

Challenging the New Atheists

The new wave of bitterly anti-God, anti-Christian atheists offer arguments against God. Patrick Zukeran provides several good answers.

The New Atheist Agenda

Nearly thirty years ago John Lennon sang the song, "Imagine." The words went like this:



"Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too

Imagine all the people
Living life in peace
Imagine there's no heaven. . .
You may say that I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

In other words, the source of much evil in the world is religion: belief in God, life after death, and a universal moral code. Would the world be a better place if faith in God was eliminated? Many atheists now think so. Richard Dawkins states, "Imagine with John Lennon, a world with no religion.

Imagine, no suicide bombers, no 9/11, no 7/7, no Crusades, no witch-hunts, no Gunpowder Plot, no Indian partition, no Israeli/Palestinian wars, no Serb/Croat/Muslim massacres, no persecution of Jews as 'Christ killers', no Northern Ireland 'troubles', no honour killings', no shiny-suited bouffant-haired televangelists fleecing gullible people of their money ('God wants you to give till it hurts'). Imagine no Taliban to blow up ancient statues, no public beheadings of blasphemers, no flogging of female skin for the crime of showing one inch of it."[\[1\]](#) The goal of the new atheists is to rid the world of belief in God or religion and replace it with reason and science. The new atheists believe that religions that embrace a belief in God, particularly Christianity, are not just irrational but dangerous and therefore must be extinguished.

The new atheists are not presenting new arguments but instead they are promoting their ideas very aggressively with strong, confrontational, and condemning language. They have gained a following amongst the young academic crowd, and they have been quite influential in public education. Some of the notable names who have written popular work include Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Dan Barker, and Christopher Hitchens.

In this work we will cover four popular arguments presented by the new atheists. The first is that belief in God is irrational. The second argument is that Christianity in particular is dangerous. Third, science has clearly proven God does not exist. Fourth, religion is the result of a natural man-made evolutionary process motivated by man's need for a divine father figure and the need to find meaning in the universe.

In this series, we will examine these arguments and see whether belief in God is irrational or if there are good reasons for belief in a creator.

Belief in God is Irrational

The new atheists allege that faith in God is the result of irrational thinking and that a rational person would not believe in God. Sam Harris writes, “We have names for people who have many beliefs for which there is no rational justification. When their beliefs are extremely common we call them ‘religious’; otherwise they are likely to be called ‘mad,’ ‘psychotic,’ or ‘delusional.’”[\[2\]](#)

Richard Dawkins, in his book *The God Delusion*, says that belief in God is the result of delusional thinking. He asserts that belief in God is a delusion built on empty assertions and not evidence. He states, “Faith is blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence.”[\[3\]](#) His conclusion is that there is no evidence to support the existence of God; in fact, all the evidence goes against God.

The assertion that belief in God is irrational is not a new argument but a very old one. It is true that many who believe in God are not able to present reasons why they believe. However, Christianity is not founded on “blind faith” but faith built upon evidence, and there are good reasons that make belief in God a reasonable conclusion. One significant individual who has come to believe in the existence of God is Antony Flew. Flew was this generation’s greatest atheist philosopher. However, Flew, through philosophical reasoning, came to believe in God.

Flew states that he wrestled with three key, major scientific questions. First, how did the laws of nature come to be? Second, how did life come from non-life? Third, how did the universe come into existence?[\[4\]](#) The naturalists’ answers, which are heavily dependent on Darwin’s theory, were unsatisfactory. Flew discovered that the classical theistic arguments provided the best answers in light of the evidence. The [cosmological argument](#), or argument from first cause, and the [teleological argument](#), or argument from design, provided a

much more reasonable answer.[{5}](#)

For centuries, Christian apologists have presented these and several [other reasoned arguments](#) for the existence of God and many have come to a belief in God as Flew did. Antony Flew's conversion from atheism to theism deals a devastating blow to the arguments of the new atheists. Not only was he a titan among atheist philosophers, but he is another example that demonstrates belief in God is not irrational. Reasoning individuals who are willing to study the evidence and follow it wherever it leads may find a strong case for a creator.

Is Science at War with God?

The new atheists allege that science and faith are at war. Therefore real scientists must be atheists, for science clearly proves God does not exist.

How do these atheists explain the display of design in the universe? Leading atheist spokesman Richard Dawkins believes Darwin's theory answers the design argument. However, recent discoveries reveal the shortcomings of Darwin's theory. Darwin's theory fails to explain the cause of the universe. It also fails to present evidence that that life came from non-life. There is also the lack of transitional forms in the fossil record, and there is no mechanism for macro-evolutionary change. Mutations and natural selection have failed to conclusively show they can produce macro-evolutionary change. In short, the new atheists have a lot of faith that Darwin's theory will answer these challenges.

Science and the Christian faith are not enemies. In fact, the more scientists study nature and the universe, they continue to discover complexity and design which make it highly improbable such complex systems could have come about by chance or natural forces. For this reason, the number of scientists who are acknowledging an intelligent creator

continues to grow. This is a fact the new atheists neglect to acknowledge.

Francis Collins, the leader of the Human Genome project and author of *The Language of God*, tells how the order and precision in the DNA code led him from atheism to belief in God. Collins writes, "Many will be puzzled by these sentiments, assuming that a rigorous scientist could not also be a believer in a transcendent God. This book aims at dispelling that notion, by arguing that belief in God can be an entirely rational choice, and that the principles of faith are in fact complimentary with the principles of science." [\[6\]](#)

Physicist Stephen Hawking states that his study of the universe reveals that "The overwhelming impression is one of order. The more we discover about the universe, the more we find that it is governed by rational laws. . . . You still have to ask the question why does the universe bother to exist? If you like, you can define God to be the answer to the question." [\[7\]](#)

Francis Collins and Stephen Hawking are just two examples of numerous award-winning scientists who acknowledge the scientific evidence points to a creator. The more we learn in the various fields of science such as biology, microbiology, astronomy, physics, etc., the evidence continues to point to design. The complexity of life and the order displayed in the universe make it more reasonable to conclude a God created it, and the greater leap of faith would be to conclude it all occurred by chance and natural forces.

Belief in God Is Dangerous

The new atheist movement asserts that religion is dangerous, for it is the source of much of the conflict in the world today. Many assert that religions, especially Christianity, teach intolerance and discrimination. To build their case,

however, the new atheists unfortunately attack misrepresentations of religions, especially Christianity.

For example, in *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins states, "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser, a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." {8} What Dawkins displays is his superficial understanding of the Bible. Certainly no Christian believes in a God as described by Dawkins.

Another error is the misuse of labels. New atheists apply the term "fundamentalist" to Evangelical Christians as well as fundamentalist Muslims, creating the illusion the two are equivalent in their teachings. When Dawkins points to the example of the Islamic riots against the Danish cartoons, he equates this incident not with Islam but with religion, all religions. {9} However a careful study reveals that there is a huge difference between Jesus' teachings and Muhammad's teachings. This huge difference is also revealed in the lives they lived. {10} A careful reading of the New Testament quickly reveals that violence goes against the nature of Christ's teachings who taught His disciples to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Mt. 5:38-48). Application of the true teachings of Christ would lead to a peaceful society.

New atheists allege that religions promote division by the creation of in-groups and out-groups. Indeed, there are religions that discriminate, including some Christian groups, but in Christianity that is a perversion of the teachings of Christ. Jesus' sacrifice and gift of salvation is offered to all (Jn. 3:16). Throughout His life Jesus reached out to those despised by the culture, and His disciples die—many in foreign fields—preaching salvation to all. Even in the Old Testament,

the mission of Israel was to be a blessing to all the world (Gen. 12). Application of true biblical teachings would lead to non-discrimination.

A significant point that the new atheists do not mention is the destructive consequences of atheist philosophies. Nietzsche predicted that the death of God would lead to a moral relativism which would result in blood in the streets.[\[11\]](#) Communism has led to the death of millions in the twentieth century. Millions were put to death under the regimes of Marx, Pol Pot, and Mao Tse Tung. Some religions are responsible for conflict, including Christians who have misused biblical teachings. However, atheism has shown to be dangerous as well.

Religion Is the Result of an Evolutionary Process

New atheists assert that religion was created out of a need for a father figure, or for comfort in a cruel world, or out of fear of the unknown. They rely on the work of James Frazer and his book the *Golden Bough*, written in the nineteenth century. Frazer taught that religion developed through a natural evolutionary process which began first with animism, a belief in spirits in nature. The worship of nature spirits eventually led to polytheism. Eventually, amongst all the gods, one was viewed as the most dominant. Eventually this dominant god alone was worshipped and monotheism developed. This was known as the evolutionary theory of religion. New atheists believe eventually man's need for God will end and atheism will be the end of this evolutionary development. Unfortunately, the new atheists once again are not presenting a new theory but reiterating an old theory which has been shown to be flawed.

One of the flaws of this theory is that it was influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution and lacked serious empirical

evidence and study.^{12} One of the most significant and well-researched works was produced by anthropologist Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt in his four-thousand-page treatise, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*. His research of hundreds of cultures revealed that monotheism is the oldest of religions. The development of religion was discovered to have gone in the opposite direction of the evolutionary theory. All cultures began with a belief in a heavenly father, and this monotheistic faith eventually degenerates to polytheism and then animism. This theory is called "original monotheism."^{13} The evidence displayed by Schmidt, and later by anthropologist Don Richardson, is consistent with the progression of religion as revealed in Romans 1. Serious research and evidence appears to favor the biblical model.

The new atheists present few new arguments. What are new are not the arguments but the method and strategy of this group. How should we meet the challenge of the new atheists? 1 Peter 3:15 challenges us to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." We are called to love those who question or even attack the Christian faith. Christians must answer their challenges with humility and grace. As we present a well-reasoned case and the evidence, the Holy Spirit will use our apologetic defense and our unshaken but loving attitude to speak to their mind and heart.

Psalm 14:21 states, "The fool says in his heart there is no God." Might it be the new atheists who are irrational?

Notes

1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2006), 23-4.
2. Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2004), 72, quoted in Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 113.

3. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 198.
4. Antony Flew, *There is a God* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), 91.
5. Ibid., 89. For more on this, see Gene Herr, "[Case for a Creator](http://www.probe.org)," www.probe.org.
6. Dr. Francis Collins, *The Language of God* (Free Press, 2006), 3.
7. Gregory Benford, "Leaping the Abyss: Stephen Hawking on Black Holes, Unified Field Theory and Marilyn Monroe," *Reason* 4.02 (April 2002): 29 quoted in Flew, *There is a God*, 97.
8. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 51.
9. Ibid., 46-50.
10. See Patrick Zukeran, "[The Lives of Muhammad and Jesus](http://www.probe.org)," at www.probe.org.
11. Amy Orr-Ewing, *Is Believing in God Irrational?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 208.
12. Alister McGrath and Joanna McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 60.
13. See Patrick Zukeran, "[The Origin of Man's Religions](http://www.probe.org)," www.probe.org.

The Technological Simulacra [no footnotes]

What Saccharine is to Sugar, or The Technological Simulacra: On the Edge of Reality and Illusion

“Anyone wishing to save humanity today must first of all save the word.” – Jacques Ellul

Simulacra

Aerosmith sings a familiar tune:

*“There’s something wrong with the world today,
I don’t know what it is,
there’s something wrong with our eyes,
we’re seeing things in a different way
and God knows it ain’t [isn’t] his;
there’s melt down in the sky. We’re living on the edge.”*

What saccharine is to sugar, so the technological simulacra is to nature or reality—a technological replacement, purporting itself to be better than the original, more real than reality, sweeter than sugar: hypersugar.



[This article with footnotes](#) *Simulacra*, (*Simulacrum*, Latin, pl., *likeness, image, to simulate*): or simulation, the term, was adapted by French social philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) to express his critical interpretation of the technological transformation of reality into hyperreality. Baudrillard’s social critique

provided the premise for the movie *The Matrix* (1999). However, he was made famous for declaring that the Gulf War never happened; TV wars are not a reflection of reality but projections (recreations) of the TV medium.

Simulacra reduces reality to its lowest point or one-dimension and then recreates reality through attributing the highest qualities to it, like snapshots from family vacation. When primitive people refuse to have their picture taken because they are afraid that the camera steals their souls, they are resisting simulacra. The camera snaps a picture and recreates the image on paper or a digital medium; it then goes to a photo album or a profile page. Video highlights amount to the same thing in moving images; from three dimensions, the camera reduces its object to soulless one-dimensional fabrication.

Simulacra does not end with the apparent benign pleasures of family vacation and media, although media represents its most recent stage. Simulacra includes the entire technological environment or complex, its infrastructure, which acts as a false "second nature" superimposed over the natural world, replacing it with a hyperreal one, marvelously illustrated in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). As liquid metal conforms itself to everything it touches, it destroys the original.

Humanity gradually replaces itself through recreation of human nature by technological enhancements, making the human race more adaptable to machine existence, ultimately for the purpose of space exploration. Transhumanists believe that through the advancements in genetic engineering, neuropharmaceuticals (experimental drugs), bionics, and artificial intelligence it will redesign the human condition in order to achieve immortality. "Humanity+," as Transhumanists say, will usher humanity into a higher state of being, a technological stairway to heaven, "glorification," "divinization" or "ascendency" in theological terms.

God made man in his own image and now mankind remakes himself in the image of his greatest creation (image), the computer. If God's perfection is represented by the number seven and man's imperfection by the number six, then the Cyborg will be a five according to the descending order of being; the creature is never equal or greater than the creator but always a little lower. {9}

Glorious Reduction!

www.probe.org/machinehead-from-1984-to-the-brave-new-world-order-and-beyond/

Hyperreality

An old tape recording commercial used to say, "Is it real or is it Memorex?" By championing the superiority of recording to live performance the commercial creates hyperreality, a reproduction of an original that appears more real than reality, a replacement for reality with a reconstructed one, purported to be better than the original.

Disneyland serves as an excellent example by creating a copy of reality remade in order to substitute for reality; it confuses reality with an illusion that appears real, "more real than real." Disney anesthetizes the imagination, numbing it against reality, leaving spectators with a false or fake impression. Main Street plays off an idealized past. The technological reconstruction leads us to believe that the illusion "can give us more reality than nature can."

Hyperreality reflects a media dominated society where "signs and symbols" no longer reflect reality but are manipulated by their

users to mean *whatever*. Signs recreate reality to achieve the opposite effect (metastasis); for example, in Dallas I must travel west on Mockingbird Lane in order to go to East Mockingbird Lane. Or, Facebook invites social participation when no actual face to face conversation takes place.

Hyperreality creates a false perception of reality, the glorification of reduction that confuses fantasy for reality, a proxy reality

that imitates the lives of movie and TV characters for real life. When reel life in media becomes real life outside media we have entered the high definition, misty region—the Netherlands of concrete imagination—hyperreality!

Hyperreality goes beyond escapism or simply “just entertainment.” If that was all there was to it, there would be no deception or

confusion, at best a trivial waste of time and money. Hyperreality is getting lost in the pleasures of escapism and confusing the fantasy world for the real one, believing that fantasy is real or even better than reality. Hyperreality results in the total inversion of society through technological sleight of hand, a cunning trick, a sorcerer’s illusion transforming the world into a negative of itself, into its opposite, then calling it progress.

Hyperreality plays a trick on the mind, a self-induced hypnotism on a mass scale, duping us by our technological recreation into

accepting a false reality as truth. Like Cypher from the movie *The Matrix* who chose the easy and pleasant simulated reality over the harsh conditions of the “desert of the real” in humanity’s fictional war against the computer, he chose to believe a lie instead of the truth.

The Devil is a Liar

A lie plays a trick on the mind, skillfully crafted to deceive through partial omission or concealment of the truth. The lie is the

devil's (devil means liar) only weapon, always made from a position of inferiority and weakness (Revelation 20:3, 8). A lie never stands on its own terms as equal to truth; it does not exist apart from twisting (recreating) truth. A lie never contradicts the truth by standing in opposition to it.

A lie is not a negative (no) or a positive (yes), but obscures one or the other. It adds by revealing what is not there—it subtracts by concealing what is there. A lie appears to be what is not and hides what it really is. "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

A lie does not negate (contradict) or affirm truth. Negation (No) establishes affirmation (Yes). Biblically speaking, the no comes

before the yes—the cross then the resurrection; law first, grace second. The Law is no to sin (disobedience); the Gospel is yes to faith (obedience). Truth is always a synthesis or combination between God's no in judgment on sin and His yes in grace through faith in Jesus Christ. "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Law without grace is legalism; grace without law is license.

www.probe.org/law-and-grace-combating-the-american-heresy-of-pelagianism/

The devil's lie adds doubt to the promise of God; "Indeed, has God said, 'you shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1

NASB) It hides the promise of certain death; "You surely will not die" (Genesis 3:4). The serpent twists knowledge into

doubt by turning God's imperative, "Don't eat!" into a satanic question "Don't eat?"

But it is Eve who recreates the lie in her own imagination. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6).

Sight incites desire. We want what we see (temptation). Eve was tempted by "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) after seeing the fruit, then believed the false promise that it would make her wise. "She sees; she no longer hears a word to know what is good, bad or true." Eve fell victim to her own idolatrous faith in hyperreality that departed from the simple trust in God's word.

The Void Machine

Media (television, cell phone, internet, telecommunications) is a void machine. In the presence of a traditional social milieu, such as family, church or school, it will destroy its host, and then reconstruct it in its own hyperreal image (Simulacra). Telecommunication technology is a Trojan Horse for all traditional institutions that accept it as pivotal to their "progress," except prison or jail. The purpose of all institutions is the promotion of values or social norms, impossible through the online medium.

Media at first appears beneficial, but this technology transforms the institution and user into a glorified version of itself. The personal computer, for example, imparts values not consistent with the mission of church or school, which is to bring people together in mutual support around a common goal or belief for learning and spiritual growth (community). This is done primarily through making friends and forming meaningful relationships, quite simply by people talking to

each other. Values and social norms are only as good as the people we learn them from. Values must be embodied in order to be transmitted to the next generation.

Talking as the major form of personal communication is disappearing. Professor of Communications John L. Locke noted that "Intimate talking, the social call of humans, is on the endangered species list." People prefer to text, or phone. Regrettably, educational institutions such as high schools and universities are rapidly losing their relevance as traditional socializing agents where young people would find a potential partner through like interests or learn a worldview from a mentor. What may be gained in convenience, accessibility or data acquisition for the online student is lost in terms of the social bonds necessary for personal ownership of knowledge, discipline and character development.

An electronic community is not a traditional community of persons who meet face to face, in person, in the flesh where they establish personal presence. Modern communication technologies positively destroy human presence. What philosopher Martin Heidegger called *Dasein*, "being there," (embodiment or incarnation) is absent. As Woody Allen put it, "90 percent of life is showing up." The presence of absence marks the use of all electronic communication technology. Ellul argued, "The simple fact that I carry a camera [cell phone] prevents me from grasping everything in an overall perception." The camera like the cell phone preoccupies its users, creating distance between himself and friends. The cellphone robs the soul from its users, who must exchange personal presence for absence; the body is there tapping away, but not the soul! The cell phone user has become a void!

The Power of Negative Thinking

According to popular American motivational speakers, the key to unlimited worldly wealth, success and happiness is in the power of

positive thinking that unleashes our full potential; however, according to obscure French social critics the key to a meaningful life, lived in freedom, hope and individual dignity is in the power of negative thinking that brings limits, boundaries, direction and purpose.

Negativity gives birth to freedom, expanding our spiritual horizons with possibilities and wise choices, which grounds faith, hope and

love in absolute truth, giving us self-definition greater than our circumstances, greater than reality of the senses. To freely choose in love one's own path, identity and destiny is the essence of individual dignity.

According to French social critics Jacques Ellul and Herbert Marcuse, freedom is only established in negation that provides limits

and boundaries, which tells us who we are. Technological hyperreality removes all natural and traditional limits in the recreation of humanity in the image of the cyborg. The transhuman transformation promises limitless potential at the expense of individual freedom, personal identity and ultimately human dignity and survival.

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All limitless behavior ends in self-destruction. Human extinction looms over the technological future, like the Sword of Damocles,

threatening humanity's attempt to refit itself for immortality in a grand explosion (nuclear war), a slow poisoning (ecocide) or suicidal regressive technological replacement. Stephen

Hawking noted recently that technological progress threatens humanity's survival with nuclear war, global warming, artificial intelligence and genetic engineering over the course of the next 100 years. Hawking stated, "We are not going to stop making progress, or reverse it, so we must [recognize] the dangers and control them."

In asserting "NO!" to unlimited technological advance and establishing personal and communal limits to our use of all technology, especially the cell phone, computer and TV, we free ourselves from the technological necessity darkening our future through paralyzing the will to resist.

After we "JUST SAY NO!" to our technological addictions, for instance, after a sabbatical fast on Sunday when the whole family turns off their electronic devices, and get reacquainted, a new birth of freedom will open before us teeming with possibilities. We will face unmediated reality in ourselves and family with a renewed hope that by changing our personal worlds for one day simply by pushing the off button on media technology we can change the future. Through a weekly media fast (negation) we will grow faith in the power of self-control by proving that we can live more abundant lives without what we once feared absolute necessity, inevitable and irresistible. "All things are possible with God" (Mark 10: 27). When we exchange our fear of idols for faith in the Living God the impossible becomes possible and our unlimited potential is released that will change the world forever!

I see trees of green, red roses, too,
I see them bloom, for me and you
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue, and clouds of white,
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself

What a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky,
Are also on the faces of people going by.
I see friends shaking hands, sayin', "How do you do?"
They're really sayin', "I love you."

I hear babies cryin'. I watch them grow.
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.

"[I]f man does not pull himself together and assert himself . . . then things will go the way I describe [cyborg condition]." – Jacques Ellul

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Machinehead: From 1984 to the Brave New World Order and Beyond

Wherever the survival of humanity is threatened we find the work of Satan. In the previous century that was Fascism, then Mutually Assured Destruction during the Cold War. Today, Satan hides behind the ascendancy of the global Empire of Technology: assimilation of humanity into the machine, creating a new planetary being: the Cyborg. I believe people best understand large conglomerates when personalized, such as, referring to the Federal Government as "Uncle Sam," so I have chosen to name the Brave New World Order: Machinehead!

Post-Orwellian World

Say good bye to Orwell's nightmare world of 1984! [\[1\]](#) And welcome to Machinehead: the Brave New World Order and beyond!

Machinehead is what I call the technological idol or the planetary being taking shape in the convergence of human and computer intelligence, a global cyborg. "Machine" is defined as *one global system with many subsystems*.

Experts already recognize the global system as a superorganism, one life-form made of billions and billions of individual parts or cells like an anthill or beehive, with one mind and one will. Thus, the global machine consists of millions of subsystems interfacing one over-system. Mankind acts as agent for the global machine's ascendancy, creating a technological god in its own image.

The suffix "head" refers to the *divine essence* as in "Godhead" (Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. Acts 17: 29). Machinehead is the replacement of all traditional views of God with the new Living God of the Machine, best illustrated by the recent movie *Transcendence* (2014), which depicts the computer's awaking to consciousness in one mind and will, the Singularity!

Two prophets of modernity plead in dire warning for us to reconsider modern faith in expansive government and escalating technological acceleration. The first and most notable was master political satirist and critic George Orwell (1903-1950), famous for *Animal Farm* and *1984*, and the second, English literatus Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), author of *Brave New World* (BNW).

Orwell envisioned the end of history in the all-powerful political dictatorship of *Oceania* marked by perpetual war,

omnipresent government surveillance, thought control, and the ubiquitous media projection of Big Brother.

Orwell gave us the foundation of the current age in Cold War politics, but does not serve as guide to the future, which belongs, if humanity allows it, to the apparent benign technophilia of *Brave New World* that follows upon Orwell's cruel political combat boot in the face!

The Cold War Era and 1984

Orwell divided his fictional geopolitical borders into three grids: *Oceania*, *Eurasia* and *Eastasia*, shadowing accurately Cold War divisions between Western and Eastern Bloc countries allied behind NATO (*Oceania*) and Warsaw pact nations (*Eurasia*), leaving the Third World (*Eastasia*) as pawns (proxy wars) for interminable power battles between the two Super Powers (Super States). Perpetual war characterized normative relations between the super states in *1984* with the objective to further consolidate the State's power over its own citizens. The threat of war inspires fear in the population and offers government the opportunity and justification for further largesse and control. War insures a permanent state of crisis, leaving the population in desperation for strong leadership and centralized command and control.

The wars of *1984* were a side note to the main thrust of the novel, omnipotent government control. The novel introduced the world to the ominous character Big Brother. The central drama takes place in *Airstrip One*, the capital of *Oceania*, formerly London, England, where Winston Smith the protagonist struggles to maintain his dignity as an individual, under the crushing gears of Fascist government.

Popular criticism asserts that Orwell had Stalinism in the cross hairs in his novel. However, that interpretative ruse acts as an escape clause for the West to disavow any participation in totalitarianism. Most Americans falsely

assume that *1984* applied to the Soviet Union and not NATO. Eurasia (the Eastern bloc) was a mere literary foil. Orwell's social criticism applies to all forms of totalitarianism, especially the subtle power structure of the West hidden behind democratic rhetoric, media bias, and an acute lack of national self-criticism. *Oceania* was Orwell's analogy and commentary on the future of the West after World War II. The NATO alliance, founded in 1949 the same year Orwell published *1984*, was the target of Orwell's criticism—not the Soviet Union.

***Brave New World* Order in the 21st Century: The Imperial Machine**

Huxley's novel *Brave New World* foresaw a techno heaven on earth that knows nothing of wars, political parties, religion or democracy, but caters to creature comforts, maximization of pleasure and minimization of pain; total eradication of all emotional and spiritual suffering through the removal of free choice by radical conditioning from conception in the test tube to blissful euthanasia.

Television was the controlling technology in *1984*, so in *BNW* control is asserted through media, education and a steady flow of *soma*—the perfect drug and chemical replacement for Jesus. "Christianity without tears" was how Mustapha Mond the World Controller described *soma*. "Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality around in a [pill] bottle." [\[2\]](#)

Spiritual perfection commanded by Jesus, "Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), will be given to all through genetic programming, sustained through chemical infusion and mental conditioning (propaganda). If *1984* was about power for the sake of power, *BNW* emphasizes the kinder, gentler technological dictatorship that does not promise happiness, but delivers it to all whether they want it

or
not!

Brave New World Order amounts to technological totalitarianism, analogous to Huxley's "World State" motto: "Community, Identity, Stability."[\[3\]](#)

The "imperial machine" as it has been called by political scientists acts outside the traditional political process and in tandem with it when needed with no central geographical location or person or groups with any discernable hierarchical structure that directs it; the United States, Great Britain, United Nations, The People's Republic of China or The European Union are not the power brokers of 21st century Empire, but its pawns.

Technological Empire rules as an all-encompassing, all-pervasive power, shaping human destiny in its own image.

Transvaluation of Man and Machine

A titanic transvaluation (reversal in the meaning of values) between superstructure (intangible ideological system: beliefs, convictions, morality, myth, etc.) and infrastructure (tangible urban development: roads, buildings, houses, cars, machines, etc.) begun with the Industrial Revolution will finally be complete some time during the 21st century. Infrastructure replaces superstructure. Technology has become our belief, religion and hope, what was once a means (technology) to an end (human progress) has replaced the end with the means. Technology replaces humanity as the goal of progress; technology for technology's sake not for the good of mankind or God's glory.

The reversal of meaning is found everywhere in postmodern society beginning with the death of God and unfolding in lock step to the death of man, progress, democracy and Western Civilization; concomitantly paired with an equal ascendancy of

all things technological, until the machine ultimately replaces humanity.

Marxist regimes were fond of calling their systems “democratic” or “republic” such as *the People’s Republic of China* despite the fact that the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* bears the opposite meaning. The majestic word *Liberal*, once meant freedom from government interference and rule by inner light of reason in the seventeenth century, had come to be synonymous with government regulation and planning by the twentieth century.

The cruelest irony in the transvaluation process is that the triumph of mankind over nature and tradition in the modern world has resulted in his replacement by the machine. Humanism of the modern period promoted the Rational as ideal type of Man. This ideal was already adapted to the machine as *1984* and *Brave New World* illustrated through the removal of faith and the attenuation of human nature to mechanical existence. French Intellectual Jacques Ellul argued further that “This type [of man] exists to support technique [technological acceleration] and serve the machine, but eventually he will be eliminated because he has become superfluous . . . the great hope that began with the notion of human dominance over the machine ends with human replacement by the machine.”[\[4\]](#)

The Devil’s Logic

What we fear will happen is already here because we fear it; it will overtake us according to our fears; it will recede according to our love. (1 John 2)

Human Replacement does not necessarily mean total human extinction, a cyborg race that fundamentally alters human nature will cause a pseudo-extinction—meaning part of humanity, the Machine Class, those most fit for technological evolution will ascend to the next stage, leaving the great majority behind. The movie *Elysium* (2011) offers an excellent

illustration: the technological elite, who reap all the benefits from technological advance control the earth from an orbiting space station. H. G. Wells in his famous novel *The Time Machine* painted a similar picture of human evolution that branched into two different species: the hideous cannibalistic Morlocks, “the Under-grounders,” their only principle was necessity, feeding off the beautiful, yet docile Eloi, “the Upper-worlders,” whose only emotion was fear.[{5}](#)

When fear dominates our thinking, love is absent from our motives. To say, “It is necessary” in defense of technological practice, abdicates choice, giving unlimited reign to technological acceleration, i.e. abortion, government surveillance, or digital conversion. “Fear” and “necessity” are the devil’s logic. Necessity imposes itself through fear of being left behind by “technological progress.”

Necessity is not the Mother of Invention, but the Father of Lies! New technology becomes necessity only after it is invented. There is no conscious need for what does not yet exist. Technological need establishes itself through habitual use creating dependence and finally normalcy in the next generation who cannot relate to a past devoid of modern technological essentials.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” serves as our mandate, if we wish to create a future of universal love and empathy instead of universal speed and memory.

Knowledge without wisdom leads to disaster. “Where is the wisdom lost in knowledge?”[{6}](#) Wisdom is the loving use of knowledge. Love counsels limits to knowledge for the liberation of all. Fear dictates limitless necessity, enslaving all.

A choice faces us. Say “yes!” to God and “no!” to *limitless* advance. Otherwise mankind faces replacement by the new digital god: Machinehead!

Notes

1. George Orwell, 1984 [{New York: HBJ, Inc., 1949}](#), 17)
2. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), 285.
3. Ibid, 1.
4. Lawrence J. Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 104-105).
5. H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (New York: Bantam, 1982 [1895]).
6. T.S. Eliot quoted in Huston Smith, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991, 5).

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Predictions for the 21st Century

From our 2015 vantage point, let's look back at predictions made in 1999 about trends which would shape this century. Although far from the end of this century, we can make a preliminary assessment of these predictions. Were they on the right track or are they already veering from current reality?

For this exercise, we drew on predictions made by seventeen scholars in 1999, published in *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*.[\[1\]](#) They discussed what they were expecting in this next century.



Past vs. Future

Some of the scholars took the approach of looking at prior centuries to see what they could learn to help them predict future trends.

Writer Charlotte Allen^{2} began by stating, “Palm-reading the lifestyles of the future usually sets you up to be proved wrong,” and looked at the last two millennia to prove her point. First, someone predicting the future in the year 1 BC would probably talk about the Roman Empire and how it was entrenched and likely to remain the dominant power. But, of course the big event of the millennium was the beginning and growth of Christianity, still impacting our world today, while the Roman Empire is only a memory. Then she notes that the future of European civilization looked grim in the year 1000, but “it turned out to be the century of European expansion and great advances in science and economics.”

Looking ahead, she had a fairly negative outlook for the West: “The combination of the new people and a fading sense of common values seems to spell disaster . . .” But on a worldwide scale, she saw us trending toward a great religious revival, the same trend that changed the outcomes of the previous two millennia.

Assessing her forecast today, we continue to see a fading sense of common values in our society and can only hope that a great religious revival will occur.

Another forecaster, political scientist Andrew Bacevich,^{3} sees Americans becoming very self-centered in their view of the world. At the beginning of the last century, Woodrow Wilson brought in the idea of American global preeminence. At the end, Bill Clinton modified this sentiment to, “the allure of globalization lies in . . . the promise of gain without pain.” Bacevich believes this attitude of taking advantage of our position in the world order will continue to grow

throughout this century.

However, now President Obama has brought a new idea—denying that America should be globally preeminent but rather, just one of many nations, an idea offering the promise of pain without gain. We suffer the pain of conflict with no real expectation of gaining greater respect for democracy.

The Role of Religion

One area of interest in 1999 predictions is how the role of Christianity may change. Three of our forecasters touched on this subject.

Physicist Stephen Barr^{4} believed little progress will be made in answering top questions of science. Questions such as “What is consciousness, and how does it fit into . . . the physical world?” However, he believed we will make strides reconciling science and religion. He stated, “For many, the scientific spirit came to be defined in opposition to faith. This hostility . . . really involves an inner contradiction that is coming to the surface.” It would become clear to most scientists that there is more to this existence than physical science. “By proclaiming the truth about man, religion will be found to be not an enemy of reason, . . . but perhaps its last defender.”

Theologian Peter Leithart^{5} believed this century will see the West becoming the primary mission field for Christians from places like South Korea. He wrote, “The same nations swearing fealty to Christ a millennium ago are now among the most secular on the earth.” Success in the West may only come after the current situation is reduced to rubble through removing the constraints once held in place by common Christian values. In which case, “the West will have to relearn the habits of Christian civilization from those once considered barbarians.”

Psychiatrist and author Jeffrey Satinover^{6} believed the teachings of the Third Reich are prevailing over the teachings of Christ. “Mercy killing, abortion, infanticide, [all] once seen as repulsive has been transformed into . . . beauty.” He sees our best universities focused on teaching a perverted view of fairness. “The American mind isn’t just being closed, it’s being evacuated,” i.e., filled with inconsistent thinking. The system which should be promoting truth and protecting us from such politically correct drivel is religion. As he pointed out, “God Himself is doing just fine, but His earthly defenders are on the ropes . . . [after all] genuine religion claims for itself the ability to know what’s true,” and yet we are not proclaiming or defending truth. Without the broader truth of Christianity, we may lose our identities completely.

Three very different pictures were forecast. One, optimistically, believes religion will be the last defender of reason, while another believes our hope lies in becoming a mission field, and a third worries that Christianity may be discarded. Fifteen years into this millennium, it appears the latter two are closer to the trajectory of society, but the optimistic view is still a possibility when fueled by the prayers of believers.

Key Drivers in this Century

Some predictions made in 1999 about this century deal with the underlying forces shaping this century.

Philosopher and theologian William Dembski^{7} predicted that “information is the primary stuff of the coming age.” In the last century, the computer helped introduce an age where the amount of information we were able to use increased dramatically. But information may be far more fundamental in this universe. Should information be regarded as “a basic property of the universe, alongside matter and energy”? In other words, rather than information being something created

by man, it may be a primary contributor to the creation and being of the universe.

Information as a driving factor of the material universe helps us to understand how our conscious thoughts are a part of it as well. As Dembski quotes physicist Paul Davies, "If matter turns out to be a form of organized information, then consciousness may not be so mysterious after all."

Why is this concept important to religion and faith? If information is not primary, the world is seriously hampered in what it can reveal. We've seen this with the rise of modern science revealing nothing about God except that God is a lawgiver. But if information is the primary stuff, then there are no limits whatsoever on what the world can in principle reveal.

However, another prognosticator, journalist Hilton Kramer,[\[8\]](#) warned that dealing with the deluge of information will be a critical factor in maintaining a healthy life and society in this century. He stated, "All the portents point to an acceleration of the merry, mindless, technology-driven surrender to the complacent nihilism that has already overtaken so many of the institutions of cultural life. . . our democratic society has lost the power to protect . . . from the evil effect of this cultural imperative." The sea of information has the effect of removing the idea of a standard of truth for righteous living. With so many competing standards vying for their attention, many have given up on pursuing any concept of truth. This thinking has a devastating effect on life based upon Jesus, the one who said, "For this reason I was born . . . to testify to the TRUTH." (John 18:37) For the church, "everything will depend on its ability to marshal a principled resistance to the influence of popular culture" and the sea of inconsistent information.

One sixth of the way through this century, we see both the importance of information as a fundamental force and the

difficulty we have dealing with the vast amount of information constantly vying for our attention. Both of these forecasts are continuing along a path to fruition in this century.

Relating to Religion

Let's consider next the perversion of tolerance and the future of ecumenism.

Author Glenn Tinder^{9} posited that the meaning of tolerance had shifted from "a willingness to put up with the characteristics of others" to a distinctly different stand "that all beliefs should be considered equally true, except for any belief that states your beliefs are correct and another's are wrong." He wrote, "Tolerance easily becomes acquiescence in the submergence of truth into a shifting variety of opinions. . . [this view] cannot be acceptable to . . . Christians . . . challenged . . . to develop an attitude toward the religious and cultural confusions surrounding them that is tolerant" in a way that is distinct from today's new tolerance.

Tinder suggested using the term "forbearance," reflecting a view imbued with brotherly love, a recognition of a diversity of views, and an understanding that one should speak out for the truth as one knows it. "In an era that says to us every day, 'there is no Truth,' the art of forbearance might at least help us resist the temptations of relativism."

In 2015, the post-modern definition of tolerance continues to hold sway. But a discernible trend to use another term to describe the loving attitude Christians have toward others has not appeared. The fight against promoting any set of ideas as equally valuable is continuing but with no discernible progress.

Princeton University law professor Robert George^{10} looked back to the Second Vatican Council in 1965 when many mainline

Protestants and Catholics were wondering if it were a precursor to ultimate reunification of the Christian Church. Surprisingly, by 1999 it was not the left talking of ecumenicalism, but rather the religious right. The consistency of moral positions in the Catholic Church and in evangelical circles had blossomed into a genuine spiritual engagement.

“How can there be genuine spiritual fellowship between people who sincerely consider each other to be in error on profoundly important religious questions?” George suggested it was genuine because it took religious faith and religious differences seriously.

Their common goal of combatting the increasing rise of non-Christian thought would cause them to work together. He stated, “I am even hopeful of its capacity to survive victories—though that of course is the far greater challenge.”

Today, in 2015, cooperation continues between conservative Catholics and evangelicals on moral issues in our world. Some Catholic and evangelical leaders released the Manhattan Declaration calling for the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage, and freedom of religion. And, in 2011, the organization, Evangelicals and Catholics Together, released a statement supporting religious liberty.

What Rules Our World

We have been looking at predictions made for this century in 1999 about factors that would rule our world situation today and in the future.

Theologian Paul Griffiths^{11} noted that at the end of the first millennium, the primary institutional form was the church. During the second millennium, it was joined by the nation-state and corporations. Entering the third millennium, “the forces . . . are now primarily economic and secondarily

political” with the churches existing at the margin of society.

He predicted the significance of corporations will advance as nation-states decline, making us a world not defined by what we believe, but by what we consume. Hopefully “as the bankruptcy . . . of the corporate promise begins . . . to become evident, people turn . . . to the churches with renewed passion.” To become anything other than a religious preference box on a census form, churches must look to provide a message that offers a hope of resistance.

Today, we are more driven by consumption. Time will tell if Griffiths is right and this trend will ultimately lead us back to the church with renewed passion.

Legal scholar Robert Bork^{12} predicted the “rule of law” will no longer have independent moral force of its own. Bureaucracies will lay down most of what governs with little accountability to the people. Elections and legislative deliberation will be disconnected from the real governance, making politics simply entertainment. “Democracy will consist of the chaotic struggle to influence decision makers who are not responsive to elections.”

Today, we are seeing the President and bureaucracy taking away the legislative authority of the Congress. If anything, this process seems to be picking up steam in the first half of 2015. If this trend remains unchecked, Bork’s prediction will come to fruition.

Francis Cardinal George^{13} foresaw a major shift in the forces of global conflict. Where most conflicts were between states, in this new century we will see the clash between modern Western states, Asian civilizations and Islamic civilization. Uncertainty about the intentions of other civilizations will produce fear between them. For example, the post-modernity of the West directly attacks the pre-modern,

faith-based culture of the Islamic societies.

George felt Christians should be open to Muslim cooperation in “addressing the moral failures of modernity.” The church could take the lead in creating a “globalization of solidarity.”

So far in this century, the clash between the West and Islamic civilizations is at the forefront of world relationships with no significant signs of a breakthrough in understanding or compromise.

Looking back over the last fifteen years, many of these predictions from 1999 are roughly on track. These pundits did not paint an encouraging view of the future. It is incumbent on evangelicals to pray fervently and work diligently to change western society for Christ over the next 85 years.

Notes

1. First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life.
2. Charlotte Allen, “What Can We Reasonably Hope For,” www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-110. Accessed July 26, 2015.
3. Andrew Bacevich, “What Can We Reasonably Hope For,” www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-47. Accessed July 26, 2015.
4. Stephen Barr, “What Can We Reasonably Hope For,” www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-23. Accessed July 26, 2015.
5. Peter Leithart, “What Can We Reasonably Hope For,” www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-26. Accessed July 26, 2015.
6. Jeffrey Satinover, “What Can We Reasonably Hope For,” www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-110.

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8. Hilton Kramer, "What Can We Reasonably Hope For," www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-113. Accessed July 26, 2015.

9. Glenn Tinder, "What Can We Reasonably Hope For," www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-28. Accessed July 26, 2015.

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11. Paul Griffiths, "What Can We Reasonably Hope For," www.firstthings.com/article/2000/01/what-can-we-reasonably-hope-for-1. Accessed July 26, 2015.

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Crimping Consciences: Texas City Railroads Pro-Gay Ordinance

Byron Barlowe blogs about the his city's Anti-Discrimination ordinance intended to give full recognition to the LGBT community at the expense of those who disagree.

New Anti-Discrimination Policy Approved

According to the [Dallas Morning News Plano Blog](#), "In a split vote Monday, the Plano City Council passed the controversial Equal Rights Policy [ERP] over the objections of many residents in the standing-room-only crowd.

The amendment to the city's 1989 anti-discrimination policy extends protections from housing, employment and public accommodation discrimination to include sexual orientation, gender identity and other categories" like veterans. While no one objected to the inclusion of veterans, an overwhelming number of surprised and very lately aware (as in, the day of) citizens voiced strong opposition. These objections, while noted, seemed to make little to no difference to the city council and certainly to Mayor Harry LaRosiliere, who was so eager to vote for the statute that he went out of order during proceedings.

As a Plano resident who publicly urged the council to vote "No" on the measure, I offer some reflections on the issue—both local and larger—from a biblically informed worldview.

Good Intentions: Trying to Legislate

Values *Directly*

Rather than seeking to legislate merely out of a set of values—an unavoidable reality—the Plano City Council clearly tried to impose a set of values directly onto the public by adopting this more expansive anti-discrimination ordinance. Such legislative overreach has become part and parcel of an increasingly politically correct polity known as the United States of America. Plano is now more PC. While this kind of ordinance is not only inadvisable because it cannot hope to work well, it also steps beyond the scope of a proper role of government.

IT CANNOT WORK BECAUSE . . .

We often hear the phrase “You can’t legislate morality.” Well, yes and no. While the very nature of human law at its root is a delineation of and codification of right vis a vis wrong—that is, strictures or incentives administered by the state as a morally informed code of conduct—it is also true that government cannot successfully impose morality, per se, onto the consciences of their citizens.

Yet, that is precisely what such ordinances as Plano’s ERP seeks to do. Plano’s “out” regarding the problem of conscientious objection? City Attorney Paige Mims assures us that if anyone outside of the many exempted statuses has a moral or religious objection, they can go through a waiver process. This is, on its face, an undue imposition on businesspeople who don’t fall under exempted categories like education, non-profit or religious. Recent legal precedent (see Hobby Lobby case) makes clear that religious businesses do not somehow lay down their rights of conscience when they go into business.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT. . .

When government entities try to arbitrate motives, for example hate crimes laws that purport to regulate actions based on the attitudinal intent of the actor, it steps into a sphere where

it does not, indeed it cannot, belong. In other words, it takes on a godlike sovereignty to righteously discern between this and that intention. Can't be done. Not righteously. Not fairly.

People—including city legal departments and judges—are fallible humans who lack the innate ability to administer justice based primarily or solely on someone's internal motivation. "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out" (Proverbs 20:5). Drawing out the "purposes" of a man's or woman's heart is certainly not a governmental role. But this is what it takes to know motives, a role only God claims full access to, and a role traditionally reserved for clergy, other spiritual advisers and psychologists.

Here is a pithy bunch of [biblical worldview teaching on the role of government](#).

Biblically, the proper role of government is founded in limits primarily written in Romans 13. As I understand it, a biblical worldview on government's role is limited to: fighting wars, passing and enforcing laws concerning public human interactions and that's about it. Anything else falls under the jurisdiction of religious and social institutions. Government: stay out!

I'm not arguing for such a state of affairs as an absolute in the real world, but as a plumb line to measure when government has stepped over its proper boundaries. In the case of Plano's ERP government has overstepped.

Progressivism on Parade

The subtext of public deliberations on Plano's ERP was plainly a progressive agenda. Why else would a city seek to get "ahead of the curve" on a social issue such as gender bias or sexual identity discrimination or whatever the euphemism is today?

(Refer above to the value of limited role of government, which was expressed repeatedly to the council by citizens of Plano.) The council, challenged that there are no known cases of such discrimination, seemed to shrug dismissively and invoke the need to “get ahead of” the issue.

“The issue of equality is a basic human rights issue and the choice for some to focus on a person’s sexuality is conflating the issue,” said the Mayor. Conflating what with what? Either the mayor misunderstands the term “conflating” (making things the same) or he’s basically accusing objectors of the very thing that has been foisted upon them—namely, making one’s sexual choices (not their true sexuality) the determiner of human rights. This is like watching someone start a fight over a piece of land and then accusing the one attacked of starting that same fight over that very piece of land!

Questioning the need for the statute was otherwise met with a not-so-veiled sense of accusation, an implication of inherent bias on the part of the objectors, despite an overall congenial atmosphere. So, if I question the veracity of the claim to need such a policy or ask for reasonable cause, I am automatically anti-gay? That’s patently false and unfair. Yet that was the sense of things in a politically correct undercurrent that is the zeitgeist of our day.

Worldview War

This is the serious game begun back in the 1970s by Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen who spelled out the propaganda project of the gay lobby in a book titled [*After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear & Hatred of Gays in the 90s*](#). Now that their jamming (name-calling, guilt by association and other tactics) have worked so well, only an implicit inference need be made at such meetings as Monday night’s. It has a chilling—no—a virtual shutdown effect.

Yet, many citizens displayed aplomb when speaking on the

Constitution and related matters. Businesspeople appealed to the unfairness of having to seek redress through a voucher system. One person well said in response: "The Constitution is my waiver." First Amendment (or any other) rights do not require special permission. It's government's role merely to ensure them, which Plano may think it's doing by elevating ever more special interests to protected status. That is an upside-down approach that's illegitimate no matter how much case law exists or how many other cities and companies enact similar policies.

The "We're Just Following" Fallacy

An admittedly very arguable point I'd like to add: Mayor LaRosiliere and City Attorney Mims claimed that other major cities in Texas have such statutes on the books. Hence we are not, as implicated, "out front" taking legal risks, but rather are following others' lead. This seems disingenuous.

Are we "out in front" of the issue or are we, as strongly emphasized by the Mayor, simply one in a fairly long line of municipalities trying to codify fair treatment to people of all lifestyles and segments? One could make the case that Plano is in the vanguard overall but not first in implementation. However, that is unsatisfactory to many. You can't ultimately have it both ways: either you're progressive on social issues (which does not truly reflect Plano well) or you're just falling in line with current legal trends.

The "Gay Gene" at the Bottom of the Debate

One thing is sure: *increased expansion of rights and privileges to previously unaddressed parties is the trend in our culture—and lots of it has to do with sexuality in a newly politicized way.* But we thought government was supposed to get out of our bedrooms?

Any claim to that distinction has been lost with the adoption of the near-universal belief in what amounts to a “[gay gene](#)”—that a person inherently possesses a sexual identity that may indeed be homosexual or of other varieties. This, over and against a mere proclivity or attraction to the same sex, which leaves room for choice, which is an ethical issue. Remove choice regarding homosexuality, you remove any basis of objection. Remove objection, you can run roughshod over any cultural restraints on the free and damaging expression of sexuality outside the bounds of its Inventor, God. Remove those restrictions, celebrate the lifestyle, then codify and impugn those who disagree, and the After the Ball agenda is a complete success.

Monday night’s meeting was an incremental victory toward this end, whether or not players on the city council or either side of the issue realized it. Regarding objectors’ motives, it’s one thing to care for individuals whose sexual identity is in question or those who act out a gay lifestyle and it’s another kind of thing entirely to exercise one’s rights to oppose codification of these choices and lifestyles. I and many of my friends there that night were doing one while we practice the other in private situations, too.

There is no cognitive dissonance or hypocrisy here—one can do both public square advocacy of conservative values and also outreach to individuals who struggle in a certain area of sin—namely other-than-heterosexual-wed sex. True Christlike love does not affirm that which the Bible condemns, but shows grace nonetheless.

There is a Precedent for Unintended Consequences and Abuse

Plano’s ERP sets up the same oppression of religious objectors that has been seen already across the U.S. with cake bakers, wedding venue owners and others who—for reasons of

conscience—refuse to do business with certain parties in select situations like gays getting married. Yes, exemptions were written into Plano’s ordinance, but does anyone seriously believe these will stand up under judicial scrutiny in this day and age? The erosion of rights continues—and saying so, again, is not to be confused with [intolerance](#).

This brand of identity politics is rooted in the cultural adoption of the doctrine of a gay gene (“God or nature made me this way!”), which is at a worldview level, where most objectors to the statute were coming from. We object to the underlying presupposition that homosexuality is not utterly tied up with choice, which is so fundamental to opposition to the gay rights issue. (I almost come off as a throwback rube for even bringing it up in today’s enlightened culture—which furthers my point!)

The Condescension that Falsely Pits Feelings vs. Facts

Monday night’s proceedings—at least from the point of view of the city council—were saturated with what has been called the Sacred / Secular Split. On this view, there are basically two levels of discourse: an area of public life informed largely by science but also by enlightened social values (invariably liberal / progressive / non-traditional ones) balanced unevenly by a lesser valued, private world of emotional / psychological / religious sentiments.

The former—where real knowledge resides—should supposedly be the domain of public policy. The latter—again, a private set of often closely held feelings and values that should have no sway in the public arena yet the existence of which are somewhat guarded by government and other institutions—are to be tolerated as inevitable but will hopefully catch up with social contracts like those being forged by the gay lobby and societal institutions across the waterfront. The notion is:

“You have a right to your private opinion. Just don’t bring it into the public square.”

This attitude, this taken-for-granted starting place was most evident in closing remarks made by several city council members—all of whom happened to vote for the policy. One council member waxed eloquent on his world travels, noting that the most advanced societies he’d run across made it a point never to discriminate. (I don’t know where he’s been, but perhaps his hotel’s staff might beg to differ—just guessing.)

More poignantly, he and another council member who said that her Christian faith informed her “yes” vote, was only one more who joined a chorus of comments like:

“There were lots of strong feelings on the topic of discussion tonight” and

“This is a very emotional issue for many. . . .”

The plain inference was that objections were raised out of the private, sacred area of life, laden with “emotion” and “feelings” while effective debate occurred on the level of law, fact and agreed-upon societal norms (at least the evolving kind that our “City of Excellence” wants to be known for).

Pronouncements by a clergy woman (Disciples of Christ) who serves as an officer of a Plano Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender association, the mayor and at least one more gay advocate that the passage of the ERP was just “the right thing to do” obviously paints the vast majority of citizens as those who want to do the wrong thing. According to Mayor LaRosiliere, “Providing equal rights to everyone is the right thing to do.” Rights to what? Rights in displacement of whose rights? The task in a pluralistic society is to find that fairest middle ground—and that failed Monday night.

Apparently bigotry, at least ignorance, was the only thing standing in the way of Plano's ERP. Thank you for the condescension. Which leads to my final point: the race card was deftly played by none other than Mayor LaRosiliere where it has no place. And the Mayor did precisely what he accused others of doing, that is . . .

. . . **Conflating Race & Sexual Lifestyle**

Plano's Mayor ended deliberations (or nearly did) with [a speech](#) on the equivalency of historical human rights movements to the current push for special privileges for sexual identities and lifestyles. His well-written story arc was centered on the question, "Why are we doing this now?" In a series of juxtaposed historical references, he posed the question he deemed was being needlessly asked about Plano's Equal Rights Protection ordinance: **Why pass this now if there is no case on record of any discrimination?** In the case of the infamous Dredd-Scott Supreme Court decision that ruled blacks were 3/5 of a person one might ask, he said, "Why are we doing this now?"

"If we spoke in 1919," LaRosiliere continued, "to allow women to vote, the question would be, 'Why are you oppressing me and making me subject to this now.'" He went on to paint discrimination against the Irish in early 19th Century New York and segregation in the South in the 20th Century as morally equivalent instances comparable to the current situation—ostensibly oppression of gay, lesbian and transgender citizens.

Very cleverly devised rhetorical device, that. But it **presupposes a moral equivalency that a black man sitting beside me rejected outright.** This gentlemen from Nigeria was so confused by the proceedings and the Mayor's speech capping them off that he was convinced the entire issue at hand was racism! When I asked him this question, he unequivocally answered "No!": "Do you think that homosexual identity is the

same kind of thing as you being black or being from Nigeria?”

“No!”

And rightly, **my new African friend—who is a Christian—was bothered by the conflation of the two and the use of such rhetoric to elevate a class of people based on their sinful behavior and identity to it as the basis to extend so-called human rights. We all have the right to fair treatment as humans made in God’s image. We do not have a right to socially engineer law to force the compromise of conscience that is being carried out by Plano’s new ordinance.**

As I pleaded with the council not to allow, we will surely read about this case going to court, being found unconstitutional and otherwise unlawful and costing this taxpayer and all others unnecessarily.

Ideas, worldviews, do indeed have consequences.

The Development of Modern Culture – Critical Role of Christianity Downplayed

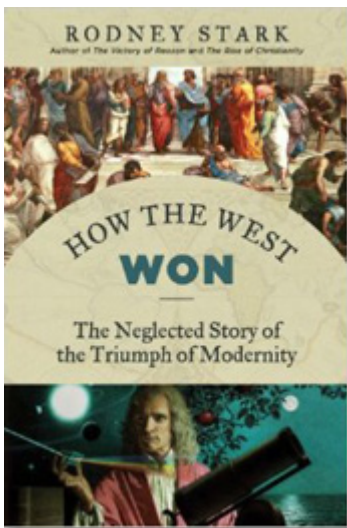
Steve Cable explodes 5 myths about history, showing Christianity’s true critical role in the progress and development of culture.

Is our history really what you have been taught in school? For at least the last five decades in schools across this nation, most of us have digested a similar litany of facts about the



development of the Western world. Among these commonly accepted facts are these five:

1. The Roman Empire introduced and maintained a period of relative peace in which innovation and free thought could flourish.
2. The Dark Ages, coming after the fall of the Roman Empire, was a period of over 500 years during which the European world languished in feudalism and ignorance.
3. The Protestant Reformation, fueled by the invention of the printing press, introduced a new era of religious freedom.
4. The Scientific Revolution was the result of Europe casting aside religious “superstitions” during the so-called Enlightenment.
5. Protestant missionaries were a negative, colonizing influence on the non-Western world.



In his recent book, entitled *How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity*, Rodney Stark, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, questions these “historical facts” from our childhood along with many others. His premise, based on the current state of historical data and analysis, is that the conventional wisdom about the history of the western world was tainted by the prejudices and lack of knowledge of the early historical writers. His view is backed up by the research and writings of many contemporary scholars. He clearly points out that what is taught in our schools lags far behind the common knowledge held by top researchers in the field. It is interesting to note that this phenomenon is very similar to the difference between high school textbooks on the

evolution of man and the current state of research into the origins of life.

Stark concludes that contrary to the conventional wisdom of high school textbooks, the worldview that developed as a result of following after the God revealed in Christian scripture was critical to the advent of our modern age. Only a society steeped in the message of an all-powerful, loving, creator of this universe was postured to take on the scientific and societal endeavors which are crucial to our society today. According to Stark, our modern world is not the result of key people freeing themselves from the chains of religious intolerance to pursue knowledge and truth, but rather the result of people seeking to better understand this universe created out of nothing into an orderly something by our Lord and God.

In the remainder of this article, we will look at these five key concepts of our history still taught to our students today and see how contemporary research has significantly modified or completely discredited them.

The Impact of Greece, Judaism, and Rome

Apart from periods of Jewish history, most of the world before 600 B.C. was controlled by systems of government that awarded the elite few at the expense of the rest of society. In China, India and Egypt societies had this common theme: "Wealth is subject to devastating taxes and the constant threat of usurpation; the challenge is to keep one's wealth, not to make it productive."[\[1\]](#) Their rulers strived to make it so. Stark pointed this out: "As Ricardo Caminos put it about the ancient Egyptians, 'Peasant families always wavered between abject poverty and utter destitution.' If the elite seizes all production above the minimum needed for survival, people have no motivation to produce more."[\[2\]](#)

Beginning around 600 B.C., the Greek city-states prior to the

reigns of Phillip of Macedonia and his son, Alexander the Great, were the first to offer a different economic model on a large scale. "The major benefit of Greek democracy was sufficient freedom so that individuals could benefit from innovations making them more productive, with the collective result of economic progress."[\[3\]](#) This unprecedented freedom was partly the result of Greece having an unfavorable geography with an abundance of mountains, no abundance of natural resources, and no large navigable river. This geography helped to promote the large number of small, independent city states. "Thus, having an unfavorable geography contributed to the greatness of Greece, for disunity and competition were fundamental to everything else."[\[4\]](#) Once Greece was under the rule of the Macedonians and later the Romans, the scale of innovation in the areas of democracy, economic progress, the arts, and technology slowed dramatically.

Unlike other peoples near the cities of Greece, the Jews were greatly impacted by the Greek philosophers. Why? The God the Jews worshipped was "conscious, concerned and rational"[\[5\]](#) and as such the Jewish theologians were committed to reasoning about God from the things God revealed through Scripture. At this time the vast majority of Jews lived in the Diaspora outside of Palestine. And so, like the Apostle Paul, these Jews were exposed to Greek thought filtered through their understanding of Scripture.

Of course, the early Christians accepted this view of God but also added the idea that our knowledge of God and of his creation is progressive.[\[6\]](#) Understand that our early Christian fathers did not wholeheartedly embrace Greek ideas, choosing to show how Christian doctrines were much more rational. But they did embrace the ideas of reason and logic which were behind Greek philosophy. This train of thought by our Christian fathers set the stage for the development and advances of science. As Stark notes, "The truth is that

science arose only because the doctrine of the rational creator of a rational universe made scientific inquiry plausible.”{7}

The rule of the Roman Empire provided centuries of relative peace and free travel throughout the Mediterranean area. This *pax Romana* facilitated the spread of Christianity across the Mediterranean world and thus played an important role in the growth of Christianity. However, Stark suggests that “the Roman Empire as at best a pause in the rise of the West, and more plausibly a setback.”{8}

Most of us probably view the Roman Empire as an expanded version of the great age of Greece where advancements were common in philosophy, commerce and technology. Stark points out that as a large, centrally controlled empire, Rome had plenty of labor and a large distance between the privileged few and the laboring masses. Consequently, the art and literature of the Roman period was fundamentally Greek. There were very few technological innovations developed during this period. In fact, “the Romans made little or no use of some known technologies, e.g. water power.”{9} They preferred to use manual labor rather than employ labor saving devices.

Stark suggests that two events during the period of Roman control were important to the development of our modern culture: the Christianization of the empire and the fall of Rome. “It was Rome that fell, not civilization. . . the millions of residents of the former empire did not suddenly forget everything they knew. To the contrary, with the stultifying effects of Roman repression now ended, the glorious journey toward modernity resumed.”{10}

The Not-So-Dark Ages

My understanding of the Dark Ages as a student from the 1970’s is probably similar to yours. It was pictured as a time in which European culture took a step backward from the advances

of the Roman Empire and made little or no progress in advancing culture, economics, philosophy, or technology. It was a time characterized by wars and the stultifying oppression of the Catholic Church. Many historians of the past wrote that the fall of Rome cast Europe into this dismal age, aided by Christianity which celebrated poverty and urged contentment.

Stark, along with most modern historians, take a far different view of this period of Western history. Stark puts it this way: "The fall of Rome was, in fact, the most beneficial event in the rise of Western civilization, precisely because it unleashed creative competition among the hundreds of independent political units, which, in turn resulted in rapid and profound progress."[\[11\]](#)

In this culture of independent political units, trade developed and expanded rapidly, the average person ate better and grew larger than in the past because the people could now put to personal use the wealth Rome had previously squeezed from them. "Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Dark Ages myth is that it was imposed on what was actually 'one of the great innovative eras of mankind.'"[\[12\]](#) During this period technology was developed and put into use "on a scale no civilization had previously known."[\[13\]](#)

One of the strongest influences during this period came from the Scandinavians, the Vikings. "The Viking merchants traveled a complex network of trade routes extending as far as Persia. . . (The) Vikings had excellent arms, remarkable ships, and superb navigational skills . . . Their boats were far superior to anything found elsewhere on earth at that time."[\[14\]](#) Our history lessons, however, placed an emphasis on great empires rather than movements impacting our way of life. "Not only have they continued to regret the fall of Rome, but they remember Charlemagne as the man who almost 'saved' Europe. In fact, the Scandinavians were as civilized as the Franks, while William the Conqueror was certainly as able as Charlemagne,

and considerably more tolerant.”[{15}](#)

One of the major events during this period was the rise of capitalism as an economic driver. Capitalism can only exist in societies with free markets, secure property rights and the right of individuals to work where they wish. The Christian West, out from under the yoke of the Roman Empire, was the only society where this move was possible. As Stark explains, “Of the major world faiths, only Judaism and Christianity have devoted serious and sustained attention to human rights, as opposed to human duties. Put another way, the other great faiths minimize individualism and stress collective obligations. They are . . . cultures of shame rather than cultures of guilt. There is not even a word for freedom in the languages in which their scriptures are written.”[{16}](#) Counter to the position of earlier historians who put the advent of capitalism much later in history, capitalism not only thrived during this period but had been fully debated by theologians who on the whole gave it general approval.

You may remember being taught that during these Dark Ages that Islamic scholarship and technological innovation kept society moving forward in the areas of science and technology. In fact, Stark points out, “The ‘Golden Era’ of Islamic science and learning is a myth. Some Muslim-occupied societies gave the appearance of sophistication only because of the culture sustained by their subject peoples – Jews and various brands of Christianity.”[{17}](#) In fact when they later cleansed their society of these other people, they soon fell back into a state where any technology was bought from the West and in many cases had to be operated by Westerners. One area where this was revealed on multiple occasions was in the area of military strategy and technology. In numerous battles between A.D. 1200 and 1600, Western forces on land and on the oceans typically inflicted casualties upon their Muslim foes at a rate ranging from 10 to 1,000 Muslim casualties for every casualty among the Western forces.

“Despite the record of Muslim failure against Western military forces, far too many recent Western historians promulgate politically correct illusions about Islamic might, as well as spurious claims that once upon a time Islamic science and technology were far superior to that of a backward and intolerant Europe.”[\[18\]](#)

“In 1148 all Christians and Jews were ordered to convert to Islam or leave Moorish Spain immediately, on pain of death. . . . And as (they) disappeared, they took the “advanced” Muslim culture with them. What they left behind was a culture so backward that it couldn’t even copy Western technology but had to buy it and often even had to hire Westerners to use it.”[\[19\]](#)

What we had been taught were Dark Ages of no progress were actually a period of great progress in the development of individual freedom and the concept of capitalism.

The Reformation and Religious Freedom

Martin Luther, the catalytic figure of the Reformation, asserted that salvation is God’s gift, freely given, and gained entirely by faith in Jesus as the redeemer. Each person must establish his or her own personal relationship with God. This new emphasis on individual freedom and responsibility was certainly consistent with the key aspects of Western modernity. But the way these ideas played out in society were a different matter.

The popular view promulgated by English and German historians was that the Protestant Reformation, which roughly occurred between A.D. 1515 and 1685, was facilitated by the printing press and the spread of literacy, resulting in a “remarkable revival of popular piety and the spread of religious liberty.” You were probably taught that this new view of piety, placing the responsibility of a relationship with God squarely on the shoulders of the individual rather than on the intervening

work of the Church, created a new environment of religious tolerance and personal piety. This environment was invigorating to the concepts of scientific and economic progress. However, the real situation was far different from this idealistic view promulgated by English and German historians. Far from introducing religious liberty to the masses, the Protestant Reformation was more about switching one monopoly religion for another.

Stark points out three ways in which earlier historians and sociologists have misrepresented what went on in the spread of the Protestant Reformation. These historians and probably your high school history textbook, taught the following about the Reformation:

1. The Reformation introduced an era of religious freedom in Europe
2. The Reformation was able to spread rapidly because of the newly invented printing press
3. The Reformation's spread was partially a result of its attractiveness to the common man.

On the first point, rather than introducing an era of religious freedom, the Reformation produced competing monopoly religions. Depending upon the area in which one lived, the pressure to conform to the religion adopted by that region was immense. So what determined whether your region would be Catholic or Protestant? If the area's current Catholic hierarchy was not operating under the rule of local rulers or councils, the rulers were very likely to convert to a Protestant view, thereby removing the influence of the Catholic Church in their domain. Importantly, it allowed them to loot church property in the name of religion. As Stark point out, "It is all well and good to note the widespread appeal of the doctrine that we are saved by faith alone, but it also must be recognized that Protestantism prevailed only

where the local rulers or councils had not already imposed their rule over the Church. Pocketbook issues prevailed.”{20}

Was it the printing press that allowed the Reformation to spread rapidly? If so, one would expect that cities with printing presses producing Luther’s pamphlets and his Bible, would be most likely to align with Protestantism. Yet what we find is a negative correlation between towns with printers who had published Luther’s Bible and those towns which had converted to Protestantism. The printing press was certainly a factor in spreading Luther’s theology, but if it was the dominant factor we should see a strongly positive correlation, not a negative one. “Indeed, assessments of the impact of printed materials on the success of the Lutheran Reformation too often overlook a critical factor: no more than five percent of Germans in this era could read.”{21}

Finally, a widely held belief is that the Lutheran Reformation touched the hearts of the masses, resulting in a huge revival in personal faith and piety. However, most people were not personally impacted by the theological arguments between Catholicism and Protestantism. The common man in Germany at that time was, at best, semi-Christian. As Stark points out, “Eventually even Martin Luther admitted that neither the tidal wave of publications nor all the Lutheran preachers in Germany had made the slightest dent in the ignorance, irreverence, and alienation of the masses. Luther complained in 1529, “Dear God, help us! . . . The common man, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about Christian doctrine; and indeed many pastors are in effect unfit and incompetent to teach. Yet they all are called Christians, are baptized, and enjoy the holy sacraments – even though they cannot recite either the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed or the Commandments. They live just like animals.”

The Scientific Revolution and Christianity

The term “Scientific Revolution” was coined, referring to the period in the sixteenth and seventeenth century beginning with Copernicus and ending with Newton, when the rate of scientific advancement was thought to have increased dramatically. However, modern historians say that no such revolution occurred, although the role of science definitely matured during that period of time. Many of us remember being taught three aspects of this so-called revolution that we want to consider:

1. Most key scientific contributors had freed themselves from the rigid dogmas of faith.
2. The Protestant Reformation had freed society from “the dead hand of the Catholic Church,” thereby making real scientific thinking possible.
3. Real science could not occur in universities controlled by the churches.

However, Rodney Stark points out that current evidence indicates that all of these claims are false, stating, “Indeed, Christianity was essential to the rise of science, which is why science was a purely Western phenomenon.”[\[22\]](#)

Of the 52 most prominent contributors to scientific advancement during this period, we find that 60% of them were devout believers in Christianity. Only one of them was a skeptic toward the message of Christianity. And the rest were classified as conventionally religious. So, the idea promoted by contemporary philosophers that scientific advancement was the result of freeing themselves from belief in the dogmas of the faith could not be further from the truth.

Of these 52 leaders of the scientific community, 26 were

Protestant and 26 were Catholic. This equal distribution belies the common wisdom that the Protestant revolution allowed real scientific thinking to begin to take root. It appears that prior advances in scientific thought had prepared the minds of these individuals to advance the frontiers even further, regardless of whether they were Protestant or Catholic. Both faiths believed in God as the Intelligent Designer of a rational universe, and a rational universe was one that could be understood through the application of the scientific method.

As noted earlier, most modern historians sided with the statement, "Not only were the universities of Europe not the foci of scientific activity . . . but the universities were the principal centers of opposition for the new conceptions of nature which modern science constructed."[{23}](#) Actually, 92% of these leaders in scientific research spent an extended period of time of ten years or more in the universities. Nearly half of them served as university professors during their careers. In fact, the distinguished historian of science Edward Grant stated, "The medieval university laid far greater emphasis on science than does its modern counterpart."[{24}](#)

Stark wrote, "Science only arose in Christian Europe because only medieval Europeans believed that science was possible and desirable. And the basis of their belief was their image of God and his creation."[{25}](#) As the distinguished mathematician and scientist, Johannes Kepler stated, "The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order and harmony imposed on it by God and which he revealed to us in the language of mathematics."[{26}](#) Thus, the so-called scientific revolution occurred not in spite of Christianity but rather directly because a Christian worldview beckoned them to study the nature of our world more closely.

Protestant Missionaries and the Rise of Western Democracies

Protestant missionaries are often portrayed as the villains of imperialistic expansion. They have often been portrayed as having a greater interest in converting their charges to Western culture than introducing them to eternal life through Jesus Christ. However, their personal and public publications do not support this negative view. On the contrary, "Missionaries undertook many aggressive actions to defend local peoples against undue exploitation by colonial officials." [{27}](#)

Beyond correcting this distorted view of missionary purpose, modern historians have discovered an interesting impact. A recent study has shown that the rise and spread of stable democracies in the non-Western world can be attributed primarily to the impact of Protestant missionaries. According to a study by sociologist Robert Woodberry, [{28}](#) the impact of these missionaries far exceeds that of fifty other control variables such as gross domestic product and whether or not a nation was a British colony. One would think that having a healthy amount of production per individual would be one of the biggest factors leading to a stable democratic government. But the data shows that it has been much more important to have the teaching and leadership development provided by Protestant missionaries.

In addition, the greater number of Protestant missionaries per capita in a nation in 1923, the lower that nation's infant-mortality rate in 2000. In this case, the effect of having Protestant missionaries was more than nine times as large as the effect of current GDP per capita. In other words, having a history of Protestant missionaries is much more important than having a large amount of money in determining a low infant-mortality rate.

Conclusion

Many of us have been given the impression by educators that the scientific, governmental, and societal advances we enjoy are the result of enlightened people taking off their religious blinders and thinking more clearly about these topics. Sociologist Rodney Stark presents compelling data, arguing that in fact it was the unique worldview of Christianity that created societies in which new ideas could foment and flourish. This Christian worldview was fundamental to the advances in economics, science and government common in our current world. Understanding the worldview that fueled the advances making up our modern world is important if we are to continue to move ahead responsibly.

Notes

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What is Technology?

Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese uncovers a disturbing new view of technology: not as neutral, but a way of life that objectifies everything, including people.

The Neutrality View

Most people take a favorable view towards technological progress; new cars, cell phones and computers – what's not to like? They embrace technological innovation as a plus despite the suspicions of questionable things like cloning,



genetic engineering and nuclear weapons. But what is technology anyway? Do we really understand this all-embracing phenomenon directing human history? We often take for granted that we think we know the answer when in fact the meaning of the greatest social mover of all times remains elusive. When it comes to defining technology we are beset with the problem of defining more than just a word, but a concept and whole way of life and worldview.

The typical definition of technology these days says technology is neutral, suggesting that technology is nothing more than tools that people use as needed. Technology is a means to an end and nothing more. All objects are separate and disconnected. They are neutral and value-free, right? Tables, chairs, and light fixtures have nothing to do with each other and express no values in themselves and are completely determined by our use. They are simply objects at our disposal and present no moral problems so long as we use them for good. We can pick up a hammer and use it, then place it back in the tool box when finished. The hammer has appropriate and inappropriate uses. Hitting nails into wood is one of the acceptable uses of a hammer; using it to play baseball is not acceptable. So long as we act as good moral agents we use our technology rightly, or so we think. This definition is so widely accepted that we have trouble ever questioning it. When faced with morally questionable uses of technology we fall back on this old cliché: "technology is neutral," and that settles all disputes. We are all familiar with this popular view and embrace it to some extent. The problem is not that the cliché is so simple or popular, but that it is so wrong. Philosophers have been telling us for decades now that the neutrality of technology definition is wrong and dangerous because it blinds us to the true nature of technology.

The Holistic View

The second view of the nature of technology, held mainly by philosophers, we call the “holistic view.” This view states that the “neutrality view” is false because people hold to it as a means of justifying every type of technology. The neutrality view blinds us to the true nature of technology, which is not value-free. The lack of understanding regarding the true nature of technology creates a serious problem for a society so heavily influenced by technological development. As sociologist Rudi Volti says, “This inability to understand technology and perceive its effects on our society and on ourselves is one of the greatest, if most subtle, problems of an age that has been so heavily influenced by technological change.”^[1] Technology is understood as a social system. We can also call it a worldview, a philosophy of life that sees all things as objects, including people. Instead of defining technology as disparate tools unconnected to each other, philosophers have suggested a more comprehensive definition that says technology does not mean neutral objects ready for use at our convenience, but a way of life that informs and controls everything we do. In other words, technology is a belief system with its own worldview and agenda—more like a religion than a hammer.

This belief system is often called the *essence of technology* or *spirit of technology* and cannot be seen in technological objects because we cannot see the entire system by looking at individual parts. We must grasp the spiritual essence before we can understand its technical parts. The “neutrality view” looks only at parts rather than the whole and misses technology’s true nature. This is a lot like looking at the tires of your car or its engine parts and thinking you now understand a car from seeing separate pieces of it and never seeing how the whole thing fits together.

The holistic view understands technology as a way of life and

spiritual reality that shapes all our thinking. Philosopher Martin Heidegger gives the example of how the Rhine River exists not as a river, but as a source for electricity. Everything becomes stuff ready for usefulness.[{2}](#)

Technology really means an interconnected system rather than a neutral tool. The neutral definition blinds us to the true nature of technology and prevents us from mastering it. Heidegger argued that “we are delivered over to [technology] in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology.”[{3}](#)

Technology as Spirituality

The neutrality argument reassures us that we remain in control of our means rather than our means controlling us. It does not allow us to find the essence of technology in everyday technological objects such as cars, computers, or screw drivers and baseball bats; rather, technology is a way of life and thought that creates a universal system. Technology means the grand accumulation of all the different technological parts into a global system.

Technology is a system of interlocking systems. As philosopher Jacques Ellul said, “It is the aggregate of these means that produces technical civilization.”[{4}](#) Technology is our modern frame of reference that speaks of the profoundly spiritual and not the strictly technical. If we look at individual everyday technologies we will miss it. Instead we must see past the common objects to the larger global system that comprises technology as a social process. In the technological system both humanity and nature have no separate standing or value outside of technical usefulness. People are simply resources to be used and discarded as needed.

This view reveals the depths to which technology shapes our thinking by informing us and conforming us into the image of the machine, which represents the greatest example of technological thinking. Everything is understood as a machine and should function like a machine including the government, the school, the church and you! Bureaucracy is a social machine.

The machine is predictable. It has no freedom. It follows mechanical steps, or linear logic. Step one leads to step two, and so forth. Any deviation from its programming causes chaos and possible break down, which is why the machine is the worst possible analogy for human beings to follow. Yet this is the basis of the entire modern conception of life.[{5}](#) People are not machines that can be programmed; to adopt this conception reverses the role between humanity and its machines, making people conform to the image of the machine rather than vice versa. Machines are our slaves. They do what we tell them to do. They have no will, feelings or desires. Philosophers tell us that the natural relationship between people and machines is in a process of reversal so that we are becoming slaves to technology. We may control our individual use of technology but no one as of yet controls the entire system.[{6}](#)

Neutrality as Modern Myth

Nothing can be explained by the neutrality argument, not even the meaning of "neutrality." It is simply not possible for any technology to be neutral; even the most primitive tools such as fire or stone axes take the form of their designers. Every technology bears inherent values of purpose and goals. Fire has value for a particular reason, to clear the land, cook food, keep people warm and ward off dangerous animals. By their very design, all inventions and tools reflects our values and human nature. Philosopher of Science Jacob Bronowski argued that "to quarrel with technology is to quarrel with the nature of man."[{7}](#) Technology is an extension

of ourselves and expresses human nature, which is never entirely good or bad, but ambivalent. Our technology reflects who we are and nothing more; it is not divine, it will not save the human race; but neither is it animal, but fully human, whose nature is always ambiguous, capable of great acts of kindness and mercy as well as cruelty and evil. People can be self-sacrificial and giving and self-destructive and greedy. There will always be good and bad effects to our inventions. They are a double edged sword that cuts both ways and it is our responsibility to discern between the two.

The modern bias in favor of neutrality reveals our protectionist tendencies towards all things technological. How is it that sinful people can produce morally neutral technology? We would not say that about art. "Oh! All art is morally neutral! It is all a matter of how you use it!" Yet the same creative forces go into producing technology as art. Is there anything neutral about the works of Caravaggio, Da Vinci or Picasso? Why then should there be anything neutral about Facebook or MX missiles?

This appears simple enough, but as modern people addicted to our latest toys and novelties we have difficulty admitting we may have a problem. We don't like to think that too much Facebook might be causing young people to be further isolated from the community because they are more accustomed to relate electronically than in person, or that email actually reduces our ability to communicate because of the absence of tone of voice, body language, eye contact and personal presence. TV and film may have a surreal effect on its message, giving it a dream like quality rather than communicating realism.

Controlling Technology

The solution is not to abandon any of the incredible inventions of the modern age, but to recognize their limits. It is the sign of wisdom that we understand our limits and

work within them. We should proceed along a two tiered path of questioning and the application of values. Ellul said that "It is not a question of getting rid of [technology], but by an act of freedom, of transcending it." {8} The act of questioning is the first act of freedom; by becoming aware of the problem we can assert a measure of freedom and control. Through critical questioning we recognize our limits and thus we are able to exercise a measure of control over technology.

We should develop technologies that reflect our values of freedom, equality and democracy. For example, Ellul did envision in the early 1980's the potential use of computer technology in a way that would create a decentralized source of knowledge that would maintain the values of democracy. We know this now as the internet. However, as Ellul also argued technology cannot change society for the better if we don't change ourselves. The computer can also be used to bring in stifling State control. {9} We will never have a perfect technology that has no problems, but we should be visionaries in how we think about technology and the application of our values to it.

Limits serve as a warning to us. It is obvious that society has progressed in many ways thanks to advanced technology, but society's spiritual regression shares the same condition as advancement. We have not become better people because we live in the twenty-first century rather than the nineteenth century. Without a renewed spiritual and moral framework to direct our development and give new purpose to the system, technology may become the source of our own destruction rather than improvement. An inventory of advancement compares starkly with the litany of potential catastrophe. We have eliminated disease, but also created dangerous levels of overpopulation. We live longer and more abundant lives materially, but are pushing the natural world into extinction. We are able to travel quicker and communicate instantly, contributing to world peace and understanding, but have also developed the

weapons of war to unimaginable levels of devastation.

Without a moral framework to control technology and understand its ethical limits we will go down a path of losing control of technology's direction, allowing it to develop autonomously. This means it will develop in a predetermined linear direction, like a clock that will inevitably strike midnight once wound up. That direction as we have seen moves inexorably closer to the mechanization of humanity and nature. With the right value-system we can begin to reassert control. The choice is yours. Where do you want to go?

Notes

1. Rudi Volti, *Society and Technological Change*, 4th ed. (New York: Worth Publishes, 2001), 3.
2. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York; Harper, 1977), 16, 17.
3. Ibid., 4.
4. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. by John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964), 2.
5. John Herman Randall, Jr. *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 227.
6. Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine; Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966); Idem, *The Myth of the Machine: The Pentagon of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970); Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1992); Lawrence J. Terlizzese, *Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005).
7. Jacob Bronowski, "Technology and Culture in Evolution," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 1. 3(1971): 199.
8. Ellul, *The Technological Society*, xxxiii.
9. Jacques Ellul, "New Hope for the Technological Society: An Interview with Jacques Ellul" in *Et cetera* 40.2 (1983): 192-206.

Dangerous Worldviews

Warm greetings from cold, cold Belarus, a country which is part of the former Soviet Union (between Poland and Russia). My husband and I are here this week to teach Christian worldview and apologetics to Christ-followers. One's [worldview](#) (and everyone has one, whether they know it or not) is comprised of a set of beliefs or presuppositions that are like a pair of glasses through which we interpret the world and our experiences in it.

In order to help our friends understand the importance of viewing reality accurately, which is only possible with a pair of glasses that consist of truths that align with what God has revealed in scripture, we brought along a prop. We brought a pair of goggles called "Drunk Busters" that give the wearer a dizzying approximation of what being drunk does to your vision. State police and drivers' education programs use them to demonstrate why it's deadly to drink and drive.

We ask for a volunteer to first navigate a simple obstacle course of chairs, catch an object we toss to them, and pick up that object from the floor. No one has any trouble doing these things.

Then they put on the goggles. They usually say, "Whoa!" It's very disorienting.

Navigating their way around the chairs, catching the objects we toss, and picking up anything from the floor suddenly becomes not only difficult but comical to those watching. Nothing is where they think it is. Their eyes lie to them

about reality. If they were behind the wheel of a car, they would be very dangerous.

Then we make the point that having the wrong worldview, the wrong set of beliefs and assumptions about reality, is also very dangerous.

It is dangerous eternally for a person to believe that God does not exist, or that God is anything other than what He has revealed Himself to be in His word and in His Son. It is equally disastrous for someone to believe in no God (atheism), and for someone to believe in a divine impersonal force that permeates everything (variations on pantheism).

But the wrong worldview can also be dangerous for Christians whose pair of glasses consists of a prescription with some truth and some error. The majority of American Christians who claim to be born again do not have a biblical worldview. What they believe differs from what the Bible says. For example, many believe in reincarnation. Many trust in astrology. Some believe that God is distant, angry, and doesn't particularly like us, that this "Gee-Oh-Dee" will begrudgingly let us into heaven only because Jesus died in our place. They don't understand that God is Father, Son and Spirit, Who have always loved us and welcome us enthusiastically into the circle of Their divine love, fellowship, joy and camaraderie.

Some believers think that they put their trust in Christ to save them when they die, but Jesus has nothing to say about their life between salvation and death. So they live their lives depending on the surrounding culture to give them wisdom and instruction about how to be educated, how to choose a mate and be married, how to parent, what kind of job to get, how to spend their money and other resources, and where to find satisfaction in their lives while they wait for heaven. They miss what Paul meant by "Christ, who is our life" (Col. 3:4). The phrase "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27) is only an abstract concept unrelated to the way they live their lives: essentially, "Jesus is in my heart, and I

keep Him stashed there till it's time to go to heaven."

It's dangerous to have the wrong worldview that misses the glorious truth that real life is only found in Jesus, that any love we give or receive comes from Jesus to and through us, that light comes from Jesus and all else is darkness. And it's far more tragic than bumping into an obstacle course or dropping a ball tossed to us.

How's your worldview? If your beliefs and the things you assume are not corrected and established by God's word, invite Him to change your prescription, and expect Him to joyfully start to transform your thinking!

Lord Jesus, transform me by renewing my mind (Romans 12:2). I don't even know what I don't know; I don't know what my blind spots are, and I don't know what I have wrong in my thinking. I invite You to change me from the inside out so I think like You!

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/dangerous_worldview on Feb.
15, 2011

**Those are sexy worldview
glasses you've got there.**

Feb. 3, 2011

E's email is a response to the post "[Glee-tastic!](#)"

Ms. McKenzie

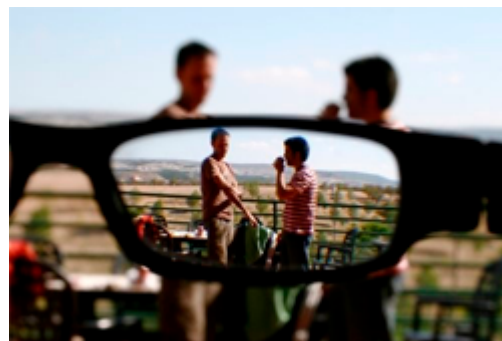
Don't think Glee's overt sexuality has no effect on you. It is shaping you episode by episode. You are not immune.

Hi E,

Thanks for writing. I appreciate where you're coming from. Of course you're right. Whatever I watch shapes me. The question is, am I simply resigned to being shaped passively? Or do I have the option to take a more active role? I want you to know that I do not underestimate the power of our culture to shape us. That's why I work at a worldview ministry. Worldview goes a long way. The healthy view of sex I have intentionally pursued through study and prayer and practice and fellowship makes the nonsense often shown on screen unattractive, uninteresting, and particularly sophomoric. (Speaking of a holistic biblical worldview on sex, let me recommend Lauren Winner's excellent book, [Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity](#)). Now, that being said, that does not mean that I am immune. I have to be careful (again: prayer, study, fellowship/community, repentance).

I also understand that not everyone has the same level of freedom to interact with various aspects of our unbelieving society. Everyone is different. There are certain things which are particularly spiritually unsafe for me—I know it in my guts and bones; I just can't go there. But I also know that doesn't mean it's as dangerous for others as it is for me, and I don't begrudge others their freedom. Especially since it's so important to engage. Personal conviction derives from the way God has uniquely **created** us as individuals and how our singular personality and wiring is affected by the **Fall** – our particular tendencies, weaknesses, addictions, our circumstances, our personal history. The Apostle Paul calls us "ministers of reconciliation," those who bring back together what has been separated, which Romans tells us is people and

all of creation, the combination of the two inevitably including what people create. The Church has, since its inception, chosen to reconcile, or **redeem** culture, generally, in five different ways (for more on this, see our article, [“Christians and Culture”](#)). And that’s good. Diversity is good. Through it we better image God in all his vastness. Creation. Fall. Redemption. That is the framework we have for understanding the world; and because the Bible is true, it’s also the most accurate understanding of the world. However, take out any part—creation, fall, redemption—and our vision is blurred.



Anyone who believes he or she is safe from the all the various temptations available in film is a fool. My colleague Todd wisely notes and advises, “Exercising rampant Christian freedom does not necessarily mean one is a strong Christian [referring to 1 Cor 8]. It could indicate that one is too weak to control one’s passions and is hiding behind the argument that they are a stronger brother.” If we choose to watch TV or movies at all, we must approach them through a “framework of moderation,” to use Todd’s phrase, that addresses *our particular weaknesses*, for we are all of us the weaker brother somewhere. “Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments” (Ps 119:66).

There is a difference between conviction and legalism. One of those differences is the legalistic compulsion to impose one’s personal convictions on others. It is possible to abstain from certain types of movies and shows, or even all movies and television, in a genuinely free way. I greatly admire my friends who abstain; who don’t even have a TV. Together we add to the richness of each others’ lives by bringing perspective

to one another about who God is and how we relate to him. Together we present to the world a more complete picture. It is the diversity of the Body that most beautifully represents Christ to the world. It is vital to our Christian calling to live as much as we can in the tension between the pulls of legalism and libertinism. The ebb and flow of this kind of living is part of what it means to live the full, rich, abundant life of Christ.

With affection in our Lord Jesus,
Renea

This blog post originally appeared at
reneamac.com/2011/02/03/those-are-sexy-worldview-glasses-youve-got-there/

Into the Void: The Coming Transhuman Transformation

In the TV show *The Six Million Dollar Man*, Lee Majors played Steven Austin, a crippled astronaut who was rehabilitated through bionic technology that gave him superhuman strength and powers. The show, like so much science fiction, presents us with the dream that technology will enhance all our facilities from sight to memory, hearing to strength, and lengthen our life span to boot. The bionic man represents a fictional forerunner of the transhuman transformation. The Transhumanist school believes that technology will not only enhance the human condition, but eventually conquer death and grant us immortality. Human enhancement technology performs wonders in allowing the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the sick to be well, but even immortality is out of the reach of technology. In striving to enhance our

physical existence we may lose our souls in the process.

In his famous book, *The Abolition of Man* published in the 1940s, C. S. Lewis wrote that modern society is one step away from “the void”^{1}—“post-humanity,”^{2} a state of existence from which there will be no return. Lewis argues that when we step outside of what he calls the Tao^{3}, we lose all sense of value for human life that has always governed civilization. What Lewis calls the Tao, we might call Natural Law or Traditional Morality—that internal moral understanding of right and wrong which God has written on the hearts of all people (Romans 2), the *Logos* by which all things were created (John 1, see especially verse 4).^{4}

In leaving traditional spiritual values behind, Lewis argues, modern technological civilization has reduced human value to only what is natural, and we have lost our spiritual quality. Modern society has striven to conquer nature and largely succeeded, but at a great cost—with each new conquest, more losses in human dignity, more of the human spark extinguished. Lewis offers the example of eugenics from his time in the 1930’s and 40’s.^{5} Eugenics is now a debunked science of racial manipulation and something we know was practiced with particular ferocity in Nazi Germany.^{6} But the driving philosophy of manipulating nature and humanity into something new and final remains prominent. Lewis underestimated the truth of his own prophecy. He thought that maybe in 10,000 years the final leap will be taken when mankind will solidify itself into some kind of inert power structure dominated by science and technology.^{7}

However, the 21st century may prove to be the era of posthumanity that Lewis foresaw in his time. The current movement of transhumanism, or human enhancement, asserts that humanity will eventually achieve a new form as a species through its adaption to modern computer technology and genetic engineering in order to reach a higher evolutionary condition. Our present state is not final. Transhumanism derives from

Darwinian doctrine regarding the evolution of our species. Evolutionary forces demand that a species adapt to its environment or become extinct. On this view, many species experience a pseudo-extinction in which their adaptation gives way to another kind of species leaving its old form behind. Many evolutionists believe this happened to the dinosaurs on their way to becoming modern birds and that humanity faces the same transformation on its way up a higher evolutionary path.[\[8\]](#) Primates evolved into humans so humans will eventually evolve into something higher (posthuman).

Metaman

Our present condition will give way to the cyborg (which is short for cybernetic organism) as we join our bodies and minds to technological progress. Transhumanists believe that because Artificial Intelligence (computing power) advances at such a rapid pace, it will eventually exceed human intelligence and humanity will need to employ genetic engineering to modify our bodies to keep pace or become extinct. Therefore, the cyborg condition represents humanity's inevitable destiny.

The two predominant pillars in transhumanism revolve around Artificial Intelligence (AI) and genetic engineering. One represents a biological change through manipulating genes. The other presents the merging of human intelligence with AI. The biological position (through use of genetic engineering) claims that through transference of genes between species, we eradicate the differences and create a global superorganism that encompasses both kinds of life—the natural and the artificial. Biophysicist Gregory Stock states that once humanity begins to tamper with its genetic code, and the codes of all other plants and animal species, that “the definition of ‘human’ begins to drift.”[\[9\]](#) Through genetic engineering we will transform the human condition by merging humanity with the rest of nature, thereby creating a planetary superorganism. A superorganism operates like a bee hive or an

anthill as a collection of individual organisms united as a living creature. Stock calls this Metaman, the joining of all biological creatures with machines, making one giant planetary life form. This superorganism encompasses the entire globe.

Transhumanism presupposes that no distinction exists between humanity, nature or machines. Metaman includes humanity, all it creates, and also the natural world. It acknowledges humanity's key role in the creation of farms and cities, but includes all natural elements, such as forests, jungles and weather. Metaman includes humanity and goes beyond it.^{10} Stock envisions a greater role for genetic engineering in redefining biological life as different species are crossed. Humanity may now control the direction of its evolution and that of the entire planet.

Stock states that through "conscious design" humanity has replaced the evolutionary process.^{11} This leads us to Post-Darwinism where people have supplanted the natural order with their own technological modification of humanity and the entire ecological system. "Life, having evolved a being that internalizes the process of natural selection, has finally transcended that process."^{12} Humanity may now, through the agency of technological progress, seize direction of its development and guide it to wherever it wants itself to go. No other species has ever controlled its own destiny as we do.

The Singularity

A second transhumanist belief argues for the arrival of an eventual technological threshold that will be reached through the advancement of Artificial Intelligence. The argument goes like this: because AI develops at a rapid pace it will achieve equality with the human brain and eventually surpass it. Estimates as to when this will happen range from the 2020's to 2045. The evolutionary process will reach a crescendo sometime in the 21st century in an event transhumanists call "the Singularity."^{13} There will be a sudden transformation of

consciousness and loss of all distinction, or Singularity, between humanity and its creations, or the absence of boundaries between the natural and artificial world. Singularity watchers expect that this event will mark the ultimate merging of humans and machines. Renowned inventor and AI prophet Ray Kurzweil states, “The Singularity will allow us to transcend these limitations of our biological bodies and brains. . . . There will be no distinction, post–Singularity, between human and machine. . . .”[\[14\]](#)As the fictional CEO and mastermind behind a cutting edge AI company in the year 2088 crowed, “My goal is for us to end death as we know it on earth within 50 years—for the essence of every person to live perpetually in an uploaded state. . . . The transhuman age has dawned.”[\[15\]](#)

Both of these positions, one emanating from genetic engineering that seeks to enhance the body, the other from Artificial Intelligence that seeks to supersede and even supplant the need for bodies, argue for the eventual replacement of humanity with biological–machine hybrids. Metaman and Singularity systems are direct heirs of the modern idea of progress. They present the dawning of a technological Millennium, but they also share a long history dating back into medieval Christendom. In the early Church, technology, or the “mechanical arts,” was never considered as a means to salvation or Edenic restoration. Historian David Noble argues that from Charlemagne to the early Early Modern period technology became associated with transcendence as the means of restoring the lost divine image or *imago dei*.[\[16\]](#)

Theologian Ernst Benz argues similarly that the Modern technological project was founded on a theological notion in which humanity believed itself to be the fellow worker with God in establishing His kingdom on earth through reversing the effects of the Fall.[\[17\]](#) We are fellow workers with God; however, this position overemphasized humanity’s role in restoration to the point of becoming a works–based salvation

of creation.

Despite the apparent secularity of the super science behind all the technological wonders of our time, the notions of modern progress and transhumanism remain grounded in an aberrant form of Christian theology. Noble summarizes this well when he states, “For modern technology and modern faith are neither complements nor opposites, nor do they represent succeeding stages of human development. They are merged, and always have been, the technological enterprise being, at the same time, an essentially religious endeavor.”^{18} The theology behind Modern technological progress remains rooted in Medieval and Early Modern notions of earthly redemption when the “useful arts,”^{19} which ranged anywhere from improved agricultural methods to windmills, were invested with redemptive qualities and humanity began to assume an elevated status over nature. “In theological terms, this exalted stance vis-à-vis nature represented a forceful reassertion of an early core Christian belief in the possibility of mankind’s recovery of its original God-likeness, the ‘image-likeness of man to God’ from Genesis (1:26), which had been impaired by sin and forfeited with the Fall.”^{20} Technology becomes the means of restoring the original divine image. Technological development was expected to reverse the effects of the Fall and restore original perfection. This theology also serves as the impetus behind Millennial thought which believes technology helps humanity recover from the Fall and leads to an earthly paradise. Transhumanism extends this Millennial belief into the twenty-first century.

Redeeming Technology

We are faced with the problem of how to redeem all the advances of technology such as human enhancement without losing ourselves in the process. Idolatry preoccupies our central concern with technology. Biblically speaking, idolatry exalts the work of humanity, including individual human

beings, over God; we commit idolatry when we serve the creature rather than the Creator. "Professing to be wise, [we] became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Rom. 1:22-23). Theologian Paul Tillich offers a keen and insightful definition of idolatry when he states, "Idolatry is the elevation of a preliminary concern to ultimacy. Something essentially partial is boosted into universality, and something essentially finite is given infinite existence."[{21}](#) Transhumanism presents us with a spiritualization of technology believed to grant us immortality through shedding our bodies and adopting machine ones or through genetic engineering that will prolong bodily life indefinitely. Our Modern age defines technology as a source of material redemption by placing finite technical means into a divine position, thus committing idolatry.

In seeking to reconcile technology with a biblical theology we have three possible approaches. *Technophobia* represents the first position. This view contends that we should fear technological innovation and attempt to destroy it. The Unabomber Manifesto offers the most radical, pessimistic and violent expression of this position, arguing for a violent attack against the elites of technological civilization such as computer scientists in an effort to return society to primitive and natural conditions in hopes of escaping the kind of future transhumanists expect.[{22}](#) However, the entire tenor of our times moves in the opposite direction, that of *technophilism*, or the inordinate love for technology. Transhumanism optimistically believes that through technological innovation we will restore our God-like image. A third position asserts a mediating role between over-zealous optimism and radical morose pessimism. [{23}](#)

Technocriticism

Technocriticism offers the only viable theological position. By understanding technology as a modern form of idolatry we are able to place it in a proper perspective. Technocriticism does not accept the advances of innovation and all the benefits new technology offers without critical dialogue and reflection. Technocriticism warns us that with every new invention a price must be paid. Progress is not free. With the invention of the automobile came air pollution, traffic and accidents. Computers make data more accessible, but we also suffer from information overload and a free-flow of harmful material. Cell phones enhance communication, but also operate as an electric leash, making inaccessibility virtually impossible. Examples of the negative effects of any technology can be multiplied if we cared enough to think through all the implications of progress. Technocriticism does not allow us the luxury of remaining blissfully unaware of the possible negative consequences and limitations of new inventions. This approach is essential because it demonstrates the fallibility of all technological progress and removes its divine status.

Technocriticism humanizes technology. We assert nothing more than the idea that technology expresses human nature. Technology is us! Technology suffers the same faults and failures that plague human nature. Technology is not a means of restoring our lost divine image or reasserting our rightful place over nature. This amounts to a works-based salvation and leads to dangerous utopian and millennial delusions that amount to one group imposing its grandiose vision of the perfect society on the rest. Such ideologies include Marxism, Technological Utopianism and now Transhumanism. We are restored to the divine "image of His Son" by grace through faith alone (Rom. 8:29). Technology, serving as an extension of ourselves, means that what we create will bear our likeness, both as the image-bearers of God and in sinful human identity. It contains both positive and negative consequences

that only patient wisdom can sort through.

Through criticism we limit the hold technology has on our minds and free ourselves from its demands. We use technology but do not ascribe salvific powers of redemption to it. A critical approach becomes even more crucial the further we advance in the fields of genetic engineering and AI. We do not know where these fields will lead and an uncritical approach that accepts them simply because it is possible to do so appears dangerous. We live under the delusion that technology frees us, but as Lewis warns, "At the moment, then, of Man's victory over Nature, we find the whole human race subjected to some individual men, and those individuals subjected to that in themselves which is purely 'natural'—to their irrational impulses." [\[24\]](#) The famous science-fiction writer Frank Herbert echoes Lewis's sentiments in his epic novel *Dune*: "Once men turned their thinking over to machines in the hope that this would set them free. But that only permitted other men with machines to enslave them." [\[25\]](#) Genetic engineering or merging humanity with AI only exchanges one condition for another. We will not reach the glorified condition transhumanists anticipate. A responsible critical approach will ask, Into whose image are we transforming?

Notes

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 77.
2. *Ibid.*, 86.
3. Lewis, of course, did not originate this ancient Chinese concept but rather applied it to universally accessible principles.
4. *Ibid.*, 56.
5. *Ibid.*, 72
6. See [Darwin's Racists: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow](#) by Sharon Sebastian and Raymond G. Bohlin, Ph.D. Though the German Nazis acted out this hideous ideology to an extreme, eugenics was actually first promulgated in the United States,

- Germany and Scandinavia around the turn of the 20th Century.
7. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 71.
 8. See Dr. Ray Bohlin's article [PBS Evolution Series](#), especially the section entitled "'Great Transformations' and 'Extinction'."
 9. Gregory Stock, *Metaman: The Merging of Humans and Machines into a Global Superorganism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 165.
 10. Ibid., 20.
 11. Ibid., 228.
 12. Ibid., 231.
 13. Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near* (New York: Penguin, 2005).
 14. Ibid., 9.
 15. David Gregory, *The Last Christian*, (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2010), 102.
 16. David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 9.
 17. Ernst Benz, *Evolution and Christian Hope: Man's Concept of the Future from Early Fathers to Teilhard de Chardin* trans., Heinz G. Frank (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 124-125.
 18. Noble, *The Religion of Technology*, 4, 5.
 19. Ibid., 14.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation Being and God*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 13.
 22. FC, *The Unabomber Manifesto: Industrial Society and Its Future* (Berkeley, CA: Jolly Roger Press, 1995).
 23. See Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 5.
 24. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 79, 80.
 25. Frank Herbert, *Dune* (New York: Ace, 1965), 11.