



IS THE PERFECT REALLY THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD?

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"The perfect is the enemy of the good," wrote deist Voltaire in an 18th century poem. The idea, of course, is that the pursuit of perfection may sometimes prevent an action less perfect that still produces something good...or at least better than nothing.

That argument has become a figurative phylactery in Washington many wear on their foreheads to expedite compromise they claim is noble. President Obama alluded to it in his most recent address to the nation on the debt ceiling:

"...Do you know what people are fed up with most of all? They're fed up with a town where compromise has become a dirty word..."

I think he may be right. The typical American of 2011 is the personification of compromise. In an age of multiculturalism, diversity, and moral equivalence it is the person holding fast who garnishes disdain. All things are tolerated but certainty. Most of us would not pay a price, no matter how small for a principle. We can't comprehend historical accounts of people like Sir Thomas Moore who lost his life rather than take an oath. Career...money....power....popularity...acceptance...those are the cherished goals of our culture. Any one willing to sacrifice such things for honor, principle, morality or long-term objectives are hobbits needing to be sent back to Middle Earth.

At least that's how a Wall Street Journal Editorial characterized Republican conservatives trying to hold the line on spending and keep their word to the American people. As Congress and the President flail about, seemingly unable, certainly unwilling to face the real truth about America's coming financial debacle, a band of principled Representatives and Senators who see clearly what must be done, are coming under ridicule.

Senator John McCain took to the Senate Chamber, echoing the WSJ metaphor, calling their resolve "crack pot political thinking." The same thinking "that turned Sharron Angle and Christine O'Donnell into G.O.P. nominees," he taunted, referring to two losing Tea Party Senate candidates in 2010. This, spoken arguably by the person besides President Obama most responsible for the tanking economy; the 2008 Republican Presidential Candidate, who by foolish, misguided political calculation, refused to fight. Of course he is opposed to anyone who sees clearly for he is a confused advocate of "the good" and not the "perfect." McCain was the personification of the "good" rather than the "perfect."

"America, after all," President Obama continued, *"has always been a grand experiment in compromise."* Really? Wasn't it Patrick Henry who said, "Give me liberty or give me death?" Wasn't it the framers who made an all-out declaration of freedom, pledging their lives and their fortunes?

"As a democracy made up of every race and religion, where every belief and point of view is welcomed, we have put to the test time and again the proposition at the heart of our founding: that out of many, we are one." President Obama is as confused as John McCain. Living together peacefully is not the same as giving up deeply held beliefs in a grand compromise.

"We have engaged in fierce and passionate debates about the issues of the day, but from slavery to war, from civil liberties to questions of economic justice, we have tried to live by (compromise.) Did hundreds of thousands of American soldiers give up their lives during the Civil War so there would be a compromise on slavery? The "good" rather than the "perfect?" Did thousands more lay down their lives to fight Nazi Germany so that Neville Chamberlain could make his appeasement? Did hundreds of black Americans walk thru dogs and hoses to gain a little bit of freedom?

America was NOT built on compromise. People from every race and creed came together around an immutable set of principles laid down by the Founding Fathers. The Founders were adamant and passionate about what they believed. So were ensuing generations. It's only our current generation, indulged, poorly educated, and indoctrinated by the Left that knows not what they believe.

"History is scattered with the stories of those who held fast to rigid ideologies and refused to listen to those who disagreed." Abraham Lincoln? William Wilberforce? Those great compromisers? *"But those are not the Americans we remember."* What great compromisers do we remember??? John F. Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis? Ronald Reagan at Reykjavik? I can't remember a single one.

"We remember the Americans who put country above self, and set personal grievances aside for the greater good." Is it a personal grievance to want to stop government from bankrupting the country? *"We remember the Americans... who put aside pride and party to form a more perfect union."* Really? If it is pride or party to try to prevent national bankruptcy, we need more of both.

No doubt trying to achieve perfection can be an impediment in many areas, but perfection is not synonymous with doing what is right. Perfection is about us; difficult choices are always about others.

Hats off to the Congressional Hobbits! And when they retreat to Middle Earth, let's hope they take America with them!