

ConnEction 2021

Loving Others in the Energy of God's Loving Us

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All real love is the most profound of all connections and it is generated and energized by the One Who is, Himself, Love, The Eternally Triune God.

Yet, *lovingly created in God's Image and called to connect with one another by love, we fail to truly love God in response to His love, and we fail to connect with each other by failing to love one another. Our failure to love as we should, has been our selfishly motivated lifestyle through every era of human history.*

We've been called to repent of our sin, to be saved from sin's dead end, by God's love for all, in Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of the world. Called and equipped through redemption to love one another and to share the Good News of God's Love with, and for, the good of all, what's our excuse for our negligence of this Love?

During Jesus' ministry, some self-righteous Pharisees tried to outperform their rivals, the self-righteous Sadducees, who'd failed in their own efforts to *trap* Jesus after buttering him up with false flattery, and following that up, with their trap questions on religion.

Intent on trapping him in their own way, some Pharisees asked: "Which is the *greatest* commandment of The Law?" Jesus' reply *enlarged* their focus: "Love the Lord your God with all your *heart*, all your *soul*, and all your *mind*.' This is the *first* and the *greatest* commandment. The second is *like* it: 'Love your neighbor as you *love yourself*'. All the Law and all the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22) The Pharisees, too, failed to trap him.

The two commandments are *one!* Loving God in response to God's love *empowers* us to love *others!* Without that Wellspring of God's Love, our own efforts to love have, do, and will run dry.

Notice that, Jesus *commanded* that *we should love God and others*, although he clearly *assumed* that *we do love ourselves*, even if, so very often, we do so, *unwisely* and *selfishly*.

As *fallen*, we humans *ravenously* seek what we want for *us*, for *ourselves*, and need to be *explicitly commanded* to *love God* and to *lovingly seek the welfare of others*, for *these*, our callings about God and others, aren't high on our own *self-centered* agendas.

Of course, just as our poor judgment can get in the way of our loving *ourselves aright*, it can get in the way when we think we're *loving God and others aright*. We must vigilantly aim to be *wise*.

According to Jesus, what should *guide us in loving others* is to be *deduced* from what *we want for us*. "The Golden Rule" that Jesus cites, is to, "*do unto others* as you want them to *do unto you*." (Matt 7:12; Lev 19:18) *Mindful* of what *we want for us*, can *remind* us of what *others* probably want for themselves. It's such a no-brainer, to be used in honesty and fairness. And, of course, we're *not to impose on them*, what *we don't want imposed on us*.

Our self-love can be even *further recycled*, for, in *serving others as we should*, we *serve ourselves*, too, by *escaping* from our own *solitary confinement* in the isolation of our *self-centeredness*. As that wise old Scot, George MacDonald, put it so bluntly: "The love of our neighbor is the only door out of the dungeon of self."

Jesus said that, to *obey* The Golden Rule, we're to tap into the *widest range* of our God-created *personhood*, including our *heart*, *soul*, and *mind*. This facilitates a more *realistically balanced* and *empathic* reading on *how to love* and better *serve others' needs*.

Later on, in the Upper Room where Jesus and his disciples met for “The Last Supper” on the night before he’d be crucified for the sins of the world, Jesus said: “I’ll give you a *new* commandment: *Love one another as I’ve loved you. All will know that you’re truly my disciples – if you love one another in this way.*” (John 13:34f)

At first, they were unclear as to *what all* would be entailed in his *new* commandment – *to love as he’d loved them*. But, in *His gift of love for them*, in his *lovingly living, dying, and rising for them*, they’d learn to *live by* and to *be His love*. Many would later be *martyred for being His disciples*. But they’d learned that *dying in Him* meant their *rising in Him on that Day when all death dies*.

Writing to the Christians in the city of Corinth, the Apostle Paul assured them that, “These three things remain: Faith, Hope and Love. But the *greatest* of all of these is Love.” (I Cor 13:13) They are the *priorities of Christian living*, and in that *ascending* order.

In 1994, one of our EC ConnECtion keynoters was Henk Hart of the Institute for Christian Studies up in Toronto. Several of you were there that summer. He’d later write the following meditation on *our becoming love as we’re being embraced in God’s Love*:

“Once we begin to be in the embrace of Love and begin to experience ourselves *to be* love, we become aware of an irresistible energy that compels us to become centered, in all we do, in that embrace; to seek for ourselves and others peace, justice, joy, life, fulfillment, patience, hope and much more. Love then begins to guide us in setting our priorities, distributing our energies, choosing our relationships, valuing our involvements and in so doing, fills us with a blessed awareness that whenever and wherever we follow this guidance we find that, step by step, but irresistibly, darkness recedes and light spreads. We become driven by a Spirit (*Ruah*, Wind, Breath) that blows where it wills and that, without exception, harvests light and life wherever it blows. The more we trust the Presence of Love in our life, the more we ourselves become a presence of love in that Presence.”

And to that, we may say a hearty, Amen!

Well, on March 15th, this year, Henk, was *called* into the *even nearer* Presence of God's Eternal Peace, into that *further* and *fuller* Presence of God's Love, God's Light, and God's Life.

Yet, here on earth, lovingly *created* by God, and given what we need to follow God's lead to share His Love with Him and with all who, *by Providence, live* in our daily lives, we do tend to so easily *ignore* God, to self-centeredly *neglect* to share His Love with all.

We so easily *ignore* and *reject* others, including those for whom the openly gay Jesuit, Fr. Jim Martin, editor-at-large of the Jesuits' *America* magazine, *spoke up* in his public prayer for the 2020 Democrats' National Convention. He lent *his voice* to all who're *yet without a voice of their own*, those whom he called, "the most in need", as he boldly and lovingly directed all who were bowed in prayer with him, to *remember* "the unborn child in the womb".

Not surprisingly, his noting of *these most innocent of all*, was *angrily unappreciated* by so many who heard him pray the prayer, who dismiss the 60,000,000 American babies aborted since 1973.

Rejecting God's Love, while favoring *selfish self-righteousness*, we're *aimlessly adrift* – *fearful, frustrated, hostile* – *thus, evidently, we're not entirely unaware of our being lost, inside ourselves.*

There's an undeniably direct *connection* between *our rejection* of God and our *being lost* and *adrift inside ourselves*, so *fearfully frustrated* and so very *hostile*. This sad truth of humanity's *fallen state of affairs* throughout all of our human history, is quite evident every day, whether in everyday headlines or in our own everyday headaches in all of our everyday obsessions over *ourselves*.

Our *foolishly self-righteous* responses to God's *gifts*, including *His gift of our awareness* that we've *gone so seriously astray, lost inside ourselves*, prompt *our putting ourselves* into *hostile denial*. But our *defensive denial can't block our awareness of our guilt*, for

our denial, itself, refutes us to ourselves, as does every defense mechanism against that truly guilty conscience that John Henry Newman called, “the aboriginal vicar of Christ in the human soul.”

We’re stuck in ourselves and we can’t get unstuck by ourselves.

If we were to *wise up* and *pay attention* to God’s gracious clues, we’d *admit* that, our *defensiveness* points to our guilt. *This gift of our sense of our guilt, is a gracious wake-up call to face the reality of what’s truly real, including God’s love and grace in His forgiving us over all of our deadly sin with its deadly consequences.*

Our fuller awareness is that, in so many ways, we’re not right – within ourselves, with others, and fundamentally, we’re not as we should be with God – we’re not as God created us to be. This is the gifted awareness by God’s grace, and the straight way into the greatest of all “head’s-up”, to The Loving Reality of all reality.

But we’ve *denied* this *Truth*, so lovingly revealed by our Creator and Redeemer. *We’ve* stuck ourselves inside *self-centeredness*, sinking in seas of *our own selfish mess*, and grabbing at whatever flotsam and jetsam seems within our own most convenient reach, while utterly failing to recognize that every bit of such useless trash that we try to tell ourselves will save us, is but a discarded piece of a prior distress from somebody else’s selfish mess.

Stuck in Yourself, Beware of “Self-Help”!

In recent decades, some woke gurus of alleged *self-love*, *self-actualization*, *self-realization*, and *self-optimization*, have pushed *do-it-yourself* mantras rooted in a “confidence game” in *one’s self as one’s savior*. Lotta’ luck, with all of *that!* Even *The New York Times* mocks it all as mere, “tongue-in-cheek Christianity”.

One of this fallen world’s faddish “self-helps” is to rise above it all simply by *pretending* that *nothing and no one outside oneself*

needs to mean anything to me, me, me. As one self-help guru screams, defensively, evidently after one too many personalized rejections: “I woke up and I realized I was *not* made *for* anyone. I was made *for me*. *I Am My Own!*” What a script for loneliness!

Such panic and puffing reeks of *selfish self-doubts*, requiring an honest reset to rejoin, as we were created, our *gregarious* race.

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, an Adam Heidelbergensis, *wasn't* made *for himself*, *all alone*, without his loving Creator God, and without Eve, his earthly companion.

God, the Eternal – Omnipotent Creator, Omniscient Redeemer, is, in Himself – though, to us, impenetrably, so, – *The Holy Trinity*. Even the brilliant Augustine could use only a simile for The Trinity:

"God is love" (1 John 4:16). Love involves a lover, a beloved, and a spirit of love between lover and loved. The Father might be likened to the Lover; the Son to the One loved, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love. Yet love does not exist unless these three are united as one. This illustration has the advantage of being personal, since it involves love, a characteristic that flows only from persons."

Yet another self-help consultant urges, and *warns*: “*Owning our story and loving ourselves* through that process is the *bravest* thing we'll ever do.” That's *not bravery*, it's *arrogance!* *Bragging* about *one's self-serving “story”*, is but a *mask for one's alienation*.

Trying to get straight to the *bottom* of life's *deepest meaning* by jumping from one's egoistically *self-preoccupied assumptions* to one's *self-preoccupied conclusions*, is quite like one's trying to get *straight* down to the tallest building's *base*, its *original basis*, by *jumping* past all of the signs up on top, all *warning*: “No Jumping!”. It's surely a *quick arrival at your supposedly sought bottom*, but you'll be DOA, without having learned anything about what *it all means*, or *could have meant*, but for your utterly blind jump into your utterly bottoming out, and without any prospect of an upturn.

Given all of our *self-serving distractions* as we go on ignoring all the plain facts about ourselves on our own, the sanest thing to do is *to resist temptations to try to do what we can't do all on our own, and that's to try to "own" our self*, as our soul's sole "savior".

One of the most popular of all of the early "self-help" gurus was the "healer", Louise Hay. She had lots of celebrity in those first of the very most frightening years of the AIDS epidemic. Here's a nod and a wink in a hint from Hay: "You have been *criticizing yourself* for years and it hasn't helped! Try *approving of yourself* and see what happens!" Hey, Ms. Hay, they've all, *already* tried that, *repeatedly*. And, it's *already* failed them all, *repeatedly*.

See, if you don't really think that you *do* measure up in *this* way or in *that* way, you can't get away with simply *telling* yourself that you *do* measure up. So, Hay's "help" here, is but another cheeky "Cheer up!", and a sure "set-up" for yet another huge "let-down"!

Missing what Matters Most while Stuck in what Matters Least

What's sure to *happen again and again, over and over, again and again*? It'll be what's *happened before, and before that, and long, long before all of that – even millennia before all of that!*

Trying to find *our own way* in the dark, still can't be found by whistling, over and over, again and again, our own loony tunes in *denial of the dark*. We need *The Light*, and not *any old light*, nor *faux* "enlightenment" from the new-fangled "woke" who're "out like a light", still snoring and snorting away, in their restlessness, and can't help *themselves* out of *themselves*, let alone, help *others* out of *themselves*. Don't count on a wake-up call from a sleeper.

But God, in the flesh of Jesus, said, in His continuing present tense: "*I Am, The Light* of the world. Whoever *follows me* will not walk in *darkness*, but will have *the light of life*." (John 8:12) This

One who called himself, “The Light of the world”, is also the One who called himself, “The Way, The Truth and the Life”. (John 14:6) So, shouldn’t we give *more serious* consideration to these profound claims than what, we know we’ve given to them, so far?

Humans think *irrationally* about *our own versions* of “ourselves” and so, we *enslave* ourselves to *our own distracting versions*, while we fear we won’t be “impressive” enough from *others’* viewpoints, as we hold “ourselves” hostage to *fond fantasies of our “if only” selves*. All trip over *their sense of self* and over their favorite fantasy of an “if only” self. We’re *all fallen* inside “self”, all the time, trying to deceive *others* yet deceiving *ourselves*. We’re a mess! Our own “omniscience” is *missing* what’s all going on!

It’s all *fabricated* inside our own brain cells, to cope with what we *fear* is “wrong with us”, but we irrationally suppose that *our “us”*, sitting inside *our own* brain cells is, somehow, also out there in that wider world’s awareness, in all of those others’ brain cells. Such is the terrorizing, stupid and misleadingly, *self-centered, self-deceiving perspective* in all who’re irrationally *preoccupied* with *their sense of “self”*, oblivious to all others who suffer that same *mental disorder* over *their sense of self* in *their* brain cells.

Of course, all those others are just as distracted with *their own unwanted* sense of self and *their own* fantasies of their own “if only” versions of self, so, *they* can’t be bothered with all of that commotion that *they* don’t *hear, see or feel* that’s going on over in *another’s* sequestered, self-centered sense of self – even *if, when or how often*, they’re ever *told about* it. *Self-centered* bellyaching bothers the bellyachers and all to whom they, *boringly*, bellyache.

So, there’s a lack of *empathy*, tied up as folks are, in “self” and in preoccupied *self-pity*, holding themselves hostage inside their own cells of *self-isolation*. Folks fail to take their *focus* off of *their*

own versions of “self” so as to even hear of *what’s all going on, in and around* them. And, that’s not *prudent* in so fallen a world of *self-obsessions, fears, frustration, hostility, and violent assaults* that are closing in all around all of us, all the time.

But *the fact* that nobody else sees *that* “self” that’s in lockdown, inside *another’s* brain cells, never crosses the distracted mindset where one’s embarrassing sense of “self” hunkers down in fear of being spotted by people outside one’s brain. Each one is stupidly convinced, based only *in one’s own fixating on one’s own version of “self” inside one’s own brain cells*, and with absolutely *no entrée* into the *internal experience of another’s self-distraction over self*, or of another’s sense of anyone else, including that worry-wart’s own version of self. No one else sees another’s sense of self as one so foolishly *fears* others do, for one’s own sense of self never leaves one’s own brain, to barge in on the brain cells where those others live in fear, frustration and fury.

Of course, God’s wise love sees through all of it.

Yet these irrationally worried *pretenders* waste time and energy on *pretentions, presentations, camouflages, etc.*, that *preoccupy* these *pretenders* whose faking so *consumes their own focus* that they can’t get free of obsessing over “themselves”, so-called, to get even a clue into what’s all *going on*, and what’s *not going on, inside and outside* of every fellow faker’s own distracted focus.

Some of what fakers so easily miss is the very predictable fact that fakers’ deliberately *polished pretentions* can be *experienced* as very big *turn-offs* to those whom fakers so foolishly *intend to impress*. Indeed, they do “succeed”, as it were, in “impressing”, but not as they *intended*, for all the posturing can boomerang into *resentment* against them. Had they not *misused* their own sense

of self to try to win *affirmation* from others, they'd have avoided their *acting out* their *self-centered faux pas*. Now it's their *plight*.

In reality, *others* are so distracted by *their own misuse* of *their own selfish* versions of self that, they don't realize how very much the others are just as self-imprisoned inside *their* worrisome brain cells and don't have a clue, or a key, to unlock any of the others' brain cells to see that nervous inmate who squats and squirms over there, all alone, frightened in his or her own self-imposed imprisonment, so worried about what others not only *can't see*, but *can't afford* to take their focus off their own sense of self long enough even to *hear about* what's going on in those other cells of solitary confinement – even in a *group therapy session*, where all *should be identifying with what they all have in common*, i.e., *one another's irrationality* in misusing one's own sense of one's *self*.

So, they so easily miss learning to *listen* and to *recognize their own* irrationality reflected through *others'* irrationality. They're too *caught up* and *bogged down* in *their own* versions of *self* and *their own* versions of *others*, to *learn some of the basic lessons of life* from *fellowship with their fellow fallen* in a *world of self-obsession*.

Our Needs are Still Deeper, So God's Love Goes Still Deeper

In this fallen, self-centered nonsense of human irrationality, with its *superficial* distractions and its *unintended* side-effects of self-delusion that prompt our *victimizing* ourselves and others, there's *so little willing and ready receptivity for any far deeper awareness of what's the case with our most ancient and most basic depravity and with all its derived depravations, delusions and divisiveness*.

All on our own, we're not open to the plain fact that humanity's deepest problem *has already been identified and addressed and solved once and for all time and for all eternity*. And it's all been

done *for us*, by God's *great love*, that's far deeper than any of us knows or even can imagine, given that we're all so self-centered.

We're loved by God more deeply than we're loved by anyone else, and certainly, more *truly* than one loves one's selfishly self-obsessing "self". All of God's grace in God's great love for us is *in spite of*, indeed, *in response to*, all of *our own self-centered self-destruction*. God, in Christ, saves us from our sinful self and our consequent death, forgiving us forever, for fellowship with Him.

There's little ability by oneself to take time and make the effort to truly love others as we should. However, in God's peace and in the ever-flowing energy of God's loving us forever, that energy to love others is graciously given. *Awareness of, and gratitude for, God's deep, everlasting love for us all, is The Way out of self-obsessive sin and consequent guilt, and generates the energy for loving one another. God's Love is, indeed, The Way Home for all.*

But, as for all of the "home brewed" potions for "*self-love*", "*self-empowerment*", "*self-realization*" and "*self-improvement*", they'd all be better labeled, "Beware: Poison", for they not only *can't* address our deepest need, they *interfere* with our getting to any *accurate diagnosis* of what's *so very deeply wrong* with us all.

Yet, our *symptoms* of sensed guilt, fear, denial, frustration and hostility – in that order – *can*, by God's *providential grace*, *induce an approach to God's provisions*. Guilt and fear surely don't *feel* good, but they *can get our attention* by God's convicting mercy, redirecting us from our denial, frustration and hostility, leading us to the cross of the Savior and Lord and to the freedom of the full salvation that He freely provides for us in His everlasting Peace.

However, *our own* "quick fixes" fall far too short for ever fixing what's *so profoundly wrong* with *us all*. Only the Reality of God's

Love in Christ's *atonement*, in *our* place, *for us*, on the cross, can *overcome all that's so very wrong with us all*.

Isaiah declared, in prophetic foresight, that a Savior would come and "be pierced for *our* transgressions, crushed for *our* iniquities; the *punishment* that would bring *us* peace would be on *him*, and by *his* wounds *we'd* be healed." As Isaiah explained: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; everyone has turned to his own way.*" (Isa 53:5f) We've all tried to have it go *our way* since Eden and *that* self-centered way didn't go well. Yet, when Sinatra boasted, "I did it *my way!*", *clueless crowds cheered in envious stupidity!*

And, as promised long before, indeed, it did come to pass, at Passover, some seven centuries later, at a bleak outcrop of rock, called, *Golgotha*, "The Skull", outside Jerusalem's walls, where Jesus, after being betrayed, deserted, mocked, and beaten was cruelly crucified for sinners' redemption.

John, Jesus' "beloved disciple", recalled that day of Jesus' crucifixion, for he was there. He'd write: "Jesus, knowing that all was now *fulfilled*, declared, '*It is finished*', and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (John 19:30) In that shed blood of The Lamb of God, *the full atonement* for sinners was *accomplished* by God Incarnate! *The Atonement was done!*

This is the Good News, against *all* of the bad news. We're all *alerted by the gift of our own gnawing awareness of our own deep need for God's grace*. And it's *all freely provided for us in Christ*. What we *needed* was what God, in Christ, actually *accomplished* on that cross, on that awful, yet, ah-filled, day that would come to be known as, "Good Friday", for the *very best of all good reasons*.

The well-founded fact that Christ rose from the dead, amazingly alive, on the third day, is God's own affirmation of it all, God's *Good News* for our fallen human race, based in God's grace,

God's *Love* for us, *accomplished in full* – by God, Himself, *incarnate, crucified* and then *risen* and *ascended* to Heaven.

These clear facts of those few days turned *fearfully disillusioned* disciples into *willing martyrs* who *died* rather than *deny* their own witness to the undeniable truth of God's Good News in Christ.

John Newton, 18th-Century slave ship captain, survived many storms at sea and even his own enslavement, before he turned to the Lord, *repenting* of his sin. He then renounced slavery and the slave trade, and went on to preach the Good News of Christ up at Olney, in Buckinghamshire, and then, down in London town.

It was from Newton's own experience of God's *amazing grace*, in spite of his sinful life, that he'd write those memorable lines for which he's been remembered ever since, *inclusive of the grace that brought him to his despair and the grace that brought him to his deliverance from despair.* " 'Twas *grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved, / How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed!*"

So, God's *grace* is *there, in both the distracting distress over our sin and in the divine deliverance into our salvation.*

Yet faced with the facts of humanity's sin, humanity continues *to be in stubborn denial, repeatedly and self-righteously falling and repeatedly and self-righteously rejecting God's call to return to Him.* We resist God's call to *repent* through our own self-imposed *delusions* in feigned *self-righteousness.* But, in these denials of ours, we're so very *uneasy.* Still, we choose to go *our own way, our self-deceived and self-deceiving way* into death, instead of by *God's graciously dependable way,* into Life Everlasting in Him.

Instead of accepting all of the *obvious and everyday evidence* of that *primeval lesson* in humanity's fatal Fall, revealed in Genesis 3 – us vs. God, me vs. you, you vs. me – scenes that are so sadly

repeated 24/7, all around the world – we’re *still so self-centered, defensively stuck in self*, consuming, and *consumed by our own hungry, unsatisfied souls while we put us at odds with each other*, disdainfully making of *each other, “the other”*, to distract us from seeing ourselves *as we are*. In it all, we fail to love God and one another, so distracted we are, with all our obsessions over “self”.

We do this, both individually and by whatever handily divisive “identities” we conjure up by melanin, estrogen or what have you. Others do the same against *us*, in *self-centered self-pity, pitting self* against “the other” and against the amazing grace of God’s having, “so loved *the world* that He gave *His only Begotten Son*” to save *us* from perishing into *ourselves* rather than *living forever in Christ*. (John 3:16). Such *defensiveness* is *proof* of our *guilt*.

Contrary to toxic indoctrination from the woke cult’s “critical race theory” – now forced into minds beginning in primary schools and going on through graduate schools – humanity’s *self-abuse* can be tracked in *intra-tribal* and *inter-tribal* rivalries, cruelty between clans, by caricature and by far worse, throughout human history. It’s always been there, *within* and *between these* African tribes and *those* African tribes, and *others, within* and *between these* Caucasians and *those* Caucasians, and *others, within* and *between these* Native Americans and *those* Native Americans, and *others, within* and *between these* Pacific Islanders and *those* Pacific Islanders, and *others*, and *within* and *between* thousands of *other people groups* over all human time and across the globe.

These self-righteously rationalized conflicts continue nowadays, through all of *our* self-servingly sinful *envy*, self-serving *blaming*, and self-serving *boasting vis a vis* all of “them”, *whoever* they may be, those *disdained* “others” of ours!

Postmodernism's "identity politics", *raging* against each other by, and to all the same anciently evil ends, is but the *most current* example of our *ancient* sins. These days, opposite that ugly old "N-word", there's now, "Whiteness", that ugly new *woke* word. But it's all, undeniably, still self-righteously *racist*, still *racism*, no matter how much the self-congratulating woke try to frame it as, "progressive", it's all "as old as the hills". These newer "framings" repeat the *other* self-serving "framings" throughout history. Their newest *self-flattery* reeks with the same *rotting self-righteousness* that our selfishly sin-sick *race* has always retched up.

So, who's *really unbiased* and *fair-minded* on matters, e.g. of *race*? Is it today's divisively *race-consumed woke* or is it their *divisive opponents*? Well – it was, for one among others, Paul, that shockingly *converted former foe* of the earliest Christians, but then, the *leading* Apostle of Christ, in 1st-century Athens, at that elite and scholarly assembly at the great Areopagus, addressing Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who'd invited him to tell them about this "new religion" that he was proclaiming everywhere.

So, Paul boldly told these pagan scholars that, contrary to all the propaganda of ancient prejudice, "From *one blood*, God made *all humanity*, to dwell *together* on the earth." (Acts 17:26) *That's the fullest integration* by the wise purpose of the One and Only God, the Creator of *the one, entire, human race!*

Even in the ancient Hebrew Psalms from centuries prior to Paul, we read of the widely aimed intentions of *YHWH* for all the world:

"Sing to the LORD a *new song*; sing to the LORD, *all the earth*. ... Declare *His glory among all the nations*, *His marvelous deeds among all the people on the earth*." (Psalm 96) "Let *all the earth* worship the LORD: let *all of the inhabitants of the world* stand in awe of *Him*." (Psalm 33)

Yet, we separate ourselves from each other, we *fear* and *hate* “them”, though they *remind us* of what we *fear* and *hate in us*, however convoluted or idiosyncratic is this linking defensiveness.

And we *fear, covet* and *hate our mere fantasies* of “the other” rather than *frankly admitting* what’s *really wrong with us* that *prompts* it, much less *dealing with what’s really wrong with us*, that includes our false *fantasies* of ourselves as *better than* all others and our *false fantasies* of others’ supposed “advantages”, thus, our *jealousies* surround *them*. We *hate* them for what we tell ourselves *about* them – and *about* us. It’s all such a *recipe for a terrible tragedy* – *inside us all and between us and all of them*.

We judgmentally project our own guilt onto, “the othered”, while *refusing to admit*, even to *ourselves*, that we *know or suspect* that there’s so much that’s *wrong with us*. In itself, this, *fuels our fears* and our stubborn *refusals to face* what we *fear* and what we *hate in ourselves*. So, *unhealed*, i.e., still *sin-sick inside*, we keep at it, habitually, in all of our *fear* and in all of our *hate*, and *that*, itself, then becomes our own *penultimate ruin*, prior to *utterly perishing* in all of our very own vainglory.

Self-righteous and *self-congratulating* “social justice warriors” try to compel all others to conform to *their “woke” agenda*, not by way of a *meaningful dialog toward reconciliation*, for that would be way beyond the *rational* abilities of any who push the Cancel Culture.

Shouting, “*Cancel ‘em!*”, is the only “solution” they know. Such brutally enforced compliance is the *modus operandi* of each and every *dictatorship*. And, then, what’s the predictable response of those who’ve been belittled, even brutally bullied and brow beaten into being “cancelled”. Well, duh! They’ll *not appreciate it?* They *won’t take it kindly?* Some will *retaliate in kind* or worse. But so sadly, the aftermath for many *victims* can be, and has been, and

will be, a lonely and miserably *deep depression* turned into *suicide*.

If it takes at least two for any *real discussion*, and it does, there won't be any *real discussions* through the *modus operandi* of the Cancel Culture. Harvard Law professor and astute Constitutional lawyer, Alan Dershowitz, describes Cancel Culture as “a cancer on America” and “a political weapon being used by the hard left that has such a terrible impact.” He sees that it, “not only cancels free speech and due process, it also derails meritocracies.”

Since the Left *can't reason* its way out of disputes by *rational debate*, of which it's so defensively suspicious, having been ill-prepared by Postmodernism's attack on rational thought, what but *bullying*, or literal *bullets*, is left to the Left?

Well, there's “compelled speech”. Yet, where's any *real victory* of *consent* through the *compelled speech* the woke *demand* of all those who won't be or can't be “cancelled”?

Isn't what's said under *compelled speech*, by definition, said under *duress*? And, it's not at all surprising, the compelled *resent* being thus compelled, so those who compel them cannot at all, reasonably *revel*, in what's *not at all a real win*. It's but a pregnant pause before a probable backlash of revenge.

Since the woke bullies of compelled speech haven't received a speck of affirmation from all of their own forcibly *pre-programed puppets*, they're all still stuck, anxious, frustrated, angry and lacking the *love* that requires *roots* in a sense of *real safety*.

Indeed, theirs is a very sticky situation that they *haven't* and *can't* resolve, for *their chosen* “solution” is *their challengingly impossible problem*. It's a ticking timebomb that's set to blow up in their faces, sooner or later – but they're without a clue as to what to do about what's coming *for sure*. As Marx, their poorly

grasped, yet revered, hero, warned: “History repeats itself. First as tragedy, then as farce.” Yet, the two aren’t all that different.

So, here’s a “heads up”: A world of folks who’re so defensively *preoccupied with themselves*, thus, very defensively habituated into *failing to love one another in really meaningful ways*, is *not a happily safe world!* And, things are not likely to cheer up any time soon – and, certainly not all on their own! It’ll never be a truly happy world until freed from *its own bondage to mere self* and to *competing selves*. It’s been this way ever since we willfully went *our own way*, against *God’s Way*, and we fell flat out, in Eden.

We’re *all up* against this utterly *exhausting rivalry* of *selfishness*, *consumed* by our *posing* of *self-importance* to *oppose* each other.

We selfishly *oppose each other*, to distract us from what’s so painfully obvious to *us*, about *us*, inside *us*, in *our* brains. But *our* ego’s *agenda* isn’t any *others’ agenda*, for *others’ agendas* are aimed at trying to serve *their* selfish purposes, *not ours*. We so foolishly fear *they see ours*, *but they don’t*, *they can’t*, they’re not inside *our* brain cells, they’re inside *theirs*, *quite uncomfortably*.

A tragic case of a self-righteous ego’s stubborn refusal to admit being wrong is Derek Chauvin’s refusing to lift his knee off of the neck of George Floyd, as folks called him out on what he knew from police training was risky. But, bent on being *right*, in effect, he damned *both Floyd and himself*, rather than *lose face* in front of that crowd of strangers, earnestly pleading for him to do *right*.

The costs of such *denial* can be, and have been, *deadly* to so many! “I’ll be *damned* if *I* admit *I’m* wrong!”, is a most foolish old mantra that’s *damned* so many, besides these egoistic braggarts.

Thus, our rabidly *self-righteous mess* gets *a hell of a lot messier* than *useless*. We stay locked up inside all of our own bad habits,

in a habitat that we, ourselves, so foolishly *disordered* to our own ruin, and, through various interactions, to the ruin of still others.

Then, *others* condemn *us* in “recompense”. But the “tits for tats” metastasize into ever angrier TITS for tats. No one ever seems to foresee what’s truly tragic that can, and so regularly, does result from all of our retaliating and escalating grievances. That’s due to retaliation’s being so myopically *self*-absorbed, it *misses* whatever is outside its own, very narrowly *self-centered* focus, even when that *self-centered* focus might *presume possible self-destruction*.

So, it’s no wonder that we *all* continue to *fail* to love one another in our ugly attitudes in all of our sins of *omission* and *commission*. And, through it all, we persistently *fail* to love God Who so deeply *loved us into life*, here and now, and continues to love us, calling us to repentance, and through our repentance, continues to offer, at Jesus’ expense, His costly gift of Resurrection to Life Eternal.

We All Have More in Common than We Think We Have

Given that God lovingly created *all of humanity in His Image*, it isn’t odd that, we may see *something of ourselves in one another* and *something of even our Creator’s Presence in one another*.

But we have more in common than our being *created in God’s Image*. We have *our self-righteous sin* in common – *our rebellion against God* – and *our one-upmanship against our fellow humans* – *our attempt to surmount our own sense of our self*. And, we have still more in common. We’re one human race for whom *God, in Christ, made the ultimate sacrifice* to bring us back Home to Him, *forgiven and redeemed by His love in His grace*.

These facts of life, sin, death, forgiveness and redemption all remind us of what we owe to God, our Creator and Redeemer, what we owe to one another, with whom we share God’s Image, with whom we share guilt in our Fall into sin and with whom we

share our continuing disobedience to the disadvantaging of each other and ourselves, and with whom we owe *our all* for God's giving *His all* to redeem us from ourselves and from each other.

Thus, we're all meant to *love* God, in Who's Image *we're all so lovingly created*, and we're all meant to *love all our fellow human beings*, our *kindred spirits* with whom we *share* so much more that we do with all of the other creatures of God's wide creation.

But we're not so keen on *loving God and our kin* among God's creation as we are on "loving" – or, *rather*, on *obsessing over – ourselves*. Our *self-obsession* is a constant clue to original sin. And, we dare not forget that, unlike all the *non-human* creatures of God's creation, *we're the ones* who've *willfully fallen* into sin and *we're the ones* who still, so *willfully*, *fall* into sin, all the time.

We twist ourselves into knots of tight-fisted, *self-centered self-righteousness* that *stubbornly blocks* our reception of God's love for *all*. But, if we thankfully *recall* God's great love for us all, we'll be empowered to love one another, and, maybe, these others will then love us, to return such an infrequently experienced good will.

Yet, we keep dividing *us* from *them* by whatever *self-righteous* criteria we deem *most advantages us*, as we try to hide *our own* faults under our drawing attention to *their faults*, to *disadvantage* "them", "the others" – by whatever superficial differences we note, whether by *race, ethnicity, cultural background, socioeconomic or political ideology, history* or by *the ever-splintering sexual/gender divisiveness of idiosyncratic one-upmanship in the LGBTIQQ+ devolution*. It's all so *self-centered, self-divisive, self-destructive*.

And now, "*intersectionality*" gets smashed together to give us even *more legs up* over all of our *rivals*, "those *others*", so-called. It's obviously done *to try* to attain some sense that there's so very

much more for others to *admire about us* than what we sense in our being *adrift* in our sense of *self*, *lost* and *not measuring up*.

But all our own efforts at grabbing onto “*intersectionality*” to give us extra legs up over others, still *fail* to convince *us* that we *do* measure up, for there are still other *fancied* “legs” we covet, but can’t claim for ourselves without being embarrassingly criticized for our *self-delusions*. But, the more “cred” we *trot out*, the more we’ll *strike out* with all who, in *their* irrational jealousy, will *resent* our boasts rather than *respect* them, as we *intended* them to do.

There are those who covet for themselves, an item or two or three or more, on *others’* intersectionality resumes, but *those who’re so coveted*, know lots better than *those who covet* them, that the *coveted images* in those selected items, have not been convincingly satisfying to those who’re so foolishly coveted for them, in these messy matters of “measuring up”. Those who are coveted *know from experience*, that each “coveted” *thing* of theirs, is, in *their* experience, a *mixed-bag in everyday life*, and probably, by now, is taken for granted, and *not* as it is taken to be in *foolish fantasies* of jealous envy by those who *unrealistically covet* “it”, however they *define* “it” in their *ignorance* and *inexperience* of “it”.

But who can take *credit* for the many “*intersectionality*” lists since nobody *earns most* “*intersectionality*” add-ons. So many coveted add-ons were never *achieved*, they’re “givens” e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, aptitude, talent, IQ (up to 80% heritable), etc. What’s *in any of these identities* to *brag* about in one’s *self* or to *mock* all who’ve *inherited otherwise*? It’s as irrational as one’s taking *credit* for *having been born* – or for having been born *in March, not May or July*, in *London, not in Lagos or Little Rock* or with *this* skin color, not *that* skin color, etc.

All who impress themselves with any item on another's list can easily be *jealous* and try to *minimize* the *other's* value. Is *that* what the envy-obsessed and notice-crazed, look for? *Look out!*

No matter how much we may *try* to impress others *and us*, by adding to *our* "intersectionality" *cred card*, we *know*, and so does everybody else, that one can't take *credit* for *givens*, "*hand-outs*" and "*hand-me-downs*". So, the elite Left refuses to give credit for one's *earning anything*. Thus, *equity* must be *distributed by force!*

Though others may *impress themselves* and *get jealous* of *their version* of "us" over their fantasy of an item or two on *our well-padded lists* – and *their jealousy surely won't do us any good* – others may have *no idea* what's even *meant* by some of these items. *What school? What award? Huh?* We take some on *our list* for granted, but we *dread* our *padding*, for it might be *exposed*. Still, *whatever's* on such lists is a notice of the lister's *anxiety*.

We try to *find meaning* through inflating *self-centered add-ons* to enhance us *superficially*, instead of by *any True Meaning* that *truly matters*, for *our welfare and, through us, for others' welfare*. *That Meaning* is in God's *lovingly creating us* and *redeeming us for our deepest welfare* and, through us, the welfare of all others.

Sadly, even *we*, who *claim* to proclaim God's love as Christians, who say that we *share* His love with others, so frequently *fail* to love God and so frequently *fail* to love others *through our having received His love for us*, to be *passed on, through us, to others*.

Moreover, all *true love* entails a wise *resistance to simply giving* to others *whatever* they *unwisely* want. So, true love can, and likely often does, evoke *resentment*, as it did back there at that *one forbidden fruit tree* in Eden's *bounteous Garden* of plenty.

Real love entails *real risks* on *both* sides. All who *truly* care for another's *real welfare*, run such risks of rejection and worse. Still,

if such realistic love is *immediately unwelcomed*, if it is *angrily refused*, *real love stays steadfast*, following God's own lead, to be offered, yet again, if and whenever, there's any real willingness to receive it as such. If there's no willingness to receive it as such, that's the story of the one who rejects it, it's not about the one whose offer is rejected. So, *all real love* needs to *recognize this* and not take offense or responsibility for another's refusal to welcome one's *genuine* offer of love. Still, *real love is always patient and kind*, no matter what the self-centered negative reactions of others might be for a while, or maybe, even, forever.

Learning to Love by Luther's Risks of Love, 500 Years Ago

AD 2021 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's loving God and all others *well enough* to take *real risks to life and limb* in his bold defense of the biblical Good News over against the unbiblical bunk of *virtue hoarding heresies* set up by a powerful and corrupt Papal bureaucracy. In 1521, he was summoned to go to Worms, on the River Rhein, to debate his officious opponents from Rome.

Here we are, already half-way into *our 21st year* in this, the *21st Century AD*. It's now *our* turn to confront the *self-righteous self-centeredness* of today's egocentric efforts to *curry favor* with the gods, goddesses, high priests and high priestesses of, this our *21st Century's secular*, as well as, *sacred fashions*, all aimed, as ever, against the biblically based *Good News of God's Grace*.

Our faults, too, are cloaked in *popular heresies* by which *we* try, but fail, to cover up our own failures to love God and each other by way of the free and gracious love of God that's shown to us all.

As Christians today, it's *our* turn to *love others in the Love with which we're loved by God*. As Luther did in his age that had lost *its way inside itself*, we, like him, need to speak out, even under

threats, to declare, as he did, the eternal Love from within the very Heart of God, demonstrated *crucially* in God's sacrifice in *the crucified Savior* who was raised in resurrection for our salvation.

Loving God and all others, is now *our* calling, given to us, in Christ, for *our* world that's so lost *its* way inside *itself*. As it was with Luther, it is with us. We'll *not be thanked* by the pagan and heretical totalitarians for standing up for the Good News of Christ. We're "cancelled", and in some places, *killed*. But, so what?!

In *our* day, here in AD 2021, *we're* called to answer God's *call to true love, where we now live by God's Love*. Are *we* up for the task of this witness *today*, as Luther was back in 1521? Pray that *we are loving enough to live up to our responsibilities these days*.

Luther knew what he'd be up against from what he knew from his own diligent biblical studies and from his eye-opening venture down into the stench-filled bowels of The Vatican, dripping with arrogance and corruption from a perverted *religious* hierarchy of self-righteous heretics and sycophants of the corrupted *secular* powers in Rome. The ancient power brokers were bent on putting Luther to death, if they could get away with it. But God rescued Luther through Frederick, the Wise, at his Wartburg Castle.

Today, we're up against the self-righteous *fashionistas of elitist secularism*, the *woke catechism*, *mainline religionists* affirming any and all interpretations of "Christianity" *except the truly biblical and historical evangel*, and we're up against Islamist fanatics bent on beheading any and all who refuse to vow: "*Allahu Akbar!*".

We're up against what the 60s' New Left's David Horowitz, now a political conservative and an agnostic, warns, in his new book, *The War to Destroy Christian America*. This was *his own Leftist aim*, with his allies among the Black Panthers, back there in the

'60s and '70s, with his *Ramparts* magazine, of which I was a *charter* subscriber, but I didn't buy into *all* of its New Left views.

As there was “hell to pay” *for calling attention to atrocities* in the religious bureaucracy of *Luther's* day, we've “hell to pay” for not swallowing all the propaganda of the self-righteous woke and the brainwashing by education monopolies, Big Media, and Big Tech. We deal with threats of being shoved to the subway tracks, face-slashed and stabbings as gang initiation rites, muggings, rioters, Antifa terrorists, and woke rules of “no jail / no bail”, etc. In China, folks endure decades of slave labor in prisons of indoctrination, rape, torture, and execution if minds won't be refitted under that powerful Communist head, Xi Jinping, the dictator with the frozen smirk. President Biden wasn't exaggerating in cracking that Xi, “doesn't have a democratic – with a small ‘d’ – bone in his body!”

At Luther's 400th, Germany was Reeling over Defeat in WWI

Some had dubbed that horrific war, “The War to End All Wars”. They should have known better. Sparked by the assassination of an archduke on June 28, 1914, over 16 million would die through all that terrible brutality before The Versailles Treaty was signed on June 28, 1919 – two years before the Luther 400th observance.

Germans were distracted by grief and rage, and turned against all that they resented in the Peace Treaty's accusations of guilt, loading them with reparations and denying them membership in The League of Nations. All their bitter resentments smoldered until exploding under Adolf Hitler's coming into dictatorial power, promising a new Germany's rising up for domination as Nazism.

Hitler, in egomaniacal outrage had exaggerated *his* “struggles”, pluralizing *his self-centered grievance* as a political prisoner in the early 1920s. But even his German publisher pushed back against

his self-serving exaggerations, reducing them from “My Struggles” to “My Struggle”, (from *Mein Kampfe* to *Mein Kampf*).

So, in 1921, while some Germans did remember the 400th Year of Luther’s historic defense at Worms and gratefully honored what he’d done through The Reformation for the return to clear, *biblical* Christianity, others had fallen under the heretical spell of the 19th-Century’s “modernist” revisionism of “Christian” theology that had *nothing to celebrate* in terms of the life and the *biblically faithful theological* contributions of Martin Luther’s authentic orthodoxy!

Two Different Lives: One lived for Self; One lived for Others

In 1921, a 15-year-old German boy paid no attention to Luther’s 400th. Adolf Eichmann was too distracted by the bullies at school. Later, as overseer of The Holocaust, *he’d* bully millions to death.

In 1921, a 23-year-old, Belfast native was back at Oxford, after being wounded in trench warfare in France. C. S. Lewis was not yet the committed Christian he’d become ten years later, to go on to become the 20th Century’s most popular Christian apologist.

Their lives and their legacies are in *total contrast* with each other’s. One, in his selfishly-centered search for affirmation, supervised the massacres of millions, to satisfy his own ego’s desire for the approval of an evil tyrant, and he wound up hiding in fear, caught, tried and executed. The other man lived for the very truest welfare of folks all around the world, lovingly giving of himself and sharing the Good News of Christ, and he wound up in an Eternal Community of Love in praise to God.

Such is the absolute difference in results, when Love is rejected egoistically for one’s own selfish ends, or when Love is gratefully received to be shared for the very best welfare of all others.

Adolf Eichmann

Eichmann's assignment under Hitler was to *oversee*, and also *overlook* – the *unspeakable atrocities* of the Nazi Holocaust, the murders of so many millions of Jews, Christians, the disabled, the gypsies, homosexuals and others *mandated as disposables*. He relished serving *his idol*, his *Führer*, and he relished his feeding his own famished *ego*, after many years of so *longing to belong*.

Back then, Christians were singing a hymn: “I would be giving and forget the gift ... I would look up, and laugh and love and lift”.

But Eichmann was repeatedly sneering: “I'll leap into my grave laughing, for the feeling I have that the millions of human beings on my conscience, are a source of my extraordinary satisfaction!” As in all boasting, his, too, was a *panicking* in *blubbing bluster*.

But on May 8, 1945, a week after Hitler's suicide, the calamitous Nazi regime collapsed. *That horrific War against Hitler was over!*

That day is a childhood memory of mine. Cars were honking in celebration all over my hometown neighborhood in Youngstown, Ohio. I joined in with all of the excitement and I honked *our* car's horn, until my Dad said, “Okay, enough!”. I had just graduated from Kindergarten, so I had about as much of a grasp of what all the honking was really all about as today's proudly Postmodernist elite have a grasp of what their own woke world is really all about.

Thirty-eight years *later* – now, 38 years *ago* – in June, 1983, at 44, I'd visit the *two* Germanys, East and West, formed *after* that Nazi collapse. I'd be there to celebrate the 500th year of Luther's *birth*. I'd see *huge contrasts* between the *police state* and *poverty* in the *DDR*, Communist *East* Germany, and the *open* and *free state* of the economically flourishing, capitalist, *West* Germany.

But the *DDR* was so desperate for tourists' money it welcomed loads of American tours to Luther's sites (most were in the *DDR*).

These Communists *capitalized* on Luther's 500th much more than did West Germany's Federalist government. The Buchenwald Concentration Camp's site, also in the *DDR*, was open to tourists for pay. But it was derided by *the totalitarian* state's Marxist tour guides' well-rehearsed lines as, a remnant of *totalitarianism*, i.e., Nazi. This was a Marxist virtue signaling to its American tourists.

In 1961, the *DDR* built a barrier of cement and barbed wire between East and West Berlin. *Antifascistischer Schutzwall* is what the *DDR* called it, pretending that it was "protection" to keep "fascists" from *West Berlin* out of the *DDR*. The *real* purpose, of course, was to keep *DDR* seekers for freedom from *fleeing to West Berlin*. Self-defensive *rationalizing for failures to measure up* is used by *countries*, just as it's used by *anxiously posturing individuals*.

In 1989, Gorbachev did "tear down this wall". I went back to revisit some of the historic sites in that fallen *DDR* and it was a *totally different experience!* No ever-encroaching eavesdroppers. And I even got *graffitied* chunks of The Wall, clearly from the Wall's *West* side, for you'd have been *shot dead* for getting *that close* to the Wall's *East German* side. West Berliners had covered their side of The Wall with loads of colorful anti-Marxist and anti-*DDR* graffiti.

More recently, the reunified Germany, in *guilt-ridden virtue signaling* after its horrible deeds of the 20th-century, has tried to *atone*, as it were, by irrationally welcoming massive invasions of *assimilation-averse* Islamists. That "solution" has not gone well.

Well, back in 1945, Eichmann escaped from Allied captors and temporarily hid in Lower Saxony. But, bereft of his one and only *raison d'etre* – doing what he'd called, his "duty" to Hitler (actually,

for *himself*) – and in daily dread of *recapture* by the Allies, he escaped, incognito, to the Nazi-tainted Argentina.

But, by May 11, 1960, Israeli intelligence agents had tracked him down to his house at 14 Garibaldi Street in Buenos Aires.

After meticulous surveillance, the Israeli agents surprised him as he stepped off of a bus and was approaching his front door. They surrounded him. He *screamed* in shock. At last, he was *caught!* There'd now be no “hiding place” for Adolf Eichmann.

Still, he was so habituated to his *self-centered need for approval from “higher” authorities*, by doggedly doing “his duty”, that, as the Israeli agents tried to sneak him out of the Buenos Aires airport as inconspicuously as possible, escorting him through the airport as *they* were disguised in El Al uniforms, he so “dutifully” called their attention to their having neglected to put an El Al *jacket* on *him*. “It will arouse suspicion”, he whispered. “I’ll be conspicuously different from the *other members of the squad* who are fully dressed” as El Al. The “*other members of the squad*”?! *Such*, was his *ego’s ever desperate desire to belong* with the big shots.

So, now, in *his own* El Al jacket, they all flew off together to Israel, for his trial over his heinous roles in The Holocaust.

Hannah Arendt, a young Jewish woman, had fled Germany just as the notoriously anti-Semitic Hitler was coming into power.

Later, she’d write her doctoral dissertation in philosophy on, *Love and St. Augustine*. She’d also become something of an authority on Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism. So, she determined to be *in Israel, in person*, to witness Eichmann’s trial *for herself*.

As she watched him, listening intently, she began to realize that she discerned *no evidence of anti-Semitism* in his *motivation for following all of those deadly orders* to administrate The Holocaust.

What she said she saw, instead, was a total failure in his *critical thinking in his defense* – actually, his *defensiveness* – that he, himself, appeared to base in his own *twisted take* on Kant's categorical imperative, *Kant's own twist* on Jesus' "Golden Rule".

Eichmann tried to justify all he'd done by telling the judges that it was *simply his categorical imperative*, his *duty*, *to his commander*. He said he was simply *doing his job!* Of course, he'd really been doing the job *he assigned himself*, for *his own ego's sake*.

His clumsy rationalization *fit* his childhood obsession *to fit in*, *to belong*, *to be approved* and *affirmed*. He tried to believe that he'd finally been "affirmed" as *the world's biggest bully's best buddy!*

Yet, beneath this scant shred of his own shroud that couldn't block *his own sight of his sense of self* – he couldn't avoid fearing that all others, too, saw straight through it. So, he never did, nor could he, nor ever would he, *ever achieve* his so desperately and so foolishly sought, but never caught, *self-centered, affirmation*.

In 1979, Bob Dylan would wisely remind us all that, "It may be *the devil* or it may be *the Lord*, but you're *gonna have to serve somebody*." Dylan's *either/or*, is, in one sense, the *full range* of choices. But, it's *oneself* who *makes* that choice. And, in the case of Eichmann, he *chose* to serve the same one that so many choose to serve, *their never-appeased version of their own self-centered sense of self*, rather than a sensibly *self-censored* self. That choice is a *killer bent on homicide* and, *de facto*, *suicide*.

One becomes, in effect, a *self-assassin*. Of course, no one else ever *knew* the *assassinated*, for the *assassinated* had always been *stuck*, *inside* the assassin's own, self-centered brain cells. The *assassinated* would waste away inside the assassin's corpse.

It was *his overriding distraction*, *his compulsive motivation*, in all of his evil deeds. He'd *tried to rationalize* it as, "doing my duty",

yet, *this rationalizing is evidence it was so much more about his “duty” to redeem his sense of “self” that, utterly consumed him.*

But up against the evidence of *his own obsession, his own self-centered drive for self-approval to combat his own self-distracting self-awareness which none of his own efforts had ever resolved*, he *refused* to reform or recant. It never worked; it never *could*. It was *his rationalization*, all up against *his much deeper awareness – even a God-given awareness – of his sin and his self-chosen soul’s “final solution”*, long before he was ever executed by Israel.

And, through it all, rather than receiving the *honors* he sought, he wound up giving to millions of people, millions more reasons to *utterly despise* even the very sound of his name, “*Eichmann*”.

In her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, published the year *after* his execution, Arendt coined the term, “the banality of evil”. His crimes were *truly atrocious*; his “explanations” were *utterly trite*.

Yet, no matter the relative level to which our misdeeds descend into deepest darkness, and however they’re the expressions of our habituation in original sin, our “explanations”, our “excuses” about “extenuating circumstances”, etc., *all remain utterly trivial*.

Augustine insightfully said, of our *depravity*, our *denial* and our *determination not to repent*: “By our own *will*, we forsake God.”

Well, back there on that night of May 31, 1962, imprisoned near Tel Aviv, before he was hanged, Eichmann was given a visit by a Lutheran minister. Then, at the scene of his midnight hanging, according to Rafi Eitan, commander of his capture in Argentina, and just as he was about to be hanged, Eichmann shouted in apparent defiance, “I hope that all of you will follow me.”

Then, when he was quite literally at the end of his rope, as the trap door under his feet was about to be released, he was heard to mumble with his very last breath: “I die believing in God.”

Was it a wish, worship, a last blip to be “a somebody”, even if only addressed to himself? Who knows? Only God knows!

C. S. Lewis

Meanwhile, some 2,300 miles west of Tel Aviv, at his Oxford cottage, “The Kilns”, a very different life was being *lived in love* – love for God and love for others – all through, and by, *God’s love*.

Formerly an *atheist*, C. S. Lewis never thought he’d ever live his life for Christ. But, by God’s grace, in 1931, in conversation on an evening’s stroll along Addison’s Walk by the river at Magdalen College, with a few of his fellow Oxford dons who’d previously come to faith in Christ, he, himself, came to Christ and he would become the 20th-Century’s most popular Christian apologist.

Well, on the 10th of June, 1962, ten days following Eichmann’s execution, C. S. Lewis was once again *motivated by Christian love* to try to be *helpful* to a man he’d never met. At his desk in his Headington Quarry abode just outside Oxford, he was kindly and patiently, hand-writing yet another of what would become his seven letters to this troubled enquirer who’d been a total stranger when he first sought Lewis’ counsel back in January of 1959.

This characteristically ordinary episode in Lewis’ life shows what a refreshingly different life Lewis led *after* his conversion to Christ and how very much more fulfilling it was, not only for himself, but for all with whom he associated thereafter – and for the millions of others whom he would help but, likewise, never meet. He could now, so very well afford to love by and through the energy with which he, himself, was loved by God in Christ.

Lewis’ first letter of response to this stranger was not at all to the man’s liking. And, the man then *complained* of this to Lewis.

Instead of paralyzingly penalizing himself by personalizing the man's blunt complaint, Lewis sincerely apologized for failing to be helpful. He could fully afford to do so, for he knew that, against all of his years of *ingratitude* to God, *he'd been forgiven in God's lovingly giving up His Own Son on the cross, to save an atheist like "Jack" Lewis, and all other self-centered sinners like himself.*

With *Christian love* and *patience* such as Paul had described in 1 Corinthians 13 – and in spite of his declining health with serious heart and kidney problems, his now dealing with the cancer that would soon kill Joy Davidman, his American friend for whom he'd provided a *civil* marriage so that she and her two sons wouldn't be expelled from refuge in England over their expired visas, and, in spite of his brother Warnie's absence on yet another alcoholic binge in Ireland – Lewis was again trying to be *helpful* to this man he'd never met. He'd now been responding to him for four years.

So, he began his latest reply with *empathic* reassurance – the wisest way to note another's distracting self-obsessions:

"You are of course perfectly right in defining your problem (which is also mine and everyone's) as 'excessive selfness'. But perhaps you don't fully realize how far you have got by so defining it."

Lewis commends him for his useful *self-awareness*:

"To know that one is dreaming is to be already newly awake, even if, for the present, one can't wake up fully. And you have actually got further than that. You have got beyond the illusion (very common) that to *recognize* a chasm is the same thing as building a bridge over it. Your danger now is that of being hypnotized by the mere sight of the chasm, or *content* with *looking* at it as *excessive* selfness. The important thing now is to go steadily on, acting so far as you can – and you certainly can to some extent, however small – as if it *weren't* there. You can, and I expect you daily do, behave with some degree of unselfishness. You can and do make some attempt at prayer. The continual voice which tells you that your best actions are secretly filled with subtle self-regard, and your best prayers still wholly egocentric – must for the most part be either disregarded – as one disregards the impulse to keep on looking under the

bandage to see whether the cut is healing. If you are always fidgeting with the bandage, it never will.”

Lewis finished this installment of the correspondence by saying:

“A list you should keep much in mind is I John iii, 20, ‘If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart.’ I sometimes pray ‘Lord give me *no more* and *no less* self-knowledge than I can at this moment make good use of.’ Remember He is the artist and you are only the picture. You can’t see it, so, quietly submit to be painted – i.e., keep on fulfilling all the obvious duties of your station (you really know quite well enough what they are!), as having forgiveness for each failure and then leaving it alone. You are in the right way. Walk and don’t keep on looking at it.”

Yours sincerely,

C. S. Lewis

Well said! And, alas, *well done!* The next letter this man would receive from “The Kilns” would *not* be from C. S. Lewis. It would be from Lewis’ brother, Warnie, now back in Oxford, writing to tell this man that Lewis had died. (C. S. Lewis and John F. Kennedy died at about the *same hour* on the *very same day*, November 22, 1963. News of President Kennedy’s assassination obviously usurped news of Lewis’s death, even in the UK.)

Other examples of Lewis’ willingness and ability to so lovingly empathize with and support those in need of the kind of response he was so readily able to afford to give after his own conversion to Christ, can be seen in his devoting time and attention to others’ needs, even for their *public*, as well as for their *private* support, in spite of his demanding writing and tutorial schedules.

Among these whom he encouraged were some of the very most disdained of society in that early and mid-20th Century, e.g., the “pansies”, the “buggers”, the “Sodomites” as same-sex oriented persons were called, mocked and *criminalized*, in those days.

As a serious Christian in the 1950s and ‘60s, and to the end of his life, he’d support these victims of prejudice. One of the last was Walter Hooper, a young gay man, a Lewis fan, from North

Carolina. Though he met Lewis just a few months before Lewis died, he'd later advocate for, and edit, Lewis' manuscripts, even rescuing some of them from a bonfire Warnie set while he was housekeeping at the Kilns. Hooper helped keep Lewis' books in print for over half a century. Hooper finally died at age 89 of Covid-19 in December, 2020.

In the 1950s, referring to the hostility of those who argued *against decriminalizing* homosexuality in Britain, Lewis rhetorically asked, quite keenly: "Is [this hostility against homosexuals] on Christian grounds?" *Answering* his question, again rhetorically, he asked: "But how many of those who fulminate on the matter are in fact Christians?" *No*, he concluded: "The real reason for all the pother is, in my opinion, neither Christian nor ethical. We attack this vice, not because it is the worst, but because it is, by adult standards, the most disreputable and unmentionable, and happens also to be a crime." Lewis was way ahead of his time in his rightly exposing the public's *self-righteousness* in this matter.

In 1960, two years before he died, Lewis wrote a kind letter of encouragement to Delmar Banner, a homosexual who was a landscape painter and did portraits of Beatrix Potter. Lewis told him: "I quite agree with you about Homosexuals", assuring him that he, too, was "fighting for the persecuted Homosexual against snoopers and busybodies", and was endorsing all of the efforts to reform the anti-homosexual laws in Britain. In 1967, four years after Lewis died, Britain finally did *decriminalize* homosexuality.

Back in 1914, Lewis, in his hometown of Belfast, was 16 years old. He'd later write that, a 19-year-old nearby neighbor, Arthur Greeves, "had tried, quite unsuccessfully, to make friends with my brother and myself." One day, "I received a message saying that Arthur was in bed, convalescent, and would welcome a visit. I

can't remember what led me to accept this invitation, but for some reason I did. I found Arthur sitting up in bed. On the table beside him lay a copy of, *Myths of the Norsemen.*" Ah!

Immediately, both young men were engaged in very animated conversation over their delight in their *mutual excitement with Norsemen.* In *Surprised by Joy* (1955) Lewis recalls that scene:

"Next moment the book was in our hands, our heads were bent close together, we were pointing, quoting, talking – soon almost shouting – discovering in a torrent of questions that we liked not only the same things, but the same parts of it and in the same way: that both knew the stab of Joy and that, for both, the arrow was shot from the North."

Lewis later reflected: "Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: "What! You too? I thought I was the only one." He'd observe that, "Many thousands of people have had the experience of finding the first friend, and it is none the less a wonder; as great a wonder (*pace* the novelists) as first love, or even a greater."

In 1918, Arthur, a devout Christian, revealed to Lewis, his "alter ego", though Lewis wasn't yet a devout Christian, that he, Arthur, was *homosexual*. Lewis' quick response was: "Congratulations old man, I am delighted that you have had the moral courage to form your own opinions independently, in defiance of the old taboos." Lewis agreed that homosexuality "is a sort of mystery only to be fully understood by those who are made that way – and", he admitted, "my views on it can be at best but emotion."

There's no record in his half-century of intimate letters with, "My dear Arthur", that Lewis *ever retracted* the fervency of his 1918 response to Arthur's "coming out" to him as homosexual, even *after* Lewis' own conversion to Christ. These two men exchanged more letters than Lewis ever exchanged with anybody else.

And, when, in 1931, Lewis shared with Arthur that he, himself, had now become a committed Christian, too, Arthur told him that

he wept tears of joy. In 1933, Lewis dedicated his very first Christian book, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, to his "dear Arthur".

In 1954, responding to a friend, an American professor, who'd asked him about Christian students coming to him with questions about homosexuality, Lewis summed up, wisely, pastorally: "All I have ever said is that, like all other tribulations, it must be offered to God and His guidance on how to use it." Lewis', "tribulations", carries no sense of condemnation, but only an *awareness* of the hardships faced by homosexuals against society's judgmentalism.

Lewis intuited that homosexual Christians would have rough times enough, not only with Christians who didn't understand them but, with their own consciences that must not be violated, and that needed to be well prepared for the challenges, and with their own deep needs for intimacy, met or not. He knew that, to manage all of this, it would take the Lord's *gentle guidance*.

In 1952, in his, *Mere Christianity*, Lewis got it so right when he directed attention *off of ourselves* in regard to our *loving another*:

"The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less."

These are the two ways things go when we're free to follow The Golden Rule with awareness energized by God's love for us all, or when we counter The Golden Rule for our own quite *selfish* goals.

In the very last letter Lewis would ever write to "My dear Arthur", September 11, 1963, he said he'd recently come out of a coma and retired from Cambridge as an invalid. He'd been "completely deserted" by Warnie, who was off on yet another long drinking binge in Ireland, resisting a return to their Oxford home. Lewis wonders about what more pain may still be his before he finally

makes it *through* “the Gate”. Still, he’s “quite comfortable and cheerful.”

He added: “The only real snag is that it looks as if you and I shall never meet again in this life. This often saddens me very much.” And, then, in the very last line of this last letter to Arthur, Lewis lamented, so lovingly, “Oh Arthur, never to see you again!”

But, of course, *they both looked forward by faith to seeing each other again* in the very Presence of their loving Savior and Lord!

A Life of Christian Love Makes The Real Difference!

What a *real difference* a *life of Christian love* makes, after what C. S. Lewis called, *his* having been “surprised by joy” in *his* conversion from *atheism* to Christ and in all that he would write during four decades after *his life-changing* experience with Christ – now 90 years ago – whether in Christian *apologetics* or in more *mystical*, though nonetheless Christian, illustrative tales of *Narnia*.

St. Augustine experienced this, many generations before Lewis. In his *Confessions* after his own conversion from *paganism*, he testified, profoundly and warmly: “I have read in Plato and Cicero sayings that are wise and very beautiful. But I never read in either of them: ‘Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden’.”

In Christ, Augustine gained *peace* at his deepest point of need in the *perspective of faith in Christ*. He trusted in Christ, and then *understood* that, one really *understands nothing* apart from *faith in Him*. This great philosopher found that, “Understanding is the reward of *faith*. So,” he urged, “seek not to understand that you may believe, but *believe*, that you may *understand*.”

Among all that Augustine came to *understand* was *what real love looks like*. As he, himself, said of *love*: “It has the hands to help others, and has feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has

eyes to see their misery and what they need. It has ears to hear their sighs and sorrow. That's what love looks like."

This Good News of God's love was memorably expressed by Jesus when he spoke with Nicodemus. John recalled it in words that, no doubt, are the most familiar words in the New Testament: "God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, so that, whoever believes and trusts in him, shall never perish, but shall have eternal life." (John 3:16)

This is God's Love, lovingly lived and lovingly spoken to us for sharing with all others. What more thankful motivation could there be, for our loving God, and for our loving all others loved by God?

Paul wrote to Christians in Galatia: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So, you're no longer a slave, you're a son, and if a son, you're an heir through God." (Gal 4:4ff)

Given the fact that, *God so loved the world*, all of us, there need be *nothing* that gets in our way to *love God in return*, and nothing to keep us from *loving all others*. This is the Gospel "proof text", if you will, *for our call to love all, in the love by which God loves all*.

Abraham Kuyper, a theologian and the Prime Minister of The Netherlands, observed: "Your homesick soul goes out after God, Himself. It is *He* your soul desires, and cannot do without."

We can so fully afford to follow God's leading us into His love given to us and to all. His own generous Love is what generates and energizes our loving of God and our loving of one another.

Amen!