

Who's to Blame for Censorship?

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Around some tables in former times, it was understood that children were to be “seen but not heard.” It seems our current federal government wants to treat Canadian citizens as children who could not possibly understand the complexities of public policy and who should not be allowed to question them as they go about their business of taxing, spending, imposing and pontificating. They forget that in a “free and democratic society,”¹ those who pay the bills—and have to live with the consequences of government policies—also deserve to be listened to.

Censorship and compelled speech have been a hallmark of tyrannical governments for millenia. The prophet Daniel was ordered not to pray (around 539 BC). He did so anyway. His three friends were told they must bow down to a statue. They refused. The apostles, Peter and John, were ordered not to speak about Jesus. But they continued to preach. In Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia and Pol Pot's Cambodia, the penalties for speaking against the policies of the ruler were severe: prison or death. Around the world today, citizens of harsh regimes are punished—often killed—for speaking out about injustice. Communist China and North Korea consider critical commentary to be treason. In some countries—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and others—speaking about Jesus or questioning Islam is considered “blasphemy.”²

Here in Canada, we have our own blasphemy laws³ and have now entered into a period of forbidden and compelled speech: two sides of the same coin. Canadians are hindered when they seek to convey biological truths about gender. Canadian doctors are told they must not convey their strongly-held opinions about medical treatments if they disagree with the pronouncements of government officials. Citizens are told they must use certain pronouns when referring to their fellow workers, to students in their classrooms or to teachers in their schools. Those who refuse to comply, who insist on speaking the truth, are deemed hateful and sometimes face expulsion, termination from a job, loss of a licence or even a jail term.

How did we get to this place in Canada and the Western world? It came in—as often happens—through the back door, through a series of bad decisions on many levels. We elected people to public office for whom free speech was less important than certain social outcomes. We chose to do business with companies and financial institutions that were run by people who cared more for the shareholders' bottom line than for the principles of free speech. We allowed our churches (some, not all) to blur the lines on moral behaviour rather than holding to biblical principles. In the interest of trying to please the many and avoid offence to any, we have allowed censorship in the pulpit.⁴

We have accepted largely—or so it seems—the fact that bribes were used to induce major media to become the megaphone of government, because we have allowed our tax dollars to be used as the carrot⁵ to encourage their uniform support for government policies: on abortion, MAiD, the carbon/ climate narrative, on vaccine mandates and the gender agenda. Even if we objected to this misuse of our tax dollars, we kept electing the very people who demanded journalistic conformity.

We've allowed our financial institutions to become the enforcers of government policies. Citizens are being told that they must not use their own money to promote ideas of which the government disapproves.⁶ We've allowed Canadian citizens to be arrested and charged for proclaiming thoughts outside of the contrived and manipulated mainstream consensus.⁷

In recent months, with Bill C-11⁸ and Bill C-18,⁹ we've seen our federal government tampering with free expression on the internet, imposing ludicrous guidelines for "Canadian content" and impeding our ability to share news stories on social media. This cutting off of our ability to share news and opinion without government approval is a chilling harbinger of further limitations on our rights as free citizens.

But we must also accept responsibility not only for whom we have elected or for with whom we do business or the institutions in which we have a financial interest. We must accept responsibility for self-censoring. We have allowed the "fear of man" to control what we say in the workplace, in our churches and among our friends. We have allowed the threat of the loss of a job, a friendship, an elected position or a place of honour to silence us. And it is our silence that allows the politicians, the bankers, the media moguls and the religious influencers to—little by little—restrict our freedom to speak the truth.

We must continue to resist the policies that choke freedom of speech, whether in the media, the pulpit or in Parliament. But our first action, and the only one over which we have total control is to exercise that freedom, to speak the truth in love and without fear. Like the apostle Paul, we must pray for boldness;¹⁰ and James tells us to pray for wisdom.¹¹ We will need both.

Footnotes

¹ tnc.news/2021/11/23/is-canada-still-a-free-and-democratic-society/

² www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/12/14/blasphemy-laws-are-still-common-around-the-world

³ www.gatestoneinstitute.org/10015/canada-blasphemy-laws

⁴ www.bible.com/bible/1/2ti.4.3

⁵ www.lifesitenews.com/analysis/the-trudeau-govt-has-destroyed-canadian-news-was-it-incompetence-or-malevolence/

⁶ fortune.com/2022/02/16/trudeau-freeze-freedom-convoy-bank-accounts-canada-covid-protest-emergency-powers/

⁷ podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/chp-talks-tamara-lich-hold-the-line/id1517269201?i=1000621727092

⁸ www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-65420133

⁹ atlantic.ctvnews.ca/murphy-s-logic-bill-c-18-s-unintended-consequences-1.6515152

¹⁰ www.bible.com/bible/1/eph.6.19

¹¹ www.bible.com/bible/1/jas.1.5

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