



Technological Development Must Have a Biblical Foundation

By RICK WOOD, Editor

We live in the most remarkable time in human history. For thousands of years people lived much the same as their grandparents did. Transportation was by horse and wagon. People lived off the land and heated their homes using firewood. But literally everything has changed over the last 150 years.

I remember a conversation I had with my grandmother in 1969, where she remarked how many new inventions she had witnessed in her lifetime, such as the electrification of the home, light bulbs, telephones, cars, radio, television, computers, and much more. I wondered at that time what new technology I would see in my lifetime. The personal computer, the Internet, smart phones and Zoom meetings are some of the big ones thus far. The pace of technological change is moving at an accelerating rate. It is hard at times to keep up with it all.

This whole issue of MF celebrates the use of the latest technologies to help identify those people interested in the Gospel and to disciple them online if necessary, and in person, if possible.

The Church has done a great job of adapting and implementing these new inventions into the mission of the Church to spread the Gospel to every tribe and tongue. We were early adopters of radio and television. The advancement in computer technology has enabled missionaries to dramatically increase the speed of Bible translation. See the article by Stan Parks starting on page 32.

The list of how technology has aided the spread of the Gospel would be a long one. This whole issue of *MF* celebrates the use of the latest technologies to help identify those people interested in the Gospel and to disciple them online if necessary, and in person, if possible.

But with change of any kind comes the challenge of understanding that change and adapting to it with biblical wisdom to the benefit of ourselves and the ministry of the Gospel. Any technology, take fire for an example, can be beneficial or harmful depending on how it is used. So as the pace of technological innovation accelerates, so does the pressure to adapt and implement these changes according to biblical values and ministry goals. Godly discernment is essential in our day to know what technology should be adopted for the purposes of spreading the Gospel and what should be opposed as biblically unacceptable. Just because science enables us to do something does not mean that we should mindlessly embrace it. Clear biblical guidelines are essential going forward. Most scientists are not governed by biblical values or motivations and yet they are leading the way in the development and implementation of new technology.

We can see some of the issues involved in technological advancement with the arrival of smart phones and social media. I have personally sat through seminars with social scientists who are warning of the adverse effects of too much “screen time” on the brain development of children and the negative behavioral development in teens.

The experts are recommending specific guidelines to limit screen time based upon age. Internet connectivity and social media pose a real safety threat to kids from online predators. This is but one example of the challenges we face in applying technology to our lives so that it is a benefit to us and not just one more drug impacting our minds. As technology continues to advance, even greater challenges to humanity lay ahead.

Our Science-Fiction Future?

We in the Church need to be aware of what some in the scientific community are thinking and planning. Some influential leaders are seeking to accelerate the process of “human evolution” through the merger of humans with technology to create Homo sapiens 2.0. It is referred to as Transhumanism and is defined by Wikipedia as:

“The belief or theory that the human race can evolve beyond its current physical and mental limitations, especially by means of science and technology. Transhumanism is a philosophical and intellectual movement which advocates the **enhancement** of the human condition by developing and making widely available sophisticated technologies that can greatly enhance longevity and cognition.”

The famous entrepreneur, Elon Musk, is actively working and planning, through his company Neuralink, to embed a computer chip in the brain of a human patient by the end of 2023. Few would argue against such a procedure to aid those with serious disabilities and disease. But the plan is to go beyond this noble aim to *enhance human cognition* and to allow direct thought to thought connections between AI (Artificial Intelligence) devices and the human brain. In such circumstances, one might ask, where do the thoughts of an individual leave off and implanted thoughts from an AI computer begin? As in the Transhumanism definition above, the goal here is to **enhance** the human condition to create a new type of human-machine merger. There is a plan to create human beings with AI empowered intelligence. AI itself poses all sorts of challenges

and dangers on its own that must be watched closely and carefully controlled.

CRISPR gene editing technology provides great hope for the cure of many genetically related diseases. But at what point could this technology be used to create superhumans through a process of cutting out inferior genes and replacing them with superior ones to enhance intelligence, strength, athletic ability and good looks? With the application of these technologies, one must ask: at what point do human beings cease to be what God created in His image?

These are just a couple of the technologies being developed by which some scientists hope to create a new and improved human race. All of this has echoes of the Eugenics movement of the 1930s where the Nazis and others sought to create a superior race of human beings while eliminating what Margaret Sanger of Planned Parenthood called the “human weeds,” by which she meant “undesirable” races like blacks, Latinos, Italians and Jews. The Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele, who experimented on concentration camp prisoners, is a good example of what can happen when biblical values are divorced from scientific research. To assume that this kind of evil research is not going on today would be naïve in the extreme.

The Church’s On-Going Challenge

As Kevin Higgins points out in his column starting on page 30, new inventions have always been met with some controversy and skepticism at first as believers wrestle with understanding the new technology and its biblical implications before adopting it to the glory of God. That process continues in our day at a breathtaking speed. We should seek to use every tool that science can provide to help spread the Gospel. But we cannot just sit back and hope that the scientific community will always use these new technologies wisely. The Church needs to be actively involved in guiding the application of new technologies from a biblical perspective. The future of humanity and what it means to be human are at stake. 