

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Mr Edmund Burke (1729 -1797), an Irish-born, British statesman and political philosopher, while referring to the Conciliation with the Americas, as the United States of America was called in his day, told the British Parliament:

'The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again: And, a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.'

His words were as true in his day as they are in ours. The United States of America is, today, learning this lesson in Iraq – sadly. When, on March 21, 2003, President George W. Bush ordered in more than 100,000 US troops 'to liberate' Iraq from the oppressive political regime of its late despotic President Saddam Hussein, I recall that this good Christian man made special mention of his dream that the Middle East be democratised. At the time, I questioned whether or not (a) this was possible and (b) would the peoples of the Middle East, especially the Muslims, wish it. For myself, I am very much in favour of the idea of democracy, but I realise that not all of the peoples of the world share my view. I have some friends who were born of Jewish mothers, signifying that they are members of this religion, numbering about 6 million people, today. Not everybody loves a Jew, in the same way that not everybody loves a Hindu, a Sikh, a Protestant, a Parsee, etc. In fact, of all of the adherents of religions of the world, today, the Jew is, most likely, the most disliked because, inter alia, he is stubborn and he refuses to integrate, freely, into other communities and societies. Also, only too often, the Jew holds himself out to be higher and better than others, claiming to be 'the Chosen People'. The Romans, when they ruled the civilised world, hated the Jews because they were the terrible trouble-makers of the Roman Empire, refusing to be subjugated to the heel of the Roman overlords. The Holy Roman Catholic See, certainly, does not believe in democracy because Catholicism, by definition, acknowledges the Bishop of Rome – the Pope – as the legitimate head of the Church; and, his word is sacrosanct. Obedience to the Pope is part of this 'universal' religious belief. There is no room in the mind of a good practising Catholic but to obey. That is the accepted view of the Catholics of the southern part of the United States of America, the mid-west and, certainly in South America, but I have been told that there are 'other' Catholics, also, who maintain that, while the Catholic Church is not democratic, at the same time, there is institutional democracy at large. I don't really understand the difference, but, there you have it: The Catholic Church is a dictatorship, complete with institutional democracy in certain unofficial schisms. I don't really know too much about the 'other' Catholics, but I am told that they do exist in small pockets, here and there. In 1650, it was fact that it was forbidden in Catholic Canada for the laity to own a Bible because it was held that the laity, in general, was unable to understand that which God had written in the Holy Scriptures. Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures was the exclusive province of ordained Catholic priests in this period of Canadian history. There are, in the world, about one billion Catholics, today. It is the largest, single Christian body in the world. If the Pope orders, in an encyclical, that this or that must be done, it is expected that his orders will be carried out because Catholics believe that God speaks through the Pope. This concept may be considered laughable in some quarters, but about one billion people in the world believe this to be true.

One of the many problems with President George W. Bush, in my opinion, is that he does not seem to appreciate, fully, that not everybody in the world shares his, and his country's, views of things. Materialism is not for everybody, in the same way that not everybody enjoys caviar and lobster. For myself, it appears

that the more things that I possess, the more consideration has to be given to the safeguarding of those possessions. For the man who has nothing and wants for nothing, the burden of possession must be, indeed, light. In the race to acquire the baubles and trappings of today's world, many people sacrifice their health, thinking, obviously mistakenly, that wealth is the most important thing in this world; wealth is power; and, power is the medium of exchange, leading to supreme happiness. Nothing could be further from the truth. For me, creativity comes first because of the lasting joys, derived from creativity. But not everybody is creative and I am well aware of that fact.

Some people do not like to lead; they enjoy being loyal followers. Some people do not like to ponder the imponderable and prefer to accept and 'tinned' versions, dished out to the laity by the clergy. The Q'ran delivers just this message – and many others. The Pope demands that his 'sheep' be followers, not leaders. Catholics are proscribed from questioning the ways of the Lord: That would be a sacrilege. The United States of America claims to maintain tolerance of other religious beliefs, but, at the same time, one notes that, thus far, there has never been a Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, or black President, and, up until recently, there has never even been a black candidate for the highest office of the largest and strongest economy of the world. It is unlikely, in my lifetime, that a black man will rise to the top of the American political pile. Perhaps, more's the pity! In the history of the United States, only white Protestant men have been selected to rule this country. Many of these leaders have been, without question, outstanding thinkers. Some, however, have been criminals – President Richard Nixon perpetrated acts, contrary to the criminal code of the country and was never brought to book because his successor, President Gerald Ford, exonerated him for the welfare of the country – some have been perjurers – President Bill Clinton immediately springs to mind – and some have been careless, foolish, and ignorant, albeit well-meaning, nevertheless: President George W. Bush. It is clear as the political dust settles in Washington that President George W. Bush was not apprised of the mind-set of the average Muslim of the Middle East. The United States is, today, reaping the rewards of that terrible mistake. To be tritish: The United States and its allies have won the war for Baghdad, but have lost the peace. It was not force of arms that caused the well-meaning 'infidels' of the West to lose the peace in Iraq, it was, simply put, the lack of knowledge of Eastern philosophy and Eastern theosophy. Theosophy is the heart and soul of the Muslim religion. And it cannot be understood, simply by reading about the history of the Muslim religion in the rarefied air of Harvard, Oxford, or Tübingen Universities. I have, always, maintained, My Dear Grandchild, that ideas are cheap, their execution is, more often than not, very expensive. President George W. Bush's idea was to democratise Iraq and to use that country as a showcase for other Middle Eastern countries: See how this Muslim country has been transformed; all of the people of this country are, today, enjoying democracy; the market economy is putting bread on the table of the man in the street; you, too, can benefit if you adopt the American version of democracy. God Bless America! But things did not go, exactly, as planned for this Christian leader of the most-powerful country the world has ever known. I shall not harp on the tens of thousands Iraqi dead and maimed, the soldiers, the policemen, the mothers and fathers, and, most pitiful of all, the innocent children of this historic country. The United States of America is not to be blamed for its failure in this country and neither is President George W. Bush. Where the failure, really, lies is in the education system of the United States of America. The arrogance of President George W. Bush, in thinking that he could impose his will on the population of Iraq, is a product of his nurture. He is not a bad man, just a stupid one. He, unfortunately, is not alone in his ignorance. I visited Louisiana, some years ago, and talked to many of the population of what the Americans like to call, The Deep South. What I learned was that, generally, the population is intolerant of anybody who is not a Catholic or Christian. As for blacks, one is told that they have the same rights and whites ... 'that is the reason that I allow them into my house to help with the cleaning, to cut my grass in my back yard, and to wash my cars on the weekends.' Things have changed very little in this part of the United States since the promulgation of the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, during the American Civil War, declaring all 'slaves within any State, or designated part of a State ... then ... in rebellion, ... shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.' Words, sadly, do not, always, translate into deeds. I cannot imagine that Texas, the birthplace of President George W. Bush, is very different from Louisiana in the way that its population treats and looks upon its black population, save for the occasional 'Uncle Tom'. The shackles of the past are difficult to cast adrift, aren't they?

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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