LAYMEN MINISTRIES

THE WATER OF LIFE │ P.S. WITH A SMILE

BY JEFF REICH

PS: WITH A SMILE

"P.S." stands for *post-scriptum*, a Latin word for "written after". It is used in a letter when you forget to write something and have already signed your letter — you add the letters P.S. and then what you forgot to write earlier. You might write something such as "P.S. I love you!" or some other addition.

"PS" in this article stands for *Police State* —- with a smile! I will explain "with a smile" later, but let's first talk about a police state. When you think of a police state, you may envision a totalitarian government, and you would be right to a degree. In fact, in the 1930s, as totalitarian governments began to emerge in Europe, the German term *Polizeistaat* came into English usage. Generally a police state may place restrictions on a population's mobility or on freedom to express or communicate political, religious, or other views, all of which are subject to police monitoring or enforcement.

The question needs to be asked, "Is America becoming a police state?" There are different political perspectives as to what an appropriate balance is between individual freedom and national security. There are no objective standards defining a "police state". To say the least, the waters are getting muddy. There is a delicate balance between the two, and here in America and Western Europe, these issues are constantly debated. But generally speaking, any law that has the effect of removing liberty is seen as moving towards a police state, while any law that limits government oversight of the populace is seen as moving towards a free state.
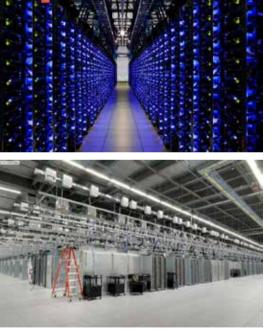
LESSONS FROM THE PAST

I have spent a lot of time in former Communist countries over the years. I have read books on the history of many of the places I have traveled to: Romania, Lithuania, Poland, Albania, etc. And one thing I have come to understand is that under Communism, freedom was suppressed, open press was prohibited, media was controlled, and everyone was monitored through various forms of surveillance, and their personal movements noted. *Data was collected on everyone.*

All of these were an attempt to control the population. Defectors were severely dealt with. Communists understood that propaganda is a powerful tool in controlling the minds of people. Collecting data on their civilian population helped them to know everything about them: their families, where they went, why they went, their political affiliation, religious background, etc. Then the government would feed them the data they thought they needed to hear to keep them following the "party-line." Dissenters often simply ended up missing.

Today data has gone digital. Data is nothing more than information, and digital means simply that data is put

▲ *Digital cameras, even security cameras and traffic cameras, are capable of providing data for facial recognition.*

into computer language. The efficiency of this information-gathering is hundreds of times more powerful than the old notebook days of the Communists and Nazis. It is high tech. And instead of this data being extracted from our populations, it is being given out for free, knowingly and unknowingly, by each of us, often while we wear a smile! We give away our information on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We allow Amazon, Google, eBay, and a host of other web-based companies to gather data (intelligence information) on each of us.

Big companies and governments collect data on everyone. Every time we post on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Pinterest, data is gathered and stored. Every time you click on an advertisement, watch a YouTube video, or look at news articles on one of the various news agencies found on the web, they are gathering information on you. That is why you get notifications that the site you are on requires you to enable cookies on your web browser. They want that information!

When you buy on Amazon, stay on a web page for so many seconds, do a search on Google, they are profiling you with the information that is being gathered. Have you ever noticed when you buy something on Amazon, the same or similar items show up on the advertising column on Facebook? How does that happen? The information that was gathered was shared by powerful computer servers — everything about you: your likes and dislikes, your race, religion, political leanings, what size shoe you wear, what movies you watch, what clothes you buy, and what you like to eat. And yes, even where you go on vacation complete with pictures of who you spend time with — everything about you is digitally recorded and analyzed.

▲ *One of Google's servers. Google has 16 server locations around the world. These mammoth facilities hold your personal data.*

SHAPING SOCIETY

Today it is not only the government who is gathering information, but even more so the private global companies. They have data on almost everyone, from the villages in the Philippines to the streets of New York City. Looking at all of this as a Christian and from a biblically prophetic standpoint, the implications become staggering. It is so obvious, yet so seemly innocent.

But it is hardly innocent. When it comes to constitutional rights, private companies are not bound by the same laws as is the government. When government agencies want to get around the constitutional laws that are supposed to protect our citizens' privacy rights, they simply work through the back door of these corporations.

In fact, with the upcoming 5G cellular systems and with emerging technology, surveillance will be easier than ever — even by foreign governments. We are headed for a true Orwellian State. All these cool gadgets, such as our smart phones, iPads, computers, smart TVs, etc., come with a price.

Investigations have found that the newer smart TVs can collect, and share, significant amounts of personal data about their viewers and even have cameras enabled with facial recognition technology for recording images of users. There are also smart light switches with cameras and audio monitoring devices. Yes, it is cool to walk into your house and tell your personal assistant like Alexa, Google, Siri, or Cortana to turn lights on and off, to order food, and add things to your shopping list.

But the future potential of these devices actually spying on you is very realistic. How about smart refrigerators, microwaves, and dishwashers complete with cameras, internet

connectivity, and microphones? Yes, they are here. Already, some of these devices are gathering information on you if you have not turned that feature off.

Big companies that build this technology say, "We are not spying; we are only making life easier for you!" or "Our devices listen for key activation words — we respect people's privacy. We want to make shopping tailored to meet your needs." What they are not saying is, "We are listening and studying you."

Such technology can be activated to watch and listen. Even the US government is concerned, as many of these "smart" devices are made overseas. Take, for instance, China. The People's Republic of China is the biggest and most recognized police state in the world, having a massive surveillance system, infamous censorship, no freedom of speech, and a one-party system. They are also known for human rights abuses and operate the Xinjiang re-education camps. Keep this in mind as you read on.

With the world's largest telecommunication system, *Huawei* (a Chinese company) wanting to bring the 5G systems to America, some in our government say these pose a threat to national and corporate security (according to members of the U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence). With something as simple as a firmware update, you may have the Chinese military listening to and watching what is happening, not only in your home, but at our military and government facilities.

This is not a conspiracy theory — these are facts that are being talked about in the news by Homeland Security. The UK just accepted a contract to allow *Huawei* to build their nation-wide 5G cellular system. And the crazy thing is, they know

China's military is connected with the company.

China is now using similar technology in the Xinjiang region, which is home to an estimated 13 million Uighur Muslims. These Muslims are subjected to unprecedented surveillance measures. Xinjiang is one of the most heavily policed regions in the world with residents being monitored by tens of thousands of cameras with facial recognition and surveillance phone apps. The government can flag individuals that are deemed "dangerous" to officials, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW). Now we have *Huawei*, China's 5G systems and smart technology, spreading to countries around the world, including the USA.

MIND CHANGERS

If you want to control people and at the same time shape society, it is best done by manipulation rather than through coercion. And today, people are being unknowingly manipulated by the use and abuse of data. We live in a society where data — information — is being taken and given in such a way to try to make you think and act in a certain way. The Bible indicates that in the last days of this earth's history, men will call evil good and good evil (Isaiah

▲ *Top: Security cameras in airports and other high-traffic areas are used to prevent terrorist activity, prevent and solve crimes, and other security measures deemed necessary in today's world. The technology is capable of keeping tabs on the movements of every citizen within its range.*

LET ME TELL YOU, IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME WHEN ONE NEEDS TO REALIZE THAT WHAT WE READ MIGHT NOT BE TRUE, IT IS TODAY.

▲ *China's Huawei Corporation has linked video surveillance cameras to its 5G communications system for optimal efficiency.*

5:21), and this can only come about if a person's thinking is changed.

Ponder this, as it is a bit staggering. Let's say you have an interest in some subject — maybe religion, racial issues, politics, or a myriad of other subjects. Where do you go? Google. You may be in Peru, India, Germany, Australia, or America, and you want to get some information about something. Where do you go? Google. Yes, the most powerful way to make people think a certain way is by having them find certain data while their mind is at its highest point of interest. And this is happening globally as the internet is molding societies.

So you live in America. The presidential elections are taking place in the USA, and you want to know about some political candidate. You type in that person's name and what happens next is very interesting. There are literally thousands of articles, news stories, and YouTube videos about that candidate on the web. But what determines what hits come up first on your screen? That is an interesting question. A person's mind is extremely impressionable when the point of interest is at its highest level. Those first few hits can shape the viewer's thinking about that candidate.

How these internet searches work is fascinating. Google uses what is called an algorithm, which is a computer program that makes the server computers complete a certain task. These algorithms are extremely complicated and can process millions of bits of information instantaneously, bringing up a "certain" result. Google's algorithm is called *PageRank* and is trademarked. Not even the US government knows how this works, as it is a trade secret of Google.

Here is one influential individual who is sharing his concerns about this fact:

"Google has come under fire lately, most recently by German chancellor Angela Merkel, because it keeps its algorithm secret. Her main argument is that transparency is vitally important to maintaining a balanced society; after all, our daily searches shape our behavior in subtle and blatant ways, and not knowing the mechanisms that influence that behavior can leave us in the dark."
— *Jayson DeMers, Founder & CEO of AudienceBloom, a Seattle-based content marketing firm, as well as EmailAnalytics app. Article found on Forbes Website.*

Is this algorithm "neutral" as they claim, only pulling up a non-biased search result? Or does Google and other search engines have an agenda?

How about Apple, Microsoft, Amazon? These companies already know what you like to buy, where you buy it, where you go on vacation, if you are a conservative or liberal, atheist or religious, gay or straight, and what your political affiliation is. By simply having their algorithm pull up what they want you to see, or what they think you need to see, they can subtly shape your thinking. Two people can put in the same search words, but they will often get different results. The search is sometimes custom-tailored just for you, based on the information (data) they have.

While Google, right now, might not be blatant about what hits it pulls up on a search, the potential down the road could be very manipulative. Believe me, Google does have an agenda, as do many news agencies and private companies. Look at the testimonies of those who have been fired from Google because of their own moral convictions. Many of these big companies promote the new morality and have fired employees for simply stating they stood for

basic biblical morals. And remember — they are global. In the future, we might be coining the phrase, "He who controls the data controls the world."

I know people who have had their lives changed by the internet. They have become atheists because they read something online that cast doubt on the Bible and Christian revisionist history. Things can get so slanted. False information is floating around as if it were fact. Lies are told, exaggerations are made. And yes, there is fake news!

You will find what you want to find on the internet, or you will find what they want you to find. And much of this is undermining basic morality and shaping society. The question is again asked, as in days of old, "What is truth?"

DATA CHANGERS

Another interesting fact is that of the content of data. Again, data is simply information, but how we have come to get that information is becoming more and more digital. Not only is there historical revisionist propaganda that is rewriting world history — there are agendas out there trying to change present society by revised historical interpretations. Such sites are all over the web.

But more than this, libraries and books are becoming relics of the past. How many young people are reading hard-copy books dealing with something like history? Youth of today generally do not grow up using the local libraries of the past (books) but are instead in front of a TV, computer, tablet or smart phone. Add to this the local grade school, high school, and universities, many of which are bent on political correctness, anti-religion, and coddling of the minds of the youth. After attending our colleges filled with liberal professors, how many have a correct understanding of history or a belief in God?

Today you can buy digital copies of books to read on a Kindle or a tablet. But remember, all of this digital data is stored on a server somewhere. That means some person has control over that data. As hard copy books become less and we become more dependent on digital copies, revisions, deletions, and changes can be made without anyone knowing. When I go to one of my hard-copy books, I can say on page 213, paragraph 3, it says such and such. As things become more digital, we have no safeguards that "such and such" will be in that book, or that the book will even be there at all.

And we are already seeing digital policing by some of these big companies such as Youtube and Google. As those who control the data deem certain things as hurtful, prejudiced, radical, racial, or in some way not in harmony with their world view, it could be revised, changed, or deleted. Or if you make a video that says something the new morality does not like, you could just get bumped off or removed from that company's service. Those who wrote about Bible prophecy a hundred years ago had no idea this high-tech era would be on us today.

All of this data gathering and propaganda is creating a digital police state. Think about identify theft as another example. Nearly 60 million Americans have been affected by identity theft, according to a 2018 online survey by The Harris Poll. So yes, the crime of this type of theft is relatively common. What happens if wrong and even hurtful misinformation gets attached to your digital profile? What if it says you are listed as a sex offender or a felon when you are not? Is it even possible to erase that from the web? You could even face crimes you never committed.

"How do you know that's true?" the question is asked. "I read it online…" is the definitive answer. Such is the case more than we would like to admit. Just like Pilate said in days of old when Christ was arrested and questioned before His crucifixion, "Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth?" (John 18:38). That age-old question is still relevant in our day.

But today the waters have become even muddier. Unfortunately, the human mind will believe something, especially if it already goes along with the current way of thinking if it was read on-line. Let me tell you, if there was ever a time when one needs to realize that what we read might not be true, it is today.

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Jesus said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth."(John 17:17). The Bible is our safeguard. Today it is under attack by these data-controllers. Don't let these people rob you of the only thing that can really ground you — the Bible.

The Bible warned us years ago, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words (information) to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:14-15). When was the last time you read your Bible? Get it out, dust it off, open its pages, read it. It is an anchor in a world of confusion. ◆

▲ *Smart refrigerators give you the ability to view footage from your home security cameras, create a shopping list, and document everything in your fridge daily via the large computer screen on the panel of the right door. Can they spy on you as well by sending video and audio clips to the server company?*