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Why Me? *Trekking to Gomorrah*

This week we bring you the final installment of this series of, “Why Me? A Novel — Novel of Historic Apprehension.” In keeping with the novel – novel theme we have looked at some of the major theses, or paradigms of historic western culture and how many times it was the antitheses of these original beliefs that brought about change, sometimes stupendous change. And amazingly in this historic context, much of this change can be considered beneficial.

In closing this series, all of our readers, whether in the United States, or elsewhere in the world, recognize that the changes we are experiencing are what we describe as stupendous. In that light the concept of “change we can believe in” seems grossly simplistic if not truly oxymoronic. As a result we all sense an excitement, but at the same time an anticipation of apprehension that mankind has truly never past this way before, especially when that concept is enlarged, as we are asked to “think

globally.”

The title to this chapter is an adaptation of the title of a book by Robert Bork entitled, “Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and the American Decline” first published in 1996. Bork was one of Ronald Reagan’s appointments to the Supreme Court, who never made it through the Senates conformation process, because he was vilified by his opponents as being an extremist. From that process came the invention of the term “borked,” which seems amazingly close to what is happening currently to the American people, by what is now being called “crony capitalists — media — politicians.”

Slouching is one of the most enlightening books I have ever read, and the title shows historically how we have pretty much through just passive neglect dumbed down the world in which we live, to the point that we will someday face destruction similar to the Biblical Gomorrah.



The divergence in the world today and the world over a decade ago, is that a slow slothful meander towards oblivion has been replaced with defined action, as if we just can no longer wait to get to Gomorrah, we have the city in our sights and together with all our baggage we are hell-bent to get there as soon as possible. In many ways Gomorrah has become our biblical replacement of the shining city on a hill, representing a New Jerusalem of many of America's Christian founders.

Somewhat along that line, we pointed out in our Monday post "Happy Days Again? Not Here, Not Yet!" the old proverb, "actions speak louder than words." In that context we mentioned that former President Clinton was using some borking words to describe current Tea Party members in the context of the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building on 19 April 1995. It should be noted that the actions taken at Ruby Ridge, Idaho a year before Clinton's presidency and the Waco, Texas actions early in his presidency, may have contributed to Timothy McVeigh's action two years later, much more than the words of Rush Limbaugh and other conservative talk radio bloviators.

The United States Constitution protects free speech. Actions are not protected, whether that comes from Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City, Major Nidal Hasan at Ft. Hood, or when governments overstep the rule of law and their constitutional limits.

In the context of Bork's book both on the timeline and in the slouching aspect, we can place Clinton at the end of the meandering journey. After Clinton, perhaps after the 9-11 attacks on New York's World Trade Center, the conscious trek to Gomorrah began with great angst. Before we continue however, it is important to remember that in the Bible God destroyed both Sodom and Gomorrah. Today God's active intervention is not required, for our modern Sodom and Gomorrah are so beyond the security of natural law they will end up destroying themselves. As we conclude our journey this week we will again see the immergence of these two cities of man, each distinct in their own diversity, and both more repugnant than the personal discussion of Biblical Lot in ancient Sodom.

According to Bork, America had been slouching for at least a century before his attempt to quantify the dumbing down of America through the rise of what we define as both liberalism and progressivism. To find a real turning point however, from New Deal thinking to the true shining Gomorrah is a little difficult morally, but if we broaden our perspective to include economics, we pretty much find ourselves in 1965 when then President Johnson simultaneously set divergent courses of the "Great Society" and defeating the communist domino theory in Viet Nam.

In an attempt to put some bookends on that period until the present, I recall some discussions a very good liberal friend of mine in Seattle have had concerning LBJ and Tricky Dick (Nixon). We fully agree that both were probably the most totally corrupt Presidents in the history of the country. The major difference is that Nixon got caught, Johnson never did.

On the other end of this time spectrum, I would also say that both George W. Bush and Barack Obama might be the most genuine Presidents we have had in American History. I realize that genuine may not be the best description for anyone who seeks to become President of the United States, but both men seem to adhere to a worldview in which they were, and are trying to change America into their vision of a better place. I would say that George W. was trying to reach or exceed the high standard of his father. Barack, not having a successful father figure, is driven to excel in ways beyond the wildest dreams of his father.

Back in 1965 I was beginning my sophomore year in college, when I received what I was told was a random 18 1/2 old draft physical. I knew no one else that received such a summons, for I was told it had nothing to do with my college draft deferment. According to the people doing the testing, I was the only person in my group of several hundred at the induction station that was in this category, but they said that there were others like me tested on occasion.

At Eastern (Washington) in those days, your first two years of ROTC were mandatory. I got deferment forms pretty much after every quarter, my friends got theirs once a year especially when we had the opportunity to join the advanced ROTC program. It was clear to me that Uncle Sam wanted me, and the only reason I could ever come up with was that in high school I had finished at the 90th percentile in all aspects of an Air Force aptitude test and the Air Force

recruiter had offered me a spot in the Air Force OCS (Officer Candidate School) right out of high school.

I had gotten my commission and was at Ft. Gordon, Georgia when calling my folks, my dad told me that I had received a draft notice, for by then it had become somewhat of a family joke. After Army Security Agency training at Ft. Devens in Massachusetts, I went to Germany spending most of my time as a company Executive Officer. In such a staff officer heavy organization, in my three years I amassed more troop command time than many career officers gained in a twenty-year career.

However during all these turbulent times I now can see how I was given the opportunity to understand at the highest levels of national security, the restraint of power that has allowed this nation to prosper when most nations would respond with force and repression. In the context of place, position, and opportunity, this window included no more than a dozen compatriots, and I just realized that gift, in the process of writing this article.

Fast forwarding through graduate school at Washington State University and five years of research and development work in sludge drying and tertiary water treatment at a Boeing subsidiary, I put my wife through the MBA program at the University of Washington, while I did similar work at Seattle U.

All this got me to 1980 at Chem-Security Systems where I was responsible for the first RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) filing for the regional Hazardous Waste Disposal Facility at Arlington, Oregon. After that I just had gotten another job and a healthy raise, which gave me more time to be with my family. My new headhunter friend told me I was one of the top half dozen hazardous waste candidates in the country.

Then Ronald Reagan became President. He basically shut down the EPA, I was soon laid off and over the next few years, I went from being really a really cool dude, to being essentially unemployable. In the process of the next few years I amassed a rejection letter file almost two inches thick, had seen my marriage fall apart, ran through all the unemployment benefits, had to liquidate all my accumulated wealth, and borrowed as much money as I could from my mother to just get by.

I had tried consulting, found lots of clients, none of them had the capital to pay for anything, and as a in kind payment for some of that work I had secured the development rights to some proprietary precious metals concentrating equipment and had joined that to a refining process I had found in some obscure South African pre-war research. So I was severely undercapitalized and trying to find someone with some real money to take this entrepreneurial effort into a highly profitable business.

Here in the states, thanks to Old Rancher Ron, all venture capital except for computer related hi-tech had dried up. With marginal tax rates greatly reduced from 70%, funding from limited partnerships or anything but a very rich father had also disappeared. Since my father was a high school principal who died in 1974, that Bill Gates route never was a possibility for me. Eventually I made some contacts, with some local securities people, who gave me some names on the then Vancouver Stock Exchange (VSE) and I began to make biweekly to monthly trips up to Canada to meet with lawyers, accountants, and securities firms to work towards funding the company as a public venture.

It was probably about this time of the year in 1987 when I got my introduction to America's trek to Gomorrah. It was a Friday just after the stock markets had closed on the east coast, when I returned from some exploratory visits to public shell companies with a broker from one of the small brokerage houses. The broker took me by the president's office to introduce me, and for some reason, perhaps he just had no reason to go home at that time, the president decided to explain to me how to make money with small public companies in Canada.

Over the next couple of hours, drinking strong black coffee sweetened with Cointreau he generously explained all the ins and outs, the good, the bad, and the limitations. Slowly our discussions turned from Canada to the United States and the similarities and the differences between Canadian and American securities laws. At some point one of the questions I asked caused him to break his contact with me and turn his chair to look out of his large east facing window and basically say that he wanted absolutely nothing to do with Wall Street, because he thought not only were a lot of the investments suspect, but so were a lot of the brokerage houses.

His descriptions were so detailed that I decided then and there you could not trust any investment opportunity where you were not able to meet the people up close and personal, and make your own decisions based upon your own analyses and gut feelings, and not the recommendations of someone who really had no inside information on the integrity of the people involved anywhere along the line. I was never able to find that equity capital and about 1990, a friend at church gave me a steady laborers job in his hardwood flooring company.

Over the writing of “Why Me?” I have been trying to figure out how I was going to report this conversation as the basis on why I think the United States is still in serious trouble; you have just received the broad context of what I could remember and how I personally got to that point. All I can add was that I believe this Canadian gentleman knew what he was talking about and had no reason to provide any spin other than what he believed to be the truth.

So last week at Wonder Springs, we basically proposed that the problems now facing the United States specifically and the world generally, are not some great conspiracy, it is that our institutional complexity has become too complex for human or computer governance. As a result we have created an infrastructure, which we have deemed 2 Big 2 Fail, which is also 2 Big 2 Work.

After that post, Wednesday evening while doing some channel surfing I came across the end of a PBS Frontline Program: “The Warning” first broadcast 20 October 2009. The link will take you to the online version, but I was able to DVR the whole program later that evening.

This program takes us to the beginning of the tenure of Alan Greenspan as Chairman of the Federal Reserve. That incumbency began in 1987 during the Reagan Administration. I do not share the Republican conservative worship of “The Gipper.” Part of the verbose on my life story was included above to give you a little insights of my personal perspective. While I have not made a lot of money since I had the opportunity to understand poverty, in ways I never dreamed, I think Reagan was a decent manager, who hired some very good people to run his administration.

Old Rancher Ron did cut government programs that his Republican amigos liked, such as the aforementioned EPA. However he really didn't cut other programs and raised the federal deficit, which one truly wise Republican who later became the President called rightly, Voodoo Economics. Reagan's worshipers also claim that he ended the Cold War, but in reality about all this massive defense spending did, was increase the profits of Wall Street defense contractors. There is a possibility that these deficits slightly accelerated the pending demise of the Soviet Union that ran out of intellectual capital long before the communist regime ran out of repressive human collusion.

Reagan did begin to cut marginal tax rates, killed all so-called flight money from income taxes for future wealth development, thereby providing a source of financial leverage for essentially unregulated mergers and acquisitions that continues to create crony capitalism to this day. By redefining growth as something you can buy, rather than allowing the natural laws of true wealth creation to exist, we now have to resort to excessive credit to provide for material goods, no longer produced as wealth creation in America, but by ex-patriot slave labor in foreign countries.

But see that is just my negative spin on something that wasn't Ronald Reagan's fault. All of this was created by just his wise appointment of Alan Greenspan as Fed Chairman and subsequent reappointments by Bush 41, Bill Clinton, and Bush 43. Then Greenspan retired in 2006, before we could see the impending collapse of his Excellency before the meltdowns and the bailouts. True to form George W. Bush appointed Greenspan's protégé, Ben Bernanke to take over, and Barack Obama reappointed Bernanke for another term. In “The Warning” Greenspan admits that the economic philosophy that drove his forty year economic career was wrong. And now the people, who were trained in the role of central bankers, essentially by the former Fed Chairman, are still running the show.

This brings us back to Sodom and Gomorrah to close out this “Why Me?” series and why this is such a great time to be alive. Within the Obama Administration you have both the mystical Gomorrah and the prophetic Sodom in strongly diverse religious tension. Both of which are the antithesis of each other, and at the same time at odds theologically of historic American values and Biblical exegesis.

So allegorically we move to a Jordan River plain. This North American city sits on a shore of a great lake, and is known as the Windy City, or Chicago. Chicago for at least a century has been known as a corrupt city. During the time of Prohibition Chicago was known for its gangsters. As has been well reported, this is the city where the young Barack Obama chose to become a community organizer, to learn power politics, and to learn the Marxist principles of his father, who chose to leave his son and return to Africa to see if he could help install a communist government in Kenya. His father failed, President Barack Obama will give his all as President, to keep from repeating his father's mistakes. At the University of Chicago Law School the future President was a Senior Lecturer in Constitutional Law.

However the University of Chicago is much better known for its economics than its law. Here we see the rise of a Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman, and the American home for Austrian school economist and author of "Road to Serfdom," F. A. Hayek. Both had profound effects upon the economics of the Reagan Revolution as well as the tenure of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

It might have ended there except for President Reagan's appointment of Alan Greenspan to implement these Chicago school economic reforms. Greenspan was a trained economist, but also a strong believer in the economic philosophy of Ayn Rand, which is known as Objectivism, or the more descriptive term, "The Virtue of Selfishness." As practiced by Greenspan it meant that unregulated laissez-faire capitalism is truly the best form of economic development. We can now move our Sodom from Chicago to Washington DC and New York City. This is where we see Sodom growth in Federal Reserve actions throughout Greenspan's tenure as Chairman and how Treasury Secretary Geithner and Ben Bernanke earned their regulatory cred.

When you take a deep breath and back up to see the big picture, what emerges are two very different cities both based upon the principles of Darwinian atheistic evolution, or Social Darwinism, both finding their roots in the early twentieth century Soviet Union.

So if we define the city of Gomorrah as the collectivism of Soviet style Marxism, we find Sodom as its antithesis in unregulated laissez-faire capitalism essentially created by Rand because of her early years living through the repressive Russian revolution as the Soviet Union was created out of the chaos, by force and oppression of individual rights. Sadly America's best understanding of this tragic time comes to us from the movie Doctor Zhivago.

We will see the evolving battle playing out on our video screens as the Obama Administration struggles with financial reform and the Goldman Sachs — SEC civil suit moves forward in ways a lot of people don't want you to understand. I could not write a better script of what I learned that afternoon in Vancouver all those years ago. How can you truly think you are able to get an honest deal from someone who believes only in the virtue of his own selfish desires? In such a marketplace stocks are just a bet related to creating controlled chaos, and then manipulating the results for your own personal gain. That is no way to run a world economic system especially one that has a number of components that are by some definition 2 Big 2 Fail because in reality they are also 2 Big 2 Work.

These struggles are what the United States and the western world are facing. Few however look at this reality, which states that both evolutionary economic paradigms are fundamentally wrong, and until we realize without the grace of God again represented in our lives individually and in our communities, we shall not be able to successfully treat the cancer that is destroying our world and our prosperity.

"Why Me?"

So you can now accept the opportunity to understand the reason you are here is not just to take up space and buy consumer stuff as your highest form of social responsibility. Because you were created in the image of God, it is time you again understand that Divine linkage and make your life count for something important.