

GRAND TOUR

Bully Pulpit

By Bruce W. Cook



IS IT NAIVE TO STATE THAT A GREAT measure of the enlightenment in the model of American society can be found in the degree of acceptance and tolerance afforded the minority segments of this population in a predominantly Caucasian, Anglo-Saxon, Christian majority? As we approach a census of some 300 million citizens at the dawn of the second millennium, has our compass wavered in terms of balancing the desires of many against the rights of few? Has America, and the world, simply grown too large, too close and too competitive to find common ground?

If there is to be peace in our time, we must not abandon decency in favor of a mismanaged majority rule. The demise of the great American society is what might be labeled as a massive move toward passive-aggressive politics. In other words, we have a collective fear of standing for anything, yet we bear our anger when old sensibilities are offended or challenged. Ironically, we serve neither the greater common good nor the minority voice. Instead we are often seen as duplicitous, manipulative and self servicing, both from differing sectors within our own society, and from outside perspectives as well.

While it is certainly not a brilliant observation, the great social dilemmas of our time are directly tied to economics. Historians will claim that it has always been this way. The time line of human destiny, the evolution of society, the outcome of war, the advancement of peace has indeed always been as much about economics as it has been about politics, religion, natural resources or expansion and military power.

The difference today, in spite of the number of people still living in hunger and poverty worldwide, is that the social and economic revolution of the mid-20th century (following WWII) changed mankind forever. The rise of the middle class, not only in America, but around the world, in various forms and fabrications in both developed and developing nations, elevated millions of people into the commercial mainstream.

Prior to the era of two cars in every driveway, people had less, survived with less, and bonded with one another to maintain a semblance of security for no other reason than to have enough food on the table to feed the family. Specifically, divorce was less of an option because both men and women needed one another. There was not the personal freedom to

move on. Abortion was not the major topic of the political mainstream because there was no sexual kaleidoscope of love in the lexicon of human relations. Oh, people still did it. The population explosion didn't come from drinking the water. Nevertheless, economic opportunity was a key factor in opening doors of sexual freedom, expression and lifestyle change, including the expansion of women's rights.

This may sound like a yearning for a simpler time. It is not the case. The past may have been simpler, but it was not necessarily kinder. Today we are faced with the nuclear threat of North Korea, the murderous actions of terrorists, and the melee in Iraq and elsewhere. Yesterday, Hitler murdered millions and threatened the very freedom of civilized man. Stalin obliterated millions more in Russia. The list of despots and their demons is as long and horrific as the history of mankind.

With this in mind, as we enter a new year, 2006, how can we face our challenges in a manner that affords progress, permits freedom, advances humanitarianism and moves humankind forward rather than backwards? The answer, my dear reader, is both biblical and ancient, tried and true, completely uncomplicated, non-technical and would not be particularly categorized as new age, or any age for that matter. The answer, or rather the hope of man, of America, of the planet can be found in one expression.

Do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you

The economic changes aforementioned that created the vast middle class American society that dominates the ideological path of this nation, also created a new age of freedom from cultural, religious, sexual, racial and ethnic suppression that not long ago dominated both the American and the world landscapes. This vast new freedom has resulted in growing pains leading to not yet fully defined moral, ethical and ideological questions. We must strive in the New Year and beyond to open our hearts and our minds to the possibility that righteousness is not so much based on dogma and doctrine, but rather on justice for all. And that justice for all is obtainable if we ask ourselves to adhere to one simple, age-old expression—the ultimate basic tenet of just human behavior.

Do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you.

Wishing the world a new year of justice and peace. **GT**

Bruce Cook is the creator of Grand Tour Magazine. He is a twice-weekly columnist for the Los Angeles Times/Daily Pilot, and serves as Editor of the prestigious Bay Window Magazine. Cook has been heard on San Diego radio for the past five years, and is an Emmy-nominated television writer and producer responsible for such programs as Entertainment Tonight.