。さまざまなプロテスタント教派を遍歴した後、41才の時、カトリックに改宗した。同時代のニューイングランドのユニタリアン、超越主義者たちが高等批評を受け容れて、イエスをキリストとしてではなく崇高な人格者、人生の指導者として考えたのに対して、改宗前からブラウンソンははっきりとイエスの神性を肯定し、神の子の受肉の教義を擁護して、受肉に基づく人間の共同体の発展を描いていた。改宗後のブラウンソンはカトリック教会とアメリカ社会は相容れないとするプロテスタント主流派の主張を論破するためにあまりにも精力を使い過ぎ、もともと持っていた神学的洞察をのばす機会に恵まれなかった。彼はカトリック教会が民主主義社会に基本的な価値を一番提供できると訴えたのであった。彼は創造における三位一体性の役割について、はっきりとしたヴィジョンを持っていた。それは現代神学でも通用するものである。ただそれは他のテーマとの関連で展開されているので、本格的なものではない。ブラウンソンは特にいわゆる「公共神学」のカトリック側の先駆者であると言いうる。

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Even among American Catholic intellectuals, not many remember the name of Orestes (Augustus) Brownson (1803-1876). But his achievement is acknowledged by specialists in American intellectual history at large. In his 1965 study, Americo Lapati refers to Theodore Maynard's assessment of Brownson as "the most remarkable mind American Catholicism produced," (550) and to the British historian Lord Acton's observation as the most penetrating thinker of his day in America (250). Van Wyck Brooks said, "He was too Yankee for the Catholic and too Catholic for the Yankees" (248). Reappraisal is called for: Lapati ranges Schlesinger and Russell Kirk on his side for such a necessity (7), and his small volume was itself the beginning of this reassessment.

Brownson was a lecturer, preacher, prolific writer, and social reformer. He was very close to the members of the Transcendental Club, including Bronson Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Hedge, and George Ripley, and joined Ripley's Utopian Brooks Farm. He came from a Calvinist background; his family was destitute, as his father died young, and Brownson was raised by foster parents. It is rather surprising that this autodidact son of poor parentage, who attended only a local academy and worked as a printer's apprentice, could assume the minister's profession, give Lyceum lectures, and familiarly mingle and converse with the contemporary New England intellectual elite.

Brownson and his fellow New England intellectuals lived in the world which he himself described: a world in which Kant had left "no space for faith in God in *The Critic of Pure Reason* and was obliged to write his *Critic of the Practical Reason* in order to restore the faith it had overthrown" ("Kant's Critic [sic] of Pure Reason," *Works* 1: 130-213). The religious monopoly, once in the hands of the Puritan divines, was now gone, although the Puritan ethos remained. Religion was rapidly proliferating with the inflow of new immigrants with diverse backgrounds and under the impact of natural science. The old traditional Christian tenets could no longer hold the restless minds of the New England intellectuals. Besides, there was the problem of working-class people's plight. The tendency on the part of the general public now in the process of industrialization's rapid progress and the development of the mercantile economy was to abandon the old traditional faith; to cope with this tendency Brownson himself organized the Society for Christian Union and Progress for the young laborers of Boston. Transcendentalism in philosophy and Unitarianism in religion were the mode of the intellectual elite's measures to halt what we now call the secularization of

society and life of the individual.

Patrick Carey, in his new biography, calls Brownson America's "weathervane." He was the indicator of young America's restless mind. Like Ishmael in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, who, feeling "a damp drizzly November" in his soul, went to sea as a sailor on a whaling ship, the young Brownson went to the dark sea of spiritual life and underwent the odyssey from Presbyterianism, Methodism, Universalism, Unitarianism, and his own "Church of the Future" until he found his soul's haven in Catholicism in 1844, with intervals of skepticism. He had meanwhile started his journalistic career with the *Boston Quarterly Review* and later with *Brownson's Quarterly Review*. Since he did not attend Harvard Divinity School, which had supplied then personnel for the New England intellectual life, it is surprising that he shared a similar acquaintance with the philosophical trends in Europe such as the case of Theodore Parker.

Immediately before his conversion, Brownson took up Kant's philosophy, and sharply criticized its subjectivism as the foundation of its ethics. He continued the criticism beyond his Catholic conversion as a means to plunge controversially in the defense of the Church he newly embraced, the bulk of his works, later assembled by his son Henry F. Brownson in twenty volumes, are from this period of his apologetic activities. Although his son collected even his earlier writings in these volumes, those of his later Catholic phase no doubt overwhelm the pre-Catholic writings. In order to become a Catholic he read, under the guidance of John Bernard Fitzpatrick, Coadjutor Bishop of Boston, much of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the Neo-Scholastic manuals then widely used in Catholic seminaries.

Brownson must be called America's first creative lay theologian, though in today's perspective he appears to have been sometimes extremely rigid and rigorous in understanding the Catholic doctrines, unlike his friend Isaac Hecker. We have to remember that those were not the days of ecumenism, but rather those of confrontation between Catholicism and Protestantism, though both felt the impact of a growing secular culture. The important aspect of the situation is that Brownson was the first Catholic convert intellectual that brought to the forum of public opinion his faith's position through his writings. He embraced faithfully—almost literally—the contemporary Roman teachings, and Pope Pius IX praised him for his work of spreading the Catholic faith in America by means of his journalistic activities.

In this sense Brownson was the first articulate ultramontane voice in the American public forum. But he was an American ultramontane, a convert with a New England intellectual background, and deep in his conscience and consciousness there existed the New England ethos with the Puritan pathos. He shared with the hierarchy and clergy the same tendency to look for Rome's directions, but perhaps he had more skill to go to the public to defend his Church's views than they, as a theologically expert lay person.

In the days when theology, as far as Catholics were concerned, was practically a clerical monopoly, it was inevitable that Brownson came into conflict with the Church authorities in Boston, and eventually he moved his *Quarterly* to New York, where the holder of its ecclesiastical jurisdiction was then Archbishop John Hughes, who was sympathetic to him at first. John Hughes' strong support of Lincoln's policy is well-known, but because of his more radical anti-slavery position, already evident in his Boston days, Brownson would have preferred to support General Fremont as the candidate in the 1861 Presidential election. And the latter's withdrawal from the campaign together with the death of his two sons so deeply disappointed him that he suspended his review in 1876. Hughes' stand appeared lukewarm not only on abolition but also on other social issues. In 1856, as Hughes publicly criticized him, Brownson moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, and brought out an autobiography *The Convert: Or Leaves from My Experience*, his *apologia pro vita sua*. He was denounced to the Prefect of the Holy Office in Rome for articles on relationship between spiritual and temporal powers. Hughes became increasingly more suspicious of this convert controversialist, although in quiet moments the Archbishop praised Brownson as a faithful champion of the Church (Ryan 728).

Brownson on his part wrote in the Archbishop's praise on the occasion of the appearance of Hughes' works in 1873:

Archbishop Hughes was a man of action rather than a man of study, and he kept his eyes open to almost every movement at home and abroad that seemed likely to affect, in any degree, favorably or unfavorably, Catholic interests. . . . His mind was broad and comprehensive, and he seemed to labor especially to gain for the church a public recognition and position in the country, which she was entitled to indeed, but had not hitherto enjoyed. (*Works* 14: 486)

Both men, different in temperament and cultural heritage, the one born Irish Catholic and the other a convert of New England stock, ardently desired to bring the Catholic voice to the public forum. Moreover, as Brownson more eloquently expressed, the heart of the matter is the Church's mission to civilization, as he writes in "Mission of America," a commentary on Archbishop Spalding's *Miscellanea*, 1855:

[The Church] demands, wherever practicable, the highest development of our natural faculties, and the highest order of civilization. . . . The active, energetic, self-reliant American character she regards with no unfriendly eye, for she knows that, once purified, elevated, and directed by grace, it is a character from which she has everything to hope. Grace does not destroy nature, nor change the natural type of character. It purifies and elevates nature, and brings out whatever is good, noble, and strong in the national type. No national character stands more in need of Catholicity than the American, and never since her going forth from that "upper room" in Jerusalem, has the Church found a national character so well fitted to give to true civilization its highest and noblest expression. (*Works* 11: 559)

II

In the preface to his 1852 *Essays and Reviews Chiefly on Theology, Politics, and Socialism*, published well after his conversion to Catholicism, Brownson writes on his religious conviction and indicates how seriously he considers it:

Religion is for me the supreme law; it governs my politics, not my politics it. I never suffer myself to inquire whether such or such a religion favors or not such or such a political order; for if there is a conflict the political must yield to the religious. I therefore have never labored to show that the Church is favorable to monarchy, to aristocracy, or to democracy. I do not find that she erects any particular form of Government into an article of faith, — the monarchical no more than the democratic, the democratic no more than the monarchical. Any one of these particular forms may be legal government, and when and where it is the good Catholic is bound to support it, and forbidden to conspire to subvert it. The Republican order is the legal

order here, and I owe it civil obedience. I am the citizen of a republic; I am a Catholic, therefore a loyal citizen, and no radical or revolutionist, either for my own country or any other. (vi-vii)

The young Brownson already expressed himself in similar vein, but his vision was limited to the experiences of his personal world:

Religion, strange mysterious world! I have asked the living, I have called upon the dead, I have pored over books, sought through all nature, by day, by night, by sickness, in health, in my hopes and in my fears, in my love, in my hazard, in my forgiveness and my revenge—all, all have I implored with tears and in every accent of entreaty to unfold to me what thou art. (*Selected Writings* 59)

The mature Brownson had made his statement eight years after his conversion to Catholicism, but the younger Brownson reminds us that he continued to have one major agenda he had ever since he started to think of the problem of man in his childhood. The young Brownson follows the above statement with a personal history of his Calvinist upbringing and the narrative of a series of religious revivals in the contemporary New England. The time shows indeed the contradictory processes of a massive loosening from the rigid observation of religion in the direction of secularized culture and the frequent spasms of religious awakenings simultaneously.

In his adolescence's Calvinistic milieu, Brownson's agonistic inner struggle was how to resolve the burden imposed by the doctrine of the depraved human soul alienated by God the omni-benevolent Creator. This problem had led him through several stages of his odyssey to Catholicism. Philosophy and theology were not just theoretical, academic speculation; these were urgent and practical not only for himself but also for conscientious fellow New Englanders of his time. His own personal experiences were involved with philosophy and theology, as he later recounts in his autobiography *The Convert* his past agony before becoming a Presbyterian minister:

I tried for a year or two to stifle my discontent, to silence my reason, to repress my natural emotion, and to submit patiently to the Calvinistic discipline. I spent much time in prayer and meditation, I read pious books,

and finally plunged myself into my studies with a view toward becoming a Presbyterian minister. But it would not. I joined the church because I despaired of myself, and because, despairing of reason, I had wished to submit to authority. (*Works* 5: 12)

He suffered and resisted the Calvinistic imposition of reason's sacrifice before what he was told the Bible reveals:

Grace is conceived . . . as opposed to nature, revelation as opposed to reason. A nature that is totally depraved cannot be redeemed, but must be supplanted or superseded by grace; a totally depraved reason is incapable of a rational act, and therefore revelation cannot be addressed to it to supply its weakness, or to place it in relation with truth in an order above its natural reach; but if conceived at all, must be conceived as a substitute for reason, as discarding at all, and taking its place. (*Works* 5: 17)

The mature Brownson's analysis of his soul's condition is penetrating, as he is reflecting after his conversion. It is Carey's view that the Incarnation of the Word is the foundation for Brownson's theology of creation (Introduction, *Selected Writings* 42-43). But this is so in his post-conversion theology. The Incarnation is knit together with reprobation and redemption in Brownson's pre-conversion time:

I was soon informed that I was totally depraved, that I was born with a nature wholly corrupt, that I was infinitely hateful in the sight of my God. . . . I was soon instructed in all the mysteries of the "fall of man," the "incarnation of God," his "death for the elect," his "resurrection from the dead," etc. . . . These doctrines are perhaps full as well as suited to the comprehension of children as of grown people, and the infantile intellect will, perhaps, be full as ready to believe them as any. They however puzzled me a little at first. (60-61)

Often enough the young Brownson burst into optimistic exclamation. This must have been a mechanism of compensation to recover from depression:

How beautiful is Religion! It calms the rough passions and spreads peace

over all the storms and bustle of life it enables its possessor to pass quietly along with a calm and serene air with dignity of spirit and gracefulness of manners unknown to the children of vice. It gives true wisdom and knowledge—it gives true and genuine feelings of humanity, it awakens true sympathy and it withholds no right that tends to ameliorate the condition of the unfortunate. It diffuses through all its votaries a sweet, gentle temper, a meek, patient temper that is not easily elated never puffed up never cast down—that evenness of temper the same in prosperity as in adversity which never repines at misfortunes—which always sees a God employed in all scenes that pass—which views “Disappointments and distress at blessings in disguise.”

How pleasing to look through nature to contemplate all transpiring events as the will of a Great and Wise Governor! What sublime felicity arises from the contemplation of God’s Sovereignty. (Spiritual Diary: Monday 20, *Selected Writings* 69)

This God the Creator is not the Leibnitzian “deus otiosus,” or the dead God proclaimed by Nietzsche, but the one who lives:

God is love, said the inspired penman. God is love, and creation confirms the glorious truth. God is live is imprinted on every page in the great volume of nature in characters which the fool can not mistake. The winged light shines the truth conspicuous. The moon reflects the same. The revolution of the planetary world [and] the regular return of the seasons confirm the grateful truth that “God is love.” The burden of revelation is, God is love. (“‘GOD IS LOVE’ 1 John 4,” *Selected Writings* 83)

And he recounts in reflection years later the personal experience of the significant moment for his ultimate turn that was consequential for his subsequent career:

I shall never forget the singular emotion, I may say rapture, I felt one day, while wandering in the maze of errors, when suddenly burst upon my mind, for the first time, this great truth that God is free, and that what most needs asserting of all liberties is the liberty of God. It struck me as a flash in the midst of my darkness, opened to me a new world, and changed almost

instantaneously not only the tone and the temper of my mind, but the direction of my whole order of thought. Though years elapsed before I found myself knocking at the door of the Church for admission, my conversion began from that moment. I had seized the principle which authorizes faith in the supernatural. God is free, I said, then I can love him, trust him, hope in him, and commune with him, and he can hear me, love me, and commune him, and he can hear me, love me, raise me to communion with himself, and blessed be his name. (*Works* 8: 132)

In the Calvinistic tradition the doctrine of reprobation is inseparably combined with that of justification, and justification is the central tenet of Protestantism as that by which the church stands or falls. In a sermon in his independent preacher days, 1831-1832, he arrives at his new interpretation of this doctrine:

Righteousness is gratitude to God, a lively sense of our accountability and relationship to him. This is nothing more than will be felt by every one who will read attentively the volume of nature, and carefully listen to the voice of the Divinity within his own soul. It includes love for our fellow beings—not merely to our own family and friends or to our own party; but to the world, to all, for “God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth.” Our love to them will make us sincere, honest, forgiving, gentle and merciful, in our intercourse with them. It will teach us to rejoice and to weep with those who weep. (“A Sermon on Righteousness,” *Works* 8: 132)

III

Brownson still connects on the eve of his conversion the doctrine of justification with Christianity's central dogma of the Incarnation in a tract written as a letter to William Channing, the influential Unitarian in his day, *The Mediatorial Life of Jesus*. He is now liberated from the fatal identification of the Incarnation with reprobation. The Incarnation is closely knit with the Redemption, to be sure, but the latter is put in a wider framework of God's benevolence in the Creation. As Carey points out in his introduction to *Orestes A. Brownson: Selected Writings*, Brownson's notion of the Incarnation is teleological, not cos-

mic, and he ascribes to the historical Jesus and his mediation not only for the salvation of mankind but also for human history and civilization. He writes to Channing:

I have sir, finally attained to a view of the plan of a world's salvation through a Mediator, which I think reconciles all conflicting theories, discloses new wisdom in that plan, and enables us to take, in its most obvious and literal sense, without any subtlety or refinement, what the scriptures say of Jesus, and of salvation through his life. The Gospel becomes to me now a reality, and the teachings of the New Testament throughout realities, having their corresponding facts in the positive world. The views to which I have attained appear to me to be new, grand, and of the greatest importance. If I am not deceived they enable us to demonstrate with as much certainty as we have for our existence several great and leading doctrines of the church universal, which have heretofore been asserted as great and holy mysteries, but unproved and unexplained. I think I can show that no small portion of the Bible, which is generally taken figuratively, is susceptible of literal interpretation, and that certain views of the Mediator, and his Life, from which our Unitarian friends have shrunk, are nevertheless true, and susceptible of a philosophical demonstration. I think sir, I am able to show that the doctrine that human nature became depraved through the sin of Adam, and that it is redeemed only through the obedience of Christ; that the doctrine which teaches us that the Mediator is truly and indissolubly God-man and saves the world by giving literally his life to the world, are great "central truth" of Christianity, and philosophically demonstrable. (*Works* 4: 143-44)

Brownson proclaims that this realization is "a theological revolution." He was not proclaiming this "truth" as a Fundamentalist does, but it was a courageous proclamation on Brownson's part. Since the work of G. E. Lessing and Hermann Reimarus, historicity in the life of Jesus had become highly problematic. Higher criticism was endeavoring to solve the problem from a Romantic, Idealist orientation in Europe, and New England Unitarian theologians were following this theological trend. In a way, Brownson's tract is a criticism of such a tendency:

By virtue of the fact that the life of Jesus has passed into the life of human-

ity, humanity is able to commune with God. Through Jesus who is our life, we have access with the Father, may come into communion, as John says, into *Fellowship*, with him. Then we may live in communion with God, and consequently be every moment deriving new life and strength. (*Works* 4: 164)

The Incarnation is the communion of God's life not with individuals alone, but with the community of the faithful; it is the communion with God's life, and with Jesus' life also. Surprisingly, Brownson at this stage upholds traditional doctrine on the Eucharist as the crux of ecclesiastical life as fellowship: the faithful congregation assembles around the Eucharist to participate in God's life. His notion of the Eucharist has relevance to ecclesiology:

This intimate relation of all men in the unity of one and the same life explains the Eucharist or Communion. That rite of the church is not merely commemorative of the last supper of Jesus with his disciples. All Christianity clusters around it, centers in it; for all Christianity is in this one word *communion*. Jesus is the living bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world. This Life, the new Life, Eternal Life, the Life by living which we are redeemed from sin and united to God, could be communicated to the world. . . . The great fact here affirmed is that the life of Jesus is communicated to the world, and spread from man to man according to principle of human life itself. It becomes human life, and men become one with Jesus, and one with God, just in proportion as it is lived. Then in order to enable all men to live this life, we must seek to facilitate the means of communication for all men in both time and space. (*Works* 4: 165)

Without naming Emerson, Brownson insists that the tendency "to resolve God into nature" is dangerous. Brownson emphasizes:

The coming of Jesus has communicated a new life to the race, which by means of *communication* of man with man shall extend to all individuals. . . . The humanity of to-day has in its life, which is the indwelling Christ, the Christ that was to be with us unto the end of the world, a redeeming power, a recuperative energy, by virtue of which it is able to come into fellowship with the Father, and thus work out its own salvation. The possession of

this principle, this energy, this life, literally, as I have endeavored to prove, the Christ, is that which within human nature differs now from what it was before Jesus came. . . . Human nature in some sense then I own possesses to-day the divine worth you claim for it; not by virtue of its own inherent right, but by virtue of its union through the law of life to Christ, who is our head, and who is one with God. This union virtually complete, is actually incomplete. To complete it, and therefore to make all men one in Christ, and through him one with the Father, thus fulfilling his prayer, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, is the work to be done, towards which all true Christian civilization is tending, and to which all true Christians direct all their efforts, individual and social. We may even be far from this glorious results as yet, and we may even be in ourselves weak and inefficient; but the Life is in the world; Christ has entered into the life of humanity; the Word has become Flesh, and dwells among us; and as individuals and as a race we may do all things through Christ strengthening us. We can affect this, because God works in us both to will and to do. By communion with Jesus, we derive life, as I have said, from God himself; we are led by the Spirit of God, are sons of God. (*Works* 4: 167)

Already at this stage Brownson's ecclesiology is what we would today call communion-ecclesiology, but it is implied that the Church's communion-nature is the actualization of the gift of the triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, although the role of the third person, the Spirit of God is simply referred to. He was calling his congregation in this connection for the realization of an ideal Christian community. In his sermon as an independent preacher, he says: "Christianity consists not in *believing* as the world has unfortunately supposed, but in *doing*." Jesus kept doing good works despite derision and rejection, "relieving the miseries of his brethren," and "gladdening their hearts with the gracious tidings he proclaimed." He concludes: "O let us imitate him. That will at least, give us practical Christianity" (*Selected Writings* 133). Christianity for social reform in his Unitarian phase. "Jesus came," he says, "to introduce a new order of things, to change, to perfect, man's moral and social institutions" (*Selected Writings* 146).

It was at this time Brownson discovered the French St. Simonian Pierre Leroux's social philosophy that emphasized hierarchical sense and life through communion. Although he had been a popular preacher in Boston, Brownson alienated

the political and religious establishment with a tract he had written in the midst of the 1840 political campaign, "Essay on the Laboring Class," that severely critiqued the economic structure of capitalist society. In his theory Leroux placed positive value on objective revelation, tradition, and the Church as medium of divine life; according to this now forgotten French social philosopher, these alone make social and spiritual progress possible. But Leroux's vision is, as Brownson remarks, "the religion of humanity." In July 1842, Brownson wrote a lengthy article in the *Boston Quarterly Review* contrasting Leroux's plan for social reform with what he considered an ideal future Christian community. Towards the conclusion he points out the characteristics of Christian community as distinguished from the St. Simonian, based as it is on the ideal of communion:

We hold ourselves able now to produce a perfect synthesis of philosophy, politics, including ethics, and theology, all harmonizing with the "Word of Life," borne witness to by the apostles, and which Jesus was. This metaphysical principle, which becomes, as it were, a universal solvent of whatever pertains to life, is simply that the *me* can never manifest itself, that is, live, save in communion with the *not-me*. (*Works* 4: 139)

In 1844, he joined with his son, Orestes, Jr., the Brook Farm community started by his Unitarian minister friend, George Ripley. But Brook Farm's debacle came soon. No doubt, the Farm's financial difficulties brought it down, but the community's division between Unitarians and followers of Fourierism left no room for religion and the spirit of communion (Guarneri 54-59; Delano 182-83). The Church is a historical reality, and not a product of experimentation. But for Brownson the historical reality of the Church has never been commensurate with the Incarnation, as he writes with the Incarnation as the starting point for his argument in *Church of the Future*, 1942:

The effects of this doctrine of the Incarnation, are visible everywhere in modern civilization, in great part are it, and are seen in its more generous and humane character over all the civilizations which preceded it; in its tenderness of human life . . . in the high value it places on man as an individual; in its emancipation of the slave, and general labors to promote liberty and social well-being.

The church, however, has but imperfectly comprehended this doctrine. She misapprehended it from the beginning. (*Works* 4: 63)

Brownson introduces an apocalyptic vision in setting forth his version of the ideal future Church of the Christian elite as a small band of saints, and concludes that the second coming of Christ is already happening among them.

IV

Brownson tells of the day when he received the Holy Communion early next morning at the Church of East Boston later in his autobiography, *The Convert*:

The great step had been taken, and I had entered upon a new life, subdued indeed, but full of a sweet and calm joy. No difficulties with regard to the particular doctrines of the church had at any time arisen, for satisfied that Almighty God had commissioned the church to teach, and that the Holy Ghost was ever present by his supernatural aid to assist her to teach, I knew that she could never teach any thing but truth. (*Works* 5: 168)

Previous to this reminiscence, he characterizes the intellectual acumen of Neo-Scholastic theologians as "severe, and conclusive for the pure intellect that is in the condition to listen to it." But he sees merit in the method of discourse he had hitherto used, for the human person is not pure intellect: "It strikes me that my method, though it can by no means supersede theirs, might be advantageously used as a preparation for theirs; not as an Evangelical Preparation presented by theologians, especially in this age when the objections are drawn from philosophy rather than from history, from feeling rather than from logic" (*Works* 5: 167). However, he dropped, as he says, for the time "the doctrine of life." He follows the account of the day he received the Holy Communion:

As I did not make use in the last moment of my doctrine of communion, and as I had no occasion for it afterwards for my own mind, I made no further use of it; and when I addressed the public again, proceeded to defend my Catholic faith by the method ordinarily adopted by Catholic writers. I did this, because, seeing the Catholic Church and her dogmas to be infinitely

more than that doctrine had enabled me to conceive, I attached for the moment no great importance to it. . . . It did not comport with the modesty and humility of a recent convert to be intruding theories of his own upon the Catholic public, or to insist on methods of defending Catholic doctrine, adopted while he was a non-Catholic, and not recognized by Catholic theologians. Was it likely I had discovered any thing of value that had escaped the great theologians and doctors of the church? (*Works* 5: 168)

It was in this very sense that he clearly sets forth in "Faith and Theology": "Catholics, if at all instructed, always distinguish between faith and theology. Faith is the revealed word of God; theology is a human science, constructed by the human mind operating on divine things partly revealed, and partly evident from natural reason" (*Works* 8: 2). However, Brownson's insight of theology as "a human science" is somewhat consequential to our understanding of the historical nature of the faith, though he primarily ascribes it to theology:

Our human science, whether history or nature, of man or the earth, is constantly changing, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. It sometimes advances, it sometimes recedes, but as long as the human mind is active, it does not and cannot stand still. The human mind is limited and infirm, and takes in things not in their whole, all at once; it studies and comprehends them under special aspects or in a succession of views. Even the faith, though all revealed at once, is not taken in and appropriated at once. Our understanding of it grows with time and study, and gains with process of time. (*Works* 8: 22)

From here Brownson goes on to discuss the historical development of theology from Augustine down to modern times. Although he did not articulate it, he had already a consciousness that historicity is intermeshed with epistemology. In the October 1850 *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, he brings out this point more clearly as regards the dogma:

But as faith is the word of God revealed to the human understanding through the medium of human language, the dogma, or authoritative expression of faith, necessarily contracts up to a certain point a human element. There is in the dogma of faith, as believed by a human element or as defined by the

Church, a human element. And this human element may vary its form without losing its truth, or affecting the truth of the dogma. ("Vincenzo Gioberti," *Works* 2: 145)

As Pierre Leroux was to the pre-Catholic Brownson, so was Vincenzo Gioberti to the Catholic Brownson. Brownson's interpretative essays on both philosophers are probably the only studies on them in the English-speaking world. After conversion, he began to distance himself from Leroux's influence, and became fascinated with Gioberti's ontologism. Gioberti viewed the history of humanity as the continuous revelation of God and the elevation of humans, and taught that revelation was not completed in the teachings of the Apostles, but was perennial and ever open, manifesting itself in history and in human consciousness. His theory was eventually condemned by Rome. The fact that Brownson was influenced in a great measure for some time at the two different stages by the thoughts of both thinkers would indicate that he also shared the general nineteenth-century intellectual climate that accepted the development vision. Thus it is difficult to understand why he so sharply criticized John Henry Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 1845.

Four major Brownson essays on this book are now included in the fourteenth volume of his *Works*: "Newman's Development of Christian Doctrine," "Newman's Theory of Christian Doctrine," "The Dublin Review on Developments," and "Doctrinal Developments," which proves that he can carry on professional arguments with profuse quotations from his adversary, as well as detailed quotations and citations from traditional and authoritative theologians down to his time. Newman's theory must have been discussed on both sides of the Atlantic.

Newman's *Development* came out in the same year as Brownson's conversion to the Catholic Church. We cannot avoid the impression that Brownson's idea of Christian dogma is extremely rigid and does not allow for the slightest growth. At the outset he charges:

Mr. Newman, like professors of natural science, has been misled by what in these times is called "Inductive Philosophy,"—a philosophy which had never had "a local habitation or a name," more than other "airy nothings," if it been borne in mind that we have no logic by which we can conclude the unknown from the known. (*Works* 14: 8)

It is clear for us today that he identified too much revelation with Church's teaching office:

Mr. Newman proceeds on the assumption, that the revelation committed to the charge of the church was not a distinct, formal revelation, but a vague, loose, obscure revelation, which she at first only imperfectly apprehended, . . . By the "Mind" of the church which works out this dogmatic truth, Mr. Newman does not mean, strictly speaking, the constituted authority of the church, but the internal sense, very nearly what Moehler calls the "internal tradition" of the collective body of the faithful. When he speaks of the recipients of the revelation, he seems always to have in his mind the *ecclesia credens*, he seems to forget the *ecclesia docens*. He does not appear to have heard that Almighty God gave his revelation to pastors and teachers qualified from the first to teach it in its purity and integrity, clearly and distinctly, but that he threw it upon the great concourse of believers for them to receive and make the most of. . . . This view, if followed out, would suppress entirely the proper teaching authority of the church, competent at any moment to declare infallibly what is the precise truth revealed; or at least, would raise the *ecclesia credens* above the *ecclesia docens*, and reduce the office of the church teaching, from time to time, the dogmatic truth which the church believing has gradually and slowly worked out from her implicit feelings. The secret supernatural assistance would then attach to the church believing, and superintend the elaboration, rather than to the church teaching; and if to the church teaching at all, only so far as to enable it faithfully to collect and truly define what the church believing elaborate; the very doctrine we ourselves set forth in the first number of this *Review*, and insisted on, not as a reason for *not* going into the Roman Church, and for staying where we were. (*Works* 14: 11-13)

Newman's theory of doctrinal development is a result of his theological process from High-Church Anglicanism to reach the final assent to the Roman Pontiff's authority in teaching as the conclusion. Perhaps Brownson did not at first see this aspect of Newman's treatise well. We can see behind Brownson's acerbic criticism his ultramontane defense of Papal doctrinal and disciplinary authority in a democratic and republican polity that thinks itself something special in the world. When he argues on this point, historical perspective and a sense of organic

process were thrown out of his sight; he became a veritable controversialist.

He declares: "The church is not of yesterday, nor are we who live now the first enlightened defenders she has had. The best method of defense has hardly been reserved for us to discover; and perhaps it is sufficient reason for disturbing any method, that is new, that is a discovery of our own. The church is not here to follow the spirit of the age, but to control and direct, often to struggle against it" (*Works* 14: 26). In the end Brownson admits: "[Newman] is no longer outside of the church, seeking reasons to justify him in asking admission into her communion. His doubts and misgivings, his advances and his retreats, have given way to firm faith and filial confidence" (27). Brownson, to be sure, came to concentrate, in his defense of the visible Catholic ecclesial polity as a communion, upon the continual apostolic tradition, rather than fellowship and its uniqueness. But this apostolicity of the Church is founded on the historicity of Jesus. The Incarnation is still important, or rather his understanding is in a sense deepened. Jesus is not the transcendental spirit as the Unitarians say, but in his historicity he is the revelation of the concrete foundation and the norm for civilization.

In a review of a contemporary book, *Christ the Spirit*, in 1861, Brownson stresses the importance of the historical Jesus, and need to take the Incarnation as historical:

The Author rejects the personal or historical Christ, seeks to preserve "Christ the Spirit." We understand very well his doctrine, for we encountered it years ago with the Boston transcendentalists. But the very authority on which he relies for asserting Christ the spirit, asserts Christ the man, Christ conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, who was dead, and buried, and the third day rose again from the dead. Reject this authority and you know nothing of Jesus Christ at all, neither as person nor as spirit; accept it, you must accept him not as spirit only, but as spirit and flesh and bones, as a real, historical person. We cannot allow what suits our purpose and reject what militates against it. The authority, if good for the existence of Christ the Spirit, is good for the existence of Christ the person, Christ the incarnate God. ("Christ the Spirit," *Works* 3: 274)

V

After his conversion Brownson gained a wider forum, and discussed broader issues on faith and reason, nature and grace, and religion and science, which were all contemporary topics of heated discussion. We may leave to Butler's book the consideration of Brownson's political philosophy and theology as reflected in his discussion on American democracy and social reform ideas. I do not know whether we can connect Brownson's early theology with Henri de Lubac or Karl Rahner, as Carey does in his biography (388). In today's perspective of the spirit of the Christian world, Brownson's journalistic writings definitely show a strong combative stance to the contemporary Protestant churches. His strong theological ultramontanist reminds today's Catholic intellectuals of the narrowness of the bygone days. If one reads "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus" from *Brownson's Quarterly Review* for April, 1874 (*Works* 5: 572-79), one would certainly feel that his notion of salvation is out-dated.

Nonetheless the present-day reader would find in the following passage in "Our Lady of Lourdes," 1875, a Trinitarian vision of the creation, similar to Hans Urs von Bathasar's:

Indeed, the whole system of creation is a system of means to ends, and, in fact, could not be otherwise, since its prototype is in the ever-blessed Trinity, which it copies, or faintly expresses *ad extra*, as the three Divine Persons express the divine essence *ad intra*. In the Holy Trinity, the Holy Triad, we have principle, medium, and end. The Father is principle, the Son is medium, and the Holy Ghost is end—the consummator. As the *idea exemplaris*, or type of creation, is in the eternal essence of God, it must, through the free act of the Creator, express in a faint degree, *ad extra*, the Triad which expresses that eternal essence *ad intra*, or which, if we may so speak, constitutes that essence. Then everything in creation must express, in some degree, principle, medium, and end; and the end is unattainable without medium or means, as we see all through even the natural world. We are promised seed-time and harvest, but we must cultivate the soil, and sow the seed, or no crop will be obtained. In no case is the end gained but by the proper use of the divinely-appointed means. (*Selected Writings* 280)

Brownson's understanding of the Trinity expressed here only in a nutshell is

comparable to that of our contemporary theologians: unity of immanent Trinity and that of salvation economy. He connects eventually in this essay this vision of creation with Mariology; Mary "as the mother of the Incarnate Word" is "the medium through which is effected the deification of man" (*Selected Writings* 281). And she is "only below the Ineffable Trinity."

Brownson as a social critic had to cope with the rising tide of the so-called anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic Native American Party within nineteenth-century American society. The secularization of American civilization was apace. Internationally, in the Catholic Church, this was the time between Popes Gregory XVI and Leo XIII, when she lost all territorial power in the Italian peninsula, and the anti-clerical laicist spirit ran rampant in France and Italy. The Church's mentality was heavily invested in monarchy as the only political system to ensure religion: the spirit of liberalism and democracy were taken as against the Church. It was the time in which the Church condemned modernism by Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus* and asserted papal Infallibility by the First Vatican Council's definition. Leo XIII, the enlightened Pope, encouraged the participation of the Catholic citizens in society and politics, but he too condemned in his Apostolic Letter, 1899, so-called Americanism, a latent attitude of actively affirming the democratic system with its ideas of political and religious freedom.

This was a kind of warning, not the rebuke of an actually existing heresy. Brownson did not live to hear about this Letter. He affirmed the ideal of American civilization. "The Catholic Church also cherishes a spirit of independence, a loftiness of soul, favorable to the maintenance of popular freedom," he declares against the Native American Party ("Native Americanism" *Works* 10: 34). And Brownson reflects on the God-given privilege of American civilization:

We have been accustomed to trace the hand of a merciful Providence in reserving this New World to so late a day for Christian civilization; We have been in the habit of believing that it was not without a providential design, that here was reserved an open field in which that civilization, disengaging itself from the vices and corruptions of the Old World, might display itself in all its purity, strength, and glory. We have regarded it as a chosen land, not for one race, one people, and kindred, where they might come as to a holy asylum of peace and charity. It has been a cause of gratulation, of ardent thankfulness to Almighty God, that here was founded, as it were, a city of refuge, to which men might flee from oppression, be free from the trammels

of tyranny, regain their rights as men, and dwell in security. Here all partition walls which make enemies of different races and nations were to be broken down; all senseless and mischievous distinctions of rank and caste were to be discarded; and every man, no matter where born, in what language trained, was to be regarded as man,—as nothing more, as nothing less. Here we were to found, not a republic of Englishmen, of Frenchmen, of Dutchmen, of Irishmen, but of men; and to make the word *American* mean, not a man born on this soil or on that, but a free and accepted member of the grand republic of men. Such is what has been boasted as the principle and the destiny of men! (*Essays and Reviews* 421)

In the April 1855 review of his friend from the Brook Farm days, Isaac Hecker's autobiography, Brownson reveals that he is not a one-sided partisan in the Catholic vs. Protestant controversy, as it appears, but was genuinely open to dialogue with his deep conviction of American uniqueness and destiny: "There has yet been no real medium of communication between Catholic and non-Catholic Americans, and if our Catholic writers have understood the non-Catholic American, he has not understood them. They have not spoken to the comprehension of the real American mind and heart, or penetrated to what we would call the inner American life" ("Questions of the Soul," *Works* 14: 540). Gregory Butler broached the name of Brownson in connection with John Courtney Murry's *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Propositions* (212). Brownson is certainly a forerunner of American public theology. When in the future a narrative of American Catholic theology is conceived and written, Orestes Brownson would be its eponymous hero.

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