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THE DOCTRINE OF MAN:

A CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN TRANSHUMANISM

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BY

CRIS D. PUTNAM

WWW.LOGOSAPOLOGIA.ORG

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to address a few of the many theological implications surrounding transhumanism, especially in regard to its consistency with a Christian worldview. The topic is so broad that it can be best addressed paradigmatically by examining its foundational technologies and philosophies. This presentation will first give a brief summary of the topic and then a broad overview of the technologies involved. As the technologies are discussed a few specific criticisms will be raised and Christian responses offered. Then it will turn to theological matters. First it will analyze the philosophical underpinnings of the movement and then interact specifically with a sampling of the more visible proponents who attempt to reconcile it theologically with Christianity. The main points offered in defense of the thesis are that promoters of Christian transhumanism are driven by an unbiblical anthropology, a Pelegian view of sin, and a profound misunderstanding of the Christian life characteristic of theological liberalism. The first point of analysis will be anthropology which naturally leads to one's position on the biblical creation account and original sin. The denial of scriptural authority on the issues of origins and sin results in an embrace of the naturalistic worldview and leads one open to ideas like Christian transhumanism. This will be revealed as initially hubris and potentially grave sin. Finally, some suggestions will be offered as a Christian response. This paper will demonstrate that while there are some who claim to be Christian transhumanists, transhumanism is an anthropocentric worldview based on naturalistic presuppositions that is incompatible with orthodox biblical Christianity.

SUMMARY

Transhumanism is an aspiring international cultural crusade that promises to break through human biological limitations and radically redesign humanity. I contend that it meets the basic definition of a religion and worldview. Adherents to this worldview plan to extend lifespans, augment the senses, boost memory capacity, and generally use technology to enhance the human condition. It is tempting to write off transhumanism as the fantastical musings of a few eccentric gamers and sci-fi fans. However, these are not just kooks; rather they are professors from universities like Yale, MIT, and Oxford and they have a secular vision for the future, an alternative eschatology if you will. They want to conquer death and create a utopia by technological means. The Bible promises the same through Christ. These two visions are not compatible and a cultural collision is inevitable.

The modern philosophy of transhumanism was first authored in 1990 by Max More in the essay "Transhumanism Toward a Futurist Philosophy." According to More, "Transhumanism is a class of philosophies that seek to guide us towards a posthuman condition."[1] More is openly anti-theistic which will be addressed below in the critical interaction section. Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom has refined and toned down More's initial rather virulent position. Still yet, most transhumanists are atheists or agnostics and the criticism that they are "playing God" does not trouble them.[2] Based on the premise that naturalistic evolution is true, transhumanism looks to shape the human species through the direct application of technology. However, this depends on a myriad of variables. We could end up with the six million dollar man or the Frankenstein monster. There is a quandary in the queries. What does it mean to be a post human? What are the spiritual consequences? What about the soul? Can a Christian be a transhumanist? While these

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[1] Max More. "Transhumanism Towards a Futurist Philosophy." *MaxMore.com.* 1990. http://www.maxmore.com/transhum.htm (accessed 12 08, 2010).

[2] Christopher Hook. "Transhumainism and Posthumanism." In *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* 3rd ed. Stephen G. Post, (New York: MacMillan, 2007), 2519.

questions remain unanswered, there are those who attempt to merge Christianity with transhumanism. An answer to the last question will be offered near the end of this paper.

The western Christian consensus has passed into history and we are living in a post Christian era. Secularism is becoming increasingly aggressive finding its voice in the neo atheist movement championed by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennet, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris. Their rhetoric of triumphant scientism is the zeitgeist of the twenty first century. In large part, transhumanists share this devoted faith in science, yet the transhumanist worldview is more enigmatic. There can be no doubt that scientific progress and technical advancements are now poised to radically transform humanity. It is moving at such a rapid pace that it is imperative for thoughtful Christians to offer a biblical perspective in the marketplace of ideas. While this is increasingly unpopular, we should not shrink back. This issue has enormous implications for theology.

Unfortunately, there has been very little written on transhumanism within conservative evangelical circles. There is a Mormon Transhumanist association, which is hardly surprising in light of their polytheism and apotheosis doctrine.[3] On the popular level, there are two websites authored by a Nuclear Operations Instructor, James Ledford, called Technical-Jesus.com and HyperEvolution.com as well as a self-published book, all of which promote "Christian Transhumanism."[4] Not surprisingly, Paul Tillich is frequently cited in support. Lately, transhumanism has found theological justification in the work of ELCA Lutheran theologians like Phillip Hefner, Ted Peters and others. In fact, the Lutheran journal *Dialog* offered an entire

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[3]Carl Teichrib. "The Rise of the Techno-Gods: The Merging of Transhumanism and Spirituality." *Forcing Change* 4,10, October 2010, 2.

[4] James Ledford. *Christian Transhumanism*. (Hyper-Evolution.com. 2005), http://www.hyper-evolution.com/Christian%20Transhumanism.pdf.

issue on the subject in their winter 2005 edition.[5] The mission of the Lutheran's seems to be a well-intended one of building a bridge between science and faith. They are welcomed in largely secular arenas and their work is being taken quite seriously. Unfortunately, with the exceptions of Thomas Horn, Chuck Missler and William Hurlbut M.D., conservative Christian voices are not being heard albeit they are likely not welcome.[6] Bostrom, Hefner and Ledford argue that there is nothing wrong with a Christian adopting a transhumanist worldview. I disagree for reasons to be discussed in the critical interaction section of this paper. First, to understand that worldview, we must briefly survey the science and technology behind it.

TECHNOLOGY

Transhumanism is driven by the ambitious juggernaut of the modern scientific and technological revolution. The technologies undergirding transhumanism are all part of the biotech explosion and include genetics, neuropharmacology, robotics, cybernetics, artificial intelligence and nanotechnology. They are all interrelated and fueled by the ever increasing speed of data processing as per Moore's law. For the purpose of this discussion, we will examine them in a very limited way in two broad categories: the biological/genetic and the electro-mechanical computer technologies. Of these two, the first has received the most attention by Christian thinkers due to issues like stem cell research, cloning and the world wide infant holocaust. As a result, Christians do have a coherent position on the intrinsic value of all human life from conception to the aged. The basic position expressed by Francis Beckwith in the

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[5] *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 44, 4 (Winter 2005).

[6] Thomas Horn. "An Open Letter to Christian Leaders on Biotechnology and the Future of Man." http://www.raidersnewsupdate.com/leadstory94.htm (accessed 12 16, 2010). Chuck Missler and William Hurlbut M.D. appeared in the Ray Kurzweil documentary "Transcedent Man" offering Christian conterpoints.

abortion debate is a good platform to start from.[7] Still yet, one of the major new challenges

facing thinking Christians is our newly acquired ability to alter nature for our own ends through

genetic engineering and biotechnology.

The discovery of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) by James Watson and Francis Crick in

1954 opened up the architecture of life to human intervention in a manner that was inconceivable

prior. In 2003, the Human Genome Project produced a map of the complete human genome.

Consequently, we are now fully capable of using genetic engineering to alter ourselves. The least

controversial procedure is somatic cell gene therapy. It entails the injecting of healthy gene

material into patients with diseases like Huntington's.[8] The second is called germline therapy and

involves rearranging defective genetic material in a way that it produces healthy genes. This

technique increases the stakes in that it will pass the alterations down to one's offspring.[9] It

follows that we could permanently alter the species with this technology and that the new one

could even split off. Current gene therapy is experimental and the FDA is moving with caution.[10]

These techniques are now being developed for healing. However, it is not difficult to imagine

their use by the military, social engineers and utopian transhumanists.

Genetic enhancement therapy is something Christians should oppose. It entails

introducing novel genetic material simply to improve one's abilities. Transhumanists envision

altering or even adding DNA from other species into the human code to create "Human Plus" a

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[7] Francis J. Beckwith. "What Does It Mean To Be Human?" *Christian Research Journal* 26, 3 (2003): 1.

[8] Michael McKenzie. "Genetics and Christianity: An Uneasy but Necessary Partnership" *Christian Research Journal* 18, 2 (1995): 2.

[9] McKenzie. "Genetics", 2.

[10] Human Genome Project Information. "Gene Therapy"
http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/medicine/genetherapy.shtml

human GMO (Genetically Modified Organism).[11] An instructive analogy is to consider the difference between diabetics using insulin and an athlete using anabolic steroids. There is a clear and normative moral distinction. It is one that should form the Christian consensus. Even on a secular basis, enhancement also poses higher risk. To correct a faulty gene with what already should be there presents low risk to the patient but to add something new could adversely affect numerous related biochemical pathways.[12] Thus, it is vitally important to distinguish therapeutic procedures from enhancement. Finally, a biblical ethic discourages enhancement because Christians are called to model Christ in self-denial and humility (Lk 9:23; Mat 23:12; Rom 12:1, 12:16).

The most controversial category is eugenic engineering which involves directing traits to improve a specific gene pool.[13] This brings to mind Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (published in 1932) and C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man* (published in 1947) both prescient yet disturbing forecasts of our current moral dilemmas. While eugenic engineering may seem prohibitively unsavory, the idea is currently being discussed amongst the intelligentsia. In a recent book discussing dangerous ideas, evolutionary biologist and out spoken atheist, Richard Dawkins, laments that prior to Hitler, scientists in the 1920s and 1930s had no qualms with the idea of designer babies. He then pondered:

> I wonder whether, some 60 years after Hitler's death, we might at least venture to ask what the moral difference is between breeding for musical ability and forcing a child to take music lessons. Or why it is acceptable to train fast runners and high jumpers but not to breed them. (Dawkins 2007, 300)

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[11] Teichrib. "The Rise", 3.

[12] McKenzie. "Genetics", 2.

[13] McKenzie."Genetics", 2.

Apart from the image of God in all people (Gen 1:26-27), there are no grounds to resist the momentum toward social engineering. After all, the current widespread use of prenatal genetic screening is a private form of it. The Chinese already have a strictly enforced one child policy and compulsory abortions.[14] Perhaps Huxley's world of compulsory test tube breeding is in our not too distant future? The uncomfortable truth is that today we can really do it.

The American philosopher, political economist, and author, Francis Fukuyama, agrees contending that "the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history."[15] Unfortunately, today there are competing pathways to that end. Other disturbing trends include human cloning, the production of human/animal chimeras and psychoactive drug use. Now that human cloning is possible, it has been purposed to employ fetal tissue harvested from cloned or genetically engineered fetuses in gene therapy or even for spare parts.[16] In 2007, scientists at the University Of Nevada School Of Medicine created a sheep that has 15% human cells and 85% sheep cells.[17] In addition, neuropharmacology is already being widely used to control behavior and emotions. While there are legitimate uses, psychotropic drugs like ritilan are being handed out to school children as a matter of routine. Prozac and its relatives are being

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[14] Joseph Kahn, "Harsh Birth Control Steps Fuel Violence in China ." NY Times. May 22, 2007. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/22/world/asia/22china.html (accessed 04 28, 2011).

[15] Francis Fukuyama. *Our Posthuman Future.* (New York: Picador, 2002),7.

[16] Jim Leffel. "Engineering Life: Human Rights in a Postmodern Age"

[17] Claudia Joseph. "Now scientists create a sheep that's 15% human." Daily Mail UK Online March 2007. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-444436/Now-scientists-create-sheep-thats-15-human.html (accessed 12 11, 2010).

taken by 28 million Americans or ten percent of the population.[18] This seems to be heading

toward what transhumanists optimistically envision as a biochemically induced utopia:

> Technologies such as brain-computer interfaces and neuropharmacology could amplify human intelligence, increase emotional well-being, improve our capacity for steady commitment to life projects or a loved one, and even multiply the range and richness of possible emotions. (Bostrom 2003, 5)

In light of twentieth century history, this seems naïve at best. The secular world view, rooted in

material reductionism and genetic determinism, leaves little room for the inherent dignity of all

human life. Ready or not, we have already entered the brave new world.

In 1965, Intel co-founder Gordon E. Moore wrote a paper describing a trend of increasing

circuit speed that has come to be called Moore's law. It describes the persistent propensity for

computing power to double every two years. This pattern has held true and is, in fact, still

considered a conservative predictor of future growth. Based on this, MIT computer scientist,

futurist, and author Ray Kurzweil predicts what has come to be termed the "singularity." This

represents a point in time when artificial intelligence surpasses human abilities and begins to

design new technology on its own.[19] At this time, he predicts technological growth will go

vertical on the exponential curve. Kurzweil also envisions the next step in the human evolution

as the union of human and machine. It really is not as fantastic as it seems. Already, cochlear

implants are hard wired to the brain to restore hearing. Brain-machine interfaces are being used

to "assist paralyzed patients by enabling them to operate machines with recordings of their own

neural activity."[20] Today, similar technology is available for gaming as consumer electronics.[21]

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[18] Fukuyama. *Our Posthuman,* 43.

[19]Ray Kurzweil. *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology.* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2005) 25.

[20] Richard Andersen. "Selecting the Signals for a Brain-Machine Interface". *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 14 (2004):1.

It is real, burgeoning and not going away. Kurzweil's optimistic enthusiasm for progress is exciting and it is easy to understand the attraction it holds for technologists.

Kurzweil is undeniably one of the leading inventors of our time and has been called the "rightful heir to Thomas Edison."[22] If one were to posit transhumanism a religion, Kurzweil's books *The Age of Spiritual Machines* and *The Singularity is Near* would be likely be considered its sacred texts. Kurzweil builds his case on the naturalistic evolutionary paradigm devoting a large section of *The Age of Spiritual Machines* to framing transhumanism as an inevitable evolutionary consequence. The Darwinian paradigm is a foundational presupposition as he purposes computer algorithms that explicitly model natural selection.[23] He argues that these and other heuristics derived by reverse engineering the human brain combined with neural net technology promise the rapid development of sentient artificial intelligence.[24] He predicts that computers will achieve the memory capacity and computing speed of the human brain by 2020. By 2029, he predicts the $1,000 computer will be one thousand times more powerful than the human brain and computer implants designed for direct connection to the brain will be widely available.[25] As far as artificial intelligence he predicts by 2029, "Machines claim to be conscious and to have as wide an array of emotional and spiritual experiences as their human progenitors,

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[21] Mike Yamamoto. "Gaming by Brainwaves Alone." *Cnet News*. March 1, 2007. http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-9692846-1.htm.

[22] "Ray Kurzweil Bio." *Kurzweil Accelerating Intelligence*. 2010. http://www.kurzweilai.net/ray-kurzweil-bio (accessed 12 14, 2010).

[23] Ray Kurzweil. *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence.* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999), *89.*

[24] Kurzweil. *The Age, 62.*

[25] Kurzweil. *The Age,* 163.

and these claims are largely accepted." [26] Furthermore, he predicts that, eventually, human consciousness will be uploaded to computers introducing immortality. By 2099, machines and humans will merge to the point that there will be no distinction between human and machine, or between real and virtual, thus eliminating all war, hunger, poverty, death and disease.[27] Does this promise sound somewhat familiar (Rev 21:4)?

THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

The transhumanist eschatology of consciousness uploading is littered with unfounded assumptions. They simply deny the soul *a priori* viewing consciousness as purely an epiphenomenon. Our bodies are considered simple hardware, a biological prosthesis, which we can re-engineer and improve. They see the essential nature of our being as information patterns and data stored in the brain. [28] Accordingly, transhumanists envision immortality via uploading themselves onto computers in the form of their brain patterns. Kurzweil calls it "patternism."[29] ELCA Lutheran theologian, Ted Peters has addressed this observing that, "It assumes that human intelligence and human personhood can become disembodied."[30] This creates an interesting dissonance with the typical naturalist mind-body identity paradigm. In typical liberal theological language, Peters argues that the term soul is a "symbolic place holder to identify the dimension

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[26] Kurzweil. *The Age,* 163.

[27] Kurzweil. *The Age,* 212.

[28] Hook, "Transhumanism"; 2517.

[29] Kurzweil. *The Singularity.* 282.

[30] Ted Peters. "The Soul of Transhumanism." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology 44, no. 4*, (Winter 2005): 385.

of who we are that connects with God."[31] This is problematic in light of scripture (Mat. 10:28; Rev 6:9; 20:4). However to his credit, he concludes that the Christian conception of the soul is nothing like the transhumanist's disembodied patterns of brain activity.

According to Kurzweil, human immortality can be obtained by uploading. As a defeater to patternism, philosopher Derek Parfit has composed a clever thought experiment.[32] The idea is that you are an astronaut going on a mission to a distant planet via a new form of teleportation. To accomplish this, your brain pattern and body type will be uploaded and sent to the planet to be reconstructed from matter precisely engineered from your scan. In the process, your body on earth will be destroyed, but this is not concerning because you will soon be in your new body. Should you go? In Kurzweil's paradigm it should work but in reality it does not. It is not so much a matter of metaphysics as logic. The law of non-contradiction will not allow it. There is no logically necessary reason that your body on earth be destroyed. Consider a scenario where you are not destroyed on earth yet the upload is successful. Obviously, the person on the other planet is not you. Since this person is clearly not you in this case, it follows that it is also not you if you were destroyed. Hence, no matter how much transhumanists might wish it were so, uploading will not defeat death (Heb 9:27). That belongs to Christ alone (Rev 20:14).

Fantasies of immortality aside, one marvels wondering exactly what Kurzweil means by a machine having a "spiritual experience." It gets weirder and this is where it intersects with theological liberalism. In *The Singularity is Near*, he expresses his belief in the need for a new religion. He offers, "A principal role of religion has been to rationalize death, since up until just

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[31] Peters, "The Soul"; 393.

[32] Derek Parfit. "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons."*Mindwaves* (1987): 19-28.

now there was little else constructive we could do about it."[33] He states that this new religion

will "keep two principles: one from traditional religion and one from secular arts and sciences—

from traditional religion, the respect for human consciousness" and from the secular world "the

importance of knowledge."[34] This is not any different than traditional secular humanism. So we

must ask, "Where does God fit into this new religion?" Kurzweil ambitiously resolves, "Once we

saturate the matter and energy in the universe with intelligence, it will 'wake up,' be conscious,

and sublimely intelligent. That's about as close to God as I can imagine." In fact, it sounds

strangely similar to liberal theologian Paul Tillich's pantheistic conception of God as the "power

of all being."[35] Yet in Kurzweil's mind, man is engaged in building God which is effectively the

antithesis of Genesis 1:26. Indeed, it is exactly backwards: God created in man's image.

In its early articulation, Max More made no bones about wanting to displace conventional

religion. Like Dawkins, he views religion as an obscurant fiction and believes science has

discredited the biblical worldview. Accordingly, he argues that transhumanism will supplant

traditional religion. He boasts, "The growth of humanism over the decades has begun this job,

but now it is time to utilize the more inclusive and memetically attractive option of

transhumanism."[36] Conventional secular humanism qualifies as a worldview in the sense that it

provides a full set of ideas through which its adherents view reality. Following this line of

thought, it is also a religion on the basis that it attempts to answer the same set of fundamental

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[33] Kurzweil. *The Singularity,* 275.

[34] Kurzweil. *The Singularity,* 275.

[35] Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Rev. ed., 1st Crossway ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001), 201.

[36] More. "Transhumanism."

questions about theology, metaphysics, identity, origins, destiny and morality as other religions.[37]

In fact, the high courts have ruled in the case *James J. Kaufman vs. Gary R. MacCaughtry* that

secular humanism is a religion.[38] In light of that status, it seems fair to argue that transhumanism

simply defines its eschatology. Thus, it is vitally important to note the abject failure of secular

humanism so far. Unparalleled scientific progress has not delivered a secular utopia. It has led to

a human nightmare. The twentieth century world total is 262,000,000 murdered by government

and largely *outside of war* in the pursuit of the secular humanist's political ideal of Marxism.[39]

Since the initial vehemently secular expression by More, transhumanist philosophy has

been polished by Oxford philosopher Nick Bostrom. While Bostrom denies that it is a religion,

he concedes that, "transhumanism might serve a few of the same functions that people have

traditionally sought in religion."[40] He states succinctly that transhumanism is a naturalistic

outlook and in a decidedly superior tone offers that, "transhumanists prefer to derive their

understanding of the world from rational modes of inquiry, especially the scientific method."[41] If

one is a Christian in any meaningful sense, this is not acceptable. In truth, we have what the

secular world does not have: infallible and timeless principles revealed from the very author of

life (2 Tim 3:16). However, it is more than a matter of simple proof texting curt responses.

Humans are God's highest creation on earth and are commanded to be good stewards of the earth

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[37] Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 20.

[38] David Nobel. "Secular Humanism." In *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, by Ed Hindson, & Ergun Caner, 443-446. (Eugene OR: Harvest House, 2008), 444.

[39] R.J. Rummel "20th Century Democide." *Freedom, Democracy, Peace; Power, Democide, and War.* 11 23, 2002. http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/20TH.HTM (accessed 10 26, 2010).

[40] Bostrom. *The Transhumanist FAQ,* 46.

[41] Bostrom. *The Transhumanist FAQ*, 46.

and its resources. Thus, we have a mandate to engage in some of the technologies discussed but with the explicit caveat of when it is exclusively directed toward the healing aspect of medicine.

Accordingly, transhumanism is finding some theological support in the "created co-creator" paradigm of ELCA theologian Philip Hefner. Hefner has become quite popular in transhumanist circles authoring articles like "The Created Co-Creator Meets Cyborg" and "The Animal that Aspires to Be an Angel: The Challenge of Transhumanism." Epistemic of the overemphasis of God's immanence in theological liberalism, his idea assumes that human beings emerged as purposeful free agents from a natural evolutionary process and that human nature is shaped by both a genetic and cultural heritage.[42] Finally, man is God's instrument for fulfilling his purposes in creation.[43] This theological construct has been articulated by him in this way:

> Human beings are God's created co-creators whose purpose is to be the agency, acting in freedom, to birth the future that is most wholesome for the nature that has birthed us—the nature that is not only our own genetic heritage, but also the entire human community and the evolutionary and ecological reality in which and to which we belong. Exercising this agency is said to be God's will for humans. (Hefner 1993, 26)

This view has been criticized for diminishing human exceptionalism with its embrace of naturalistic evolution, while simultaneously presuming to elevate humans to the same level as God.[44] Hefner's liberal theology is derived from his low view of special revelation.

Hefner interprets the Genesis creation account as primordial mythology using symbol and metaphor for man's evolutionary past.[45] He quotes Tillich frequently in his treatise on the fall.

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[42] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), 501.

[43] Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture and Religion.*(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 32.

[44] Hubert Meisinger. "Created Co-Creator." *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion; (Macmillan-Thomson Gale, eNotes.com.* 2006). http://www.enotes.com/science-religion-encyclopedia/created-co-creator

[45] Philip Hefner. "Biological Perspectives On Fall And Original Sin", *Zygon,* 28, 1 (March 1993): 77.

For example, "Before sin is an act, it is a state."[46] This is in reference to the idea that there was

no actual space time fall of man, rather "the fall" symbolically represents the inevitable tension

between cultural ideal and primordial instinct that ensued as man evolved from his lowly origin.

In fact, Hefner dismisses the traditional biblical understanding as obsolete:

> Furthermore, certain traditional understandings are seriously challenged, including the necessity for simply rejecting some historically popular insights. Notions of (1) the "first pair," (2) concepts of the Fall that insist upon some primordial act by early humans that altered subsequent human nature, and (3) certain forms of aetiological interpretation are among the elements that must be looked upon with great skepticism. (Hefner 1993, 98)

This is highly problematic because it is clear from scripture that Jesus believed in a first pair

(Mat 19:4). Furthermore, this view does not qualify as theistic evolution in a meaningful

Christian sense. As Millard Erickson expresses it, "With respect to the biblical data, theistic

evolution often holds to an actual primal pair, Adam and Eve."[47] In respect to his complete

rejection of Genesis' historicity, his view seems more in line with deistic evolution. For an

alleged evangelical theologian, his near scientism is disturbing.

The major flaw in this line of thinking is that it completely undermines the basis for the

Gospel message. The Apostle Paul proclaims, "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation

for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men" (Ro 5:18). Thus

in Paul's reckoning, the denial of an original sin effectively denies the atonement of the cross.

Furthermore, if sin is merely a vestigial memory then the cure cannot be a restoration via

sanctification in Christ (Rom 6:22). The cure for sin necessarily becomes the elimination of the

left over animal instincts. Erickson argues, "This conception of the cure for sin embraces the

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[46] Paul Tillich. *The Shaking of the Foundations*. (New York: Charles Scnbner's Sons 1948), 155, quoted in Hefner "Biological Perspectives", 92.

[47] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 505.

optimistic belief that the evolutionary process is carrying the human race in the right direction."[48]

While this idea coheres nicely with transhumanist thought, Jesus taught that "many will fall

away", "lawlessness will be increased" and that "the love of many will grow cold" at the time

world evangelization is completed (Matt 24:10-14) and scripture supports increasing apostasy

and wickedness (2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 4:3; 2 Pet. 3:3). Finally, consider that Jesus

"needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man" (Jn 2:25).

      The fact that their theology is antithetical to scripture does not seem to bother liberal

theologians like Paul Tillich and Philip Hefner. The embrace of Darwinism and higher criticism

over creation and inerrancy renders one more vulnerable to the latest postmodern trends. In his

article "The Animal that Aspires to be an Angel: The Challenge of Transhumanism", Hefner

intentionally blurs the distinction between healing and enhancement, often equivocating

transhumanism with medicine. To his credit, Hefner does warn that while we are created to push

the envelope, "we are not God; we are finite and sinful."[49] However, one must keep in mind his

view of sin is not the orthodox Christian one. While he urges caution, it effectively amounts to

hedging his bets. The prohibition of murder in Genesis 9:6 is based on the fact that the human

was created in God's image. It seems reasonable to extend that to include posthuman alteration.

But Hefner contends that to object to transhumanism on the grounds of the *imago Dei* imposes

an unwarranted normative anthropology by arguing:

> Other thinkers argue that there are inviolable qualities, chiefly, human inviolable
> qualities, chiefly, human dignity, which are also threatened by biotechnology. The
> difficulty with such thinking is that it imposes a static quality to nature that does not in
> fact conform to what we know about nature's dynamic character. (Hefner 2009, 166)

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[48] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 616.

[49] Hefner. "The Animal", 166.

This reads like he is arguing that the evolutionary mandate trumps the idea that human dignity is fixed. It seems that he, like Kurzweil, views transhumanism as the inevitable next step in human evolution. That transhumanism is a natural consequence of man's status as a co-creator with God. In other words, it is deistic evolution via human agency. In his theological conclusions he writes, "TH is not first of all a matter of morality. Our existence as created co-creators who face the possibilities of TH is profoundly an expression of our human nature."[50] He also contends that, "to discredit our God-given nature is itself a rebellion against God."[51] In other words, we have a God given mandate to transhumanism. It is not difficult to see why Hefner's created co-creator is a pillar in the thought of so called "Christian" transhumanists.

While not nearly as sophisticated as Hefner, Ledford's popular websites also use the work of Tillich to justify Christian transhumanism. Specifically an idea Tillich called the "profound doctrine of transcendent humanism" which is Tillich's idea that "Adam is fulfilled in Christ."[52] Tillich explains that "this means that Christ is the essential man, the man Adam was to become but did not actually become."[53] This is not in line with the orthodox Christology which places Christ as the eternal second person of the trinity. It is also logically incoherent because Adam was created through Christ (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16). Ledford's reliance on Tillich is not surprising. Tillich's over emphasis of God's immanence has been criticized as amounting to panentheism

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[50] Hefner."The Animal", 166.

[51] Hefner."The Animal", 166.

[52] James Ledford. *Christian Transhumanism*. (Hyper-Evolution.com. 2005), 164-165, http://www.hyper-evolution.com/Christian%20Transhumanism.pdf.

[53] Paul Tillich. *A History of Christian Thought From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism.* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 45.

and seems disturbingly similar to Kurzweil's conception.[54] Ledford's webpages read like a

syncretism of New Age mysticism, Christianity, and transhumanist ideology. Notable examples

include, "Heaven allows Hyper-Evolution" and clichés like "You can do no wrong when the

spirit of love, the Holy Spirit, is with you."[55] He really makes no effort at scriptural coherence

offering platitudes like "The path to God is wide as we are different. And, the path to God

converges on his calling."[56] Of course this stands in direct contradiction to Jesus who said, "Enter by

the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who

enter by it are many" (Mat 7:13). Ledford is no theologian and his work offers no real challenge to

anyone with a basic understanding of Christian doctrine. Unfortunately, less sophisticated seekers are

bound to be deceived by it.

As far as the previously posed question, "Can a Christian be a transhumanist", that one

need ask reveals a wayward heart condition. Transhumanism is less a sin as it is hubris. The

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology makes the distinction that:

> Whereas hubris signifies the attempt to transcend the limitations appointed by fate, sin
> refers to an unwillingness to break out of our narrow limitations in obedience to the vision
> of faith. While hubris connotes immoderation, sin consists in misplaced allegiance. Hubris
> is trying to be superhuman; sin is becoming inhuman. Hubris means rising to the level of
> the gods; sin means trying to displace God or living as if there were no God. (Bloesch
> 2001, 1104)

Based on this, transhumanism is hubris of the highest order while becoming post human is a sin.

The "obedience to the vision of faith" spoken of above is not Tillich's or Hefner's but Paul's.

The Apostle exhorted the Colossians to "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,

compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience," (Col 3:12). Tillich, Hefner

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[54] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 333.

[55] Ledford. *Christian Transhumanism,* 29.

[56] Ledford. *Christian Transhumanism,* 58.

and Ledford all demonstrate a gross misunderstanding of the human condition. Humans are both finite and sinful (Jer 17:9; Isa. 64:6; Rom 3:11). We lack the wisdom and moral purity necessary to decide matters of human "perfection." Therefore, it is immoral and sinful to use such technologies to enhance or evolve humanity. Christians must take an informed stand on transhumanism understanding both the appropriate use of technology and the potential dangers it presents. Thus a theology of healing as opposed to enhancement must be developed in accordance with sound biblical guidelines.

Transhumanism is a new anti-Christian religion in the making. Globalism is leading to a "technocracy" or rule by the elite.[57] When transhuman enhancement becomes widely available and it likely will soon, only the elite will be able to afford it. This will create new a caste system. Furthermore, the potential within these technologies for mind manipulation opens the door for an Orwellian totalitarianism. Francis Schaeffer and C.S. Lewis issued prescient warnings to the Christian community that this was coming. Schaeffer wrote back in 1976,

> As we consider the coming of an elite, an authoritarian state, to fill the vacuum left by the loss of Christian principles, we must not think naively of the models of Stalin and Hitler. We must think rather of a *manipulative* authoritarian government. Modern governments have forms of manipulation at their disposal which the world has never known before. (Schaeffer 1976, 228)

Indeed they do. A major funder of transhumanist research is the National Science Foundation.[58] The military applications are fearsome. Already we see this trend of manipulation in our corporate controlled media and increasingly globalist politics. Considering Kurzweil's prediction that there will be cerebrally interfaced network by 2029, the potential for centralized

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[57] Teichrib."The Rise",14.

[58] Hook. "Transhumainism", 2518.

control gets more disturbing. Quite astonishingly, Ledford predicts that "The Antichrist will likely emerge but so will Christ. This becomes a sign that Christian Transhumanism is the way."[59] While I disagree with the latter, there may be some truth to the former.

CONCLUSION

In the public arena, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get a fair hearing for Christian values while remaining true to scripture. We are not convincing the public on abortion and President Obama recently issued an executive order that expanded embryonic stem cell research. While that is being battled in court, as this research has demonstrated, there are a myriad of even more disturbing technologies that are never publicly debated. The history of science is not silent on one point: transhumanism will not wait for Christians to catch up. While we have a duty to educate ourselves to address highly technical issues with scriptural principles, it is doubtful much can be done other than serious prayer. Historically, the military industrial complex has never been transparent about their projects. Furthermore, there is nothing to stop ambitious scientists from simply relocating to countries like China to work on their more controversial ideas. One way or another, the melding of man and machine is going to happen. While many will want to participate, Christians should take a firm stand against enhancement. Transhumanism is going to be an issue that divides.

This paper offered a brief summary of the topic and a broad survey of the technologies involved. This was followed by critical analysis of transhumanist thought and its implications for theology. It was demonstrated that the philosophical underpinnings are atheistic and opposed to Christianity. Furthermore, the transhumanist hope for immortality via uploading was revealed

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[59] Ledford. *Christian Transhumanism,* 51.

to be logically incoherent. Particular attention was given to those who attempt to reconcile

Christianity with transhumanist ideas. Criticism was offered that their theology is based on a

naturalistic anthropology, denial of original sin, denial of biblical creation and an overemphasis

on God's immanence. In the end, we must trust in the Lord to handle man's extreme hubris and

sin. We have nothing to fear. After all, we have already read the ending (Rev 21-22).

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