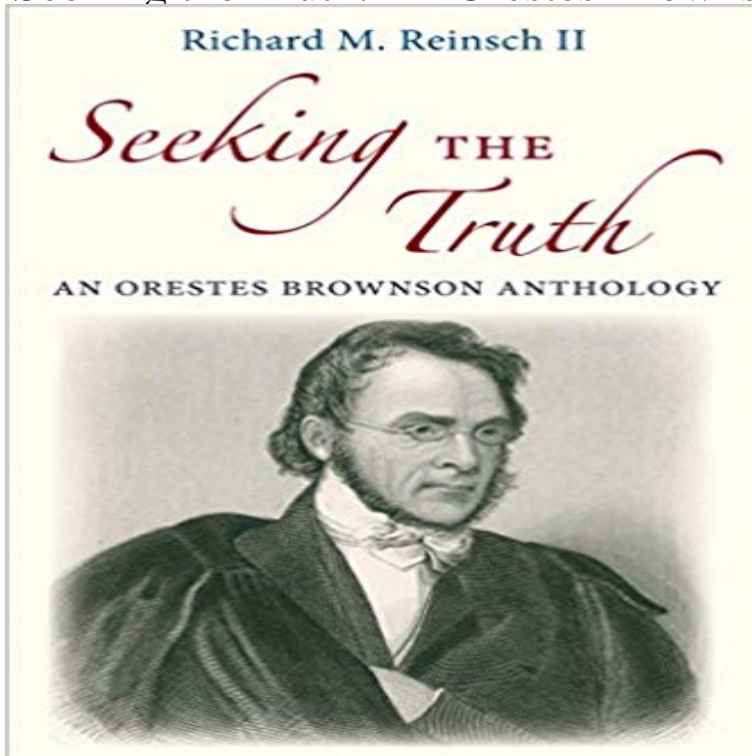


Seeking the Truth: An Orestes Brownson Anthology



This anthology of essays from the great nineteenth-century thinker Orestes A. Brownson will engage the reader with key writings from one of the most compelling American Catholic intellectuals. Brownson was a spiritual seeker who migrated through Presbyterianism, Universalism, skepticism, Unitarianism, and Transcendentalist thought, and finally at age 41 to Catholicism. Politically he found himself anticipating socialism in the 1830s, then, turning into a disciple of John Calhoun's states rights constitutionalism, and later he incorporated his criticisms of mass democracy into a unique philosophical defense of the Constitution that emerged in full bloom during the Civil War. Brownson's life, in its several phases, turns, and allegiances, has remained noteworthy for his rejection of modern pragmatism's aim to obtain material comfort in service of man's desires, while deemphasizing deeper concerns for philosophical and spiritual truth. Brownson's writings, born from his existential wranglings were, therefore, addressed to our authentic human longings to know the truth about ourselves. If much of late modern thought can be characterized as dualistic, fractured, and subjective, Brownson's questing was that of a modern intellectual using modern philosophical resources in dialogue with pre-modern and classical sources to recover the dialectical whole of knowledge. Therefore the intellectual quest must contemplate the natural and the supernatural, reason and faith, religion and science, the various levels and forms of political authority, the beginning and end of man, and the relationships that exist among these sets of inquiries. Resulting from Brownson's study of these universal questions is also a particular application of his learning. Brownson, unlike almost any other American figure, illuminated the promises and the limitations of American

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