

More Winnies, More History, Defining Religion



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"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing every other Wednesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Verbal Vol. Verbal is a software engineer, college professor, corporate information officer, life long student, farmer, libertarian, literarian, student of computer science and self-ordering phenomena. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FTC-only RSS feed available [here](#).

Today we will continue to look for stones that we may turn over for the good of voluntaryism. We will examine different parts of the checkered history of American foreign policy to see that most decisions, mostly bad, are made in secret, in arrogance, in hiding, and without a care for the majority. We will observe how we never learn from the past because we insist upon ignorance in the present. And we will revisit a widely misused and misunderstood word from our everyday usage.

More Winnies

In my last column I presented to you my nominations for the Winnie awards, being my list of 10 of the worst U.S. foreign policy foul ups. And, by the way, the Winnies are named for Winston Churchill, the grandest imperialist of all. I have already covered prohibition, and as promised I will now cover two more, from the bottom to the top of the list:

Nixonism – In the piecemeal way that we are taught history, as fables, we slip into the lazy proposition that history is made by great events performed by great men. But the sad fact is that our foreign policy actually grows out of an accumulation of lapses. Where we are today is just the logical point on the slippery slope of where we have arrived through a chain of errors and their cover-ups.

I don't know when it became the constant of U.S. government to preserve itself through lies, but I have the strong opinion that it reached a height under both the vice-presidency and the presidency of Richard M. Nixon. Nixon made the arrogance of oligarchs public, but most probably not by design. To be a really perverse abuser of the government process requires a monumental incompetence and a gargantuan narcissism.

Although Nixon just barely outclassed such ignoble presidents as Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, he nevertheless excelled as a crook. His estate is the imperial presidency,

rampant lying, using ends to justify means, paranoia, the tail wagging the dog, megalomania, narcissism, the misuse of government, the metastatic spread of government, and warmongering under the guise of peace seeking. Nixon combined all of the bad attributes of every mediocre-to-bad president we have ever had. And let's not forget Watergate – the idea that presidents were above the law.

In my view, there has been only one good president, Thomas Jefferson. And that is not saying that he performed well as president; it is just saying that he was most likely the greatest man who was ever president. So while, in my mind, the affliction of having a bad president could have been named after any one of 43 bad presidents, somehow Nixon always leaps to my mind as the worst of the worst.

Remember the words of Henry L. Mencken:

“When a candidate for public office faces the voters he does not face men of sense; he faces a mob of men whose chief distinguishing mark is the fact that they are quite incapable of weighing ideas, or even of comprehending any save the most elemental – men whose whole thinking is done in terms of emotion, and whose dominant emotion is dread of what they cannot understand. So confronted, the candidate must either bark with the pack or be lost... All the odds are on the man who is, intrinsically, the most devious and mediocre — the man who can most adeptly disperse the notion that his mind is a virtual vacuum. The Presidency tends, year by year, to go to such men. As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.”

Someday, I will share with you more thoughts on bad presidents, but today I will share with you my current worst five: 1) Richard Nixon, 2) Franklin Roosevelt, 3) Andrew Jackson, 4) Abraham Lincoln, 5) Lyndon Johnson.

The Democracy Litmus Test – Even though Woodrow Wilson was another horrid president, we continue to operate under a lie which he famously promulgated – that democracy is beneficial, that anybody knows how to do it well, and that you can fight wars to deliver

democracy.

Firstly, the USA is not a bastion of democracy – our ruling class only give lip service to democracy as part of the lipstick on a pig that we call government. Secondly, no democratic form of government has ever been established. Every government which claims democracy starts off by excluding great swaths of the people from having a say in government. Our “government,” for instance, excluded all but white European males from the vote. The colluders who cook up governments may put on a show of being democratic, strictly among themselves, but the fix is in and the fancy footwork abounds. And the quality of the decision making actually goes downhill as we graciously admit new voters to the flock. See above, where Mencken impales the presidency, he also skewers the electorate.

So, I have an extremely jaundiced view of anybody who claims to bring democracy to someone else. Are we really fighting in Iraq (and yes we are really still fighting in Iraq) to bring democracy to the Iraqi? If you have bought that proposition, then I have a historic bridge over the North Fork of Benson Creek I would like to sell you.

Do you storm your next door neighbors’ houses to demand of them not only that they should vote on it, but that they must decide thereby to have the same thing for dinner that you do?

Politicians who tell you that they are supporting our country’s holy mission of bringing democracy to the world have taken advantage of your good intentions. They use this as a cover for the most egregious imperialism ever practiced by human kind. Our politicians and the military industrial complex take no backseat to the Mongol Horde, Great Britain, Spain, the USSR, nor even the Nazis and the legions of Rome.

Why is such a cover chosen? It is because the manipulators have discovered that it works. The American populace has been dumbed down to accept anything under the banners of God, country and Mom’s apple pie – but the state is none of the above. The federal government is not God. The Federal Government is not this bounteous land. And the Federal Government sure ain’t my Mom nor her great apple pie. The Federal Government is not democracy in any form.

What would we call it if one group claims to deliver to another that which it does not practice for itself? Hypocrisy.

History’s Refrain

Mark Twain said something like, history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes. That is to say that there is a continuity, a connection, a motif.

In the past two weeks, in my Lifelong Learning Institute Foreign Policy discussion group, we have talked about Egypt and NATO. Both sets of problems, to my mind, are directly caused by the same thing. American imperialism. And the book I am reading now further paints detail into that picture. I am reading *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* by Tim Weiner. Weiner insists that his work comes from research only in direct documents and from interviews with participants, not from other research or from other investigative journalism.

The other two problem areas I discuss in this column above, delivering “democracy” to other countries and Nixonism, are also inextricably interwoven with imperialism. I have had others, both conservative and liberal, argue with me that the USA is not imperialistic. “Not yet,” they usually caution. I have even had some who insist that since we do not have emperors and empresses, that we cannot be an empire. I remind them that the word “empire” showed up everywhere in America during our westward expansion. I also remind them that our children’s literature, designed by would-be “adults,” is saturated with the misadventures of kings and queens, princesses and princes, conquerors and soldiers of fortune. It is a poor student of history who ignores or forgets that Alexander Hamilton would have loved to serve an Emperor George Washington or Emperor John Adams. Fortunately for us, Washington and Adams dissuaded Hamilton, and of course Jefferson would have nothing to do with him.

In *CIA*, it is shown that there is not a corner of the Earth where the CIA has not advanced its agenda, though a somewhat squirmy agenda it may be (make that agenda *du jour*). In NATO, we have taken to subsidizing most of the state military establishments in the membership. We have subsumed most of the soldiery of our allies, and through the great sugar tit of Uncle Sam (please, I know this is somewhat unscientific in an animal husbandry sense), we have spread the Pentagon’s and the military industrial complex’s influences everywhere. We belong to other alliances such as SEATO, and our coziness with Israel is tantamount to a control of the Middle East. Egypt is a great example of where we play both ends against the middle and we do it with the approval of Israel.

Whether we knew it at the time, in the days of the American Revolution, we were building our new country on the precepts of the Roman Empire and Mother England – the two most notorious imperialists in the history of the world (before us). While our “founding fathers” may have felt as though they were very creative, the structure of their new country was based on the state structure of England’s monarchy, but some of the names had been changed to protect the guilty. When the names were changed, they usually relied on the tongue of Rome, that is Latin, to gin up those names. How much of a surprise should it be to us that we have not become a voluntarist country, but rather the wholly owned subsidiary of the government that imprisons more of its people, *per capita* than any of the so-called totalitarian states?

So many things are interrelated. I have for years been extremely fascinated with the Yalta

Summit Conference near the end of World War II. The mistakes made in that meeting have reverberated down through history to this day. NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was formed to deal with the countries that were swamped by the Soviet Union at the end of the combat phase – but the ensuing Cold War, though supposedly ended, continues to this day. In fact, as I look at the upcoming and recently past agenda items for the Foreign Policy discussion group in 2013, I cannot find one which does not have a direct line from Yalta. In a future column I will cover Yalta more specifically, but for now mark my words that Yalta and other events perpetrated by arrogant statists affect every breath that we breathe.

The really surprising thing is that the governments of the U.S. and Great Britain have managed to obscure Yalta and its horrid effects for so long. But Yalta is not an isolated event; it was conducted in secret by big brothers Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, as though none of the rest of the people on the planet had a brain in their heads. Commensurate with my description of the founding of The USA, another exclusive and microscopic group of egomaniacs took it upon themselves to disregard the remainder of the human species.

Religare

A friend on Facebook, recently made the suggestion that we should consider forming a religion called Voluntaryism – that way we could get away with some of the shenanigans that the organized churches pull off. At first I thought it would be a great idea, including taking advantage of the numerous government exemptions that our more devout brethren enjoy.

But before I could “commit,” I decided I needed to re-examine the annotative definition and etymology of the word “religion,” and I was correct to do so. I can commit – voluntarily – to a number of things. For instance, my wife and I are celebrating our 48th anniversary next year, and we have maintained close contact with all of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren – voluntarily. I am on good speaking terms with every relative I know about.

The word “religion” comes, however, from the Latin word, *religare* – to bind. In the strictest sense this is bondage, and in an abstract sense it can be naught but collectivism. Many of us are actually voluntary followers of spiritual philosophies, cultures, and traditions. But no matter how voluntary we believe it to be, there is someone on the institutional side who considers all others bound. The Latin word, *religare*, also appears in the context of monasticism – sacrificing of life in pursuit of religion.

Please, do not mistake me, however, for a proponent of anti-spiritualism. I believe that the individualist follows his heart, his mind, and his soul, inventing ways to be spiritual. I

believe that following another's cookbook, without coming to grips as an individual, is a collectivist activity – an evasion of the responsibility to think for one's self.

And on second thought, I would rather end government than pay fewer taxes. Both taxes and government would be gone, in that case.

And so, to put a voluntaryist bow on this package, we might consider the following:

A priesthood of otherwise ordinary men, made drunk with the elixir of state power, are making decisions for us without consulting us, never admitting when things go wrong, and hiding secrets from us for generations. These arrogant people are laughing foolishly in the face of history and its clear indications of which are most likely the mistakes. Then others use sleight of hand to direct our gazes away from that which is spiritually true by making us chant in the archaic forms of religion.

How can we call ourselves individualists and voluntaryists, when we are letting secretive cliques do all of our thinking for us?