

# GRAND TOUR

*Bully Pulpit*

By Bruce W. Cook



It is most curious that in a world set to advance via science, technology, and intellectual curiosity into a new and daring age of possibilities, 21st century humankind, including in particular American citizens [since I am among that demographic] are mired in contentious debate over the role of

religion in our life, our society, our government.

The debate over the removal of statues on government property displaying the Ten Commandments, and the utterance of the words “one nation, under God” in The Pledge of Allegiance reduce men to the breaking point, even to the pursuit of arms in defense of God in society – or conversely in defense from God in society.

The greatness that is the foundation of the American civilization is not based on the fact that we are a nation poised to praise God, but rather that we are a nation prepared to safeguard the freedom of the individual to choose to praise God or to live without God entirely. The American Republic was created as a secular state. Our government exists to protect our freedom, to protect our property, to protect and promote our economic prosperity.

Frequently we are admonished by pundits pushing their own religious agendas, that “our founders” based our constitution, at least in part, in the Judeo-Christian tradition as written in both Old and New Testaments of The Bible. In fact, the founding philosophy of this nation was based on what might be more appropriately termed an intellectual approach to the science of the age interpreted to fit a new national model created to advance human liberty without the providence of King or Church. Indeed, our founders, and many men and women of conscience then and now serving in government embody a spirit of “enlightened deism”. In other words, their personal faith in a greater power, or the God of nature, or a specific belief of faith in a defined religion, does not exclude those who do not share their faith from the freedom of the American equation, under God or not.

Over the course of human history great societies have faded into memory and archeological dissection because their blessed belief over that of their neighbor propelled war. In my humble view, if God exists in this world, then God exists in the spirit and the execution of justice among men on the planet. In every age, in every civilization, what has survived thousands of years of war, has been the ultimate triumph of justice. In the end it is not power, not might, not money, not the sublimation of

countless numbers of people that makes a difference in the world...that survives all else. It is the spirit, the practice of doing the right thing. Being a person standing for justice, equal and fair treatment, kindness and compassion for others, is the ultimate expression of divine providence on earth.

Americans have become overly concerned with the “image” and less concerned with the reality of justice. If people lived in righteous compliance with the Ten Commandments, they wouldn’t be so concerned with the display of the message. And, those who fear said display as an intrusion of church over state, would fear far less living among people who believed and practiced just principles.

Our political and our religious traditions, separately and together, that we hold so dear and that we believe are the cornerstone of civilization, will pass into obscurity, fading to dust along with the Greeks, the Romans, and every other dominate society of mankind past, if we do not face the duplicity, the hypocrisy, and the injustice that has overtaken our society falsely in the name of God, Country and truth.

As this predominantly Christian nation debates the role of God and state; as we question if the death penalty is immoral, if abortion is murder, if gays should be granted equal rights including marriage under the law of state and church, if women are indeed equal to men in all aspects of life, if religion should be taught in schools, if the pledge should be “Under God” and if the Ten Commandments should be displayed in bronze in front of the county courthouse...ask yourself if you live, day to day, a just life?

Despite the teaching of the Church for nearly two thousand years, I dare to state, humbly, that God does not condone injustice in small or large part, man to man, or nation to nation. Forgiveness is not absolution. Survival of the American ideal lies not in might, not in adherence to “accepted” religious tradition, but rather in the practice of just and righteous acts... on a personal level as well as on a collective societal basis.

If America wants to stand for freedom, we must first stand for justice, and we must mean it. The world will watch, and if truth prevails, so will peace. **GT**

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