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The Ease and Speed of Judgment

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The Ease and Speed of Judgment

Abstract

"I am simultaneously sinner and saint, the old man and the new creation I am becoming in Christ."

Posting about God as the only just judge from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/the-ease-and-speed-of-judgment/>

Keywords

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

The Ease and Speed of Judgment

 [all in allthings.org/the-ease-and-speed-of-judgment/](http://allthings.org/the-ease-and-speed-of-judgment/)

July 24,
2017

Aaron Baart

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 75](#)

[Nahum 1:1-13](#)

[Revelation 14:12-20](#)

Like so many others, every day I take a leisurely mental stroll through the world's newest offerings of photos, random musings, culinary experiences, pet infatuations, and reflexive reactions to the goings on of the world. I check BBC news, the President's latest Twitter commentary, and the public's response to it. And I can do all of this in just a few minutes by perusing my favorite news apps, social media, and other digital information feeds.

However, unlike the evening news that we used to watch on our couch or the Newsweek magazine we read, these new information platforms invite us into the fray, encouraging a like, share, or some other single-click engagement. In a way designed to create a sense of significance for us, we aren't just watching the news anymore, we're *participating* in it. And now, our Facebook personas don't just include pictures of our most recent vacation but full disclosure of our political leanings, pet peeves, and personal preferences.

What is more, the online avatars of our Facebook-selves create worlds made in their own image, preaching to our own e-choirs as we digitally surround ourselves with friends who think like us and share our values, to whom we then share and re-tweet ideas we like, passing over or frowny-facing the ones we don't. Somehow, we've begun to believe that we're engaging global ideas through the simple use of emojis, all while inside a digital echo chamber.

This is the new world of thought engagement, a war of ideas and social or political snippets fought in hand-to-keyboard combat (limited to 140 characters). What is worse, our modern form of intellectual trench warfare only becomes even more deeply entrenched as our apps and web browsers study our behavior, re-creating an internet and online world fashioned in our own likeness. In other words, our digital screens end up serving as a sort of mirror. Although, instead of a true reflection of our physical likeness, they shine back at us all of our inner likes and dislikes, political leanings, and food preferences, revealing whether or not we are a cat or a dog person, and so many other individual idiosyncrasies. We've stated what we already like and dislike and then it just continues to revisit us, further cementing in place the ideas and opinions we already held.

Much has already been said elsewhere (and shared and shared and shared again) about the over-simplification of the way this causes us to engage ideas. And yet, I still haven't found the social media platform offering up a button for, "that-might-be-a-good-point-creating-some-helpful-dissonance-in-my-thought-life-and-I-should-really-pause-and-think-about-that-before-responding." However, perhaps spoon-fed news and overly-simplistic opinions from one of "our guys" might not actually be the greatest danger in the way that we engage the world.

My greatest social media/fake news/online fear is that this new way of interacting with ideas is making us incredibly judgmental. In a very short period of time, our response to a myriad of complex, global issues has been reduced to something we either "like" or don't; something we'd either "share" or not. But this **inability to hold complex thoughts in tension isn't just bad for our intellect; it's dangerous to our souls.**

In today's Scripture readings from Nahum 1, Psalm 75, and Revelation 14, we are reminded of both the dangers of judging others as well as the sheer arrogance of it. Judgment is a role reserved for God alone and no amount of social media influence, in the end, can hold sway with God's prerogative.

“No one from the east or west
or from the desert can exalt themselves
It is God who judges:
He brings one down, he exalts another.”¹

Or, speaking about the rising military influence of Nineveh he warns,

“Although they have allies and are numerous,
they will be destroyed and pass away.”²

Consider the recent storm of online activity surrounding Jonathan’s Merritt’s RNS interview with Eugene Peterson. An eighty-four-year-old paragon of the Christian faith was quickly transformed into an online weapon, suddenly representing “my side” and then just as quickly, not. Everyone left wondering if he was or wasn’t on their “side” after all. This kind of binary thinking of “like” or “dislike” limits our ability to live in the tension that is real life. After all, the real line between good and evil doesn’t run between *us* and *them*, it runs down the middle of me. I am simultaneously sinner and saint, the old man and the new creation I am becoming in Christ. This is why Jesus said,

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”³

I need to think about this a bit more the next time I’m in dialogue online or in person and encounter an idea different than my own. I hope we all do.

Footnotes

1. Psalm 75:6-7 ↩
2. Nahum 1:12b ↩
3. Matthew 7:1-2 ↩