

Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Cutting the Un-Biblical Cord



A lot of folks today seem vexed by the idea that people just can't seem to agree on anything.

“Why can't we all just get along?” is the rallying cry of the liberal side of life that believes that in order to co-exist in this life we have to homogenize, neutralize, and super-size our toleration of every possible theory, algorithm and ideology. Whether it's politics, religion, healthcare, or child-rearing, increasingly, differing points of view on almost any subject, with a side order of political correctness thrown in, can generate passionate, even violent responses from both the left and right sides of the socio/political aisle.

But, in spite of all our vast differences, believe it or not, I am going to say something now that no living being will be able to argue with. Really. Alright, it's pretty basic and not too profound, but it is no less *true*. Here it is: every living being, whether plant, animal, or homo sapien, has to eat in order to maintain life. Yep, that's it. I know, you are overwhelmed with revelatory insight right about now. But just think at how basic I had to get to find something EVERY living thing can agree on! That should give you an idea of the complexity of our world at this point in time. A world where any opinion or spin, no matter how wacky or wicked, can have a written or oral audience 24/7, whether on the airwaves or internet. Wacky *and* wicked, it is.

So, let's keep it basic. We all agree that every living being is **designed** - oops, we now disagree already perhaps - so let's say that each living thing eats according to it's physiology and each living thing needs certain nutrients. People eat people food, horses eat what they require, and plants take nutrients from the earth. Because we need to eat so frequently, we spend a lot of time acquiring, preparing, and digesting our nutrients. If we eat more than we require, we also have to spend any remaining time trying to work off the evidence that we can't seem to *stop* taking in food. Now, in a simpler time, people lived on farms and raised their own protein and carbs, taking in and then burning off what they just ate, for survival's sake. In fact, our great-greats probably spent most of their waking hours pondering their next meal and doing what it took to get it. How primitive and unproductive, you might be thinking.

But life moves forward: suppose humans reach a point in their 'evolution' on earth where they still *need* to eat, but can no longer be hunter/gatherers due to social change. Over time, with the industrializing of all aspects of life, let's say we got ourselves a bona-fide, city-fied, electri-fied, consumer-driven world in which our every waking moment is governed by governors, industry and self-proclaimed experts on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? Survival mode is hard-wired into us.

Fear not, the only thing that might change, really, is *how* to acquire nutrients - from whom, and from where. The small country farm could give way to the 'mega-farm', which in turn could become enslaved to multi-national corporations to process and distribute mass quantities of well-preserved foods to a bona-fide, citi-fied, electri-fied world that cannot feed itself. That might work, but doesn't it sound a bit - unnatural? What *is* natural anyway? Behold the humble cow, one of man's three best friends in the world (cows, horses and dogs: a meal, a ride and a friend.) Cows are designed (there's that word again) to eat grass, which turns into steak and butter and real milk, and - I suspect - should not be injected with a vast array of chemicals designed to destroy both the animal and the human who benefits from it's many talents. Crops should be grown with sun and rain and dirt as they are designed to,

thereby bringing health to the body. When I was young, our parents were students on the types and quantities of nutrients needed, and the consequences of living outside those parameters so they could make informed decisions in spite of a radically changing world. But the world system, being what it is (fallen) and owned by who it is (Satan) has persuaded us to tamper with the natural order in many areas of life to serve egos and unbridled greed, so now a global 'food industry' has often turned the natural, God-given and enjoyable pleasure of eating an often dangerous mine-field of scientific experimentation. See "*e.coli*".

So here is a snapshot of the world as it has embraced progress: malnourished, sedentary, and stressed, artery-clogged and stroke-ready, depressed, violent, and often insomniac. But all is well, global citizen, we have tamed the hunger beast, for there is nothing we cannot do, we lack for nothing, and are lord of all we survey. Huzzah! And - we did agree on *something*.

I know enough about the world's system to know that everything about it is corrupt, it's fading away, and I shall not put any hope whatsoever in its false premises and promises. I know enough that if I weren't a believer, I would be frustrated beyond words at how things are run in this life and how little justice is served. I think it's very possible that I would be the poster child for clinical depression if I didn't have the solid foundation of Jesus to build upon each day. So, by God's grace and to keep my sanity, as I still have to eat/drink/breathe in this world, I still spend a necessary amount of time acquiring and preparing family nourishment but I also add to that the pursuit of truth with any time I have left.

But how about another human need? It's no less basic and foundational, yet I will bet dollars to donuts I won't get unanimous agreement on this one. Here's the premise: humans are more than the sum of what we eat and drink and wear; we are spiritual beings that because of creation know full well there is a God behind everything we see (Romans 1); we are sinners in need of a Saviour (Romans 3:23), and God has provided for us all that is needed for life and godliness (2Peter 1:3) Some will agree with this, but I would have lost some by now I'm sure. But if you have already been reconciled to Christ through His atoning work on the cross - through genuine repentance and faith in that work - you are a new creature in Christ, old things having passed away. And like any new life, your first requirement is to - eat. Can we all agree on that premise as believers? I hope so, or the rest of this article will not be a consensus.

Because of His Word, the owner's manual for humans, we can know everything there is to know on this side of eternity concerning what God requires of us. We know His Word is foundational to life, because the Scriptures tell us that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1); that 'heaven and earth may pass away, but My words will never pass away' (Matt 24:35; 1Pet 1:23); and that He 'exalts His Word above His Name' (Psalm 138:2). Whether you are a seeker looking for the answers to life's dilemmas, or a new believer looking for a bottle of 'milk' whereby to grow, or a seasoned saint who has learned how to dig deep for a hearty meal, the Bible is indispensable and foundational to anyone who thinks they have it all figured out. It corrects, rebukes, reproves, and yet comforts in the darkest hour. It's milk, meat, vitamins, side dishes and dessert all in one. It's pure, and cuts through the lies of this world, and nourishes us to the very marrow of our bones. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Deut. 8:3) What in particular is it about that last verse do today's Christians not understand? Plenty, apparently.

We have been generously supplied with a food source that comes from God Himself - true, trustworthy, pure, unadulterated, life-giving. No additives, the only preservative effect is that for those who live by it, it preserves the soul for eternity. It is free, it prevents (spiritual) death, it is readily available. It can be stored up in the innermost being for times of famine and scarcity, and is a source of fuel - for extra energy when times are hard...and light for when it's dark! And no one has ever had to 'shed the excess'. In fact, I have yet to hear of a case of someone who has gorged themselves on the Scriptures to excess and whose spiritual health is compromised. More good news!

Now, let's suppose that once upon a time (not too terribly long ago) Christians were able to feed and be fed within their community of believers, their 'circle of influence'. A time when each local church, as governed by God and as the Holy Spirit gave direction, used its gifts and callings in a way that was simple and unadulterated. Kind of like when people lived in small communities, rural or urban, and knew where the food was coming from and built a solid life around that. People did their usual living and dying, marrying and burying, of course, but the local congregation acquired, prepared, and digested the Word for themselves, they ate regularly, and God gave the increase. They took it in, and 'worked it off' by being ready in season and out and living it out. Result: a healthy local body. So simple! But this model of Christianity may be on its last legs, in the same way that we no longer grow our own protein and carbs on planet earth. Let me explain.

There are those movers and shakers in the church today that might say, “how primitive and unproductive is the old fabled path, when what we *could* be doing is repackaging our food for more people. Isn’t it time to let someone else prepare, slice and dice, pre-digest our food for us, so we might actually change the world with mass-produced yet feel-good fillers that might be palatable for any spiritual persuasion? If all the food looks and smells and tastes the same, we could industrialize and popularize and homogenize our product so that we can all feel like we have eaten the same spiritual food each day.” And the more watered-down it is, the more we can feed. Christianity Lite! One-third less conviction, less filling, tastes great going down. But oh the heartburn.

Is processed spiritual food of any value to the church? And who are the processors and where is the ingredient list so I can see what’s inside and make an informed choice? Well, the processors are the publishing industry who take the latest fads and fancies of the church and re-package it for undiscerning Christian consumption.

This includes former Christian publishers who have sold out to the huge secular book companies like Zondervan (owned by Rupert Murdoch and FOX), Thomas Nelson (owned by InterMedia Publishers, a private investing group), and Multnomah (owned by Random House) and turn a generation of authors who may or may not even understand salvation into postmodern rock stars with ready made pulpits.

The mega-church is not unlike the corporate farm; the book publishers are not unlike the multi-national corporations who market their agenda/product. Ever since *The Prayer of Jabez*, and right up through *The Purpose-Driven Life* and *The Shack*, on into the latest *Emerging Church* tome, the Christian best-seller, with it’s formulas for success and re-inventions of the gospel is nothing more than man’s attempt to build bigger and better barns, by the arm of the flesh, and create a customer base for whatever it is they’re selling. Do I enjoy these comparisons? No, not one bit. Neither do I like it that there are churches that are abandoning the ‘small family farm’ approach to ministry, where leaders are letting a best-seller teach their people with a program that by default creates a back-door denomination and clones parts of the body that were meant to be distinctly unique. Richard Bennett has written the following about this trend that has taken over many churches:

Displacement of Pastors and the Consequences

“The ‘40 Days of Purpose’ campaign of purpose and community is distinct from other movements we have seen in recent times. Rick Warren asks pastors to devote their church and their people to an intensive forty days of reprogramming their understanding of God, Christ, and how one becomes a Christian. He promises at the end of forty days that the church will be transformed. Through his book and the agenda laid out, he teaches for forty days on nearly every aspect of the Christian life. This type of interference in the running of a church opens the way for an insidious take-over of that church. In Scripture the function of pastors is to teach and to be watchmen and guardians of the flocks the Lord has given to them. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.”* (Acts 1:28) To hand over their position before the Lord to another who will for seven weeks teach his own doctrinal messages based on a multitude of flawed paraphrases of Scripture is utterly unbiblical. The church is the pastors’ and elders’ charge. It is not theirs to bring in debased ideas that infiltrate every important area of the church life. In Warren’s book and movement, God’s absolute sovereignty is flatly denied as men are counseled to determine their own destinies.”

The Purpose-Driven Life: Demeaning the Very Nature of God by Richard Bennett

I could not agree more with this brother. When we follow the latest spiritual fad, we are told that there are no side-effects and that there is no need to read the label, and those who do are ‘heresy-hunters’ and intolerant and narrow-minded. What did I say earlier in this article about our *physical* food choices? *‘People should be students on the types and quantities of nutrients needed, and the consequences of living outside those parameters so they can make informed decisions in spite of a radically changing world.* As much as this applies to our physical bodies, how much more does it apply to ‘reading the label’ in what we take in spiritually? Would you - do you - allow the kinds of toxins into your physical bodies as are floating around the church today? Things such as emergent mysticism, purpose-driven relativity, and seeker sensitive powdered milk?

When you call your family to the table each day, do you disregard warnings of food-bourne toxins and safe food-

handling practices? Do you leave perfectly good food purchased with hard-earned money out on the counter to rot and bring illness to those you love? Or do you carefully acquire, prepare and offer up the best possible meals to bring growth and soundness to the bodies of those you love? With our natural bodies, we care for them and keep them safe, if we are wise, so that we can live a productive life – even all the while knowing we will die someday! No one likes to be sick, and yet the body of Christ seems to care not one bit if it allows spiritual poison to enter its bloodstream. Few blink when their churches turn to programs that serve up a plate full of adulterated fluff that never satisfies, cause spiritual malnourishment, and makes the sheep sedentary, lazy, self-absorbed, and bring the cancer of apostasy into a formerly healthy ‘body’.

What can be done? Are we just too far gone to reverse this trend? I have great respect for the godly Pastors who labor among us; but I have no respect for those who take His Word so lightly that they give place to pre-owned teachings and faceless “satellite churches”, and neglect to be led by the Holy Spirit in their calling. God’s people will continue to get ripped off if they refuse to be discerning about what they are being fed. Even when we are sheltered in our mother’s womb, there is a cord that nourishes and fosters life when we cannot feed ourselves. All I can do in my own small way is to plead with today’s shepherds to nourish and shelter the sheep, and to cut that un-*biblical* cord with any ministry that embraces today’s smorgasbord of emergent-ecumenical-purpose-driven-seeker-sensitive junk food, and get back to communicating a faithful rendering of God’s holy Word - for the health of those for whom Christ has died.

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2Timothy 4:2-5

- Mary Danielsen

Mary’s on vacation....Maranatha!

What Could Go Wrong?

Hezbollah Has More Rockets Than 27 NATO Countries Combined

thetower.org

Any future war between Israel and Hezbollah will take a devastating toll on civilians due to the Iran-backed terrorist group’s practice of embedding its military assets in residential areas, Willy Stern wrote in the June 20 issue of The Weekly Standard.

Hezbollah currently has a stockpile of over 130,000 rockets, more than the combined arsenal of all NATO countries, with the exception of the United States. This number includes long-range rockets and M-600 ballistic missiles, which carry a high payload and would be able to “wipe out a good chunk of Times Square and maim and kill people four football fields away from the point of impact,” Stern noted. Hezbollah also has approximately 100,000 short-range rockets trained on schools, homes, and hospitals in northern Israel, which could potentially kill hundreds of civilians.

“You don’t collect 130,000 missiles if you don’t intend to use them,” said Matthew Levitt, an expert on counter-terrorism and intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Hezbollah’s positioning of this weaponry in civilian areas poses a challenge to Israeli officers, added Geoff Corn, an international military law expert at the South Texas College of Law in Houston. “After exhausting all feasible efforts to reduce civilian risk, IDF commanders must resolve the decisive question: Is the potential for civilian harm excessive in comparison to the advantages the attack would provide? When you talk of an M-600 in the hands of an enemy that targets vital military assets or the civilian population—even if that apartment building is full—launching

the attack will be necessary to mitigate the threat,” he explained.

If Israel were to launch a strike in this instance, he concluded that “both legally and morally, the cause of these tragic consequences will lie solely at the feet of Hezbollah.” As such, “Hezbollah should be pressured starting today to avoid locating such vital military assets among civilians.” Otherwise “the instinctual condemnation of Israel will only encourage continuation of these illicit tactics.”

Stern explained that while Hezbollah has the manpower and weapons arsenal “of a nation-state...its tactics are those of a terrorist organization.” The destruction inflicted upon Lebanon in the event of war will therefore be massive, despite the fact that the IDF wages war in a cautious way to minimize civilian casualties. “The IDF’s warnings certainly go beyond what the law requires, but they also sometimes go beyond what would be operational good sense elsewhere,” noted Michael Schmitt, chairman of the Stockton Center for the Study of International Law at the U.S. Naval War College. “People are going to start thinking that the U.S. and other Western democracies should follow the same examples in different types of conflict. That’s a real risk.”

Israeli military officials in May 2015 told the New York Times that Hezbollah has “moved most of its military infrastructure” in and around Shiite villages, which “amounts to using the civilians as a human shield.” One senior military official added that Lebanese civilians are “living in a military compound,” noting: “We will hit Hezbollah hard, while making every effort to limit civilian casualties as much as we can...We do not intend to stand by helplessly in the face of rocket attacks.”

Stern, who was shown classified IDF maps of the locations of Hezbollah weapons, said that they are not only being stored in these southern villages, but in Beirut itself. He added that he was provided access to these documents, as well as military simulations, strategic projections, and top IDF officials, “because Israel wants the world to know that (1) a war with Hezbollah in Lebanon will be, unavoidably, awful; and (2) the massive collateral damage won’t be -Israel’s fault. Even more than that, the IDF seems to be pleading to the international community: Do something. Stop Hezbollah. Before it is too late, and they drag the region into a bloody hellhole.”

Yaakov Amidror, Israel’s former national security advisor, met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the summer of 2013 and showed him “detailed evidence of Hezbollah’s deadly arsenal and the fact that it was strategically placed within densely populated civilian centers.” When Amidror asked Ban what the Israelis should do, he “offered no response and no suggestions.”

“Nobody, it seems, in times of peace is willing to offer Israel a constructive suggestion on how to deal with an Iranian-backed terrorist organization in possession of a massive arsenal on its northern border,” Stern concluded. “But these same organizations stand front and center to criticize Israel for acting legally and proportionately for protecting its own citizens in wartime.”

The EU is Coming to Close Down Your Free Speech

by Douglas Murray

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/8234/eu-free-speech>

The German Chancellor was not interested in the reinforcement of Europe's external borders, the re-erection of its internal borders, the institution of a workable asylum vetting system and the repatriation of people who had lied to gain entry into Europe. Instead, Chancellor Merkel wanted to know how Facebook's founder could help her restrict the free speech of Europeans, on Facebook and on other social media.

Then, on May 31, the European Union announced a new online speech code to be enforced by four major tech companies, including Facebook and YouTube.

It was clear from the outset that Facebook has a definitional problem as well as a political bias in deciding on these targets. What is Facebook's definition of 'racism'? What is its definition of 'xenophobia'? What, come to that, is its definition of 'hate speech'?

Of course the EU is a government -- and an unelected government at that -- so its desire not just to avoid replying to its critics -- but to criminalise their views and ban their contrary expressions -- is as bad as the government of any

country banning or criminalising the expression of opinion which is not adulatory of the government.

People must speak up -- must speak up now, and must speak up fast -- in support of freedom of speech before it is taken away from them. It is, sadly, not an overstatement to say that our entire future depends on it.

It is nine months since Angela Merkel and Mark Zuckerberg tried to solve Europe's migrant crisis. Of course having caused the migrant crisis by announcing the doors of Europe as open to the entire third-world, Angela Merkel particularly would have been in a good position actually to try to solve this crisis.

But the German Chancellor was not interested in the reinforcement of Europe's external borders, the re-erection of its internal borders, the institution of a workable asylum vetting system and the repatriation of people who had lied to gain entry into Europe. Instead, Chancellor Merkel was interested in Facebook.

When seated with Mark Zuckerberg, Frau Merkel wanted to know how the Facebook founder could help her restrict the free speech of Europeans, on Facebook and on other social media. Speaking to Zuckerberg at a UN summit last September (and not aware that the microphones were picking her up) she asked what could be done to restrict people writing things on Facebook which were critical of her migration policy. 'Are you working on this?' she asked him. 'Yeah', Zuckerberg replied.

In the months that followed, we learned that this was not idle chatter over lunch. In January of this year, Facebook launched its 'Initiative for civil courage online', committing a million Euros to fund non-governmental organisations in its work to counter 'racist' and 'xenophobic' posts online. It also promised to remove 'hate speech' and expressions of 'xenophobia' from the Facebook website.

It was clear from the outset that Facebook has a definitional problem as well as a political bias in deciding on these targets. What is Facebook's definition of 'racism'? What is its definition of 'xenophobia'? What, come to that, is its definition of 'hate speech'? As for the political bias, why had Facebook not previously considered how, for instance, to stifle expressions of open-borders sentiments on Facebook? There are many people in Europe who have argued that the world should have no borders and that Europe in particular should be able to be lived in by anyone who so wishes. Why have people expressing such views on Facebook (and there are many) not found their views censored and their posts removed? Are such views not 'extreme'?

One problem with this whole area -- and a problem which has clearly not occurred to Facebook -- is that these are questions which do not even have the same answer from country to country. Any informed thinker on politics knows that there are laws that apply in some countries that do not -- and often should not -- apply in others. Contrary to the views of many transnational 'progressives', the world does not have one set of universal laws and certainly does not have universal customs. Hate-speech laws are to a very great extent an enforcement of the realm of customs.

As such it is unwise to enforce policies on one country from another country without at least a very deep understanding of that country's traditions and laws. Societies have their own histories and their own attitudes towards their most sensitive matters. For instance in Germany, France, the Netherlands and some other European countries there are laws on the statute books relating to the publication of Nazi materials and the propagation of material praising (or even representing) Adolf Hitler or denying the Holocaust. The German laws forbidding large-scale photographic representations of Hitler may look ridiculous from London, but may look less ridiculous from Berlin. Certainly it would take an enormously self-confident Londoner unilaterally to prescribe a policy to change this German law.

To understand things which are forbidden, or able to be forbidden, in a society, you would have to have an enormous confidence in your understanding of that country's taboos and history, as well as its speech codes and speech laws. A ban on the veneration of communist idols, for instance, may seem sensible, tasteful or even desirable in one of the many countries which suffered under communism, wish to minimise the suffering of the victims and prevent the resurrection of such an ideology. Yet a universal ban on images or texts which extolled the communist murderers of tens of millions of people would also make criminals of the thousands of Westerners -- notably Americans -- who enjoy wearing Che Guevara T-shirts or continue their adolescent fantasy that Fidel Castro is an icon of freedom. Free societies generally have to permit the widest possible array of opinion. But they will have different ideas of where legitimate expression ends and where incitement begins.

So for Facebook and others to draw up their own attempt at a unilateral policy of what constitutes hate-speech would

be presumptuous even if it were not -- as it is -- clearly politically biased from the outset. So it is especially lamentable that this movement to an enforced hate-speech code gained additional force on May 31, when the European Union announced a new online speech code to be enforced by four major tech companies, including Facebook and YouTube. Of course, the EU is a government -- and an unelected government at that -- so its desire not just to avoid replying to its critics -- but to criminalise their views and ban their contrary expressions -- is as bad as the government of any country banning or criminalising the expression of opinion which is not adulatory of the government.

That these are not abstract issues but ones exceedingly close to home has been proven -- as though it needed proving -- by the decision of Facebook to suspend the account of Gatestone's Swedish expert, Ingrid Carlqvist. In the last year Sweden took in between 1 and 2% additional people to its population. Similar numbers are expected this year. As anyone who has studied the situation will know, this is a society heading towards a breakdown of its own creation, caused (at the most benign interpretation) by its own 'open-hearted' liberalism.

Countries with welfare models such as Sweden's cannot take in such numbers of people without major financial challenges. And societies with a poor integration history cannot possibly integrate such vast numbers of people when they come at such speed. As anyone who has travelled around there can tell, Sweden is a country under enormous and growing strain.

There is a phase in waking up to such change which constitutes denial. The EU, the Swedish government and a vast majority of the Swedish press have no desire to hear critiques of a policy which they have created or applauded; the consequences will one day be laid at their door and they wish to postpone that day, even indefinitely. So instead of tackling the fire they started, they have decided to attack those who are pointing to the fact that they have set the building they are standing in on fire. In such a situation it becomes not just a right but a duty of free people to point out facts even if other people might not want to hear them. Only a country sliding towards autocracy and chaos, with a governing class intent on avoiding blame, could possibly allow the silencing of the few people pointing out what they can clearly see in front of them.

People must speak up -- and speak up now, and speak up fast -- in support of freedom of speech before it is taken away from them, and in support of journalists such as Carlqvist, and against the authorities who would silence all of us. It is, sadly, not an overstatement to say that our entire future depends on it.

(Coming to a country near you....MD)