

Vitamin (W)oke

A Bitter Pill for Some

Folks who don't like the contents of this essay are likely to make accusations that I "Blame America First." That is incorrect. I blame greed and its ever-eager accomplice – religion. So, I blame America only to the extent that America's destiny has been shaped by the toxic combination of greed and religion.

There are also likely to be accusations linking the contents of this essay to delusional conspiracy theories involving liberal-controlled "Re-education Camps" targeting "Patriots" and "Conservatives." There is no such thing as a "Re-education Camp" because there is no such thing as "re-education." Education is a thing. Continuing Education is a thing. But "Re-education" is not a thing. If a mind is indoctrinated with religion, revisionist history, propaganda, or other thought contagion, then education has not occurred. Removing thought contagions in preparation for actual education is not "re-education" because that would imply that there had been some sort of previous education. Removal of various thought contagions is simply a complication and impediment to actual education. In another scenario, there may be an effort to replace actual education with religious dogma, propaganda, or other thought contagion. Again, that is not "re-education" – such efforts would be better described as "De-education" or "Dis-education."

This essay does not propose to tell anyone what to think. It does ask that folks learn to think rationally. This will be painful for some folks. That is because there are these pesky things known as "inescapable conclusions." Once one learns to think rationally, then one becomes subject to those "inescapable conclusions." Giving up long-held beliefs isn't an easy or painless process for everyone.

Revisionist History

I started hearing the term "revisionist history" some years ago. Ironically the term was being used to defend an inaccurate history. Adherents of traditional beliefs surrounding the Columbus Day holiday were upset that the hero status of Christopher Columbus was being questioned. The term "revisionist history" was being applied to facts which aggravated a demographic which was largely white and of European heritage. Facts are that Columbus "discovered" America only in the sense that Europeans generally hadn't been aware of it previously. There were civilizations already present in America when Columbus "discovered" it. Unfortunately, Columbus's "discovery" was the beginning of a disaster for the civilizations already present. European and African diseases were major factors in this disaster. Malaria decimated indigenous civilizations – sharply curtailing their ability to resist the takeover by European powers. The introduction of Malaria was probably an accident – and thereby somewhat forgivable. Later on, Smallpox was likely intentionally leveraged as a weapon against the indigenous peoples of North America – not so forgivable and a clear violation of the rule known as "golden."

So, we are going to lay claim to the term "revisionist history" – taking it from adherents of inaccurate history to use the term to describe what it logically implies.

There are a great many examples of revisionist history. We will choose some that lend themselves to a better understanding of the problems with revisionist history. If folks "know" anything about the

genesis of World War II in the Pacific, then it is likely to be something along the lines of “sneaky Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor without provocation on ‘December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy.’”

It is true that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. But to say that the attack was without provocation is the epitome of “revisionist history.”

One of the overarching lessons which should be drawn from history is that events occur in long unbroken sequences chained together by cause-and-effect relationships. Applying this overarching lesson to the attack of December 7, 1941, means that we can’t understand that attack without looking at prior events in the Pacific. Because events occur in unbroken sequences, there are many places to jump into the chain of events which culminated in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Let’s first consider the events of July 8, 1853, in Tokyo Bay. On this day Commodore Matthew Perry entered Tokyo Bay with four steam-powered warships. Perry then proceeded to “negotiate” a trade treaty with the Japanese Government. Wealthy merchants of America and Europe were no doubt delighted that Perry had “taught a lesson” to the Japanese. Apparently, there had been some clash between western notions of property rights and more of a “finders keepers” attitude when western merchant ships were unfortunate enough to be wrecked on Japanese shores. Western merchants regarded Japanese policy as piracy. Those alleged acts of piracy led to the events of July 8, 1853. I am sure the Japanese were indeed “taught a lesson” on July 8, 1853 – with that lesson being that “might makes right.” This probably wasn’t exactly the lesson intended by Perry and supporters of his mission.

The Japanese were a proud people and had “lost face” at the hands of Perry. To avoid more humiliation in the future, they began to emulate their antagonist. The Japanese were also a very industrious people. Soon their growing military prowess would threaten American domination of the Pacific. That in turn led to various treaties meant to limit Japanese ascension. When those efforts failed, the United States government turned to trade embargoes against Japan. At this point it is important to know a few key facts about the geology of Japan. Japan occupies an island arc that sits above a subduction zone where one piece of Earth’s crust is being forced under another. This type of geology includes volcanoes such as the iconic Mount Fuji. In general, island arcs are very young when considered against geological timescales. All that taken together means the Japanese home islands are relatively devoid of valuable minerals and fossil fuels. These kinds of resources were critical to the military ambitions of Japan. Thus, Japan moved to secure access to these resources by invading and occupying lands of other Pacific rim nations. The trade embargoes imposed by the United States were interpreted as a threat to Japanese interests in the Pacific – clearly a provocation from the Japanese perspective.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was just one event in a long chain of events related to the struggle for military dominance in the Pacific. The chain is easily traceable all the way back to perceived piracy by Japan. But the chain does not end there. We won’t try to follow the chain any further back in this essay – the application of the overarching rule is sufficiently demonstrated without tracing further back. The takeaway is that there is a clear and unbroken chain of events linking July 8, 1853, in Tokyo Bay to the attack on Pearl Harbor some 88 years later.

There were two especially horrific events near the end of hostilities between Japan and the United States. The first of these was the detonation of a bomb named “Little Boy” over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The second was the detonation of a bomb named “Fat Man” over Nagasaki three days after the bombing of Hiroshima. Propaganda from the United States attempted to rationalize these atrocities by claiming that the overwhelming show of force would lead to early capitulation by the Japanese. This was ostensibly to save the lives of U.S. Servicemen. It is important to know that Japan had offered conditional surrender prior to the detonation of those bombs. The sole condition of surrender was that Japan be permitted to retain their Emperor. However, the United States demanded unconditional surrender. But strangely, the United States accepted the surrender a few days after committing atrocities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and allowed Japan to retain its Emperor. What changed?

Much of the evidence is circumstantial, but it is likely that the intended audience for the overwhelming show of force was not the people of Japan or the government of Japan. The intended audience was probably one Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Stalin was a fascist and the brutal dictator of Russia – creating the “Iron Curtain” and adding territory captured during World War II to the Soviet Empire. He and his ambitions were perceived as a significant threat by the governments of the United States and many of its allies.

The overwhelming show of force was wasted and did not have the desired effect on Stalin. Turns out he had a competent espionage network and knew about the American nuclear weapons project in advance. In fact, he was well along with his own nuclear weapons project. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are therefore events properly understood as links in the unbroken chain leading to the period of history known as the Cold War.

We have agreed that one of the overarching lessons gleaned from history is that events lead to more events in long sequences of cause and effect. We should now agree to a second overarching lesson learned from history. No matter who you are, your ancestral lineage probably includes some cruel and unscrupulous folks who committed atrocities against others. This is important because one cannot resolve to do better in the future if one will not acknowledge the imperfections of our past and present.

Whitewashing of History

Much of our popular, but revisionist history is about denial of atrocities committed by our ancestors. For example, the narrative surrounding the founding of the United States is romanticized with heroic acts and lofty ideals attributed to “the Founding Fathers.” Here is a popular snippet from their lofty ideals.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Sounds great provided one ignores the fact that there were basically two kinds of “Founding Father.” One kind of “Founding Father” owned slaves. The other kind of “Founding Father” negotiated away the ostensibly “inalienable rights” of enslaved persons in order to achieve other goals.

Founding Mothers

Oh, right. There weren't any. We'll return to the subject of the Founding Fathers and slavery shortly. But first we will briefly consider the surprisingly relevant topic of the "Founding Mothers." As noted at the beginning of this section: "Oh, right. There weren't any." Why not? Seems the Founding Fathers didn't envision any place for women in government. This point is apparently entirely lost on "Originalist" Amy Coney Barrett – despite the fact that the Founding Fathers made no provision for voting by females – much less a provision for several females to sit on the highest Court in the land.

As envisioned by the Founding Fathers, the circumstances of a woman's life were largely dictated by what quality of husband could be attained based on her appearance, family name, or family fortune. Women were treated little better than slaves – "given in marriage" by one man to another man. A woman had little control over her life until "given in marriage" by a man. At this point little changed except that she now answered to a different man. One thing that would change is that her new master could make demands on her regarding conception and delivery of heirs. Baby girls would eventually grow up and be "given in marriage" to a new master.

Once one understands the place occupied by women in early American society, then it is not difficult to understand how the Founding Fathers might have seen little difference between the transactions surrounding the trade of women, the trade of enslaved women or the trade of enslaved men.

Slavery as practiced by the Founding Fathers may have been among the most cruel and noxious forms of slavery in recorded history. First, slave traders kidnapped people in Africa. Next the slave traders would pack the kidnapped people onto ships. There are cargo manifests that show how slave traders packed excess "cargo" on the slave ships. Their business model was to invest little in food and fresh water for the "cargo." This meant the starving and dehydrated "cargo" would remain docile for the trip across the ocean. Keep in mind that technology has changed dramatically since the days of the Transatlantic Slave trade. In those days sailing ships relied entirely on renewable wind power for propulsion. The Transatlantic crossing was slow by modern standards and typically took six to eight weeks. The limited food and water during that time meant that much of the "cargo" would die of disease, starvation, or dehydration before reaching America.

Calcium carbonate forms the rigid matrix of our bones. The pressure of the deep ocean enhances the seawater's capacity to dissolve calcium carbonate. Consequently, the incriminating bones of all the dead "cargo" thrown overboard by slave traders have dissolved long ago. But recall those cargo manifests? Those reveal how many human skeletons once littered the seafloor between Africa and North America.

The gene pool of descendants of people kidnapped from Africa is different than the gene pool of their relatives who remained in Africa. And that is not just because slaveowners liked to diddle their slave girls. The descendants of people kidnapped from Africa are significantly more likely to have a genetic predisposition for Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) and Type II Diabetes. That is because of the selection pressure represented by surviving the trip as "cargo" across the Atlantic. The genetic characteristics that lead to Hypertension and Type II Diabetes would have also made someone more likely to survive the starvation and dehydration used by slave-traders to keep their "cargo" docile and compliant. The process of evolution is iterative. The trip across the Atlantic affected a genetic lineage only once because descendants of survivors were obviously not taken back to Africa and then subjected to the arduous journey of their parents. Consequently, deaths

attributed to the Transatlantic slave trade effectively acted on a single generation. This may be somewhat confusing as the Transatlantic slave trade lasted longer than a generation – but recall that each affected lineage made the crossing only once. The fact that a single iteration of the evolutionary process made a discernable difference in the gene pool of descendants of these kidnapped Africans hints at the power of evolutionary processes when applied recursively.

The slaves who survived the arduous Transatlantic journey may not have been the fortunate ones. After arrival in America, the kidnapped Africans were sold at auction to the highest bidder. Once auctioned, the slave was forced to toil to the benefit of the slave owner. The slave did not get to enjoy any of the allegedly “inalienable rights” of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The fruits of their labor were taken by slave-owners in an extreme example of wage theft. This continued year after year until the slave succumbed to disease, infirmity or murder.

The Second Amendment and Slavery

Slaves weren't stupid. Slaves didn't joyously toil for their owners. Slaves had to be coerced into toiling long hours for their owners. This coercion included threat of death by force of arms. Escaped slaves would be chased down – and either coerced back to their life as a slave or killed by slave-owners or agents of the slave-owners. This is the murder that often marked the end of a slave's life.

The importance of firearms in maintaining control over slaves was critical to slave owners. Slaveowners placed so much importance on firearms as a means to sustain slavery that they forced it into the “Bill of Rights.” This should be seen as hugely ironic because the Second Amendment was conceived primarily as a means to permanently curtail the allegedly “inalienable” rights of enslaved people.

The Founding Fathers thus penned the following:

“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

Now, let us be clear. The Founding Fathers were politicians. Politicians often lie. Politicians often deceive. Politicians often obfuscate. Politicians often need cover stories.

Recall that there were two types of Founding Fathers: those who owned slaves and those who would negotiate away the allegedly “inalienable” rights of slaves. Among the second cadre there were certainly some who would have been quite squeamish about signing their names to a naked Second Amendment. If honestly written, the Second Amendment might read “A well regulated slave labor force, being necessary to the profits of certain wealthy white landowners, the right of wealthy white landowners to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

So political cover was needed before the squeamish politicians could be persuaded to sign on to the Second Amendment. Thus, those nonsensical bits of questionable grammar were prepended to the right to bear arms. The Second Amendment was conceived complete with its first coat of whitewash. Layer upon layer of whitewash has been slathered on the Amendment over the years. One of these layers is the notion that the Founding Fathers intended the Second Amendment to act as a check on government overreach. This is farcical being as the Founding Fathers were the government and would have had little interest in limiting their own power. Anyone paying attention

would also note that history doesn't corroborate the cover story regarding a "well regulated militia." What is seen in our history is a reliance on a combination of conscription (the draft) and mercenary (paid) soldiers.

Some things never change. The Founding Fathers invoked National Security to curtail the rights of slaves. In 2001, George W. Bush invoked National Security when authorizing un-regulated wiretapping of U.S. citizens. Invoking "National Security" obviously remains a powerful political strategy for politicians to this day.

Before we move on from the Second Amendment, we should consider how those grammatically questionable bits at the beginning make it different from all the other Amendments included in the "Bill of Rights." All the other Amendments included in the Bill of Rights either defined a right of the people or placed some limitation on the Federal Government. None of the other Amendments contain any reasoning as to why the Amendment was needed. None of the other Amendments give the slightest hint as to any responsibility which might attach to the right being conferred. It is revealing that only the Second Amendment needed a "cover story."

The United States was founded with slavery as a cornerstone. Slavery is enshrined not only in the Second Amendment, but also in the original Constitution prior to any amendments.

Here is an excerpt from Constitution of the United State of America, Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3: Apportionment of Representatives and taxes:

"Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons."

This language controls the balance of power in the U.S. House of Representatives as well as the balance of power in the Electoral College. If the allegedly "inalienable" rights of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" had applied to all "persons," then this language could have been much less complicated. The words "free Persons" needs no explanation. The words "bound to Service for a Term of Years" refers to Indentured Servitude. Indentured Servitude was a type of contract entered into by a person whereby they agreed to be a servant/slave for a fixed length of time. Terms of such contracts typically specified that the indentured servant would receive food, clothing and shelter along with such things as humane treatment and forgiveness of debt as part of the contract. The words "Indians not taxed" referred to indigenous people leading a life apart from the European invaders. The "Indians" were not considered as participants in society and the language here dismissed them from representation. They were assumed to have no vote and to have no other say in their governance. So far, we have two groups of people: one group participating equally in voting and governance and one group excluded. But what of those last six words? The words "three fifths of all other Persons" do two things. First, these words euphemistically refer to slaves and then counts each of those slaves as three fifths of a person for the purposes of apportioning power in the U.S. House of Representatives and for apportioning power in the Electoral College. This had the effect of shifting power from voters in non-slave states and concentrating it with wealthy white slave owners and their political allies.

Some things never change. The United States has roughly one twentieth of the world's population. Ironically, "the Land of the Free" is among the countries with the highest percentage of its population locked away in jail. In fact, the "land of the free" accounts for about one fifth of the world's incarcerated population. This is wildly disproportionate when considered on a per capita basis. This incarcerated population is disproportionately made up of persons of color. Persons of African descent account for about 14% of the total population in the United States. Yet, persons of African descent account for 37% of the jailed population. These people are "disenfranchised" by laws which deny voting rights (and voting responsibilities) to folks in jail. Now consider where the jails are located. In general, one sees a pattern where jails are located in more rural areas, but the people in the jail originated in more urban areas. Now consider the Census. The Census counts people where they are. The net result is that non-voting people get counted in rural areas and increase the representation apportioned to those areas. This effectively shifts power from minorities in urban areas and transfers that power to whites in rural areas. It is the shadow of the three fifths rule – despite the fact that the three fifths rule was theoretically canceled by Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment. We should also note here that many states have "once a felon, always a felon" policies which serve to permanently diminish minority voting power.

There is additional language in the U.S. Constitution related to slavery. Recall that the Founding Fathers were politicians, and politicians often use deceptive language when dealing with contentious issues.

Slavery was a point of contention from the very beginning. Obviously, some might have objected on moral or ethical grounds. Anyone sensitive to hypocrisy or cognitive dissonance would have difficulty with curtailing the allegedly "inalienable" rights of enslaved people. The issue was somewhat clouded by the antiquated practice of Indentured Servitude whereby a person could voluntarily enter into a form of slavery. However, much of the resistance to slavery originated as opposition to an unfair business practice. Some folks from states without slavery objected because they feared slave labor would allow southern states to undercut the prices of goods produced in northern states. However, all these objections taken together did not prevail. The allegedly "inalienable" rights of slaves were negotiated away by politicians with other priorities.

Such political negotiation resulted in Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution. This clause is generally referred to as the "Fugitive Clause."

"No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due."

Notice how no form of the word slave appears in the text. Slaves are euphemistically included with Indentured Servants as Persons "held to Service or Labour." This language in the Constitution made clear that a slave was still a slave even if they escaped to a jurisdiction where slavery was illegal. Slave owners and their agents were free to chase down escaped slaves anywhere across the young United States.

Let's look at another instance where we can see whitewash layered on top of whitewash. In Florida it is proposed to teach students that slaves benefited from something like on-the-job training to

gain skills from which the slaves profited later in life. This is complete nonsense. As mentioned earlier, slaves were forced to labor for their owners until death or when infirmity rendered the slave useless.

A typical understanding of the “Battle of the Alamo” among Americans is corrupted by portrayals originating in Hollywood. Romanticized portrayals from Hollywood and other sources of revisionist history don’t often make clear why Santa Anna used an army to attack the defenders of the Alamo. Well, the reason was to restore public order. There was a multi-faceted problem with illegal immigration from the United States. (Texas was part of Mexico at that time.) Mexico welcomed immigrants from the United States, but there were conditions. Chief among those conditions was conversion to Catholicism – the official state religion of Mexico. Mexico was comparatively consistent in its application of human rights, so slavery was illegal. Many immigrants were ignoring the requirement to convert to Catholicism. This made them illegal immigrants. This was compounded by the fact that many of these illegal immigrants brought slaves with them from the United States. So, Santa Anna saw reason to march with an army to restore public order.

In a public relations misstep, Santa Anna’s army massacred the defenders of the Alamo. Anger over this became a rallying call and eventually Texas seceded from Mexico. The Battle of the Alamo took place from February 23 through March 6 of 1836. Texas was annexed as the twenty-eighth state on December 29, 1845. This triggered the Mexican-American War which officially lasted from April 25, 1846 until February 2, 1848.

Score for this round was slave owners: 1, Rule-of-Law: 0. The next round would start in about a dozen years.

The United States Civil War officially started on April 12, 1861 and officially ended on April 9, 1865. This war has been the subject of perhaps the most vigorous whitewashing in history. Many whitewashers would have us believe that the “War of Northern Aggression” was fought by the south for noble purposes such as preserving “states’ rights.” Advocates of an honest history might counter that the only “rights” in contention were the allegedly “inalienable” rights of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” That is an obvious and valid point. But the circumstances leading up to the War between the States were a bit more complicated than that. Recall how some people in northern states regarded slavery as an unfair trade practice which would allow southern states to undercut the price of goods produced in northern states.

Passages from the Christian Bible are often used to justify slavery. However, slavery as imagined in the Christian Bible was probably quite a bit different than the slavery practiced in the young United States of America. In “Biblical Times” a mistreated slave might hope to slip away and start a new life out of reach of their former owner. In the young United States of America such escape was much less likely. Features such as skin pigmentation and texture of hair marked slaves as surely as if they had been branded. Consequently, an escaped slave could have had little hope of traveling to some other place and blending in as a “free person.”

We should look at another aspect of slavery in the United States before moving on to other topics. It appears to be human nature to assume a lower intelligence in people with a different language and enculturation. Slave owners in the United States leveraged this to perpetuate the notion that kidnapped Africans were inferior. Education was systematically denied to kidnapped Africans and

their children. This served to perpetuate the perception of inferiority of enslaved people. Some things never change. We still see unequal access to education for the children of urban populations. This is often accomplished by manipulation of school funding formulas. Marginalized communities receive fewer tax dollars per student – conveniently perpetuating unequal educational outcomes and the perception that descendants of kidnapped Africans are inferior.

Slave owners among the “Founding Fathers” were concerned with retaining their “wins” in negotiations over our founding documents – at least during their own lifetimes. Consequently, we see yet another concession made to them embedded in the Constitution.

Article 1, Section 9, Clause 1 of the Constitution:

“The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.”

As before, slavery is the subject, but we do not see any form of the word “slave” in this clause. The clause guaranteed the “status quo” for slave owners through 1808 – including the right to continue taking possession of people kidnapped from Africa. Considering life expectancies at the time, we must note that this language guaranteed a slave-owning “Founding Father” could anticipate the “status quo” for the remainder of his days. The fact that slavery was enshrined as the first clause of this section of the Constitution speaks to the importance of the issue to slave-owners among the “Founding Fathers.” So, rather than defining the “Founding Fathers” based solely on their lofty ideals or heroic deeds, it is appropriate to also consider their selfishness and greed.

This seems a likely point in our discussion to introduce a third overarching lesson from history. That third lesson is that war is about who gets to exploit the people and resources of a region. War rarely benefits regular folks or the folks on the front lines. The primary beneficiaries of war are arms dealers and the wealthy.

The Russian war on Ukraine should be seen as nothing more than smash-and-grab crime by the Russian Kleptocracy. Other wars may *appear* to be fought over religious differences or ethnicity. This is because religion is often used as a wedge issue and as an organizing tool. Xenophobia is often leveraged as a tool to build a base of political power.

Let’s have an honest look at how religion usually has a cozy relationship with government. A good example to start with is one of the most far-reaching empires ever assembled. That empire even has a religious term as part of its name. The Holy Roman Empire stretched from the British Isles to the Middle East. Remnants of the vast empire still have religions based on the religion used to bind the Holy Roman Empire. Two major branches of that binding religion survive as Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Religious leaders prop up regimes and regimes prop up religious sects. If asked for a contemporary example of this, I imagine that many Americans might first cite the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan. It is easier to see faults in the backyards of others than it is to see faults in one’s own backyard. Islamic countries do indeed provide many clear examples of governance sanctioned by a religious sect in exchange for state sanction of the religion. We can

cite Iran as an example of this without needing further explanation. Relatively few Americans will know about Wahhabism. Wahhabism is the form of Islam found in Saudi Arabia.

Examples are everywhere. We briefly mentioned that conversion to Catholicism was a condition for immigration to Mexico in the time of the Battle of the Alamo. If one watches a British Coronation, then it is clear that the ceremony is primarily a religious anointing of the new Monarch. Here in the United States things are not quite so obvious, but one sees that institutions such as Liberty University have an outsized voice in our governance. There are also very lucrative tax breaks for religious enterprises. It is not coincidental that the United States didn't have a Catholic President until 1961 – ending a run of thirty-four Protestant or Protestant-aligned Presidencies.

Ukraine could obviously not abide a religion which had sanctioned war to force Ukraine back under the control of the Kremlin. So now there is a Ukrainian Orthodox Church which no longer answers to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. It is reported that Patriarch Kirill urged Vladimir Putin to use force to bring Ukraine back to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Holy Roman Empire was responsible for quite a lot of pain and bloodshed in its heyday. Its legacy is more of the same.

The Scopes “Monkey Trial” and Climate Change Denialism

In 1925 the state of Tennessee made it a crime to cast doubt on the origins story presented in the Christian Bible's Book of Genesis. This law was conceived to counter a growing body of scientific evidence that Humankind had evolved from Apes. This new law in Tennessee also obviously contravened the “Establishment Clause.”

The first amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads as follows:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

It is likely significant that the Founding Fathers put freedom of religion ahead of all other ideas in the Bill of Rights – and by rational extension Freedom *from* religion for those not inclined toward religion. The words “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” are known as the “Establishment Clause.”

The Tennessee law establishing deference to the Book of Genesis as official curriculum in government-funded schools challenged the Bill of Rights as well as the notion that the Bill of Rights superseded any conflicting state law.

The inevitable legal challenge came in the form of prosecution of a substitute teacher named John T. Scopes. The trial was very high profile and was nicknamed “Monkey Trial” because Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution was on trial as much as was Scopes. The Scopes “Monkey Trial” should be viewed as part of wider pushback against the Theory of Evolution. The result was a widespread indoctrination which told religious folks that they could and should believe whatever they liked – without regard to science or fact. This prepared fertile ground for science denialism – and students of history should view it as an event in a very significant chain of events.

The Nicotine Industrial Complex.

The nicotine industry had grown to be a very profitable segment of the economy by the early 1960's. In 1964, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report which concluded that cigarette smoking caused Cancer and Lung Disease. The Merchants of Death who profited from the sale of tobacco products feared loss of revenue and immediately set about defending their lucrative businesses.

Recall all those religious folks who had been conditioned that science should be ignored and that they should believe whatever was comforting and convenient? Those folks proved to be fertile ground for the propaganda machine deployed by the Merchants of Death. The propaganda machine was relentless – and didn't just target the part of science which implicated the Nicotine Industrial Complex as a leading cause of death and disease. Apparently, some scientists were already aware sixty years ago that the burning of fossil fuels was changing the atmosphere and would predictably lead to global warming. So unsurprisingly, denial of industry as a cause of global warming was included in the broad assault on science conducted on behalf of profitable industries.

In December, 2000, the “Conservatives” of the United States Supreme Court halted recounts in Florida and made George W. Bush the next President of the United States. The Fossil Fuel Industry now had a puppet in the Oval Office. The Bush Administration micro-managed what government scientists could say. The Bush Administration also forced the adoption of the term “Climate Change” as that sounded less threatening than “Global Warming.” Bush would later use flimsy pretexts to try to grab Iraqi oil resources for his cronies in the fossil fuel industry. Bush would also undermine renewable energy sources – such as when he colluded with Enron to create artificial energy crises in California.

Later, the fossil fuel industry would get one of their own assigned to lead the Environmental Protection Agency – one Scott Pruitt nominated by Donald J. Trump. Pruitt would undermine the mission of the EPA until he was ousted for conflict-of-interest and other ethics violations.

So, there is the chain; people conditioned to ignore science in favor of religious origin stories, those people leveraged and cultivated by propagandists for the Nicotine Industrial Complex, with propagandists for the Fossil Fuel Industry piling on.

But the chain does not end there. There was a small but vocal anti-vaccination movement in place prior to COVID-19 – but the COVID-19 outbreak gave them a platform and a much larger presence in the public consciousness. Much of their angst over vaccinations appears to have originally focused on Gardasil. Gardasil vaccinates against Human Papillomavirus (HPV). This is important because HPV causes cervical and other cancers. Originally, Gardasil was recommended for all girls by age eleven or twelve. The intention was to have vaccination in place prior to any sexual contact. The focus was on girls because cervical cancer was the most common cancer caused by HPV. All of this should seem reasonable and rational. However, some uptight parents apparently assumed that vaccinations – like age-appropriate sex education – would be interpreted by their daughters as permission and encouragement to become wanton sluts.

There now exists a cottage industry of anti-vaccination disinformation led by the likes of “Doctor” Joseph Mercola. Mercola is regarded by rational people as a “misinformation super-spreader.” His dogma endangers the health and well-being of many people across the globe. He opposes vaccination – apparently preferring abstinence until marriage policies. Reality is that teenagers are likely to experiment and that people of all ages are prone to extra-marital sex. Consequently, sound

public health recommendations are now that all children be fully vaccinated against HPV by age 15. Boys are now included because HPV can cause penile cancer as well as other cancers. Also, a vaccinated boy or man cannot spread HPV to an unvaccinated girl or woman. This is an example of “herd immunity.”

Freedom vs. Anarchy

Many MAGA-type Americans invoke “Freedom” when confronted with vaccine or mask mandates intended to safeguard the public health. This invocation of “Freedom” is remarkable in the depths of its ignorance and remarkable as an extreme expression of selfishness.

First of all, freedom is not an absolute. As we shall soon see, “Freedom” is in fact somewhat oxymoronic – a concept forever locked in war with its very self.

Let us consider two hypothetical persons. Each is told they have absolute “freedom.” One of them is lazy and immediately gets the idea of declaring the other person to be their slave. The newly declared slave is obviously not happy about this and immediately has the idea to procure a firearm. The slave now uses the firearm to reclaim their “freedom” by murdering the person who asserted ownership over the slave. This scenario is anarchistic. Thus, we can see that “freedom” and anarchy are inextricably bound to one another. More “freedom” equals more anarchy and less anarchy means less “freedom.” A mathematician might state “anarchy varies directly with freedom.”

“Freedom” has always been constrained since the very earliest precursors leading to a civilized society. “Freedom” has been constrained since the first time cavemen agreed to stop bashing one another over the head with rocks to steal one another’s cavewomen. This sort of agreement is an example of compromise. In this compromise, a caveman trades his “freedom” to steal another caveman’s cavewoman for the freedom to go about his daily activities without constantly worrying about being bashed over the head by other cavemen seeking to steal his cavewoman.

Matthew 7:12 of the Holy Bible:

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

This passage isn’t as far removed from the cavemen in the preceding paragraph as you might think. Both are forms of the rule known as “Golden.” The rule leads to a handy test to quickly determine right from wrong. Simply replace words in the Golden Rule with the behavior to be tested.

“Bash other cavemen over the head with rocks and steal their cavewomen as you would have other cavemen bash you over the head with rocks and steal your cavewoman.”

“Refrain from coveting thy neighbor’s cavewoman as you would have thy neighbor refrain from coveting thine own cavewoman.”

If the resulting construct sounds sane and rational then the behavior is “right.” If the resulting construct sounds irrational and insane then the behavior is “wrong.”

Returning to the subject of public health mandates, we could construct something like: “Spread deadly COVID-19 to thy neighbor’s dear old mum as you would have thine neighbor spread deadly

COVID-19 to thine own dear old mum.” Or perhaps “Take simple precautions against spreading possibly deadly COVID-19 to others as you would have others take simple precautions against spreading possibly deadly COVID-19 to you. Under the rule known as “Golden” you would obviously wear a mask when around others, get the COVID-19 vaccine, wash your hands often, and avoid unnecessary in-person social interactions.

So, when you hear “freedom” this and “freedom” that, remember freedom isn’t free – it is compromise and forever constrained by something very much like the rule known as “Golden.”

Pervasive Wage Theft

We briefly considered slavery as an extreme example of wage theft. Wage theft occurs when an employer takes a disproportionate or unfair share of value created by an employee. Slavery and wage theft obviously fail to conform to the rule known as “Golden.” Yet wage theft is pervasive in the United States of America. It is so pervasive that most of us have become completely accustomed to wage theft and don’t even notice it. Wage theft has become part of “normal.” In this instance “normal” is not right.

To understand why wage theft is pervasive in the USA we must first understand that significant unemployment is official U.S. Government policy. That may seem a shocking statement to some newly “woke” citizens. So, let’s see how that works.

Federal Reserve Board vs. Full Employment

Folks who are attentive to current events may from time to time see news about the Federal Reserve Board adjusting something called the “Prime Interest Rate.” For purposes of this discussion, all we need to know about the “Prime Interest Rate” is that it directly affects the cost of capital. This sounds innocent enough at first. But we shall soon see that the Prime Interest Rate *indirectly* affects the employment rate.

This is because cost of capital affects every business’s ability to expand and function as a “job creator.”

We must be extremely cautious with the term “job creator.” That is because there is a fictitious and romanticized version in addition to the real-world reality-based version. There are a number of special interest groups who would like us to believe that legions of heroic “job creators” are eager and waiting to give us all good paying jobs – if only we would first sweep away all the overly burdensome government regulation. Their hidden agenda is usually pro-pollution, anti-worker and anti-public health. In reality, “Job Creators” create good paying jobs in this country only as a last resort. “Job Creators” will first try to squeeze more from their existing workforce. Then they will try to export the work to a low-wage jurisdiction or automate the work. The real world “job creator” is motivated primarily by profit and does not care how profit is achieved. A “Job Creator” will create a good-paying job in this country only after exhausting every possible alternative.

Inflation is often mentioned in conjunction with changes to the Prime Interest Rate. When inflationary pressures prevail then the Federal Reserve Board generally raises the cost of capital. This cools off business expansion – and cools off hiring by businesses. This is important because when labor markets approach universal employment of able adults then workers can demand more

pay. These demands for higher pay constitute an inflationary pressure – due to basic economic rules regarding supply and demand. Core rules of economics are that more well-paid workers mean more dollars competing for goods and services – driving up the price of goods and services and eroding the value of the dollars. When the purchasing power of dollars is eroded we call that inflation. In practical terms, the Federal Reserve Board manipulates the cost of capital to hold unemployment around one in twenty-five able adults. As those unemployed folks seek work – for whatever meager wages are offered – the cost of labor is capped and the accompanying inflationary pressure is reduced.

Thus, a mathematician might write “Cost of capital varies directly with the Prime Interest Rate” and “The Employment Rate varies inversely with cost of capital” thus “The Employment Rate varies inversely with the Prime Interest Rate.”

This method of regulating the economy is wholly irrational. It permanently tilts the playing field in favor of the wealthy and against employees. It allows for pervasive wage theft where billionaires take a disproportionate share of value created by employees. Unemployed and underpaid folks end up homeless – living in their cars, or living on the streets if they are even less fortunate. Some turn to crime as they are denied jobs or public assistance. Unemployment of able adults greatly reduces quality of life for everyone except the billionaires. The vast wealth of billionaires allows them to isolate their lives from street crime, homeless encampments, overwhelmed law enforcement, and all the other ills which are the result of billionaire greed.

The link between the greed of the wealthy and widespread homelessness may not be readily apparent to everyone. So, let’s take a moment to look at how that works. Homelessness can be looked at as three separate demographic groups. One group is economically disadvantaged. These people are able to work, but are under-employed or unemployed due to U.S. Government policy requiring 4-5% unemployment to contain inflationary pressures. Folks in another group have been “broken” by being sent off to wage war in foreign countries. A third group is composed of people who are “broken” by other causes such as birth defects, substance abuse by a parent, or their own addictions. Before the Reagan Administration there were publicly funded institutions which cared for people with significant disabilities. The Reagan Administration cut funding for such public institutions under the guise of reuniting people cared for in such institutions with their loving families. There may well have been some portion of people cared for in such institutions who could be cared for by their relatives. However, it should not require a rocket scientist to figure out that the mother of a baby born with fetal alcohol syndrome is not likely to be the best caregiver for that baby. And programs to help that mother successfully care for her baby are chronically underfunded for the same reason the Reagan Administration cut funding for those public institutions in the first place. That reason was intense lobbying by wealthy folks whose greed demanded freedom from taxation. We see an overwhelmed system of care facilities for veterans for basically the same reason – intense anti-tax lobbying by the ultra-wealthy. Able adults find themselves homeless due to pervasive wage-theft by millionaires and billionaires. Thus, we can see that greed among the richest folks is the primary driver of homelessness across the country. This means that homelessness is not a crime committed by the homeless. Homelessness is a crime committed by the most powerful amongst us – and a crime committed against the least powerful amongst us.

Speaking of billionaire greed, as this discussion is being put to paper, fully 53% of inflationary input is from billionaire greed. Billionaires keep raising prices on goods and services. They obfuscate and blame things like “supply chain disruptions” and economic policies of the current Administration for the price increases. But honest economists will point to the ever-increasing share of profits hoarded by billionaires as the current majority driver of inflation. Blaming the Biden Administration for the resulting inflation has the added benefit of undermining the political party which is less aligned with the priorities of the billionaire special-interest group.

We would be remiss not to examine a particular bit of propaganda from billionaires here. That propaganda says that the “welfare state” perpetuates a “cycle of poverty” by teaching new generations to be reliant on “government hand-outs.” This bit of propaganda is most often heard as part of an effort to cut welfare programs and force more people into jobs paying the most meager of wages. The hidden agenda is to magnify the effect of Federal Reserve Board policies by injecting more job-seekers into a job market where the supply of workers already significantly exceeds the number of available jobs.

Fascism Masquerading as Communism and Socialism

Most Americans misunderstand Communism, Socialism and Fascism – to the delight of ultra capitalists. This circumstance arises because many fascists started out espousing communism or socialist ideals. But communistic or socialist governments often quickly devolve to some form of dictatorship or oligarchy. George Orwell’s exploration of this phenomenon in *Animal Farm* is instructive in this regard.

In its purest form communism doesn’t require government or even money. In a purely communistic society, each person would contribute according to their ability and take according to their need. One doesn’t need to be much of a student of human nature to see why a purely communistic society is likely doomed to fail. There is a tendency to suspect that “freeloaders” might be cheating and contributing less than is their ability. Resentment over suspected “freeloaders” would quickly sap motivation of those contributing to the maximum of their ability. Communism is thus doomed by basic human nature. But that doesn’t prevent fascists from calling themselves communists.

Socialism adds a way to track how much each person is contributing and limits how much any one person can take. This regulation is most often through currency and wages. Socialism doesn’t require or imply any particular form of government. A successful socialist society could be overseen by a benevolent monarch or benevolent dictator. It is worth noting that the countries with the overall happiest populations have a form of government known as democratic socialism. In democratic socialism there are elected leaders. The elected government then determines which functions are best left to “free markets” and which functions are best accomplished jointly in the interest of the “common good.” There will typically be some regulation of private industry in the interest of consumer protection. Other functions such as healthcare may be entirely managed by the democratic government to prevent exploitation and to guarantee universal access.

As with people calling themselves communist, it is important to keep in mind that just because someone labels themselves as “socialist,” that doesn’t mean they are socialist. The “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” (USSR) had the word “Socialist” in their name. The USSR was in fact an example of a brutal sort of fascism concerned primarily with preserving the power of the ruling

class. This portion of the discussion would not be complete without mention of the “National Socialist German Workers’ Party.” The leader of that party included the word “Socialist” in the name chosen for the party. This party would quickly devolve into a brutal dictatorship led by a textbook fascist. The National Socialist party is more commonly known as the Nazi Party and the leader was the notorious Adolph Hitler.

So, history has given us a lot of confusion about what socialism really is. Socialism is not fascism. We see genuine socialism at work in places such as the countries of Scandinavia. We see fascism at work in places such as Russia.

“Democracy” is a term which is often misused in a way similar to the way we see misuse of the term “socialism.” The “Democratic People's Republic of Korea” (DPRK) includes the word “Democratic” in the name of their country. You are more likely to recognize the DPRK as North Korea – where strongman Kim Jong Un controls one of the most repressive regimes on Earth. Just because someone claims the mantle of democracy doesn’t mean it is a democracy.

The United States certainly fancies itself to be a democracy. In fact, the United States fancies itself to be the *leading* democracy. However, we must remember that the United States started out with a government in which female persons might be enslaved or “free.” Enslaved female persons had no say in governance. Female persons not enslaved were ostensibly “free” – but not free to vote or otherwise have a say in governance. Enslaved men had no say in governance. Things have obviously changed since then. Women are free to vote and otherwise participate in governance. Slavery has been abolished, so most descendants of slaves are now free to vote and otherwise participate in governance. We can see that the United States has moved toward democratic ideals – but the United States retains many anti-democracy mechanisms in its government. Many of these anti-democracy mechanisms were conceived to preserve slavery.

We already noted how the three-fifths rule shifted power from non-slave states to slave-owners and their allies. Very complex procedural rules requiring super majorities in the United States Senate were conceived with the goal of forever blocking any anti-slavery legislation which might otherwise advance. Slave-owners viewed this as a crucial backstop in case they did not control the power of Presidential veto or a control a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. Today we see politicians such as Mitch McConnell (R, Kentucky) leverage those antiquated Senate rules to forever frustrate the aspirations of the majority. For example, Americans overwhelmingly wish to have European-style healthcare. Instead, we retain a healthcare system which has been tuned for profit instead of efficient delivery of healthcare. As a result, the United States spends more on healthcare than any other country. Yet, despite all the spending large swaths of the population go without basic healthcare and healthcare outcomes in the U.S. rank below most industrialized nations.

It is time to introduce a fourth overarching lesson drawn from history. We often hear political attacks decrying the role of the “Intellectual Elite” in governance. There is, conveniently enough, never any mention of the alternative. A review of history reveals only two choices. Historically we see a limited number of choices which all involve some balance of power between the “Intellectual Elite” and an extraordinarily greedy elite. Historically we also see that the average citizen is better off when the “Intellectual Elite” prevail and that average citizens fare much worse when the “Intellectual Elite” is silenced by the greedy elite.

Regimes run by self-proclaimed communists and self-proclaimed socialists promise a turkey in every pot – if everyone is willing to put in a good day’s work. Capitalists similarly promise a turkey in every pot – if everyone is willing to put in a good day’s work. What self-proclaimed communists, self-proclaimed socialists and capitalists all deliver is a struggling underclass and a fabulously overpaid ruling class.

The vast majority of societal ills are attributable to some combination of greed and religion – with religion’s role being greed’s ever-eager accomplice. The most obvious exceptions are sex crimes – which we will generalize as attributable to excess and unrestrained testosterone – often in concert with a less refined inculturation.

The greedy elite realize tremendous profit via the Fossil Fuel industry. Like the profiteers of the Nicotine Industrial Complex before them, the profiteers of the Fossil Fuel industry see scientific fact as a threat to their cash flow. So, like the profiteers of the Nicotine Industrial Complex before them, the profiteers of the Fossil Fuel Industry have deployed a well-funded propaganda machine to attack science, facts, and scientists. It is estimated that opponents of rational climate policy outspend proponents by twenty-seven to one. This includes lobbying of legislators whose votes often go to the highest bidder. The lobbying is augmented with a well-funded propaganda effort where we see misnomers such as “clean coal.”

Things which the “woke” should know about Global Warming

Global Warming is driven by “greenhouse gases.” “Greenhouse gases” tend to retain heat near the Earth’s surface. So, less greenhouse gases in the atmosphere mean more heat radiates into space, while increased concentrations of greenhouse gases correspond with less heat radiating into space. This is important because a tremendous amount of heat is added each day. The Sun is the primary source of heat added each day. If less heat is added than is radiated into space over time, then the average temperature of Earth drops. If more heat is added than is radiated into space over time, then the average temperature of the Earth rises.

Oceans and large bodies of water act to slow these changes. Oceans slow changes directly by absorbing or releasing heat – this is readily observable if one compares daily temperature swings on an island to daily temperature swings in a desert. The diurnal temperature swings in a desert will be of much greater extent than on the island. This happens over much longer timeframes as well. Knowing this, we should anticipate that average ocean temperatures should lag compared to average temperatures in the atmosphere. Unsurprisingly, data collected by climate experts confirms that ocean temperatures are indeed rising – following increases in the average temperature of the atmosphere.

Oceans and large bodies of water do more than absorb excess heat. They also absorb “greenhouse gases.” This slows any changes in atmospheric levels of “greenhouse gases” as these gases either diffuse into or out of the oceans. Unsurprisingly, data collected by climate experts corroborate the expected change in the prevalence of entrained greenhouse gases in ocean waters.

Carbon is the primary concern when considering “greenhouse gases.” We may see carbon as a component of carbon dioxide or as a component of methane. When entrained in water, carbon dioxide increases the acidity of the water. Consequently, ocean water is becoming more acidic as

atmospheric carbon diffuses into the oceans. Biologists can see the effects of increased acidity on ocean life. Living things which construct shells of calcium carbonate are less able to build and maintain those shells as a more acidic environment tends to dissolve structures made of calcium carbonate. That is not the only effect on the oceans which we can see. A principal takeaway from basic physics is that things generally shrink when cooled and generally expand when heated. As it turns out, not all of the observed sea level rise is attributable to melting glaciers. A portion of sea level rise is now attributed to warmer water taking up more space and therefore adding to the climate risks for low-lying cities such as New Orleans.

Sources of Atmospheric Carbon

Many debates over atmospheric carbon are over-simplified. A typical debate considers only fossil fuels – often just coal, petroleum, and natural gas. Humankind has added atmospheric carbon and continues to add to atmospheric carbon in other ways.

Deforestation

If one explores the coastal areas around Santa Cruz in California, then one may become aware of an environmental nightmare which was created in the early 1900's. The remaining forests may appear normal, but they are not. The majority of the redwoods in the redwood forests are all very close in age. This is not normal. It is a result of clearcutting virtually every redwood tree in the early 1900's. If one knows where to look, then one may get to stand in a perfect circle of these new Redwood trees. A perfect circle of Redwood trees is commonly called a Redwood Cathedral. Standing in the middle of such a Cathedral can be a magical experience. It can also be a bit of an eye-opener if one learns how the perfect circle came to be. The perfect circle of redwoods marks the circumference of a giant redwood which was cut down. Under the right circumstances, the roots of the old tree send up fresh shoots all around the circumference of the original tree. So, when you're looking up in the center of the Redwood Cathedral, you're not surrounded by Redwoods. You are surrounded by *a single* Redwood – all genetically identical and sharing roots vastly older than the United States. Now consider that this Redwood stood in a normal Redwood forest. It would have been surrounded by Redwoods of all ages. Some were ancient giants such as itself. Others were fallen and in various states of decay, leaving gaps in the canopy where a new generation of Redwoods reached upwards for the sunlight.

Why was it all clearcut? The basic answer is that it was all cut down for profit. Cities wanted cement for buildings and sidewalks. The area around Santa Cruz had another valuable resource that was useful for producing cement – limestone. Limestone is often found where the tiny skeletons of ancient sea life piled up and were later compressed into rock. As you may have guessed, we're going to talk about calcium carbonate again. That's because all those tiny skeletons were made of the stuff. To get cement, one need only liberate the calcium and get rid of the unwanted carbon. How does one liberate the calcium and get rid of the unwanted carbon? Heat. That is where the Redwood trees became part of the story. Most of the Redwood trees were cut down and burned in kilns designed to heat limestone and produce cement. That released all the carbon in the trees into the atmosphere along with all the carbon in the Limestone. It was Global Warming double coupon days. Redwood trees not burned in the lime kilns were cut down and used to make barrels in which the cement was shipped. Other Redwood trees were cut down and used as railroad ties for rail lines used to get the barrels of cement to market.

This is but one example of deforestation. Another human practice is more widespread. Slash and burn agriculture is as old as recorded history. Slash and burn agriculture worked well for early civilizations. An area would be clearcut. – with the vegetation generally left to wither where it fell. When the withered vegetation was sufficiently dry it would be set afire. This tended to destroy seeds of unwanted plants making it easier to cultivate the desired crop. Unfortunately, slash and burn agriculture also tends to deplete soils. Consequently, early farmers would move on to decimate new parcels of land. Cycles of slash and burn agriculture repeated on a parcel can turn fertile soil into desert or wastelands. Deforestation to make room for farming, suburbia, and the expansion of cities and roadways continues to this very day.

Acid rain

Burning coal releases a lot of carbon into the atmosphere. It also releases sulfur. The released sulfur reacts with atmospheric moisture to create sulfuric acid. This turns ordinary rain slightly acidic. This can damage buildings, sidewalks, and plants – almost anything exposed to it outdoors. In some instances, acid rain has made lakes beautiful to behold – devoid of any life in the crystal-clear water. In other lakes a limestone substrate buffers the acidic inflows. But there is a downside. Students of chemistry will know the result of exposing calcium carbonate to sulfuric acid – fizzy water. This is similar to the process which creates naturally occurring seltzer. The life in the lake is protected – but the accelerated decomposition of native limestone releases even more carbon into the atmosphere.

Thus we can see why many folks properly consider the climate situation to be a crisis. There is a lot of propaganda to convince us otherwise. Some of that propaganda is meant to distract from real problems by creating fake crises.

The “Crisis” at the “Southern Border”

There are multiple political agendas and special interest groups in play which must be acknowledged in any rational discussion regarding people trying to immigrate to the United States.

One such political agenda is that of agribusiness which is dependent on a readily available pool of low-cost labor. There is a popular stereotype which attributes laziness to Mexicans. This stereotype is immediately dispelled by observing Hispanic field workers toiling away under the hot Sun in southern and central California. Agricultural Special Interests aren't the only Special Interest employers which have become dependent on “undocumented workers.”

Another Special Interest group has a covert agenda. That agenda is racism and white supremacy. That agenda is often covert because many racists are uncomfortable publicly admitting their racism. Folks with this agenda can be identified by the cover stories they employ to mask their racism. Chief among these is opposition to “amnesty.” This cover story often fails to distinguish between illegal immigrants and immigrants of color. This cover story is often accompanied by a desire to block all immigration.

Understanding Asylum

The United States is bound by international law to allow refugees to apply for asylum at the border. Political refugees are more likely to be accepted than economic refugees. However, the majority of

people seeking asylum are fleeing countries with failing governments and failing economies. This means the majority of asylum seekers are turned away because they can't show that their lives are in danger due to political persecution. Racists tend to attempt to lump asylum seekers in with people who have illegally crossed the border under cover of darkness or crossed away from official entry points. Another type of illegal immigrant arrived in the United States legally – such with a tourist visa – but then became an illegal immigrant when they remained in the United States after the expiration of the visa.

The border situation would be easily resolved if all the special interest groups were honest and agreed to a rational discussion. An obvious piece of the solution is a legitimate guest worker program with substantial penalties for workers *and employers* who failed to follow the rules of the program. As things stand now, there can be no rational discussion because racists plug their ears and begin loudly complaining about how any solution would equate to “amnesty for illegals.”

Gerrymandering

Earlier in this discussion we noted that the Government of the United States retained many anti-democracy mechanisms. Many of these mechanisms were conceived to prevent a majority from outlawing slavery. Gerrymandering may not have been conceived for this purpose, however gerrymandering is certainly anti-democracy. Gerrymandering is employed to take political power from one group of people and transfer that power to a different group.

How does gerrymandering work?

Gerrymandering draws voting districts to advantage certain voting groups at the expense of other voting groups. The means are commonly referred to as “packing” and “cracking.” Packing draws voting districts with unequal numbers of voters and packs as many opposition voters into as few districts as possible. Imagine a district drawn around a city center and including more voters than surrounding suburban and rural districts. This prevents those city center voters from perhaps overwhelming voting groups in the surrounding districts. Cracking does the opposite. Cracking might divide that city center up and assign slivers of it to surrounding suburban and rural districts. This makes it improbable that the city center voters can ever effectively elect a representative sharing the priorities of the city center voters.

Gerrymandering and “False equivalency”

Defenders of Gerrymandering will claim that both major parties do it. This is true. But it is also a false equivalency. That is because one party does it much more often and to a much greater degree than the other. It is easy to see gerrymandering in action. Wisconsin provides a textbook example. The Office of Governor is a state-wide office and is held by the party of blue. This suggests that Wisconsin is a purple or blue-leaning state. However, you'd reach the opposite conclusion if you looked at Wisconsin's legislative bodies. Both the state Assembly and State Senate have two-to-one super-majorities of seats held by the party of red. The advantages are the result of gerrymandering. We can know that because slightly more votes were cast for candidates of the party of blue than were cast for the party of red in recent elections. Fairly drawn districts would have given a near equal number of seats to each party. However, entrenched gerrymandering preserves a significant advantage for the party of red even when that party receives fewer votes.

Before we begin to wrap up this discussion, we should agree to one more overarching lesson from history. That lesson is that government is not inherently evil. Government is evil only when subverted/perverted by (usually greedy) special interests.

Earlier in the discussion you were asked to agree that “war is about who gets to exploit the people and resources of a region.” Many readers probably didn’t agree. That is largely due to popular “history” and romanticized “history” having obscured factual history. This discussion has largely focused on history as it relates to the United States and the interests of the United States Government. However, it is time to look at some distorted history which predates the relatively young United States of America. European powers are famous for their wars – wars often believed to have been fought by gallant knights at the behest of noble kings. But that interpretation is unduly influenced by propaganda.

To pull back the curtain of propaganda, we will first look at how the “intellectual elite” might have organized very early civilization. They might have seen the need to enforce agreed upon rules such as not bashing one another over the head to steal one another’s women. They might have conceived of a system in which certain men were designated as keepers of the peace. These keepers of the peace would have been compensated with huts, food, and perhaps prestige and some peacekeeping tools. The thing which actually evolved was a little different.

Local bullies took what they pleased. If locals fought back, then the bullies formed alliances with nearby bullies to quell the resistance. Alliances of bullies would eventually arrange for the construction of fortified residences. The bullies would lead increasingly extravagant lifestyles inside their fortified residences. An exercise in compare and contrast between modern street gangs and the early European warlords is revealing. A look at the past and present show similarities. In each case there is a “business model” with extortion at the core. A “Protection Racket” took valuables in exchange for defense against rival gangs as well as the local gang. Many modern day borders are based on the boundaries created by those alliances of bullies back at the dawn of recorded history.

Credibility of sources.

Some readers are likely to be very unhappy with conclusions and supporting facts presented here. That is likely to lead to “debunking” and “fact checking.” To be valid, such “debunking” and “fact checking” must be based on credible sources. Fun fact: your textbooks from school might not be credible sources. This is because political interests are able to influence the content of school textbooks. One of the most recent and well-publicized examples of this may be seen in Florida where it is proposed to teach that slaves received valuable on-the-job training from which they profited later in life. Another example is seen in textbooks which reduce slavery to “triangular trade” while glossing over the fact that the commodity being transported on one side of the triangle was kidnapped Africans. While considering Credibility of Sources it is also appropriate to consider the observations of Dunning-Kruger.

What you should know about Dunning-Kruger

The central conclusion of Dunning-Kruger is that there is an inverse correlation between a person’s self-assessment of expertise on a subject and their actual expertise on that subject. The supporting data was derived in two ways. One set of data was derived by simply asking participants to pick a

level of expertise to represent how well-informed the participant thought they were on a particular topic. The other set of data was derived by administering a test to determine the actual level of expertise for each participant. David Dunning and Justin Kruger found that the greater the knowledge in a subject, the less the individual's confidence that they knew all there was to know about the subject. Conversely, if the participant was uninformed or misinformed then the participant was likely to self-assess as well-informed or an expert in the subject. Climate Science is very illustrative. A climate "skeptic" is likely to do an online search and find some information from a non-credible source, but which affirms a politically-driven prejudice. The climate "skeptic" now falsely believes that he or she is an expert on climate science. Meanwhile climatologists will understand that climate is extremely complex and that an individual researcher likely only understands portions of the complex physics involved. Knowing that there is still much to be learned about these complexities causes the climatologist to self-assess as less confident in their level of expertise. Don't be on the wrong side of Dunning-Kruger – doing so allows political agendas to supplant facts and leads to misinformed voting and poor public policy outcomes.

Hallmarks of Credible Sources

Credible sources will make mistakes from time to time. Credible sources will publish retractions or corrections when they find that mistakes have been made. Credible sources will be recognized with prestigious awards such as a Nobel Peace Prize or a Pulitzer Prize for Journalism. Credible sources are peer-reviewed. Credible sources have extensive (and unfortunately often boring) footnotes. Non-credible sources tell you what you want to hear. Non-credible sources often have a conflict of interest – look for who is being paid and who is doing the paying. If you are reading a historical account and find yourself filled with pride as a result, then it is very likely that you are not reading a historically accurate account of events.

Exxon Valdez and credible sources

In 1989 Captain Joseph Hazelwood was negligent and allowed his crew to run the Exxon Valdez aground on Blight Reef in Prince William Sound near Valdez Alaska. The stricken oil tanker leaked eleven million gallons of crude oil into the pristine waters of the Sound. Consequently, Exxon was receiving a lot of bad press coverage and other negative publicity – in addition to being sued for damages by fishermen and others. Multiple Universities had people on scene counting dead wildlife and otherwise measuring the environmental damage resulting from the shipwreck. These studies did not end after the initial (and very expensive) clean-up was completed. Litigation was also ongoing as Exxon did not wish to pay damages for lost revenue and other harm to fishing communities on the shores of Prince William Sound. Evidence was that a lot of oil remained on the beaches and continued to adversely affect wildlife and fisheries in the Sound. So, Exxon commissioned its own study of damages. Unsurprisingly, the study commissioned and paid for by Exxon found that "hydrocarbons in the water column" were low. The Exxon study also concluded that if there were any hydrocarbons in the water in Prince William Sound, then those hydro-carbons likely originated from natural oil seeps near Yakutat. Yakutat is 250 miles to the east of Prince William Sound. A reasonable reader will conclude that Exxon and its paid agents are not credible sources of information regarding environmental damages allegedly caused by oils spills.

As we wrap up this discussion it is appropriate to examine the complaints made against "woke" people and "wokeism." Opponents of "woke" politics seem opposed to facts, an accurate

understanding of history and any expression of empathy for anyone who is not a member of their tribe. Opponents of “woke” oppose sympathy for people trying to escape poverty. Opponents of “woke” become angry when romanticized and whitewashed “history” is challenged. Opponents of “woke” don’t like it when “woke” agendas demand divestment of holdings in toxic industries. Ironically many of these complaints come from self-proclaimed Christians. The complaints are ironic because Christians are bound by commandments to love thy neighbor as thyself – a mandate for empathy. In fact, the Holy Bible is rife with “woke” edicts.

Leviticus 19:34:

“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Some opponents of “wokeism” don’t like it when divestment in toxic industries threatens corporate profit margins. Yet, a Christian perspective should hold that fixation on worldly goods and profit without labor are antithetical to the teachings of Christ.

Taken together all of this means everyone should be “woke.” The rational thinker must arrive at “wokeness” as consequence of multiple “inescapable conclusions.” The faithful must arrive at “wokeness” as a consequence of commandment and adherence to the words recorded in their Torah, their Quran, or their Holy Bible. Regardless, of your starting point I hope this essay has helped you on your journey to “wokeness.”