

Manifesto of Old Men and Simple Preachers

by [Barry Clark](#)

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Over time a man, if he is perceptive, comes to certain conclusions. The most startling is that the greatest truths were spoken to him throughout his life by ordinary men, simple preachers, old men sitting around drinking soda and eating peanuts, his father. These men, if beneficiaries of a culture and community that embraces common-sense as a virtue, know truths that philosophers for centuries have tried in various ways to express. Common-sense is something all men should know; common-sense informs us of certain natural laws, common-sense is God's gift of understanding.

Progressivism is based upon perceived empirical or scientific knowledge. One wonders what the ultimate cost of our fast-paced, progressive materialistic, industrial/post-industrial, consumerism will ultimately be. Over the course of history time and again philosophers, theologians, poets, historians and ordinary men of exceptional commonsense have written, spoken and preached against the various outcomes incumbent in unrestrained progressivism absent a human connection to nature and nature's God.

Progressivism is missionary, almost religious in nature. The ultimate goal of the progressive is progress itself. The economy of the progressive is not designed to conserve or preserve the wholesome and good things of a culture, region or people. The acquisition of material goods becomes an end unto itself, no matter if these material goods actually improve the real quality of life for the ordinary man. Instead of freeing man from the burdens of a harsh existence, consumerism has bound mankind in a form of slavery.

Despite the religious appearance of progressivism, the missionary zeal with which its adherents spread its "merits" and the fact that historically the very roots of what became progressive industrialist began with puritanical religious dissenters - progressivism in its secular humanist current form is divorced entirely from God and nature. The reliance on the belief that mankind can master the universe and all of nature, this secular humanist notion, depends upon the very

nature of mankind being progressive and basically good. This premise, this optimism concerning mankind is misplaced and wrong, a fact provable by historical observation.

In the name of progress, modernization and efficiency “Americanism” was born on this continent and by either force of will, envy or simple inertia exported to virtually every corner of the Earth, in small parts and large. Americanism, in its current bellicose form, was not always a foregone conclusion neither in North America and certainly not in the rest of the world. The war in 1861 and the defeat of the South eliminated the regional voice for agrarianism and a culture that represented the best hope for the maintenance of a lifestyle that supported an appreciation for the aesthetics of life itself, a reverence for family, the soil and a conservatism capable of withstanding unchecked progressivism. What was once a Northern ideology, became Americanism without a powerful alternative to oppose it, morphing into the key tenets of globalism.

It was in the name of progress that the “west was won”, at great cost to the people and the cultures that already lived there. It was the industrialization resulting from progress that gave rise to sprawling urban centers where men and children worked most of their waking lives for a pittance in compensation. Perhaps these were mere unfortunate realities of a culture adjusting to rapid technological changes combined with restless aggression that often occurs when a stronger nation competes with a weaker over resources. Conversely, it is also possible that the very reason these events occurred is because Americanism lacks the guiding principles of natural law and true conservatism.

In 1930 twelve Southerners collaborated on *"I'll Take My Stand"* providing a prophetic view of the world to come.¹ Observing from what we now must consider a simpler time they clearly saw the avarice of consumerism and the various cost to the arts, religion and quality of life in an increasingly industrialized society, a culture that developed without the tempering effect of conservatism and common-sense.

¹ (Southerners 1930)

In their statement of principles they observe:

“It is strange, of course, that a majority of men anywhere could ever as with one mind become enamored of industrialism: a system that has so little regard for individual wants. There is evidently a kind of thinking that rejoices in setting up a social objective which has no relation to the individual. Men are prepared to sacrifice their private dignity and happiness to an abstract social ideal, and without asking whether the social ideal produces the welfare of any individual man whatsoever. But this is absurd. The responsibility of men is for their own welfare and that of their neighbors; not for the hypothetical welfare of some fabulous creature called society.”

Returning to the old men and simple preachers that still dispense common-sense in rural America we can find ample evidence to support what they know intrinsically to be true. To the progressive, empirical or scientific data is all that matters – neither the old meanings of words or the received knowledge and wisdom of generations make a difference to their way of thinking. In the case of evidence that points to the ultimate failure of a tenet of progress the progressive merely prescribes more progress. Men of commonsense know better.

We have lost the simple civility that comes from an ordered community based upon principles and shared values; a love of the land, the place, family, God and a respect for who we are and those that came before. We have replaced our local communities with the generalization “society”. In this we have lost our local roots and our individuality.

As we have lost our own individual identities and our community civility, our government has stepped in to fill the role of the community for the good of “society “. The result is a significant separation between functions of government that were once relatively harmless and perhaps only irritating at worst to the ordinary citizen. Our police forces at all echelons have become dangerous in many situations to even ordinary citizens. One does not have to search far or deep to find copious evidence of unsuspecting, ordinary citizens being surprised by police action that can only be termed, in a historical perspective, as tyrannical and sometimes outright murderous.

The ecological cost of progress and consumerism is measurable or perhaps, considering our finite understanding of nature, immeasurable. We can quantify the number of species extinct or endangered by man’s hand. We can count the number of acres deforested and while we cannot

fully account for the true impact of our waste on the environment, if we are honest we have some idea of the magnitude. Men know instinctively that the world is our domain to use for our benefit. Nature's God told us as much, we should have dominion over the fields and the beast of the fields for our purposes. This is just and right. What we should not do is allow our sloth, greed and contempt for inconvenience to dissuade us from the duty to preserve as we use.

We are beginning to reckon the cost of our progressive perversion of agriculture. Our mass production farms, with animals stacked snout to tail, filled with filth and a daily dose of antibiotics and steroids is an affront to nature and our own humanity. Our genetically engineered hybrid seeds present potential complications to the environment and human health that we, as of yet, do not fully comprehend.

Our landscape is marred with identicalness everywhere you look. Each town and suburb look much the same, with familiar strip malls, fast food establishments and neatly ordered subdivisions. We have essentially lost all sense of locality and regional individuality. Our progress toward convenience and efficiencies has cost us the great beauty of our differences. We no longer know who we are and for many the only purpose of our existence is to acquire more transient things.

Corporations in our system have proven themselves to be soulless monstrosities motivated by profit without any of the tempering effects a man with a conscience might demonstrate. Wendell Berry speaking of these aberrations said; "A corporation, essentially, is a pile of money to which a number of persons have sold their moral allegiance." Our system of progress needed large entities to engage the forces of forward momentum - and thus we enacted an entire body of law to give essential personhood to the unliving in the shape of corporations. To correct what we saw as an inequity in this matter we empowered labor unions through force of law. We thus expanded the role of government, placing it as a "necessary" mediator between these groups to manage the numerous laws the government saw fit to create in a circumstance it birthed in the first place.

The free market system itself, spoken so highly of by libertarians, is a wonderful notion on a

small scale and in a community that lives according to first principles and conservative values. Berry says of free-market capitalism; "Let us have the candor to acknowledge that what we call "the economy" or 'the free market' is less and less distinguishable from warfare." A free market on a small scale is beautiful, as are most things on a small scale. In macro terms, with faceless giants essentially controlling the markets and influencing the government more than any private citizen could ever hope to do, free-market capitalism is criminal and contrary to natural law.

Americanism has given rise to utilitarianism in many forms and the impact of this point of view is enormous. Most notoriously, our very understanding of our laws, our Constitution and the role of our government has been modified significantly via utilitarian thought processes, both by commercial progressive "conservatives" and social egalitarian progressive liberals. Few "serious" observers even comment on the fact that the Constitution and form of government we now live under does not resemble at all the one ratified in 1789. As George P. Fletcher points out in "*Our Secret Constitution: How Lincoln Redefined American Democracy*" we essentially had a second constitution after 1865 based upon "organic nationhood, equality of all persons, and popular democracy" concepts different and opposed to those of our first constitution which promulgated "peoplehood as a voluntary association, individual freedom, and republicanism".² The words by which we assume we are governed under this new form of government seem good and noble. One need only look at the methods and the extreme means used to achieve this end and then honestly ask "is the ordinary man more free and secure now than a man that lived under what came before"? The honest answer is that the deplorable means used to forge this new government and Constitution, consisting of the death of over 600,000 Americans followed by deceit, extortion and the threat of more force was neither just nor legal. Most mainstream historians are only too pleased to continue the lies and deceit surrounding those provable events and make a villain of the South for standing up for the former form of government.

Seldom does the serious scholar examine the dubious circumstances and events surrounding the ratification of the fourteenth amendment, the most significant amendment to the Constitution.³ So great was the change brought about by this one amendment it consists of about

² (Fletcher 2001)

³ (Burke 2002)

as many words as all of the first ten combined. However, it is inconvenient to consider that this amendment was not legally ratified by any standard acceptable before or after its enactment - it is utilitarian verbiage, it centralizes power and therefore makes the “conservative” commercial progressives happy and it creates “equality” by enabling the central government to force discrimination of its own liking, this making the social equalitarian liberals happy.⁴ If force, coercion and deceit were used to enact the amendment then and courts have continuously redefined and expanded the meaning of the words since it is simply a matter of utilitarian fact - one easily accepted by people so caught up in progressive Americanism, to these it does not matter.⁵

However it should matter. The callous disregard for the actual processes and protections of real law in exchange for the appearance of law in order to accomplish some “good” is a perilous road. In the years since the enactment of this farce of law numerous new rights have emerged, social and economic rights. This of course is another farce, how can a government create a right? Rights come from God and are universally true even when they are not universally recognized. If a right exists it existed before the government, governments can merely affirm and protect rights, not create them. With these new “government created rights” have come laws that actually restrict the real rights of other men and in almost all cases add to the general tax burden of all men - depriving the citizenry of more of their property in the form of income they have earned through their labors – this is by any plain definition theft, taking by force of arms from one man to provide for another.

Under the delusion of progress we have lost our affinity for and propagation of the arts. We mass produce what we might attempted to call “art” created or performed by “artist” but as everything else in a consumer economy our “art” caters to the lowest denominator - the thing that will sell to the highest number. In terms of quality this has certainly proven not to be the best model, our “art” is crude, borders on vulgarity and passes more as mindless entertainment than real art. Despite the promise of industrialist to create machines that would reduce our work load and allow for more leisure time we find ourselves always living by a clock with no time for real

⁴ (McDonald 1991)

⁵ (Woods 2007)

leisure, even when we are not “at work”. It is no wonder that we have time only for entertainment and none for art. Corporate endowments made with the bounty derived from selling products people do not need have done nothing to enhance art in our culture and certainly have not kept what we call art focused on the primary subject of historical art - nature.

Our consumer-based economy forces us to be pioneers continually seeking new frontiers to conquer and exploit. The industrialist must become a globalist, for they cannot ignore a fundamental law of nature. That being that everything is finite, this includes resources and consumers. A production/consumer economy must continually expand, there is no such thing as sustainability in this model. Once the economy ceases to expand the real cost of previous expansion - debt - crushes down on the system. This very fact drives the foreign policy of a nation enslaved to the industrialist/consumer scheme. Americanism is more than our senseless production of items we do not need and our increasing debt to buy these things and our callous disregard for the natural cost of these items. Americanism drives us to be missionaries of consumerism to a global market, it requires us to engage in war to secure “tranquility” in regions that have resources we need. In this sense it is ultimately immoral.

Finally, as a last assault on nature our modern, industrial, progressive, egalitarian culture has sought to fully separate man from the founder of Natural Law. Religious attendance is historically low per capita and those that do attend likely worship in a “modern setting” replete with all of the trappings and tools of an industrial society. Power Point services are common, hymns are out and mindless feel good songs are in, strange and false doctrines have become mainstream. We have determined that the State (Federal Government) and therefore the groups that benefit most from the state (corporations, labor unions and “special” status citizens) should be free from religion and the moral lessons it tries to teach. After all, real law has proven to get in the way of progress, why should Natural Law as adhered to by religion be different. In our fast-paced, competitive world, devoid of ties to home and family, most Americans have accepted this last tenet of Americanism and abandoned spiritual religion intended to honor Nature’s God entirely. To be certain we have retained religion, statism for some or a dozen other -isms for others, but religion focused on the true God is a dying occurrence.

One could ask where this endless drive for progress will end. The old men possessed of common-sense probably already know and could articulate it in a number of colorful ways. The twelve Southern authors of "*I'll Take My Stand*" ended their introduction with this words:

“For, in conclusion, this much is clear: If a community, or a section, or a race, or an age, is groaning under industrialism, and well aware that it is an evil dispensation, it must find the way to throw it off. To think that this cannot be done is pusillanimous. And if the whole community, section, race, or age thinks it cannot be done, then it has simply lost its political genius and doomed itself to impotence.”

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