

CREATION CARE

The World and all that is in it belong to the Lord, the Earth and all who live on it are His! –Ps 24:1

Northern Ohio District, Church of the Brethren, Stewardship Advocate, Clyde C. Fry, cceseven@embarqmail.com

Occasional Newsletter #35, Fall/Winter 2020/21; Providing relevant articles on biblical, economic, political and social impacts and the consequences they have on God's Creation and the Church. On the Web: nohcob.org, click: Ministries, click: Creation Care

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT!

Diet is one of the great essentials contributing to healthy living. Food production and distribution is being challenged by all sorts of new climate-related influences. The efficient production of food is growing in importance because of climate change. All around the world there are scientists, farmers, and food distribution people focusing on what has become known as the *Planetary Health Diet* or *Sustainable Diet*.

We have known for a long time that meat, especially red meat, consumes a greater share of natural resources in their production than grains and vegetables and is a significant source of pollution and greenhouse gasses. For example, it takes more than 2,400 gallons of water to produce just 1 pound of beef. It requires about 50 bushels of corn to finish an animal for our U.S. desired endpoint (USDA choice grade; USDA yield grade 2 or 3; approximately 28% body fat). There are 56 pounds of corn in a bushel, so you will need around 2,800 pounds of corn to produce an animal that weighs 1,250 to 1,350 pounds. This equates to 2.07 to 2.24 pounds of corn per pound of finished animal.

The reduction of red meat consumption not only saves resources, it can help lower our risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and cancer.

What does a *planetary health diet* look like?



Source: EAT-Lancet Commission

BBC

- 1, Nuts - 50g a day
- 2, Beans, chickpeas, lentils and other legumes - 75g a day
- 3, Fish - 28g a day
- 4, Eggs - 13g a day (so one and a bit a week)
- 5, Meat - 14g a day of red meat and 29g a day of chicken
- 6, Carbs - whole grains like bread and rice 232g a day and 50g a day of starchy vegetables
- 7, Dairy - 250g - the equivalent of one glass of milk
- 8, Vegetables - (300g) and fruit (200g)

The diet has room for 31g of **sugar** and about 50g worth of **oils** like olive oil. There are a number of eating plans that promise healthy results. Here are four general types for consideration.

There are a variety of diets which promise healthier results:

Vegetarian is someone who lives on a diet of grains, pulses (peas, beans, lentils, etc.), legumes, nuts, seeds, vegetables, fruits, fungi,

algae, and yeast. Some will include non-animal-based foods like salt, and others will include dairy products, honey, and eggs.



Vegan consists of those who exclude any foods derived from animals. [Vegansociety.org](http://vegansociety.org) describes veganism as a philosophy and a way of living that seeks to exclude all forms of exploitation, harm, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. Strict Vegans will not use any product derived wholly or partly from animals.

Pescatarian comes from the Italian word, *Pesce*, which means *fish*. These are people who follow a vegetarian diet with the addition of fish and seafood. This type of diet is routine in Mediterranean and Asian cultures.

Flexitarian is sometimes called “*semi-vegetarian*” and includes people who occasionally eat meat as part of their diet, but may choose free-range or organic meat because they favor ethical treatment in the rearing and harvesting of animals.

The bottom line is that the American tradition of “*meat and potatoes*” meals needs to change for physical, environmental, and ethical reasons. ⊕



WHEN YOU MONETIZE POWER, THINGS SPIN INTO AN AMORAL CHAOS.

⊕

FOR-PROFIT NURSING HOMES

Roughly 70 percent of our nation's nursing homes (15,400) are for-profit institutions. These homes face many challenges in their reach for a desirable level of profit. The legal standards for nursing-home care and the enforcement of those standards vary greatly among the states.



The two common places where costs are reduced and profits enlarged are in the quality of care and in the level and competence of the staffing. The industry has become notorious for low employee pay, and lean, and untrained staffing. Businesses hate the word “*regulation*,” but the historic record is clear; without it abuses will flourish. The current pandemic has revealed that truth in the nursing home industry. ⊕

"You will know the truth and the truth will make you free!" -Jesus (John 8:32)

"What is truth?" -Pilate (John 18:38)

HAS TRUTH BECOME A MATTER OF PERSONAL OPINION AND FEELING OR IS IT ANCHORED TO SOMETHING BEYOND OUR PAROCHIAL SETTINGS AND RHETORIC?

This year, the COVID pandemic in our nation has been met with confusion & consternation in a battle between health scientists & our political, economic, & educational pundits, many of whom strongly resist containment measures like shut-downs & are miserly in their support of social distancing, mask wearing, & limiting gatherings, etc. One result of the resistance was the re-opening, in the fall, of public & private educational institutions. At this writing, because of skyrocketing COVID infection rates, we are closing them again! Should anyone be surprised?

In every aspect of our culture, these days, the issues of "What is true?" & "Who can I believe?" has brought twisted confusion, fairytale conspiracy theories, broken relationships, & governmental disruption in our society. Just how complicated is it to find the truth?

TRUTH AND EMOTION: Stephen Colbert, satirist & comedian of the Late-Night Show, in one of his early episodes said:

"Face it, folks, we are a divided nation – divided between those who think with their head and those who know with their heart – because that's where the truth comes from, ladies and gentlemen---the gut."



Michiko Kakutani, in her book The Death of Truth, writes that we live in a world where falsehood & misrepresentation have become the strange new norm:

"a disregard for facts, the displacement of reason by emotion, and the corrosion of language are diminishing the very value of truth."

She continues:

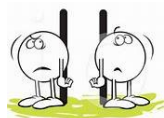
"The postmodernist argument that all truths are partial (and a function of one's perspective) led to the related argument that there are many legitimate ways to understand or represent an event."

The idea of "**alternative facts**," a phrase coined by Trump Presidential Counselor, Kellyanne Conway, to defend an alleged false statement made by the White House press secretary in 2017, illustrates the point that what actually happened isn't the issue; it's how you interpret what happened that counts. In this scenario the material facts surrounding something are not considered necessary to support your narrative; **perceived truth** no longer requires reality & needs no verification outside of itself; the cause-and-effect connections are no longer fixed.

The 1983 Nobel Prize in Literature recipient, John Maxwell Coetzee, asks:

"Is truth a function of perspective? Are reason and the senses the only valid ways of knowing? Do the products of the imagination---beliefs that we need to believe, memories that we construct, legends that we tell of people after they have gone, possess their own reality, given that they clearly have the power to affect the world?"

In other words, does myth, or even fiction, have a role to play in the formation of the truth? Critics complain that those who rely only on evidenced-based conclusions about truth often challenge the validity of faith-based ideas about truth; i.e., biblical stories & miracles.



TRUTH AS A PERSONAL OPINION: One aspect of the American sense of individual importance & freedom is the idea that what I think is as good & perhaps even better than what you think; fact-checking, scientific inquiry, historical record, & expert opinion are no longer considered to be essential in ferreting-out the truth. In America we have the

right to believe anything we want. The practical result is, that today, our search is not for evidence-based truth, but for what has become known as **CONFIRMATION BIAS** in which we seek the comfort & comradeship of those people & sources that match what we choose to believe, regardless of how absurd or baseless it may be. Those who disagree with our sense of reality & values are judged to be either ignorant, or even worse, enemies. The result is that we have become a nation of tribes in which argument is substituted for discussion, compromise & negotiation are looser tools, & we live with labels like "red & blue states," "radical left & radical right," as consummate realities.

TRUTH AS A SOCIAL OPINION: What happens when accepted social opinion is wrong? Issues like "The earth is flat" & the "earth is the center of the universe" etc., had strong social consensus at one point in history. Courageous individuals like Copernicus, Bruno, Kepler, Galileo, & Newton, had reason not to believe the common assumptions that the church & the society taught during their lifetimes. As a result, they often faced great social & religious hardships & persecution for their opinions, even though, in the end, their ideas prevailed.

Because of political and clerical authority, controversial questions were often too hot or too dangerous to discuss in public discourse and so were clandestinely raised in art, literature, and drama.

Here are two examples where difficult and dangerous questions were clothed in literature and drama in order to raise them safely in public. Both had a great impact, not only in their time, but in our time too.

The first is when, in 1605 and 1615, the first so-called "*modern*" novel, Don Quixote, by Spanish writer, Miguel de Cervantes, was published. It is still considered one of the greatest literary works ever written.

At the heart of the comic/tragic Quixote was the idea that accepted reality could be wrong. People thought that Quixote acted like a buffoon, but the issues he raised struck a vital nerve that shook the social foundations of the time. The central ethical idea in the drama is that individuals can be right, while society can be wrong. What is truth and how is it decided? Majority-opinion and tradition provide no guarantee that the truth has been found, so be careful how you choose to defend it.



In 1879 the challenge of individualism enjoyed another, intense public debate when the play, by Henrik Ibsen, the Doll's House, took center stage; it remains in intellectual discussion today. The central question in the play concerns the right of free will, equality between the sexes, and the need to be true to one's own self.

In the play, Nora, a wife, mother, and church devotee, struggles with her sense of personhood because of the demands made by her marriage, family, and the cultural niche into which 19th century society and religion placed women. She had long accepted the religious teaching of the time without giving it any serious thought; but no more:

"I want to find out whether what Pastor Hansen said was right-- or anyway, whether it is right for me."

She eventually did the unthinkable; she left her husband, family, and the church to make her own way in the world. The shocking popular drama caught public attention, and boiled its way through the society of the time -- all the way into ours.

In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet (act 1, scene 3), Polonius speaks to his son, Laertes, giving him advice on how to behave when he goes to the university. He sums-up his counsel with the words: "*To thine own self*

be true.” Self-integrity is important, but it requires the input of a moral/ethical foundation that is informed from personal experience, insight, social history, consensus, and natural and spiritual law. The point is that finding the truth comes from both inner insight and the outer precepts of man and God.

For Christians the foundation upon which truth lies rests on God’s revelation in Christ Jesus as revealed by his historical life, the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and theological conclusions. Jesus in John 14:6^a said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” and in John 8:31, he said: “If you obey my teaching you are really my disciples.”

In our national government the foundation for truth is found in documents like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the just laws enacted by various councils and legislatures throughout the nation.

TRUTH THROUGH FAITH AND REASON: The Italian Dominican friar, philosopher, priest & “*Doctor of the Church*,” Thomas Aquinas, taught that faith & reason are complementary. A hammer & a screwdriver do not cancel-out each other because their conception & design are not the same; in the end they both contribute by fastening things together, but by different means. Faith & reason are the grand abilities that God has given us & they should not be at war with one another; they are both pathways that lead to the truth. Humanity was given freedom of choice in creation. The ability to reason & to have faith are a part of that freedom; but it is important to remember that both faith & reason can, & often are abused, especially when our desire for something becomes so strong, that it dominates us, to the neglect of other values & considerations. Today, single-issue politics is a stinging example of radical commitment to one truth at the cost of & often the abandonment of other so-called “lesser” truths. Is it right to prioritize one truth above another?



TRUTH IS ESSENTIAL FOR COHESION: The harmonious existence of any society, and its structures, depends upon the values it promotes and its ability to recognize and support the common rules of process and control that express and enhance those values. The religious part in this is not to use the government to legalize and enforce church doctrine in an attempt to restrain a demon-fought humanity, only a personal encounter with the divine and an enlightened education can do that, but to enlist those transformed believers into faithful civil participation.

FINIS: It is good that, in the truth-finding process, the tension between what is seen as “correct” through informed social consensus and what is perceived as correct by soul-searching individuals exists, because both are needed in recognizing what is true. The ongoing exchange between both sources requires discussion, sound technique, and historical insight. I believe, that on top of everything, there is an ultimate reality in which universal truth is encoded and revealed in the nature of creation and its creator. It is our task to unearth it. ☹

**THERE ARE DECADES WHERE NOTHING HAPPENS;
AND THERE ARE WEEKS WHEN DECADES HAPPEN.**

2020 has been filled with weeks when decades happen.

2020 was marked by a continuing onslaught of moral and ethical decay, political disarray, division, and malaise; disturbing presidential politicking and reality denial; the so-called “once in a century” pandemic, whose effects have been worse in our nation than anywhere

else in the world, & our inability to accept its gravity & to unite in our response to fight its spread; the decline & closing of many, once prominent business, social, & religious institutions; disregard for evidence based truth; a society traumatized by tribal isolation & seething divisions.

It was also marked by the selfless heroism of first responders, especially in the medical fields, who kept essential services & the production of goods going; creative innovation, of multiple kinds, in response to basic social and economic needs; the courts, who defended & maintained the rule-of-law & rationality during an onslaught of irrationality; a successful historical election in which more people participated than at any time in our history and whose integrity was protected by officials from both political parties; a resurgence of scientific muscle in an unprecedented world response in the development of COVID vaccines that will eventually bring the pandemic to an end. ☹

**“...I HAVE LEARNED TO BE CONTENT; WHATEVER
THE CIRCUMSTANCES.”**

**“I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO FACE ALL CONDITIONS
BY THE POWER THAT CHRIST GIVES ME.”**

Philippians 4:11^b and 4:13

ZOOONOTIC DISEASE

Almost two-thirds of human diseases originate in animals. A pathogen jumps from an animal to a human, who then infects other humans, resulting in the birth of a new epidemic or pandemic. It is estimated that there are more than 827,000 viruses in the animal world that have the potential to infect humans! Both pets and animals in the wild, have the potential to transmit these viruses to humans.

Monkeys, bats, rats, chickens, etc., have all been original sources for a variety of human diseases. (COVID 19 is thought to have jumped from bats.) Cultures which fancy exotic meats for eating, animal parts for medicinal and sexual applications, animal skins and fur for clothing and accessories, and exotic pets, all provide entry points for the transmission of a virus.



The reduction of animal habitats by the invasion of humans into plush natural areas has resulted in frequent close contact between wildlife and people. The careless handling of excess human food-stuffs offer an easy supply for hungry critters who simply add garbage-cans, etc. to their regular food seeking routes. Although many people enjoy these close contacts, and many animals become accustomed to them, the exchange of pathogens in these encounters is inevitable, increasing the likelihood of new zoonotic disease outbreaks in the future.

Effective garbage handling, pet-trade regulation, dismantling animal related cultural myths through education, dietary changes, food safety and defensive personal habits, are all needed to lessen the possibility of more zoonotic disease outbreaks. The bottom-line, however, is that we must be ready for new zoonotic outbreaks in the future.

All governments must provide the national and international mechanisms like the CDC and WHO, to quickly respond to every new virus outbreak with early detection, prevention, and treatment. We certainly must avoid the stupid politicization that COVID 19 received in our nation in 2020. Two of the past three presidential administrations set up comprehensive prevention mechanisms; we must renew that effort. (See Spring Issue, #33, Page 1, “Federal Failure” article.) ☹

immunizations



Americans have not handled the COVID-19 pandemic very well with the result that our nation leads the world in the number who have become sick and those who have died. Why did this happen?

The time-gap between understanding what was happening and what could be done about it, partisan buffoonery, economic protectionism and income loss, mistrust of scientific opinion, reluctance and impatience with the many inconveniences demanded by virus prevention procedures, psychological mumble-jumble, and a rush to “return to normal” are among the reasons for our awful situation.

The unprecedented development of vaccines is now a source of great hope. Immunizations are scheduled to cover major segments of the population by mid-summer and continuing through-out 2021; but there is a catch that hasn't been given much public attention.

First, so far studies show that the vaccines can protect against getting sick with the disease, but may not prevent being infected with the virus, which means that you can still pass it on to someone else. As a result, public health measures remain crucial; social distancing, hand washing, and mask wearing will still be necessary at least through 2021.

Second, this virus may never fully disappear, which means that an annual inoculation will probably be necessary.

Third, a vaccine for children has not yet been developed. ☹

OCEAN MONITORING SATELLITE IS NOW IN ORBIT



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched a NASA satellite into orbit on 2-21-2020, in a joint European-U.S. mission. The *Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich* satellite is designed to measure sea levels and to

send radio signals through the atmosphere, providing data on atmospheric temperature and humidity, which will make weather forecasting more accurate. The satellite is expected to stay in orbit for the next 30 years.

Seventy percent of the earth's surface is ocean. Our warming climate is raising water levels (warm water expands) and melting polar and glacial ice at alarming rates. For example, NASA reports that Greenland lost 600 billion tons of ice in just the summer of 2019 alone.

Coastline flooding causes saltwater to back-up into freshwater reservoirs, wells, streams, lakes and croplands. The flooding also causes sewer lines and treatment plants to overflow. The combination of both salt and sewage contamination is very dangerous and difficult, if not impossible to reverse. That is not all, we must also factor-in the chemical contamination caused when flooding affects automobiles, industries, and other businesses.

The world's coastlines have been experiencing unprecedented high-tide flooding for several years now. These locations have billions of people living there. If we cannot change the warming and pollution trends that we are experiencing, it is expected that society will face the greatest forced human migration in world history. The social, economic and political impact of such a migration is unimaginable. ☹



FEAR-MONGERING



“Fear causes a short in the circuitry of the frontal lobe [of the brain] – the seat of our intelligence and our capacity to reason. There is no power that seems to be as effective in dumbing-down the mind and our power of reason as fear.”

–Walter Kania, Clinical Psychologist, Professor, Clergyman

Kania goes on to say that **“Fear-mongering makes use of fear to influence one's opinions and behaviors.”** It is no wonder that power hungry people in all walks of life use fear in an attempt to get or accomplish what they want, because their main goal is not to get people to think objectively, but to follow blindly.

What are the common characteristics that describe fear-mongering?

- 1) Fear-mongers (FM's) cannot be successful without the use of exaggeration and fabrication.
- 2) Truth and reason are the enemy because they expose the exaggerations and fabrications used to make their case and stir-up a following.
- 3) FM's promote and seek emotional responses from their target audiences because emotion represses reason and inspires blind enthusiasm and compliance.
- 4) FM's seek division with an appeal to historic human weaknesses like racial, religious, & cultural differences to stir-up enmity & hatred.
- 5) FM's are self-indulging egocentric persons who believe that their knowledge and schemes are superior to that of anyone else.
- 6) FM's leadership styles range from autocrats to dictators.
- 7) FM's reject giving the people the power of governance because they believe that the people are naïve, narrow in knowledge, and, like sheep, need and want to be led; that is why FM's fear and seek to suppress the rule of law, the power of a free press, and the ability to vote.

Faith and Reason are antidotes for fear:

- 1) *“Do not be afraid---I am with you! I am your God---let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you.”* (Isaiah 41:10). Confidence, that there is something bigger than ourselves in charge of our destiny, is step one in facing our fears and keeping hope for the future.
- 2) Christians should apply the same teachings, qualifications, and moral/ethical standards for leadership in the secular society as they do for leadership in the church; Romans 12, 13, 1 Timothy 3, etc. These standards for moral and ethical behavior are universal in application, not sectarian.
- 3) Information that is gathered from verifiable, known sources with a variety of perspectives, both written and broadcast.
- 4) Discussion, not argument, with one's peers and community. ☹

MORE THAN 70 MILLION TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS ARE LEARNING FROM HOME THIS SCHOOL YEAR.

That means they're spending more time online, which increases the chance of encountering hateful extremist propaganda that lies in wait there. Parents and caregivers must be able to recognize and intervene effectively.

American University's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab and the Southern Poverty Law Center have developed a guide to help parents and caregivers understand how extremists are exploiting this time of unrest by targeting children and young adults for recruitment.

Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era is a free resource designed for loved-ones who must respond to radicalization. It contains tangible steps you can take, from recognizing the warning signs to talking points that counter hateful propaganda. Learn more at: www.splcenter.org/PERIL. ☹