

Plain talk keeps a prophetic perspective

I admit that some people say I make too much of this and complain out loud when I should just be polite and shut up. Here is my problem: I think the food we are supposed to eat is too politically correct and too far down the food chain to enjoy. Where has rump roast gone — and mashed potatoes with the little lake of real gravy on the top (or even meat loaf for that matter)? Where is plain lettuce in a salad that has no hidden tiny strings of sprouts or mystery nuts and surprise flower petals?

Instead, what do we have to choose from? Even chicken is now politically correct. I recently was served at a proper restaurant skinless and boneless breast of organically grown Oregon chicken Cajun slow-roasted over mesquite bark and presented on a bed of Minnesota wheat. Can you imagine such an odd thing? I do not want you to think that I am anti-gourmet. I love gourmet food, and I often eat a waffle at breakfast if no pancakes are available. I'll even go for English muffins if they are sliced nice and smooth. But what I am pleading for is white bread, generous butter and Skippy peanut butter. It is about time!

MORE THAN BEAN SPROUTS are at stake when this P.C. (politically correct) or S.C. (spiritually correct) expectation takes over at a college campus or in government or in a church. Have you found yourself unable to say something that you really wanted to say because it does not now appear on the approved relevancy list of today's idea pacesetters? Have you found yourself deliberately using certain words just because they are now politically or religiously correct, and not because you really mean what they say? Do you know the code words that will signal that you are an insider with the group that counts most?

How do you feel about these questions? I bring them up because I think a lot of us are eating mesquite dried-out and scorched chicken on soya bean noodles and telling everyone at the table how interesting the mingle of flavors is. We don't really like what we are eating at all, but when we cannot think of anything else to do when the table is crowded with people whose disapproval we fear.

I HAVE A SOLUTION. Try your best to keep a prophetic distance from every fad, whether it is of food or ideas. The prophets of the Bible saw themselves under the Law and



From Your Minister

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the Gospel of God, and when they were good prophets they did not forget that the message a prophet needs to share comes from God. The result was that these men and women stood out as unique witnesses to their time and generation. When they remained loyal to the covenants of God, they were both a real bother to their own contemporaries and a help. Since their words were not the rehearsed echoes of the powerful voices of the dominant culture, what they had to say was fresh and refreshing. Even the hard words were better because they were more substantive. Slogans require very little thinking because they are so readily available — and at very little cost of brain power or soul power. But when a prophet is thinking through an issue in the light of the covenants of God's law and promise, such a person must become totally involved in the journey toward life and living as well as words and speaking.

WE WHO WANT to be prophets in 1992 also need to live, think and speak under the authority of the Word of God. The Old and New Testaments are our sources. They are the check and balance against the pressures of our own crazy ideas and the pressures of other people's crazy ideas too. This Reformation standard for the source of our discipleship and our message will keep us a lot more healthy than when I, or my generation, choose the special mold into which every text of Old or New Testament is forced to fit.

Of course, we all look at the Bible through our own eyes, and we have glasses, too, because of damage to our eyes that we have experienced throughout our lives. A person who has suffered from oppression of any kind will always see things through eyes that have been affected by that experience. But we must not swindle ourselves from a new discovery of the power and goodness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by holding

onto old unpaid debts in our own experience of life. This swindle happens when we insist that everything Jesus says and does must somehow solve our own felt needs.

There are total surprises in the Gospel that are both salty and joyous, and we discover these surprises when we risk ourselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ without demanding the right to ask all the politically correct questions. We make the best discoveries when we cease trying to ensure that the answers of Jesus always support the prearranged solutions that we so badly wanted, or thought we wanted. I make the best discoveries when I quit trying to force every theme of the Bible to answer the questions I decided are the most important.

RIGHT NOW THERE is a terribly dangerous thing happening out there among people who should know better. I see it both in the right wing and the left wing of theological and social movements. It causes people to jump through tight word hoops in order to win tenure at a university or to get ahead with the people who we think really count.

Decide that you won't belong to any P.C. or S.C. fad is my advice. Don't let a phrase formulate who you are. Use simple English and say what you really mean to say. Be yourself and stand in faithfulness under the only standard that can set you free. Be a Biblical Christian, and that means keeping your eyes on Jesus Christ because that is what the Bible by its own message and design encourages us to do.

THE OLD TESTAMENT in anticipation and the New Testament in witness both point us to Jesus Christ, who belonged to none of the fads of his own time. Not even such a good friend and strong supporter as John the Baptist could make Jesus religiously, prophetically or politically correct. We each need to discover what the Bible is really saying as we study and read and hear it for ourselves.

When you express your convictions, use your own words, not someone else's. Try to learn from the people around you as a good listener because a prophet must listen as much as speak, but do not allow what people want, or think they want, you to do or say become the P.C. hoop that you obediently jump through. Maybe John the Baptist ate such strange food for this reason. But then, Jesus ate the ordinary food to prove the same point.