
PERSPECTIVE

Earl Palmer

Some people say I make too much of this, but I think the food we are told is good for us is too politically correct and too far down the food chain to enjoy. Where has rump roast gone? What happened to mashed potatoes with the little lake of real gravy on top? When was the last time you were offered meat loaf? Poultry is politically correct—as long as it's skinless and boneless breast of organically grown Oregon chicken, Cajun slow roasted over mesquite bark and presented on a bed of Minnesota wheat. Even salad is under attack—remember when plain lettuce was good for you? Now I hunt through tiny strings of sprouts, mystery nuts, and surprise flower petals only to find a dark green and red substitute.

I don't want you to think that I am anti-gourmet. I love gourmet food. I'll eat a waffle at breakfast if no pancakes are available. Or even English muffins if they are sliced smoothly. But what I am pleading for is old-fashioned white bread, generously buttered or topped with Skippy peanut butter.

Yet there's more at stake than bean sprouts when you feel pressure to be politically correct on a college campus or in government—or when you feel pressure to be religiously correct in a church.

Do you sometimes feel reluctant to speak because what you want to say doesn't appear on the approved list of today's relevant idea pacesetters? Have you picked up on the code words that mark you as an insider with the group that counts

most? Have you deliberately used politically or religiously correct words—even when the phrase doesn't say what you really mean? I bring up these questions because I think we are eating dried-out, mesquite-scorched chicken on soya bean noodles and telling everyone at the table how interesting the mingling of flavors is.

During another time when powerful voices of the dominant culture were pressuring people to be correct, a small group of men and women refused to echo the politically and religiously correct phrases, offering instead fresh words from God. These were the prophets of the Bible. Remaining under the Law and the gospel of God, they stayed loyal to the covenants of God and were consequently both a bother and a savior to their contemporaries.

A terribly dangerous thing is happening today in both the right and left wings of theological and social movements. People (who should know better) are pressuring other people to jump through tight word hoops in order to win tenure at universities, to get ahead with those who hand out promotions, to win approval at a dinner table crowded with people whose disapproval we fear. My solution? Keep a prophetic distance from every fad, whether of food or ideas.

Like the prophets of old, we who speak to today's issues need to live, think, and speak under the authority of the Word of God. The Old and New Testaments check and balance the pressures of our own crazy ideas as well as the pressures of others' crazy ideas. Viewing our discipleship and our message through this

Reformation lens provides more accurate vision than when we choose our own special lens through which every text of the Old or New Testament is read and permitted to speak.

Of course, we all look at the Bible with our own eyes, through lenses we've acquired because of damage done to our eyes through experiences in our lives. A person who has suffered from oppression, for instance, will see through eyes harmed by oppression. However necessary we feel these lenses are, their danger lies in making us insist that everything Jesus says and does must somehow solve our own felt needs - and if we do that, we swindle ourselves out of new discoveries of the power and goodness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Both salty and sweet surprises in the gospel await our discovery, and we can only taste them 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. 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

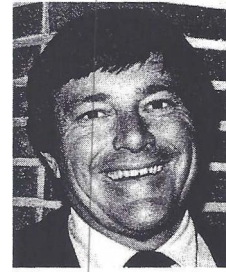
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the Baptist could make Jesus religiously, prophetically, or politically correct. Being a biblical Christian means keeping your eyes on Jesus Christ, following his example. Be yourself and stand in faithfulness under the only standard that can set you free. We each need to discover what the Bible is really saying as we study and read and hear it for ourselves. Don't let any politically or religiously correct phrase formulate who you are.

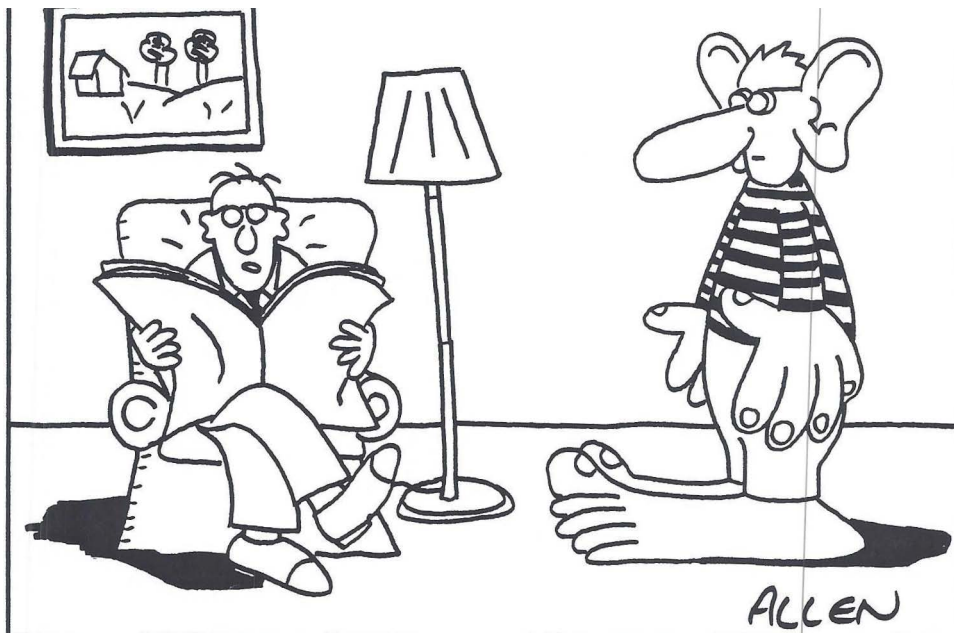
When you express your convictions, use your own words, not someone else's. Don't stop trying to learn from the people around you—a prophet must listen as much as speak—but do not allow

what others want you to do or to say become the politically or religiously correct hoop that you obediently jump through. Use simple English to say what you really mean to say.

Maybe John the Baptist ate strange food for this reason. But then Jesus ate ordinary food to prove the same point.♦



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"I wouldn't worry about it, son. It's just a stage—we all went through it."

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