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Our Enemy, the State

by Albert Jay Nock

Reprint Revision 1.0
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First Printing 1935
Second Printing 1946

In Memoriam
Edmund Cadwalader Evans

A Sound Economist, One of
The Few Who Understand
The Nature of The State

Be it or be it not true that Man is shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it is unquestionably true that Government is begotten of aggression, and by aggression.

Herbert Spencer, 1850

This is the gravest danger that today threatens civilization: State intervention, the absorption of all spontaneous social effort by the State; that is to say, of spontaneous historical action, which in the long-run sustains, nourishes and impels human destinies.

Jose Ortega y Gasset, 1922

It (the State) has taken on a vast mass of new duties and responsibilities; it has spread out its powers until they penetrate to every act of the citizen, however secret; it has begun to throw around its operations the high dignity and impeccability of a State religion; its agents become a separate and superior caste, with authority to bind and loose, and their thumbs in every pot. But it still remains, as it was in the beginning, the common enemy of all well-disposed, industrious and decent men.

Henry L. Mencken, 1926

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

When **Our Enemy, the State** appeared in 1935, its literary merit, rather than its philosophic content, attracted attention to it. The times were not ripe for an acceptance of its predictions, still less for the argument on which these predictions were based. Faith in traditional frontier individualism had not yet been shaken by the course of events. Against this faith the argument that the same economic forces, which in all times and in all nations drive toward the ascendancy of political power at the expense of social power, were in operation here made little headway. That is, the feeling that "it cannot happen here" was too difficult a hurdle for the book to overcome.

By the time the first edition had run out, the development of public affairs gave the argument of the book ample testimony. In less than a decade, it was evident to many Americans that their country was not immune from the philosophy which had captured European thinking. The times were proving Mr. Nock's thesis, and by irresistible word-of-mouth advertising a demand for the book began to manifest itself just when it was no longer available; And the plates lead been put to war purposes.

In 1943, he had a second edition in mind. I talked with him several times about it, urging him to elaborate on the economic ideas, since these, it seemed to me, were inadequately developed for the reader with a limited knowledge of political economy. He agreed that this ought to be done, but in a separate book, or in a second part of this book, and suggested that I try my hand at it. Nothing came of the matter because of the war. He died on August 19, 1945.

This volume is an exact duplication of the first edition. He intended to make some slight changes, principally, as he told me, in the substitution of current illustrations for those which might carry less weight with the younger reader. As for the sequel stressing economics, this will have to be done. At any rate, **Our Enemy, the State** needs no support.

Frank Chodorov, New York City, May 28th, 1946

PREFACE TO REPRINT REVISION 1.0

The basic principles and economic predictions written by Albert Jay Nock in 1935 are a foundation for the stark reality America faces in the second millenium. Over the past sixty-five years, the uncontrolled growth and seizure power of the State has eroded any fundamental basis for social power that was once inherent with the People. The necessity of political social and economic reform, as a means to control the State, has become as pointless as the principles written within our Constitution.

As predicted by Mr. Nock, the sovereign Rights and powers of our towns and communities have now all been absorbed into the federal United States at Washington City. Without objection or complaint, the State has taken over the duties of charity and education once belonging to the church. Under the guise of societal welfare, the federal State has become a religion of its own and the benign grantor of common benevolence.

Since Lincoln's Civil War, each generation of Americans has increasingly believed that the power of the ballot is the controlling factor behind our purported republican system. In reality, our current political system is built on Roman State imperialism, not the electorate. Our Legislators have the appearance of representation, but without the reality. Americans have been led to believe, and have willingly accepted, the principle that State interests and community interests are the same. In all actuality, they are diametrically opposed. Political party reform and reorganization is perhaps the greatest deception ever accepted by the American people. Any expectation of changing State power to social power through political party administration is an illusion.

Michel Chevalier appears to have been correct when he observed, back in 1836, that the American People had no common philosophy and followed no set beliefs. Our current American self-portrait is one of immediate revelation rather than long-term vision. As King Solomon wrote, "where there is no vision, the people perish." Where the church was once the central depository of American morals, it is now nothing more than displaced artificial corporate entities. The American People have lost their dream and the State has replaced it with a new religion.

Thomas Paine warned us that government was a necessary evil caused by the inability of moral virtue to govern. While all government is initiated to insure freedom and security, there exists today a strong parallel between the decline of moral character and the increase of State power. As history has repeatedly recorded, social deterioration combined with

uncontrolled State power has been the demise of every great government. It can be presumed that our current government system is no exception. Our centralized State government cannot help itself from destruction any better than a drug addict can resist more drugs.

Christian ethics are the key to any society or government. When the moral values of a community decline, the innate and corruptible power of the State increases. When a State becomes the fictitious god of charitable offerings, social wellbeing, and ethical guidance, the People become a cult of followers. Without a strong moral fibre and the vision of Christian sovereignty, America will soon perish.

It is our prayer that, after reading this book, you will understand how the State is a product of the People, and; that our present State is what we have allowed it to become. The church foundation must be restored from the choke-hold of the State and the moral roots of the American liberty tree must be nourished. As our entire nation is rotting from the ground up to the highest branches, it is the responsibility of Christians to re-establish the social well-being of our soil, the local communities. The unchecked power grid of the State must be shut down, in terms of social control, and replaced by righteous charity rooted from each family in order for His Liberty Tree to survive in America. Ecclesia Libertas.

Anthony Wayne, Editor

Many footnotes have been added to the following original thesis written by Albert Nock. Not only has the English language changed in its usage and meaning over the past sixty-five years, but the events of the 1930's have long been forgotten. For this reason, we have made many addendums to help clarify the original text.