

Eye on the World

Aug. 31, 2019

This compilation of material for “Eye on the World” is presented as a service to the Churches of God. The views stated in the material are those of the writers or sources quoted by the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Church of God Big Sandy. The following articles were posted at churchofgodbigandy.com for the weekend of Aug. 31, 2019.

Compiled by Dave Havir

Luke 21:34-36—“But take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence, and drunkenness, or the anxieties of this life, and that day come on you suddenly, like a falling trap; for it will come on all dwellers on the face of the whole earth. But beware of slumbering; and every moment pray that you may be fully strengthened to escape from all these coming evils, and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man” (Weymouth New Testament).



An article by Seth J. Frantzman titled “Israel’s Strategy Against Tehran: Revealing the Iranian Threat” was posted at nationalreview.com on Aug. 27, 2019. Following is the article.

No longer will Iran and its allies be able to hide in the shadows.

On Thursday, August 22, members of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force took a drone to an area near the Golan Heights, seeking to attack Israel.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) monitored the men, took video of them walking through a field, and struck back two nights later.

The air strikes targeted a villa in southern Syria that Jerusalem says was being used by the IRGC and Shiite militias. This includes Hezbollah, a Lebanese ally of Iran that has played a major role in Syria in recent years.

The air strike is part of an increasingly firm stand Israel is taking against Iran’s regional ambitions in the Middle East.

This includes several recent air strikes in Iraq that Iranian-linked paramilitaries have blamed on Israel. It also includes near-daily reports in media from Lebanon to Kuwait asserting that Israel is targeting Iran’s network of proxies and their bases in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria.

Jerusalem is no longer secretive about this widespread campaign. In January former IDF chief of staff Gadi Eizenkot said Israel had carried out thousands of air strikes on Iranian targets.

Now IRGC Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani has warned Israel that these strikes will be Israel's last. Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah has threatened retaliation.

This is part of a rising Iranian-backed chorus against Jerusalem, which includes real threats such as continuing rocket fire from Hamas in Gaza. It also includes threats by Iranian proxies such as Iraqi-based Kata'ib Hezbollah against U.S. forces in Iraq.

What is Israel's strategy in all this? The goal is to draw Iran and its allies out of the shadows.

Over the past decade, inflamed by the 2015 Iran deal, Tehran has increased its weapons transfers to Hezbollah, sent thousands of advisers to support the Syrian regime, and helped mobilize a network of militias in Iraq.

Some of this was used to fight ISIS, or enemies of Bashar al-Assad. But with the ISIS war and Syrian conflict winding down, these groups are turning their threats toward Iran's adversaries.

Tehran is obsessed with destroying Israel, as can be seen in its frequent statements and militaristic parades. It has launched drones from Syria into Israel in February 2018, rockets in May 2018, and a rocket in January 2019. Hezbollah threatens that its 150,000 rockets can strike all of Israel.

Air strikes on Iran's network of proxies force the network out of the shadows. It can't hide in villas in southern Syria, or launch drones at night, or stockpile ballistic missiles in Iraq if it is looking over its shoulder and increasingly making mistakes through its aggressive and open threats.

Iran is used to playing a double game of moderates and hard-liners, sending its smiling foreign minister to the recent G7 while boasting of its allies' drone technology striking Saudi Arabia.

The Israeli air strikes couple well with the Washington-led campaign of "maximum pressure."

Iran now faces two fronts, the sanctions and strikes, that together are designed to blow the lid on its regional strategy.

Tehran will be tempted to make a misstep in its otherwise calculated reactions. Iran has a playbook: If a Western power seizes its tanker, as the U.K. did in July, Iran seizes a tanker. It downed a sophisticated U.S. drone in June but hasn't harmed anyone in six sabotage operations on oil tankers in the Persian Gulf.

- More than anything, Iran wants to preserve its regional power, based in proxies and allies that are often Shiite coreligionists.
- Its long-term goal is to get Hezbollah and its Shiite paramilitary allies in Iraq into more government positions and build up their parallel-state structures of armed fighters and bases.

■ A war with the U.S. or Israel, or a direct confrontation with Saudi Arabia, as opposed to using proxies such as the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, is not in Tehran's interest.

This is the strategic calculation that underpins Israel's actions, but it can go only so far. A game of whack-a-mole against Iran's drones and missiles is just a setback for Tehran. If Tehran doesn't gamble on a major conflict with Israel, it will continue its creeping annexation of neighboring states.



An article by Alex Morales and Josh Wingrove titled "Boris Johnson's Long Journey From Trump Hater [in 2015] to Best Friend" was posted at bloomberg.com on Aug. 24, 2019. Following is the article.

In December 2015, Boris Johnson joked that he wouldn't go to some parts of New York because of the risk of meeting Donald Trump, a man of "stupefying ignorance."

How times change.

Johnson was London's popular mayor, Trump a presidential outsider attacking the U.K. capital on the campaign trail. But two months later, Johnson threw his considerable charisma behind Brexit, setting in motion a chain of events that would bring the two together as allies at the Group of Seven summit.

They've spoken at least five times in the month since Johnson became U.K. prime minister, sealing a rapprochement that was already evident at the United Nations in 2017.

Johnson, then foreign secretary, approached Trump with a warm handshake and a matching look of black suit, red tie and similar blonde hair. It was classic Johnson: animated chatter, arms gesturing wildly. The British premier knows how to turn on the charm.

And he will be taking it up a notch for their first meeting as fellow leaders over breakfast in Biarritz on Sunday.

Balancing act

With Johnson seeking support for Brexit and the EU anxious about being blindsided by Trump, their tete-a-tete is the most-anticipated of the summit.

But fanfare aside, Johnson is in a precarious position.

The gargantuan task of leaving the EU cost his two predecessors their jobs and Johnson, the public face of Brexit, has to make it happen somehow. Amid forecasts of economic catastrophe if he leaves without an exit deal, he is clinging to the prospect of a free-trade agreement with the world's largest economy to show it was all worth it.

Trump has been open in his support for Brexit — in fact he often says how he predicted the outcome the day before from his golf course in Scotland. And for him, the prospect of the U.K. leaving without a deal, and the greater divisions it will sow in Europe, is an opportunity to exploit.

Photo op

Peeling the U.K. away from France and Germany would play into Trump's strategy and victory for Johnson offers legitimacy of sorts to Trump's style of politics.

Both men came to power with populist messages and idiosyncratic use of language: Trump favors short words and pithy phrases such as "sad" and "fake news," Johnson likes arcane phrases peppered with Latin and classical references.

And then there are visuals. Photographers will be snapping maniacally when Trump's carefully sprayed hairdo meets Johnson's studiously untidy thatch.

"Imagine Donald Trump doing Brexit," Johnson said in a leaked audio obtained by BuzzFeed News last year. "He'd go in bloody hard. There'd be all sorts of breakdowns, all sorts of chaos. Everyone would think he'd gone mad. But actually you might get somewhere."

Toxic reputation

It's a balancing act for both men though.

Trump is toxic in the U.K. — his two visits to Britain drew mass protests — so Johnson also needs to be careful not to appear to be too cozy with the U.S. leader. He has an election to fight before too long if he's to turn the fragile majority he inherited into a more stable platform for governing.

So the president won't be pushing Johnson this weekend on the issues like Iran or Huawei where he needs help in his efforts to strong arm the other EU powers. But there may eventually be a quid pro quo for the "fantastic" trade deal Trump has dangled.

Trump's trade talks rarely prove speedy. He remains locked in a trade war with China and a revised accord with Canada and Mexico dragged on for over a year and is stalled in Congress. An agreement with the U.K. could be years in the making and Trump drives a hard bargain — whether he likes you or not.

Trump likes winners

There are also important differences in their world view.

Johnson favors immigration, Trump famously doesn't. The U.K. is signed up to the Paris climate agreement whereas Trump pulled out. And while the U.K. shares Trump's concerns about access to Chinese markets, Johnson believes they should be addressed by giving the World Trade Organization more teeth. Trump is more concerned at blunting the WTO's teeth.

On landing in Biarritz, Johnson went out of his way to find the correct turn of phrase to draw attention to the damage Trump's tariff policy was unleashing

without blaming him overtly: "Those who support the tariffs are at risk of incurring the blame for the downturn in the global economy, irrespective of whether or not that is true."

Trump likes winners. And for now, he considers it's in his interest to prop up his British friend. "He's tough and he's smart," he said back in July. "They call him 'Britain Trump.'"

This weekend the two men are likely to form an important alliance—Johnson walking a fine line. The challenge for the British premier is to keep it that way.



"Eye on the World" comment: The following list of articles consists of headlines of extra articles, which are considered international. The articles were not posted, but the headlines give the essence of the story.

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- An article by Stefan Lovgren titled "Near the Amazon Fires, Residents Are Sick, Worried and Angry" was posted at nationalgeographic.com on Aug. 23, 2019.
 - An article by Eileen AJ Connelly titled "Brazilian Troops Enlisted to Fight Unprecedented Wildfires in Amazon Rain Forest" was posted at nypost.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
 - An article by Daniel Politi titled "Brazil Deploys [44,000] Troops to Fight Amazon Fires After International Outcry" was posted at slate.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
 - An article titled "Amazon Fires: [President Jair] Bolsonaro Sends Army After EU Threat on Trade Deal" was posted at aljazeera.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
 - An article by Monica Showalter titled "Brazil's [Conservative Jair] Bolsonaro Gets Blamed for Same Amazon Fires Also Plaguing Socialist Bolivia" was posted at americanthinker.com on Aug. 25, 2019.
 - An article by Alexandra Ma titled "Brazil's President Said He Would Accept \$20 Million From the G7 to Tackle the Amazon Fires, But Only If Emmanuel Macron Apologizes for Calling Him 'Extraordinarily Rude' " was posted at businessinsider.com on Aug. 28, 2019.
 - An article titled "Israeli Jets Hit Targets in Syria to Prevent Iranian Drone Attack" was posted at afp.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
 - An article by Sonam Sheth titled "Trump Never Made It to the G7 Climate Meeting, and World Leaders Say They Are Giving Up on Bringing the US Back Into the Paris Accords" was posted at businessinsider.com on Aug. 26, 2019.
 - An article by Eliza Reiman titled "Trump Derailed a Meeting With G7 Leaders When He Insisted Russia Should Be Readmitted to the Group and Everyone Slapped Him Down" was posted at businessinsider.com on Aug. 27, 2019.

- An article by Amir Vera titled "Russia Says It Launched 2 Ballistic Missiles in the Arctic Ocean As Part of Combat Training" was posted at cnn.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
- An article by Yan Zhao and Jasmine Leung titled "Hong Kong Police Fire First Gunshot, Water Cannon in Protest Clashes" was posted at afp.com on Aug. 25, 2019.
- An article titled "Hong Kong Police Draw Guns As Protesters Chase Them" was posted at apnews.com on Aug. 25, 2019.
- An article titled "Smart Lamppost Toppled to Ground by Hong Kong Demonstrators Over Chinese Surveillance Fears" was posted at abc.net.au on Aug. 25, 2019.
- An article by Andy Meek titled "US-China Tensions Are Threatening an Undersea Internet Cable Between the Two Countries" was posted at bgrnews.com on Aug. 28, 2019.
- An article titled "China Unveils Plan for Huge Anniversary Military Parade [on October 1]" was posted at afp.com on Aug. 29, 2019.
- An article by Frank Zeller titled "30 Years After Berlin Wall Fell, Dashed Hopes Boost Far-Right" was posted at afp.com on Aug. 26, 2019.
- A Reuters article titled "Nearly 100 Companies Move to Netherlands Ahead of Brexit: Dutch Agency" was posted at reuters.com on Aug. 26, 2019.



An article by Walter Williams titled "Beginning of US Slavery" was posted at jewishworldreview.com on Aug. 28, 2019. Following is the article.

The New York Times has begun a major initiative, the "1619 Project," to observe the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery. It aims to reframe American history so that slavery and the contributions of black Americans explain who we are as a nation.

Nikole Hannah-Jones, staff writer for *The New York Times* Magazine wrote the lead article, "America Wasn't a Democracy, Until Black Americans Made It One." She writes, "Without the idealistic, strenuous and patriotic efforts of black Americans, our democracy today would most likely look very different—it might not be a democracy at all."

There are several challenges one can make about Hannah-Jones' article, but I'm going to focus on the article's most serious error, namely that the nation's founders intended for us to be a democracy.

That error is shared by too many Americans. The word democracy appears nowhere in the two most fundamental founding documents of our nation—the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Instead of a democ-

racy, the Constitution's Article IV, Section 4, declares, "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government."

Think about it and ask yourself whether our Pledge of Allegiance says to "the democracy for which it stands" or to "the republic for which it stands."

Is Julia Ward Howe's popular Civil War song titled "The Battle Hymn of the Democracy" or "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"?

The founders had utter contempt for democracy.

James Madison, the acknowledged father of the Constitution, wrote in Federalist Paper No. 10, that in a pure democracy "there is nothing to check the inducement to sacrifice the weaker party or the obnoxious individual."

At the 1787 Constitutional Convention, delegate Edmund Randolph said, "that in tracing these evils to their origin every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy."

John Adams said: "Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall observed, "Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos."

The U.S. Constitution is replete with anti-majority rule, undemocratic provisions. One provision, heavily criticized, is the Electoral College.

In their wisdom, the framers gave us the Electoral College so that in presidential elections, heavily populated states could not run roughshod over sparsely populated states. In order to amend the Constitution, it requires a two-thirds vote of both Houses, or two-thirds of state legislatures, to propose an amendment, and requires three-fourths of state legislatures for ratification.

Part of the reason for having a bicameral Congress is that it places another obstacle to majority rule. Fifty-one senators can block the wishes of 435 representatives and 49 senators. The president, with a veto, can thwart the will of all 535 members of Congress. It takes a two-thirds vote, not just a majority, of both houses of Congress to override a presidential veto.

In addition to not understanding our Constitution, Hannah-Jones' article, like in most discussions of black history, fails to acknowledge that black Americans have made the greatest gains, over some of the highest hurdles in the shortest span of time than any other racial group in mankind's history.

The evidence: If black Americans were thought of as a nation with our own gross domestic product, we'd rank among the 20 wealthiest nations. It was a black American, Gen. Colin Powell, who headed the world's mightiest military. A few black Americans are among the world's wealthiest. Black Americans are among the world's most famous personalities.

The significance of this is that in 1865, neither a slave nor a slave owner would have believed that such progress would be possible in less than a century and a half, if ever.

As such, it speaks to the intestinal fortitude of a people. Just as importantly, it speaks to the greatness of a nation within which such progress was possible, progress that would have been impossible anywhere else. The challenge before us is how those gains can be extended to a large percentage of black people for whom they appear elusive.



An article by Lyman Stone titled “Slavery in America Did Not Begin in 1619, and Other Things *The New York Times* Gets Wrong” was posted at thefederalist.com on Aug. 23, 2019. Following is the article.

The New York Times has published a series of essays about slavery, race, and American politics under the heading “1619 Project.” These essays cover an enormous amount of terrain: music, constitutional theory, economics, management, ethnic identity, and more.

Many conservatives responded negatively, which at first perplexed me. Slavery was a huge part of American history and has affected every facet of our society. A collection of articles outlining this history seems as good a topic as any to write about.

But zoomed out from the mostly mundane minutiae of individual articles—in the absence of slavery and thus without as much African influence in our music, what would American music sound like?—a larger concern animates the 1619 Project. The project’s central purpose is not simply to educate Americans about the history of labor accounting from plantation to data visualization, or an account of the history of brutal sugar cultivation, but to give a specific narrative about what America is.

The project’s summary makes the aim quite clear: “[The 1619 Project] aims to reframe the country’s history, understanding 1619 as our true founding, and placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are.”

Considered this way, the 1619 Project looks very different. It isn’t mostly about helping Americans understand the role played by plantation agriculture in American history. It’s mostly about convincing Americans that “America” and “slavery” are essentially synonyms.

It’s mostly about trying to tell readers they should feel sort of, kind of, at least a little bit bad about being American, because, didn’t you hear? As several articles say explicitly, America, in its basic DNA, is not a liberal democracy, constitutional republic, or federation. It’s a slave society.

Let's start with the first thing wrong here

There are a lot of ways to attack this story. But the simplest place to start is the central conceit of the project: that year, 1619.

1619 is commonly cited as the date slavery first arrived in "America." No matter that historians mostly consider the 1619 date a red herring. Enslaved people were working in English Bermuda in 1616.

Spanish colonies and forts in today's Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina had enslaved Africans throughout the mid-to-late 1500s: in fact, a slave rebellion in 1526 helped end the Spanish attempt at settling South Carolina.

The presence of Spanish power continued to inhibit English settlement of the deep south basically until the Revolutionary War. In some sense, the 1526 San Miguel de Guadeloupe rebellion cleared the way for English settlement of South Carolina.

Of course, when the English did arrive in South Carolina, they struggled to make a living. Early settlers survived on a trade of buckskins and vegetables.

It was not until South Carolinians fought the Yamasee Wars of 1715-1717, and sold between 20,000 and 50,000 kidnapped Native Americans into slavery into New England and the Caribbean, that South Carolinians had the capital to buy enough African slaves to get rice and indigo plantations up and running.

But before 1526, slavery was already ongoing in the eventual United States. The earliest slave society in our present country, and our most recent slavery society, was in Puerto Rico. The island's Spanish overlords were enslaving the Taino natives by 1500.

By 1513, the Taino population had shrunk dramatically due to brutal violence and disease. Thus, Spain brought the first African slaves to Puerto Rico.

Chattel slavery in Puerto Rico continued, despite many "Royal Graces" easing life for free blacks and sometimes promising eventual emancipation, until 1873. Even then, slaves had to buy their own liberty. It's not clear when the last slave was free in Puerto Rico, but it would still have been a fresh memory in 1898 when the United States gained control from Spain.

Slavery in America did not begin in 1619. It began in 1513.

Any argument for a 1619 date implicitly suggests that the American project is an inherently Anglo project: that other regions, like Texas, California, Louisiana, and Puerto Rico, have subordinate histories that aren't really, truly, equal as American origin stories.

In essence, the 1619 date for the beginning of slavery sets up a story of America as an essentially Anglo project that African-Americans were forced into and now claim their share of.

But in reality, our country has many origins: French Cajuns and Huguenots, Swedes in Delaware, Dutch in New York, Russians in Alaska, Mexicans in the southwest, Spanish in Florida and Puerto Rico, and of course Native Americans everywhere.

Missing essential stories of American slavery

Native Americans point to another vital reality: African-American identity and a personal history of enslaved ancestors are not synonymous. Some African-Americans, like President Obama, have no ancestry among enslaved Africans in America.

Many people enslaved in America, most notably the first slaves, Native Americans, are not of African descent.

Furthermore, "unfree labor" did not end with the end of race-based chattel slavery. Unfree Asian labor in Hawaii and the Pacific west continued almost until the 20th century, while today prisoners of all races are often press-ganged into underpaid labor.

This is not to diminish the African-American experience of slavery: the overwhelming majority of enslaved people in America were of African descent, and the overwhelming majority of people of African descent in America are descended from ancestors who were enslaved. Today, it is reasonable to speak of the African-American experience and the experience of enslavement as essentially and inexorably connected.

But when we talk about history and origins of our society, when we try to untangle the web of events that brought us to where we are today, we have to be more careful. Slavery in America began with Spanish enslavement of Native Americans. In the most enslaved parts of America like South Carolina, slavery largely began with the enslavement of Native Americans.

Like Americans whose origins are in non-Anglo colonies, so too the 1619 Project's narratives seem to miss a significant part of the legacy of slavery: Native Americans, who remain significantly poorer than African-Americans, less educated, and often with shorter life expectancies.

Undoubtedly the 1619 Project's writers have genuine sympathy for Native Americans. I'm sure they would read my comment here as disingenuous: do I really support Native American rights to land and reparations? For the record, yes, I do.

But beyond that, the 1619 Project bills itself as helping Americans see the real story of American origins. And the real story as the 1619 Project tells it is that slavery began in 1619 with 20 Africans. This isn't true. This ignores the experience of Puerto Rico, where slavery began earlier, and lasted longer.

Furthermore, a serious accounting for slavery has to wrestle with the experience of Native Americans and Hawaiian islanders, and especially the status of their ancestral lands and sovereign rights.

More broadly, to wrestle adequately with the painful historical reality of America's "labor freedom," we have to be able to talk about less-than-free Asian migrant workers in California and Hawaii, as well as the indenturehood of the Scots-Irish and subsequent Appalachian poverty.

That these peoples are not treated as subaltern today to the same extent that Native Americans or African Americans still are should not exclude them from a project concerned with history.

Plus, many poor whites in Appalachia with accents still experience a version of ethnic subaltern status. We should let them speak without writing it off as white racial grievance.

The United States was a footnote in slavery's history

Finally, it's worth exploring the specialness of American slavery. The New York Times is an American publication, so it makes sense to explore the American experience. But a wider-angle lens can help us understand that experience.

Those early slaves in 1619 that The New York Times focuses on arrived on the San Juan Bautista. If that name doesn't sound English, that's because it isn't. It was a Portuguese ship en route to Spanish Mexico. Off the coast of Mexico, it was attacked and captured by English pirates masquerading as Dutch. They sold their enslaved human cargo at Jamestown.

From its earliest moments in the Spanish colony of 1526, Puerto Rico in 1513, or even Jamestown in 1619, the truth is that America was a footnote to a larger world of slavery. We did not invent this evil. We enthusiastically embraced it.

But when we explain the role played by slavery, we have to recognize that slavery is no more "native" to the American experience than, well, anything. We stole the first slaves from Portugal.

Slavery struggled to "take off" in much of the South because managing a plantation is extremely technical and complicated, and many Americans were not good at it. It was an influx of experienced human traffickers, slave-torturers, and large-scale agribusiness experts from Haiti and other Caribbean colonies in the 1700s that gave much of the Deep South enough "expertise" in the abuse of humanity to develop a thriving slave economy.

Lacking much home-grown ingenuity, U.S. slavery had reached an economic bottleneck by the 1780s: tobacco destroyed soil nutrients and was unsustainable, rice and indigo couldn't be widely cultivated, the colonies had a bad climate for sugar, and the de-seeding process for "upland cotton" was prohibitively expensive, meaning only Caribbean-style "Sea Island" cotton could be cultivating on a large scale. It took a clever abolitionist New Englander, Eli Whitney, to invent the cotton gin.

He thought he was sparing slaves the tedious work of de-seeding Sea Island cotton. He didn't realize he was opening the door to cotton cultivation, and thus a slave economy, throughout the interior south.

In other words, the history of slavery is not one of some evil creativity unique to Americans. We emulated models of slavery pioneered elsewhere. We "improved" on it, of course; the American zeal for "efficiency" drove escalating brutality (although Anglo cotton plantations never reached the perigee of inhumanity achieved by the Francophone sugar plantations of Haiti and Louisiana).

We are covered in the blood-guilt of millions of enslaved people. But when we try to tease out the strands of American identity, slavery, like so many other pieces of America, is an immigrant.

To the southern Tidewater colonies, to their eternal ignominy, it was a welcome one. But many inland southerners and to many northerners, slavery was a baleful evil they—perhaps incorrectly—saw as forced upon them by Britain.

America's story is of increasing refusal to tolerate slavery

This story of slavery as something somehow “foreign” to many Americans will read as a bit much to many enthusiasts of the 1619 Project. If Americans were so unhappy with slavery, why didn't they abolish it?

My answer is simple: we did. At the risk of historical absurdity, it must be noted that when Georgia was founded in 1732, slavery was banned, making it the first place in the Western hemisphere to ban slavery.

But alas, the appeal of plantation wealth was too great, and by 1752 the King George II (the father of the George we rebelled against) had taken over Georgia as a royal colony, and instituted slavery.

Thus, in 1775, there was no free soil anywhere in the Western hemisphere. Slavery was a universal law. While I cannot say for certain, it is possible there was no free soil in the entire world—that is, no society that categorically forbade all slavery.

But then something changed. Revolutionary agitation led to war in 1776, and by 1777, Vermont's de facto secession from New York and New Hampshire created the first modern polity in the western hemisphere to forbid the keeping of slaves. In 1777, war with Britain was barely begun.

Vermont was hardly secure. But in their opening salvo to a watching world, Vermonters made clear what they thought America was about: liberty for all mankind. In 1780, still amidst the guns of war, Massachusetts' constitution rendered enslavement legally unenforceable, and the judiciary soon abolished it.

Numerous states followed suit. Their exact procedure varied: some immediately emancipated all slaves, some used gradual emancipation, and some tried other “creative” methods. But the point is that, unlike in some early-abolition countries like France or Peru, or in Georgia's early free status, abolitionism stuck in America.

The fledging Confederation Congress set aside the majority of the land ceded from Great Britain as free soil. Despite concerted attempts by southerners to “flip” both Indiana and Illinois as slave states, the early commitment to abolition held fast.

Likewise, the United States was the second country, by a matter of weeks, to outlaw the international trade in slaves, after Great Britain. Countries like Spain and Portugal continued thereafter to trade slaves for decades, and Brazil did not outlaw slavery until 1888.

In other words, Americans were early adopters of abolition. We were the first to establish formally abolitionist constitutions and states, the second to ban the trade in slaves, and middle-of-the-pack in achieving uniform abolition of slavery.

No, slavery does not define America

Undoubtedly, we still must atone for much. Slavery lasted longer than any conscience should have allowed. The Christian consciences of America's founders should have stirred them to intolerance of a single day of slavery on our shores. Alas, it did not. This is a moral failure.

But the history of America is not defined by some romance with enslavement, as the 1619 Project seems to suggest. The high points of American history, the ones we celebrate, memorialize, emphasize, and teach to our children as who we are, and as examples to be emulated, are moments of liberation.

The Jamestown founding of America has no national holiday, in part because most Americans sense that slavers looking for gold is, while part of our history, not the part we want our children to emulate. But when Thanksgiving comes, we celebrate the Plymouth colony: religious dissidents seeking liberty.

While fictionalized to some extent, it speaks well of Americans that Thanksgiving is presented as a collaboration between religious dissidents and Native Americans: the story we tell to our children, the example we hold up as how Americans ought to live, is that they ought to tolerate diversity of opinion and actively seek cooperation and peace with extremely different neighbors.

The history of America is indelibly marked by the sin of enslavement of many peoples, African and Native American. To remind Americans of this, and to carefully trace how slavery has impacted our society today, is a good thing.

What defines us isn't our worst moments

America has been blessed by courageous black voices for centuries reminding the mostly white body politick of this sin, and calling us to repentance and reconciliation.

This call to repentance has often come at considerable cost to those African-Americans who speak up in a society that, like all human societies, dislikes being reminded of its sins.

The American story is not a story of a country defined by slavery, but a country defined by trying to figure out what it means to live with liberty and self-government.

Much of the straight history presented in the 1619 Project is good, insightfully presented, and will be news to many Americans. As a Lutheran, I applaud the authors of the 1619 Project for confronting Americans with the law of God, holding a mirror to our sins, past and present.

Yet I also wonder if that mirror of our ugliness is truly who we are.

Is a person who he is in his darkest moment?

If we record people in their most vicious hour, when they most succumb to the temptations that nag on all of us, is that video who they truly are?

I think not. I think we are not defined by who we have been, and we are not defined by our worst national sins.

The American story is not a story of a country defined by slavery, but a country defined by trying, in fits and starts, with faltering and hesitance, but also with moments of glory, to figure out what it means to live with liberty and self-government.

It is altogether fitting, then, to conclude as a great, glorious, flawed, struggled, penitent, but courageous American concluded, when discussing what it meant to be American in a time of great division.

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."



An article by Burt Prelutsky titled "Just Biden Being Biden" was posted at patriotpost.us on August 24, 2019. Following are excerpts of the article.

I have heard for years that Joe Biden is a very likable guy. If by "likable," people meant feeble-minded, I can see where an argument could be made.

I know that some people don't take President Trump seriously when he says he hopes that Biden gets the nomination and that the ex-Vice President is his opponent in 2020. But I think he means it and with good reason.

I suppose admitting to be a gaffe machine is preferable to trying to deny such an obvious truth, but do people really want to elect a President who can barely get through a sentence without saying something embarrassing?

It's true that Trump, in speaking about the two recent massacres, said "Toledo" when he meant Dayton; but Biden went him one better by referencing the shootings in "Houston and Michigan."

Furthermore, the gaffes can't all be attributed to his advanced age, although if they could, that might be even worse in a presidential candidate. I'm sure that some people blamed his recent observation that "Poor kids are just as bright and as talented as white kids" on his 76 years, but that's only because they haven't been paying attention for the past 50 years or so, because when the guy isn't sticking both feet in his mouth, he's busy plagiarizing other people's words.

■ Plagiarizing in law school

Back in the 1960s, when he was attending Syracuse University College of Law, Biden was found to have used five pages from a law review article in a term paper without using quotation marks or attributing them to its author.

In a letter to the law school faculty, pleading not to be dismissed, Biden wrote (apparently on his own): "If I had intended to cheat, would I have been so stupid? I value my word above all else."

Apparently it worked because Biden graduated in 1968. Apparently, the faculty members decided it would be the profession's loss if someone who could cheat so brazenly and then lie about it was denied the opportunity to practice law.

■ Plagiarizing in 1988

Having learned nothing from the experience except that he could get away with it, Biden had to drop out of the 1988 presidential race when it was discovered that he'd delivered a speech identical to a speech that had been given a few months earlier by British Labour Party politician Neil Kinnock.

It seems that 2008 was a red letter year for Biden when in spite of spreading gaffes the way that Johnny Appleseed spread his seeds, he actually became the Vice-President.

Clearly, the man isn't qualified to be the Commander in Chief. But I'd hate to see his talents lost forever to a nation that more than ever needs to laugh.

Perhaps after the election, President Trump, in a move to unite the country, could appoint Joe Biden his court jester.

■ Amusing one-liners

Because even Joe Biden can't be expected to get all the laughs, Joe Neuner has passed along a few amusing one-liners:

"We have enough gun control. What we need is idiot control."

"Let's stop sending money to other countries and let them hate us for free."

"Camping: Where you spend a small fortune to live like a homeless person."

"Vegetarian: The ancient tribal name for the village idiot who can't hunt, fish or light fires."

"If guns kill people, then pencils and pens misspell words, cars make people drive drunk and spoons make people fat."



An article by Burt Prelutsky titled "The Big House and the Bug House" was posted at patriotpost.us on August 26, 2019. Following are excerpts of the article.

I'm not sure how I feel about the red flag laws I keep hearing about, the ones that would, theoretically, keep guns out of the hands of loons. I guess my skepticism stems from the fact that I don't know who would be making the

determinations. If it turned out the decisions would be made by the same lot who grant paroles, I wouldn't consider it an improvement.

■ Rebuilding insane asylums

On the other hand, when I heard President Trump speak about rebuilding the insane asylums that were torn down by budget-cutting governors and state legislatures in the 70s, thus releasing millions of loons onto our streets, you can count me in. The best way of keeping the likes of Nikolas Cruz, Adam Lanza, Patrick Crusius, James Huberty, Joseph Whitman, Seung-Hui Cho, George Hennard, Devin Patrick Kelley, Omar Mateen and Stephen Paddock, from going on killing sprees is to lock them up before they have the chance to obey those voices in the spooky echo chambers they call their heads.

The fact that most of them express their madness in the various social networks currently available should make it a simple matter to institutionalize them based on their stated desire to commit murder. The notion that people's First Amendment rights might be infringed upon is a crock. Nobody is constitutionally entitled to threaten to kill their schoolmates, their fellow workers or the President.

That's not free speech, that's crazy speech.

■ Building more prisons

At the same time that these asylums are being built, another massive construction project should be undertaken. We need more and bigger prisons. We should never again be caught releasing convicted felons early because some blue ribbon commission has decided that conditions are too crowded. God forbid that rapists, thieves and pedophiles, should be confined in uncomfortable living quarters.

■ Certain crimes shouldn't be enforced?

That might even curtail some of the nonsense about our having too many people under lock and key. Our problem isn't that we have too many mischief makers locked up, but they we don't have enough of them stashed away. When Democrats claim that we have far more prisoners than other industrial nations, they're just blowing smoke in our direction. Their idea of lowering the crime rate is to insist that certain crimes, generally those involving drugs, simply shouldn't be enforced.

The truth is that would be the equivalent of claiming to cure cancer by announcing that henceforth the disease would be called recnac (cancer spelled backwards), but that never seems to enter their pointy little heads.

■ Were people born that way?

I'm not calling for homosexuals to be stoned or even shunned, but I have gotten tired of hearing the perversion defended on the grounds that people are just born that way and that if anyone should be blamed, it's God.

That's pretty skimpy as excuses go. And while I'm not lumping all so-called gays in with rapists, pedophiles and Democrats, they can all use the same

excuse to rationalize their own depravity. Homosexuals would point out that their behavior is limited to consenting adults, but of course that's not always true. Sex involving adults and teenagers is not all that uncommon, and it's not regarded as pedophilia.

We're all born, you may have noticed, unable to speak or think rationally. It's our mission in life to improve on the basic raw material and actually make something better of ourselves.

■ Transgender crowd

On the lunacy scale, I would venture that the so-called transgender crowd is somewhere between homosexuals and the 20 freaks contending for the Democratic nomination.

I don't hate transgenders. I do hate parents, who in their quest to be regarded as avantgarde, encourage their tykes to be confused about their gender. But that doesn't mean I believe that little boys who insist they're girls and little girls who insist they're boys should have any say in the matter. When kids are very young, they will base those decisions on their belief that one group gets to have more fun or that the other get more presents.

When they get to be teenagers, these misfits should not be allowed to use the bathrooms and locker rooms of their choice, and they should not be permitted to enter athletic competitions based on anything but their biology.

■ Recommend treatment

If I had my way, these people would be among the first people to be given space in the newly built asylums, not so they can be punished, but because they need to be treated for their mental disorders. That's because they are even more prone to commit suicide than the typical teenage zombies who lurch through adolescence with their eyes focused on their brain-sucking smart phones.

■ Shoot-out in Philly

When the shoot-out between Maurice Hill, a 36-year-old career criminal, and the Philadelphia police force finally ended, I was left with two questions: the first was why it took the cops eight hours before they finally drove him out of the apartment with tear gas; the second was why we have 36-year-old career criminals lurking in society? Why are they not turned into mulch long before they get to shoot off 200 rounds wounding six police officers and shutting down half the city?

■ Jeering at the police

And how is it that when we are told that most black people living in the hood are decent and law-abiding, we saw hordes of them on the streets of Philly laughing and jeering at the cops while the cops were risking their lives to protect them?

To me, it's the 2019 updated version of the creeps who used to curse and spit on the soldiers returning from Vietnam in the 60s.

■ Refusing to work on a border project

In yet another reminder of the inglorious past, hundreds of Google employees are refusing to work on a government project meant to help secure the border against invading aliens. They're reminiscent of the punks in the 60s whose fear of military service led them to flee to Canada, all the while pretending they were a bunch of Mahatma Gandhi's.

■ Presidential candidates

Unless some dope like Mitt Romney or John Kasich decides to challenge President Trump for the nomination, we've got our candidate. But how are Democrats ever going to settle on just one standard-bearer when they have the contents of the world's largest clown car to choose from?

As Jay Lehr points out:

Joe Biden has promised to cure cancer.

Kamala Harris is going to flood black neighborhoods with reparation money.

Bernie Sanders is going to forgive all student loans.

Elizabeth Warren is going to send reparation checks to homosexuals.

Beto O'Rourke is going to tear down border walls.

Cory Booker is going to increase welfare programs.

Amy Klobuchar will grant statehood to Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.

Peter Buttigieg is going to eliminate the Electoral College.

Andrew Yang is going to give every person over the age of 18 \$1,000 a month.

How's a person to pick just one from this liberal smorgasbord of delights? If I were a Democrat, rather than torment myself over the various herrings, boiled potatoes, gravlax and Swedish meatballs, on the menu, I really wouldn't be able to settle on just one. I think I'd just stay home on Election Day.

It recently occurred to me that the reason that scientists are so eager to find signs of intelligent life on other planets is because it's in such desperately short supply on this one.



An article by Julia Mazziotta titled "Here's All the Places Where People Have Reported Contracting Flesh-Eating Bacteria in 2019" was posted at people.com on Aug. 9, 2019. Following are excerpts of the article.

Each summer, as the waters along the U.S. coastline heat up, cases of flesh-eating bacteria start to grow. The bacteria — which can be deadly, depend-

ing on the type—thrives in water with temperatures that stay above 55 degrees year-round, making the southern portion of the Atlantic coastline a common source of cases.

In 2019, several people or their families have spoken out about contracting a flesh-eating bacteria. They required a significant hospital stay and often surgery.

For three people, they sadly died after contracting the most severe type of flesh-eating bacteria, necrotizing fasciitis—a rare but deadly disease where the bacteria attacks the skin and soft tissue, causing it to decay and leading the organs to shut down.

Of the reported cases, eight occurred in the Gulf of Mexico, where flesh-eating bacteria, especially the vibrio species, have thrived for years because of the year-round warm waters.

- In April, a man fishing in Ozone, Florida, contracted the bacteria.
- Two months later, the same thing happened to a 12-year-old girl vacationing in Destin, Florida.
- Just a few days later, a 77-year-old woman died after walking along Coquina Beach on Anna Maria Island in the same state.
- After the Fourth of July weekend, five people developed flesh-eating bacteria—a man in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, a woman in California, and two men who died from necrotizing fasciitis, one in Okaloosa County, Florida and another on Magnolia Beach in Texas.
- Cases from other areas include one in Waterloo, Alabama, along the Tennessee River, another at Ocean View Beach near Norfolk, Virginia, one at Colonial Beach in Virginia, on the Potomac River, one on Ocean City, Maryland's bay side and another from the Green River in Kentucky.
- While most cases are in the southern part of the Eastern Seaboard, the flesh-eating bacteria vibrio is spreading north because of climate change, a new study found. Between 2017 and 2018, there were five cases where people contracted the bacteria in the Delaware Bay, or near Delaware and New Jersey.

"We believe that clinicians should be aware of the possibility that *V. vulnificus* infections are occurring more frequently outside traditional geographic areas," the authors wrote in the report, according to CBS.

- A 68-year-old man said Aug. 7 that he developed flesh-eating bacteria after swimming at Connecticut's Hammonasset Beach State Park on the Long Island Sound. He contracted necrotizing fasciitis, and doctors had to amputate his right leg after multiple surgeries aimed at saving it were unsuccessful.

Strong immune system

Still, the most deadly form, necrotizing fasciitis, is very rare, with just 20,000 cases a year, and people should not spend their lives fearing the water.

Chances of contracting it is unlikely, especially if you're healthy and have a strong immune system, the Centers for Disease Control says.

Good hygiene

Practicing good hygiene is crucial in prevention. Make sure to shower after going in the water, and properly care for any and all wounds—which includes keeping them covered with dry, clean bandages.

Those with open wounds and active infections should avoid bodies of water, especially swimming pools and hot tubs.



“Eye on the World” comment: The following list of articles consists of headlines of extra articles, which involve the United States. The articles were not posted, but the headlines give the essence of the story.

Deficit

■ An article by Fletch Daniels titled “Debt Dwarfs China As Top National Security Threat” was posted at americanthinker.com on Aug. 24, 2019.

Finances

■ An article by John Aidan Byrne titled “Brave New World: Uncle Sam Is Taxing Robots As Companies Invest in Advanced Tech” was posted at nypost.com on Aug. 25, 2019.

■ An article by Mike Elgan titled “Uh-Oh: Silicon Valley Is Building a Chinese-Style Social Credit System” was posted at fastcompany.com on Aug. 26, 2019.

Trade war

■ An article by Yun Li titled “China Will Retaliate With Tariffs on \$75 Billion More of US Goods and Resume Auto Tariffs” was posted at cnbc.com on Aug. 23, 2019.

■ An article by Tal Axelrod titled “National Farmers Union Condemns New Tariffs: ‘Trump Making Things Worse’ ” was posted at thehill.com on Aug. 23, 2019.

■ An article by Jacob Pramuk titled “Trump Will Raise Tariff Rates on Chinese Goods in Response to Trade War Retaliation” was posted at cnbc.com on Aug. 24, 2019.

■ An article by Rebecca Ballhaus and Noemie Bisserbe titled “White House Says Trump Regrets Not Raising Tariffs Higher” was posted at wsj.com on Aug. 25, 2019.

■ An article by Jamie LaReau titled “Trump Would Cost General Motors Billions If He Actually Orders Business Out of China” was posted at usatoday.com on Aug. 28, 2019.

■ An article by Ben Shapiro titled “Trump Is Right on China Threat” was posted at cnsnews.com on Aug. 29, 2019.

Green New Deal

- An article by Monica Showalter titled "Democrats Dump Climate Change Debate, Recognizing How Badly It Will Bomb With Voters" was posted at americanthinker.com on Aug. 25, 2019.
- An article by Susan Jones titled "Dinesh D'Souza: Obamas' Mansion Purchase Exposes 'Hollow Rhetoric' Behind Climate Change" was posted at cnsnews.com on Aug. 28, 2019.

Illegal immigration

- An article by John Burnett titled "Employers Struggle With Hiring Undocumented Workers: 'You Cannot Hire Americans Here' " was posted at npr.org on Aug. 21, 2019.
- An article by Craig Bannister titled "Texas CBP Agents Bust Gunrunner With 10,000 AK-47 Rifle Rounds, Firearms Crossing Border in '07 Impala" was posted at cnsnews.com on Aug. 29, 2019.

Comments about weapons

- An article by Matt Zarrell and Emily Shapiro titled "2 Kids [in Ohio] Dead After Stabbing Suspect Allegedly Stole Police Cruiser, Plowed Into Van at 97 mph: Police" was posted at abcnews.com on Aug. 27, 2019.

Comments about Trump support

- An article by Colby Itkowitz titled "Trump Raises \$12 Million for His Reelection at Two Hampton Fundraisers" was posted at washingtonpost.com on Aug. 9, 2019.
- An article by Jordan Carney and Max Greenwood titled "Nervous Republicans Focus Energy on Protecting Senate 'Firewall' " was posted at thehill.com on Aug. 27, 2019.

Comments about Trump opposition

- An article by Steve Peoples titled "When They Go Low? Dems Navigating Nasty Race Against Trump" was posted at apnews.com on Aug. 26, 2019.
- An article by Courtney O'Brien titled "[Democrat Jerry] Nadler Criticizes Omar and Tlaib for Sharing 'Vile' Cartoon" was posted at townhall.com on Aug. 23, 2019.
- An article by Julio Rosas titled "University Psychiatrist [Dr. Allen Frances Appearing on CNN]: Trump 'May Be Responsible for Many More Million Deaths' Than Hitler, Stalin and Mao [More Than 45 Million by Mao, 20 Million by Stalin and 11 Million by Hitler]" was posted at washingtonexaminer.com on Aug. 25, 2019.
- A Reuters article by Tim Reid and Joseph Ax titled "As Trump Policies Deepen Farmer's Pain, Democrats See An Opening in Rural America" was posted at reuters.com on Aug. 27, 2019.

- An article by Laura Barron-Lopez, Alex Thompson and Holly Otterbein titled "Democrats Disavow Obama's Creation of Rival Political Group [Organizing for Action]" was posted at politico.com on Aug. 27, 2019.
- An article by Sahil Kapur titled "Elizabeth Warren Draws Record Crowd of 15,000 in Seattle" was posted at bloomberg.com on Aug. 25, 2019.
- An article by Grace Panetta titled "Elizabeth Warren Is the Only Candidate to Consistently Rise in the Polls; That Could Make Her the Candidate to Beat in the 2020 Primaries" was posted at businessinsider.com on Aug. 28, 2019.
- An article by Marc Caputo and Alex Thompson titled " 'The Rock Star' vs. 'The Rock'; Warren and Biden Hurtle Toward Collision" was posted at politico.com on Aug. 26, 2019.
- An article by Rebecca Morin titled "Jill Biden to Democrats: Your Candidate May Be 'Better' on Some Policies But Joe Biden Will Beat Trump" was posted at azcentral.com on Aug. 20, 2019.
- An article by Matt Viser and Greg Jaffe titled "As He Campaign for President, Joe Biden Tells a Moving But False War Story" was posted at washingtonpost.com on Aug. 29, 2019.
- An article by Jennifer Bendery titled "Elizabeth Warren to Introduce Bill Revoking Medals of Honor for Wounded Knee Massacre" was posted at huffpost.com on Aug. 22, 2019.
- An article by Geoff Boucher titled "Bill Maher Has No Tears for David Koch: 'I'm Glad He's Dead and I Hope the End Was Painful' " was posted at deadline.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
- An article by Chris Riotta titled "Elizabeth Warren Slams Koch Brothers After Bernie Sanders Tells Off Supporters for Cheering Billionaire's Death" was posted at independent.co.uk on Aug. 26, 2019.
- An article by Thomas Beaumont titled "Buttigieg [Who Is Openly Gay] Making Faith-Based Appeal to Voters in 2020 Bid" was posted at apnews.com on Aug. 24, 2019.
- An article by Jack Crowe titled "De Blasio Considering Eliminating Gifted Programs to Achieve Racial Parity in NYC Schools" was posted at nationalreview.com on Aug. 27, 2019.
- An article by Timothy Meads titled "Taylor Swift Announces She Supports Abortion, Thinks Trump Is An Autocrat" was posted at townhall.com on Aug. 24, 2019.

Kamala Harris

- An article by Madeline Osburn titled "Charges Kamala Harris Brought Against Planned Parenthood Whistleblower David Daleiden [Who Recorded Planned Parenthood Executives Conspiring to Sell Body Parts of Abortion Babies] Could Be Dropped" was posted at thefederalist.com on Aug. 23, 2019.

Robert Francis (Beto) O'Rourke

■ An article by cnsnews.com staff titled "Beto O'Rourke: 'Only America Has More Guns Than Human Beings' " was posted at cnsnews.com on Aug. 23, 2019.

News about the media

■ An article by Tristan Justice titled "CNN Just Paid Off Another Corrupt Deep State Leaker [Former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe] With a TV Contract" was posted at thefederalist.com on Aug. 23, 2019.

General interest

■ An article by Christopher Mims titled "Cities Are Saying 'No' to 5G; Citing Health, Aesthetics and FCC Bullying" was posted at wsj.com on Aug. 24, 2019.

■ An article by Jonathan Ayestas titled "40-Person Brawl at Raging Waters Started Over Beach Towel" was posted at kcra.com (Sacramento, Calif.) on Aug. 26, 2019.

■ An article by Tonya Garcia titled "Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Family Dollar to Pay \$1.2 Million for Selling Expired, Obsolete Products" was posted at marketwatch.com on Aug. 29, 2019.

■ Looking back to July, an article by Leada Gore titled "Tennessee Man Dies From Flesh-Eating Bacteria After Destin Trip" was posted at al.com on July 12, 2019.



Isaiah 55:6-11—"Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."