The MOLDING OF THE MIND

By Jeff Reich

O ver the years I have spent a lot of time in former Communist countries. Wanting to be informed about the countries I travelled in, I read books on the history of many of these places: Romania, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Albania, etc. Living with people in their homes in the cities and villages, I spent hours listening to them tell me about what daily life was like under Communism. One thing that become very clear was that freedom was suppressed, open press was prohibited, media was controlled, everyone was monitored through various forms of surveillance, and their personal movements were noted. *Data was collected on everyone.*

Lessons from the Past

In the 1930s, as totalitarian governments began to emerge in Europe, the German term *Polizeistaat* came into English usage — it simply means "police state." When you think of a police state, you may envision a totalitarian government, and you would be right — to a degree. 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. Part of the control was the use of propaganda and data collection.

You can envision secret police standing in the shadows, watching people and writing notes in a small black book. People were often stopped and questioned. The information was written down. All was turned into "headquarters" and filed for future evaluation. Or they tapped phone lines and recorded conversation using old reel to reel tape decks.

All of this was an attempt to control the population. Dissenters were severely dealt with. Communists understood that propaganda is a powerful tool in controlling minds. 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." Some dissenters simply came up missing.

The Digital Era

Today "data" has gone digital. Data is nothing more than information, and digital simply means that data is put 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. 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, do a Google search, post on Twitter, Instagram, or Pinterest, data is gathered and stored. Every time you click on an advertisement, place an order on Amazon, watch a YouTube video, or look at news articles on one of the various news apps, they are gathering information on you. That is why you get notifications that the site you are on requires you to enable your cookies on your web browser. They want that information! Those cookies tell them a lot about you. Add to this the many companies that buy and sell your personal information.

Have you ever noticed when you do a search for an item on Google, the same or similar items show up on the advertising column on Facebook or as a suggestion on Amazon? How does that happen? The information that was gathered was shared by powerful

computer servers. Everything about you — your likes and dislikes, race, religion, political leanings, shoe size, movies you watch, clothes you buy, what you like to eat, and yes, even where you go on vacation (complete with pictures or who you spend time with) — is digitally recorded and analyzed.

Say goodbye to the secret police standing in the shadows writing down information about you in a little black book. They now lurk in the shadows of your desktop or laptop computer, smart phone, refrigerator, and flat screen television.

Shaping Society

It is not only the government who is gathering information. Private global companies are as well — and maybe more so. 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 seemingly 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. The government now has a l oophole!

In fact, with the newly-released 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. It is not that 5G is bad in and of itself. But it is the next step to faster data transfers and nationwide 5G surveillance.

Investigations have found that the newer smart televisions 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 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, a one-party system, and the world's first Social Credit System. They are also known for human rights abuses, such as the Maoist era and the Xinjiang re-education camps. Keep this in mind as you read on.

I wrote about this issue in 2019 — Homeland Security had issue with *Huawei* and the potential of spying. Good news is, the current administration has found yet another way to tighten restrictions on Huawei and other Chinese companies that the US government has designated as national security threats. Here is the scoop.

DATA WAS COLLECTED
ON EVERYONE.

WE ARE NOT SPYING; WE ARE ONLY MAKING LIFE EASIER FOR YOU!

With the world's largest telecommunication system, *Huawei* (a Chinese company) wanting to bring the 5G systems to America, some in our government (2019) say these pose a threat to national and corporate security (according to members of the U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence). The move to not allow *Huawei* to setup America's 5G networks nationwide was a right move by the Department of Homeland Security. Here's why. Something as simple as a firmware update and you have the Chinese military listening 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.

Over the last 5 years China has been 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 with facial recognition cameras and surveillance phone apps. The government can flag individuals to officials that are deemed "dangerous," according to Human Rights Watch (HRW). Now we have *Huawei*, China's 5G systems and smart technology, spreading to countries around the world.

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

Consider 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. If you are in Peru, India, Germany, Australia, or America, and you want to get some information about something, where do you go? Google. Google is an international entity having more influence than governments. Google knows 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. This is happening globally as the internet molds people and 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, new 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. How many of us, on those first few hits, think to ourselves, "This must be the right answer!" Such thinking 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 pieces 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.

Back in 2019 German chancellor Angela Merkel

raised her concerns about Google and the influence it has on society:

"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. Article was 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? As we have watched the interaction during Covid and now, recently released information about the elections and other political issues, we know for sure there is a bias. In fact, Google, Twitter, Facebook and other social media companies have admitted to deleting posts that they disagreed with — that were not part of their political agenda. In fact, with Elon Musk's attempted purchase of Twitter, it came out that there were thousands of bots posting content. Bots are computer-generated "fake people" who make thousands of posts to propagate certain social and political views.

How about Apple, Microsoft, and 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

I AM LISTENING

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 attempt to 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. 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. They have fired employees for simply stating they stood for basic biblical morals. And remember - they are global. Today we should coin the phrase, "He who controls the data controls the world!"

I personally 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 a 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. Sadly, much of this is undermining basic Biblical 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 television, computer, tablet or smart phone. Don't forget to 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. Most young people have no clue about history, so it is easy to get them to believe new revisionist history such as found in the "Critical Race Theory." After attending America's colleges filled with liberal professors, how many have a correct understanding of history or a belief in God? WOKE has become the only religion allowed in colleges. If you have kids, consider home schooling or private Christian schools.

Today you can buy digital copies of books to read on 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 fewer 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.

We are already seeing digital policing. As those who control the data deem certain things as hurtful, prejudice, radical, racial, or in some way not in harmony with their world view, it could be revised, changed, or deleted. Books that are deemed racial or do not follow revisionist history are being pulled from school libraries and get removed online. If you make a video that says something the new morality does not like, you could just be flagged 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 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.

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 and if it was read online. 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. [LM]