

# The Meanings of Words & The Word of All Meaning

EC's 2020 Octoberfest Keynote by EC founder, Ralph Blair

**“What’s the matter?”** Have *you* ever been asked *this* question by *anyone*? Has *anyone* ever asked *this* of *you*? What does the question *mean*? What’s *meant* in the *mind* of the one *who* asks? What’s *meant* in the *mind* of the one *who’s* asked? These are the relevant questions for interpretation in the minds of each.

Since *matters of meaning matter*, making out what’s *meant*, and not making up what’s *meant*, is *crucial*. Making out what’s *meant* in *any matter*, requires a wise and an honest use of *gray matter*.

“What’s the matter?” can be asked from *sincere concern* or, out of *irritated manipulation*. *Meaning* in two such *different questions* is a matter of two *different motives* for quite *different purposes*. Either motivation might be in play. So, recognizing the *motivation* that *defines* the *matter* of the question’s *meaning* is a *vital matter*.

Whether *asking* or *answering* any question, *context* is a *critical matter* for discerning the *meaning*. What’s *meant*, but *not clearly understood*, *matters* as much as what’s *meant*, and *understood*. All must be understood by both, for a *meaningful communication*.

*Motives* in *asking* and *responding* are as contextually important as are the *demeanors* in the asking and responding – *how* is the question *asked* and *how* is it *answered*. It shouldn’t be *assumed* that it *was heard* in the way it was *meant* to be heard. The reply might be with *relief* in having been asked, but the reply might be more of the tit-for-tat, *more* of that irritated manipulation, e.g., an angrily voiced, “Nothing!”, *meaning*, “You *finally* asked?!” “Can’t you see?!” “You don’t care about *me!*”

It’s the *entire meaning* of the question and response, *interpreted* by each, that *matters*. But neither person can simply *assume* to

be *correct* in *interpreting* the matter, either in asking or in replying. “*Meanings*” can be well or wrongly read, by either’s interpretation.

What’s *meant* in the mind of the one who asks or in the mind of the one who’s asked, cannot be assumed to be in the mind of the *other*. We can’t, and we dare not, extrapolate from our own, *self-involved* motivations and interpretations, to conclude that, we’ve, *thereby*, uncovered the *meaning* of each other’s *intension* or the *meaning* of the *interaction*. More *deliberation* may be necessary.

What’s the meaning of *silence* from another? What does it *mean*, if someone’s not been in touch with you? Do you *actually* know *what* the person is thinking? It’s so easy to so ignorantly conclude this or that about another’s thoughts of you, especially when you’re caught up in your own self-doubts.

One’s unwanted feelings of *hurt*, *frustration* or *fear*, are certainly not pleasant. They’re *unwanted* feelings. But, *not wanting* them is *unfortunate*. That’s because, interpreting these feelings in *that* way, there’s nothing one can do to *get rid* of the hurt, frustration or fear. *Actually, these three unwanted feelings are among our very best friends*, although we don’t “feel” that they are.

A *feeling* is the *emotion* we *experience* that’s *based* in whatever *interpretation* we put on something. The *question to ask*, and it’s *not hard* to find the *answer*, is: “What am I *telling* myself?” All our *feelings* flow from what we’re *thinking*. We think in *words* and in *sentences* of self-talk. So, it’s easy to answer: “What am I telling myself?” Simply repeat to yourself, your self-talk. You’ll *hear* it!

But there’s no use to tell oneself, “Just get over it!”, “Cheer up!”, “Screw *him!*”, or “I need a drink!”, etc. What one is *thinking* when *feeling* hurt, frustration or fear must be identified, challenged and changed if one is going to get out from under these troublesome feelings. Unwanted feelings come from the *sentences* we *give* to

ourselves about what something *means*. And, they can be *life sentences* that we give ourselves, by *never changing our minds*.

Take, *frustration*. Please, *take it away!* No. What *notions* are *behind* frustration? If one thinks that something *absolutely needs* to go *a certain way*, when, in reality, for it to go *that way*, requires *cooperation* from one or more *other people*, not to mention *other factors*, it'll be *impossible to avoid frustration* in a situation where one *tries, single-handedly*, to do what it takes at least another, in sync with oneself, to do. So, one can *rationaly rid* oneself of the *frustration* by changing one's mind in *realistic* ways. Furthermore, how can you predict that something *really* needs to go *your way*? Surely, you know by now that you're no fortune teller. Right?

Think of frustration as you've never before thought of frustration! *Think of frustration as a faithful friend!* He pops up to lend you a helping hand. When he next appears, he'll say something like: "Hey, it's me! Remember me? I'm the guy who's always showing up whenever you're trying to make something happen when, *in reality*, it takes at least one other person or maybe a lot of people, to cooperate, to achieve. I know you think I'm a "nag", but that's okay, I don't personalize. I take it as what it takes, to be of *help* to you. So, my showing up this time, does it help you recall what we've talked about? If so, bye-bye. And, I'll see you again!"

The same process of rethinking more *meaningfully* is required for one's getting out from under unwanted *fears* and *hurt feelings*.

*Feeling fear*, we need to identify what we're telling ourselves about *the future*, for *fear* is *always future focused*. We *project a worst-case scenario* and *nothing but*. Again, we *can't foretell* the *future*. And, we can't, *right now*, get *our hands on* the future.

When the future *arrives*, we *can* get *our hands on* it, and we *can* get *our minds around* it, and, what we'd predicted as *unbearable*,

will now be experienced as another *mixed experience*, as is *all* of life. So, when that old prompter, *fear*, drops by to do *his* job, *take hold* of what *fear* has to teach: Our unmixed fantasies don't rightly forecast the whole story of our coming experience. Yet, how very often it is that we see a headline such as: "Many, fear the worst!"

What if "the worst" *really* happens? *As such*, it *won't*. What's "the worst" in a *fantasy*, is a *mixed experience* in *reality*. But what if I'm locked up inside a Nazi concentration camp!? Well, locked up in a Nazi concentration camp, psychiatrist Viktor Frankl *came to realize* that, *his experience* depended on *the meaning that he, himself, was free to assign* to his imprisonment. *That* mattered for *how he experienced* it. Corrie ten Boom, too, learned this in *her own* Nazi imprisonment. No Nazi was able to deprive one of *the relief* found by *going deeper, taking charge* of one's own personal *interpretation of the imprisonment*, and thus, of one's *feelings*. In 1946, Frankl shared his insight in his, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

Some 2,000 years before, Paul, the Apostle, wrote from prison in Rome, *out of his foundational faith in God*: "I have *learned to be content* in whatever circumstances I find myself." (Phil 4:11)

As healthy and bright young adults, Joni Eareckson and Charles Krauthammer were *instantly paralyzed for life* when they dove into pools of water. *The meaning* they ascribed to their broken bodies led them into the rest of their meaningful lives of *self-fulfillment* and *valuable service* to others. *Wise interpretations of what are always mixed situations release us from the paralysis of self-pity*.

Back in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the evangelical English poet, William Cowper, through chronic bouts with depression, was able to write, from *his experience*: "Ye fearful saints, fresh courage, take. The clouds ye so much dread, are big with mercy, and shall break, In blessings on your head. His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding

every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.” Repeated bouts of depression weren’t his whole story.

Cowper’s closest friend was the former slave ship captain, John Newton. After his conversion to Christ, he wrote that great hymn, “Amazing Grace”. Cowper, too, was an abolitionist. He *identified with the slaves*, in his poem, “The Negro’s Complaint”: “Forc'd from home, and all its pleasures, Afric's coast I left forlorn; To increase a stranger's treasures, O'er the raging billows borne. Men from England bought and sold me, paid my price in paltry gold; But, though *theirs*, they have enroll'd me, *Minds are never to be sold. Still in thought as free as ever.* ... Skins may differ, but affection Dwells in white and black the same. Is there, as ye sometimes tell us, is there one who reigns on high? Has he bid you buy and sell us, Speaking from his throne the sky? ... Hark! He answers! ...Where his whirlwinds answer – No.”

The brilliant scientist of energy and demography, Vaclav Smil, grew up under Marxism in Czechoslovakia and he escaped to the US in 1969 for his graduate studies at Penn State, just as I was finished mine. His observations never fail to add insight, and, this topic of *fear* is no exception. Bill Gates says, "I wait for new Smil books the way some people wait for the next *Star Wars* movie."

Commenting on the *unusually high levels of fear over Covid-19*, Smil notes that the Covid-19 death rate per million is one-fifth that of the 1957-58 Asian flu and one-third that of the 1968-70 Hong Kong flu, yet they had only “evanescent economic consequences” and “did not leave any deep, traumatic traces in memories” of the 350 million people who were 10 or older when both struck. That’s true in my own case. I was 18 during the Asian flu, 29-31 during the Hong Kong flu. I recall the term, “Asian flu”, better than “Hong Kong flu”, but I have no specific memories beyond these names.

Smil notes there were no “mass-scale lockdowns” and the like, back then, and asks: “Was it because we had no fear-reinforcing 24/7 cable news, Twitter, etc. ... Or is it we ourselves who have changed, by valuing recurrent but infrequent risks differently?” On that idea, one may take note of what psychologist Jonathan Haidt and attorney Greg Lukianoff document on increasingly risk-averse child-rearing practices, that now continue past childhood and on into college years and beyond, for such “snowflakes”.

Whether lockdowns, 24-7 hysteria on cable news and Twitter, or newer child-rearing practices, all are *matters of meanings* that we *read into events* and the *consequent feelings* we then experience.

Turning now to *hurting our feelings* – and we are, indeed, who do it to ourselves when we feel hurt. What do “hurting” feelings have to teach us? *Our self-spun hurting stops hurting* when we realize that, what anybody says *to us*, or *about us*, is the *story of that person*, it’s *not* the story of *us*. *Our own story of us is what we’re uneasy about* in another’s “put down” of us – if that’s even what was *meant* by that other person. *If it was meant* as a “put-down”, it came from the other’s agenda, inside *his or her* sense of *low self-esteem*, so, in effect, it’s an *unintended compliment*. *But*, if it rings *our* alarm bells, that says it’s about what *we’re telling ourselves about ourselves*. *We* now get to *think* that one through, frankly and rationally, toward more maturity within ourselves.

Know what your unwanted feelings *mean*, *defeat* them honestly and frankly, and learn from them, in a rational way, so that your feelings of hurt won’t so needlessly distract you from opportunities to move on into a much more *productive* and *meaningful life*.

**Did you ever read a book, that was written and published in a language you never studied and never learned? If this sounds**

like a *stupid* question, even an *insulting* question, it really isn't. And, there's no "complement" implied, as if the one who's asked must be some sort of a "clairvoyant" – which, at any rate, would *not* be any praise.

So, how does anyone who's never ever *learned to read in a particular language*, nonetheless claim, to *read books written and published in that language*?

Well, people do it all the time. And, they're not a bit hesitant to boast that, they're really quite good at it.

How do they *do* it? They *read into* the books instead of *reading* the books. It's done from *prejudice* into *projection*. They "*already know*", by *petulant presumption*, all that's *wrong* with *these* books and what's *not to like* about what's *in* them. They "know" it, from *grumbling to themselves*. Did you ever realize what a very angry world can be entered through *gates of grumbling to oneself*?

In defensiveness, they've "written" a *caricature* off the top of their empty heads, *their own version*, and *with prejudice*, i.e. they *judge the case closed*, it's over and it's done with. *No appeal* is allowed! There's *no point* to *re-read* what's already been "read" through *their very own image, imagination* and *projections*.

Here, I'm referring *not only* to the *Bible*, that they've *really never read*, but *assume they know as if they wrote it*, for, of course, *they did write it, in their ignorant, imaginary perversion*. I'm referring to *whole libraries* they've never read, entire *arguments* of which they know nothing. Defensively, they assume they don't need to *learn* what they already "know", in spite of what many others may say otherwise.

There are so many books in the world, in so many languages. One lifetime is far too short for reading even a very small fraction of them. And, for many reasons, they're just out of one's reach.

But many books are readily within the easy reach of those who *refuse* to read them by *assuming* they've already "read" them. So, they *dismiss* them. The Bible is *certainly* among these books.

These books are *rejected* in nonchalance or even with violence. Both of these reactions point to rationalized motives under wraps. So, there's an awkward awareness that their slips are showing, whether or not they can frankly afford to admit this, even to themselves, let alone, to anyone else. Their *unwillingness* to *listen* to counter arguments, let alone their refusal to *rationally argue* their case, is all the evidence that's needed to conclude that, their "search" for *meaning* is a *sham* and so is their armor of a "know-it-all" attitude. They're missing the "full armor of God" against all evil distractions, of which Paul wrote. (Eph 6:11ff)

Archeology, anthropology, and ancient texts evidence the fact that, throughout human history and all across the globe, all of humanity has always and everywhere exhibited awareness that we're not on our own, that, regardless of how it's expressed, there's a *broken relationship between us and God, or, the "gods"*.

So, there's this ages-old, sensed need for the ultimate *Meaning*. It's felt in our common human awareness of our *guilt* and of our need for *peace of mind* and *heart*, and for *assurance* that we *do* or *can*, somehow, *measure up*. It's by God's grace we're made aware of this fact that, we *don't*, as we now are, *measure up*.

We make up all kinds of excuses and self-promotions that we really *can't believe*, in order to combat our awareness that we *don't* measure up. None of it ever *convinces* us against our convictions that we don't measure up, so we *continue* to load up on all sorts of ineffective antidotes as substitutes for the One and Only Substitute. All of these alibies go all the way back to Eden.



Both Hebrew and Christian texts note that, above and beyond our sense of unworthiness there's a universal awareness of awe. The psalmist sings: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim His handiwork. Day after day proclaims speech, night after night reveals knowledge, and all, without speech or words. Their *voice* goes out through all the earth, their *words* to the end of the world". (Ps 19:1sff) Paul gave witness to the fact that, "God's wrath is revealed against all our unrighteousness and suppression of the truth. For, what can be known about God is plain to humanity. God has shown it to all. From the creation, His invisible attributes, eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen in the things He has made. So, humanity is without excuse. Yet, aware of God, they did not honor him or give thanks to Him. They became futile inside their own minds. Their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be *wise*, they became fools, exchanging the glory of the immortal God for mere *images* of men, birds, animals and creeping things." (Rom 1:18ff)

As the English poet and cleric, John Donne, wrote of anyone who refuses to see or hear the evidence for God: "He must pull out his own eyes, and see no creature, before he can say, he sees no God; He must be no human, and quench his reasonable soul, before he can say to himself, there is no God."

But fallen humanity is so much at odds with God that it's so often, only when one comes to the end of one's rope, when all that had been counted on for ultimate satisfaction, has fallen apart and can no longer be counted on for *any* satisfaction at all, that one comes to be *open* to God's Presence. And *God is there!* Of course, *He's there! He's always been there!*

Today's efforts to *block* this *gift* of awareness of God are openly displayed in psychopathological denial through uselessly ruthless

“remedies” of a “New Atheism”, agnosticism, New Age notions of “wellness”, *ad nauseam*, and all the gibberish of Postmodernism. But, in all of these attempted *distractions*, there’s still no escaping the *gnawing awareness* of *guilt*. These frauds are, themselves, evidence of rebellion. So, boasting in oneself and blaming others backfires on a guilty conscience and never distracts from the guilt that’s felt. Yet, the fact that it’s still felt, is a painful, but grace-filled, call to repentance and restoration, a call to ask, “What’s up?” All the *disappointments* in our substitutes are *gracious alerts* that *our* “remedies” don’t, and won’t ever, fix what’s *terribly wrong*.

Our sense of estrangement, of Homelessness, is a gracious call to come Home to our Creator, our Father, God, in Whose Image we’re lovingly created, for the most meaningful relationship of all, *with the One Who is, The True Word of All Meaning*.

**If we don’t *know the meaning of a word*, that word is useless – at least, to us.** We’re in the dark and unenlightened. Even if we can identify each letter in that string of letters, we still won’t know the *word’s meaning*. Yet, the matter of *meaning* is *the very point of any word*.

*A word’s meaning is always, also, a matter of context.* And the *context* is just as crucial for understanding the *meaning of single, one syllable words*, as it is for understanding the meaning of a *whole string of words*, whether in a simple story or a sound or an unsound explanation, an argument or a narrative.

There’s always much more to be taken into consideration in the matter of *meanings* than mere strings of letters, or even strings of words. And, whether they’re our own or another’s, the *personal motivations, presuppositions, intentions, and agendas* of various

stripes, whether *revealed* or *concealed*, or a mix of both, are all intimately involved in the overall context of all *meanings*.

And, what's *meant* must not be dismissed with a clueless, but loaded, "So what!" Such shrugs of indifference are so frequently permeated with a malignancy, metastasizing even as that alleged apathy is being asserted.

In *many* cases, being in the dark about the meaning of a word may *not* really matter *very much, if at all*. But, in *other cases, the meaning of a word really matters very much*.

So much that's *really very significant* can be at stake in just one little word, while, *so little* can be at stake in volumes of verbosity. And, to know which is which, is a matter that *really does matter*.

In the case of *any* word, we won't be better informed by merely *making up* a meaning to suit ourselves. This is the case, whether we need to deal with a single, significant word or with a long string of significant words, as in an *adept argument*, a vital *narrative* or a *whole world and life view*. It's also the case with our *self-talk*. Are we talking *nonsense* to ourselves? Are we *clueless* about *that*?

If you're just starting to learn English as a foreign language, and somebody tells you, "Ah, I'm all worn *out*" and, moments later, he says "I'm all *in*", he doesn't mean he's *recovered*. But, don't "out" and "in" mean opposites? Colloquialisms *can* be confusing! This is yet another reason *why contexts* are important for *meaning*.

As one who's just beginning to learn English, and approaching a door that says, "Push", or, "Pull", you'll likely soon discover what's meant, simply by trying to open the door. Still, to one who's just beginning to learn English, those two little words certainly do look a lot alike, don't they? They both have four letters, they both start with a "Pu", but, then, there are those two odd little add-ons, "sh"

and “ll”, that really do make a *very big* difference as to what’s *meant*, as well as to what *might happen!*

Confusion over what’s meant by a sign on a door that says, “Push” or “Pull”, is clarified rather easily, and usually without any unwanted consequences. However, in other situations, not being sure of what’s meant by “Push” or “Pull” can mean the very big difference between life and death – *literally!*

There are other doors in life, at other entrances or exits, into or out of *good or bad habits*, a *wise or foolish lifestyle* or an entire *world and life view*, that can have quite significant, even life or death consequences, even far beyond those doors of decision.

So, one *needs* to know the *meaning of a single word* as well as the *meaning of its context*. And, *every* word has its context. Still, if one knows only a *part* of a *narrative* and is blind to the wider, and *most significant parts* of that *context*, one can be seriously disabled and in need of enlightenment by, “the rest of the story”, as Paul Harvey said on radio, long before many of you were old enough to understand or even care about the “rest of the story”.

Going way back to thousands of years ago, to the wisdom of Proverbs, so *very* long before *we* were born, it was quite obvious that the *fuller narrative* was necessary for knowing the *truth, at all*. As one Proverb puts it, “The one who states his case *first, seems right, until* the *second* witness states *his* case. (Prov 18:17) Have we not all lived long enough to learn this wise lesson? It’s what’s behind every single change of mind that we’ve ever experienced.

If we hold ourselves hostage to nothing but *our own side’s old suspicions*, based in *our own side’s presuppositions* and *slogans*, with little or no real awareness of *relevant evidence* and *sound arguments* for *even our side*, let alone, for the *other side*, while we mock the *other side’s slogans* with *our slogans*, and they operate

in the very same way, what's the reasonable basis for any really *meaningful* dialogue, debate or informed decision making?

That's a *rhetorical* question, right? There ain't no *basis* for any *meaningful* dialogue under those conditions! Save your breath! But, having saved a bit of your breath, plenty of breathtakingly unwanted consequences can result from having no dialogues.

Things so often *boil down* to shouting illiterate slogans at each other instead of trying to truly *understand* one another. When we fail to understand one another, things can *boil over*, very rapidly.

Isn't that what we have these days in the angry chaos of self-righteously ill-informed rioters in the streets of our cities, on our cell phones, Internet, radio, television, and by all the other means by which self-identified "know-it-alls" *refuse to listen* to each other so as to have any opportunity to even *just begin* to comprehend or communicate, *in these matters of race, culture, history, politics, religion*, etc. Recklessly accusing each other of racism or fascism displays utter ignorance of the history of racism and Fascism. So, sadly, for so many, it's now, *E Pluribus Unum* be damned!

People who *get hooked*, keep on *hooking themselves* to biased sources and talk-shows that feed them what they *demand* to be fed, instead of the well-balanced diet they need for *digestion* and healthy growth. How can we mature together, as fellow citizens, without a wider, healthier diet? *We can't!* And neither can *they!* Yet it's all on deadly public display, day after day, night after night.

We and they *cannot mature*, if we and they don't have what it takes to make *our* case or critique *their* case, *rationally*, with clear *logic, accurate historical awareness, a cognitively honest attitude* and *mutual good will* to allow for *humbly, listening* to one another.

But, so many Millennial and Gen Z rioters are brainwashed by Postmodernist faculties to believe that, *logic, rational analysis* and

*the scientific method* are all products of “whiteness” and “systemic racism” in the oppressiveness of Western Culture, and so they, so very puppet-like, parrot this popular propaganda that they’ve been force-fed, up to the gills, but, tragically, without getting *fed up* with what’s so obviously *indigestible*, and, more seriously, *fatal*.

However, if these anarchists get arrested for physical attacks, lootings, arson, etc., as they *riot for social justice*, they’re quick to demand and depend on the *best logic and rational arguments* of their defense attorneys. If shot, they’ll depend on best-based medical research, and still more smart lawyers. Isn’t that odd.

Recently, a graduate student, an adjunct professor, simply posed a question for his undergrad students to discuss and debate on the “Columbian Exchange” – the globalization that began in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. But “social justice” activist offended themselves and accused him of discrimination and bias. He was immediately fired without opportunity to appeal or to present his side. That’s “Freedom of Speech” in academia these days!

It shouldn’t be at all surprising. When did our *fallen race not fill* itself up with counterproductive and irrational self-righteousness?

*Self-righteously approved claptrap* was all that was ever needed to pass muster in *brainwashing* schools of both the Left and Right. Bereft of useful training and experience in *logic, debate* or *patient, honestly exchanged viewpoints*, students are still *proselytized* that any *counter opinions* to the approved creed is “violence” or “heresy”. A whiff of any such jargon requires a “trigger warning” or, “safer” still, “warm fuzzies” and, otherwise, *expulsion, post haste* by campus cancel culture, whether at Middlebury or BJU.

Thus, ill-equipped, both sides try to shut down all opposition by shouting them down, by shaming them, or by shipping them out of the institution, for none can see or afford to reveal one’s own poor

abilities at *reasoned debate* which too many on the Left say is “white racism” and too many on the Right say is “of the devil”.

If we or they were willing to be even somewhat better informed and somewhat more committed to an honest recognition of more careful reflection, scientific research, statistics, etc., there would be less of a felt need to revert to tantrums of toddlers who’ve not yet learned even the skills of *considerate listening*, let alone the skills of *intelligent research* and *rational debate*.

Well-understood counter-arguments make good cases, first, for *oneself*. They might even do some good for opponents if they’d have any willingness to *listen* and *challenge themselves*. That would be *progress* and more proof of the truth of that old Proverb (18:17) I’ve mentioned. A patiently reasoned foundation and a proceeding with arguments that build a solid case for truth with facts that foil fantasies and all else that’s false, can make, null and void, all of that resorting to nasty animus and deadly violence.

But the foolish, trip themselves up into useless tricks and traps when it comes even close to the matters of the very greatest of all significance. Many foolishly, deliberately, dodge any truly serious consideration of *the very meaning of life, itself*, let alone, *the very foundational meaning of life’s Creator, The Meaning* of all that is, ever was, and ever will be.

And, don’t count on many churches today to be any less prone to using useless tricks and traps. Many of today’s church goers are what one author now calls, “the Remixed”. (Tara Isabella Burton) They’ve inherited the heretical spirit of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century’s *Social Gospel*, that wasn’t at all the *Good News* of the *true Gospel*. She refers to this as being wrapped up in, “a utopian vision of what a truly ecumenical, social-justice-focused Christian world would look like.” And, there’s that oft-repeated misuse of

“utopian” that *literally means “no place”!* It’s not only, *not a perfect place, not even a good place, not even a mediocre place,* but it’s *no place at all! And that’s what’s rightly called a matter of utter oblivion!*

Evangelical German theologian, Helmut Thielicke, a heroic resistor against the *Nazis*, sagely warned: “When theology says only what the world can say to itself, it says nothing. The feet of those who will remove it are already at the door.” He’d pointed to God’s amazing grace that’s been repeatedly rejected by this fallen world’s self-righteous ramblings, rants and rationalizations.

It’s still so evident today in the latest versions of drivel in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century churches, where rainbow flags fly *self-righteously* above the front doors of virtue-signaling churches where no *Gospel* is preached within. Yet, Thielicke’s *gay support* predated the easy gusto of LGBTQ+ flags over church doors, by over half a century.

We do ourselves no favor by *making up* the meaning of a word or of a string of words, or to try to cover up our ignorance or to reinforce our rebellion, or to cater to our own self-righteously self-serving wishful thinking as we whistle past our scary graveyards.

Whether we stupidly try to *sound smarter* or dangerously try to *seem safer, in spite* of our ignorance, even *to spite* our ignorance, we remain uninformed, squatting in our own damned darkness while pretending we’re so delightfully enlightened, without a clue – *except for that gracious clue, that troubling pretentiousness,* that keeps on *distressing us,* to get *our attention.* But, to what avail?

In the 20th Century, and now in the 21<sup>st</sup>, whether in Nazi Germany, the USSR, Communist China, Communist Cuba, Communist North Korea, and in every other dictatorship around the world, the meanings of words and of entire narratives and worldviews were and continue to be *dictated to the masses* by



*totalitarian tyrants*. Failure to hold to the *dictated meanings* of words and *worldviews*, failure to let go of *forbidden narratives*, or failure to show sufficient respect for the dictator means severe torture, execution, or life-imprisonment in slave labor camps for entire families, including down through the third generation born inside those camps. It's an ever-present threat, an ever-present atrocity, and should be an ever-present *lesson to be learned by* those who are fortunate enough to be living here, in *America*.

That none of these totalitarian systems has ever really *worked* for the *real good* of the *common* people, is blatantly evident in the *historical facts of their failures* to achieve their *promised goals* and from the facts that, folks under all these dictators *risked their lives* to *escape the deadly terrors* – from the USSR to Western Europe, *not in the opposite direction*, from East Germany to West Germany, *not in the opposite direction*, from North Korea to South Korea, *not in the opposite direction*, from North Vietnam to South Vietnam, *not in the opposite direction*, from Communist China to Hong Kong, *not in the opposite direction*, from Communist Cuba to Florida, *not in the opposite direction*, from Communist regimes in Latin and South America to the USA, *not in the opposite direction*. But free of those truly dreadful daily realities, ignorant fans of Antifa so foolishly call America the land of oppression.

Is there any need for *more proof* that *Marxism means terrible failures and tragic atrocities*? Well, if the *historically duped* don't know the *historical facts*, they can't refute their *fantasies* that Marxism simply means "fairness" and "free stuff for all".

Might *selfies* be more persuasive than history lessons, to the historically duped? Anarchist social-justice warriors act just like Marxists do to *gain power* and to *set up power for themselves*, alone. When *the few*, gain power and then lord it over *the many*,

where's all that "fairness" and "free stuff" now? Marxist dreams have always backfired and backfire today. Oh, but we're told by the deluded today, *we're "Socialists"!*

If *well-informed*, it's impossible to *disagree* with the analysis of Winston Churchill, who, in his life of service, witnessed the fact that: "Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy." His remark explains the clueless motivation of so many Millennials and Gen Z youth who, *by no fault of their very own*, have been kept from knowing the truth, within a terribly tainted system of education and a lack of upbringing for responsible living.

Sadly, these days, and for so many decades now, in America and in Western society in general, we've been manipulated to *accept, without question, Politically Correct meanings of words and entire narratives and worldviews as defined by and as dictated and enforced* through those in power and authority in *Postmodernism's PC control* over education, the media, etc.

Their power in education, from pre-school through graduate school, ruthlessly enforces *new meanings* onto *old words* and *time-tested narratives*, by repeated mantras of propaganda, restrictions on sources and resources from "dead white men" of an "evil and racist" Western Culture. Power is held and reinforced by the consequent punishment of all nay-sayers, through failing grades, non-promotion, and all of the other academic ammunition available to the academic cancel culture in totalitarian charge.

All of this has gone against *freedom for one's opinions* and *free speech rights, liberties* set forth in the wisdom of our Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the well-informed understanding that's based in well-researched investigations. So, of course, all this politically correct agitprop has and continues to wield, deleterious

effects in education, the media, politics, religion, mental health, health care, legislation, the judiciary, the penal systems, etc.

But, beyond the everyday, *seemingly secular*, situations, this darkness also has meant serious consequences in shrouding words of the *most significant of meanings*, and attempts to shroud the *meaning of the deepest and truest of all meaningful narratives* – which, of course, it unquestionably does *try* to do.

Fine synonyms for “meaning” include “definition”, “explanation”, “understanding”, “interpretation”, “significance”, etc. These words underscore the great *importance of meaning*. *Meanings*, whether truly perceived or merely projected, determine what one feels or doesn’t feel, can or can’t do, should or shouldn’t do, will or won’t do. But, *merely making up meanings* to suit our own *defensively self-centered* objectives, is *counterproductive*, and, even worse, it’s *self-destructive* and it *destroys* so much more in the process.

**All *hurt feelings, frustrations, and fears* are the direct result of the *meanings* that one *reads into* life’s daily challenges.**

Unless these *spontaneous meanings* that one attaches to *difficult* situations are *rationally interpreted*, they’re easily *misinterpreted* by, for example, *personalizing* what others say or do, or don’t say, or don’t do, and by *predicting unmixed* doom and gloom into the fantasies of the future that automatically spawn irrational *anxiety* and, then, consequent “solutions” in anger and even in violence.

Without rationally identifying, challenging and changing our own minds about our kneejerk interpretations of the *meanings* that we irrationally attach to these *matters*, we’ll be setting ourselves up for all of the unwanted feelings of *hurt, frustration* and *fear* that we then will try to escape through *venting our anger and rage*.

“Good luck!”, with *that house of cards*, for the others will then cause themselves to suffer from *their own* irrational interpretations of *our* irrational interpretations of them, and in their bad reactions of hurting *their own* feelings, scaring *themselves* and retaliating against *us*, whom they assume, *victimized them*, we’ll all go spinning around in our distress and against each other in viciously victimizing cycles of irrationality, chaos and even catastrophe.

If folks have no better way to *think their way out of unwanted feelings of hurt, frustration or fear*, as discussed in the first several pages of this lecture, they’ll be *stuck with those feelings*, although they’ve brought them onto themselves by their irrational interpretations. So, out of their anger, they’ll blame others. And since folks tend not to enjoy being attacked by angry blamers, the useless cycles of attack and counter attack continue.

It’s so very much more feasible for any who’ve *hurt their own feelings, or scared themselves, or frustrated themselves* by their *irrational interpretations*, to *resolve* their feelings *on their own*, without needing any cooperation from those they blame. They must grab ahold of their own ability to think clearly through their irrationality. It’s done by *reason, logic*, and taking *personal responsibility* for one’s *irrational self-talk*, so as to arrive at *reality, replacing one’s own unrealistic meanings* loaded onto oneself, while faulting others and by owning one’s own irrationality so as to undo it. Finding faults in others never ever solves one’s own *self-induced* unwanted feelings. It only interferes with one’s own job.

Folks must *rationally investigate* their self-talk, *articulate* it to themselves, *evaluate* it, *locate* the *irrationality* so they can then *repudiate the irrationality, rationally*. Then, they can intuitively *integrate* their *rational reinterpretation* of what all they’d told themselves, and thus *recuperate* from all of those self-imposed

hurt feelings, fears and frustration that, if unexamined and unresolved, are always *acted out in anger*, to no one's satisfaction, encumbered as that so-called "satisfaction" is, with still further unwanted, but very predictable, consequences.

Once those foolishly foisted meanings are *well identified and challenged and changed*, what's *now understood* as having been one's *own* irrational interpretations in need of a reason-based revision, can be dismissed, and the *unwanted feelings* will flee. One then *feels a whole lot better*, without ever having had to get any complicating cooperation from those who were blamed for what's now resolved in one's own mind by one's own realistically reinvestigated and revised irrational self-talk.

Those who were *blamed*, of course, are still coping with *their own* hurt feelings, if they *didn't mean* to hurt that person in the first place. Resenting the one whom they now think *hurt their feelings*, they'll, no doubt, try to retaliate in kind, and it won't be pretty.

So, it might well be wise, in one's *new-found freedom*, for this one who'd irrationally blamed the other, to share this new-found rational resolution with the other. Sharing the revised meaning of what had launched that blaming could help toward a reconciliation between the two, for, in effect, it's a *believable apology*, and an *admission of one's own irrationality and guilt*, and, thus, an *honest gesture of peace*. It's also an opportunity to explain that, we don't personalize a *stranger's* insult. People *personalize* what they mistake as an "insult" from one whom they hold dear. So, this tells the person who was blamed that he or she is indeed, a very meaningful part of the reconciling person's life.

In addition, *sharing a realistic plan* for resolving such problems, may now be learned and used by the one who'd been blamed, who now has something to help in further problems with others,

including this original blamer. It's thus a real win for these, now reconciling, friends, who've obviously meant a lot to each other.

The *meaning* of such a reconciliation is certainly worth revisions of thinking, so as to humanize rather than brutalize one another. And the original blamer is reinforced in the lesson by being able to share it with this friend.

Learning this lesson, one can move ahead without distracting oneself with hurt feelings blamed on *a friend*. *In charge of one's unwanted feelings by revising the irrational blaming of another for one's own hurtful self-talk*, a relationship can be restored, *unless the other hasn't yet, can't, or wills not to learn this same lesson*.

*Pretenses* in these self-inflicted scams of personalizing are most likely prompted, at least in part, by a distracting sense of one's *not measuring up, socially*, in self-imposed competition. Strutting tries to *cover up* this annoying self-awareness of one's *social inferiority*. But *one's own* cover-up can't be *covered up* by the *cover-up's instigator*, i.e., *one's self*. One's annoying *self-awareness of failing to socially measure up*, simply *can't* be covered up by one's own cover-up that lies there, cheek by jowl, with one's version of self, inside one's own mind. So, one's still stuck in one's own *unrevised* mind. But in changing one's mind through rational understanding, one can be *free* from this useless, defensive sense of one's interpersonal, social inferiority, without a need for a cover-up. It's in one's own mind, not in the other's mind.

The reason for *not personalizing* nasty stuff others say about us is the fact that, *what they say* is *not* about *our own* version of *us*. What distracts us so unreasonably, is that, we do misuse *our own version of ourselves* to interpret a put-down. How foolish!

And, those who do a put-down, don't speak on behalf of *others*, for, they're not in others' brains. What they say is from within their own brains, though they may have sought agreement from others because they're not secure in their own brains. And some may *self-servingly* try to favor *themselves* by saying what they think someone wants them to say, but the thoughts are in *their own* fantasyland. Any *nasty* stuff that *they* say about us is prompted by *their uncomfortable version* of *their* not measuring up and from *their uncomfortable version of their* thinking that *we* are somehow *advantaged* and *privileged* over their own jealously self-pitied *version of self*. That's distracting to them – and, so much so that, they try to diminish *our* “status” that *they trip themselves over* in their own agitated minds of *envy*. Their insults are, thus, *useless* “compliments”.

*Jealous* people *don't resent* those whom they think are actually *less advantaged* than they. People get *jealous* and *resentfully angry* over those whom they perceive to be more *advantaged* than they. Recall all those school day put-downs aimed at “the teacher's pet” or “the dumb jock” who were seen as *brighter* or more *butch* than oneself. I knew *heterosexual* who put-down *gay* men because he thought that all the *gay* men needed to do to “get laid” was to go to a cruising spot in the park, but that straight men had to go through the rigmarole of an expensive date and even then they couldn't count on “getting laid” that night. All of these various put-downs are rooted in *ignorance*, *irrational envy* and *irrational jealousy* that's all *rooted deeply in self-doubts* and *mere fantasies* of others' “privileges”. This envy is *always followed by resentment*, and the resentment can get *acted out* in violence.

These defensive put-downs of others are always so foolishly chosen as *expected exits from envy*. Envy can't be escaped that

way. Put-downs of the *envied* do nothing but put a *deadbolt on the door of escape from envy*. Those who envy others are still locked up, sulking inside their own self-constructed cell of their irrationally self-destructive envy.

Since we're always inside our own brains – and that's really where *we're meant to be to think through what we need to think through* – it must be kept *in mind* that *our version* of *self* really is in *our brain cells*, and *not in others' brain cells*. Others *have never, and never will, see the version* of *you* inside *your own brain cells*, packed with all of your own long-term memories of formative years and all of your own self-doubts, etc. They have *no access to your brain cells* and even if you *tell* them about yourself, what they receive is still the story of *their version* of what you tell them and their *competing version* of what they tell themselves about *their version of you* and *their version of them*.

*Their own brain cells* include *their irrationally troublesome thoughts about themselves* that *always take precedence over their version of another*. But, since they're so *self-centered* on worrying about their own sense of self, they'll think that *you, too, are aware of their sense of self*, and *that can panic them into all sorts of defensive posturing and envious put-downs of their you*.

So, get over your *misuse* of *your own brain*, mistaking it for *another's brain*, or for *many other brains*. Use it *wisely!* This is what your brain is *meant* for! Make good use of your *gray matter* to understand and interpret the meaning of *any matter*, including the meaning of your own gray matter. Get rid of all the *nonsense* you've stored inside your own brain cells for far too many years.

We often fail to use the best in our brains for what *really matters so much*, especially when we're sidetracked by our irrationality.



In *simple-mindedness*, we think in terms of *rigid divisions* and then, in its *ugly divisiveness*, as in categories of *either/or* resulting in frustration and regret, *all or nothing*, resulting in disappointment and depression, *now or never*, resulting in impatience and carelessness, *oppressors or oppressed*, resulting in unresolvable antagonism, *black or white*, especially now in matters of race, resulting in envy and resentment that gets expressed, these days, in *ugly contempt* by the use of “the n-word” or use of the currently counter put-down, “whiteness”.

None of such *simple-mindedness* deals with the *complexity of reality*, the *spectrum of colors*, shades and tints in all matters that require *a very good use of our gray matter*.

And, if one’s thinking that he or she is *really not measuring up in the truly most fundamental way possible*, this points to *the most basic sense of one’s failure* to be *who one was created to be*.

And, such an annoying sense of one’s *deepest guilt* is, indeed, a *gift of God’s grace*. If recognized and honestly admitted for what it truly is, that good sense of one’s deepest need for God, it points beyond all *futile defensiveness over unrighteousness*, into a *fertile discovery of basic reality and relief* in the reception of God’s *gift of righteousness in Christ’s own righteousness*. And that’s God’s *Good News*, the Gospel!

**Seriously called to what’s *meant by*, “*the meaning of life*”, arouses the very deepest considerations of the most *fundamental significance*.** Yet, so many, so very carelessly reduce this great matter of *the meaning of life* to *whatever meaning* suits their *small-minded, self-obsession* in *wishful thinking*, a self-imposed imprisonment that blocks access to any accurate assessment of *the actual, God-given* “*meaning of life*”

that He purposely created in His own image, for His very best purpose for that life by His lovingkindness, through His grace, in His peace.

If, *on our own*, we presume to *define* “*the meaning of life*”, we’re still squatting in our own deep darkness, whether or not we admit it. Who among the blind from birth presumes to *define* darkness? Who, but a fool, among mortals dares to *define*, on his or her own authority, what’s so profoundly significant as *the meaning of life*?

*The meaning of life is surely the most fundamentally significant singularity within all of creation.* So, it dares not be left to foolishly self-serving agendas, guesswork, pet prejudices, pet peeves, passing fads, daydreams or nightmares for its *true definition*.

Nor can this matter be *pretentiously dismissed* as the cult of the self-refuting self-serving postmodernists have attempted to do by weaseling out of any serious spiritual matters by their pathetically pretending that the very question is nonsense. It dare not be left to self-consumed *inattention* or merely *postured* “righteousness”.

Missing the *true answer* to this question of *the meaning of life* is tragic, for, *the meaning of life* is not something to be trifled with, to be selfishly contrived in one’s *badly blinkered imagination*, when it’s already been, so very graciously provided and defined by the Creator, in *His Imagination*, Who brought us into life in *His Image*.

When C. S. Lewis, experienced this truth, he declared that, he was, “*surprised by joy!*” But, as to how it works, said Lewis: “One can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works, indeed, he certainly won’t know how it works until he’s accepted it.” And, that necessary step of *faith* in accepting God’s gracious gift of salvation and eternal life in Christ, is but the *entrance* to so *very much more of the unfathomable meaning of mercy, in Christ!*

Lewis went on to share this truth of Christ in his straightforward apologetical works, his fiction, and in his fantasy tales of Narnia.

Back in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, this same truth of *the very meaning of life* was put into memorable words by Augustine of Hippo in North Africa. He was an aristocratic, a highly educated Roman citizen. He'd known, as Lewis would, painful and frustrating despair in his earlier years without the Lord. Later, he too, was *rescued* into a relationship with the One Who *is Himself, the Meaning of Life*. In his grateful prayer to God, Augustine said: "O Lord, You made us for Yourself, and the heart is restless until it rests in You."

**From the most seriously Christian perspective, rooted in history, we have the eye-witness testimony of Jesus' own disciples.** During Jesus' two to three years of public ministry, they walked and talked with him, heard him teach, heal the sick and confront the self-righteous religious leaders who lorded over the common folk by loaded them down with distorted dogmas.

When Jesus was arrested and crucified by Roman edict that was egged on by the religious establishment, all but one of his disciples were hiding in fear for *their* lives. But, three days later, they met their *risen Lord, Yeshua Hamashiach*, Jesus, the Christ. They were with him for forty days, until he ascended into Heaven.

With resurrection faith in their hearts and minds, they now, with no hesitation, were ready to proclaim the Good News of their Savior and Lord, even if, doing so, meant martyrdom.

We have *their* testimonies and additional accounts from those who knew them and who were converted to faith in Christ, and went on to tell others of the Good News. They all testified to faith in Jesus, the risen Lord, and they did this at the risk of death.

Some were killed for their faithful witness. John's punishment for his witness to Christ was exile on the isle of Patmos.

John the apostle wrote of John the Baptist's pointing to Jesus and declaring, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) He was the only disciple who risked being at the cross to witness Jesus' crucifixion, with Jesus' mother, Mary. (John 19:26ff) After Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, he wrote his Gospel, humbly alluding to himself as "the other" or "beloved", but not by name. He summed up what we're looking into on *the meaning of life*, when he wrote his first five sentences.

Here's how he put it, *beginning* with familiar opening words from the Hebrew Bible, a phrase, synonymous with the title of the book of Genesis: "*In the beginning, was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning of creation. Everything came into existence through him. Nothing that exists was made without him. He was the source of life, and that life was the light for humanity. That light is still shining in the darkness, and darkness has never extinguished it.*" (John 1:1-5)

He who is the *Life and Light, Christ Jesus*, from before the very beginning of time and space, was *the Word* through Whom God created everything, from what's, to us, an unimaginable vastness to all that's equally, to us, unimaginably infinitesimal. *This Living Word enlightens humanity* in the most amazing *Good News* for the *meaning of all time and eternity*, and none of all the *opposing darkness* has ever or will ever, *extinguish God's Eternal Light!*

We're told that it is "in His Light that we see *light*, i.e., that we are informed and given *the Meaning of Life, in Him*. (John 36:9) John goes on to tell us: "God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that, whoever trusts in Him, will *never perish*, but will

have *eternal life*.” (John 3:16) Both texts are full of the richest and most amazingly *Good News* humanity could ever receive.

Throughout history, in fraught experiences of disappointment and guilt, folks have gotten themselves *ticked off* into fear, frustration, rage, and violence – rationalized by resentment that reeks of self-righteous entitlement and envy. Or, in a wholly different direction, in the same fraught experiences, folks have been *tipped off to the truth*, and so, they’ve cast their sights *upward*, to the Sovereign and Loving God, and away from all of their fickle fantasies about their alleged *misfortunes* and others’ *allegedly fabulous fortunes*, so as to confess *their own, dark failings*, to cease their own *pointless posturing* and to turn, instead, to the Truth, Himself, to be well-grounded in the gift of life that God so graciously intended for us all and freely gives to those who do turn to Him in sincerely realistic repentance.

But, today, stuck in themselves, as others are or have been, so many in our country, whether by indifference, intention or by foul indoctrination, remain historically, politically, psychologically, morally and biblically, *illiterate, naïve*, and thus, most *immature*.

They may be what others, in their own unwanted situations of grievance, jealously resent as, “spoiled brats” of one kind or other, but *that status, too, is a curse*, so they fail to see that everyone, whether rich, middle class or poor, young or old, of every race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender, here at least, in America, is really very privileged to live in the freest, most advantageous and prosperous county in all of the world’s history. Spoiled by self-entitled, self-righteous, self-centered, self-defeating pouts of resentment, they flail at fantasies that know no bounds, they’re stuck in a rut, with no rudder for the least bit of reality-testing.

Since millions know of no resolution to their disgruntlement, no matter how unreasonable their expectations and their entitlement schemes can be, their anxieties over common financial problems, normal challenges in any marriage, aggravated illness, etc. – all of which may be symptomatic of the fact that they’ve actually had a rather protected life compared to daily threats to life and limb as suffered around the world and all through human history. They resist such feedback. They rationalize their grievances and inflate their selfish expectations of entitlement that, then, merely inflate and perpetuate their resentment, which, when expressed, sparks resentment in those they resent and blame, who, then, of course, retaliate by returning the “compliment” in kind, and not kindly.

So, the angry antagonisms persist without resolution between individuals and between identity groups, all coveting fantasies of others by multiplying “qualifications” through an ever-expanding, ever ludicrous “intersectionality” in order to win. It won’t work!

Many today fall into a cultic trance over QAnon, a conspiracy that claims that Mother Teresa was a child trafficker and her son is Anthony Fauci. ‘Nough said? It’s typical of all the conspiracy epidemics across history – e.g., witch hunts from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries that killed thousands of “witches”, the day-care sex abuse hysteria with terrible consequences for the accused, though innocent, child-care givers, or the deadly anti-vaccine crusade of stupidity, or that turn-of-the-century’s Y2K panic with plans to survive its forecasted “end of the world” or the “nothing burger” of a hoaxed “Russia conspiracy” of 2016 and far beyond.

Yet, continuing disappointment, disillusion, distress, depression and fears of death *can be our “bottoming out” that can redirect us to rational revisions of our thinking*, so that, all *our own irrational “meanings”* can be identified, challenged and changed to *rational*

*meanings for really life-changing understandings of what's truly important, what's the deepest of all, the very Meaning of Life.*

But, nowadays, in Postmodernism, we reside in an age of “*post-truth*”. That’s the Oxford Dictionaries’ Word of the Year for 2016. Its Word of the Year for 2017 was “Youthquake”, meaning “a significant cultural, political or social change arising from the actions or influence of [so naturally immature] young people.” Not surprisingly, then, the Word of the Year for 2018 was “Toxic”. The Word of the Year for 2019 was the feared, “Climate Emergency”, of which we were taught by a teen, *Time*’s “Person of the Year”.

2020’s words of the year include: “peak”, i.e., one’s “being at the *height of popularity or attention*”, a “stan”, i.e., “an extremely excessive, enthusiastic and devoted *fan*”, “Peoplekind”, along with the gender fluid, “they”, seeking fantasy as another gender. Do we smell that chronic stench of lonely *self-centeredness* in the 2020 words of the year? These last five years continue to reveal *narcissistic hunger pangs for self-centered affirmation* that only *reinforce* the problem. Indeed, they *poison* the problem, as does all pathetically narcissistic pathology, while trying to conceal the sense of low self-worth. The *real meaning* of this flimsy list of hapless *self-centeredness, insecurity, and anxiety*, is a *dearth of real meaning that can and does matter for the true meaning of life against a death culture’s real dangers*.

If more reality-based lessons of truth are *not* and *never* learned, meaningless schemes of counterproductivity, and, so predictably, further disappointments, followed by deepening resentment-triggered violence, devolve into cyclical dead-ends of devastation and death – figuratively *and* literally, sooner *or* later.

For months now, in cities across our country, in one inner-city victimhood after another, deadly rioting, night and day, rages with

double-digit increases in shootings, murders, muggings, arson, looting, and the destruction of properties of rich and poor alike.

Illiterate, furious Fascist hypocrites, boasting they're "Antifa" or BLM, viciously *pretend* to be "social justice warriors" while they randomly desecrate statues of Abraham Lincoln with a freed slave by his side, statues of U. S. Grant, who won the Civil War against slavery by defeating Robert E. Lee's slavery defenders. Other destroyed statues have been of a Union Colonel, Hans Christian Heg, a young abolitionist and leader of Wisconsin's troops against the Confederates, killed, at 33, at the Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia. Another desecrated statue was that of the escaped slave, Frederick Douglass, who, through his oratory and writing, became the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century's foremost black abolitionist. And the mobs say they're destroying these statues in support of "Black Lives Matter"? They don't know *what the hell* they're doing in the name of so-called "social justice". All they know is that, *their own fantasies* aren't being met, and it's "*not their fault, it's the fault of any and all others*". It's a formula for continuing failure and worse.

Said Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "I have seen gross intolerance shown in support of tolerance." And, so have we all seen such self-centered stupidity! We've seen it day after day after day, night after night after night, these days, these nights! But it's really nothing *new* in this *fallen* world of *self-righteousness*.

What accounts for all of this lack of *wisdom*? Is it due to the loss of wisdom teeth in the younger generation? Did you know about the microevolutionary lack of wisdom teeth in those born in recent years? Wisdom teeth no longer sprout in the backseats of more and more new mouths. But no, this emerging situation seems due to our *increased ability to chew food* that's now, more usually, *processed*, so, the wisdom tooth is wisely disappearing.



All our lack of wisdom and irrationally self-centered resentment is rooted all the way back in our most ancient human history. It's been the same stupid story of ingratitude, ignorance, envy, jealousy, boasting and blaming out of our useless attempts to smother our privileged dependency on our Creator and our desire to climb out of our status as our Creator's crown of creation, to be, ourselves, the Crown.

Our earliest ancestors were blessed with all that our Creator wisely and lovingly *meant* for our flourishing, a calling to fullest fulfillment. But we told ourselves that, *we knew better* than the One who'd kindly created us. We told ourselves *we were missing out* on what it would *mean* for *us* to be able to have, all the many fantasized advantages of being *our own "gods"*, *all on our own*.

In this, our original nightmare of fantasy, we were deliberately *missing out* on staying in touch with the Meaning of Life, Himself. We so rashly brainwashed ourselves out of all our innocence and into the lie of "our truth" as we still do. Being *rash*, *meant our ruin*, and we could not, on our own, wash away these fatal results of our own self-righteous brainwashing.

Still, we're prone to bull-headedly, self-righteously try to wash it away on our own. Now, even in these *most meaningful of matters*, it's recommended by the popular DIY drive, to "Do it yourself". Resolve your spiritual needs *on your own*. *Make up your own meanings* for *spiritual liberation*. But when it comes to solving the problem of *deadly self-righteousness*, *more self-righteousness* simply doesn't do it. It never did. It never will.

The biblical book of Micah (737-696 BC) predates the coming of Jesus by some eight centuries. Yet, what this ancient Hebrew prophet described and warned against, is as pertinent today as it was back in his day. But today's reporters don't read much in the

book of Micah, so, they're woefully lacking in any knowledge of what Micah relayed when *he* paid attention to God's word and wrote it down for us. It would be wise to read it, to be reminded of what our ancient forebears had to be reminded of, over and over again. Their need, then, is our need, now.

Naturally, Micah's relayed revelations were still up-to-date in the time of "the weeping prophet", Jeremiah (650-570 BC). So, quite understandably, Jeremiah quoted Micah's quoting God. In so doing, he became the *first biblical* writer to quote from *another biblical* writer. If it was wise for Micah to write it down, and for Jeremiah to quote it, might it not be well for us to pay attention?

In speaking of selfish, self-righteous rationalizers who seek to confirm their self-centered biases and self-serving agendas while misleading others, Micah wrote down what Jeremiah would quote, and what we, in turn, may quote to ourselves in our vernacular: "Rulers rule for bribes, priests posture for prestige, the clueless lecture for filthy lucre, and their puppets applaud." (Micah 3:11; Jeremiah 5:31) Tragic, but true! There it is, in politicians, clergy, writers, commentators, reporters and massed mobs today!

Yet, all pretend they're speaking *truth*, "*their truth*", "to power" as they put it, fashioning it to satisfy the parlance of Progressivists' Postmodernism. "We're the *woke!* You're *not!*" "You're *wrong!* We're *right!* ", and "The arc of history is *on our side!* *Not yours!*"

How terribly wrong we are to substitute "our truth" for God's truth! Jeremiah's citation from Micah was God's truth, given to both of them, to pass on to us. (Micah 3:11; Jer 5:12) Let's give God's truth the attention it rightly deserves. Much has changed from those faraway times, but our human nature is still the same.

All of the many self-righteously rationalized worldviews that are concocted against God's revelation, are but *derivatives* of the *first catastrophic lie* that was believed back there in Eden's Garden.

The Puritan Pilgrims' pastor, John Robinson, who blessed their departure from Leiden for eventual landfall in America, remarked: "There is no creature so perfect in wisdom and knowledge but may learn something for time present and to come by times past."

Centuries later, cultural critic George Santayana phrased it as a *warning*, in this historically-informed observation: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." His quote is often recalled, but his *meaning* seems never to register.

If we *don't learn* the truth of the past or if we're deliberately *misled by misrepresentations* of the past, how can we grow up so as *not to repeat* the mistakes of the past?

We're told by an historian in *The Washington Post*, that, "today, fewer than 2 percent of male undergraduates and fewer than 1 percent of females, major in history, compared with more than 6 percent and nearly 5 percent, respectively, in the late 1960s". He says: "History departments are cutting courses and curtailing hires because of falling enrollments. There's a state university system that is considering even abolishing its entire history department." These stats are reductions from the late 40s when my dad earned his MA in history and taught it for the rest of his working life. In the late-50s, I, at least *minored*, in it at college.

But a *falsification of the past* has been served up to pass as real "history" for many decades now. My dad noticed this shift when he served on review committees for new history textbooks back in the 1960s. Given what's now expected to be regurgitated by the clueless students to their misled and misleading history teachers and professors in order to get high marks, it would be better not to

have “history” classes, than to get more of this indoctrination that is pushed under the toxic influence of Howard Zinn’s popular Marxist revisionism of America’s history. To these revisionists, the ignorance that’s bliss is their grandiose ignorance of history.

Here’s just a recent foul example of what’s gone so wrong for so long among the so-called “history professors”. A University of Rhode Island history professor snarked on his blog: “I see nothing wrong with it, at least from a moral perspective.” He noted that, “tactically, that’s a different story.” He was referring to a young Patriot Prayer member’s having been brutally murdered by an Antifa leader in riots in Portland. When Kara Zupkus, editor of the Young Americans for Freedom’s *New Guard*, quote tweeted this professor, he labeled *her*, a “fascist”, and blasted the Young Americans for Freedom, adding, with a sneer: “Thanks for the reminder to teach my students this semester just how horribly disgusting the Young Americans for Fascism is and has been since its beginnings in the cesspool of William F. Buckley’s diseased racist brain.” He “doth protest too much, methinks”, revealing *his own fascism*, his own *anarchism*. He exemplifies the tenured toxicity of a majority of the departments of history and social studies these days. And once *tenured* into the safety of “the system”, they’re there *for keeps* – but, alas, not *for good*.

And, so, it goes, as has this fallen world gone, ever since Eden. So, it goes – *for now* – in its own self-righteous ways, with nothing under the sun of our fallen nature to make any lasting difference – except for the Son of Righteousness, Jesus, the Light of the world, whose sacrifice on the cross brought even the noonday sun to stop shining. Said Jesus: “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)

**In this 400<sup>th</sup> year since “The Pilgrims” arrived, EC honors their witness and testimony in, this, our 17<sup>th</sup> Octoberfest.**

These Puritans, or Separatists, left the Church of England, first seeking refuge in the Netherlands, to escape the lack of religious freedom under England’s state church. Although they *did find the religious freedom* that they’d sought in the Netherlands, they were now up against a language barrier, so they had difficulty finding any better employment than they’d found. They were concerned, too, about what they saw as immorality in Dutch youth that could have a bad influence on their own young folks. So, they began to prepare for a *new life*, all the way across the Atlantic Ocean, in the *New World*. This would not be like a cross Atlantic flight!

For their voyage to America, they connected with a British venture for *investment* in the New World. These sponsors would be sending a ship to the little English settlement of Jamestown, founded in 1607, in Virginia. So, these Puritans signed up as passengers, in exchange for agreeing to send produce and furs, etc. back to their trip’s sponsors. After some false starts and the exchange of ships due to leakage, they finally did set sail at Plymouth, England, on the merchant ship, “The Mayflower”.

During the voyage, the Mayflower’s 102 passengers mainly lived on the open gun deck. The length of that deck, from stem to stern, was about 80 feet, of which about 12 feet at the back, was the gun room and off-limits to passengers. The width at the widest part of the gun deck was just about 24 feet. Thus, the living space for all 102 passengers was about 58 feet by about 24 feet!

To envision these tight dimensions and the implications, take a look when you next pass a layout on the sidewalk for keeping 6-foot separations. Four spaces between separations will help you empathize with the Separatists, but, *only barely*. You’re breezing

along, not crowded in, you've had a recent bath or shower, you're well fed, you're not having symptoms of seasickness and neither are those next to you, nor are you surrounded by chamber pots, nor have you been freezing for days, for weeks, for months. You're stuck, on the ship's middle, up and down and sideways, day after day, week after week, month after month.

And you, in 2020, complain about *lockdown* in your apartment?

The Puritan Separatists departed from Plymouth in England, on September 6, 1620. While enduring their very cramped quarters through three months of stormy seas, two of the Puritans died on board and one little girl was born.

They finally arrived in America in mid-November, off Cape Cod, hundreds of miles north of their intended landfall at Jamestown, but it was far too dangerous to try to steer the Mayflower south along the stormy eastern seaboard.

They decided to disembark in the frigid ice and snows at Cape Cod and, as pledged and signed in their "Mayflower Compact", to proceed together to, faithfully "*undertake for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honor of our King and Country*", their sacred mission in America.

During their first hard winter, half of these Puritans would die.

If you went to school long enough ago, you'll recall some names of the 41 who signed the "Mayflower Compact", including, William Bradford, William Brewster, Miles Standish, John Alden. Most of them have descendants in America today.

Do you recall Longfellow's line for Priscilla Mullins in his poem, "The Courtship of Miles Standish", about a love triangle between Miles Standish, John Alden and Priscilla? Her quietly disclosing line, to gently push through the bashfulness of John Alden, whom she loved, was: "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

Given what these Puritans went through to get here, you might refrain from complaining of delays and cramped seating on *your* next trans-Atlantic *flight!* Sure, you'll have to endure some jetlag that wasn't suffered by the Puritans, who lost track of *weeks* in their turbulent *months* of sickness among a hostile, foul-mouthed, crew, *in and on* the Atlantic's stormy waves – *not flying high in the sky above those waves*. And, you'll get to your own destination a lot faster, and far more comfortably, than did those Pilgrims inside that bouncing *Mayflower*.

Nonetheless, may *your mission for flying* across the Atlantic have *some of the significant meaning* of *theirs* for *sailing* across that same vast ocean in but a small vessel of timbers and linen.

**But, before we greet those Puritans up at cold Cape Cod in that winter of 1620, let's take our own, albeit *deliberate*, detour, these 400 years after *their forced* detour.**

We're doing this to examine the *meanings* of *The Project 1619* and to put into *context* the criticisms of this rabidly *distorted* version of American history that's gotten so much *undeservedly positive* publicity from those who *try* to thrive on mere soundings of a *coveted mantra*, in spite of its *fabrications of meanings* and its *denials of historical facts*. But such distortions don't matter to those who *crave* to *believe a lie* – if it's *their lie*. This is the case across the spectra of politics, religion, etc.

The *deep meaning* of such falsification is *fallen* human nature's bent to *always search for self-flattering, self-righteous, excuses for self* and *always search for excuses to blame someone else*.

*Meaning* is what *matters in any and all matters*. If any true and accurate meaning is *distorted* into less than truth, that *lie means trouble*, from minor matters to the very most major matters of all.

In this particular matter, it also distracts from the *significance* of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Puritan Pilgrims' arrival at Cape Cod. Ironically, it focuses on the original site of the *Mayflower's aim* for landfall, missed because of the Atlantic's tempests – that small English settlement of Jamestown down in Virginia.

America's alleged "*founding in slavery*" is the message that's *meant* to shame America, published in what's called, *The New York Times 1619 Project*. It came out late last year in an edition of *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*. Contrary to the true *historical facts*, it *means* for readers to buy into its propaganda that, *America was founded in slavery in 1619*.

Jake Silverstein, *The Times Magazine's* editor, wrote, at that time, his explanation for, "Why We Published The 1619 Project". He stated that their journalist, Nikole Hannah-Jones, "(from whose mind this project sprang) provides the intellectual framework for the project."

But there might have been a bit of a clue in her own recollection that, even as a child in the early 1980s, in her home in Iowa, she was *embarrassed* by the *patriotism* of her father, a black man, born on the Mississippi Delta, in the racist era of Jim Crow.

On the first page of her own blog, and in capital letters, she forcefully states: "I SEE MY WORK AS FORCING US TO CONFRONT OUR HYPOCRISY, FORCING US TO CONFRONT THE TRUTH THAT WE WOULD RATHER IGNORE."

Given the devastating criticisms that she, herself, has gotten, and continues to get, from so many highly qualified scholars and so many American history professors, there's plenty of truth that she, herself, now tries to ignore. And, it's not that she wasn't forewarned by scholars, *before* the 1619 Project was published.



Even before the *1619 Project* was published, she was warned by *consulted historians*, that she was *incorrect in her assumptions and her polemic*. After publication, she's resorted to *doublespeak* when she's up against the many honest historians who've written withering criticisms that continue to confront her argument.

So, she finally "admits" that, "America was not yet America, *but* this [i.e., her focus on a 1619 slave sale in Jamestown] was the moment it began." Always beware of "buts" that follow a merely, *seeming* "concession"! They're *meant* to *minimize*, and thus, in effect, *to cancel*, the so-called, "concession", so that what then, *comes out* after these shifty "buts", is the *point* that's *meant* by the one who *means* to escape the truth through *obfuscation*.

Hannah-Jones picks out, *anachronistically*, an *historically minor* incident that she labels, *America's founding in slavery*. The event occurred in 1619, and was referred to, at that time, as a matter of "20 and odd Negroes", were traded for food at Jamestown. *This*, as she tries to contend, constitutes *America's founding in slavery*? Yet, according to her, "America" and "slavery" are *synonymous*.

*This "moment"* that she *so inflates*, was 157 years *before* our Constitutional Convention that did, in fact, *historically found* the United States of America, in 1776. That Jamestown incident of 1619, that she *calls America's founding*, was over a century and a half before the signers of our *Declaration of Independence* were even *born*. Neither had their *parents* been *born*, nor had their *grandparents*, nor had their *great-grandparents*, and so on, back to some seven or eight generations.

Among distinguished historians who've honestly and thoroughly taken to task this *1619 Project*, is Princeton University historian, Allen C. Guelzo. As he sums it up: "The 1619 Project teems with historical howlers [and] the very first, ironically, is in the title. That

1619 is the beginning of American history because 1619 is when African slaves were first brought to North America at Jamestown. Well, no, actually that's not right." He takes note of the slaves the Spanish brought to what's now Georgia, "almost a century before 1619". But, unfortunately, distortions of history, once they're in print, even in *discredited* sources, can still do plenty of damage.

*The 1619 Project's point is an unadulterated lie*, yet this most recklessly inflammatory narrative is now being taught across our country, to multitudes of impressionable kids, K-12, and to college and university students and through many other venues, to vent the invented propaganda to the emerging American generations.

Hannah-Jones complains that the topics of slavery and racism have been neglected in our schoolrooms. No. What she meant was that *her spin* on slavery and racism has not been taught. Yet, even *her* slant has, indeed, been the agenda of far too many.

In December, 2019, five historians of impeccable repute, *quickly* sent a response to the *New York Times*. They really got right to the bone of the matter. They said plainly, that the *1619 Project* was the "displacement of historical understanding by ideology".

They found *false*, the *Project's claim* that, protecting slavery in America was necessary because of an abolitionist movement in England. In confronting the *New York Times*, Gordon Wood, the leading historian of our American Revolution, insisted that: "No colonist expressed alarm that the mother country was out to abolish slavery in 1776." And, according to Leslie Harris of Northwestern University, "Far from being fought to preserve slavery, the Revolutionary War became a primary disrupter of slavery in the North American Colonies."

Many founders, even those who had slaves, were against slavery. Others weren't. Still, when representatives of the 13

original colonies came together in Philadelphia in 1776, they framed their Declaration of Independence from Britain with bold statements of unity and their reasons for founding their “separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them.” *Nothing in the Declaration supported slavery.*

As they declared: “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*” That, straightforward statement was, indeed, a *very revolutionary declaration of human equality.*

Constitutional historian Paul Moreno fully grants that, “Many of [America’s] founders were slave holders.” However, he adds: “Not a single one of them argued that slavery was good. None of them made a justification of it. Every one of them understood that slavery was wrong, the question was what could we do about it? I think no one’s a better illustration of this than Thomas Jefferson, a slave holder. Over and over again Jefferson said, ‘We know that slavery is wrong. I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just and that his justice cannot sleep forever, but what do we do about the institution *as it actually exists? What practical steps can we take? What would be the consequences of immediate and complete emancipation?*’ ” Eventually, it took the Civil War!

Jefferson's *original* draft of the Declaration of Independence contained a *paragraph condemning slavery as unnatural, immoral and "execrable commerce"*. By enabling the slave trade in the colonies, Jefferson wrote, the British monarch had "*waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their*

*transportation thither.*" In what lawyers would call "an admission against interest", Jefferson wanted to put it *in the record* that *nobody could rightfully hold humans as property.*

The anti-slavery paragraph did *not* make it into the *final* draft of the Declaration, for South Carolina and Georgia objected to such a powerful rebuke to such a substantial part of *their* economies.

Who, if recognizing Jefferson's troubling questions, would wish to have to even attempt such a foreseeably overwhelming task in the midst of all the other challenges of founding this new nation in freedom, but with the needed cooperation of politicians so at odds with each other over slavery? Yet, today, the pompously ignorant can be rashly judgmental of their pioneering forebears of freedom.

Thus, the Constitution's compromise on slavery was considered to be necessary as a matter of political pragmatism in order to get the uniting document ratified. One may say that these founders conceded more than they had to, but such is second-guessing of the facts, and that's no help at all. There was no question in their minds at the time that, the institution of slavery was morally wrong and that they needed to *put it on course to its ultimate extinction.* At last, it was left to Lincoln, years later, to confirm, as *his calling.*

President Washington, in his "Farewell Address", referenced the foundations from which the solution to slavery would finally be brought forth: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. ... Let us *with caution* indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion." A lesson for today!

Said John Adams: "A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the Constitution, and a constant adherence to those of piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality,

are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty, and to maintain a free government.” Another lesson for today!

As early as February, 1819, Congress passed the strategically important Missouri Compromise to at least, *curtail*, the *spread* of slavery as the country expanded through newly founded states.

Also, in 1819, the American Navy’s African Slave Trade Patrol, to *stop* the *slave trade* on West Africa’s 3,000 miles of coastline, went into operation. It was manned until the Civil War began.

*Why* was there no *Times’ 1819 Project* in 2019? Was that *truly* and *genuinely American anti-slavery effort* not worth the attention that *The Times’* paid to what was *not at all* an *American project* of any sort in 1619? That 1819 effort was a *genuinely American matter meant to end slavery by stopping the slave trade itself, at its very source*. And, it was discontinued *only in order to fight* the Civil War that *did end slavery* in America. Where’s a *New York Times’* celebration of the 200th anniversary of this brave and innovative endeavor, America’s African Slave Trade Patrol? Did you ever hear of it in school? Did you ever read about it in the newspapers in 2019, its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary?

The *1619 Project* ignores what the Southern Confederacy’s own Vice-President, Alexander Stephens, *fully acknowledged*, a month before the Civil War. On March 21, 1861, he was giving his noted “Cornerstone Address” at the Athenaeum in Savannah. He made it clear that the original Founders of the United States were *not* committed to any *continuation of slavery*. And, he *complained* about it, explaining that, "The prevailing ideas entertained by [Jefferson] and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old [1776] Constitution were, that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally and politically. It

was an evil they knew not well how to deal with; but the general opinion of the men of that day was, that, somehow or other, in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away”.

Jefferson, himself, could not have expressed his own anti-slavery position any better. Stephens went on to register his own militantly *pro-slavery* position by stating that, “Those ideas [of the anti-slavery Founders] however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races.” Yes, they most certainly did! *And this is the witness of their enemy!*

Stephens and his Confederate colleagues held to the idea that African natives were *racially inferior* to whites so, *slavery was not an unjust institution* and the Confederacy was justified in splitting away from the Republic to continue its misuse of African slaves.

Ironically ignoring its proclaimed distaste for enslavement, the *1619 Project* is, in another sense, enslaving young minds and long-term memories of generations of students who *don't know* any better and *won't learn* any better after being shackled by *The Times'* racist brainwashing that *America was founded in slavery*.

It's been said that the *meaning of old news* is *no news*. Some of the *oldest news* in world history is of worldwide *slavery* of one people by another. That's evidently *no news* to this *1619 Project*.

*The 1619 Project* misses other *really big news* of *America and slavery*. For, what's uniquely different about slavery in American history is the unimpeachable fact that, unlike the history of slavery in all other cultures in all of world history, *America went to war against itself to end slavery on the basis of its belief in “freedom and justice for all”*. *That's the news The New York Times* ignores!

And, naturally, what else the *Times'* *1619 Project* leaves *well enough alone*, are the embarrassing issues surrounding slavery

and segregation *within* the many generations of the *Times'* own founding family, the Ochs-Sulzbergers. As one of their Southern ancestors, referring to *himself* as a *seller of slaves*, proudly put it into poor poetry in 1784: "He has for sale, Some Negroes, male...He has likewise Some of their wives...For planting, too, He has a few to sell, all for cash...or bring them to the lash." This self-betraying jingle rhymer was also a "master" at Charleston's horrible "workhouse" where, as Robert N. Rosen notes in his book, *The Jewish Confederates*, "slaves were beaten for violating laws or for running away."

Slavery *had been* the custom on both American continents for *generations beyond counting*. It was a basic fact of life among the Native American tribes who enslaved other Native American tribes, or, were, themselves, enslaved by more powerful tribes of Native Americans. Choctaw enslaved Choccoma and Cherokee. Pima enslaved Apache and Yuma. Pueblo kept their enslaved for *food*, as well as for labor. Huron peddled slaves to the Outauac. The Sauk and Ottawa enslaved the Missouri, Mandan, Osage and Pawnee. "Pawnee" was, itself, a synonym for "slave"! This list only begins to begin reference to all of the Native American tribes that enslaved other Native American tribes, or, were enslaved by other tribes, mostly as spoils from their battles. Native Americans' enslavement of other Native Americans continued, even past the 1776 founding of the United States of America.

So, slavery had been here on this continent long before 1526, when Spanish explorers brought a hundred or so slaves to a settlement somewhere in what later became South Carolina or Georgia. However, in only a short while, the subjugated revolted and disappeared without a recorded trace of what happened.

It was in 1619, that, the incident occurred that was distorted by the *1619 Project* as the date America was “founded in slavery”. But, even Captain John Smith, the knighted English explorer who, from 1607, was a leader of Jamestown, had, himself, been a slave of Turks. These Arab slavers were notoriously known for capturing isolated peasants who lived along the European coasts of the Mediterranean, as well as natives around the Indian Ocean, Western and Central Asia and in Africa, itself. They’d engaged in this from medieval times and on into even the early 20th century. These Muslims were longtime buyers of African slaves from African sellers.

Smith, himself, was also captured by Powhatan, the Great Chief of the Algonquians, who planned to bring Jamestown under his own dominion. He’d even sent his agent to England to spy out his chances for bringing England under his Algonquian rule. He later settled for his idea of hopefully combining his power with Smith’s to control some neighboring tribal enemies. That didn’t work out.

Today, millions of Uyghurs, Muslim minorities, are held under tight control in Communist China’s so-called “re-education” and detention camps for brainwashing and slave labor. Extensive data from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, show they’re forced to make products that are to be sold to the “woke” here in America and elsewhere, through Apple, Nike, Adidas, etc. But now, the US has banned these slave camps’ products.

So, it’s not surprising that, Chinese Communist state-run media promote the *1619 Project*. Nor is it shocking that China’s training school texts now teach that *Jesus stoned to death, the woman accused of adultery* in the Bible, an obvious attempt to misuse Jesus’ credibility with China’s persecuted Christians to make them



more pliant to the regime's rampant use of capital punishment for Christians who don't obey that dictator with the frozen smirk.

The worldwide phenomenon of slavery didn't need Europeans to introduce it to the world. As with all the Native Americans' slavery customs, it's been the case on the African continent where tribes of Africans enslaved *other* Africans and *others*, Asians enslaved *other* Asians and *others*, etc. Egypt enslaved the Israelites. Before he, himself, was freed, and gained his Roman citizenship, Paul, the future Christian apostle, was a slave of Romans at Tarsus in what is today's country of Turkey.

And, of course, what but *enslavement*, was the brutalizing oppression inflicted by Nazi, Fascist and Communist dictatorships across the globe during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?

Slavery's *dismantlement*, so far as it's been achieved, whether here in the past, or around the world today, has been achieved, almost entirely, by those whose views were informed within the Judeo-Christian heritage. This is the truth of *slavery's abolition*. Folks took the Hebrew and Christian scriptures very seriously and applied them to living at peace with others, without distinction of race or ethnicity. A serious Christian, William Wilberforce, broke the British *slave trade* of African slave traders in other Africans. Among his supporters were John and Charles Wesley and their Methodist followers, and William Cowper with his anti-slavery poetry and the former slave ship captain, John Newton, who wrote the hymn, "Amazing Grace".

The work for *racial equality* was picked up by later Christians, including efforts to end *racial segregation* in America, given such eloquent voice by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he declared: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a

nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

I so well remember where I was when I heard him speak those stirring words of hope at the March on Washington, at the Lincoln Memorial, on August 28, 1963. I had just flown back to Los Angeles to resume my graduate studies at USC and I heard his speech on the radio in a roommate’s car at a gas station.

Sadly, his dream has lately been distorted into nightmares of obsession over *skin colors* and “whiteness” instead of focusing on those considerations of *character*, no matter the race or the color.

There’ve been many different patterns of this ancient, worldwide evil of slavery. Many have been very cruel, indeed. Others have been advantages for those who submitted to being somebody’s slave for a while in order to work his way out of debt into freedom.

Jack Warren, of the American Revolution Institute, sums up his thoughts on this *1619 Project* by recognizing that it’s, “not an educational enterprise. It is a tool of political indoctrination.” The National Association of Scholars’ David Randall examines both the *1619 Project* curriculum and Sen. Tom Cotton’s bill opposing the curriculum, the Saving American History Act of 2020. Randall argues: “We must get rid of the *1619 Project* Curriculum to save our children from the anti-American lies of the woke establishment.”

Constitutional historian Paul Moreno reminds us that, “When [the former slave] Frederick Douglass read the Constitution and came to understand it in its historical context and its background, understanding the political philosophy behind the Constitution”, he so clearly saw that, “the Constitution was actually a glorious liberty document and that there was no problem of dealing with slavery under the Constitution, so that you could preserve the

Constitution and preserve the Union. The best way to get rid of slavery was by constitutional, not by revolutionary means.”

Against the *1619 Project's* spin on slavery, University of Texas sociologist, John Sibley Butler, who is black, points to the “black bourgeoisie”, thriving communities of former slaves in both the North and the South following the Civil War. He says that these free blacks “created business enclaves that stood at the center of their mission of economic opportunity and education.”

Even before the Civil Rights laws of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, intact black middle-class families in America often succeeded beyond the whites who refused, as these blacks did not refuse, to remain together as families, to stress the importance of books and school and to get jobs and stay out of trouble.

I can relate to Butler’s description of black families, for such were the black families in our neighborhood where I grew up and went from kindergarten through high school, in the late 1940s and early 1950s: two parent households, serious students, no gangs, etc. There was only one kid, a white kid, who became what was called, a “juvenile delinquent”. Yet he, too, became a good friend who’d stop by to pick me up for our walks to Hillman Junior High.

As I said at last year’s Octoberfest in celebration of Julia Ward Howe and her great *Battle Hymn of the Republic*: “In America’s bloodiest war, half a million Union soldiers died. Half a million white Northerners died fighting white Southerners, even white Christians, to free 3.9 million blacks – nearly four million slaves.”

So, the founding of these United States in 1776 was not to champion slavery or the triumph of “White Supremacy”. It was about what the framers of our Constitution wrote very plainly – independence from Britain, limited self-government and freedom for all, as they clearly saw that such freedom was the will of God.

They even anticipated the inevitable demise of slavery in America.

The sooner this country can freely accept *all* of its history — the good, the bad, and the ugly — without demonizing people today for whatever were the sins of ancestors and generations now dead, the sooner Americans can return to the often hard, but honest, work of team work for making our union even better.

The Christian theologian, Miroslav Volf, expounds on these ages-old self-righteous rivalries and the rationalizations for the discriminating between “us” and “them”, tracing it back to Cain and Abel. And, these very divisions rationalized slavery.

Volf goes back to Cain’s killing his own brother in jealousy and resentment, to find the ages-old example of what’s all too painfully familiar throughout history, down to our day: From then on, “this has been the foundation of conflicts, this rivalry between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. The dehumanizing, the belittling and the killing of our ‘brothers’, are manifestations of this malady. The characters and scenery change, but the script outline remains the same: ‘Your existence threatens my identity. Now, with racism, ‘the beast’ enjoys a hearty banquet.”

Volf goes on to say: “It seems to me that [racism] embodies some of the most extreme forms of exclusion; and exclusion that has been both in the individual hearts of people, but that has been baked into history, so to speak.” He discerns that, *sin*, “is also a very personal thing”, and he posits that, laws are not enough. “The legal system allows for order... and for the most part the absence of violence. But peace, *shalom* ... and true reconciliation ... that requires the help of a Higher Power ... one that has already defeated the beast.”

That great Christian poet of paradox and ironies, John Donne, observed the self-contradictory mentalities of “us” versus “them” back in the age of the Puritans when he penned: “No man is an Island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

**The Pilgrims’ 1620 landing at Cape Cod was a great moment in history. It far exceeds the meaning of a 1619 moment, so distorted for petty political propaganda by the discredited *1619 Project’s* claim that *1619 was when America was founded in an arrival of slaves at Jamestown.***

Ironically, this little settlement in Virginia, as we’ve noted, happened to be the original site for the Pilgrims intended landfall. They were unable to do that because of the rough Atlantic coast.

As inklings of what would at last become a revolutionary shift in world history, hopes for the fundamental liberties to be founded a century and a half later as the United States of America, inspired these Puritan Pilgrims to search for freedom, outside of England, in the New World.

Incidentally, since John Donne is often referred to as a “Puritan” poet, yet, in 1621, he became the Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, and served there until his death ten years later, it’s been confusing to many, given the fact that discrimination against the Puritans was experienced within that same Church of England. This confusion arises from the use of the term, “Puritan”, applied

to Donne, as a *synonym* for “metaphysical”, i.e., his *literary style*. Again, *meanings* of words depend on the *context* and the *intent*.

In the Netherlands, their original alternative to the Church of England’s oppression, the Puritans found that the barrier of a foreign language hindered their best employment opportunities. And, what they considered to be a low level of morality in Dutch youth, they feared, would begin to influence their own children.

They found again, naturally enough, that we need to know the *meaning* of words to have the freedom to *use* the words, and in *their case*, as well as in the case of the *native Dutch*, this freedom was missing when it came to communicating with one another.

This was not a problem so long as the Puritans stayed alone, by themselves, in their Leiden homes, in their family interactions and worship, but, as for finding work, for practical purposes, there was a *loss of freedom of speech* between two nationalities. So, again, they concluded that they needed to seek another land, and, for that, an *English* colony in the New World beckoned with promise.

The joint stock company that sponsored these Puritans was set up by King James I in 1606. In 1607, it founded that very first of its proposed settlements on America’s east coast, the site of the Pilgrims’ *interrupted* landfall, Jamestown.

The Plymouth Colony was the first permanent English colony in what would become Massachusetts, a part of the “New England”. They named the site, “Massachusetts”, after a local Algonquian tribe, the Wampanoag. The name means, “a place of a big hill”.

When the Puritans arrived, they found the remains of a Native American village whose inhabitants had died in an epidemic over the previous few years. The Puritans were accustomed to deaths *en masse*, as all in that age were. Indeed, over their first winter, they lost about half of their folks to diseases picked up during their

long voyage, and locally, from what William Bradford, their leader, called, “starving time”, simply a lack of food. Others died of scurvy and pneumonia. We can now know better than we could before our experience with epidemics of AIDS and Covid-19, what they went through, though, as noted, they far were more used to epidemics than we were before AIDS, especially when it, at first, was called “*the gay plague*” and labeled as “God’s punishment”.

Bradford described how seven of the colonists risked their own lives to care for the sick. He especially noted William Brewster and Miles Standish among these kindhearted folks. He noted, too, that the ship’s crew and non-Separatists refused to help the sick and even turned on each other out of their panic and anger.

In mid-March, by Bradford’s recollection, a native approached some Pilgrims. He shocked them by speaking in broken English. He called himself, Samoset, and told them something of his own people and said that another man, Squanto, could speak better English than he.

Squanto was the only survivor of the Patuxets who all died of a plague while he was in England, the slave of an English sea captain who’d captured him in 1614 and taken him to England. In 1619 he’d returned with an English explorer and he discovered that his entire family and all in his tribe were dead.

Samoset visited again and brought five other natives, along with the tools that earlier had been stolen from the Pilgrims. Samoset planned a meeting for them with his leader, Massasoit, of the Pokanoket tribe that, like the Patuxet, were part of the Wampanoag Nation. When Squanto returned from England, he’d been made their slave.

By Massasoit’s proposal, a peace treaty and an alliance were made with the Pilgrims. Terms of this Pilgrim-Wampanoag Peace

Treaty were these: 1. That neither he nor any of his, should injure or do hurt to any of their people. 2. That if any of his did any hurt to any of theirs, he should send the offender that they might punish him. 3. That if anything were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his. 4. That if any did unjustly war against him, they would aid him; and if any did war against them, he should aid them. 5. That he should send to his neighbor confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong them, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace. 6. That when their men came to them, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them.

For the pilgrim's military help, Massassoit said he'd help the Pilgrims learn to grow food and catch fish to feed themselves. The Pilgrims agreed to the Peace Treaty. Massassoit then ordered that Squanto instruct them in all they needed for survival. This Treaty was signed on April 1, 1621.

On April 5, 1621, The Mayflower and crew left for their return to England. Due to the struggles of that first winter, it went back to England without the expected goods for the stock company.

It was so worn out by then by all of its voyages, that, after the return to England, its life on the ocean was over. But, should any of you ever like to go into that old Mayflower for yourself, on your next trip to England, go up to Buckinghamshire, north of Greater London. At Old Jordan's, you'll find the Mayflower. Like many another retired old ship, it was dismantled and its timbers were recycled into a barn. But, it's quite a treat, and very moving, to stand underneath those curved timbers and recall, in gratitude, as I've had the privilege to do, what was accomplished through its very good use in bringing the Pilgrims to America 1620.



Still, in their deep Christian faith, these remaining Pilgrims in Massachusetts, went soldiering on in their continuing common purpose, trusting in God, so very thankful for their newfound religious freedom and their good relations with the native people.

Some of the many unfortunate stereotypes of Puritans, dressed so primly in their stereotyped black and buckled outfits – actually, creations in the minds of later artists – is an excess of prudery and a “know-it-all” dogmatism that doesn’t really do them justice.

As they were embarking for America, even before leaving the Netherlands, they were bid farewell from their fond old pastor, John Robinson, who wasn’t physically up for such a long and difficult trip across the ocean. But, his *generous spirit* with which they were quite familiar, and treasured, *traveled with them*. They recalled his words of farewell that assured them that, as he said: “God has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy word!” He advised that, when this happens, they must be open to it. That doesn’t sound like advice from an old stick-in-the-mud preacher!

Over three centuries later, the evangelical theologian, Clark H. Pinnock, who was a friend of EC, for he, too, took Robinson’s wisdom to heart, having this same adventuresome sense about our need to be always alert and sensitive in exploring the “yet more light” from God we all need. He wrote: “Feeling our way toward the truth is the nature of theological work even with the help of Scripture, tradition, and the community. We are fallible and historically situated creatures, and our best thinking falls far short of the ideal of what our subject matter requires.” He added: “A pilgrimage, therefore, far from being unusual or slightly dishonorable, is what we would expect theologians who are properly aware of their limitations to experience.” Well said!

When Pinnock died, *Christianity Today* said of him: “He was reputed to study carefully, think precisely, argue forcefully, and shift his positions willingly if he discovered a more fruitful pathway of understanding”.

A major biographer of Calvin, T. H. L. Parker, noted: “As his understanding of the Bible broadened and deepened, so the subject matter of the Bible demanded ever new understanding in its interrelations with itself, in its relations with secular philosophy, in its interpretations by previous commentators.”

The Reformed biblical scholar, Herman Ridderbos, wrote: “The contents of the Christian message will always appear to have new answers to new questions.” Helmut Thielicke observed: “In the course of history, every age has not had the same problems. Thus, the same biblical words are not significant in the same way in every age. Rather, at any given time only a part of the canon bears fruit ‘unto its time’.”

Christians need to continue to learn these lessons in every generation, for, in the words of the Australian scholar Leon Morris: “There are always risks in living in a new age but there is disaster in trying to live in a past age.”

Westminster Seminary’s Moises Silva avers: “God’s truth remains sure, while our perception of that truth may need to change.” Evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch reminds us: “The Word of God is not fettered. It leaps and runs and is not even bound to the means of grace – the Bible, the sermon, the sacraments – though we are so bound.”

Moreover, as Bernard Ramm, the Baptist scholar, explained: “Scripture is not the totality of all God has said and done in this world.” Over the centuries, what is understood as *Common* Grace and *General* Revelation can add, and often has added, to

Christian insight in interpreting the truth of biblical or, Special Revelation.

And, of course, didn't Jesus say that he, himself, had more to teach his disciples but that they were not yet ready for it? (John 16:12) Evangelical scholars discern that his disciples' prejudices didn't allow them to yet delve more deeply into all the wonderful implications of the Good News. (John 15:15) So, Jesus promised: "When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into full truth." (John 16:13) And, indeed, as Jesus promised, the Spirit came!

New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, took this very seriously. He pointed out that, adhering to the Bible, "is not tantamount to shutting the Holy Spirit up in a book or collection of books. Repeatedly, new movements of the Spirit have been launched by a rediscovery of the living power which resides in the canon of Scripture."

According to J. I. Packer: "The Spirit's work of illumination and instruction is also progressive, in the sense that those whom the Spirit teaches learn one thing after another. This principle applies not only to the individual but also to the church, within which a 'progressive orthodoxy' appears as one doctrinal issue after another is raised and resolved."

There's nothing at all heretical, indeed, there's everything to be gained, in always being on a *biblical journey* and on a *theological pilgrimage*, aware and alert to the *special* revelation of the Holy Scriptures, as well as God's evidence of Himself in His general revelation throughout the universe, and *common* grace in all the creations in God's Image, while always being *alert to the Spirit's leading* toward more and more *maturity in the Lord*.

Thus, all of this is, by God's grace, and for our blessed calling to *true meanings of words* and to *The Word of All Meaning, Himself*.